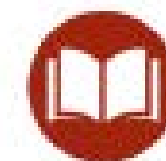


PILOTING A LITERACY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR REFUGEE YOUTH TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOLS



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OUR TEAM

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Why?

- Limited literacy programming for refugee youth in Nova Scotia.
- Essential for helping them catch up in academics.
- Refugee students may need up to 10 years to develop necessary English skills (Collier & Thomas, 2017).
- Crucial to reverse the trend of school resistance–truancy, dropout, disengagement–among refugee youth (Nakhaie, 2021).

Purpose

For this study, there were two main objectives:

- Develop case profiles of refugee youth literacy and language development
- Document structured literacy instruction for refugee youth

The two guiding research questions were:

- What strengths and assets are demonstrated by refugee youth, with interrupted education, when engaging in structured literacy instruction?
- What are the language and literacy needs of refugee youth with interrupted education?

Theoretical Background



Literacy Skills

1. Individual **cognitive-oriented perspective** of acquiring the complex skills to read and write: phonology, vocabulary, morphology, and comprehension (Gates, Jacobson, Degener, & Purcell-Gates, 2009)
2. A **socio-cultural perspective** that considers a person's functional literacy development as situated within a particular context of use mediated through the student's educational context, and most importantly for adolescent youth, with their peers (Cumming & Geva, 2012).

Socio-cultural Context



Phonics
+
Phonology



Vocabulary
+
Oral language



Morphology



Comprehension

Language Skills

Language is a communication tool that serves two purposes:

- a) social needs
- b) academic needs

The time to learn the two types of *languages* varies greatly, as does how students learn (Cummins & Early, 2015).



Social

- High-frequency irregular words
- High-context (e.g., gestures, visuals)
- Oral language
- Anglo-Saxon origins
- 1-3 years to learn



Academic

- Low-frequency words
- Multi-syllabic words and complex sentence structures
- Low-context/subject specific
- Written language (predominantly)
- Latin and Greek origins
- 5-9 years and needs to be explicitly taught

Instructional Approach



Limited to no Literacy skills

Learning
letters/sounds
Learning short
vowel sounds
CVC words

Case
Cluster A



Beginning Literacy Skills in English

Identify most to all letters/sounds
Recognize, read and write simple words
Practice writing

Case
Cluster B



Case
Cluster C



Case
Cluster D



Methods

Participants

Halifax High School

- 15 joined the study (2 Female; 13 Male; ages 15-21)
- Spoke Arabic as home or additional language
- Students chose their pseudonyms:
- 8 completed the study (received \$150 gift card)
 - 4 formally withdrew/stopped attending school
 - 3 missed all of the instructional sessions because of truancies or suspensions
 - 47% withdrawal rate

Qualitative

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

- Initial Interview (in Arabic) (Using collages made)
- Ongoing weekly reflections by the tutors/instructional team
- Weekly learning tasks
- Focus Group (member-checking in Arabic)
- Final Interviews (member-checking in Arabic)

Data Analysis

- Narrative Case Profiles were created (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)
- Theme and Pattern Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)



Measures	What is it measuring? Time taken to complete.	What will the participants do?
<i>Literacy Measures</i>		
1. Letter-Word Identification (WJ-WID)	Identification of letters/words (5 min)	The test starts with identifying only one letter per item, and gradually shifts into identifying one word at a time (Woodcock et al., 2001).
2. Pseudoword reading (WJ-WAT)	Phonetic decoding (5 min)	This test starts with the identification of 2 to 3 letter string nonwords with an increasing difficulty level (Woodcock et al., 2001)
3. Word Reading Fluency (TOWRE)	Word/non-word reading rate/accuracy (90 sec)	Participants will be given 45 seconds to read as many items as possible in each subtest (Torgesen, Wagner & Rashotte, 2012)
<i>Phonological Awareness Measures</i>		
4. Elision task (CTOPP)	Ability to isolate and/or delete phonemes (5 min)	Participants repeat a word without saying one part/sound of the word (CTOPP2; Wagner, Torgesen, Rashotte & Pearson, 2013)
<i>Oral language skills Measures</i>		
5. Vocabulary (EVT)	Ability to name the objects shown in pictures (10 min)	Participants are shown a picture of an object and they have to name the object shown (EVT; Williams, 2018).
<i>Phonological Processing Measures</i>		
6. Phonological Processing (RAN-Letters and Digits)	Ability to quickly name letters and digits (2 min)	Time to name letters/digits and number of errors determines phonological processing skills (CTOPP2; Wagner et al., 2013).

