





## CHAPTER 2.6

# Fostering Independent Communication: Language Training Programs for Adult Resettled Refugees

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 2.6

# Fostering Independent Communication:

## Language Training Programs for Adult Resettled Refugees

The focus of this Chapter is on strategies to support resettled refugees' acquisition of the language of the receiving society (called the target language). While, it is concerned with adult resettled refugees, many of the principles and strategies outlined in this Chapter apply to language programs for refugee children and young people. Further detail on programs for this group can be found in Chapter 3.3. Strategies for enhancing women's participation in language training are addressed in Chapter 3.2.





## CHECKLIST

### Planning target language training programs

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ a basic post arrival language instruction program;
- ✓ professional development for language instructors to enhance their capacity to teach and support resettled refugees;
- ✓ incorporating informal language training into the role of volunteer support providers (see Chapter 2.3);
- ✓ identifying and building relationships with existing adult education facilities with a view to developing more advanced language training options.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ incorporating information on language training options, and how they can be accessed, into refugee orientation programs;
- ✓ developing a flexible range of delivery options (e.g. specialist class based programs, on-line and distance learning, work and community based options, full and part-time study);
- ✓ coordinating, monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms (e.g. benchmarking; national curricula);
- ✓ standardised pre-course analysis;
- ✓ advanced language training options for those wishing to advance to further education and training;
- ✓ technical support for language training program providers;
- ✓ linkages between post arrival language training programs and vocational counselling and education;
- ✓ enhancing the capacity of volunteer social support providers to contribute to language acquisition (see Chapter 2.3);
- ✓ learning options for those with low levels of participation in, or high rates of attrition from, formal language training programs;
- ✓ building a work force of bilingual teaching professionals and teacher aides;
- ✓ liaising with relevant teacher training facilities to develop and maintain a teacher work force with skills in adult education, cross-cultural learning, second language acquisition, and teaching non-literate, pre-literate and semi-literate learners;
- ✓ establishing specialist teacher qualifications in second language learning for both adults and children;
- ✓ professional development and debriefing for language training providers to enhance their capacity to support learners affected by refugee-related trauma.

## Target language competence as a resource for rebuilding

Target language competence is a basic requirement for achieving independence in day-to-day matters such as shopping, banking and driving a motor vehicle, as well as for negotiating systems such as health care and education. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate in the language of the receiving country have better prospects for achieving self-sufficiency. They have access to a wider range of employment opportunities and are better equipped to participate in further education and training.

Language is the vehicle through which resettled refugees come to feel 'part' of the receiving society. It enables them to engage with its broader social milieu through exposure to its media and community life; to participate in informal interactions in neighbourhoods, shopping centres and community facilities; and ultimately to form meaningful social connections with others.

Competence in the target language also has psychological benefits, helping resettled refugees to regain a sense of autonomy, dignity and self worth. Struggling to communicate, or depending on others (in particular, children) to communicate on their behalf can be a source of shame and embarrassment.

Having the ability to comprehend basic safety instructions (such as traffic warnings or labels on medicines and appliances) and to contact an emergency service in the event of a health or security crisis, provides reassurance to resettled refugees, helping them to regain a sense of security.

Facilitating language acquisition also helps to promote the human and civil rights of resettled refugees, enhancing their capacity to act as self advocates in commercial transactions and in their dealings with employers, law enforcement personnel and government agencies.

Language acquisition is particularly important for resettled refugees in parenting or guardianship roles. It can help both to avoid the negative family dynamics which may result from dependency on children (who generally acquire a new language more rapidly) and optimise parents' capacity to support children and young people in their resettlement.

While language training programs require careful planning and adequate resourcing, they are an investment that reaps





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long term benefits for receiving societies. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate independently are better placed to contribute their skills and attributes and will require fewer long term resettlement supports.



