

The Effect of an Intercultural Communication Model on the Reading Comprehension of Refugee and Underprivileged Learners

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Abstract: This study describes a shifting of paradigm in the literacy education of Syrian refugees and underprivileged Lebanese learners ($n = 72$) in three eighth-grade classes in a public school in Lebanon. The study used a pre/post experimental control-group design to address its research questions. As complement to a human-rights education curriculum framework suggested in 2018, an intercultural communication model named the Third Space Literature Circle (TSLC) is offered, its goal to improve the reading comprehension of underprivileged Syrian and Lebanese learners. An experimental group ($n=49$), received the TSLC model instruction whereas the control group ($n=23$), received the regular reading instruction. Results show that the experimental group outperformed the control group; in particular, some members of the experimental group became more fluent describing their experiences than their control group-counterparts.

Keywords: human-rights education, Literature Circle, literacy, reading comprehension, Third Space.

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication in a language class should improve learners' knowledge and equip them with skills needed in real-life conditions. Language teaching should focus on cultural aspects (Stoin 2020). Intercultural communication is a "communicative process involving individuals from cultures which are sufficiently different to be perceived as such, with certain personal and/or contextual barriers having to be overcome in order to achieve effective communication" (Aneas & Sandín 2009: 2).

This study argues for a transformation of the current literacy education of Syrian refugee and underprivileged Lebanese youth in the public schools in Lebanon. As complement to the Human Rights Education (HRE) curriculum framework suggested by Awada, Diab and Faour (2018), I propose an intercultural communication model named the Third Space Literature Circle (TSLC), intended to improve the reading comprehension of underprivileged learners from Syrian and Lebanese cultures. This model builds on the claim that "classroom teaching as an intercultural communication phenomenon has a rhetorical capacity to alter a behavior, to persuade, or make a change in people's perceptions, beliefs or assumptions" (Delante 2020: 6).

The proposed model combines Gutiérrez' (2008) collective Third Space (TS) concept and Widodo's (2006) Literature Circle (LC) structure in an attempt to investigate the role of socio-critical literacy in improving the reading comprehension of Syrian refugee and underprivileged Lebanese English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners. The Third Space conceptualization in this study builds on a comprehensive synthesis of research and the notion of the *Zone of Proximal Development*, required to reorganize everyday concepts into "scientific" (Vygotsky 1978) or "school-based concepts" (Gutiérrez 2008: 152). Third Space

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draws on “carefully designed” and “ecologically grounded practices” that can transform an educational system from a less into a more equitable one, to “account for development as the transformation of the individual and the individual’s relation to the social environment and the environment itself” (Gutiérrez 2008: 152).

The second component of the TSLC model, the Literature Circle, is used in this study as a proven teaching structure allowing learners to take control of their own learning, assuming roles while discussing a reading selection and engaging in critical thinking in small groups about what is read. This study presents the TSLC model as a generic model that can be used to improve the reading achievement of Syrian refugee and underprivileged Lebanese EFL learners suffering from trauma and characterized by weak literacy.

1.1 Significance of the study

There is no research investigating the effectiveness of the TSLC model, an innovation in the education provided to Syrian refugees and underprivileged Lebanese EFL learners. Another purpose of the study is to contribute to research on human rights education in warring, fragmented countries like Lebanon. The study is intended to develop a new understanding of existing challenges falling within participants’ Zone of Proximal Development. The study corroborates the findings of Gutiérrez (2008), who showed the effectiveness of the Third Space in using imagination and those of Widodo (2016), who reported the effectiveness of the Literature Circle in improving literacy.

This study aims to make a significant normative contribution regarding the issue of education of Syrian refugee learners resulting from the Syria crisis that started in 2011. Given the effectiveness of HRE (Awada, Diab & Faour 2018) in the context of the work of the United Nations (UN) in Lebanon – a country characterized by political instability and civil strife – I take as starting point that the TSLC improves the reading comprehension of Syrian refugee and underprivileged Lebanese learners. Besides improving reading, the model is intended to transform the negative experiences of learners into a point of departure for success.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The huge influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon has increased tremendously since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, reaching 1.2 million refugees in 2019, including 314,482 children under the age of 18. This is out of the 4,837,134 Syrian refugees spread around the world. These refugees have been registered in Lebanon with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Kawa, Hanna & Bizri 2019). Lebanon is collaborating with the UN and other international organizations to promote human-rights values at the personal and societal level (Kawa, Hanna & Bizri 2019; Burrige *et al.* 2013).

