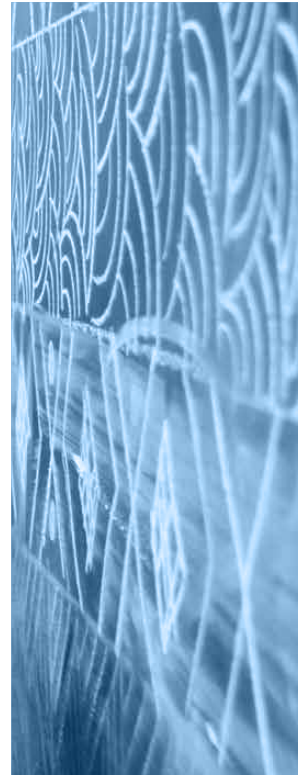


# Language for Resilience

Cross-disciplinary perspectives on the role  
of language in enhancing the resilience of  
refugees and host communities

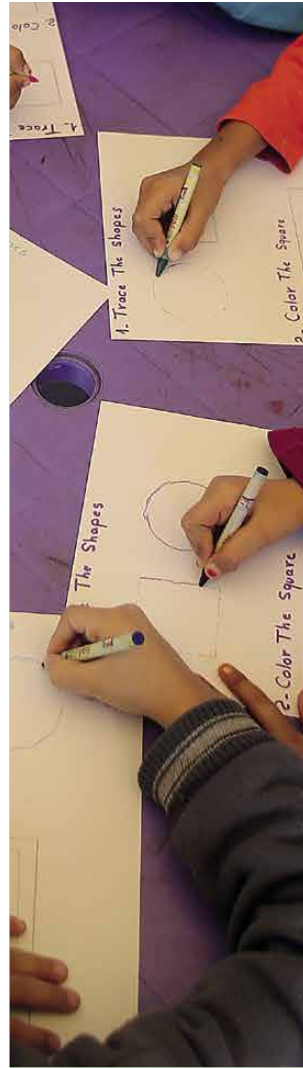
Edited by Dr Tony Capstick





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# Foreword

## Dr Tony Capstick

*The Salzburg Statement for a Multilingual World*, launched on World Mother Languages Day in February of this year, reminded us of two important facts: that all 193 UN member states are multilingual and that 23 languages dominate as they are spoken by over half of the world's population. Thus, our world is truly multilingual, yet many education and economic systems, citizenship processes and public administrations disadvantage millions of people due to their languages and language abilities. This disadvantage is most apparent in the lives of displaced people. Escaping conflict or political strife, individuals and families may have also left many resources behind them, including their home languages.

Building social relations in new countries and maintaining ties with homes and families elsewhere in the world are achieved through language. It is a vital asset in rebuilding their lives. *The Language for Resilience* research (Capstick and Delaney, 2016) established five key principles for planning language education responses for displaced people and the host communities who welcome them. These principles were drawn from the findings of interviews and classroom observations carried out in the four countries neighbouring Syria. They were designed to help language planners and policymakers from agencies, donors and education providers understand language use and language education.

This research hub publication extends these original research findings by bringing together responses from a group of specialists, myself included, working in each of the five areas: **home language and literacy, qualifications and training, social cohesion, trauma and institutional strengthening**. Throughout the first half of 2018, we produced an individual 'thought piece' each, a short, written account of what we believed to be some of the important aspects of the five principles. We then met together, virtually, to discuss these overlapping concerns within our disciplinary areas and produced a set of cover statements which captured the central points from our discussions. These statements are

therefore based on our knowledge of the literature from our different fields as well as what we think will be of use to language planners and policymakers. Summary cover statements and background thought pieces are presented in the following chapters for each principle.

Everybody makes decisions about which languages to use and when. We do not wish to restrict the realms of language policy and planning to the macro-social level. We hope these statements are of use to policymakers at national and regional levels, but we also hope that they reach beyond these contexts. Employers, head teachers and families all make decisions about language use. Companies employ people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and make decisions, every day, about what languages to use in the workplace. Often employers do not have official language policies as it is taken for granted that employees would use dominant languages such as English or Arabic. Decisions such as these, whether made in resource-rich environments in resettlement countries or in resource-low settings in refugee contexts, have lasting socio-cultural effects.

These decisions about language use are transmitted across generations, borders and technologies, and dominant languages become a standard against which other, less dominant varieties, are compared. This has material consequences for all, but particularly for displaced people, as these choices of language confer privilege upon those who can use them. If displaced people cannot use the language of school, work and/or society then, as with many less privileged groups in society, their chances of socio-economic mobility and social integration are greatly reduced. This means that the disaster of having to flee their home country is often followed by a lack of access to basic rights for displaced adults and their children, compounding trauma and disadvantaging their life chances. We hope that this document will help inform discussion about language among decision makers at whatever level they are operating.

## About the authors



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Dr Mohammed Ateek is a Teaching Fellow in the Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of Reading. His main research interests are language education, refugee education, language and migration, L2 reading and learner autonomy. Being an academic and a Syrian refugee himself, Mohammed is currently involved in different research projects that draw on language analysis for asylum seekers/refugees. His recent research project sought to analyse the Syrian refugees' linguistic choices on social media, with focus on identity, translanguaging, social media and language teaching. Mohammed also has teaching experience in the fields of TESOL and EFL.



### Professor Clare Furneaux

Professor Clare Furneaux is a Teaching and Learning Dean at the University of Reading, where she is responsible for 'the student experience'. With a background in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Asia, Clare is also Professor of Applied Linguistics in the university's Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics. In that role she has taught on and led MA ELT programmes on campus and by distance learning over many years. She supervises and conducts research into academic literacy, especially writing. In 2017 she was co-lead for a University of Reading/British Council online mentoring project working with inexperienced teachers employed by Mercy Corps in refugee support centres in Kurdistan.



### Dr Tony Capstick

Dr Tony Capstick is Lecturer in TESOL and Applied Linguistics at the University of Reading. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics and an MA in Development Education. Tony worked as an English Language Adviser at the British Council in Pakistan and as a teacher trainer in Cambodia, Indonesia, Romania and North Korea. His research interests include language education for teachers and learners in resource-low environments and exploring the role of language, literacy and power in migration. He recently co-authored the *Language for Resilience* report for the British Council exploring the role of language in enhancing the resilience of refugees who have left Syria and are now living in the neighbouring countries of Jordan, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey. His monograph *Multilingual literacies, Identities and Ideologies* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2016.



### Dr Beverley Costa

Dr Beverley Costa, a psychotherapist, set up the Mothertongue multi-ethnic counselling service ([www.mothertongue.org.uk](http://www.mothertongue.org.uk)) in 2000, and founded The Pasalo Project in 2017 ([www.pasaloproject.org](http://www.pasaloproject.org)) to disseminate the learning from nearly two decades of Mothertongue's service. She set up the Bilingual Therapist and Mental Health Interpreter Forum in 2010. In 2013, Beverley established 'Colleagues Across Borders', offering pro bono peer support to refugee psychosocial workers and interpreters based in the Middle East. Beverley is a Senior Practitioner Fellow at Birkbeck, University of London and she has written a number of papers and chapters on therapy across languages with and without an interpreter. Together with Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele, they won the 2013 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Equality and Diversity Research Award. She has developed and delivers a programme of training for therapists and clinical supervisors in culturally and linguistically sensitive supervision.



### Professor Shirley Reynolds

Professor Shirley Reynolds is a clinical psychologist. Her main research is in child and adolescent mental health. She directs the Charlie Waller Institute (School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences, University of Reading), where each year around 350 clinicians are trained to deliver evidence-based treatments. She is also co-director of the Anxiety and Depression in Young People research clinic research, where treatment to children and families is offered. She has written about her research for parents, young people and professionals, and runs free online courses for the public through FutureLearn. She is interested in preventing and treating mental health problems in children and families who live in extremely stressful conditions.



### Chris Sowton

Chris Sowton's language teaching and training experience has been wide and varied, including Vietnamese asylum speakers with learning disabilities, Cambridge PhD students, secondary school children in Nepal, ESOL students in East London and Syrian refugee teachers in Lebanon. Now a freelance consultant, he works with a range of organisations such as the British Council, CUP and several NGOs, focusing particularly on projects which prioritise the emancipatory power of English in marginalised (especially refugee) communities. This is also the focus of his doctoral work. He has also written several self-study books, teachers' books and coursebooks, and is the joint co-ordinator of IATEFL's Global Issues special interest group.



### Dr Kerryn Dixon

Dr Kerryn Dixon is an Associate Professor of the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. Her teaching is in the field of language and literacy studies where she specialises in early literacy and critical literacy. Her main research interest is in the application of Foucaultian and spatial theories in education. She has recently authored *Literacy power and the Schooled Body* (2011) and is a co-author of *Doing Critical Literacy* (2014). She is particularly interested in the interrelationship between language, literacy and power in contexts of learning.

# Principle 1: Home language and literacy development







# Cover statement

## We believe the following

- Languages are refugees' greatest asset.
- Learning in a home language and becoming literate in that language has extensive cognitive, cultural, social, academic and economic benefits.
- Language and literacy are cultural practices that are understood and valued differently by different communities. Some languages and literacy practices are more powerful than others.
- Refugees have a right to learn dominant languages and literacy practices, but this should not be at the expense of the home language.

## Principles

- Refugees feel empowered when their home language is respected and valued:
  - Depriving refugees from using their languages adds to the level of vulnerability they face.
  - This has consequences for the individual, the host community and the refugee community.
- Exposure to more than one language at home has a positive impact on children's development.
- Learning in a home language at school has positive effects on children's sense of self, sense of belonging and academic achievement, and it validates their home lives.
- Literacy skills learned in a home language can be transferred into additional languages:
  - The knowledge and strategies learned to read and write in one language support learning and literacy in additional languages.
- Language is a tool for expressing emotions and understanding traumatic experiences:
  - Emotions, experiences and identities are expressed differently in different languages.
  - Being able to express trauma in a home language can enhance treatment.

## Recommendations

- It is important to understand home language and literacy practices in contexts of displacement from refugees' own experiences.
  - The way people talk about their languages is the first step to understanding how we can support them better.
- Communities, governments and non-governmental organisations have various roles to play in providing appropriate language and literacy education at the various stages of schooling.
  - Better partnerships need to be established between these groups to promote multilingual education.
- Language programmes need to be designed so that they meet the particular needs of refugees by validating what refugees already have and providing access to powerful practices:
  - Creating multilingual classrooms is a step towards creating inclusive educational systems where refugees are not left behind.
  - Multilingual pedagogies need to be linked to what we know about language and literacy practices in specific homes and communities.
- Parents/guardians need to be provided with correct information about the importance of:
  - Maintaining home language(s).
  - The role of home language(s) in supporting additional language and literacy learning.
  - Supporting oracy and literacy in their home environment.
  - Creating responsive family language policies.
- The effects of trauma on language and literacy development needs to be foregrounded:
  - The impact of disabilities on language and literacy learning requires investigation.
  - Parents who are dealing with extreme or chronic stressors have less capacity to help their children's literacy and language development and need support.
  - Training programmes for therapists and counsellors need to include working in multilingual contexts and working effectively with interpreters.

## Implementation

- There needs to be macro-level multilateral support to advance home languages and literacy that takes the reality of living in contexts of displacement into account. Advocates and policymakers need to understand:
  - There are many routes through which languages and literacy can be acquired.
  - The many benefits of maintaining home languages.
  - The need to educate those working with refugees about these benefits.
  - How home languages provide the foundation that can be used to access powerful languages and literacy practices.
- Teacher education programmes need to provide:
  - Content on the beneficial role and long-term impact of home language and literacy maintenance.
  - Ways parents, children and communities can be engaged with to identify language and literacy practices.
  - Culturally appropriate multilingual pedagogies to support language and literacy learning.
- Parents need access to:
  - Information about the benefits of home language and literacy maintenance.
  - A variety of ways that they can maintain home language and literacy practices.
  - Support structures to deal with trauma using home language/multilingual techniques.

# Thought pieces

## Home and shared language in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis

Mohammed Ateek

Different studies have shown the positive correlation between the language of education and high rates of academic achievement (Barnard and Glynn, 2003). In addition, mastering home language(s) contributes to mastering additional languages. This leads to social, educational and economic gains.

Looking at the Syrian refugees' case, the home language and the language of formal education in Syria is largely Arabic. This is applied to all Syrians, including those whose first language is Kurdish or Armenian and other minority languages in the country. Syria has always boasted about its high-standard Arabic language education. The country has been known in the Arab world for its professional Arabic language teachers and its proficient users.

Having said that, this has resulted in marginalising some other home languages in a country that is rich in languages and language varieties (Ateek and Rasinger, 2018). Ethnologue lists seven indigenous and 11 non-indigenous languages (Simons and Fennig, 2017). Some communities, such as the Armenian community, have been able to use and learn their home languages in Syria, while others, such as the Kurdish community, have been deprived of using and learning their home language. This has been one of the discriminatory practices of the Syrian government to some minorities, resulting in even depriving them of citizenship, which has raised many questions about language and identity.

Since the Syrian conflict started in 2012 many Syrians have become internally displaced people or refugees in neighbouring countries. This has made them vulnerable in different ways. The resources they have are limited. However, their language is one of the greatest assets they still have, and depriving them of their language adds to their vulnerability.

Valuing these refugees' first language boosts their sense of belonging and identity. Moreover, including their first language in their education and as a language of instruction strengthens their literacy development, adds to their success and increases their employment opportunities. When it comes to the community level, which starts from the individual as well as the family level, having a shared language enhances the family's sense of belonging, which is vital for communities at risk. All these roles that the home language plays pertain directly to the resilience of the internally displaced people in Syria and the Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.

In Lebanon and Jordan, Arabic is the official language. However, the medium of instruction in schools is Arabic in Jordan, while it's more diverse in Lebanon (Arabic, English and French). This creates more challenges for the Syrian refugees in Lebanon as they used to learn in Arabic in Syria. In Turkey, Arabic is not used in schools or universities, with the exception of a few schools specifically built for Syrian refugees.

Based on my involvement in different educational programmes, these points speak to the use/role of the home language for Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.

Syrian refugees feel empowered when they sense the importance/use of their home language, whether it's Arabic, Kurdish, Circassian or any other language. This is very important for their well-being and removes some of their vulnerability. In the long term, this is essential for the economic growth of the host community in the light of the continuing, seemingly endless conflict in Syria. Moreover, valuing the refugees' home language and including it as a medium of instruction in schools contributes to their academic success and access to education

in the host countries as they are used to Arabic as a medium of instruction in Syria. Even if children haven't been schooled in Syria, their parents are able to help them/teach them at home.

For the majority of refugees, when Arabic is a shared language in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, this gives refugees a sense of belonging at times and eases different challenges they face because of displacement. This includes easier access to and inclusion in education and strengthens literacy development for both adults and young learners. Although this shared language in the three countries might bring unity at certain times and places, it also might stir division between the refugee community and the host community. When refugees use their Syrian dialect in or out of school, they are sometimes perceived negatively. The reasons for this are varied but are perpetuated by some politicians' constructions of refugees and ongoing negative depictions in the media. In addition, the political/societal tensions between Syria and Lebanon before the conflict in Syria need to be taken into account. These tensions became more pronounced when the Syrian army intervened in Lebanon, arguably to help end the civil war in Lebanon, but the army stayed till after the war ended. This was seen as an act of occupation by Lebanese people. Therefore, the Syrian dialect could be perceived negatively in Lebanon. In Jordan, Syrians are seen as competing for jobs, which also makes them perceive the dialect negatively. These tensions are exposed in schools when Syrian refugees are present, which makes the shared language, although with different dialects, an intimidating language.

Taking all these points into account, there is a space for developing refugees' literacy skills by looking at ways to include the home language in schools in Syria's neighbouring countries, using methods that are inclusive and minimising the division that the shared language can bring. This could be achieved through raising awareness of content and activities that involve collaboration between refugee learners and other learners. Another way could be through promoting and valuing the home language and how this could add to their sense of belonging and identity. Last but not least, governmental policies should push towards multilingual classrooms and translanguaging in the classrooms, as a step towards inclusive educational systems where refugees are not left behind.

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## Displacement and home languages

Tony Capstick

This principle acknowledges the close relationships between language, literacy and social identity, and stresses the importance of the individual cognitive benefits of literacy in the L1. These benefits have a direct impact on how refugees are able to gain access to economic opportunities. Without access to the languages and literacies of school, learners will face barriers to obtaining qualifications and access to certain kinds of jobs. Many poorer refugees who have not had access to schooling may be dealing with literacy classes for the first time in their countries of asylum. Conversely, well-educated migrants may have several qualifications gained in their home country but lack the academic literacies or employment-related genres that would enable them to get a job. Refugees are not all the same but we are able to generalise about what barriers to L1 literacy mean for refugees of all socio-economic groups.

These multiple benefits to literacy in home languages mean that multiple agencies are required to work together on multilingual programming. Drawing on partnerships between communities alongside governments and NGOs creates stronger alliances. Experts from education, language, literacy and psychology have different roles to play in helping design appropriate multilingual programming which caters for the different stages of schooling and linking these pedagogies to what we know about language use at home and in the community.

These different approaches must then be brought together with knowledge and expertise about the specific contexts of displacement. Outcomes of schooling are different when learning trajectories have been interrupted and when families are unsure whether they will remain in a temporary settlement, return to their home country or move on to a new destination. Trajectories are a useful notion with which to explore these transnational contexts and identify how refugees need to develop a range of language skills which may allow them to respond to the different settings along their journeys. Literacy programmes need to reflect these changing circumstances and build on community links to design relevant pedagogies which reflect the cultural diversity of heterogeneous literacy classes.

Terminology is an issue when working across different areas of expertise in this way. When we presented the findings of the *Language for Resilience* (Capstick and

Delaney, 2016) study a fellow researcher questioned the use of the term 'home' in home language and literacy development. I explained that throughout the research we were interested in the terms that the participants, often refugees and displaced people, used themselves. Many participants made a distinction, for example, between the kinds of language that were used and the different varieties used when family and friends met together informally. Researchers use the accepted terms from within their disciplines and draw on theories and concepts which have meaning to others in their field. But the levels of human mobility the world is experiencing often demands that we re-think these categories, or accept that new categories are emerging. Linguistic repertoire is one such term. These are the sets of language varieties used in the speaking and writing practices of a community of users or at the individual level – they are all the language varieties (dialects, styles, registers, etc.) which the individual draws on to make sense of the world. They are mobile resources rather than the immobile languages that we think of as unchanging regardless of context (Blommaert, 2010). These repertoires will include varieties which are used predominantly at home or in the community and away from formal settings. It is in this sense that we use the terms home language and home literacy.

Also, when the participants in the project I mentioned above use phrases such as 'the language I use at home' and 'we only really use this kind of language at school' it is important to use these terms when we write up our research findings as they help us understand how individuals draw on their multilingual repertoires. Understanding how they describe their languages is the first step to understanding how we can support them better. It often seems that these descriptors demonstrate learners' awareness of the interplay between language systems when they focus on their practices and communicative purposes rather than the boundaries between language systems.

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## Understanding the complexity of contexts in maintaining home languages

Kerryn Dixon

There is a large body of literature that talks about the importance of supporting home or heritage languages. Research on language maintenance clearly shows the cognitive, cultural, psychological, social and economic benefits for individuals, families and communities (Kroll et al., 2014). There is also evidence that shows the value of developing language and/or literacy skills in home languages in order to develop literacy in additional languages, even if the languages have different scripts and orthographies.

While this research is an important foundation for establishing the role of home languages and literacies for refugees, we also need more nuanced and socio-cultural readings of refugees' lived experiences of maintaining, learning and using languages and how literacy practices are sustained and developed. Language and literacy are deeply connected to social structures and power relations. They are themselves contested. Learning a language and becoming literate are not neutral activities, and navigating the gains and losses in bi/multilingual spaces is necessary in informing policy and programme development. Four points are worth thinking about.

The first point is that refugee experiences are not the same. Homogenising refugees as a group does not take important issues into account. For example, the ability to maintain home languages may be affected by the circumstances under which refugees had to leave their home country. Language may be subsumed by other priorities when they resettle. The quality of education systems and level of education they received in the home country, and/or the length of interrupted schooling/education, affects individuals' levels of language and literacy proficiency. This affects access to services and experiences in the host country. Education, access to services and support also affect family language policies. Access to language and literary resources in home languages depends on economic access and availability. In addition, the perceived status of refugees' home language plays a role; whether refugees speak dominant languages or are part of marginalised groups who faced linguistic and ethnic prejudice in the home country has psycho-social and educational consequences.

The second point relates to practices, assumptions and dominant discourses in host countries that work against maintaining home languages and literacy practices. Eisenchlas and Schalley (2017) note that as Australia becomes more multicultural and multilingual there is an increase in assimilationist policies and a monolingual orientation. Assimilationist and monolingual discourses are dominant in many countries across the world who often have large refugee populations. In countries where English is a dominant language and a monolingual mindset exists, children are often described in deficit ways: 'children with no language', 'children with problems in English', 'limited English proficient', 'non-native English speaker', 'severe EAL' and 'children with bilingual problems'. McKinney (2017: 80) describes this as Anglonormativity – which is the 'expectation that people will be and should be proficient in English, and are deficient, even deviant, if they are not.' It can also intersect with racist discourses.

The argument that social cohesion will be affected if refugees maintain their home languages is part of assimilationist discourses. This is opposite to many refugees' belief that it is a 'civic duty' to learn the language of the host country. Cummins (1981) has argued that programmes which push for a quick transition to English and English-only policies hide xenophobic beliefs. A monolingual mindset can lead to misconceptions about language and literacy learning and the benefits of multilingualism. Refugee families then get the wrong information. For many families access to information about the benefits of bilingualism can shape family language policies. This means that rich cultural heritages, practices, identity and community ties are not part of the collateral damage of language loss. Knowing that bilingual children are likely to perform better academically, with higher levels of self-esteem and access to higher education than children who are placed in 'immersion' programmes, is empowering.

This relates to the third point about how the needs of refugees are accommodated in systems. Many language programmes are designed for individuals who do not come from conflict situations. A number of assumptions are made about who students are that do not necessarily hold for refugee families.

One assumption is that individuals have had access to stable schooling, but the reality is that this is not the case. Another assumption is that children/youth are proficient speakers and readers in their mother tongue. Depending on the disruption of schooling, automatic transfer from the home language to an additional language is not guaranteed. Being in a school also requires a process of socialisation to understand how schools work. Refugee children may not have experiences of school, and they may also be dealing with the effects of trauma. What 'school' is, is based on cultural models, norms and values that may not be the same as refugee families' views. Because literacy is socially constructed, the value and functions of certain literacy practices in western societies can be confusing to refugee families (e.g. storybook reading, children writing messages to adults).

Finally, the role of children in refugee families is important. Children have a large amount of agency and navigate the linguistic and literacy landscapes of their host countries in a variety of ways. They often learn languages and become acculturated into the host country before their parents do. When home languages are not maintained, intergenerational communication is compromised and family conflict can arise. When roles are reversed between parents

and children, the balance of power can shift, resulting in familial tensions and resistance to parents' authority. The way languages are valued, used, talked about and explicitly connected to identity and community can be both a stabilising and destabilising force for families. In a world where multilingualism is the global norm, the benefits of home languages to function in the world should also be normalised.

