

Aotearoa 2020: factors affecting language development opportunities for limited literacy learners.

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Overview

- ▶ Context and aims
- ▶ Underpinning literatures: New Zealand research; a Transdisciplinary focus on language acquisition literacy, Mental health
- ▶ The wider project and this aspect of it: methodology, themes, discussion
- ▶ Implications and the next step.
- ▶ References

Context: Background

- ▶ Aotearoa will welcome 1,500 people of refugee backgrounds in July 2020: double the 750 people who have been offered a home in New Zealand each year for the past nearly 30 years.
- ▶ Currently there are eight reception centres, Auckland region, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington region, Nelson, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill.
- ▶ Six new settlement centres are being developed: Whanganui, Levin, Masterton, Blenheim, Ashburton and Timaru.
- ▶ Increased need for language development opportunities in different areas of the country.

This inquiry - part of a larger inquiry aims to:

- ▶ listen to the voices of learners', tutors' and our own experiences as teachers and researchers
- ▶ glean insights that might inform useful pedagogy for teachers and refugee background learners,
- ▶ contribute to new programmes which will need to be set up to support the language development of double the number of individuals with refugee backgrounds each year.

The importance of English language skills

- ▶ Complementary New Zealand studies, which surveyed adult immigrants and refugees, English language providers and TESOL professionals, found that *English language skills were either the key, or one of the main keys to successful settlement*
- ▶ (Watts, White & Trlin, 2001).
- ▶ Respondents believed English skills were needed, among other reasons:
 - ▶ for finding a job;
 - ▶ participating in New Zealand life
 - ▶ being accepted by Kiwis,
 - ▶ making friends,
 - ▶ finding somewhere to live,
 - ▶ for further education.
- ▶ This has not changed in the intervening years.

Language development opportunities

- ▶ A ten week programme at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre in Auckland
- ▶ Government institutions: Institutes of Technology
- ▶ English Language Partners: community classes and home tutor scheme
- ▶ (Add learners stats from ELP)
- ▶ Private educational businesses
- ▶ Community organisations: including those focused on the needs of women and children, such as Sharma in which women from varying countries provide language classes amongst other services.
- ▶ Religious institutions: mosques, and temples

Looking to previous experience from teachers' perspectives

- ▶ Shamem, McDermott, Blake & Carryer (2002)
- ▶ report on literacy classes in Auckland, based in government institutions and related to the ESOL Home Tutor Service, found that those learners who had the assistance of bi-lingual tutors (BLT) demonstrated better results in learning, compared with those taught only by English-speaking tutors. Tutors working with BLT valued them for a range of reasons.
- ▶ The bi-lingual tutors themselves articulated challenges they faced including: constant influxes of new learners, large and multi-level classes, coping with different language groups or individuals, and differences in values amongst ethnic groups within the class.