The current Lebanese educational system operates in a challenging context that needs to cater for the learning needs of Syrian refugees as well as Lebanese citizens belonging to eighteen different sects (Awada 2019). In 1997, the latest national curriculum was introduced with official textbooks and comprehensive teacher-training campaigns at the national level aiming to unite the various religious and political groups. The new textbooks, adapted in 1997-1998, have not been revised since then. They include some HRE principles, but they are not accompanied by adequate activities (Haugbolle 2005; Shuayb 2015; Awada, Diab & Faour 2018).

1.3 Study rationale

I hoped that the TSLC model would contribute to creating an equitable, HRE-based educational system in Lebanon, improving literacy through facilitating scaffolding among learners of different performance levels, increasing interaction among them. The TSLC model is introduced during the pre- and post-reading stages to introduce a new pedagogical vision

organized around the HRE curriculum framework suggested by Awada, Diab and Faour (2018). The TSLC model relates to the experiences of the Syrian refugee learners to help them identify problems they are facing, use their imagination, come up with a good solution and possibly end the negative experiences they have encountered.

The TSLC model builds on the findings of Gutiérrez (2008), Widodo (2016) and Awada, Ghaith and Mawlawi Diab (2020). Awada, Diab and Faour (2018) confirmed that employing a whole-school approach and a transformative model could result in building a culture of peace and promote HRE values. I reasoned that the TSLC model could be an effective way to bridge the gaps reported in Awada's (2019) study.

2.Literature review

For this study, I adopted the proposition that literacy development involves what Brown *et al.* (1993) call “mutual appropriation”, in which individuals and their sociocultural environments transform. I employed the Third Space, along with Literature Circle activity, to encourage transformative literacy and cognitive development: this to promote a collaboration medium through which learners interact and develop skills (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

The intercultural-communication-based TSLC model shares some of the features of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and the *Zo-ped* (pedagogy of the wise man) of Cole (1985). The present study relates Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development to the HRE crisis-management zone of conflict (Awada 2019) – combining the individual and collective thinking of learners sharing the same refugee experiences of war, death, and displacement. I encouraged teachers to scaffold learners' use of imagination as part of Third Space during and after the Literature Circle activity to relate the assigned reading to their personal life. Teachers participating in the present study prompted learners to identify relevant problems concerning the topics under discussion, analyze aspects and causes, and collect evidence that could help them suggest solutions, after which learners were asked to synthesize what they collected in one statement. Finally, they evaluated the proposed solutions with each other. My hypothesis was that the transformative effects of applying the literacy activities to unresolved tensions would lead to a rich learning environment for traumatized learners from nondominant groups, based on the premise that engagement in everyday class activities would support the cognitive and social development of disadvantaged learners, as suggested by Griffin and Cole (1987). Below, I review the two lines of research, on Third Space and Literature Circle efficacy, to highlight how the TSLC model might contribute to the transformative learning experiences of learners from nondominant groups in a complex, challenging, transnational Lebanese/Syrian educational context.

2.1 Third Space conceptualization

Gutiérrez (2008) proposed the Third Space as a new model for what counts as learning and literacy for US youth, particularly learners from nondominant groups. Invoking Luke's (2003) call for articulating an alternative vision of a more just and democratic educational system, Gutiérrez proposed Third Space as a mechanism to redesign teaching practices for poor and immigrant youth. The suggested practices are based on “business principles of efficiency, accountability, and choice to establish the education agenda”; the agenda endorses the “sameness as fairness” principle that implements the “color blind” (Gutiérrez 2008: 148) practices of English-only, one-size-fits all curricula together with policies driven by high-stakes assessment (Crosland & Gutiérrez 2003, Gutiérrez & Jaramillo 2006).

Third Space is conceptualized as a medium where teachers and students formally and informally, officially and unofficially share spaces of the learning environment to facilitate authentic interaction that should result in more assimilation of knowledge (Gutiérrez 1995). The notion of the Zone of Proximal Development as a productive scaffolding is basic to Third

Space. That said, Cole (1985) writes that the TS addresses a number of Zone of Proximal Development limitations pertaining to 1) reorganizing everyday concepts into school-based or “scientific” concepts, 2) reorganizing everyday functioning through activities significant for the individuals’ development and 3) accounting for development as the transformation of individuals in relation to their social environment. Individual development is observed while orchestrating participation in a rich set of carefully designed and ecologically grounded practices to regulate the occurrence, frequency, and difficulty of problem-solving environments.

