

Language learning: attitude, ability, teaching and materials in host and refugee communities in Jordan



Language for Resilience

Chris Sowton
September 2019

CONTENTS

List of abbreviations	00
Executive summary	00
Background to this report.....	00
Scope and nature of this research.....	00
Findings.....	00
Recommendations.....	00
1. Introduction	00
2. Literature review	00
2.1 Language for Resilience: original report.....	7
2.2 Language for Resilience: follow-up report.....	7
3. Methodology	9
3.1 Research purpose and overview.....	9
3.2 Research participants.....	9
3.3 Research location.....	9
3.4 Ethical considerations.....	9
3.5 Research methodology.....	10
3.5.1 Focus groups.....	10
3.5.2 Individual interviews.....	10
3.5.3 Lesson observations.....	10
4. Findings	11
4.1 Language attitudes and perceptions.....	11
4.1.1 People have complex language histories.....	11
4.1.2 English dominates, despite some interest in other languages.....	11
4.1.3 The primary value of language for refugees is that it offers a pathway to a third country.....	12
4.1.4 Language is perceived as a means of becoming more employable.....	12
4.1.5 Language can be a barrier to higher education, but it is seldom presented as an opportunity at the institutional level.....	12
4.1.6 Language competency is measured by certification.....	13
4.1.7 Using additional languages can be perceived negatively by the wider community.....	13
4.1.8 Language is used to broaden social and cultural understanding.....	14
4.1.9 Language learning has significant psychosocial value.....	14
4.2 Language use and ability.....	14
4.2.1 L2 is seldom used outside the classroom.....	14
4.2.2 Knowledge about language is commonly valued more than ability to use language.....	15
4.2.3 The language of instruction tends to be the target language.....	15
4.2.4 English language teachers' competency and confidence in English varies hugely.....	15
4.3 Language learning teaching and provision.....	16
4.3.1 The only English provision is general English.....	16
4.3.2 Language teaching pedagogy tends towards the formal, even in informal settings.....	16
4.3.3 The use of volunteers for teaching poses challenges.....	16
4.3.4 Current teacher education is inadequate.....	17
4.3.5 Teacher education is individual, not institutional or systematic.....	17
4.3.6 Language acquisition and retention is generally poor.....	17
4.3.7 Teachers lack support within their institutions and from their peers.....	18
4.4 Language learning materials.....	18
4.4.1 Most language providers use textbooks, many of which are not fit for purpose.....	18
4.4.2 Materials (as well as processes) can yield a psychosocial dividend.....	18
4.4.3 Institutions work within their own silos and do not share language learning materials.....	19
4.4.4 Teachers and learners access online materials, but their use is sub-optimal.....	20



5. Recommendations	21
5.1 Create a relevant, manageable and recognised certification system for language competence	21
5.2 Create language learning materials which are relevant and appropriate for those using them	21
5.3 Harmonise and shape teacher education programmes across all implementing actors	22
5.4 Support peer-led language and pedagogical enhancement	23
5.5 Widen IELTS participation	23
5.6 Investigate the viability of alternative language delivery mechanisms	23
5.7 Ensure that any language/pedagogy programme which has an online component uses e-moderators	23
5.8 Initiate quantitative data collection for language competency	23
References	24

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for their support and encouragement for this piece of research: Al Quds University, Arab Open University, Ayat Nashwan, Ben Webster, Beverley Costa, Caspar Mays, Claire Duly, Fiona Pape, Francesca Pinna, Frankie Randle, Gary Motteram, Gordon Slaven, Joel Bubbers, Jordan Refugee Studies Centre, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Mahmoud Saqallah, Mercy Corps, Mike Solly, Muteeb Hamdan, Mosaik, Naheed Ghazzoul, Reece Waldron, Sahar Al-haj Ali, Sawiyan, Tony Capstick, Vento di Terra, Voice of Minority Refugees in Jordan, UNHCR Jordan.

List of abbreviations

EAP

English for academic purposes

ESP

English for specific purposes

HE

Higher education

IELTS

International English Language Testing System

L1

First (home) language

L2

Additional language

L4R

Language for Resilience

MENA

Middle East and North Africa

PTSD

Post-traumatic stress disorder

TE

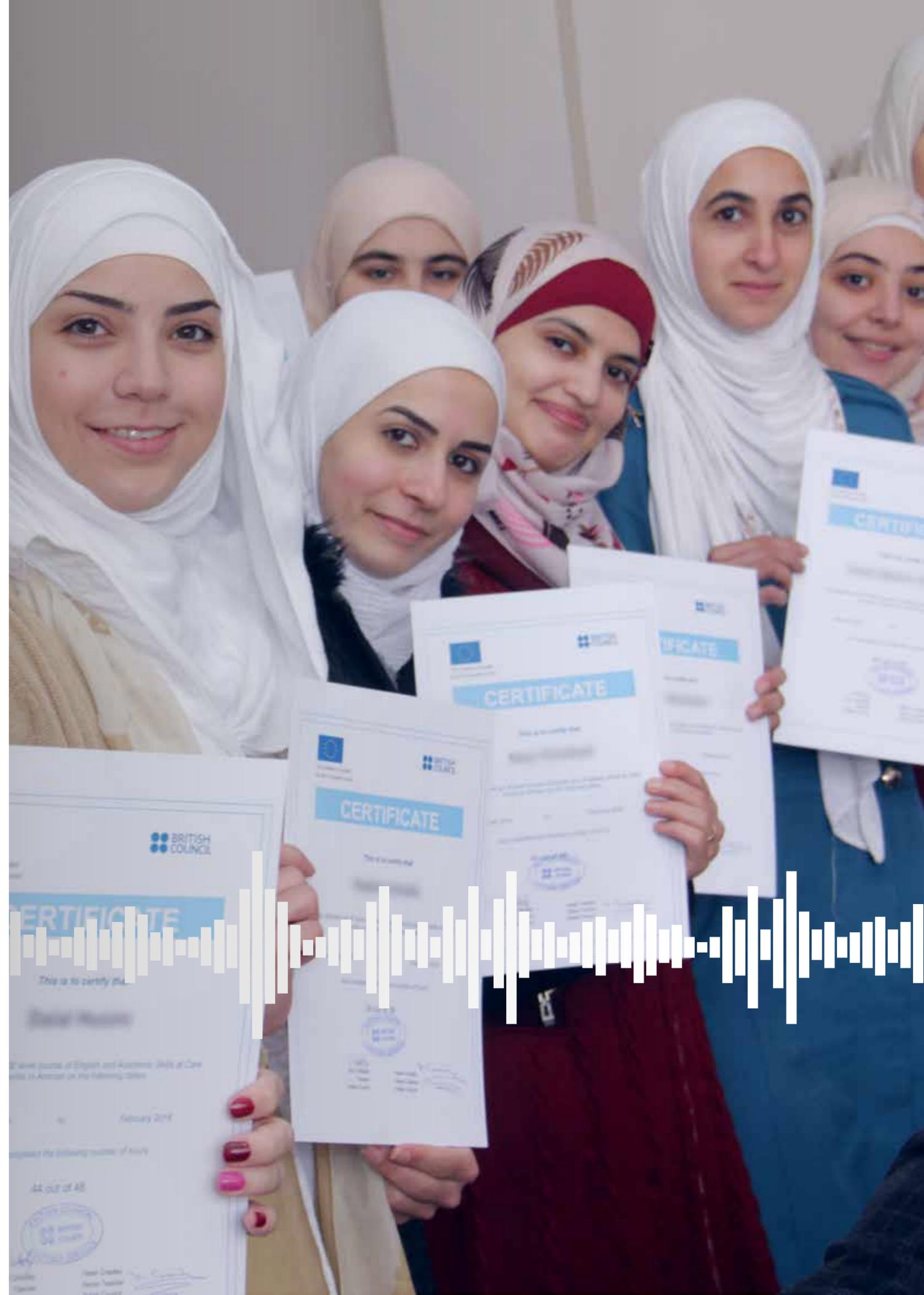
Teacher education

TOEFL

Test of English as a Foreign Language

UN

United Nations



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to this report

This report, the latest iteration in the British Council's work on Language for Resilience (L4R), is a timely account of the importance and value of languages for refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities. It follows in the vein of previous British Council research, which has shown that home and international languages can enable people to overcome the legal, cultural and psychological barriers constraining their attempts to lead a good life, thereby enhancing their life opportunities for both their present and future selves (Capstick and Delaney, 2016; Kennett, 2017; Capstick, 2018).

