

The Successes and Challenges of Syrian Refugee Families in Canada: A Follow-Up Study

by

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Abstract

This study provides a one year follow-up on the resettlement experiences of four Syrian refugee families living in Canada. More specifically, this study focuses on the language and literacy development of refugee children. Overall, a lack of development in English and Arabic proficiency was noted among refugee children. A closer analysis of the learning environments of refugee children demonstrated there was a lack of support available at home and in school.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1. Syrian Refugee Crisis

Since the start of 2011, Syria has been embroiled in a civil war. The effect of this devastating situation has led to millions of individuals being displaced. By the end of 2014, it was approximated that more than 7.6 million people have been internally displaced. Whereas, 3.7 million have left the nation (Ostrand, 2015). This mass exodus of migrants has led to a global refugee crisis.

Most Syrian refugees migrated to neighboring countries such as, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey (Ostrand, 2015). The arrival of these migrants significantly altered the demographics of these nations. For instance in 2015, it was noted that 1 in 5 individuals living in Lebanon was a Syrian refugee (Ostrand, 2015). Furthermore, reports state that social services (ex. housing, healthcare etc.) were heavily strained. With regards to housing, it was observed that 85% of the Syrian refugees were living outside of refugee camps (Berti, 2015). This resulted in an increased demand for shelter, and consequently, an increase in the price of rent (Berti, 2015). This effect was detrimental for the financially limited refugee population. Apart from housing, employment opportunities in neighboring countries were also scarce (Berti, 2015). As a result of such, many refugees agreed to work for low wages and in harsh conditions (Berti, 2015).

The educational development of refugee children was also significantly impacted. While living in Syria, many children were kept home from school (Berti, 2015). Once they migrated to neighboring countries, refugee children were accommodated in local educational systems. However, this often led to overcrowding of schools and overworked personnel (Berti, 2015). Some refugee children were obstructed from attending schools due to the cost of tuition. In Lebanon, the gross enrollment rate of Syrian children in primary school was 55%. Whereas, the gross enrollment rate for secondary school was 13%. Both these values were lower than the Lebanese and pre-war Syrian averages (Berti, 2015).

2. Global Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

In light of this refugee crisis, many Western countries looked towards admitting and resettling Syrian refugees.

2.1 Canada

In North America, Canada took the lead in Syrian refugee resettlement. In early 2016, Canada decided to admit 25,000 Syrian refugees (Hansen & Huston, 2016). By 2019, more than 40,000 refugees have resettled in Canada (Government of Canada, 2019). These refugees were selected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from refugee sites in Lebanon and Jordan. Refugees selected were classified as Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) (Government of Canada, 2016). Apart from GARs, some refugees were privately sponsored (known as PSRs) by permanent residents, Canadian citizens or community organizations (Government of Canada, 2016). Refugees were expected to undergo security and healthcare clearances. Once these were completed, refugees travelled to the Canadian cities, Toronto and Montreal.

Upon their arrival in Canada, refugees were assisted with their transition into the community. As GARs, refugees had a brief stay in a hotel (Hansen & Huston, 2016). Shortly thereafter, they would be transferred to communities with resettlement supports in place (Government of Canada, 2019). As part of their resettlement process, GARs would be transferred to a Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) (Hansen & Huston, 2016). These organizations would provide refugees with information about life in Canada, about the community they live in, language training and job searching assistance (Government of Canada, 2019). Moreover, refugees would have access to services such as, child-care, transportation assistance, translation, interpretation and crisis-counselling (Government of Canada, 2019). Financially, RAPs provided income supports up to one year for refugee families. If the refugees were privately sponsored (PSRs), their financial, housing and emotional needs were expected to be met by their sponsors (Government of Canada, 2019).

Apart from these immediate resettlement services, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funded supports such as, summer programming, Arabic-speaking youth workers

and youth employment programs (Government of Canada, 2019). Furthermore, the IRCC provided education-based supports for refugee youth such as, Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS). As per this program, a settlement worker is placed in a school with a large newcomer population. This is done in order to promote the resettlement and achievement of refugee students (Government of Canada, 2019).

3. Refugees and Non-Refugee Migrants

When resettling, Syrian refugees become a part of the multitude of newcomers establishing their lives in the Western hemisphere. Like other migrants, refugees usually have low initial earnings and occupational statuses (Chiswick, Lee & Miller, 2005). This is mainly due to their limited language proficiency in the host nation language. For instance, Rivera-Batiz (1990) demonstrated that low English proficiency significantly constrains immigrant wages. Low employment outcomes are also explained by the lack of recognition given to migrant credentials (Reitz, 2007). Adapting to life in the west is also confounded by factors such as discrimination and racism (Reitz, 2007). A mental health study has also demonstrated the association between being a migrant in a high-income nation and the increased risk for severe mental illnesses (Hollander, Bruce, Burstrom & Ekblad, 2011). Circumstances such as these implicate the difficulties migrants face when resettling in a new environment.

While broad similarities exist, there are a number of differences between refugees and non-refugee migrants. Firstly, it should be noted that refugees do not voluntarily move to a host nation. Whereas migrants, such as skilled-working immigrants, often intend to move to these countries prior to their arrival. In some nations, immigrants are selected based on their ability to adapt to the host society. For instance, immigrants in Canada are selected on a point system (Government of Canada, 2018). Most points are awarded based on the language proficiency, education and work experience of the migrant (Government of Canada, 2018). Compared to immigrants, refugees have poorer host language skills and lower levels of education (Chiswick, Lee & Miller, 2006). Furthermore, a significantly lower number of refugees work skilled jobs in host countries (Connor, 2010).

Apart from employment differences, refugees also differ from non-refugee migrants on topics such as, family size, physical and mental health, and neighborhood characteristics. Unlike other

migrants, refugee families are less likely to have both parents at home and more likely to have more minor children (Connor, 2010). Furthermore, refugees are noted to have poorer levels of physical and mental health when compared to their non-refugee counterparts (Chiswick, Lee & Miller, 2008). Refugee families are also more likely to live in neighborhoods with a large foreign born population and low median income (Connor, 2010). Given these circumstances, it should not be assumed that refugee resettlement will be very similar to the resettlement of non-refugee migrants.

4. Language and Literacy Development of Refugees

A multitude of research has shown language proficiency is one of most important factors when adapting to a new environment (van Tubergen, 2010; Brown, Miller & Mitchell, 2006; Hou & Beiser, 2006). Acquisition of a second language (L2) is predicted by a number of pre- and post-migration factors. The pre-migration factors most salient in predicting refugee L2 fluency are years of education, prior residence in a major city and emigration at a younger age (van Tubergen, 2010). Post-migration factors include shorter stays in reception centres, integration course completion and post-migration education (van Tubergen, 2010).

4.1 L1-L2 Relationship and L1 Maintenance

In 1979, Jim Cummins introduced the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis. According to his theory, language and literacy skills can be transferred between languages. For instance, success in reading in a second language (L2) is largely dependent on first language (L1) literacy skills. With regards to children and youth, these findings indicated L1 at home interacts with L2 at school (Cummins, 1979). Research in subsequent years has demonstrated this interaction between various languages. For instance, the L1 (Turkish) of Turkish children in the Netherlands was found to influence their L2 (Dutch) phonological, literacy and pragmatic skills (Verhoeven, 1994). The effect of L1 proficiency on L2 development is also noted to be long-term. In one study, L1 reading and spelling skills in elementary school were noted to be the best predictors of L2 writing proficiency in high school (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, Humbach & Javorsky, 2006).

These findings have promoted the concept of L1 maintenance among migrant students. Eisenclas, Schalley and Guillenmin (2013) have noted the cognitive, affective and social advantages associated with being raised bilingually. For instance, bilingual children are noted to

have a greater sense of metalinguistic awareness when compared to monolinguals (Bialystok, Peets & Moreno, 2014). Moreover, children with a deep understanding of their L1 are able to learn a L2 more proficiently (Cummins, 2000). Bilingual migrant youth have a stronger sense of their cultural identity and belonging (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). As a result of such, these youth have a heightened sense of self-esteem (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Bilingual children are also reported to have higher test scores than their monolingual peers (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

However, it should be noted that migrant children with interrupted education may not have had the opportunity to develop a strong L2 proficiency. For instance, it is reported that cognitive and academic success in L2 requires L1 oral and written skills to be developed up to an elementary school level (Collier, 1995). As a result of such, migrant children with interrupted education will take longer developing L2 proficiency (Brown, Miller & Mitchell, 2006).

4.2 Language and Literacy Development of Refugee Children at School

Acquiring a host nation language in a school curriculum is a difficult and lengthy process. It should be noted that this development is not equivalent to learning a foreign language as an academic course (Collier, 1995). Collier (1995) proposed a complex and interdependent concept to explain the acquisition of a L2 during school. This concept involves sociocultural processes, language development, academic development and cognitive development (Collier, 1995). In terms of sociocultural processes, students need a supportive environment in order to support their L2 learning. Moreover, it is beneficial for students to have a well-developed understanding of their L1 (Collier, 1995). As previously described, skills established in learning their L1 support their L2 development (Cummins, 1979). Furthermore, students may have knowledge of academic course work such as, mathematics and science in their L1 (Collier, 1995). As a result of such, these students should not be prevented from continuing these studies until their L2 is fully developed. Lastly, students are expected to have strong cognitive skills in order to support their L2 acquisition (Collier, 1995).

Most researchers suggest the acquisition of a L2 during school occurs over the course of a number of years (Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000; Cummins, 1981). Migrant students are expected to acquire social communication skills in order to support their interactions with their peers (Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000). Cummins (1981) refers to these skills as Basic Interpersonal

Communicative Skills (BICS). These skills can be developed much faster than academic writing and oral skills. Cummins (1981) regards academic skills as Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Hence, it should not be assumed that migrant students with well-developed L2 oral proficiency will have well-developed L2 academic proficiency.

The development of L2 proficiency becomes more difficult if students have had periods of interrupted education. Hakuta, Butler and Witt (2000) indicate migrant youth with disrupted schooling have lower levels of cognitive performance. As previously stated, many refugee children do not have the opportunity to develop strong L1 skills. As a result of such, they do not have the foundation to support L2 learning (Miller, 2009; Cummins, 1981). Moreover, refugee students may feel discouraged if expected to perform on the same academic level as their monolingual peers (Kanu, 2008).

Educational environments must adapt to the needs of refugee children. L1 and L2 skills should be assessed in order to grasp a sense of total language proficiency (Kaplan, Stolk, Valibhoy, Tucker & Baker, 2016). Moreover, staff need a better understanding of the educational, cultural and family background of migrant children (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). By doing so, they will be better able to support their language acquisition and academic development (Cheng, 1998). Many programs are in place today to support the L2 acquisition of migrant children. However, it should be noted that these programs do not distinguish between the needs of refugee and non-refugee migrants. The following programs are provided by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

4.2.1 English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD)

These in-school programs are designed to support elementary school children with English language acquisition. ESL is designated towards assisting newcomer children who have had age-appropriate schooling in their country of origin (TDSB, 2014). Whereas, ELD is to support the needs of newcomer children with limited prior schooling (TDSB, 2014). In these programs, students are taught language skills in addition to academic skills such as, mathematics and social studies (TDSB, 2014). The structure of ESL and ELD programs vary among different schools.

4.2.2 Language Enrichment Academic Program (LEAP)

LEAP is directed towards youth between the ages of 11 and 18 years (TDSB, 2014). Like the ELD program, LEAP is for students who have limited or no prior schooling in their country of origin (TDSB, 2014). LEAP is considered an intensive program and provides half-day classes to students (TDSB, 2014).

4.3 Language Development of Adult Refugees

With regards to post-migration education, it should be noted that an increased length of L2 training is associated with linguistic benefits and employment opportunities (Mesch, 2003; Beiser & Hou, 2000). One study has shown that L2 proficiency was able to predict employment success even 10 years after refugee resettlement (Hou & Beiser, 2010). The following English language learning program is offered to newcomers in Canada.

LINC is a free English training program offered to newcomer adults (Government of Canada, 2018). These classes focus upon basic language skills. At times topics such as, banking, housing, citizenship and job opportunities are discussed (Government of Canada, 2018). Throughout the program, newcomers will complete a number of Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels. A CLB level of 4 or higher in speaking and listening is required for Canadian citizenship (Government of Canada, 2018). LINC classes are meant to be flexible and can be taken on a part-time or full-time basis (Government of Canada, 2018). In a few locations, child care services are also provided.

Research regarding the effectiveness of LINC in the lives of adult migrants indicates further development of the program is needed (Ricento, 2013; Cervatiuc & Ricento, 2012). Program instructors often fail to incorporate concepts such as, critical thinking on everyday migrant issues (Curry, 2001). Moreover, classes rarely touch upon topics that are interesting to students (Cervatiuc & Ricento, 2012). In one case study, a 51-year old refugee referred to LINC classes as a waste of time (Ricento, 2013). This view was based upon the lack of attention given to the ages, backgrounds and needs of adult learners (Ricento, 2013). Cervatiuc and Ricento (2012) found the teaching methods of LINC classes to be implicitly based on a paternalistic approach.

