

# Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Advice to teachers – Support document

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This document was produced by the authors based on their research for the report *Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners*, and is an added resource for further information. The report is available on NCVER's website: <<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>

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# Advice for teachers of adult Sudanese refugee learners

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## Introduction

One of the aims of this study was to elicit data that may provide helpful advice to teachers in their quest to meet the learning needs of their Sudanese learners. The participants in the study were

- ✧ specialist teachers of adult English language, literacy and numeracy who were currently teaching adult Sudanese refugee learners, mostly from southern Sudan, and
- ✧ other professionals assisting Sudanese refugees in the settlement process. These professionals included representatives of the Sudanese community.

Notwithstanding the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Sudanese population, critical aspects of the profile of southern Sudanese refugees that impact on them as learners are that they have a background of life experience within a rural, pastoral economy disrupted by years of conflict and forced displacement; a background of a highly oral culture with no written script in any of the most commonly spoken languages; and a background of very limited or no formal schooling. The advice in this document relates to such learners who, through being denied access to formal education are in the very early phases of developing English language, literacy and numeracy skills in a formal learning situation.

This document attempts to capture the observations and suggestions of all research participants, based on their own experience, and on feedback from the Sudanese community itself. It is also informed by the literature review to assist teachers in the successful delivery of teaching programs for this emerging learner population. Participants in the study generally agreed that as a whole or in part, this advice may also apply to other learner groups who share some of the critical features of the learner profile mentioned above.

The purpose of this document is to make the advice provided by the research participants readily available to all teachers teaching adult southern Sudanese learners or other groups of learners for whom the advice may also be relevant. It is assumed that the primary users of the advice, that is, specialist teachers of adult English language, literacy and numeracy, are conversant with current teaching methodologies in these fields. It is also assumed that in their day to day professional practice, these teachers are drawing on a broad range of techniques for teaching the skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy. Therefore, the advice does not attempt to lay out specific teaching strategies in any of these learning areas. Instead, the advice is to do with general approaches and ideas at the level of classroom management and of program design that have been suggested or successfully tried as ways of meeting the needs of adult southern Sudanese learners. Although some classes had only Sudanese learners, the majority of classes represented in the study were comprised of a mix of Sudanese learners and learners from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Teachers have reported that many of the approaches and ideas they have put forward with their Sudanese learners in mind are beneficial to all their learners.

The advice to teachers is categorised under six factors which research has shown to be necessary conditions for successful training programs as described below. At the end of this document, an

annotated list of resources that may further assist teachers in meeting the needs of their Sudanese learners is included.

## Framing the advice: the six factors for successful training programs

Input to the present study was provided by teachers in Western Australia who saw value in exploring the similarities between the learning needs of southern Sudanese refugees and Australian Indigenous learners on the grounds that both groups had a history of successfully operating within a highly oral culture, and with no written script in their first languages. There were also similarities between the two groups in relation to their concept of family as extended family; their sense of obligation to family and community; and in their world view centred on the spiritual and material connectedness between man and land. Consequently, to these educators, it appeared that educational programs embodying Western concepts and expectations, and especially the introduction of written English to adults from both these groups posed some of the same challenges for teachers. Furthermore, the desired outcomes from educational programs expressed by Indigenous educators and their learners may also resonate with adult southern Sudanese refugees (and other groups) in English language, literacy and numeracy programs.

A recent review of research into training programs for Australian Indigenous learners (Miller, C 2005, Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians' aspirations: a systematic review of research, NCVET, Adelaide) identified successful training programs as those which produced some or all of the following outcomes for learners:

Personal outcomes such as

- ✧ improved self esteem
- ✧ improved sense of connection to and engagement with the broader community
- ✧ improved skills and knowledge
- ✧ improved understanding of Australian systems and culture

Employment outcomes such as

- ✧ access to employment

Educational outcomes such as

- ✧ access to further education.

Miller's review also found that time and time again, the research identified the same array of factors contributing to the success of training programs for Indigenous learners. These factors formed an interrelated matrix: success depended on all of them being present all of the time. As a framing tool for the advice to teachers in this document, the seven factors for the success of training programs for Indigenous learners have been reconstituted as six factors which are pertinent to the success of English language, literacy and numeracy instruction for adult southern Sudanese refugee learners. The six factors are:

- ✧ Community involvement and ownership
- ✧ Learners' identities, cultures, knowledge and values
- ✧ Flexibility in course design, content and delivery
- ✧ Quality staff and committed advocacy

- ✧ Learner support services
- ✧ True partnerships which help to achieve sustainable funding.

## The advice

Under each of the six factors, there are ideas and approaches for addressing the specific needs of Sudanese learners suggested by the participants in the research. Where appropriate, successful examples of educational practice related to each factor are also provided.

### 1. Community engagement and ownership

This study confirmed recent research indicating that the success of any program of intervention depended on consultation with representatives of the target community, including the program recipients themselves. In this instance, success depended on consultation with the Sudanese community, including adult Sudanese learners.