Scope and nature of this research

Focusing on refugee and host community youth in Jordan, this research had two main purposes. The first was to better understand these groups' perceptions, abilities and use of language, and the relationship of language to accessing pathways and psychosocial support. The second is to better understand how language learning takes place in these communities. The research was qualitative in nature and based predominantly around focus groups, individual interviews and lesson observations. The research participants were from the Jordanian host community and refugees, of both Syrian and non-Syrian background. The fieldwork for data collection took place mainly in Amman and urban/peri-urban areas of northern Jordan. The research mostly took place under the good offices of domestic and international organisations working in the field, including UNHCR and Mercy Corps, as well as several Jordanian universities.

Findings

The main findings of this research, clustered around four main themes, are as follows:

1 Language attitudes and perceptions

- People have complex language histories.
- English dominates, despite some interest in other languages.
- The primary value of language for refugees is that it offers a pathway to a third country.
- Language is perceived as a means of becoming more employable.
- Language can be a barrier to higher education, but it is seldom presented as an opportunity at the institutional level.
- Language competency is measured by certification.
- Using additional languages can be perceived negatively by the wider community.
- Language is used to broaden social and cultural

understanding.

- Language learning has significant psychosocial value.

2 Language use and ability

- Second languages (L2) are seldom used outside the classroom.
- Knowledge about language is commonly valued more than ability to use language.
- The language of instruction tends to be the target language.
- English language teachers' competency in English varies hugely.

3 Language learning teaching and provision

- The only English provision is general English.
- Language teaching pedagogy tends towards the formal, even in informal settings.
- The use of volunteers for teaching poses challenges.
- Current teacher education (TE) is inadequate.
- TE is individual, not institutional or systematic.
- Language acquisition and retention is generally poor.
- Teachers lack support within their institutions and from their peers.

4 Language learning materials

- Most language providers use textbooks, many of which are not fit for purpose.
- Materials (as well as processes) can yield a psychosocial dividend.
- Institutions work within their own silos and do not share language learning materials.
- Teachers and learners access online materials, but their use is sub-optimal.

Recommendations

- Create a relevant, manageable and recognised certification system for language competence, which would recognise the importance of multilingualism as well as the difficulties displaced people face in providing verifiable evidence of their linguistic competence.
- Create language learning materials that are relevant and appropriate for those using them, such that they are high-quality, contextually relevant and offer 'value added' in terms of delivering light-touch psychosocial support.
- Harmonise and shape TE programmes across all implementing actors wherein they empower and give teachers agency, are decentralised and iterative, and focus on crucial multilingual practices such as

translanguaging.

- Support peer-led language and pedagogical enhancement, especially in organisations and institutions where individuals may have the content knowledge but not necessarily the skill or resources to support and train others.
- Widen IELTS participation given its importance but high cost, which places it out of reach of many.
- Investigate the viability of alternative language delivery mechanisms, for example upskilling young people with language skills to deliver programmes at a community level.
- Ensure that any language/pedagogy programme which has an online component uses e-moderators, who add huge value-added support, especially in terms of motivation and retention.
- Initiate quantitative data collection for language competency to support and provide a solid empirical basis for future initiatives in this field.



THE DIFFERENT LANGUAGE HISTORIES AND JOURNEYS THAT PEOPLE HAVE HAD MAY SHAPE THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE.



INTRODUCTION

The importance of language in marginalised communities is well attested to. It is therefore highly surprising that there is no mention of it whatsoever (save in one optional indicator) in Sustainable Development Goal 4, the focus of which is education. One main reason for this is the fact that it can be a highly contentious issue that is embedded in the DNA of national and cultural identity, and therefore nation states are more likely to want to make decisions about language policy, and specifically language in education policy, themselves. This invisibility of language at the multilateral level has, however, resulted in marginalised people across the world not having the opportunity to reap the linguistic dividend, and to be able to use language to increase their economic, social and political capital. This is particularly the case for the world's 71 million plus forcibly displaced people (UNHCR, 2019). In the liminal world they inhabit, there are often legal, cultural and psychological barriers constraining their attempts to lead a good life; a transferable skill such as language ability, which has both intrinsic and instrumental value, can enhance their life opportunities, for both their present and future selves.

In this situation, the importance of the British Council's L4R agenda is welcome, necessary and important. It is also heartening that language has been afforded more significance in more recent multilateral documents, such as the most recent Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2019) on the theme of 'Migration, Displacement and Education', which contains many references to language and sees it as an issue of prime concern. It notes, for example, that 'the language in which lessons are taught can drive them [students] away' (ibid.: 2) and that 'literacy skills support social and intercultural communication' (ibid.: 19). The main purpose of this research is to extend the knowledge base of the L4R framework and to offer practical recommendations as to what steps the British Council could take in Jordan, more widely in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and elsewhere to develop programmes which have at the heart the notions that 'every language used by the refugees helps them to build resilience at the individual, family and community levels' (Capstick and Delaney 2016: 7) and that language is a 'vital asset in rebuilding ... lives' (Capstick, 2018: 3).

Following this introduction, Part 2 presents a short literature review of key L4R documents created to date, with the methodology in Part 3 emerging directly out of this framework. Part 4 presents the main findings of the research, which are divided into four main sections, namely language attitudes and perceptions, language use and ability, language learning teaching and provision, and language learning materials. Part 5 presents eight main recommendations that proceed out of the findings.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Given that this research is presented within the British Council's L4R ambit, a short overview of the research done to date within this field is given in this brief literature review.

Language for Resilience: original report

The original L4R report was published in 2016 to inform the British Council's work in terms of supporting 'individuals, communities and education systems affected by conflict and displacement to harness the power of literacy and additional languages' (Kennett, 2017: 10). Based on research in four neighbouring territories that have taken in Syrian refugees (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and the Kurdistan region of Iraq), the report outlines five interconnected ways that language enhances resilience. These principles, which have shaped the L4R work done to date, are as follows:

1. home language early education is crucial to child development and adult literacy plays a key role in establishing social identity
 1. other languages provide access to employment, training, school and higher education
 1. learning a language in a participatory way helps develop individual and community resilience and refugee–host community social cohesion while providing a vehicle for developing life skills, critical thinking, conflict transformation, citizenship skills, inclusion and rights-based approaches
 1. language programmes provide the opportunity to create 'safe spaces' where loss, displacement and trauma can be voiced and begin to be addressed
 1. institutional resilience can be strengthened through literacy and other language teacher training and professional development for school leaders and other education professionals, working in informal refugee and formal host government systems (Capstick and Delaney, 2016: 6–8).

Language for Resilience: follow-up report

A follow-up L4R report in 2018 brought together several experts from different fields, including education, psychology and literacy, to examine L4R, and specifically the five principles identified above, from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Of most interest and relevance to the current study are the 'beliefs', i.e. underlying values and convictions, that emerged for each of the principles. These are identified below:

Principle 1: Home language and literacy

- 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.

Principle 2: Access to education, training and employment

- Multilingualism is commonplace in refugee communities, and that it is a fact of life which should be welcomed rather than side-lined – 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.

Principle 3: Language and social cohesion

- 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 that 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.

Principle 4: Addressing the effect of trauma on learning

- 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.

