



The Impact of Language Learning on Internally Displaced and Refugee Resilience

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Received: March 26, 2018 ▪ Revised: May 21, 2018 ▪ Accepted: May 29, 2018

Abstract: One of the central aspects of displacement and migration is resilience on behalf of the affected individuals. UNHCR reports that the number of displaced people around the world reached 65 million by the end of 2015. In another report UNHCR states that the number of Syrian refugees in Iraq is 233,224. While IOM reports that the number of the internally displaced persons in Iraq between 2014 and 2016 reached to 3.4 million. As it is crucial to communication and, thus, survival, language is vital to promoting resilience of such people. Nowadays, English language learning provides numerous opportunities for individuals to succeed; hence, it is essential in building resilience among displaced populations. The current study aimed to explore resilience level of the displaced adolescents in Iraq, also to verify the impact of English language learning on their lives. The study has been conducted in camp and non-camp schools via the delivery of a CD-RISC-25 questionnaire as quantitative method, followed by interviews as qualitative method. The results concluded that the participants had medium resilience level, and learning English plays different roles in building resilience of the participants.

Keywords: *Displaced people, refugees, English as a foreign language, Iraq crisis, resilience.*

To cite this article: Ameen, R. F., & Cinkara, E. (2018). The impact of language learning on internally displaced and refugee resilience. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 7(3), 529-538. doi: 10.12973/eu-jer.7.3.529

Introduction

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been defined as “people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border” (UNHCR, 2006, p.8). On the other hand, refugees are considered as “individuals who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence; have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution” (The Refugee Convention, 1951, p.3).

However, each day, global conflicts increase the numbers of IDPs and refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), reports that the number of IDPs and refugees around the world reached 65 million by the end of 2015. This number represents immense human suffering, meaning that one out of every 113 people on the Earth now have been obligated to leave home by conflict, persecution or violence. Another way to explain this is that each minute, 24 people are forced to flee from their homes (UNHCR, 2016).

The results of being displaced or refugee may negatively affect person's life. De Vries (1994) states that IDPs and refugees are extremely vulnerable victims of conflict and violence in the countries from which they flee, and they often are victims of violence in the country to which they flee as well. Moreover, they often live in insecure economic conditions and lack of basic services. Such events and experiences could affect person's emotions negatively. Lavik, Hauff, Skrondal, and Solberg (1996) state, people who experience displacement, especially young people, are at great risk of developing psychological and emotional problems. Ajdukovic (1998) mentions some of these psychological and emotional problems, namely nightmares, sleeping problems, anxiety, sadness, low self-esteem, violent behavior, and guilty feelings.

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It is obvious that displacement whether it was internally or externally has negative impacts especially on lives of children and youth. Losing homes, parents, siblings, friends, schools, lifestyles, habits, and the expected future all are not happy experiences for anybody.

Resilience is one of the required factors to be normal or to live normally, not only for displaced individuals, but for people in general. Historically speaking, the notion of resilience comes from the Latin word *resilio*, which means “jump back” or “bounce back”. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2013) “resilience is the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity or the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; and toughness”. However, researchers give various definitions for the construct of resilience, e.g., it has defined as “the ability to successfully adapt to stressors, maintaining psychological well-being in the face of adversity”. Also, “it is dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity or trauma” (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000, p. 543). According to Masten (2001, p.228) “resilience refers to “good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development”. Leipold and Greve (2009, p.41) demonstrate that resilience involves a measure of emotional stability “an individual’s stability or quick recovery (or even growth) under significant adverse conditions”.

Regarding resilience studies, Boss, Bryant, and Mancini (2001) report that “resilience researchers explore coping and adapting process under stress conditions as chronic illness, death of a loved ones, abuse, neglect, disasters, and stressful life events. In other words, most of the resilience researches shed the light on individuals of a given community who face difficulties or problems in their lives”. According to Tusaie and Dyer (2004) resilience has primarily been studied in relation to stressful times of transition. Whereas, Spiegel and Grinker (1945) studied men under stress in war and presented a research on the impact of catastrophic events involving trauma and loss. Commenting on Spiegel and Grinker study, Figley and McCubbin (1983) state, that study has demonstrated the individual’s capacity to recover and move on with life. Similarly, another study associated with pain was conducted by (Friborg, 2006). Bonanno (2004) studied number of people exposed to loss and traumatic events at some point in their lives. In the same manner, Carver, Pozo, Harris, Noriega, Scheier, Robinson, and Clark (1993) examined women with breast cancer and their coping strategies. In a longitudinal analytical resilience study. Werner and Smith (2001) follow up 700 children involving different internal and external protective factors affecting their lives over time. They conclude that nothing was “cast in stone” because of early life experiences. Few persons identified as resilient at age of 18 had showed serious problems by age 30. Also, the study concludes that resilience could be developed or changed at any point over the life course.