**Communication is an important thing, because it is important to speak the language, otherwise you cannot talk of integration.**

Resettled refugee



### Factors affecting target language acquisition and participation in language training

Factors which affect a resettled refugee's capacity to acquire a second language include:

- their level of literacy in their own language. People who are literate in their own language learn a second language more readily. Second language acquisition depends in part on learners having grasped basic communicative and numeracy concepts in their first language;
- their fluency in languages other than their mother tongue;
- their prior familiarity with the language of the receiving country or a variation thereof;
- age, as learning another language becomes more difficult with age;
- the extent to which they are experiencing psychological responses to torture and other traumatic refugee experiences or stress associated with resettlement (e.g. anxiety about family members left behind or trauma symptoms such as flash-backs may interfere with the learning process)<sup>1</sup>.

There are a number of factors which may affect resettled refugees' participation in language training programs, including:

- their familiarity with a classroom environment. Some resettled refugees will not have participated in formal education for some time and some may never have done so;
- family responsibilities and the availability of appropriate child care options. Refugee families may have limited access to informal child care through the family yet may be unaware of, uncomfortable with or unable to afford formal child care services;
- other resettlement demands. Some resettled refugees may find it difficult to give priority to language learning over other tasks of resettlement;
- economic factors. Resettled refugees may wish or need to give priority to employment over language learning;
- gender. In many cultures it is unacceptable for women to participate in a mixed-gender setting. In cultures where the role of women is seen to be primarily in the home, language learning may not be seen as a priority for refugee women. It is important for resettlement countries to address this since, as indicated in Chapter 3.2, the integration of refugee

women is vital both for the women themselves and their families and communities;  
—their physical and mental health status.

Factors in the receiving society affecting language acquisition and training include:

- whether formal language training programs are offered and their accessibility. This will depend in part on the size and composition of the resettlement program and the geographic distribution of new refugee arrivals;
- the availability of an appropriately qualified and experienced work force to support language training, including teaching professionals, interpreters, bilingual support staff and teachers with expertise in target language training, adult education and teaching pre-literate, non-literate and semi-literate learners;
- the extent to which existing educational facilities are orientated to meet adults with special educational needs. The education systems of many countries of resettlement are highly developed, well established and oriented to meet the needs of nationals with a continuous educational history;
- whether income support payments are made available to resettled refugees while they participate in language training programs. This is usually influenced by the expectations of the resettlement country in relation to economic self-sufficiency (see Chapter 1.4);
- the availability of supports to enable resettled refugees to participate in language training (e.g. child care, transport);
- opportunities to practise the target language;
- the relative need to speak the target language in order to ‘survive’ (e.g. employment opportunities for individuals with limited target language proficiency, access to bilingual family support);
- languages spoken. In some countries a number of local dialects may be spoken in addition to the official language. It may be of equal, if not greater, importance for resettled refugees to learn these languages if they are to manage and participate in the receiving society.

### Issues to consider in planning target language programs

Should resettled refugees be offered formal language training programs on arrival?

While most countries make some provision for post arrival language training, there are variations in the duration of



**If he started learning the language he would lose his job. The working plan changed all the time so he couldn't follow a regular class.**

Resettled refugee



LANGUAGE  
TRAINING


**INTEGRATION  
IN PRACTICE**
**Learning a local  
language in Benin**

WHILE resettled refugees in Benin are offered classes in French, the country's official language, a local dialect, Fon, is spoken in the community in which many settle. Recognising that it would be important for resettled refugees, in particular, those starting small businesses, to communicate in the local language, classes were also offered in Fon.



language training programs and their position in the integration process.

Three approaches can be distinguished. In some countries, such as the USA, language training is offered via a basic and time limited program, conducted as part of the refugee reception process. The focus is on imparting the language skills needed to accomplish basic tasks such as banking and using public transportation. Opportunities for ongoing language training are available. However, the emphasis is on resettled refugees accessing these programs concurrently with paid employment, either through training provided in the workplace or outside of working hours through community based programs.

This approach is promoted in the belief that resettled refugees will learn the language more quickly through their day-to-day interactions in the receiving society, and in particular through employment. In some countries, it is thought that overall integration goals are better served through early economic self-sufficiency (see Chapter 1.4), a process that would be delayed by extended participation in a dedicated language training program.

