

## **A Corpus-Based Comparison of Inclusiveness in L2 Reading Materials for Refugee Children**

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### Abstract

Despite increased emphasis on the role of inclusive practices and materials in post-COVID-19 classrooms and warnings about implicit biases against disadvantaged groups, the textbook problem has rarely been approached with equity measures in mind. This multimethod study aimed to investigate to what extent L2 reading materials, locally produced and used for refugee education in Turkey and New Zealand, include all children with different proficiency levels, gender identities and cultural backgrounds using corpus-driven methods. All verbal and nonverbal texts from ten thematically similar third-grade storybooks were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. Comparisons against measures of grammatical and lexical complexity, and of gender and cultural equity revealed that despite both being far from achieving the ideal composition for creating inclusive learning-friendly environments, TSL materials were lagging further behind ESL counterparts. They depended on almost uniform sets of easy-to-read narratives embodying simpler grammatical features and high-frequency words, and thus needed extension with relatively elaborate ones to accommodate mixed-abilities. Gender disparities were institutionalised through male overrepresentation in hero-making, negative stereotyping, familial and occupational identification, and engagement in monetary and mobility activities, but occasionally ameliorated, in the ESL case, by reversing conventionally-gendered domestic, technical and intellectual skills in texts and illustrations. The widest gap was observed in cultural representations because TSL materials, written from a tourist's perspective, focused on imposing superficial knowledge of target-culture elements, and ESL materials on ensuring relevance through greater use of elements from diverse cultures. Therefore, egalitarian representations in gendered and cultural contents are required for their rehabilitation.

*Keywords:* equity, inclusive learning-friendly environments, refugee children

As the third anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic approaches, one thing the world has learned is that regardless of age, gender, class, colour, ethnicity, creed and geography, everyone can become vulnerable to multiple losses (i.e. of their lives, loved ones, homes, jobs and schools) within a breath, and in the absence of welcoming communities, they may come out of this global ordeal materially and emotionally needier than before. Therefore, one of the principal buzzwords of the new millennium in education, “inclusion”, has been gaining wider acceptance with the help of the democratising virus, which already changed the learning mediums dramatically, for instance, by moving classes online and increasing accessibility (or sometimes lack thereof) for all kinds of teachers and students around the world. Since the introduction of the concept of inclusion by the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, what started out as a deficit-based medical model of educating disabled children separately in special schools, and later with non-disabled peers in mainstream classrooms has eventually evolved into its interactional version, where individual learner differences are treated not as problem sources but rather as opportunities for teachers to enrich mutual learning experiences (Ainscow, 2020; Smith, 2018; Stadler-Heer, 2019). This shift towards inclusive education can certainly be defended from different angles: the necessity of educating all children together leads to development of innovative teaching methods that create learning environments responsive to their specific needs (educational), assists to ingrain the principles of justice and non-discrimination in the future adults (social), economises on educational costs by not establishing different types of special schools (economic) and derives from the basic human right to get equitable access to quality education (legal) (Ainscow, 2020).

Whichever of these agendas are pursued in educational settings, it is essentially “equity” in provision of what exactly every learner needs to thrive rather than “equality” of shares in treatment that gives a greater reason to fully embrace inclusive transformation in the language classrooms as well (Smith, 2018). Compared to most teacher-led content-area classes, language lessons can be claimed to provide a more conducive atmosphere to supportive learning for two immediate reasons. Neurodiversity, language, culture and emotion-related learning difficulties become more detectable during language use, and especially English language teachers’ familiarity with communicative methodologies and materials puts them at an advantage in terms of the implementation of inclusive education (Smith, 2018). When it comes to tackling different learning challenges, they have been observed to capitalise on their long-standing experience in differentiating and scaffolding the learning content and processes mainly through the use of access-self, multilevel and multimodal texts, participatory and multisensory activities, explicit grammar and strategy instruction and also bilingual support (British Council, 2012; Glas et al., 2021; Smith, 2018; Stadler-Heer, 2019; Tomlinson, 2011).

According to this year’s report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2021), the education of over 1.5 billion learners globally has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but 7.9 million refugee children, with already high out-of-school rates (48%), may possibly have been hardest hit by the school closures. In other words, more than half of refugee students might also be estimated to have been struggling with learning in an alien classroom, where the lesson is delivered in a different language from their own, and through learning materials that are written for children with different personal, language, learning and cultural backgrounds. As a result, the second/additional (L2) language teacher’s use of inclusive practices and materials has become more critical than ever in order to reduce the language learner’s vulnerability and foster resilience in refugee children. Also, UNESCO (2015) strongly emphasises the role of teaching materials in ensuring inclusiveness in the classroom, and warns about the hidden prejudice and discrimination against disadvantaged groups. Yet, rarely has the textbook problem been approached with equity measures in mind.

For this reason, the current study focuses on assessing whether the reading materials used for teaching Turkish and English as a second language (TSL/ESL) reflect diversity in terms of learner abilities, gender and culture, or, in other words, how level-appropriate, gender-fair and non-discriminatory they are for arming refugee learners with the enabling knowledge of languages.

