

Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document – Methodology and literature review

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METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study utilised a qualitative approach to identify existing classroom management practices in the field, to explore the complexities surrounding such practices with a view to gaining new perspectives, and to identify ways of changing or improving practice in the light of the study's findings.

Participants in this study consisted of specialist English language, literacy and numeracy teachers in Western Australia and New South Wales currently teaching Sudanese refugee learners and people with expertise in refugee issues or in community work with Sudanese refugees.

Data for analysis was gathered from the following sources:

- ✧ electronic survey
- ✧ telephone interviews with teacher respondents
- ✧ consultations with experts (face to face, telephone and email)

This document contains a detailed account of the processes and findings from all three of the above sources of information. It also includes the research instruments used for the electronic survey and the semi-structured telephone interviews.

The principles of confidentiality, informed consent, self determination of information and anonymity within the report were adhered to throughout the study.

Electronic survey findings

Introduction

This phase of the research gathered and analysed a mix of quantitative and qualitative information from 30 adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers who are currently teaching Sudanese learners. In consultation with NCVET, the data was gathered from practitioners in two states, NSW and Western Australia, both of which have had substantial numbers of Sudanese refugee arrivals in the past few years. Following discussion with key stakeholders in the research project, a target of 30 surveys to be analysed was agreed upon.

The survey findings support the information about the particular learning needs of adult Sudanese refugee learners presented in the literature review for this study. Specifically, these needs arise from the learners' limited formal education, their oral/aural cultural background, their unfamiliarity with a highly literate (print-based) culture, and the physical and psychological effects of the conflict in their home country and settlement issues. The findings also reveal a highly experienced group of teachers doing their best to accommodate these needs within the constraints of curriculum and program delivery requirements.

Survey methodology

Survey purpose

The aim of this phase of the research was to use electronic surveys as a means of collecting mostly quantitative data but also some qualitative data on the classroom management strategies that adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers are currently using to address the specific learning needs of adult Sudanese refugee learners. This data would then be used to inform and frame the subsequent qualitative data gathering processes for the project. It would also provide a starting point for the development of the advice to teachers in the guidelines which are an agreed outcome of the project.

Given the size of the project, the data gathered from the electronic survey could not be claimed as representative of all teachers working with all adult Sudanese learners nationally. Rather, the sample data thus gathered was intended to provide a useful starting point for the deeper exploration of successful classroom management strategies in the later stages of the study.

Sampling techniques

The survey was designed to be self administered electronically to allow ease of response. One survey instrument was developed for teachers. It was trialled on three respondents in NSW and amended to incorporate their feedback. A copy of this survey is attached as *Appendix 1: Teachers' survey*.

Referential sampling/snowball sampling (Atkinson and Flint) was used to reach teachers not otherwise easily identified and also to respect notions of protocol and power situations in vocational and community education settings. Surveys were therefore sent to people in positions with management responsibility for the relevant full time and part time teaching staff. These managers would become the key contacts for this project, selected on the basis of their responsibility for adult English language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff, and their organisation's delivery of programs which would target adult Sudanese learners, among others. Significant among these programs were the Adult Migrant English Program and the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program.

Electronic copies of the teacher survey and an accompanying document outlining the nature of the research project were emailed to the key contacts in adult English language and literacy/numeracy tuition in NSW and Western Australia. The key contacts were asked to distribute the survey to staff, or to supply contact details of a more appropriate person to undertake that task. Where it became clear that major providers were not represented in the survey responses received by the return date, email reminders were sent to the relevant key contacts, and a new return deadline was negotiated. As this method of distribution relies on the key contacts forwarding the survey form, the exact number of surveys distributed to individuals is not known. However, considering their relative population sizes, it was anticipated that a larger number of surveys would be returned from teachers in NSW than from teachers in Western Australia. The greater number of completed surveys were returned by email, but a small number (4) from Western Australia were posted back in hard copy.

Thirty teacher surveys were returned, all of which were analysed. Table 1 illustrates the breakdown of the surveys analysed by state and teachers' area of discipline expertise.

Table 1: Surveys analysed by state and teacher designation

State	English language teacher	Literacy/Numeracy teacher	Total
NSW	12	2	14
Western Australia	12	4	16
Total	24	6	30

Approximately half of the responses to the survey came from each of the two states in the project. The preponderance of responses from English language teachers (24 of the 30 respondents) is consistent with the learner demographic information also elicited in the survey. This information indicates that the great majority of Sudanese learners referred to in this sample have very little English language proficiency (assessed as being below International Second Language Proficiency Rating 2). These learners would be accessing the 510 hours entitlement to English language tuition available to them through the Adult Migrant English Program, and indeed, 20 of the 30 teacher respondents were teaching on this program.

Findings

Demographic information

In Section 1 of the survey, teachers were asked a range of questions to form a picture of their current teaching work with Sudanese learners. The great majority of the respondents were working in the capital cities, Sydney and Perth. The responses also reflect settlement patterns of Sudanese refugees, being within major cities rather than in small towns. Only a few respondents were working in other locations, as illustrated in table 2.

Table 2: Geographical region

Region	Number	Percentage
Capital city	28	93.3%
Other major city	2	6.7%
Small town	0	0.0%
Total	30	100.0%

TAFE and AMES featured as the main employers of the teacher respondents from both states. The employers represented in the survey responses are set out below in table 3.

Table3: Employing organisations

Organisation	Number	Percentage
TAFE	15	50.0%
Adult Migrant English Service	13	43.4%
Adult and Community Education	1	3.3%
Private Provider	1	3.3%
Total	30	100.0%

The question regarding length of teaching service revealed a highly experienced sample of the teaching workforce, as shown below in table 4.

Table 4: Years of teaching experience

Experience	Number	Percentage
1-2 years	1	3.3%
3-5 years	4	13.4%
6-10 years	4	13.4%
11-15 years	8	26.6%
More than 15 years	13	43.3%
Total	30	100.0%

Almost all of the respondents (26 of the 30) also claimed experience of teaching refugees from a range of countries in the Middle East, Europe, Central and South America, Asia and Africa. The majority of countries listed however, were countries with a literate (print-based) culture.

Respondents generally rated themselves as having a substantial awareness of the special needs of their Sudanese refugee learners. Half (15 of 30) said they had moderate awareness, 7 (of 30) said they had a comprehensive awareness, while only 7 (of 30) said they had limited awareness. When asked to indicate the source(s) of their information regarding the needs of refugee learners, many cited multiple sources, but the most frequently cited source was 'Talking to the Sudanese learners'. Respondents also indicated that Sudanese learners were the most helpful source of information. The range of responses is shown in table 5.

Table 5: Sources of information about the special needs of Sudanese refugee learners

Source of information	Number of citations
Self- access to print or other media resources	19
Professional development	16
Visiting speaker from the Sudanese community	15
Research reports	6
Talking to the Sudanese learners	28
Other (these included talking to colleagues; meeting and talking with Sudanese people at church; observing other teachers' classes)	6

The preference for talking to the learners themselves is puzzling, as other parts of the survey suggest that many of the learners have very little English, so they would not be able to articulate their needs very well. That preference may simply indicate teachers' easy access to the learners as a source of information. Alternatively, it may relate to teachers' focus on a learner - centred approach or an attempt to foster learners' 'ownership' of learning content.

Interestingly, considering the growing number of studies into refugees generally and into Sudanese refugees in particular, as indicated in the literature review for this study, teachers did not seem to access these research reports.

Section 2 of the survey began by asking teachers to provide demographic information about the Sudanese learners in their classes. Statistical information from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs cited in the literature review for this study indicated that in recent intakes, there were more male Sudanese arrivals than females in all age categories. That would reasonably lead the researchers to expect a greater number of adult Sudanese men presenting for English language, literacy and numeracy tuition than Sudanese women. However, from the responses to the survey, it would appear that there were about the same numbers of men and women accessing classes, as indicated below. It may be that Sudanese women, who, according to the research, have had the least access to education in Sudan, were coming to class in Australia to assist with their own and their children's settlement here. Also, it may be that the requirements of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs via Job Network agencies for refugees to actively seek employment have greater influence on Sudanese men, who thus make employment their priority. The gender balance of Sudanese learners in classes referred to in the survey is presented in table 6.

Table 6: Numbers of Sudanese men and women in respondents' classes

Sudanese men and women in respondents' classes	Number of responses
More Sudanese men than women	12
More Sudanese women than men	11
Approximately the same number of Sudanese men and women	5

In terms of age, respondents indicated that the majority of their Sudanese learners were between 25 and 44 years old as indicated in table 7. There were no learners in the 16 to 17 year old category in this sample.

Table 7: Sudanese learners by age category

Age category	Number of responses indicating highest category	Number of responses indicating second highest category
16-17 years	0	0
18-24 years	4	5
25-34 years	14	6
35-44 years	10	9
45+ years	1	3

Most of the learners in this study (for 22 of 30 respondents) were from Southern Sudan. Three respondents had roughly equal numbers of learners from both Northern and Southern Sudan; and two respondents had learners from Northern Sudan only. Only 3 respondents indicated that they did not know which part of Sudan their learners came from. The information from the surveys is consistent with anecdotal information and statistical data from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs indicating that the majority of recent Sudanese arrivals are refugees from Southern Sudan.

The educational background of the learners in the respondents' classes is also consistent with the information in the literature, with respondents reporting almost 40 percent of their learners as having no experience of formal schooling, and a further 34.4% experiencing only up to five years of formal schooling. However, in this study, the percentage of learners with more than six years of schooling (26.2%) is also relatively substantial. The years of schooling experienced by the respondents' Sudanese learners is presented in table 8.

Table 8: Years of schooling of Sudanese learners

Years of schooling	Number of Sudanese learners	Percentage
No formal schooling	95	39.4 %
1-2 years of schooling	46	19.1%
3-5 years of schooling	37	15.3%
6+ years of schooling	63	26.2%
Total number of learners in this study	241	100%

The survey responses indicated that the majority of Sudanese learners were entering English language and literacy provision with very limited English. In terms of class placement and the on – entry English language levels of the Sudanese learners, the survey responses suggested that for the most part, learners with similar proficiency were placed together, and that the learners in a high number of these classes (ten responses) had almost no English (International Second Language Proficiency Ratings 0 or 0+). A further eight classes were for learners with only a little more English, assessed as having between International Second Language Proficiency Ratings 1 and 1+. The combination of low levels of formal education and low English language proficiency ratings would suggest that these learners need a substantial amount of time for the development of learning skills, of oral English language skills and of initial reading and writing skills.

Only one class had Sudanese learners assessed at International Second Language Proficiency Ratings 3, the accepted entry point for language learners wishing to pursue academic studies. Only two respondents reported having mixed-level classes, including Sudanese learners with widely differing English language levels, for example where the learners' International Second Language Proficiency Ratings ranged from 1 to 3.

Teacher perceptions of Sudanese adults as learners

In the second part of Section 2, respondents were asked to comment on their perceptions of their Sudanese learners' strengths and challenges in their new learning environment; and on their own capacity to address the specific needs of these learners.

Respondents provided a wealth of comment regarding their Sudanese learners' strengths as learners, revealing a highly motivated learner population keen and able to learn spoken English. The learners' keenness to build on existing social and community ties also featured strongly in the respondents' comments. For convenience, responses are categorised under three headings and presented in table 9. The numbers beside individual comments indicate the number of times the same comment was made.

Table 9: Sudanese learners' strengths as learners

Learning strategies	Learners' attitudinal strengths	Building relationships
Excellent strategies for learning oral skills (9)	Keeness and willingness to learn (11)	Ability to work in groups cooperatively with students of all language backgrounds (3)
Ability to ask for clarification	Positive attitude (4)	Keeness to maintain cohesive community links
Good at rote learning/memorising	Persistence in the face of many obstacles	
	Confident about their ability to learn	
	Learners work to their potential	
	Motivated to learn to get a better job to provide for their families; to access further vocational or university study; to help others in the community	
	Amiable disposition	
	Sense of humour, fun	
	Love of music	

Respondents were next asked to comment on their perceptions of the barriers to learning that were pertinent to their Sudanese learners. Again for convenience, responses were grouped according to how they may relate to Sudanese learners' experience of formal education; to their shift from a highly oral culture to a highly literate (print-based) culture; or to the physical and psychological effects of past trauma or present settlement issues. Responses are presented in table 10. The numbers beside individual comments indicate the number of times the same comment was made.

Table 10: Barriers to learning for Sudanese learners

Experience of formal education	Moving from a highly oral culture to a highly literate (print-based) culture	Physical or psychological effects of past trauma or current settlement issues
<p>No or limited experience of formal education in any language (9)</p> <p>Limited background in the cultural norms of our classroom practice (eg teachers' questioning techniques) (2)</p> <p>Not independent learners</p> <p>Sudanese with higher education are often not given the chance to further their education or to upgrade existing technical/professional levels of education due to the requirements to seek work. They get unskilled jobs.</p>	<p>Unfamiliarity with Western emphasis on written rather than spoken language (6)</p> <p>Dinka (one of the main languages spoken in Southern Sudan) is an oral language with no written form (2)</p> <p>Learners have a different spatial literacy, which doesn't help them to read our maps, graphs and tables (2)</p> <p>No previous exposure to the concept of codifying sounds/meaning in L1 script. This makes teaching phonics very difficult and reduces the number of strategies they have for learning to speak, read and write.(2)</p> <p>Unfamiliarity with handling paper or putting papers in order (2)</p> <p>Unfamiliarity with written markers eg page numbers, headings</p> <p>Some learners have difficulty writing cohesively</p>	<p>Difficulty with retention of learned material (2)</p> <p>Lack of personal accountability/inability to follow through on what they agreed to do (2)</p> <p>Interference of stress related to settlement issues</p> <p>Learners miss class due to family problems or family responsibilities</p> <p>Stress of financial difficulties: learners can't access childcare and therefore can't attend class; learners are under pressure to provide for family here and to send money to relatives in Sudan (2)</p> <p>Poverty and accompanying hassles</p> <p>Fatigue: learners come to class after a long day of hard physical labour in the abattoir</p> <p>Inability to plan time well</p> <p>Inability to think ahead about consequences</p> <p>Difficulty in getting on with others</p> <p>Sometimes learners' manner can be 'off-hand' and they can appear impolite/inconsiderate</p>

The comments made by the respondents regarding the particular learning challenges that Sudanese learners face were consistent with observations documented in the research literature, confirming the profile of this particular learner group.

When respondents were asked to rank specific skill areas in terms of their difficulty for Sudanese learners, their answers were substantially consistent with their responses to the questions about these learners' strengths and the barriers they faced. The trend in the ranking (whether the responses congregated at 'greatest difficulty' or at 'least difficulty') indicated that that Sudanese learners had least difficulty in learning speaking skills. This finding confirms observations in the literature indicating that in Sudan, people normally grow up learning to speak a number of languages. The respondents' perceptions of the areas of greatest difficulty, namely reading, writing and learning skills, were consistent with the majority of learners' limited educational background and their need to learn how to operate successfully in a culture which places a high value on written language. Again it must be stressed that this finding should be treated with caution owing to the small size of the sample. It may not be applicable to the whole population of adult Sudanese learners.

In light of the general agreement among respondents that the learning of oral skills was an important strength of Sudanese learners, it appeared anomalous that teachers reported that learners had considerable difficulty in acquiring listening skills in English. The anomaly may be resolved by reference to teachers' responses to a question in Section 4 of the survey. There they were asked to identify teaching activities that Sudanese learners appeared to like most and least. Listening to audio tapes was cited several times as an activity they liked least. However, listening activities where the spoken language was supported by contextual clues were listed as strong

favourites. Various kinds of spoken interactions in the classroom and activities using audio-visual materials were listed as examples. It would appear that Sudanese learners prefer listening activities which are or closely approximate real life spoken interactions. Listening activities in which contextual clues are absent (such as listening to audio tapes) are intrinsically more difficult for all language learners. It may also be that listening difficulties are linked to health issues such as impaired hearing.

In relation to its difficulty for Sudanese learners, there was no clear trend discernible for numeracy. Reference to the question about teaching activities in Section 4 suggested that not all teachers were addressing the teaching of numeracy.

Teacher perceptions about learner performance and teaching approaches in all relevant skill areas were explored further in the semi-structured telephone interviews.

The final questions in Section 2 focussed on respondents' ability to adapt their teaching program to address the considerable challenges facing their Sudanese learners. Responses were evenly divided, with just over half (16 of 30) indicating that they were able to adapt their teaching program, and just under half (14 of 30) indicating that they were not able to adapt their teaching program. The great majority of these latter respondents (13 of 14) indicated that curriculum requirements prevented them from making changes to their teaching program to align it more strongly with the greatest areas of need for their Sudanese learners. This issue was also included for further exploration in the semi-structured telephone interview questions.

Classroom management: Managing signs of stress in learners

Section 3 of the survey began to explore the extent to which Sudanese learners may be exhibiting trauma or stress-related behaviours, what support is available to teachers, and how teachers are addressing these concerns. It also began to explore teachers' approaches to introducing Sudanese learners to a new learning culture.

The most frequently cited behaviours that may relate to psychological stresses were 'come late to class' (17 responses) and 'have difficulty concentrating for long periods' (16 responses). The only other behaviour which was cited more than twice was 'miss class a lot' (8 responses). With such a small sample of responses, it would be impossible to argue for a causal link between learner behaviour and symptoms of stress. There can be many explanations for these behaviours for all learners (not just Sudanese learners), and not all explanations may relate directly to learner distress. For example, learners may have family responsibilities to attend to in class time. Alternatively, they may find the lessons unhelpful, irrelevant, too easy or too difficult. One respondent commented that Sudanese women students often have many children, could be pregnant, and have no family support. The respondent commented that sheer fatigue was interfering with these women's learning.

Respondents offered a range of strategies they used successfully when learners exhibited the behaviours mentioned above. They are presented below in table 11. The numbers indicate how many times a strategy was selected.

Table 11: Successful strategies for managing learners' physical and psychological issues

Strategy	Working successfully	Not successful	Don't use this strategy
Try to assist learners by using different activities, different approaches and/or timetabling of activities	22	3	
Personally discuss with the student (out of class) any issues they might be experiencing that are impacting on their class attendance/participation	14	4	5
Ask a counsellor to talk to learner/s	11	3	10
Take a more authoritarian approach to classroom management, which may be more consistent with learner expectations of the classroom environment	10	3	9
Avoid discussion of reasons for learner behaviour as they are adults and their privacy should be respected	1	1	20

Additional strategies mentioned were:

- ◆ Using activities that involve the students moving around
- ◆ Teaching songs
- ◆ Making lessons fun
- ◆ Using humour and interactive activities to build cooperation
- ◆ Providing lots of opportunities for repetition and recycling of learned material
- ◆ Maintaining a fast pace of activities to keep learners' attention

The responses to this question indicated that teachers were addressing learners' needs through a combination of teaching practices and the use of support staff. The idea of teachers taking a more authoritarian stance as part of accommodating and re-socialising learners into a new educational culture (as discussed in the literature review) was also favoured by a substantial number of respondents (10 responses).