Participants in this study indicated that educational providers were keenly aware of the value of community consultations and of the value of feedback from learners. Some examples provided by participants of consultations undertaken and outcomes achieved included:

- ✧ *Informal consultations between learners and teachers.* In one instance these consultations resulted in changes to timetabling so that Sudanese learners could attend English classes at one college and vocational training at another on different days.
- ✧ *Formal consultations between representatives of the African community and representatives of the educational provider.* These consultations resulted in:
  - ◆ an information session (with interpreters) to all African learners en masse to present an outline of the educational pathways available within the same institution beyond the learners' current English language, literacy and numeracy provision.
  - ◆ information sessions on urgent settlement issues led by experts in their fields. Interpreters were used as needed. The main issues were financial management, health, and law and order matters such as domestic violence, and driving without a licence or without car registration.
  - ◆ a major recommendation by community representatives that there be an option for African adults to concentrate on developing spoken English language skills prior to learning written English.
- ✧ *Formal mechanisms for continuing communication between the educational provider and the community.* In one instance the mechanism was the appointment of an African Student Support Officer on campus. The main objectives for this position were:
  - ◆ to strengthen the links between the educational provider and the local African community
  - ◆ to assist African refugees in cultural transition, especially with regard to educational opportunities beyond English language, literacy and numeracy tuition
  - ◆ to enhance the educational provider's staff's awareness and understanding of African communities arriving as refugees, and
  - ◆ to present a role model for African refugee learners.

### 2. Learners' identities, cultures, knowledge and values

Knowledge-sharing between teachers and learners will assist teachers to build a comprehensive picture of the diversity of their Sudanese learners' histories, backgrounds; world view and values;

and will assist learners to become familiar with some key concepts and values pertinent to their new culture in Australia.

Advice to teachers is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Possible professional development needs for teachers relating to Sudanese learners' identities, cultures and values**

Possible professional development needs	Possible strategies
Need to develop greater knowledge about refugee issues in general	Institutions should provide time and other resources for teachers to access professional development on refugee issues, using one or more of the professional development resources listed at the end of this document or other resources.
Need to develop greater knowledge about the background and recent history of their Sudanese learners	<p>Institutions should provide time and other resources for teachers to access professional development opportunities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information sessions on new arrivals in the humanitarian immigration program (such as refugees from Sudan) prior to their arrival</li> <li>• talks by representatives of the local Sudanese/African community</li> <li>• talks/workshops led by educational and other professionals with an understanding of the settlement issues facing Sudanese adults</li> <li>• workshops to identify likely critical teaching and learning issues and solutions</li> <li>• workshops to explore the nature of learners' background in a highly oral culture, and the implications, including the potential benefits, for program design and teaching</li> <li>• workshops to identify existing teaching resources and resources needed</li> <li>• workshops for teacher skill development to meet learner need</li> </ul>
Need to develop a deeper understanding of Sudanese learners' cultural values and concepts (for example, notions of family, family obligation; the importance of personal pride; a different sense of time)	<p>Teachers should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss cultural values with Sudanese community members and learners (if possible)</li> <li>• incorporate cultural similarities and differences explicitly into lesson content</li> <li>• build in success by pitching learning activities at the appropriate level of difficulty</li> <li>• explain that learner error is part of learning</li> <li>• take care not to single out weaker learners in feedback sessions or teacher questioning</li> </ul>



**Table 2: Possible considerations for teachers arising from Sudanese learners' encounters with a new culture.**

<b>Possible considerations</b>	<b>Possible teacher interventions</b>
Many material things in Western society eg household furniture, the telephone; computers, household appliances, are new to learners.	<p>Actively seek to understand learners' current knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Be ready to explain anything the learners do not know.</p> <p>Incorporate regular and systematic vocabulary development activities into the teaching program.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for hands-on learning to use new things.</p>
Australian social services and systems are new to learners.	<p>Seek institutional support to arrange information sessions (with interpreters if necessary) by other professionals on settlement issues such as financial management (need to pay for rent, electricity); health (nutrition, men's health, women's health); law and order (driving, drugs and alcohol, domestic violence).</p> <p>Incorporate settlement information into the content of the language, literacy, numeracy program learning program.</p> <p>Have up-to-date information on services/support available to refugees in the local area.</p>
The Australian school system and vocational learning opportunities available to adults are new to learners.	<p>Incorporate information about Australian education, including school education, into the language, literacy, numeracy learning program. This is particularly important for the many parents with children of school age, many of whom have expressed eagerness to help their children through their schooling.</p> <p>Provide information on educational pathways for adults, especially within the teacher's own institution, using interpreters if needed.</p>
Learners have a background in a highly oral culture and are entering a culture which places a high value on the written word .	<p>Actively seek to understand how people successfully operate in a highly oral culture</p> <p>Develop teaching strategies that tap into the learning strategies that people from highly oral cultures use to learn language.</p> <p>Stage literacy learning activities appropriate to learners' skills and knowledge</p>
Learners' cultural values and practices are different from Western cultural practices (eg notions of punctuality, making and keeping appointments).	<p>Provide opportunities to make cultural expectations explicit, especially those relating to the learning setting.</p>
Learners able to attend class only intermittently, or need to attend appointments in class time (due to obligations regarding work or other settlement issues).	<p>Provide many opportunities for repetition and recycling of material.</p> <p>Accommodate learner absence/lateness due to other responsibilities and commitments. This can be done by asking other learners to recap earlier activities or by repeating the most recent activity.</p> <p>Accept that other professionals may be better placed (than themselves) to provide settlement advice to learners.</p> <p>Ensure that learners can visit counsellors during class time if necessary.</p>

