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Pedagogy and participation: Literacy education for low-literate refugee students of African origin in a western school system

Karen Dooley and Pavithiran Thangaperumal
Queensland University of Technology

For ESL teachers working with low-literate adolescents the challenge is to provide instruction in basic literacy capabilities while also realising the benefits of interactive and dialogic pedagogies advocated for the students. In this article we look at literacy pedagogy for refugees of African origin in Australian classrooms. We report on an interview study conducted in an intensive English language school for new arrival adolescents and in three regular secondary schools. Brian Street's ideological model is used. From this perspective, literacy entails not only technical skills, but also social and cultural ways of making meaning that are embedded within relations of power. The findings showed that teachers were strengthening control of instruction to enable mastery of technical capabilities in basic literacy and genre analysis. We suggest that this approach should be supplemented by a critical approach transforming relations of linguistic power that exclude, marginalise and humiliate the study students in the classroom.

Keywords: Adolescents, classroom discourse, ESL, literacy, pedagogy, scaffolding

In recent years there has been growing interest in literacy education for refugee young people. This reflects the enrolment of increasing numbers of non-, and low-literate refugees of African origin in secondary schools in the U.S. (Tarone & Bigelow, 2005), Canada (Kanu, 2008), Australia (Oliver, Haig & Grote, 2009) and other western countries of re-settlement. At the same time, a long-standing critique of the constraining effects of basics education on the life chances of adolescent refugees (Fu, 1995) has been extended to programs for Sudanese (Perry, 2007) and Somali (Bigelow, 2010) young people. By way of alternative, programs of intellectually substantive and critical literacy are recommended for refugee and other learners of English as a second language (ESL) (e.g., Christie & Sidhu, 2002; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). In this context, what form of literacy education is appropriate for low literate adolescents?

In the Australian state of Queensland from which we write, text analytic forms of critical literacy (Luke & Dooley, 2011) were enshrined in the English syllabus and local pedagogic convention more than two decades ago. Programs designed to give ESL students

access to genres of power as described by Hallidayan educational linguists are ubiquitous. Early questions about the transformative potential of this approach remain unresolved (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999; Martin, 1999; Luke & Dooley, 2011), but in some settings overtly transformative goals are pursued through critical language awareness. This approach to critical literacy teaches students to read ideological representations of the world, author-reader power relations, and the interests served by particular texts in particular social fields. Early differences about the priority and possibility of these outcomes (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999; Martin, 1999) persist in the local ESL field.

With the arrival of large numbers of non-, and low-literate refugees with severely interrupted schooling in Australia, some have cautioned against basics programs that would preclude intellectually substantive and critical literacy outcomes (Christie & Sidhu, 2002). Yet, many of the refugee students do need to strengthen basic literacy capabilities if not become literate for the first time. Negotiation of these complex demands is our focus in this article.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Our data are drawn from interviews conducted in an intensive English language school and three regular secondary schools (see Table 1). Students enter the intensive language school on arrival in Australia and proceed to regular schools after completing a course of English language studies and content area studies in English. At the time of data production (2006-08), all four schools had sizeable cohorts of African refugees. Many students were non-, or low-literate on arrival at the intensive language school. But hopes were high. As an administrator from the school put it, “Oh, I expect them to be totally retrievable with proper programming ... I really do”. By “retrievable” was meant attainment of outcomes from secondary schooling akin to those achieved by non-refugee students.

Given the small scale of the study, we make no claims about representativeness. But we suggest that attention to possibilities for interrupting the reproduction of social disadvantage through literacy education is timely given increasing student mobility in a world of uneven educational opportunities (Arzubiaga, Nogueron & Sullivan, 2009). Two of the school administrators stressed the urgency of this work of their schools. In the words of one, “if we then get this wrong... then their move into adulthood is going to be not a very good one... if we get it right and we can get the language happening, the literacy... and then start heading them off on some pathway... towards education or career... then we actually have helped change their life”. Although the study is conducted in Queensland, it might be of interest in other western contexts with similar student populations (e.g., Tarone & Bigelow, 2005; Kanu, 2008).