Principle 5: Building the capacity of teachers and strengthening educational systems

- 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 for the challenges of dealing 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 TE 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 from accessing quality education (Capstick, 2018).



OF ALL THE FINDINGS IN THIS REPORT, THE OVERWHELMING DESIRE TO DO IELTS STUDY AND TAKE THE EXAM IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST.



METHODOLOGY

Research purpose and overview

Focusing on refugee and host community youth in Jordan, this research had two main purposes. The first was to better understand these groups' perceptions, abilities and use of language, and the relationship of language to accessing pathways and psychosocial support. The second is to better understand how language learning takes place in these communities. While the specific target language was not English, given its status as an international language, it did become the default centre of discussions within the research.

While this research is intended to contribute to the literature in the field, it is primarily intended as an opportunity to gather data that can inform practice and hopefully have a tangible impact at the macro-level in terms of policy through the British Council and others, as well as at the micro-level in terms of the actual organisations and individuals involved. It is also hoped that by virtue of having the space and platform to reflect and think about their previous language experiences and future language learning trajectories, the research process is also developmental for the participants. Therefore, this research is 'open access' and freely available, which participants were informed of during the preparation phase.

Research participants

Two specific groups constitute the research participants, namely:

- language learners who are (a) refugees or part of the host community and (b) fall into the 16–34 age range
- educators who work with these groups.

The research participants were from the host Jordanian community and refugees, of both Syrian and non-Syrian background. The majority of the research participants were recruited from organisations known to the British Council in Jordan, and included:

- Al Quds University
- Arab Open University
- Jesuit Refugee Services
- Jordan Refugee Studies Centre
- Jordan University of Science and Technology
- Mercy Corps
- Mosaik
- Sawiyan
- Vento di Terra
- Voice of Minority Refugees in Jordan
- UNHCR.

Research location

Based on the sites where most refugees are living, namely Amman and northern areas of Jordan (including Irbid, Ajloun and Mafraq), the majority of the research took place in these locations. One field visit was also made to Ma'an, in southern Jordan.

Ethical considerations

Clearly, this research took place within a sensitive environment, and ethical considerations were extremely important. Throughout the research and writing process, I have tried to ensure that participants are not essentialised simply as 'refugees' or 'disadvantaged youth', but rather as individuals who have particular views and experiences of learning languages, who also happen to be refugees or from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background.

The following specific measures were therefore undertaken:

- participants were asked to give informed consent to participate in the research
- participants could opt out of the research at any time
- participating organisations had the opportunity to see some of the indicative questions and to comment on the suitability and appropriacy of these prior to use
- I was conscious about the need to avoid the risk of re-traumatisation from any of my scheduled questions, or questions which arose during the discussions
- all data were recorded and stored safely using password protection
- I was careful to ensure that my role in the proceedings was clear, and that no expectations of any potential future benefit were given
- names have been anonymised, but salient details about their sex/age have been included.

Research methodology

The research was qualitative in nature, consisting of three main data collection tools: 13 focus group discussions, ten individual interviews and five lesson observations. Further details are presented below.

Focus groups

Focus groups were used for three main reasons. Firstly, they can provide a platform for expression within a safe and familiar space and context. Secondly, they are effective when exploring sensitive issues (Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter, 2003), and can provide a dynamic, stimulating atmosphere that encourages reflection (Upvall et al., 2009). Thirdly, linking to this study's desire for participant agency, they can be empowering and even liberating for the participants as sites for social transformation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The language used in these groups was either Arabic or English, depending on the preference and desire of the group. For each focus group discussion (unless there was explicitly no need for one), a British Council-appointed translator was present and provided simultaneous translation. A semi-structured approach was used in order to ensure that certain key themes were covered while also allowing the participants to take discussion in their own direction. The focus groups were relatively small, ranging from three to eight people. In total, 13 groups were conducted with a total of 62 participants. Each discussion took around one hour.

Individual interviews

The ten individuals interviewed were either educational experts who understand this area of research (and who I was not able to talk to in person) or teachers in camps who I was unable to visit in person. Each interview, whether face to face or by Skype, took approximately 45 minutes and was fairly loosely structured, focusing on the particular area of interest or knowledge area of the interviewee.

Lesson observations

I was able to observe six lessons, at a mixture of primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and also had the opportunity to speak to the lesson teachers (and occasionally students) afterwards. The total lesson observation time was approximately six hours.



LANGUAGE IS YOUR IDENTITY, SO YOU HAVE TO KEEP YOUR OWN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATE USING THIS LANGUAGE WITH YOUR PEOPLE, WITH YOUR FAMILY AND WITH YOUR RELATIVES'.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in four sub-sections, namely: 4.1 Language attitudes and perceptions, 4.2 Language use and ability, 4.3 Language learning teaching and provision, and 4.4 Language learning materials.

Language attitudes and perceptions

People have complex language histories

Although the overwhelming majority of refugees registered with the UNHCR in Jordan are of Syrian origin, with many coming from areas close to the Jordanian border, there is a significant number coming from other places in Syria, as well as from other countries, most notably Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and Somalia. The former group describe having language histories closer to the host country community, using a very similar dialect and accent. As one educationalist noted, 'People from Daraa [a Syrian city close to the Jordanian border] easily integrated into the community ... even the family names are the same.' The experience of those Syrians from areas further from Jordan, meanwhile, is often very different. For example, one 23-year-old Syrian male from Homs said that his mother tongue was Turkish (a language he says he now cannot speak) and that if he wanted to speak Arabic as a child, he had to do it outside of the house.

Prima facie, therefore, it is important to note that the different language histories and journeys that people have had may shape their perceptions and attitudes towards language. For example, several respondents were clear about the importance and value of their home language. One Iraqi male stated that 'language is your identity, so you have to keep your own language and communicate using this language with your people, with your family and with your relatives'. For some of the respondents, in particular those who came from Sudan, linguistic oppression was identified as one of the contributing factors to their position as refugees. Their attitude towards their home language was therefore even stronger. It was also noted that refugees whose home language was not Arabic (such as those from Somalia, and Darfur and the Nuba Mountains in Sudan, where Arabic was generally an additional language) appeared to be more open and positive towards notions of multilingualism.

English dominates, despite some interest in other languages

Unsurprisingly, English was by far the most popular language that people wanted to learn. While there was some interest in other languages, the desire to learn these was incomparable with English. As a male Syrian respondent succinctly put it: 'Everyone understands English but not everyone understands German.' While most of the refugees interviewed appeared sufficiently

knowledgeable and worldly not to see English as a total solution for their problems, it was seen as being the best way they could maximise their opportunities. One Iraqi male summed up what many respondents thought when he said that 'studying English is the most important thing in my life ... all information and knowledge nowadays is in English'. This motivation and drive to learn English was summarised as follows by a highly experienced female HE teacher, with many years' experience teaching in both Syria and Jordan:

I worked in Syria between 1999 and 2012 ... In that time, I did not see the same passion that I saw from the Syrian students here ... their motivation, dedication, eagerness. Syrian students took the easy life for a long time. They were different ... as if they were not my country people. They were trying to find a different path in life and ... started managing their life using the English language ... It wasn't merely a language that was grammar and language ... it was like a saviour ... a way to integrate themselves into Jordanian society ... into the labour market... the education market.

The strongest reason given for learning languages other than English were when family members of refugees were in Turkey, or when they had been resettled in non-anglophone countries, primarily Germany. The same teacher noted above talked about when, in 2015, Germany opened its borders to refugees, at which point 'students started asking me about this ... and started learning this language'. She noted further the psychological benefit this yielded for students, who felt that learning the language gave them a better chance of reaching there, whether or not this was factually true.