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## Home languages and literacy development: second language learning perspectives

Clare Furneaux

My background is in English language teaching and my current research interests are in the development of academic literacy in higher education contexts. However, I know the challenges faced by students struggling to study in a second/foreign language and can see the benefits of building on a strong L1 literacy base – it gives insights, expertise, strategies and confidence that can be drawn on in reading and writing in a second language. For writing (my primary interest), it is more effective to develop an understanding of the process of writing in the mother tongue, which can then be transferred to writing in another language, than to try to develop this understanding in that other language. My former colleague Eddie Williams (2006) compared the development of literacy skills in two contexts: one with mother tongue literacy introduced first (Zambia) and the other where literacy was introduced in English as a second/foreign language (Malawi). Eddie showed the detrimental effects on children's learning of the latter route. Of course, it is not always possible to offer schooling in the home language where that language is one of a number of languages in a region. However, it is better to develop literacy skills in a local language to which children have access outside school, rather than an imported world language which only the elite have access to.

CLIL (content and language integrated learning) is a growing trend in schools around the world – with English as the most common language of instruction. This worries me as I think it is not being done well in many contexts: neither teachers nor children are sufficiently proficient in the language of instruction to make this work. This risks major damage to children's learning – but is something parents and ministries of education tend to push for on the grounds of bettering children's opportunities in a global context (see Paran, 2013 for discussion of problems with CLIL). Language and literacy development are linked to

education and empowerment. As such, the use of home languages in developing literacy skills is a political issue – as Paulo Freire (in Freire and Macedo, 1987) pointed out.

'Home literacies' also refers to the uses of literacy and different literacy practices in the home. The work of Gregory and Williams (2003) explored this in the context of different religious and cultural groups in East London. They revealed a range of literacy practices of which teachers in schools were unaware (as Shirley Brice Heath's 1983 seminal work indicates). This evidence around home literacy practices reinforces the notion of interaction between language, literacy and identity – discussed in my field of interest by Ros Ivanič (1998).

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## Home – the crucible in which early language and literacy develop

Shirley Reynolds

Infants are pre-prepared to learn language (Chomsky, 1965), and exposure to language determines which language(s) they learn. This in turn influences their language development. In addition to the infant's own cognitive and neural framework for language development, parents/carers scaffold language learning through positive reinforcement and providing exposure experiences. Language is, therefore, also about social communication as well as a set of linguistic rules: parental/family behaviour also shows the child how to use language. Early language involves more than listening and speaking – it includes, for example, reading and manipulating gesture, facial expression and tone. Some early parental behaviours are likely to accelerate language learning, including direct communication with the child (one-to-one, face-to-face), repetition, non-verbal behaviours and use of language in a social context. Exposure to more than one language at home has mainly positive impacts on child development. However, what is needed is more research about the ways in which literacy skills are transferred when written language systems are different (e.g. English and Arabic, or English and Thai).

### Relationship between language and literacy

Literacy involves understanding symbolic relationships, which are initially developed through learning the associations between objects and names, actions and verbs. As a starting point in learning to read and write, children have to draw on their knowledge of the sounds in their language (phonological awareness) and map these sounds onto written symbols (grapho-phonetic awareness). As a psychologist it seems clear that there is a critical period during which languages are most easily learned – this presumably relies on a certain level of cognitive and social development having been reached. Children tend to follow a very reliable

pathway of learning languages, and there appears to be a reciprocal relationship between language learning and cognitive development. Just as you need a certain level of language development to start to learn language, so learning language, especially abstract language, helps promote and support further cognitive development (e.g. use of abstract concepts). Similarly, learning more than one language appears to support cognitive development and may protect against later cognitive decline. Understanding that even concrete objects can be related to different constructs in different languages helps flexible and abstract thinking to develop.

Parental behaviour is important as a way of modelling literacy. Reading to children supports the parent-child relationship as well as showing the value of literacy. Shared reading in the context of warm parenting is likely to promote reading in children as it will be associated with positive parenting behaviours and attachment. Parents who themselves have mental health problems, or are dealing with extreme or chronic stressors (e.g. refugees) will have less capacity (and possibly motivation) to support their child's literacy and language development. Extra support is needed to be given to these parents so that they can in turn support their children.

Learning how to be literate is also changing as materials are presented digitally. This provides important avenues of access to information and education refugees. It also raises questions about how we understand the processes of becoming literate when traditional modes are replaced by digital ones.

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## Finding the balance between home languages and English

Chris Sowton

In this thought piece I set the discussion about home languages and literacy against the backdrop of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (2015), a framework which contains no references to language whatsoever in its 17 global goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators, save for one optional thematic indicator (4.5.2). The Sustainable Development Goals do not make any explicit reference to refugees or internally displaced people. The lack of any macro-level, multilateral support makes advancing home languages in fragile contexts more challenging, and from the perspective of those advocating for multilingual programming, all the more important.

A further initial challenge in discussing this issue is terminology. Why 'home languages' rather than 'mother language/tongue', 'L1' or 'native speaker'? What, if anything, is connoted by these different terms? This issue is especially live in a complex context of conflict and migration, particularly with regards to power issues and the issue of cultural corporatism. Oh and van der Stouwe (2008) provide examples from prestige and non-prestige forms of the Skaw dialect in Myanmar.

In marginalised situations, the pressure to rush towards learning an international language, which often equates to English being used as the medium of instruction, can be intense. Parents/guardians and community leaders may feel that developing a portable skill such as English, with all its concomitant symbolic capital, and in a context where certification is extremely hard to come by, is the main goal of education. One area to look at then is how parents/guardians can be properly engaged in the educational process as genuine stakeholders in order to show how additional languages can be learned more effectively once the home language has been secured. In addition, this support to parents/guardians is crucial for ensuring that children have the opportunity develop oracy and literacy in their home environment, and for them to consider their family language policy.

Looking in more detail at the value of translanguaging (García, 2009) in these contexts could yield rich dividends. It acknowledges the social and cultural pressures of wanting to learn an international language as well as respecting the value and importance of home languages. Historically,

translanguaging has been perceived suspiciously, if not negatively, at the classroom level, even though multilingual classrooms are common, especially in marginalised areas. In such situations, translanguaging can become a useful tool, an example of good pedagogical practice. This can be of particular value in Lebanon, for example, where trilingualism in the education system is not uncommon. Encouraging translanguaging and allowing learners to have agency in how they draw from their linguistic repertoire may well lead to superior educational outcomes as well as feelings of empowerment.

Where languages are introduced in a haphazard way, or when the policy concerning the medium of instruction is confused, it can be difficult for teachers and learners alike to know where they stand. This is particularly so for inexperienced teachers and for learners who have had their education interrupted. In terms of acquiring literacy in the specific context of Syrian refugees, these challenges may be augmented by the significant grammatical, phonological, orthographical and semantic differences between Arabic and English, which may create additional stress and threaten the concept of the perceived 'safe space' of the school.

One final area to think about relates to inclusion, and those who may have disabilities. It is clearly important that those who are, for example, blind or deaf are also able to acquire language and mechanisms for communication in order to enhance their resilience. Given the significant percentage of refugees/internally displaced people who have a disability of one kind or another, this is perhaps a specific area requiring more research.

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## Home languages as a therapeutic asset in children's and adults' mental health. Talking to children's heads or to their hearts – why do their languages matter?

Beverley Costa

Although being multilingual shapes people's identities, and their ability to express emotions and recall memories, attention to multilingualism is almost never included in training programmes for therapists and counsellors, despite many working in highly diverse areas. Most therapists in the UK, for example, will not have access to an interpreter and will try to work through English as the lingua franca, unless they share another language that the child speaks. So, what can therapists do that is beneficial when working across languages? And how is this relevant for language teachers?

It's easy to feel complacent. Even if the child speaks excellent English, we should heed what Nelson Mandela advised: 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.' Is it, in fact, possible that children's multilingualism can be a therapeutic and educational asset?

Here are some ideas to bear in mind when talking with multilingual children and young people in therapy and in classroom settings in refugee contexts, and for using their multilingualism as an asset in their learning.

**Children and young people may feel different and may have different identities in different languages.** One participant in a recent research project I was involved in (Dewaele and Costa, 2013) said: 'I feel like a huge part of me just doesn't go to therapy with me. I have different personas with each language I speak, so only speaking in English in therapy isn't helpful.' A teacher might bear in mind that they may be seeing an aspect of a person in one language which is very different from how they conduct themselves in their home languages. A student who feels foolish and infantilised because they cannot speak with fluency in the target language might relish the opportunity to show their competence and maturity in their own language.

**They can express their emotions differently in their different languages.** Think about giving a learner or a client who has expressed pain or sadness the opportunity to re-explain in their home language. But a word of caution here. Moving between languages can unleash strong, unexpected emotions, which can be overwhelming for a child or an adult. Even in a classroom/educational setting, the use of a person's mother tongues or first languages may invoke feelings for which the facilitator was not prepared. Moving between languages is more than a technical skill. It is a complex process which needs to be understood if it is to be utilised in therapy or education.

**They can process trauma differently and more effectively in treatment.** This fact depends on the language they use for recall and the language in which the trauma was experienced and processed cognitively and emotionally. In treating trauma, language switching can increase emotional mastery after a traumatic experience. In addition, language switching allows clients to distance themselves from something traumatic – or zoom in on something emotional, allowing them to self-regulate. Applications to the classroom setting include using an exercise where a teacher asks students to list words for emotions, depicted by emoticons, in their own languages and then in the target language – noticing the different reactions they have when they think about or say the words in different languages. This activity could serve as a simple linguistic tool, for some students, to move themselves away from overwhelming feelings when this is appropriate.

**Teachers can aim to work collaboratively with an interpreter.** There is seldom access to trained interpreters or to any training for therapists in how to work effectively with an interpreter. It is also not regular practice for language teachers to work with

interpreters. However, teachers working in refugee contexts may be drawn into increasingly psychosocial roles. A teacher may be the only person with whom the student has formed a trusting relationship. A teacher may wish to have a more in-depth conversation with a student in order to assess their needs and to be able to refer on appropriately. This conversation may be too sophisticated to be conducted in a lingua franca. Teachers will therefore need to be able to work effectively and collaboratively with an interpreter, ideally trained to work in an educational setting. Working with interpreters, for teachers, is an area in which they will require experiential training.

**Even if the therapist/teacher does not speak the native languages of the client, creating an environment where clients can bring words or phrases from their own languages can be a therapeutic asset in general.** An interested and open attitude on the part of the therapist/teacher gives permission for not only further exploration and expression as in the above example, but more playful, equal and respectful working. For instance, when a therapist/teacher is taking an interest in what is being created or described, the young person's explanations and discussions can become multidimensional if phrases and descriptions from their first languages are invited. In this way, too, a child or young person may regain some power in their powerlessness. Having to lose a culture and home is disempowering, and this can threaten to upset the balance of the relationship and trust with a counsellor/teacher who is not displaced. Being invited or allowed to express their concerns, in their own languages, can not only open the topic up but also reset the power balance for young people, so that they feel they have some control.

Here is what a participant in our research had to say about their need to use their first language: 'When I mixed in some words from my first language, it started to make more sense talking about my childhood. As if the English language did not let my memories come back efficiently enough, and I just needed some key words in my own language to bring memories back.'

Refugees have a future in the country in which they have claimed asylum, but it will only be accessed in a mentally healthy way if we make ethical decisions about upskilling ourselves to be able to work in this way and not to leave a child silenced.

When children are able to use their home languages in school for a clear purpose, this can have a positive impact on their sense of identity, belonging and the value placed on their home lives. An excellent example of this is the Hampshire Young InterpreterScheme,<sup>1</sup> or the NGO MotherTongue, which offered art workshops for newly-arrived children where speaking in their home languages is encouraged, and provided support for teachers in working appropriately with Child Language Brokers.<sup>2</sup>

Feedback from teachers on these programmes highlights the improved confidence of the children participating and an increase of interest and respect for the children's home languages by their peers.

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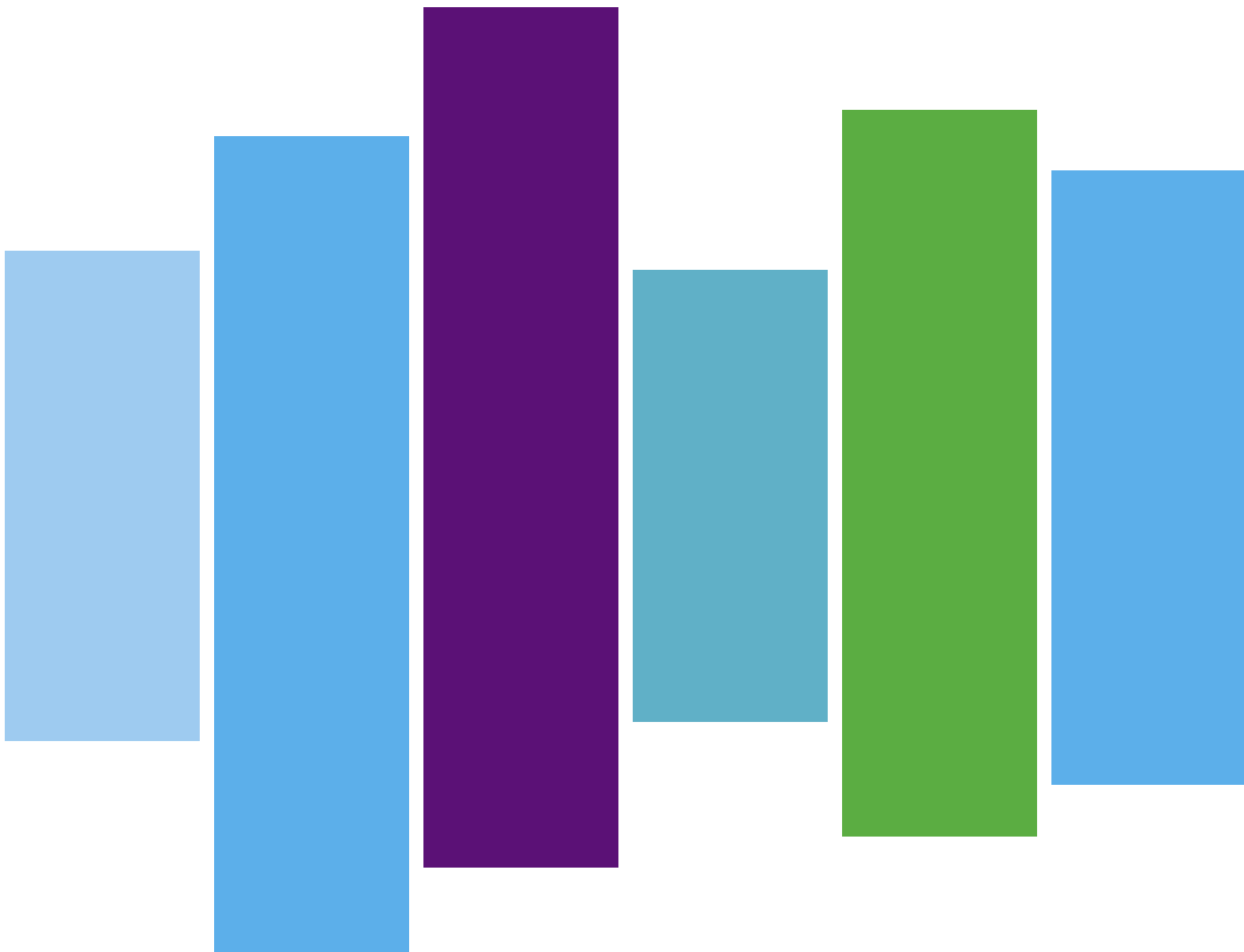
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<sup>2</sup> [www.mothertongue.co.uk](http://www.mothertongue.co.uk)

# Principle 2:

## Access to education, training and employment





# Cover statement

## We believe the following

- Multilingualism is commonplace in refugee communities, and that it is a fact of life which should be welcomed rather than sidelined – seen as an opportunity rather than a nuisance.
- Language is a critical and embedded component of the continuum between education and employment. The inability to use a language should never be a barrier to an individual's ability to access education or training, or to work in gainful employment.
- Language learning can have a positive, two-way impact on cohesion between refugees and the host community both in the classroom and in the workplace.
- Refugees are protected by Article 23 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights as much as the citizen of a nation state, namely 'everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment'.
- Effective language learning does not take place within a silo, but within a community.
- While technology presents significant opportunities for language learning, and for improving educational, training and employment outcomes, the pre-existing digital divide risks exacerbating social and economic cleavages.
- Language acquisition should be seen primarily in communicative and functional terms, as opposed to the prevailing teacher-centred, grammar-based system.
- Understanding the language ecology is important, specifically the opportunities arising from the knowledge of a language, and the constraints emanating from a lack of knowledge, provided by a particular context.
- The demand, and drive towards, international languages in refugee and other marginalised contexts can lead to language loss, which in turn can result in unresolved grief and a sense of alienation and non-belonging later in life.
- The availability of a language in the environment, such as in the media, publishing or schooling, does not automatically mean that all individuals can access that language, i.e. understand that language and harness its potential to transform their lives.

## Principles

- Where people lack the opportunity to develop their language skills, they are more likely to face economic, social and political marginalisation. Lack of language can be a barrier to accessing, or maximising the utility of, education and training.
- A multilingual approach will increase access to and retention within education and training systems, resulting in both more positive learning experiences and better learning outcomes.
- Considering the educational interruptions which many refugees have faced, especially children, there must be support in 'learning how to learn', i.e. reflexive practices by which they can acquire the metacognitive skills to be effective learners.
- When designing educational, training and employment programmes, host country citizens as well as refugees should be included to foster positive mutual relationships between these groups and to avoid negative in-group/ out-group dynamics.
- A greater tolerance for linguistic diversity would result in less hostile workplace environments, especially where refugees and host country citizens work in the same space, and where the latter may perceive the former in deficit model terms.
- There is a correlation between language learning and employment, but the specific languages will be determined by the specific context.
- Since employers in host countries are often reluctant to hire refugees because of their 'limbo' status, where refugees can display additional, value-added skills (such as languages), they are more likely to be able to attain gainful employment.
- Work fulfils a wide range of fundamental human needs, for example providing a sense of purpose, positive reinforcement, status, intrinsic reinforcement, social support, traction, a sense of identity and a place within the social hierarchy.



## Recommendations

- Refugees should have the greatest possible opportunity to develop their language skills so that they can not only develop individual resilience, but also so they can become valued and productive members of whatever community they are living in.
- Language learning should be prioritised according to people's present situations as well as their potential future trajectories, as far as this is possible.
- Language policy should consider education–training–employment as a continuum, and ensure that there are clear links within the different stages of this continuum.
- There should be dialogue and advocacy at multiple levels (international, national and local) concerning the value of multilingual approaches. In education systems which are often very hierarchical, unless there are clear top-down directives about this (whether from governments, local education offices or school principals), the reality at the classroom level is unlikely to change.
- Implementing organisations should make their learning materials open source, or as a minimum relax their attitude towards copyright/IP, so that the educational needs of refugees can be more adequately met. Alongside this, implementing organisations should be critical of their own and others' learning materials to identify what works (and why) as well as what doesn't work (and why).
- Considering the huge and often unexpected challenges faced by implementing organisations, donors should adopt a more tolerant attitude towards programmes which have not worked as expected, provided that these lessons are learned for the future. Creating such an atmosphere would potentially lead to more radical and innovative solutions to challenges which are often seen as intractable.
- Teachers need to be shown the kinds of pedagogies which build expertise in multiple languages without detriment to one or the other. Indeed, there should be a tolerance of – or even encouragement for – strategies such as L2 use in the classroom – to improve educational outcomes.

Where there is a desire to use English as a medium of instruction, this should only be done once the home language has been secured, and the transition should be gradual and managed.

- Recognising that being a refugee is increasingly a medium- and long-term problem, more open and flexible policies towards work should be adopted so that refugees can participate meaningfully in their host community.
- Language myths which assume a causal relationship between English and development/economic opportunity should be debunked, and more honest, empirically-based discussion about the value of multiple languages should be held.
- The use of technology in delivering training programmes should ensure that those on the wrong side of the digital divide have equity of access.

## Implementation

- A clearly curated database of materials should be developed which implementing agencies can use as relevant in the specific contexts in which they are working.
- 'Learning to learn' programmes should be introduced to educators, and included as norms within classroom practice.
- Teacher-training programmes should acknowledge the learning experiences of teachers, and the outcome-driven views towards the education commonly held by parents and school principals, and encourage dialogue between these groups. If key education stakeholders are resistant to the changes to classroom practice which teachers wish to make following training, the situation is unlikely to change.
- Interpreters can play an important role in the classroom, training hall and the workplace, adding value as well as providing employment opportunities to refugees.
- Implementing organisations need to avoid 'one size fits all' type courses which do not take into account the historical experiences of learners and their future trajectories.

# Thought pieces

## The importance of context and the instrumental value of languages

Mohammed Ateek

There are structural barriers that affect access to education, training and employment for Syrian refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries, such as the illegal status for asylum seekers in different places, the scarcity of funding from the host country and the UN, and the diversity in language knowledge of the host country. The main focus in this thought piece is on the relationship between language learning and access to employment. The languages needed for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, for example, to boost their employment opportunities are Arabic, English and French. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq they will need Kurdish, Arabic and English. Turkish and to some extent English are important in Turkey.

Bearing in mind the need to learn these languages, the role of English language is essential in these countries and also in Jordan for accessing higher education and for many jobs. For higher-income jobs, English is needed for the work of many local NGOs (reading international research papers, making contact with funders and bigger INGOs). It is needed for accessing higher education in the four countries, and it is needed for accessing employment in many sectors.

Recognising this need, different NGOs and community centres started up their language learning programmes for refugees so they become more integrated and resilient in their countries. In addition, some centres started teaching languages of the country of destination for some refugees, such as German or Swedish. Jusoor, an NGO based in Lebanon, set up many language programmes for Syrian refugees. For example, they run IELTS courses for refugees who seek to continue their education in Western countries. Also, other centres offer ESP courses, especially in the fields of medicine, engineering and IT. English for academic purposes is important for access to university.

Employers in the host countries are often reluctant to hire refugees because of their limbo status and the unstable/unknown legal status of many of them. In addition, refugees might be perceived negatively at times in some places, which also adds to the hostility towards refugees and reluctance to hire them. However, when refugees are well equipped with different skills and are proficient users of different languages (especially the ones needed in the host country), their chances of employment improve.

The problems facing refugees and asylum seekers in Syria's neighbouring countries affect their daily life. These problems include lack of official documents, scarce resources, inability to work, and no access to training or language learning. This is expected in low-resource countries such as Jordan and Lebanon. Governments and policymakers must collaborate with other powerful countries and the UN to find solutions for Syrian refugees by offering language learning programmes and training programmes, and creating job opportunities, as this will benefit both the host country and the refugees themselves.