Respondents were also asked to indicate the kinds of support they felt they needed to assist them in teaching Sudanese learners, and whether or not they were receiving that support. Their responses are presented in table 12. The numbers indicate the number of responses.

Table 12: Support for teachers

Support	Support is needed	Support is received
Bilingual support	8	5
Sharing strategies with colleagues	19	19
Assistance from a counsellor	12	12
Professional development	17	9
Other	More teaching resources for students with no literacy in first language (2) Different timetabling could help to place students into similar groups Network with other organisations dealing with Sudanese refugees Volunteers to help in class	Use volunteers Use teachers' aides Visiting Sudanese speaker <i>Our Class</i> , a TAFE NSW teaching resource cited as providing a useful framework for teaching this population of learners
No support needed (3)		

The responses indicated that for the most part, teachers were receiving the support they felt they needed. The exception was professional development, where the perceived need was clearly greater than the supply. At least one teacher who indicated that she needed no support taught only one Sudanese learner in a one-to-one teaching arrangement.

The final question in Section 3 asked respondents to indicate how they familiarised their Sudanese learners with the routines of their classroom. Over half of the respondents (17 of 30) indicated that they explained all protocols of classroom behaviour and explained the purpose and procedures of all activities. That response, namely one which makes explicit the classroom practices the teacher wishes to introduce to learners, would be consistent with meeting the needs of a learner population with limited experience of formal education. However, in view of the emerging picture of the Sudanese learner profile, how much of the explanation is understood may be another matter. One respondent made the comment that it was hard to explain classroom procedures to learners with zero (or not a great deal more) English; and that he often had to rely on learners working out what the teacher wanted with the help of their linguistically more proficient classmates. That may be a process other teachers also depend on.

Almost a quarter of the respondents (7 of 30) indicated that they explained only if there appeared to be an issue or a misunderstanding; and only three (of 30) indicated that they basically left it to the learners to discover the classroom protocols for themselves.

Section 4 of the survey sought information on a range of classroom management processes and how these were being applied to classes which included Sudanese learners. Specifically, responses were sought on matters regarding learner groupings; teaching strategies; the choice of content of teaching material; and assessment processes.

Classroom management: Learner groupings

It is not possible to extrapolate from this small sample of data whether teachers have adapted their teaching style to accommodate the needs of Sudanese learners or whether their responses reflect their approach with all learner groups. A substantial number of responses (19) indicated that the grouping they used most often was *Teacher-directed whole class instruction*. However, when first and second choices (most frequently used and second most frequently used groupings) are considered together, *Pair work with teacher monitoring* (24 responses) *Small group work with teacher monitoring* (22 responses) were cited almost as frequently as *Teacher-directed whole class instruction* (23 responses). This would indicate that all three learner groupings were used frequently. The

response rate for *Individual learner work with teacher monitoring* (15 responses for first and second choice) may be indicative of a small number of classes of Sudanese learners with advanced levels of English proficiency.

It is also not possible to determine whether teachers' judgement of learners' preferences regarding learner grouping is an objective observation or merely an indication of teachers' own preferences. For the purposes of the analysis, respondents' choices ranked first and second were added together. The data indicates that teachers perceived a strong learner preference for *Teacher-directed whole class instruction* (22 responses). This is consistent with observations in the literature regarding the educational culture of Sudan, where the teacher is the central authority figure. *Small group work with teacher monitoring* (16 responses), *Individual learner work with teacher* (16 responses) and *Pair work with teacher monitoring* (14 responses) were all perceived by teachers as being less popular options, but approximately equally popular as each other. This indicates that teachers were successfully using a range of classroom groupings, introducing some groupings which may be unfamiliar to the learners. It also indicates that there were no classroom groupings that teachers used, knowing them to be distasteful to the learners. The findings regarding teachers' preferences for learner groupings and teachers' judgement of their Sudanese learners' preferences are presented in table 13.

Table 13: Preferences for learner groupings

Learner grouping	Teachers' most frequently used groupings (1 st and 2 nd choices)	Teachers' judgement of Sudanese learners' preferred groupings (1 st and 2 nd choices)
Teacher-directed whole-class instruction	23	22
Small group work with teacher monitoring	22	16
Pair work with teacher monitoring	24	14
Individual learner work with teacher monitoring	15	16

Classroom management: Teaching strategies

For the full range of skill areas relevant to language, literacy and numeracy teaching (speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy and learning), respondents were asked to identify, from their own experience, the teaching activities they perceived their Sudanese learners to like most and like least. The responses were very comprehensive for most skill areas, with relatively less information provided for the skill areas of numeracy and learning. Given the subjective nature of the question, the diversity of teachers, and individual preferences of learners, it was not surprising that some teaching activities (for example role play, oral presentation, class excursions) were nominated by respondents as activities that learners liked most and liked least. The responses are summarised in table 14, with special attention given to responses cited more than once. Responses are presented in order of frequency of citation.

Table 14: Teacher perceptions of teaching activities that Sudanese learners like most and like least

Skill area	Teaching activity learners appear to like most	Teaching activity learners appear to like least
Speaking	Pairwork activities 5 Roleplay 5 Oral presentation 4 Controlled practice 4 Group discussion 3 Pronunciation 3 Learners like speaking activities most	Oral presentation 8 Role play 4 Students very reluctant to speak
Listening	Word/picture matching 5 Listening to tapes and repeating 4 Video with questions 3 Video with class discussion 2 (special mention of <i>Behind the News</i>) Dictations 2 Listening to taped text while reading the written script 2 Comprehension questions delivered orally and in writing	Audio tape activities 7 Guest speakers who talk fast 3 Controlled practice 2 Learners like listening activities least
Reading	Reading comprehension (special mention of stories) 9 Cloze exercises 5 Reading for personal details Jigsaw reading Computer-based English language programs	Unguided reading of long texts 3 Cloze 3 Comprehension exercises 3 Reading aloud 2 Reading instructions Find reading difficult because of poor phonic skills Newspaper articles
Writing	Guided writing 12 Copying only 5 Recount eg writing up excursions 3 Cloze 2 Dictations and group correction 2 Journal writing Writing descriptions	Free writing 7 Academic writing (essays and reports) 2 Guided writing Writing with a specific grammatical focus Being particular about spelling Group projects Writing on a set topic
Numeracy	Contextualised activities 3 Money 2 Roleplay shopping 2 Number exercises Mental maths discussed orally Activities based on authentic and relevant materials eg transport timetables; bank statements Weights and measures Matching words and shapes	Ordinal numbers 2 Group problem solving Some learners show abhorrence for numeracy activities Writing sentences involving numbers
Learning	Class excursions and celebrations 5 Goal setting 2 Guided activities to assist learners to keep their files in order 2 Guided activities to familiarise learners with layout of learning texts eg instructions, page numbers and exercise numbers 2 Teacher modelling Study skills Vocational planning Using computers	Group learning Being left to organise their learning files and materials independently Explaining learning strategies

As mentioned earlier, learners' apparent dislike for listening activities may relate to the particular kinds of activities cited (listening to audio tapes), which have limited supporting contextual clues. With regard to numeracy, only basic numeracy skills appear to be addressed. It is not possible to say whether this is a reflection of teachers' lack of confidence or experience in teaching numeracy or of teachers genuinely addressing learners' immediate needs. Interestingly, there does not appear to be a strong interest in teaching the numeracy involved in reading graphs, table and charts, which are essential for learners engaged in higher level study.

Respondents were also asked to indicate skill areas they did not teach, as it is common practice for teachers to share classes, with each teacher focusing on developing specific skills. All teachers indicated that they taught speaking skills, and only a few indicated that they did not teach listening, reading and writing skills. The numbers were higher for numeracy and learning skills, with seven respondents indicating that they did not teach numeracy and four respondents indicating that they did not teach learning skills.

Classroom management: Content of teaching/ learning material

Respondents were asked to nominate the main source of content for their language, literacy and numeracy teaching program from five broad topic areas. These were:

- ✧ Learners' life stories
- ✧ Newspaper and other media articles about learners' country
- ✧ Information about living in Australia
- ✧ Real problems, situations that learners are concerned about
- ✧ Vocational content of interest to the learners (eg horticulture; childcare)

The responses suggested a clear preference among teachers to focus learners' attention on the present and the future to assist with learners' resettlement in a new country. *Information about living in Australia* was cited most frequently (18 times) as the first choice of lesson content. *Real problems, situations that learners are concerned about* was cited seven times as the first choice of content, and 13 times as second choice. Only five respondents selected *Learners' life stories* as their first choices, and six chose it as their second choice. However, it clear from one of these responses that they meant giving learners practice in saying and spelling names and addresses. No teachers selected *Newspaper and other media articles about learners' country* as their first or second choices. This would indicate that in general, teachers in this sample were not drawing learners' attention to possibly distressing content relating to their past in Sudan or to what is happening there now.

In giving reasons for their choice of content, most respondents indicated their reasons as 'learners need to know/share this information' (22 responses) and as 'learners are particularly interested in this content' (15 responses). One respondent commented that choice of content was influenced by the need to give learners opportunities to do the same things many times over. Asking learners to ask and write about each other provides a ready source of repetitive practice.

Vocational content of interest to the learners was not cited as a first choice by any respondent, and by only two respondents as a second choice. Perhaps this was because it was perceived to be 'early days' yet for vocational content, especially as many learners were presenting with very limited English proficiency. However, recent initiatives in Western Australia, in which instruction in childcare was the main source of content for English language instruction, suggest that levels of English language may not be a barrier to vocational learning. The combination of tuition in English and in childcare in particular would appear to address immediate language and settlement needs of many Sudanese women. A discussion of the Western Australian initiatives was included in the report for this project.

In order to link the present project with another current NCVET project, *Enhancing refugee literacy and employability through community engagement* the survey included a question on teachers' ability to explicitly incorporate employability skills (communication skills, teamwork skills, problem solving skills, initiative and enterprise skills, planning and organising skills, self management skills, learning skills, technology skills) in their teaching programs for Sudanese learners. Responses were evenly distributed between 'Yes' (11 responses) and 'No' (15 responses). The employability skills that teachers thought their Sudanese learners urgently needed to develop were:

- ◆ Planning and organising skills (five responses)
- ◆ Technology (three responses)
- ◆ Initiative and enterprise (two responses)
- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Self management
- ◆ Problem solving

Respondents who indicated that they were unable to incorporate employability skills into their teaching most often cited curriculum requirements as the reason (ten responses). Others (seven responses) said that these skills were implicit in all their teaching. One said that it was difficult to incorporate employability skills into a teaching program which focused strongly on teaching the names of the letters of the English alphabet and the sounds associated with them.

Classroom management: Assessment processes

Respondents were also asked to provide their opinion on the assessment processes that gave their Sudanese learners the best sense of progress in their learning. These processes and the number of times they were cited are presented below.

- ✧ Teacher comments/error correction 29
- ✧ Tests 17
- ✧ Self assessment using technology (eg computer, audio tape, video) 10
- ✧ Individual performance in formal assessment 10
- ✧ Tasks/performance in group projects 8
- ✧ Peer assessment 3
- ✧ Other (please specify: individual performance in informal assessment) 2

From this sample it appears that teachers use a range of assessment methods. The methods they selected most often as the ones which they thought gave Sudanese learners the best sense of their learning progress, *Teacher comments/error correction* and *Tests*, are consistent with the assessment processes used in the learning culture with which Sudanese learners would be familiar. Teachers did not appear to think that Sudanese learners placed much trust in *Self assessment using technology* nor *Individual performance in formal assessment* as signs of progress, the latter judgement being very interesting in the context of competency based assessment. Rating lowest were *Performance in group projects* and *Peer assessment*, possibly because they would not be deemed by learners as good indicators of progress, but possibly also because they were not frequently used by language, literacy and numeracy teachers working with learners at very low levels.

Requests for further assistance

The final questions in the survey asked respondents for additional assistance. One question asked respondents to identify any colleagues who were successfully addressing the needs of their Sudanese learners. One teacher from New South Wales was identified, and a survey form was distributed to her.

It was agreed that ten teacher participants would be selected for telephone interview in the next phase of the project, six from New South Wales and four from Western Australia. The last question in the survey asked respondents if they would agree to participate in such an interview. Not all respondents completed this part of the survey. Of the 17 'Yes' responses, ten were from New South Wales and seven were from Western Australia. Of the 11 'No' responses, two were from New South Wales and nine were from Western Australia. The 'Yes' responses provided a sufficiently large pool of potential interviewees to select the agreed number from each state and to ensure representation from all providers represented in the survey responses.

Semi-structured telephone interview findings

Introduction

This phase of the research gathered and analysed qualitative information from 11 adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers, eight from New South Wales and three from Western Australia. The findings provide a body of data which further explores some of the responses supplied in the electronic survey regarding teachers' experience in addressing the specific learning needs of Sudanese refugee learners. It must again be stressed, however, that because of the small size of the sample, even where there appears to be agreement among the participants in the telephone interviews, the findings may not be reflective of teachers' experience generally. Furthermore, the interviewees themselves were cautious about making generalisations about any aspect of their Sudanese learners' characteristics or capacities as learners.

Responses to the electronic survey and the telephone interviews indicate significant variations among teachers and their Sudanese learners which may have influenced teachers' responses to the researchers' questions. Some key variations can be summarised as follows:

For teachers

- ✧ extent of experience in teaching Sudanese and other refugee learners
- ✧ number of contact hours with Sudanese learners (from 2 to 20 hours per week)
- ✧ experience in teaching adult second language learners with very limited English
- ✧ experience in teaching adult second language learners with more advanced English language skills.
- ✧ individual differences which affect the quality of the relationship between teacher and learners (eg the level of learners' trust in the teacher)

For learners

- ✧ recency of arrival in Australia
- ✧ location of settlement (whether there are a lot or only a few Sudanese in that location)
- ✧ extent of family and community support
- ✧ individual differences in relation to self image as a language/an adult learner
- ✧ individual differences in coping with resettlement (financial, emotional, practical and educational issues)
- ✧ individual priorities

The factors listed for learners may also have some bearing on learners' responses to trauma and on their readiness for learning.

Telephone interview methodology

Telephone interview purpose

Semi-structured telephone interviews were used to collect qualitative data from individual teachers regarding successful and unsuccessful classroom management strategies they were using when teaching Sudanese refugees. The 11 interviewees were selected from people who completed the electronic survey in the initial data-gathering phase of the project and who indicated their willingness to be interviewed. In addition to selecting appropriate numbers of teachers from each state, the criteria for selection of the 11 interviewees included:

- ✧ representation of teachers teaching on a variety of programs (for example the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program as well as the Adult Migrant English Program)
- ✧ representation of Sudanese learners at different levels of English language proficiency; and
- ✧ representation of Sudanese men and women learners.

The data from the telephone interviews was thematically analysed, and was also used to inform subsequent phases of this research project, specifically the consultations with experts in the field of rehabilitation for refugees, the development of the guidelines for teachers, and the validation of these guidelines.

Sampling techniques

A set of suggested questions was developed to enable teachers to expand on key issues introduced in the electronic survey. The methodology and interview questions are attached as *Appendix 2: Telephone interview questions*. Interviewees were contacted prior to the interview to verify that they were still willing to participate and to arrange a suitable time and contact number. Although the agreed total number of ten interviews was exceeded, the final representation from the two states changed slightly, from six New South Wales and four Western Australia, to eight New South Wales and three Western Australia. These changes reflect respondents' availability at the time of interview. Interviews were kept to 30 minutes, and interviewers tape-recorded the interviews with the interviewees' permission. The interviews covered four main areas:

- 1 Exploration of teacher perceptions of Sudanese learners' aspirations/pathways
- 2 Exploration of effects of previous trauma on Sudanese learners
- 3 Exploration of Sudanese learner strengths/difficulties and teacher responses
- 4 Institutional requirements (with regard to curriculum).

Findings

Exploration of teacher perceptions of Sudanese learners' aspirations/pathways

There was a wide variety of learners represented in the sample. While there was a preponderance of Sudanese learners with low levels of English, making it difficult for them to articulate their aspirations in any detail, there were also learners operating at higher levels of English. There were Sudanese women and Sudanese men in the sample. In general, the diversity of stated or perceived aspirations reflected the differences in learners' prior schooling; English language proficiency; gender; and to a lesser extent, the funding source for the program in which they were receiving tuition. Aspirations were categorized as personal; educational; and employment-related.

Employment-related aspirations dominated the responses, with personal aspirations also emerging as an important priority. Educational aspirations, most fully articulated by the small number of more advanced learners, are discussed in some detail as they link closely with employment-related aspirations.

Employment-related aspirations

Irrespective of the language program the learners were in, teachers most frequently cited the need to find work as the learners' number one reason for learning English. Employment was seen as a key to taking responsibility for their own needs (rather than living off welfare payments); to participating in the community; and to earning surplus money to help support family members still in Africa. Teachers reported that Sudanese men seemed more anxious to gain employment than women, particularly middle-aged women who saw their main responsibility as caring for their children. Teachers reported that younger women were keen to enter the workforce. Sudanese learners' priority for learning English in order to gain employment was most clearly expressed by the teacher who said:

Most are keen to get jobs...even the brightest ones are ending up in chicken factories ... they really want jobs even though they know they would get more interesting jobs if they stayed and learned English. There's quite a lot of pride among [the Sudanese learners] that you don't find as universally amongst other groups of learners.

Another commented that in her experience the men's urgency to obtain any kind of work seemed to subside as they realised that English was the key to obtaining anything other than unskilled work which often took the men away from their families. However, work remained a priority. She added that direct employment outcomes would provide a strong motivation for learning English: 'if they could do an [English language] course which would lead to a job at the end, they would probably stick with the course, but the number one priority is to provide for their families'.

Personal aspirations

Many of the respondents indicated that their Sudanese learners wished to learn English so that they could feel part of the wider Australian community. Three respondents also mentioned that their learners wanted to help their children with their schoolwork, and English was needed for that.

