

Teaching English
ELT Research Papers

Beyond resilience: Facilitating learning and well-being in the refugee language classroom

Aleks Palanac, Sarah Hunt, Pam Rogerson-Revell,
Wasył Cajkler and Gabi Witthaus

In collaboration with



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Wasył Cajkler and Gabi Witthaus**

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About the authors

Wasył Cajkler is Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Leicester. He has a history of engagement in teacher development initiatives in initial and continuing teacher education. In recent years, he has led research projects using lesson study in initial teacher education. Lesson study was used as a vehicle for the exploration of teacher practice in the refugee sanctuary classes featured in this report.

Sarah Hunt is a PhD. candidate at the University of Leicester, Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour. Sarah's research area is on the mental health and well-being among refugee and asylum-seekers in the UK post-migratory context. Sarah's work focusses on UK service response to mental health needs, the impact of post-migratory risk factors to mental health and well-being and the design of refugee trauma-informed interventions across variable service settings (education; health; voluntary sectors).

Aleks Palanac is Head of Sanctuary at the Centre for International Training and Education, University of Leicester. She has been heavily involved in developing its University of Sanctuary initiative, particularly by widening participation to HE for refugee-background students through English language provision and has recently extended this work to a UK-wide scheme – RefugEAP. Her research develops an approach to trauma-informed ELT for refugees, a topic on which she has written and presented widely.

Pamela Rogerson-Revell is Professor of Applied Linguistics and TESOL in the School of Education, University of Leicester. She has been involved in many funded ELT projects both nationally and internationally, including several focusing on widening participation through online and distance learning. Her research interests include phonology and pronunciation teaching; English as an International Language (EIL) and Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL).

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how language teachers contribute positively to the Psychological Well-Being (PWB) and educational outcomes of refugee-background students (RBSs) in a University Sanctuary setting, drawing on the fields of TESOL, refugee studies, trauma psychology and positive psychology.

Our project explored the experiences and perceptions of a group of refugee-background students, including intensive case studies of six teachers and six students. This mixed methods research project was conducted in three phases: Phase 1 constituted an initial survey of 41 refugee-background students; in Phase 2, teachers engaged in trauma training and lesson study training before planning, delivering and evaluating a research lesson with RBSs; in Phase 3, six case students were interviewed, and the teachers participated in a focus group discussion. Several data sets were collected: questionnaire data, recordings of preparation and evaluation meetings, interviews with students, observations of classroom practice and a final tutor focus group meeting.

This study found indications that RBSs' experiences of learning English can be linked to improvements both in levels of English and PWB and that the relationship between language learning and PWB appears to be complex and mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, many examples of good classroom practice as well as wider institutional strategies were identified as critical to facilitating both language learning and refugee PWB. Our study also found that teachers benefitted significantly from professional development opportunities focusing on the promotion of RBSs' PWB and that trauma training and lesson study were effective vehicles for teacher analysis of students' classroom responses.

The principal condition for the success of refugee students was making them feel valued and unthreatened. This required a climate characterised by supportive collaborative interaction among students, positive mutual regard, and teachers being responsive to individual students' attributes and experiences. These are conditions which are likely to help all students to flourish.



FACE

HEAD

HEART

RATIONALITY

MY WORK

SOUL

ANALYSIS
DATA

List of abbreviations

CITE – Centre for International Training and Education (at the University of Leicester)

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

EAP – English for Academic Purposes

ELT – English Language Teaching

ELTU – English Language Teaching Unit (part of the Centre for International Training and Education at the University of Leicester)

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

ESP – English for Specific Purposes

F2F – Face to Face

FLA – Foreign Language Anxiety

HE – Higher Education

HEI – Higher Education Institution

LCofS – Leicester City of Sanctuary

LS – Lesson Study

PSP – Pre-sessional Programme

PWB-PTCQ – Psychological Well-Being – Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (Joseph et al, 2012)

PTG – Post-Traumatic Growth

PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PWB – Psychological Well-Being

RBS – Refugee-Background Student

RefuAid – a charity supporting refugee-background students' access to educational opportunities

RQ – Research Question

S²R Model – Strategic Self-Regulation Model of Language Learning (Oxford, 2011)

TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (i.e. the UN Refugee Agency)

UoL – University of Leicester

UoS – University of Sanctuary or Universities of Sanctuary

A note about terminology

This report will generally employ the term “refugee-background student” (RBS), as used by researchers such as Lambrechts (2020), to refer to current or aspiring university students who have a personal history of forced migration. This term, as used in this report, includes people seeking asylum or granted refugee status, those granted Humanitarian Protection or Limited or Discretionary Leave to Remain as a result of an asylum claim, and any other persons who have experienced forced migration, irrespective of their current UK immigration status.

A note about names

All students' names used in this report are pseudonyms to protect their identities.

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1

Introduction

The challenge

By the end of 2021, there were almost 90 million people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced (UNHCR, 2022) because of conflict and persecution in what is termed the global 'refugee crisis'. Refugees experience prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at much higher rates than non-refugee populations. Trauma and its residual symptoms can significantly impact on learning, including language learning, which creates a unique set of challenges for both refugee learners of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and educators who find themselves 'on the front line of coping with the outcomes of displacement' (British Council, 2018:60).

Despite the fact that many refugees around the world wish to enter higher education (HE), only 6% currently have access, as compared with 40% of non-refugees (UNHCR, 2023). This low figure is partly explained by the external barriers that many refugees face when attempting to access HE, including prohibitive financial costs, lack of clear and consistent information, limited guidance about the host countries' education systems and pathways, lack of recognition or down-grading of previous qualifications and, most significantly, language proficiency, which Stevenson & Baker (2018) have identified as the key challenge for refugees wishing to access HE. It has been suggested that the inter-connectedness and cumulative nature of these barriers may lead to what can be described as 'super-disadvantage' for refugee background students (RBSs) wishing to access HE (Lambrechts, 2020:803).

While it is possible, in the UK (United Kingdom), for eligible asylum seekers and refugees to attend free ESOL classes by obtaining funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes are not funded by the government, indicating a crucial gap in language provision for refugees wishing to study in a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) (Stevenson & Baker, 2018).

A learning context currently becoming more accessible to RBSs is the UK university-based language centre, often as part of Universities of Sanctuary (UoS) initiatives. Our research was conducted in one such centre, the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU), within the Centre for International Training and Education (CITE) at the University of Leicester. Since the autumn of 2015, the ELTU has worked in partnership with local charity, Leicester City of Sanctuary (LCofS), to provide free non-formal ESOL classes for local RBSs. Since autumn 2017, Leicester University of Sanctuary has extended its offer to include scholarships for eligible RBSs to attend the University's pre-sessional academic English programme. In conjunction with wrap-around practical and pastoral support, working closely with a variety of local and national partners, and the provision of sanctuary scholarships for a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, this provision has been termed a concrete 'zero to highest' progression opportunity.

Aims of the study

While language classes 'are increasingly seen by many agencies as a potential space in which to deliver psychosocial support alongside or embedded in formal language learning' (British Council, 2018:60), this prospect poses many practical and pedagogical challenges to teachers, especially as, for students of any background, learning a second language is often 'a traumatic experience' (Clarke, 1976:377), and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a well-documented source of interference in language learning (Zheng, 2008). For adult RBSs, these common anxieties may be intensified, yet research into how language classes effectively facilitate learning while incorporating psychosocial support to secure well-being is currently sparse.

Although some measures had been implemented by the Leicester UoS' ELT (English Language Teaching) tutors, such as providing trauma training sessions for tutors and additional pastoral support, a concern was expressed that teachers needed a clearer understanding of RBSs' needs and what might be done to best support them holistically. This was one of the principal concerns that motivated this research project. Consequently, our main aim was to explore how HE language teachers in a University Sanctuary setting contribute positively to the linguistic, social, psychological and educational outcomes of refugee students. Thus, the project's objectives were to:

- gain an in-depth understanding of current refugee-background language learners' experiences in a University of Sanctuary setting.
- gain an in-depth understanding of current language teachers' experiences of working with refugees in the sanctuary setting.
- recommend strategies and resources to support language teachers to optimise the psycho-social and linguistic experience of their refugee learners.
- contribute to language teacher development by documenting the teaching skills, training and resources needed to work successfully with sanctuary students.
- disseminate project findings in and beyond the University, to contribute to good practice in terms of ELT provision for RBSs in HE.

As students with forced migration backgrounds take increasing advantage of language learning opportunities in HEIs, it is essential that the education institutions and their language teachers deepen their understanding of the nature and complexity of students' needs. Addressing these has implications for practice both inside and outside the language classroom. Findings will be used to inform various needs-led support strategies which more effectively support language teachers to mitigate the effects of refugees' trauma, while helping them to improve their language learning, achieve resilience and enhance their sense of well-being in a positive mind-set.

The project was cross-disciplinary in nature, bringing together insights from applied linguistics and TESOL, refugee studies, trauma psychology, education, and the emerging field of positive psychology, which addresses human difficulties from the standpoint of human strengths rather than weaknesses.

Feedback

at the weekend I was sleeping all morning



I had really good I -i at the weekend.



2

Literature review

RBSs' needs in the language classroom

Whilst providing English language learning to RBSs wishing to access university is an important step forward, these students' distinctive needs can make a teacher's task more challenging and complex than usual (Phillimore, Ergun, Goodson and Hennessy, 2007:17). Fortunately, there is now a small body of literature documenting specific needs and challenges pertaining to RBSs, and how these might present in the language classroom. For example, several practical needs have been identified (Hann, Willott, Graham-Brown, Roden and Tremayne, 2021), which RBSs commonly experience and which have a detrimental impact on their ESOL learning. These needs are complex, and include financial, socio-familial, emotional, academic and psychological difficulties. Financial hardship can mean that even where course fees are waived, RBSs still experience difficulties covering extraneous costs for resources, travel, examination fees and basic daily needs. Absence of social and familial support networks often lead to practical repercussions such as lack of childcare which disproportionately affects the opportunities of female learners (Phillimore et al., 2007). Disruption to learning and/or attendance may also result from having to balance language learning with other pressing needs, such as trying to secure adequate shelter.

The areas outlined above are not exhaustive but illustrate some of the common challenges faced by RBSs and their teachers. In addition to these situational stressors, many refugees have also experienced traumatic events, and so tend to have far greater mental health needs than the general population, including higher incidences of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Fazel et al, 2005, in Sen, 2016) This leaves many ESOL teachers feeling unable to support them adequately in the classroom (Capstick and Delaney, 2016).

Impact of trauma on language learning

Trauma has been shown to have an effect on various parts of the brain, including the medial prefrontal cortex by negatively impacting an individual's ability to think rationally, the hippocampus by impairing memory and reducing the ability to differentiate between past and present and the amygdala by increasing fear responses (van der Kolk, 2014). It has been suggested that this can lead to students exhibiting avoidance behaviours (e.g. absences or lateness), poor concentration and memory, extreme emotional reactions to discussions, over-sharing of traumatic stories, reluctance to take risks and difficulties interacting with others (Kerka, 2002). Such effects have been found to 'interfere with many areas of functioning, including all aspects of education [and] learning a new language' (British Council, 2018:56). However, research also supports the hypothesis that while PTSD has a direct detrimental effect on refugee language learning this can be mediated by effective ESOL approaches (Furneaux, 2018:66).

Classroom strategies for mitigating the impact of trauma

As noted above, there has been relatively little comprehensive research conducted into which strategies might be implemented in the language classroom when working with adult refugees to mitigate the effects of trauma. However, a recent synthesis of insights from the fields of ELT, refugee studies, trauma psychology and positive psychology by Palanac (2019) points to the following groupings as a starting point to inform pedagogy for RBS classes.

Helping to reduce post-migration stressors

RBSs typically face multiple complex challenges and stressors in their daily lives, which can have a negative impact on their learning and well-being. The literature suggests that teachers can support by reassuring students, showing understanding and making reasonable adjustments, such as by being flexible with deadlines (Horsman, 2004). Language classes also serve a useful purpose in teaching students functional language to deal with challenges in their daily lives, such as learning phrases or vocabulary to use when dealing with a solicitor (Simpson, 2019, in Hann et al., 2021). It is also important for teachers to recognise the limits of their own ability to help in different situations and to refer students on to relevant local/national agencies and networks for further support (Isserlis, 2000).

Creating a safe space

The literature on trauma symptom mitigation also emphasises the importance of creating a 'safe space' in which an individual can feel confident that they will experience no unpleasant surprises or threats to self, and over which they might exert some measure of control.

Predictability, control and agency

A space can be regarded as 'safe' in both physical and psycho-social terms. A physical safe space is characterised by being well lit, with easily accessible exits and no physical hazards, facilitating a sense of agency in students (Finn, 2010). In terms of a psycho-socially safe space, a sense of agency and mutual respect can be facilitated by setting clear expectations, structures and routines (Furneaux, 2018), which might include setting clear role boundaries (Horsman, 2004) and ground rules such as when it might be permissible to opt out of an activity and following principles such as not 'outing' an RBS as being a refugee to other students in the class.

