Methodology and Applications to Teach Refugees and Young Adults

Tuncer Can, Istanbul University

tcan@istanbul.edu.tr
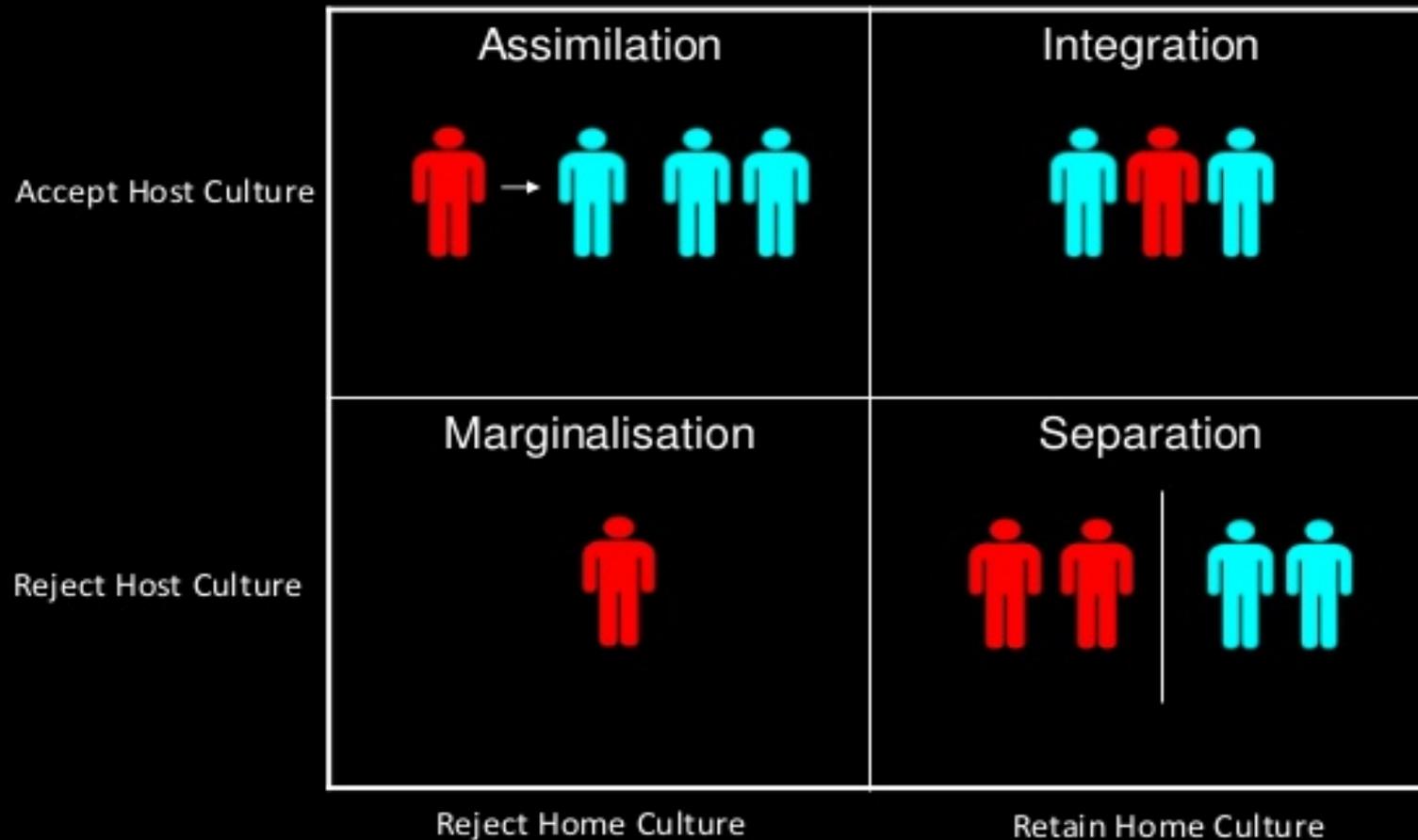
* Children below the age of 18 years comprised 50% of the world's 10.7 million refugees in 2013 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2014).