Background of the displaced people in Iraq

Since 2004, the conflicts in Iraq have been forcing people to flee from unsafe areas of the country to other areas perceived to be relatively safer. 2014 was the worst year for internal displacement, as hundreds of thousands of Iraqi families fled from their homes and re-settle in other cities. Likewise, since 2012, violent events in Syria have forced multitudes of individuals either to resettle in other Syrian cities, or flee the country altogether to neighbouring countries like Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq. However, UNHCR (2017) reports that the number of Syrian refugees in Iraq is 233,224, while international Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that the number of Iraqi IDPs between 2014 and 2016 exceeded 3.4 million (IOM, 2017).

Not only do IDPs and Syrian refugees in Iraq lose their homes, but also do several of them lose one or more family member to murder, abduction, separation, or physical harm. Also, many witness severe violence and crimes as they leave their friends, relatives, schools and jobs behind. They now live in poor economic conditions, have low qualities of health and education, and lack proper shelter, food and sanitation. As a result, they experience anxiety, stress, grief, depression, sadness, fear, anger and all symptoms of negative impacts.

As a response to the crisis in Iraq, a tremendous effort is spent by different entities to accommodate these vulnerable people. The local government, United Nations agencies (UN), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), all work as humanitarian partners throughout the country. Since 2012, these partners have built many camps in different cities as shelters for displaced people. And they provide people in camp and non-camp settings with different kinds of services such as food, education, security, sanitation, and medical services including psychological and psychosocial services.

The education service that the displaced people receive in Iraq includes learning English as Foreign Language (EFL). Despite the difficulties that some of the learners complain of, English stands as the most popular foreign language in this Country. English is essential in all Iraqi schools, institutions, and universities which utilize English in some or all of their courses and classes. This language is labeled as a foreign language (FL) in this country due to its lack of communicative functions within an Iraqi context, as well as its lack of official recognition by the Iraqi government (Ahmed, 1989). Historically, English first became present in Iraq during the early decades of the last century. Hakim (1977) stated that American missionaries were very active in the southern cities of Iraq, opening their first school in Basrah during the early twentieth century.

Today in Iraq, students including the Iraqi IDP Syrian refugee who speak either Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, Shabaki, Armenian, Mandaic, Syriac or Persian, express great willingness to learn English beside their first or second language that they speak. The local government encourages that for different reasons such as societal goals, individual needs, or

economic interests (Ahmed, 1989) Not only do students represent the learners of this language, but also do ordinary people learn English via different methods such as television, internet, courses, etc.

As resilience plays crucial roles to improve the lives of the displaced people, and since English is the most important (FL) in Iraq, it is significant to explore to which extent English affects resilience of the IDP and refugee adolescents in this country.

Language learning for resilience building

“The experimental psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) claimed that the study of language could provide important insights into the nature of the mind, and he wrote extensively about many different aspects of language. Between 1870 and 1900, most of the investigations into child psychology focused on the development of speech in early childhood, especially on memory and mental associations involving the use of language” (Demirezen 2004, p.26).

Many studies report various positive impacts of learning languages. Garfinkel and Tabor (1991) state, there is a positive correlation between reading scores and FL learning. Similarly, Hakuta (1986) highlights that, children learning FL are more flexible and have more high- order thinking skills. Also, Seligman (2011) reports that, learning FL supports the resilience building skills. A study in Louisiana Public Schools which involved 13,200 children from different races, genders and levels. That study indicates that children who take FL courses score higher on basic skills tests than those who do not (Dumas, 1999). Another study conducted by Horn and Kojaku (2001) state that, FL students not only earn higher grades in school but they are less dropping out from school. Likewise, Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) found that the cognition of children exposed to a FL at an early age develops better. In the same manner, Cummins (1981) claims that understanding how language works and the ability to manipulate language assists children in thinking and problems solving.