We begin by locating the study within a rapidly proliferating literature on post-re-settlement literacy education for African refugees in English-speaking western countries. In doing so, we adopt an ‘ideological model’ of literacy (Street, 1993). This model construes reading and writing not only as technical capabilities, but also as social and cultural ways of knowing that are embedded in relations of power. A contrast is drawn between this and the ‘autonomous model’ of literacy which focuses on the technical aspects of reading and writing as universal cognitive capabilities. Technical capabilities and cognitive understandings of these have a place within the ideological model, but so too does literacy as social, cultural and political phenomenon.

Literacy programs for refugee young people of African origin

Both critical pedagogic and text analytic approaches to critical literacy have been developed for African refugees in western secondary schools. Canadian research with refugees and immigrants from Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Senegal and Togo recommends a critical pedagogic approach (Ibrahim, 1999, 2004). This approach capitalises on students’

affective and identity investment in the texts of Hip-Hop culture by bringing rap into the classroom. The aim is to valorise and interrogate student voice and knowledge about race, gender and other power relations in North American societies. Voice is also the focus of a text analytic approach developed in an Australian secondary school (Hewson, 2006). This approach aimed to enable low-literate Sudanese and Liberian refugees to represent themselves in terms other than that of the homogenising label, 'refugee'. A genre approach infused with critical dialogue was used to produce an autobiographical documentary about post-resettlement identity changes.

Other programs address technical aspects of literacy both across the curriculum and in subject English. An intervention study conducted with Sudanese students in mainstream secondary content area classes shows how comprehension of science texts can be enhanced through direct vocabulary instruction (Miller, 2009). Other research on reading, conducted with low-literate Somali adults in the U.S. (Bigelow, 2010), has yielded recommendations for teachers of adolescents to prioritise instruction in bottom-up reading processes while supporting top-down processes through talk about purposes for reading and personal links to text. With respect to writing, teachers are encouraged to co-construct knowledge with students in talk around culturally significant oral texts including rap and traditional poetry and folktales (Bigelow, 2010). This is consistent with 40 years of research which shows how classroom discourse can establish epistemological conditions for intellectually substantive learning (Johannessen & McCann, 2009). The approach draws also on understandings of ESL language socialisation. Specifically, teachers are encouraged to enable participation in classroom discourse by ensuring that refugee students of African origin: i) have opportunities to find ways of contributing their knowledge and skills; ii) are not marginalised, but enjoy teacher and peer support; and iii) perceive no threats to cultural or linguistic status (Bigelow, 2010).

In summary, programs for refugees of African origin target critical, intellectually substantive and basic literacy capabilities. To this end, they draw variously on dialogic, interactive and direct pedagogic elements. These elements are often considered antithetical. Recitation, memorisation and other traditional forms of direct instruction are effective for basic literacy instruction for ESL and other students (Goldenberg, 2008). But they have been implicated in preclusion and suppression of the thought and critique (Kanu, 2003) required for intellectually substantive and critical literacy. Moreover, traditional pedagogy can be disengaging, engendering student resistance (Luke, 2008) or necessity for heroic persistence (Fu, 1995). However, these effects are contingent rather than necessary; they stem from the nature of the literacies and pedagogic exchanges to which traditional pedagogic elements are appropriated. Traditional pedagogy need not be suppressive if interwoven with critical dialogue about relations of power both within and beyond the classroom (Luke, 2008).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The study

The study followed 8 focal students from an intensive English language school to regular secondary schools (see Table 2). Data were produced through two rounds of interviews. The first round was conducted at the intensive language school. Administrative, teaching and (African) paraprofessional personnel were interviewed, as were the focal students and adult family members. 18-24 months later, the second interview round was conducted at the regular schools. ESL teachers and administrators were interviewed, and the students and family adults were re-interviewed. All the interviews addressed students' opportunities for social, linguistic and academic development. Interviews were audio-recorded digitally for later verbatim transcription. Interpreters were provided for family adults and students in the first round of interviews and as requested by parents in the second

round. Interviews were conducted individually unless participants requested otherwise. Two ESL teacher interviews and four family adult interviews were conducted with groups of 2-4.