* In general, children and young people of refugee background will have experienced a wide range of **traumatic events** prior to their arrival in a settlement country. These may have included coming under combat fire and bombing; destruction of home and schools; separation from and disappearance of parents, family members, and friends; witnessing violence and death; prolonged danger; and perilous journeys. Some will have experienced forced conscription, arrest, detention, sexual assault, and torture. Traumatic events are rarely isolated and are associated with separation from and loss of family members, poverty, and lack of health care and education (Amnesty International, 2002; UNHCR, 2008).

* **Trauma** and impaired attachment do not uniformly influence neurobiological, cognitive, and psychological functioning in all affected children, and may be **reversible** to some extent, given timely psychosocial interventions (Cicchetti, 2008).

* At a different level of intervention, **a whole-of-school** focus involving students, families, communities, teachers, support staff, local agencies, and principals, is recommended to foster inclusion, celebrate diversity, achieve equitable education, and identify learning difficulties for refugee students (Block et al., 2014; Fraine & McDade, 2009; Taylor & Sidhu, 2011). To **bridge the gap** between schools and refugee families, a U.S. refugee agency employed culture brokers, who were resettled refugees of similar cultural background to the families that they liaised with; after 12 months parents became more involved, communicating significantly more often with schools (McBrien, 2011).

Refugees and Their Problems

* «*Healthy Individual is the one who loves and produces*» Freud

* Individual, Social and Economical

* Adjustment Problems:
    * Emotional Distress
    * Low Positive Self
    * Anti-Social Behaviour
    * Anger Control Management
* Coping Styles
    * Self Confident Style
    * Optimistic Style
    * Helpless Style
    * Submissive Style
    * Seeking Social Support

Berry's Acculturation Model

	Reject Home Culture	Retain Home Culture
Accept Host Culture	Assimilation	Integration
Reject Host Culture	Marginalisation	Separation

* A large body of literature around refugee resettlement (Bean et al., 2006; Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2011) suggests that **schools play a major component** in the successful resettlement of refugee children.

* Schools are "…a stabilizing feature in the unsettled lives of refugee students" (Matthews, 2008).

* The classroom is a **globalized social space**, with students whose reasons for migration, desires and dreams, linguistic and cultural resources, and functional goals may all differ from that of other class members (Block & Cameron, 2002; Canagarajah, 2005).

* … literature both internationally and nationally agrees that developing **proficiency in English** is essential and critical to assist social cohesion, successful resettlement and wellbeing o refugee children (Hek, 2005b; Matthews, 2008; McBrien, 2005; Rutter, 2006).

* **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:**

* …. a pedagogical framework that emphasises the need to acknowledge (and respond to) student differences. (Cazden and Leggett, 1976)

* In order to enact such a pedagogy, literature suggests that teachers must have two important attributes:

* **cultural competence** and **socio-political consciousness** (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2013; Ladson & Billings, 1995; Young,2010).

* Five common philosophies/approaches used in adult ESL literacy instruction include:

* **Freirean or participatory education**, which revolves around the discussion of issues drawn from learners' real-life experiences;

* **Whole language**, which emphasizes that language must be kept whole when learned or it is no longer language, and that written language is as natural as spoken language and needs to be integrated with it in learning;

* **Language experience**, which allows learners' experiences to be dictated, then transcribed, either by the teacher or other learners, and the transcription is used as reading material;

* **Learner writing and publishing**, which encourages adult learners to write about their experiences, and programs internally publish these writings, making them available to other learners to read; and

* **Competency-based education**, which has four components—**assessment** of learner needs, **selection** of competencies based on those needs, **instruction** targeted to those competencies, and **evaluation** of learner performance in those competencies (Peyton, 1995).

* **Curriculum and Instructional Strategies**
* Focus on the learners' immediate **personal experiences**, cultural backgrounds, familiar topics, and concrete real-world materials, rather than abstract and decontextualized themes for learners with limited first-language literacy (Allender, 1998).
* Use **concrete but age-appropriate materials** to enhance instruction by providing a context for language and literacy development (Holt, 1995).
* Acknowledge that in a multilevel classroom learner perceptions of what constitutes sound language learning may not match those of the teacher; thus use teacher's **enthusiasm and goodwill** to encourage learners who resist unfamiliar and non-traditional classroom activities to participate fully in the class (Shank and Terrill, 1995).
* Use **poetry as a tool** for learners to read, discuss, and write about poems and how they speak to their life situations; learners can also create poems of their own to express their feelings, thoughts, or beliefs (Peyton and Rigg, 1999).