Foreign language learning in displacement and crisis contexts have positive impacts on people, Welsh Government (2013, p.13) concludes “Good language skills provides firm foundations from which asylum seekers and refugees in Wales can achieve their potential. As well as being the means through which individuals within a community communicate and learn about each other, language carries important cultural and historical signals, which can facilitate inclusion”. Similarly, British Council (2015, p.4) reports that “language-learning builds inclusive environment, increases feelings of safety, increases students’ attendance and attainment in the classrooms. Language is an essential part of our individual and community lives, as well as being an essential tool for learning. All the languages that migrants speak and write, contribute to their capacity to interact with other cultures in different sociolinguistic contexts. Indeed, access to opportunities for individuals to draw on these languages is central to participation in social processes as well as policies of social inclusion”. Likewise, UNICEF (2016) reports that, language can play an important role resilience building and it can prevent conflict because it is an expression of identity resilience of individuals can be increased via language programs such as, developing literacy and home language, learning additional language, learning additional language, and through supporting and promoting language teachers skills and capacities. Similarly, in a more recent study, Cinkara (2017) reported the support of language learning in development resilience in Syrian refugee student sample in Gaziantep.

From the physiological perspective, studies have determined that that FL learning positively affects the human body. Mackey (2014, p.1) states that brain size can be developed by learning a FL”. She relies upon the findings of Swedish scientists who utilized magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Different groups of people were examined, some of whom were extensively learning a FL and others who were learning a different content. “The results indicated that “some parts of the brains of the FL learners had developed in size after three months, while the brains of the learners of the other content had not changed in size. This proves that brain growth is one effect of learning a FL”.

Resilience and foreign language studies in Iraq

To the best of the researcher knowledge, there is a lack of resilience studies in Iraq. This term resilience seems to be unknown or new for the majority of people. Persons who know the meaning of this construct either work in humanitarian sector among the ongoing crisis, or they participated in recent resilience programs in this country. The good news about the shortage in resilience studies in Iraq, is that many resilience plans and programs includes resilience activities were designed for Iraq society, e.g., the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP), also, The Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Program (ICRRP). Such programs aim to better resilience understanding and to promote it in this country, hopefully these activities would lead to more scientific resilience studies (UNHCR, 2016). However, one of the few resilience studies in Iraq is the one done by British Council. It reports a significant relationship between language learning and resilience among Iraqi society and it aims to develop language-education to promote the resilience of refugees and IDPs in Iraq and also in Syria, Turkey, and Lebanon (British Council, 2015), in that study, Delaney explains the positive impacts of language learning on the displaced people in the aforementioned countries. She states “language classes can help with trauma [because] having a class to go to gives you a safe place, structure, and something to do. Yet, it is more than that- language is the medium we use to express ourselves. Even learning foreign words that describe feelings could be important. The unfamiliar language can give some distance from the emotions,

perhaps making them feel 'safer' to talk about". A language communicative class gives individuals the opportunity to share their stories and emotions without vulnerability feelings.

When it comes to the foreign language studies in Iraq, the results shows that most of the studies concern with English since it is the most popular foreign one. As Iraqi people have become increasingly aware of the importance of English over the past few decades, the number of studies regarding this language is increasing as well; therefore, day by day, the variables associated with this language are becoming clearer, e.g., Ahmed (1989) investigates the role of attitudes and motivation in EFL teaching and learning in Iraqi preparatory schools. He concludes that parents play important roles in their children's attitudes and motivation toward learning EFL. Abid (2012) investigated the beliefs of 101 undergraduate Iraqi EFL learners. Her findings revealed that Iraqi children are learning English more efficiently than adults because they have believe that they are able to learn a FL. Last but not least Al-Akeeli (2013) explored lexical and grammatical difficulties among Iraqi EFL students, addressing the mistakes that students make in composition and providing linguistic explanations for the occurrences of these mistakes. He concludes that the frequency of such errors are caused by the mother tongue. The students demonstrated that they received thoughts and ideas in their mother tongue and translated them to English; therefore, some of their English sentences had an Arabic structure.

Hypotheses

In this study, the following is hypothesized:

- 1- Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents have low levels of resilience.
2. No statistically significant difference exists between Iraqi IDP adolescents and Syrian refugee adolescents in terms of resilience.
3. Learning EFL boosts the resilience of Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents in camp and non-camp schools.