It has been suggested that including students in the development of ground rules might further increase their sense of agency (Horsman, 2004). Another recommendation is to tailor the course to be meaningful to students by making it relevant to daily contexts of language use (Finn, 2010), making time and space in class for students to discuss daily struggles (Isserlis, 2000) and giving them a chance to choose course materials and goals (Horsman, 2004). However, Horsman (2004) cautions that activities such as goal setting may be extremely difficult for trauma survivors, raising control issues for some, and van der Kolk (2014) offers a further explanation that trauma can block the imagination, making it difficult to visualise the future.

Not forcing personalisation

Another important means of creating a safe space in the language classroom relates to how personalisation is managed. Personalisation in ELT has been defined by Thornbury (2006) as the use of language to talk about 'knowledge, experience and feelings', and he outlines how this methodology, popularised by the influence of humanistic approaches to language learning, has been widely used by teachers to render language items more meaningful, memorable and motivating. However, Isserlis (2000) claims that, despite the advantages and prevalence of this methodology in ELT, requiring students to talk about themselves in class can risk re-triggering trauma and anxiety, particularly in activities such as 'getting to know you' tasks which require students to divulge personal information to others before they have had a chance to learn to feel comfortable with each other. Isserlis therefore suggests reassuring students that they need not share any information about themselves that they do not feel comfortable sharing.

Fostering strong relationships

While relationship-building has been an important tenet of ELT pedagogies for many years, it has also been found to contribute to students feeling safe in their social environment, which resonates strongly with trauma-informed pedagogy. A recommended trauma-informed strategy is to help students feel valued as individuals by greeting them by name when they enter the classroom (van der Kolk, 2014). Language learners also need to feel comfortable enough to take risks and make mistakes in class. Therefore, reassuring them that mistakes are a normal part of language learning and using sensitive error correction strategies can be very helpful (Stone, 1995).

Reducing trauma symptoms

Teacher awareness of what strategies to use in the event of a student experiencing a flashback or panic attack in class has been a focus in a number of studies, including the use of trauma de-escalation procedures (UNHCR, 2017) to reorientate individuals slowly to their surroundings.

Another difficulty commonly experienced by trauma survivors is the tendency to view the world in terms of extremes, which can make it difficult for them to recognise incremental progress (Horsman, 2004). One way of tackling this is to scaffold activities to maximise the chances of success, and to set small, regular goals and progress checks (Horsman, 2004), incorporating opportunities to reflect on achievements and link these to their larger goals.

Psychological Well-Being (PWB) and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG)

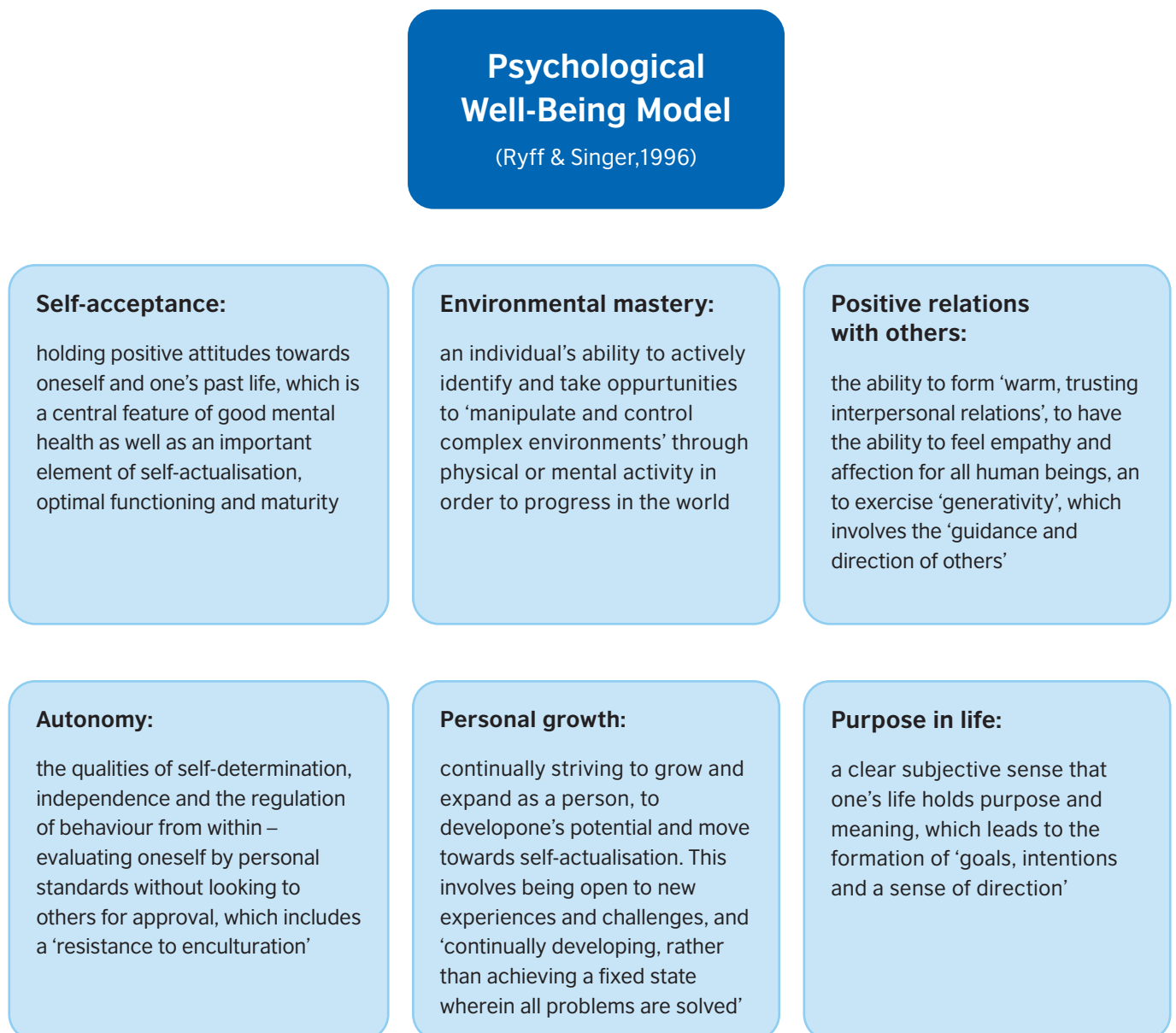
A move has recently been made, through the British Council's Language for Resilience reports (e.g. Capstick & Delaney, 2016), to incorporate the concept of resilience, from the field of positive psychology, into discussions about trauma-informed pedagogy in the language classroom. This project has initiated a timely debate about how best to mitigate the negative effects of trauma and displacement through the use of language as a means of increasing the resilience not only of individuals but also communities and institutions (Capstick & Delaney, 2016:5).

However, it has been suggested that the concept of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) is also of relevance here (Palanac, 2019). PTG refers to the way in which

survivors of trauma develop and grow beyond their pre-crisis level of functioning, in contrast to resilience, which is characterised by a return to their baseline level of functioning. Both constructs relate to the concept of Psychological Well-Being (PWB).

The most comprehensive, multi-dimensional model for describing PWB is proposed by Ryff and Singer (1996). This model has been influential in studies of refugee psychological experiences, war-related trauma and PTG. It draws on different domains of psychology, including positive psychological functioning and life-span development perspectives to develop six core dimensions of PWB, outlined in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Ryff & Singer's (1996) model of Psychological Well-Being



Because well-being across these six dimensions has been found to be significantly reduced through exposure to traumatic events (such as many typically encountered during forced migration), this is a useful framework for this present study, which aims to determine whether language learning provision can in some way contribute to increases in PWB in these six areas.

Research questions

Important as it is to develop strategies to help students tackle the effects of trauma and displacement, we propose that there is great value in broadening the focus beyond resilience as a psychological construct and encompassing other facets of PWB. While some attempts have been made to develop trauma-informed ELT pedagogy for refugees, by incorporating strategies for fostering PTG with those designed to mitigate the effects of trauma (Palanac, 2019), there is a need for more focused research into the specifics of what would constitute best practice in trauma-informed ELT for RBSs in specific contexts, incorporating a focus on PTG and other aspects of PWB. Therefore, the research questions for the project were:

- 1 Can English language provision facilitate Psychological Well-Being in a University of Sanctuary setting, and, if so, in what ways?
- 2 What skills, strategies and resources do language teachers need in order to optimise the psycho-social and linguistic experience of their refugee learners?
- 3 In relation to question 2, what constitutes good practice in ELT provision for refugees in a University of Sanctuary context, both at present and in the future?

Our aim in this study was to provide an understanding of how English Language provision in a University of Sanctuary setting can positively contribute to the educational, social and psychological growth and well-being of refugee-background students.

*Do you mind if
I ask you ...?*

would you like to ...?

3

Methodology

Research approach

Our study drew upon theoretical frameworks from psychology and pedagogic frameworks from education and TESOL (lesson study) and, while it aims to contribute to these fields, the intention was also to gather data to inform pedagogic practice when working with RBSs.

The study adopted a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative data collection through interviews, focus groups and classroom observations with quantitative data from questionnaires in order to facilitate triangulation and enhance validity and reliability. It also incorporated a professional development element where participating teachers received training in a) recognising and dealing with trauma in RBSs and b) using the 'lesson study' teacher development framework.

Study participants and context

The participants for the study were refugee language students and language teachers at the University of Leicester's English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU), with a total of 41 students participating in Phase 1 of the study, and six students and six teachers participating in Phases 2 and 3, including a teacher who is also a member of the research team. The students participating in Phase 1 varied in terms of gender, age, country of origin, immigration status and level of previous education. They were enrolled in a range of classes; some were specific Leicester City of Sanctuary classes (informal provision aimed mainly at RBSs) and others (e.g. formal pre-sessional academic English classes) had a mixture of students, with a minority of refugees. The information from the 41 completed questionnaires was used to inform the selection of 6 case students for Phases 2 and 3 of the research study, to provide a range of demographic profiles and scores. The six students were in classes taught by one of our teacher-participants, who were all qualified, experienced teachers and had been teaching RBSs for a range of one to several years.

Data collection

The various phases of the study took place over a period of nine months from January to September 2020.

Phase 1

The initial phase involved the design, piloting, translation and distribution of a three-part questionnaire to RBSs. 'Part 1: About You' was designed to gather information about the students' backgrounds (e.g. gender, immigration status, courses attended). 'Part 2: In Your English Class' aimed to gather information about RBSs' experiences and feelings in their English classes and was informed by the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire 5 Part IV and Oxford's (2011) Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model of Language Learning, which provides language learners with a facilitative framework of strategies and meta-strategies in the cognitive, affective and sociocultural-interactive dimensions. For Part 3: 'How You Feel About Yourself Now', we asked RBSs to self-report any changes in their levels of functioning and PWB since leaving their home country via a slightly adapted version of Joseph et al's (2012) Psychological Well-Being – Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB-PTCQ). This tool is based on Ryff and Singer's (1996) six dimensions of PWB.

Phase 2

This phase involved the planning, delivery and evaluation of the lesson study research lessons, including preparation through workshops on trauma training and the lesson study pedagogic approach.

Trauma training workshops

An important element of the study was the inclusion of trauma training for the teachers before the lesson study phase. All participating tutors attended a session entitled 'Working with Trauma in the Refugee Language Classroom' led by the teacher/researcher. This session, based on Palanac (2019), outlined the common causes and symptoms of trauma in RBSs, how it might present in the language classroom, and strategies that language teachers might use for mitigating this and for facilitating post-traumatic growth.

Lesson Study

In this project, lesson study was used as a mechanism for planning, observing and reflecting on three 'research lessons'. The lesson study phase involved the six teachers attending two workshops to introduce them to the process, which usually involves a group of teachers working together to plan, teach and evaluate one or more 'research lessons'. This idea has been in use in Japan for many decades and recently adapted in other countries. For practical reasons, variations were necessary in our study; the 'research lessons' were prepared by teachers working in pairs and drawing on insights gained from the analysis of the student questionnaires. Following detailed collaborative planning, one teacher taught the research lesson while the other observed two refugee case students for evidence of their learning and engagement. After the lesson, the two teachers held a brief discussion with the case students.

Phase 3

Follow-up teacher focus groups were conducted to gather teachers' reflections on working with RBSs on this project. Similarly, students participated in interviews to reflect on their learning experiences and self-assess their levels of PWB.

A combination of video and audio recording was used for various phases of data collection, but we decided not to audio or video record the lesson study classes, as this seemed too intrusive in the circumstances. The teacher-observers therefore took field notes. Because of Covid-19 lockdown falling in the middle of the data collection period, the student interviews could not be conducted face-to-face. Consequently, students were given a choice of interview method and, of the six interviews, three were recorded via Zoom (two with video and one with audio) and three via telephone.

Data Analysis

Student interviews and teacher meetings were audio recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Researchers were able to gauge student perceptions of their learning experiences and identify themes that indicated elements of those experiences that had been perceived by the students to contribute positively to a sense of well-being. Data from the questionnaires were analysed using a combination of quantitative tools (SPSS) for the closed questions and qualitative methods for the open-ended questions. Construct and content validity were ensured through careful structuring and piloting of the questionnaire and interview questions. To ensure reliability of thematic analysis, two researchers completed two rounds of coding to reach a consensus.

Ethical considerations

This research was clearly conducted in a particularly sensitive context with potentially vulnerable individuals and, consequently, ethical considerations were particularly important. Given the background of the participating students, measures were taken to ensure the rights and sensitivities of vulnerable individuals or groups, while ensuring that the participants were not essentialised as 'refugees' or 'asylum seekers'.