## Understanding the wider context of accessing education, training and employment

Tony Capstick

The *Language for Resilience* report (Capstick and Delaney, 2016) stresses the importance of access to education, training and employment but recognises that often this access is gained through dominant languages such as English, Arabic and Turkish, languages which not all displaced people are able to use confidently. Often these are world languages such as English and Arabic rather than the less dominant language varieties that people use at home. For example, in Lebanon, English and French are used to deliver the curriculum in state and private schools whereas Lebanese Arabic, among other languages, is used at home (with lots of code-switching to French and English). In Jordan, higher education is delivered in the medium of English. This means that access to academic English is central to achieving a good degree.

The benefits of getting a good degree, or being able to understand classroom interactions between the teacher and other students, are well documented and have formed the basis for many officials' calls for English medium of instruction in many countries around the world, just as similar calls are being made for French medium of instruction in francophone countries. Such is the perception that proficiency in English brings with it economic and social gains, regardless of the socio-economic context. There is no doubt a link between English and social and economic development in some jobs in some parts of the world, but certainly not all. This thought piece does not, however, focus on these generalised links between globalisation and English but looks beyond the rhetoric of English for development. Instead, the focus here will be to identify the precise nature of access to English in order to avoid over-simplifying the association of 'globalisation and English' or 'development and English' which assume a causal relationship (Coleman and Capstick, 2012).

### Access to education, training and employment within the wider language ecology

The availability of a language in the environment, such as in the media, publishing or schooling does not automatically mean that all individuals can access that language. What this means is that being able to use specific genres and styles of language requires language courses which are tailored to the needs of students with needs analyses carried out and relevant materials design undertaken. In countries such as Lebanon, English is used widely, but for refugees from parts of Syria where English was not so available, they may have great difficulty accessing the language. It is therefore important to identify both the language ecology of the destination country as well as have information about the individual repertoires to identify precisely how access to education, training and qualifications might best be supported through language programmes. In resettlement countries in the West, there is an emerging literature which seeks to measure students' progress in learning English when they are from refugee backgrounds. Browder (2018) found that once interrupted schooling, missing years of schooling, English proficiency on arrival and literacy in the home language were measured over time, students with interrupted schooling did not necessarily have lower home language literacy and that the rate of learning English for the refugee-background learners in his study varied enormously even when they had similar educational backgrounds. The findings of studies like this are relevant to all those working with refugee learners as much more evidence is required to determine which students from refugee backgrounds require more help learning new languages such as English. They warn against lumping refugee-background learners together in 'one-size-fits-all' programmes since there is high variability between those learners who have had access to English, those with interrupted schooling, and their learning outcomes in host countries.

Where a language such as English does dominate schooling or employment or at least lead to the best jobs and qualifications, there is often a tendency to see linguistic diversity as a nuisance and as a threat rather than as a resource. However, many people are strongly attached to their home language and they wish to educate their children through that language, thus access to dominant languages must be achieved alongside access to schooling in non-dominant. Multilingual education which values all the languages in learners' repertoires and builds on home languages to facilitate and transition to the learning of world languages is known to be successful. Teachers need to be provided with training opportunities which include the kinds of pedagogies which build expertise in multiple languages without detriment to one or the other. Introducing English medium of instruction too early or in resource-low environments is based on a common misunderstanding that, in the education system, using languages other than the mother tongue has no negative consequences. This is not the case:

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subtractive dominant-language medium of education for IM (indigenous and minority) children can have harmful consequences socially, psychologically, economically and politically. It can cause very serious mental harm, social dislocation, psychological, cognitive, linguistic, and educational harm, as well as social and political marginalisation (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009: 340)

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This makes it clear that there are a wide range of negative consequences which result from introducing language programmes that are not carefully designed for the specific communities, in this case refugee communities, in which they will be used. For example, it is employers' responsibility to provide volunteer teachers with relevant training in language pedagogy before they embark on classroom teaching.

### Access to education, training and employment

We use language in a wide range of ways to make meaning by drawing on our individual repertoires whether we think of ourselves as multilingual or not. These personal resources of language provide the foundations for learning future languages and mediating any new language use. As we develop the linguistic means that will give us access to education, training and employment we use our language repertoires to speak and write in the different ways required to perform different language functions. The concept of language repertoires helps us to understand how teaching can be tailored to the needs of specific learners who need access to specific language varieties which have been unavailable in the past. It switches our attention from the language itself to the users of the language and the uses to which it is being put, in this case learning the languages of power which grant access to education, training and employment. To sum up, we need to think of a way of talking about access to English which helps teachers and education planners to understand how it works and how it is learned in low-resource environments.

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## The life cycle of languages

Beverley Costa

### Employment and languages as a resource

The right to work is enshrined in Article 23 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Employment provides a monetary reward, but also non-financial gains, to the worker. These additional benefits include social identity and status, social contacts, support and involvement, a means of structuring and occupying time, and a sense of personal achievement.

The multilingual skills of refugees and migrants can provide them with a source of employment and professional development. Initiatives such as the Cairo Community Interpreter Project at the American University in Cairo provide a high quality of training to refugees who wish to become interpreters. It is often the case that the career of interpreter or teacher was not the first choice of career for the person who has migrated. People may have invested a great deal in training to be a doctor or an engineer, for example, and may need help to come to terms with this change of direction so that they can enact their new role wholeheartedly.

It may also be difficult to come to terms with a change in status. Highly trained and experienced refugees may have to accept jobs which are significantly lower in pay and in status than they are used to. They may even be barred from working. The frustration of not earning any money from their work as a volunteer may understandably be a barrier for some but, if sensitively presented, opportunities for volunteering can help to give people some of the satisfaction which they derived from a working life.

### Volunteering and languages as a resource

Volunteering opportunities promote psychosocial well-being, social inclusion and cohesion for both clients and volunteers – offering possibilities to meet with people from a wide range of cultures and to move from the role of ‘helpee’ to ‘helper’: from dependency to interdependence and independence.

Volunteering opportunities can capitalise on people’s often-underused strengths and skills with language. Frequently, people’s home languages are very much connected to their sense of identity. The ability to be able to share that in the wider community and the world of work can help people to integrate their different identities and cultural senses of self.

Language loss, or attrition (Schmid, 2013) can cause problems of unresolved grief and marginalisation in later life. It is not atypical for a six-year-old internationally adopted child to lose the bulk of her expressive native language within the first three months in her new country. A similar process can happen to children who have had to migrate. As they get older, second-generation migrants can start to feel inauthentic as members of either language community and find themselves discriminated against by both communities because of ethnicity and/or language. In later life, a sense of alienation and ‘not-belonging’ may set in and the losses may be truly appreciated. Children who lose contact with their heritage cultures and languages may begin to feel marginalised in both cultures. Marginalised children can become disaffected adolescents, vulnerable to mental health problems and easily targeted for exploitation.

Examples of trained volunteer positions which capitalise on people's home languages and which are relevant to the Language for Resilience programme include assistants in language classes and language supporters for newly arrived people. Volunteering provides other 'by-product' benefits such as meeting with other people, forming new relationships, improving confidence and job prospects, and generally improving lives. It also builds on the life-stages model whereby people move in and out of dependency and caring roles throughout the life cycle. A volunteer training programme can also give people skills for improving their own lives; for example, in managing relationships, considering boundaries and ethical dilemmas, managing time, managing other people's expectations, negotiation, influencing and assertiveness skills (Holland, 1992).

### **Attitudes to multilingualism and the role of education**

Linguistic justice refers to the way in which some languages (such as English, which is a lingua franca of many parts of the world) are dominant in discourses and have disproportionate power to influence (Van Parijs, 2004). A receiving community may be hostile to the language needs of newcomers and judge new speakers by native-speaker standards. Ingrid Piller talks about this in her blog 'Language on the Move'. She says that speakers of non-standard versions of the host language are disadvantaged in the workplace and other institutions because they are considered within a deficit model of 'non-native' speakers. Their competency and even their personality is often judged by the way they speak – e.g. their accent, and their grammar strategies.

Education has a significant role to play here. Language teaching serves the function of helping people to improve their language skills. General education programmes can incorporate language awareness training for all as part of the core curriculum. An account of a stimulating way of exploring language discrimination, using Forum Theatre (Boal, 2002) techniques, can be found in Cooke et al. (2015: 21).

Volunteering provides other 'by-product' benefits such as meeting with other people, forming new relationships, improving confidence and job prospects, and generally improving lives. It also builds on the life-stages model whereby people move in and out of dependency and caring roles throughout the life cycle.

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## Access, language and structural inequality

Kerryn Dixon

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The world of language is not just one of difference but one of inequality; ... some of that inequality is temporal and contingent on situations while another part of it is structural and enduring (Blommaert, 2010: 28).

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A lot has been written about the impact of displacement of refugees. One of the concerns that has been raised about displacement is its effect on education. A history of disrupted or poor schooling impacts employment and social mobility.

In this thought piece I want to think about what it means when we talk about having access to education and employment. Access is always connected to systems of power, which means that some people will be included, others might be partially included, and others will be excluded. Having access to something may be undermined by not having access to something else. For example, having access to a country that has liberal policies for refugees is beneficial in being able to build a new life. But that is not enough because other systems and policies may undermine the benefits of being in a safe place. Hainmueller et al. (2016) show that the length of time that refugees wait in a country like Switzerland to gain asylum directly affects their ability to find employment. The longer they wait, the harder it is to find work. This in turn directly impacts their psychological well-being.

Language is an important means of providing access to education and employment, but it is also a barrier. Language proficiency is a key issue for social integration and social inclusion. Finding language a barrier to education is a common experience of refugees across the world. Sometimes this is because children do not know the language of learning and teaching

in the school. Schools may assume that because children have had courses in English they are proficient in the language. Conversational competence is not the same as academic language. Teachers often do not have the knowledge and experience to work with children who speak different languages. Sometimes moving to different countries and encountering teachers whose own proficiency in a language is poor can result in children who do not have full mastery in any language. Dryden-Petersen (2015) gives an example of a Burundian refugee whose primary schooling began in English and Kiswahili in Tanzania. Secondary schooling followed a Burundian curriculum that was supposed to be in French and Kirundi, but the teachers used mostly English and Kiswahili. The student then completed secondary school in French following the Congolese curriculum.

Access, education, employment and language are also interrelated. In countries like South Africa that do not make adequate provision for educational support for refugees, refugee children are often forced to drop out of school to find employment to fund their schooling. While legally they have access to free schooling, the costs of transport, books and uniforms are not funded by the government. Employment opportunities for minors are limited (and depending on their age, illegal). The accents and home languages of unaccompanied minors living in South Africa's border towns mark them as foreign, which increases their exposure to xenophobic practices. They are also precariously placed as informal street traders or street children who beg for money. Girls are particularly at risk of being coerced into sex work. The structural inequalities in the social fabric of South African society increase the vulnerability of refugee children.

Even if refugees gain access to a powerful language like English, this may not be sufficient. While many host countries provide access to language courses as part of resettlement programmes and see them as a means to help refugees integrate into a new society, the success of these courses needs to be examined. One of the problems is that when they are a one-size-fits all model they do not take into account previous experiences and education. People need to use language for a number of reasons. Courses developing competence to function in the world do not necessarily develop the language needed for the workplace.

It is also important to think about the 'myths' that are associated with powerful languages. One myth that is bought into by language schools, language teachers and students taking courses is that the ability to speak English will result in employment or better educational opportunities. Warriner (2016) shows that many English courses that refugees attend in fact only prepare them for low-paid, low-skill jobs and limit their participation in the workplace. These courses meet short-term goals but don't help students achieve 'authentic language learning, true economic self-sufficiency, and social mobility' (page 10). Cultural capital and knowledge of how things work in the host country is as important as being able to speak a language.

As a final point, the role of technology is important when thinking about access and education. Digital inclusion is closely linked to social inclusion. Despite a willingness to engage with technology, especially on the part of young refugees, the more marginalised a community is, the greater the digital divide. Many organisations use technology in innovative ways to provide refugees access to education at all levels. Digital technologies provide refugees with access

to information, education, jobs, services and cultural connectivity to home and host communities. But technology is not a panacea in itself. Just because materials are placed online and are attractive does not mean they are effective. The costs of data and the technology itself, the availability of technology in communities, people's mobility and transport infrastructure, as well as language proficiency, affect how digitally connected refugee communities can be.

When we think about questions of access it is not enough to think about access in terms of having access to educational resources. We also need to think about what the resources enable and the extent of the access.

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## Language for specific purposes

Clare Furneaux

English for specific purposes (ESP) has been a major area of research/pedagogy in ELT since the 1980s. Its aim is to provide learners with the language they need for work/study. Subsets of ESP, therefore, are English for occupational purposes (EOP) and English for academic purposes (EAP). Given that refugees may be studying other languages (such as French in Lebanon) for specific purposes, I shall refer to language for specific purposes (LSP) here. However, it should be noted that the language for which focus has been on specific purposes instruction, in terms of research (with major journals in ESP and EAP), materials production and exposure/expertise worldwide, is English. Lessons learned from ESP should be drawn upon in any discussion of LSP. There is, however, very little research that I am aware of into ESP at low language levels.

The LSP context will vary enormously, of course, but a basic distinction here is between:

1. instruction that is before the academic/occupational context is encountered (such as pre-sessional EAP courses before university study begins)
2. instruction that is contemporaneous to the study/work.

Clearly what can be taught and how are influenced by this. I assume that refugees in camps mostly fall into the former group and those settling in new/host countries into the second.

The language taught for specific purposes can also be divided into two broad areas:

1. technical (e.g. the specialist vocabulary of an area of science)
2. sub-technical (e.g. the language used to indicate cause and effect in science).

The former needs specialist knowledge to teach/develop; the latter can be taught by those with an understanding of LSP in general.

### Students

Do learners need a basic level in the target language before they can start learning the language for special purposes? There is no simple answer here

– as always it depends on the context. In refugee contexts there will be two broad types of learner with regard to this question:

1. Those with a background in the target specific context, such as the Syrian academics Cara (Council for At-Risk Academics) is currently working with in Turkey. They know their discipline area in Arabic and now need/want to develop the skills in English to research and teach it in that language. With this group one can use some materials from their discipline to help develop the language skills of even those with low levels of English.
2. Those with no relevant academic/occupational background, who need to develop vocational/professional/academic skills in the target language. For this group, the specialist language of the new work/academic area is an extra challenge for those with low levels of language. Learning crucial new knowledge/skills in a language the student has only a limited command of is very difficult. Some would argue that there is a 'threshold level' of language below which LSP input will not work and that these learners should be helped to reach that level (whatever it is!) before being exposed to LSP. Others might say that many of these learners do not have the time this would take – they need to be able to seek employment immediately and cannot do that without some relevant language skills.

For both groups, of course, there are huge motivational advantages in learning language that has clear benefits/payback in terms of present or future employment needs. It should be realised, however, that disappointment resulting from any lack of success in achieving these aims will be equally huge, given the high stakes for refugees in acquiring these language skills. Therefore, it is very important that:

1. learner expectations are managed – people need to understand the challenges and demands of language learning starting from their current language level (especially around the time and effort needed)
2. teachers know what they are doing.

### Supply of LSP teachers

Almost all LSP teachers start their teaching careers as general language teachers. These teachers need training/specialist input of some kind to become teachers of LSP. This is because the requirements of LSP teaching are different and more specialised and, in addition, in many countries language teachers have a background in literature, not the area of LSP they are required to teach. They do not, therefore, have appropriate knowledge and skills to switch into LSP unaided. In refugee contexts, where recruitment of experienced, qualified language teachers is already an issue, finding appropriate LSP teachers will be even more of a challenge.

### LSP instruction: needs analysis

A major recommendation in LSP is to conduct a needs analysis before designing any course – this will apply in refugee contexts too. Two main issues will be those that apply in any LSP context, but which are greater here:

1. the wide range of needs there could be in any group of refugees
2. the fact that they may not know what their future needs will be.

Having identified a specific professional context, needs analyses of workplaces draw on inside information and documentation (e.g. examples of meetings/documents which inform teaching content). It would help to do this in refugee contexts wherever possible – either through finding out what goes on locally in the contexts that might employ these refugees or by drawing on what is known about that specific context more widely (e.g. for business English).

### Learning to learn skills

Given the challenges of identifying specific contexts for groups of refugees, and their varied language levels and needs, it would make sense to try to equip them with general 'learning to learn' skills they can take into any work/study area. This would mean giving them the skills to identify their own needs in a specific context, to ask, and to find answers, to basic questions such as:

- What vocabulary do I need to learn to do this job?

- What kind of texts do I have to read/write to do this job?
- Who can help me learn these things?

It would also include strategies for language development once needs had been identified, giving the refugees, for example, techniques and strategies for recording the new language they identify, or for practising important literacy skills. This 'learning to learn' training could (and probably should) be done in the refugees' mother tongue. It would have the further advantages of being empowering, and giving refugees strategies for their own ongoing language development in specific contexts.

### Politics

Finally, there is also a difficult and largely un-discussed political angle here. LSP courses are often taken to mean employment and, therefore, permanent residence. Governments are unwilling to accept that; refugees are by definition seen as 'temporary' and governments do not usually want to contemplate or facilitate permanent residence (although they will not put it as bluntly as this).

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## Making work work

Shirley Reynolds

To paraphrase Sigmund Freud, the mark of good mental health is the ability to be able to love and to work. Leaving love aside for now, 'Education, training and employment' share many common features, and all involve 'work'.

### Why is work important?

Why is work so fundamentally important to human well-being? There are many theoretical perspectives from psychology on this and most identify a number of important functions that work fulfils (Jahoda et al., 2002). Many of these functions can be met in other ways but work is unusual in that it can, and sometimes does, meet all of them.

1. Work scaffolds meaningful activity and provides a sense of purpose. Work can be solitary but even then often links the individual to something 'bigger' or 'more than' the individual.
2. Work provides a system to obtain positive reinforcement. In most working environments there is a systematic system of extrinsic rewards (and punishments) usually linked to specific goals and behaviours. These include pay (of course) but also multiple other rewards including encouragement and praise, examination results, certificates, etc.
3. Work provides status and can be a way of satisfying competitive needs.
4. Work can also provide intrinsic reinforcement – for example from satisfaction from doing a 'good job'.
5. Work provides social support of various kinds (i.e. practical or instrumental, and emotional).
6. Work provides 'traction' – it can impose a shape to the day and to the week (and year). Working hours break up the day into meaningful periods of time. The working week and weekend shape leisure and family time and influence, and are influenced by our commercial and religious activities.
7. Work provides a sense of identity – e.g. I'm a nurse, I'm a farmer, I'm a plumber.
8. Work provides a social hierarchy and thus a 'place' in a system that is recognised by others; we are counted, we are on the payroll, we are expected to turn up – we exist.

Work, at its very best, can provide a means of achieving a range of human needs (for example, food, shelter and status) – including, as Maslow would define it, 'self-actualisation'. Work at its worst can be abusive, hostile, demanding, dangerous and insecure. Not all work is equal, and legislation is required to control and limit work that is damaging and exploitative, or illegal.

Given the range of functions work can serve it is not surprising that the absence of work (e.g. through unemployment during recession) is strongly associated with many mental health problems (Modini et al., 2016). These may be exacerbated by poverty and lack of other resources, but even after these are accounted for work itself appears to contribute to psychological well-being. Where individuals are able to replace the functions of formal work in other ways the absence of work is not problematic – however, involuntary unemployment or lack of work is a significant risk factor.

### The role of work for refugees and migrants

The unplanned and uncontrolled movement of thousands of individuals worldwide presents a huge human and logistical challenge to host countries. The challenge is greatest for neighbouring countries who typically accommodate the largest numbers of refugees and are themselves economically insecure. Naturally, NGOs and government agencies focus on the most essential ingredients necessary for human survival – food, basic public health and shelter.

The reality of life as a refugee and/or migrant is often characterised by extremely high levels of uncertainty, loss, threats to identity and a lack of security. Access to basic resources (e.g. food) is often unpredictable and insecure. Forms of work (including training, employment and education) can offset some of these highly adverse experiences through offering the functions outlined above. Paid employment, in particular, offsets some of the problems refugees experience in accessing basic resources for themselves and their families.

Work of various types can also offer a direct way of supporting refugees to integrate into their host community and highlight the potential contributions that refugees can make. Not surprisingly, many refugees are highly motivated to undertake paid work or structured training and education that develops their skills and prepares them for the workplace. Refugees are sometimes excluded from employment because they lack core language skills or their qualifications and experience are not recognised in their host country. Language education is a key element of this skill development. However, many host countries limit access to formal paid employment for refugees (and migrants) or ban it altogether.

Many refugees are only allowed to work in the margins, in low-paid, insecure, unprotected and illegal jobs where they are extremely vulnerable to exploitation. This marginalised existence may help provide the absolute basic resources to support themselves and their families. They may help make some tenuous link to the host community, but this precarious position also risks increasing stigma and exposing vulnerable people to extremely risky situations (e.g. crime), which may create a significant barrier to wider integration into the host community.

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## E-learning, enterprise and economic zones

Chris Sowton

An important starting point here is, that while having access to education, training and employment can of course yield a range of positive outcomes, it is important to not forget the issue of quality. When improving the quantity of something in an already heavily under-resourced environment, the quality often suffers. In talking about this principle, this is a pertinent challenge – the pressure between providing education for all (or at least as many people as possible) in an environment where only limited funds are available. This can lead to challenges for tertiary education programmes or specific vocational programmes which have a relatively high unit cost compared to, say, primary education. At the other end of the educational spectrum, it can also lead to underfunding in areas such as early childhood development (despite the huge benefits investment here yields) as education is started later, and to significant pressure on primary/secondary systems through the double or even triple shifts employed to mitigate these issues of access, which can result in additional problems such as teacher burnout and increased wear and tear on the school fabric.

In terms of access to education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, recent UNHCR (2016) data shows that refugee children are hugely disadvantaged compared to children in non-refugee contexts. At the primary level, only 61 per cent of refugee children of primary school age go to school (against a global average of 91 per cent), at secondary level the figures are 23 per cent versus 84 per cent, while at the tertiary level the data is even more stark: one per cent versus 36 per cent. Barriers holding young people back from accessing education in refugee contexts are very similar to those in other low-resource environments, including long distances for travelling to school, poor sanitation facilities and the opportunity cost of sending children to school. In addition, refugee children are more likely to face other barriers to accessing education, including legal obstacles (e.g. due to their status or certification), social challenges (e.g. discrimination), linguistic

difficulties (e.g. medium of instruction, language of textbook and language of assessment) and economic pressures (e.g. the rapid and significant additional stress on host country infrastructure).

When considering higher education and training and the instrumental value of languages, especially English, in accessing such courses, I would argue there are two specific factors which it is important to consider. The first is to ensure a balance of supply and demand of learners and what they are able to learn. It is no good 'upskilling' learners in relevant international languages in order to prepare them for higher or further education if they are then unable to access such courses. This is not to say that programmes such as the British Council/EU's LASER (Language and Academic Skills and E-Learning Resources) project are not of value and of huge benefit to the individuals involved, but they are on a very small scale compared to the need. The second is to think through what happens if and when young people are able to participate in and graduate from such courses, what happens next? There needs to be clear pathways for them to follow in order to participate in meaningful employment; if not – if they become qualified but are unable to actively use their knowledge and skills – there is a significant risk that they will become extremely frustrated, a contemporary form of what has become known as 'diploma disease'.