*Example of sharing knowledge by linking English language tuition with immediate settlement needs: English for Child Care, Western Australia*

This initiative was modelled on Canadian English playgroups observed by the educator. The program was aimed at African women with young children who could not access English language provision owing to lack of child care places. The idea was to provide English tuition to mothers, whilst their children were looked after by students in Certificate III in Child Care at a local VET provider. An appropriate venue was provided free of charge at a local university, with a separate room for children's activities.

The English provision was 3 hours (one morning) a week. Six sessions were delivered in second term 2005. Initially three women attended, but the class grew to nine women and ten children.

The class was quite diverse. It included learners with a range of English levels from 0 to 1+ on the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings scheme. There were 3 women from India; 2 women from Southern Sudan; 2 women from Afghanistan; 1 woman from China, and 1 woman from Iran.

As there was limited public transport to the centre, funding for taxi fares for some of the women was obtained from a government department.

Initially, a separate room was provided for the children's play group, but the children were hesitant to be in a room away from their mothers. The solution, which worked well, was to locate the English class and the childcare activities in the same room. The TAFE students who looked after the children did this as part of their practicum and were supervised by a visiting vocational teacher.

The content for the English language program focused on parenting, children's play, health (eg teeth cleaning) and healthy diets for children. The women found this program extremely beneficial as it gave them the skills and the language associated with caring for their babies. Specifically, they learned how to interact with children, how to talk to them and play with them. They also learned the developmental benefits of these activities for the children.

Content was negotiated with the group as a whole and therefore motivation was very high. Mostly discussion occurred as a whole group and then students undertook individual tasks. The women preferred to work individually or as a whole group rather than in pairs or groups. For example, the 'higher' level English students worked with the teacher using pamphlets on healthy foods which were especially written for refugees from Africa. Women with lower English skills copied vocabulary.

Unforeseen benefits of the program were the social contact among the women from different backgrounds, and the practical support the more established residents could give to new arrivals.

### 3. Flexibility in course design, content and delivery

Teachers need to adapt their course design, content and delivery to meet the specific learning needs of adult southern Sudanese refugees.

Research into the learning needs of Sudanese learners, and recently-developed teaching and learning resources for this learner group are listed at the end of this document.

Advice to teachers relating to course design and content is presented in Table 3, while advice relating to course delivery is presented in Table 4. Table 3 highlights issues that are closely linked to the absence of a written script in learners' first/additional languages; and to the possible effects of learners' experiences as refugees. Many of the suggested interventions require the

support of management level, but may arise from teacher concern. Table 4 sets out issues that are closely linked to learners' lack of experience of formal learning. Similarly, some of the suggested interventions require the support of management, but may arise from teacher concern.

**Table 3: Considerations relating to course design and content, and possible teacher interventions**

<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Possible teacher interventions</b>
As adults, learners bring a wealth of life and learning experience to the classroom, and many have learned to speak more than one language	Actively seek to understand learners' strategies for learning oral language Actively seek to identify content for language learning that is immediately relevant and interesting to learners
Some learners may not be ready to acquire a new culture and language in a formal learning setting.	Seek institutional support to provide opportunities for learners to make contact with a home tutor as a first step towards establishing a personal connection with Australians.
Some learners may be frustrated with the slow pace of learning and may not see a ready application of their language learning. Some learners are very anxious to obtain work.	Seek institutional support to offer classes with a practical focus eg English for shopping; English for gardening; English for computers. Seek institutional support to provide optional English classes linked to local work opportunities
The task of learning all language skills concurrently, particularly the skills of reading and writing, may be too great a learning burden for some learners, especially those with very limited spoken English.	Seek institutional support to offer optional classes focussing on oral skills. Bi-lingual support may also be needed as additional learning support. This kind of offering would allow learners to gain a grasp of spoken English before tackling reading and writing. In this scenario, teachers would need to devise a substantial repertoire of learning activities which do not rely on written English. Songs, rhymes, poems, chants and other mnemonic devices that learners may already have used in learning other languages may also promote their English language learning.
Some learners may be at very preliminary stages of literacy development, needing to develop fine motor skills associated with using writing implements and forming letters.	Seek institutional support to provide small group opportunities for learners to develop these skills. Support initiatives to train Sudanese refugee teachers to act as aides to help others in their community in developing these skills prior to entering language/literacy provision
Western concepts of mathematical operations may be new to learners	Explicitly address the numeracy arising out of all language learning topics and texts Explicitly teach the language of mathematical operations Provide real life/simulated opportunities to do all four mathematical operations eg shopping; budgeting, scaling weights and measures up or down; taking public transport Select activities that can be demonstrated correctly and situationally rather than abstractly Focus on group performance Allow opportunities for doing and observing activities Allow opportunities for imitation and repetition
Course hours/ tuition entitlement may not be sufficient for learners to achieve functional English in all macroskills	Seek institutional support to provide additional tuition for learners wishing to continue Seek institutional support to prioritise macroskills to be developed within the available hours
Learners with good oral skills may want to concentrate on developing their reading and writing skills in English	Seek institutional support to offer classes focussing on written skills as an option
Graphic/diagrammatic forms of presenting information eg maps, timetables are new to learners	Teach these modes of presentation explicitly and provide real-life opportunities for learners to interpret graphic/diagrammatic texts for their own use.
Learning activities which refer to family or home country may be distressing to learners	Take care to avoid content that may be distressing to learners. However, some learners are very keen to tell their stories.