Participants



ELENA

- Grade 10; age 17
- Reads and writes Turkish and Kurdish; less comfortable with Arabic
- Attended grades 4, 7 to 11 in Turkey
- P.E., Math, EAL, Science, Business Technology



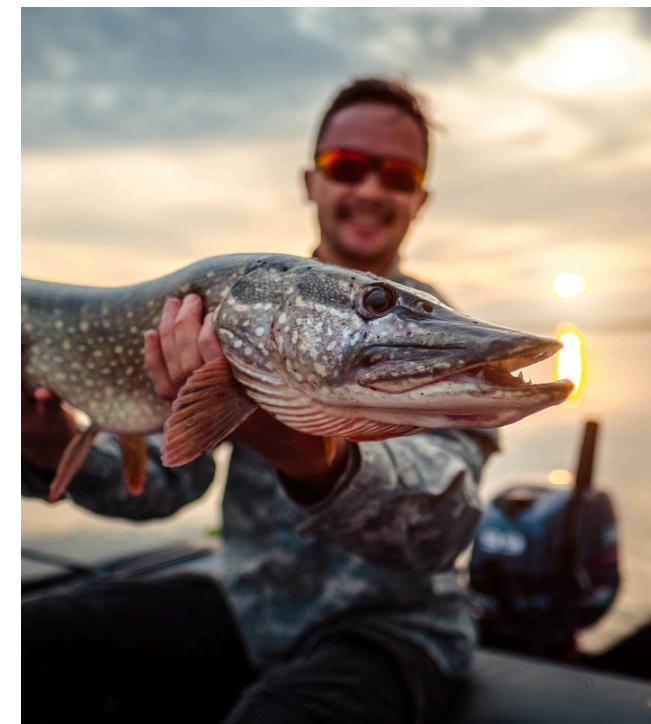
HUSAM

- Grade 10 & 11; age 21
- Read news/novels and write Arabic
- Attended grades 1-5 in Syria; trained with Jordanian Red Cross
- Taking Math, Music, and Environmental Science



DLO

- Grade 11; age 18
- Reads novels Kurdish
- Attended grades 4-9, missing grade 7 to work in Kurdistan
- Science 10, Math, Agriculture and English,



FATTOUSH

- Grade 10; age 16
- Text in Arabic, overall struggles
- Up to grade 2 in Lebanon
- Career Development, Early Literacy, Math essentials, Agriculture

Participants



MOUDY*

- Grade 11; Age 20
- Read and write Arabic, used to read novels in Turkish
- Attended grades 1-4 (grade 4 in Turkey)
- Agriculture, Drama 10, English 10, learning strategies



AISHA

- Grade 10; Age 16
- Read and write Arabic
- Attended for a few years in Niger; someone came to her house in Libya
- EAL, Science, Career development, music



SALAMA

- Grade 11; Age 18
- Read and write Arabic
- Attended grades 1 in Syria; 11 years of school in Jordan
- Math, Physics, Calculus, EAL Literacy



FERAS*

- Grade 10; Age 16
- 5 years of school Syria/Kurdistan (Iraq)
- Spoken Kurdish/Arabic
- Biology, Drama, P.E., EAL, Math