Third Space also relies on Goodwin's (1995) concept of inter-subjectivity as a collective practice, needed to foster interaction and engagement that facilitates learning. Collaborative thinking is fundamental to inter-subjectivity. The set of relations prompted through collective collaborative practice make Third Space possible, not only through the collaboration of individuals, but also that of activity systems needed to create interdependent Zones of Proximal Development (Engestrom 1994; Tuomi-Grogn, Engestrom & Young 2003).

Social dreaming is another primary component of Third Space. Social dreaming as conveyed in text, theatre, and classroom language (Freire 1970, 1998) helps learners understand difficult texts, abstract ideas, and scientific notions. It enables teachers to help change learners’ attitudes and perceptions. “Cognitive grammar” is a basis for conversations among learners (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), facilitating the creation of a rich learning ecology through sets of language structures that underlie reading and writing activities depicting emotions and lived personal experiences (Gutiérrez 2007).

2.2 Literature Circles

Several scholars have defined the Literature Circle as a student-centered activity during which learners discuss ideas, share suggestions, and raise questions. The teacher does not prepare questions for learners as the teacher’s role is that of a facilitator who should ensure the smooth running of the Literature Circle activity (Brabham & Villaume 2000). The Literature Circle is an active reading activity enabling learners to discuss, reflect on, and share what they learn from and about the selected texts. In Literature Circles, learners are engaged in conversational meetings (Venegas 2018).

Literature Circles and group discussion activities improve content knowledge and foster acquisition of lexico-grammatical structures. Literature Circles involve role scaffolding, enabling learners to increase their content knowledge and learn language features through engagement in a collaborative learning community in which peers use scaffolding as a Zone of Proximal Development. That enables teachers to act as mere guides throughout the story-circle process (Widodo 2016).

The Literature Circle can be perceived as a scaffolding activity that ensures learners a space for social interaction and engagement with peers of different language proficiency levels. Widodo (2016) maintains that reading is a cognitively multifaceted process that involves interpreting and using meaning communicatively. Teachers should recognize the socio-cognitive features of reading. I constituted Literature Circles in the present study as reading groups where teachers put students who read the same text into small groups in which the students assumed responsibility for their own learning. They discussed the text together along lines suggested by Martínez-Roldán and López-Robertson (2000). I was influenced by Shelton-Strong’s (2012) description (2000: 214) of Literature Circles as “small peer-led discussion groups, involved in reading the same piece of literature, and who come together on a regular programmed basis to share interpretations of what they have read”.

3. Method

3.1 Research questions

The present study addressed the following questions:

1. Does the TSLC model improve reading comprehension for the Syrian refugee and underprivileged EFL learners in public schools?
2. Will participants receiving the TSLC instruction outperform their counterparts in the control group receiving regular reading instruction?

3.2 Participants

Participants ($n = 72$) comprised three eighth-grade classes in a public school that included a substantial number of Syrian refugees. All students in the three classes were sampled. I studied the use of the TSLC model in EFL instruction. Twenty-three participants were Syrian learners, forty-nine Lebanese. The Syrian learners constituted nondominant groups in each of the three classes under study: eight in two of the classes and seven in the third. Age ranged from 13 to 19. All students were native Arabic speakers of low socioeconomic background.

All participants in both groups (TSLC and control) received the same regular reading instruction, but the experimental group also received the TSLC instruction during discussion sessions involving the same reading themes covered by the control group. The control group used warmup questions along with the reading-comprehension questions for the reading lessons², whereas the TSLC group received the TSLC instruction. The study lasted eight weeks. Both groups took an English proficiency test at the beginning of the study. Results yielded similar scores (Table 1), indicating limited English proficiency for all Syrian students sampled. The participating teachers were trained in use of the TSLC model. The investigation concerned the effectiveness of TSLC in building literacy communities of engaged learners in need of learning opportunities to use imagination in discussions with more skilled learners.

3.3 Treatment

Prior to commencement of the study, training in use of TSLC was given to the three participating teachers, who received an in-service workshop offered at Lebanese American University. As a researcher and a teacher trainer, I was an insider for the participating teachers in continuous contact with them, but not with the students who participated in the study. The study extended from October 24, 2018, till April 9, 2019.