The L2 proficiency of migrant adults can also greatly influence the L2 development of their children. For instance, Paradis (2011) has shown that child external factors (such as, months of exposure to L2, mother L2 fluency, richness of L2 environment outside of school) are associated with second language acquisition in migrant children. Furthermore, low L2 literacy of migrant parents is associated with the poor L2 scores and academic achievement of their children (Hakuta et al., 2000).

4.4 Acculturation and Language Acquisition

Acculturation is referred to as the process where a migrant adapts to a new culture (Esses, Hamilton & Gaucher, 2017). Berry (1997) has noted four forms of acculturation. These include integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization (Berry, 1997). Integration refers to a migrant maintaining their cultural heritage while also seeking contact with the host society. Assimilation requires the migrant to replace their cultural heritage with the norms of their new environment. Separation is the opposite of acculturation. In this situation, the migrant prefers to maintain their cultural heritage while avoiding the host society. Marginalization involves migrants shedding their cultural heritage while also avoiding contact with the host society (Berry, 1997). Recent theories of acculturation indicate integration is the healthiest form of migrant membership in a host society (Amiot, de la Sablonniere, Terry & Smith, 2007).

Acculturation strategies are also impacted by the response migrants receive from the host society. In the face of hostility and prejudice, migrants may choose to withdraw from society (Crocket & Major, 1989). In other cases, migrants may distance themselves from their cultural heritage via assimilation (Esses, Hamilton & Gaucher, 2017). On the other hand, positive interactions between migrants and host societies are known to promote migrant integration.

It has also been suggested that the level of acculturation is based on the characteristics of the migrants. Factors such as the country of origin, socioeconomic status, education level and knowledge of host language are believed to promote higher levels of migrant integration (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010).

4.4.1 Peer Interactions and Language Learning

Integration is also promoted by host society language acquisition. Without L2 proficiency, many migrants find it difficult forming social networks outside of their ethnic group (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). By not doing so, they are at risk of isolation and exclusion.

Moreover, the formation of inter-cultural peer contacts has been noted to be crucial for migrant youth success (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). For instance, inter-cultural peer contacts promote the development of L2 proficiency. Indirectly, this enhances migrant youth academic achievement (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). In fact, Bosnian and Albanian refugee students living in the United States viewed English proficiency as a requirement for future success (Pryor, 2001). In one study, host nation language proficiency was able to mitigate the risk of low peer acceptance among migrant children (von Grünigen, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Perren & Alsaker, 2012).

4.4.2 Family Dynamics and Language Learning

During the process of integration, the dynamics of migrant families can also be affected (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). For instance, youth tend to acculturate and learn the host society language faster than their parents (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). As a result of such, parents may feel ill-equipped to support the educational development of their children. In order to prevent inter-generational conflict, the native language (L1) of youth should be maintained (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

5. The Wellbeing of Syrian Refugees

Due to the civil war in Syria, many refugees have experienced psychological and social distress (Hansen & Huston, 2016). Much of this distress is associated with trauma exposure (Silove et al., 1998). For instance, German mental health officials working in a Turkish refugee camp found 1 in 3 outpatients experienced trauma during the war (Nicolai, Fuchs & von Mutius, 2015). Furthermore, 25% of the patients reported affective disorders, 25% reported anxiety disorders and 15% had cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Nicolai, Fuchs & von Mutius, 2015). Apart from pre-migration trauma, many refugees experience distress after arriving in the host country. Post-migration factors such as, unemployment are also associated with psychological distress in refugees (Kokko & Pulkkien, 1998). Moreover, refugees have been

noted to experience higher levels of distress and PTSD symptoms when compared to non-refugee immigrants (Ametz, Rofa, Arnetz, Ventimiglia & Jamil, 2013). Due to the complexities of resettlement, few refugees tend to prioritize their mental health (Hansen & Huston, 2016).

Mental health difficulties were also noted in Syrian refugee children and youth. In another study of a Turkish refugee camp, 45% of children were noted to have experienced PTSD symptoms, 20% had clinically diagnosable levels of depression and many reported psychosomatic pains (Sirin & Sirin-Rogers, 2015). When asked to draw a picture of an individual, 23% of children depicted multiple sources of trauma (e.g. blood, tears, death, guns) (Sirin & Sirin-Rogers, 2015). Refugee children are also noted to have higher levels of externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Henley & Robinson, 2011; Montgomery, 2008).

The mental health of refugee children is also impacted by a number of factors post-migration. Many refugee parents have difficulty finding employment and learning the language of the host nation (Hadfield, Ungar & Ostrowski, 2017). In fact, it has been noted that refugee youth tend to acculturate and learn the host nation language faster than their parents (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). These differences can cause a shift in traditional family roles. Refugee boys tend to experience more difficulty adapting to a new family structure and are more likely to have poor mental health outcomes (Tousignant et al., 1999). Apart from family dynamics, refugee children may also find it difficult to adapt to a new school environment and form peer-relations. In effect, this may lead to feelings of isolation and exclusion (Hadfield, Ungar & Ostrowski, 2017).

Recent research suggests social cohesion and a sense of belonging can greatly improve refugee youth wellbeing (Hadfield, Ungar & Ostrowski, 2017). Refugee children who feel integrated in their resettlement country are less likely to have problematic internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Berry, 1997).

6. The Pilot Study

Prior to this current study, a pilot project was conducted in 2018. The purpose of this project was to assess to language and literacy development of five Syrian refugee families living in Canada. More specifically, the study focused on the Arabic (L1) maintenance and English (L2) development of the children within these families. The study was based upon a mixed methods

design. The families completed qualitative interviews and nine children (5 girls; $M_{age} = 134.67$ months) took part in a battery of quantitative language and literacy measures. These measures were administered in both Arabic and English.

6.1 Previous Study Findings

The pilot study noted the importance of L1 maintenance and L2 acquisition in the five refugee families. Moreover, the L1 and L2 language and literacy skills of refugee children were noted to be poor.

7. The Present Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct a one-year follow-up on the resettlement experiences of the same refugee families. More specifically, this involved assessing the language and literacy development of refugee children. Furthermore, this study aimed to investigate the integration experiences of refugee families in terms of their social environment and wellbeing. Unlike the pilot study, a greater emphasis was placed on the educational development of the refugee children.

Chapter 2 Methods

1. Participants

Four of the five Syrian refugee families continued in the follow-up study after the pilot project. Three of the families lived in Scarborough, Ontario, were government sponsored (GARs) and were Arab. Whereas, one family lived in Toronto, Ontario, was privately sponsored (PSR) and was Kurdish. Like the pilot study, parents ($N = 7$; four mothers) took part in semi-structured qualitative interviews and completed questionnaires. Eight children (five girls; $M_{\text{age}} = 158.75$ months) took part in the follow up study. One of these children did not previously participate in the pilot study. All children were interviewed and completed a battery of language and literacy measures. Children also completed a well-being questionnaire. Unlike the previous study, educators ($N = 6$; two public elementary schools) of the refugee children were also interviewed. These educators included two principals, two ESL teachers, one main room teacher, and one in-school settlement worker. All educators worked with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

2. Measures

2.1. Qualitative Measures

Semi-structured Qualitative Interviews with Parents, Children and Educators. All participants took part in semi-structured qualitative interviews. The parent and child interview questions were adapted from the original interviews administered in the pilot study. Although in this study, a greater portion of the interview focused on recent changes experienced during resettlement. Children were mainly asked questions regarding their typical school day, their interests outside of school and their future goals. Parents, on the other hand, were mainly interviewed about their lifestyles and recent changes. Both interviews highlighted concepts such as L1 and L2 language and literacy development. The frameworks of the child and parent interviews are presented in Appendix A and B, respectively.

When interviewing educators, the conversation was based upon the behavior and academic development of refugee children. Questions regarding the supports offered at schools, teacher

training and educator-parent relationships were also posed. A framework of this interview is presented in Appendix C.

Provincial Report Cards. Provincial report cards were collected in order to assess the academic achievement of each child. These documents were also able to provide information regarding the learning strategies of each child, their teacher commentary and their progress within the English language learning programs.

2.2. Quantitative Measures

Rapid Automated Naming (Digits). This test was administered in order to assess cognitive abilities underlying language learning and reading. In English, a subtest was used from the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP; Wagner, Torgesen & Rashotte, 1999). For this measure, children were asked to read two sets of 36 digits as fast as possible. The time to read both sets was recorded in seconds. A similar test from the Arabic Language Assessment Battery (ALAB; Assadi, Shany, Ben-Semon & Ibrahim, 2011) was conducted in Arabic. Unlike its English counterpart, the Arabic test only consisted of one set of 36 digits.

Vocabulary Size. English receptive vocabulary was assessed using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT; Dunn & Dunn, 2007). The English PPVT measure was translated to Arabic and used to test Arabic vocabulary proficiency. Both tests were discontinued after the child made eight consecutive errors in one set.

Word Reading Accuracy. English word reading was tested using the letter-word identification subtest (Form B) of the Woodcock–Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew & Mather, 2001). English task consisted of 76 items and was discontinued after the child made six consecutive errors. A similar task was used to measure Arabic word reading (Tibi, 2016). The Arabic task consisted of 90 items and did not have a ceiling rule for discontinuation.

Reading Comprehension. English reading comprehension was evaluated with the passage comprehension subtest (Form B) of the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew & Mather, 2001). This test consisted of 47 items and was stopped once the child provided six consecutive incorrect responses within one set. A similar test for reading comprehension was used in Arabic. One portion of the measure was retrieved from ALAB, a

battery of Arabic language measures (Assadi et al., 2011). This portion assessed sentence comprehension. The second part of the Arabic measure assessed passage comprehension. The passage in this test was adapted from Mahfoudi (2010). Overall, the Arabic measure consisted of 42 items. There was no ceiling rule for discontinuation and children were asked to independently complete the Arabic measure within 25 minutes.

Test of Narrative Language. Oral narratives were elicited from children using the Test of Narrative Language (TNL; Gillam & Pearson, 2004). This test is widely used and has a high reliability and validity. The measure consists of 42 items. The TNL involves eliciting narratives using an “I tell-you tell” (Hadley, 1998) technique in which the examiner first demonstrates a story, comprehension questions are asked and then the child produces a similar story. The single complex picture task (version A) was used. Children were tested in English and Arabic. The Arabic measure was formulated by translating the original English task.

Language Environment Questionnaire (ALEQ-4). This questionnaire was only administered to parents. This measure collected information regarding the language development history of each child, their home and school language use and their participation in literacy activities. The education and English fluency of the parents were also noted. This questionnaire was adapted for the refugee population (Paradis, 2011; 2010).

Child Wellbeing (SDQ). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001) assessed well-being (emotional-behavioural regulation and prosocial behaviour) in children. Children (aged 9 years and above) completed the child self-report. Additionally, parents completed a report on the well-being of their child. The child report consisted of 25 items in five sub-scales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behaviour. The parent report on the child consisted of questions regarding the feelings and behaviours of each child. The SDQ has been extensively evaluated and applied world-wide (Woerner et al., 2004). It is publicly available in Arabic (Alyahri & Goodman 2006).

3. Procedure

The study was conducted between February and August 2019. With the assistance of an Arabic-speaking research assistant, families from the pilot project were contacted and informed about the follow-up study. Families interested in participating were visited. Throughout the project, families were visited two to three times. Moreover, all visits were between two to three hours in length. An Arabic-speaking research assistant was present during each visit. During the first family visit, the study was explained in detail and the consent from willing participants was collected. Parents and children participated in individual semi-structured qualitative interviews. Moreover, provincial report cards were collected. Children were also asked to provide the name of a current educator. In the subsequent visits, the language environment and wellbeing questionnaires were completed. During these visits, children completed a battery of English and Arabic language and literacy assessments.

After visiting the families, the teachers recommended by the child participants were contacted. Principals and support workers at the schools of the children were contacted as well. If interested in the study, educators were met with to further describe the project. The consent from willing participants were collected and a one-hour semi-structured qualitative interview was conducted.

3.1. Analysis

This project was conducted in order to assess the successes and challenges of Syrian refugee families. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and provincial report cards were used in order to grasp a greater understanding of their everyday lives. Only the results from the follow-up study were used in the analysis of these measures. This portion of the analysis involved all eight child participants (five girls; $M_{\text{age}} = 158.75$ months), parents and educators.

In order to examine the development of refugee children, the results from the pilot and follow-up study were compared. Seven children (four girls; $M_{\text{age}} = 156.29$ months) from the pilot study continued to take part in the follow-up study. The quantitative results of these seven children at T1 and T2 were compared in order to assess their long-term development. The quantitative results used in this comparison focused on English and Arabic language and literacy development.