In contrast to English, people seldom seem to be deliberate and determined in their attempts to learn other languages. Other languages may be learned in a more casual way. One 20-year-old Iraqi male stated that the reason he was learning French was that 'I am free, so I have chance to learn another language'. Having so much free time was a strong motivation for learning a language. This can be seen as a positive way of managing the negative mental effects of having a lot of empty time on their hands: there is a psychological value in using this time for learning languages. Others noted that their reasons for learning other languages were purely serendipitous, as in the case of a 30-year-old Sudanese male who was taking Spanish classes simply because he had been made aware of a class being provided by a Colombian in his local area. Similarly, an 11-year-old Syrian girl in Mafraq was able to speak a few words of Chinese because the Confucius Institute had run a handful of classes there. She expressed the joy of learning the 'strange shape of the Chinese letters'. One

university teacher saw the movement towards learning Turkish as reflective of the wider geopolitical situation, with refugees noting the more pro-refugee policies of the government there. He said that this learning mainly took place 'alone, watching YouTube channels'.

The primary value of language for refugees is that it offers a pathway to a third country

The dominant perception of language by refugees is that it represents a way out of their current situation. The view that it can be a mechanism through which they can survive and thrive within Jordan is present, but as a secondary concern. Three specific reasons were given for this, namely:

- language competence enhanced the chances of accessing scholarships for higher education
- language competence increased the chances of gaining employment overseas
- language competence meant that people would be better placed to get to third countries where they already had relatives living.

The absence of language competence was identified as a barrier to any of these three eventualities being realised. For example, a male Syrian from Za'atari stated that his lack of language ability meant that he was unable to take up a scholarship offer at a Canadian university. Another young male from the same camp, who had a master's degree in maths, reported that he did not apply for a teaching job in the United Arab Emirates, because of his weakness in English, despite being otherwise qualified for the position. Almost exclusively, language competence was perceived as a synonym for English competence by the respondents, since English was of value for anglophone as well as non-anglophone countries.

Language is perceived as a means of becoming more employable

A teacher from Azraq camp said that 'students who are best at English get the best opportunities' and that 'if you wanted to have a good position in society, you must work on your English'. Specifically, one interviewee made the point that language ability was particularly helpful for women to get work, specifically in teaching, which was a good status profession. In terms of some of the direct value of languages for the workplace, careers in translation and interpretation were discussed by several respondents. As a side note, it was interesting that at the end of many of the focus group discussions conducted during this research, interviewees were very keen to talk to the translator about their work, and pathways into this. The value of English, in particular, was identified as

being valuable both in terms of the workplace and for the interview process.

Moreover, it is not just the language learned that can be beneficial for getting jobs, but also the language learning process. One Syrian male, who worked both as a private tutor and as a sports coach, spoke very positively about his English language teacher: 'I learnt from him a lot of ways to teach people ... When I sit in front of him I have two points. First thing is to learn English. Another point, to learn how to teach people.'

Language can be a barrier to higher education, but it is seldom presented as an opportunity at the institutional level

It was reported that bachelors' degrees in Jordan have an English requirement for all students, assessed either by performance in the Tawjihi (which has no speaking or listening component) or through an entrance test, which is predominantly grammar-based. This illustrates the view that English has a gatekeeper function for higher education, rather than being widely perceived as something that can add value or improve the educational experience. This is despite the fact that English is officially used as the language of instruction in many universities – even though, in practice, Arabic is commonly used instead. Furthermore, there appears to be no link between the kind of English required to perform well as an undergraduate at a Jordanian university and the kind of English that is assessed at entry. For postgraduate studies, recognised standardised assessments such as TOEFL/IELTS are required, with, for example, the University of Jordan requiring students to have an overall IELTS of between 5.0 and 6.5 depending on the course.¹ While aptitude in English is demanded for entry to universities, once students have gained their place, the importance of English appears to be significantly marginalised. Although there are some courses at university ('English 101'-type courses), these are general English courses, with very little English for specific purposes (ESP) or English for academic purposes (EAP) provided.

Given the preponderance of digital and non-digital sources of information being in English, some young people saw language, specifically English, as a means by which this knowledge could be accessed. A 19-year-old Iraqi female reported that she had been able to enrol on online courses about a range of different subjects, and described English as a mechanism 'to learn new things about culture'. Her teacher went further, arguing that students needed 'to shift their learning ... from Arabic to English in order to help them develop'.

1. See <http://graduatedstudies.ju.edu.jo/Admissions/Required%20Scores%20of%20English%20Language%20Test.pdf>

Language competency is measured by certification

The importance of knowledge certification in refugee communities is well attested to, as are the struggles and implications that a lack of documentation and certification can cause. Important reasons for a lack of certification include the fact that records of previous certification have been destroyed, are lost during the complex process of migration or have no equivalence for certificates previously obtained. One example of this, which was far from untypical, concerned Mohammed, a fifth-year pharmaceutical student from Daraa:

...He helped a lot of wounded people in Damascus. He was spotted in some of the demonstrations, so all his papers were burnt ... by the government. There was no proof he was a student at Damascus University.

Another 23-year-old woman was unable to 'sit for the Tawjihi because there is nothing which proves I finished middle school ... There is nothing to prove because the school was burnt'. In Jordan, it is not possible to sit the Tawjihi if you are over 21, so she is now stuck in educational limbo.

This situation, combined with the fact that IELTS is (or at least is universally perceived as) the main educational mechanism by which people can 'get out', means that there is a very strong predilection towards language courses that lead to certification, in particular IELTS and, secondarily, TOEFL. IELTS was seen as being of value not only for university entrance programmes but the workplace as well. In fragile situations, a well-recognised certificate that has value worldwide and that provides evidence about someone's level of competency in English is clearly of significant value – all the more so if refugees lack clarity about where they will be in the future.

Of all the findings in this report, the overwhelming desire to do IELTS study and take the exam is one of the strongest. A teacher in Azraq camp said that if people had the opportunity to take IELTS, 'you can't imagine how happy they would be ... they would feel secure about the future' – even if they had to put themselves under serious financial pressure (for example by borrowing money) because of the high relative cost of taking the IELTS exam. Performing well in IELTS would make them 'feel secure' and 'confident' even if it did not immediately lead to work or scholarships. Not only would the external recognition and validation be valuable, performing well would also be of intrinsic value for the individual.

Using additional languages can be perceived negatively by the wider community

Despite the value attached to language competency, many respondents expressed a reluctance to speak a language other than Arabic in public. There were two reasons given for this with regards to English. The first was a sense of shame at the poor standards of English when people speak, which a Syrian teacher at Azraq camp described as a 'fear of English'. One Iraqi male described his learning process as follows: 'After the exam we forget all the information we studied ... We spent 12 years learning English at school but when we finished the courses ... we find we cannot speak a single word in English.'

As can be seen by the range of nationalities who expressed this same view, this would appear to be a region-wide issue. This perception of language is preventing people from using it.

The second reason as to why people may feel reluctant to use English is the perception of arrogance. For example, one young Jordanian woman from Ma'an said the following: 'Our problem is with the local community. When we say something wrong they will laugh and say "you don't know how to speak English" ... They will think we think we are better than them.'

Similarly, two students from the programme reported that during a break in their class (immediately before they came to a focus group discussion), they had tried to speak in English to each other, only for their classmates to ask: 'Why you speak in English during the break?'

Language is used to broaden social and cultural understanding

A young Sudanese male talked about the 'great opportunity' offered by the number of English-speaking tourists in Amman, specifically at the Citadel in the city centre. He talked about going up to people and 'talking to them in the English language ... I feel so excited when I talk to them'. This was an opportunity not only for English development but also for learning about other cultures. A young Jordanian female in Ma'an noted something similar, talking about a nearby tourist hotspot and the potential opportunities therein. 'We go to Petra a lot ... when we find any tourists we don't know how to talk to them ... I need to tell people about my ideas, my dreams, my vision.'