At the outset of the study the student population of the intensive English language school was 187 (See Table 1). Around 80% of the students were refugees, predominantly from Africa, but also from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey. 70% of the students had at least two years less schooling than might be expected for their chronological age. Schools A, B and C respectively had African minorities of 38%, 18% and 14%. All had ESL units that provided services including parallel (sheltered) content instruction and English language support in mainstream content area classes.

The focal students were from Sudan, Eritrea, Rwanda and Burundi – the countries of origin of the largest African groups at the intensive language school at the time.

Administrators selected students who seemed to be displaying some common patterns of engagement with schooling. But they underscored the guesswork involved in these judgements. Initial class placement – based on English proficiency, literacy and school socialisation needs – was the main selection criterion. The administrators recommended 2 students who had been placed in the Foundation class, 5 in Beginners and 1 in Post-Beginners.

Foundation was established when large numbers of students with severely disrupted schooling began arriving at the intensive language school in the early 2000s. The two focal students from this class both claimed about 4-5 years less schooling than might be expected for chronological age and displayed little literacy skill on arrival. The other six focal students seemed to have missed 1-3 years of schooling. Five were placed in Beginners, which assumes no prior English. On arrival, all displayed literacy skills in Arabic, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda or French. The remaining student, John, was literate in French and Swahili. He was placed in Post-Beginners, which assumes basic interpersonal communication skills in English. In the

past, students usually spent 6 months at the school. But the focal students stayed longer because they spent up to a year in Foundation and/or repeated Beginners and Post-Beginners.

The students' English proficiency levels were relatively low on exit from the intensive language school. Historically, students exited with 4s on the 8-point ESL Bandscales (McKay, 1994)¹. At this level, learners are likely to have "great difficulty dealing with junior secondary activities unless systematic ESL support is provided" (D7). One of the students originally placed in Beginners went close to this, achieving 4s for speaking, listening and reading and 3+ for writing. But five scored primarily 2- to 3+. At Level 3 high-literate students begin to experience transfer of concepts from their first language, but low-literate learners are reliant on what has been learnt in English (D31). Level 2 predicts that it is "very unlikely that a student could engage effectively in learning activities in an Australian secondary mainstream context" (D4). Our teacher data describe efforts to adjust instruction in the secondary context to enable effective engagement of the refugee students.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

To prepare the data for analysis, the entire corpus of transcripts was read and excerpts pertaining to literacy instruction and learning were extracted and placed in a single file. These data were then read until literal understanding was achieved. This reading indicated that a genre approach was in place in all the schools. Teachers at Schools B and C spoke at length also of basic literacy instruction provided for refugees of African origin. The Head of ESL at School A mentioned the basics program in her school, but concentrated on her teaching of critical language awareness. An overall impression was that teachers were trying to adapt the genre approach for the students. They were strengthening their control of the pedagogy and adding direct instruction in basic technical capabilities previously assumed by genre programs at secondary level. Given this preliminary finding, codes enabling fine-grained analyses of control (Table 3) were developed and applied to the data. The codes were derived

initially from control values specified in a canonical description of genre pedagogy (Martin, 1999). These were elaborated for the data set inductively and by reference to empirical descriptions of more strongly controlled literacy pedagogy (Paris, Wixson & Palincsar, 1986; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Strengthening control of existing genre pedagogy

Teachers in Schools B and C spoke of strengthening control of genre pedagogy. By way of background, it should be noted that the genre teaching-learning cycle has three main phases: i) teacher-led deconstruction or modelling of text and context; ii) teacher-student joint construction of text for a given context; and iii) student independent construction of a similar text. Content is developed alongside these phases. Later versions of the pedagogy suggest that transformative work might be infused into genre pedagogy and that students with adequate technical control of the basics and genre analysis might be able to demonstrate such in their independent writing (Martin, 1999; Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999). Following an interpretation of the Brunerian/Vygotskian tradition, teacher control varies with student competence. Particular control values are assumed for particular phases of the teaching-learning cycle (Martin, 1999). We found evidence of stronger control values.