Educational aspirations

These aspirations appear to be linked to learners' current level of English and their level of schooling. Learners with very little English language and limited or no schooling did not appear to express further educational aspirations. Learners with higher levels of English were clearly more interested in taking up or continuing further vocational studies. However, several teachers reported a disjuncture between current capacity and aspiration among Sudanese learners with more advanced spoken English. Teachers reported having difficulty in convincing these learners of the extent of study required for entry into professions such as teaching or medicine, especially as the study places such a strong emphasis on skills in reading and writing. One respondent said that she

often runs sessions on pathways and what is required to achieve the end goals, but [she] does not think that Southern Sudanese learners, particularly the men, really comprehend the level of English required and that such levels may not be achievable.

The issue of personal pride (exhibited in this context by never asking for help) was also mentioned as something that may limit Sudanese learners' chances of success in vocational study.

To make this point, one respondent cited a positive example, where the learner actively sought all the help she needed:

One student wants to go to university to continue her nursing career that she began in Sudan. She has a very good chance of succeeding because she is very good at speaking up for herself. Of all the Sudanese learners I have taught, and that's quite a lot, she is the best at telling me what she doesn't understand. She'd never seen a computer before she came to Australia but in the computer class she was smart at getting the support she needed because she was determined that that wasn't going to hold her back, and she had really good learning strategies in place. She was the exception to the rule that you never asked for help, so you would not admit to others that you were not succeeding.

Exploration of effects of previous trauma on Sudanese learners

This area of the survey and the telephone interview produced the greatest variety of responses, making it difficult to form a clear picture of what seems to be occurring.

The literature suggests a range of behaviours that learners suffering from trauma commonly exhibit. They are:

- ✧ Miss class a lot
- ✧ Come late to class
- ✧ Have difficulty concentrating for long periods
- ✧ Exhibit aggression to peers or teachers
- ✧ Do not seem motivated to learn
- ✧ Do not participate in activities

In the survey, teachers were asked to indicate whether these behaviours applied to their Sudanese learners. Most respondents indicated only that Sudanese learners came late to class or missed class a lot, and one cited learners' lack of concentration. Further exploration of this issue in the telephone interview was inconclusive. Teachers were cautious about making a direct connection between these particular learner behaviours and past trauma, several noting that lateness and absence from class and lack of concentration are not unique to Sudanese learners, and that there are a multitude of possible explanations for these behaviours. Practical matters such as getting children to school, or worry about finding suitable accommodation were frequently offered as plausible explanations. Similarly, teachers were cautious about linking poor retention of learning observed in some Sudanese learners with the effects of trauma. They suggested that physical health problems may be an equally good explanation.

While all of the interviewees were aware of their Sudanese learners' background, more than half of them said that the trauma their learners had experienced in the past did not appear to affect their classroom behaviour or their ability to learn. When asked to comment on Sudanese learners' ability to cope with trauma, respondents mentioned Sudanese learners' positive attitude, their resilience, and the development of informal support systems (such as the mentoring of younger men by older men). Most frequently, interviewees suggested that support from the Sudanese community was a key factor in assisting learners to deal with the stresses of the past and present. Community was mentioned by several interviewees in the context of religious affiliation and church attendance:

Their strength is community. Unlike the refugees from the Yugoslav countries where opposing sides from the war were often in the classroom together with fresh memories and aggressive feelings, the Sudanese refugees are all on the same side and welcome each other warmly. Very quickly they know what the other students are doing and they can say that X won't be here today because they have this or that problem to solve. The Sudanese

community here is huge. There is a thriving congregation at our church and there are growing congregations in two neighbouring suburbs.

The availability of support from religious organisations and from within the community may go some way to explaining why Sudanese learners did not appear to seek the help of college counsellors. Where counsellors were available, teachers appeared to use their expertise (mostly for professional development purposes) rather than the learners. Another interviewee simply said 'I don't know how [Sudanese] learners are dealing with past trauma. I don't know whether coming late or any of the learners' classroom behaviours (none of which is alien) have anything to do with past trauma'.

There was, however, some evidence of the effects of traumatic events on Sudanese learners. Two respondents recounted incidents in which seemingly innocuous class activity (for example, an excursion to the beach) triggered distressing flashbacks of life-threatening events. Other 'one-off' incidents of behaviour that may have related to past trauma were also reported. These incidents were effectively resolved by either the learners themselves or by the teachers.

In one instance, explicit classroom talk about learners' past trauma seemed to have a cathartic effect. One interviewee reported on the extraordinary relief that learners appeared to feel when they had the opportunity to tell their stories of war and escape. On the day before the ANZAC day holiday, the teacher told the class the story of her father's role in World War II. In response to her story, the learners' stories tumbled out until all had told their story.

Other teachers commented on the present stresses on their learners. These were considerable. They ranged from dealing with many new elements of Australian culture (for example using basic items of furniture); learning of their entitlements and obligations under support services such as Centrelink; placing and keeping their children at school; and simple homesickness. One teacher quoted one of her learners as saying: 'I want to see Africa'.

Another teacher talked of the pressure placed on men and women as their roles changed in a new country. In addition to learning a new language and new culture, women (often sole parents) had responsibility for caring for up to eight children, some of whom may not be their own, and some of whom may have been the result of rape. In two-parent households, Sudanese men were expected to help with the care of children, traditionally the sole responsibility of women in Sudan. Domestic violence against women was suspected but not openly discussed. The teacher's approach to addressing these concerns was to provide a calm, predictable but flexible learning environment with learning tasks set at a level where learners were challenged but prepared for success.

Some responses suggested that the English language class itself was also an important forum for Sudanese adults to get together to exchange news and help each other. One interviewee teaching a class of Sudanese women said

A lot of class time is spent with learners talking in Dinka [one of the main languages spoken in southern Sudan]. The learners don't let me into their Dinka discussion. They discuss their problems....When I or one of the others (non-Sudanese people) try to step in they say 'don't worry'. They want to sort their problems out themselves and not have us involved.

Given this array of data, it is not possible to make any firm comments about how teachers may assist Sudanese learners in dealing with the effects of past trauma or present stress, or if indeed it is appropriate for teachers to play a major role at all. The researchers' proposed discussions with members of the Sudanese community and representatives from the Services for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors may provide further guidance on this issue.

Exploration of Sudanese learner strengths/difficulties and teacher responses

Picking up on the data from the electronic surveys, all 11 teachers were asked to comment on their Sudanese learners' capacity for learning spoken English. The teachers were also asked to describe briefly their approach to teaching spoken English and whether they had changed their approach to teaching and assessment when teaching spoken English to Sudanese learners.

Next, teachers were asked to elaborate on their survey responses about their perception of their Sudanese learners' greatest learning difficulties. These responses varied and therefore, for each of the skill areas of reading, writing, numeracy and learning the sample was fewer than 11 responses. Eight teachers commented on reading and writing; three commented on learning; and two commented on numeracy.

Some teachers made over-arching comments regarding learner strengths and difficulties which also need to be recorded. Several interviewees noted the fundamental issue for many of their Sudanese learners. This was the multitude of cultural differences between their 'world' of subsistence farming/displaced persons in Africa and their new 'world' as refugees in Australia. Sudanese adults' unfamiliarity with basic financial management (for example the need to pay bills, or to live within a fixed weekly budget); unfamiliarity with using white goods in the home; and unfamiliarity with the Australian laws regarding driving a motor vehicle or domestic violence were mentioned frequently as issues teachers were addressing in class. In the words of one teacher

Essential concepts are absent, to do with world knowledge....Time and time again we've found that the language wasn't the problem. It was knowledge of the concept. We have to keep going right back to explaining what something is. For example when we are teaching Sudanese learners how to use the telephone, we don't just have to make sure they can press the right numbers or listen to what the other person is saying. We also have to teach what a telephone is.

Spoken English as the language area of least difficulty for Sudanese learners

There was no general agreement on the ease with which Sudanese learners were able to learn spoken English. Some interviewees were quite emphatic that one of the key strengths of Sudanese as learners was their ability to develop oral skills. In support of their claims they referred to Sudanese learners' good ear for the nuances of spoken language; or their ability to memorise language they had heard; or their ability to learn the forms and pronunciation of English easily. Three interviewees mentioned the broad equivalence of the sounds of the learners' first language (Dinka or Nuba) and English by way of explaining their Sudanese learners' ability to hear and replicate English sounds. In contrast, others said that poor pronunciation was an issue.

One teacher commented that some Sudanese learners' ease with learning spoken English was something of a mixed blessing, as their written language skills lagged so far behind their spoken language skills. Such a profile made these learners' placement in an appropriate class difficult. Another teacher supported this point with the comment 'The issue of pride is very important and it is often difficult to persuade Sudanese learners to go into what the teacher perceives to be the appropriate class. They always want to go into the higher class'.

Other interviewees were equally emphatic about their Sudanese learners' difficulty with learning oral skills. Two interviewees teaching Sudanese learners with almost no English commented that the development of oral skills did not seem to come any more easily than the development of other language skills. One of these interviewees made the point that for his group of recent arrivals, culture shock may have been interfering with their ability to learn English. He made the further point that there appeared to be a correlation between learners' ability to learn a new

language and their readiness/willingness to acquire a new culture and language. For refugees, that readiness may not coincide with arrival. From his experience, Sudanese learners

who can't come to class but have a home tutor seem to do well when they get to a class. Personal contact with a local person develops the desire to communicate and to get to know the community. These learners [mostly women with new babies] seem to do better than those who come to class without that preliminary personal contact.

The other teacher cited a situation in which she was able to turn learning failure into learning success for one Sudanese man. He had failed his assessment and therefore had to repeat the same (very low) level.

He was quite despondent about this. As the process of repeating the class went on, he slowly realized that he had heard/done many of these things before, and he began to grasp things well. So much so that I noticed he was translating/explaining to others, and his new role as informal teacher's aide began. He is flourishing, the other students love having access to explanations in their own language, and I have valuable support.

Two interviewees noted that in their experience, Sudanese learners' listening skills were not as well developed as their speaking skills. One teacher was puzzled by her learners' difficulty in following spoken instructions. This perception may relate to the greater level of explicitness that Sudanese learners seem to need, as mentioned below. The other commented that Sudanese learners are so good at speaking that they are quite surprised to find that sometimes they've missed nuances in the speech of others.

Approach to teaching speaking

Teachers' responses to this question extended to their approach to teaching all language skills. Most teachers were taking a communicative approach to teaching English, which advocates a scaffolded, three-phase lesson structure. This is described in broad terms as follows:

- ✧ Presentation of new language, in this case, new elements of English that the teacher assumes the learners do not know (teacher modelling new language to ensure learner comprehension)
- ✧ Practice of new language (learners using the new language with the teacher and with other learners in the group)
- ✧ Production (learners incorporating new language into activities that involve known language).

Almost all teachers mentioned the need to provide many opportunities for repetition and recycling of learned material for Sudanese learners. The explicit focus on vocabulary development and pronunciation were also frequently mentioned.

Several interviewees mentioned that they were much more careful about the content of teaching material, to avoid topics that may distress learners, particularly if teachers knew that learners were separated from their spouses or children still in Africa.

Interviewees generally said they did not feel they could make significant changes to their teaching or assessment practices, as most Sudanese learners were in classes with other learners from different backgrounds. Sometimes the Sudanese learners were in the majority in the class. However, the points made earlier about the need to explain unfamiliar concepts, the need to teach basic sound/letter associations, and the need for substantial recycling and re-teaching of learned material suggests that teachers are changing their teaching practice to meet the particular needs of their Sudanese learners. One interviewee teaching an advanced English class said that while she had not needed to change her general teaching approach, she did need to explain learning tasks much more explicitly because the Sudanese learners were not used to being asked to express their ideas. She gave the example of outlining the stages of a debate in some detail, noting that although the Sudanese were not the only learners to benefit from the explicitness of

this instruction, they stood out more in the frequency with which they needed clarification about what the teacher wanted.

Sudanese learners' difficulties with reading and writing

The frequency with which reading and writing were nominated as areas of greatest difficulty was not surprising, given that most of the learners in the research sample were from southern Sudan where indigenous languages have no written form. One interviewee summed up their difficulties as follows: 'because Dinka is not a written language, learners have nothing to draw on. When we teach reading and writing to children in Australia, they have a lifetime of familiarity with writing materials, and grow up with writing all around them'.

Several teachers commented on the Sudanese learners' poor retention of instruction to do with the sound/letter relationships in English. One also commented on Sudanese learners' difficulty in transferring the learned spelling of words to the spelling of the same words when they occurred in dictation. Another commented that her Sudanese learners think spelling doesn't matter. A third teacher explained Sudanese learners' difficulty in making a firm connection between sounds and letter this way:

Coming from a culture where they survived without relying on any script at all, and never having to associate sounds with meanings in written script, they haven't been 'sold' on the value of script. It's a completely foreign concept and perhaps an unnecessary one.

He went on to say that his learners seemed to have a better retention of whole words. Considering that many Sudanese adults come from a background where knowing how to read and write is preserved for the educated few, it may be difficult for them to understand the importance of written English as a vital form of social intercourse for everyone in English speaking countries. Furthermore, considering the variety of Sudanese learners' aspirations, interests, capacities and the learning effort required for learning to read and write in English, there may be a need for teachers and their employers to rethink language program options. Options such as tuition in oral skills only, tuition in written skills only, tuition in oral and written skills relating to immediate and practical skill development may be useful strategies in addressing the needs of Sudanese and other African learners.

Sudanese learners' difficulties with learning skills

Only two teachers commented directly on this area of learning, but others made relevant comments incidentally. In addition to the comment noted earlier to do with Sudanese learners' need for explicit and possibly more detailed instruction preceding learning activities, teachers also noted the need for assisting Sudanese learners to organize their learning. One teacher said that she tried to reinforce the importance of keeping learning notes in order by making the filing of papers in a folder an activity that occurred at the end of each lesson. She drew attention to organising principles such as the date, the heading, the teacher's name, or day of the week to introduce the notion of categories within the same folder.

In a comment related to reading, which relates equally to the acquisition of learning skills, another teacher commented on Sudanese learners' difficulty in navigating a page for meaning, as they were unfamiliar with the reasons for having such things as page numbers, logos, headings, or dates and signatures on letters.

Two teachers mentioned the issue of using visual material in teaching. They noted that real objects, photographs and video material seemed much more easily comprehensible to Sudanese learners than pictorial representation (for example drawings or cartoons) requiring a Western understanding of perspective.

Sudanese learners' difficulties with numeracy

Two teachers commented on this area of learning, and both were unsure whether the Sudanese learners' difficulty with numeracy was conceptual or linguistic. They both reported that Sudanese learners did not seem able to deal with the four mathematical operations: "They have no concepts of numeracy such as adding up or multiplication, they don't know the signs for addition, division etc, and they don't know how to 'carry' or the multiplication tables".

Researcher comment: It is difficult to comment on these observations without knowing more about the numeracy tasks the learners were asked to do (abstract mental arithmetic using numbers only? written sums? contextualized real-life numeracy tasks?). However, although the interviewee recognized the teaching challenge, she was keen to persevere. She said that she was considering trying a hands-on visual approach.

One teacher noted that reading texts requiring culturally specific spatial concepts (such as bus timetables) also presented difficulties for Sudanese learners. These learners had particular difficulty in making the connection between times and destinations.

Both interviewees said they spent a lot of teaching effort on teaching the time using different clocks. They reported that the Sudanese learners had no more difficulty than other learners in learning these concepts, but the importance of being punctual did not seem to be connected with the ability to tell the time: "Students wear watches, but as jewellery, not to tell the time".

Institutional requirements (with regard to curriculum)

All 11 teachers were asked if the requirements of the curriculum they were using prevented them from addressing the specific learning needs of their Sudanese learners. Six said 'no', adding that their curriculum was well tailored or sufficiently flexible to allow them to focus on their learners' greatest areas of need.

One said that the curriculum for her lower level learners was suitable for them, but that at Certificate II and higher, the curriculum, particularly the assessment, was more 'limiting in what you can do as you have to address the outcomes'.

The remaining four interviewees said 'yes'. One interviewee said that 'for higher level learners (in English for Further Study and English for Academic Purposes) the curriculum outcomes were very clearly stated, and if some students have particular difficulties you just have to keep moving on'. Additional tuition for these learners (for example, the Sudanese) was arranged and well attended. These comments were echoed by another teacher who was also teaching a higher level class. She said that 'the curriculum outcomes were based on the assumption that learners would progress to further academic study so included formal learning skills, academic writing, giving oral presentations'. She thought these outcomes were too prescriptive and did not really suit learners who did not wish to pursue formal study.

The remaining interviewees were teaching lower level classes. One said she found that the assessment tasks for the curriculum she was using were too prescriptive. The other said the curriculum did not allow her to devote more time to teaching basic reading and writing, the skills which Sudanese learners lacked most.

Additional comment

At the end of the interview, teachers were asked if they wanted to add any comment that they had not yet had the opportunity to make in regard to their experience with Sudanese learners. They were also asked to describe particular initiatives that had been prompted by the influx of Sudanese and other African refugee learners.

Learner placement

One interviewee suggested that Sudanese learners whose spoken English is well in advance of their written English should be encouraged to enrol in a class which aligns with their written English.

There they will have a better chance of picking up good writing habits such as paying attention to sentence structure, grammar and spelling. Teachers teaching classes at higher levels assume these basics are already in place, and if they are not, students tend to write gobbledygook.

Researcher comment: An obstacle to the success of this strategy may be Sudanese learner pride (always wanting to go into the higher class, as mentioned earlier).

English for Gardening

Another interviewee gave a brief outline of a new initiative, English for Gardening, which was about to begin at her college with the support of the local government council. The idea came from the Sudanese learners themselves, and the new class would involve mostly Sudanese learners. The idea was for the learners to learn the English associated with the practical skills of growing a vegetable garden from soil preparation stage to harvest. The researchers have contacted the leader of this initiative, and have agreed to visit the college and document progress for inclusion in this research study.

English for Childbirth

A third interviewee mentioned that her staff teaching an all – female class of Sudanese and other African women developed a teaching sequence on birthing. This was a particularly successful class as the women all had small children and some were pregnant at the time. The teaching was followed up with a visit to the birthing centre at the local hospital.

The employment of an African Support Officer

One organisation in regional New South Wales had employed an African Support Officer to assist in identifying and addressing the specific needs of African learners. In particular, his role was to assist African learners with regard to their further studies; and to inform them of the counselling and other services available to learners at the college and in the community.