The content of language courses can also offer a window into other cultures. A Sudanese male talked of his interest in 'learning about the Masai tribe in Kenya', while another in his class had learned about Malala Yousafzai. Another teacher talked about exploring 'injustice' and 'inequality' by talking about apartheid-era South Africa

as a proxy for reflecting on their own life experiences, saying that 'students can fill in the gaps'.

Language learning has significant psychosocial value

A university teacher on the programme gave three examples of students who had benefited from the opportunities that a language class provides for talking about difficult issues:

One of my students, on a bus, she faced a lady in front of her when she heard her talking over the phone in a Syrian accent. She turned to her and told her you are causing a lot of problems to the Jordanian people.

One student said I have a phobia of aeroplanes ... 'I feel scared and I feel horrified'.

One student talked about her experience of leaving her home ... and how she got to Jordan ... how they were very scared of the checkpoints without papers ... she didn't have any ID papers. She was so afraid her dad wanted her to go back ... but by a miracle they all managed to get to Jordan.

It should be noted that he had an excellent relationship with his students, the majority of whom were in their 20s. In each case, he emphasised that the tellers of these stories had experienced a positive response from the rest of the class, and had felt the sharing of these stories had been beneficial. Finding 4.2 explores this idea in more detail from a materials and processes perspective.



THE DIFFERENT LANGUAGE HISTORIES AND JOURNEYS THAT PEOPLE HAVE HAD MAY SHAPE THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE.



Language use and ability

L2 is seldom used outside the classroom

For many students (and teachers) there are few push or pull factors for them to use a second language outside the classroom. This is compounded by finding 4.1.7 above. For some, this is the case not just within their community but within their own family, as well. A young Iraqi male refugee said: 'Sometimes I try to speak to my family in English but they do not want to, but I want to make progress'. Such was the reluctance of one learner to use English that, when faced with real-life opportunities, they would 'pretend not to know English so I don't embarrass myself'. One potential explanation for this is the cultural importance of 'keeping face'. Another reason was expressed rhetorically by an Iraqi male who hoped to teach at a university in an anglophone country, and asked whether students 'are going to accept my accent'. It was noticeable that within the groups interviewed, learners whose L1 was not Arabic (e.g. Sudanese, Somalis and Iraqis) were much more confident and willing to use English outside the classroom. One potential reason for this is that English has become the lingua franca for such groups, who were often taught as mixed classes. Another reason is that since they already felt more like outsiders, they did not have the same reticence to speak in English outside of the classroom. As one Sudanese male said, 'many people who love to help refugees are from Western organisations. Most of them, they are speaking English'. Another Sudanese male spoke about a Western librarian in Amman that he knew, and who he would talk to about books.

A further finding was that learners did not show any reticence in practising L2 with native speakers remotely. A number of the refugees I spoke to (none of the Jordanians I spoke to had remote access to native speakers) recorded positive experiences of speaking on Skype. For example, one teenage Syrian female said:

I am talking with native speaker two days a week on Skype ... she is Canadian ... sometimes she gives me an assignment in reading and writing ... about the essays I write them and send them back and we correct them together.

While it is certainly the case that the small number of students who were able to participate in this kind of programme found it beneficial, there is the risk that it can also create dependent learners, rather than users who can use language in authentic situations. It is also unclear what training native speakers who are involved in these programmes have had, and what their levels of commitment are, an important consideration given that transience is part and parcel of life for many refugees. Such programmes also feed into the general perception

about the importance of accent, and the desire to communicate with (and be taught by) native speakers of English. Regardless of whether this is considered a desirable outcome, the reality of the situation is that the likelihood of being taught by a native speaker is very remote, with demand for this always far outstripping supply.

The reluctance of English language teachers to use L2 outside the classroom seems to have a strong negative impact on their students. This reluctance or lack of opportunity to use English outside the classroom is mirrored inside the classroom, and this reluctance is vicariously passed on to their students. One teacher described her attitude to her interaction with a native speaker as this: 'If she asked me to speak in English, I would be silent ... our head is heavy of grammar.'

Knowledge about language is commonly valued more than ability to use language

Related directly to the point above, in lesson observations as well as in discussions with students and teachers alike, there was a strong proclivity towards valorising knowledge about language rather than ability to use language, especially within the classroom. There is an underlying presumption that an academic qualification in a language equates to competency in use and in the ability to teach. This can sometimes result in absurd situations, as in when a teacher of A0 boys in Mafrq explained to them (in c. B1+ level English) the difference between short and long vowels. A Jordanian university student from Ma'an explained the reason for this as: 'Teachers correct grammar and pronunciation in class to show that they know particular things about the language as they are not confident in their own pedagogy.'

The language of instruction tends to be the target language

Except for very young students, it seems that the target language is overwhelmingly the medium of instruction. Only on rare occasions was L1 used within the classroom, with it usually being for translation purposes. The perception, following on from 4.2.2 above, appeared to be that using L1 within the classroom would have been inappropriate, or indeed some kind of failure. One of the main exceptions to this was the girls' class at Mercy Corps in Mafrq, in which greater tolerance of L1 resulted in a better classroom atmosphere and, it appeared, better educational outcomes.

English language teachers' competency and confidence in English varies hugely

In terms of English teachers' own language competence, there was a significant divide between HE and non-HE teachers, with the former group generally being competent speakers (B2/C1) and the latter much weaker (B1 and below). The latter group had very little confidence in their English ability, feeling that it was insufficient for them to perform the job well. In the worst-case scenarios, teachers faced a constant challenge to keep ahead of their students' English. This said, the reality of the situation was that their ability to communicate was far better than their perception, with many non-HE teachers underestimating their own abilities in English. Often this lack of confidence was their perception of having a poor accent, and more widely there is certainly a strong preference towards wanting to sound like a 'native speaker'.

The result of all this at the classroom level, both in HE and non-HE contexts, is that teachers are generally very constrained in the English that they use, and stick to a fairly tight script, focusing on language, structures and situations which they are familiar and comfortable with. No free speaking activity was seen in any of the classes observed. Spoken production tended to be constrained to repeating sentences that the teacher had already said, or to completing 'open' statements with very familiar words and phrases. At the HE level, where teachers were more skilled linguistically and pedagogically, there was more interaction, but all conversation still came through the teacher; there were no instances of pair or group work where students could experiment freely with the language. While unable to see any lessons in the Jordanian public or private sector, these views were confirmed by teachers working there. As such, it appears that teachers are vicariously passing on their own reluctance to use English meaningfully or communicatively, meaning that pre-existing perceptions of language are deeply ingrained. This can be seen most clearly in the fact that the English Tawjihi, the Jordanian Class 12 examination, contains no speaking or listening component.



TEACHERS ARE GENERALLY VERY CONSTRAINED IN THE ENGLISH THAT THEY USE, AND STICK TO A FAIRLY TIGHT SCRIPT, FOCUSING ON LANGUAGE, STRUCTURES AND SITUATIONS WHICH THEY ARE FAMILIAR AND COMFORTABLE WITH.

Language learning teaching and provision

The only English provision is general English

In Jordan, there is very little evidence of ESP (including EAP) being available. While most learners require general English, once people reach a good B1/B2 standard, there is nowhere for them to go except for IELTS. This seems to be one of the main reasons why IELTS is so strongly held in people's minds: the lack of availability of anything else and the lack of knowledge that such courses can exist. Once people reach their B1/B2 plateau, it is not clear how they can continue to develop their English, or what their potential pathways are. There seems to be a significant gap. Even English language programmes that focus on higher education are not explicitly EAP courses due to the low standard of English which people come with. Since the medium of instruction in HE is English, it is odd that there is no provision for this. Such an approach could significantly improve students' university experiences.