We begin by looking at control of deconstruction. This is a phase during which teachers are expected to exercise strong control of instruction in genre features. The principle is one of 'guidance through interaction'. Teachers initially voice understandings of genre features in interaction around exemplar texts and gradually cede responsibility for these to students (Martin, 1999). In contrast, our data provide evidence of very strong teacher control of this phase. The following excerpt is illustrative. It is drawn from an interview with 4 ESL teachers at School B. The excerpt is part of a lengthy series of exchanges about provision for Shusu, a focal student who had arrived at the school a year or so earlier.

... genre, we try to pitch it at where they're at and a little bit harder than that, not to overrun them with the requirements of that particular genre or piece of writing they have to do. I try, and in this class and in every class, to do, to break that [exemplar text] down in bits. We call it 'deconstructing', showing them the bits. That's the bit, the part where they find it really hard: getting to write a short narrative... writing a news report. So to break, to show them these parts, to make it as visual as you can, pointing, cutting, pasting, drawing, you know, all these markers, different colours, and then putting it as a class together... you're trying as a teacher to do as much as you can to use various strategies, visual, and sitting with them and showing the group to actually, getting to be able to repeat the steps, and as I said, succeed in what, you know, the expectations are for the peers at that year level.

The teacher says that schematic structure (e.g., "the parts" or "the bits" of narratives and news reports) is particularly difficult for her students. So she tries to make this text feature more concrete through marking up and unjumbling exemplar texts. The pronouns are telling. During instruction there is an "I" and a "you" – part of the ESL teacher "we"; and a "they" and "them" – the students. I/we/you "pitch it" at their level, "show them" the bits, and sit with them, monitoring their work as they repeat the steps in groups. This is direct instruction (Paris, Wixson & Palincsar, 1986; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Unlike some examples of direct instruction discussed in the ESL literature, the aim is grade level outcomes in the regular curriculum, "the expectations... for the peers at that year level". However, the degree of control is stronger than the "guidance through interaction" expected during deconstruction (Martin, 1999).

We turn now to 'independent construction'. During this phase of the teaching-learning cycle control is expected to be weak as the teacher assumes a consultative role (Martin, 1999). But we found that study teachers described a strongly controlled interventionist role. The data are drawn from the group interview with the ESL teachers at School B. One of the teachers spoke on behalf of all the teachers in the school's ESL unit, "We have all changed our teaching styles". She then went on to describe adaptations to her own pedagogy during the independent phase.

I find that the students can't really handle the planning involved in those huge tasks where you've researched, you take notes, you put it together and you formulate something and write it. I find I need to break it down a lot and even, I didn't, necessarily present a task like that as a 'task' but I present it as different bits that all go together, because planning over weeks is not something that students can do if they're not used to that kind of teaching.

The “huge tasks” are research assignments which are heavily weighted in Queensland’s school-based assessment system. These assignments are completed during the independent phase of the genre teaching-learning cycle, typically as homework. They have proven to be particularly challenging for the refugee students (Dooley, 2004). Accordingly, the teacher at School B had begun breaking them down into sub-tasks, thereby maintaining a strong degree of control of ostensibly independent work.

Some of the other teachers spoke in detail about their intervention in students’ preparation for their individual assignments. Another teacher from School B described the assistance she gave refugee students with information searches and note-taking when providing support in mainstream content area classes.

I can actually clarify or explain further... to these students, how to go about it even the key word, like if you want to google something and look at the sites available, you know, how to do that, where to look, what is a good, you know, what is a very difficult source that is just, you know, so technical, so that they don’t waste their time

.....

You really need to sit with them and say “Okay, this sentence reads this. What are the key words? What is this about?” And show them, “Highlight that, so what do we write? We don’t write a full sentence. What do we write in our book or notepad?”