Measures taken included:

- ensuring all participants were fully informed of the project aims and what their participation involved
- seeking informed consent and clarifying the option to withdraw from the study at any time
- employing a distress protocol, avoiding any actions that might trigger previous trauma
- providing access to professional mental health support
- anonymising names, while maintaining salient details such as age, sex, educational background.

Ethical approval was sought from and agreed by the University of Leicester and the project followed ethical guidelines throughout.



vegetable
happy
efficient
grateful
contain
surprised

4

Findings – student data

Introduction

This section reports on the findings from the student questionnaires (41 participants) and the interviews of the 6 case students. The questionnaire findings are grouped under the three parts of the student questionnaire from Phase 1 of the study (1 – About You, 2 – ‘In Your English Class’, 3 – ‘How You Feel About Yourself Now’). Then, the Phase 3 interview findings, derived from a thematic analysis of the transcripts, will be reported under five key themes, grouped under two domains.

Questionnaire findings

Part 1: About You

Whole cohort – In terms of the demographics of the 32 participants who completed this part of the Student Questionnaire, the ratio of male to female was roughly 3:1, with approximately one third having refugee status, one third currently claiming asylum and the remaining third having Limited Leave to Remain, being on the Ankara Agreement or ticking ‘other’ immigration status. Just under half had been in the UK for under a year, and more than two thirds had been studying English at the ELTU for under six months. Most had been educated to university level in their own country.

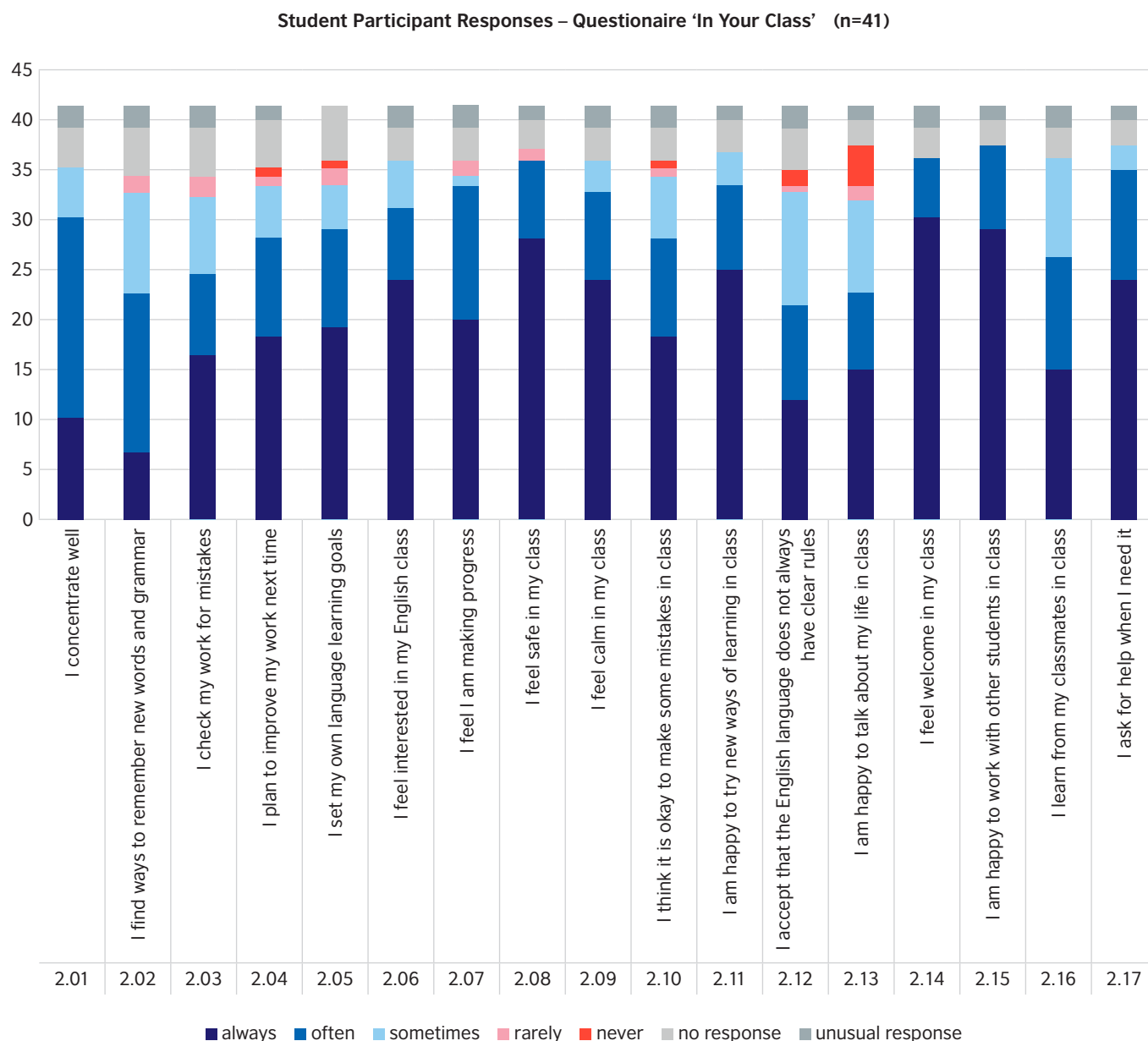
Case Students – six students were selected from the cohort to participate in Phases 2 and 3 of the project (see Appendix 2). They were selected using convenience sampling (Waterfield, 2018:9) from among students who had given their consent to participate in the study, for whom we had full data sets in terms of their responses to the Phase 1 questionnaire, who attended class on the day of the scheduled observation, and whose teacher had also agreed to participate in study.

Part 2: In Your English Class

Whole cohort – 34 students fully completed this part of the questionnaire. It was divided into three sets of questions: Section A – cognitive factors; Section B – affective factors; and Section C – sociocultural-interactive factors. Figure 3 shows participants’ responses to the questions, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (always) to 1 (never). On average, Section C responses scored the highest, indicating that respondents generally felt comfortable being and working with others in class. Part A scored lowest, indicating relative levels of difficulty using cognitive strategies in their language learning. Part B, affective strategies, had the most variation in responses, with ‘I am happy to talk about my life in class’ receiving the most ‘never’ and ‘rarely’ responses of all items.

For each section, a statement which received a below average score was selected as a suggested focus for the teachers participating in Phase 2 of the project (lesson study). These were: ‘I set my own language learning goals’ (Section A); ‘I am happy to talk about my life in class’ (Section B); ‘I learn from my classmates in class’ (Section C).

Figure 3: Student responses to Part 2 of questionnaire – ‘In Your English Class’

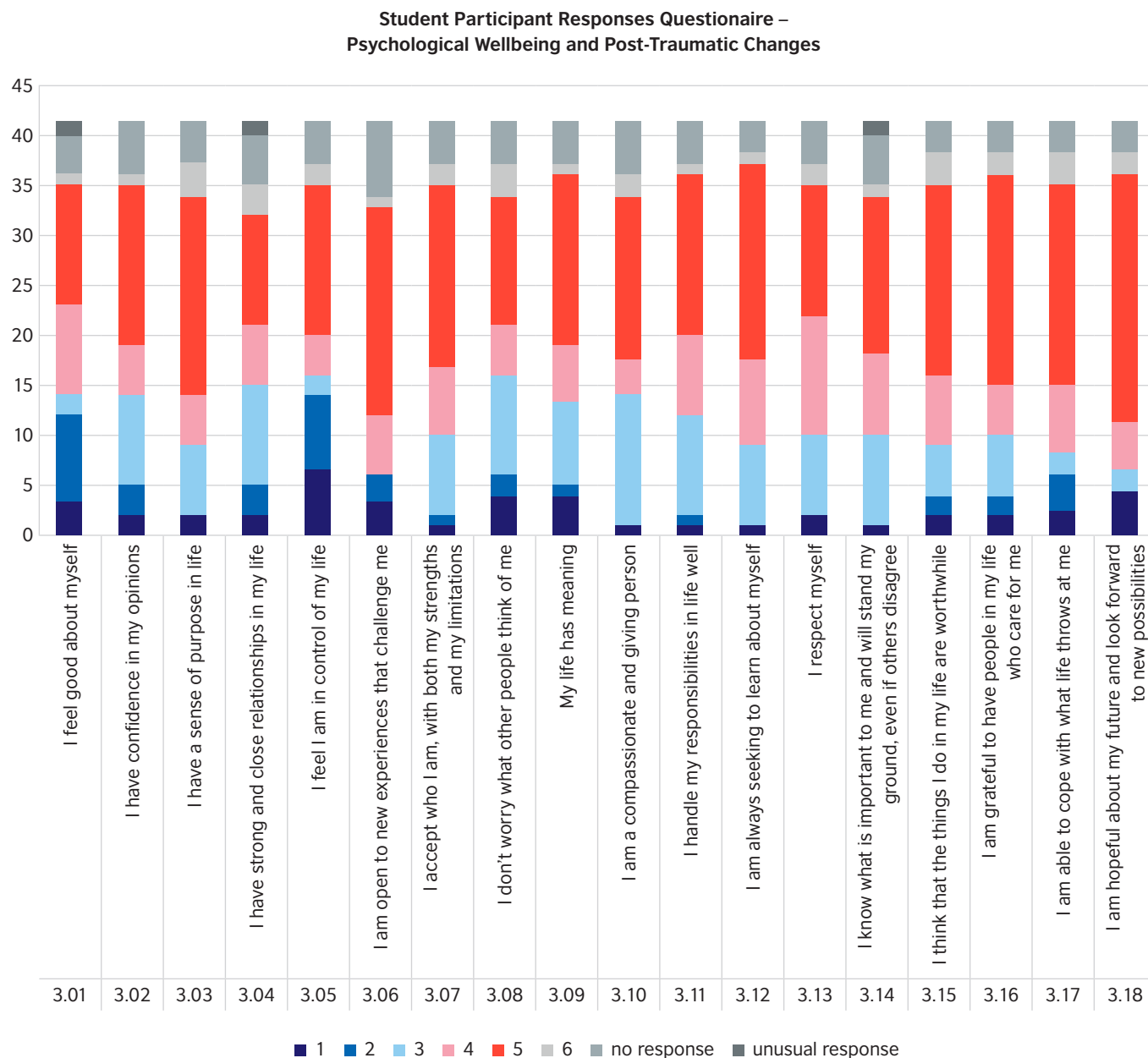


Case students – the combined average scores of the 6 case students’ responses to the items in Part 2 (4.00) were 7% lower overall than the combined average for the whole cohort of 41 students (4.28). This indicates that the case students’ responses were only marginally lower than those of the cohort as a whole (please see Appendix 2 for examples of case students’ items which scored low).

Part 3: How You Feel About Yourself Now (Psychological Well-Being and Post-Traumatic Growth)

Whole cohort – 20 students fully completed this part of the questionnaire, slightly adapted from the Psychological Well-Being and Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (Joseph, Maltby, Wood, Stockton, Hunt and Regel, 2012). Results indicated that, while there were both increases and decreases in PWB since leaving their home country across the cohort for every item, the increases significantly out-scored corresponding decreases (see Figure 4 in all six domains. Despite this overall pattern, 24 of the 41 reported lower levels of PWB since leaving their home country for one or more items on the questionnaire, with items relating to the Sense of Mastery dimension scoring low most often.

Figure 4: Student responses to Part 3 of questionnaire – ‘How You Feel About Yourself Now’ (based on the Psychological Well-Being and Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire)



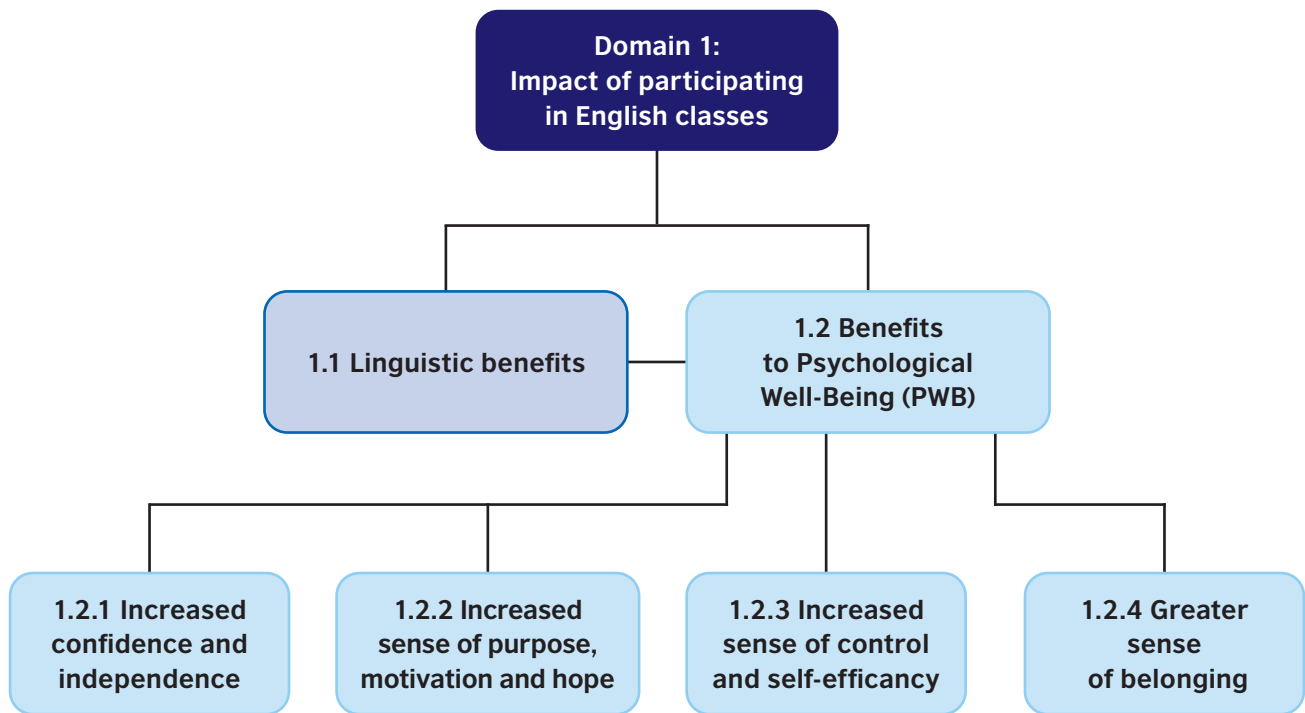
Case students – On average, the case students demonstrated a net increase in their PWB in every domain, in line with the rest of the cohort. However, two of the case students reported significantly lower levels of PWB since leaving their home country (see Appendix 2 for further details). Findings guided research design and the development of a refugee trauma-informed approach.