Language teaching pedagogy tends towards the formal, even in informal settings

Within the formal education sector, the pressure to perform well in the Tawjihi is tantamount and drives the content and delivery mechanism of education. This is the main explanatory factor of the grammar- and writing-focused nature of the lessons, since listening and speaking are not components of the examination. The focus of many of the lessons appears to be 'knowledge about language' rather than 'ability to use the language'. The purpose of learning English is seen as the acquisition of sufficient language (or rather, knowledge about language) to pass the English component of the Tawjihi. This pedagogical approach is common in marginalised educational contexts.

Even when some teachers knew that the way they taught was not as effective as it could be, they were unsure about how they could do it differently. Furthermore, even when some teachers had received pedagogical training, they found it very difficult to implement, or the wider educational and societal environment was not conducive to it.

This formal approach to teaching is found even in informal and non-formal settings, with some exceptions. Certain outliers should also be noted, including the use of a Dogme² methodology with a group of mixed-nationality refugees in Amman. In this class, learners took responsibility for identifying what they wanted to learn and for sharing relevant materials for discussion and analysis during the class time. These classes were highly effective, but this group were particularly motivated, knowledgeable, independent and capable. It appears that this group already had these character

attributes before adopting the Dogme methodology, but that following the Dogme approach has further embedded these attributes. However, with appropriate support and exposition, there appears to be no reason why this approach could not be used more widely. But for such a peer-led/peer-facilitated approach to gain support and be successful, there has to be a paradigm shift in terms of how education is perceived.

The use of volunteers for teaching poses challenges

Another related issue of concern is that many organisations in Jordan use volunteer teachers, a fact which is unsurprising given the demand for services and pressure on resources. Some of these volunteers may be from the host or refugee populations, whereas others are from overseas and are either already based in Jordan for other reasons or come specifically to be volunteers for a time-limited duration. While there are some advantages to this system, not least the cost-effectiveness and volunteers being able to access native speakers, there are also a number of downsides.

- Since teachers are volunteers, by definition they are more transient. One organisation using overseas volunteers reported that they would typically be with them for one semester (two to three months), while another using local Jordanian/Syrian volunteers acknowledged that should these teachers get the offer of paid work, they would leave. Not only is this challenging from a programmatic point of view, it is also a real issue for students who may develop relationships with these teachers, only to see them go, which, with children in this context, can be damaging. The quality and style of teaching may also vary over a period of time, impacting the learning of languages.
- Many of these volunteers are not trained teachers. Since the teaching contexts within which they are working would be challenging for experienced teachers, this is a concern. There is the risk that inexperienced teachers working in such an environment would be faced with problems they don't know how to deal with, which would be problematic for both the teacher and the student. If they are from overseas, they may lack understanding and appreciation of the nuances of the context within which they are working.

2. Dogme is a teaching approach where the focus is on the learner rather than on the available resources, such as textbooks. The underlying philosophy is that if the learners are not interested in the materials, they will not learn. Therefore, learners are given the responsibility to generate the materials and direct the learning.

urrent teacher education is inadequate

One public school teacher from the outskirts of Amman spoke of the challenges he faced. He was an English literature graduate who was only able to secure his first teaching post seven years after graduating. He had received no training, and no teacher guide. He had been told training would happen 'within one month', all the while dealing with what he described as a very difficult class, composed mostly of Bedouin students whose formal educational history had been extremely patchy.

While teachers spoke extremely positively about training and the need for it, in reality there are many barriers to its successful implementation, including:

- the cost of travel to get to training (and the opportunity cost for being there)
- the lack of time – for family reasons, other jobs (for example private teaching)
- the lack of institutional buy-in and support.

Teacher education is individual, not institutional or systematic

There appears to be little evidence of training knowledge being disseminated more widely within organisations. With limited resources available, few in-service support structures in place, and a very transient population, it is important for any training to be cascaded as far as possible, to realise the full value of this training. Organisations have an awareness of the training that is going on, but not buy-in. They need to be brought more into the process for it to be as effective as possible.

Related to this, there was little support at the classroom level, resulting in less experienced or less capable teachers being able to implement aspects of what they had learned during training. This was also problematic for more capable teachers, such as one of the lecturers on a language development programme for refugee and host country youth. While he had a phenomenal rapport with the class and there were many good things that happened in his classroom, there remained questions as to educational outcomes. With a relatively small amount of support for mentoring, it is likely his teaching practice could have been significantly improved.

Ironically, organisations may sometimes be unwilling, or at least reluctant, to send their teachers for training. The reason for this is that once they become upskilled, they are more likely to move on to other (better) paid work. There is a still net benefit following the training, since the majority of these teachers will remain within the education system. However, on a micro-level, there may be a perverse disincentive for resource-poor organisations to send their teachers for training.

Language acquisition and retention is generally poor

Although difficult to make too many sweeping generalisations considering the scope of this report, some commonalities seem to emerge, most noticeably:

- lessons often have no clear outcomes, and there is minimal checking of the language acquired
- there is frequent repetition (as opposed to recycling) of material
- 'talking' is often the focus of communicative activities rather than 'speaking' – students are just repeating in a very controlled way what their teacher has said, rather than actually developing communicative competence
- teaching of literacy was difficult for students – e.g. words presented to accompany the letters were random and difficult to grasp; there was mixing of upper- and lowercase letters, making it confusing for students; and there was a lack of clarity between the 'name of letter' and 'sound of letter'.

Teachers lack support within their institutions and from their peers

There appears to be minimal professional interaction between teachers where they teach. Reasons for this include the busy, often complex lives of teachers, a two- or even three-shift pattern, an educational culture where this is not common, and the lack of systemic opportunities (e.g. staff meetings and training sessions). In fragile contexts, however, the need for support and interaction between peers is extremely important, not just for pedagogical reasons but also for self-care and the psychological support that interacting with others can bring, the more so when teachers are refugees themselves. One reason cited for this was that teachers see their work as a way of getting through the day. Very few groups, communities of practice, lesson observations, or even informal support to each other were observed.

Language learning materials

Most language providers use textbooks, many of which are not fit for purpose

In all sectors and contexts, textbooks were commonly used to deliver English language learning. Some of these were official government textbooks, others had been donated free by publishers, while others had been downloaded from the internet and printed out. Generally speaking, these books were highly structured, Western (whether explicitly or implicitly) and had a heavy grammar focus. It is questionable whether textbooks should be used at all in refugee contexts. There are three main reasons for this.

- Refugee students, whose experience of (formal) education may be very limited, may find it difficult to follow a structured language curriculum. This is compounded by the fact that they may be more likely to miss classes, for a myriad of reasons.
- The content of what is presented in these textbooks commonly has tangential relevance to the lives of the users.
- The books make assumptions about the teachers and students who use them, which may not be accurate. In a refugee context, the users may be unfamiliar with, for example, the task types used. This is compounded by the general lack of teacher guides providing support.
- A strong finding coming through regarding the use of textbooks is that very commonly the reason they are used is entirely serendipitous. One non-governmental organisation education co-ordinator reported that their textbooks 'were here when I arrived'. The main reason for choosing the books for the programme was that they were available in all of the target locations. Clearly, the availability of textbooks is a factor, but it is highly questionable whether it should be the deciding, driving factor.

Materials (as well as processes) can yield a psychosocial dividend

The very act of language learning provided opportunities for students to benefit psychosocially from the process. It was reported, and observed, that classes were commonly of mixed nationality. In the formal education sector, this is commonly between Jordanian and Syrian students. In the informal and non-formal sectors there was also this mix, along with other refugee groups. Interviewees were generally very positive about how language learning can be a positive experience for those concerned, with one Iraqi female positively describing her class as being like 'a small country'. Her teacher elaborated further on this point, saying:

We have people from different country – even people who came from same country don't know each other ... when they come here you will bring them here they work together ... people from Sudan learn from Iraq, other people learn from Somalia ... cultural exchange whether direct or indirect way ... in the end we will find a place that can put us together.