This is evidence of strong teacher control during the independent phase of the teaching-learning cycle. In the course of text production, as of instruction in genre features during the deconstruction phase then, teachers were exercising stronger control than that to which they were accustomed. Some of the refugee students were receiving similar assistance at school-, and community-based homework clubs (Dooley, 2004). As a volunteer tutor in one of these clubs, the first author provided assistance with comprehension, note-taking, assignment planning, drafting and editing. The pedagogy was as interventionist and directive as that described by the study teachers.

Teaching basic literacy in the secondary school

The teachers from Schools B and C spoke of embedding basic reading and writing instruction in their genre-based programs. The following extract is drawn from an extended set of exchanges with the Head of ESL at School C. The exchanges began when the interviewer asked for comment on controversy in the local field about the educational effects of trauma, inadequate nutrition and other aspects of some refugee experiences. The ESL Head distanced herself from the position of some in the field by attributing student difficulties instead to inappropriate pedagogy in Australian contexts. She held her own teaching up as an alternative:

... it's what we have taught and how we have taught it... you build from something very low. You don't expect them to do genres and essays when they can't write sentences, so we build from words, identifying words and matching exercises... I did a procedure genre... they learned the names, they learned the healthy diet pyramid, they wrote and they could speak an oral presentation, "I am eating a healthy diet today... because it's got carbohydrates".

In this classroom, pedagogy begins with direct instruction in vocabulary and word identification ("matching exercises"). This basic literacy learning sits alongside concept development ("the healthy diet pyramid"). And in a context where 'doing' a genre means teaching schematic structure and language features, there is evidence also of instruction in genre, "I did a procedure genre".

Teachers at School B spoke likewise of providing direct instruction in basic literacy skills. The following excerpt is drawn from the section of the interview where the teachers spoke about how they had catered for Shusu since she transitioned into the school. The excerpt begins after one of the teachers described the program of daily oral reading she had developed for Shusu and other refugee students of African origin.

I also looked at using things that supplement that [reading program] such as short sentence writing, spelling on a regular basis to address the literacy skills that I think is the basis for them, and also model, very often in class if there is sentence writing, but me showing the parts, students do one together, then to do it individually, give comments, as much as they can, at an individual basis

Like the ESL Head at School C, this teacher provides direct instruction in writing below the level of the text. She models not just genre structure, but also sentence-level language features. Instruction is very strongly controlled: the teacher models and explains a sentence, and then has the students write a similar sentence collaboratively before attempting to do one on their own. Formative feedback is provided. Practice and monitoring of this kind represent very strong control. Extrinsic rewards are a further traditional pedagogic element of this teacher's pedagogy. This is evident in the following elaboration of the teacher's spelling program.

... they love spelling tests. I always have little treats – I'm not quite sure if that's correct – for them and I call it 'lucky dip', 'lucky dip box'. So, even now, you know, they all really try. They showed me, "look, Miss, practise"... they like to see that they improve, they really do and even the students that have behaviour problems... when you sort of go and you point to ... the little improvements, they feel all perky and happy

Like some of the other study participants, the teacher was a little uncomfortable 'admitting' to her use of traditional pedagogic elements, in this case extrinsic rewards for performance on spelling tests ("I'm not quite sure if that's correct"). There was a similar self-consciousness in the data about using song and chant for memorising multiplication tables, "we didn't go for rote learning, but if they learn by rote learning...". This anxiety can be understood in terms of decades of tension between traditional and progressive pedagogies.

Discussion

Our data show how some ESL teachers in Australia are addressing the complex literacy needs of African adolescents with severely disrupted schooling. We found that teachers are providing highly controlled instruction in basic literacy and genre analysis. Given the requirements of high stakes national testing, access to these technical capabilities must be part of any equitable literacy education in the local context. The effectiveness of highly controlled pedagogy for basic literacy instruction is well established, as is the

necessity of interactive and dialogic pedagogy for intellectually substantive and critical outcomes (Goldenberg, 2008; Luke, 2008). The merits of highly controlled pedagogy – for technical mastery of the basics or genre analysis – need to be assessed within the contingencies of a given context. It is in this spirit that we look at the priority of transformative critical literacy for students like those who participated in our study.

