



Teaching English to refugee students in the Greek Primary School: Problems and difficulties towards literacy

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Research questions

- What literacy difficulties do refugees face?
- What are the main causes ?
- What factors affect their literacy development?

Aims of the research

This study aims at discovering:

- Refugees' literacy weaknesses
- Causes-factors impeding literacy skills acquisition
- Specific ways of eliminating their deficiencies

Motivation for the research

- Increased number of refugees from Arabic countries in Greece
- 2,643 refugees in preparatory classes in the first year of operation (2016-2017)
- Present curriculum: insufficient
- Lack of trained teachers
- Studies mainly focus on problems-causes
- Gap in research concerning remedies

Literature review

Refugees face problems with:

- English alphabet, reading-writing direction, pronunciation (Ashour, 2017)
- Spelling, punctuation, text organization & structure (Burns & Siegel, 2017)

Reasons for refugees' difficulties:

- Native language rules transfer, limited formal schooling (Alkateeb, 2016)
- Living conditions, low parental support (Ferdoes, 2016)

Methodology

- Grounded theory principles (empirical data-conclusions)
- Inductive approach (from specific to general)
- Mixed methodology (integrating quantitative-qualitative data)

Research tools

- Teachers' questionnaire :includes questions about refugees' problematic areas in English literacy, behaviour, factors affecting their education and solutions to support English language learning (25 responses)
- Interviews: investigate teacher's experience, training in special education matters and opinions about a new syllabus creation (10 responses)
- Students' questionnaire : explores personal issues such as living conditions , parental support, school experience and difficulties in English language learning (13 responses)
- Classroom observation: examines class organization, teacher's preparation/knowledge, methodology/style and students'behaviour (13 students involved)

Data analysis and suggestions

A mixture of :

- Quantitative approach (statistics, figures, tables)
- Qualitative approach (verbal interpretation, reports)

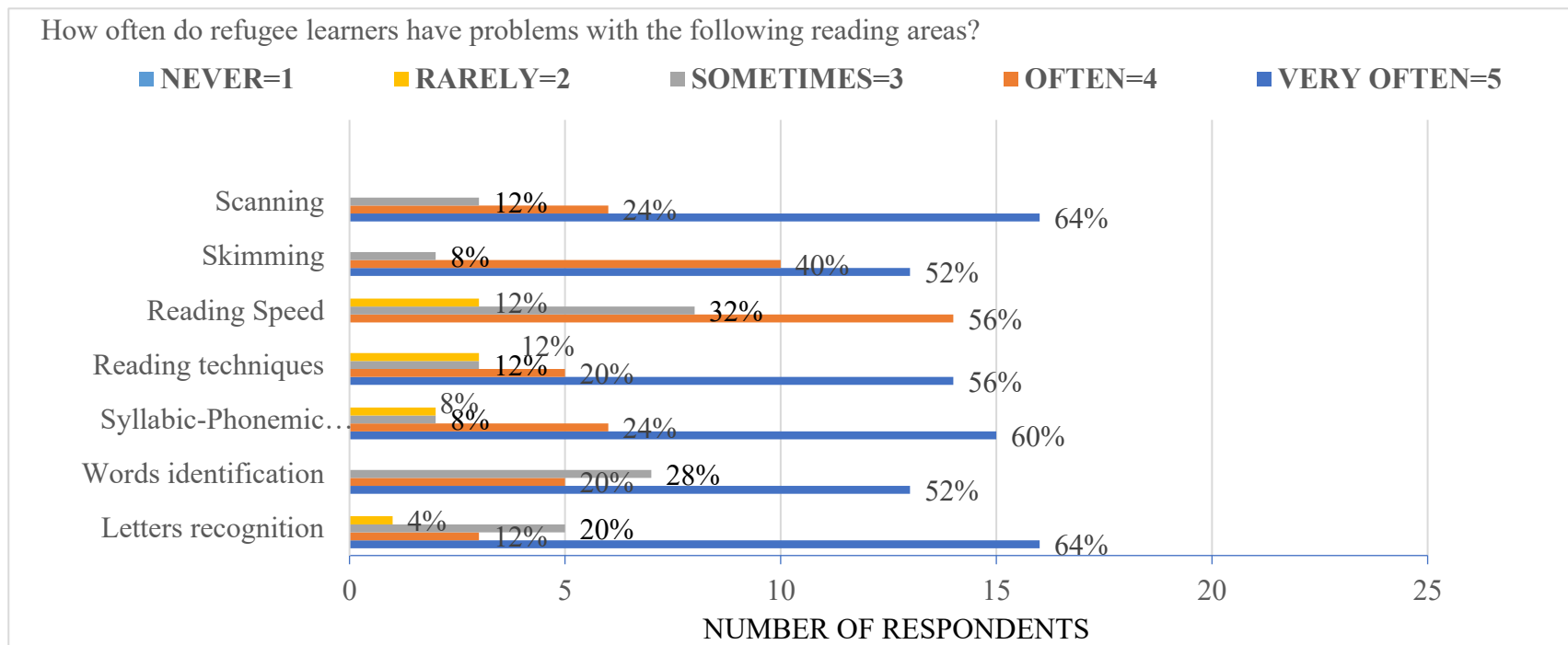
A 10-Week syllabus based on:

- Social constructivism, progressivism, process, communicative approach
- Spiral language items, learner –centred activities

Research findings

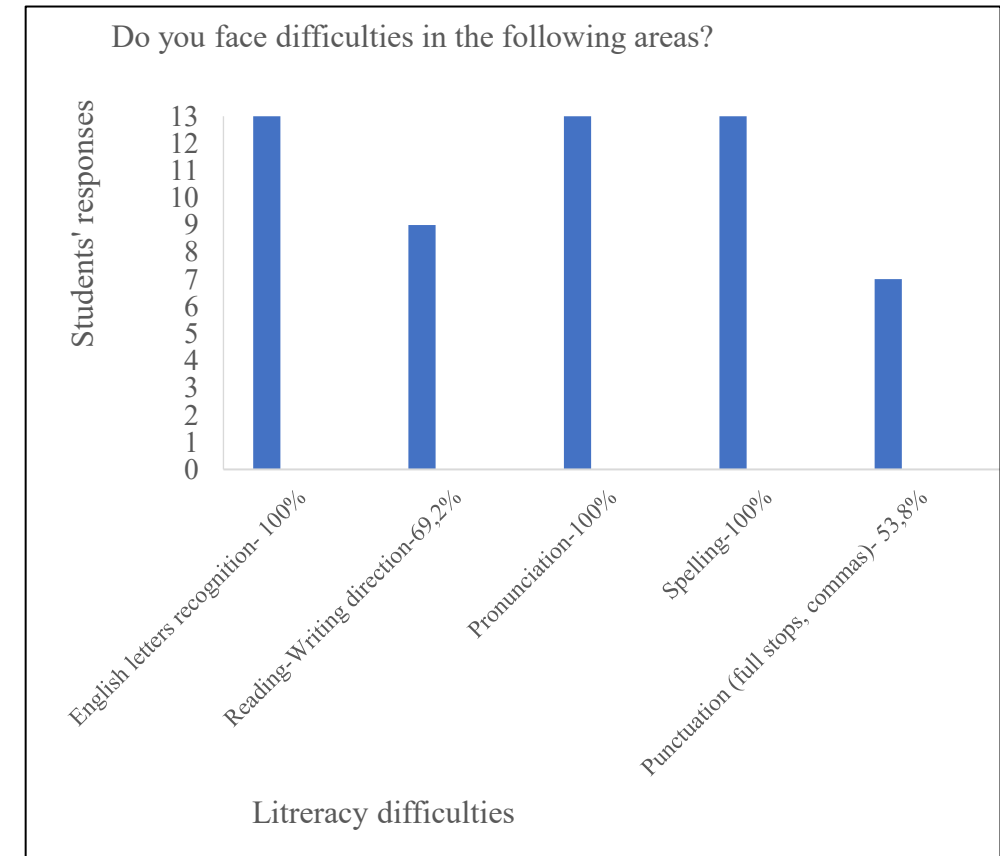
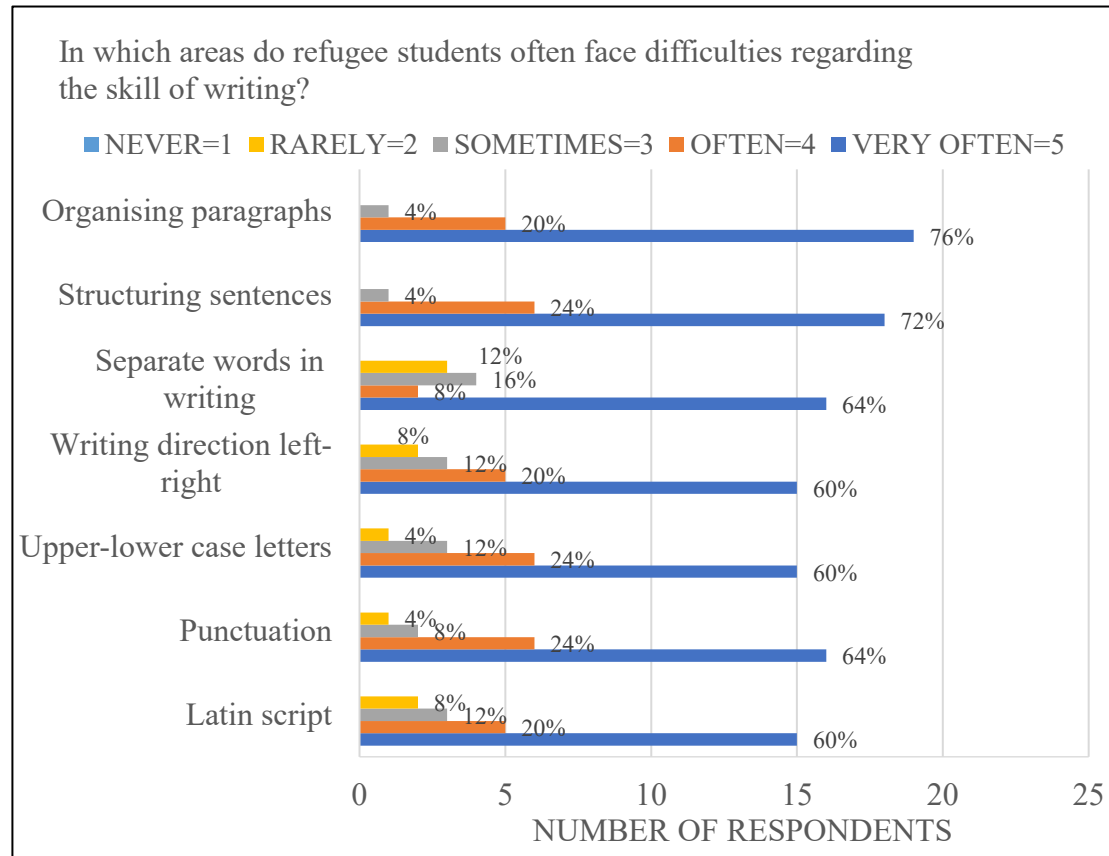
Reading difficulties:

- Letters recognition, words identification, syllabic –phonemic reading
- Reading techniques, speed, skimming, scanning



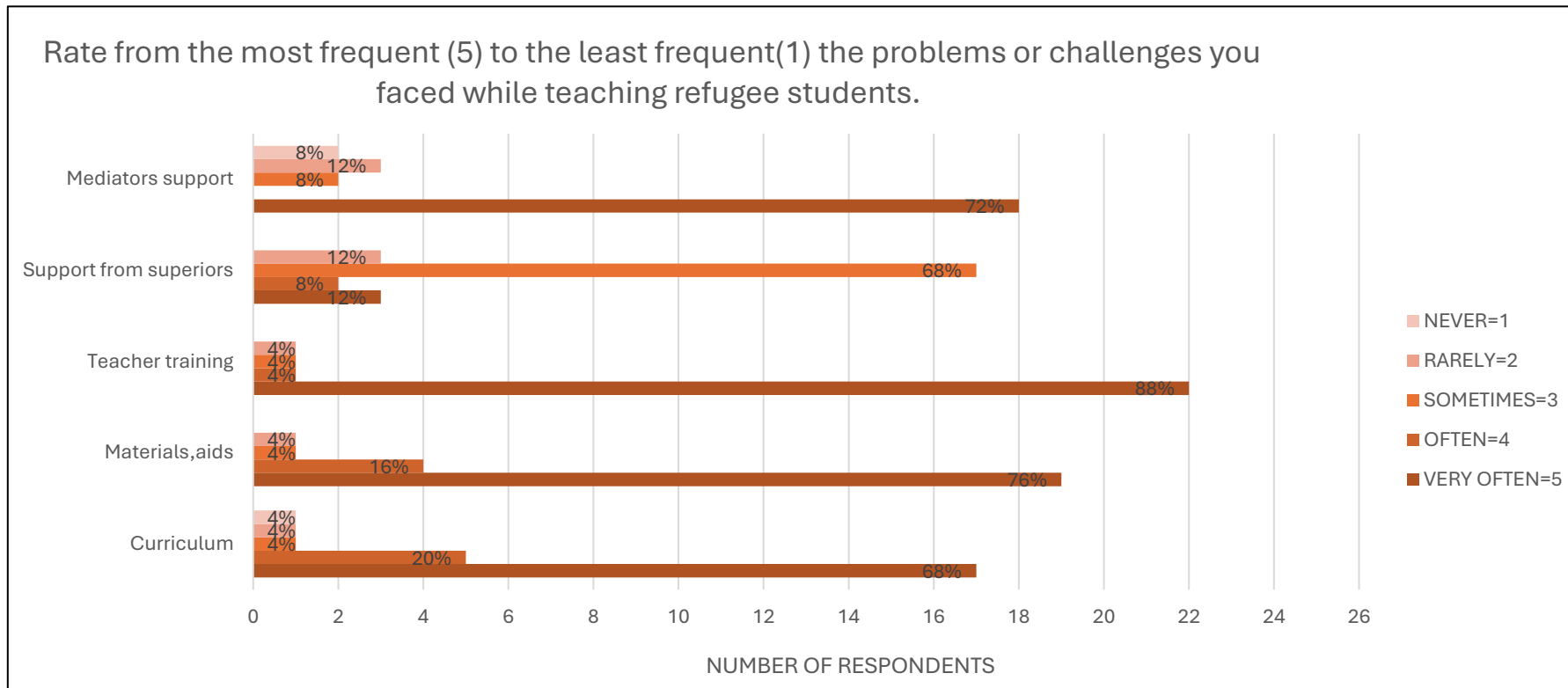
Writing difficulties:

- Latin script, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, direction
- Words separation, sentence structure, paragraph organization



Factors affecting refugees' education:

- Limited school experience, parental support, homework
- Lack of curriculum, mediators, trained teachers
- Cultural differences, discipline problems



Remedies for literacy difficulties (syllabus):

Pre-literacy skills practice, contextualized, cooperative learning

Inclusive, differentiated, computer assisted instruction

A. PRE-LITERACY/CONTEXT/COOPERATION

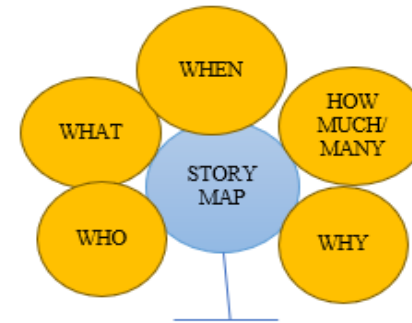
Trace the lines, shapes and letters

////////// 0000000000 ***** Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee

Can you read the pairs? **BA CA DA BE CE DE**

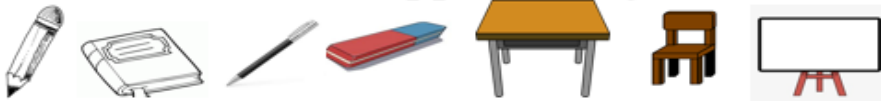
After reading “The Very Hungry Caterpillar.”

Fill in the flower map with your partner



B. DIFFERENTIATION/ICTS

After audio-visual support. Can you write the school objects? (For older students)



Trace the school objects (For younger students)

PENCIL BOOK PEN BOARD ERASER CHAIR



PENYETBOOKS
ENERASEROOL
NOTDESKGPM
CHAIRKLRTKO
IBOARDNMKIO
LMONOTELMI

Implications of the study

This research can serve as:

- A source for refugees' challenges- remedies
- A useful guide for inexperienced teachers
- An impetus for literacy syllabi development
- A motivation for future research

References

Alkateeb, M. (2016). My Mother Tongue Pulls My Leg, Arabic Language Interference in the Acquisition of English Language: An Attempt to Know How. *Journal of Education and Practice*, (7)23, 96-102.

Ashour, H.M (2017). Major Differences between Arabic and English Pronunciation Systems: A Constrastive Analysis Study .*AL-Lisan International Journal for Linguistics & Literacy Studies*, (1)1, 132-150

Burns, A. & Siegel. J. (2017). *International Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills in ELT*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ferdoes, F. (2016). *Influence of Students' Socio-Cultural and Educational Background on English Language Learning*. [Master's Thesis of Brac University]. Retrieved from https://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10361/7999/1326300001_ENH.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

**Thanks for your time and
attention!**

