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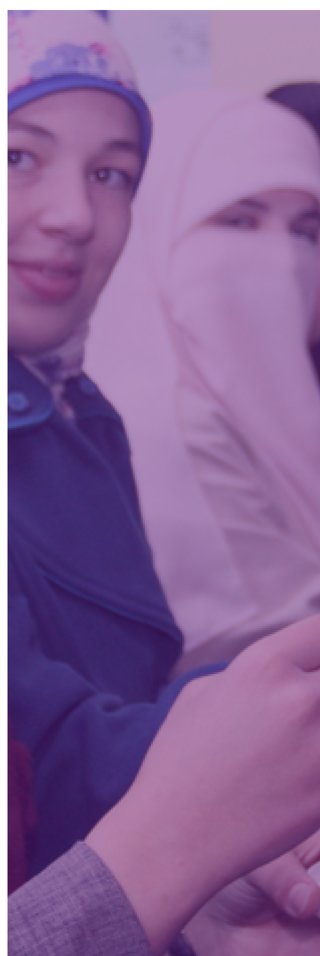
Mapping the provision of English language to displaced and marginalised youth in Jordan's non-formal and informal education sectors



Language for Resilience

Georgina Hett
August 2019

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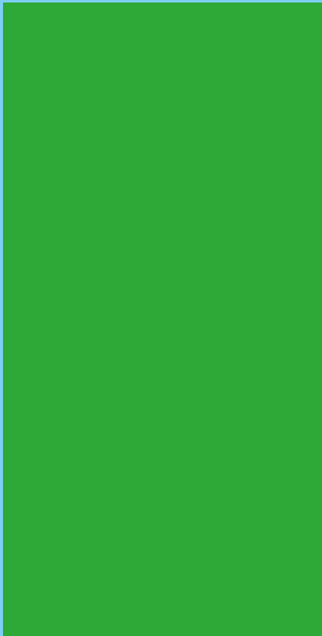
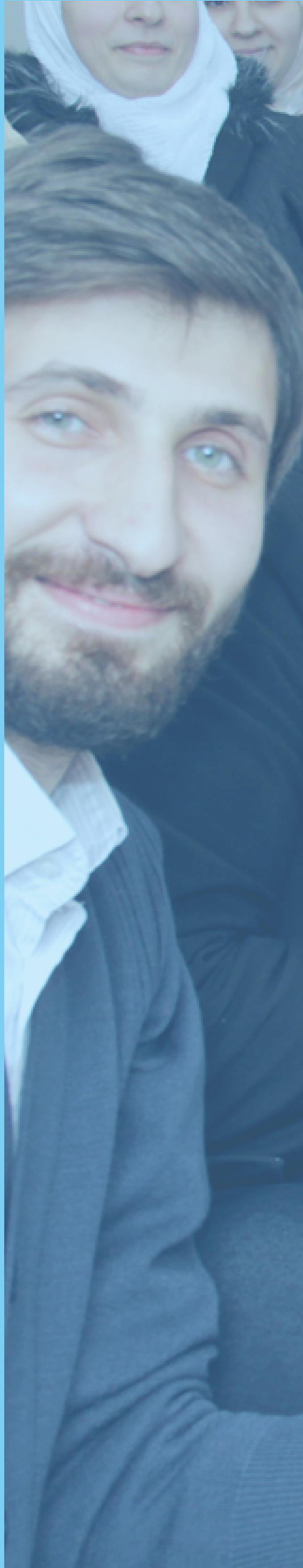
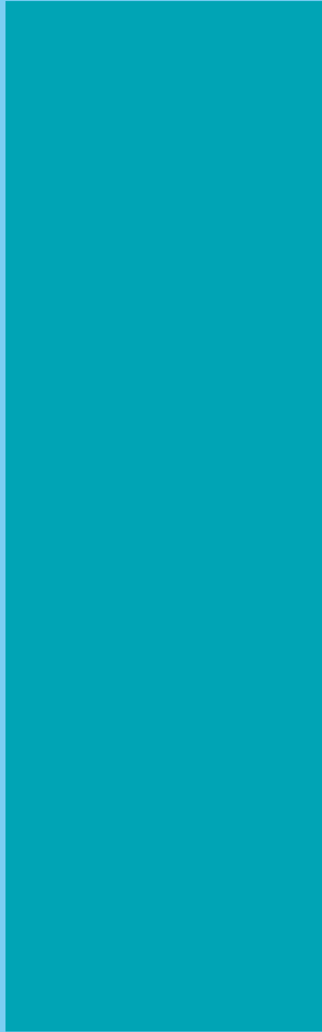

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CONTENTS

Mapping the provision of English language to displaced and marginalised youth in Jordan's non-formal and informal education sectors 1

Executive summary 3
Educational and English needs around Jordan 3
Mapping exercise findings 3
Conclusions and recommendations 4

List of abbreviations 4

Introduction 5

Methodology 6
Ethical considerations 7
Limitations 7

Educational and English needs in Jordan 8
Displacement, marginalisation and youth 9

Mapping exercise findings 9
English provision by governorate 9
Increased availability of English since 2013 10
Scope and intensity of provision 10
Beneficiaries 10

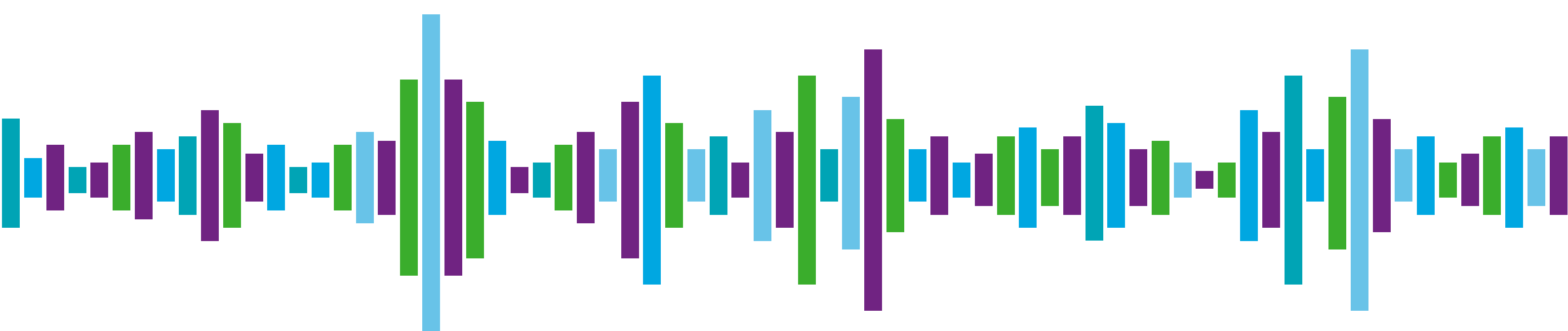
Types and modes of English provision 11
English provision by level 13

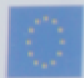
Organisation of students in classes 14
Funding and technological resources 15

Challenges to English provision 15
Students' (and parents') commitment and attainment 16
Expectations around English learning 17
Students' fear of English 18

Teacher and management training needs 19

Summary and recommendations 20

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2019, the British Council commissioned a mapping exercise to explore the priorities, challenges and needs in the provision of English to displaced and marginalised youth in the non-formal and learning support sectors in Jordan. This work aims to identify potential scope for improvement and greater co-operation in the provision of English language services.