Methodology

In the current research, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilized. The resilience scale CD-RISC-25 was used to explore the resilience levels of the Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents. Then determining whether there is a significant difference in terms of resilience exists between Iraqi and Syrian adolescents or not. For the qualitative data, high-, medium- and low-resilience students were interviewed to understand the role of EFL in their resilience-building.

Data collection tools

Two data collection tools were employed in this study:

The Connor and Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25)

As a quantitative method, the Connor and Davidson CD-RISC-25 scale was employed to measure and investigate the resilience of Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescent students. This questionnaire was comprised of twenty-five items concerning resilience. According to Connor and Davidson (2016) this scale is translated to many languages. In the current study the Arabic formal version was administered to 223 subjects. The students were asked to rate statements according to the extent to which they agreed by using the following scale: not true at all = 0, rarely true = 1, sometimes true = 2, often true = 3, true nearly all the time = 4. The scoring of the scale is based on summing the total of all items, each of which is scored from 0-4. The full range is therefore from 0 to 100. Higher scores on the CD-RISC indicate higher levels of resilience. Connor and Davidson (2003 & 2016) report that this scale was used in 400 resilient researches. The content of the scale represents five main factors. The first factor (8 items) presents the notion of personal competence, high standards and tenacity. The next factor (7 items) concerns trust in one's intuition, tolerance of negative affect, and the strengthening effects of stress. The third factor (5 items) reflects the positive acceptance of change and secure relationships. The fourth factor (3 items) reflects control. Finally, the fifth factor (2 items) shows spiritual influence. Furthermore, in this scale scores between 0-49 consider as low resilience level, while scores between 50- 79 represent medium resilience level, and finally, the scores from 80 to 100 state high resilience level (Connor and Davidson, 2003 & 2016).

Structured interviews

After analysing the questionnaire results via SPSS, the students were divided into three groups: high-, medium- and low-resilience students, based on their scores from the CD RISC questionnaire. 28 students were invited to participate in interviews (10 high-resilience scores, 10 low- resilience scores, and 8 medium-resilience scores). For each session, the interview began with a short introduction to the study and its purpose in comfortable classroom in all five schools. After obtaining participants' consent, they were asked to answer five written questions with explanation from the researcher. The purpose of the interviews and questions was to determine how English language learning impacts these adolescent students. In particular, how learning EFL affects participants' schooling, lives, future, to overcome the crisis, and the advantages of learning this language. These questions previously had been translated into Arabic. Each of

these interviews lasted between 20-28 minutes, during which the subjects answered the translated written questions with pleasure.

Participants and setting

In Duhok Governorate where this study took place, 97 schools have been opened since 2014 in camp and non-camp areas to receive Iraqi IDP students. These schools are primary, secondary, and preparatory. The number of the students enrolled in these schools is changing every day because newly displaced students arrive irregularly from different areas, at the same, some existing students leave to other places or drop out. However, during the data collection process of this study there were 68,627 students enrolled in IDP schools in Duhok. On the other hand, 14 schools were opened after 2012 in camp and non-camp areas for Syrian refugee students. During data collection process there were 11,169 students attending these primary, secondary, and preparatory schools.

In this study, 223 subjects (126 female and 97 male aged 15-17 years) completed a CD-RISC questionnaire in 5 preparatory schools (see Table 1).

Table 1. CD- RISC Participants description

Location	Status	Nationality	Male	Female	Number of the participants
Gawilan Refugee Camp	Refugee	Syrian	6	12	18
Domiz Refugee Camp	Refugee	Syrian	10	30	40
Khanki IDP Camp	IDP	Iraqi	41	44	85
Kaberto IDP Camp	IDP	Iraqi	20	19	39
Akre Non-Camp	IDP and Refugee	Iraqi and Syrian	20	21	41
Total			97	126	223

Table 1 shows CD RISC-25 questionnaire were distributed in five preparatory schools, four of which were in a camp settings and one of which was not. Furthermore, two schools were Iraqi IDP schools, and the other two schools were for Syrian refugee students. The last one was a non-camp mixed identities school.