Potential solutions to the first of these challenges is found in the rise of MOOCs and online courses by high-calibre institutions, for example Coursera for Refugees. To ensure that MOOCs are widely accessible to as many young people as possible (rather than just those who already have higher levels of economic or cultural capital), young people need to not only be upskilled in English, but also in digital literacy, as well as having access to the software and hardware required to participate fully in the courses. Clearly, this increases the cost. A further challenge with MOOCs to consider is their general lack of accreditation (or meaningful accreditation), which

in marginalised contexts is so highly valued. A potential solution to the second challenge, and one which may potentially help to mitigate the often hostile work environment faced by refugees, is to support them in establishing micro-enterprises within their own contexts. Psychologically this can be very empowering, since many refugees are entrepreneurs, having had their own businesses in their country of origin. Such schemes would, in purely economic terms, help them maximise their utility by enabling them to pursue the kind of work which they are good at. There are a number of good examples of this practice, many of which can be seen by walking down the so-called 'Champs-Élysées' of small enterprises in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. The ability to provide IT services through offshore outsourcing is a particular area which could be tapped into more, with many refugees young, ambitious and technologically literate.

Given the generally challenging and problem-laden employment landscape in the host countries where Syrian refugees find themselves, it is tempting to want to look beyond the quotidian for new and radical solutions to a seemingly intransigent problem. One such initiative of particular interest is the so-called Jordan Compact, a concept which was first raised by Betts and Collier (2015) which argued for the creation

of special economic zones in Jordan (breathing new life into these erstwhile moribund areas) where displaced Syrians could work. In return, Jordan has been offered concessional loans and preferential trade terms. The authors posited that refugee policy should improve the lives of the refugees in the short term and the prospects of the region in the long term, but while this programme has been a moderate success in Jordan (with women in particular actively engaged in the workforce, sometimes for the first time in their lives), the prospect of a similar programme happening in, for example, Lebanon seem remote, with its reluctant approach to allowing Syrian refugees formal opportunities to work. Perhaps an underlying issue is that while some parts of national governments acknowledge that Syrian refugees are highly likely to be living in their countries for many years to come, others still feel their status is temporary, and so are unwilling to make any major concessions.

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## Summary of questions

The following set of 12 questions are based on the main issues raised in the thought pieces related to Principle 2:

1. What kind of English should Syrian refugees be learning to maximise their educational and employment opportunities? ELF (English as a lingua franca)? British English? American English? Arablish? And what about the overall teaching framework – ESP? General English? ESOL? Business English? What are the advantages/disadvantages of each?
  - The question is potentially not so political for French, which with its high barriers to entry is more uniform.
2. What is the nature of the relationship between English and development? Correlation, causation or neither?
  - In focusing on helping refugees acquire international languages are we in fact simply supporting a neo-liberal economic worldview?
3. How can the educational opportunities of technology (e.g. through MOOCs) be realised most fully in refugee communities?
  - What other upskilling will refugees need to access such courses, e.g. digital literacies?
  - How can we assess whether MOOCs are pedagogically robust, rather than just online information dumps?
  - What kind of languages (and genres) are required to access these opportunities?
  - How can access similarly be provided for nationals of the host country?
  - What about the accreditation issues?
4. There appears to be a significant gap in terms of perception towards language by those who have power (e.g. government policies, employers, the education system) and those who do not (e.g. refugees, ‘the marginalised’), with the former often seeing linguistic diversity and multilingualism as a problem, and the latter seeing it as an important aspect of identity. How can this gap be bridged, so that code-switching, translanguaging and the notion of language repertoires are tolerated and even welcomed?
  - How can refugees negotiate the areas of educational mediums of instructions?
  - How can language in the workplace be an enabler of cohesion rather than a source of division? To what extent are their language shibboleths at play (e.g. Syrian versus Lebanese Arabic)? What about deficit models of language? Acrolects versus basilects?
5. Is it reductionist to talk about (or focus on) the instrumental value of languages (e.g. in terms of their ability to access higher education, or to get work)?
6. How can we balance the ‘present self’ instrumental linguistic needs of individuals (e.g. for school or the workplace) with the potential negative psychological damage to their ‘future self’ caused by the loss of home language and the development of, for example, intra-family linguistic division?
7. In marginalised situations, educational, training and work opportunities are often seen as – or indeed are – a zero-sum game (i.e. the opportunities available are scarce and finite). What strategies can be used to turn this into a non-zero-sum situation?
8. How can refugees be prepared most effectively for entry into the workforce?
  - What psychological support do they require to prepare them for work?
  - What linguistic support do they require to prepare them for work?
  - In addition to ‘pre-workplace support’ what about ‘in-workplace support’?
  - What support do refugees’ co-workers/employers need?
9. Is denying (or making it extremely difficult for) refugees the opportunity to work, as practised by some national governments, an immoral act?
  - Do people in general (and refugees in particular) have a natural, or legal, right to work?
10. How can a situation be created so that refugees have the opportunity to work effectively in such a way that host country nationals are not disadvantaged?
11. Is there a mechanism by which national governments (both safe-haven and third countries) can maximise the utility of the refugees who are there (especially in fields where there are skill shortages – e.g. doctors, engineers, etc.) in such a way that it is perceived positively by host country nationals?
12. The elephant in the room: to what extent does people’s inability to access education, training and employment result in them being more likely to become radicalised?

# Principle 3: Language and social cohesion







# Cover statement

## We believe the following

- Although multiple definitions of 'social cohesion' exist, we see it primarily as a positive, two-way interaction between individuals and social groups as well as socially inclusive behaviour which aids participation in civil society.
- Social cohesion can reduce inequalities, maximise inclusion and strengthen social relations.
- Language does not only serve as a means of communication, it reveals affiliations to certain groups and could, therefore, work to unite or divide groups.

## Principles

- When people leave their homes, for whatever reasons, it takes time to integrate their different identities and cultural sense of self.
- Learning the host language is central to this new beginning and goes hand in hand with adapting to a new culture. This is because language learning is primarily a social activity.
- If the newcomers understand the host country's spoken and written language they will be in a much stronger position to access healthcare and other social services.
- Learning a language together fosters integration as it enables individuals and communities to engage in meaningful dialogue.
- Language helps build relationships between parents and children, it strengthens community relationships and is important when refugees and host communities come together to learn.
- Language can be used as a tool that works against social cohesion. It is harnessed in several ways; naming practices, dialects and languages are markers of difference which affect how people interact with each other.
- Where refugees are not able to do the same type of work as they were doing in their country of origin – especially if that work was highly skilled or of high-status – this may further negatively affect their ability to integrate.

### Recommendations

- It is important to understand the importance of language for refugees and its effect on their resilience in the host community as well as the integration process in general.
- Language learning promotes social and life skills that are necessary for building relationships, which are essential for many refugees to integrate in the new community/country.
- Building relationships and social cohesion requires buy-in from all stakeholders.
- Language classes can serve as safe, shared spaces where the belonging to a group (class membership) can reduce divisions between the host communities and refugees and between refugees themselves.
- As well as providing support for people, it is important to think about how to provide opportunities for people to provide support – to move from the role of ‘helpee’ to that of ‘helper’ – from dependency to interdependence and independence.
- Volunteering opportunities can capitalise on people’s often-underused strengths and skills with language.
- The world of work can also offer opportunities for refugees to socialise and to integrate in their local communities, which can have a positive impact on their mental health.
- Becoming an independent learner is not easy, and teachers/coaches need training in developing this set of insights and skills.
- Formal and informal language support can provide social contact across different groups.

### Implementation

- There is a need for language policy that promotes ethnic harmony and social cohesion.
- Targeted educational and social interventions can help to improve the environment in which people live and build strong, positive, integrated relationships and inclusive identities.
- Developing useful language skills is empowering, leading to greater independence and the possibility of developing other life skills.
- Language plays an essential part in building social cohesion through using teaching methodologies that promote communication, preferably in mixed classes where refugees and host communities work together. In refugee-only classes, the need for such methodologies, along with boosting learner autonomy, is important.
- A vast amount of contextualised language can be generated in these types of classrooms which is directly related to everyday situations which help displaced people ‘fit in’ but teachers, particularly those working in NGOs, need training to be able to harness this language and use it strategically.
- Published texts and newspaper articles can be supplemented with teacher-written model texts if teachers wish to embed the participatory approach within more formal approaches such as those set out in textbooks and coursebooks.

# Thought pieces

## Social cohesion and membership: language as a facilitator and detector

Mohammed Ateek

The discussion in this thought piece will be on the importance of languages and language learning activities for developing individual resilience which contributes to social cohesion.

To set a context for this discussion, it is essential to know the background of communities in Syria and the languages they use. The shared language between all communities in Syria is Arabic; however, different minority communities speak different languages such as Kurdish, Armenian and Aramaic. Syrian governments have deprived these minority language groups from using or learning their language. This has resulted in disturbing the social structure and social cohesion between different Syrian communities (Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, 2016). After the Syrian conflict started, the current opposition government focused their policies on improving the social cohesion among the different Syrian groups by giving them equal rights and ensuring that each minority has the right to use and learn their own languages. This has not always been successful, as for these policies to work, there must be a sense of peace and governance, which is what Syria lacks at the moment.

In Syria's neighbouring countries, the situation is mixed. The position of Syrian refugees in society and the level of membership (attitudes, behaviour) differs from one country to another. However, there are some common aspects: lack of communication between the host community and the refugee community can be a problem. Language plays an essential part here through using teaching methodologies that promote communication, preferably in mixed classes where refugees and host communities work together. Even in refugee-only classes, the need for such methodologies, along with boosting learner autonomy, is important. Language learning promotes social and life skills that are necessary for building relationships, which are essential for many refugees to integrate in the new community and country (UNCHR, 2018). However, there is a need for a language policy that implicitly promotes ethnic harmony and social cohesion, again through using activities and using methodologies that serve this purpose.

These methods could have their implications in real-life situations, where refugees feel abler to communicate with 'the other', more independent (autonomous) and abler to express themselves. Self-expression is also very important to deal with the effects of trauma, in a way that refugees and asylum seekers can express themselves to professionals.

Refugees and asylum seekers are vulnerable people in host countries due to many reasons (for example, lack of knowledge about the country and its system, lack of language, lack of relationships, hostility towards refugees and looking down at them in some cases). This is also the case among the refugees themselves (refugees from cities versus refugees from rural areas, different ethnicity groups, etc.). Therefore, building both social cohesion and social trust among these groups can emerge by combining these efforts in one physical/identity space, with less division. Language classes could serve as safe, shared spaces where belonging to a group (class membership) could lessen these divisions between the host communities and refugees and between refugees themselves. This can only be achieved through a carefully designed language policy and learning approach.

Moreover, the bigger picture for the role of language in building life skills and resilience comes through the need for refugees to engage in everyday-life activities (hospitals, markets, business, access to employment, communication with the host community and across different community groups, access to education, having a voice and dealing with trauma). Regardless of the language being used and learned or its importance according to the country, language learning provides other 'by-product' benefits. An example of this is a group working in the UK, mainly in Manchester, with

migrant women called Heart & Parcel, where they bring women from migrant communities together by making dumplings and developing ESOL skills. This builds relationships, connections, individual resilience and self-confidence, and develops the sense of valuing women refugees' skills and experiences by sharing cooking recipes for example, while learning English at the same time. All of these skills are very important for increasing refugee integration in the new community and decrease the chances of separation.

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## Going round the houses: there is no straight path to social cohesion

Beverley Costa

Indicators of strong social cohesion include: strong, positive, integrated relationships and inclusive identities (UNDP, 2015). When people leave their homes, for whatever reasons, it takes time to integrate their different identities and cultural senses of self. The adjustment period is delicate, even more so when people's motives for leaving their homes have been forced upon them. The way in which they adjust can affect the future relationship with the new culture. This will affect the way they may come to feel included in or excluded by society. Berry's (2001) model of acculturation is helpful in explaining the way in which the stresses of acculturation as a result of migration may intensify people's sense of social exclusion. Acculturation anxiety may produce stances of separation, assimilation, marginalisation or integration. Separation occurs when people place a high value on maintaining their own culture without any external influence and low value on the culture they have migrated to. Assimilation occurs when people place high value only or mainly on the new culture to which they have migrated. Marginalisation occurs when people feel alienated both from their heritage culture and the culture in which they are living. The final position in Berry's model is that of integration where people find a way to integrate, incorporate and live out their varying experiences of culture. The model has limitations as it focuses on the behaviour and actions of the newcomer and not the behaviour and actions of the receiving community. It doesn't address the differentials in power between the newcomer and the receiving community – the vertical social cohesion relationships. However, the model's real value is in the identification of these different stances. It is easy to see how these stances will affect people's sense of being on the inside or on the outside of society.

There have been many debates about whether distress in humanitarian crises should be viewed through a mental health/psychopathology lens. There is an increasing focus on psychosocial well-being as a pathway to strong social cohesion with respect to three core domains: human capacity, social ecology and culture and values.

### Interventions which promote psychosocial well-being – the 'by-product' approach

Interventions, offered by the receiving community, work best when they are culturally and socially relevant to the target group of newcomers and foster horizontal and vertical social cohesion relationships. It is useful to bear in mind, as Agger (2001) shows, that even interventions which may be appropriate for people from one culture may not be applied universally across ages, genders or, in the following example, class. In the following example (*ibid.*: 124), the writer discussed the knitting circle setup as a psychosocial intervention for traumatised women in the former Yugoslavia.

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After many talks with the women who participated in the project, the international NGO staff had realized that sitting in a circle and knitting and drinking coffee was an old peasant tradition among women from the region. It was a 'self-healing' circle that had been practised for centuries during all the former wars and hardships people had gone through. By distributing wool and supplying coffee they were setting the scene for a communal practice to develop among these refugee women who often did not know each other and needed new social networks. However, this would not have been the optimal approach among middle-class women in Sarajevo or some of the other large cities, where psychotherapy was a normal activity that had been financed by the health system during the socialist government.

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Psychosocial interventions can also be most effective when their intentions and aims are operationalised with subtlety and a lightness of touch. Because of the stigma attached to mental health for some communities, and the potential to re-trigger trauma for traumatised people, at Mother tongue (a multi-ethnic multilingual counselling service) we employed a circuitous route, 'going round the houses', to get to where we were aiming for. Although language learning activities do not carry the same stigma, engaging people in talking about peace or psychosocial issues (both carrying the potential to re-traumatise) may benefit from a similar approach. The psychological outcomes of our approach and the interventions seemed to be by-products of the activity rather than the intended outcome. This is illustrated by the following example.

### **One example of the by-product approach: The knitting group**

At Mothertongue we ran a knitting group as a way of engaging people who would be put off by an activity with mental health in the title. Besides this aim, we also wanted to help people to improve their spoken English, to feel comfortable in a supportive environment and to build trusting relationships. Although knitting was the overt activity, the by-products were often our main aims. We developed a stepped approach. The group offered a transitional experience to people who had already had intense individual support. They could connect with people in a small group, safely, as a stepping stone to connecting with the wider community. The first step involved a circle for newly arrived women coming to an urban environment in the UK with very few, if any, personal and social contacts. Many began their connection with Mothertongue by accessing counselling or by joining our English language class. Bearing in mind that the adjustment period needs to be respected with sensitivity, the first step for the group involved only newly arrived people, with varying levels of English. The group communicated in five or six languages with participants translating for each other and for the English-speaking facilitator. Eighty per cent of attendees over a period of one year felt that their English had significantly improved. As well as building sustainable, supportive relationships with each other, they had an opportunity to feel that they were productive contributors to the society in which they now lived by making and donating blankets to the Premature Baby Unit at the local hospital. They also started to explore ways in which their handiwork and skills could produce an income for their families. For example, one participant, who was a 'reluctant knitter' to begin with, ended up over the years designing her own patterns and selling her creations from her own website!

### **Fundamentals of the by-product approach**

The 'by-product approach' is not one that just happens by chance. Our thinking in setting up groups was to consider issues that clients needed to address, and to come at them at an oblique, yet intentional angle. The knitting group was configured by thinking of the needs for containment, varying the levels of participation according to people's confidence: by focusing on a task which would not require linguistic competence; by providing an opportunity to

talk or to remain silent while still being involved; providing an opportunity – via a creative activity – to take on the more empowered role of helper/producer (rather than client/consumer); and finally, by providing an opportunity to meet and to make real relationships with people from the receiving community. The by-product approach requires the by-products to be the primary outcomes and the secondary activities. Real improvement in participants' conversational English had not been the overt aim for the knitting group and yet it was a significant outcome. The activities themselves can seem rather ad hoc and purely social rather than therapeutic or educational. But for this way of working to fit with a reflective clinical or educational model, a clear rationale is needed. The proposed activity needs to be chosen because it is the optimum method of delivery for the identified outcomes/by-products. It is easy to select activities that staff want to deliver. But it is always necessary to select the activity which is most likely to lead to the outcome which is needed. We developed the 'by-product approach', as a more direct approach would have alienated many of our participants. And the final 'by-product' of the knitting group exemplifies that perhaps best of all.

After a period of time, once relationships had formed within the group, the group was moved to a new location in the town where it is now integrated into a local community art organisation and is open to all. Real social relationships are forming between residents of the receiving community and the more recent arrivals. Participants, who had attended the groups for between six months and six years, fed back to us that, after coming to the group they felt they had a greater sense of belonging and of being valued by the wider community. They had a fuller sense of what Berry (2001) describes as an integrated identity.

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## Learning together and social cohesion: integration not assimilation

Tony Capstick

Although multiple definitions of ‘social cohesion’ exist, the following includes several key components:

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Social cohesion ... is understood, firstly, as positive interaction (exchanges and networks between individuals and communities) and, secondly, as social inclusion (integration of people into civil society) (Legère and Rosendal, 2015: 75)

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Each refugee’s ability to interact and integrate is different, though most face the challenge of making a new home for themselves and their families in unfamiliar surroundings. Learning the host language is central to this new beginning and goes hand in hand with adapting to a new culture. This is because language learning is primarily a social activity and must be accompanied with different levels of support from others in the host community, the refugee community and at the policy level. It is understanding integration at these different levels which makes it such a disputed, complex and political concept as well as a social and individual process. As countries all over the world try to respond to the heightened mobility of displaced communities they grapple with both the perceived and real consequences of forced migration. Language learning is quite rightly central to these debates, but it is often the refugees themselves who are so seldom listened to regarding language issues in integration. This is often because ‘integration’ means different things to different people at different times on people’s journeys, particularly when applied to refugees and displaced people who may not know how long their stay may last. The term is often linked to other contested terms such as ‘belonging’, ‘cohesion’ and ‘citizenship’. A great deal of cross-cultural research, not specifically with refugees, has focused on acculturation, which describes the process by which people adjust to contact with a culture other than their own. Berry’s model of acculturation includes four types of strategies (Berry, 1997):

- integration: the individual maintains their own cultural identity while at the same time becomes a participant in the host culture

- assimilation: the individual gives up their own cultural identity and becomes absorbed into the host culture
- separation: the individual maintains their own cultural identity and rejects involvement with the host culture
- marginalisation: the individual does not identify with or participate in either their own culture or the host culture.

A criticism of Berry’s model is that it sees acculturation processes as static. Alternatively, LaFromboise et al.’s work (1993) has developed a model which addresses alternation as a strategy in which one moves back and forth between one’s own culture and the host culture depending on the situation and the wider context. However, the role of language within these processes is more convincingly addressed in ethnographic research about migrants’ lived experiences and focuses on topics such as belonging as well as the concept of community (Wessendorf, 2013) and what it means to fit in with a new community. These perspectives provide much-needed real-world examples of community relations which counter the discriminatory top-down discourses of anti-immigration policies and politicians.

At times of massive displacement such as that which is currently affecting the countries neighbouring Syria, refugees face increasing social and economic barriers to becoming full members of society as, understandably, host communities feel that with limited resources to begin with the refugee communities put increasing pressure on fragile welfare systems. Furthermore, displaced people face uncertainty around their legal status, which impacts their ability to work and study in both camp and non-camp settings. All of these processes are much easier to address if the newcomers understand the host country’s spoken and written language as they will then be in a much stronger position to access healthcare and other social services. When refugee families include children, parents are also in a better position to find out about how the education system works, what qualifications are available and how to discuss their children’s schooling with teachers.



Beyond providing the content for language learning, classrooms play a significant part in helping displaced people to develop relationships with other learners who are experiencing similar life-changing experiences. In this sense, learning a language together fosters integration as it enables individuals and communities to engage in meaningful dialogue. This is because successful integration occurs on an emotional as well as a functional level. Community settings as well as formal classrooms can be developed as spaces for social small talk as well as providing adults with opportunities to learn through engagement with host communities.

An example of a successful community-driven project in the UK is the Reflect ESOL programme, which was developed by the international charity Action Aid based on Reflect methods which were originally designed in developing countries (Moon and Sunderland, 2008). The pedagogic innovation here is the participatory curricula that teachers develop with their learners as there is no syllabus. This puts the learner at the centre of their own learning by helping them to identify their own issues and take a central role in preparing their own materials for language learning. However, the challenge of applying these pedagogies to areas of the world where teachers have not had access to teacher education programmes in which theories of language learning are included, they may find themselves unable to identify what to do with the kinds of spontaneous language use that arise from more participatory methodologies. A vast amount of contextualised language can be generated in these types of classrooms which is directly related to everyday situations which would help displaced people 'fit in', but teachers, particularly those working in NGOs, need training to be able to harness this language and use it strategically. There is a clear link here between the participatory approaches that practitioners in non-formal education use and the techniques adapted to refugee settings which many NGOs in refugee communities are also familiar with, particularly those drawing on techniques such as problem posing, drama, visual tools, storytelling and art. Published texts and newspaper articles can be

supplemented with teacher-written model texts if teachers wish to embed the participatory approach within more formal approaches such as those set out in textbooks and coursebooks, which is more often the preferred approach in more formal settings.

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## South Africa belongs to all who live in it... except if you are not South African

Kerryn Dixon

In the *Language for Resilience* report (Capstick and Delaney, 2016) there are a number of references to the important role language plays in building relationships. Language helps build relationships between parents and children, it strengthens community relationships and is important when refugees and host communities come together to learn. The report foregrounds refugees' desire for meaningful engagement. It is well documented that refugees often show a willingness to learn, value education and have a desire to integrate into host communities. A number of thought pieces across other principles emphasise how important a sense of belonging is to well-being. These positive stories and examples speak to the resources refugees draw on and their resilience in working towards creating a better life. This has made me think about the other side of the story: that of the host country. Building relationships and social cohesion requires buy-in from all stakeholders. What kind of relationships are fostered in host countries? How is language used in and by host countries to facilitate integration and social cohesion?

I focus on South Africa in this piece. When one looks at South African laws, policies and conventions to which we are signatories, a human rights discourse predominates. People's dignity and the right to a dignified life are valued. Our constitution is a liberal text. It states very clearly that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it.' Its approach to language is progressive. We have 11 official languages, and heritage languages are protected. People have the right to speak and use the languages of their choice. Education is a right and ideally should begin in the home language. Legislation is in place to support refugee rights. The progressive Refugees Act (1998) directly addresses refugee protection. When refugees are granted asylum they can access education, healthcare and social assistance. South Africa has no refugee camps, refugees have freedom of movement and are encouraged to self-settle. Other legislation like the Children's Act (2005) make special provisions for children applying for asylum. We have signed the Convention of the Rights of the Child that gives all children equal status regardless of nationality, and we are required to provide protection and humanitarian assistance. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child mandates that all children have the right to free and compulsory primary education. The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees foregrounds family as a right. The Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires states to ensure protection against discrimination. The International Labour Organisation Convention 182 on Child Labour recognises the relationship between child labour, poverty and need for free education.