* **Recycle language and skills**, include physical activities, and make frequent changes of activities for learners who have limited previous experience of education, because such learners benefit from instruction in techniques for study management, problem-solving, memorizing, categorizing, the use of reference tools such as dictionaries, and the explicit transfer of skills to other contexts (Holt, 1995).

* **Use music in the adult ESL classroom** to create a learning environment; to build listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing skills; to increase vocabulary; and to expand cultural knowledge (Lems, 2001).

* **Allow learners to have "dialogue journals,"** which are written conversations in which a learner and teacher (or other writing partner) communicate regularly over a semester, school year, or course whereby even learners with limited literacy skills to write can begin their journal work by using a few words or by drawing pictures, with the teacher drawing pictures in reply, perhaps writing a few words underneath or labeling the pictures (Peyton, 2001).

* Encourage the use of a particular **core series or provide a library** of materials from which instructors can choose to meet the multiple needs of learners (Schlusberg and Mueller, 1995).

Examples for Teaching Refugees

* Writing **bilingual stories**: developing children's literacy through home languages – Justine Dakin, (2013)

Justine uses a **case study approach** to describe a successful primary school project in which pupils learning EAL created illustrated books in English and their home language with the collaboration of their parents and other community members.

The children had different levels of literacy in English and in their home languages. Justine demonstrates how the project enabled them to combine and enhance their skills to produce their bilingual texts and reflects on the importance of valuing children's home languages and literacies.

* Rabeena (Year 5), who was highly literate in Tamil, and Estela (Year 4), who spoke Bosnian at home and was just learning to read and write it at a community school, collaborated on a project together. Having produced an English version of **The Wolf and the Seven Kids**, a traditional story familiar to both of them, they translated it into their respective home languages and created a **tri-lingual book**.

* Aliya (Year 5) adapted the traditional English tale of **Little Red Riding Hood** and set it in her homeland of Tanzania. She called the main character **Red Dress** and transformed the wolf into **Wild Dog**. Written in Swahili and English, Red Dress reflected Aliya's African roots and her British identity.

* In search of the highest level of learner engagement: **autobiographical approaches** with children and adults – Dina Mehmedbegović, (2012)

Dina describes her efforts, as a teacher new to working with migrant and refugee children, to develop an approach which could engage children at different levels of English proficiency, and with different levels of literacy skills in any of the languages they use. All too often curriculum and teaching appear disconnected and irrelevant to children's lives.

Dina explores the **use of personal narratives** with a Year 7 class in a secondary school and encourages others to look for ways which will enable them to exploit autobiographical approaches for the benefits of enhanced participation, achievement and intercultural competencies.

* Cummins (2000, 2001) writes about two principles: **Maximum Cognitive Engagement** and **Maximum Identity Investment**.

«Being a beginner in English does not by definition make a child a beginner in any other subject area.»

Evidence has shown an association between childhood experiences of traumatic events and impaired memory, attention, executive skills, and abstract reasoning (Beers & De Bellis, 2002; Pynoos, Steinberg, & Wraith, 1995; Toth & Cicchetti, 1998).

«**Maximum Identity Investment Principle** means going beyond celebrating diversity. It underpins practices which fully integrate diversity as a resource for teaching and learning.»

Identity Investment is about creating conditions in educational settings where children build on what they have and what they know; their prior experiences are not dismissed, but 'allowed in' as the foundation stone of their current and future experiences and learning. And this principle is important for all children – immigrants or not. It is about affirmation of different socio-economic, class, ethnic, regional, local and individual identities. Every child needs to learn through education first of all how to know, understand, analyse and critically approach his own individual situation within the history of a community and a social group, to **be able to see the bigger picture and gain understanding of the self within it**. That understanding is essential in enhancing one's potential to achieve, not only in terms of school grades, but on a long term basis, in terms of **social mobility**.

