



TeachingEnglish

## British Council: TeachingEnglish

A podcast series for teachers  
of English



# Episode 4: How can I teach refugees, migrants and internally displaced people effectively?

Show notes



## Episode overview

There are more than 85 million displaced people in the world, with children under the age of 18 constituting around half this total. Whether a refugee, migrant, or internally-displaced person, developing language skills can play a huge role for these individuals – and the host communities in which they live – to withstand challenges, recover from crisis and overcome barriers. We'll explore the British Council work on *Language for Resilience* to understand this further. Following on from this, we'll speak to teacher and trainer Brian Lally about his work and research in Lebanon with Syrian refugees and identify some core principles which teachers working in these challenging situations can use.

## In this episode

42% of the world's forcibly displaced people are children which obviously has huge implications for education.

Language classes give people the opportunity to come and share, talk about their experience in a safe space, and also to engage with other communities.

A Sudanese participant, he took the training ... and it gave him many chances to be part of the community and even to develop his language proficiency.

My concern is really that the terminology might actually displace some of the responsibility.

Just the very existence of education in these contexts is itself a statement of hope.

## Classroom application

Think about how you could use the ideas in this episode in your own teaching. The questions below focus particularly on refugees, IDPs, migrants and asylum seekers (RIMA). If you don't teach these groups, you could ask yourself:

- How do you make your teaching relevant and inclusive for students from different backgrounds?
- What teaching practices / skills mentioned in the podcast would you like to improve? How could you achieve this?

### Think about your own practice

In terms of learning, what are the particular needs and requirements of asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and IDPs (ARMI)? How can you create a positive learning space for these groups?

Why do ARMI want to learn language(s)? What are the opportunities? What is the motivation?

What are the challenges faced by ARMI in terms of learning language(s)?

When teaching ARMI, are there any particular issues which you might need to omit, or manage?