**Table 3 cont...**

<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Possible teacher interventions</b>
Conventions of page layout for written texts are new to learners.	Teach page layout explicitly. Provide repeated opportunities for learners to familiarise themselves with the functions of headings, page numbers, pictures and captions and other features of page layout as they are encountered.
Organising written learning materials is a new activity for learners	Explicitly teach the language relating to stationery items, especially paper. Establish standard ways of categorising worksheets and other paper-based resources (eg by date, by teacher name, by topic). Make filing and organising materials an integral part of each lesson.

Delivery of English language, literacy and numeracy tuition should build on learners' strengths. While not all teachers agree, some teachers have reported that southern Sudanese learners have good strategies for learning oral forms of language, for example, the ability to memorise words and phrases, a good ear for the stress and rhythm of English spoken language, and because of the substantial equivalence of English sounds and sounds of learners' first languages, good English pronunciation. Teachers' use of songs, rhythm, chants, and other musical elements in their teaching repertoire have tapped into this strength. Using hand-clapping to identify syllables in words, and syllable and word stress were suggested as successful strategies. Using songs, poems and rhymes as mnemonic devices were also reported as assisting in teaching vocabulary sets. Other strengths reported are learners' positive attitude; their keenness to learn, and their resilience in the face of all the challenges they face.

In addition to taking account of learners' background in highly oral, rather than highly literate (print-based) cultures, delivery should also address specific learning needs arising from southern Sudanese learners' limited formal education.

**Table 4: Considerations arising from course delivery, and possible teacher interventions**

<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Possible teacher interventions</b>
Classroom routines or the processes of language/literacy learning activities are new experiences for learners	Establish a welcoming, calm environment with predictable routines. Provide step by step instructions and explanations of classroom activities. Provide many opportunities for repetition and recycling of material. Provide encouragement and feedback on learner progress
Learners are not accustomed to sitting for long periods of time. Some learners are exceptionally tall, and standard classroom furniture is too small for these learners.	Provide opportunities for learning tasks involving physical movement in the classroom Provide a variety of short learning activities.
For beginning learners, teacher's accent and speed of delivery may render teacher talk incomprehensible	Seek institutional support for provision of bi-lingual support Slow the pace of speech Use a range of comprehension –checking techniques
Spoken English in contexts where clues are reduced eg listening to audio tapes present may be too difficult for some learners.	Give initial preference to listening activities in which clues to spoken meaning are maximised eg face to face situations or video/DVD/CD-ROM Stage more difficult listening tasks eg using audio tapes/ radio to build in success
Learners have different (non-Western) perceptions of visual representation.	Use real objects, video or photographs; avoid drawings where possible

Table 4 cont...

Considerations	Possible teacher interventions
Asking for clarification of classroom tasks/materials may not be culturally appropriate for learners.	Provide opportunities for learners formulate questions for clarification  Explicitly address the issue of learner- to- teacher questions as a normal learning activity.
Some assessment procedures used in language and literacy programs may be new to learners	Use assessment methods familiar to learners (eg tests) in combination with other assessment methods, with a clear explanation of what is being assessed and why.
Sudanese learners are sometimes in classes with learners from other backgrounds whose learning needs are significantly different. Where the other learners' literacy development is more advanced, Sudanese learners may fall behind.	Seek institutional support to place learners in classes with others with substantially similar needs and at an equivalent level of literacy development.
The standard class size where the teacher to learner ratio is 1:15 may limit the teacher support available to Sudanese learners at the pre-literate stage of development.	Seek institutional support to reduce class size for classes with Sudanese pre-literate learners to a ratio of teacher to learner ratio of 1:10.

*Example of flexibility in course design, content and delivery: English in the Garden, NSW*

This initiative had its beginning in the project leader's belief that for some learners, including English language learners, the most effective way of learning is through 'doing'. That is, involvement in an activity that is engaging and meaningful will provide the context and stimulus for learners to communicate in English. Her proposal to run classes under the banner *English in the Garden* elaborated details of how building and maintaining a garden could provide the focus for English language instruction.