A second approach is that adopted in Canada and Australia where extended specialist language training programs are a core component of the integration program. They are funded by central governments and are provided free-of-charge, with resettled refugees being offered income support to meet basic living costs to enable their participation. Newcomers have a right to these programs, but are not obliged to participate in them.



**Sometimes I learn a bit of Swedish from my eldest daughter, but it's difficult as she has already forgotten her Kurdish.**

Resettled refugee





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Integrating language training and employment through individual introduction plans in Sweden**

IN THE course of	into account the resettled	experience. This
developing their individual	refugee's language training	approach is taken on the
introduction plans	needs, qualifications, past	understanding that
(see p. 83) resettled	employment and	employment provides
refugees settling in the	educational history and	resettled refugees with
Swedish municipality of	their goals for the future.	natural opportunities to
Lulea meet with their	While tailored to the needs	practise and consolidate
refugee case officer and	of the individual, it	their Swedish language
guidance officers from the	commonly includes a	skills while at the same
municipal adult education	combination of formal	time gaining the
program and the	class-based language	psychological and practical
employment office. The	training and relevant	benefits of participating
plan is developed taking	part-time employment	in employment.

In these countries it is thought that given a grounding in the target language, resettled refugees will have better prospects for achieving self-sufficiency in the long term, accomplish other integration tasks more independently, and participate on a more equal footing in the receiving society. It is also recognised that the process of acquiring a new language as an adult is a difficult one which is further complicated for refugees by the stress of their experiences. Income support is provided in the belief that resettled refugees will acquire the target language more readily if they do not simultaneously face the additional demands of searching for and participating in paid employment.

A third approach is that adopted in a number of the Nordic countries. As is the case in Australia and Canada, resettled refugees are offered language instruction free-of-charge and have access to social support payments to enable their participation. However, in these countries planning for language training is individualised and more formally linked with vocational counselling, further education and employment placement through individualised 'introduction' plans (see Chapter 2.3). This may involve a program of part-time language training alongside part-time employment. Participation is generally obligatory and in some countries, resettled refugees may have their income support payments reduced if they do not participate.

It is important that the circumstances and priorities of individual resettled refugees are respected in relation to





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language training. Some may need time to cope with trauma and stress before they can make meaningful use of language training opportunities.

Language training will be a vital first step in the resettlement pathway of many resettled refugees. Others will see their integration goals as being better served through early employment. Even in those countries offering relatively generous conditions for participation, the reality is that income support payments typically cover basic living costs only. While in most cases this is to ensure parity with income support paid to nationals outside of the labour market (see Chapter 2.4), they may be prohibitively low for resettled refugees who face additional costs involved in building a life in a new country. Some may also be supporting relatives overseas. Resettled refugees in these circumstances may have no choice but to give priority to employment over language training. Nevertheless, experience in those countries offering specialist language programs suggest that the majority of refugees elect to participate.

Resettlement countries can support resettled refugees to balance language learning with other resettlement objectives by providing flexible language learning options (see below). Some countries also allow a generous 'window period' between the resettled refugee's arrival and the time they are expected to have enrolled in or completed a language training program.

### Language acquisition as a process not a program

Language acquisition is an ongoing process. Even where relatively generous provision is made for post arrival language training, many resettled refugees will only achieve partial language proficiency<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, it is important that there are ongoing opportunities for resettled refugees to participate in language learning. Adequate provision will also need to be made for interpreting and translating services, particularly for communicating about matters requiring a high level of technical language proficiency, such as health care or legal concerns (see Chapter 2.5).

### Language training as a resource for resettlement

Language training programs delivered in an integration context are distinguished from those which may be offered to nationals in a traditional educational environment, in that one of their primary goals is to support refugees to resettle in their new country.

In most countries post arrival language training programs emphasise language learning for social and communicative competence, rather than for achieving technical proficiency. Typically programs combine language training with learning about practical resettlement tasks and the laws, customs and practices of the receiving society. In some countries, language training programs are also used as a forum for linking new arrivals with other resettlement services, either by inviting support services to deliver information sessions in class time or conducting excursions (or field trips) to key services and institutions. These are usually conducted in resettled refugees' mother-tongue.