The report is based on desk research, a short online survey and a series of hour-long interviews with centre managers (CMs) and English teachers (ETs). The research was conducted between February and April 2019.

Educational and English needs around Jordan

With large numbers of refugee children swelling public school classrooms, Jordan's Ministry of Education (MoE) has expanded measures such as double shifts in formal schools, while also increasing educational support in the non-formal and informal sectors to alleviate pressure on formal schools. Participants in this research signalled these diversified and increased opportunities for accessing extra English support as a particular benefit of the refugee crisis to Jordan's marginalised youth, as well as to refugees.

Mapping exercise findings

The research yielded a far higher data return from northern and central governorates than from the south, highlighting the greater availability of English provision in these areas. The mapping exercise illustrated the general features of non-formal and informal English provision across Jordan, including a range of existing issues in delivery.

- English learners tend to be young. Beneficiaries of English provision are around four times more likely to be aged 14 or under than over 15.
- English provision is mostly remedial and general in nature, with only limited opportunities available for specialised provision such as academic or business English.
- Informal/non-formal English provision remains rather 'school-like', which is seen as detrimental to English learning. Moving towards more creative, play-based English provision through clubs would be a desirable shift.
- Although most of the English provision available is offered at beginner and elementary levels, teachers are concerned that many students' English is not up to the level of the class material.
- Some major challenges to teaching English to displaced and marginalised youth include lack of investment and poor attendance levels, conflicting expectations around the purposes and priorities of English provision, and students' fear of English.
- Despite many teachers holding English literature degrees, few have received any formal training, so teacher training needs remain broad. The additional need for training in providing psychosocial support to enhance students' resilience through English is widespread.

Conclusions and recommendations

In the face of uneven English provision around Jordan, the need for equity of access to training and other interventions is emphasised. The report recommends harnessing the hand-held technology already available and the identification of 'training hubs' where teachers can gather to discuss and activate training initiatives through peer-learning. A progressively more informal approach to English provision is endorsed, which builds basic literacy skills in an engaging, play-based environment that fosters psychosocial support.

List of abbreviations

CBO
Community-based organisation

CM
Centre manager

CSO
Civil society organisation

DoS
Department of Statistics

ET
English teacher

IFE
Informal education (not certified by the MoE)

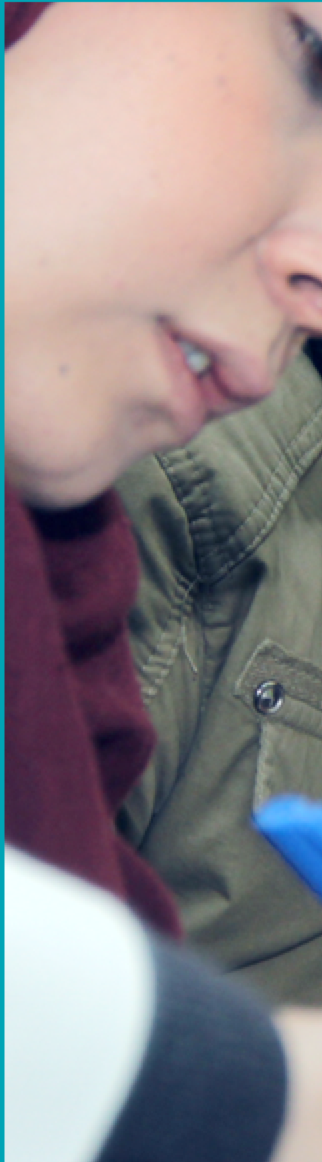
INGO
International non-governmental organisation

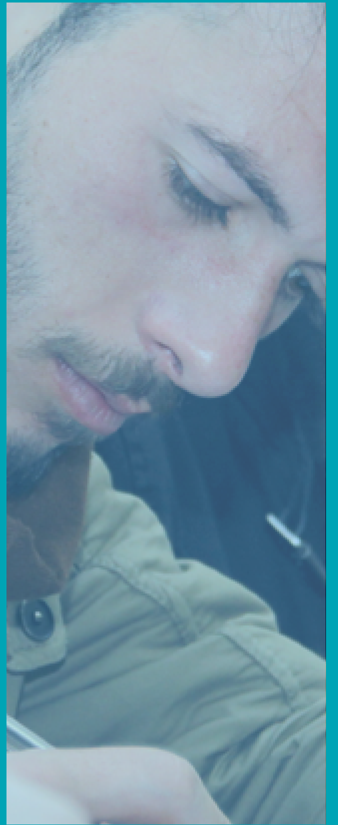
ITC
Informal tented community (Dom/Turkman)

MoE
Ministry of Education

NFE
Non-formal education (certified by the MoE)

NNGO
National non-governmental organisation





INTRODUCTION

The findings of this research highlight the important role played by the non-formal (NFE) and informal (IFE) education sectors in providing English language teaching to displaced and marginalised youth in Jordan. The report also demonstrates that supplementary English language provision in these sectors as a felt-need for marginalised Jordanians and other refugees pre-existed the Syrian refugee crisis. Double-shift schooling has been in place in Jordan since 1960 in response to overcrowding in schools caused by influxes of refugee children from neighbouring countries, particularly the Occupied Palestinian Territories and later Iraq.[1]

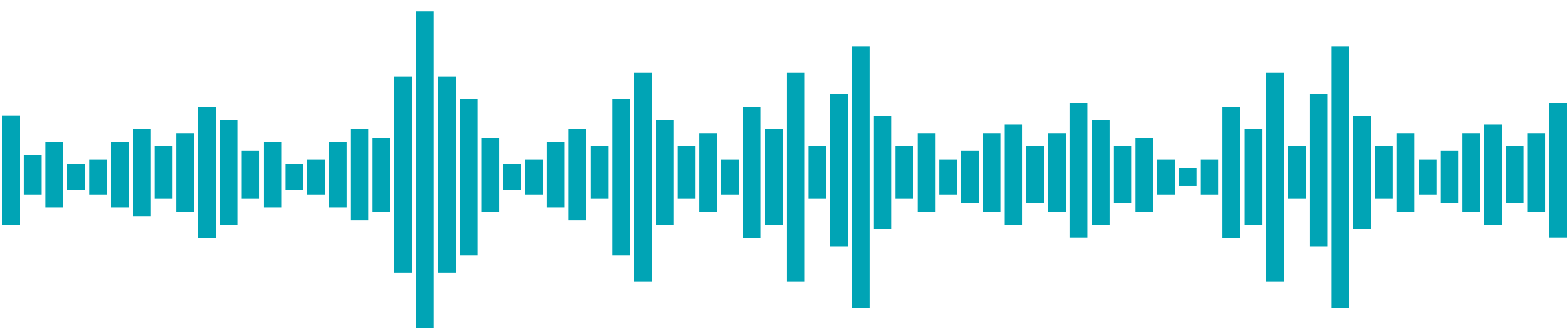
Much of the programming researched in this report has been driven by the still overwhelming numbers of Syrian refugees[2] living in Jordan (660,393 UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees, although the 2016 census put the total number of Syrians in Jordan at 1.3 million). However, this does not tell the full story of Jordan's hospitality to refugees. In addition to Syrian refugees, the UNHCR Jordan factsheet for March 2019 numbers Iraqis in Jordan at 67,600 and Yemenis at 14,457, with over 6,000 Sudanese and almost 800 Somalis.[3] The number of Sudanese granted refugee status spiked in 2013 and 2014,[4] but has remained largely static since 2015, as has the number of Somalis.[5] Meanwhile, numbers of Yemenis registering with UNHCR have risen.[6] The second Mixed Migration Platform briefing report contends that the weight of numbers of Syrians has led to a differentiated humanitarian response, with agencies and donors tending to 'focus exclusively on Syrians, with the needs of other nationalities rarely featuring'.[7]