The proposal for a community garden within the grounds of the VET college at which the project leader was employed attracted funding from the Commonwealth government, the NSW State government (via the VET college) and local government. The funding covered basic materials for the garden, and tuition by two teachers: a language teacher (the project leader) and a teacher with extensive experience in developing community gardens in the Sydney area. The project commenced in mid 2006 and is set to continue into 2007.

After only three months, the garden had grown in dimension to eight four metre square beds, and included a small glass house for raising seedlings as well as a thriving worm farm. It had changed a grassy slope into a productive and lively area, full of vegetables and the prospect of providing food, skill, knowledge and enjoyment for the students who participated.

The garden was first proposed to meet the needs of students from Sudan and other emerging communities. It was, however, open to all students of language backgrounds other than English. Initially, in view of the complexity of the principles underlying a sustainable 'no-dig' garden, the project leader considered that it would be necessary for the students establishing the garden to have at least a functional level of spoken and written English (ISLPR 1-). Over time, as interest in the garden grew, the project leader anticipated that other learners, especially those who were at very early stages of their English language development, could also participate in the garden project. The students initially involved in the garden project came from a variety of backgrounds. There were 2 students from Sudan, 2 from Afghanistan, and one each from Turkey, Korea, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and Iran. While some of the first students have since moved on, the *English in the Garden* student numbers have grown to 33, and the project now includes two pre-literacy groups with 25 students from southern Sudan. These groups are working on two plots of the garden dedicated to their use with their teacher and the gardening teacher.

The language learning content of the original classes followed the development of the garden from soil preparation (including the principles of the no-dig garden, setting up the beds, planting) to shopping for worms for a worm farm, setting up the glass house, and observing and maintaining the garden (weeding, watering, controlling pests, planting out and sharing the

harvest). These processes involve a myriad of opportunities for developing speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy skills. No activities were beyond the physical capacity of any of the students working either individually or in small groups. In a garden diary, students are asked to write what they have done or observed in the college garden or their garden at home. On the two days of the week for the gardening class, the morning is spent in the classroom to review the garden diaries and make corrections as needed; and to work on the language associated with the activities planned for the afternoon in the garden. One class is collecting photographs to document the progress of the garden to the end of the year. The photographs will be accompanied by a written record of events to hand on to other groups.

Teachers of the new groups joining the project are adapting the teaching content to suit their learners and the gardening they want to do.

Due to its success as a site of learning, the project continues to attract funding, positive attention, and collegiate support. In addition to groups of prospective gardeners in English language classes, visitors include students in other courses at the college. Recently, students in a photography course for youth at risk visited the garden to take photographs; and students in a News Media course have begun a series of interviews with the gardening students for publication in the college newsletter. Science teaching staff at the college have assisted by providing the *English in the Garden* teachers with a digital camera to document progress, and have given the learners the experience of viewing common garden insects under a microscope. Another English language teacher has made a CD-ROM of the construction of the garden beds made by the two new groups. It is anticipated that the CD-ROM will become a valuable resource in the language learning process for these learners.

It is anticipated that the project will continue for the foreseeable future, as funding, shared by several partners, is not onerous; as there is space to expand the garden within the college grounds; as interest continues to be strong among English language teachers and their students; and, most importantly, as the benefits of the project to the college community as a whole are applauded.

#### 4. Quality staff and committed advocacy

The high level of expertise, experience, understanding and sensitivity of the teacher participants in research may be an indication of the specialist English Language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce already working with Sudanese and other African refugees.

Several providers of English language tuition, other VET programs and support services for refugees are pro-active in employing Sudanese or other African adults. For example, a major provider of the Adult Migrant English Program employs its student graduate African refugees on its administration staff. Sudanese community leaders have also advocated the training of refugees who had worked as teachers in Sudan to assist with basic literacy tuition (for example holding a pen; letter formation; left to right orientation; page layout) for their fellow refugees.

*Example of committed advocacy: Training and employment of Sudanese staff, Victoria.\**

A major provider of the Adult Migrant English Program in Victoria views employment as critical to successful settlement for refugees. Therefore, in the last three years, that provider has put in place two major strategies to assist members of newly-arrived refugee communities to gain employment. Both strategies provide Australian workplace experience which is so critical to gaining initial employment in Australia.

#### *Education Traineeships*

The Education Traineeships Program, now in its third year, provides traineeships in AMES centres as a pathway to employment as Language and Literacy Integration Aides in primary and secondary schools. The education trainees use their first language skills to assist recently arrived migrants and refugees in their language learning and introduction to the new culture. More than 50 trainees from refugee backgrounds have successfully completed the programme and moved onto employment.