The psychosocial support value of language learning can also be seen in the physical aspect of the classrooms. One such example was in a Mercy Corps classroom in Mafraq, where the walls were covered in posters and materials created by the learners themselves, including drawings of how they envisioned themselves when they were older (I want to be a doctor/teacher/footballer, etc.). What should be noted here, however, is that although this classroom was used by both boys and girls, it was only the girls' materials that were on the walls. This is reflected in the pedagogical approaches of the teachers, with the girls' teachers being very empowering and learner-centred, and the boys' teacher adopting a more traditional, teacher-centred approach. Illustrative examples of some of the notes and observations made in the two lessons are in the table below:

Girls' lesson	Boys' lesson
Girls throw a ball to each other in a circle and say how they are feeling.	Teacher makes a complex grammatical point about the consonant doubling when turning a one-syllable noun into an adjective.
One girl welcomes us in Turkish (which she has learned by watching the TV).	Teacher explains a difficult pronunciation point about the long 'a' sound.
One girl leads the class in doing heads, shoulders, knees and toes.	Boy tries to get friend's attention by waving his arm about (seemingly because he is feeling bored).
One girl is asked to summarise (give a meta-analysis) what they have just been doing – she replies: 'We did a game about decision making.'	Teacher differentiates between British English and American English.
Girls work in groups on creating a presentation. Teacher circulates and supports. Girls are using a mixture of Arabic and English in their discussion.	Boy is brought to the front by the teacher to illustrate a point, but the process is very time-consuming.
Girls present to the rest of the class. Very positive atmosphere. They are all interested and engaged.	Zero opportunity for students to practise the new language by themselves.

There was one incident that occurred in both these lessons that acts as an interesting point of comparison. In the girls' lesson, one girl stood up and opened a blind because the room had got dark. This was completely unnoticed by the rest of the class, but definitely

improved the learning environment. The boys' class faced the same issue, but in this case one of the boys put his hand up and asked specific permission to open the blind, which was granted. Clearly this is a small example (and could potentially be explained by other factors), but this does appear to be a clear example of how the girls felt ownership over their learning and their learning space in a way that the boys did not. This is not to say there were no positive outcomes in the boys' lesson, or that the girls' lesson was a model, but that the difference between them was very noticeable.

A teacher on the programme shared a particularly creative and interesting discussion activity which he ran in his class. Keen to explore the concept – and reality – of division, but also wary of confronting the issue directly, he instead chose to explore 'topics that are not related to ... culturally specific issues', including gender, religion and politics. As such, he decided to run a debate about football clubs (Real Madrid and Barcelona, two very popular teams in Jordan) where they could explore differences of opinion without confronting some of the starker realities. He hoped that such an approach could act as a stepping stone to potentially deeper and more explicit discussions at some future point. One of the students who participated in this activity, a Syrian male, commented positively on this while also noting that he felt it could be challenging for younger children to do, especially those who may be strongly influenced by their parents.

Overall, there is an excellent opportunity to embed psychosocial support materials within English language materials, and it would be beneficial for this to be more widely implemented and in a deliberate manner.

Institutions work within their own silos and do not share language learning materials

As noted above, there is a multiplicity of different types of organisations providing English language learning opportunities in Jordan. There seems to be very little communication or sharing of information between any of them, which has several negative side effects. For example, there is very little coherence in pedagogy or materials, which is problematic for both learners and teachers in a highly mobile environment, and there are no economies of scale in terms of material creation.

The reasons why such sharing does not take place are many and various, and include a lack of awareness of the concept of doing, the technological challenges of doing this and time constraints. One particularly interesting point raised by an American organisation about why organisations find themselves in such silos is that they are competing for finite funds and resources.

Other points that were not noted explicitly but could be a factor are the 'face' aspect and the perception that sharing information in this way is somehow pedagogically emasculating, and that sharing materials might potentially be a threat to their job security, which in fragile contexts can be a very powerful factor.

A role certainly exists for an organisation to be a nexus for these myriad organisations. Of the organisations with the requisite scope and reputation, the British Council is probably the best placed to play this role for two main reasons:

1. its extremely strong reputation among all stakeholders
1. its apolitical position means that it can be an 'honest broker' to all stakeholders.

Teachers and learners access online materials, but their use is sub-optimal

While technology can provide opportunities, it is not a silver bullet. The content is more important than the platform. A good example of this is a learning platform that uses materials from an English language website for which the content is very focused on atomised, highly contextual grammar points, which do not support communicative competence. While some would benefit, this is not the sort of language that is needed by the majority of learners in their context.

Many respondents talked about how much they used online resources to try to develop their language skills. YouTube was the most commonly used resource, not only for the English language but also for Turkish (especially Turkish soap operas, which are very popular). One challenge expressed by the majority of interviewees was that when searching online for materials, they did not know what was good and what was not good. An online search for material would yield many responses, but it was not clear which they should access.

In addition to the deleterious educational outcomes from accessing poor-quality language sites, one young female respondent from Ma'an (who echoed what others in the group had also faced) brought up a very important point about security. For those already facing marginalisation, facing a situation like the one she described could be extremely negative: 'He was a bad guy ... He did not talk to me in a nice way. He asked me for bad things. I deleted him. I started to look for other people but all of them were the same.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

In very brief summary, there are numerous areas of opportunity for development and improvement. The language learning and teaching landscape in Jordan is fractured, incoherent and frequently ad hoc. This is not to say that there is not excellent provision, but, in the main, it is a piecemeal affair in which co-ordination and communication between providers is disconnected, where there are few economies of scale, and where the demand for quality language provision far exceeds the current (and probable future) levels of supply. This said, there are grounds for optimism.

Using its very strong reputation across Jordan and its knowledge, experience and materials, there is much that the British Council can do to remedy some of these issues. Some of these potential directions of travel are outlined below. They have been chosen to channel what the British Council is good at, and what it has a track record of, which is as a leading player in the knowledge economy rather than specifically as a development actor. For some of the more contentious/new areas, it would be very powerful for an organisation like the British Council to present these – e.g. translanguaging or peer-led classes. If these recommendations come with the British Council imprimatur, they will be much harder to rebuff and ignore.

This report is not advocating that the British Council should implement all of these recommendations, and certainly not by itself. There is significant scope for it, however, to lead on many of these issues and bring in other partners. Its 'honest broker' reputation, particular funding mechanism and knowledge gleaned from the wider MENA region are but three reasons why it has the potential to make transformational change.

Create a relevant, manageable and recognised certification system for language competence

Across all respondents, and in all areas, the centrality of certification was noted, of which the Tawjih and IELTS were the two most prominent. The English language component of the former, from an assessment perspective, does not work in the context of trying to deliver a more communicative curriculum, since there is no speaking or listening component. To make these changes, more fundamental, widespread changes would be needed, and are far beyond the scope of this report. Comments regarding IELTS, and brief suggestions for an alternative certification system, are presented below.

In order to reflect the social, cultural and economic value of multilingualism, to recognise that displaced people are often unable to provide verifiable evidence of their linguistic competence, and to mitigate against

the unattainably high cost (and preparation courses required) of exams such as IELTS, the British Council should look to work with a consortium of partners (such as UN agencies, ministries of education, universities and the business community) in creating a certificate of language competence which is suitable in mobile contexts and could be accessed by host country and refugee populations and internally displaced persons alike. Such a certification system would answer one of the key findings of this study, namely that language learners are frustrated that their historical and present language competences are not recognised, and that they are unable for financial and logistical reasons to do extant standardised assessment tests.

Were such a certification system to be developed, it is unlikely that it would undermine IELTS since in the short and medium terms there would be very little overlap in the demographics of those doing either certificate.