After analysing CD-RISC data via SPSS and getting participants resilience levels, 28 of the total 223 students, in same five schools were invited again to written interviews (see Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' interviews description

Resilience level	IDP	Refugee	Male	Female	Number of the participants
Low Resilience	5	5	4	6	10
Medium Resilience	5	3	3	5	8
High Resilience	5	5	5	5	10
Total	15	13	12	16	28

Table 2 shows that 28 students participated in the written interviews to reveal the impact of EFL on their resilience. Table 2 shows that the current study targeted students from various resilience levels for the interviews (10 high-resilience scores, 10 low-resilience scores, and 8 medium-resilience scores). Also, this table shows that the distribution in terms of gender and nationalities were fair.

Procedure

Most of the camps for displaced people in Iraq are distributed in the north of the country. In Duhok Governorate, there are five camps for Syrian refugees and fifteen camps for Iraqi IDPs. In most of these camps, there are primary, secondary and preparatory schools. However, the current research involved five preparatory schools. Four of these schools were in camps, and one was not. Two schools were for Iraqi IDPs and two for Syrian refugees. The last school which is a non-camp school receives Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee students alike (see Table 1).

After conducting a pilot study among 40 adolescents in two camps via the CD-RISC scale and getting 83 reliability score, 223 students of the first class of preparatory schools were invited to participate in this study. After obtaining their consent, they were delivered an Arabic version of the CD-RISC-25 questionnaire. In the all five schools, the students indicated their age and gender while receiving an introduction to the study and questionnaire in a calm and comfortable room. After analysis of the CD-RISC data via SPSS software and getting the resilience level results, a total of 28 students (10 high-resilience scores, 10 low-resilience scores, and 8 medium-resilience scores) were invited to interviews (see Table 2). These interviews were conducted in the same five schools. All 28 students were delivered five written questions in Arabic to show how learning English affects their lives. Again, after reporting their age and gender as well as providing consent, they answered the written questions eagerly.

Data analysis

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through CD-RISC questionnaire and interviews, respectively. The data collected via CD-RISC was analysed using SPSS, which quantitatively displayed the levels of participants' resilience. Also, SPSS was used to answer the first and second research questions of this study. On the other hand, the data collected in the interviews was content-analysed to qualitatively show the role of EFL in building the resilience of Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents. This analysis method is considered as a flexible method for analysing qualitative data (Cavanagh, 1997). The following procedure included reading all comments obtained from the five written questions, followed by both the researcher and a second coder (a PhD holding EFL instructor), then summarizing the texts into smaller comments by coding them. The next step involved organizing the codes into categories based on relationships with each other, e.g., the comments containing words or phrases such as "using a mobile phone" "using a computer" "accessing information online" "I will become a teacher in the future" and "I will become a doctor in a hospital", all are highlighted into codes. Then, the codes related to technology were collected together under a technology category, and the codes which referred to the future were put under "future" categories. After combining the similar categories, themes such as technology use and better future were established. In the findings, each theme was displayed with the number of codes comprising that theme. The themes were supported by some of the participants' comments, but the participants were given pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality.

For the sake of interviews' reliability and validity, the data collected from the interviews and content was analysed by the researcher with the codes, themes, were cross-checked with the findings of the second coder. The codes and themes that both coders found showed 90% similarity when they were compared to each other, and only matching codes and themes were included in the study.

Findings

This study aimed to investigate the resilience of Iraq IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents who live in Iraq in camp and non-camp settings. Also investigating the impact of learning EFL on the resilience and lives of these adolescents. However, participants' resilience levels will be revealed according to each hypothesis separately;

Results of the first hypothesis

The first hypothesis of this study was "Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents have low levels of resilience". According to the results obtained from the questionnaire, Hypothesis #1 is rejected, as the results show that Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugees Adolescents have medium resilience (See Table 3).

Table 3. Data from CD-RISC describing participants' resilience level.

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
223	26.00	93.00	63.6816	12.0566

Table 3 displays descriptive results for the first hypothesis. Participants' average mean score was 63.6816 which represents medium resilience level lying between 50 and 79. And the Standard Deviation (SD) for the all 223 participants was 12.05.

Results of the second hypothesis

The second hypothesis of this study was "there are no statistically significant differences between Iraqi IDP adolescents and Syrian refugee adolescents in terms of resilience." The data collected via the CD-RISC questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS and indicated that Hypothesis #2 is verified (see Table 4).