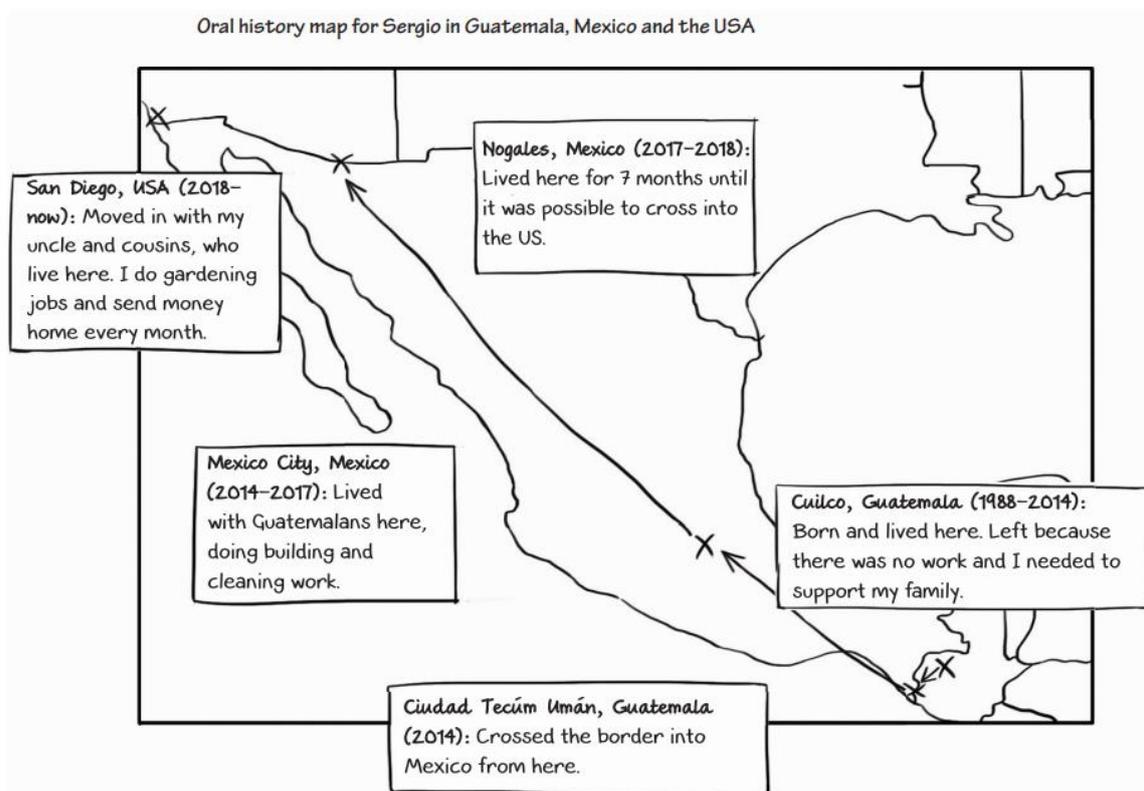
### Try this classroom activity

1. Invite people from the local community into your classroom. Ask them to talk about the past. Encourage the speakers to discuss a wide range of topics (e.g. culture, society, technology, politics).
2. Make the discussion interactive. Encourage students to ask questions. It might be helpful to prompt students with questions such as:
  - How have things changed in the last (30) years?
  - What did this area used to look like?
  - Are there any festivals which aren't celebrated anymore?
3. Some students should be taking notes. You could also record or video what is said (if possible). If you do, make sure you ask for and receive permission from everyone who is going to appear in the video.
4. Students create a poster / play / short video about what they have heard. From a language perspective, encourage students to use both L1 and L2. For example:
  - the poster could be labelled in L1 and L2
  - the play's dialogue could be in L1 and the narration in L2
  - the play's dialogue could be in L2 and the narration in L1
  - the video could be in L1, but with subtitles created in L2 (but if this is difficult technically, subtitles could be written on paper – they do not have to appear on

the screen).

5. Students share what they have created with the wider community, e.g. performing the play, reading the story or displaying the poster.
6. If you have time, students could do a range of follow-up written activities in L2, like producing a summary, news report, newsletter, and so on.

Highly mobile settings, where people have physically moved between many different places, can be used positively with students. Students could interview people and create a map which physically represents their journeys (see an example of an oral history map below). This could then be labelled in L2 and/or L1.



From Chris Sowton (2021), *Teaching in Challenging Circumstances*

## Social media

Please share your views about this episode, and the series as a whole, on social media using the hashtag #TEBC. Let us know your thoughts, reflections, comments and whether you have been able to use any of the ideas in your teaching.

## Detailed notes

Use these notes to find out more about the contents of Episode 4.

Phrase	Explanation and Further Information
<b>Field Report: Language for Resilience</b>	
Terminology	<p>There is often confusion about the descriptions of people who have left the place where they were living. The different terms are used as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A <b>refugee</b> is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country due to a conflict or a credible fear of persecution based on reasons of race, religion, political opinion, membership of a social group in that country and is seeking refuge in another state.</li><li>• An <b>asylum-seeker</b> is someone who applies for protection as a refugee in another country and his or her request for refugee status has not been assessed or is yet to be processed.</li><li>• <b>Internally displaced people</b> are people seeking refuge from conflict or disasters but within the borders of their own country.</li><li>• A <b>migrant</b> is an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.</li></ul>
Language for Resilience	<p>As the British Council's website for <a href="#">Language for Resilience</a> says, "Language learning is absolutely essential. It helps refugees and their host communities to withstand challenges, to recover from crisis, to overcome barriers – to build resilience."</p> <p>The original language for resilience report can be downloaded <a href="#">here</a>. The follow-up report, <i>Cross-disciplinary perspectives on the role of language in enhancing the resilience of refugees and host communities</i>, can be downloaded <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Jordan	The Language for Resilience Programme helps community centres in Jordan deliver high-quality English language