This approach has been adopted recognising that target language training is more likely to be effective if it is based on adult learning principles (see box, p. 130) and is meaningful to the everyday lives and needs of adult learners in their roles as shoppers, parents, citizens and so on<sup>3</sup>. It also offers obvious efficiencies for resettlement countries, enabling other integration goals to be served in the context of language training.

Some countries also link language training with vocational education, training and employment placement.

### Language training and cultural adaptation

Language training programs enable resettled refugees to acquire the target language and learn about the receiving society. However, there should also be opportunities for bilingual instruction and the history, literature and cultural experiences of resettled refugees should be reflected in the curricula and classroom environment.

The merits of rebuilding and maintaining cultural connection and exchange have been discussed elsewhere in this Handbook (see Chapter 1.3). Similar considerations apply in the use of resettled refugees' first languages. The process of learning a second language is more likely to be effective if individuals have ongoing opportunities to use their mother tongue<sup>4</sup>. Further, as indicated above, there are some concepts that need to be learned in a first language before they can be grasped in a second.

### Funding and planning of language training programs

In most resettlement countries responsibility for funding, planning, coordinating and monitoring language training





## Developing language training on the basis of adult learning principles

ADULT education is more likely to be effective if:

- learners are involved in planning and implementing learning activities;
- it draws upon learners' experiences as a resource. These provide a foundation for learning new things and enhance readiness for learning;
- it cultivates self direction in learners as an important characteristic of adulthood. This may need to be encouraged as many participants may be more familiar with teacher directed learning environments;
- it is delivered in a climate which encourages and supports learning, which is characterised by trust and mutual respect, and in which conflict is effectively managed;
- a spirit of collaboration is fostered in the learning setting, in recognition of the fact that both teachers and learners have something to contribute;
- it uses small groups to promote team work and encourage co-operation and collaboration;
- it is based on an understanding of learners' experiences and communities (e.g. taking into account such factors as gender, refugee experience);
- it involves adult learners in identifying and establishing their own evaluation techniques.

Adapted from S Imel, *Using Adult Learning Principles in Adult Basic and Literacy Education* from the website of the Adult, Career and Vocational Educational Clearinghouse, 1998.

programs lies with national governments. However, in recognition of the importance of implementing integration at a more localised level, programs are generally delivered by community based providers such as educational institutions, community based ethno-cultural agencies, non-government organisations and municipal governments.

For example, Canada's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC) is funded by the federal government which also assumes responsibility for setting broad curriculum goals and guidelines and monitoring. However, programs are delivered by some 80 providers across Canada.

### Initiatives for facilitating target language acquisition

Flexible delivery options

A flexible range of delivery options is important (see box), as:—some options may be more suited to those with special learning needs (for example, home tutoring may be more accessible to women with child care responsibilities, trauma

## The importance of flexibility: Delivery options for language training programs

THERE ARE a range of models for delivering language training, including:

- specialist group based programs;
- work based programs;
- home based tutor schemes (delivered by paid teachers or trained volunteers);

- ‘distance’ education programs ;
- on-line learning. For example, refugees resettling in Canada can access instruction under that country’s LINC program on-line;
- instruction within and outside of conventional working hours as well as

on a full and part-time basis.

While language training programs should be delivered by personnel with appropriate training, informal language learning objectives can be built into the roles of sponsors, be-frienders and volunteer support providers.



