

Impact Case Study

Title: An enquiry into the time taken for L2 literacy learning development with two groups of adult language learners.

Reference: *from RO*

Date project/study commenced: July, 2017

Expected conclusion date: October 2019

Researchers/Collaborators: Jenny Field, Celine Kearney

Name	Role in this project/study	Wintec position	or External Affiliation
Jenny Field	Lead researcher	Senior Academic Staff Member	
Celine Kearney	Collaborative researcher	Acaemic Staff Member	
English Language Partners New Zealand	Colloraborative partners in the research project		External affiliation

Academic impact:

- Planned academic outputs - 3 Journal articles 1 National, 1 International, 1 Sociolinguistic
- Anticipated academic impact - 3 Journal articles 1 National, 1 International, 1 Sociolinguistic
- Academic outputs achieved – Presentation at LESLLA Conference, Aug 28-30., Pittsburgh, USA.
- Contract for Chapter in Springer Publication by 1 February, 2020.
- Potentially a Chapter for “Journal of Second Language Writing,” US. A special edition on Writing with limite literacy learners. Abstract submitted in May, 2019.

Impact beyond academia:

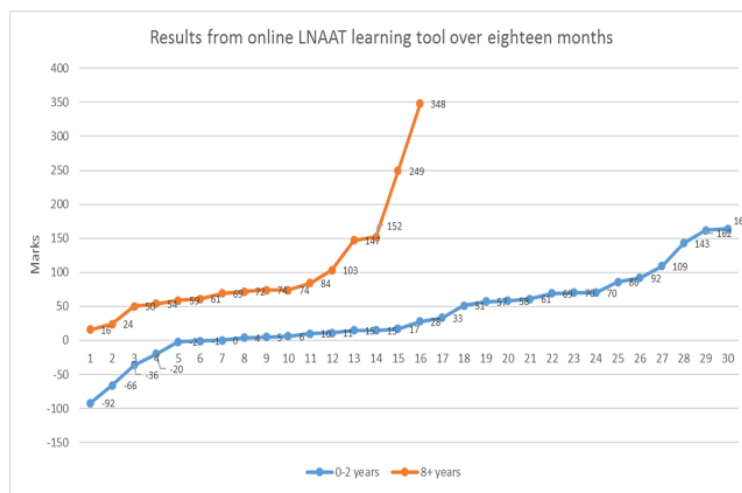
WHY this project/research/study?

- *What is the need that you have identified and seek to respond to?*

- As an experienced teacher of adults from limited literacy backgrounds, I became interested in researching this group. Initially I wanted to enquire into time time taken to become literate in a second language. I wanted to find out what strategies assisted these learners. I then discovered that this particular group is very underresearched.
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- “ A prominent goal of research on second-language acquisition (SLA) is to identify universal cognitive processes involved in acquiring ‘second langauges’, or L2’s. Yet there has been very little SLA research to date on the cognitive proesses of illiterate or low-literacy adult L2 learners. Almost all the adults learners studied in the SLA research have been literate, in the sense that they have been able to dedecode print or embodied text..... Because illiterate and low print literate L2 learners rarely if ever set foot in the social world of academia in which SLA researchers operate, they have been left out of the SLA database p. 1.” Tarone, E., Bigelow, M., Hansen, K.(2009) Literacy and Second Language Oracy.Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tarone et. al estimate there are 774 million adults who lack minimum literacy skills. I wanted to try and make even a small contribution to knowledge about these adult learners.

- What are your quantitative and qualitative indicators of success?
- Quantitative: My instrument was developed by TEC to assess the progress of limited literacy learners. It was thoroughly piloted. I took 4 collections of results with 2 groups and adult learners and compared their learning gain. (One group was 0-2 years of L1 education and the other group have 8+ years of education.) The results showed the the 8+ group had a slightly greater rate of learner gain that the 0-2 group. Both groups did not have a steady rate of increase, but gains and recesses. The mean gain of the 8+ group was much greater than the 0-2 group. (102.3 cf 37.3).



- Qualitative:
 - The pre and post interviews revealed the following.
 - Learners in the early stages of learning L2 benefit greatly by having help from their L1, in fact it is essential
 - A strategy used by learners is cooperative learning. Learners help each other often interpreting for each other.
 - Old ways of learning remain valuable: Repetition, imitation, use of memory, copying
 - New methods are helping; mobile phones and tablets are being used in classes to learn.
 - For former refugees there are many socio cultural economic, factors that constrain attendance at classes. E.g health, housing, family needs, appointments. However, most remain resilient and determined.

1 **WHAT** is your response and **HOW** do you expect it to overcome (or contribute to overcoming) the need identified?