#### *Community Guides*

The provider's Community Guides Program, delivered as part of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, provides settlement services to newly-arrived refugees from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds in the most appropriate way by ensuring refugee "voices" continually shape how the provider's services are delivered employment opportunities as first steps to more substantial employment and additional employment for under-employed people from refugee and settler communities training and development to ensure greater depth in leadership and mentoring skills within new and emerging communities

Community Guides are themselves often relatively newly-arrived refugees and migrants with bi-language skills in English and the language of the new communities. Working with qualified Settlement Case Coordinators, the guides undertake many practical tasks in initial settlement and link refugees to their respective communities and to the broader Australian community through the provider's Volunteers Program, and are paid for these services. Since October 2005, the provider has trained 94 guides and fourteen Guides have gained employment with other agencies using their skills training and experience to support increased cultural diversity in other agencies. The initiative has been very much welcomed by refugee communities in Victoria and has generated much interest from refugee communities in other states.

*\*Although Victoria was not officially included this study, the above example was provided by a member of the project's Advisory Group.*

## 5. Learner support services

Counselling and other support services are required to enable Sudanese learners to access and remain in education programs.

Research participants generally report the availability of counselling services for learners. Childcare presents a challenge as some African families are large (up to eight children), but education providers are working to meet these challenges by accessing additional accommodation. They also report that counselling, consultation, childcare, and access to information is presented using learners' first language or bi-lingually if needed.

*Example of learner support services:* The appointment of an African Student Support Officer by an educational provider, regional New South Wales.

The objectives of this role are presented under Community engagement and ownership on p.6. This initiative was begun as a pilot project in regional NSW, where there was a substantial influx of refugee arrivals from North, East and West Africa in recent years. A large number of these arrivals were Sudanese. The pilot project was continued on the basis of its success in assisting refugees from Africa in their adaptation to a new education system and in their integration into the broader Australian community. The African Student Support Officer (from Kenya) provided counselling and advice on course offerings to individual learners; provided professional development to teachers on African refugees' life and experiences prior to arrival in Australia; and took part in formal consultations between the African community and the educational provider.

## 6. True partnerships which help to achieve sustainable funding

Currently, some innovative programs designed specifically to address the needs of southern Sudanese learners are funded and resourced through partnerships between educational providers and other organisations. The English for Childcare initiative in Western Australia mentioned earlier, for example, relied for its success on seed funding for the pilot; the supply of English language and Childcare teachers from the VET provider, Childcare students from the VET provider, accommodation supplied by a local university, and funding for transport supplied by a government department. However, at the time of writing, there is no continuation of this initiative, in spite of its outstanding success, and in spite of the continued need for such a program.

The English for Gardening initiative in NSW is being funded by all three levels of government, at modest levels for all three. It is further supported by management of the educational provider, which has permitted an increasing part of the college grounds to be converted to garden; encouraged students and teachers in other courses to involve themselves in activities related to the garden; and has included the garden in the security arrangements for the college. At this point, the garden and its funding are sustainable.



# Annotated list of resources for teachers

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Some recent publications relevant to this study are listed and annotated under the following categories:

- ✧ Professional development resources regarding refugee issues
- ✧ Professional development resources regarding the specific learning needs of Sudanese refugees and others with special needs
- ✧ Teaching and learning resources (with particular reference to Sudanese or other learners from highly oral cultures)

## Professional development resources regarding refugee issues

Abbatangelo, J 1994, *Given a Chance* (video and trainer notes) Ethnic Youth Issues Network, Victoria

### **Comment**

This resource is for teachers of senior classes in secondary schools and vocational education institutions. Though the immigration figures and other information is dated, the information regarding the issues facing young refugees is still relevant. The five young refugees' stories are powerful illustrations of the hardships of their lives prior to arrival in Australia, their particular settlement issues, their courage in overcoming these hardships and their plans for the future. This resource is valuable for teachers of adults and their students, and can be used as the basis for many language and literacy teaching activities. Teachers of adults need to make a professional judgement as to when/whether to use the case study material as it may be distressing for some learners.

Francis, S 2004, *School's in for refugees: Whole school guide to refugee readiness*, The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., Melbourne

### **Comment**

This resource is designed for use in primary and secondary schools. However, the background information and advice sections will be very helpful for teachers of adult refugees in developing their understanding of the particular issues facing refugees, and in providing strategies for supporting students through their experiences in the Australian education system. Parts of this resource will be very helpful to teachers of adults and their students. There are current refugee case studies which could form the basis of reading or listening tasks. Teachers of adults need to make a professional judgement as to when/whether to use the case study material as it may be distressing for some learners.

Martinez, A 1997, *Teaching survivors of torture and trauma: A handbook for teachers*, TAFE NSW, Sydney

**Comment**

This handbook is a professional development resource for all teachers of adult refugees. It provides advice to teachers on ways of configuring their teaching practices to take account of the issues that refugee students are working through on a daily basis. The handbook covers general classroom management issues as well as issues especially relevant to adult English language teachers.

Mylan M, and Shenk, J *Lost Boys of Sudan*

**Comment**

This is a feature-length documentary film that follows two refugees, (two of the many 'lost boys' orphaned in the conflict in Sudan) on their journey from Sudan to America. Information about the film and its availability for purchase on DVD are provided on <http://www.lostboysfilm.com>. The website also contains background information about Sudan, and educational material based on the film.