The British Council's 2016 Language for Resilience report[8] highlights several ways in which teacher training and development initiatives could enhance personal, community and institutional resilience in diverse ways. Throughout the report, 'options for programme development' offer suggestions for interventions facilitated or supported by the British Council based on its long history of language programming in conflict and post-conflict zones.[9]

In order to further explore these opportunities, in January 2019, the British Council commissioned a mapping exercise of the provision of English to displaced and marginalised youth in the NFE and IFE (learning support) sectors in Jordan, together with a description of the English provision available.

This report and its findings build on previous research by exploring in greater depth the priorities, challenges and potential scope for improvement and greater co-operation in the provision of English language services for displaced and marginalised youth groups. This will in turn inform the development of future programming, leading to co-ordinated efforts in teacher training and programme development led by the British Council.

1. https://www.double-shift.org/double-shift/the-true-samaritans (accessed 30 July 2019). Double Shift is a joint project of the Berlin Social Science Center and the European Bank for Reconstruction Development with support from Madrasati.
2. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36 (data as at 9 April 2019; accessed 24 April 2019).
3. UNHCR Jordan Factsheet (March 2019) https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/68925.pdf (accessed 30 July 2019).
4. Davis, R et al. (2016) Sudanese and Somali Refugees in Jordan: Hierarchies of Aid in Protracted Displacement Crises, Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP). Middle East Report 279.
5. Mixed Migration Platform Briefing Report (April 2017) Displaced Minorities Part I: Migration and displacement trends of Somali, Sudanese and Yemeni refugees and other migrants in Jordan. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MMP-Feature_Article_Displaced-Minorities-Jordan_P1.pdf (accessed 30 July 2019).
6. Ibid.
7. Mixed Migration Platform Briefing Report (April 2017) Displaced Minorities Part II: Experiences and needs of Somali, Sudanese and Yemeni refugees and other migrants in Jordan. http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MMP-Feature_Article_Displaced-Minorities-Jordan_P2.pdf (accessed 30 July 2019).
8. Capstick, T and Delaney, M (2016) Language for Resilience: The role of language in enhancing the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities. The British Council.
9. Ibid.: 4.



METHODOLOGY

This report conveys an overall picture of English provision in the NFE and informal learning support sectors around Jordan, using data collected through an online mapping survey and follow-up interviews conducted in five of Jordan's 12 governorates. Data was collected in order to provide an insight into the types and format of English provision being offered, and their location. As well as survey responses, the voices of CMs and ETs from ten centres around Jordan are foregrounded, acknowledging that their perspectives and needs can lead to capacity building and increased resilience at institutional, service-provider levels.[10]

The following research activities were undertaken to collect this data:

- a rapid literature review to understand the wider humanitarian situation in Jordan and the educational context onto which findings from the NFE and IFE sectors would sit
- desk research to identify current English language providers and to grow the list of British Council contacts with other English providers which were then contacted by email and telephone
- an online survey, informed by previous mapping exercises[11] and the rapid literature review, which was shared with all non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) offering English at the time of data collection, to gather information about their English provision
- follow-up interviews with CBO managers and/or ETs in five of Jordan's 12 governorates.

The online survey was shared directly with both individual centres offering English and larger national and international NGOs to disseminate through their networks to centres and/or implementing partners offering English. The survey remained open for a period of two months from February to April 2019.

In total, 125 completed surveys were received. However, 21 of these appeared to be duplicate surveys or surveys from centres not currently offering English, which were thus considered outside the scope of the research. Therefore, 104 surveys were included in the analysis, from providers offering English language provision at the time of conducting the research, in all of Jordan's 12 governorates.

Ten centres were chosen for follow-up interviews with the CMs and/or ETs. These were a mixture of international (INGOs) and national (NNGOs) non-governmental organisations, individual CBOs partnering with INGOs or NNGOs, and individual CBOs with no other affiliation. This enabled me to incorporate qualitative perspectives from the various types of organisations represented in the research, while giving slightly greater place to organisations with the highest proportion of respondents in the dataset. Interviews took place in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, Karak and Madaba governorates in order to obtain rich data from northern, central and southern governorates. No interviews were conducted in camp settings, as the priority of the research was to focus on settings where both refugees and marginalised Jordanians were beneficiaries.

Ethical considerations

Acknowledging that this research required participation at an institutional level (INGO, NNGO, etc.), as well as at an individual centre management and teacher level, I sought to explain the research and obtain informed consent from multiple sources – firstly from gatekeepers to NGOs and then again from the CMs or teachers who would ultimately complete the online survey. An email outlining the intended research project was shared initially, and this information was included again in the online survey for those completing the questionnaire. Participants in follow-up interviews were also asked to sign informed consent forms. The following measures were implemented:

- respondents agreed to participate by completing the survey
- respondents could participate anonymously by not sharing the name of their organisation/centre or any contact details
- participants could opt out of the research at any time
- written notes from the interviews are stored securely using password protection
- participants' anonymity has been preserved in the writing of the research report.

Limitations

Despite enthusiastic responses to my initial contact and explanation of the research, some INGOs failed to follow through with providing completed surveys. Online surveys were shared with over 60 other organisations whose centres did not return completed surveys. It is difficult to guess how many different sites of English provision these organisations may represent. Time constraints limited the extent to which it was possible to follow up with these organisations or to identify all centres currently providing English language education. Possibly some centres and organisations, having been contacted, elected not to participate in the research for their own reasons.

Some survey responses averaged out an organisation's services between several different individual sites, including centres in different governorates, rather than returning one form per centre. The researcher contacted these organisations to request a disaggregation of their centres by location in order to more accurately map the availability of English by governorate. This revealed that the 104 surveys returned actually represented around 220 sites of English provision.[12]

Of the surveys reporting for more than one site of delivery, some gave total student numbers covering their multiple sites of delivery, while others averaged out student numbers between multiple sites of delivery. Furthermore, some surveys gave total numbers of beneficiaries over a period of years, which further confused the numerical data. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to obtain accurate numbers of student beneficiaries in each of these individual centres; therefore, the data for numbers of students currently accessing English in each governorate remains imprecise.

IN NORTHERN AND CENTRAL JORDAN, INCREASED ENGLISH PROVISION WAS SEEN AS A POSITIVE OUTCOME OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS.