- *What is your theory of change (<https://www.theoryofchange.org>)?*
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- *Describe your engagement with other researchers/institutions; other stakeholders; projected beneficiaries (as per identified need)*
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- I have engaged mainly with English Language Partners New Zealand, who have 7000 learners throughout New Zealand. Many of them are former refugees and migrants. ELP has supported

me by giving me permission to invite their learners to be participants in the research. They also supported the project financially in Year 1. The results of the research will be disseminated among their learners and staff.

Trust Waikato has in 2019 assisted with funds to complete the research; relief time for writing and funds to pay for interpreters in the post interviews (Aug – Oct 2019).

- *Outline your research aim/question:*

I wanted to enquire into the rates of learning between these two groups. The main variable in this group of former adult refugees is that one group has barely any prior education and one group had about 8-9 years, although this may have been interrupted.

Research questions;

- What does the TEC online assessment tool reveal about learners' progress over two years?
- 2. Were there other social or political affordances and / or constraints that contributed to learners' development of literacy in their first language?
- 3. Are there other social or political affordances and / or constraints that are contributing to learners' development of literacy in their second or additional language?
- 4. What strategies do learners consider help them to learn well and gain confidence?

- *Explain your methodology*

- Instruments:

- Quantitative TEC Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool
4 collections Nov2017 - June 2019

- Qualitative Portfolio assessment learners work
Classroom observations
2 collections (3 x 2 weekly)

- Pre and post interviews
(Bilingual interpreters)
July 2017 July – Sept 2019

- Analysis: Coding and categories emerging

- *Describe your results/findings (when completed)*

- Participants cooperate with others and support each other.
- Initially construct meaning through L1
- Actively listen. This may be followed by clarification of meaning with another learner or assistant
- Use repetition and imitation to learn new words and phrases
- Copy (write words and phrases already met). They then often read them (vocally).
- Learn new words as whole words from many meaningful encounters with text
- Use phones and tablets in class for pronunciation or to find the meaning of a word.

The results from the preinterviews were : learners key goal was independence in communication. They wanted to be able to talk with others and go about their daily lives autonomously. The results from the post interviews, not yet completed was that they were somewhat satisfied with their progress in communication over the two years; e.g. they could now answer the phone, answer the door when needed and go to the doctor by themselves without the aid of an interpreter.

- *Describe how these were disseminated and/or applied to the identified need*

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I will present at the international conference LESLLA in Pittsburgh later this month initially and my partner, Celine will present at the ALANZ AALA Conference in Perth in November about social/ economic/ impacts for this group of adult learners. We plan to write articles one of which will be aimed at teachers of these learners. New Zealand plans to receive 500 more refugees from July next year, and we are making some recommendations for teachers which may impact and improve the approaches taken by teachers of these adult learners.

2 WHO benefited?

- Beneficiaries as identified in the initial needs analysis
- Adult learners with very little prior education or an interrupted education will benefit as teachers will be more fully informed about how learners learn the second language, which may be different from those that are print literate. Teachers will allow time for learners to gain the requisite pre-reading skills and phonemic awareness to acquire literacy. There will be a recognition that use of the first language is a key mediating factor in learning the second language. More attention will be given to approaches like 'noticing' and less to formal teaching of phonics until students have understood the links between letters and sounds. To this end I have developed a framework for these learners for teachers based on van Lier's interactive curriculum (1996). The principles of this curriculum are awareness, autonomy, and authenticity.
- See attached.
- Any unintended beneficiaries?
- Adult students' friends and families will benefit as students will not be regarded from a 'deficit' view, but rather as active participants in an interactive, learner centred process of enquiry.
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- *Any unintended 'dis-beneficiaries'?*
No

3 HOW did they benefit?

- *Use PESTLE framework to identify areas of benefit (political, economic, societal, technological, legal, environmental)*
- *And/or identify benefit types, e.g. behaviour change; policy change, leading to implementation, leading to practice change; procedural/process change; economic change; social and/or cultural change; improved outcomes (health, legal, environmental, technological, educational)*

Format: Descriptive List

As the research process is still not completed, it is quite early to extend the areas of benefits of this research and to predict any further benefits. However, here are some possibilities:

Political: A recognition that former refugee adult and illiterate migrant learners are fully functioning autonomous individuals who wish to fully participate and contribute to society and should be realised as such, and not as some perceive, which is that they may be a burden to society.

Training of teacherfacilitators and first language facilitators/ helpers be extended.

Economic: That the resettlement process for former refugees continue to develop, especially in the area of housing.

Societal: That Aotearoa New Zealand continue to explore the benefits of refugee resettlement

Technological: Adult learners benefit from IT technologies available on their devices. Although this is a small market, adult learners would benefit from some contextualised material made locally rather than relying on European/ American sources as they do at present. E.g Digital stories in a New Zealand context. Graded readers with local content are also valuable.