## Building language training capacity in emerging resettlement countries

LANGUAGE training programs take some time to build and are a cost consideration. It may not be possible for developing countries to offer a comprehensive program, particularly in the founding years. However, consider:

- establishing a task force or working group of specialists (such as adult education experts and language teachers) who can assist in identifying appropriate language programs, placement options and other strategies for language training;
- developing a long term

plan for building language training capacity (three to five years and beyond), aimed at linking early language training with other existing formal or specialised courses;

- liaising with existing educational institutions to offer advanced language training;
- placing resettled refugees in sites with other linguistically diverse communities (e.g. immigrant or asylum seeker populations) where there may be established training programs or where there are greater possibilities to benefit

from economies of scale;

- tutor programs (offered by paid or trained volunteer teachers), an option where numbers do not warrant a more formal program;
- identifying and developing specific integration communities for resettlement (see Chapter 2.1). If resettled refugees are dispersed it will be logistically difficult and more costly to deliver language training programs;
- incorporating informal language training into the roles of volunteer support providers.





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- and torture survivors or those with disabilities);
- more formalised learning options will be required for those wishing to participate in advanced language training and further education and training;
- language acquisition is an ongoing process. By accessing flexible learning options such as on-line instruction and home tutor schemes, resettled refugees can hone the language skills learned in a class program;
- in those countries where resettled refugees are placed outside of large urban centres it may be difficult to offer all new arrivals a group based program;
- flexibility allows integration planners and providers to explore opportunities for learning in a range of social contexts such as the workplace, school communities and in social support relationships;
- resettled refugees who are holding down jobs may have a limited capacity to attend classes.

### Individualised pre-course needs analysis

Analysis of the language training needs of resettled refugees is conducted in a number of countries prior to their entry into a language training program. Some countries have developed standard assessment instruments for this process. Needs analysis helps to:

- assess refugees' mother-tongue literacy and their knowledge in the target language so that they can be placed in a course at an appropriate level. This is important to avoid the attrition which may result from learners being required to learn at too fast a pace or being under-challenged;
- enable language training providers to establish with resettled refugees their language learning goals, i.e. whether they are learning primarily to manage day-to-day life in the receiving society or for the purposes of further training and study. In some countries, pre-course needs analysis is specifically linked with vocational orientation and counselling to support resettled refugees to plan appropriate learning and training pathways;
- identify participants with special language learning needs (e.g. pre-literate learners, trauma and torture survivors, refugees with disabilities).

### Quality assurance

Since language training programs are typically provided by a range of community based providers, it is important that strategies are developed to ensure an appropriate standard of

## Providing language training in the workplace

LANGUAGE training providers in the USA and other established resettlement countries have placed some emphasis on developing work based language training programs. These are offered either in work time or immediately prior to or following working hours, thus eliminating travel time and transportation problems.

In some cases work based language training is provided as a discrete program. In others, language instruction may be tailored to enable resettled refugees to perform their job roles more effectively.

As indicated in Chapter 2.9, work based language instruction can also be offered to prospective employers where limited language proficiency might otherwise serve as a barrier

to employing resettled refugees.

Employers may be prepared to support work based language training, either by allowing resettled refugees to withdraw from work to participate or by contributing to the costs of the program. One of the disadvantages of 'withdrawal' programs, however, is that the time available for instruction may be limited.

Work based language training, particularly where it is tailored to the requirements of particular job roles, can be highly effective, enabling refugees to acquire language skills that have immediate application and meaning for them and which they have ongoing opportunities to practise in their job roles. Through improved language

competence resettled refugees may also have better prospects for advancement within their workplace.

At the same time, however, programs that are workplace driven may not necessarily enhance resettled refugees' communicative competence in other settings, suggesting the importance of participants having access to other language training opportunities.

Work based programs have been particularly important in the USA where resettled refugees are required to access language training concurrently with paid employment. However, in other countries they can be used to provide ongoing opportunities for language acquisition, thereby complementing dedicated post arrival programs.

program delivery and that the objectives of language training programs are broadly consistent both with one another and with national integration goals. Specific initiatives in established resettlement countries include:

- language benchmarking (or scales of communicative proficiency). As well as providing a basis for conducting pre-course needs assessment, benchmarks can be useful tools for setting standards for language training programs, for teacher training and for promoting clear communication among language training personnel and between them and funding bodies, employer organisations, assessors and licensing bodies. Canada, Australia and Ireland have national benchmarks for language training programs;
- national curricula. For example in Canada and Australia, providers of language programs have developed a national