Student interview findings

As noted above, two main domains were identified in the thematic analysis of student interview data (six case students observed the research lessons). Domain 1 corresponds to RQ1 and focuses on the impact of participating in English classes for RBSs. Domain 2 can be mapped to RQ2, focusing on what strategies, skills and resources were identified as facilitating language learning and PWB. The themes for each domain are outlined below.

Domain 1: Impact of participating in English classes

Figure 5: Domain 1: Key Themes



Linguistic benefits

All six students interviewed felt that their general English language proficiency as a whole had improved since joining their courses, with Omar saying that his level of English had improved ‘all the way’, Jamal claiming all of his language skills had improved ‘2000%’, Mehmet reporting that he found the course ‘very useful’ and Munir noting that even his colleagues at work had noticed a marked improvement in his conversational English proficiency. Speaking, listening and writing were the most frequently mentioned areas of improvement, with reading, grammar and vocabulary being mentioned less often. Sumeyye emphasised the need for more speaking classes because these were the only opportunities she had for interaction in English, not having any English-speaking neighbours.

Interviewees felt that attending ESOL classes helped them function more effectively in their daily lives. Indeed, Fareed says that ‘general English ... help me ... deal with life’ and suggested that ‘refugee student they need, er, er ... to study more, more general English than other student’.

With regard to academic English development on the pre-sessional programme, Mehmet said ‘I got a good academic language education, er, like especially grammar and writing skills for academic level’, Omar described it as learning ‘deeper English’ and Munir listed many ways in which his academic language and skills have now developed as a result of attending the course.

Benefits to Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

Increased confidence and independence

There was evidence of increased levels of confidence and independence in daily life across all interviews, with Omar linking these with improved speaking and writing proficiency:

I think I feel confidence, it's easy. I can speak now with anyone easily. I can write something without help, without my son help ... It makes feel good for me.

Sumeyye echoed this, attributing it to the opportunities which the classes gave her to practise her speaking:

I never spoke before these classes, I can speak now – not correct, maybe, but I can speak a little bit (laughs) ... When I was came to UK, I couldn't go to outside just myself ... Always I feel depend other person and I feel very bad myself. But now, I can go everywhere just alone ... just myself ... er ... I think it's better. I feel happy because I can do my jobs ... I can go market, supermarket, hospital, everywhere now.

Jamal linked his increased confidence to increased well-being:

I feel more confident ... the teachers are pushing us to be more, to be more confident when you talk or when you want to say anything. That ... make me like now, in general life, I'm, to be honest ... so positive. I can ... I have self-confidence to say what I want, or to say what ... without shy or without mistake.

However, with regard to their performance in the skill of speaking, Mehmet and Sumeyye expressed dissatisfaction with their levels of accuracy and fluency, which they linked to low self-confidence and feeling stressed when speaking.

Increased sense of purpose, motivation and hope

Jamal, Fareed, Munir and Mehmet all saw the ELTU classes as offering a progression opportunity to achieve their future goals of studying at university and subsequently finding employment. For Jamal, the very act of studying seemed to give him purpose and contribute to his PWB:

.. if it's not ELTU, maybe to be honest I be in depression because you know, er ... when I was asylum, it's very hard situation, to be honest. If we are doing nothing, like, without studying, without anything, it's gonna be like too hard ...

For Fareed, simply being in close proximity with the university community was motivating:

Now, I feel confident, and, erm, feel ... my life is going in the right direction, because you know ... the sanctuary classes, and, er ... you know, it's open your mind because you, and, er, you're near the, the, the high class of education ... you see the teachers from university. You see the student going to study at university ... around those people, they can give you more hope.

However, Omar and Mehmet struggled to maintain their motivation to study when their pre-sessional courses moved online during the pandemic, which resulted in both of them deferring their studies, and both of them linked this to not having a clear future goal of studying on a degree programme.

Increased sense of control and self-efficacy

All of the students interviewed indicated that their sense of control over situations in their daily lives had increased in one or more respects as a result of attending classes at the ELTU. Furthermore, Munir noted that

... also one benefit from the ELTU course because, er, the thing we learning that you can plan in advance ... so whenever you want to do something, you have to plan in advance, and that way you can control yourself, so before you start anything you have to put your plan – one, two, three – and then you have to follow this step by step.

A greater sense of belonging

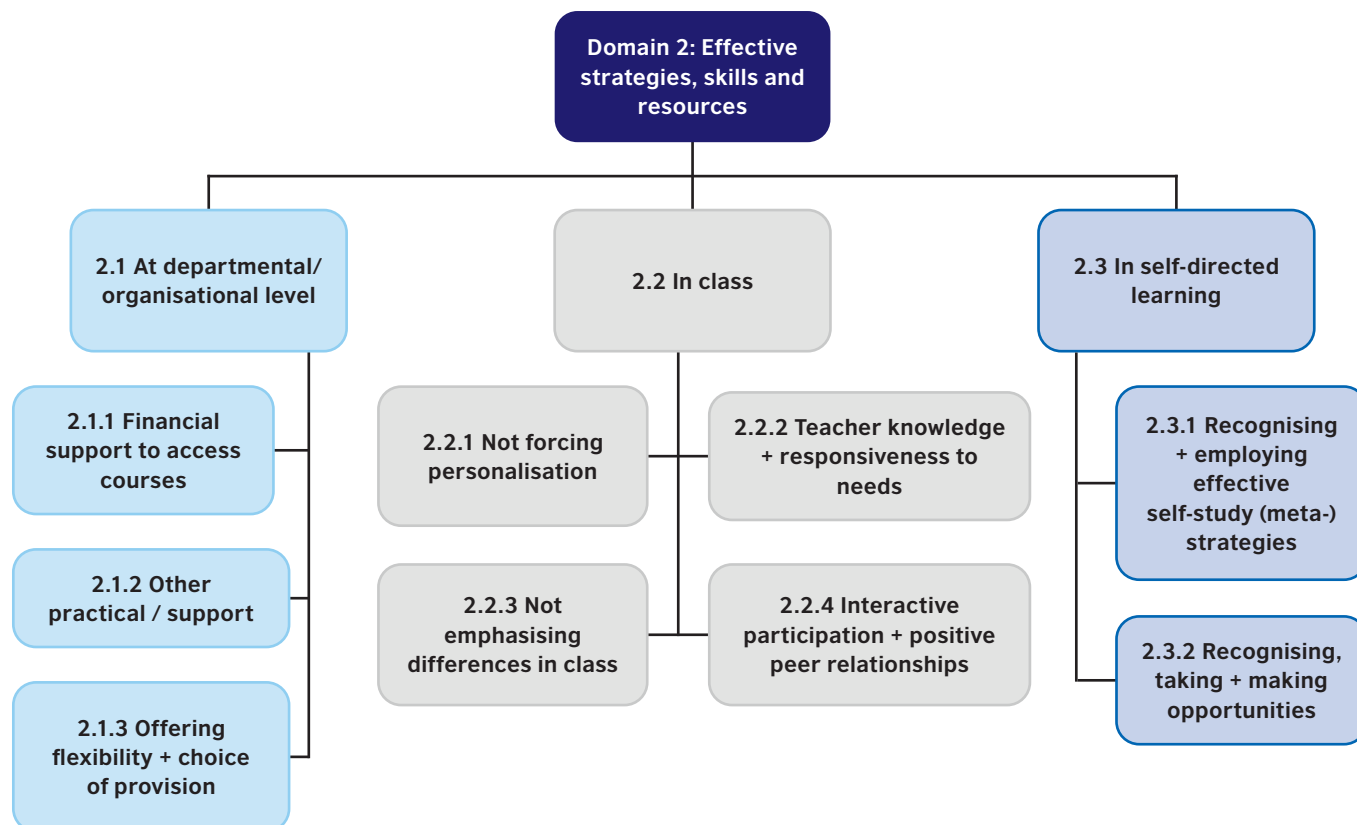
The challenge of settling in a new community was discussed in various ways by all participants, with Omar describing his transition from feeling like a ‘guest’ in the UK when he first arrived to accepting that he could not return to Turkey but that, instead, ‘I should live here, and this is my country’. Mehmet believed that attending classes contributed to speeding up this integration process and provided opportunities to develop friendships:

I think this training is very valuable as a, for my refugee friends ... It speeds up integration ... very valuable about integration and other relationship between ... friends.

Others advised of feeling more comfortable in the UK and being able to communicate more effectively, as a result of the sanctuary classes. How you live in another country was something frequently mentioned and without the classes there was a view that the process of adjustment to how you live in the new community would be much slower.

Domain 2: Effective strategies, skills and resources

Figure 6: Domain 2: Key Themes



At departmental / organisational level

Financial support to access courses

Access opportunities were discussed by half the group, who stressed that fee waivers had been critical to participation. They were very appreciative of the sanctuary classes, without which access to other programmes would not have been possible. Additional financial support was also mentioned, with Munir noting the importance of the reimbursement of transport costs through a partner charity RefuAid, and Jamal mentioning the usefulness of being provided with stationery: 'I appreciate ... every small thing – even a pen'. During the course of this research, the pandemic took hold and restricted some participants as they only had mobile phones to access the replacement online provision.

Other practical / pastoral support

All interviewees noted that refugee-background students tend to encounter a range of complexities in their daily lives, often juggling many demands which impacted on sanctuary provision. This could mean supporting students who have difficulties with asylum applications, students who find themselves homeless, and, as in one case in this group, a student requesting confidentially a move to another class as a result of feeling unsafe and threatened in the presence of a classmate who had political connections to his country's government:

All in breaks he is talking about my situation, about politician ... they called me as a terrorist ... maybe they, if they know my name, exactly name, who am I ... because you know ... the government ... kidnap someone from another country. Maybe – this is UK, they can't do that, maybe ... but if I didn't want to with them argue because they can learn my name, who am I.

Omar mentioned (with regard to RBSs) the need for psychological support and guidance to help cope with such complexities, with an implication from Munir's responses that sensitive needs analysis and teacher awareness of challenges for refugees were needed:

if they understand the personal situation of each student, that would help ... better to understand about their experience, what they think, how they think, what ... their next step [is].

The complexity of experiences encountered by RBSs was a recurring theme in all data sets collected during this project.

Flexibility and choice of provision

As noted above, interviewees felt that attending ESOL classes helped them function more effectively in their daily lives. Fareed suggested that informal and more frequent Sanctuary ESOL provision could meet students' needs more effectively:

By give more classes ... by make different time for classes ... So if it's be like a ... more flexible, that mean more students they can ... catch up ... like, er, maybe sometimes they can't come on Thursday ... but ... they can come on Fridays and Monday.

Other interviewees noted that ESOL could only take them so far in their attempts to prepare to access university, with Munir saying that he would have preferred direct entry to the University's pre-sessional course:

Yes, so I have a feeling that I wasted a lot of time to, like, one year or something like that to do something that's not academic or not going to help you in the next step.

Mehmet echoed this, saying that the pre-session course was for him:

... more professional and better than the ESOL ... I had shortcomings, especially grammar, and I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to overcome these deficiencies.

However, it was emphasised by three students that, despite the range of opportunities on offer to RBSs, communication about the full range of provision available to them at the ELTU needed to be clearer and not so reliant on word-of-mouth communication within existing students' own communities and networks. Munir felt that current information about provision available online was not enough, and that a more systematic and proactive approach to disseminating information about the provision was required.

In class

Not forcing personalisation

A recurring concern of the students, expressed also by their teachers, was about the degree to which personal experiences and issues could be discussed in class. When one student, who had requested to move class for safety or security reasons noted above, was asked how he would feel about being asked to talk about his life in class, he said:

It's not comfortable for me ... about my personality, about my life, what I did, what I was in my country, what I worked in XXX ... there is no way, if you talk about my personal life, there is no way I can feel comfortable.