* Creative ESOL: the power of **participatory arts in language** acquisition – Eleanor Cocks and Theah Dix, (2013)

Eleanor and Theah explore an innovative, **creative approach** to supporting newly arrived young migrants and refugees with their English language development. 'Creative ESOL' is an arts and language programme which works with young people aged 11 to 16 to improve their English language skills through drama and the arts. 'Creative ESOL' draws on applied **theatre** practice encouraging participants to explore culture, emotion and imagination through drama activities. The teaching approach adopted is grounded in critical pedagogy, recognizing that young people should become active agents in their own learning.

Second language acquisition is intrinsically bound up with the **construction of identity** (Canagarajah 2004: 117) and we cannot ignore the challenges that young people are facing in relation to migration and cultural transition. This is particularly difficult for young adolescents negotiating their identities in a harsh inner-city environment. When creating characters, participants can explore and experiment with aspects of their own identity through a fictional persona. The creative framework provides participants with a safe, fictional world in which to work through their feelings about their new lives.

* **Class blogging** in ESOL – Richard Gresswell and James Simpson, (2012)

Richard and James draw on specific examples of class blogging projects in16 –19 ESOL provision in a further education college to explore, from practice and theoretical perspectives, the issues, challenges and opportunities, of introducing new digital media into the young adult ESOL classroom. They show how learners encountered, engaged with and used digital technology for productive learning experiences and how their use of digital media enabled them to overcome some of the literacy challenges they face.

* **The use of mobile technologies as a bridge to enhance learning for ESOL students – Carol Savill-Smith, Rekha Chopra and Octavia Haure (2013)**

Through two case studies, three experienced ESOL practitioners address the use of new technologies, specifically mobile technologies, for learning by ESOL students. The ways the technologies were used for teaching and learning are described, with a particular focus on how they were introduced into the curriculum, the resources created by the teachers and how they were used by the learners. The authors demonstrate the innovative and useful role that mobile devices can play in helping people, whose first language is not English, to learn, understand and interact with the host community.

* **Mobile devices** are acting as a **bridge** – offering the opportunity to make links between **a)** the learning that takes place inside the classroom and the outside world, so learning does not just stop at the college gates; **b)** between learning with their peers at the same time, i.e. synchronous learning; and **c)** learning at other times and places convenient to them, i.e. asynchronous learning.

*   Communication bridge

Mobile devices offer many communication possibilities. Within the classroom, they allow easy communication between students from a wide range of backgrounds. Information can easily be passed across the language and ethnicity divisions of a classroom. The following are some examples, drawn from the case studies, of how mobile devices can be used to aid communication.

Speaking

Skype (a proprietary voice-over-Internet protocol service) can be used to encourage students to communicate with their teacher and with each other. In case study one, the MoLeMentors initially answered their mentees' questions using this service, with tutors facilitating the conversations, but soon the students became independent (of the tutor) and much of the communication was found to have taken place well out of class time.

Previously hesitant speakers in lower level ESOL groups were encouraged to talk in greater depth when they were using material which they had created themselves as opposed to using textbook pictures. Sony PSPs were found useful for this, because personalised visual prompts can be recorded whilst capturing still images and videos, the vocabulary level can be fixed, and it uses simple buttons and direction mechanisms which require only a little pre-teaching.

Learners created their own learning resources from videos they had taken (this could be anything – the process of cooking a dish or creating a spreadsheet), and then used them to describe the process to their class. The teacher then used the learners' own resources to teach grammar points which could be practiced repeatedly both in and outside the classroom by playing the videos.

Learners' interview skills were improved by role-playing a formal job interview, during which photographs were taken. Afterwards, they used **Microsoft Photo Story** software, to create a visual digital story from the photographs which was projected onto a whiteboard to allow peer critique and group learning. It could then be used as a pictorial prompt in an extension activity, or sent to the teacher for analysis and feedback given via email. Many teaching opportunities can be planned using mobile devices' ability to take photographs of events, articles, labels or blurbs in museums, which can be used as prompts for later written work. The voice recording feature on mobile devices was used for recording, comparison or descriptions of places or persons. Learners then listened to each other's voice recording and peer assessed for pronunciation and use of various grammar points.

* **Writing**

Students' own images were used as prompts for writing. Students also made use of colour coded text, helping them plan the text they were about to write (such as using 'SimpleMindX on the iPod Touch). This contributed to the students' understanding of text structure.