Chapter 3 Results

1. Qualitative Results

1.1. Semi-structured Interviews

From the semi-structured interviews, six themes emerged. These themes were: (i) L1 Maintenance and Family Dynamics, (ii) Development of L2 with Peers, (iii) Refugee Children at School, (iv) Parent-School Relationship, (v) Parent L2 Learning Programs and Supports, and (vi) Refugee Emotional Wellbeing. Below, verbatim quotations of the interviewees accompany each theme. To identify parent and child speakers, individuals are identified by their family (labelled 1 to 4). Furthermore, parent speakers are identified by their parental role (Mother or Father). In addition to family labels, child speakers are identified by their age (in years). Educators are identified by their teaching roles (principal, main room teacher, ESL teacher or in-school settlement worker). The school of each educator (either 'School 1' or 'School 2') is also noted in order to distinguish between educators with the same roles.

(i) L1 Maintenance and Family Dynamics **L1 Maintenance**

All parents wanted their kids to maintain their L1. In the Arab families, Arabic maintenance was stressed. Whereas the Kurdish family noted the value of Kurdish maintenance.

"I want them to watch Arabic programs not English." (Family 2, Mother)

"...I tell them to speak in their language so they don't forget because at school they speak in English all the time. For example, with their friend, always in English. So, I don't like them to forget their language. At home, I tell them speak in your language...their English has become better than their Kurdish. So, I don't want them to forget their language too." (Family 4, Mother, via an interpreter)

One mother felt Arabic was maintained at home because her children frequently met with their Arabic speaking relatives.

"All my family is here too. So they're forced to talk to them and us in Arabic." (Family 3, Mother, via an interpreter)

The value of L1 maintenance is also noted amongst educators.

“And we always stress the first language, a child’s competence in their first language is a critical building block for learning a second, third, fourth language.” (Principal 1, School 1)

However, some children acknowledged a decline in their L1 proficiency. This decline was also noted by teachers.

“...like I’m starting to forget Arabic.” (Family 2, Child Age 9)

“I find that many of them are losing their first language already. A lot of times I would ask them, ‘How do you say that in Arabic?’ They think and think and couldn’t come up with it. That strikes me because I was ESL too and I’m still ESL, I can tell you. So whether because they don’t understand the English or is it really they cannot recall how to say it in Arabic. A lot of times they can’t recall how to say it in Arabic but I do see them talking to the parents, talking to their siblings in Arabic but when you ask them, ‘what is this word?’ And I’m not using verbs or abstract language, usually it’s just nouns. They couldn’t recall.” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

Family Dynamics

While living in Canada, many parents noted a change in their relationship with their children. Parents, particularly fathers, voiced their unease with the individualistic nature of society.

“When I went to work, he went with me. He would work with me. I was in construction. I had equipment, wood, tools, and labourers. I was in charge. I would take him with me, he would pass me all the bricks for the top of the building but here no.” (Family 1, Father, via an interpreter)

“In our countries, the relationship is better with the families. Despite how sometimes the family can be hard on them. Despite that, the child is respectful and for me, respect is very important. Still, the child respects their mother and the father... Here, ‘no, you didn’t work hard on me and you didn’t raise me and you didn’t give me money, the government gives me money.’ ...So here, I see that there’s distance.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

An in-school settlement worker acknowledged the new role children have in their families. Many children tend to have a higher level of English proficiency than their parents. As a result of such, children often assist their families with administrative tasks by acting as an interpreter.

“They’re all going to school, their English is getting better. Some of them never even went to school before, period! And not a language there, they don’t know how to hold a pen. They started doing very well. So it is a relief for the kids. Because some of them also at elementary stage they work as their interpreter when they go to the doctor, anywhere,

they take a day off or every day off. And they do that and in the meantime the kids are kind of being pushed to be an adult so fast.” (In-School Settlement Worker, School 1)

Interestingly, the resettlement experience has also led to a change in the role of refugee women. Many mothers have acknowledged the greater lead they take to assist their families. This change was also noted by the in-school settlement worker.

“So some men’s mentalities changed. Why? Because I have to go to work, so my wife has to learn to shop, learn how to go to the super market, how to go to school. So there are some husbands that have adapted.” (Family 4, Mother, via an interpreter)

“Especially with English and everything else. People that come from the Middle East, the man is the boss. He knows everything, the woman doesn’t do anything. She’s totally depended on him and when come here, it’s reversed. Even if they’re both the same level, he is shy to take charge. So I see it in almost every case...” (In-School Settlement Worker, School 1)

(ii) Development of L2 with Peers

Children Learn English from Peers

Throughout the child interviews, many participants credited their peers for their L2 development. In the quotation below, the child refers to the assistance peers provide within schools.

“They’re always with me, they’re talk with me English. Like she gave me homework, they help me. They’re good with me.” (Family 1, Child Age 16)

Some children credited interpersonal conversations with friends as one of the main supports for their English development. Multiple participants used terms such as, “easy” or “easier” when referring to speaking English among friends.

“That’s how I left ESL like really early before everyone because I talked a lot to my friends, I always tried to like have conversation with other people, tried to listen to a lot of English music so I can learn English. They helped me a lot...because kids have their own way of talk and it was easier to talk to kids than adults.” (Family 2, Child Age 14)

“...they can help you English what we talk for your friends. Like talk to you English and it be easy for you to speak English.” (Family 4, Child Age 16)

Children also noted the lack of vulnerability they felt when learning English amongst friends.

“Messing up? Not really, ‘cause my friends helped me a lot with that. Yeah, they just understood everything I said.” (Family 3, Child Age 13)

Parents Learn English from Peers

In a manner similar to their children, many parents referred to their peers when speaking about their English development. One father credited his language development to his work experience.

“For myself, my language improved because I’m working. Through work, there’s talking which improves my speaking skills, my listening skills really improved.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

The father also mentioned the lack of English development he experienced when working among individuals from his ethnicity. When forced to interact with others from different backgrounds, he made a greater use of English.

“I use to work with Arab people that’s why there was no opportunity for me to speak a lot of English. Here, they only speak English. So, I’m forced to speak in English. So, I don’t use Arabic at all.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

A similar finding was noted by a mother who attended community programs.

“Before I gave birth, I would go to this place...there were conversations there and see people...There were conversations from all over the world. No only Canadian, but there were other countries.” (Family 4, Mother, via an interpreter)

(iii) *Refugee Children at School*

Behaviour and Performance of Refugee Children at School

When talking to educators, many observations were made with regards to the behaviour of refugee children at school. Many educators found that refugee children were quieter in class and less likely to participate in school activities.

“I would say that they were quieter and they weren’t participating at the same level, generally speaking.” (Main Room Teacher, School 1)

“...because family picks him up right after school so he doesn’t participate, he can’t stay. In this school, we have a lot of lunch programs. I don’t see him participating as much.” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

On the other hand, educators noted an increase in participation if the children were in smaller groups.

“So I know [Student] fits into a larger class quite well but he will be quieter. I think he does try to answer questions but from what I see, he tends to be quieter. But he is more vocal, more verbal because there’s more chance for him to express himself and because it’s a smaller group.” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

This was also noted by the children themselves. One child regarded her positive experience with her close knit ELD class.

“...because we always together, we have like too much class together. We have like three class together, yeah and we sit together, we share our food, everything together, we’re like best friends.” (Family 1, Child Age 16)

Educators acknowledged the difficulties refugee children experienced when adapting to a new school environment. Some children had to acculturate to new methods of peer-to-peer interaction.

“I remember when he first started, he came in like a hurricane, like you know outside at recess and playing very rough and just a lot of um just a lot of rough playing. Just trying to understand how to play safely and not be hands-on and rough...So some of those children had a hard time at the beginning.” (Principal 2, School 2)

Adapting to the school systems was particularly difficult for children with long periods of interrupted education. The effects of interrupted education were most evidently seen in the academic performance of these children.

“I find that many of them or most of them, other than behind in language, math skills too...because of interrupted schooling, I suppose.” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

“When they’re refugees is interrupted a lot and it’s not solid and fluid and there gaps, right? So that’s sort of been my observation of the students coming in is their education has not been continuous. It’s been spotty, I guess. And they are finding, they do need a lot of support coming back in...They need support coming into Canada and into the education system.” (Principal 2, School 2)

Apart from educators, parents also made note of the hardship their children (those with interrupted education) experience when adapting to the structure of a typical school day.

“...he hesitates because the school day is long. He says that, ‘I’ll go from 9 to 3 or 4, it’s a long day.’ He gets bored.” (Family 4, Mother, via an interpreter)

Teacher Student Relationship

During the child interviews, many children referred to the closeness they felt with a couple of their teachers at school.

“I sit with my teacher every time, like I talk with her, she help me in my work. Like when I going to do something in future she tell me like this is good or bad. Or if I go to swim she tell me like look what I do, what I doesn’t do, she tell me if the boys come to see me, I don’t know she give me ideas too much. She’s my best teacher.” (Family 1, Child Age 16)

“She just amazing. She doesn’t teach us like students, she teaches us like her friends.” (Family 2, Child Age 14)

One child referred to the strategies her teacher would use to help her understand the class lesson.

“...the teacher that teach me ESL, she was a drama teacher and she was also a dance teacher. She was really, really good at teaching me and stuff. And if you didn’t understand something, she would act it out for you or bring it for you and show you what it is.” (Family 2, Child Age 14)

In the interview with the main room teacher, communication was largely stressed as the foundation for the teacher-student relation.

“I’m big on that connection and that motivation so if you can’t communicate with your teacher then it’s that much harder for you to figure out how you’re going to connect and therefore, how the teacher is going to help motivate you. And know what you’re interested in and figure out what’s going to pull you in.” (Main Room Teacher, School 2)

Teacher Training

Educators also made reference to their lack of knowledge on refugee student backgrounds. Moreover, the in-school settlement worker voiced a need for further teacher training on the cultural traditions and norms of Syrian refugees.

“Lately, through conversation they’ve telling me certain things about, like [Student] telling me about Lebanon. Like he’s such a happy child, I was like. And he was saying it with a smile. I had to move from Syria and then ended up in Lebanon. Wow, you went through so much! You’re carrying such a baggage but he’s integrated so well. Am I prepared for that? No! I know nothing about it. You call them Syrian refugees, I didn’t think of them as refugee because on the index card it says Lebanon. Because you write down the last place you came from.” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

“I think it’s about more of traditions. Let’s say the psychologist is a man and the parent is a woman. Like why would she resist coming to see him? You know what I mean? ...the

entire offices in the schools should be trained on what are those people like, what are most of their religions, and what are their habits... ” (In-School Settlement Worker, School 1)

Many of the educators interviewed recognize their lack of training on the refugee experience.

“The only thing that I’ve had in connection to this would be from my MEd and it wasn’t even specific to refugee experiences...” (Main Room Teacher, School 1)

“I would say doing some more professional development around refugees as opposed to immigrants.” (Principal 1, School 1)

However, few educators felt they had the resources and support to attend these training programs.

“The TDSB offered um because of the influx at the time, they were offering just some sort of um kind of basic, ‘These are refugee families, this is the situation.’ I meant to go. I was first year at this school. I didn’t get a chance.” (Principal 2, School 2)

“If it’s during school time the school has to supply, has a supply teacher. You need to have the okay from the principal. Some of these training is after school, then it’s your own time.” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

(iv) Parent-School Relationship

Language Barrier of Parents

After speaking with educators and parents, the image of a weak refugee parent-school relationship emerged. Many educators understood and acknowledged the fact that refugee parents want their children to succeed in school. However, language barriers seemed to prevent parents from taking a larger role in the academic development of their children.

“Well especially when they’re first learning English, I find there are parents that don’t want to engage or talk to you because they feel self-conscious about their level of English, it’s like ‘no, no, it’s okay.’ ... But they all care about their kids. They want them to succeed, just like most parents do, any culture, anywhere.” (Principal 1, School 1)

“They really want to know. But some parents like they probably don’t have as much education background themselves. Some of them even you know illiterate themselves, probably in their own language. So in that case... On the one hand, they want their kids to do well. On the other hand...” (ESL Teacher 1, School 1)

In one instance, an ESL teacher noted the responsibility placed on children to regulate their own English learning at home. She suggested this is mainly due to the lack of English assistance parents can provide their children.

“...their own parent’s level, the language barrier. I know one sponsor actually goes into the home once a week and read....But part of is, they would take the book home but nobody to help them to read. You try to give them books they can read themselves. But it really depends on the student and how responsible they are to read to themselves. And if the parents can’t help them, if there is nobody to listen to them read, or if they don’t read themselves...” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

Furthermore, it seems that parents lack information regarding the structure of the educational school system. When interviewing one family, it was found that the parents did not understand the implication of choosing an “Applied” or “Academic” stream in high school. In many situations, parents rely on their children to explain these concepts.

“I don’t know. My daughter didn’t tell me the teacher talked to them about high school.” (Family 2, Mother, via an interpreter)

One child chose a high school stream independently and without consulting her parents. Her reasoning was based on her parents not being able to understand the educational system.

“I signed it. Even if I told them, they wouldn’t understand it.” (Family 2, Child Age 14)

The main room teacher spoke about the difficulty she encounters in determining whether or not refugee parents understand the educational system.