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- curriculum. Recognising the need for flexibility, the curriculum is not highly prescriptive, but outlines broad content areas, objectives and competencies;
- technical assistance bodies and resources. For example, in the USA the Office of Refugee Resettlement funds the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. The Institute supports community based language training programs through the provision of professional development programs, curriculum development and advice on program design. In Canada, teachers have access to a national website which provides specific curriculum guidelines, lessons plans and further resources;
  - quality assurance systems. For example, in the USA the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning (as above) has developed the *English Language Training Program Self Review*. Designed as a tool for self improvement, the self review identifies quality indicators in a range of key areas, such as curriculum and professional development, against which providers assess their programs.

#### Language training for resettled refugees with additional or more intensive needs

Resettled refugees who have no or limited mother-tongue literacy, who originate from pre-literate societies (sometimes known as societies with oral traditions) or who have refugee-related trauma may have additional language training needs.

Resettlement countries have sought to support the participation of these groups in language training and to enhance learning outcomes by:

- integrating psychological and resettlement support with language training. In some countries partnerships have been formed between language training program and settlement support providers so that resettlement issues can be addressed alongside language training (see box, p. 138);
- delivering language training in contexts which may be more acceptable to resettled refugees than a traditional classroom environment (e.g. as part of recreational or social activities);
- ensuring that a flexible range of language training options is available;
- providing practical assistance to access language training (e.g. child care, transportation);
- providing specialist professional development or qualifications for teaching professionals who are teaching learners with special literacy needs, since this task requires different skills and approaches;



- offering special needs learners a longer and/or more intensive period of language instruction (see box, p. 138);
- developing opportunities for bilingual instruction. These will be particularly important for special needs learners, as many concepts cannot be taught in a second language until they are grasped in the first;
- engaging ethno-cultural communities in planning language programs;
- contracting ethno-cultural groups and services as language training providers.

Targeted approaches may also be required to ensure the participation of refugee women and elders. These are discussed in Chapters 3.2 and 3.4 respectively.

### Supports to participate in language training programs

In a number of countries, formal funding provision is made by national governments to meet the cost of child care to enable resettled refugees with family responsibilities to participate in language training. Where formal funding is not available for this purpose, volunteer programs may provide an important source of child care.

### Curriculum resources

Curriculum resources have been developed to facilitate language acquisition and to provide a vehicle for learning about the receiving society and other resettlement services. Curriculum resources enable practice to be documented and made available to a wider range of language training providers and, by reducing class preparation time, enable more efficient use of teacher time.

### Work force development and support

Teaching professionals working in an integration context require additional skills in the areas of second language acquisition, adult learning approaches and cross-cultural education, as well as in teaching adults with special educational needs (e.g. those with limited mother-tongue literacy, trauma and torture survivors.).

In countries with well established refugee and immigrant programs, specialist qualifications have been established for target language teachers working in adult settings (either as a speciality within a teaching qualification or as a post graduate course of study). While this may not be viable in emerging countries or those with small refugee intakes, other arrangements for providing professional development to





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Hastening learning through first language instruction