### Literature Review

Detailed overviews of various literacy and language programs for displaced people in Hanemann's (2018) background paper for UNESCO's *2019 Global Education Monitoring Report* have demonstrated that despite higher concentrations of refugees and migrants in the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, the educational needs of young and adult refugees can be argued to have largely gone unnoticed on the basis of limited information on literacy and language provision for them. On the other hand, those settling in high-income regions such as North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand are provided with better educational facilities because the inclusion of refugees in the labour market is regarded as "a priority goal", and at least basic or secondary education and proficiency in the host language must be attained "to succeed in post-industrial economies" (Hanemann, 2018, p. 57). In their efforts to foster social integration through L2 proficiency, they also take a whole-of-government approach and implement a variety of school-based interventions according to refugee learners' individual needs (Auckland UniServices, 2007; Hanemann, 2018). In the New Zealand context, the following practices have thus been recommended (Auckland UniServices, 2007; Hanemann, 2018):

- Initial, diagnostic and curriculum-based assessments of both L1 and L2 are carried out to improve instructional planning and provide appropriate learning experiences.
- Non-English-speaking-background (NESB) children are included in mainstream classes to increase interaction and reduce stigmatisation by native-English-speaking peers.
- Pull-out ESL classes are developed for the ones with special needs (e.g. true beginners or traumatised refugees) and made more relevant through connections with content-area learning.
- Peer-tutoring, pairing new arrivals with English-speaking peers, or preferably L1-speaking former refugees (e.g. as cultural facilitators) is utilised for familiarising them with the New Zealand school system.
- The curriculum also draws on the home languages, cultures and experiences of refugee children.
- The responsibility of their L2 learning and acculturation belongs to not just ESL teachers but all in the school environment.

As shall be seen in other examples of good practice, appreciation of the refugee student's own heritage, as well as reciprocity in efforts to learn about each other's language and culture alongside the majority's actually lay at the heart of effective approaches to refugee education. In initial attempts to humanise shared classrooms, Ghosn's (2013) materials development project is worthy of mention. Despite even minor differences in (Arabic) accent and culture, Palestinian refugee children had still been withdrawn while attending United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools and experienced academic difficulties. This was due, in part, to on a national curriculum that was intent on English-medium content-area instruction, and high-level language textbooks were developed exclusively for Lebanese children with potential interests in national festivals and foreign travel (Ghosn, 2013). Unsurprisingly,

together with their overworked teachers, the refugee students were later found to react positively to the alternative lower primary materials that achieved relevance with gradually increasing difficulty levels for both literacy and L2 instruction and familiar content from their immediate environments such as readily identifiable characters with Arabic names, Palestinian costumes, households and rituals (Ghosn, 2013).

In more recent models of inclusive practice, tolerance of L1 use, or more appropriately L1-support and use of multimodal storytelling techniques have become the hallmarks of plurilingual classrooms, where students from migrant or refugee backgrounds and majority peers can act as co-informants of their native languages and cultures and be guided into working towards a common goal by both their language and content-area teachers. In the British Council's project from the Lebanese context, Grappe and Ross (2019) involved refugee parents, speaking Bedouin Arabic, Kurdish or Turkmen, in the co-construction of a parent/teacher training pack, consisting of 13 awakening-to-languages activities (e.g. *What did you do today?* worksheets), Arabic translations and images for adults with limited or no L1 literacy. In this way, Syrian preschool children were enabled to compare the teacher-mediated knowledge about different cultural aspects with the parent-mediated knowledge about their home situation and share with their teacher and classmates at school (Grappe & Ross, 2019).

Minuz et al. (2020) also explained that Italian teachers provided their child readers with opportunities to explore multilingual books via the *Mamma Lingua* [Mother-tongue] project website, got them to discuss, retell and translate the stories into Italian with help from their teachers and peers and develop language awareness besides reading for pleasure. Similarly, Heathfield and Goksu's (2019) case study of YouTube storytelling performances by a class of 25 secondary pupils (14 migrants) in Hannover showed that telling and hearing stories from their home and other foreign countries allowed them to use their native and additional languages (English) in a non-threatening atmosphere and also promoted mutual understanding and respect for their unique identities. In each case, alternation between the home and school languages serves to create diverse third spaces, where the teacher and learners can jointly construct new knowledge (L2 output) based on their native resources (L1 inputs) (Makalela, 2015; Minuz et al., 2020). The use of translanguaging strategies has thus come to be regarded as a key indicator of educational equity in progressive language education (Li & Luo, 2017; Minuz et al., 2020).