Mehmet echoed this discomfort about discussing personal life in class, but for different reasons:

I don't want remember previous life because not good for me. Very, very, very bad experience for me because political situations problem, and human rights problem, unfortunately, and I don't want remind.

On the other hand, this was not a universal view. For instance, Munir said that he was comfortable with talking about any topic in class but acknowledged that this was not the case for many other RBSs who he knew.

Teacher knowledge and responsiveness to needs

All interviewees noted the additional challenges faced by many RBSs, and some emphasised the benefits of teachers being both aware of these and willing to respond by supporting students with understanding and flexibility. For example, as Munir says:

I finish my shift at like six o'clock, and nine o'clock I have to come to class ... So all the teachers they support me even they ask me if I need break I can take one whenever I need it, so this kind of thing really encourage someone to achieve ... And also they are very friendly, so they are open every time you have to ask. You send email or face to face – whenever, they are ready to help you.

The quality of support and understanding such as that shown to Munir was acknowledged by other interviewees. Omar underlined the importance of teachers being aware of emotional difficulties and Fareed said something important about teacher responsiveness to individual students and the contribution this made to feelings of security, being valued and well-being:

My teachers, they're very ... er, I feel comfortable with, with them ... so that's why I like (laughs) to speak all the day ... they try to help you to think. And when you talk, they focus on what you, what you trying to say and it can help you. They, they let you feel confident and comfortable like that.

This should be the case in all classrooms, we would argue, irrespective of background and experiences, and lies at the heart of what it means to be an effective and learner-responsive teacher, committed to a culture of positive mutual regard in the classroom.

Not emphasising differences in class

All interviewees recognised that RBSs were likely to have different needs from other students, and that ideally these needs should be met. However, five of them also emphasised that differences should not be highlighted as they shared similar goals to non-RBSs. They argued that it was important not to be seen, by the other students, to be treated differently, as Omar illustrated:

I think I wouldn't prefer anything different ... from other students and I think nobody prefer it, because it's, er, makes ... maybe different, it make different you from others... I would prefer same learning with others and same level, same ... everything should be same, just apart from ... avoiding talking about personal life, just in class, yeah

This poses challenges to teachers as they prepare for teaching in sanctuary settings.

Interactive participation and positive peer relationships

The importance of having opportunities to interact with their classmates was stressed by all, noting that this gave them the chance to practise their speaking, which, as outlined above, helped them improve their linguistic proficiency and confidence, as well as contributing to the reduction of social isolation. In addition, all interviewees valued learning with and from their classmates during pair and group work:

Fareed: In group, or as a pair, you can learn something from others ... about their country, about their culture, about their religion, they can, they explain something in other way ... this is a chance for learn something.

As a result of interactive activities in class, friendships could develop among participants who also took advantage of informal spaces for interaction before and after class, as Summeyer explained:

... when I was came here, I feel very bad myself because I was, er, feel alone. And, er, I find new, new friends and I can speak after classes. Er, it's very important, my psychological well-being. I feel better now.

There was evidence of these friendships and the associated peer support being sustained in the longer term, as noted by Munir:

... we have group of WhatsApp. Though the course is finished still we are communicating each other, some of them in Turkey, some of them in Saudi Arabia. So, still, we have the group and it's active ... sometimes we discuss the homework, the challenge ...

Self-directed learning

Recognising and employing effective self-study (meta-)strategies

Some of the interviewees mentioned using specific self-study strategies suggested by their teachers. Mehmet reported using a repeated listening strategy and Jamal a vocabulary learning strategy. However, teacher guidance for self-study was still felt to be needed, for instance to help students set language learning goals and create and implement a clear study plan. Jamal was keen for more comprehensive guidance from his teachers with regard to self-study:

If the teacher gives the key ... to be a good student, then I will learn.

Fareed set targets and maintained his study routine every day, even during lockdown, and, as noted above, Munir found planning ahead and breaking down goals into smaller targets so useful that he could transfer it to other contexts in his life. However, whilst recognising the value of setting and working towards goals, Jamal suggested that modified versions of this approach may be more effective, under the guidance of the teacher. There was, however, some diffidence about self-direction with one student requesting that there be a common study plan issued to all:

Er, if everyone, er, study the same, er, topic maybe, it's better and I can think everybody is studying. I have to study – maybe. (Sumeyye)

This possibly suggests a danger of over-dependence on the teacher developing in sanctuary settings, an issue for further research perhaps as provision grows.

Recognising, taking and making opportunities

Four of the students interviewed actively sought out opportunities for social contact and connection with a view to improving their English, with Jamal volunteering with a local community group, Munir actively seeking out students to talk to on the university campus, Sumeyye approaching her neighbours and people in parks and Fareed actively making friends from outside his own community, although this was limited significantly by the Covid-19 lockdown:

I'm trying to have friends ... so I can practise my English ... from different, er, not my community, from different, er ... community ... but unfortunately, because of Corona ... yes, you can't ... meet other people like that.

The students, particularly Munir, also showed that they were able to recognise and take other opportunities associated with attending English classes at the ELTU. For example, Munir saw homework as an opportunity to improve rather than being a burden, even though he was juggling full time study with working night shifts and raising a young family. Such complexities in the lives of the participants were not untypical.



A

DEPENDS

Q

A friend has a severe case of bad breath. Do you mention it?

5

Findings – teacher data

Introduction

Analysis of the teacher data (i.e. research lesson planning meetings, research lesson evaluation meetings and the post lesson observation teacher focus group meeting) identified a number of themes that reflect the main aspects of teacher discussions.

Teacher research lesson planning and evaluation meetings

Analysis of the research lesson planning and evaluation meetings generated seven key themes, each discussed in brief below.

1. Clarifying the learning challenge and scaffolding learning

The teacher pairs typically focused on preparing a sequence of activities that would scaffold student learning and discussed ways of consolidating learning in the lesson, designing the lesson with reference to their knowledge of the students' prior learning and their judgments of individual students' differing abilities. Discussion was informed by the principles of planning achievable steps and reducing cognitive load, while remaining keenly aware of the possible impact of trauma and anxiety:

T2: Yeah and that relates to this whole thing in trauma training about small regular goals and progress checks, because that sort of scaffolding is basically that.

(Research lesson planning meeting 1)

2. Personalisation as a teaching strategy

The issue of personalisation is particularly challenging in an RBS teaching context such that teachers were sensitive about asking students to relate their learning to their own personal experiences, as illustrated when T1 and T2 discussed the concept and its relevance to learning and the challenge of managing this:

T2: You know, I guess it doesn't have to be factual, like facts about their life it could be more to do with beliefs and things.

T1: Well it's going to reflect their knowledge of the world and their world view, because they are not working from sources, so everything is going to come from their own life experience.

(Research lesson planning meeting 1)

However, predicting what might cause anxiety was not straightforward. Both T1 and T2 agreed that asking students to plan more effectively brought with it challenges related to past experiences, with implications for lesson planning:

T2: And I mean for students who have, experienced trauma, so if they have, so for example if they have PTSD, things like planning is something that they do struggle with

(Research lesson planning meeting 1)

On the other hand, another group noted that some students might choose to personalise the grammar in the free practice session, but that the lack of a requirement to do so made it a safer space for them. Many parts of the discussions reflected not only a growing understanding of the students' responses to the post-lesson student questionnaire (in which students gave feedback on their learning), but also teachers' learning from the trauma training they had received.

3. Responding to student behaviours and unforeseen events

Responsiveness to students' behaviours and the need to address individual student issues was a frequent theme, as illustrated by teachers T3 and T4:

T3: Because, I was quite distracted by, even if she hadn't been observed, I was distracted by Fareed, because I very quickly picked up, that there was a problem.

The observations also showed how skilled some teachers were at adapting to unforeseen events in class, for example, when three students left during a class and the teacher had to reshuffle student groups:

T4: It was quite a, you know a difficult lesson in a sense that, obviously three students in total have left actually. At different points, during the task, and you had to constantly sort of shuffle, and reshuffle the persons, sort of try to make sure that everybody has somebody that they can work with. I mean it's not easy. If you haven't planned it.

T3: But, you know, that isn't unusual as you know with refugees.

They later discussed how a mobile phone 'issue' had been resolved in a supportive, rather than confrontational way, allowing a student to leave the room to take a call:

T3: And I think that maybe some of the, the issue had been resolved, because she had gone out and taken a call.

T4: Yes.

T3: But I did say to her, do you just want to go home? You know, and she said, no, no, no, she wanted to come back, she was just sorting something out.

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 3)

4. Developing a sense of empathy

Teachers' classroom observations suggested a developing sense of empathy with their students for example in relation to the cognitive challenge of maintaining focus in class:

T6: I was watching them that time, it's, you realise from their point of view how focused you have to be for an hour and a half

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 2)

In relation to social and affective factors, concern was shown for the difficult external circumstances that some students had to face, including separation from family members and the Covid pandemic:

T3: ... a few of them were worrying about their families back home and not just because of, you know the fact of being away from home, but also because of the, you know the coronavirus and what's happening at the moment.

(Research lesson planning meeting 3)

5. Creating a sense of well-being and a safe space

Both the lesson observers and the teachers reported a perception of well-being /happiness on the part of the students in lessons, apparently related both to social engagement and positive group dynamics:

T5: Yes, yes and with the refugee students you kind of sometimes notice that they are really quiet and shy but with those two, like you said they're kind of happy in the environment they are in and they are not afraid or embarrassed to share their ideas, which is really good, yeah and it kind of shows the dynamic of the whole group as well.

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 2)

Two other teachers commented on the increasing sense of confidence that had developed in the students over several weeks studying together:

T2: Yeah, and they both said that, that they really appreciated the teacher's patience and that, you know, they feel like they can say, say anything and, and they won't be rejected. So, I would say that, that to me, shows that they feel like it's a safe space.

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 1)

When asked explicitly, in their post-lesson study meeting with their teachers, how confident they felt during the research lesson, two case students expressed similar positive sentiments:

Fareed: For me, I feel confident in the class and even my teacher is helping me. So, when I get confused of something, when I ask her, she answer me and allow me and she try to drove me, as to understand...

Sumeyye: Usually, I feel confident myself. If I didn't understand anything, I can ask my teachers or my friends. They help me, they are help me every time. I feel nice, I feel confident in lesson.

(Research lesson student feedback meeting)

There was a close relationship between students' social engagement in class, their affective or emotional state and their cognitive engagement with the lesson itself and how these in turn relate to group dynamics, as discussed in the next section.

6. Group dynamics

In many cases, teachers painted a picture of a convivial, collegial atmosphere in class with students generally comfortable and willing to collaborate. One teacher dyad observed how two case students appeared to be 'strong characters' and that one in particular, Omar, was keen to support other students:

T6: I think they are both quite strong characters and very confident. I mean, for example, Omar was talking to his partner, correcting and explaining to his partner. But then, he was also talking to [that] other group of lads that were at the end of the table.

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 2)

Teachers T3 and T4 demonstrated their sensitivity to individual student emotional states and their impact on group dynamics, as they reflected on how external circumstances can trigger negative reactions. On one occasion, the teachers referred to what one described as 'quite a chaotic lesson' in which some students left the classroom, possibly related to concerns about relatives back home.

With regard to the two case students being observed, T4 noted that Fareed seemed more focused and engaged in the learning task, while Sumeyye became increasingly distracted and was using her phone for personal purposes:

T4: Definitely, Fareed sort of appeared more confident, with what was sort of, at hand, while Sumeyye, looked a bit, perhaps, maybe confused or sort of a bit more distant or sort of distracted and at times she was quite difficult.... Because Sumeyye was using her phone a lot, at times it was definitely difficult to say whether it was for lesson purposes or whether it was for...

T3: Personal purposes...

T4: A distraction yes.

The frustrations and difficulties experienced by some students were further illustrated in this lesson when Sumeyye left the classroom:

T3: And this is also where, in the latter part of that task, where she left the classroom and I made a note, she was in total, away for fifteen minutes actually, in fact until you went...

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 3)

Such events, which seemed to be triggered by a variety of external issues, were a relatively common occurrence, presenting additional challenges for both teachers and other participants.

7. Peer learning

Peer learning was a commonly observed feature, whether pre-planned by teachers or naturally occurring. Often this took the form of one student supporting a fellow student's learning, as discussed in T4/T3's post research lesson evaluation meeting:

T3: ... So, I mean in terms of, learning goals and the factors that affected it, there was a lot of peer learning.

T4: Yes.

T3: For Fareed, wasn't there?

T4: Definitely.

T3: And I think, certainly for Sumeyye, when she came back to work with that female only group. They were definitely, sort of, helping each other.

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 3)

The T1/T2 post-research lesson discussion reported one student to be a source of support for others and he was always responsive (and patient) even though he was often interrupted for advice. In discussions following the lesson study observations, his teachers conjectured that providing peer support was helping him to take on a leadership role, offering help and consequently gaining other students' respect.

T2: And so, he's got this very mature attitude. And I'm, I just think it's probably doing him actually a world of good being in that situation where, people are coming to him for help.

T1: Yeah.

T2: It's like, where he is not like a victim or a recipient of help, but he's actually the one giving the help.

(Research lesson evaluation meeting 1)

Such episodes highlight the importance of teachers' awareness of individual attributes, and not just cognitive but also socio-affective factors.