Pickering, E, Lonnon, G, and Nicholls, N 2002, *Settling in: a group program for newly arrived refugee and migrant students* (training kit), NSW Service for the treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, Sydney

**Comment**

This is an early intervention program designed for newly arrived migrant and refugee children and young people of school age in Australia. Its purpose is to support these people through their initial settlement phase, with special attention to their emotional wellbeing as they enter the unfamiliar environment of school/education system in a new country.

Some aspects of this resource are valuable for teachers of adults and their students, and some handouts may be useful as the basis for language and literacy learning activities. The section on getting to know each other without reference to family is particularly useful and could easily be adapted for adults.

Pittaway, E 2003, *Roads to refuge: refugees in Australia*, (video and text-based training kit) Centre for Refugee Research, University of NSW, Sydney

**Comment**

This training kit, prepared for use in primary and secondary schools, aims to give teachers and students a comprehensive understanding of refugee issues, especially those relevant to Australia. It covers all aspects of the experiences of refugees prior to their arrival in Australia, and the issues that differentiate refugees from other migrants. It places a particular emphasis on the strengths of refugees, their contribution to Australian society, and their determination to succeed. The videos and presenter's notes contain a wealth of material, including case study stories that could form the basis of many language, literacy and numeracy activities. Teachers of adults need to make a professional judgement as to when/whether to use the case study material as it may be distressing for some learners.

## Professional development resources regarding the specific learning needs of Sudanese refugees and others with special needs

Adult Migrant Education Services with Victoria University, (forthcoming)

*Into Learning: a professional development kit for teachers and trainers of adult literacy learners from aural/oral learning cultures*, Adult Migrant Education Services, Melbourne

### **Comment**

This resource comprises a DVD and accompanying CD. The DVD presents film sequences from five classrooms which highlight useful approaches and strategies especially for adult learners with limited formal schooling. The accompanying CD contains printable material to support and extend the examples of practice shown on the DVD. The CD also includes an overview of current theory and methodology, a facilitator's guide, and a further readings and reference list. *Into Learning* is designed to be a practical self-access resource for both individuals and groups, providing a starting point for reflection and dialogue on how best to facilitate the acquisition of second language literacy.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Fact Sheets, NCELTR, Sydney

### **Comment**

These fact sheets have been developed by the AMEP Research Centre to provide AMEP teachers with information on areas of professional concern. They provide a summary as well as identifying some annotated references that can be used to broaden knowledge and extend understanding. There are several series in the Fact Sheets, which can be downloaded from <http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/pdamep/factsheets.html>

Those most helpful for teachers encountering new learner groups are:

#### COUNTRY PROFILES

These provide summaries of a number of countries, 7 of which are in Africa. The information includes historical background, economy and education, people and culture, settlement in Australia, classroom issues and an annotated bibliography.

#### TEACHING ISSUES

Many of these describe the cultural and educational backgrounds of learners from Africa, identify emerging teaching issues and suggest strategies for teachers. The full list of the Teaching Issues fact sheets follows.

- The influences of prior learning
- Teaching spoken and written language
- Enhancing language teaching with content
- Generic Skills
- Vocational Training and the AMEP
- Responding to younger learners with minimal or no schooling
- Youth in the AMEP
- Learners with low literacy in the AMEP
- Teaching pronunciation

Jackson, E 1994, *Non-language outcomes in the Adult Migrant English Program*, NCELTR, Sydney

**Comment**

This is a report on a project that identified outcomes other than purely language and literacy outcomes identified by teachers in the AMEP. These outcomes cover areas such as learning skills, increases in confidence and motivation, knowledge of the Australian community context and cultural understanding. It draws attention to the fact that outcomes of this kind, far from being peripheral educational outcomes, are now actively demanded by the national training reform agenda, in particular by the 'generic' workplace competencies, or employability skills underpinning that agenda. For this and other relevant resources, see the NCELTR online catalogue at <http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications/Catalogue.pdf>

McPherson, P 1997, *Investigating learner outcomes for clients with special needs in the AMEP*, NCELTR, Sydney

**Comment**

This is a report which draws on the knowledge of teachers with expertise in teaching English language and literacy to learners with special learning needs. Special needs in the language /literacy class means learners may have some of the following characteristics:

- no or little experience of formal learning,
- disrupted education
- are not functionally literate in their first language
- literate only in non-roman script languages
- are older learners
- have cultural backgrounds and educational perspectives significantly different from the Anglo Australian culture.