I held a series of preliminary meetings with the participating teachers to explain the research objectives and procedures as well as ensure confidentiality of data. The teachers and their students then completed informed-consent forms after having explained to them the purpose of the study and received confirmation that all data would remain confidential, used only for purposes of this research. All students received instruction based on the 1997 Lebanese official curriculum and national textbooks. The aforementioned English proficiency test³ revealed that proficiency levels ranged from weak to average, with all Syrian participants being less proficient than their Lebanese counterparts. The teachers of the experimental group gave students instruction in according with the Literature Circle and TSLC model: socio-critical literacy conversation, discussion, and interactive activities. The teachers shared past experiences, reflected on them, and drew on the group's collective imagination to suggest solutions. All students within the Literature Circle shared with peers, especially those who had the same socioeconomic and educational background, addressing the challenges that faced them while reframing them to fit a more optimistic future. The teachers acted as role models, sharing experiences using family pictures and presentations while explaining

² <https://sway.office.com/jaBFkYYeZH0WjpU?ref=Link>

³ <https://sway.office.com/Fd0f7pOD2upmWpdE?ref=Link>

characteristics of the autobiography genre and introducing the “cognitive grammar” structures associated with this genre. The teachers supported the students’ efforts with their peers while encouraging them to relate the present situation to the past and future by asking them to identify their problems and suggest solutions based on the texts under discussion, collective thoughts, and imagined future.

The training workshop lasted four days. Two teachers instructed the experimental group, comprising 49 EFL learners including Syrian refugees and underprivileged Lebanese living in Beirut. Besides this, there was a full coordination of the materials, reading texts, lesson plans⁴ and textbook. The TSLC instruction was given during the post-reading activities. The main difference between experimental and control group was at the post-reading stage. All participants received a total of six contact hours of EFL instruction per week involving integrated reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

The teachers of the experimental group formed host and guest Literature Circles consisting of Syrian and Lebanese learners with varied language proficiency levels to ensure scaffolding. Each student was assigned a different role. The host group included a “passage master” whose role was to introduce the purpose, main ideas, and genre features of the text under discussion. The “summarizer” was in charge of writing a summary including the topic sentence, main ideas, and concluding statements. The “language enricher” was asked to take account of the grammatical structures they had learned.

The guest group had to learn, for example, tenses, transitional signals, and active and passive voice. The “passage enricher” was asked to suggest related texts to enrich the discussion. Other roles included the “text assessor”, “information seeker”, “questioner”, “language observer”, “note maker” and “reporter”. The “text assessor” was asked to check whether the selected text was indeed related to the chosen topic. The “information seeker” had to find important information in the text. The “questioner” posed as many questions as possible, based on the text. The “language observer” was asked to locate new vocabulary and newly covered grammatical structures to be learned. The “note maker” and “reporter” were asked to take notes of the discussion to share with the class and the teacher.

First, the host group introduced the reading selections to their counterparts in the guest group, who were then asked to raise questions and start discussion related to the content, structure, and organization of the text (Widodo 2016). Students in the host group prepared posters at the conclusion of their group discussion. The guest group listened to the poster presentations as a springboard to again discuss the content and structure of the text. The teachers ensured smooth interaction and engagement of all students. Guest team members reported what they have learned from the host group. Finally, the host group reported to the entire class what they had discussed and contributed. Meanwhile, all students completed exercises in their textbooks, to ensure curriculum coverage.

The experimental-group teachers asked learners to build a shared vision of the future through TSLC dynamics. They presented vignettes at the beginning of the study to clarify the process of social dreaming using metaphors. As learners started the Literature Circles, the teachers encouraged learners to share their dreams, followed by discussions of issues arising from the readings, in relation to the assigned curricular units.

Experimental and control group alike received EFL instruction using the six assigned reading selections in the official curriculum and textbooks, organized around the theme of immigration.⁵ The experimental group received the TSLC materials in addition. The supplementary materials were the stories “Meet Khalil”, “Meet Hasko”, and “Meet Mohamad”.⁶

⁴ <https://sway.office.com/jaBFkYYeZHZ0WjpU?ref=Link>

⁵ <https://sway.office.com/jaBFkYYeZHZ0WjpU?ref=Link>

⁶ <https://sway.office.com/3FwHMJuRtAX5utTF?ref=Link>

3.4 Data collection

Two reading tests⁷ were administered to measure the students' reading comprehension. Each test consisted of literal statements, inferential statements, summaries, contextual clues, cloze, and correction of grammatical and structural errors. I prepared the two tests in collaboration with the teachers.

3.5 Data analysis

The present study used the pre/post experimental control-group design. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data from the two reading tests.