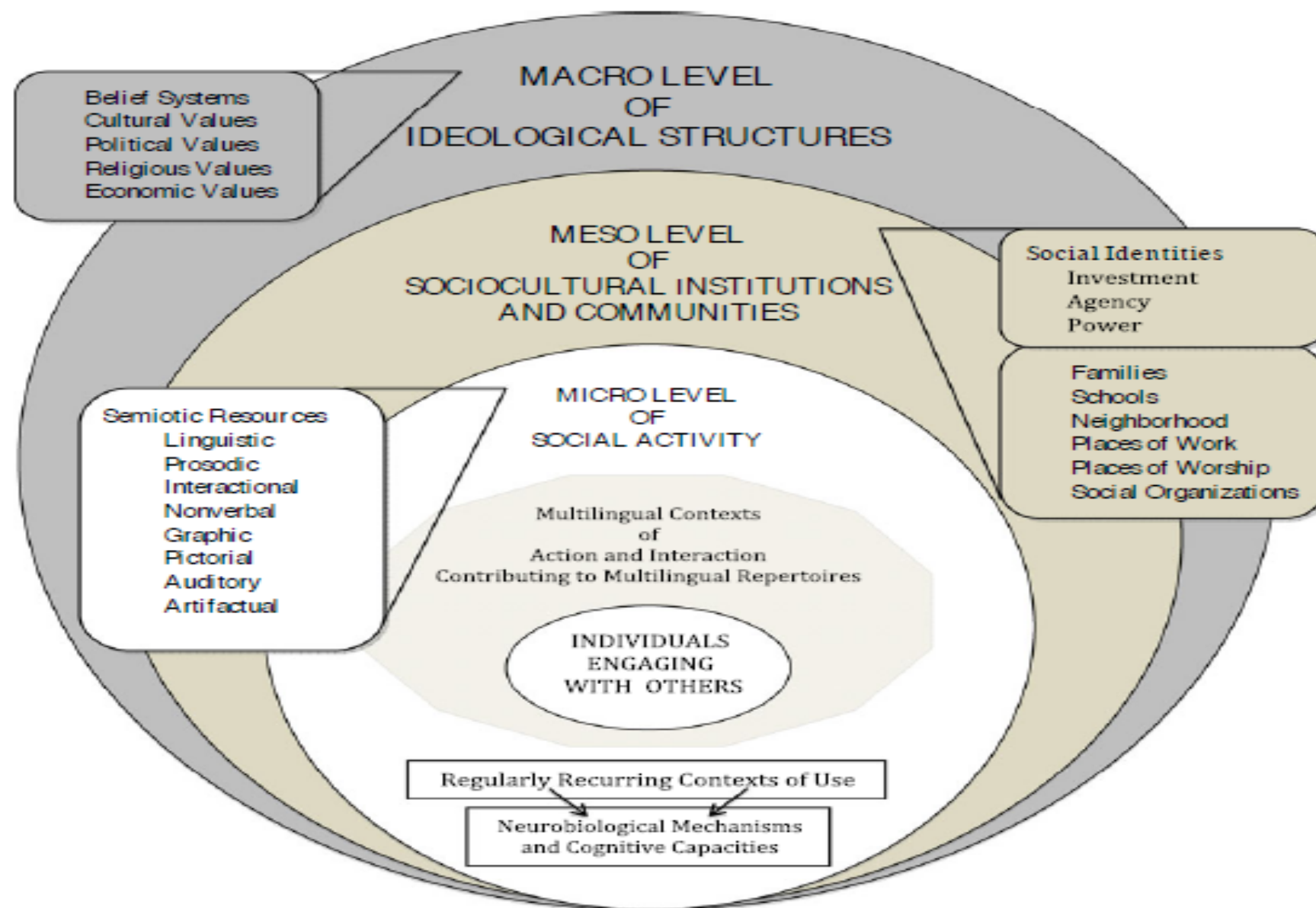
Strategies of teachers

- ▶ Benseman's (2012) suggested responses
- ▶ teaching strategies and skills,
- ▶ teacher qualities,
- ▶ teacher development
- ▶ in the context of interpersonal relationship for tutors to nurture self-efficacy through constant praise of all achievements, showing respect for learners' age, religion and culture.
- ▶ Being aware that learners' previous trauma can be played out in the classroom in the form of constant headaches, difficulties in concentration on tasks and ongoing health issues
- ▶ Issues outside the classroom were also addressed including the need for pastoral care in relation to significant issues.
- ▶ (p. 101).

A Transdisciplinary Approach

- ▶ The Douglas Fir Group (2016) present a diagrammatic representation of the multi-faceted nature of language teaching and learning.
- ▶ Language learning is a complex, ongoing, multifaceted phenomenon involving a dynamic and variable interplay among a range of individual neurobiological and cognitive capacities, and learners' diverse experiences in their multi-lingual worlds.
- ▶ There are three inter-related levels of social activity:
 - ▶ the micro level of social action and interaction;
 - ▶ the meso level of social institutions and communities
 - ▶ the macro level of ideological structures (p.36).
 - ▶

FIGURE 1
The Multifaceted Nature of Language Learning and Teaching



Transdisciplinary focus

- ▶ Important to be aware that moving from the micro-level to the meso level, is *the constitutive*, if not *causative* role of social, economic, cultural and political conditions, present across contexts of interactions, social institutions and communities.
- ▶
- ▶ On the macro level of ideology, the frame we wish to focus on is related to language and language acquisition
- ▶ In our context of language development
- ▶ This transdisciplinary focus challenges us as teachers and researchers to broaden our understanding of language learning and teaching, sidestep theoretical ‘turf boundaries’ (p.38)
- ▶ To better serve our learners language development

Underpinning literatures

- ▶ **Literacy** and instruction mediate language learning so these two need to be understood as influences on the learning of the new language. (Douglas Fir Group)
- ▶ Alphabetic print literacy shapes the way oral second languages are processed and learned
- ▶ (Tarone, Bigelow & Hanson 2009, p.30).
- ▶ There is a gap in research done with learners who are not alphabetically literate. The wider project addresses this.
- ▶ **Mental Health**
- ▶ Miriam George (2010)
- ▶ Need to understand individual backgrounds
- ▶ Trauma in migration or forced migration.
- ▶ Ainslie, Tummala-Narra, Harlem, Barbanel & Ruth (2013)

The Research Project (2017-2019)

Jenny's project: supported by Trust Waikato

- ▶ This paper is part of a larger inquiry into the time taken for L2 Literacy learning development: addressing the question *'Do language learners with little nor no alphabetic literacy in their first language take considerably longer to become literate in their additional language than those who are literate in their first language?'*
- ▶ The learner group are adults, with refugee backgrounds, who have been in Aotearoa for up to six years. Two groups: one 0-2 years education, the other up to 8 years.

- ▶ *Methodology : Mixed Methods*

- ▶ Quantitative: two years capturing compulsory TEU assessment data, measuring learning gains.

Qualitative: Pre and Post course interviews with assistance of qualified translators; classroom observations; analysing portfolios of written work.