But what happens within our borders is a different story. In 2008 xenophobic violence broke out in Johannesburg and spread across the country. By the end of the attacks 62 people had died and 100,000 were displaced. In each subsequent year there have been outbreaks of more xenophobic attacks, and thousands more people have been displaced across the country. Xenophobia and racism are not new occurrences – this is a daily lived experience for refugees. It is the violent magnitude of this hatred that is new. Equally disturbing is that these acts of violence are often perpetuated by the most marginalised South Africans.

There are complex reasons for this rise in xenophobia. Some are economic and have to do with the sharing of scarce resources. Some are systemic and affected by failing infrastructure and high levels of corruption. Some have to do with a mindset that focuses on national identity. Others have to do with the consequences of an apartheid past where racial and spatial segregation, the restriction of movement and suspicion cannot be erased by 20 years of democracy.

Thus, the day-to-day existence of many refugees living in South Africa is characterised by exclusionary practices. Despite people's linguistic rights being entrenched in legislation, despite multilingualism being a norm, and policies celebrating diversity, language is used as a tool that works against social cohesion. It is harnessed in several ways.

One of the most common is in naming practices. Names are important; they are fundamental to identity construction, to a sense of self and who we are in the world. But it is important to ask who gets named, what they get named, who does the naming, and who does not get mentioned.

South Africans' linguistic dexterity and creativity are harnessed in negative naming practices. Makwerekwere is probably the most commonly used derogatory term for 'foreigners'. It is racialised and used only to refer to other black Africans. The onomatopoeic 'kwere kwere' refers to the incomprehensible sounds made when other

Africans open their mouths. Language structures are deliberately altered to create new meanings to describe 'outsiders'. Magrigamba becomes demeaning because the prefix 'ma-' refers to things or non-humans. This seemingly innocuous prefix attached to the noun hooks into racist colonial discourses of Africans as sub-human. Naming practices work metaphorically to create powerfully disturbing images – amazeze refers to bloodsucking lice or fleas. The metaphor of the parasite and the false claims that 'foreigners' drain the economy are echoed in the much-heard complaint from marginalised people that 'they are taking our jobs'. These negative constructions are further entrenched by xenophobic public denouncements by political figures and community leaders.

Language is also used to erase the individuality and lived experiences of refugees. The word 'foreigner' becomes a placeholder for all other Africans living in the country whether they have immigrated and are in the country legally or illegally, whether they are documented or undocumented migrants, whether they are internally displaced people, refugees or asylum seekers. 'Foreigner' has come to stand for other Africans, who can be recognised by the 'blackness' of their skins and their accents, and who live in less 'modern' states. What this term does is erases the history, experience, trauma and identity of refugee experiences. If these experiences are erased then it becomes easy to turn a blind eye, and not meet the legislative and social responsibilities we have committed to.

Languages too are markers of difference which affect how people interact with each other. Although English is seen as a marker of prestige that enables access and social mobility, a double standard operates. There are many stories of refugees being victimised or attacked because they spoke English and not a local South African language. During the xenophobic attacks language was used to distinguish locals from foreigners. They were 'tested' on their ability to speak a South African language, typically being asked what the Zulu word for 'elbow' is (indololwane). Refugee children note that code-switching, which is often used to foster inclusion between groups, is used as a means of exclusion by teachers and peers at their schools.

The examples of communities being supportive and open to integration are few. But organisations that have histories of resistance and solidarity like the Abahlali baseMjondo movement in Durban and Unemployed People's Movement in Grahamstown show what is possible. These organisations recognise similarities in their own experiences of poverty, discrimination and marginalisation. They work together through a 'politics of residence' where communities support each other. Origins and language as barriers are broken down because everyone knows their neighbours (Naiker, 2016).

As South Africans we need to carefully examine the contradiction between our espoused values and our lived practices. As Badiou (1998: 17) writes,

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We should first tackle the question of how, concretely, we treat the people who are here; then, how we deal with those who would like to be here; and finally, what it is about the situation of their original countries, that makes them want to leave.

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## Social cohesion through the lens of ESOL

Clare Furneaux

I shall approach this topic through the lens of ESOL in the UK (see Cooke and Simpson, 2008 for a critical overview of ESOL, and Mallows, 2014 for further discussion from teachers and learners' perspectives). This seems to me to be a context which has been the subject of research that may be closer to those in refugee contexts than others (e.g. school/higher education contexts).

Developing useful language skills is empowering, leading to greater independence and the possibility of developing other life skills. However, we should not underestimate the challenges that becoming sufficiently proficient for one's needs in another language poses, especially to older learners and those with limited mother-tongue literacy skills. See Simpson and Whiteside (2015) for an international perspective on adult language education for migrants.

Formal and informal language support can provide social contact across different groups (as Mercy Corps sought to do in Kurdistan, aiming to bring together refugees, internally displaced people and host community members). Such social contact is not necessarily without its challenges – bringing different groups together does not mean they will get on – but it can help promote their intercultural understanding. This in turn can help develop individual resilience, as what is recognised and understood is easier to deal with.

ESOL programmes in the UK work with adult learners in further education and in informal contexts through the charitable sector. State funding has been cut dramatically (it was reduced by 50 per cent between 2008 and 2015), leaving increasing reliance on a fragmented and largely unregulated voluntary sector. That said, there is huge commitment from a wide range of people and organisations, including the national association for ESOL teachers, NATECLA.

A major study into ESOL practices (Baynham et al., 2007) adopted the view that, when looking for effective practices in ESOL teaching, 'Rather than opting for a "one-size-fits-all" notion of effectiveness, we ask "effective for whom, and in what circumstances?"' (page 14). This is an important principle to adopt when looking at language learning in all contexts, but especially those for non-traditional learners and contexts.

The contexts Baynham et al. (2007) studied included colleges and community centres – the latter probably have more in common with the context in which many refugees find themselves. An observation they made was that community centres had more constraints than college contexts: mixed level classes,

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a perception of community-based provision as separate and 'other'; poor facilities and student support; lack of opportunities for student progression; and lack of robust management structures and support. (Page 17)

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They reported that:

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Our study shows that there is no magic bullet for effective ESOL practice. The major resource that can make or mar the most promising methodology or initiative is the expertise and professionalism of ESOL teachers. This professionalism draws on both subject and subject teaching knowledge and on CPD that encourages an interpretive and reflective stance on teaching and learning. (Page 71)

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Four groups of teaching strategies were identified: 'those that promoted balance and variety and planning and explicitness were significantly more in evidence than those promoting a collaborative learning environment and connecting the classroom with learners' outside lives.' (Page 69–70.)

Beyond language learning, another, radically different, approach to teaching in contexts of disadvantage is presented in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). This suggested a participatory approach to teaching adult learners in an empowering way:

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A classroom using a participatory approach uses two-way dialogue, problem-posing, and problem-solving strategies while using language learning as a vehicle. Problem-posing and problem-solving activities support for critical thinking and creative ways to address learners' pressing social issues. Participatory approach is more process-based than product based in its outcome. With participatory approach, students are encouraged to work with fellow students either in pairs, small groups, or in whole groups for collective participation. Activities such as role plays, writing a letter to school board or city management staff, and other functional exponents using the target language and language domains make an important facet in the students' learning because these are the tools that will help students liberate from their problems.

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Freire's focus on process over product is useful, as resilience is developed through learning 'how' not 'what'. Resilient learners develop 'portmanteau' ways of thinking and learning that can be adapted and used in new, unexpected contexts. This brings me back to my opening point about empowerment and independence. Becoming an independent learner is not easy, and teachers/coaches need training in developing this set of insights and skills.

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## The question of employment in the context of refugees and their integration

Chris Sowton

In many cases, the very fact that you are a refugee means that the very idea of work, let alone the actual act of working, poses a significant challenge. Refugees have generally already suffered hugely before leaving their country of origin, are likely to have suffered further on their migration, and may be experiencing additional stressors in their host country. To be genuinely 'work fit' in such a situation is highly unlikely. Similarly, from a training perspective, young people in such fragile, febrile, liminal situations may find it difficult to imagine their 'future selves', and therefore may not be motivated to pursue personal development opportunities which do exist. This is especially true given that so few refugees do ever reach third countries or return to their country of origin, and that in all likelihood they are going to be living in their current state of limbo for many years to come. A negative mindset can thereby develop.

When refugees do feel able to work, or when they face the economic necessity of doing so, they may not be able to do the same type of work as they were doing in their country of origin. The reason for this may be legal, psychological or physical, among others. The legal landscape with regards to refugees' ability to work is highly complex, nuanced and non-uniform across the Middle East region. Jordan, for example, is much more supportive of refugees in the workforce in contrast to Lebanon, where refugees face many more restrictions and in reality are restricted to only cleaning, farming and building jobs. Where refugees may not be able to do the same type of work as they were doing in their country of origin – especially if that work was highly skilled or of high status – this may further negatively affect them mentally. In addition, there is also a significant loss of economic and social value for the community in which the refugee lives, especially given that it is

highly likely there will be a shortage in this skill there, making the wastage particularly damaging. This said, the world of work can also offer opportunities for refugees to socialise and to integrate in their local communities, which can have a positive impact on their mental health. There may be more opportunities for this to occur where the demand for labour is higher than the supply at particular times of the year – e.g. during the harvest.

It is also necessary to consider the perspective of employers. Employers may have perceptions of refugees – and their mental health – which might dissuade them from offering employment, fearing that their trauma may impact negatively on their ability to adequately perform their duties. Even where these perceptions may not exist, given that the refugees may be moved on locally, nationally or internationally at a moment's notice, there is a strong disincentive to invest time and money in them as employees. In an interesting study on refugees in third countries, Wright et al. (2016) argue that neither pre-displacement nor post-displacement trauma independently predicted unemployment two years post-arrival, but that the interaction of pre and post-displacement trauma was a predictor of two-year unemployment. Refugees with high levels of both pre- and post-displacement trauma had a 91 per cent predicted probability of unemployment, whereas those with low levels of both traumas had a 20 per cent predicted probability.

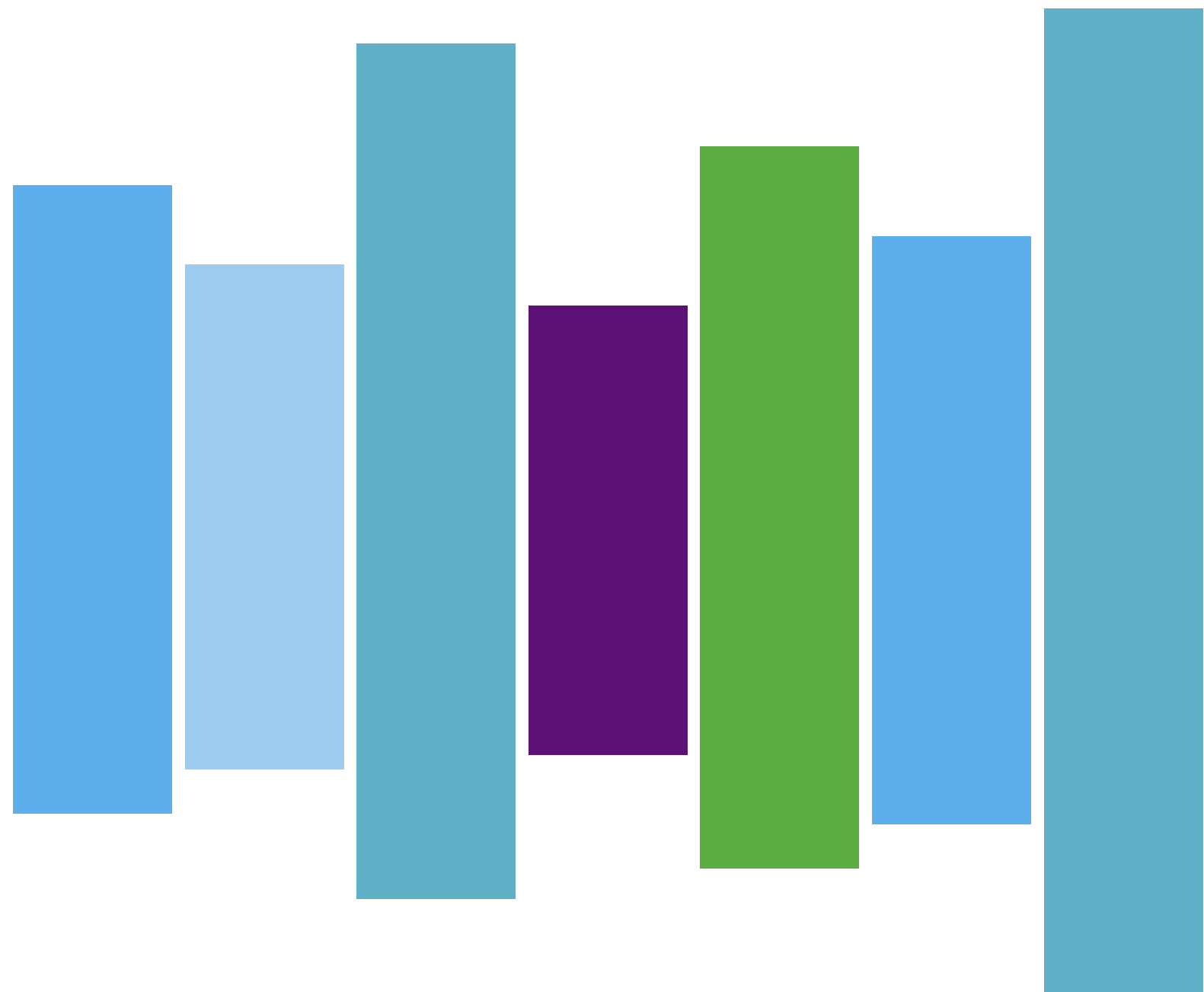
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# Principle 4:

## Addressing the effect of trauma on learning







# Cover statement

## We believe the following

- Nearly all refugees will have experienced significant trauma and many will still be exposed to trauma.
- Teachers, interpreters and others who work with refugees are at increased risk of vicarious trauma.
- The adverse effects of trauma include a greatly increased risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health problems, particularly depression.
- PTSD is marked by flashbacks, acute fear, sleep disturbance and avoidance. It also has many negative effects on aspects of thinking, including memory, attention and planning.
- The subtle and distressing effects of trauma need to be recognised by all individuals and organisations who work with, and for, refugees.

## Principles

- All individuals are vulnerable to the physiological and psychological effects of trauma.
- Not everyone who experiences acute or chronic, or extreme trauma will develop PTSD, which is a more severe presentation that interferes with functioning.
- The effects of trauma are pervasive but may not be obvious. These can have long-term adverse effects on adults and children and on their families.
- The effects of trauma interfere with many areas of functioning, including all aspects of education, learning a new language, parenting skills and establishing a new family home.
- There are effective psychological treatments for children and adults who have experienced acute and chronic trauma – where possible these should be available in all refugee settings.
- Schools and other institutions that provide familiarity and structure can provide a welcome and supportive environment to promote resilience and recovery.
- Acknowledging the adverse effects of trauma on individuals and on families can help reduce stigma and increase resilience.
- Language is a tool for expressing emotions and understanding traumatic experiences.
  - Emotions, experiences and identities are expressed differently in different languages.
  - Being able to express trauma in a home language can enhance treatment.

## Recommendations

- It is important to understand the effects of trauma on individuals and families who are refugees and on those who work with refugees.
- All organisations working with refugees should provide basic training on the effects of trauma to all staff and volunteers.
- All individuals working with refugees should have access to and undertake training on the psychological and physiological effects of trauma on people, including refugees.
- All individuals working with refugees should understand the risk to themselves of vicarious trauma and be able to recognise the signs of vicarious trauma.
- All organisations working with refugees should provide supervision and support to staff and volunteers who are at risk of vicarious trauma.
- Organisations should encourage a culture of compassionate self-reflection and learning for all staff.

### Training for teachers and educators who work with refugees

- Teachers should understand the specific impact of trauma on memory, attention and cognition and be able to recognise when the effects of trauma interfere with a student's ability to learn.
- The wider effects of trauma on children's behaviour and emotions should be recognised by all teachers.
- Training should include methods to organise and deliver teaching that is sensitive to the specific needs, strengths and difficulties of students who have experienced significant trauma.
- Teachers should be familiar with key aspects of self-care to reduce the impact of vicarious trauma.
- Training for teachers of refugees should include specific information about the specific context of the refugees with whom they work; this may include aspects of culture, politics and displacement history.

### In the classroom and beyond

- Schools and teachers should be aware of the impact of significant trauma on all members of the family – in particular, parents who have experienced trauma may struggle to provide a warm and supportive environment for learning and growing.
- Opportunities for students to disclose elements of their personal 'journey' can be incorporated into lesson plans, but there will be variability in how ready individual students are to share that information.
- Teachers need skills to provide non-directive support for students in distress and to signpost them to the available resources.
- Teachers should be encouraged to seek formal and informal supervision for their practice (for example via peer supervision groups) as well as opportunities to reflect on the personal impact of working with traumatised adults and children.

### Implementation

- Teachers and educators need structured packages of training on the psychological and physiological effects of trauma. This could be provided through CPD and in pre-qualification training.
- Ongoing structured support for teachers and other frontline workers is available from the international Red Cross. This is limited in resource but the practice of providing support could be extended by using Skype and other online platforms to link workers with peers/supervisors.
- Simple psycho-education on the effects of trauma in children, adolescents and adults should be available to refugees. This would help demystify their troubling and disturbing symptoms and help them support other family members.

# Thought pieces

## Peace education and trauma

Mohammed Ateek

The Syrian conflict, now in its eighth year, has killed almost half a million people, including many children and women (UN, 2018). In addition, the UN identified 13.5 million Syrians requiring humanitarian assistance, of which more than six million are internally displaced within Syria, and around five million are refugees outside of Syria (taking into account that these are only the official numbers and that there are many refugees/asylum seekers who are not registered).

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Tens of thousands of Syrian children are estimated to be living with life-altering injuries due to the conflict. In addition to death and injury, children are exposed to further dangers of malnutrition, illness and the psychological impact of their traumatic experiences. (International Alert, 2016: 1)

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Many Syrians have been traumatised by what they have experienced and witnessed in the crisis, including those who fled to neighbouring countries (i.e., Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq). International Alert (2016) identified a number of factors that increase vulnerability among refugees including: a lack of economic opportunity, disruption to social context and experiences of violence, displacement, trauma, and loss and degradation of education infrastructure and opportunities to learn. Therefore, dealing with the consequences of trauma and its effects of behaviour and learning is important to both refugees and their host communities.

Recognising and dealing with the effects of trauma on Syrian refugees and asylum seekers must be carried out by governments and organisations at different levels and in different sectors; the education sector is no exception. When it comes to language learning, classrooms could be created as safe spaces for refugee learners. This can be done not only by employing activities that promote this idea, but by implementing a whole approach such as that taken in the 'peace education and creative and interactive arts-based psychological educational approach' used with Syrian refugees (*ibid.*). In this approach, language

learning is an integral part of peace education. The creative activities (drama, storytelling, music, singing, etc.) within the language class are organised into different themes and the content of these activities are focused on tackling trauma in an approach similar to that of peace education.

The whole point of putting such an approach into practice is that it can be used across a range of academic subjects in addition to language and literacy. Language learning activities may create safe spaces to tackle the effects of trauma, but putting these activities in broader educational context makes a more powerful impact and can be adapted across the curriculum. This creates both systematicity and consistency in implementing such activities.

International Alert applied these two approaches for building resilience. This does not address language learning specifically, but their experience can be applied.

A considerable number of organisations, including International Alert, Save the Children, Oxfam and others, work on the effects of trauma and displacement on behaviour, especially in Lebanon and Turkey. Most of them work outside the education/language learning field as psychosocial intervention. However, some initiatives do address the effects of trauma in the classroom through different activities. The majority of these activities include: storytelling, the use of puppets (One Hand puppet group) and drama.

The primary goal of these creative activities is to 'give participants a voice'. This is very important, as there is a sense of neglect and that Syrians are not having their voices heard.

However, the question here is whether there is any follow-up plan after voicing their experiences. For example, if a refugee learner was able to talk about their experience, which might be a traumatic one, and use their L1/L2/foreign language to voice this experience in one of the language learning activities,

could this have a counter-productive effect if the teacher does not know what to do or how to handle this, or that they might say/do something that adds oil to the fire?

Storytelling, drama, writing and plays are essential language learning activities that could help with the effects of trauma, especially because they are about communication with others' activities and traumatised learners might want to share this in a safe space with their classmates. To add to their effectiveness, I think the content of these activities must be directed at the effects of loss.

These activities, with the aim of helping refugees with their trauma, cannot be effective without delivering them effectively through experienced teachers. It is important to give teachers proper training to support their use of creative activities to deal with the effects of trauma. Therefore, it is important to build a collaboration of psychologists, artists, teachers, academics and even curriculum designers. The aim of this collaboration would be to develop training for teachers, which would include creative activities and support for teachers to deal with different scenarios, including those presented by traumatised learners and their own experiences, as they might be refugees or experience vicarious trauma.

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## Combining different areas of expertise and working across disciplinary boundaries to help teachers understand the relationship between language and trauma

Tony Capstick

Refugees, internally displaced people and host communities experience varying degrees of adversity as a result of displacement. The vocabulary we use to describe this adversity varies across the agencies working with these communities. There is, however, consensus that individuals who have experienced adversity will then find it difficult to 'bounce back' from these experiences as they attempt to build new lives for themselves in new settings. Before considering how interventions can help individuals learn to cope, this thought piece focuses on the relationship between language and classroom activities.

Knowledge about how language mediates recovery is the first step in helping practitioners who wish to design interventions begin their planning. Work with agencies can then build on what is known about the way their work is mediated by language. For example, teachers need this understanding before they can begin to design classroom activities that help their learners develop social relationships within the classroom, without risking harming their learners further. Similarly, teachers need to know how to deal with disruptive behaviour and be able to plan their lessons and design their teaching strategies and materials with these behaviours in mind. School leaders may not be aware of the wealth of knowledge that exists about education psychology and its relationship with culturally sensitive mental health guidance for those working with non-dominant culture populations. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education 2013 mental health implementation strategy, *Supporting Minds*, supports school-based staff to develop cultural competence when recognising that ethnicity and culture affect mental health services uptake in the community.

In low-resource environments in many parts of the world teachers are on the front line of coping with the outcomes of displacement while only having access to teacher-centred methodologies. This limits their opportunities to engage and support learners. Often the pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes, on which these teachers laid the foundations to their practice, did not equip them with the skills or knowledge to work with refugees or newcomers more broadly. They may not have been shown how to welcome newcomers with different cultural practices into the classroom, or how to harness these practices for learning, or to design classroom activities to help displaced learners settle in and begin to cope in new settings. Typically, resources to help teachers build relationships with the wider community and parents and to understand the displacement and adversity their learners have experienced are not available. Central to this is the teacher's own self-care, how they deal with their own experience of trauma and adversity and how they seek support themselves.