Table 4. Means and T-test results

Status	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
IDP	142	26.00	86.00	62.7746	12.22043	1.491	221	.719
Refugee	81	45.00	93.00	65.2716	11.66835	1.511	173.001	

Table 4 presents the means scores for both groups, the Iraqi IDP adolescents and also the Syrian refugee adolescents. The average mean score was 62.7746 for the Iraqi IDP adolescents, while the mean score was 65.2716 for Syrian refugee adolescents. The T-test analysis of the SPSS in this table shows that there is no significant difference between Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents in terms of resilience; $t(221) = 1.491$, $p = .137$.

Results of the third hypothesis

The third hypothesis of this study was "learning EFL boosts the resilience of IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents in camp and non-camp schools. The answers to the 28 interviews show that EFL provides six categories of advantages in the process of resilience building. This can be elaborated by the following points:

EFL to enhance positive emotions

Positive emotions are strongly related to resilience and also to language learning. Confidence, self-esteem, happiness, optimism, stress, despair and so on all can increase or decrease resilience levels. On the other hand, learning EFL can positively or negatively affect these personal emotions. Our interviewees demonstrated that learning English enhances positive emotions. There were 11 comments refer to the positive emotions and feelings. The subjects expressed happiness, pleasure, confidence, and trust when they speak English. That's can be helpful to boost or build resilience. Awaz (pseudonyms are used throughout the paper) stated the following:

“Answering teacher’s question in English makes me feel confident and proud. Speaking English with someone is wonderful thing”.

The refugee student Noveen highlighted the following:

“Speaking English in Arabic countries makes me feel special”.

EFL support getting education

The IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents realize the importance of learning English in their schooling and lives. 18 students reported that learning English helps them in school materials such as mathematics, Physics, and chemistry. An example is Berivan’s statement below:

“Yes, learning English language support our school life. All the materials in schools include English words, numbers, symbols, and unites, such as Mathematics, Physic, and chemistry”.

Another educational benefit of learning EFL is, it enriches students’ vocabulary size and meanings. Nine students indicated that learning EFL provides them with new vocabularies and information. The following answer by Sally exemplifies this:

“Learning English language increase our vocabulary size which increase our understanding of meaning, translation and provide us with new information”.

EFL for a better future

The influence of globalization and economic development has made English the language of the world. It is also a vital way of improving an individual’s prospects for obtaining well-paid employment. All the subjects made a strong link between EFL and their future. Twenty-one of the subjects expressed that English will provide them with better jobs in the future. Several subjects foresaw and named their future careers such as English teacher and translator. Manal expressed the following:

“Learning English will support my future, and to achieve my dreams. It will help me to be English teacher or translator or any career related to English language”

EFL for technology use

Utilizing technology depends largely upon a knowledge of English. Computers, mobile phones, the internet and television all involve English. The subjects showed a strong relation between the English language and these technologies in twenty-five answers, e.g., Asala stated the following:

“Learning English language helps me to use Computer, and mobile phones and the applications on my mobile phone, e.g., how to use mobile dictionary or make search about something”

EFL for daily life

English becomes part of people’s daily lives even in non-English-speaking countries. It is a primary means for performing daily work. All of the subjects’ comments included using English for simplifying daily tasks and duties, namely shopping, traveling and communication. Waseem gives a good example on shopping with the following words:

“Learning English language helps us in our daily works, e.g, in shopping. The labels on goods and products all in English, so we can know what is bad or good. Also knowing English makes us able to read instruction on the food or medicine to use them properly”.

EFL to overcome crisis

Speaking English is important for having your voice heard all over the world. A large number of humanitarian workers in Iraq speak English. Iraqi IDPs and Syrian refugees can have a strong means to deliver their needs and concerns to these entities via English language. On the other hand, many members of vulnerable families who live in camps joined

humanitarian NGOs and entities, then became productive supportive persons to their families to overcome the crisis. However, thirteen subjects asserted that speaking English helps them to gain services, improve their lives and overcome the crisis. This can be seen the following comment of Asala:

“Yes, English language helps me to get services from some foreign staffs of the NGOs who helps IDPs. Also some of the IDPs who speak English work with NGOs or companies and that improves our situations as IDP and make as able to overcome the crisis”.