4. Results

4.1 Question 1: Does the TSLC model improve the reading comprehension of the Syrian refugee and underprivileged EFL learners in public schools?

Participants were 72 EFL learners assigned to an experimental group receiving TSLC instruction ($n = 23$) and a control group receiving the regular reading instruction ($n = 49$). The experimental group was trained in applying the TSLC model.

I used two independent sample t -tests to find out the effect of TSLC instruction and regular instruction without TSLC. The first t -test examined whether there was a significant difference between the mean pre-test score of participants in the TSLC condition and that of participants in the control condition. The second examined if there was a significant difference between the mean post-test score of participants in the TSLC condition and that of participants in the control condition. Table 1 shows no significant difference in pretest scores between the TSLC ($M = 9.69$, $SD = 1.63$) and control condition ($M = 9.93$, $SD = 1.60$).

Table 1: Independent sample t -test of pre-test scores.

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.11	.74	.59	70	.59	-1.05	.57
Equal variances not assumed			.59	43.84	.56	-1.05	.58

Table 2 shows the results of the first independent sample t -test, which indicate no significant difference between the experimental and control conditions in the pretest scores $p(t(70) = -.59, d_f = 70) > .05$ using an alpha level of .05 (Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of pre-test scores.

Group	n	M	SD	Standard error mean
TSLC	49	9.69	1.62	.23
control	23	9.93	1.59	.33

M : mean, SD : standard deviation

Table 3 shows that a significant difference in the descriptive statistics of post-test scores between the TSLC ($M = 10.87$, $SD = 1.14$) and control condition ($M = 12.56$, $SD = 1.56$).

⁷ <https://sway.office.com/Fd0f7pOD2upmWpdE?ref=Link>

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of pretest scores

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Standard error mean
TSLC	49	10.87	1.14	.16
Con	23	12.56	1.56	.32

4.2 Question 2: Will participants receiving the TSLC instruction outperform their counterparts in the control group receiving regular reading instruction?

Participants receiving the TSLC instruction outperformed their counterparts in the control group. Some of them became more fluent describing their experiences than their control group counterparts. One student shared a dream of his with his classmates. He dreamed of having a nice house with an orchard that would then be a primary source of income for him and his family. In the subsequent discussion, his dream took on a collective form: having a secure country with no civil war and no bloodshed; ensuring the return of all refugees to their homes in Syria. Modal auxiliary verbs were explained to the students to help them express future tense, past possibilities, and solutions. The students were asked to use words and grammatical structures from the texts to reframe their knowledge of the past and allow them to present vignettes drawing on their imagination.

The results of the second independent sample *t*-test reveal a significant difference between the TSLC and control group in the post-test scores $p(t(70) = -5.18, d_f = 70) < .05$ using an alpha level of .05 (Table 4). This verifies that participants in the TSLC group did not improve significantly more than the control group in their reading.

Table 4: Independent sample t-test of post-test scores.

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower	Upper	
	Equal variances assumed	2.06	.15	-5.18	70	.00	-2.33	-1.04
Equal variances not assumed			-4.63335		.00	-2.42	-.95	

5. Discussion

In line with the ideas of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the present study confirms that TSLC facilitated building community.

The language curriculum in contexts like this should combine sociocultural theory with reading and writing practices that reflect on emotions and cognitive grammar in spoken conversation. The Literature Circle discussions in this study engaged students in meaningful activities using focused grammatical structures, authentic materials, and a strong emphasis on summarizing the product of the Literature Circle discussions.

In line also with the findings of Brabham and Villaume (2000: 279), this study found that the experimental group met with “critical issues and experiences in readers’ lives”. In line with the efforts of Venegas (2018) and Widodo (2016), this study proved the effectiveness of TSLC in improving the reading of the experimental group participants even though the control group outperformed them. The results confirm that a collaborative learning community created using the TSLC model can help peers use scaffolding appropriately throughout the story-circle process.

Unlike the control-group teachers, the experimental group teachers reported a positive, indeed happy, class atmosphere. That said, the teachers' observations were not quantified using, e.g., Likert scales so could not be statistically analyzed. The lack of any questionnaire serving this purpose might be seen as a limitation of this study.

