

AN ENQUIRY INTO THE TIME TAKEN FOR L2 LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

“I desperately want to be able to talk to people”

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BACKGROUND

“Almost all the learners studied in SLA research have been literate.”

“There has been very little research to date on the cognitive process of illiterate or low-literate adult L2 learners.... They have been left out of the SLA database.” Tarone, Bigelow and Hansen (2009)



Minnesota project with Somali
adolescents and adults (2004-5)



Conclusion: “older language learners who lack alphabetic print literacy are using the linguistic input they receive orally in different ways from those who are alphabetically literate.”

Tarone et al. (2009).

- 774 million adults lack minimum literacy skills
- One in five adults is not literate
- Two-thirds of these are women



Tarone et al. (2009) p. 21



<https://www.leslla.org/>

Literacy Education and Second Language Learning Acquisition publications suggest that:

... The process of developing literacy to the level of native speakers may take much longer than if the individual were literate upon arrival.

A TEC report on ESOL gaps and priorities

(TEC, 2008, p. 6) acknowledged that

'learning progress for pre-literate learners is extremely slow.'

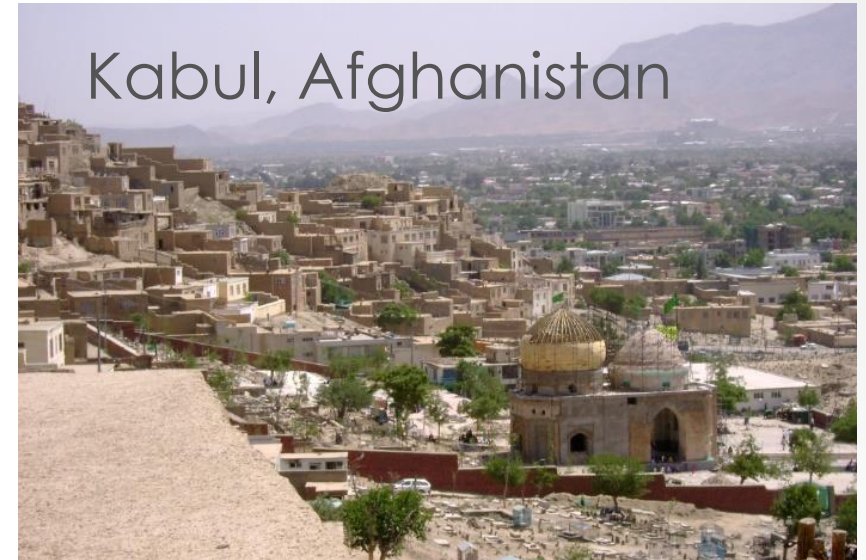
Traditional assumptions about stair-casing to higher level programmes need to be challenged in the case of pre-literate learners.'

Benseman (2012)



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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



Methods

Instruments

- Literacy Numeracy Assessment Tool
- Portfolio assessment
- Classroom observations
- Pre and post interviews

Analysis Grounded theory. Data analysed into categories. Themes emerge from the data.



RESULTS INTERVIEWS: CONSTRAINTS ON SCHOOLING

0 – 2 years prior schooling

No prior schooling

Minimal schooling

Participants from Cambodia, Colombia, Congo, Djibouti and Pakistan

I didn't go to school. Problem. I can't read and write in Dari.

8+ years of schooling

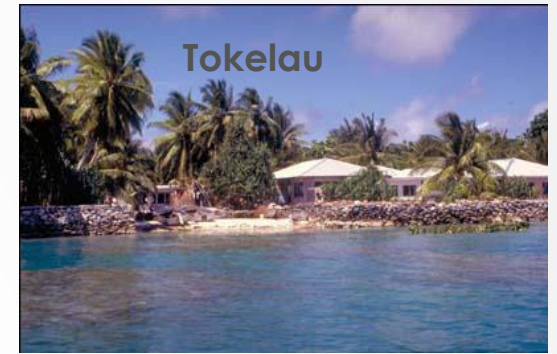
Participants from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Congo, Colombia, Djibouti and Pakistan

Participants from China

...it was too far to get to high school. I worked with my parents at the farm.



KEY LEARNING GOALS OF PARTICIPANTS



0-2 years

- All participants reported that their main goal was **independence**
- Parents' goals were focused on their children's education and training
- Some younger participants aimed to find work after they become functional in L2

I want to be independent. I don't want to depend on others. Just I want to go to the doctor without an interpreter.

8+ years

- Participants wanted to improve their communication skills and literacy skills
- They had goals for further training and employment

To take my children to school, to know what's going on at school. I want to know how they're going, shopping, doctor. I want to do things by myself.

RESULTS ONLINE LEARNING TOOL

0 – 2 YEARS

Jul. 17 Nov, 17 Jul.18 Mean gain

684	685	713	28
746	728	725	-21
634	661	696	62
320	393	344	24
680	709	745	65
710	669	745	35
684	661	672	11
629	630	673	44
360	344	393	33
710	772	748	38
635	700	605	-30
771	770	772	1
769	747	1000	231
711	746	769	58
675	671	710	35
699	723	697	-2
708	727	746	38
730	743	764	34