Bi-lingual talks

Several interviewees noted the bi-lingual talks organised for the benefit of Sudanese and other African refugees. Specific talks mentioned were on subjects such as health (nutrition, men's health, women's health, drug and alcohol abuse); police matters to do with driving and domestic violence; and educational matters such as learning pathways. These talks could provide the basis for further work in language and literacy classes.

Outcomes of consultations with experts

Introduction

This phase of the research gathered and analysed qualitative information from six experts'/community representatives: five from New South Wales and one from Western Australia. These included:

- ✧ a Sudanese community worker employed by the state-wide Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors in New South Wales
- ✧ a psychologist and counsellor working for a major provider of the Adult Migrant English Program in Western Australia (Western Australia)
- ✧ the African Student Support Officer and Regional Multicultural Education Officer employed by a regional city provider of Adult English language, literacy and numeracy tuition in New South Wales
- ✧ representatives from the peak Sudanese Associations in New South Wales.

The analysis of the initial data collection phases (electronic survey and telephone interviews) informed the development of questions to be posed during this consultative phase of the project.

Methodology

In view of the diversity of the Sudanese community in Australia and the need for the study to reflect that diversity, the researchers contacted a senior training officer working with the New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors to assist them in identifying key personnel with expertise in refugee issues. Representatives of peak Sudanese associations in New South Wales were thus identified. A meeting with these representatives was held on 27 March 2006.

One outcome of the meeting was the identification by the Sudanese representatives of a community worker from Southern Sudan based at the New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors. They advised that this community worker had close association with many members of the Sudanese community in the western Sydney area, and that he would be able to provide further data for the present study.

Consultation with the New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors Sudanese Community Worker occurred on 29 June 2006.

During the initial data gathering phase of the project contact was made with an Adult Migrant English Service psychologist and counsellor in Western Australia who indicated her willingness to participate in a telephone interview.

Similarly, during the initial data gathering phase of the project the researchers were advised of an initiative developed by a provider in response to the significant numbers of refugees from Africa resettling in a regional area of New South Wales. The initiative included the provider funding an African Student Support Officer position.

The consultations covered two broad areas:

- ✧ issues that experts were dealing with in their work with Sudanese refugees
- ✧ suggested advice for teachers.

Outcomes

Issues

The issues raised in the consultations with these experts can be categorised as relating to educational considerations; Southern Sudanese refugees' responses to past torture/trauma; and issues to do with transition to a new country and new culture.

Educational considerations

All consultations highlighted the diversity in educational backgrounds of Sudanese learners, with some learners having higher levels of English and formal education, and some having very limited English and formal education. For example the Sudanese Community Worker was of Southern Sudanese background and had completed an Engineering degree (in Arabic). Even highly educated refugee learners who have been educated in different systems could still need support in adapting to different learning demands in adult learning contexts in Australia. However whilst there is diversity, the preponderance of Southern Sudanese refugees (particularly women in the age group 30 +) have had no formal education or minimal education. The challenges for such learners are compounded by their oral culture background and differing world view. The Sudanese Community Worker identified that education in Southern Sudan was perceived as a privilege for the select (male) few. The literature indicates that although Southern Sudan has an oral culture, people are aware of the political power of literacy through their ongoing conflict with Northern Sudan. However, this awareness does not appear to be transferred at the personal level within the Australian context, where literacy is not just a 'tool' of power or of privilege but a requirement of everyday life.

Both the Sudanese Community Worker and the African Student Support Officer indicated that the development of English literacy (especially the development of reading and writing skills) appears to be a slow and extremely frustrating task for many Southern Sudanese learners. The very task of adapting to the routines of schooling, of sitting and concentrating in a classroom are unfamiliar and for many, a challenging experience. Many refugee learners need to be taught the fine motor skills of holding a pen resulting in students tiring easily.

Southern Sudanese learners via their community representatives have expressed a need for different approaches to their immediate needs in language and literacy learning. The suggested approaches include:

- ✧ identifying existing skills beyond English language proficiency at the initial assessment stage. The purpose of this broader assessment of skills would be to provide an acknowledgment of the full range of skills that Southern Sudanese refugee learners have on arrival. It may also suggest vocational areas to link to English language tuition or areas for further study.
- ✧ linking English language, literacy and numeracy tuition with the development of informal practical skills, possibly building on the existing skills of Southern Sudanese learners. Some

providers are beginning to run trials along these lines. Examples include English for kitchen hands, English for computers, English for gardening, English for birthing.

- ✧ providing the option of English language classes which place emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills. This option would address the concern that in classes where speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy are all being addressed, learners are overwhelmed and feel they are not making progress in any of these language areas. There is particular concern where learners are presenting with very limited or no reading and writing skills in any language, and large amounts of class time are devoted to the development of these skills.
- ✧ providing the option of English language classes which place emphasis on the development of reading and writing skills, as these are presenting great difficulty for Southern Sudanese learners at all levels of English language proficiency.
- ✧ 'pre-literacy' tuition, for example pen holding, letter formation, the concept of sound/letter relationship, could be provided by Southern Sudanese refugees who were formerly teachers in Southern Sudan, where the language of instruction is English. Such an approach would maximise the Adult Migrant English Program's hours of funded provision.

The strategies mentioned above were not seen as being applicable to all Southern Sudanese learners but rather as options to be offered alongside current programs.

Southern Sudanese refugees' responses to past torture/trauma

It would appear from the consultations undertaken (and substantiated by the literature) that it is difficult to distinguish between the effects of past sufferings from the effects of forced migration itself and from the challenges of re-adjustment in a new country. As the Adult Migrant English Service psychologist and counsellor commented 'overwhelmingly, Sudanese people see trauma as a part of life'.

The experts consulted were generally in agreement that individuals who are more seriously affected come forward for counselling or resolve issues within their community. It may be that the more highly traumatised individuals are not yet accessing English language tuition. Most of the Sudanese refugees appear to cope with their experiences through a combination of individual factors such as personality and age, and the emotional, moral and practical support they draw from their religious faith and/or community and family. Possibly the notion of great personal pride among the Sudanese refugee population, of 'saving face', noted by teachers as well as the experts consulted, might mitigate against refugees' disclosure of troubling experience in the past or present. Experts from Southern Sudanese backgrounds participating in the consultations did not focus on past experiences of trauma as an area of paramount concern. Rather, stresses of resettlement were emphasised, including the need for Sudanese refugees in Australia to make enough money to help support family members still in Africa. The Adult Migrant English Service psychologist and counsellor identified the needs of children and young people and that challenging parental discipline and teachers in school could be related to trauma. However, alternative explanations are possible. Similarly, it is difficult to extrapolate that behaviours exhibited in class such as lack of concentration, tiredness or absence necessarily stem from past experiences of torture/trauma. All experts consulted indicated that learner awareness of support services was paramount. Ironically the physical locations of specialised torture/trauma support centres in New South Wales and Western Australia are difficult to access without private transport. It has been suggested via the consultations that teachers need to have a broad awareness of their learner's background experiences, an understanding of support services available, the need for flexibility in delivery; and possibly the boundaries of their own role and expertise.

Transition

The challenges of settlement for Southern Sudanese refugees as identified during the consultations are many, and for many refugees these challenges include the movement from the world of rural agriculture to the world of urban unemployment; the movement from a highly oral culture to a highly print-based culture. These changes require fundamental shifts in world view, and fundamental shifts in assumptions about how language can be used on a day to day basis. The main transitional challenges highlighted in the consultations were to do with work opportunities, family structure and dynamics, financial management and system requirements. These are discussed in some detail below.

Work opportunities

The consultations with Sudanese men highlighted the priority for Southern Sudanese men to find work to support family in Australia and to assist kin left behind in Southern Sudanese or other countries. The Sudanese Community Worker stated that unemployed Southern Sudanese men felt great guilt that they were the lucky ones to have escaped the conflicts, but were not able to access work to fulfil these male responsibilities. The African Student Support Officer commented that in order to fulfil their roles as heads of family, some Southern Sudanese men were foregoing opportunities to learn English and were leaving their families to travel to other regional centres (some approximately 100 kilometres away) to work. Owing to limited or no formal education and no Australian work experience, most work obtained is usually low-skilled, casual or seasonal. The consultations did not reveal insights into Sudanese women's efforts to enter the workforce.

In contrast to the picture painted by the Sudanese consultants, the Adult Migrant English Service psychologist and counsellor presented an opposing scenario. She portrayed a situation in which Australian government system requirements (through Centrelink and Job Network agencies) put refugees under pressure to find work, yet not all the Southern Sudanese who came to her for assistance saw work as their first priority. Those who wished to postpone entry into the workforce saw settlement for their family and language learning as their priorities.

Family structure and dynamics

Consultants commented that Centrelink payments to women and older children created significant changes in family dynamics, eroding the traditional status of men as the authority figures in the household. Also, unemployment was creating poverty, frustration and depression. All these had the potential for exacerbating or causing health problems. Many Southern Sudanese families have single women, not, as is traditional, married men as the head of the household. This departure from tradition was creating tensions between the women and the older children/ young people, and difficulties for the women in finding effective ways of disciplining their children.

Financial management

There was unanimous agreement among the consultants that managing money was a huge problem for newly arrived refugees. Financial management is an unfamiliar concept and a new challenge for Southern Sudanese refugees, many of whom have lived in refugee camps for years prior to arrival in Australia, with very little in the way of finances to manage. Furthermore, many are unfamiliar with Australian currency or cultural norms regarding financial obligations such as paying rent, or paying for services such as the telephone or electricity. Several of the consultants told horror stories of astronomical phone or electricity bills that families on Centrelink benefits had no hope of repaying. Linked to the issue of financial management was the issue of lease agreements that the refugees did not understand. One consultant noted that there was a high incidence of Sudanese families discovering that the exit date from their rental property had arrived, leaving them with an unexpected crisis on their hands.

System requirements

Because of their unfamiliarity with government systems and their limited literacy in English, Southern Sudanese refugees experience difficulties with system requirements. For example, Centrelink, along with most government agencies in Australia, conducts most of its business via forms and letters, which in turn create additional workload for counsellors assisting Sudanese to manage their affairs. Issues of over- and under-payment of Centrelink benefits to people in casual or seasonal employment are all spelled out in writing that many of the refugees are at a loss to understand.

Suggested advice for teachers

The main points to emerge from the consultations were as follows:

- ✧ teachers could assist in informing Sudanese refugees of the pathways to the wider vocational learning arena, not only to English language and literacy learning opportunities
- ✧ where possible, English language tuition should be linked with practical skill development
- ✧ teachers should be aware of what services are available to refugee learners and encourage learners to access these services
- ✧ consider different approaches for example linking English to job opportunities in the local area
- ✧ consider the use of Southern Sudanese teachers to provide 'pre-literacy' tuition

Teachers' survey

This survey focuses on teachers' experiences of teaching Sudanese adults, and is to be completed only by teachers who currently have Sudanese learners in their class(es).

This survey should take about 15-20 minutes of your time.

Section 1

There are eight questions in this section that seek background information about your current teaching work with Sudanese learners.

Please respond to all the questions by clicking on the appropriate box or by typing in the space provided.

1. Please indicate the organisation that employs you. *Click one box only.*

<input type="checkbox"/> TAFE	<input type="checkbox"/> Mission Australia
<input type="checkbox"/> AMES	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Community Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Australian Centre for Languages	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify _____)
2. Please indicate the location of your centre. *Click one box only.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Capital city
<input type="checkbox"/> Other major city
<input type="checkbox"/> Small town
3. What is the main program you are teaching on? *Click one box only.*

<input type="checkbox"/> AMEP
<input type="checkbox"/> LLNP
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify _____)
4. What is your main teaching focus? *Click one box only.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult English language
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult literacy/numeracy
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult numeracy
5. How many years have you worked as an adult English language or literacy/numeracy teacher? *Click one box only.*

<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 years

- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than 15 years

6. Have you taught refugee students before? *Click one box only.*

- Yes
- No

If yes, what country/countries were the refugee students from?

7. How would you rate your awareness of the special needs of the Sudanese refugee learners in your class? *Click one box only.*

- Limited awareness
- Moderate awareness
- Comprehensive awareness

8. (a) How did you obtain your knowledge of the special needs of Sudanese refugee learners? *Click on all relevant boxes.*

- Self access to print or other media resources
- Professional development (please specify _____)
- Visiting speaker from the Sudanese community
- Research reports
- Talking to the Sudanese learners
- Other (please specify _____)

(b) Which of the sources of knowledge you indicated above helped you the most?

Section 2

There are nine questions in this section that seek information about **Sudanese** learners in your classes. Please respond to all questions by clicking on the appropriate box or by typing in the space/ table provided.

1. In your classes which include **Sudanese** learners, what is the gender balance among these learners? *Click one box only.*

- more Sudanese men than Sudanese women
- more Sudanese women than Sudanese men
- approximately the same number of Sudanese men and women

2. How old are your **Sudanese** learners? Please rank the age categories where **1** is the category with the **highest** number of learners.

16-17 years of age

18-24 years of age

25-34 years of age

35 -44 years of age

45+ years of age

3. What is the educational background of your **Sudanese** learners? Enter the approximate number of learners in the table below.

Years of schooling	Number of Sudanese learners
No formal schooling	
1-2 years of schooling	
3-5 years of schooling	
6+ years of schooling	

4. Are all the **Sudanese** learners in your classes at roughly the same language/literacy/numeracy level (for example ISLPR 0+/NRS 1) or is there a range of levels? Click one box only and provide levels in terms of either ISLPR or NRS.

One literacy/language level. What is the level? ISLPR or NRS

A range of levels from ISLPR to ISLPR or NRS to NRS

5. As far as you are able to generalise, what would you say are your **Sudanese** learners' greatest strengths as learners?
6. As far as you are able to generalise, what would you say are the greatest barriers (if any) to learning for your **Sudanese** learners?
7. In what English language learning areas are your **Sudanese** learners experiencing the greatest difficulties? Please rank the following skill areas from 1 to 5 where **1** represents the **least difficulty** and **5** represents the **greatest difficulty**. Click one box for each skill area.

Skill area	least difficulty	greatest difficulty			
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Learning skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

8. Are you able to arrange your teaching program so that you can focus on the skill areas presenting the greatest difficulty for your **Sudanese** learners? Click one box only.

Yes

No

9. If you answered **No** to question 8, why is that? *Click on all relevant boxes.*

the Sudanese learners' problems are not the same as the problems of the majority of the learners in their class

curriculum requirements

you don't know how to address these needs

you don't have the resources to address these needs

Other (please specify _____)

Section 3

There are five questions in this section that seek information about your class environment and teacher /learner relations. Please respond to all questions by clicking on the appropriate box or by typing in the space/ table provided.

1. Many refugee students have experienced torture and trauma and face resettlement issues also. In your experience, do your **Sudanese** learners exhibit any of the following behaviours more often than your other students? *Click on one box for each behaviour in the table below.*

Behaviour	Yes	No
Miss class a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Come late to class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have difficulty concentrating for long periods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exhibit aggression to peers or teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not seem to be motivated to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not participate in activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please list, if you answered 'Yes')	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. (a) What strategies do you use to assist **Sudanese** learners who are exhibiting any of the behaviours above? Are the strategies working? *Click on one box for each strategy.*

Strategy	Working	Not working	Don't use this strategy
Ask a counsellor to talk to learner/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personally discuss with the student (out of class) any issues they might be experiencing that are impacting on their class attendance/participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Avoid discussion of reasons for learner behaviour as they are adults and their privacy should be respected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Try to assist learners by using different activities, different approaches and/or timetabling of activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take a more authoritarian approach to classroom management, which may be more consistent with learner expectations of the classroom environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(b) Are there other strategies you are using successfully to manage the behaviours you have indicated in question 1? If so, could you please briefly describe them?

3. What support do you **need** to assist you in teaching **Sudanese** learners? *Click on all relevant boxes.*

- Bilingual support
- Sharing strategies with colleagues
- Assistance from a counsellor
- Professional development
- No support needed (Proceed to question 5)
- Other (please specify _____)

4. What support do you **receive** to assist you in teaching **Sudanese** learners? *Click on all relevant boxes.*

- Bilingual support
- Sharing strategies with colleagues
- Assistance from a counsellor
- Professional development
- No support available
- Other (please specify _____)

5. How do you familiarise **Sudanese** learners with the way you like to conduct your class and with learning approaches you think are useful? *Click one box only.*

- Explain all protocols of classroom behaviour and explain the purpose and procedures of all activities
- Explain only if there appears to be an issue or a misunderstanding
- Provide opportunities for students to discover the protocols themselves
- Other (please specify _____)

Section 4

There are eleven questions in this section that seek information about the teaching strategies and activities that you use with **Sudanese** learners as part of your normal classroom practice. Please

respond to all questions by clicking on the appropriate box(es) or by typing in the space/ table provided.

1. Teachers use a range of learner groupings for teaching language, literacy and or numeracy skills. Which of the following groupings do you use most often? *Click on the box that best describes your teaching.*

- Teacher-directed whole-class instruction
- Small group work with teacher monitoring
- Pair work with teacher monitoring
- Individual learner work with teacher monitoring
- Use all groupings a lot but no special preference for any one of them

2. Are there teacher/learner groupings you rarely/never use? *Click on all relevant boxes.*

- Teacher-directed whole-class instruction
- Small group work with teacher monitoring
- Pair work with teacher monitoring
- Individual learner work with teacher monitoring

3. As far as you can generalise, which learner groupings do your **Sudanese** learners prefer? *Could you please rank them from 1 to 4 where 1 represents the **least favourite** option and 4 represents the **favourite** option.*

Teacher-directed whole-class instruction

Small group work with teacher monitoring

Pair work with teacher monitoring

Individual learner work with teacher monitoring

4. There are many teaching activities that teachers use for teaching different language/literacy/numeracy skills. (Language/literacy teaching activities here refer to cloze exercises; controlled practice, picture/word matching; role play; reading comprehension activities; oral presentation; guided writing exercises, class excursions, group projects etc).