Post lesson study focus group meeting

The teacher focus group meeting had slightly different foci, with six principal strands in the discussion, some of which mirrored the pre- and post-research lesson meeting conversations.

1. Impact of trauma training

Teachers deemed all aspects of the project training useful. In particular, the inputs on trauma were seen as very effective in preparing teachers for sanctuary classes and informed every discussion whether before or after each research lesson.

While there were calls for more training e.g. on counselling (T1) or 'mental health related training' (T2), trauma training had grown their confidence and left them not feeling like 'throwing hands in the air' (T3):

T2: I've learnt so much from that and I've also gained confidence, you know so that when something does happen in the classroom and so on, 'oh my goodness this is all my fault' and you know um, I also have, I'm now a part of this community where.... So that's a sort of support network as well, I think. Really helpful.

T5 valued the trauma training but wanted examples of what could be triggers of trauma, making the interesting point that it was not possible to predict exactly what might trigger a reaction as these could be, on the surface, quite unexceptional and even apparently trivial things.

The trauma training helped teachers to prepare and manage situations with sensitivity and understanding, but approaches used in class depended on teacher ability to read the classroom and reflect-in-action during students' responses and activities.

2. Impact of Lesson Study

There was a positive attitude from teachers to the lesson study project, although the experience was not always comfortable. Teachers commented on wanting to try to observe better, focusing much more prominently on what students were doing at any particular point in the lesson, with more concentration on trying to see the intended lesson through the eyes of the students. T2 resolved to try to adapt lesson study methods to observe students in future lessons:

T2: ... and just to make a mental note to yourself, 'in this lesson I'm going to particularly focus on student C' [sic, her words] you know as much as you can do 'what are they doing? how are they responding?'... yeah. That would be quite an interesting thing to keep trying to do.

Teacher 3 claimed that focusing on what students do was a contrast to the way, traditionally, lesson planning often takes place with its concentration on what the teacher does during the lesson. She wanted to repeat the process with different students.

Lesson observations were reported to be eye-opening, with teachers' reactions described variously as 'surprising', 'shocking', 'enlightening', 'intensive', 'revealing', 'meeting expectations', 'not meeting expectations'. The complexities observed in class also took teachers by surprise, making them aware of the limitations of what teachers working in solitude can possibly observe:

T3: What I was particularly surprised about was how much I didn't see in the classroom; that was really quite enlightening for me.

In summary, engagement in the lesson study cycle was seen as useful in 'taking you as the teacher off the focus of the observation' (T3) and concentrating attention on the learner experience.

3. Language goals and in-class concerns

Reflecting students' questionnaire responses, teachers agreed that students found it difficult to express their own learning goals independently. On the other hand, teachers believed that students derived value from interaction and welcomed opportunities to share in their learning together. However, some students needed to be advised that group work and pair work were not just fun distractions but important opportunities to learn:

T2: Yeah, yeah, so it's not that they're reluctant to be in small groups or do small group work or talk to their classmates, they just don't recognise it as being a learning tool, or opportunity.

Trust and feeling comfortable were essential. Some teachers began the research lessons feeling that students would be reluctant to talk about personal information for fear of being vulnerable: 'sometimes you don't necessarily want to share things anyway, do you? It might be too personal' (T3). Teachers discussed at some length the unpredictability of what might cause distress resulting from past trauma and, as T3 suggests, the need for more support in how to deal with this:

T3: I know that we talked about politics and personalisation being one of the triggers, but in one of the classes I taught, it was a coffee shop that was a trigger for one of my refugee students, and she just burst into tears, so maybe examples of what could be triggers and how teachers could deal with these situations.

4. Responsiveness to student needs

All teacher participants wanted to know more about student needs but were aware of a number of anxieties and tensions. On the one hand, students prefer not to benefit from adjustments that mean causing some form of trouble (T1), possibly relating to just wanting to fit in with other students:

T2: I agree with you and it's an attitude of 'everything is wonderful, everything we do is wonderful', they're so grateful, it's all lovely. And you know, anything is a bonus, which kind of links back to that thing of asking them to identify their own learning needs.

On the other hand, an alternative and more assertive view suggested that there was sometimes a feeling among refugees that 'if they won't act, they won't get':

T3: ... sometimes the refugee students could be particularly demanding. Well, because they needed to be, and I remember for example we were giving them bus passes, and they didn't quite understand the social distances, and they got quite demanding with the person who was giving them out.

As with their language learning goals, it was agreed that refugee students were sometimes uncertain about their needs, hopes and identities, so teachers could find themselves feeling unaware of students' aspirations.

5. COVID-era provision

Discussion inevitably turned to the impact of Covid-19 on refugee students. There was concern that online provision was not as positive a learning experience as being in the classroom for some students, with discussions of wealth and digital divides within the refugees attending sanctuary classes. Some had much greater access to ICT and interactive learning environments than others. Sadly, while representing half of the group, no Sudanese students appeared able to attend online. In contrast, more affluent refugees had regularly accessed online provision:

T2: You know the refugees who are better off maybe financially and have more access to better accommodation, more access to technology, have been able to access the classes, and then the others just... we've not seen them at all, which is really sad.

One teacher commented that some students benefitted from provision online, for example women with childcare responsibilities who could now attend. However, teachers' overall concern was to avoid a two-tier online experience for less well-off students:

T5: ...isolation is one of the things that we need to worry about in terms of the message to students and trying to make them part of the learning community again, whether it's through Zoom ... but again we come back to the problem of technology and whether they've got access to it.

6. Support for sanctuary class teachers and students

Teachers speculated that refugees' needs may be given less priority, because they do not pay fees and are not funded by influential sponsors:

T2: I just think there have been tensions and some issues to do with non-refugees and refugee students... and I'm probably biased, but I often feel that the refugee students' needs are perhaps further down the pecking order...

T2: I guess they're the minority of students. Dare I say it, they're not fee-paying students. So yeah, you know we've got some students who come from quite powerful funding providers.... I probably shouldn't say any more.

The importance of being able to elicit feedback from students was stressed. Teachers 3 and 5 argued that ongoing, informal (possibly weekly) evaluations would be useful to inform planning for refugee students, but this would need a relaxed, informal and unthreatening atmosphere for student evaluations to take place.

Heinemann Grammar

The Heinemann ELT
English Grammar
An Intermediate Reference
and Practice Book

The Heinemann ELT
English Grammar

New

6

Discussion

In the previous section, we presented the findings of the research project. We will now consider how these relate to our research questions and draw recommendations for future practice and research in this area.

Answering our research questions

RQ1 – Can English language provision facilitate Psychological Well-Being in a University of Sanctuary setting, and, if so, in what ways?

All six case students reported an increase in their English language proficiency since joining the ELTU language classes. In some cases, this improvement was mainly in their general language skills, particularly speaking, listening and writing, and for others, it was largely in academic English skills.

In terms of students' PWB, the questionnaire data indicated that, though there were incidences of reduced well-being (and potential PTSD) in some individuals, the general pattern for this cohort was one of increased PWB since leaving their country. While it may be possible that individuals in this cohort joined their language classes because they already had higher levels of PWB, the indication from the student interview data is that the classes contributed not only to an improvement in language proficiency but also to increased PWB. Examples of this will be discussed below with reference to Ryff and Singer's (1996) framework for describing PWB.

Self-acceptance (SA)

Self-acceptance:

holding positive attitudes towards oneself and one's past life, which is a central feature of good mental health as well as an important element of self-actualisation, optimal functioning and maturity

(Ryff & Singer, 1996)

All case students expressed some positive attitudes towards themselves, with five scoring high in this area in Part 3 of the Student Questionnaire. The interviews demonstrated that these feelings were often related to attending language classes and/or improving their English language proficiency, gaining in confidence and independence in their daily lives and generally feeling more positive. As well as being able to identify areas where they had progressed, all were able to identify areas where they still needed to improve, thus indicating an acceptance of current limitations.

However, in terms of attitudes towards their past lives, two students stressed that they felt a great deal of discomfort when thinking or talking about this, which is consistent with Isserlis' (2000) concerns that requiring RBSs to talk about themselves in class can risk re-triggering trauma and anxiety. Indeed, the corresponding item from Part 2 of the Student Questionnaire, 'I am happy to talk about my life in class', scored lowest of all the items, flagging up the issue of having to talk about one's life in class being one for particularly careful consideration when teaching RBSs.

Environmental mastery (EM)

Environmental mastery:

an individual's ability to actively identify and take opportunities to 'manipulate and control complex environments' through physical or mental activity in order to progress in the world

(Ryff & Singer, 1996)

The case students indicated that their environmental mastery had increased in one or more respects as a result of attending classes at the ELTU, mediated by an increased sense of control and ability to cope (as confirmed by their questionnaire responses).

This included using various meta-strategies in line with Oxford's (2011) S2R model of language learning: seeking out opportunities to practise their English outside class, such as befriending students on campus and volunteering in the local community (meta-sociocultural-interactive); reframing challenges as opportunities to learn (meta-affective), and actively applying strategies learnt in class (such as creating step-by-step plans) to their lives more widely (meta-cognitive).

However, all four students currently on the pre-session programme noted the crucial importance of environmental factors which facilitated access to these classes, such as fee waivers. They also emphasised the importance of knowing what opportunities and resources exist within an organisation for RBSs and being able to ask for help when they needed it. This recognition underlines the importance of moving away from purely 'individualised understandings of resilience' to a resilience enabled by 'collective support or systemic change' (Rivers and Webster, 2017, in Stevenson and Baker, 2018).

Positive relations with others

Positive relations with others:

the ability to form 'warm, trusting interpersonal relations', to have the ability to feel empathy and affection for all human beings, and to exercise 'generativity', which involves the 'guidance and direction of others'

(Ryff & Singer, 1996)

The interviews, student questionnaires and tutor meeting and focus group data all confirmed that the case students highly valued the opportunities afforded by their English classes to meet, learn from and communicate with other students. Feeling supported by the teacher and peers in class fostered a sense of comfort, trust and confidence in the case students, which enabled them to actively participate, and thus risk making errors in class – a crucial tenet of successful language learning (Stone, 1995).

All interviewees valued the chance to expand their social networks, developing friendships with students from other cultures as well as informal study networks to support each other through their courses. The majority of the interviewees also appreciated both receiving peer support and giving it, in some cases even functioning as class leaders, as demonstrated through the lesson study observations. The accompanying positive feelings might indicate support for Murphey's (2016) 'well-becoming through teaching/giving' hypothesis, through which students might shift out of 'self-focus' and focus on others through supporting them.

Autonomy

Autonomy:

the qualities of self-determination, independence and the regulation of behaviour from within – evaluating oneself by personal standards without looking to others for approval, which includes a 'resistance to enculturation'

(Ryff & Singer, 1996)

There was certainly evidence of students gaining a sense of agency and independence, partly as a result of their increased linguistic proficiency, in going about their daily lives. Students also gave examples of specific cognitive strategies that they used in their language learning, and some were evidently using meta-cognitive strategies too, such as goal setting and planning. However, others expressed a need for ongoing guidance and support from the teacher and their peers with planning, setting goals and evaluating progress towards these, which may corroborate Horsman's (2004) suggestion that goal setting can be difficult for trauma survivors.

With regard to the concept of 'enculturation', English language provision appears to have contributed positively to case students' sense of belonging and sped up the process of integration, by helping them feel less like a guest in the country and more able to communicate and mix with people in the wider community.

Personal growth

Personal growth:

continually striving to grow and expand as a person, to develop one's potential and move towards self-actualisation. This involves being open to new experiences and challenges, and 'continually developing, rather than achieving a fixed state wherein all problems are solved'

(Ryff & Singer, 1996)

There were several examples of how attending classes facilitated the development of a 'growth mindset' (Dweck, 2006), indicating a belief that one's abilities can be developed rather than being fixed. Three of the students indicated that they saw challenge as a means to grow and learn rather than being threatened by it. Five of the interviewees also alluded to their willingness to improve themselves through learning from peers – not only in terms of increasing their English level but also to use the

opportunity to learn about other countries, cultures, ideas and perspectives. This indicates a desire to use the opportunity afforded by attending English classes to grow in more than one respect.

However, there were some differences between the case students in terms of their attitude towards taking risks and making mistakes when speaking in English. For example, two students emphasised the importance of feeling comfortable enough to speak and receive feedback from teachers and classmates. However, for other students, a fixation on 'getting it right' in terms of spoken accuracy and fluency worked against them through causing them stress when speaking and sometimes closing them off from potential opportunities for learning and growth. This is suggestive of Foreign Language Anxiety (Zheng, 2008).

Purpose in life

Purpose in life:

a clear subjective sense that one's life holds purpose and meaning, which leads to the formation of 'goals, intentions and a sense of direction'

(Ryff & Singer, 1996)

Four of the students indicated that studying at the ELTU was helping to give them a sense of purpose and direction in their lives by offering them a progression pathway to their goal of studying at university. One student explicitly stated that being able to study was keeping him occupied and helping him stave off depression, a common outcome for RBSs who have very few or even no opportunities to 'participate in meaningful future-oriented activity' (Hartley and Fleay, 2014, in Stevenson and Baker, 2018).