10. Capstick, T and Delaney, M (2016) op. cit.: 8.
11. Stevenson, A, King, P and Sterland, L (2017) Mapping ESOL Provision in Greater London. Learning and Works Institute.
12. One respondent was uncertain of the exact numbers of small English groups running at the time of collecting data. Details of numbers of classes happening in different governorates were also unavailable.

EDUCATIONAL AND ENGLISH NEEDS IN JORDAN

As mentioned in the introduction, Jordan's education system has been under pressure for decades, in part due to previous spates of refugees swelling the population. Humanitarian funding to alleviate the pressure of the huge influx of Syrian refugee children and youth since 2011 has driven much of the educational programming and English language provision being examined in this research. Many Syrian refugees have now been in Jordan for at least five years.[13] Over 80 per cent of the registered Syrian refugees live in host communities, with the highest concentrations in Amman, Mafraq, Irbid and Zarqa governorates, which host 89 per cent of the total registered Syrian refugees.[14]

Other migrant communities arguably face more difficulties accessing formal education in Jordan than Syrians. This is partly down to schooling costs, which are waivered only for Syrians, and occasionally due to racism and prejudice in the classroom, which deters school attendance.[15] Davis et al. (2016) highlight the complexities surrounding the status of non-Syrian refugees in Jordan, outlining their much longer and more uncertain pathways from being classed as 'asylum seekers' to being granted refugee status by UNHCR, and the limitations these place on their ability to access assistance.[16] Their report sheds light on the role of IFE sector establishments in creating opportunities for free education for all, regardless of their nationality.

The Syrian refugee crisis has propelled Jordan into a period of 'tremendous demographic and contextual challenges'[17] – not least the strains on the financial and human resources of Jordan's education system that the huge influx of refugee children has created.[18] Despite such pressures, Jordan's MoE remains committed to a vision of quality education for all – including marginalised Jordanians and refugees. This commitment is exemplified by and set out in the MoE's Education Strategic Plan 2018–22, which outlines the measures being taken by the ministry to offer learning support in the informal sector or create alternative learning pathways in the non-formal sector, all of which it is implementing in partnership with a multitude of INGOs.

The five strands of the NFE curriculum in Jordan are administered and certified by the MoE.[19] The Drop Out Educating Programme is the strand primarily encountered in this research and comprises a certified two-year programme available to students who have missed one year of schooling or who have never been enrolled in formal education in Jordan, earning them a certificate equivalent to a public-school grade completion. To continue back into formal education, students must complete the grade subsequent to theircertificated level as homeschoolers, before transferring into formal schooling.

IFE comprises activities such as literacy, numeracy and life skills sessions that are not certifiable by the MoE or bound to specific age groups. It includes basic learning, technical skills/post-basic education, recreational activities, and accelerated learning to support reintegration into formal schooling.[20]

IT IS CLEAR THAT A COMMON DIRECTION AND PURPOSE IS GRADUALLY EMERGING ACROSS PROVIDERS THAT COULD GALVANISE THE DELIVERY OF ENGLISH IN THE IFE SECTOR IN PARTICULAR.

Displacement, marginalisation and youth

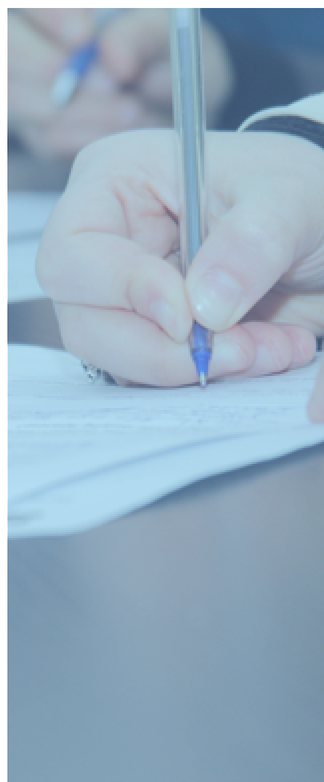
The World Bank's 2019 Economic Update for Jordan reviews the findings of the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DoS) in 2010 that 14.4 per cent of Jordanians lived below the national poverty line, with an additional 18 per cent being vulnerable to poverty. Given that these findings pre-date the Syrian refugee crisis, the update posits that poverty and vulnerability are unlikely to have declined when estimates from the DoS 2017–18 survey are released.[21] This language mapping report borrows the definition of vulnerable children found in the 2017 Situation Analysis of Children in Jordan: 'poor children, refugee children without adequate documentation, children with disabilities, children from marginalised ethnic minorities, and children living in informal settlements'.[22] The analysis highlights the importance of achieving parity of access to education for children from these communities.

The UNFPA Youth Mapping Report (2014–15) takes 'youth' to be the 10–24 age group. UNICEF's guidance note on 'Makani' separates this into 'girls and boys (5–18 years) and young people (up to 24 years old)'.[23] This research follows the wider definition adopted by UNICEF to incorporate English services offered to both age group categories.

The UNFPA report found that while improving the overall quality of education for all was the biggest challenge facing Jordan, focus group participants from five northern and central governorates particularly emphasised a need for activities that improve the quality of English language provision around Jordan.[24]

This research found that of the 104 survey responses, 82 reported that their English provision had been introduced within the last six years. This highlights how, despite the pre-existing need for educational support, the Syrian refugee crisis has been the catalyst for intensified efforts on the part of the MoE, NGOs and CSOs.

Years of English provision	
6 years or less	82
7 years or more	21
No answer	2



13. Ibid.
14. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36 (data as at 9 April 2019; accessed 24 April 2019).
15. Mixed Migration Platform Briefing Report (April 2017) op. cit.
16. Davis, R et al. (2016) op. cit.
17. Ministry of Education: Education Strategic Plan 2018–22: 9.18. Ibid.
19. See the Education Sector Working Group Jordan 2014 Glossary of Terms for further details of NFE provision. Available online at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/0md80nr7h0nwek7/2014_09_17_ESWG%20Education%20Glossary%20Ar_Eng.pdf?dl=0 (accessed 8 April 2019).
20. Ibid.
21. http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/837261553672494334/jordan-MEU-April-2019-Eng.pdf (accessed 30 July 2019).
22. National Council for Family Affairs/UNICEF (2017) Situation Analysis of Children in Jordan: 5.
23. UNICEF Jordan Country Office (2015) Guidance Note on "Makani" – "My Space" Approach: Comprehensive child protection, education, youth empowerment and psychosocial support approach: 2. Available online at: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/45808 (accessed 8 April 2019).
24. UNFPA (2015) Who is doing What for Youth in Jordan: Mapping of Youth Activities in Jordan 2014–15: 25.