Can you please indicate, from your experience with your current classes, which activities your **Sudanese** learners like most and like least for each language/literacy/numeracy learning area? *Type the activities in the table below for each skill area.*

Skill area	Teaching activity learners like most	Teaching activity learners like least	N/A (don't teach this skill area)
Speaking			
Listening			
Reading			
Writing			
Numeracy			
Learning			

5. Do your **Sudanese** learners appear to learn the most from the activities they like the most? *Click one box only.*
- Yes
- No
- Hard to tell
6. What are your main sources of content for your language, literacy or numeracy teaching material for teaching **Sudanese** learners? *Please rank in rough order, where 1 represents the least often used source and 5 represents the most often used source.*
- Learners' life stories
- Newspaper and other media articles about learners' country
- Information about living in Australia
- 'Real' problems, situations that learners are concerned about
- Vocational content of interest to the learners (eg horticulture; childcare)
- Other (please specify _____)
7. Why did you decide to use this content? *Click on all relevant boxes.*
- I use this content successfully with all my students
- Learners need to know/share this information
- Learners are particularly interested in this content
- Other (please specify _____)
8. (a) Have you been able to explicitly link employability skills (communication skills, teamwork skills, problem solving skills, initiative and enterprise skills, planning and organising skills, self management skills, learning skills, technology skills) to your teaching of **Sudanese** learners? *Click one box only.*
- Yes No
- (b) If you answered Yes, which of these employability skills do you think your **Sudanese** learners most urgently need to develop?
- (c) If no, why not? *Click on all relevant boxes.*
- These skills are implicit in all the teaching I do
- I wasn't aware of these as 'employability skills'
- My Sudanese learners already have these skills
- It is difficult to incorporate the teaching of these skills into the curriculum I am using
- Other (please specify _____)

9. What do you think gives **Sudanese** learners in your class the best sense of their language/literacy/numeracy learning progress? *Click on all relevant boxes.*

- Tests
- Self assessment using technology (eg computer, audio tape, video)
- Teacher comments/error correction
- Individual performance in formal assessment
- Peer assessment
- Tasks/performance in group projects
- Other (please specify _____)

10. Do you know of any examples of approaches that are being successfully implemented by another teacher with **Sudanese** learners? *Click one box only.*

- Yes No

If you answered **Yes**, could you please provide contact details of the teacher involved (if the teacher agrees to be contacted).

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

11. Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow up telephone interview?

- Yes No

If you answered **Yes**, could you please provide your contact details below. These details will be used solely for contact purposes and **will not be used** to identify you in the research findings.

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Best time to contact you:

When you have completed your survey, please:

- 1. Save your changes**
2. Close the document
3. Attach the document to an email and send to:

xxxxxxx

by Monday xxxxxxx 2006

Thank you very much for your time and your responses. They are greatly appreciated.

Semi-structured telephone interview questions

Purpose

The purpose of the ten semi-structured interviews is to collect qualitative data from individual teachers regarding successful and unsuccessful classroom management strategies. The data will inform the final report and the development of the 'Advice to Teachers' document.

Methodology

- Interview participants will be selected from teacher respondents to the survey who indicated willingness to participate in follow up interviews.
- Six respondents will be selected from New South Wales and four from Western Australia. The ten respondents will be selected to represent a range of providers, programmes and metropolitan and regional locations.
- Interviewees will be contacted via email prior to the interviews to confirm interest, to distribute the interview questions and to arrange a suitable time and contact number. Postal addresses of interviewees will be sought for the mailing of consent forms. Return envelopes will be provided.
- Interviews will be 20-30 minutes in length and will be tape recorded.
- Tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is completed.
- Each interview will begin with welcoming remarks, expression of thanks and purpose of the interview.
- Each researcher will undertake five interviews. Researchers will use a speaker phone to assist in documenting interview responses.
- The interview material will be coded by both researchers. Each interviewer will code the interview data they have collected to identify emerging themes. One researcher will analyse and write up the data in consultation with the other.
- Four main questions will be posed (see below).

Interview questions

Question 1: Exploration of Sudanese learners' aspirations/pathways

In the survey, many teachers indicated that they talk to their Sudanese learners to help them determine learner needs.

From conversations you may have had with your Sudanese learners, how would you describe their expectations/goals for themselves?

- What do they want to get out of their learning?
- Are any identified goals unique to Sudanese learners?

Notes:

Reference is to Section 1, question 8 in the survey.

Probes:

Include examples of reasons for learning English-employment? To help children with their school work? Further study? Which appear to be most important?

What impediments are there to achieving their goals? Are their goals/expectations realistic?

Question 2: Exploration of effects of previous trauma on Sudanese learners

You would be aware that your Sudanese learners have left a situation of prolonged civil conflict and many would also have experienced the harsh conditions of refugee camps.

Some teachers are noticing Sudanese learners seem to exhibit particular behaviours (for example difficulty concentrating).

If so, why do you think this is occurring?

What strategies would you use in response to these learner behaviours? Why choose these strategies?

Are there any behaviours that would prompt you to suggest that the student seeks help from a counsellor (if these services are available)?

What support services are available to you?

- as the teacher

- for the student?

Which learners appear to be more troubled by the effects of their past experiences? For example: Sudanese men? Sudanese women? A particular age group?

Can you suggest any possible reasons for this?

Can you recall an incident/situation involving Sudanese learners which may have arisen from possible stresses (eg past trauma or current settlement issues) that was significant to you?

What led up to the situation?

What was critical in reaching a successful/unsuccessful outcome?

What strategies did you use? Can you tell me why you used these strategies?

Notes:

Reference is to Section 3, questions 1 & 2

Probes:

Are these needs being supported? If so, how? If not, how are you dealing with these issues?

Have you had access to STARTTS (or similar) workshops?

Any situations that have occurred and strategies you have used that worked?

Question 3: Exploration of Sudanese learner strengths/difficulties and teacher responses

a) The vast majority of teachers completing the survey selected **speaking** as the skill area of least difficulty for Sudanese learners.

What is your position on this-do you feel the same way?

Can you describe briefly your approach to teaching speaking?

Have you needed to change your approach to accommodate Sudanese learners?

Have you needed to adapt your approach to assessing speaking to accommodate Sudanese learners?

Do you think there are opportunities to capitalise on this learner strength as a 'way in' to teaching other language skills? If so - how?

Have you been able to explore other areas of strength? If so - how?

b) Many teachers completing the survey indicated that XXXX and YYYY (*researcher to select two relevant skills based on interviewee selected*) were the skills areas presenting the greatest difficulties to Sudanese learners.

Can you expand a little on what particular difficulties Sudanese learners are having in learning XXXX?

Why do you think that is?

How are you responding to the difficulties the learners are experiencing?

What's working well?

Have you adjusted your approach to assessing XXXX and YYYY in view of the challenges for Sudanese learners?

Have you seen/heard about other strategies that are working well with Sudanese learners in teaching and assessing XXXX or YYYY or other language skills?

Notes

Reference to Section 2, questions 6, 7 & 8

Probes:

Researchers to focus on the two skills identified for each interviewee based on their responses to the survey questions.

Question 4: Institutional requirements

Quite a few teachers completing the survey indicated that curriculum requirements prevented them from focusing on Sudanese learners' specific learning needs.

Was this the case for you?

If so, what aspects of the curriculum are problematic?

If not, can you expand a little on how you are able to address Sudanese learners' needs using your curriculum?

How do you think the curriculum could be enhanced / improved to better accommodate Sudanese learners' specific needs?

Do the requirements of the program you are teaching on provide opportunities -or limit- flexibility in content or delivery?

For example community involvement; incorporating knowledge of Sudanese learners' cultures in the approaches taken?

Notes

Reference to Section 2, question 10 and Section 4, question 7

Probe:

Do you involve the community in developing/designing content? Could you link vocational aspects to language, literacy and numeracy development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to contextualise the recent settlement of adult Sudanese refugees in Australia as a starting point for a consideration of recent research on how their particular background experiences and circumstances may shape these refugees' expectations and capacity as learners in their country of settlement. It will also consider the research by English language and literacy educators to address the specific learning needs of this student population. It is anticipated that the work done specifically on Sudanese refugees may be applicable to refugees from other source countries.

A number of small scale studies conducted in the UK and elsewhere in Europe confirm the crucial role that education plays in the psychological, cultural, economic and social adjustment of adult refugees. As Hannah notes (2000, p.263),

Having left behind their homes, work, education and perhaps family and friends, refugees are highly vulnerable to isolation and dislocation from 'normal' life in their place of refuge. [They] are highly vulnerable to social exclusion, and participation in education and training can play a crucial role in helping refugees to rebuild their lives.

In Australia, the point of entry into education and training for many adult refugees, and adult Sudanese refugees in particular, is in the English language, literacy and numeracy area. As part of their settlement program, all migrants and refugees of language background other than English are entitled to 510 hours of English language tuition provided through the Adult Migrant English Program, and up to an additional 100 hours of tuition is available to refugees and humanitarian entrants (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2005). Beyond that, refugees with functional English may be entitled to tuition to assist their entry into the workforce through the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program. In addition to these federally funded initiatives, English language, literacy and numeracy programs and vocational programs are offered through state-funded organisations to assist migrants (including refugees) to find their way in a new culture through education and training.

For many adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers, Sudanese refugees, among others, may pose new and difficult teaching challenges. Many teachers and managers who participated in a recent NCVET project 'Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce' (Mackay et al, 2006 forthcoming), reported a shift in the profile of learners, citing an increase in the number of learners presenting with limited education in their first language, limited literacy in any language, very limited English, and with behaviours that may be indicative of the effects of traumatic experiences. While there is a growing body of teaching and learning material being generated through national, state and local initiatives to address the needs of adult learners with limited literacy in their first language coupled with limited English language proficiency, there is relatively little guidance, to date, to assist teachers to configure their classroom practice to also take into account the psychological effects of learners' refugee experiences. Teachers reported that it was in dealing with this aspect of classroom management that they needed professional development (Mackay et al, 2006 forthcoming p.26). It is the purpose of this study to make some headway towards assisting

teachers to address the constellation of learning needs that Sudanese adults bring to the English language, literacy and numeracy classroom.

The discussion in this review will encompass a brief outline of Australia's refugee program with particular reference to recent arrivals from Sudan; emerging views on the psychological effects of the traumatic experiences in many refugees' personal histories; background information on the context that has given rise to the resettlement of Sudanese refugees; differing cultures of learning in Sudan and Australia; and the research and resource development work done recently by English language and literacy educators to address the learning needs of refugees, again with particular reference to Sudanese refugees in Australia. This literature review will be presented under the following headings:

- ✧ Australia's refugee program
- ✧ Recent research on the refugee experience
- ✧ Patterns of settlement of Sudanese refugees in Australia
- ✧ Background to Sudan as a source country in Australia's humanitarian refugee migration program
- ✧ Considerations in teaching adult Sudanese refugees: recent research and implications for English language and literacy teaching
- ✧ Towards a framework for the guidelines for teachers

Australia's Refugee Program

In Australia the federal government has sole responsibility for the immigration program, which is organized into two main categories: migration (non-humanitarian) and humanitarian. The humanitarian program comprises off-shore settlement (for people who are overseas) and on-shore protection (for people already in Australia). Refugees are in the off-shore settlement category. The number and composition of people considered for entry to Australia as refugees are identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in consultation with the Australian government (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005). A refugee is defined as a person who

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, cited in UNHCR 2001-2005).

Since the end of World War II, over 620,000 refugees and displaced persons have been resettled in Australia, an intake of approximately 12,000 per year (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005). The countries of origin of refugee arrivals have changed over the years, reflecting shifts in areas of conflict around the world. In line with the regional priorities recommended by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 70% of the refugee intake for Australia in 2004-05 came from African countries. At 43% (n = 5220) of the refugee intake for that year, Sudan was at the top of the top ten source countries, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Offshore Visa Grants [in the refugee and humanitarian program] by top ten countries of birth 2004-05

Country of birth	Number of offshore visa grants
Sudan	5220
Iraq	1589
Afghanistan	1291
Liberia	868
Sierra Leone	751
Burundi	660
Myanmar	313
Congo	300
Iran	278
Somalia	201
Others	625
Total	12096

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005

Differences in refugee policy in Australia and other countries

According to UNHCR statistics, (UNHCR 2005) the United States, Australia and Canada had the highest intake of refugees in 2004, as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Ten main countries of resettlement of refugees in 2004

Country	Refugee intake total
United States	52,868
Australia	15,967
Canada	10,521
Sweden	1,801
Norway	842
New Zealand	825
Finland	735
Denmark	508
Netherlands	323
United Kingdom	150

UNHCR 2005

However, information available on the resettlement of refugees, particularly in industrialized English speaking countries, suggests quite different approaches to identifying refugees to accept, and levels of on-arrival support for refugees who are accepted. The United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are offered as examples.

In the United States, source countries for refugee arrivals in 2004 were Haiti, China, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela (UNHCR 2005). Only limited on-arrival resettlement services are available, with policy placing emphasis on the refugees' responsibility to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible (United States Department of State, Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services 2000, p. 2).

In Canada, source countries for refugee arrivals in 2004 were Colombia, Mexico, China, Sri Lanka and India (UNHCR 2005). Resettlement services, including some English language provision, provided to refugees are limited to their immediate needs in their first year in Canada. Funding for these services is shared by the Canadian government and private sponsoring groups. For many refugees, they retain only the limited rights (to work and study) afforded to protected persons for several years. Family reunion, which can play an important role in settlement, is available only to permanent residents. Processing these claims can be prolonged, sometimes for years (Canadian Council for Refugees 2002, pp.5-11).

In the United Kingdom, source countries for refugee arrivals in 2004 were Iran, Somalia, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and China (UNHCR 2005). In contrast to Australia, where off-shore refugee quotas are set, refugees are granted asylum in the United Kingdom after they have arrived by submitting an application to the Home Office. For example, Hannah writes (2000, p.264), that 32, 500 applications for asylum were lodged in 1997, 50% of which came from people already living in the United Kingdom. The difference in the selection process clearly has implications for deciding who is selected, and what settlement services can realistically be offered. It would appear that many refugees accepted in the United Kingdom (unlike many others) have the skills and resources to make their way out of their home country before they are officially accepted as refugees. Their dispersal through the population also makes services for refugees difficult to organize.

The literature seems to indicate that Australia has developed a well-structured and comprehensive settlement program for all new arrivals. This settlement program encompasses

assistance with accommodation, early health assessment and intervention, assistance with enrolling children into schools and into intensive English classes for school-age children, income support, interpreter services, and, as mentioned earlier, 510 hours of English language tuition for adults (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2002, pp. 24-25). By contrast, the resettlement programs for migrants and refugees coming to the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are much less structured and much less comprehensive. Most importantly, they do not include substantial, funded English language teaching programs for the many adult migrants and refugees of language background other than English. Without this support, all migrants, and refugees in particular, who arrive in their new country with limited proficiency in English, face the prospect of employment in only the most unskilled occupations, as noted in Hannah 2000, pp.267- 268:

A recent study in the inner London burroughs identified the lack of proficiency in English as the main barrier to education, training and employment identified by refugees (Africa Education Trust 1998), a finding consistent with a number of other studies (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 1996, Iredale et al 1996).

As formal, on-arrival language education of adult refugees is, on the face of it, an issue of greatest concern in Australia, and because the present study will focus on the needs of adult Sudanese refugees, the later sections of this review will refer mostly to the research and resource development efforts of researchers on refugee issues, professionals employed by the Services for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors NSW and their Victorian counterpart, and adult English language, literacy and numeracy educators working with refugee groups in this country.

Recent research on the refugee experience

Research influences policy, and policy influences action at national and international levels. As the policy contexts of different industrialised countries give shape to their refugee intake, and to support services and interventions designed to assist people living in war zones, it is important to include here a discussion of recent research which challenges the premises, and hence the actions that may follow earlier research. The literature about the importance of culture in determining policy, and about refugees' responses to their experience is especially relevant to teachers of adult refugees. These issues are considered in the discussion below.

Key differences between refugees and other migrants

As described in Pittaway (2003, pp.5-6), Refugees are fleeing their country for fear of their lives, and are offered resettlement in a new country which may be completely different from their home country in terms of language, culture, economy, geography and climate. Some refugees may know very little about their country of settlement prior to arrival. They may not even know where they will end up. Migrants freely choose to come to a new country, basing their decision on at least some information. Refugees are further distinguished from other migrants in that they rarely have a chance to prepare for their departure by packing their belongings, setting their affairs in order, or saying goodbye to loved ones. Prior to resettlement in a new country, many refugees may also experience harsh conditions in camps, sometimes for years, in neighbouring countries with few resources to spare.

Being tortured or witnessing other people being tortured, both considered to be traumatic events, are also more likely experiences of refugees than of migrants. Experiences of armed conflict or other circumstances associated with war (for example the death or disappearance of family members and friends) again, more likely experiences for refugees than for migrants, are also considered to be traumatic. Fernandes and Dimech (2003, p.5) make the point that human rights organizations have estimated that there are at least 130 countries in which individuals or families are detained then tortured in prisons, police stations or other locations. These organizations also estimate that between 5% and 35% of the refugees from these countries have been tortured and that at least 90% may have seen the effects of torture. According to Hannah (Hannah 2000, p.266),

Refugees often experience physical and psychological problems emanating from the factors which prompted their flight (intimidation and torture), the circumstances of their flight (hazardous journeys) and the conditions they encounter in their host country. In some cases, the pre-arrival experience will have been so traumatic that work or study is out of the question and a lengthy period of rehabilitation involving medical care and counseling may be necessary. All new arrivals will require a period of time in which to re-orientate to the new society and culture and 'grieve' for the pre-refugee life which has been left behind, perhaps forever.

Refugees and the changing nature of warfare

The nature of warfare has changed dramatically since World War II. As described by Pittaway (2003, p.6) and Newman (2005, pp.3-4), in addition to battles between opposing armies, armed conflicts have taken place increasingly among civilians. Major refugee movements in recent years have resulted from long-term, low-intensity conflicts arising from ethnic, tribal or religious differences, with violence erupting in villages and suburban streets.

Indeed, in modern conflicts, the elimination of civilians is often a primary military objective. Newman writes that 'prior to the turn of the 20th century, civilian fatalities constituted 5% of total deaths as a result of conflict, compared to current conflicts in which 90% of fatalities are non-combatants' (Newman 2005, p.4). Also according to Newman (2005, p.3) 'the [United States] Committee for Refugees places the number of forced migrants at the end of 2000 above 35.5 million people', and although it is recognized that the statistical data cannot be precise, 'it is nonetheless clear that conflict has the greatest impact on the poorest communities in the poorest countries of the world'.