EIGHTY per cent of adult refugees arriving in New Zealand since 1995 have never completed a primary school education. A study completed by Jeannie Martin Blaker from the West Auckland ESOL Home Tutor Service found that after five years none of the refugees and migrants would meet the accepted definition of a literate person. An Australian study completed in 1992 found that low level literacy learners need around 18-24 months of full-time tuition to reach a basic level of competency in English.	be able to integrate more speedily into New Zealand society, a new model was developed and piloted by the national ESOL Home Tutor Service. The program was developed in the belief that resettled refugees, in particular, those with low literacy levels in their first language, would learn more rapidly if their tutor were bilingual and they were offered more extensive language training. A proposal was submitted for employment training of skilled refugees as tutors, and bilingual African refugees were identified who could teach literacy to other people speaking their language. WINZ (the government employment agency) funded a training course for 10 bilingual tutors. Potential tutors needed to have a good standard of English and have at least a secondary education. Identifying and recruiting women from the target communities who met this criteria proved challenging. The course started with two Somali women and eight males – five of whom had a teaching background prior	to arrival in New Zealand. With tuition hours secured from the government's Adult Literacy Strategy, the trained bilingual tutors offered classes for learners with low levels of literacy, for between two and 12 hours duration, for Amharic, Somali and Oromo speaking resettled refugees. In total, 118 learners attended the classes. Student evaluation of the new tutors was very positive, the most consistent comment being that the tutors could explain concepts to them in their own language. A concurrent research study on developing measures of literacy gain was undertaken by a collaborative research team from a local polytechnic and university, which examined the bilingual tutors' classes and other literacy classes for refugee learners taught by native English speaking tutors. The research project was completed in March 2002. Due to the success of the program there are plans to replicate the model in other major resettlement centres.
In New Zealand resettled refugees commonly receive about three hours of language tuition per week through the home tutor scheme. A small number may secure a place in a government sponsored course. Access to more comprehensive language training, however, is more commonly on a fee-for-service basis. Fees for courses are usually beyond an affordable level for resettled refugees.	In response to these studies and the recognition of the need for refugees to	

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Learning about health through language training**

IN THE Australian state of Victoria, the Adult Multicultural Education Service formed a partnership with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture to produce a curriculum workbook aimed at enhancing resettled refugees' understanding of and access to health care in Australia.	communities, it focuses on the issues of direct concern to resettled refugees. Recognising the importance of dual language instruction, the workbook is accompanied by booklets in eight community languages. Titled <i>Making a Healthy Start in Australia</i> , these enable new arrivals to learn more complex conceptual information in their own language while at the same time learning the language of accessing health services through related exercises in the workbook.	own understanding of health and health care based on their experiences in their countries-of-origin. This is used as the point of departure for exploring differences in the Australian health care system. This approach recognises the importance of acknowledging, affirming and drawing on the culture and past experiences of resettled refugees. Providing background information for teachers, the workbook also serves as a vehicle for enhancing awareness and understanding of the refugee experience among teaching professionals.
The workbook, <i>HealthWays</i> , contains a range of individual and group language learning exercises and can be used in a classroom context or for self guided learning. Since it was based on extensive consultation with refugee	Each exercise in the workbook begins by exploring resettled refugees'	

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**Consider providing the following information to assist teaching professionals and volunteers to provide effective language training to resettled refugees:**

- background on the countries from which refugees come;
- the likely level and nature of educational experience of relevant communities;
- the languages spoken by refugee groups;
- the impact of the refugee experience, in particular torture and trauma, on the learning process;
- the personal impact on teachers of working with traumatised students and ways in which they can help to prevent and deal with this;
- social and resettlement supports available to resettled refugees in the receiving country;
- how to refer students requiring further support;
- specific curriculum and other resources available to teachers;
- cross-cultural training.



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### More than language training in Australia

MIGRANTS and refugees settling in Australia are entitled to 510 hours of English language instruction through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The program is offered to support the successful settlement of migrants and refugees and their equal participation in all aspects of Australian society. Accordingly, it is not restricted to those requiring language skills for work and study purposes. While the program is voluntary, over 90% of new arrivals participate <sup>5</sup> .	are eligible for income support while attending classes. The AMEP is funded by the Australian government and is delivered on a contractual basis by various providers in each state and territory. In the Australian state of Victoria, the AMEP is provided by Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) and its partners. AMES offers a range of study options including full or part-time courses in either a formal classroom environment or community based setting. A home based tutor program (provided by trained volunteers) and distance learning options are available to those clients who are unable to attend formal classes because of class location, timing or personal, cultural or work related reasons. The distance learning course comprises texts, audio and video tapes,	backed by regular telephone contact with a qualified tutor. Clients can also choose a self paced learning option, again supervised by a teacher. Before commencing their AMEP, clients undergo an assessment of their language skills and are placed in a class appropriate to their learning level. Refugee and humanitarian program entrants who have limited literacy in their own language, who are struggling with settlement challenges, or who have severe refugee-related trauma are invited to participate in the Special Preparatory Program (SPP). This program provides an additional 100 hours of free language instruction designed to prepare clients for entry into the mainstream AMEP. Through a partnership with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, teachers are also offered special training to support
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teaching professionals might be considered (for example, through a technical support agency or a teacher training institution).