Discussion and Conclusion

The current research investigated the resilience levels of Iraqi IDPs and Syrian refugees. It further investigated the role of EFL in their resilience building. Regarding participants' resilience levels, the results obtained from the CD-RISC questionnaire revealed average mean scores 63.6816. This score represents a low-resilience level by U.S. standards, but in other countries it is considered a medium level. These results are close to other studies conducted among refugees. This medium mean score reflects participants' personal competence, tenacity, and tolerance of negative affect, the ability to deal with stress, their positive acceptance of change, and their feelings of security, as the authors of the scale explain (Connor and Davidson, 2003). These adolescents have medium resilience, but we have to take into consideration that when we measure an individual's resilience, adults generally score higher than children (Campbell-Sills, Forde and Stein 2009).

As Hypothesis Two revealed and concluded, no statistically significant differences exist between Iraqi IDP and Syrian refugee adolescents' resilience. This may be attributed to various reasons. First, both groups have interrelated traditions and cultures since they are from two neighboring countries. Secondly, they speak the same languages, i.e. Arabic and Kurdish. Thirdly, both groups face several similar circumstances—they have escaped from armed conflicts and witnessed violence, lost loved ones, and left family members and friends. Fourthly, both groups now live in similar situations in Iraq. The government, UN agencies and NGOs provide these people with same levels of basic services such as shelter, food, health services, education, and sanitation. The final important point which led to convergent resilience outcomes was that both groups integrated into the community without any discrimination from the host community. There was no local working law that prevented the Iraqi IDPs or the Syrian refugees from working in the host cities, attending schools, visiting hospitals. In other words services are provided to both groups alike.

The interviews in this study revealed that learning EFL facilitates participants' resilience-building. Both groups of participants believe that learning EFL positively affects their lives. A large number of comments revealed that learning EFL enhances participants' positive emotions such as feelings of confidence and happiness. These feelings are important elements not only in resilience-building but also in maintaining normal balanced life. Also, participants demonstrated that learning EFL plays a crucial role during difficult times. It helps them to recover from the shocks they have faced during displacement, provides them better job opportunities, better living conditions, and helps them to integrate into new societies and cultures.

As English is a lingua franca, the participants expressed great enthusiasm in learning this language regardless of their situation. They know that the English language is an important factor in using modern technologies such as mobile phones, computers, and the internet. On the other hand, participants mentioned that schools in most countries try to increase the use of English in their curricula; thus, English is essential for being a student in one of these schools. Furthermore, English is used in all life sectors such as consumerism, health, travel, etc.

This study's findings regarding the importance of learning EFL and its impact on participants' lives confirm the results of other studies in same domain. British Council (2013) highlights that the English language now is useful for more than 1.5 billion people around the world, and they expect that the number of people using or learning English will reach 2 billion by 2020. None of the participants commented that learning English affects them negatively; however, regardless of whether they face difficulties in learning this language, all believe that learning a FL positively impacts their lives. These results support one study claims that people's awareness of the importance of learning an additional language and its cognitive benefits is increasing, learning EFL can enhance job opportunities for them (Met and Galloway, 1992) Similarly, Villano (1996, p.4) stated that “FL speaking have benefits in studying, travelling, better internships chances, and boosting experience”.in the same manner, Shaheen, Walsh, Power, and Burton. (2013) investigated the use of English in Bangladesh. They reported that most of the sectors such as education, banking, and technology all require this language at different levels. However, the current study reveals a great similarity to the Shaheen, et al.'s study in terms of its findings regarding the use of English among primary and secondary school students in Bangladesh. The students use English for communicating with foreigners and their relatives in foreign countries. Also, they use it for education purposes, playing certain games, using mobile phones and computers, watching movies. And as with participants in the current study, the majority of these students believe that English will help them to obtain good employment both inside and outside of Bangladesh in the future.

To cut the story short, both groups of adolescents, the Iraqi IDP and the Syrian refugee who live in Iraq have medium resilience level. It is important to find new ways and means to boost their resilience, and the current study suggest one.

The findings showed that EFL have positive impacts on resilience of these adolescents. Therefore, intensifying EFL activities can play prime roles to support the lives of all adolescents in Iraq.

The current study has some limitations. First, it involved only 223 participants from only 5 schools. The future studies could involve larger number of samples in more schools and also involving other settings as homes, social centers, etc. Doing so would lead to better precise findings. Second, this study limited to obtain participants resilience levels only in one occasion without approaching the reasons behind low or medium scores. Lastly, the findings regarding the impact of FFL on resilience building, the current study neglected the low frequent comments. Further studies could be more inclusive in terms of presenting the qualitative data findings.

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