MAPPING EXERCISE FINDINGS

English provision by governorate

The quantity of English provision varies greatly between governorates, reflecting differences in demand, particularly between the north and south. Provision in northern and central governorates (69 and 94 sites of English provision respectively) greatly outweighs that of the south of Jordan (26 sites). This reflects the national pattern of population density but is also determined by higher concentrations of Syrian refugees in northern and central areas, which has in turn increased pressure on public schools and led to the implementation of double-shift schooling to address this. In 2016, 235,952 students were spread across 450 double-shift schools, the majority of which were in Amman, Mafraq, Irbid and Zarqa governorates.[25]

English provision by governorate	
Ajloun	6
Amman	51
Aqaba	7
Balqa	5
Irbid	30
Jerash	3
Karak	12
Maan	5
Madaba	4
Tafila	2
Zarqa	36
Various	30

Increased availability of English since 2013

In northern and central Jordan, increased English provision was seen as a positive outcome of the Syrian refugee crisis. Interview participants asserted that measures taken by the MoE and INGOs to mitigate pressure on public schools through non-formal and learning support service interventions have benefited northern and central communities by increasing opportunities for marginalised Jordanians and refugees in Jordan since before the Syrian crisis to learn English. Increased numbers of foreign NGO staff in these governorates have also created greater opportunities and need for English, since English is the de facto lingua franca of the international community.[26]

In contrast, interviews in Karak and Madaba governorates suggested that the demand for English has not changed significantly since 2011, as fewer refugees have settled in these areas. Nevertheless, all three of the centres visited in these governorates have started offering English classes within the last five years and were partnered with a large INGO providing learning support services nationally in response to the Syrian refugee situation.

Scope and intensity of provision

The scope of centres' English provision ranges from very small groups to larger centres reporting capacity reaching to the thousands. The largest group of beneficiaries is in the 10–14 age category, with the smallest being the 19+ age group. Beneficiaries up to 14 years old outweigh beneficiaries aged 15 and above by more than four to one. However, as mentioned previously, it is problematic trying to extrapolate much more than that from the numerical data, because of the range of ways in which surveys were answered. Average class sizes reported were between 20 and 30 students.

The intensity of English provision varies from 45 minutes per week to 12 hours per week. Most providers offer between one and four hours of English per week. Provision may vary from level to level and, in some centres, provision increases during public school holidays. The most commonly reported model was provision of three hours per week. The INGO implementing the MoE's Drop Out programme (14 respondents, accounting for 97 centres) offered 1.25 hours of English per week.

Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of English provision are predominantly Jordanian, Palestinian and Syrian, with Syrian-only beneficiaries in Azraq and Zaatari camps. Other nationalities comprise both refugees and migrant labourers (or their children). Dom and Turkmen students are occasional beneficiaries of English provision mentioned by surveys from Amman, Madaba and Karak governorates. Students from these communities are particularly marginalised and limited in their access to education, due to their often-peripatetic lifestyles and low levels of literacy, so an eighth-grade age group were said to have 'the English level of third graders' (ET, Karak governorate). Teachers often travel to these informal tented communities (ITCs) to deliver classes in their tents. In one centre, this was jokingly referred to as 'McDelivery teaching' (CM, Mafraq governorate). ETs and managers in centres serving ITCs consistently highlighted the challenges of educating students who accessed schooling so irregularly. In Mafraq, where centres could be trying to support tented Syrian refugees, one centre described the lack of commitment to education among this group as a major challenge to education.

Nationalities of beneficiaries learning English	
Jordanian	86.3%
Palestinian	61%
Dom	2%
Turkman	2%
Syrian	87%
Yemeni	5%
Sudanese	7%
Egyptian	15%
Iraqi	9%
Other	9%

The table above represents the percentage of survey respondents that reported offering English provision to the nationalities listed. For example, 88 centres (86.3 per cent of respondents) stated that Jordanians are among their beneficiaries, while 61 per cent of centres are serving Palestinians and 87 per cent count Syrians among their beneficiaries. Some centres did not offer a breakdown of nationalities but noted that recipients of their services came from 'mixed nationalities' (survey, Amman governorate) or 'all nationalities' (survey, Balqa' governorate). Most centres reported serving a wide range of nationalities.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF ENGLISH IS BEING PROVIDED BY TEACHERS WHO HAVE RECEIVED LITTLE OR NO FORMAL TEACHER TRAINING BEYOND AN ENGLISH LITERATURE DEGREE.

25. Ministry of Education EMIS data. Cited in Ministry of Education: Education Strategic Plan 2018–22: 8.

26. Capstick, T and Delaney, M (2016) op. cit.: 19.

TYPES AND MODES OF ENGLISH PROVISION

Most English provision is 'general' in nature, and around two-thirds of respondents are offering English as part of remedial literacy programming to support school children. This is a priority for CBOs and CSOs partnering with the MoE as part of a nationally led response to the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis on Jordan's education system. English is offered as part of a wider remedial programme enhancing Arabic, maths and science.

A wide range of curricula are being used for this, with various 'in-house' curricula having been developed by individual organisations with assistance from the MoE. Fifty respondents reported that they are offering remedial English using the Save the Children/UNICEF curriculum developed in co-operation with the MoE. This curriculum was seen as challenging for refugees, with one teacher describing the Grade 2 book as 'better suited to the English level of fifth-grade Syrians' (ET, Karak governorate). Several other surveys reported using the MoE's public school curriculum in their remedial setting. A few centres are using international coursebooks or curricula with external accreditation.

The Save the Children/UNICEF curriculum is implemented by some centres as classes of one hour, offered three times per week, and by others as classes of 45 minutes offered five days per week, with the following course structure:

Level	Hours of tuition	Period
1 (Grades 1–3)	72	6 months
2 (Grades 4–6)	42	6 months
3 (Grades 7–9)	42	6 months

There is some limited provision of specialised English available: 20 survey respondents identified themselves as offering English for professional or academic purposes. Most of the 20 responses account for NGO centres operating the MoE's Drop Out programme. This programme is implemented in three blocks of 40 hours each, giving a total of 120 hours of English provision over a two-year period.

Other skills-based approaches such as workplace workshops were offered by just five providers, while informal activities such as book clubs or conversation clubs are similarly scarce. Preparation for international exams such as IELTS was mentioned by just one centre, with mainly foreign teachers. Only seven English providers surveyed are exclusively serving students aged 15 or over, and, of these, only one is offering specialised English for professional or academic purposes. The rest offer general or remedial English, or support students who are studying for the secondary education certification exam Al-Tawjihi.

Despite this, several surveys mentioned that students learn English to be able to 'complete their studies' (survey, Amman governorate) and to 'get scholarship' [sic] (survey, Amman governorate), or stated that the 'current labour market requires English as a fundamental' (survey, Irbid governorate).

Although there was little direct mention of students with special needs, learning difficulties or disabilities in the surveys, several respondents identified a need for further training in teaching children with special educational needs.

- Programmes are needed that combine academic and/or professional and bureaucratic skills with appropriate consideration of the contextual needs of beneficiaries and prepare them for academic study or non-academic pathways to professional employment opportunities.
- Programmes such as the British Council's free online module on special educational needs and other documented resources could be valuably subtitled in Arabic and discursively shared with teachers to enhance their capacity and confidence in this area.