Western concepts and non-western contexts

There is a growing concern in the literature (Eyber, 2002, Newman, 2005) that models of intervention by western countries (countries of western Europe and North America) offering assistance to people in areas of conflict, or to refugees from these areas, may not sufficiently take into account the cultural contexts of the recipients of this assistance. By applying western concepts of childhood, adulthood, community and family, aid agencies may inadvertently exclude those most in need; and that by applying a western understanding of trauma, and ways of dealing with responses to trauma to all individuals and populations, they may be offering culturally insensitive or, at worst, meaningless solutions for some people who are trying to cope with the experience of war and forced migration. These issues raised in the literature are particularly relevant to teachers, who also need to be aware of the dangers of limiting their understanding of their refugee students to what may amount to stereotypical assumptions about refugees' experiences and their responses to them. A discussion of conflicting notions of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, community and family, and the effects of trauma follows, drawing mostly from Newman (2005) and Eyber (2002).

Childhood, adolescence and adulthood

In Newman's study (2005), 'child' refers to individuals who have not reached puberty, while 'young people' refers to adolescents in transition from puberty to physiological maturity and to individuals up to their early twenties. He writes that '[i]n general, the international community functions according to age-based definitions of children and adults that correspond to western understandings of children and child development (2005, p.10). Since the industrial revolution in Europe, Newman argues, childhood in the affluent western world has been constructed by psychologists, educators, and others working child-related disciplines as a time in which individuals are brought up by a nurturing family in safe environments such as the home and the school. It is a time characterized by leisure and learning, relatively free of the burdens of economic or social responsibility. This construction is consistent with viewing young people as vulnerable and incompetent especially in times of war.

Social scientists, on the other hand, 'hold that categories such as childhood and adolescence are socially, rather than biologically determined. ... [They] are seen as diverse and malleable constructs, reacting as much to social, cultural, economic and political context as to biological sequences' (Newman 2005, p.10). Different societies have different ideas about what responsibilities are appropriate for children and adults, and different ideas about what adulthood is and how to attain it. Factors such as gender, physical maturity, marital status, sexual activity,

peer group seniority, position in the family, class and employment are common ways of defining the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood (Newman 2005, p.11). Newman goes on to illustrate this point noting that in many cultures girls become adults at puberty, when they are expected to marry, bear children and take on responsibilities associated with running a household. In many African societies (and others), children become adults after initiation rituals. In some places, those who attend school are considered children while people of the same age who work instead of going to school are considered adults. In all of these instances, there is no concept of a leisurely adolescence. Children living in poverty quickly assume the responsibilities associated with adulthood. They often bear major responsibilities for contributing to the family by earning income or caring for family members.

As noted above, episodes of conflict in recent years have had the greatest impact on some of the poorest communities in the poorest countries of the world. It is the many young people in these communities, Newman claims (2000, p.7), who are likely to experience rights violations and confront severe challenges to their personal safety.

Youth and adolescents are more likely than younger children to be recruited into military service and engage in armed combat, are particularly vulnerable to economic exploitation, and are less likely to receive education and health care during emergencies than young children.

Newman, however, challenges the portrayal of young people in these situations as vulnerable, passive, helpless victims. Instead, he prefers to portray these young people as active agents with valuable insights into their own problems, and with skills and capacities for solving them. To support his position, he refers to the growing body of literature which suggests 'that even amidst tremendous hardship, young people may be remarkably capable of managing hazards and coping with misfortune' (Newman 2005, p.23).

The above considerations to do with notions of childhood, adolescence and adulthood are of immediate relevance to an understanding of how young adults and adults now coming to Australia as refugees from Sudan may respond to their new educational environment. They are also relevant to framing lines of enquiry for gathering information from teachers, especially as teachers may have an understanding of youth (what matters to them, what they are interested in, what their responsibilities are) that is at odds with the experience of the learners in their class.

Community and family in times of conflict

Although there is a common perception that family and community are safe havens for children and youth, Newman refers to recent research which indicates that this may not necessarily be true in times of conflict. In the kind of fighting that is characteristic of the late 20th century, communities are often pitted against each other. Newman cites the example of the sexual exploitation of adolescent girls in Uganda by soldiers, made possible by men within their own communities. The men chose girls strategically, organizing the abuse of those girls against whose male relatives they held grudges. In that way, the men were able to use the girls to humiliate and terrorise their own personal enemies while protecting themselves from immediate harm (2005, p.19).

In times of conflict the well-being and protection of all family members is not necessarily a family's first priority. Newton notes that it is not uncommon for families in distress to single out older children as dispensable through abandonment, sale or militarization (2005, 20). Even after the hostilities have subsided, intergenerational tensions deriving from struggles for authority may continue to corrode relations within the family. For example, on returning home, 'boy' soldiers may no longer see themselves as children, yet that is their status from their parents' or guardians' perspective. The frustration resulting from this mismatch of perception may find expression in the boys' threatened or actual physical violence against their elders.

Family reunions may see the (usually male) head of the family resume authority, displacing the person who took on that responsibility in his absence. Heads of families may try to cope with social upheaval of war by imposing iron-fisted authority over their children for fear of losing influence over them as the family moves on into the future (Newton 2005, p 21).

It is likely that refugees entering Australia have had experience of similar community breakdown, and have undergone similar disruptions to their families. In addition to dealing with the loss of family members during conflict or flight, they may also be in the process of renegotiating their relationships and responsibilities within their families while also trying to cope with resettlement in a new country. Many may be trying to provide financial support to relatives still in their home country. Akuei (2004, p.3), Pittaway (2004, p.31) and Cassity and Gow (2005, p. 52) all make special note of the moral obligation that refugees from southern Sudan feel towards the family members they left behind. That moral obligation is bound up with the notion that maintenance of kinship ties and ethnic belonging are central to well-being and concept of self. The need to support and maintain links with family members still in Sudan may create additional financial burdens for refugee families struggling to make ends meet. It may also have implications for adult family members making decisions about the priority of English language learning over earning income.

Experiencing and recovering from traumatic experiences

The emerging debate presenting opposing views on how war affects its survivors, and consequently, on what are the best ways to help them, is crucial for international agencies charged with implementing what are hopefully helpful programs in war-affected areas programs. Because an understanding of the debate is also crucial to framing the present study, it is described in some detail, referring mainly to Eyber (2002).

Different cultures have responded differently to the matter of reincorporating armed forces into their peace-time communities, and in some cultures it is still a matter for spiritual or religious leaders. Purification rituals conducted by these leaders for returning soldiers in Angola, Mozambique and Northern American communities are cited as some non-western ways of assisting the communal healing process (Eyber 2002, pp.2-3).

The development of psychology and other disciplines related to mental health in western countries has progressed in the context of a growing concern to address the psychological damage caused by the major conflicts of the 20th century, namely the two World Wars, and more recently, the Vietnam War. Large scale studies of Vietnam veterans have revealed similarities in their symptoms and behaviours relating to their wartime experience. As many returned soldiers reported similar symptoms, psychologists could describe what they saw as a new psychiatric disorder, post traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms were:

- the re-experiencing of the distressing event
- the avoidance of things that reminded one of the event, and
- increased physical problems such as not being able to concentrate.

If these symptoms affected the person to the extent that they were no longer able to function in social, vocational or other important areas of their life, and if they persisted for more than one month, a person could be diagnosed as having post traumatic stress disorder. (Eyber 2002, p.7).

Strategies for dealing with these symptoms have been developed, with a central focus on sufferers communicating (through telling, drawing or acting out) details about specific distressing events in the past. In recent years the term 'post traumatic stress disorder' has been applied to the effects of all kinds of distressing events, and mental health practitioners around the world now use it as though it is a universal concept that can be applied to anyone, regardless of their

age or gender, or their cultural, ethnic or religious background. While the concept of post traumatic stress disorder is central to understanding the effects of armed conflict, the concepts of trauma and traumatising are broader than post traumatic stress disorder, and can include symptoms such as depression, anxiety, addiction, relationship problems, aggressive disorders and even schizophrenia (Eyber 2002; Ingleby 2005).

According to Eyber (2002, pp.9-10), the concept of trauma has come under criticism in the past few years. The key criticisms relevant to this study are mentioned not to discredit the work done by organizations which follow the prevailing paradigm, but to suggest caution in advocating a particular theoretical position in this study, and to draw attention to other ways of thinking. The key criticisms are summarized from Eyber (2002) below:

Trauma is a western concept that cannot be applied to non-western populations

Trauma and post traumatic stress disorder, arising out of a western diagnostic system, may be inappropriate to different cultural contexts, where people not only have different diagnostic systems, but also different understandings of distressing events and how to survive them. At times, western models of trauma may fit poorly with local cosmologies, norms, and values.

Interventions that aim to alleviate trauma are often inappropriate and ineffective

If the conceptualisation of the problem ignores cultural difference, it is likely that the treatment will also ignore cultural difference. Western treatment practices for trauma using a uniform program of interventions, regardless of the cultural context of the subjects, may be ineffective, or worse, destructive of peoples' confidence in their own capacity for recovery. For example, the practice of 'working through' a trauma may not be successful for people whose culture places a high value on stoicism and 'active forgetting'.

Local resources and systems are ignored

Communities have resources for coping with distress. Greater recognition needs to be given to the important role of local healing practices and coping strategies as these are central to the many ways in which people rebuild their lives after events of armed conflict.

The resilience/vulnerability debate

The presentation of people and communities as traumatized implies that they are dysfunctional, and that they are passive victims needing the assistance of western-trained experts. Claims of vast numbers of 'traumatized' people and generational transmission of trauma exaggerate the percentage of people who may be unable to cope with their distressing experiences.

Studies of people in countries where almost everyone has been exposed to distressing incidents (Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia) indicate that they are remarkably resilient. For example, in a survey of 3,000 people in Sierra Leone, whose population has suffered ten years of civil war, 59% described themselves as 'generally a happy person'. This finding is similar to figures for North America and Europe, where there was no armed conflict (Eyber 2002, p.11).

Similarly, in a study by Ingleby (2005, p.10) of 824 asylum seekers from Kosovo in Great Britain, almost all respondents mentioned work, schooling, family reunification as major concerns. Very few seemed bothered by psychological symptoms.

Eyber (2002, p.10), like Ingleby focuses on 'psychosocial' factors, that is, on a combination of psychological and social factors that contribute towards the well-being of an individual.

Some of the commonly described factors that may play a role in determining a person's well-being are:

- the social environment, which involves the emotional, moral and practical support from family, friends neighbours
- individual factors such as age, personality, previous experiences, coping strategies
- ideological factors such as political commitment, religious faith
- cultural resources and collective coping strategies such as ceremonies and rituals.

Resilience implies strength, and capacity to overcome hardship. However, it does not mean there is no distress and no need for help. In Eyber's words,

Placing the emphasis on resilience does not mean that people who are resilient do not experience symptoms of distress. It does, however, take as a starting point people's abilities and capacities to deal with their experiences, and necessitates - at the very least- providing assistance that they themselves need and want (Eyber 2002, p.12).

The research cited above appears to make a strong case for re-examining the presumptions underlying the notion of trauma and its remedies. However, Ingleby (2005) suggests that the emphasis on post traumatic stress disorder can only be understood if we consider the social consequences of such a diagnosis: a diagnosis of post traumatic stress disorder helps to make things happen. He goes on to make the argument that if we see post traumatic stress disorder as an accepted 'package' of symptoms and accepted interventions in much the same way that anorexia or attention deficit hyperactive disorder are 'packages' of symptom and interventions, the symptoms experienced by their sufferers have a chance of being recognized as serious and genuine, and hence have a chance of being addressed.

The concept of trauma and post traumatic stress disorder in their more inclusive forms (where there are symptoms which go beyond those covered by the strict definition of post traumatic stress disorder as listed above) underpin the work of the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, Sydney, and the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc, Melbourne. They appear central to the dominant paradigm for understanding and assisting refugees in Australia.

According to Eyber, (2002), there is growing research to indicate that the most effective ways to help may be to provide practical assistance to do with the many immediate concerns of making a new life in a new country, and to enlist the services of spiritual leaders from the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the people affected by the experience of war.

Some strategies for dealing with the effects of war arising from cultural and anthropological studies

As refugees begin to concentrate their numbers in specific towns and suburbs in their new country, it may be appropriate to mention local resources and strategies that appear to have been useful in dealing with the effects of war, offered in Eyber (2002, p.15). These resources and strategies may be relevant to the present study of Sudanese refugees in Australia. They are:

Practical advice

One of the most common ways in which people around the world respond when they are distressed is to turn to those around them for practical advice. Taylor and Stanovic's study of the regional settlement of refugee groups in Victoria (2005) appears to support this claim. The study aimed to explore settlement issues for refugees (one Iraqi group and two Sudanese groups) in different regional locations, namely Shepparton, Colac, and Warrnambool. Dealing with the psychological effects of their experiences prior to arrival in Australia did not appear to emerge explicitly as an important issue for any of the groups or individuals in this study. Instead, the most urgent issues were to do with practical matters in the present, such as finding suitable

accommodation, the need for interpreters, and access to transport. The main source of anxiety reported by all three groups was the safety of family members left behind, and the difficulty of meeting their own day to day living costs with enough left over to send to these family members. However, the non-mention of the effects of their war experiences on these refugees may be due to the fact that they were not a central concern of Taylor and Stanovic's study.

In relation to the present study, adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers play a key role in providing information and advice regarding Australian systems and culture, not as occasional after-class counselling for individuals, but as integral components of the teaching program. Questions in the teacher survey and in the follow-up interviews with teachers in the present study seek to explore the extent to which teachers are explicitly providing this kind of information to their refugee learners.

Indigenous healers or spiritual leaders

Eyber cites several examples of studies which confirm the important role that healers and spiritual leaders play in the well-being of people affected by experiences of war. An example from recent research in Australia also supports this point. In their study, Taylor and Stanovic (2005, p. 33) note that among the three main aspects of settlement that Sudanese settlers in Colac reported as working well for them, they included being able to have their own language (Nuer) church service. In the present study, consultations with Sudanese community leaders and with representatives from the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors will include a discussion on the strategies that Sudanese refugees are using successfully to deal with the distresses of their wartime experiences.

Patterns of settlement of Sudanese refugees in Australia 2003 to 2005

Sudanese refugees have been entering Australia in small numbers under the humanitarian migration program since the early 1980s (Taylor and Stanovic 2005, p.10). The majority have entered Australia as permanent residents, so they do not have the additional burden of uncertainty about their future that entrants on Temporary Protection Visas often experience. Their numbers have increased significantly from 2003, with the majority settling in Victoria, NSW and Western Australia. At NCVER's request, the scope of this study is confined to NSW and Western Australia, as Victoria has been selected for inclusion in a number of other related studies. Because this project is focused on the learning needs of adult Sudanese refugees, the researchers are interested in arrivals of people over 15 years, as this is the age which marks the end of compulsory school education in most states. The number of Sudanese refugees over the age of 15 arriving in Australia by state in the period 2003 to 2005 is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Adult Sudanese settlement in Australia (by state) 2003 to 2005

State	2003	2004	2005
Victoria	898	1,509	1,988
New South Wales	739	1,287	1,392
Western Australia	232	496	777
Queensland	439	604	707
South Australia	186	361	404
Tasmania	147	171	172
Northern Territory	56	52	67
Australian Capital Territory	14	50	65
Total	2,711	4,530	5,572

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

The total number of Sudanese refugees arriving in Australia between 2003 and 2005 was 10,063. For the purposes of this project, it is also relevant to examine the composition of the Sudanese refugee population in Australia in terms of age and gender. The main points are presented below.

Age distribution nationally

- Approximately 40% (n=4,013) of Sudanese refugee arrivals were children of compulsory school age or below.
- The great majority of adult Sudanese refugee arrivals were of working age. The age category with the highest number of arrivals was 25-34 (n=2,148), followed by the 18-24 year olds (n=1,790) and the 35-44 year olds (n=1,127).
- The top three adult age categories nationally were reflected in most states, with numbers concentrating in the top two categories.

Gender distribution nationally

- Male arrivals of Sudanese refugees exceeded female arrivals in all age categories.

- The difference in male to female numbers was greatest among children of compulsory school age or below; and in the 18-25 year old category. There were approximately 300 more males in both of these categories.
- There were approximately 200 more males than females in both the 16-17 year old and the 35-44 year old categories.
- There were approximately 100 more males than females in the 25-34 year old age category.

To enable the researchers to make some predictions about the age and gender of adult Sudanese refugee learners entering English language, literacy and numeracy programs in the states with the largest intake of these refugees, figures for Victoria, NSW and Western Australia are provided in table 4 below. The age ranges are confined to those falling between the ages of 16 and 44, as these represent the majority of the target population.

Table 4: Adult Sudanese refugee arrivals in Victoria, NSW and Western Australia by age category and gender

State	16-17 years		18-24 years		25-34 years		35-44 years	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Victoria	115	66	342	246	356	374	260	154
NSW	74	39	220	172	301	254	180	116
WA	55	27	140	90	123	114	80	60
Total	244	132	702	508	780	742	520	320
Total per age category	376		1210		1522		840	

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

From the table above, age and gender criteria alone would suggest that in NSW and Western Australia there would be a large number of adult Sudanese learners presenting for English language, literacy and numeracy tuition in both the 18-24 and 25-34 age categories; and that men students would outnumber the women students in all four age categories. Other factors such as individual health, and family responsibilities (for example, employment or caring for children below school age) could also influence the gender balance of the target learner group.

Given the geographical diversity of NSW and Western Australia, and the settlement patterns of Sudanese refugees within them, the data generated from these two states should provide sufficiently rich samples to apply to teachers in other states. It is anticipated that much of the advice relevant to teaching Sudanese refugees in the targeted states will also be relevant to the teaching of refugees from other countries and backgrounds.

In addition to the distribution of Sudanese refugees by state, the patterns of learner initial settlement in NSW and Western Australia in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas may be significant in revealing important differences in resources, support, and learning opportunities available to Sudanese learners in different places. Taylor and Stanovic, (2005) for example, refer to particular barriers to settlement for refugees in regional centres. They include refugees' difficulties in finding affordable housing; limited employment opportunities (both in kinds of work and continuity of employment); difficulties for employed refugees in accessing English classes or other programs of further study; and provision of English classes (particularly for the Sudanese women in these locations) which do not take into account their lack of education in their first languages.