“I think a lot of parents don’t know. They don’t get it. So they get this paper home and it says applied or academic. And some of them will know and some of them will have no idea and they just sign it and they send it back. So there’s no way for me to really, like who does and doesn’t know what’s going on here. If you don’t come to the parent-teacher interview and you sign the form then you know you see that it’s applied and now if you don’t know what that means, it’s terrible.” (Main Room Teacher, School 1)

Lack of Parent-Teacher Interaction

Educators also acknowledged their lack of regular face-to-face communication with parents. One teacher regarded refugee parents as more “hands off.”

“Whether it’s due to a language barrier or the culture, I would say it’s more a hands off. I think most of it is the language barrier. So they might come in but you remind them there’s a parent interview, they’ll come in. Many of them do come in and talk. When we have school meetings, many of them do come in because we get the interpreter to contact them and that’s vital...But do I see them coming in and complaining, specifically if a certain situation, certain things happen. They’re not really that much involved with the school.” (ESL Teacher 2)

As a result of such, many educators have little to no understanding of the living circumstances of refugee families.

“...not a lot...not a lot...you know, the parents come and drop them off at the beginning of the day and they pick them up at 3:15, they’re very reliable.” (Principal 2, School 2)

“I’m really not sure. I really don’t know what the family home is like. I really have very little idea.” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

(v) Parent L2 Learning Programs and Supports

Class vs. Parent Needs

Upon resettlement, many refugee parents participate in English learning classes. Most of the parents interviewed had attended or were attending LINC classes. In some situations, parents felt that the classes were not structured to meet their needs. In the following quotation, one mother discusses her difficulty in these classes because of her limited prior schooling.

“...because I don’t know how to read English so it’s very difficult for me. I still haven’t learned reading and writing. I speak very little but reading and writing I don’t know. I’m finding the school really hard...I studied in Syria till grade 4. My husband studied till grade 9, so he can read. He can read English, I don’t know. So I don’t understand in school.” (Family 1, Mother, via an interpreter)

Many parents felt they were assigned to classes where their abilities did not compare to those of their classmates.

“I’m 45 years old, you can’t compare me to someone who’s 22 or 25 years old coming new here. For example, I haven’t learned a lot of English...like I’m not good with learning...” (Family 2, Father, via an interpreter)

“I’m 39 years old. There were people in my class that were 50 years...I was the fastest one to grasp it...Time is wasted for me because you’re spending this time teaching that

other person the idea that I already understood. I want something I can benefit from.”
(Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

Furthermore, a father expressed his frustration with being taught concepts he felt would not assist him in integrating with the larger society.

“Some other teacher will teach grammar. I don’t care about that, I care about how to integrate with the people.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

Interrupted L2 Learning

During the process of resettlement, many parents were prevented from attending language learning classes. In most situations, this involved the responsibilities of child care.

“I take it but my wife doesn’t. She took it for 2 months because we had kids, the young one and last year, our daughter too. They were young. Now she go to daycare and this year my son will too.” (Family 2, Father, via an interpreter)

“Yes, I use to go to school because I had a baby, now it’s been 6 months and after this break I have to go back and finish studying.” (Family 4, Mother, via an interpreter)

Some parents, particularly fathers, had a difficult time balancing their language learning and employment obligations. One father gave up LINC classes for the sake of work.

“...I got tired, it exhausted me to study and work. I was too tired to see [family]. So I gave up on studying for the sake of work.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

In the opposite circumstance, one father gave up work to attend LINC classes full-time.

“I’ve worked for approximately 5 months but because we’ve been here for 3 years, I have be level 4 to get the citizenship...I’ve stopped and went back to school to do level 4.” (Family 1, Father, via an interpreter)

Limited Family Supports

Throughout the parent interviews, it was found that parents had limited supports to assist their resettlement. More specifically, these supports were related to subjects such as, finance, time, and resource stability.

Multiple interviewees spoke about their financial and time constraints affecting their ability to participate in community activities and services.

*“I go to school, I come home maybe 2 o’clock, I’ve been working since we got home.”
(Family 1, Mother, via an interpreter)*

“They can go every day to the mosque but they want money per month. They take \$40 per child.” (Family 1, Mother, via an interpreter)

“For me, work and home. I don’t have progress. I don’t even have activities. I don’t have time to be involved in activities. Although I really like those things, but I don’t have the time for them. There’s no advancement. We’re moving from home to home, the rent is increasing.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

*“There are a lot of papers that come, especially someone like us who can’t read, that’s a little difficult. Now I’m forced to take all the papers and bring someone who knows English and bring someone and pay them, a translator. She translates my papers and I know that that’s what I need and this is what I don’t need. So the paper’s a little hard.”
(Family 4, Mother, via an interpreter)*

*“I would say that the money that they get from the government and when you compare it to the rent, you have no idea how they make it. All those apartments around us reaches about a \$1000 and the money that they get every month is, depending on how many children, \$1200, \$1400, \$1500. So when you take that bulk, you hardly have any left....”
(In-School Settlement Worker, School 1)*

Some families mentioned the lack of stability and reliability in services offered to refugees.

*“At times you do get annoyed. The employee there, you suddenly need their help and you realized they’ve taken a vacation. There’s no one to help you there except him.”
(Family 2, Mother, via an interpreter)*

“There was a huge wave of Syrians that came here and there was a shortage of employees. They assign someone to a home, okay, ‘In two days an employee is going to come and help you.’ Two days turned into two months and there were no employees that came at home.” (Family 2, Mother, via an interpreter)

“Right now, there’s nothing. In the past, there was the Arab community centre where they would help you fill out forms and how would these papers help...then there was this community that would help with health...but currently, there’s nothing.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

(vi) Refugee Emotional Wellbeing

Child Wellbeing and Peer Contacts

Many refugee children made reference to their peers when speaking about their overall sense of wellbeing. More specifically, these children referred to the positive impact they felt when connecting with and speaking with friends.

“...first I was really scared of everyone, I didn’t like anyone there. I want to go back, I start crying. But then after like, I don’t know, I got use to the people there. Started hanging out with them, I felt like they’re more like me and I start to make friends with them.” (Family 2, Child Age 14)

“He just talk to me. He say, ‘just wake up and you feel good.’ ...when something happen, I say, ‘[Friend] come or I’m going to there.’ I visit him.” (Family 4, Child Age 16)

One refugee child spoke about her ability to empathize with the losses of other refugee children because of her own experience losing a friend. Furthermore, the child recalled the supports she needed when she first arrived and her attempts to provide these supports to others.

“Yeah I like to talk. Like when I saw somebody who’s like same thing with their family, with their dad, mom, everybody, when they tell me the story, I feel bad. I remember like before how’s my friend.” (Family 1, Child Age 16)

“I translate for her English. She’s like zero English. I feel bad about her like before I was like this and I need help. When she come, I feel I want to hug her. I want to be like, my friend how they help me when I come.” (Family 1, Child Age 16)

Parent Wellbeing and Peer Contacts

After conducting the parent interviews, it was found that many parents associated their wellbeing with their ability to adapt to Canadian culture.

“There are some people that arrive and immediately get depressed. They don’t go out, they didn’t try learning English, they relied on neighbors who speak the same language and just sat there.” (Family 2, Mother, via an interpreter)

“You’re going to get sick and you’ll get depression. You’ll have to adapt, that’s by force on us.” (F4, M, via an interpreter)

A few parents spoke about the feedback they received from their peers. One father noted the optimism he felt after receiving encouragements from his peers.

“...sometimes that help can give you energy. Someone gives you energy. They give you a sense of optimism. Those were the things that I benefited the most...So you arrived here and it’s certainly hard on you, but with you’ll improve....So the most important thing in this country was benefiting from people that helped me become optimistic.” (Family 3, Father, via an interpreter)

Nevertheless, another parent spoke about the lack of genuine care individuals feel for one another in Canadian society.

“The Canadian society is friendly but don’t have a lot of time to listen to you....He doesn’t have time. You say, ‘How are you?’ We say, ‘We’re tired.’ Here, if you say you’re tired, they won’t talk to you.” (Family 2, Mother, via an interpreter)

Stigma Regarding Mental Health among Refugees

Many educators recalled situations where refugee students may have had mental health concerns related to trauma.

“There’s one girl I know, she’s in grade 3, and if there’s ever like a loud sound like firing like shots or something you know, like kids will take a juice box, blow it up and they’ll smash it, and it sounds like a bomb. Like that is very disturbing for this one girl who I have at this school. Like it’s very like, it’s anxiety, right? Because of her experience.” (Principal 2, School 2)

“But there are others who I’ve seen, one girl in particular, she actually saw her father being shot and I know right away she’s got ADHD, whether that’s what she has or whether it’s from the experience...this girl who actually saw her father being shot. We had a more behaviour student here one day and he was with me. And I was working with those 2 and he did a gesture of shooting his fingers as a gun and making those noises. I had my back to the girls so I didn’t see but lucky, my special needs assistant, we share the room, and she happened to walk by and she told me afterwards that when he did that noise she actually like jumped! And looked really scared....she’s very ADHD. Her focus is really, really poor. And whether it affects the memory too, so she doesn’t retain information so well. It takes a lot of repeating and reviewing and repeating and reviewing for her to retain any of the learning” (ESL Teacher 2, School 2)

“...I don’t know if it’s for a student or the teacher, or a principal that walked in, something happened to that student. And he came just absolutely hysterical and he refused to come to school after that day. He stayed home. But when we dugged into it a little bit more, his mom finally told me he’s a worrier. Especially when they were in

Syria. They went out somewhere, the family, and came back and their house was destroyed...He lost his friend. He lost his grandparent. He lost his country and he's coming here, losing all this and now he goes to school and something happen. He wouldn't talk about it and how would he know that since he's losing everything, if he left his house, he's going to go back and it's not there." (In-School Settlement Worker, School 1)

However, parents rarely shared experiences of pre-migration trauma with educators. These events were only discussed after teachers voiced their concerns.

"But some parents, they hesitate to reveal that. They feel vulnerable, for some reason, so that's why I don't always get the complete picture..." (ESL Teacher 1, School 1)

"But one of the things that sort of came out later when we had to have a school support team meeting for the child, who was sort of having some real behavioral difficulty challenges, so then the trauma came out from the parent in the school support team meeting later on. But I think families are a little bit sort of guarded about some of what's happened to them before they come here." (Principal 2, School 2)

Educators also voiced the difficulty they experience when persuading refugee parents to send their child to a mental health professional. The in-school settlement worker suggested her technique when speaking with refugee parents.

"Usually I leave it and then every time the topic comes up, we talk about it a little bit more. 'It's just like having a flu, it's just like this and that, it's better to look after the issue when he's young.' And eventually when they get to know me.... 'So do you think I should?' I said, 'You're the mother, I'm not going to tell you, but I'm going to tell you what can they do.'" (In-School Settlement Worker, School 1)

1.2. Provincial Report Cards

Five participants provided their provincial report cards for this study. After reviewing the academic documents, some commonalities were found. Most children performed poorly in their English subject. English was evaluated in terms of reading, writing, oral communication and media literacy skills. Moreover, children were frequently instructed by their English teachers to practice their reading and writing skills at home.

"...encouraged to read daily at home and to reflect on what she has read, in order to develop her comprehension skills. Extra practice online, using Read Theory, would be beneficial." (Regarding Family 2, Child Age 9)

*“...must practice her reading and writing. Learning English takes work outside of class.”
(Regarding Family 1, Child Age 16)*

“His reading improves with repeated practice, reading the same text over and over again...encouraged to use letter sounds and sounding out to read decodable books at home.” (Regarding Family 4, Child Age 10)

“...encouraged to read and write every day, to build her understanding and ability to communicate her ideas.” (Regarding Family 4, Child Age 14)

In some situations, children were encouraged by their non-English teachers to practice their language skills in order to improve their performance in other subjects.

“...requires assistance to use appropriate vocabulary in written and oral communication.” (Social Studies; Regarding Family 4, Child Age 10)

*“...would benefit from more concentration in class to improve her writing skills. Goals should include reading each evening in order to further strengthen language skills.”
(Advanced Learning Statistics: Skill; Regarding Family 1, Child Age 16)*

Nevertheless, many teachers applauded refugee students for their consistent efforts and positive attitudes towards learning.

*“...should continue to approach new tasks with confidence and a positive attitude.”
(Regarding Family 1, Child Age 16)*

“...continue to set goals to further her learning and pursue these goals with her positive attitude.” (Regarding Family 4, Child Age 14)

2. Quantitative Results

2.1. Demographic Information

Demographic information was gathered from the semi-structured qualitative interviews and from the language environment questionnaire (ALEQ-4). Information collected is summarized in Table 1. All families arrived in Canada in 2016. In most families, the fathers were employed whereas the mothers were not. The parents who were employed worked in the labour sector. Five of the eight child participants attended English language learning programs at school. Two of the child participants did not attend school prior to coming to Canada. These children were also the two eldest among the child participant sample.