Types of English provision currently offered	
Remedial literacy	75
General English	45
Professional/academic purposes	20
Tawjihi support	10
Workplace workshops	5
Drop Out programme	4
Other: conversation, IELTS, cultural skills, etc.	8

Modes of delivery tend to be static, fixed largely in classroom settings which appeared somewhat formal with desks and chairs, despite efforts to decorate and adorn the walls with students' work and informative posters. There is some limited use of digital resources. Eighty-two surveys (79 per cent) indicated that their English lessons are delivered in the classroom only. In contrast, 17 (16 per cent) offer English through blended teaching approaches (incorporating internet-based resources and activities). Six respondents mentioned delivering English classes in non-classroom contexts such as outdoors, in tents or caravans with ITCs or tented refugee communities, in homes or in conversation or book clubs, in addition to classroom settings in centres.

English provision: From classes to clubs

The desire to move away from formal approaches to English provision emerged strongly in interviews. Several teachers expressed frustration with their classroom settings. Teachers argued that English classes in community centres have mirrored those of formal school environments too closely, which was demotivating for students and affected attendance levels. One teacher desired to distance the centre from an identity of 'school' and to be radically different – mentioning learning through play, using technology and students' smartphones to support learning.[27] Others desired a room for English in which to create a safe 'English zone' filled with toys, other objects and musical CDs – 'anything that makes the centre different from school' (ET, Karak governorate). A centre in Amman had tried introducing an English book club, but this had ended up being run mainly in Arabic, as students were shy about trying and speaking English.

A centre manager in Irbid governorate described his 'big idea' of a Montessori-type English room where students move around different learning stations each manned by volunteers and interact naturally in English as they engage in learning activities at each station. Another director of an NNGO outlined their plans to take a lead on narrowing this gap between teachers' current realities and future aspirations for English provision. Their NGO was engaged in a transition into English provision through clubs where English would be acquired through play, daily life interactions and social activities to 'make English a part of their daily lives' and 'get away from the idea of school'.[28]

Ideas for further support

It is clear that a common direction and purpose is gradually emerging across providers that could galvanise the delivery of English in the IFE sector in particular. The British Council has a wealth of ideas and experience in the area of developing English clubs from which to make a coherent and cohesive contribution to this need. Opportunities should be sought for improved co-ordination and effective partnerships between NGOs, the British Council and other actors, to develop manuals, resources and training for teachers running these clubs.

English provision by level

English levels being offered by providers	
Absolute beginner (0)	53
Beginner (1)	77
Elementary (2)	79
Below intermediate (3)	63
Intermediate (4)	44
Above intermediate (5)	27
Advanced and above (6)	9

Courses are currently offered to students across the full range of levels, with higher concentrations of courses in the lower levels. Several respondents are offering multiple classes at different levels, which sometimes corresponded with them offering a range of types of classes.

Interview data yielded frequent concerns over students' very low levels of both English and Arabic, even among children in full-time formal education: 'Even fourth-grade children can't write their own names in Arabic' (CM, Amman governorate). This is seen as a particular problem among children in second shift schools.

Ideas for further support

In this context, training resources specifically targeting teaching low-level students and basic English literacy skills would be beneficial to a large swathe of providers in this sector, as would training in assessing students' English levels, as the next part shows. There is also a clear need to make some provision for improving Arabic literacy teaching and resources, particularly for refugees who do not have Arabic as a first language.

ENGLISH BY ITSELF IS BLAND, YOU NEED TO SPRINKLE IT WITH SPICES!

27. Interview 10, English teacher, Madaba governorate.
28. Personal communication with NGO director, Amman, 8 April 2019.

ORGANISATION OF STUDENTS IN CLASSES

The survey requested details of how students are grouped to make up classes, with a separate question around the gender makeup of classes. It also asked respondents to evaluate whether there was parity in students' English levels within classes.

Gender considerations

Forty-three respondents indicated that they offer mixed-sex classes, while 49 offer classes in single-sex groupings. Eleven respondents offer both mixed and single-sex groups depending on the ages of the students.[29] Some specified offering mixed classes to children under ten before moving into segregated classes for the over tens. Others differentiated by grade: Grades 1–3 are grouped in mixed classes, while grades 4 and above are segregated. These grade levels parallel the age ranges already mentioned.

Correspondingly, 49 per cent of the surveys reporting to offer mixed classes serve students in the youngest age bracket of under nines as a majority. This figure increases to 81 per cent when the 10–14 age group is included. Of the respondents offering segregated classes, only ten per cent had the under nine age group as their largest cohort. However, there are notable exceptions to these overall patterns, particularly in Amman where some centres offer only classes for the 19+ age group and run classes as mixed groupings. A centre in Amman pointed to the success of mixing nationalities in their classes and mentioned wishing to integrate the genders in classes more extensively, too. However, they felt that 'the mentality' of their beneficiaries prevented this (CM, Amman governorate).

Other considerations in class organisation

Age and/or English level were the most common factors considered in grouping students. Most respondents group students according to 'age and English level' (34 per cent), with 24 per cent grouping students according to their English level alone, and 23 per cent grouping students according to their ages.

Seventy-seven per cent of respondents reported offering an intake assessment of student beneficiaries before they are placed in classes. However, it emerged that intake assessments are often of students' Arabic and mathematics levels, rather than of their English levels. In response to this gap, some ETs mentioned devising their own English assessment.[30]

Despite the seemingly high priority given to students' English levels in determining their class groups, of the 79 respondents that offer an intake assessment, 51 (65 per cent) found that students did not share the same English level within classes. Possible reasons for this disconnect could include that students' English levels are being tested but clear policies for utilising the results are unavailable, or that intake assessments more widely do not include English. Possibly, some mixing of levels is also necessary to fill classes. One survey reported that despite offering an intake assessment, students were in fact placed by age.

Ideas for further support

Many centres would benefit from support from the British Council and other NGOs in designing, administering and responding to English language placement tests or general language assessment tools. 'Assessment' featured as a training need for CMs in 20 per cent of surveys.

How student groups are organised	
Age	24
English level	25
Age and English level	35
Academic performance	11
Times students can attend	6
Gender	1
Arabic	2

Funding and technological resources

Funding is a primary en/disabling factor affecting centres' abilities to provide English, both in terms of personnel and resources, particularly in the IFE sector. Access to resources is unequal and competitive, which is seen to limit the extent to which English provision can be offered, and its efficacy. Thirty-two centres contacted for this research but NOT offering English, and therefore not represented in the data, cited lack of or withdrawn funding as the primary reason for their not having started, or having to stop, offering English classes. Another main reason given was the lack of English teachers available to them.

Seventy-one respondents indicated that their work is enabled by funding or direct implementation from partnering organisations. Very few centres offer English provision without any financial or practical support. Some centres had funding for other programming, but not for their English provision, so relied on volunteers. In the case of one centre, this volunteer had not even completed their own English studies, raising question marks over the quality of teaching available, despite the obvious good intentions. A manager in Irbid particularly mentioned the challenge of retaining teachers in this environment: 'The best is when volunteers are also teachers in local schools as they already have an income so they are less likely to move on anywhere else' (CM, Irbid governorate).

For him, the possibility of local school teachers volunteering was a means of ensuring both quality and sustainable English teaching for his beneficiaries. However, he also highlighted the difficulty that during school exam periods, these teachers were not available to him, emphasising the problem with relying on people with already heavy workloads. Nevertheless, 34 surveys reported that their English teachers also work in MoE schools.