**Mean gain
av. 38**

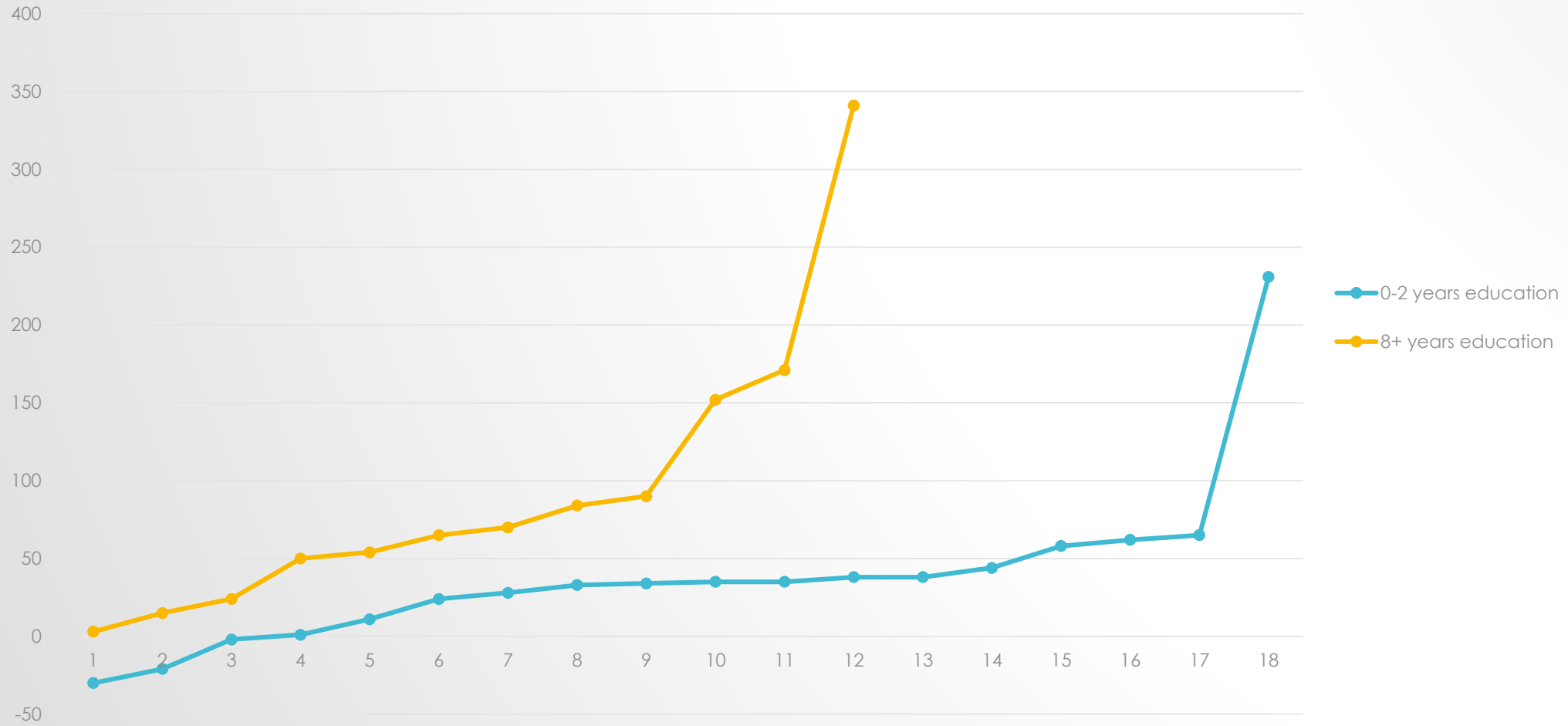
8+ YEARS

Jul. 17 Nov. 17 Jul. 18 Mean gain
av. 93

710	772	800	90
490	707	661	171
579	589	649	70
659	671	673	24
623	770	673	50
681	698	696	15
522	712	863	341
502	505	654	152
661	628	745	84
695	802	698	3
683	713	748	65
658	663	712	54

**Mean gain
av. 93**

Learning Rates of the two groups



RESULTS OBSERVATIONS WITH 0-2 YEARS PRIOR LEARNING

- Students support each other in class
- Construct meaning at first through L1
- Repetition and imitation
- Memory
- Realise they need the alphabet for the code
- Learn new words as whole words from meaningful encounters with text (oral or written).



CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS OF 8+ YEARS PRIOR LEARNING

- Have learned the code on letter sound correspondence
- May still have difficulty with vowel sounds
- High frequency words becoming automatic
- Enjoy reading together shared class work
- Repeated new words, wrote them down, sometimes saved onto phones
- Starting to write words and short sentences
- Enjoy Flash cards, phonics games, bingo, and word games.

DISCUSSION

ILN Results

There is a difference in rates of learning between these groups.

The 0-2 group are doing the work in preparation for becoming literate in L2, understanding the letter – sound relationship and how to decode. These are pre-reading stages and take time.

Baddeley (2007) working memory model

- Incoming information stored temporarily
- Subject to rapid deterioration
- Strong association can increase this capacity as can rehearsal
- Information in the short term memory can interact with the long term memory
- Information is stored in a 'phonological - loop' long enough to decode it

JOHAN AMOS COMENIUS

1592-1691



- Use imitation instead of rules
- Have your students repeat after you
- Use a limited vocabulary initially
- Teach language through pictures to make it meaningful

1631 -- 1658 This approach based on exposure to the target language rather than rules

RECOMMENDATIONS 0-2 YEARS

- **Make meaning** using multiple strategies
- Build simple conversations and responses
- Delay formal phonics teaching
- L1 support whenever possible
- Visuals and pictures
- Use language experience, read own stories together, noticing building blocks of language
- Build sight words through reading their own stories
- Daily reading of graded readers.

Allow time for the pre-reading skills to develop

RECOMMENDATIONS 8+ YEARS

- Simple everyday conversations, encourage simple communication
- A combined top down and bottom up approach
- Engage in noticing (phonics, structures, spelling)
- Use repetition and recycling
- Allow spelling develop by noticing
- Personal dictionaries
- Make reading a daily enjoyable activity
- Authentic concrete experiences

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THANK YOU