Some of the focal students expressed anger about their treatment during oral interaction in the classroom (Dooley, 2009). They spoke of being laughed at for their accent or for asking clarifying questions when teachers spoke too quickly, and of their anger at being unable to formulate responses quickly enough to respond to teacher questions. Sophia said that she didn't "really like" most of the other year 9 students because "some Australian people" are "so mean to people that doesn't know how to speak English". The problem is that "they never give you a chance to talk or even to put your hand up". This is "embodied political anger" (Luke, 2004).

At School C one of the teachers said that she coached the African students to "tolerate" having their speech laughed at. Drawing on her own migrant experience, she worked to build student goals and self-esteem, "... we prepare them ... to take the knockbacks... [we say], "You want to excel... What is your ambition? ... How grateful are you to be in Australia?" The heroism required here is sustainable only by a misperception of structural reality. For some, it may be impossible to summon up the requisite 'gratefulness'. And for others, the cost may be a psychologically damaging cynicism, quiet rage or sense of moral failure (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; see also Yoon, 2007). A transformative critical literacy addressing the structural reality of linguistic discrimination is an alternative approach.

Genrists have contemplated the possibility of transformative deconstruction of instructional discourse with students (Martin, 1999). But they argue that this is contingent upon mastery of basic literacy and genre analysis capabilities in English, and accordingly,

that it is these capabilities that should be prioritised for ESL students (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999). However, transformative work need not begin with comprehension and analysis of written texts. Embodied political anger about exclusionary, marginalising and humiliating oral interaction might be a starting point for a transformative critical literacy. This form of anger denaturalises and discomforts, rendering the familiar – in this case the linguistic politics of the classroom – strange (Luke, 2008). This is a starting point for naming and problematising lived experience before moving on to analysing texts with a critical metalanguage (Luke, 2004).

The data suggested possibilities for working transformatively from the embodied experiences of the refugee students. There was consensus amongst the teachers that oral interaction per se presents few difficulties for refugee students of African origin. A comment by a teacher at the intensive English language school is indicative, “My class are quite low in literacy, but they all have a say about something, particularly if it’s important to them at that moment”. An embodied critical approach involves more than talk: textual analysis with an analytic metalanguage is required if the talk is to go beyond celebration of difference (Luke, 2004). The Head of ESL at School A insists that ESL students of African origin can understand and apply terms such as ‘representation’, ‘connotation’ and ‘resistant reading’. Her approach is evident in the following data about preparation for an analytic essay on representations of oppression.

... we’re doing *Animal Farm* and so we’re focussing on the oppression... Some of the girls watched the film the other day and I said, “It’s not just a love film, there is oppression in there”. So each time we’re just building up ‘This is being represented in this text in this way’ so hopefully they can pull it all together [in the analytic essay] you know... it does work you know.

Initially, it is the teacher who voices understandings of the text analytic term ‘representation’. In the course of interaction around exemplar texts, responsibility for using the term is gradually ceded to the students. The use of pronouns is telling: the teacher and the students are the “we” who explore the concept of oppression, build up analyses of

representation and come back to ways of talking about these. The teacher went on to suggest that this pedagogy works when it can be “related to ... something in their lives”. In the case of *Animal Farm* that was the students’ own experience of civil war. Links to lived experience enabled the students to co-construct knowledge, “Oh, that’s what happened in Rwanda; that’s what happened in Liberia”. The conclusion might be drawn that if the topic is “something ... important to them”, and if the pedagogy enables access to critical metalanguage, then a transformative literacy about the linguistic politics of the classroom is feasible.

Given the anger of some of the focal students, a transformative literacy on relations of power within the classroom is a priority in its own right. But we suggest also that it has implications for intellectually substantive outcomes. Exclusion, marginalisation and humiliation militate against ESL students’ participation in interactive pedagogies (Bigelow, 2010). Transformative intervention in the linguistic politics of the classroom then may be necessary if the benefits of those pedagogies are to be realised for refugee students of African origin.