Tables 5 and 6 below show where most Sudanese refugees aged over 16 years, arriving between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2005, settled initially in NSW and Western Australia. In order to show where this population is concentrated, figures are provided only for locations indicating ten or more adult settlers. Although some people may have moved to other locations within this time, the figures may still be valid indications of current settlement trends. The data in tables 5 and 6 were provided by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

Table 5: Patterns of adult Sudanese settlement in NSW 2003 -2005

Location	Number of adult Sudanese settlers
Blacktown	611
Auburn	303
Holroyd	237
Canterbury	140
Parramatta	134
Newcastle	126
Liverpool	119
Fairfield	80
Penrith	65
Coffs Harbour	41
Bankstown	30
Maitland	20
Wollongong	19
Wagga Wagga	15
Hurstville	13
Lismore	13
Sutherland Shire	12
Lake Macquarie	11
Sub-total	1989
Other locations	76

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

Table 6: Patterns of Sudanese settlement in Western Australia 2003-2005

Location	Number of settlers
Stirling	614
Wanneroo	99
Canning	96
Victoria Park	11
Vincent	11
Joondalup	10
Mandurah	10
Subtotal	952
Other locations	29

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

In NSW, by far the greatest numbers of Sudanese adults were initially located in metropolitan suburbs within a thirty kilometre radius of the Sydney CBD, favouring western and south western suburbs (Blacktown, Auburn, Holroyd, Parramatta, Canterbury, Liverpool, Bankstown, Hurstville and Fairfield). These are generally suburbs with many people from low socio-economic backgrounds. They also have a high number of migrants from many countries and cultures. Regional settlement is concentrated in coastal towns such as Newcastle, Maitland, Coffs Harbour and Lismore to the north of Sydney, and Wollongong to the south. The only significant settlement location in inland NSW is Wagga Wagga.

In Western Australia, by far the greatest numbers of Sudanese adults were initially located in metropolitan suburbs within a twenty kilometre radius of the Perth Central Business District. The highest concentration of these settlers (approximately two thirds) is in the city of Stirling, about 10 kilometres to the north of the city centre. With the exception of Wanneroo, Mandurah

and Joondalup, which lie on the fringes of the metropolitan area, the suburbs in which Sudanese refugees are settling are those which contain a high number of socio-economically disadvantaged groups. That is similar to Sudanese settlers in the Sydney area. In contrast with NSW, there is no regional settlement of Sudanese refugees in Western Australia.

The respondents chosen for this study will be representative of teachers and learners in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in NSW, and the metropolitan area surrounding Perth in Western Australia.

Background to Sudan as a source country in Australia's humanitarian refugee migration program

Geography

Sudan is in the north of Africa, opening to the Red Sea to the north east, and bordered by Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central Africa, Chad, Libya and Egypt. The Nile River and its tributaries dominate the country, with deserts in the north and a more tropical climate in the south. Sudan has a population of approximately 35 million people living in an area of approximately one third the size of Australia. (Hillier 2002; Williams 2003).

Cultural and linguistic diversity

Arabic is the official language of Sudan, and the language of instruction, but there are also over 100 indigenous languages spoken, mostly in southern Sudan. The literature offers different figures for the number of cultural groups in Sudan. Williams (2003, p.2) claims there are 90 cultural groups, while Hillier (2002, p.2) and the Center for Applied Linguistics (2002, p.1) put the figure at 400. The figures would vary depending not only on definitions of what constitutes a cultural group but also on the movement of displaced persons into and out of Sudan, especially in recent years. However, irrespective of the exact number, the fact that the minimum number quoted is 90 suggests the rich cultural diversity of Sudan's people. According to Williams, up to 70% of the total population is Muslim, with their numbers concentrating in the Arabic - speaking northern parts. Southern Sudanese are either Christian or follow indigenous belief systems (2003, p.2). Most of the recent refugee arrivals in Australia from the Sudan are from the south, and many are speakers of Dinka or Nuer. In addition to their own indigenous language, many of these refugees also have a command of Juba Arabic (an Arabic-based Creole spoken in southern Sudan) and some know a little English. Even among groups of learners with patchy or no formal schooling, the linguistic agility of learners is impressive, as noted in Gunn (2003, p.261). Not counting English, in her group of ten learners, all could speak at least two languages, two could speak three languages and two could speak four languages.

The cultural and linguistic diversity of Sudan presents particular problems in finding interpreters to assist refugees settling in metropolitan as well as regional areas. Furthermore, for teachers, it means they cannot assume there is a common language, or sense of identity or solidarity between Sudanese students.

The economy

Although the extraction of crude oil makes a contribution to the wealth of Sudan, its economy is based primarily on small-scale agricultural production which employs approximately 80% of the workforce. The greater part of the agricultural activity takes place in the southern regions. The largest oil fields also lie in the south of the country, and the competition between these two sources of wealth is contributing to the ongoing conflict. Women are responsible for the farming and domestic work while men are responsible for grazing and herding. Cattle are essential as sources of food, and represent an important form of wealth and social status (Hillier 2002, p.3; Williams 2003, p.3).

Recent history giving rise to the refugee crisis in Sudan

Military dictatorships favouring an Islamic-oriented government have dominated national politics in Sudan since its gained independence from British-Egyptian administration in 1956. Since then Sudan has been at war with itself for all but the ten year period from 1972 to 1983, when hostilities between the north and south that had persisted since 1956 again intensified. In 1983, the government introduced Islamic Sharia law, and in response, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army were formed to oppose the implementation of this law to animist and Christian African tribes of the south. The renewed and continual fighting, as described by Malual (2004, p.5) 'has resulted in the deaths of more than two million people, with 4 million people being displaced internally. It has also led to more than two million people fleeing to the neighbouring countries of Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Egypt as refugees'. These figures are also cited in Taylor and Stanovic (2005, p.10). In the war zones, human rights abuses and acts of cruelty have been committed by both sides in the fighting. Children as well as adults have suffered from serious abuse, including enslavement, forced labour, and forced conscription. Children have been used by both government and rebel forces to fight in armed combat (Malual, 2004, p.5; Williams 2003, p.2).

Reports from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2005, indicate that the conflict in Sudan came to an end officially in January 2005 when the government and the southern based Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army signed an agreement leading to the establishment of a Government of National Unity in September 2005. The agreement provided for an autonomous south for a six year period to be followed by a referendum. The agreement also provided for the inclusion of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in a Government of National Unity, inaugurated in July 2005, as well as the inclusion of representatives of the north in the new government of south Sudan which was sworn in October 2005.

However, the National Congress Party representing the Arab-dominated government still controlled power structures at the central level, and the peace agreement did not include other rebel groups. That situation left many local grievances unresolved, and has led to new conflicts, for example the raids on southern towns by Ugandan rebels in September 2005.

In November 2005 reports were received by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre that a crisis in Darfur (West Sudan) was also escalating, and that security in Dafur had deteriorated to the extent that the UN had temporarily withdrawn all non-essential staff.

The continued fighting has undermined the provision of education and health services, particularly in the south, and has seriously affected food production, resulting in widespread food shortages in the south. The ravages of fighting have been exacerbated by drought, and famine has added to the stresses of prolonged and brutal warfare. These are the circumstances underlying the large movements of displaced people not just in and out of Sudan, but in and out of several African countries, often to temporary refugee camps.

Life in African refugee camps

Many Sudanese refugees coming to Australia have experience of sometimes extended stays in refugee camps in countries which share borders with Sudan. Most camps are set in places where the inhabiting population is already facing extreme poverty. One such camp referred to in the literature is the camp at Kakuma, Kenya, the subject of a field trip by Pittaway and Bartolomei (2002). Their report on conditions there may serve as a fairly representative example of life in these camps.

From the video and notes in their report, it appears that while the camps may have offered refugees respite from the fighting, they nonetheless presented a harsh continuation of their struggle for survival. Kakuma camp was located in the north of Kenya, in a remote semi-arid area

where temperatures reach 40 degrees daily and fall only slightly at night. Dust storms were frequent. The shelter available did little to alleviate the heat or dust.

The camp had been run by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees for over ten years. That body had responsibility for running the camp, with the assistance of several non-government organizations, providing food, water and materials for building shelters. Supplies of food and water fluctuated with the generosity of donors, and health care was spread thinly.

At the time of the field trip, the camp had a population of over 84,000 people representing at least 12 nationalities, housed in an area of approximately 25 square kilometres. An influx of 11,000 refugees from Somalia was expected in the near future.

In such conditions, the daily tussle for limited resources often resulted in outbreaks of fighting among different groups within the camp. Frequent fights also erupted between refugees and the Turkana people on whose land the camp was situated. The lack of safety for women and girls in the camp was a matter of major concern, as the incidence of rape and sexual violence was reportedly extremely high, and domestic violence was commonplace. The proportion of men to women in the camp (approximately three times more men than women) exacerbated these kinds of abuse.

Education programs for school age children were common features of camp life, providing some sense of normalcy for the children (as pupils) and adults (as teachers and administrators). In addition to these classes, an outstanding program of vocational education was being run by one of the non-government organizations. This program offered classes in computing, the electrical trades, and other trades such as carpentry, plumbing and tailoring. It also provided some sense of meaningful activity and normalcy for young people and adults. The students were mostly men, but women were encouraged to join (Pittaway and Bartolomei 200). It is not known how many people were able to take advantage of these vocational education opportunities.

Threats to personal security, the eternal waiting for a chance to move on, poor housing, shortage of food and water, and the heightened chances of infection where many people are living in such desperate circumstance all leave their mark. Unfortunately, one of the lasting legacies of camp life is chronic poor health. Hillier (2002, p.8) notes that 'most refugees who have spent years in camps suffer chronic health problems - parasites, malaria, hepatitis, sickle-cell anaemia. They may be taking strong medication which affects their concentration and their attendance may be erratic'.

Education in southern Sudan: recent history

According to the settlement data provided in table 3, many of the adult Sudanese refugees coming to Australia are in the 18 to 34 year age range, so information about education in Sudan, and especially southern Sudan, in recent years may provide some useful insights into their educational background. Hillier writes that 'in the south, because of the war and government neglect, few schools remain open and two generations of southern Sudanese children have not received an education' (2002, p.3).

In general, the literature suggests that after Sudan became independent of British-Egyptian rule in 1956, provision of government funded education at all levels has been chronically under funded. Education effort is focused on primary school education, as there has not traditionally been a strong emphasis on vocational education, adult education or university education. Where schools were established at all, they were more likely to serve the northern areas close to the capital, Khartoum, and to a lesser extent other urban centres, despite the fact that the population was concentrated in the rural south (United States Library of Congress, 1991). Primary schools, which provided the main source of basic education, were poorly resourced. As late as 1996, the Sudanese Ministry of General Education reported that text books, considered an essential tool of

education, were in short supply, with the student to book ratio sometimes as high as three to one. Other instructional equipment such as radio, video players, and computers were non-existent in schools. There was also a shortage of blackboards and chalk (Ministry of General Education, 1996). Reports on primary school class size vary, but figures as high as 46, 57, and 86 are mentioned (Ministry of General Education, 1996).

Another important aspect of education in Sudan is the cultural bias towards the education of boys. Until as recently as 2004, the prevailing cultural norm was that boys could benefit from education, bringing status and wealth to the family. Girls were valued as prospective wives and mothers, with preparation for these roles taking place in the home. Gender equity in education is a very recent policy development in Sudan, but driven more, it would appear, by public health concerns than by an interest in equal opportunities for girls' and women's advancement. The education of girls, according to the Federal Ministry of Education (2004), is regarded as one of the most effective means of combating the spread of HIV/AIDS in Sudan. The report notes, however, that for the period 1990-2001, enrolment figures in primary school (actual figures not available) showed no increase in enrolment by girls (Federal Ministry of Education 2004). In some places, for example in Darfur, in western Sudan, school boys outnumbered school girls by four to one, and of those girls who did attend, many dropped out before completing even four years of primary school' (Oxfam nd). The notion that education is for boys may have some bearing on Sudanese women's access to education, even English language tuition, in Australia. It may be that a resumption of 'normal' life in Australia means that men prefer their wives to stay at home, or that the women themselves prefer to stay at home to take on their 'normal' responsibilities of home-maker and carer, regardless of the social isolation that results for the women. It may help to explain the gender imbalance in English language classes (favouring men) if that is indeed found to be the case in the present study, predicted by the same gender imbalance in the arrival data.

Not surprisingly, the legacy of inadequate school education, coupled with the disruptions to the delivery of educational programs during prolonged civil conflict, is a record of poor adult literacy in Sudan, particularly in the south. Accounts vary as to what the national adult literacy rates are (and there is no detail about which language was the target of any adult literacy initiative (presumably Arabic); how literacy was assessed; or the size of the adult population sampled), but the United States Library of Congress (1991) claims that by 1990, approximately 30% of Sudanese adults were literate. USAID estimates that 80% of all adults, especially women, are unable to read. Sudan's Ministry of General Education (1996) puts the adult literacy rate at 52.5% for both men and women in 1993/4.

The literature on education in Sudan would suggest that adult refugees from the south of Sudan now in Australia who have grown to adulthood through the war are likely to have had a very patchy education. The women have probably had little or no formal education. Some adults may have learned some English in the refugee camps. Anecdotal evidence from English language teachers interviewed in the NCVET project investigating their professional development (Mackay et al 2006 forthcoming) confirms these outcomes. The teachers reported that many Sudanese adult learners in their classes are presenting with very limited literacy in any language, and very limited English. However, according to Hutchinson (1996, p.284), in southern Sudan, even adults with limited literacy recognize that 'paper' (written language) is a powerful tool.

Furthermore, given their lack of education in Sudan, it may also be fair to say that many of these adult learners would have developed few learning skills that they could apply directly to the learning environment they are entering.

Considerations in teaching adult Sudanese refugees: recent research and implications for English language and literacy teaching

There is substantial recent research documenting successful teacher responses to the particular issues facing adult learners with special needs, defined in McPherson (1997, p. 1) as learners who display one or more of the following characteristics:

- ◆ have no or limited (less than seven years) formal education
- ◆ have no experience of formal learning as adults
- ◆ have disrupted education due to war or other political crises
- ◆ are functionally illiterate in their first language
- ◆ are from non-roman script background
- ◆ are elderly
- ◆ are suffering severe effects of political torture and trauma
- ◆ have cultural backgrounds and educational perspectives significantly different from those of Anglo-Australian culture.

Clearly, southern Sudanese refugees fall into the ‘special needs’ category of learners. Drawing on data gathered from teachers working with Hmong refugees, McPherson suggests a number of successful interventions that may also apply to teaching Sudanese learners. These interventions include course design which focuses strongly on first developing oral language related to events and actions within the learners’ own personal experience; curriculum which relates language to the immediate needs of the learners in accessing community services; the use of in-class bi-lingual support; and a relaxed attitude towards student attendance and towards students taking a break within class time; as far as possible, placing learners with special needs in dedicated classes; minimising class numbers to 10 learners.

There is also a growing body of small studies of adult Sudanese and other African learner groups in English language and literacy classes in Australia. The issues these learners face, and the main implications they present for English language and literacy teachers are presented below. The issues and their implications have been assembled into three main categories:

- previous educational experience
- learners’ movement from a highly oral culture to a highly print-based culture and
- stresses of resettlement and effects of war-related experiences.

These categories are suggested as organizing principles, acknowledging the overlap and strong interrelationship among the issues presented in them. The findings from the literature will serve as starting points for discussions of issues and strategies with respondents in the present study.

Previous educational experience

As mentioned earlier, most adult Sudanese make their first contact with the Australian education system in English language classes; and most have either direct or indirect experience of the

education system in Sudan. With the disintegration of health and education infrastructure in Sudan during the years of internal conflict, it would also appear from the information available that the length of a person's formal education may not be a reliable indicator of its quality, especially considering the lack of teacher training (see table below). Furthermore, many refugees arriving from southern Sudan may count in their schooling the instruction they received in refugee camps, which again may have been provided by untrained teachers with few resources at their disposal.

A contrast of some key aspects of education in southern Sudan (as far as one can make generalizations) and current practice in language classes in Australia may provide some insights into the mismatch between southern Sudanese learners' previous educational experiences and understandings and the educational culture they are entering. For clarity, the relevant information is presented in table 7 below. Unless otherwise specified in the text, sources of information regarding education in Sudan are the Ministry of General Education 1996 and the Federal Ministry of Education 2004. The sources of information regarding the Australian context are the extensive personal experience of the researchers in the adult English language, literacy and numeracy education field in Australia, and authors from the literature. This table summarises some points made about learners' previous educational experience and about learners' movement from a highly oral culture to a highly literate one.

Table 7: Key contrasts between southern Sudanese learners' educational experience and learning in Australia

Key questions	In southern Sudan	In Australia, with special reference to adult English language classes
What are the goals of primary school education?	The teaching of the religious ideas and moral values of the Koran is central to the curriculum.	Schools aim to assist children to grow into independently thinking, knowledgeable citizens. Religious instruction is a minor element of the curriculum.
Is education available to everyone?	No. There are few schools in south Sudan. Universal primary school education remains a goal yet to be achieved. School education for girls lags far behind education for boys. There are compulsory school fees which many parents cannot afford.	Yes
Is education compulsory?	No. In some places there are no schools. If there is a school, children can go to pre-school from the age of 4 to 6. From 6 to 14 years, children go to primary school. Secondary schooling is for three years, so students attending the full school program would leave at 17 years. The strongest focus is on primary school. The age for starting school varies depending on the availability of school, with some reports of people starting school in their early teens (Gunn 2003, p.262).	Yes. Compulsory schooling extends through primary school to the early years of secondary school. Children usually start school at the age of 5 or 6, and they may leave school when they reach 15 or 16 years depending on which state they live in.

Key questions	In southern Sudan	In Australia, with special reference to adult English language classes
How long does an education take?	Most commonly, the 7 years of primary school or less. Retention rates beyond four years of schooling are low, particularly for girls.	Most commonly, 12 years. Many students plan to continue their education even further, in vocational education or at university. Some may not complete their education until they are in the early to mid-twenties.
What is the usual class size?	Reports vary, and numbers vary from place to place, but over 50 pupils per class are common. In some areas, primary school class size is over 100.	Adult English language classes usually have a maximum of 15 students.
Is it essential for teachers to have formal teaching qualifications?	No. In 2005, only about 10% of teachers in southern Sudan had formal teaching qualifications.	Yes All school teachers and teachers of English language and literacy need to have formal teaching qualifications.
What is the role of the teacher?	The teacher is an expert in religious teaching whose role is to impart religious ideas and moral values. Corporal punishment is a standard strategy for keeping discipline. Teaching follows the transmission, or reproductive model (Ballard and Clanchy 1991, p.13).	The teacher is an expert in language teaching, and an authority figure presenting more like a friend. She is the coordinator of learning resources, and is the principal source of assessment. Corporal punishment is not accepted as a strategy for keeping discipline. Teaching follows a mix of the reproductive and analytical models (Ballard and Clanchy 1991, p.13).
What is the role of the learner?	The learner should listen and observe. There is no room for questioning or for an alternative view. There is a strong emphasis on memorization and recitation of religious texts rather than on reading.	Learners are encouraged to communicate with the teacher and other learners. They are expected to actively participate in the learning activities, sometimes in pairs or small groups.
What is the most important teaching resource?	The textbook, which contains the standard curriculum. Availability of the textbook is an issue. Sometimes three pupils have to share one text book.	Usually there is no set textbook. Teachers use many books, videos and other resources for teaching English, including computer-based programs.
How are learners assessed?	There is a standardized exam at the end of Basic Education (primary school) and at the end of Secondary school. It is a test of memory with an emphasis on replication of knowledge. Exam results (products) are evidence of learner progress. (Yates 2003, p. 66)	There may be small tests, but no final exams. Learners are asked to do tasks or assignments which are used to determine their achievement of learning outcomes in the curriculum. Assessment tries to capture skill development (process).
How/why do people learn English?	English is taught as a school subject in primary and secondary school. It is also taught in some refugee camps.	English is the official language, the language of instruction, the workplace and social inclusion. Learning English involves using it in both its spoken and written forms in meaningful learning activities that apply directly to real life use of language outside the classroom.