Technological resources to support language learning were inconsistently available, yet consistently desired and requested.

Ideas for further support

The widespread availability of hand-held technology to students and their families should be harnessed through developing a broad database of mobile applications that can enhance English learning in the home. Active promotion and exploitation of the digital resources already available to beneficiaries could significantly enhance the delivery of English provision.

Training teachers in using these applications both for class and homework would be an essential step in ensuring their effective ongoing use.

INTERVIEW DATA YIELDED FREQUENT CONCERNS OVER STUDENTS' VERY LOW LEVELS OF BOTH ENGLISH AND ARABIC, EVEN AMONG CHILDREN IN FULL-TIME FORMAL EDUCATION.

29. One respondent did not answer the question.

28. Interview 9, English teacher, Karak governorate.

CHALLENGES TO ENGLISH PROVISION

In addition to the challenges of funding mentioned above, students' perceived lack of motivation to attend informal English classes is mentioned by research participants as a significant problem for providers serving displaced and marginalised youth. This is linked to familial needs, but also to the classroom environments and expectations around the purposes of provision and classroom language use. Students' perceived fear of English, partly resulting from their experiences in public schools, is another obstacle. Circumstantial factors such as weather, school exam periods and access to opportunities for practice were also mentioned as contributing factors limiting students' investment in learning English.

Students' (and parents') commitment and attainment

Some managers and teachers interviewed mentioned Syrian students' poor attendance in English classes as an indication of their (and their parents') low investment in learning English. They also cited Syrian children's low levels of motivation to complete homework as an area for concern. They seemed to give little consideration to other possible circumstances that could be preventing attendance or homework completion (such as the ongoing 'formality' of these 'informal' learning environments and their similarity to formal schools, mentioned above), and several interview respondents expressed the ensuing belief that education is a low priority for Syrian families. They claimed that this is true across all age groups, but also endorsed the narrative that this is particularly true for teenaged boys, for whom generating income for the home becomes a family priority.[32] Low literacy levels among parents was seen to compound the problem of homework completions. Managers also acknowledged that the lack of certification in IFE sector centres is a problem and further disincentive.

CMs regularly communicate to parents the importance of encouraging their children to remain committed to their learning. Several mentioned the need for greater incentives to encourage attendance. 'English by itself is bland, you need to sprinkle it with spices!' (CM1, Irbid governorate). The primary suggested vehicle for this was graduation ceremonies with prizes and public celebrations of students' 'success stories' (CM4, Irbid governorate). The CM contended that such events would build parents' trust and confidence in the centre, as well as creating healthy competition and commitment among parents through the desire to see one's own children celebrated.

These findings apparently contradict those of Sowton (2019),[33] who found high levels of motivation and enthusiasm for learning English among participants who were both language learners and educators in Jordan. This suggests that in some contexts, CMs, teachers and families are struggling to engage well over the role, purposes and priorities of learning support services. This has arguably fostered beliefs and assumptions taking root that are based on dominant discourses and perceptions, rather than communication and understanding.

Ideas for further support

Some centres have intentionally incorporated programming for parents to promote greater accessibility and trust through shared ownership of the space. This could be taken further to include parents in language learning communities together with students and teachers, and creating opportunities for family language learning and educating parents in supporting their children's literacy development.[34]

- Develop a certification system denoting language competence, which can be implemented nationally and accessed by both refugees and marginalised Jordanians.
- Create a database of level- and age-appropriate 'performance pieces' of songs, poems, chants, short plays, etc. that showcase students' learning and language development for public performance.
- Given the dissonance between the findings presented in this section and those presented in Sowton's research, there seems to be a clear need to facilitate discussions between parents of displaced and marginalised youth, the children and youth themselves, language educators and managers of particularly IFE institutions. These conversations should aim to promote shared understandings of the purposes and content of learning support interventions, who they are for and what benefits they can offer, and to engage with the requests and priorities of beneficiaries in this process.

Expectations around English learning

A likely contributor to low levels of motivation in these informal sector English classrooms are conflicting expectations over the priorities of English language provision. CMs frequently described how they prioritise ‘communication over grammar’ (CM, Mafraq governorate) and encourage teachers to use only English in class. However, interviews illustrated how this approach caused consternation and anger among students, who then couldn’t understand their teachers. Two stories from Amman illustrated this conflict particularly saliently: in one, a teacher with over two decades’ English teaching experience in Syrian schools was in their centre when a group of foreigners visited. ‘He could hardly say a word to them in English. We discovered that although he was a great teacher, he couldn’t actually communicate in English’ (CM, Amman governorate). In the second story, students in a centre complained about a male teacher with ‘really excellent’ spoken English because he used only English in class. Recently he was overheard teaching English using mainly Arabic as his medium of communication and, when challenged, explained that students preferred this so that they could understand (CM, Amman governorate).

In addition to demonstrating an apparently strong desire on the part of students to understand everything in their lessons, interviews also described how students frequently approached teachers in IFE centres for help with their schoolwork. This implies that students’ priorities in learning English are more connected to surviving and succeeding in school in the short term, than in communication and fluency in English. This seems a natural instinct in a context where certification is available only through assessment in the formal sector. It also denotes the likelihood that communication and fluency in English are not prioritised for the purposes of that formal assessment.

However, in contrast to these findings, and to those of the previous section, Syrian students in particular were described in some interviews as being motivated to learn English in order to emigrate (CMs, Amman governorate and Mafraq governorate). Another perhaps more powerful motivation according to a CM in Mafraq governorate was that students sought to ‘gain a voice’ through English, and viewed it as an important vehicle for ‘getting their stories heard’ internationally. This CM said:

Many of our kids are from tented settlements and are visited by ‘solidarity tourists’ (donors etc.) who want to see Syrians and ‘help’. So those kids are actually in fairly regular contact with foreigners and they want to be able to tell their stories and have their voices heard. They realise that these visitors are mainly westerners, and that the big stories are coming out of the west, not the Arab world, and that these are being told in English. They are also using social media a lot, and this is often in English (CM, Mafraq governorate).

In a context where foreigners seemed to be somewhat regularly present, opportunities for communicating in English (and desire to do so) therefore increase. This suggests a longer-term level of investment in speaking and communication that should not be overlooked by the findings that suggested a limited short-term investment in attending lessons in community centres.

Ideas for further support

This section raises the possibility that while students may be highly invested in learning English, and in communicating in English, the formats and contexts currently available to them to achieve their goals are sub-optimal in their eyes, and are possibly even undermining their ambitions. This feeds back in to the proposal made earlier in this report that informal English provision move towards a club-based and real-life approach.

- There is a need to action the findings of the 2016 Language for Resilience report around multilingual programming and training teachers and CMs in the psychosocial and linguistic value of making use of home languages in classrooms.[35]
- Building on the work that Relief International has already started through their training in storytelling in English classes,[36] training in storytelling techniques should be expanded and shared more widely with NFE and IFE centres.