The present research is a response to calls by Luke (2003) and Gutiérrez (2008) for a just and democratic educational system: a call I wanted to honor by developing the TSLC model. The findings of this study give evidence that the TSLC model is a means to engage students in productive scaffolding. The TLSC materials,⁸ shared formally and informally in the study as a means to facilitate authentic interaction, resulted in more learning, a finding corroborating earlier work by Gutiérrez (1995). The findings also confirm Cole's (1985) claims that the Third Space addresses a number of Zone of Proximal Development limitations for reorganizing everyday concepts into school-based concepts. As with Cole's work, the present findings show that the Third Space facilitates restructuring of learners' past, present, and future psychological states.

Drawing on Goodwin's (1995) concept of inter-subjectivity as collective practice, this study fostered the kind of interaction and engagement that facilitates learning. The collaborative thinking fostered by the TSLC is conducive to inter-subjectivity. In line with the Widodo's (2016) findings, participants in the Literature Circle discussions created imaginary contexts in (and through) which they had the power to create a better world. As Goodwin (2006) observed previously, learners empathized with each other – and mourned collectively the loss of refugee children whose bodies were left floating at sea. The notion of social dreaming (Gutiérrez 2008), was implemented sequentially. Learners collectively experienced an aspect of social dreaming by sharing their narratives in relation to the texts under discussion. This led to collective creation of a better, more optimistic view of the world.

The findings further confirm that the collective practice taking place through Literature Circles does so as a collaboration of individuals creating interdependent Zones of Proximal Development: a claim that finds support from Engestrom (1994) and Tuomi-Grogn, Engestrom and Young (2003). In line with Freire (1970, 1998), the findings indicate that social dreaming in TSLC took place while the students were busy associating authentic texts with the six reading selections from the official textbook.

The “cognitive grammar” of the Literature Circle conversations facilitates creation of a rich learning ecology that improves reading achievement with reading tests that included some grammar items. The experimental group teachers introduced time markers; they explained chronological-order transitions, verb tenses and run-on sentences; they requested learners to work collectively and individually. The TSLC model supports the grammatical structures needed for conversations among learners – as well as interactions more generally. The teachers in this study asked learners to use code switching and figurative language as they referred to events and themes in the stories they had read or in their social dreaming. Finally, the findings show that the Literature Circle is an active reading activity resulting in conversational meetings, in harmony with Venegas (2018).

6. Conclusions

This study proposed a model – the TSLC model – that is generic and could therefore be employed in the context of this study: eighth grade classes that included learners from non-dominant groups suffering from trauma and characterized by weak literacy. The study is part of a larger research project in the context of the HRE curriculum framework developed by Awada, Diab and Faour (2018). Based on the findings, I recommend further studies to investigate the generalizability of TSLC model in improving literacy and turning negative

⁸ <https://sway.office.com/jaBFkYYeZHZ0WjpU?ref=Link>

experiences into positive. Research is also needed to investigate the effectiveness of TSLC for improving learners' attitudes including perceptions of reading. Equally important is investigating teachers' perceptions of TSLC. The effectiveness of TSLC should be investigated on a larger scale and on different grade levels.

The TSLC is recommended as a literacy-, HRE- and student-centered scaffolding intervention, particularly relevant for disadvantaged learners from nondominant groups. This study is exploratory, aiming at presenting a model that can be used to improve the quality of education for Syrian refugee learners, help them envision a better future and overcome negative experiences caused by war and displacement. The generalizability of the findings can be explored through further studies in various contexts that include disadvantaged populations and refugee learners.

The findings call for curriculum and textbook adjustments in Lebanese schools that enroll large numbers of refugee learners. Public school teachers in Lebanon are restricted to using the official national textbooks based on the 1998 national curriculum. Teachers should be encouraged to use TSLC dynamics in their teaching to bridge the gap between the curriculum and textbooks, on the one hand, and learners' needs for effective and, indeed, transformative instruction on the other.

The TSLC model is intended to be used in classes that include Syrian immigrant learners whose inclusion in public schools with Lebanese learners has been a notable phenomenon since 2011. These learners need instruction based on the HRE principles of democracy, equality, and social justice to instill hope that might mitigate the impact of the suffering and poverty that characterizes them as members of disadvantaged nondominant groups in Lebanon's schools. Building on the theoretical concept of the Third Space, its implications for learning environment research (Davydov 1988), and research in the context of HRE (Awada, Diab & Faour 2018), I urge researchers to investigate the effectiveness of TSLC as a mechanism for improving the socio-critical literacy of learners of different cultures. The TSLC might be useful in wartime contexts for increasing hope and reducing misery as learners reconstruct their shared socio-historical and educational ecology to imagine a better future. Further research is needed to investigate if TSLC might help change learners' perceptions of literacy experiences.

About the author



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