Educational: Traditionally teachers of this group may be teachers from primary schools. A developing awareness about the differences in teaching approach needed for these preliterate adults and young children with a well developed working vocabulary, may be a good starting point in raising awareness to more fully meet the needs of these learners.

and **HOW** did your project/research bring this about?

- *Reflect on your theory of change (step 2) and identify the causative links*
- *Reflect on your success indicators (step 1) and the extent to which these have been achieved*
- *Were there any unexpected benefits (positive outcomes)?*
- *Were there any unexpected dis-benefits (negative outcomes)?*

Format: Narrative

The changes that I have described are all potential changes: However English Language Partners, a national organisation has promoted this research and the results will be disseminated across the twenty plus centres in New Zealand and possibly at their next annual training sessions.

I expect there will be uptake from teachers and particularly more attention given to the use of first language support in the classroom. English Language Partners have used L1 since 2008 and are early adopters of this means of support.

Although its very early days in my research, I think there is enough evidence to show that more research is needed about effective teaching of this growing group of adult learners, and that they now need to be included in the Second Language Teaching database.

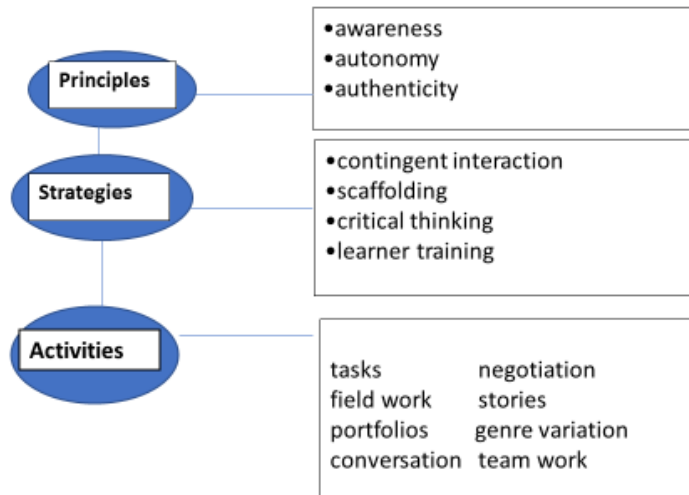
4 **WHERE** is the evidence?

I have attached my suggested framework for teachers when teaching this group of adult learners

It is adapted from van Liers interactive approach. (1996)

Van Lier, L. (1996) *Interaction in the Language Curriculum: Awareness, Autonomy and Authenticity*. London: Routledge.

Suggested framework for teaching adults with limited L1 background education; adapted from Van Lier (1996)



Adapted from Curriculum Design (Van Lier, 1996, p. 189).

Activities

Tasks: Based on real experiences, (Language Experience Method) Learners dictate, T. writes. Noticing phonemic aspects of text then read text together. Explicit teaching of sound-letter connections may follow later. Use pictures to build meaning. Discuss, question, agree. Learners read own stories which are meaningful. Use repetition and patterns to build oral language. Use new language outside classroom. Use oral platform to build tasks; brainstorm, build vocabulary orally. Recycle and revisit tasks in the next lesson.

Fieldwork: Visits in community, visitors to classroom. Interaction with native speakers. Surveys to find out more about community. Discuss and record, and analyze findings.

Portfolios: Collection of work for own portfolio to read at home. Collection of naturally occurring evidence for assessment (if required).

Negotiation: Negotiation of syllabus, goals and outputs, methods, evaluations. Transparency with learners

Genre variation: Start with oral discussion then move to written e.g. Forms, short recounts and descriptions.

Conversation: Simple and often. Pairs and groups. Every lesson starts with conversation, leading to enquiry. May use phones to record conversations.

Stories: Tell stories from own culture, and current experiences; share them, record them on phones or write them. Those with an oral tradition are likely to enjoy hearing and telling stories

Team work: Inclusive practices in class so that learners feel welcomed. Recognition and praise. Feelings of success.

- E.g.
 - *Independent external evaluation report or audit*
 - *Commercialisation, patents, licencing agreements etc. and spin-offs*
 - *User uptake*
 - *Repeat collaborations with same researchers/institutions and end users*
 - *End user and or stakeholder testimony*
 - *Formal media reports*
 - *Social media content and metrics*
 - *Records of change in policy and practice related to the research/project*
 - *Citations in policy, strategic or legislative public discussion*
 - *Invitations to contribute to policy and strategy processes, or take up advisory roles*

Format: Maintain your own file of all evidence and submit a copy to the RO at least annually and at the conclusion of the project and case study