	Family 1	Family 2	Family 3	Family 4
Family Size	8 (6 children; 3 girls)	7 (5 children; 4 girls)	4 (2 children; 1 girl)	7 (5 children; 2 girls)
Age Range of Children	5 - 17 years	3 -14 years	10 - 13 years	6 mo. - 16 years
Ethnicity	Arab	Arab	Arab	Kurdish
Religion	Islam	Islam	Christianity	Christianity
Child Participants	16 years; 2 mo. (F)	9 years; 8 mo. (F) 14 years; 2 mo. (F)	10 years, 9 mo. (F) 13 years; 4 mo. (M)	10 years; 2 mo. (M) 14 years; 8 mo. (F) **16 years; 11 mo. (M)
Residence in Neighboring Countries of Syria	Lebanon (2 years)	Jordan (4 years)	Lebanon (4 mo.)	Lebanon (3 years, 3 mo.)
Refugee Status	GAR	GAR	GAR	PSR
Date of Arrival in Canada	January 2016	February 2016	February 2016	June 2016
Pre-Migration Parent Occupation	Mother - N/A Father - Trades	Mother - N/A Father – Service & Sales	Mother - Professional Father - Professional	Mother - Trades Father - Trades
Post-Migration Parent Occupation	Mother - N/A Father - N/A	Mother - Volunteer Father - N/A	Mother – Service & Sales Father - Trades	Mother - N/A Father - Trades
Current Academic Level of Child Participants	Grade 10 (ELD; 16y,2m)	Grade 4 (9y,8m) Grade 8 (14y,2m)	Grade 5 (ESL; 10y,9m) Grade 8 (13y,4m)	Grade 4 (ESL; 10y,2m) Grade 9 (LEAP; 14y,8m) **Grade 11 (16y,11m)
Period of Interrupted Education for Child Participants	6 years; 5 mo. (Did not attend school before arrival in Can.)	None	4 mo. (During stay in Lebanon)	8 years (This refers to the eldest child (16y,11m), who did not attend school before arrival to Can.)

Table 1. Information regarding the demographics of each of the four families involved in the study is presented above. **This child attends an accredited program associated with the TDSB to support children who have needs that cannot be met by the educational school system.

2.2. Mean Scores of Cognitive, Language and Literacy Measures

<i>Measures</i>	<i>Time 1</i>				<i>Time 2</i>			
	Mean Raw Score (SD)	Mean Standard Score (SD)	Mean Percentile Rank (SD)	Mean Grade Equiv. Score (SD)	Mean Raw Score (SD)	Mean Standard Score (SD)	Mean Percentile Rank (SD)	Mean Grade Equiv. Score (SD)
Cognitive Assessments								
<i>English RAN</i>	16.14sec (4.17)	8.43 (4.65)	41.43 (36.11)	-	14.84sec (3.25)	8.71 (2.81)	37.29 (29.30)	-
<i>Arabic RAN</i>	53.03sec (62.40)	-	-	-	59.10sec (100.07)	-	-	-
English Language & Literacy Measures								
<i>Vocabulary</i>	94.29 (28.62)	60.57 (19.53)	2.46 (2.41)	-	106.00 (25.64)	59.71 (20.44)	3.03 (3.80)	-
<i>Word Reading</i>	38.86 (13.23)	69.00 (38.55)	-	3.03 (1.45)	42.14 (13.36)	68.71 (35.46)	-	3.61 (1.83)
<i>Reading Comprehension</i>	18.14 (10.33)	59.71 (41.89)	-	2.16 (1.58)	21.86 (8.61)	65.57 (35.51)	-	2.86 (1.49)
<i>Narrative</i>	15.71 (10.32)	-	-	-	24.43 (8.54)	-	-	-
Arabic Language & Literacy Measures								
<i>Vocabulary</i>	45.86 (18.93)	-	-	-	49.43 (16.56)	-	-	-
<i>Word Reading</i>	32.86 (36.10)	-	-	-	42.43 (35.61)	-	-	-
<i>Reading Comprehension</i>	16.29 (17.46)	-	-	-	19.14 (14.98)	-	-	-
<i>Narrative</i>	15.71 (10.16)	-	-	-	19.43 (9.98)	-	-	-

Table 2. The mean scores and standard deviation values (SD) of all quantitative measures are presented. These scores represent the 7 participants who continued to take part in the follow-up study (T2) one year after the pilot run (T1). All Arabic measures are non-standardized. The following English measures are standardized: RAN, vocabulary, word reading and reading comprehension. The means of raw scores, standard scores, percentile ranks, and grade equivalents are shown. Standard scores were determined by scaling raw scores against an age-based normative sample. Standard scores were then converted into percentile ranks and grade equivalents. Grade equivalent values indicate the academic grade level at which the child is performing at.

2.2.1 Mean Scores of Cognitive Assessments

The cognitive performance of the child participants was assessed using the RAN measure. This test was administered in both English and Arabic. The English RAN test was standardized. All

English scores were scaled against an age-based normative sample of 1900 individuals living within the United States (CTOPP; Wagner, Torgesen & Rashotte, 1999). Hence, the percentile rank of each child against their age-based normative sample was noted. The Arabic measure was not standardized and all Arabic scores are raw. Raw scores represent the time taken (in seconds) to read one set of 36 digits.

When looking at the percentile ranks for the English RAN test, it seems that the average child is performing worse than most of the individuals within their normative sample. In other words, the average child tested in T1 and T2 has poorer cognitive skills than most children within their normative sample. Moreover, when the percentile ranks of the mean scores are compared between T1 and T2, it seems that there is a decrease over time. This implies the cognitive performance of the average child participant in relation to their normative sample has decreased over the course of one year. Yet, the mean raw scores for the English RAN test imply the average child participant was able to complete the measure faster in T2 than in T1. This indicates that though there was improvement among the children tested, the level of improvement was lower than what was expected based on an age-based normative sample.

When looking at the means of the Arabic RAN scores, it seems that the mean score has increased from T1 to T2. This implies the average child participant took longer to read a set of 36 Arabic digits in the follow-up study compared to the pilot study.

2.2.2 Mean Scores of English Language & Literacy Assessments

Development in English language and literacy was assessed using four measures (vocabulary, word reading, reading comprehension and narrative). Most of the measures were standardized, whereas one was not (narrative). The scores of the 7 participants who took part in the study at T1 and T2 were used to assess English language and literacy development over the course of one year.

English Vocabulary. Table 2 presents the mean vocabulary (PPVT; Dunn & Dunn, 2007) scores of the 7 participants during the pilot and follow-up study. The PPVT measure is standardized and is based upon a normative sample of 3540 individuals living within the United States (Dunn & Dunn, 2007). This measure provides an age-based standard score for those between the ages of 2.5 years and 90 years (Dunn & Dunn, 2007). Raw PPVT scores were scaled against a normative

sample in order to provide standard scores. The percentile ranks corresponding to each standard score were noted. The mean standard scores of the 7 participants who participated in the pilot and follow-up study at T1 and T2 are presented. In order to provide a sense of context, the mean percentile ranks of these children at T1 and T2 are also shown.

The mean percentile ranks imply the average child is performing extremely poorly when compared to their age-based normative sample. Moreover, a comparison of the mean percentile ranks at T1 and T2 implies the average child has improved their English vocabulary performance over the course of one year. This finding is also noted by comparing mean raw scores from T1 and T2. However, there is a large amount of variation among participant scores. This is depicted by the large standard deviation values. Hence, a closer inspection of individual scores is needed.

English Word Reading and Reading Comprehension. English word reading and reading comprehension were assessed using the battery, Woodcock Johnson-III Tests of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew & Mather, 2001). These tests were standardized and produced standard scores based on a normative sample. The normative sample of this measure consisted of 8000 individuals between the ages of 2 and 90 years (Woodcock, McGrew & Mather, 2001). The raw scores of all the child participants were collected and converted to standard scores. The standard scores were then used to determine the grade equivalency of each child. A grade equivalency value indicates the grade level at which the child is performing at. These values may be different from the actual grade level of the child. The grade equivalency levels for these tests range from kindergarten (K.0) to graduate (>18.0) (Woodcock, McGrew & Mather, 2001).

At T1, the average child participant was in the sixth grade and at T2, the average child participant was in the seventh grade. However, the mean grade equivalence values for English word reading and English reading comprehension were much lower than these values at T1 and T2. On average, children performed at a grade 3 level for English word reading and a grade 2 level for English reading comprehension. This was noted at both time points. When reviewing raw scores for these tests, the average child did improve from T1 to T2. However, their level of improvement did not alter their grade equivalence levels.

English Narratives. English language use within narratives was assessed in terms of the Test of Narrative Language (TNL). This measure was not standardized. The results of the seven children who took part in the pilot and follow-up study were analyzed. The mean raw scores of these children at T1 and T2 are depicted in Table 2.

English narrative scores increased from T1 to T2. Moreover, the degree of variation among individual scores also decreased from T1 to T2. This is noted by the lower standard deviation score in the follow-up study.

2.2.3 Mean Scores of Arabic Language & Literacy Assessments

Arabic Vocabulary. Arabic vocabulary was assessed during the pilot and follow-up study. The measure used to assess Arabic vocabulary was not standardized. The Arabic vocabulary scores from T1 and T2 were compared among the seven child participants who took part in both the pilot and follow-up study. Table 2 presents the mean Arabic vocabulary scores at T1 and T2.

The above table indicates the mean Arabic vocabulary score did increase from T1 to T2. However, the standard deviation values of each mean are quite large. This implies there is a large degree of variation among individual Arabic vocabulary scores.

Arabic Word Reading and Reading Comprehension. The Arabic word reading and reading comprehension skills of children were assessed. The measures used in these assessments were not standardized. Table 2 provides the mean raw scores at T1 and T2. Again, the mean scores reflect the child participants who took part in both the pilot and follow-up study.

The mean scores in Table 2 imply there is an improvement from T1 to T2. This improvement is noted for both Arabic word reading and Arabic reading comprehension. However, the standard deviation values associated with these means are quite large. As a result of such, a closer analysis of individual scores is needed.

Arabic Narratives. Arabic narratives were assessed using a non-standardized measure. Table 2 compares the mean raw scores of child participants at T1 and T2. Only those children who participated in the pilot and follow-up study are represented.

The results in Table 2 imply the average child did improve their Arabic narrative scores from T1 to T2. Moreover, the standard deviation value did decrease from T1 to T2.

2.3. Cognitive Assessment Scores of Individual Participants

The standard deviations values in Table 2 are quite high. This indicates there is a large degree of variation among individual scores. In order to assess individual RAN scores, Figure 1a depicts English RAN percentile ranks of each child at T1 and T2. Figure 1b depicts the raw Arabic RAN scores of each child at T1 and T2.

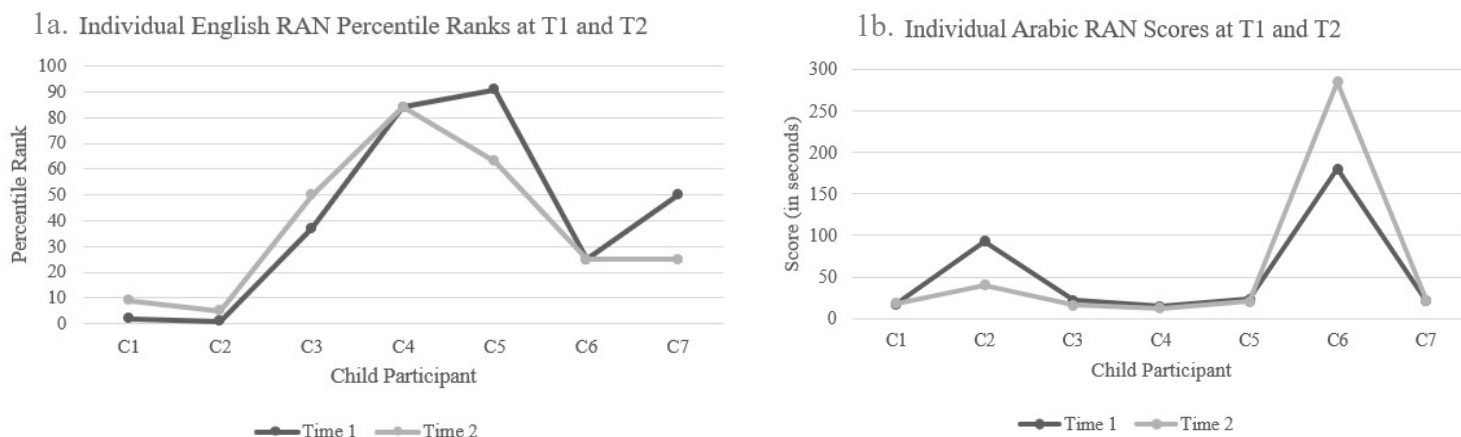


Figure 1. Individual scores on English RAN and Arabic RAN. Each participant is labelled from “C1” to “C7.” Children are labelled according to age (ex. C1 is the oldest among the participant sample). Figure 1a depicts the English RAN percentile ranks of the 7 participants who took part in the pilot and follow-up study. The ranks from T1 and T2 are presented. Whereas, Figure 1b presents the Arabic RAN scores (in seconds) of each participant at T1 and T2.

The above Figure presents the English RAN and Arabic RAN scores of individual participants. The participants are labelled from C1 to C7, where C1 is the oldest participant and C7 is the youngest participant.