Direct instruction and interactive and dialogic pedagogies all have a place in provision for low-literate adolescents of African origin in western schools. The challenge is to weigh the necessity and outcomes of particular pedagogic settings for particular students – and to do so reflexively in relation to a normative vision of equitable literacy outcomes for the students.

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¹ The *ESL Bandscales* are used by teachers in Queensland to report the proficiency of second language learners in school. They assume an English-medium and Western-cultural curriculum setting. They draw on a range of Second Language Acquisition theory, including Lyle Bachman and Adrian Palmer’s model of language ability, and Jim Cummins’ work on social and academic language.

Table 1: Study Schools

	Location	Years receiving African refugees	Size	Number of ESL students	Category of ESL students	Number of African Refugees	Focal Students
Intensive Language School		-	-	-	Migrant Refugee	80% of the students were refugees	All attended
High school A	Located in a mixed socio-economic inner suburban area.	6 years	575	296 (46% of total)	International Migrant Refugee	223 (82% of ESL; 38% of total)	Jenny John Michael Sophia Mohammad Caroline
High school B	Large suburban high school in an affluent are. (Including students who travel from lower socio-economic outer suburban areas.)	6 years	750	200 (26% of total)	International Migrant Refugee	140 (70% of ESL; 18% of total)	Shusu
High school C	Located in a low socio-economic outer suburban area.	4 years	840	Half to three-quarters of the total are ESL students	Migrant Refugee	13% of the school population	George

Table 2. Focal students: Demographic and academic data

Student	Country of origin	Transit country	Pre-arrival schooling	On arrival placement	Period at intensive language school	Exit Bandscales			
						Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Jenny, 12 yrs at outset	Burundi	Tanzania	Attended camp school for 4 years, completing 3 grades.	younger beginner class	9 months	4	3+	4	4
John, 12 yrs at outset	Burundi	Tanzania	1 year of regular school in Burundi. 5 years of camp schooling.	post-beginner class	6 months	2	2	2	2
George, 15 yrs at outset	Burundi	Tanzania	Started school at age 9 in a camp. Repeated both first and second grades.	foundation class	20 months	2	2-	3	3
Michael, age not available	Rwanda	Tanzania	1 year of regular school in Rwanda. 5 years of camp school.	younger beginner class	6 months	3+	3	4	3+
Sophia, 13 yrs at outset	Eritrean family	Born in Sudan	6 years in regular Sudanese town school.	younger beginner class	9 months	2+	2+	3	3
Mohammad, 14 yrs at outset	Eritrean family	Born in Sudan	4 years in camp school, repeating first and second grades.	foundation class	18 months	2	2	2	2
Caroline, 13 yrs at outset	Sudan (south)	Egypt	1 year of regular school in Sudan. 4 years in refugee school in Egypt.	younger beginner class	13 months	3-	3-	3	3
Shusu, 15 yrs at outset	Sudan	Egypt	Regular Sudanese school. Refugee school in Egypt.	younger beginner class	9 months	3-	2-3	4	3+

Table 3. Literacy pedagogy coding categories

(Adapted from Paris et al, 1986; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Martin, 1999)

Category	Description
Directive	<p>Very strong focus on transmission through teacher-directed skill and knowledge development activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple, clear goals • careful sequencing • sufficient and continuous time • repetition, drill and practice • extensive coverage of skills and knowledge • low level questions • close monitoring of student performance • immediate, academically-oriented feedback
Authoritative	<p>Strong focus on transmission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher and student share knowledge and build common understandings through oral interaction • teacher draws attention to pertinent knowledge and skill and explains ‘how’ and ‘why’ • strategic use of questions to ‘microscaffold’ student knowledge construction
Guiding	<p>Weak focus on transmission. Teacher observes as students work, intervening as necessary to achieve the goal (e.g., planned conferencing, teacher guides students to organise their material)</p>
Facilitative	<p>Very weak focus on transmission. Teacher available for consultation at student request during independent work</p>

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