*Has been attending school for 3 or more years

Quantitative Findings

Constructs	Measures	Time 1 Means (SD)	Time 2 Means (SD)	t-value	sig	Cohen's D
Word Reading	WID	27.13 (9.32)	40.25 (9.03)	9.245	.000	1.43
	WAT	10.00 (5.29)	17.63 (6.45)	4.165	.001	1.27
Sight Word Reading	TOWRE-SW	32.50 (18.58)	38.75 (15.25)	3.087	.018	0.37
	TOWRE-PD	13.50 (12.78)	22.88 (12.92)	4.987	.002	0.73
Phonological Awareness	CTOPP-Elision	10.17 (4.07)	10.33 (8.40)	.053	.960	-0.02
Phonological Processing	RAN-Letters	32.51 (10.40)	30.47 (6.02)	.703	.505	-0.25
	RAN-Digits	32.12 (8.11)	31.84 (8.12)	.109	.916	-0.03
Vocabulary	EVT	21.13 (11.20)	27.75 (10.66)	2.77	.028	0.61

Legend

No Change (-0.29 to 0.29)	Small to moderate positive change (0.3 to 0.699)	Large positive change (above 0.7)
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| Qualitative Themes

Assets

Rich Background

- Rich experiential education background, which they are not able to express or draw on as a skill in their academic courses

Peer Support

- The importance of peer support for the students was essential for the students in attending the sessions (and school), engaging or disengaging with an activity.

EAL Teacher + YMCA

- The EAL teacher(s) were seen as an ally in the school for all students. There was some mistrust of other educators in the school.