A learning environment offers unique opportunities for adult participants to build relationships with one another and with teaching personnel and volunteers. Disclosures of both past traumatic experiences or current difficulties are not uncommon in these contexts. Both volunteer and professional teachers require support to respond sensitively to participants and to deal with the personal consequences of working with a client group affected by trauma (see Chapter 3.1).

survivors of trauma.

AMES programs are delivered by qualified teachers with additional specialist qualifications in teaching English as a second language in an adult education setting. Classes are taught to a set of competencies outlined in the national Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE). Students achieving the competencies in the CSWE are awarded a certificate. Program quality is maintained through regular monitoring of CSWE benchmarks by an experienced AMES teacher.

AMES, however, offers more than a program for language acquisition. Clients participating in the AMEP are introduced to a range of settlement services via information and visits as well as being taught the language required to access these services.

In the SPP program particular emphasis is placed on supporting clients to recover from the negative effects of their refugee experiences. The SPP builds in extra supports such as bilingual information and instruction and home tutoring. It is offered in close consultation with other settlement services so that participants can secure assistance with emotional or resettlement issues.

Language learning is tailored to the needs of individual resettled refugees and is focussed on addressing issues in the resettlement process.

The SPP is complemented by other innovative programs developed to support resettled refugees with additional learning and employment needs (see p. 288).

AMES ensures that there are sound links between its

AMEP program and further education, vocational training and employment. As their English language skills improve, clients who wish to pursue these options are assigned a counsellor who assists them to plan their particular pathway. Students are taught English for job search and occupational purposes and are offered placements in Australian industry to gain work experience.

AMES seeks to affirm and respect the linguistic and cultural heritage of its clientele through a range of strategies including cross-cultural teaching approaches, bilingual instruction and support, catering for particular cultural needs (e.g. the provision of prayer rooms), providing cultural diversity training for teachers and offering opportunities for students to share their cultural experiences.

Arrangements for delivering professional development and teacher debriefing can be made through either a technical assistance agency or through a partnership with a refugee support service.

To enhance opportunities for bilingual instruction, consideration also needs to be given to building a work force of bilingual teachers or teacher aides.





## TARGET LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND TRAINING

### OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- incorporate target language training as an integral component of a refugee resettlement program;
- ensure that language training programs receive adequate, stable and ongoing funding;
- establish mechanisms for the central coordination, planning and monitoring of language programs;
- develop national standards for language training programs;
- have strategies in place to build work force capacity for the delivery of language programs;
- offer a range of options in program type and instructional format recognising the diversity in capacities, competencies and aspirations among resettled refugees;
- provide income and other supports to enable participation in language training;
- ensure linkages between language training and other integration processes, in particular, orientation, social support, vocational counselling, further education and training and employment placement;
- promote language training as a socially and economically valuable but voluntary activity;
- ensure that resettled refugees have continued access to interpreters until they have acquired communicative competence (and thereafter in matters requiring more technical language proficiency).

### LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS WOULD:

- operate on adult learning principles;
- respect and value the learner's first language and culture by promoting opportunities for multi/dual language use and incorporating the history, literature and cultural experiences of refugees into curricula and in the classroom;
- ensure that second language learners have equitable access to facilities and resources;
- have individualised assessment procedures to ensure that training opportunities are tailored to the competencies and aspirations of resettled refugees, including those with additional language training needs;
- reflect the social context of the language taught and the importance of experiential learning;
- provide or facilitate access to culturally appropriate childcare;
- be provided by staff with appropriate technical teacher training in second language acquisition and adult learning as well as professional development in identifying and responding to the additional needs of refugees in a learning context;
- take care to counter any signs of racism and discrimination in the learning environment.