There was also an indication that being close to a university community could facilitate a sense of purpose, especially for RBSs wishing to pursue HE studies. However, for students on the pre-sessional programme whose purpose for studying was less well defined or was not necessarily related to studying in HE, motivation was difficult to sustain when learning moved online during the pandemic and required significantly more self-directed learning on their part.

RQ2 – What skills, strategies and resources do language teachers need in order to optimise the psycho-social and linguistic experience of their refugee learners?

Findings provide insight into a range of skills, strategies and resources being used by language teachers to support their refugee-background learners and highlighted areas that could be further developed.

Supporting students to employ effective learning strategies

Some students were more confident than others in articulating whether they used learning strategies, what strategies they used and how these were helpful to their language learning. Some felt that they found it useful to be explicitly introduced to learning strategies and meta-strategies (whether cognitive, affective or socio-cultural-interactive) in class, which enabled them to make informed choices about strategy use and fostered a greater sense of agency and control (Oxford, 2011). However, some students said that they found goal-setting and planning difficult, in line with Horsman's (2004) and van der Kolk's (2014) suggestion that trauma survivors tend to struggle with these sorts of tasks. Students suggested that peer and teacher support with metacognitive tasks such as planning and goal-setting would help them maintain focus and motivation in their self-study.

Fostering supportive peer interaction

Students and tutors alike valued peer interaction in class, as it served some useful functions. Formal pair/group activities in class were found to provide speaking practice and build confidence, as did informal opportunities for interaction before, during and after class (although the latter was sorely missed when classes moved online during the pandemic). Peer interaction also gave students an opportunity to get to know people from other backgrounds and perspectives, and sometimes forge lasting friendships. The importance of feeling safe enough to take risks and feel comfortable making mistakes in front of others was also emphasised, echoing Stone's (1995) point on this matter. This feeling of safety was facilitated by developing trusting relationships and feeling listened to and valued by others. Peer interaction also developed through students supporting each other's learning, both in and out of class (e.g. through WhatsApp groups). One unanticipated finding was that RBSs might also flourish in leadership roles in class, supporting and guiding others, which shifts them from recipients to providers of support, and relates back to Murphey's (2016) 'well-becoming through teaching/giving' hypothesis.

Sensitivity and responsiveness to RBSs' needs

Students and tutors emphasised the highly complex nature of RBSs' circumstances and individual needs, reinforcing the idea of 'super-disadvantage'

(Lambrechts, 2020). Though tutors expressed understanding and empathy with RBSs studying whilst facing difficult external circumstances, they felt that they needed a better understanding of individual RBSs' complex challenges and needs, including psychological support needs. To tackle this, one student suggested more comprehensive initial and ongoing needs analyses, and tutors highlighted the value of the trauma training and collaborative lesson study process in facilitating deeper understanding. The case students also emphasised that, although RBSs tend to have complex needs, they do not wish attention to be drawn to these or to be seen to be treated differently in front of other students, thus highlighting that needs should be addressed with sensitivity. Tutors noted that, from their experience, RBSs do not always express their needs, sometimes through a wish not to cause bother, and sometimes because they may not be fully aware of their own needs and goals.

Tutors stressed the importance of anticipating RBSs' needs when planning lessons, but also the importance of being flexible and responsive to situations and needs as they arise in class, particularly in informal provision, which can be more unpredictable by nature. The ability to respond quickly and appropriately to unanticipated events in class was emphasised by the tutors. One important need referred to by students and tutors was to feel safe in class and this was seen to promote both learning and well-being. The area which was most strongly emphasised here was discomfort if required to talk about their lives in class (especially their past lives), echoing Isserlis' (2000) warning that personalisation can risk re-triggering trauma, although this feeling was not universal. Tutors responded to this in their planning, incorporating advice from the trauma training and giving students a choice as to whether to personalise or not.

RQ3 – In relation to RQ2, what constitutes good practice in ELT provision for refugees in a University of Sanctuary context, both at present and in the future?

Our study has highlighted many examples of good practice in facilitating both language learning and PWB for RBSs in relation to these teachers' pedagogic skills, expert knowledge, teaching practices and use of resources with their RBSs, as summarised above (RQ2). In addition, we identified broader issues that facilitate and enhance EL provision for RBSs, including wider institutional systems and strategies which might not be directly within a teacher's control.

Supporting RBS teachers

What emerged from the tutor focus group is that they all valued the support provided as part of the research process to enable them to meet the needs of their RBSs more effectively. One means of support was through CPD opportunities such as the trauma training and the lesson study process. In terms of the former, tutors felt this training helped them better understand and be sensitive to RBSs' needs, how trauma might present in their classes, and what strategies they might use in response. Tutors said they felt more confident planning, teaching and evaluating classes for RBSs after this training, but would benefit from more detailed workshops covering areas such as examples of the types of situations that might trigger trauma responses.

In terms of the lesson study process, tutors remarked on the benefit of this type of student-focused observation to be able to 'read' the classroom and become aware of individual student issues, as well as class dynamics. Developing awareness and sensitivity to the needs of vulnerable students is obviously a key quality for any teacher but it was evident from our data that planning and teaching RBSs required considerable empathy towards student perspectives and experiences.

A further benefit of the lesson study approach was the opportunity to work collaboratively to plan, observe and reflect on teaching. This not only enabled individual teachers to further develop their own pedagogic skills but also to share or jointly develop teaching resources. In this way, teachers were able to develop a community of practice to share experiences and challenges and evaluate their own and each other's teaching. It was suggested that an ongoing tutor support network would be helpful, as would additional support and training in further developing their capabilities for supporting their RBSs more effectively.

Optimising institutional-level systems and support

Our findings also emphasise the importance of wider systems and strategies operating within an institution to support RBSs' needs. One thing highly valued by students was to be offered joined-up provision, offering range, choice and a progression opportunity. They appreciated the fact that they could access flexible, non-formal provision from beginner level ESOL, which could lead on to formal university-level EAP. They also valued both general and academic English classes, with the latter being seen as invaluable by those with aspirations to enter university and/or a professional domain, as emphasised by Stevenson and Baker (2018). However, they stressed the need for clear communication

about the range of opportunities available for RBSs, as prospective and current students were not always fully informed, which indicated a lost opportunity.

Provide wider wrap-around support for RBSs before and during studies

Another issue strongly emphasised by students and tutors alike was the need for additional support for RBSs to enable them to access provision and learn more effectively. In terms of resources, students stressed that, without fee waivers, they would not have been able to join the pre-session programme. They also mentioned other useful financial support for travel costs and stationery. However, when classes moved online during the pandemic, these measures of support were not enough to enable RBSs without a suitable digital device or adequate wifi/data to access online classes. Students and tutors noted that this situation exacerbated the digital divide, leading to some students having to pause their studies. Some RBSs also expressed the need for psychological support to be on offer, in addition to guidance in defining their goals and aspirations and accurate information about feasible pathways for meeting them.

In order to attempt to meet some of these disparate needs, many examples were given of the university tapping into its own resources to support RBSs with practical matters such as accommodation and their asylum claims. Further examples were given of fruitful partnerships with other organisations including RefuAid (which funded RBSs' travel costs) and LCofS (which provided informal ESOL and EAP classes). Engaging wider networks brought about more holistic and effective support than would otherwise be possible.

In the next section, we summarise our recommendations based on the findings and examples of good practice identified in this study.



7

Conclusions and recommendations

This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of refugee-background students (RBSs) and their teachers in English language classes in a University of Sanctuary setting, focusing not only on how classes can improve students' level of English, but also their levels of Psychological Well-Being (PWB). By focusing on PWB in its broadest sense, we have attempted to extend our focus 'Beyond Resilience' to explore other facets of PWB. Our goal was to use our findings to illustrate some of the skills, strategies and resources that teachers can employ to optimise PWB and from these make recommendations for future research and practice to further strengthen policy and practice in this area.

We have found indications that RBSs' experiences of learning English can be linked to improvements both in levels of English and PWB (across all six dimensions), and that the relationship between language learning and PWB appears to be complex and mutually reinforcing. Attending language classes and improving their English level generally helped RBSs feel better about themselves and develop confidence, independence, agency and a sense of purpose. In particular, they highly valued opportunities afforded by attending these classes to interact with others, not only in terms of language practice but on a deeper and more holistic level of genuinely learning from, trusting and supporting each other, and creating a classroom environment in which many RBSs felt able to learn and grow, sometimes thriving and developing into class leaders themselves. Those who were able to thrive tended to see challenge as a means to learn rather than being threatened by it, in line with the concept of a 'growth mindset' (Dweck, 2006); conversely, those who displayed a fixation on 'getting it right' in their spoken accuracy and fluency showed indications of anxiety and a 'fixed mindset', which suggests that encouraging students to adopt a 'growth mindset' may be beneficial.

This study also highlighted a number of areas in which some RBSs struggled in their language classes. Being required to talk about their lives (i.e. forced personalisation), past or present, was very uncomfortable for some, as was being singled out publicly from other students as being different or needing additional support. Some struggled with employing meta-strategies in their learning and suggested that ongoing tutor and peer support and guidance in this area would be of benefit.

Our research highlighted the complexities and tensions of teaching in such environments and the need for sensitivity and awareness as well as specific skills and knowledge in terms of language pedagogy and PWB. All the teacher participants concluded that the principal condition for the success of RBSs was making them feel welcome, valued and unthreatened by facilitating supportive interaction among students, developing responsiveness to individual students' attributes and experiences and promoting a classroom climate in which collaboration and positive mutual regard are key. These are conditions which are likely to help not only RBSs but also all other students to learn and thrive.

Recommendations

In class:

Explicitly teaching useful language learning strategies and meta-strategies by:

- **introducing students to useful language learning strategies:** these could potentially be drawn from the three domains (and meta-domains) proposed by Oxford (2011) – cognitive, affective and socio-cultural-interactive. There are various ways to go about this, but Oxford (2011:181) recommends being explicit about naming, modelling and explaining why and how to use a strategy. Learners should then be encouraged to try the strategy out, evaluate its success and decide when and how to transfer the strategy to new tasks. For example, one meta-sociocultural-interactive strategy would be to encourage students to actively seek out opportunities to practise their English, whether this be through approaching neighbours, other students, or perhaps identifying volunteering opportunities. Students could then reflect on the usefulness of this in a reflective journal entry.
- **fostering tutor and peer support with metacognitive tasks:** this might involve explicit initial discussions about how to set reasonable goals, and how to break these down, how to space the steps over time and how to motivate oneself to sit down and do the work. It might involve planning and goal-setting in pairs or small groups and checking in with buddies at regular intervals to discuss progress and how any challenges might be overcome. It might involve anchoring self-study tasks in activities completed in class, such as reading one graded reader per fortnight and coming to class prepared to talk to a partner about it, which could provide additional impetus to complete the task.
- **fostering a growth mindset:** this indicates a belief that one's abilities can be developed rather than being fixed (Dweck, 2006), and may be particularly beneficial for students who are unduly anxious about perceived poor performance in their spoken accuracy and fluency. Useful techniques here might include: the teacher modelling trying to learn words and phrases in the student's language; making mistakes (possibly deliberately) and then trying again; encouraging students to reflect on occasions in the past when they successfully learned something; offering them real-life examples of people similar to themselves who experienced similar struggles and overcame them to succeed in their learning; brainstorming helpful self-talk to help them view feedback constructively.

Fostering supportive peer interaction by:

- **providing opportunities for speaking practice:** these might include formal pair and group activities which form part of the lesson plan (e.g. information gap activities, group discussions), and informal, organic opportunities to interact before, during and after class. One way to facilitate this would be to allow students to access the classroom ten minutes before and after the lesson (a strategy which could also be transferred to the online classroom).
- **supporting students to build trusting relationships to help them feel safe enough to take risks and make mistakes:** this could be done through: centring relationships by welcoming students by name and encouraging small talk; warmth and gentle humour; the teacher modelling active listening and showing genuine interest in what learners have to say; modelling and explaining that it is okay to make mistakes and that they are a part of the learning process; encouraging discussion about learning challenges and useful strategies to overcome them; setting clear ground rules (including the option to opt out of activities if they want to).
- **encouraging students to support each other's learning in and out of class:** this might be done through: giving students time in class to discuss their learning challenges and how they tackle them; setting up a study buddy system; encouraging students to set up a WhatsApp group (or similar) through which they can discuss their study tasks and ask questions in an unthreatening environment.

Supporting RBSs' teachers to develop their practice by:

- **providing CPD opportunities:** these might usefully include training in trauma-informed pedagogy for RBSs, which the tutors in this study found very helpful, but it is also important to include information to raise tutors' awareness of many of the wider experiences and challenges that RBS students have encountered and still encounter (e.g. financial hardship, homelessness, living in limbo whilst waiting for a decision on their asylum claim).
- **developing a supportive community of practice:** this might involve something akin to the hands-on collaborative planning, delivery and evaluation of lessons for RBSs through the lesson study process used in this study. Equally, it might take the form of an online support group or forum for practitioners from different institutions who can ask each other for advice on specific points, can share experiences, and can feed back on what strategies worked and did not work.