Create language learning materials which are relevant and appropriate for those using them

There is an urgent need for the creation, curation and dissemination of high-quality, contextually relevant English language learning materials across Jordan. A considerable proportion of the materials being used are irrelevant (for example in terms of content) and inappropriate (for example in terms of level). These materials are often produced by experts who appear to have little understanding of the reality of the classroom in this context, remaindered or donated books by publishers who no longer have any use for them, or 'off-the-shelf' resources that continue to peddle a grammar-centric, non-communicative view of language. None of this is satisfactory for the end users. The British Council is well placed to lead on this given its track record in this area and the fact that it can act as an 'honest broker' in a field which is often factionalised. It also has a large knowledge base and a huge existing repository of materials in Jordan but also more widely in MENA and beyond. These materials could be offered to agencies working in the field, alongside an orientation course as to how to use them. These materials could be developed to offer 'value added' in terms of delivering light-touch psychosocial support content. Ideally, the materials would be provided online and would be clearly tagged, according to their level, appropriate age group, focus and other key factors. A further option would be to actively involve individuals and organisations working in the field in the co-construction of these materials.

As a corollary to this, the British Council could also investigate the viability of creating some kind of kitemark initiative, in which online materials, YouTube channels,

English language websites, etc. could be given the British Council imprimatur to show that they meet certain predefined quality criteria. If possible, there could also be a centralised website where these links could be posted. This would be of huge value to users who have no way of knowing what the quality is of materials they find through internet searches.

Harmonise and shape teacher education programmes across all implementing actors

First and foremost, as the section header suggests, a semantic shift from 'teacher training' to 'teacher education' would be welcome, since this would embed the notion that the participating teacher is an agential part of the process. While the types of TE available varied considerably, the one constant was that teachers, whether in formal, informal and non-formal contexts, wanted additional support. It would be useful for an organisation like the British Council, which has a long track record of excellence in pedagogy, to create a set of principles for training in the contexts found in Jordan (and more widely), and to disseminate these principles among agencies that are delivering TE programmes, as well as embedding these principles within their own programmes. Based on lesson observations and discussions with educational stakeholders, some of the core components of such TE are listed below.

- TE should present strategies by which teachers can create a positive class atmosphere while also securing good learning outcomes. It seems rare to find both present within the same class.
- TE should provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their previous educational experience of teachers (both professionally but also as students), which was overwhelmingly grammar- and teacher-centric, since this has a huge influence on the way they deliver their own teaching. If there is no opportunity for this, they are less likely to be able to adopt the training contents (especially if it espouses a more communicative, participant-led pedagogy) into their practice.
- TE for English language teachers should provide support for how they can develop their own ability to develop their own levels of English.
- TE should look at multilingual practices such as translanguaging or code-switching
- TE should help teachers understand how to deal with trauma, not as psychologists but from a classroom management aspect. They should also have support in terms of their own self-care, which is largely ignored.
- TE should not just be centralised and one-off,

since many teachers find it extremely difficult to change their practice once they are back in their own classroom. There is a need for continuous development, where they are also supported in their own environment, whether that is face-to-face or remote feedback.

- While some aspects of TE can be delivered remotely (although the preference of participants is more face to face or blended), the importance of having a real person they can communicate with (for example e-moderators) is very valuable.
- TE should involve institutions, not just individuals. This mitigates against the challenges of fragile, mobile populations and ensures that there is systematic capacity building. People may move, but institutions stay. Training more than one person from each institution involved would be one way of de-risking the training.
- TE should emphasise communicative competence in both English and teacher training classes. In the latter, the issue of accent should be dealt with sensitively, for example by promoting the notion that once fluency in English has been developed, accuracy can follow.

While all teachers and educators could benefit from training, the primary/early childhood development level is where it is most needed given the relative inexperience of teachers, their low levels of language, the poor facilities and the large class sizes. Furthermore, many of the children taught in refugee communities of primary age may have very little prior experience of education and no understanding of the norms of learning, making the job even harder. This frustration is compounded by when teachers 'higher up' the system assign blame to primary teachers for the fact that their students' English is so poor when they get to secondary or tertiary level.

Support peer-led language and pedagogical enhancement

To empower teachers and learners, and in recognition of the fact that demand for language support will always outstrip supply, the British Council should work with partners such as universities, community groups and community-based organisations to create materials that can be used in peer-facilitated sessions such as teacher activity groups or university conversation clubs (where, for example, ESP could be developed). This would boost teacher's abilities to develop their own English language and pedagogical skills, and would enable other groups to pursue particular areas of interest, for example ESP. The British Council would not need to provide personnel for such courses, but rather the bare bones information



plus a facilitator's guide. After some initial training and orientation, these clubs could then be self-run, potentially with top-up support given at various future opportunities.

Widen IELTS participation

Notwithstanding Recommendation 1, if possible, given the huge and insatiable demand for IELTS, more support to those wanting to do IELTS should be provided. For example, is it possible to introduce smart payment mechanisms that ease the burden of paying for the examination? Furthermore, related to Recommendation 2, the British Council could look at whether it is possible to provide more digital support for IELTS since many learners do not know where to find reputable sources of information for this. Furthermore, the viability of looking at how IELTS examination content containing potential triggers should be investigated, since this could unfairly and negatively affect both the mental health and the performance of those suffering from trauma. This is particularly problematic considering the target demographic given the extremely burdensome financial cost of doing IELTS.

Investigate the viability of alternative language delivery mechanisms

As noted elsewhere, the British Council does not have the capacity (nor is it its specific role) to provide language training and support across Jordan. However, given the scale of the crisis and the need for languages, one option that could perhaps be investigated is the viability of alternative mechanisms for delivering language teaching, especially those which are more typically found in the informal and non-formal sectors. One opportunity area is the large number of young people who have a degree of language aptitude and who, with training and upskilling, would be able to deliver classes to refugees and marginalised Jordanians alike. This would have the double value of meeting the huge, unfulfilled demand for language learning, and would provide a tangible, employable skill for the young people who delivered the programme. Benefits of this approach would include cost-effectiveness, empowerment, cascading, near peer role models, etc. The British Council English and Digital for Girls' Education programme in South Asia is an example of one such programme that has had a significant amount of success.

Ensure that any language/pedagogy programme which has an online component uses e-moderators

Unsurprisingly, and as a general principle, there was a preference for face-to-face training and support. In order to reach scale, this will often not be feasible. Where programmes are virtual or blended, e-moderators should be used. This personal contact is highly motivating and would ensure better programme retention and impact, and therefore better value for money.

Initiate quantitative data collection for language competency

To support some/all of the initiatives outlined above, better quantitative data would help to underpin some of the key principles, especially in support of certification and to show its value and what it could do. Historically a 'language vulnerability index' has been mooted as an idea, and this would be a welcome addition to a field where there is a good qualitative evidence base, but which lacks in this area. This could help to advocate more effectively with large agencies. Moreover, set against the protracted nature of the Syrian conflict, this is needed and would help to show progress and advance the cause of language learning, and the L4R agenda, politically. Furthermore, there would be real value in the way that people could be engaged in the process, for example as data collectors, which would be an upskilling and valuable initiative in itself.

REFERENCES

Capstick, T and Delaney, M (2016) *Language for resilience: the role of language in enhancing the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities*. The British Council.

Capstick, T (ed) (2018) *Cross-disciplinary perspectives on the role of language in enhancing the resilience of refugees and host communities*. The British Council.

Denzin, NK and Lincoln, YS (eds) (2011) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage.

Kennett, P (2017) *Language for Resilience: Materials Development Research*. The British Council.

Streubert-Speziale, HJ and Carpenter, D (2003) *Qualitative research in nursing. Third edition*. Philadelphia: Williams & Wilkins Co.

UNESCO (2019) *Global Education Monitoring Report: Migration and Education*.

UNHCR (2019) *Global Trends – forced displacement in 2018*. Geneva: UNHCR.

Upvall, MJ, Mohammed, K and Dodge, PD (2009) *Perspectives of Somali Bantu refugee women living with circumcision in the United States: a focus group approach*. *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 46/3: 360–368.