C1. This child is the oldest within the child participant sample. As described in Table 1, he did not attend school prior to coming to Canada. The results from Figure 1 imply he had one of the lowest scores in English RAN. More specifically, he had a score below the 5th percentile at T1 and a score below the 10th percentile at T2. With regards to Arabic RAN, he was able to complete the test within 30 seconds at T1 and T2. However, his Arabic RAN scores did not improve between the pilot and follow-up study.

C2. Like C1, this child did not attend school prior to coming to Canada. Similarly, her English RAN scores were quite poor. Her score did improve from T1 to T2. However, she was still performing within the 10th percentile at both time points. Unlike C1, her Arabic RAN scores

were also quite poor. At T1, she completed the test in approximately 90 seconds. Her T2 score improved. At this time point, she completed task within 50 seconds. Nevertheless, her Arabic RAN scores were still among the highest among the participant sample.

C3. This child was one of the few participants no longer attending an English language learning program at school. Her English RAN score did improve from T1 to T2. At T1, she was performing within the 40th percentile. Whereas at T2, she performed at the 50th percentile. Her Arabic RAN scores improved from T1 to T2. At T1, she completed the test within 25 seconds. Whereas at T2, she completed the test in less than 20 seconds.

C4. Like C3, this child was no longer attending an English language learning program at school. His English RAN scores were among the highest within the participant sample. However, it should be noted that his English RAN score did not improve between T1 and T2. At both time points, he was performing within the 85th percentile. With regards to Arabic RAN, his scores improved from T1 to T2. At T1, he completed the test in approximately 14 seconds and at T2, he completed the test within 13 seconds.

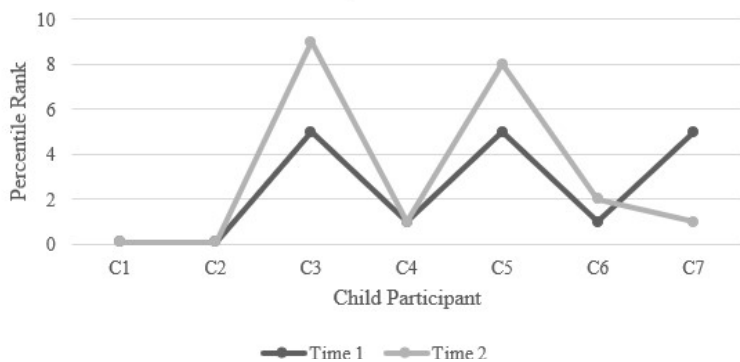
C5. This child demonstrated the greatest improvement between her T1 and T2 English RAN scores. At T1, she was performing within the 65th percentile. Whereas at T2, she performed at the 91st percentile. It should be noted that this child is still attending an English language learning program at school. Her Arabic RAN scores also improved from T1 to T2. At T1, she completed the test within 25 seconds and at T2, she completed the test in 20 seconds.

C6. This child did not improve their English RAN score from T1 to T2. During the pilot and follow-up study, his score was at the 25th percentile. With regards to Arabic RAN, he was able to complete the test within 3 minutes at T1. At T2, he completed the task within 4 minutes.

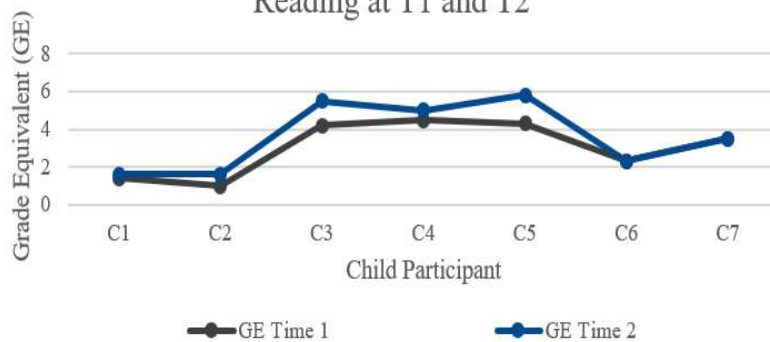
C7. The child was the only one whose English RAN score decreased from T1 to T2. At T1, her score was at the 50th percentile. Whereas at T2, her score was at the 25th percentile. Her Arabic RAN scores did not change from T1 to T2. At both time points, she completed the test in around 21 seconds.

2.4. English Language & Literacy Assessment Scores of Individual Participants

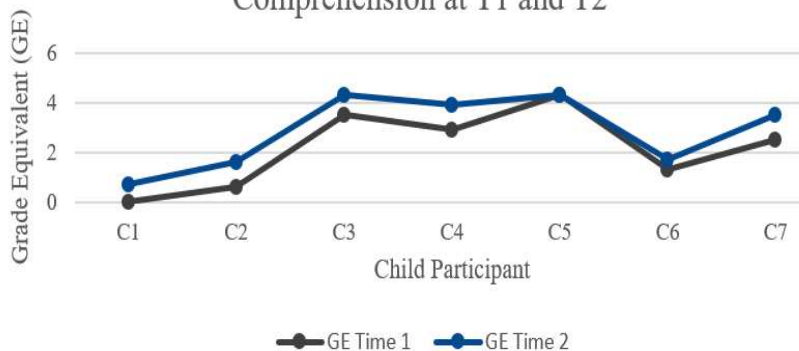
2a. Individual Percentile Ranks for English Vocabulary at T1 and T2



2b. Individual Grade Equivalents for English Word Reading at T1 and T2



2c. Individual Grade Equivalents for English Reading Comprehension at T1 and T2



2d. Individual English Narrative Scores at T1 and T2

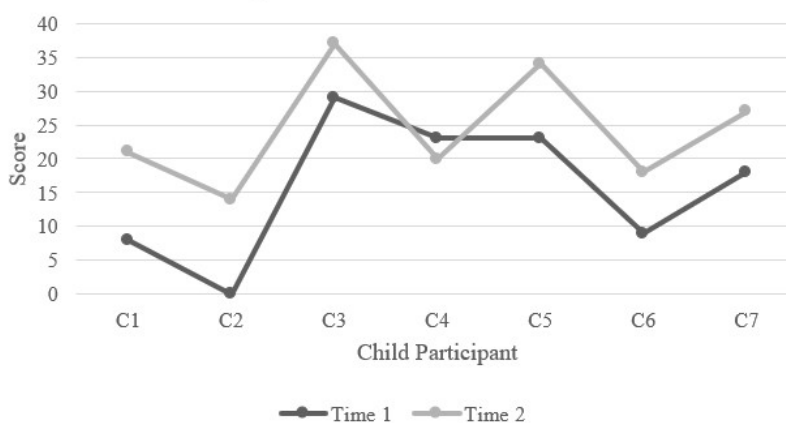


Figure 2. Individual scores on English vocabulary, word reading, reading comprehension and narrative are presented. Each participant is labelled from “C1” to “C7.” Children are labelled according to age (ex. C1 is the oldest among the participant sample). Figure 2a depicts the English vocabulary percentile ranks of the 7 participants who took part in the pilot and follow-up study. The ranks from T1 and T2 are presented. Whereas, Figure 2b presents the English word reading grade equivalents of each participant at T1 and T2. Figure 2c represents English reading comprehension grade equivalents for each participant at T1 and T2. Figure 2d represents individual English narrative scores during the pilot and follow-up study.

Figure 2 represents the English language and literacy scores of each participant during the pilot and follow-up study. The scores of each participant is further discussed below. Again, each participant is labelled from C1 to C7, where C1 represents the eldest child and C7 represents the youngest child.

C1. The English vocabulary scores of this child did not change from T1 to T2. At both time points, his vocabulary scores were less than the 1st percentile. Similarly, his English word reading scores did not improve from T1 to T2. During the pilot and follow-up study, his

performance on word reading was equivalent to a grade one level. His performance on reading comprehension also did not improve between T1 and T2. At both time points, his reading comprehension scores were equivalent to a level below the first grade. Interestingly, a large improvement was noted in his English narrative scores from T1 to T2.

C2. The English vocabulary scores of this child did not improve from T1 to T2. During the pilot and follow-up study, her vocabulary scores were less than the 1st percentile. Similarly, little improvement was noted among her English word reading scores from T1 to T2. Her word reading scores at both time points were equivalent to a grade one level. A greater degree of improvement was seen among her reading comprehension scores. At T1, her performance in reading comprehension was at a level lower than the first grade. Whereas at T2, her reading comprehension performance was equivalent to that of the first grade. Like C1, the English narrative scores of this child improved from T1 to T2.

C3. The English vocabulary scores of this child did improve from T1 to T2. At T1, her vocabulary score was at the 5th percentile. By T2, her English vocabulary score improved to the 9th percentile. Her English word reading scores also improved. At T1, her performance in English word reading was equivalent to a grade 4 level. Whereas at T2, her performance improved to a grade 5 level. A similar finding was noted among her reading comprehension scores. At T1, her performance in reading comprehension was at a grade 3 level. By T2, her performance improved to a grade 4 level. An improvement from T1 to T2 was also noted in her English narrative scores.

C4. This child did not improve his English vocabulary scores from T1 to T2. At both time points, his performance in English vocabulary was ranked at the 1st percentile. However, an improvement was noted among his English word reading and reading comprehension scores. At T1, he performed at a grade 4 level for word reading and a grade 3 level for reading comprehension. At T2, his performance in both measures increased by one grade level. His T2 performance in word reading was equivalent to a grade 5 level and his T2 performance in reading comprehension was equivalent to a grade 4 level. Interestingly, his English narrative scores decreased from T1 to T2.

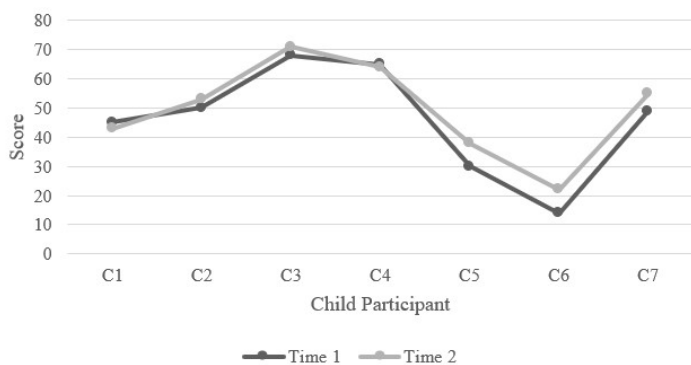
C5. This child improved her English vocabulary scores from T1 to T2. At T1, her vocabulary score was ranked at the 5th percentile. By T2, her score increased to the 8th percentile. Similarly, her English word reading scores also improved. During the pilot study, her word reading score was at a grade 4 level. By the follow-up study, her score increased to a grade 5 level. This level of improvement was not seen in terms of English reading comprehension. At both T1 and T2, her reading comprehension scores were at a grade 4 level. Her English narrative scores did improve from T1 to T2.

C6. This child did improve his English vocabulary scores from T1 to T2. At T1, his vocabulary score was ranked at the 1st percentile. By T2, his performance on English vocabulary was at the 2nd percentile. Improvement between T1 and T2 was not noted for English word reading and reading comprehension. At both time points, he performed at a second-grade level for English word reading. Similarly, his reading comprehension scores during the pilot and the follow-up study were at a first-grade level. His English narrative scores did improve from T1 to T2.

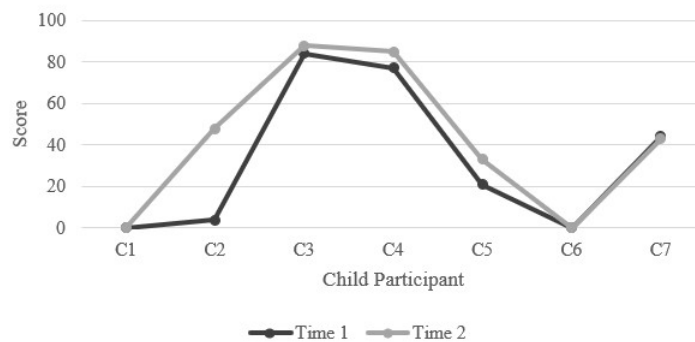
C7. The English vocabulary scores of this child decreased from T1 to T2. At T1, her vocabulary score was ranked at the 5th percentile. By T2, her English vocabulary score was at the 1st percentile. Her English word reading score did not improve from T1 to T2. At both time points, she was performing at a grade 3 level. However, improvement was noted among her English reading comprehension scores. At T1, she was performing at a grade 2 level. By T2, she was performing at a grade 3 level. Improvement from T1 to T2 was also noted among her English narrative scores.