32. The MoE’s Education Strategic Plan 2018–22 indicated that this is also a risk factor for Jordanian youth.
33. Sowton, C (2019) Language learning: attitude, ability, teaching and materials in host and refugee communities in Jordan. British Council, Language for Resilience.
34. Capstick, T and Delaney, M (2016) op. cit.: 28
35. Ibid.
36. Capstick, T and Delaney, M (2016) op. cit.: 22.

Students' fear of English

Students' unfavourable responses to teachers using English in class possibly stem in part from negative experiences of English classes in public schools. One teacher described students' 'fear of English' as the 'biggest obstacle' (ET, Karak governorate) to learning English. Another described challenges with English learning as 'more a matter of fear than of difficulty' (ET, Irbid governorate). When asked to account for this fear, interviewees posited that large classes with short, infrequent English sessions in public schools leave students feeling exposed and vulnerable, particularly when requested to speak. Government school environments were described as sometimes rough and threatening – particularly so for refugee children – and some interviewees expressed the fear that negative discipline practices such as shaming students in response to hesitation or error could be negatively affecting students' attitudes to both learning and using English.

The research found that interviewees' confidence in public school teachers', and even their own, English levels was similarly low. Twenty-six survey respondents identified strengthening teachers' English language levels as a key training need, while 13 specifically highlighted a need for conversation classes for teachers.

Ideas for further support

Some interview participants felt that their centres were 'propping up', or even replacing, English provision in public schools, rather than supporting or supplementing it. Several CMs argued that improving the quality of English teaching in schools will automatically improve the level of provision that NFE and IFE centres can offer. This is particularly important given the accreditation available in the formal sector. Given that 34 of the survey responses reported that their teachers also work in public schools, it is encouraging to note that any interventions made in the NFE and IFE sectors could have some effect on English teaching in public schools. Initiating agreements with the MoE whereby English teachers in public schools can also participate in training and development workshops offered to teachers in the NFE and IFE sectors would enable such programming to have a much wider impact.

- Develop discussion-based teacher training opportunities that enhance teachers' own language skills at the same time as exploring 'modern teaching methods' such as active learning and learning through play that are also repeatedly requested by survey respondents.
- Positive error correction strategies and classroom management techniques are fundamental to helping teachers overcome students' fear of English and enable them to engage meaningfully with communicative language learning approaches and develop confidence to speak.

THE RESEARCH FOUND THAT INTERVIEWEES' CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' ENGLISH LEVELS WAS LOW.

TEACHER AND MANAGEMENT TRAINING NEEDS

The vast majority of English is being provided by teachers who have received little or no formal teacher training beyond an English literature degree. Ninety-one teachers have a university English degree, 14 also have a university teaching certificate. Teachers in two centres hold CELTAs, while others mentioned diplomas or a CEFR equivalency. Some reported that they rely on teachers with currently no English qualifications or training. Fifty-five respondents have received short training courses from partner NGOs, internal centre management or the British Council.

As with English provision, training needs identified were also primarily general. English language input, training in using technology and blended learning in the classroom, and dealing with special educational needs have been highlighted elsewhere in the report, as have needs around assessment and curriculum development.

‘Teaching methods’, or ‘developing teaching skills’, were requested by 24 respondents for teachers and by 17 for managers. The need for training in understanding the psychosocial needs of students is keenly felt, as teachers and managers recognise their need to help mitigate the impact of trauma on students in their classes. Training in active learning or learning through play was also specified – particularly by teachers with a majority of younger students.

Ideas for further support

For CMs the outstanding request is for training in supporting teachers. Within this, evaluation and follow-up are particular areas needing development.

- Training in essential teaching skills such as classroom management, building a communicative and stimulating environment, and handling coursebooks forms part of an essential toolkit that many teachers are currently lacking.
- Develop creative resources and training that help teachers understand the psychosocial needs of students, and provide creative ways to develop students’ life skills through English language classes that help meet some of these needs.

Top teacher training needs identified	
Psychosocial support training	27
English language training	26
Effective/‘modern’ teaching methods	21
Conversation skills	13
Teaching through play	7
Active learning	7
Blended learning	5
Dealing with special educational needs	3
Developing teaching skills	3

Top management training needs identified	
Supporting teachers	44
Assessment	21
Teaching methods	17
Curriculum	16
Planning courses/content	6
Evaluation	6
Psychosocial support training	5
English language training	4
Developing teaching skills	3

MOST ENGLISH PROVISION IS ‘GENERAL’ IN NATURE, AND AROUND TWO-THIRDS OF RESPONDENTS ARE OFFERING ENGLISH AS PART OF REMEDIAL LITERACY PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT SCHOOL CHILDREN.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the mapping of English provision for displaced and marginalised youth exercise highlights a range of current issues.

1. English provision in the NFE and IFE sectors is uneven around Jordan. There is a greater concentration of provision in northern and central areas where there are higher numbers of Syrian refugees and there has been greater investment from the international community. The need for English language development for teachers is universal, however. Access to language courses for teachers that are online and use virtual platforms for conversation practice would improve equity of access for all teachers.
2. Age groups of beneficiaries are bottom heavy – with the majority being schoolchildren aged between six and 14. English levels also tend to be low, particularly in relation to the MoE English curriculum. There is a need for teacher training that emphasises working with young learners and helps teachers to identify and respond to the psychosocial needs of students in this age category, as well as for training that builds basic literacy skills in both English and Arabic.
3. English provision is mostly limited to general English, with few opportunities for specialised language learning. Quality, graded teaching materials and resources are needed that are freely available to centres within both sectors and that address students' general educational and specific professional or academic needs.
4. Classrooms in NFE and IFE centres that are too 'formal' or resonate too closely with public school classrooms are seen as demotivating for students. Programming that is progressively more informal, mobile, interactive and club-based would be an important positive development.
5. Assessment of students' English levels at intake is currently limited in its use and scope, and several providers group students according to age or school grade. Robust English assessment tools are needed across all levels to help teachers in this sector measure students' progress. This could also facilitate the development of a codified scheme of certification in language competence that is suitable for these sectors.

Some of the main challenges that centres face in providing English can be summarised within a narrative of 'lack' – lack of commitment and motivation, lack of competence in English, lack of competence in teaching and lack of access to opportunities. In response to the issues highlighted in this research, the creation of an organic database of online teaching resources and training videos, which draws on this and research from other Language for Resilience contexts and which reflects the specific needs and challenges of facilitating English learning in these sectors, would be a welcome development.

In contexts where the 'group' often takes priority over the 'individual', creating opportunities for interactive and discussion-based training could considerably enhance teachers' acceptance and application of ideas. Several managers and teachers in this research expressed a preference for face-to-face training. The promotion of 'training hubs' – centres around the country which could host groups of teachers coming together to view and discuss training videos or new teaching resources – would encourage a peer development training model and promote greater equality of access in what has hitherto been an uneven context.

THIRTY-TWO CENTRES CONTACTED FOR THIS RESEARCH BUT NOT OFFERING ENGLISH, AND THEREFORE NOT REPRESENTED IN THE DATA, CITED LACK OF OR WITHDRAWN FUNDING AS THE PRIMARY REASON FOR THEIR NOT HAVING STARTED, OR HAVING TO STOP, OFFERING ENGLISH CLASSES.

English Upper

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