Blogs are a popular form of recording thoughts and undertaking descriptive writing. In the case studies there were many instances of class blogs being written either for use in the classroom or after visits to various places such as museums. In this way, learning was extended outside the classroom, and the outside was brought into the classroom. Material could then be used for future discussion and self or peer assessment. Teachers often reported that the public nature of these forums improved the quality of the presented written work.

* **Community bridge**

The use of mobile devices can help students build links with different communities including their children's school, their workplace and within their learning community.

In case study one, users reported that they were able to **'Google' information for their children's homework**. This represented quite a role reversal at home. Parents were now able to re-assert their authoritative position as the 'information provider' for their children, rather than to take a more passive role as an observer of their children's progress in school, in a foreign language. In case study two, women who had previously struggled to understand what their own children were doing on computers at home found that they could join them in learning activities online, thus fostering intergenerational learning opportunities.

Isolation is often experienced by ESOL learners on work placements if they cannot communicate accurately and confidently in English with colleagues or their clients. This can be somewhat overcome through the use of videos – if on placement the

learners can upload them to blogging sites for collaborative comment, or if in the classroom they can use them to practise the language used. It was found that this increased their confidence in communicating in English with their clients, and allowed them to integrate more easily **with colleagues at work**. For the younger learners, it was also found that their confidence at work could also be increased simply by using mobile devices, which are regarded as 'cool'.

Many students use **Facebook, a social networking service**, as part of their daily lives. This use, out of college, can foster and maintain relationships and add to greater cohesion and dynamic when back in class which, in turn, can have a positive effect on their attendance and retention on the course.

Mobile devices allow learners to **maintain links with their country of origin**. To stay in contact with their family, country and its language diminishes some of the immigration trauma and loneliness which can be experienced.

Independence bridge

The facilities provided by mobile devices can offer a highly-valued level of independence to the user and help to provide a bridge with society at large.

Much of this is related to the user being able to search the internet for information or the use of mobile applications or apps. Examples of this are:

Journey planners and map applications offer greater independence to the user, allowing them to find out information for themselves, often accessed whilst they are on the move.

Dictionary, grammar and spelling applications are useful, especially where students could also record their own vocabulary into the system for future playback. Idiom (the natural manner of speaking) translator applications, for example IdiomSite.com, were specifically noted by students as being beneficial.

Encyclopaedias, such as Wikipedia, are useful for finding out information.

Text translation tools, such as Google Translate, are useful for translating difficult or unfamiliar words and text structure applications.

Information gathered from **online sites** such as those describing countries and cultures, travel, weather, news information sites, shopping and the payment of bills using online billing are all considered helpful.

Some students were required to take their British Citizenship Tests and the use of the website '**Life in the UK**' and its practice tests were considered invaluable (also for those applying for settlement, or indefinite leave to remain, in the UK). Similar comments were made about the usefulness of websites relating to driving tests (theory and practical).

All the above encourage the user to engage with information in English, reading and writing both formally and informally. They encourage the user to feel part of society and remove potential areas of stress such as having to take part in face-to-face interaction or make telephone calls to access such information.

* The personal made impersonal and the impersonal made personal: **reading circles** and language learning – Sam Duncan (2012)

Sam draws on three case studies of reading circles within formal and informal adult education to explore reading circles as a language practice and pedagogy, as a vehicle for **student-led differentiation**, and as a '**negotiated syllabus**'. She shows that reading circles are an authentic adult literacy practice, and a way of working which involves not only adult topics but adult ways of working: mutuality, shared responsibility and a sharing of expertise.

References

* Canagarajah, S (2004) 'Subversive identities, pedagogical safe houses, and critical learning' in Norton, B and Toohey, K Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Cummins, J (2000) Language, power and pedagogy. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

* Cummins, J (2001) Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society. Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education, 125.

* Council of Europe (1995) All different – All equal. Education Pack. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

* Council of Europe (2009) Autobiographies of intercultural encounters. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

* Freire, P (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. London: Penguin.

* Mallows, D. (2013). Innovations in English language teaching for migrants and refugees.

* Taylor, P., & Garrett, L. (2014). Effective teaching of students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds: A critical literature review.