In the many interviews carried out in the countries neighbouring Syria for the *Language for Resilience* research, many of those interviewed from governmental and non-governmental agencies working on the humanitarian response to the crisis did not understand how language fits into their work on providing 'safe spaces' for displaced people. When NGO staff reported the need to provide safe spaces for refugees to learn in, their main focus was creating the conditions in which to deliver psychosocial support to the beneficiaries and not how language mediates almost everything that they do in the classroom. Thus, language learning classes are increasingly seen by many agencies as a potential space in which to deliver psychosocial support alongside or embedded in formal language learning.

This is seen in in state sector schools in Lebanon, which deliver the curriculum in English or French and in NGO classrooms in Erbil, Kurdistan where English language lessons are seen as a vehicle for 'post stress attunement' programmes in adolescent-friendly spaces. Research carried out by one of these NGOs found that the impact of this approach to psychosocial interventions focused on beneficiaries' increased levels of social trust, diversity of social networks, perceptions of security and safety, and confidence in the future (Panter-Brick et al., 2018).

Refugee settings are always complex; it may be the first time that people living there have been displaced or they may have lived through multiple displacements and experienced many different types of adversity. Some displaced people want to return home at the earliest opportunity while others may not have made any decisions about what to do next. These different aims affect how they are able to talk about the adverse experiences on their journeys. This complexity has implications for the language learning programmes which seek to support learners with coping strategies as NGO and governmental organisations may only be able to meet the needs of learners who have previously had access to some form of language learning in the target language of the NGO's language classes.

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## Supporting the supporters – how to be helpful without being a hindrance

Beverley Costa

### The need

Teachers and interpreters who work with vulnerable, displaced young people, adults and children frequently feel under-prepared to support and respond appropriately to children whose migration stories contain traumatic experiences. These experiences can promote so much anxiety for the adults and children that they are unable to learn and to find ways of integrating successfully.

The impact of this work on the teachers and interpreters, who are exposed to stressful and distressing situations on a regular basis through the nature of their work, can take its toll. They run the same risks as other frontline workers of developing secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma and burnout. But teachers and interpreters have little, if any, help with their self-care, and there are few outlets for the emotional impact on them. They are subject to vicarious trauma, which results from their empathic engagement with a client's trauma material. Other symptoms of this burnout are exhaustion, cynicism and inefficiency (Valero-Garcés, 2014, Pearlman and Saakvitne, 1995). Teachers and interpreters are frequently in a bystander position – witnesses to distress and unable to do anything about it. This can be exacerbated when clients' stories of trauma and terror resonate with their own experiences. In refugee settings, teachers and interpreters are often refugees themselves and so the trauma they hear is layered on top of the trauma they themselves have experienced. Without support, these workers are even more susceptible to burnout (Doherty et al., 2010), so that they can continue to provide an effective service. What kind of support and training input can be useful for teachers and interpreters who are working with distressed and displaced people?

Teachers and interpreters may benefit from training to understand the impact of trauma and models of resilience and self-care. In order for the short training to be of most use and for the learning to be embedded, teachers and interpreters benefit from ongoing support for themselves from more senior colleagues to reflect on their practice. This enables them to build up their resilience and self-care, both for their own well-being and to model self-care for the children and adults they are supporting. By supporting the supporters, workers will be able to provide the best possible environments for children and adults to access the help and the education they need, to heal, to thrive and to feel integrated into the communities in which they are living.

### Recommendations: reducing susceptibility to vicarious trauma and burnout through self-care

1. Fawcett (2003) recommends self-care activities which can reduce susceptibility to vicarious trauma. Self-care activities help an individual to maintain their physical, mental or emotional health. They can help a person stay robust enough to carry out and fulfil their work and responsibilities. Fawcett's recommendations are: to increase self-awareness; to ensure a balance between work and personal time; to keep up with connections: 'Strong relationships afford the best protection in traumatic and stressful environments' (*ibid.*: 7)
2. By supporting interpreters and teachers with their own self-care and by understanding models of trauma, the impact of trauma and vicarious trauma and 'first-aid' for dealing with the effects of trauma, workers will stay fit to continue to work and the help they offer will be more effective.



### Implementation

The International Red Cross recognises that ensuring the effectiveness of interventions in crisis and disaster situations includes providing appropriate support for frontline workers. The International Red Cross provides support in situ for staff working in crisis contexts. This is not always possible or affordable in many environments. Matching workers with supporting colleagues, via platforms such as Skype, is an alternative.

The following three-step programme is an illustration of how this could be achieved.

**Step one:** short online psychosocial training for teachers and interpreters working with refugees and displaced people. This training will provide and describe information about models of trauma and the impact that traumatic experiences can have on people's lives and their behaviour, as well as methods of self-care and strategies for building resilience.

**Step two:** online induction, building on models and mentoring/reflective conversations (for example Mozzon-McPherson and Vismans, 2001). These inductions prepare experienced teachers and interpreters with the skills to supervise, support and mentor less experienced junior colleagues as well as equip them with psychosocial aspects of their work with vulnerable children and young people. They provide practitioners with a space to reflect on their work and their learning because 'strong relationships afford the best protection in traumatic and stressful environments' (Fawcett, 2003: 7).

**Step three:** via Skype (or equivalent platform) support/mentoring sessions to be offered by mentor-teachers and interpreters (trained at step one and step two level) to less experienced interpreters and teachers.

### Evaluation of the three-step programme

Initial, small-scale evaluation of support of this kind by Colleagues Across Borders and the University of Alcalá, Spain, suggests that training about trauma and self-care would be beneficial for teachers and interpreters working in refugee contexts. Findings also suggest that a remote (yet personal) support programme can be of benefit to interpreters and teachers working in refugee contexts and can help to mitigate the effects of vicarious trauma and burnout.

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## Putting literacy into the conversation about trauma and language

Kerryn Dixon

Although the number of refugees worldwide has increased considerably over the last decade with many refugees experiencing trauma of some kind, there are still gaps in our understanding of how traumatic experiences affect learning for refugees and how best to provide supportive learning environments, especially for children.

What we do know is that:

1. Trauma affects people's ability to learn.
2. Research emphasises the need to take into account the effects of trauma on refugees in educational contexts – but it does not always say how this must be done, what kind of knowledge, skills and practices are needed, and the kind of support needed for different kinds of trauma.
3. There is more work that focuses on adult refugees suffering from trauma and less on the psychological or educational impact of trauma on children (Hart, 2009). But, children constitute half of the worldwide refugee population (Clayton, 2015).
4. Refugee children are at increased risk of having mental health disorders (Ruf et al., 2010) and there is evidence that after exposure to trauma children are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than adults, and may also be misdiagnosed as having behavioural disorders (Hart, 2009).
5. Refugees who have experienced trauma take longer to acquire a second language (e.g. Gordon, 2011). Traumatic experiences may also have an adverse impact on motivation to learn an additional language (Iversen et al., 2014).
6. Many English second language programmes in which refugee children are enrolled are heavily focused on language acquisition rather than literacy competence and do not take children's socio-emotional needs into account (Woods, 2009).

It is this final point that underpins this thought piece. When many refugee children have had interrupted schooling, informal schooling or no schooling, it means that they may not have developed literacy competence in their home language. A high level of literacy competence is a prerequisite for school success. This competence requires a level of language proficiency in a language that is most likely not the home language.

This raises several questions: What do teachers need to know about how the effects of trauma may manifest on children's language and literacy learning? What does this mean for teacher development and training? What strategies, beyond traditional ESL approaches, take literacy needs into account?

Understanding that trauma affects how the brain functions is useful in understanding challenges children may face in learning and the pace at which learning takes place. The effects of trauma include poor concentration and memory, high anxiety, a reluctance to participate verbally, and poor processing of information and dissociation – all of which interfere with learning. Academic performance is also affected by depression, levels of motivation, poor self-regulation, disruptive behaviour and stress. This means that learning environments need to be safe rather than stressful so that the brain is in a calm state rather than in 'fight or flight' mode.

We know that learning a language and becoming literate require high levels of concentration and the ability to make sense of information in order to connect this to other information in meaningful ways, and it takes lots of practice. We also know that learning to read is not natural and is a highly complex process. Children have to be taught to read and have enough time to practise so that the neural pathways in the brain are 'laid down' for reading to become habitual. Children who cannot focus or concentrate, whose ability to remember information is compromised, or who are extremely anxious require different approaches to learning. It is important that teachers understand how symptoms of trauma and related mental health problems affect the kinds of information children have to remember, process, retrieve, store and make meaning from when they are learning languages or developing literacy.

Language and literacy teachers are often the first teachers that refugee children will meet when they are enrolled in schools or language programmes. These teachers, and the wider school staff, may have no specialist support or training to work with children who are refugees. For children whose schooling has been interrupted, the experience of school often requires a process of socialisation, of learning a set of alien rules and practices that are often implicit normalised practices (Brown et al., 2006). Schools can play an important and positive role for child refugees by providing a stable and 'normal' environment, helping children integrate into a community, and help

with trauma (Mathews, 2008). Language classrooms are places where safe spaces can be created, and support provided in navigating a new space if curricula are designed to be flexible and driven by student needs. Schools can also be a negative environment for children and be places where hostility, bullying and discrimination occur. How do we think about the interrelationship between the role of the school, meeting the needs of refugee children and the language and literacy curriculum?

Teacher training rarely prepares teachers to work with children who are refugees, or those who have experienced trauma. There are also few opportunities for professional development. However, many teachers who have found themselves working with these groups have identified important principles (MacNevin, 2012; Szente et al., 2006) and these need to be more widely disseminated. There is also a lack of research focused on responsive literacy and language pedagogies (Benseman, 2012). It seems important then that the experiences, strategies and techniques for language and literacy learning that take into account the impact of trauma are consolidated. But it is equally important that these are not decontextualised lists where cultural understandings of trauma from communities are lost.

A final issue addresses the ways in which literacy learning is conceptualised in schools. A common response of schools who accommodate refugee children who are not literate in the dominant language is to take students out of mainstream classrooms to address what are seen as their language and literacy deficits. When there are no programmes in place, schools often use reading programmes that are designed for the early years, and are often heavily focused on phonics and decoding. This approach to literacy does not acknowledge broader forms of meaning-making, and the use of inappropriate materials, designed for younger children, tends to alienate rather than engage. We know that multimodal literacies encourage a broader form of meaning-making, and often draw on popular culture and students' worlds. The affordances of different modes enable children to work across them when they do not have sufficient oral language or expertise with print. It would be useful to consider the ways in which multimodal approaches to learning can be applied to teaching and learning for refugees.

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## Trauma and second/foreign language learning

Clare Furneaux

Second language learning has been described as ‘a fundamentally traumatic experience for the individual’ (Clarke, 1976: 377) and it is true that foreign language anxiety (see Zheng, 2008) has been identified as a source of interference in language learning and production. Of course, the traumas that many refugee learners bring with them are invariably of a different magnitude, but it is important to recognise that second language learning may add to this stress. This is particularly true where the second language being learned is high-stakes for the refugee, as in where it is the language of a new host country, giving as it does access to the possibility of a new life: education, employment and access to services.

In addition, what are the effects of trauma on the language learning capabilities of refugees? A review (Clayton, 2015) of 43 articles from 1988 to 2015 exploring refugees’ language learning and PTSD found that the articles ‘strongly support the hypothesis that PTSD has a direct effect on refugee language learning but that ESL educators can implement procedures to minimize impediments to learning’ (*ibid.*: 2).

This thought piece will explore this principle in relation to cognitive theories of language learning, motivation, age of exposure to the new language, being a child refugee learner and language as social activity. It will conclude by identifying areas of focus for language teachers working with refugees.

Cognitive theories of language learning (see Ellis, 2015) highlight the centrality of the cognitive process of processing, attention and memory. These are the same cognitive processes that trauma can affect, by altering neural pathways within the brain. In particular PTSD has been shown to cognitively impair working memory (Johnsen et al., 2008; Söndergaard and Theorell, 2004), which is important for coding and storing new information (such as grammar and vocabulary in an unfamiliar language).

Motivation is important in language learning. The extrinsic motivation for learning an influential second language was noted above; however this is not straightforward. Iversen et al. (2014) explored the role of trauma and psychological distress in motivation in relation to refugees in Norway, for example. They noted two types of trauma, impacting differently on motivation. The first was trauma experienced as deprivation (lack of food, etc.); refugees with this background were more motivated to learn a new language than those who had

experienced violent trauma. They also noted that refugees with strong coping strategies were more likely to be successful in language learning. In addition, they observed that background was important, with Asian refugees more motivated for language learning than those from Africa.

Age of learning is also important, as native-like pronunciation is acquired up to puberty. Foreign language anxiety is also higher in those learning a language late in life.

Being a child refugee seems to be a particular disadvantage in terms of fitting in to existing educational systems. Noting that children below 18 represented 50 per cent of refugees in 2013 (UNHCR, 2014), Kaplan et al. (2015) conducted an overview of multidisciplinary studies of refugee children or children in bilingual contexts. They noted that refugee children were over-represented in special education settings and disproportionately referred for possible learning disorder cognitive assessments in the host country. This reveals the need to establish factors such as the number of languages a child has been exposed to, their proficiency levels in each, their literacy and educational levels, their age on arrival, and access to an interpreter before conducting any educational tests.

Socio-cultural activity plays a major role in language learning, but refugees coping with trauma may well struggle to take part in such activity. Studies such as Steel et al. (2002), who interviewed over 1,000 Vietnamese refugees in Australia, and Carlsson et al. (2006), working with 63 refugee survivors of torture, show that traumatic experiences and subsequent PTSD inhibit normal daily functioning and contact, reducing exposure to the second language outside the classroom.

### Pedagogic suggestions

There is interesting recent discussion around language learning and trauma from Canada, which has offered a home to a number of Syrian refugees (Government of Canada, 2017). This included online advice for teachers from trauma experts (such as the child psychiatrist Jean Clinton) and teachers of English (such as Maria Margaritis’ 2016 blog). ‘The Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma’ (n.d.) also gives useful advice.

As Gordon (2011: 2) states 'ESL teachers play a key role for refugee learners who have survived trauma as one of the first links to their new country and a main source of cultural information'. They can also play a part in the refugee camps as refugees wait to find out their future. This latter setting is more challenging in many ways as there are fewer resources, less exposure and less immediate need.

Refugee students are coping with multiple stressors and at different stages of recovery from trauma. It is, therefore, vital that language classrooms are places where they can learn safely and effectively. It is important, therefore, for teachers to:

- provide structure and stability in the classroom
- build trust and confidence
- set academic goals that are relevant to the refugees
- provide a holistic learner-centred environment.

There must also be support for the teachers themselves, in terms of training to enable them to set appropriate boundaries when dealing with traumatised students and to understand, and compensate for, the effects of trauma on learning. See Finn (2010) and Margaritis (2016) for more detailed suggestions.

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## How trauma can impact educational access, quality and linkages in post-conflict contexts

Chris Sowton

### Trauma can be detrimental to social and learning experiences in school

Children who have experienced trauma often struggle to regulate their emotions and to develop trusting relationships. This can lead to challenging behaviour which is hard to understand in schools, and which may be described by teachers as 'acting out'. This can be problematic in 'the playground' – in terms of developing social relationships with classmates – as well as in 'the classroom'. Behavioural problems can impact on children's ability to concentrate and take part in classroom activities. This behaviour (which may be interpreted simply as bad behaviour) can have a detrimental effect on the class as a whole, with other learners not understanding what is happening, and with teachers lacking the skills, knowledge or time to deal with these issues. Typically, if teachers are not able to manage behaviour associated with trauma, their actions and those of other children may inadvertently help maintain or even prolong the child's inability to self-regulate.

### Educators are often not equipped or trained to deal with traumatised learners

Because teachers may be the only professionals that most child refugees (and their parents) routinely meet, there may be an assumption that they have expertise about children's mental health and well-being. However, schools are seldom well informed about the potential effects of trauma on children's emotions and behaviours. The extent to which teachers are sensitive to the effects of trauma may therefore depend on their own individual knowledge and interest. Even when teachers have received training about the effect of trauma on children, the context in which they teach may not help them to provide appropriate education. In many marginalised and post-conflict situations, the dominant teaching methodology is teacher-centred, and teaching is based in small, overcrowded classrooms with fixed desks and benches. Beyond the classroom it is also likely to be very difficult to provide specialist treatment given the resource-poor environment and the enormous demand on services. In addition to the needs of children and parents who have experienced trauma, teachers may also be suffering the effects of direct trauma themselves, or may experience vicariously the cumulative effects of working with traumatised children.

### Educational spaces contain many potential triggers

In post-conflict situations, schools are often heralded as safe spaces. However, for children with trauma, schools can also be sites of anxiety. Triggers abound, including bells signalling the start and end of class, fire drills, too many instructions being given at once, unfamiliar languages, sitting too long, abrupt changes, anger and confrontation, staring, racism, noise, the appearance of strangers or authority figures, touching, and discussions related to family or personal matters. At an institutional and classroom level, there needs to be an awareness of these triggers, and while this knowledge may exist in, for example, programmes run by NGOs or UN agencies, this is unlikely to be the case in temporary settlements or where children learn in host country schools.

### Trauma can adversely affect the acquisition of home language(s) and additional languages

Children who have experienced trauma are at increased risk of experiencing a delay in cognitive development and language acquisition. If learning their home language proves difficult, then developing L2 will prove even more challenging. Indeed, the very act of trying to acquire L2 may become an additional stressor, especially if the curriculum is very English-centric (as is common), and in particular if the medium of instruction is English. If refugees find it difficult or impossible to learn a second language, even when they receive instruction, this may lead to feelings of powerlessness and a lack of agency, and get in the way of them being able to integrate properly. Combined with poor educational outcomes, caused partly by low language levels, difficulties in learning the host language will adversely affect refugees' opportunities to progress to training and into employment.

### The curriculum can be a tool for providing emotional support to traumatised children

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is a methodology which teaches subject matter through a target language. Historically, CLIL has focused on subject areas such as science, maths and history. Potentially, however, this methodology could

be used in a post-conflict situation to address trauma in a very broad, generalistic and non-clinical way, for example through storytelling that addresses issues such as transition, hope and loss. Using CLIL allows teachers to open conversations or discussions related to experiences of being a refugee but does not require the teacher to explicitly address these issues. Similarly learners can be in control of what they did and didn't engage in and share with others. Although this method may not be an ideal way to address the emotional issues associated with trauma, in an environment where therapeutic support is low or non-existent, it may provide a means – some scaffolding – for some children to deal with their trauma.

#### **An alternative view**

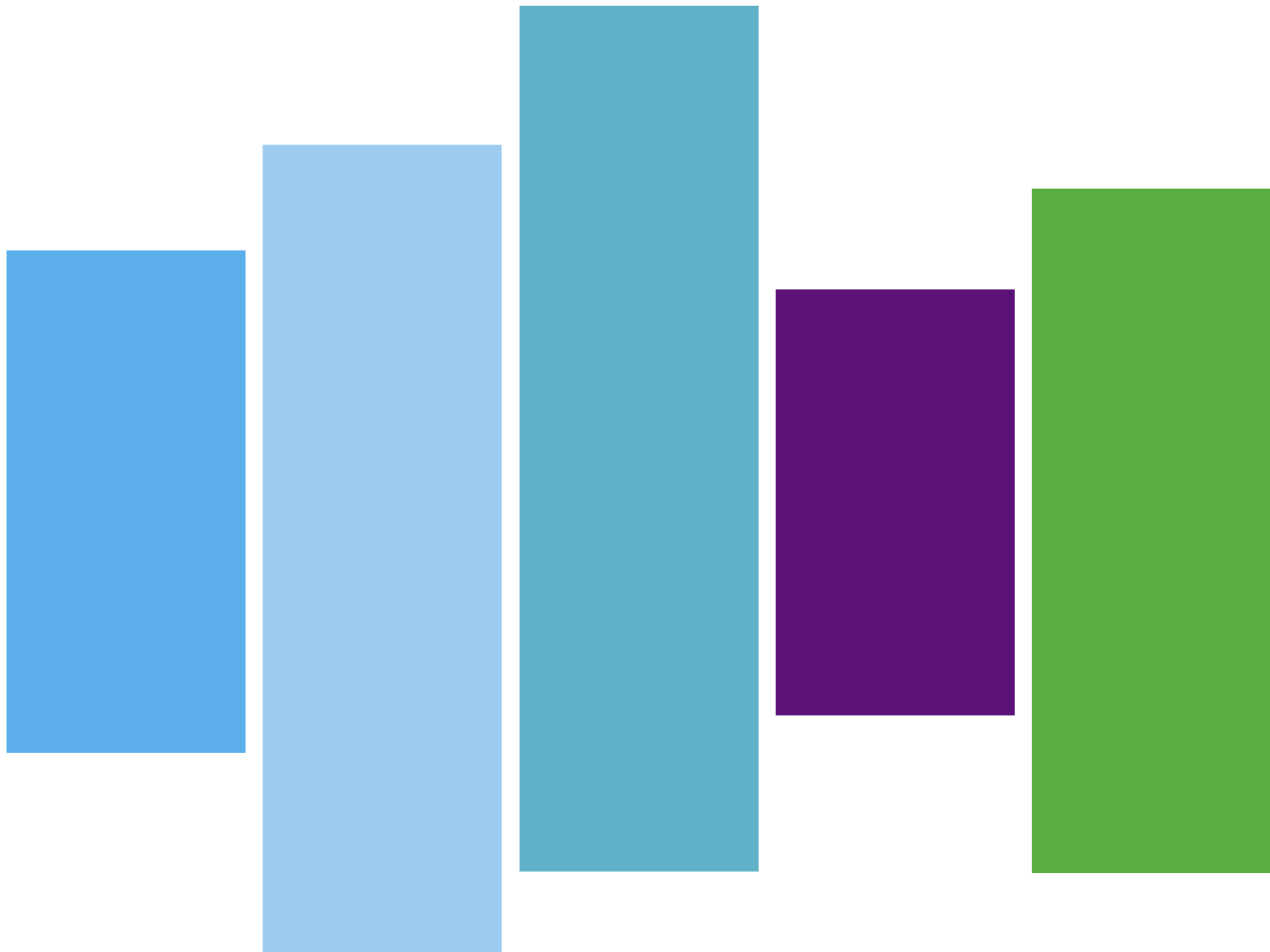
There is a tendency by mental health professionals to approach the state of being a refugee as if it were a psychological, or indeed a psychopathological, state. However, logically, it is possible that a refugee can have a negative, neutral or positive response to being traumatised. An important consideration, therefore, of 'refugee trauma' is the personalised nature, impact and response on the individual. Papadopoulos (2007) argues that despite the fact a person may be traumatised, they may also gain from the experience. To describe this, he used the term 'adversity-activated development', by which he means that any therapeutic approach should recognise the strengths and coping mechanisms used by refugees to function successfully, in addition to the difficulties associated with the trauma.