The report describes the profiles of such learners, their effects on language learning and the elements of useful teaching approaches. For this and other relevant resources, see the NCELTR online catalogue at <http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications/Catalogue.pdf>

National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR)

There are many relevant resources available from (NCELTR), based in Sydney. Their online catalogue is at <http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications/Catalogue.pdf>

Wigglesworth, G ed 2003, *The kaleidoscope of adult second language learning: Learner, teacher and researcher perspectives*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Sydney

**Comment**

This collection of research papers represents an exploration of some of the factors that impact upon learners in the contemporary language – learning situation in Australia. The contributions examine learners' perceptions, their participation and roles in the classroom, and how their background, previous educational experiences and family situations influence their learning. Of particular interest to teachers of Sudanese refugees are the chapter by Howard Nicholas and Alan Williams 'Oracy is more than the absence of literacy: Changing learner groups in ESL classrooms in highly literate societies'; and the chapter by Margaret Gunn 'Problem or opportunity? Providing for preliterate learners in the AMEP'.

Willing, K 1989 *Teaching how to learn*, NCELTR, Sydney:

**Comment**

This resource helps teachers develop the learning strategies of their students. It deals with the theoretical aspects of cognitive styles and learning strategies and gives extensive practical advice on how teachers can help learners identify their existing learning strategies and exploit them further. Ten key strategies are included providing learners with a full picture of how they can manage their learning processes and information more effectively. It includes photocopiable activity worksheets and a Teacher Guide. For this and other relevant resources, see the NCELTR online catalogue at <http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications/Catalogue.pdf>

## Teaching and learning resources (with particular reference to Sudanese or other learners from highly oral cultures)

*It's Over to You* (Preliminary course materials), NCELTR, Sydney

**Comment**

While this course for beginner literacy learners was created for distance learners who have access to home tutor support, it can be used in a low literacy classroom. The course has 4 books arranged around topics: At the Park; At the market; At the video store; At after- school care. The Letters and Numbers workbook provides extensive practice in writing and speaking alphabet and numbers. Each workbook is accompanied by a DVD with dramatised segments and spoken instructions in seven languages, including Somali, Swahili, Dinka and Arabic. The materials cover basic literacy and numeracy, letter and number formation, Australian currency, family structure, and basic conversation. For these and other teaching materials, see the NCELTR online catalogue at <http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications/Catalogue.pdf>

Resources developed by AMES West Coast, Perth, Western Australia. If readers would like to purchase any of the resources listed below, please contact the Publications Officer AMES West Coast, Level 6 , 16 Victoria Avenue Perth WA 6000, phone (08) 9229 36222, email [probes@ames.training.wa.gov.au](mailto:probes@ames.training.wa.gov.au)

Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors and the East Metropolitan Population Health Unit, *Anemia, Appetite, Keeping Strong and Healthy* .

These three books are low-level illustrated readers aimed at improving the nutrition awareness of newly arrived refugees.

Adamache, P and Domahidy, C *Listening tasks for beginners*

This resource, comprising a workbook and audio cassette, contains a range of listening tasks that focus on the topic of personal information. It is suitable for beginner ESL learners and can be used in the classroom or in self-access mode.

Brown, A *Activities for the communicative classroom*,

This is a book of photocopiable classroom activities suitable for beginner to intermediate level ESL students. The activities, which are a mixture of pair work and group work, encourage students to interact communicatively.

Domahidy, C *Numbers and money*

This is a workbook for beginner ESL students. It contains activities and listening on the theme of numbers and money.

Domahidy, C *Printing for adults*

This workbook guides students through letter formation, with provision to practise in the context of the language exercises provided throughout. The book is illustrated and is suitable for classroom use or self-access.

Domahidy, C *Print Write*

This is a basic workbook designed to assist learners in their development of printing, beginning with shape discrimination and alphabet recognition.

Harris, C and Hague, M *Get ready: beginning reading and writing*

This resource, comprising a set of student workbooks, a set of tutor guides and a set of audio tapes, is suitable for pre-literate students working in small groups in a classroom, working with a home tutor or self-access study.

Hoang, H *Communicative activities: pair work and group work*,

This is a handbook of classroom worksheets comprising pair work and group work information gap activities. The activities aim to foster interaction among students and provide opportunities for students to encounter a variety of topics, functions and structures in a communicative format. Each activity is accompanied by teachers' notes with suggestions for use and examples of language likely to emerge from the activity.

Hoang, H *Literacy: making the connection between sound and symbol*.

This resource of 18 practice units comprises a teacher's book, a student's book and an audio cassette tape. It aims to assist students to make the connection between most common letters or groups of letters and their corresponding sounds and symbols. The focus is on consonants.

Hoang H, Ng, L and Searle, M *Listening tasks for ESL Learners in Australia*

This workbook and audio cassette contain a wide range of listening activities suitable for beginner and intermediate ESL learners. It is suitable for use in the classroom or as self-access material.

Kam, C *Towards better writing*

This is a guide to basic grammar and sentence construction. It is very useful for those students who want to work with graded grammar exercises to improve their writing skills. It can be used in the classroom or as a self-access resource.

Stowe, C and Farrell P *Numbers and Money* CD- ROM

This resource is an interactive CD-ROM to assist adults to recognise ordinal numbers and Australian currency, and is targeted at students with very limited English (ISLPR 0/0+). It is suitable for classroom use or self-access.