

Syrian Refugee Children’s Language and Literacy Development in English and Arabic

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Language and Literacy Development of Syrian Refugee Children and Arabic Speaking Immigrant Children

RESEARCHERS: Xi (Becky) Chen, Redab Al Janaideh, Kathleen Hipfner-Boucher, Alexandra Gottardo, Sana Tibi, and Johanne Paradis

SUMMARY: The study looked at English and Arabic language and literacy development in a sample of 115 Syrian children with refugee experience, aged 6 to 13, who had recently resettled in Canada. It compared older (10-13 years old) and younger (6-9 years old) children's language and literacy development and assessed the simple reading view model in English and Arabic.

LINK: Click [here](#) to read the executive summary and [here](#) to read the publication

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In a sample of 115 children with refugee experience comparing older (10-13 years old) and younger (6-9 years old)...

14% could not read English

57% did not have reading skills in Arabic



OLDER CHILDREN

experienced more challenges in learning English, but outperformed the younger group in Arabic



CHILDREN WITH REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

follow similar, although delayed, developmental trajectories compared to less vulnerable groups

LOW LEVELS OF ENGLISH AND ARABIC SKILLS LIKELY AFFECTED BY...

Amount of exposure to each language	Socioeconomic status	Parents' level of education	Interrupted schooling	Traumatic Experiences
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Recommendations:

- Findings that refugee children performed poorly on the English standardized measures must be interpreted with caution. This sample was within their first 3 years of learning English, and research has shown that it takes five or more years for English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners to develop academic language proficiency.
- This study shows the need to support refugee children’s language and literacy skills in English and Arabic, both at school and in the home.
  - For older youth, tutorial classes that combine academic content with language support can help familiarize youth with specific vocabulary needed for school.
  - For children of all ages, same-language peer pairing in schools can help the development of both languages.
- Language programs should aim to be culturally responsive and include trauma-informed approaches.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition.

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