2.5. Arabic Language & Literacy Assessment Scores of Individual Participants

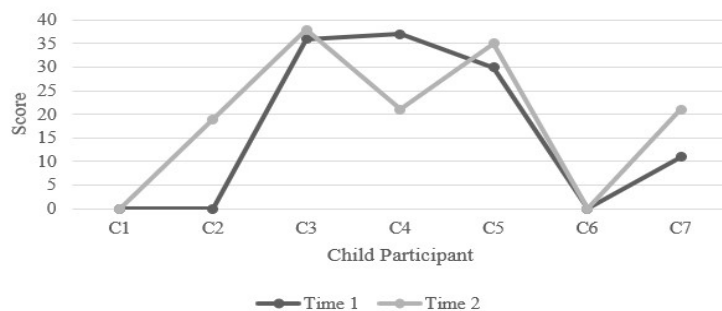
3a. Individual Arabic Vocabulary Scores at T1 and T2



3b. Individual Arabic Word Reading Scores at T1 and T2



3c. Individual Arabic Reading Comprehension Scores at T1 and T2



3d. Individual Arabic Narrative Scores at T1 and T2

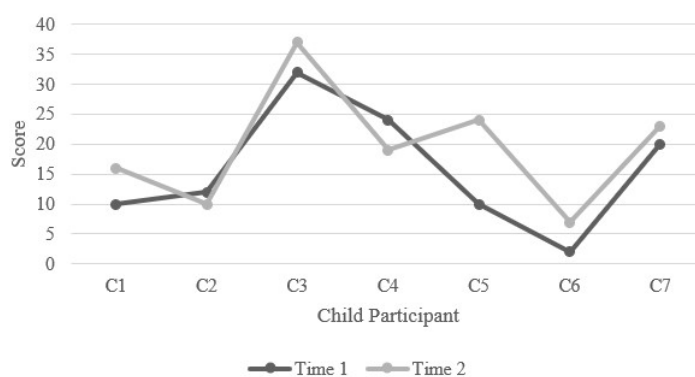


Figure 3. Individual scores on Arabic vocabulary, word reading, reading comprehension and narrative are presented. Each participant is labelled from “C1” to “C7.” Children are labelled according to age (ex. C1 is the oldest among the participant sample). Figure 3a depicts the Arabic vocabulary scores of the 7 participants who took part in the pilot and follow-up study. The scores from T1 and T2 are presented. Whereas, Figure 3b represents the Arabic word reading scores of each participant at T1 and T2. Figure 3c presents Arabic reading comprehension scores for each participant at T1 and T2. Figure 3d represents individual Arabic narrative scores during the pilot and follow-up study.

Figure 3 represents the Arabic language and literacy scores of each participant during the pilot and follow-up study. The scores of each participant is further discussed below. Again, each participant is labelled from C1 to C7, where C1 represents the eldest child and C7 represents the youngest child.

C1. The Arabic vocabulary scores of this child were noted to slightly decrease from T1 to T2. Moreover, the child was not able to complete the Arabic word reading and reading comprehension tasks at T1 and T2. As a result of such, his scores during the pilot and follow-up study were both zero. Interestingly, an improvement from T1 to T2 was noted among his Arabic narrative scores.

C2. The Arabic vocabulary scores of this child were noted to slightly increase from T1 to T2. At T1, her Arabic word reading score was less than 5. By T2, her performance in Arabic word reading markedly increased. At this time point, she had a word reading score of 48. Interestingly, she was unable to complete the Arabic reading comprehension test during the pilot study. During the follow-up study, she was able to complete the test and had a score of 19. Surprisingly, the opposite trend was noted among her Arabic narrative scores. More specifically, her Arabic narrative scores decreased from T1 to T2.

C3. Again, a slight improvement was noted among Arabic vocabulary scores from T1 to T2. A similar degree of improvement was noted among Arabic word reading and reading comprehension scores from T1 to T2. The Arabic narrative scores of this child also increased from T1 to T2.

C4. The Arabic vocabulary scores of this child remained virtually unchanged from T1 to T2. Interestingly, Arabic word reading scores improved from T1 to T2. However, Arabic reading comprehension scores markedly decreased from the pilot to the follow-up study. Likewise, Arabic narrative scores also decreased from T1 to T2.

C5. The Arabic vocabulary scores of this child increased from T1 to T2. Similarly, her Arabic word reading and reading comprehension scores also improved from T1 to T2. Moreover, there was also an evident increase in Arabic narrative scores from the pilot to the follow-up study.

C6. The Arabic vocabulary scores of this child improved from T1 to T2. However, it should be noted that the Arabic vocabulary scores of this child are relatively lower than those of the other children within the sample. Like C1, this child was unable to complete the Arabic word reading and reading comprehension tasks at T1 and T2. As a result of such, his scores on these measures are zero. Interestingly, he was able to improve his Arabic narrative scores from T1 to T2.

C7. The Arabic vocabulary scores of this child improved from T1 to T2. However, her Arabic word reading scores remained virtually unchanged between the pilot and follow-up study. This was not the case for the Arabic reading comprehension test. Her T2 score for this measure was greater than her T1 score. Like most participants, the Arabic narrative scores of this child improved from T1 to T2.

2.6. Language Environment Questionnaire (ALEQ-4)

Parents were asked to complete the language environment questionnaire. This measure was used to assess the quality and richness of the at-home language environment. It should be noted that this questionnaire was adapted for Arabic-speaking Syrian refugee families. This questionnaire is not standardized.

	Family 1	Family 2	Family 3	Family 4
<i>Language Input from Family to Child</i>	Mainly Arabic	Mainly Arabic	Mainly Arabic	-
<i>Language Output from Child to Family</i>	Usually Arabic	Mainly Arabic	Equally Arabic and English	-
<i>Number of English Books at Home</i>	Less than 5	Less than 5	5 - 10	10 - 25
<i>Number of Arabic Books at Home</i>	None	None	5 - 10	Less than 5
<i>Maternal English Fluency</i>	Not Fluent	Quite Fluent	Some Fluency	Some Fluency
<i>Paternal English Fluency</i>	Some Fluency	Limited Fluency	Some Fluency	Some Fluency

Table 3. The above table represents the type of language input and output of the children within each family, the number of English and Arabic books at home and the English fluency of each parent.

In one portion of the questionnaire, parents were asked to report the type of language input and output of their child. Language input is referred to as the type of language used by the family to communicate with the child. Language output is referred to as the type of language used by the child to converse with others. Table 3 represents the language input and output of each child within the follow-up study. Only 3 of the 4 families are represented. This is because one family within the study predominantly speaks Kurdish. As a result of such, the parents of this family did not complete this aspect of the questionnaire.

The results from Table 3 imply Arabic is used more often than English to communicate to children. Child output values seem to be much more varied. In most situations, children employ a greater degree of Arabic than English. However, children tend to have a greater degree of English output than English input.

Table 3 also refers to the number of English and Arabic books owned by the refugee families who participated in the follow-up study. Generally, it seems that the families own more English books than Arabic. This implies children have greater access to English literacy materials at home compared to Arabic.

The level of English fluency of the parents (mothers and fathers) of the refugee families are also presented in Table 3. In most of the refugee families, the language fluency of the mothers and fathers are not the same. In fact, it seems that most mothers are better or just as fluent as fathers in English.

2.7. Wellbeing Questionnaire

Based on the child self-report and the parent child report, five subscales (each consisting of 5 items and out of 10 points) were analyzed (Goodman, 1997). These scales referred to emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and prosocial behaviour. The results from the hyperactivity and conduct problems scales were combined to formulate a score (out of 20 points) for externalizing behaviour. The scales of emotional and peer problems were combined to create an internalizing score (out of 20 points). Four subscales (emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer problems) were combined to create a total difficulties score (out of 40 points). The impact score was used to analyze the effect (if any) emotional and behavioural problems might have on the lives of the child participants.

Table 4 presents the wellbeing questionnaire results for the child participants at T2. The results are depicted as mean scores. The mean scores can be compared to the borderline cut-points for each SDQ subscale. The borderline cut-points were established from a population-based survey in the United Kingdom (Goodman, 1997). These points generally represent 10% of the population. Any subscale score above the borderline cut-point is considered abnormal. A score below the borderline cut-point is considered normal. The one exception of this ruling is the prosocial scale. Any prosocial scale score below the borderline cutoff point is considered abnormal. Whereas, any prosocial score above the cutoff point is considered normal. Typically, 80% of the general child population scores within the normal range (Goodman, 1997).

<i>SDQ Subscales</i>	Child Self-Report Mean (SD)	Borderline Cut-Points for Child Self-Report	Parent Report on Child Mean (SD)	Borderline Cut-Points for Parent Report on Child
<i>Emotional Problems</i>	3.88 (1.89)	6	3.00 (2.62)	4
<i>Conduct Problems</i>	2.75 (0.89)	4	1.63 (1.41)	3
<i>Hyperactivity</i>	4.00 (2.45)	6	3.25 (1.58)	6
<i>Peer Problems</i>	1.88 (1.73)	4-5	3.63 (1.51)	3
<i>Externalizing Score</i>	6.75 (2.76)	10	4.88 (2.90)	9
<i>Internalizing Score</i>	5.75 (2.71)	10-11	6.63 (3.85)	7
<i>Total Difficulties Score</i>	12.50 (4.50)	20-21	11.50 (6.41)	16
<i>Impact Score</i>	0.50 (0.76)	1	1.50 (1.85)	1
<i>Prosocial Behaviour</i>	8.88 (1.25)	5	8.50 (1.77)	5

Table 4. The means and standard deviations (SD) from parent and child reports are presented above. Along with these values, cut-points for borderline abnormal behavior are also noted. Any mean report value above (below for the prosocial scale) the borderline values are considered abnormal

From the above table, it seems that the child self-reports and parent child-reports do not largely differ on emotional and hyperactivity subscales. However, parents associated more peer problems with their children. Children, on the other hand, associated themselves with more conduct problems. Furthermore, parents attributed higher impact scores to their children.

When referring to the borderline cut-points, it seems that most mean scores are considered normal (Goodman, 1997). The means scores from the parent child-report regarding peer problems and difficulty impact were categorized as borderline.

Chapter 4 Discussion

For the past few years, the resettlement of Syrian refugee families has been followed. As noted in the introduction, host nation language proficiency of refugees is a strong factor for migrant integration. However, the findings from the pilot study and follow-up study imply L2 development may be delayed by a number of factors. For instance, many English language and literacy measures indicated a lack L2 progression among refugee children. This finding was also seen to affect their academics. In many of their provincial report cards, low scores were noted under the category of English language. Furthermore, low scores were also seen in subjects other than English. Many educators attributed part of this outcome to the low English proficiency of these children. This outcome is frequently noted in research (Collier, 1995). Cummins (1981) indicated the development of interpersonal oral language proficiency often predates the development of cognitively demanding academic language. The refugee children in this study were still developing their English oral language skills. As a result of such, their ability to make use of academic English language was still limited.

A portion of this study probed the performance of refugee children in Canadian schools. With the use of semi-structured interviews, the behaviours of refugee children were investigated. Educators in this study recalled a number of observations made regarding refugee students. Children were noted to be quieter and were less likely to participate in the school community. Factors such as, disrupted education were found to negatively affect their academic development. A few educators noted the difficulties refugee children experienced when adapting to new methods of peer-peer interaction. Specific classroom layouts were noted to benefit the learning of these children. Many educators recalled the advantage of using smaller groups to promote class participation. The impact of this strategy may be associated with the greater opportunity refugee children have to facilitate closer contact with their peers. Peer contact is considered to be protective factor that supports and encourages refugee academic development (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

This study also focused on the effect teachers have on the learning of refugee children. Many refugee children spoke about the benefits they encountered when working with a teacher who could personally connect with them. This observation was also noted by the teachers themselves.

One main room teacher spoke about the importance teacher-student communication had on student learning. In fact, Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) also viewed a strong teacher-student as a protective factor for refugee student integration. However, the communication in this relationship can greatly be hindered by the lack of understanding teachers have of their students. Many educators felt they did not fully understand the lifestyles and circumstances of refugee children. While they did advocate for more training on this topic, they also spoke about their limitations in terms of time and staff support. Due to their lack of understanding of refugee backgrounds, educators often provide refugee children the same educational supports as other non-refugee migrants. Multiple studies have reviewed the potent differences that exist between refugees and their non-refugee counterparts (Bakker, Dagevos & Engbersen, 2017; Connor, 2010). As a result of such, refugee specific supports are warranted.

When reviewing report cards, it was found that many educators encouraged refugee children to practice their English language skills at home. In order to do so, these children would require parental support. This support is largely limited by the lack of English language proficiency among refugee parents (Connor, 2010; Hou & Beiser, 2006). After speaking with parents, it was observed that few refugee parents understood the structure of the educational system. Many parents relied on their children for information regarding their academic development. This reliance restricts refugee parents from taking the lead in supporting the educational development of their children. Furthermore, this reliance limits the progression of the parent-teacher relationship. Once again, this prevents educators from having a strong understanding of the family dynamics and living circumstances of refugee students.

Many parents in this study were working towards improving their English development. For instance, a number of parents were enrolled in governmental language classes such as, LINC. Through the parent interviews, it was found that these classes were not largely effective. Many parents felt that the class structure did not take their individual language proficiency into account. As a result of such, many parents were enrolled in classes that were not conducive to their English development. Furthermore, parents were often restricted from attending these classes due to obligations such as, child care. In other situations, parents spoke about the difficulty they had in balancing employment with classes. Unfortunately, many parents felt they were forced to choose one over the other in order to better support their families.