| Qualitative Themes

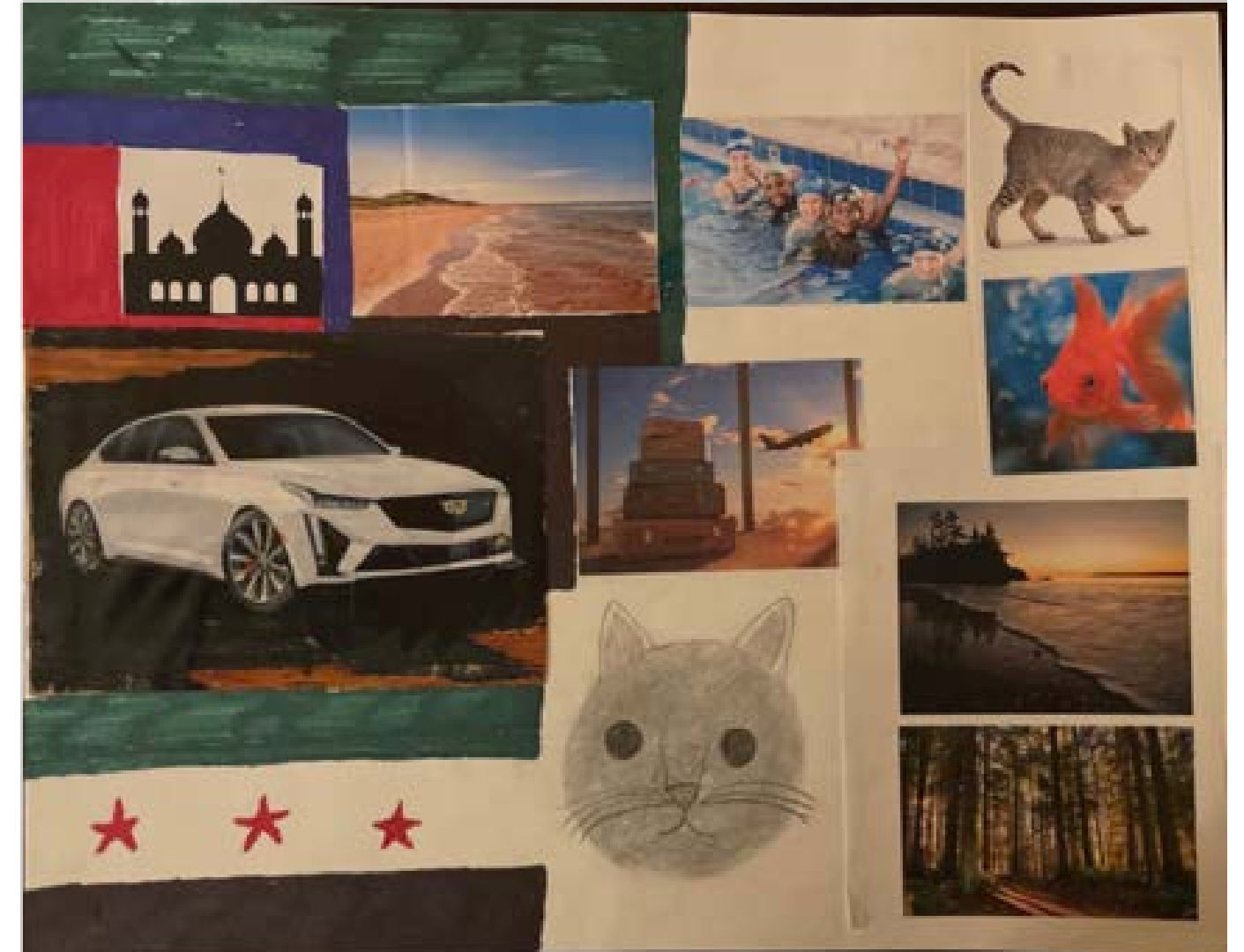
Challenges

Engagement

- Difficult to have the students remain engaged. Including a game element to most lessons was essential (e.g., Bingo, resorting phoneme cards).

Undiagnosed Learning Challenges

- Across the 13 weeks, we noticed that some of the students had possible undiagnosed learning challenges, despite being in the school for more than 3 years.



came
Time
Bone
cute

the hot has I am hot
he is so fat


Eat
The cat and dog eat
The sun is up
chips neck
chin clock
sit run
Log chop
I chop the log
I eat bread
sam can hop

Fattoush's writing sample from lessons 2, 5, and 9

plate

1) block	<u>blocks</u>	sandwich	
2) pot	<u>pots</u>	9) sandwich	<u>sandwiches</u>
3) pan	<u>pans</u>	10) apple	<u>apples</u>
4) plate	<u>plates</u>	11) orange	<u>oranges</u>
5) dish	<u>dishes</u>	12) chair	<u>chairs</u>
6) spoon	<u>spoons</u>	13) table	<u>tables</u>
7) fork	<u>forks</u>	14) truck	<u>trucks</u>
8) box	<u>boxes</u>	15) car	<u>cars</u>

box



* Completed independently
* Only needed help with reading the words because printing wasn't very good (pixelated)

Fadi's morphology practice

Reading responses to early grade 1 level text

Trucks
fire the sthree to stop the fire
ice cream He need a many and he like the people to
mail he go to the beldeng and hose to give a people what
garbage the take a garbage because to clean away
and we dont want to get problem in the way

arrived- Sept 2022
this sample- Jan 2025

*has some literacy skills in
home language.

Fire: The mail to stop the fire to trash water
ice: the kids turn around to ice cream

arrived Sept 2022
sample fr. Jan 2025

| Qualitative Themes



School Level

Social Language Needs not being addressed

- Some students who have attended school for more than three years lack the basic language skills (e.g, everyday clothing vocabulary) necessary for them to thrive in a Canadian classroom and form friendships with non-Arab classmates.

School Refusal

- High attrition rate in the study (and school), with nine students disappearing from the study, despite the \$150 gift card. Possible reasons are lack of interest in school, truancy, suspension, needing to attend court dates, and Ramadan.

Discussion

Understanding of Literacy and Language

- The predictive acquisition of literacy components that occurs for children does not apply for youth. Oral language is developing simultaneously (Cumming & Geva, 2012).
- The role of the L1 and other languages learned influence the development of language and literacy skills.

Asset-based approach

- Valuing the students' skills, background and language communicates that school can be for them

Programing and School-level Approaches

- Specialized programing for these Youth are essential for their success as they transition from High School
- Restorative approaches to justice is needed to reduce the high rates of school refusal.
- Working across organizations to maximize the support needed, reduce duplication and provide a targeted approach to meet the learner needs

Learner Dimensions

Age – Physical and Cognitive Developmental – Goal Orientation

Newcomer Adolescents and young adults vary in their goal orientation (Doe & Ritchie, forthcoming)

Formal and Informal Educational Background

Most had some experience with formal and informal education but there was a lot of variation in years and frequency of disruption; most had learned an additional skill via some informal training

Family Responsibilities

Some gaps in attendance was due to the students needing to help another sibling but often a parent (grocery store, bank, etc) (Hynie, Guruge & Shakya, 2013)