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# Principle 5:

## Building the capacity of teachers and strengthening educational systems







# Cover statement

## We believe the following

- The normalising effect for refugees of having any kind of education is extremely positive.
- Teachers are at the frontline of dealing with the global refugee crisis.
- There is insufficient understanding of what it means to educate large numbers of marginalised, displaced children who live in contexts of distress.
- When 86 per cent of refugees are hosted by developing countries, universities in those countries should engage with building the capacity of teachers.
- Teachers should be prepared to deal with the academic, social and psychological needs of refugee children.
- It is important for teachers to appreciate issues around 'identity': both their own and that of their learners.
- Improving language teacher education for teachers of refugees will benefit host contexts by developing the pool of teachers in the region.
- Tackling misconceptions about language (interference, immersion and diversity) as 'a problem' requires applied linguists to work with community groups, government and teachers.
- Different social factors can prevent refugees accessing quality education.

## Principles

- There is an urgent need for widespread government and public education, informed by local research-based evidence, on multilingualism in education and society to counter widespread deficit models.
- Host communities' and displaced communities' needs can be combined in a unified approach which treats language as a joint resource which enhances resilience, supports psychosocial support and fosters social cohesion.
- Those already teaching refugees need new in-service teacher education opportunities to develop the insights and skills they need.
- Important aspects of teacher education provision are teachers' ability to understand the identities of their students and to understand how their own personal identity is an important aspect of their professional identity as a teacher.
- Initial and ongoing teacher training/ education should:
  - Develop teachers effectively, countering negative perceptions of refugees.
  - Develop teacher identity that incorporates multilingualism and cultural diversity as an enriching resource.
  - Develop teachers professionally, providing appropriate knowledge and understanding of the importance of multilingual refugee learners developing home and target language skills, and literacy.
  - Provide refugee teachers with status, training and remuneration.
- Teacher trainers/educations need sustained, comprehensive professional development in relation to the development of languages and literacies for diverse classrooms including refugees.

- It is important to have appropriate language syllabuses and teaching materials in refugee contexts.
- Educational contexts should provide a safe space for learning, as well as preparing children for their unknown futures.
- Schools in refugee contexts should take a systemic 'whole school approach' to mental health.
- New in-service teacher education provision can best be achieved through partnerships with institutions which:
  - Have trainers who understand issues in working with refugees.
  - Support teachers in implementing new curricula.
  - Use new teaching methods.
  - Enhance the practical competencies of dealing with displaced learners.
  - Include lesson planning for diverse groups of learners and materials design.

### Recommendations

- The needs of students in each country are different, as are the needs of teacher training courses. A systemic, strategic mechanism is needed to define these needs, and then to plan how to meet them.
- Universities in countries with large numbers of refugees should engage with teacher training for teachers in refugee contexts.
- Given the very scarce resources in many refugee contexts, the priority should be improving the capacity of schools to maximise the use of their existing resources.
- Continuing professional development should be offered to teachers of refugees in both formal and informal contexts.
- All teacher training programmes for refugee contexts (initial, and in-service) should:
  - Promote the move away from traditional teacher-fronted classes towards student-centred learning.
  - Promote an evidence-based, positive view of multilingualism and literacy.
  - Re-structure basic teaching qualifications curricula to include developing learning outcomes and competencies in counselling learners and parents.
- Teachers from a different background to the refugees in their classes should know:
  - About the educational experiences in children's countries of origin and first asylum.
  - About the extent to which children's schooling has been limited, disrupted or if they have had no schooling.
  - That language is a barrier to schooling.
  - That their refugee students may have previously been taught in a range of languages without proficiency in any.
  - That the quality of education they may have received is low and uneven.
  - That they have faced forms of discrimination (i.e. bullying, hostility).
  - About the importance of building a classroom community to support learning.
  - The implications of working with learners and families who have experienced trauma.
- National and regional responses are needed to address the assessment of learners who may be temporary residents, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged when placed in the local educational system.

## Implementation

- Donors, NGOs and UN bodies need to:
  - Work together to produce language policy and planning in the domains beyond education as part of a comprehensive approach which addresses all social, economic and educational questions linked to language.
  - Consult with a range of stakeholders to be able to take account of all of the communication needs of host and displaced communities.
- Teacher training and CPD curricula should be developed within the national context and should include:
  - Basic information about the effects of trauma on children's emotional, social and cognitive development, and how this is likely to interact with learning and behaviour in school.
  - Practical, uncomplicated advice for teachers on how best to support children who have experienced trauma, how to adapt standard teaching methods, and what they can do to help vulnerable children learn and develop their full potential.
- Pre-service teacher education needs new curricula which include:
  - Basic knowledge of the teaching profession.
  - Capacity for applying knowledge in practice.
  - Knowledge of the subject area.
  - Understanding of multilingualism in refugee contexts.
- All teachers need training in appropriate psycho-social support for refugee pupils and their families.

This development of theoretical knowledge and practical skills then needs to be supplemented through ongoing supervision and support to teachers. This could be provided in a range of ways, to individuals or groups of teachers, using Skype, email or video conferences. Peer supervision may be viable in some schools.

- For existing teachers:
  - Any change in expectations of teachers must be introduced carefully to ensure that teachers are not over-burdened.
  - Existing teachers can also be supported to improve/develop traditional methods of language teaching, rather than being expected to adopt new pedagogies.
- Changes in teaching practices need buy-in from parents, principals and policymakers:
  - Outreach and the development of a shared educational vision with all educational stakeholders are crucial for success.
  - In addition, teachers and students alike should be involved in the co-construction of the curriculum.
- Teachers should:
  - Ideally be recruited from the same background as the refugees to allow shared identities.
  - Be inducted into the background and rights of refugees if they are host country nationals.
  - Comprise a gender balance, to give both boys and girls positive role models.

In non-formal educational settings, where teachers may be untrained, capacity building should be provided from local language teaching professionals and advisers to support work-based teacher development. This support should include the development of appropriate syllabuses.

- Most of the methodology should be targeted at three goals:
  - Classrooms are safe spaces for refugee students even if the community is not.
  - Promote social interaction as some learners might be isolated outside the classroom.
  - Develop inclusive pedagogy, especially when national students and refugee students are in the same classroom.

# Thought pieces

## Capacity building among teachers: working with refugee teachers in camps and host communities

Mohammed Ateek

There are different social, cultural and economic challenges that are faced when building the capacity of teachers and strengthening educational systems. Some of these issues will require government action, but without this, principals and teachers play an important role in tackling these issues.

First, different social factors, mainly linked with economic causes and poverty, prevent refugees accessing quality education. These include early marriage, difficulty in accessing formal schools, underage labour and refugee exploitation.

In Turkey, Lebanon and Kurdistan, both the language barrier and the choice of curriculum (including Jordan here) present enormous challenges to learning in the classroom (UNCHR, 2015):

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Certification and accreditation for studies is not guaranteed and this can deter young people from continuing or re-entering formal and non-formal education (Refugee Studies Centre, 2014: 3).

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Second, untrained and vulnerable language teachers contribute to undesirable outcomes and may also present protection risks in schools. Managing large classes made up of students who have experienced trauma might do more damage than good if the teachers are untrained.

Third, refugee students, especially those coming from Syria, are used to grammar–translation methodology when it comes to learning languages. This method doesn't promote interaction or communication and orients to a teacher-centred classroom. Refugees are in need of interaction and less controlled practice by teachers. They shouldn't feel that they are passive, especially in places where they might be perceived negatively.

These issues, faced by both refugee students and teachers, contribute to the deteriorating situation for refugees in the neighbouring countries of Syria. Some proposals which could be beneficial when improving the situation for these vulnerable groups are:

1. An updated view of classroom management extends to everything that teachers may do to facilitate or improve student learning. This includes factors such as behaviour, environment, expectations, materials and activities. When tailoring professional development/teacher training, these factors in the courses/workshops must be included to ensure better quality language education for refugees. Covering the basic knowledge, classroom language and teachers' roles and responsibilities ensures students' protection and well-being.
2. Stressing the importance of teacher training to ensure that all teachers have access to orientation, training and ongoing in-service support according to their needs. In situations that necessitate the recruitment of unqualified, inexperienced refugee teachers, commitment to building teachers' capacity to keep children safe and help them learn in school is critical. 'Teacher training is a technical area requiring expertise, so reaching out to national partners to ensure quality professional development is recommended' (UNCHR, 2015: 4).
3. Not just refugee teachers but also national teachers need induction on the background and rights of refugee learners and preparation for challenges they may encounter including language and psychosocial issues.
4. Exploring methods to support school-based teacher development, which could include teacher observation, collaborative lesson planning and action research. Pedagogical advisers, qualified national teachers and/or experienced or qualified refugee teachers can be used to support school-based development.

5. More schools, training centres, psychosocial support and on-the-job training opportunities and teachers are urgently required to meet the needs and educational aspirations of young refugees from Syria.
6. The pay scale for teachers teaching refugees should be sufficient to attract the best and brightest young people, who are interested in learning and being part of the school family, and also committed to giving the children the best possible learning experience. The principal should aim for a gender balance among staff, if possible, to give both girls and boys positive role models (Alkateb-Chami et al., 2017).
7. Ensuring the language teachers get enough training in classroom management, language knowledge and teaching methodologies that promote learner autonomy, social interaction and communication in the classroom.
8. Part of the teacher training courses must be allocated to raising awareness and educating teachers about promoting social interaction and understanding. Students shouldn't feel that they are passive, especially in places where they might be perceived negatively. Methodology should be targeted at three goals:
  - classrooms are safe spaces for refugee students even if the community is not
  - promoting social interaction, as some learners might be isolated outside the classroom. This will contribute to their mental well-being, which essential to deal with the effects of trauma
- developing inclusive pedagogy, especially when national students and refugee students are in the same classroom.
9. Ensuring that there are workshops for teachers that deal with the teachers' well-being and managing their stress.

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## Strengthening institutional resilience: working with government

Tony Capstick

### Government provision in resource-low environments

Government institutions in many of the countries experiencing the effects of displacement are unprepared for the heightened mobility of people because many are only just managing to meet the needs of their existing populations. Ministries of education, health and social affairs struggle with limited resources to draw on the latest knowledge and expertise from around the world, particularly in relation to education innovation. In refugee contexts, this innovation often relates to the importance of multilingualism at the individual and societal level. There is an urgent need for national-level government as well as public education on multilingualism in education. Widespread misunderstanding of the role of multiple languages in the lives of all communities, particularly displaced communities, is often used as an argument against language diversity (UNICEF, 2016). Institutions can only be strengthened through collaborative partnerships among donors, NGOs and UN bodies, who together can produce language policy and planning in the domains beyond education as part of a comprehensive approach which addresses all social, economic and educational questions linked to language. By doing this, host communities and displaced communities' needs can be combined in a unified approach which treats language as a joint resource which enhances resilience, supports psychosocial support and fosters social cohesion. Official decision-making about language use in government institutions must be combined with processes of local grass-roots language planning to inform government decision-making. To achieve this, partners in language planning need to consult with a range of stakeholders to be able to take account of all of the communication needs of host and displaced communities.

### Pre-service teacher education reform

For ministries of education dealing with the provision of pre-service teacher education, institutional reform agendas need to include comprehensive modernisation of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. For pre-service education, learning outcomes which foreground new curricula need to include basic knowledge of the teaching profession, and the capacity for applying knowledge in practice followed by knowledge of the subject area. This includes pedagogic support that moves away from traditional teacher-fronted classes towards student-centred learning. At the core of these pedagogies is the national and international mobility of learners and teachers and the employability of the learner. Modern restructuring of the curricula is central to acquiring a basic teaching qualification which includes developing learning outcomes as well as competencies in counselling learners and parents. This is not psycho-social counselling but rather the type of support which helps teachers understand how to cope with newcomers in their classrooms and where to go for help with their own self-care and the care of their learners.

### In-service teacher education reform

Often in resource-low environments there is no effective system of in-service education. In times of heightened mobility, it is increasingly important to establish continuing professional development opportunities for serving teachers by providing teachers with opportunities from formal CPD frameworks such as those developed by the British Council. The process of developing new in-service teacher education provision can best be achieved through partnerships with institutions which support teachers in implementing new curricula, in using new

teaching methods and enhancing the practical competencies of dealing with displaced learners, including lesson planning for diverse groups of learners and materials design. Addressing the different assessment needs of learners who may be staying temporarily in one setting requires a regional as well as national response and can be part of new comprehensive systems of in-service education which help modernise national systems of education.

### **Teacher and learner identities in teacher education**

A further important aspect of these teacher education programmes is the knowledge that learners all belong to different national, cultural and social groups, but that nationality is only one aspect of our identity. The notion of identity helps teachers think about all the factors that contribute to their learners' individuality including the personal and social issues that are central to being a learner and being a teacher. An important aspect of teacher education provision is teachers' ability to understand the identities of their students as well as helping them to understand how their own personal identity is an important aspect of their professional identity as a teacher (Conteh, 2007). This is important in the resource-low environments of many refugee settings where there are a lack of opportunities for professional development that come with more comprehensive teacher development programmes. Institutional strengthening of teacher education can help teachers to better respond to students from different language backgrounds to their own when they themselves understand the importance of their own ethnicity and language background. Often there

are common misunderstandings between the perceptions of displaced communities and host community officials on questions of language in education as well as across other domains. Officials as well as the general public often argue for the need for national unity, global competitiveness or economic efficiency when orienting to monolingual education programming and often interpret demands for multilingual rights as socially disruptive or politically subversive. Collaborative decision-making can begin to counter these deficit models of multilingual education through informed evidence-based research selected for its relevance to the specific local multilingual context (UNICEF, 2016). This collaborative decision-making involves officials, experts and community representatives engaging in open-ended but guided dialogue (see Coleman and Capstick, 2012) to devise new policy positions to modify and improve existing practices. Misconceptions about language interference, language immersion and language diversity as a problem require the collaboration of applied linguists working alongside community groups, government and teachers.

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## Filling research gaps to build teacher capacity

Kerryn Dixon

The most recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study data indicates that 78 per cent of Grade 4 children in South Africa cannot read for meaning. Despite most children beginning schooling in their home language, children learning in African languages are outperformed by children at schools where English is the language of instruction. The children who most need access to quality education are the least likely to receive it. While there are many reasons for this crisis, universities responsible for educating teachers have to take their share of the responsibility.

Presently my own and other universities have begun to look closely at reforming language and literacy courses in primary school programmes. What is clear is that there is a dearth of knowledge and research, and much of the research that does exist is from the political North. We also have not been responsive enough to what it means to educate the large number of children who are marginalised, displaced and live in contexts of distress.

What do the South African literacy crisis and university courses have to do with education for refugees? For me it has to do with what we do not know. There are many ways to address the question of how teachers' capacity can be built and how educational systems can be strengthened. This thought piece focuses on the role of the university as a place where knowledge is produced and where such knowledge should inform teacher education. I outline some of the gaps that exist in the research and think about what the implications are for teacher education.

It seems strange that there is a gap in the research on teachers who teach refugees. More work focuses on the children. Many writers strongly emphasise the important role of teachers, but not their experiences. We do know that teachers are not prepared to deal with the academic, social and psychological needs of refugee children. Many of them have had to work out how to help children on their own (Szente et al., 2006). We don't know enough about the effective practices

teachers do use in their classrooms. It is also not clear which practices can be successfully applied across contexts. Does what works in a well-resourced classroom with a small class and highly qualified teacher in Canada work with a poorly qualified teacher with a large class in South Africa, or an untrained teacher teaching in a refugee camp in Kenya whose own schooling has been interrupted?

Teacher identity is an important issue as is ongoing professional development. How does one develop teacher identity with men and women who had no intention of teaching but find themselves working with children? What does professional development look like for teachers who have only done a ten-week course?

Knowing about the educational experiences in children's countries of origin and first asylum is a way of helping to support teachers. This is another gap. Teachers need to know how to find information about where children come from, the kind of conflict that has taken place in the country, and ethnic and linguistic tensions. They also need to know the extent to which children's schooling has been limited, disrupted or if they have had no schooling; that language is a barrier to schooling and they may have previously been taught in a range of languages without proficiency in any; the quality of education they may have received is low and uneven; and that they have faced forms of discrimination (i.e. bullying and hostility) (Dryden-Peterson, 2015).

There is also a gap in early childhood research for refugee children. There is greater recognition of the importance of early childhood education and the developmental consequences of not having access to early schooling. There is value in understanding young children's experiences of adapting to school, and navigating languages and home-school relationships. There needs to be more work on the contribution early childhood pedagogies can make. How can these pedagogies be adapted for older children? Using other modes to communicate when

children have not yet acquired language and more participatory and embodied ways of making meaning can be less stressful than more formal classroom learning.

Although there is a lot of work that has been done on multicultural education, there is not enough work on what culturally responsive pedagogies can look like with refugee children. Teachers have to take into account the challenges of transitioning to a new language, the impact of trauma, additional academic support and the fact that children are also likely to be distrustful. Roxas (2011: 5) quotes a teacher who talks about the importance of building a classroom community to support learning:

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Students can't begin to learn if they don't feel safe in their own classroom ... The classroom structure is their safety net because everything else around them could be in turmoil due to possible transition issues. They are often trying to help take care of the family, interpreting as they acquire more English or assisting as a bridge in the transition process, and they may have to babysit their siblings ... Due to all the transitions going on in their lives, they need that community in their classrooms in order to go forward in their schooling and language skills.

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In what may be a provocative point, the notion of culturally responsive practices also needs more careful investigation in relation to teacher-centred teaching. Teachers teach as they have been taught – teacher-centred teaching aligns with cultural

practices, child–adult relationships, and are deeply rooted in Africa and many other parts of the world. How does working to make teacher-centred teaching more productive rather than replacing it with other Western pedagogies have an impact on teaching interventions for emergency education?

The final gap in research returns me to my opening point: higher education's role. We know that refugees who have been able to access higher education make a greater social and economic impact. When there are so many refugees and displaced people in the world who have the right to quality education, what do responsive teacher education programmes look like? What constitutes effective language courses? When 86 per cent of refugees are hosted by developing countries, building the capacity of teachers is a conversation universities in developing countries need to be having.

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## Teacher education and training

Clare Furneaux

### Range of teacher training/education provision

Institutions that provide language and education programmes need teachers that can work with the students they have. In contexts with refugees these can be formal or informal contexts, and for pre-school-aged children, school-aged children or adults.

Taking teacher training/education in England as a case study of a possible ‘host’ country for refugees and asylum seekers, the following types of teacher training/education can be found.

**ELT/TESOL:** English language teachers’ qualifications, undertaken by teachers/trainees who wish to work in the UK or elsewhere, include the following qualifications. All are recognised worldwide, though not always within state systems.

- Introductory courses: weekend courses/a few hours online for gap-year students (e.g. i-to-i) or modules/training on some undergraduate programmes for year-abroad students – aimed at those going to work as short-term language assistants in other countries.
- Basic qualification: UCLES Certificate/Diploma in English Language Teaching for Adults (CELTA) one-month training. See Cambridge English (n.d.1). No focus on working with refugees.
- Intermediate qualification: UCLES Diploma in English Language Teaching for Adults (DELTA); post-two years’ experience; typically a four-month course. See Cambridge English (n.d.2). No focus on working with refugees.
- Academic qualification: master’s in ELT/TESOL – pre-/post-experience. Also offered in other anglophone countries worldwide, and in some other contexts with English-medium education. These may include relevant modules (e.g. Reading’s MA TESOL has ‘Language and Migration’), with the accompanying potential for dissertations in this area, but such possibilities are uncommon.

**EAL within Initial Teacher Education (ITE):** English as an additional language, with its UK association NALDIC (the National Association for Language Development In the Curriculum), is the title given to teaching in British schools to children whose first language is not English. Teaching of refugees in schools would come into this category. Teachers train as regular primary or subject-based secondary teachers (NALDIC, n.d.); this is increasingly being done in school-centred teacher-training programmes, with limited input from universities. The trained teachers then move into EAL provision within schools, by incorporating it into their everyday classrooms. This is not ideal as there are no EAL subject specialists at the ITE level, and EAL within

schools has an indeterminate status. Jean Conteh (2015: 1) notes that ‘EAL needs to be a central aspect of the professional knowledge of all teachers’, but it is, in practice, a minor part of initial teacher education programmes, and then of the professional skills of teachers who teach in schools and will go on to train the next generation of teachers.

**ESOL:** English for speakers of other languages who are migrants to English-dominant countries. This relates to adults. In England, pockets of good practice exist within formal education structures (in some further education colleges, for example), but this is an area that has experienced massive government cuts in the last ten years. The government’s response to the needs of refugees has been to place responsibility on the voluntary/third sector, conversation clubs and the like, rather than to support and maintain a well-funded, well-trained and professional teaching base.

This picture is, therefore, one of very limited/no formal teacher training or education targeted at those who teach refugees, aiming to teach either within the country of provision or elsewhere. However, there are perhaps models of teacher training and education here that could be adopted in refugee contexts, with appropriate content. Providers of the kind of courses outlined above could, for example, work with local teacher trainers/educators (another area of need) in other contexts.

### Aims of teacher training/education

It is vital that such teacher training/education in all contexts aims to:

- counter typical negative perceptions of refugees by non-refugee teachers (as found in UK by Safford and Drury, 2013, but noted elsewhere) – developing affectively
- construct a sense of teacher identity that incorporates multilingualism and cultural diversity as an enriching resource (e.g. Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Miller, 2010), as research indicates that professional identity is affected by personal and professional experiences of those two factors (Varghese et al., 2005; Hobson et al., 2009; Cajkler and Hall, 2012) – developing teacher identity
- provide refugee teachers – an invaluable resource – with status, training and remuneration
- provide teachers with the appropriate knowledge and understanding of: the importance of multilingual refugee learners developing home and target language skills, and literacy skills in conjunction with parents and appropriate refugee groups, and of teachers developing the necessary teaching skills – developing professionally.

### Other priorities

**Trainer/educator training:** priority should be given to develop and fund a sustained and comprehensive professional development programme for teacher educators/trainers in relation to the development of languages and literacies for diverse classrooms, including refugees.

**Development of appropriate teaching resources:** it is important to have appropriate teaching materials. Most materials currently available for language teaching purposes are not suitable. Commercial publishers may not see a sustainable market demand, so the provision of such materials probably has to lie with local educational departments and organisations. This has the advantage of allowing students and teachers to input to materials development in local contexts.

### Contextual factors

In a rare paper exploring and comparing the literature on refugee education in different contexts – Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Turkey – Crul et al. (2016) identify ‘seven institutional arrangements’, which are core to any refugee’s educational experiences in the country they find themselves in:

1. entrance into compulsory education
2. welcome, submersion, preparation, international or introduction classes
3. pre-school arrangements
4. second language instruction
5. additional support (emotional and psychological)
6. ‘tracking’ (selection to academic/vocational tracks in schools)
7. education after compulsory school.

Any of these can present major support or challenges to refugee learners in that context, and they give important messages about how to welcome the refugees. It is important that educational providers are aware of this.

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## Teachers within the educational system

Shirley Reynolds

### Why teachers and the education system?

Teachers, schools and other parts of the education system have a unique set of relationships with children and their families. Teachers may be the only professionals that many families meet or have access to – education is a universal service in many countries and settings, and the role of teachers is widely understood and is often linked with status and respect – so people may listen to them.

Schools and the wider education system link into other social systems and can provide a pathway to multiple other sources of practical support for refugees and other vulnerable groups.