Key questions	In southern Sudan	In Australia, with special reference to adult English language classes
How important is literacy?	Southern Sudanese cultures place a high value on spoken texts. Speech is used to record and transact the core meanings of the culture (Nicholas and Williams 2003, p.37). The recitation of the Koran is highly prized as a mark of scholarship (Yates 2003, p.65). The Koran is written in classic Arabic, which is different from the Arabic creole used as the language of instruction.	There is a high social value placed on literacy and the power of the written word in English speaking countries. Writing is used to record and transact the core meanings of the culture. Knowledge of spoken English is the basis for learning written English (Nicholas and Williams 2003, p.29).

Ministry of General Education (1996), Federal Ministry of Education (2004), researchers, and authors as cited

Implications for English language and literacy teachers

The most comprehensive discussion of the ways in which prior education shapes Sudanese learners' expectations is found in Yates (2003).

To find a way of respecting the learners' views about teaching and learning while still pursuing their own, Yates (2003, p.72) suggests that teachers could embark on a two-way adjustment. This involves some **accommodation** of their own teaching in the direction of the learners' expectations, and some **re-socialisation** of the learners in the direction of the teachers' expectations. Some strategies and benefits of accommodation and re-socialisation noted by Yates and others (as cited) are presented in tables 8 and 9 below.

Table 8: Strategies for accommodating learners' expectations and the benefits of these strategies

Strategies for accommodating learners' expectations	Benefits
Teacher takes a more authoritarian approach to learner punctuality and attendance, completion and correction of homework, time on task, learner responsibility for bringing writing equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer to learners' idea of teacher's role • Language learning is taken more seriously by learners
Informal, short oral testing (eg of vocabulary items)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer to learners' idea of how to judge own learning progress • Provides indication to teacher of learners' retention
Meaningful repetition/recycling of learned items (also mentioned in Muir, 2003?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replicates a key learning strategy for this population of learners
Making a book or portfolio of language learning (Sangster, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer to learners' idea of the supremacy of the textbook • Develops learning skills • Provides a source of materials for revision and independent learning outside the classroom • Provides a mechanism for learners to measure their progress

Yates (2003) and authors as cited

Table 9: Strategies for re-socialising learners and the benefits of these strategies

Strategies for re-socialisation	Benefits
More teacher-controlled activities moving on to freer activities within the same teaching session (also mentioned in Sangster 2002;)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gradual lessening of learners' reliance on the teacher as the only source of instruction
Introduction of new learning activities such as group work. These require explicit setting up (explicit purpose of the activity, clear instructions, clear idea of outcomes, clear idea of timeframe).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New learning activities more closely aligned to education in the host culture• New learning activities may be designed to encourage learners taking initiative and risks.

Yates (2003) and authors as cited

Learners' movement from a highly oral culture to a highly print-based culture

Closely related to the issues relating to prior education are the issues to do with the relative importance of oral versus written language in the learners' culture. Nicholas and Williams (2003) point out that 'in learning languages in literate societies, children progress from learning a spoken version of a language to a written version' (2003, p.29). They go on to make use of what they have learned about the specific language and language in general when they learn to read and write, and from there on, knowledge and skills in the use of spoken language inform the development of written language and vice versa. This view of orality as being fundamental to literacy centres on an understanding of literacy as meaning making is shared by (Gee 1994, p.55), who goes on to make the point that talking provides practice in articulating, organising and sequencing ideas.

In literate cultures, Nicholas and Williams (2003) argue, the core meanings and texts, as well as core negotiating processes are written. There is a higher value placed on what is written than on what is said. Such cultures often require that something be put in writing before it is regarded as having meaningful status or is regarded as confirmed. Conversely, in 'highly oral' or 'high oracy' cultures, the core meanings and texts as well as the core negotiating processes are oral rather than written. Many African cultures, including the cultures of Sudan, are highly oral, with rich traditions of poetry and story-telling even in Arabic-speaking urban areas (Hutchinson 1996, p.6). Some of the key points to note about language use in highly oral cultures, as presented by Nicholas and Williams (2003, pp.32-33), are:

The emphasis on sharing and continuity.

There are no original compositions in several genres of oral tradition, only performances of existing oral texts such as key myths, religious or belief messages, histories, legal texts and representations of identity.

The mutually supportive roles of speaker and audience.

Oral texts are performed by one person with expected active participation of the audience so that there is a sense of creating the text together. The speaker must provide 'slots' into which support moves can be inserted; and the speaker expects the audience to produce these moves.

The systematic features of oral texts that distinguish them from written texts.

These features include repetition, parallelism, piling and association, tonality, idiophones, digression, imagery, allusion and symbolism. These features are discussed in detail in Nicholas and Williams (2003, pp.39-44).

When learners from highly oral cultures come to learn English in Australia, they are entering a world which reflects the primacy of literacy in the language practices and culture of Australian society, as well as the centrality of literacy in the professional discourse of English language and

literacy teachers. Their learning task is not to transfer to English their language skills from their first language (which is true for learners from other literate cultures) but to learn completely different ways of using language, favouring writing over speaking. In Nicholas and Williams's words, 'the greater the differences between the oral and literate orientations of two language and their users, the more difficult it will be for learners and teachers to see how the learners' knowledge of language in general gained from their first language can be used in learning a second language' (2003, p.33).

Implications for English language and literacy teaching

The main implications for teachers arising from Sudanese learners' shift from a highly oral culture to a highly print-based culture follow, summarizing from Nicholas and Williams (2003).

Different learner assumptions and knowledge should prompt explicit teaching

Nicholas and Williams (2003, p.49) make the point that because learners from highly oral cultures come to their learning of English with different assumptions about language use and interaction in spoken and written English compared to learners from highly literate cultures, teachers need to assist them by making explicit the significance of literacy and its relationship with spoken language in the technologically oriented societies they have moved into.

Differences in assumptions and knowledge may explain Sudanese learners' lack of familiarity with the western concept of time, and with the western concept of pictorial representation (two dimensions on paper representing three dimensions in the real world). Sangster (2002) and Muir (2003?) both report on learner difficulties in these areas.

Teachers' understanding of features of highly oral cultures may shed light on their learners' acquisition of English

The need for separate classes for learners with very limited English literacy

There is an increasing number of Sudanese learners presenting with no familiarity with written English or any system of writing. Gunn (2003) suggests that placement of these learners in classes including learners with more established knowledge of written English places the 'non-literate' learners at a disadvantage. She notes that changes to the curriculum were made to recognize the learning progress of adults learning sound-letter relationships, letter formation and basic writing conventions such as left to right orientation, capitalization and full stops

Stresses of resettlement and effects of war-related experiences

Resettlement: the power-load-margin

Refugee families in Australia experience high levels of unemployment, often live in insecure housing situations, and are over-represented among people on low and fixed incomes. (Francis, 2004). Concern with finding and keeping accommodation and a job, meeting costs of living, and honouring responsibilities to support family members still in danger, as mentioned earlier, may reduce refugee's capacity to learn. The culture shock of being in a new country with unfamiliar systems is also a daily source of stress (Francis 2004). Practical concerns such as lack of childcare and lack of transport are cited in Lamb (2002) as key factors keeping refugee women out of English language classes. Seufert (1999) suggests a useful way of looking at these issues, referring to the 'power-load-margin' formula, where 'power' is the total amount of energy a refugee has, 'load' is the energy used for basic daily survival, and 'margin' is what is left and can be applied to other activities such as learning. Any changes in refugees' lives which improve the margin would seem to be helpful in enhancing learning capacity. Community-building among the refugees from southern Sudan is, according to Gow (2002) an important resettlement strategy. His research on

the Oromo refugees settling in Melbourne indicates that making a home for themselves in Australia was not just an individual effort, but one which called upon the cultural resources of the community. For example, 'public events' such as a birth ritual, or an end of season barbeque for the soccer club, are now used as ways of building their 'Oromo' identity in a new place. Gow highlights the important role that language, music and dance play in building this identity. 'It is becoming part of conventional wisdom of diaspora studies that people can be 'at home' in different places, at different times' (Gow 2002, p.44).

Physical health issues

Hillier (2002), Martinez (1997), Malual (2004) and Francis (2004) all refer to a high incidence of poor health, need for dental care, and sight and hearing impairment among refugee populations. With the exception of Martinez, whose work pre-dates the current influx of refugees from Africa, all the aforementioned writers note the prevalence of these physical health issues for Sudanese refugees.

Psychological issues: negotiating roles within the family

Some of the daily stresses for refugees are also experienced by other migrants, but would seem to be exacerbated, in refugee families, by their limited financial and other resources. Lamb (2002), Seufert (1999) and Newman (2005) all refer to the difficulties arising from the disruptions to traditional family structures and role changes. 'Family' for Sudanese refugees refers not only to immediate family (grandparents, parents and children). It refers also to other groupings of people who share responsibility for each other's well-being and safety, such as guardians and unrelated children, and more distant family members such as aunts, uncles, and cousins. Lamb and Seufert raise the issue of the psychological stresses where women enter the workforce (against their own or their husband's wishes) in order to support the family. The difficulties appear to be most pronounced in families where the husband is unemployed. Seufert and Newman raise the issue of the tensions arising from the fact that children and young people acquire language and adapt to a new culture more quickly than their elders. Their roles as translators and cultural brokers sit uneasily with notions of authority within the family. Newman (2005) and Francis (2004) also raise the issue of the over-protectiveness of parents who fear losing their children through some imagined harm, or of losing their children to the new culture. The parental restriction of their children's contact with others is a common source of family tension. These issues may add to the psychological burden relating to past and present events that adult refugees are carrying.

In their research on young Sudanese refugees in NSW, Cassity and Gow (2005 p.152) found that the whole concept of 'youth' is foreign (as mentioned earlier in reference to work by Eyber, Ingelby) and confuses young Sudanese people and their families. The leisure focused lifestyle of young people in Australia is very different to their prior experiences of labour and interrupted schooling. Tensions occur in families over sharing domestic work, family responsibilities, moral obligations to family still in Africa, and educational responsibilities for young people. Truancy and homelessness are featuring as some young Sudanese refugees' strategies for responding to these pressures. In turn, these behaviours are additional worries for the young peoples' parents or guardians.

Psychological issues: dealing with past experience of torture and trauma

There is no doubt that refugees have survived life-threatening situations and events, and have experienced loss of family, home and country. Some have experienced torture. There is an emotional and psychological toll on people who have gone through these experiences, and while it is difficult to assign with absolute certainty particular symptoms to particular causes, the research suggests some patterns in the behaviours of refugee adults and children that are more prevalent in these populations than in other migrant groups. Francis (2004), Martinez (1997),

Malual (2004) and Seufert (1999) all mention symptoms such as difficulties with concentration, limited retention (memory problems), fatigue, sleep disorders, and frequent absences that can have a direct effect on learning. These symptoms relate to particular feelings identified by Francis (2004), Malual (2004) and Martinez (1997). They are anxiety, sadness and depression, anger, guilt and shame.

Francis suggests that anxiety and fear are common responses when people re-experience traumatic events. Martinez (1997, p.18) and Francis (2004, p.30) cite every-day sounds (sirens, a car backfiring, a plane flying overhead) or actions (shutting a door, turning off the light) or simply a certain date as common triggers for painful memories.

Shame and guilt, according to Francis (2004, p.32) are legacies of exposure to violence. These feelings relate to a person's memories of actions done in order to survive or escape at the cost of others, of not having been able to help others, and of leaving others behind. For many women there may also be memories of sexual violation.

Francis (2004, p.34) provides a useful map of emotional blocks to learning, their symptoms and some strategies that teachers could use to work through them with refugee children. This map, adapted to adults through reference to Martinez (1999), is presented in table 10 below. It is suggested as a starting point for discussion with teachers and other respondents in the present study. Part of that discussion will also involve exploring strategies for dealing with behaviours which may relate to past experience in ways that allow individuals and groups of individuals to build on their strengths, and draw on the resources they have developed as resilient survivors of their past experiences.

Table 10: Emotional blocks to learning and their features, and suggested strategies to address them

Emotional blocks to learning and their features	Strategies
<p>Anxiety poor concentration memory problems restlessness going blank</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe, structured and predictable environment. • Explain changes, rules and expectations. • Prepare learners or explain alarming and strange noises. • Be flexible about learner participation. • Set up a graded approach to unfamiliar activities. • Avoid activities that take a long time or break a long activity into smaller activities. • Recycle lesson content in different ways.
<p>Withdrawal, grief and depressed mood loss of interest anger lack of motivation lack of energy sadness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set achievable goals. • Provide a caring and supportive environment. • Provide for one-to-one discussions. • Provide opportunities for pleasure, play and laughter. • Praise effort. • Include physical activity in learning tasks (eg moving around the classroom).

Emotional bocks to learning and their features	Strategies
<p>Anger low frustration tolerance aggressive behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain limit setting. • Allow 'time out' for the learner. • Discuss anger in one-to-one situation. • Discover what is troubling the learner. • Acknowledge legitimate problems or provocations. • Address causes such as racist or other offensive remarks/behaviour. • Allow for appropriate expression of difficulties for example in games or sporting activities. • Communicate with all learners respectfully by remembering their names and pronouncing them correctly. • Provide attention. • Respect privacy. • Allow for gradual participation. • Be a model of a caring adult who respects the strengths of others.
<p>Guilt and shame withdrawal anger</p>	

Adapted from Francis (2004) and Martinez (1997)

Implications for English language and literacy teaching

In addition to being aware of the emotional state of learners and having appropriate strategies to manage them in the learners' interests as suggested in the table above, the literature reveals several additional implications for English language and literacy teaching linking back to issues to do with experiences of war and resettlement. They are as follows:

Initial resistance to learning English

Martinez (1997, p. 44) suggests that learners, who through no real choice of their own find themselves in an English speaking country, may initially resist learning English as they may fear the loss of their own culture, or see paid employment as a higher priority. All that teachers can do in this situation is to continue to offer a welcoming environment and gradually encourage learner participation.

The need for caution in the selection of classroom content

Martinez (1997, p.45) and Duigan (nd) caution teachers against using material or topics which can result in involuntary recall of past events and very strong emotional responses. Topics best avoided or somehow distanced from the learners in the class (for example by creating fictional people whose lives can be used as language models) include remembering the past, links with families, autobiographical accounts, comparisons between Australia and the learners' home country; news and current affairs pertaining to the situation in the learners' home country, festivals and celebrations in the learners' home country, politics in the learners' home country, and religion. Following their advice, writing topics not recommended would include potentially distressing topics such as 'My hometown is a great place to live'; or 'Black is the best colour to wear'; or 'Using a credit card can be beneficial' as cited in Slikas Barber (2003, pp.282-3).

Martinez suggests that a good strategy for using language relevant to the learner is to focus on events in the learners' present or recent past (in Australia).

A general principle for language teaching content suggests Martinez (1997, p. 47) is for teachers to focus on what the learners have in common rather than on what differentiates them. She refers to the resettlement process itself as a rich field of learning exploration, listing topics such

as housing, food, health, entertainment, transport, facilities and services available in the language centre or the learners' suburbs.

As the arrival of refugees from southern Sudan in significant numbers is a fairly recent phenomenon, it is not surprising that the literature referring to classroom management strategies is fairly general (though helpful), and the actual studies of Sudanese refugee groups are small in number and size. Not a great deal has been revealed to date as to exactly what 'troublesome', possibly trauma-related learner behaviours teachers are encountering; how teachers are handling those behaviours; how teachers are assisting learners to succeed in Australia's culture of learning; and how teachers are maximizing learners' progress in spoken and written English by building on their strengths in the use of oral language. It is anticipated that the present study will contribute to the existing research in those areas.

Towards a framework for advice to teachers

In addition to the research report, the researchers for the present study will prepare advice for adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers to assist them in addressing the specific needs of their Sudanese learners. Recent work done in the field of Australian indigenous education has useful categories which, with some modification, can be used to form a framework for these guidelines. In her recent review of research into training for Indigenous Australians, Miller (2005, p.7) presents the outcomes that Indigenous people seek from training programs. These are grouped under personal outcomes; educational outcomes; and employment outcomes. These groupings are also relevant to Sudanese (and other) learners, but there may be some variation on the specific outcomes and their relative importance for different learners. The present study will gather data on the desired outcomes of language, literacy and numeracy tuition for Sudanese adults.

In Miller's work, the articulation of the desired outcomes of training for Indigenous Australians sets the stage for an examination of the factors which the research has indicated as contributing to the successful achievement of these outcomes. Seven critical factors are identified (2005, pp. 8, 9), and Miller emphasises that all factors need to be present all of the time in every training program. Although for convenience they are presented as a list, which may give the impression of a hierarchy of importance, the intention is that the seven factors form a matrix in which all factors are of equal importance. In reference to Indigenous Australians, these factors are worded in several ways, as presented below:

- ✧ Owned (Community ownership and involvement)
- ✧ Possessing indigenous spirit (Indigenous identities, cultures, knowledge and values)
- ✧ Connected (Working in true partnerships)
- ✧ Adaptable (Flexibility in course design, content and delivery)
- ✧ Skilfully led (Quality staff and committed advocacy)
- ✧ Backed up (Extensive student support services)
- ✧ Resourced (Appropriate funding that allows for sustainability)

These factors may be customised and applied to other learner groups. They provide a useful starting point for framing the proposed guidelines for teachers of Sudanese learners that emerge from the data collected in the present study.

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