Gender – Race – Language Background – Income

Resources at schools vary greatly based on languages spoken (El Chater, 2022); Background variables all played a role in possible discrimination or favourable attention given at school (Van Viegan, 2020; Xuemei & Grineva, 2016)

Supports in Place

High School EAL courses (electives)

- **EAL Literacy 10** - The course is specifically designed to take into account the students who have gaps in their first language literacy and/or academic skills
- **EAL Academic Language 10** - This course helps EAL students develop their skills and strategies in English academic language to prepare them for success in school (for students of interrupted educational background and those who have same level of education prior to coming to Canada
- **EAL 10** - for EAL (English as an Additional Language) students entering high school, who are new to Canada with varying proficiency levels in English and new to the subject of English Language Arts. It is a grade 10 elective credit designed to prepare bilingual/multilingual learners for success in English Language Arts 10

Strengthening Literacy Instruction

- **Implementation of UFLI** - EAL Literacy and EAL Academic Language started incorporating UFLI phonics lessons in their lessons.
- **Pilot** - Lexia*

Increased Access to EAL courses

- Increasing number of high schools (in HRCE) are now offering EAL classes



Supports in Place

Improved EAL Teacher to Student Ratios

Newcomer Welcome Centre

- **Educational Background** - prior educational experience, language/literacy ability, special learning or medical needs, trauma etc.
- **EAL Initial Intake Process** - determine language proficiencies in R, W, L, S ahead of starting school; refer to EAL Proficiency Benchmarks

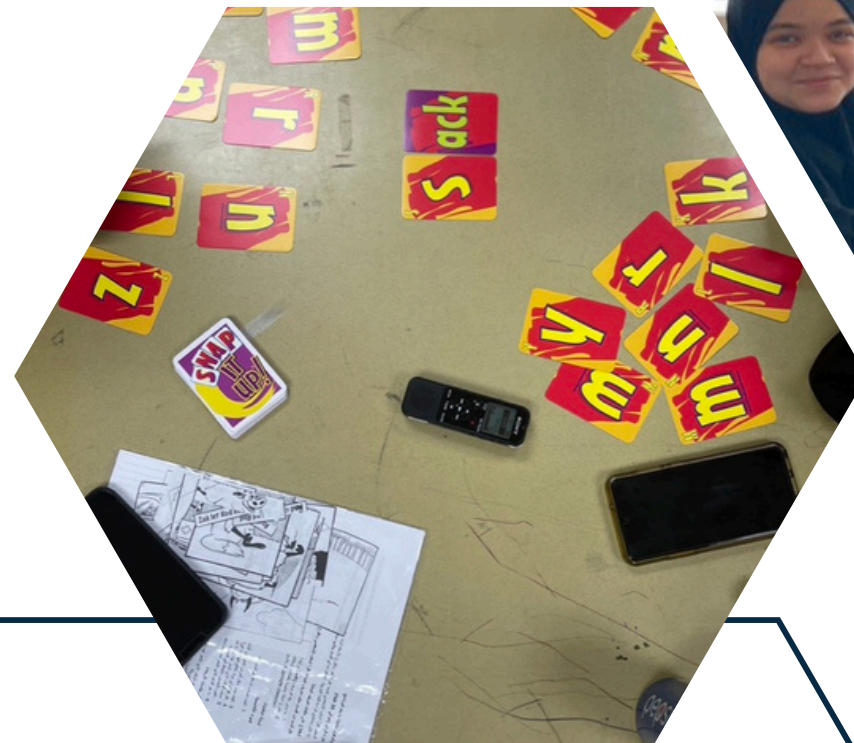


For Future Consideration

- Additional sections of EAL Literacy 10, EAL Academic Language 10 (one semester is not enough time to gain literacy skills required)
- Credit given for prior experience (many are quite skilled which is not often valued, acknowledged, or given credit)
- Credit given for being bilingual/multilingual
- Improved youth pathways that include job-preparedness
- EAL teachers with a literacy background (SLIFE teachers in NB, ELD teachers in Ont.)
- Numeracy; sheltered content courses



Thank You



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