Moreover, many parents felt unable to effectively support their children due to the lack of resources they encountered in everyday life. In the participant sample of this study, three out of the eight parents were employed. Those who were employed worked in the labour sector. In effect, refugee families were financially limited. Many parents could not afford to send their children to after-school programs. Furthermore, parents spoke about the lack of reliable assistance offered by refugee-based services and supports.

Given these circumstances, refugee children are forced manage their own education. In many situations, education was put aside to assist the family with day to day tasks (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). The in-school settlement worker explained how these children often work as interpreters for their parents and others.

This increase in expectations adds to the difficulties refugee children experience when acculturating to a new host society. In western communities, many individuals are encouraged to take on an individualistic lifestyle. In effect, this can often cause a rift between parents and children. This rift seems largely associated with the emerging independence of refugee children and the collectivist traditions of their families (Azar & Cote, 2002). A few fathers in this study spoke about their dislike for the distance they noted in western parent-child relationships. Many parents wanted their children to maintain their first language. From the study, mean scores in Arabic language and literacy measures implied refugee children were improving their Arabic proficiency. However, it should be noted that individual performances on these measures were quite varied. In fact, some children felt their Arabic language skills were weakening. When reviewing the language environment questionnaire (ALEQ-4), refugee children were observed to speak their L1 less frequently than their parents. Furthermore, children participated in more English activities and had access to more English resources outside of school than Arabic.

Both L1 and L2 are crucial in the development of peer contacts for refugees (Mace, Mulheron, Jones & Cherian, 2014; Connor, 2010; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). As noted in the introduction, many refugee children experienced trauma before and after migrating to a host society. With regards to this study and its sample of refugee children, the mean scores from the SDQ were classified as “normal.” Nevertheless, many educators observed behavioral and emotional difficulties in refugee children pre-exposed to trauma.

When interviewing refugee families, many participants spoke about the wellbeing benefits they encountered from their peer-contact (Porter & Haslam, 2005). These benefits were largely associated with their sense of belonging. A few parents mentioned the difficulties one would experience if they did not take the initiative to interact with others in the community. Likewise, children mentioned their friends and the importance of supporting one another when discussing what eased their transition into a new society.

Overall, this study observed the post-migration experiences of four Syrian refugee families living in Canada. More specifically, this study focused upon the language and literacy development of Syrian refugee children. In order to do so, the existing dynamic between refugee children, their parents and their schools were reviewed. Based on the findings from this study, a number of gaps were noted to exist with regards to the resettlement supports provided to refugee families. With regards to education, a greater amount of training must be provided to educators on topics pertaining to Syrian refugees. Moreover, the structure of adult English language learning programs needs to be adapted to the needs and capabilities of refugee parents. Lastly, there needs to be a greater provision of reliable and inexpensive community supports for refugee families. As noted in a meta-analysis by Porter & Haslam (2005), government support and agencies can greatly reduce challenges and strongly promote the success of refugees in a new host society.

Chapter 5

Limitations, Next Steps and Conclusion

1. Limitations

This study was based upon a mixed-methods design and involved four Syrian refugee families living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) of Canada. The institutions and supports reviewed in this study were also based in this region. As a result of such, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the experiences of all Syrian refugees in Canada. Furthermore, it should be noted that the six educators who participated in this study were from two schools in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). More specifically, these educators were from two public elementary schools. Hence, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to all schools within the region. Moreover, both teachers for the English language learning classes in this study were teaching ESL. Nevertheless, both teachers were familiar with the structure of other learning programs such as, ELD and were able to provide corresponding information.

This project also made use of semi-structured interviews. These interviews were used to better understand the experiences of refugee families. However, other qualitative methods could have been used. For instance, participants could have shared their oral histories. Oral histories are often used to gather data about the recent past (Grele, 1987). More specifically, oral histories are led by the participant. As a result of such, the participant is more likely to share their emotions and subjective experiences. The information attained from oral histories is less likely to be influenced by the nature of the interview questions.

For this study, the same Arabic speaking interpreter was used as was used in the pilot study. In both studies, the interpreter facilitated the interviews between the lead investigator and the parents. Throughout the interview, the interpreter would explain the parent responses to the lead investigator. The interpreter also transcribed all Arabic interviews to English. This commonality limited the discrepancies that might occur regarding the interpretation and translation of Arabic between both studies. With the use of an interpreter, there is always the risk of information not being conveyed as accurately as it is spoken. In order to limit this risk, the lead investigator and interpreter worked closely together and reviewed the interviews multiple times. The interpreter was also the one who conducted all Arabic language and literacy assessments.

As noted previously in this study, one of the four refugee families is Kurdish. The children of this family were not assessed in terms of their Kurdish language proficiency. Thus, their performance on Arabic measures may not accurately represent the maintenance and development of their first language. Nevertheless, these children were raised in Syria and some were taught Arabic in schools in Lebanon. Moreover, their parents were able to speak Arabic proficiently. In order to ensure the communication between this family and the researcher was clear, the Arabic-speaking interpreter was also fluent in Kurdish.

2. Next Steps

In the future, a larger study should be conducted with regards to the long-term resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada. Educators from higher-level institutions (ex. secondary schools) and various school boards should be involved in order to assess the academic experiences of refugee children in different environments. This includes interviewing the instructors for various English language learning programs (ex. ELD, LEAP) in schools.

Further comparison of Arab and Kurdish Syrian refugee families is warranted. Future studies should assess the development of Kurdish as well as Arabic among Kurdish families. These findings can then be used to assess the progression of English development in Arab families (who speak Arabic) and Kurdish families (who speak both Arabic and Kurdish).

As the Syrian refugee families become resettled, it would be valuable to investigate the post-secondary outcomes of refugee children. By doing so, the impact of pre and post-migration factors on subjects such as, employment can be more closely assessed.

3. Conclusion

Overall, this study was a follow-up on the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugee families living in Canada. More specifically, this study focused on the language and literacy development of Syrian refugee children. Compared to the pilot study, there was a slight improvement in English language and literacy proficiency, whereas Arabic language and literacy proficiency did not greatly vary. Interviews with children, parents and educators uncovered the need for more supports to promote the educational development of Syrian refugee children.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Child Interview Guide

Education until now

1. In Canada, do you learn anywhere besides at school? (Prompt: extra curriculums, camps, community centers, sports, dance, Qur'an, etc)
 - a. Have you made friends at these activities?
 - b. Do you speak in English or Arabic? Why?

Typical School Day

1. Could you describe to me your typical school day? (Prompt: yesterday)
 - a. What makes a day especially good?
 - b. How about what makes a day at school bad?
 - c. And so having a good or bad day, does it depend on your or also on other people?
2. How do you get along with your classmates?
 - a. How about with your teacher?
3. Are there things that are easier here than in your home country?

Informal Schooling and Extracurricular activities

1. What do you do in your free time?
 - a. What do you do when you get home from school?
 - b. Follow up: Do you think you are learning something there?
2. Are there people that you would say helped you a lot, and that you have learned a lot from them?
 - a. Follow up: Please tell me about this person/ people.
 - b. What did you learn from them?
 - c. Why have you learned a lot from them?
 - d. What about the situation made it easier to learn?

Easy/Difficult Learning Situations

1. What is your easiest subject at school?
 - a. What makes that subject so easy?
 - b. Does it have to do with your teacher? Classmates?
 - c. How do they make it easier to learn?
2. What kind of thing do you find easy to learn?
 - a. Can you describe why this is easy to learn?

- b. What is the situation surrounding this?
3. Are there times where it is really easy for you to learn and achieve something?
 - a. Please describe that kind of situation.
4. Can you tell me something that you accomplished/achieved that you are really proud of?
 - a. How did you achieve [whatever they said above]?
 - b. What and who helped you?
5. What is your hardest subject in school?
 - a. Why is it so difficult?
 - b. What about it is difficult to learn?
 - c. What would you need to make it easier to learn?
 - d. Who could help you with this?
 - e. How could they help you?
6. Do you think that other young people have this same difficulty with ____?
 - a. Why do you think that?

Future Questions

1. If tomorrow, another young person arrives here in “Canada”, what piece of advice would you give to that person?
2. If you were the leader of Canada, what would you change to make things better for you?
 - a. What are one or two laws that you would make.
3. If you could be anything you wanted to be in the future, what would that be?
 - a. What is easy about becoming that?
 - b. What is going to be hard about becoming that?
 - c. What do your parents think about that plan?
4. Are you receiving any resources/information from the school on their post-secondary education? (*If in high school*)
 - a.) What kind of resources?
 - b.) Who’s providing the resources? (ex. counsellors, teachers)
 - c.) How are they helping the child?
5. Because your child is starting high school, did they give them information on the high school programs and curriculum? (*If in middle school*)
 - a.) What kind of information did you receive?
 - b.) Did the information help?
6. Is going back to your home country of origin something you think about?

Concluding Questions

1. I think that is all the questions that I have for you, is there anything else that is important to you and that we haven't talked about?
 - a. Do you have any questions for me?
2. Can I contact you if I have some more questions about what you said during this interview?
 - a. Availability
3. Teacher contact information
4. Reports cards if available.

Thank you

Appendix B: Parent Interview Guide

Introduction

1. What have you been doing since we last saw you?
2. Do you feel your language has developed since last year?
 - a.) If so, how?
3. Are you taking English classes?
 - a.) If yes, how are they going?
 - b.) How did they determine what level you are at? How did you get assessed?
 - c.) What is the structure of the classes like?
 - d.) How do you get to the classes?
4. How do you feel your children are developing in terms of language?
5. Are you receiving any resources/information from the school on their post-secondary education? (*If in high school*)
 - a.) What kind of resources?
 - b.) Who's providing the resources? (ex. counsellors, teachers)
 - c.) How are they helping the child?
6. Because your child is starting high school, did they give them information on the high school programs and curriculum? (*If in middle school*)
 - a.) What kind of information did you receive?
 - b.) Did the information help?

Lifestyle

7. Are there things here easier than in your home country?

Informal Schooling and Extracurricular Activities

8. In Canada, do you learn anywhere besides at school? (Prompt: extra-curricular, camps, community centers, sports, dance, Qur'an, etc)
9. Are there people that you would say helped you a lot, and that you have learned a lot from them?
 - a. Please tell me about this person/people.
 - b. What did you learn from them?
 - c. Why have you learned a lot from them?
 - d. What about the situation made it easier to learn?

Future Questions

10. If tomorrow, another young person arrives here in "Canada", what piece of advice would you give to that person?
11. Is going back to your home country of origin something you think about?
12. Can you tell me about Canadian culture from your perspective?

13. Are there any similarities/ differences from in your home country?
14. How has it been integrating into this culture?
15. What benefits does Canadian culture/society have on your family/ children?
16. Can you tell me about any concerns you have?
17. How can these concerns be addressed?

Concluding Questions

18. I think that is all the questions that I have for you, is there anything else that is important to you and that we haven't talked about?
 - b. Do you have any questions for me?
19. Can I contact you if I have some more questions about what you said during this interview?
 - a. Availability

Thank You

Appendix C: Educator Interview Guide

Teacher Education/Training to Work with Refugee Populations

1. What is a typical day for you as a teacher?
 - a. What subjects do you teach?
2. What are the sorts of pedagogy and differentiated instruction implemented to effectively teach refugee students?

Behavior of Refugee Students in Classroom

1. Do you know if there are refugee students in your class?
2. Can you speak about refugee students in general?
3. What is the overall level of class participation of refugee students?
4. How well do refugee students adapt to classroom environments?
5. Are there differences between refugee students and other second language learners (ex. immigrant students) in your class in terms of academic performance and behavior?
6. Can you describe a time where a refugee student seemed worried, angry and/or distressed?

Support at School for Refugee Students

1. In general, what programs and resources are present to students (ex. learning disabilities, special needs etc.) having difficulties in the classroom?
2. What programs and resources are specifically in place to support the learning needs of refugee students?
3. Can you describe interactions of refugee students and instructional assistants (ex. peer mentor, tutor, ESL teacher)?
4. Are interpreters used for interactions with refugee students?
5. What kind of differentiated instructions are implemented to support refugee student performance? (ex. use of picture dictionaries)

Academic Achievement in School

1. How are refugee students performing for their age and/or grade level?
2. What are some of the academic strengths of the students?
3. Are refugee students having particular difficulties with subject specific language (ex. Science, math)?
4. What are some academic resources useful to refugee children?
- 5.

Communication with Parents

1. What forms of information is available about student background before the start at school?
2. Is an interpreter used when contacting parents?

3. Have there been any attendance issues with refugee students?
4. What role do refugee parents play and how do you think this affects student learning?

Living conditions of refugee youth

1. What do you know about the living situation of the refugee students in your school/class?
2. Can you talk about the main challenges and resources through their living situation?

Staff Education/Training to Work with Refugee Populations

1. What kinds of training have you received up until now with regards to teaching refugee students?
2. How did you adapt to teaching refugee students?

Thank you