	programmes to marginalized and displaced youth through Community Language Support (CLS). Discover more about this programme <a href="#">here</a> . You can also <a href="#">click here</a> to read about a recent piece of research on language for resilience in Jordan commissioned by the British Council.
English for Interfaith Dialogue	English for Interfaith Dialogue is a continuation of The British Council partnership with Al-Azhar, which started back in 2007, to help building the English Language, communication and leadership skills of teachers and students. Discover more about this programme <a href="#">here</a> .
@ Palestine programme	<a href="#">Click here</a> to discover more about the work of the British Council in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and <a href="#">click here</a> for more specific information about the @Palestine programme.
Gaza Sky Geeks	Gaza Sky Geeks is an initiative born out of Mercy Corps' desire to extend its work beyond traditional humanitarian programs, and Google's interest in the Gazan tech community. Find out more at <a href="https://gazaskygeeks.com/">https://gazaskygeeks.com/</a> .
<b>Interview with Brian Lally</b>	
Brian Lally	Find out more about Brian's research <a href="#">here</a> . Brian has been working with a Syrian-led NGO MAPS in Lebanon. You can discover more about their work <a href="#">here</a> .
Education in Emergencies	Education in emergencies means providing schooling in humanitarian emergencies including conflicts or wars, natural disasters and health-related crises. A useful website with more details about this form of education is the <a href="#">INEE</a> .
Often, I'm seeing children responding normally to bad teaching	As the psychologist Madge Bray says, "A child's current behaviour often reflects an essentially sane response to an untenable set of life circumstances."
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects people's behaviour. People with ADHD can seem restless, may have trouble concentrating and may act on impulse. Symptoms of ADHD tend to be noticed at an early age and may become more noticeable when a child's circumstances change, such as when they start school.
Trauma	The language classroom can be a space in which students can learn to manage their own feelings and behaviour. There is also

	good evidence that the ability to switch between languages can help people manage their trauma – either to distance themselves from the traumatic event, or else to focus in on it, allowing them to self-regulate.
A safe space	A 'safe space' is somewhere that students feel they can speak and act freely, without being judged unfairly by the teacher or their fellow students.

## Useful links

- [Language for Resilience Facebook Group](#)
- [Language for Resilience LinkedIn Group](#)
- [Migrants and Refugees in Education: A toolkit for teachers](#)
- [“What I wish I'd known when I began teaching English to refugees” – an article in the British Council's 'Voices' magazine](#)
- [University of Kent free resources for teaching ARMI](#)
- [Education and Training Foundation – free ESOL materials](#)

# Glossary

The following words at the B2, C1 and C2 level (according to the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#)) are used in this episode.

## B2 Level

abandoned  
academic  
actual  
adapt  
additional  
affected  
ambitious  
anxiety  
appropriate  
artificial  
barely  
barrier  
basically  
beyond  
capacity  
cause  
circumstances  
commerce  
commitment  
communicative  
community  
compares to  
concern  
confidently  
conflict  
context  
contrary  
contribute  
cope  
council  
crisis  
critically  
culturally  
currently  
data  
denied  
dialogue  
dimension  
diverse  
economy  
effectively  
enable  
eventually  
existence  
express  
extension  
extreme  
factors

faiths  
feature  
feedback  
focus  
formal  
global  
graduates  
highlight  
hints  
host  
human rights  
identified  
illustrated  
images  
immediate  
individuals  
inspiration  
institutions  
key in  
management  
massive  
master  
meaningful  
media  
misunderstand  
nations  
necessarily  
networks  
occupied  
opposed  
overall  
overseas  
partnership  
plugged  
practical  
present  
pressure on  
primarily  
process  
prospects  
protection  
psychological  
publication  
put up with  
rate  
realities  
reality  
recommendation  
reflections

refugee  
regarded  
regional  
relevant  
researchers  
resource  
response  
responsibility  
scale  
seek  
specific  
statement  
stood out  
strengthening  
stressing  
sudden  
sum up  
symbol  
territories  
tied up  
tradition  
truly  
united  
unlocks  
version  
violence  
vision  
working at / on  
worldwide

## C1 Words

acknowledge  
addressing  
attendance  
broaden  
broadly  
competent  
completion  
constitutes  
constructive  
displacement  
displacing  
diversity  
duration  
engage  
evaluate  
flee  
grand  
implications

interactions  
internally  
leadership  
literacy  
moderate  
namely  
notions  
overwhelmed  
participant  
perceiving  
principles  
privileged  
provision  
pursuing  
random  
reinforce  
restless  
scholars  
scope  
stereotype  
supportive  
tolerant  
unqualified

## C2 Words

advocate  
aspiration  
diagnosing  
echo  
engage in  
entity  
hostility  
margins  
narrative  
novelty  
observer  
optimism  
persistence  
practitioner  
resentment  
resilience  
resilient  
rigid  
scenarios  
schooling  
striving  
trauma  
underlying  
vulnerable