Using thematic analysis

This inquiry ‘Aotearoa 2020’: explores constraints in learning

- ▶ Using a Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2014)
- ▶ 60 learners, adults, aged late 20’s to 70, in Aotearoa for up to 6 years.
- ▶ With refugee and migrant backgrounds, and predominantly limited literacy background.
- ▶ In classes in a government tertiary institution and community based classes.
- ▶ Pre-course interviews, involving a bilingual translator
- ▶ Asked about schooling in country of origin and in New Zealand;
- ▶ Life goals
- ▶ *Progress and constraints* in their English language learning.
- ▶ There were 19 clear expressions of *constraint* which we coded initially with single words:
- ▶ health, worry, time, remembering, money, classroom, family, electronic devices, learning issues.

Conceptual categories: themes

▶ *1. Challenges related to learners' physical health, children's health*

- ▶ If I am well I am learning well. Sometimes I am not well. I was in a lot of pain. I had an X-ray for my stomach and my back.
- ▶ I come every day but I have two children and if they are sick I can't come

▶ *2. Issues around responsibilities for family members and dependence on children for assistance*

- ▶ I rely on my sons for everything. I want to be independent. If my sons are not there, I can't go out like go to the doctor.



Themes 2

▶ **3. Challenges to learning: time, concentration, remembering, money**

▶ It's hard to listen. I can't remember very well. In one ear and out the other. I am gradually catching up. It's not fast. I like You Tube it helps me to listen. We have this at school but I can't afford the internet at home.

▶ **4. Challenges to mental health and peace of mind**

▶ My mind is not settled. My mind is in _____. I think about my children and how they doing. During the whole of my life I have been in war. I am thinking about my daughters. When they go out the door I don't know if they will come back. My family who have been killed. My sister and my brother are lost. We don't know where he is. Until today I am still waiting.

Themes 3

- ▶ 5. *Issues relating to the classroom*
- ▶ We don't have a lot of support. The classroom is big. When the teacher is with Profile 1 we are by ourselves so we need a bit more help.
- ▶

Discussion

- ▶ Language competencies are complex, dynamic and holistic; variability and change are at the heart of language learning.
- ▶ “No two people, even those in the same classroom will experience exactly the same social contexts of language use or resolve them in exactly the same way”
- ▶ Individuals will have different learner histories across differently situated contexts which will create difference in learning trajectories
- ▶ (Douglas Fir Group p. 30).

Implications for teaching

- ▶ Keep language content grounded in learners' current lives. Co-construct learning texts.
 - ▶ Facilitate co-operative learning through a shared languages/bi-lingual tutors
 - ▶ Scaffold extensively, recycle and repeat.
 - ▶ Nurture self-efficacy through constant praise (Benson 2012)
 - ▶ Respect learners, their cultures and histories
 - ▶ Learning rates will vary amongst learners
 - ▶ Learning rates may be influenced by post traumatic stress.
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- ▶ Teachers will need professional development for this learner group
 - ▶ Teachers would benefit from reflecting on their own social identity/s (professional and personal) and how this influences their teaching

Grounded Theory: What is not said?

- ▶ A constructivist understanding of Grounded Theory development, requires that we as researchers need to acknowledge, that we hold prior ideas and skills and these need to be explicitly acknowledged.
- ▶ Our assumptions - about what is not said - would be influenced by our personal and professional experiences: and well-meaning products of white privilege

Positives

- ▶ **Home tutors**
- ▶ I had a home tutor before he was coming for one month. I couldn't understand him very well. So he came with another learner and the three of us learned together
- ▶ **Getting a drivers licence – this enables learners in broader areas of life**
- ▶ I got my licence and have driven to Ruapehu with my family. I learned to drive in NZ and took my family to Wellington in the holidays. The six children are all at school, Intermediate and 3 at Primary. A daughter is at Girls high School.

Positives 2

- ▶ *Class mates help - they can understand the learner's language*
- ▶ Holding back learning? I am not having any problems. If we have a problem they will explain. Debora is my teacher and she's very good. I can speak to most of the Afghan learners and they can understand Farsi.
- ▶
- ▶ *Personal agency*
- ▶ I am sick, but I still come because if I sit at home nothing will change.

Still to come

- ▶ I plan to interview 5 teachers of students of this learner background
 - ▶ These colleagues come from different cultural backgrounds
 - ▶ I will analyse code and develop themes from their experiences and suggestions for teaching strategies
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- ▶ Drawing on both learners' and teachers experiences to make suggestions for the new language development programmes that will be developed in six new reception centres around Aotearoa.

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- ▶ service providers need sensitivity to social, political and historical variables associated with each individual, and enhances awareness of clients' true experience.

- ▶ George (2010)

- ▶ Contemporary psychoanalytic views of immigration, underscored the need for individuals to have opportunities to find ways to cope with stress rooted in interpersonal and collective trauma. They also point out that there are often generational issues of intergenerational conflicts within immigrant families (Ainslie, Tummala-Narra, Harlem, Barbanel & Ruth 2013 (p. 675).

Life and experience

- ▶ Learners acquire a dynamic and malleable repertoire of resources from their life-world experience.
- ▶ ‘Life and experience are intertwined beyond referential messages and symbolic expression: Language is experience: “embodied, situated enactments of language in situ articulate with thinking, feeling, consciousness, and the ‘incessant emergence’ of existence.” Ochs (2012, p.152) cited in The Douglas Fir Group p.37)