Developing sensitivity and responsiveness to RBSs' needs by:

- **finding out about individual RBSs' challenges and experiences:** this might be through comprehensive needs analysis tailored to RBSs' experiences (which might take the form of a questionnaire or an initial interview or structured conversation). It could also be through observation of individuals in class, potentially through the lesson study process, which in our approach spotlighted two individuals for observation, often leading to deep insights about their needs and responses.
- **addressing the need to feel safe in class** (e.g. through not forcing personalisation): this particular need deserves a special mention, as it came through very strongly in the student data. One way in which personalisation in the language classroom can be handled in a trauma-sensitive manner is to always offer students a choice as to how to approach these sorts of activities. For example, in an activity which requires discussion of family, students can be given the choice of talking about their own family, another family which they know, a fictional family or perhaps a famous family. This can give students a sense of agency as to how much they might wish to disclose to others in class.

- **anticipating and responding flexibly to RBSs' needs:** some needs of RBSs (e.g. not forcing personalisation) can be anticipated in advance, and appropriate measures can be taken accordingly. However, other needs (or presentations of needs) might take a teacher by surprise. A key principle here is for tutors to remain alert, responsive and willing to be flexible at all times, foregrounding the principles of helping RBSs feel welcome, safe, seen and heard and facilitating choice and a sense of agency.
- **addressing needs sensitively:** while many RBSs may have additional needs which should be addressed to facilitate learning and well-being in the classroom, the way in which these needs are addressed should be sensitive to the fact that many RBSs do not wish to be seen to be treated differently from other students. One way to achieve this might be to set the same ground rules (e.g. the choice of opting out of activities if one feels uncomfortable) for all students on the understanding that only those with a need to do so are likely to do so. Another option might be to use personal tutorial time to outline additional support to RBSs, and to encourage them to contact their tutor privately (e.g. to catch them after class or to email them) should they wish to discuss an issue.

At institutional level:

Optimising institutional-level systems and support:

- **offering joined up provision, with range, choice and a progression opportunity:** it is important that any opportunities on offer are joined up with internal or external progression opportunities so that RBSs have a clear pathway from beginner's level to advanced. Clear referral pathways to external opportunities should be put in place.
- **offering both informal and formal provision:** this will help to meet the needs of RBSs in different situations, as will offering classes on a range of days and times.
- **providing both general AND academic English classes:** RBSs in this study deeply valued both general and academic English provision for different reasons. The importance of making academic English classes available (in addition to the more widely available general English or ESOL provision) was emphasised.
- **offering more speaking classes/opportunities:** this might take the form of classes or less structured opportunities such as conversation clubs, book clubs, study groups or simply the provision of shared student spaces.
- **clearly communicating the range of opportunities available:** all existing RBSs in all types of provision in an institution should be actively informed about opportunities available to them and other RBSs. This might be made available in the form of an induction pack (whether physical or electronic) or an induction session.

Provide wider wrap-around support before and during studies:

- **providing financial support to access classes:** as a minimum, this would take the form of fee waiver, but it is helpful if it also includes a bursary for travel expenses and any required learning resources such as coursebooks, pens and notepads.

- **providing digital devices and wifi/data:** when classes are held online, or involve a substantial online element, it is important to bear in mind that RBSs may not have the resources required to participate in the course. Organisations should try to ascertain their needs in this area and attempt to address these, potentially through tapping into hardship funds or partnering with charities who provide digital devices and/or facilitate internet access.
- **mobilising networks to support with practical matters:** these might include other departments or services within one's own institution, or perhaps local or national charities or voluntary groups. Two particular areas which emerged from this study were the need for the possibility for students to access psychological support and support with determining study or career pathways.

Looking forward

We see the cross-disciplinary nature of our research focus and research team as a strength which enabled us to explore the links between language learning and teaching and PWB. We hope that our findings will also contribute knowledge in areas such as PGT within psychology, and ESP/EAP pedagogic approaches to teaching refugees within applied linguistics and TESOL. Going forward, we would suggest possible areas for future research in this area, for example, into the use of, or alternatives to, particular pedagogic strategies, such as personalisation, the use and modification of learning strategies models, such as Oxford's S²R model (2011) for RBS contexts, or the application of psychological models, such as Dweck's (2006) concept of a 'growth mindset' and its links to post-traumatic growth in the RBS language classroom.



Refugee Background Students		Teachers of refugee – background studies		Institutions
Impact of English classes	Psycho-social needs	Strategies (classroom + self-study)	Qualities / Skills	Resources / Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved English proficiency + Psychological Well-Being (Ryff & Singer, 1996) levels, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-acceptance - Environmental mastery - Positive reactions with others - Autonomy - Purpose in life - Personal growth - Sense of safety - Trusting relationships - Agency and control - Independence - Confidence - Purpose, progression and hope - Feel valued and welcome - Positive self-regard - Positive mutual regard and support in class - Self-reflection - Ability to cope - Challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readiness to respond (through awareness of, and planning for, psycho-social and learning needs) - Sensitivity and flexible responsiveness to emerging needs - Empathy - Supportiveness - Being warm + welcoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer / tutor support with language learning strategies and meta-strategies (Oxford, 2011) in and out of class, especially goal setting and planning - Growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) - reframing risks / errors as challenges and learning opportunities - Speaking practice - Build trusting relationships - Don't force personalisation - Meeting safety needs - Don't single RBSS out as different - Facilitate choice, agency and active participation - Facilitating / demonstrating progress (e.g. scaffolding tasks and reflection) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing RBSS' teachers with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CPD (e.g. trauma training) - ongoing support network / Community of Practice - Ascertaining needs and challenges faced (e.g. needs analysis, lesson study observation) - Offering provision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joined up (progression pathways) - Range of levels - Formal / non-formal - General and academic - English - Speaking practice - Clear communications about opportunities - Wrap around support (finance, travel, stationery, laptops, wifi, psychological + careers support) in partnership with other organisations, where required 	

* Based on the findings and recommendations from the following British-Council ELTRA-funded research project: Palanac, A., Hunt, S., Rogerson-Revell, P., Cajkler, W., & Wittthaus, G. (2023). *Beyond resilience: Facilitating learning and wellbeing in the refugee language classroom.*

Figure 7

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Student Questionnaire (English version)

Date:
Number:

Part 1: About You

Personal data	1. Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) / /						
	2. Are you: (please circle)	female	male	other				
	3. Country of birth							
	4. Which language(s) do you speak?							
	5. Which language(s) can you write in?							
	6. What is your immigration status in the UK now? (tick one)	<input type="checkbox"/> asylum seeker <input type="checkbox"/> refugee status <input type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian Protection (HP) following an asylum claim <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Leave to Remain (or Discretionary Leave to Remain) following an asylum claim <input type="checkbox"/> in the UK under the Ankara Agreement <input type="checkbox"/> a dependant of any of the above groups <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) _____ _____ _____						
	7. When did you arrive in the UK?	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Month	Year			
	Month	Year						
8. Do you have a disability? (please circle)	yes	no	prefer not to say					
9. Do you live: (please circle)	alone	with one or more family member	with one or more friends Other (please specify): _____ _____ _____					
Employment	10. Occupation* in your country (paid or unpaid / voluntary)							
	11. Occupation* now (paid or unpaid / voluntary)							
	12. Future occupation* (What do you want to do in the future?)							

* This can include: the type of work that you do, volunteering, studying, doing housework, looking after children or others, being retired, being unemployed or any other occupation.

13. Education level	<p>Did you.... (please tick the highest level that applies)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> study in primary school? <input type="checkbox"/> finish primary school? <input type="checkbox"/> study in high school/secondary school? <input type="checkbox"/> finish high school/secondary school? <input type="checkbox"/> study at university? <input type="checkbox"/> get any university qualifications? If yes, please specify the highest university qualification that you have achieved: <table border="1" data-bbox="651 506 1417 629"> <tr> <td data-bbox="651 506 863 573">Type of Qualification</td> <td data-bbox="863 506 1417 573"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="651 573 863 629">Subject</td> <td data-bbox="863 573 1417 629"></td> </tr> </table>		Type of Qualification		Subject	
Type of Qualification						
Subject						
14. When did you start studying at the ELTU?	<table border="1" data-bbox="711 689 1358 792"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="711 689 1043 734">Month</th> <th data-bbox="1043 689 1358 734">Year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="711 734 1043 792"></td> <td data-bbox="1043 734 1358 792"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Month	Year		
Month	Year					
15. Which English classes have you attended in Leicester? (please tick all that apply)	<p>ELTU classes:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Module A <input type="checkbox"/> Module B <input type="checkbox"/> Module C <input type="checkbox"/> Module D <input type="checkbox"/> IELTS <input type="checkbox"/> OET	<p>Leicester City of Sanctuary classes at the ELTU:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Entry 1 (on Mondays) <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Entry 1 (on Tuesdays) <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Entry 2–3 (on Tuesdays) <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Level 1–2 (on Thursdays)				
	<p>WEA classes at the ELTU:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Together We Learn ESOL <input type="checkbox"/> Midlands ESOL Engine	<p>Other English classes (please specify)</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
16. Which English classes are you attending now? (please tick all that apply)	<p>ELTU classes:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Module A <input type="checkbox"/> Module B <input type="checkbox"/> Module C <input type="checkbox"/> Module D <input type="checkbox"/> IELTS <input type="checkbox"/> OET	<p>Leicester City of Sanctuary classes at the ELTU:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Entry 1 (on Mondays) <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Entry 1 (on Tuesdays) <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Entry 2–3 (on Tuesdays) <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Level 1–2 (on Thursdays)				
	<p>WEA classes at the ELTU:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Together We Learn ESOL <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL Entry 3 Speaking and Listening	<p>Other English classes (please specify)</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				

	When I am learning English ...	Circle one option
A	1. I concentrate well.	always often sometimes rarely never
	2. I find ways to remember new words and grammar.	always often sometimes rarely never
	3. I check my work for mistakes.	always often sometimes rarely never
	4. I plan how to improve my work next time.	always often sometimes rarely never
	5. I set my own language learning goals.	always often sometimes rarely never
B	6. I feel interested in my English class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	7. I feel I am making progress.	always often sometimes rarely never
	8. I feel safe in my class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	9. I feel calm in my class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	10. I think it is okay to make some mistakes in class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	11. I am happy to try new ways of learning in class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	12. I accept that the English language does not always have clear rules.	always often sometimes rarely never
C	13. I am happy to talk about my life in class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	14. I feel welcome in my class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	15. I am happy to work with other students in class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	16. I learn from my classmates in class.	always often sometimes rarely never
	17. I ask for help when I need it.	always often sometimes rarely never

Part 3: How Do You Feel About Yourself Now?

Please read each of the following statements and rate how you have changed since leaving your country:



Please tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> one option for each statement	1. Much less now than before I left my country	2. A bit less now than before I left my country	3. I feel the same about this now as before I left my country	4. A bit more now than before I left my country	5. Much more now than before I left my country	6. I prefer not to say
1. I feel good about myself.						
2. I have confidence in my opinions.						
3. I have a sense of purpose in life.						
4. I have strong and close relationships in my life.						
5. I feel I am in control of my life.						
6. I am open to new experiences that challenge me.						
7. I accept who I am, with both my strengths and limitations.						
8. I don't worry what other people think of me.						
9. My life has meaning.						
10. I am a compassionate and giving person.						

Please tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> one option for each statement	1. Much less now than before I left my country	2. A bit less now than before I left my country	3. I feel the same about this now as before I left my country	4. A bit more now than before I left my country	5. Much more now than before I left my country	6. I prefer not to say
11. I handle my responsibilities in life well.						
12. I am always seeking to learn about myself.						
13. I respect myself.						
14. I know what is important to me and will stand my ground, even if others disagree.						
15. I think that the things I do in my life are worthwhile.						
16. I am grateful to have people in my life who care for me.						
17. I am able to cope with what life throws at me.						
18. I am hopeful about my future and look forward to new possibilities.						

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. If you are having any difficult or upsetting thoughts and feelings, please tell xxx and she will advise you how to access support and advice

Appendix 2

Case students' questionnaire highlights

Part of Student Questionnaire		Munir	Jamal	Mehmet	Omar	Fareed	Sumeyye
Part 1: About You	Sex	male	male	male	male	male	female
	Country	Sudan	Sudan	Turkey	Turkey	Sudan	Turkey
	Immigration status	Refugee status	Asylum seeker	Refugee status	Refugee status	Asylum seeker	Ankara agreement
Part 2: In Your English Class	Languages spoken and written	Arabic and English and tribal language	Arabic and English	Turkish and English	Turkish and English	Arabic and English	Turkish, Arabic and English
	Items which scored low (1 or 2)	Item 5 – 'I set my own language learning goals' (cognitive)	Item 13 – 'I am happy to talk about my life in class' (affective)	Item 10 – 'I think it's ok to make some mistakes in class' (affective)	Item 2 – 'I find ways to remember new words and grammar in the lesson' (cognitive) Item 13 – 'I am happy to talk about my life in class' (affective)		
	Items which scored low (1 or 2)		Item 15 – 'I think that the things I do in my life are worthwhile' (Purpose in Life)		Item 4 – 'I have strong and close relationships in my life' (Positive Relationships) Item 9 – 'My life has meaning' (Purpose in Life) Item 16 – 'I am grateful to have people in my life who care for me' (Positive Relationships)		Item 1 – 'I feel good about myself' (Self-Acceptance) Item 5 – 'I feel in control of my life' (Sense of Mastery) Item 6 – 'I am open to new experiences' (Personal Growth)



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