In this thought piece I will explore UK government initiatives designed to develop the role that schools play in supporting children's mental health. One option is to introduce a 'senior lead for mental health' in each primary and secondary school. Some elements of that proposal may be relevant to building the capacity of teachers and schools internationally.

### Building the capacity of teachers, as individuals and as a profession

#### Individuals

Teachers working with children who have experienced trauma and relocation face many demands for which they are often ill-prepared. We can build the capacity of teachers in this respect through adapting initial teacher training, and through ongoing professional development and training.

Teacher training and development should include basic information about the effects of trauma on children's emotional, social and cognitive development, and how this is likely to interact with learning and behaviour in school. Teachers need practical, uncomplicated advice on how best to support children who have experienced trauma, how to adapt standard teaching methods, and what they can do to help vulnerable children learn and develop their full potential. This will be particularly important where children are learning in an unfamiliar environment, in a new culture or country, and in a language in which they are not fluent. All of the cognitive problems associated with trauma will impact on the child's ability to learn a new language.

This development of theoretical knowledge and practical skills then needs to be supplemented through ongoing supervision and support to teachers. This could be provided in a range of ways, to individuals or groups of teachers, using Skype, email or video conferences. Peer supervision may be viable in some schools.

Individual teachers need to feel that they can manage most situations that arise in the classroom, and that they continue to learn and develop their skills. Any change in expectations put on teachers must be introduced carefully to make sure that teachers are not over-burdened, and that we do not expect them to solve insoluble problems that belong elsewhere.

### Strengthening education systems

In the UK, schools are encouraged to adopt a systemic 'whole school approach' to mental health and to integrate mental health and well-being throughout the curriculum (Weare, 2015). This approach aims to minimise stigma, make mental health and well-being everyone's business, and teach children about mental health, just as we routinely teach them about physical health and well-being. A whole-school approach includes all individuals working with or in the school system including school staff and parents.

Eight principles make up the Public Health England (*ibid.*) whole school approach.

1. It must be led by the senior management team.
2. Well-being and mental health must be embedded in the school ethos and environment.
3. Well-being and mental health should be incorporated into the routine school curriculum.
4. Students should be involved in making decisions about things that affect their education (at a developmentally appropriate level).
5. The well-being and mental health of school staff should be protected and promoted.
6. Schools should monitor children's well-being and mental health and use this data to plan activities and interventions to promote well-being and mental health.
7. Schools should work in partnership with parents to promote well-being and mental health.
8. Children with identifiable needs should receive targeted support.

The whole-school approach assumes that schools will use their own resources to promote good mental health and well-being and that they can access 'targeted' support for children with 'identifiable' needs. There is evidence that interventions can be delivered in high- and low-income countries (Fazel et al., 2014a; Fazel et al., 2014b); however, given the huge demands on very scarce resources, most schools who work with refugee children will not have access to external specialist services. Therefore our priority should be on improving the capacity of schools themselves to maximise the use of their existing resources.

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## Involve stakeholders, measure impact and scaffold teacher development

Chris Sowton

Teachers are at the frontline of dealing with the global refugee crisis. This results in huge pressures and expectations being placed on them, which is often especially problematic since they are refugees themselves, and may be experiencing trauma, poverty and/or isolation. At one and the same time, these teachers are expected to support children 'in the now' by providing a safe space for learning, as well as preparing children for their unknown futures. For skilled, trained teachers this would be a huge challenge, but in refugee situations teachers are very often not trained and have little or no previous teaching experience. Furthermore, the educational setting is highly likely to be a challenging one: children are likely to have had a fractured educational experience, classrooms are frequently makeshift and unfit for purpose, the materials available may not be suitable or appropriate, and little internal or external support is provided. And yet, despite this panoply of difficulties, education – formal, informal and non-formal – is taking place in many refugee communities. Whatever questions there may be over the quality of the education being given, the normalising effect of having any kind of education is extremely positive, in addition to ancillary benefits such as the respite it provides to parents, and the vestige of hope it offers in deeply complex and difficult circumstances.

Clearly, then, to improve educational quality in these contexts, capacity building at the systemic and programme level is crucial. Training, however, is commonly insufficient and ad hoc, and there is little support provided where it would have the highest impact – at the classroom level. As Burns and Lawrie (2015: 7) suggest, teacher professional development in crisis contexts is 'episodic, its quality variable, its duration limited and support or follow-up for teachers almost non-existent'. All too often training is viewed in quantitative rather than qualitative terms – by volume rather than impact. In many contexts there appears to be an assumption that training will automatically and casually result in superior educational performance by students, as opposed to it being viewed as something which needs to be applied, which brings its own complications. Training can be perceived as a product rather than a process, echoing the commonly held attitudes towards education at the institutional level.

From a practical perspective, through my experience of working with English language teachers in informal Syrian refugee settlements in Lebanon, I have come to the opinion that – for this group of teachers at least

(but I believe this point can also be more widely applied) – there are two necessary conditions for meaningful capacity development to take place. Firstly, there has to be buy-in from the 'three Ps' – parents, principals and policymakers. Without this support, teachers will be stymied when trying to introduce pedagogical changes at the micro-level. This is especially the case in many refugee contexts because these stakeholders hold conservative educational attitudes – the result of either their own educational experiences in Syria (or elsewhere), or their perception of what a good education should be. This results in educational systems which are teacher-centred and exam-centric models, where the focus is the acquisition of knowledge rather than the development of skills, and where the trappings of 'proper' schools (fixed tables and benches, bells, roll call/assemblies and uniforms) are often found, regardless of whether this is pedagogically sound and economically efficient. Outreach and the development of a shared educational vision with all educational stakeholders is, therefore, crucial for success.

Secondly, at the classroom level, alongside the development of new curricular materials, a much more scaffolded approach to capacity development is needed. Ideally, teachers and students alike should be involved in the co-construction of the curriculum, even if only in a light-touch way. Being involved in such a process is empowering and increases the agency of the participants, and the material itself is likely to be more relevant and appropriate. Given that the application of unfamiliar pedagogical ideas is especially difficult for inexperienced teachers in the context outlined above, additional support is necessary. However, the ability and availability of other teachers or trainers to watch, give feedback and upskill teachers in this way is extremely limited, meaning another route is needed to take this to scale. The work I am trying to take forward in Lebanon consists of developing a teacher 'script' for the lesson (which they can deviate from according to how confident they feel) and where the methodology applied supports teachers in implementing a more learner-centred, dynamic, emotionally literate suite of materials.

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## Preparing the ground: pre-learning personal mentors

Beverley Costa

This thought piece is based principally on my experience of running a service for vulnerable migrants in the UK and working with a refugee support service in the Middle East. There may be evidence-based practice that can support the following suggestions, but I am afraid I am not aware of them.

### Building on experience

Observing an Italian language class being delivered in Sicily to a group of young unaccompanied refugees, I was struck by the following:

- the enormous energy, commitment and skill of the teacher
- the challenge to teach a heterogeneous group comprising different educational experiences, levels of literacy in their other languages, motivations and mental health issues, competing demands for their attention (for example, two of the 15-year-old girls had their babies with them in the class).

The challenges seemed to be related to:

- the effects of trauma. Alterations to brain functioning after exposure to traumatic experiences over a period of time – the under-activation of the prefrontal cortex i.e. ‘The Thinking Centre’ impacting on concentration, attention and memory
- the survival/practical needs of recently arrived young people – learning how to navigate a new system; the infantilisation process of not understanding the system or the language or how one’s survival needs will be met; fear for one’s own and for one’s loved ones’ safety; culture shock or acculturation stress.

Eleftheriadou (2010: 121), in a discussion of the psychosocial experiences of migrants, likens the early days of entering a new culture to that of a new baby coming into the world. She makes the parallel referring to the overwhelming anxiety of managing the practicalities of the world, for example finance and housing. She says that without some space free of these anxieties, the newly arrived person will

become overwhelmed by the newness of everything. It is a time when newly arrived people need robust containment if they are then going to be able to proceed to explore and become involved in their environment.

### A possible intervention

It occurred to me that, given the impact of traumatic experiences on people’s memory and ability to learn, coupled with their practical survival priorities, the following could be useful:

- some pre-education mentoring, by trained pre-learning psychosocial mentors, for the students, preparing them for the language-learning process, given the students’ fragile survival contexts
- training for teachers to take on this psychosocial mentoring/advising role. This training could include: psychosocial models for understanding and respecting different levels of motivation; priorities within a survival context; attitudes to and tolerance of challenge; short-term goal setting; long-term goal setting; toleration for the unknown (given that almost all their students’ futures are probably unknown); recognising success; trust building; repairing ruptures in learning experiences.

### Suggested implementation

Although the role of language adviser (Mozzon-McPherson and Vismans, 2001) was set up for a very different context, it could perhaps serve as a prototype upon which to build this new role.

### Language advising in practice

A key aim in advising is to support students in their language learning and help them find the most effective and efficient way of doing so in a variety of learning environments (online, in self-access centres, in classroom contexts).

The language adviser or ‘pre-learning mentor’ in the refugee context would need to be able to



work in the students' proficient languages or to be able to work collaboratively with an interpreter. A language adviser could be available to all students pre-enrolment and offer some of the following as appropriate:

- identifying potential students' prevailing preoccupations and priorities and identifying appropriate support for that
- exploring relaxation and calming techniques to help to calm the mind, pre-lesson and during lessons, so they can relax enough to learn
- explaining neurological impacts of trauma and its effect on learning
- exploring motivation for learning the language
- exploring barriers to learning the language and attending classes and identifying strategies to overcome these barriers
- creating a learning plan together.

As well as the pre-learning mentoring session, the mentors would also offer regular reviews to adapt the learning plan with the student as needed, based on reality feedback and to respond to the student's changing needs and circumstances.

#### Potential barriers

- Not enough resources to implement.
- Not enough time for professional development.
- Competing priorities.
- Teachers not convinced about the value of this intervention.
- Ability to work effectively with interpreter.
- Availability of good-quality interpreting.

#### Possible solution

One possible solution is a small-scale pilot to develop training materials for pre-learning mentors and to trial them with a group of teachers working in a refugee camp. There are some coaching and mentoring training programmes for teachers, although they are not quite as envisaged in this paper.

A simple project could build on the experience of remote mentoring trainee teachers, e.g. ESOL teachers from the Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics, School of Literature and Languages, University of Reading who remotely mentored trainee teachers in 2017. Focus groups and interviews could be carried out with the participating teachers to: identify the type of situations they encountered; the gaps in their own training and formation if they were to carry out the role of a psychosocial pre-learning mentor – with or without an interpreter; their contexts and the type of training in terms of knowledge about trauma and self-care strategies they feel is needed.

#### From these interviews:

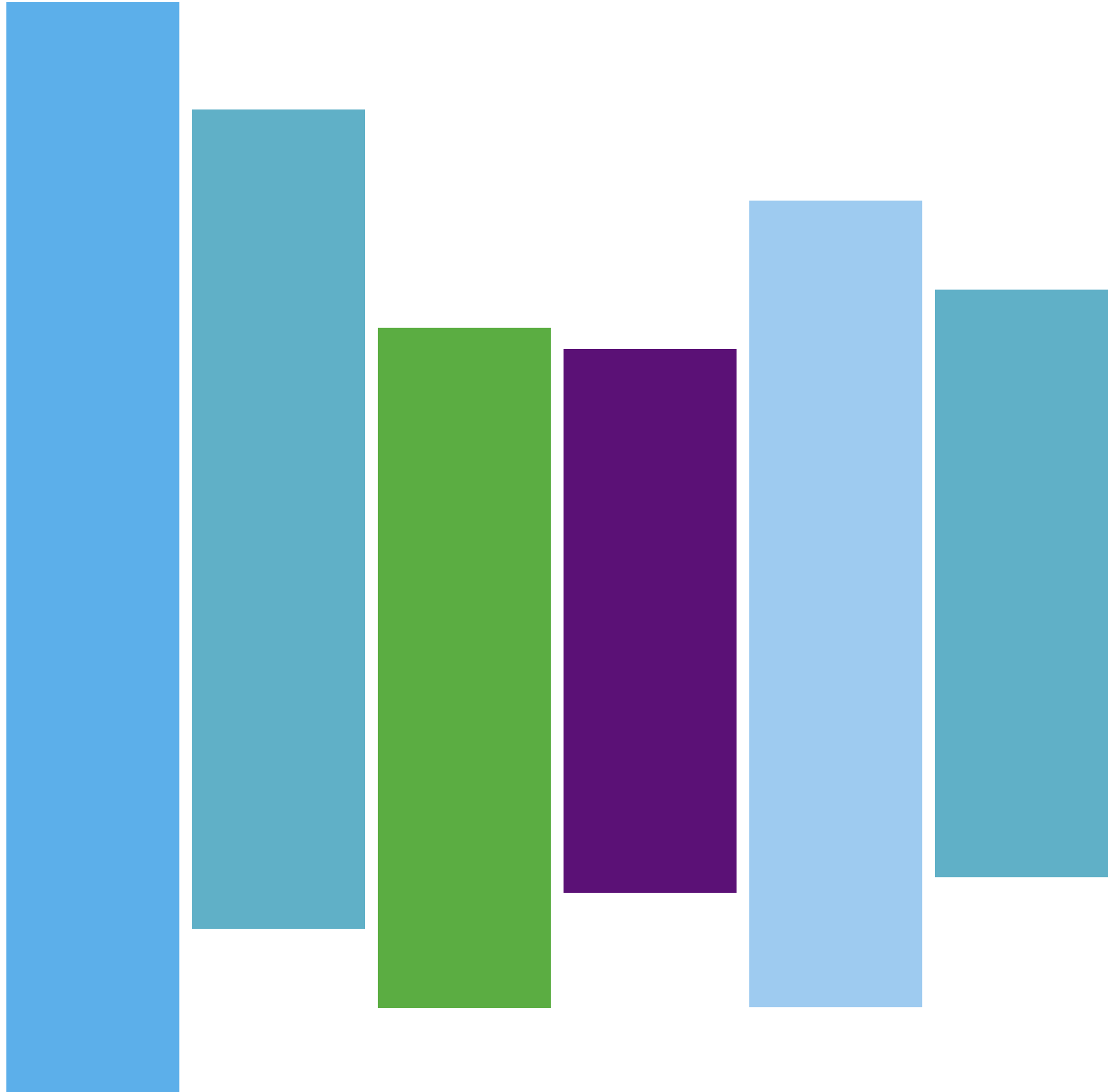
- online training could be developed, trialled and evaluated with participants
- online induction could be trialled: to prepare a small group of interested teachers to become trainee pre-learning mentors, working with/ without an interpreter
- possible interpreters could be identified and trained to work collaboratively with pre-learning mentors
- a small pilot with targeted potential students, linked with pre-learning mentors and interpreters to be trialled and evaluated.

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# Appendix





# The role of language in enhancing the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities

This is an abridged version of the original *Language for Resilience* research available at <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language-for-resilience-report-en.pdf>

The *Language for Resilience* report sets out findings related to the language needs of refugees and host communities affected by the Syrian crisis. It examines the role and importance of language in supporting the resilience of people, communities and institutions hardest hit by the crisis, in particular how language can enhance protection and decrease vulnerability.

The authors carried out desk and field research in Jordan, Iraq (Kurdistan Region), Lebanon and Turkey – interviewing teachers, Ministry of Education officials, children, parents, volunteers, and INGO/NGO staff.

The aim was to understand how language programming and tools, when strategically implemented as part of wider humanitarian and development efforts, can enhance resilience at all levels in a community by:

- Giving people a voice and acting as a tool to support social cohesion.
- Providing individuals with the language skills they need to access work, services, education and information.
- Helping schools, universities and educators in host communities handle influxes of refugee students with different home languages, attainment, and psychosocial needs.

## Background

The Syria Crisis is the largest political, humanitarian and development challenge of our time. As the conflict in Syria enters its 6th year, most of the over four million Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq see little prospect of returning home in the near future and have limited opportunities to restart their lives in exile. The international community has committed to support these people and the countries and communities hosting them, and to

reduce the need for refugees to risk their lives reaching safety elsewhere. Enhancing resilience at individual, community and institutional levels is a key focus of this support. Resilience in this report is defined as improving ‘the ability of individuals, households, communities and institutions to anticipate, withstand, recover and transform from shocks and crises’ (3RP).

## Role of the British Council

Since 2012, the British Council has been building on over sixty years’ experience on the ground, by working to support stability in host countries and increase access to opportunity for host communities and refugees.

Since the start of the crisis, the British Council has:

- Worked in over 20,000 public schools in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq; delivering major public school system strengthening programmes and school leadership training.
- Collaborated with the Open University to provide academic and language skills programmes and greater access to higher education through an innovative online learning programme. This programme will directly benefit 3,000 Syrian refugees aged 18–30.
- Supported over 128,000 children in Lebanon and Jordan to access quality education through our work on improving teacher capacity to address inclusion and integration in the classroom. This is helping to address barriers to access and reasons for drop-out.
- For those outside the school system, the British Council is providing incentives to enter and stay in non-formal education, through improving the quality of catch-up classes, or providing sought after English language.

## Findings

The report identifies five interconnected ways in which language is an essential component in enhancing the resilience of individuals, communities and institutions. It identifies the protective factors in each strand and the vulnerability factors.

- 1. Home language and literacy development:** creating the foundations for shared identity, belonging and future study through home language use. Children's access to education in their home languages is a crucial factor. Research shows that proficiency in a home language is vital to successful learning in school. It also affects success at learning any additional languages which may be required. In addition, proficiency in home languages enhances resilience by giving access to the maintenance of a shared culture, sense of belonging and identity.
- 2. Access to education, training and employment**  
Across the region, there is a recognition of the important role of education, training and employment opportunities to protect vulnerable people and enhance their resilience. Language competency was highlighted in all of the countries as vital for securing access to education, training and employment. Many refugees have problems accessing information and applying for education and training courses due to their lack of language proficiency. Professionals also identified a need for language programmes to provide greater access to professional documentation and training. English was identified as a high priority in Jordan, the Kurdistan region of Iraq and Lebanon. In Lebanon French was also needed by some refugees. In Turkey children and adults need to quickly learn Turkish to access formal schooling and employment opportunities.
- 3. Learning together and social cohesion:** language-learning activities as a basis for developing individual resilience, ensuring dignity, self-sufficiency and life skills. This theme links the role of language with the development of life skills for enhancing personal and community resilience. Language learning can improve engagement with host communities and public services, particularly where host communities have low levels of Arabic proficiency and where public services are delivered in a foreign language, such as Turkey. A shared interest in language learning, often English, also provides a means to bring people together to communicate and build relationships, acting as a vehicle for people to tell their stories, gain skills vital for self-sufficiency, interact with each other, express emotions and celebrate diversity. Programmes can bring people from different communities together to learn a language as well as foster intergenerational learning within communities with family programmes.
- 4. Addressing the effects of trauma on learning:** language programmes as a supportive intervention and a way to address the effects of loss, displacement and trauma on behaviour and learning. Language can be linked to enhancing resilience by its potential role in helping refugees to address the effects of loss, displacement and trauma. Language gives a voice so that stories can be heard and understood. The effects of trauma are often displayed in learning situations but psycho-social interventions do not always need to be seen as separate interventions to language learning. Language learning can provide opportunities for safe spaces, where students work through the effects of trauma in learning by exploring personal experiences and feelings through creative activities, play and storytelling. This can be particularly powerful in the safety of a second or third language.

5. Building the capacity of teachers and strengthening educational systems to create inclusive classrooms: professional training for language teachers to build institutional resilience For UNDP (2015), the core of the resiliencebased development response is the support of national systems. This theme explores the links between institutional providers of language and education programmes and the resources needed by teachers to support vulnerable students. In resilience building, these resources are protective factors. Professional development for teachers, particularly in the areas of creating inclusive classrooms, understanding the effects of trauma on learning, and teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms is seen as vital in developing the ability of public education providers to withstand the influx of large numbers of students with different language competencies and backgrounds. The report also highlights the barriers education providers and teachers face when attempting to implement innovation at both the class room and systemic levels. These barriers, which create vulnerability in the implementation of such training were identified as a lack of space in the curriculum and the complex integration of assessment, teacher training and the size of national education systems.

## Recommendations

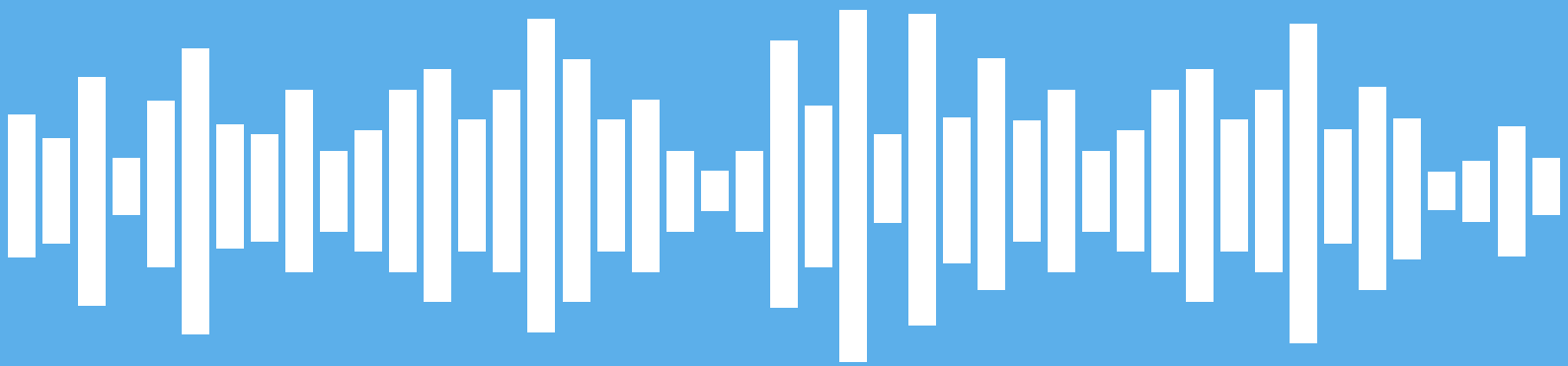
The report examines existing language programmes and provides suggestions for building on these in order to better meet the scale of the need. These programming recommendations focus on five main areas in both the formal and non-formal sectors:

- Multilingual programming, including home language development
- Language learning for tertiary education, vocational and professional training and employment
- Community language learning and social cohesion language projects
- Language activities as supportive psychosocial interventions
- Teacher development for inclusive language education

It also recommends utilising the existing UN-led coordination structure on the ground to improve organisation, quality and understanding of language programming, through for example a Language Sub-Group within the Education Sector Working Group.

More broadly, for improving the international response to language needs in crisis contexts, the authors recommend exploration of a 'Language Vulnerability Index' – a tool for measuring how an individual's vulnerability is affected by their language profile, based on a range of linguistic and environmental factors.

The British Council plans to use this report to build on the existing foundations for language education in the Syria Crisis Response, working with language sector partners and those already providing resilience and protection for refugees and host communities in Syria and neighbouring countries. Language for Resilience will also be a topic of discussion and presentation at fora in the region and globally, with a view to seeing how the lessons from this crisis can be applied elsewhere in the world to support others affected by conflict and displacement.



## Photography

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