A closer look at recent research on refugee education in Turkey has nonetheless manifested that participant views on major issues facing refugee learning partners were elicited almost invariantly via semi-structured interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including elementary teachers (Bulut et al., 2018), teachers of Turkish language and literature (Alan & Alptekin, 2021), school counsellors (Bozan & Celik, 2021), headteachers from refugee-populated areas (Eren, 2019), field-researchers (Bozan & Celik, 2021), refugee students

(Bozan & Celik, 2021) and parents (Celik et al., 2021) alongside language assistants (e.g. Morali, 2018; Taskin & Erdemli, 2018) and coordinators (Bozan & Celik, 2021; Eren, 2019) from temporary education centres (TECs) and the EU-funded project on promoting integration of Syrian children into Turkish education system (PICTES). However, they could not go beyond redocumenting persistent problems related to the national curriculum, instructional materials, in-service teacher training, administrative procedures, school infrastructure and communication with refugee and other students or their parents (Celik, 2019; Celik et al., 2021; Eren, 2019).

In these studies, their greatest challenge of communicating in the local/official language also seemed to be primarily linked with psychosocial factors such as Syrian refugees' concerns about separation, exclusion and assimilation (Celik et al., 2021; Tunga et al., 2020). Yet, two other issues, top-ranking next to *their* language deficit, namely lack of appropriate L2 materials and qualified language teachers, might actually be the overlooked culprit that places the insurmountable language barrier to refugee learners' school success and integration. Furthermore, Tunga et al. (2020) have pointed out in their recent review of 25 descriptive studies that there was a considerable lapse of time between the beginning of Arabic-medium education at the now-closed TECs and enrolment of refugee children in Turkish-medium public schools. Consequently, another contributing factor could also be the much-delayed decision to teach Turkish to Syrian children because of a miscalculation that displaced Syrians would return home ten years on from the war (Tunga et al., 2020).

As an interim solution to increase access to education for an ever-growing number of refugee children, over-age students have eventually been admitted to first grade and monolingually taught the national curriculum elusive for many by mostly untrained teachers (Celik, 2019; Morali, 2018; Taskin & Erdemli, 2018). Due to absence of age-appropriate contents for their literacy and grade levels, they have been exposed to materials which were originally designed for teaching Turkish to adult international students (Bulut et al., 2018; Eren, 2019; Nimer, 2019). This in turn has caused an outcry among the teachers for removing refugee students from mainstream classes until they develop L2 proficiency (Bulut et al., 2018; Celik, 2019; Celik et al., 2021; Taskin & Erdemli, 2018). Since 2019-2020 academic year, refugee students who scored less than 60% on the Turkish proficiency exam have thus been receiving 24 hours of remedial language education besides six-hour arts and sports courses (DG NEAR, 2020). An initial evaluation of adaptation classes has still indicated that refugee learners' major problems with instructional materials and teacher competences remain unresolved (Bozan & Celik, 2021). To make matters worse, separation from their native-speaking peers have not only reduced the opportunities to use the target language for authentic communication and develop social relationships, but also increased the prevalence of disruptive behaviour in refugee-only classes and negative labelling at school (Bozan & Celik, 2021; DG NEAR, 2020).

Examination of the very few existing studies of TSL coursebooks for refugee children has also demonstrated how misconceived the adopted approach to L2 materials development could get. Irrespective of whether Yunus Emre Institute's four-book basic set for eleven-to-fifteen-year-olds (entitled, *Türkçe öğreniyorum* [I am learning Turkish]), or PICTES' three-book equivalent for six-to-twelve-year-olds (entitled, *Hayat boyu Türkçe* [Lifelong Turkish]) underwent teacher-evaluation still only superficially, both materials were met with disapproval due to the incompatibility of their irrelevant and outdated content with the refugee students' age and grade levels (Alan & Alptekin, 2021; Bicer & Kilic, 2017). Perhaps more interestingly, greater incorporation and positive representation of L2 (Turkish) culture were also recommended to their authors by experts on mother-tongue instruction, who clearly viewed second and foreign language learning as identical (e.g. Alan & Alptekin, 2021; Bicer & Kilic, 2017).

In essence, the education literature suggests that segregated schooling along with linguistically and culturally-inappropriate (if not actually assimilationist) materials should be more readily held responsible for refugee students' failure to learn the target language. However, teacher self-reports alone may not provide objective evidence for evaluating the efficiency of a given set of L2 materials in creating an inclusive and learning-friendly environment (ILFE) for refugee learners. For this reason, this study aimed to investigate whether and to what extent TSL and ESL reading materials, locally produced and used for refugee education in Turkey

and New Zealand, include all children with different levels of language proficiency, gender identities and cultural backgrounds by using corpus-driven methods. The following research questions were addressed:

- How do TSL reading materials for refugee learners compare with their ESL counterparts in terms of grammatical and lexical complexity?
- How do TSL reading materials for refugee learners compare with their ESL counterparts in terms of gender equity?
- How do TSL reading materials for refugee learners compare with their ESL counterparts in terms of cultural equity?

## Method

In this multimethod study, where the text data was transformed into frequency and percentage distributions, comparative corpus-based analyses of grammatical and lexical complexity were conducted solely on outliers, and content analyses of verbal and nonverbal inputs from TSL and ESL reading materials were also performed for the purpose of assessing their degree of inclusivity (Morse, 2003).

## Data Collection

For comparison purposes, five narratives (CEFR-A1) (entitled, *Acil* [A&E], *Kayıp bavul* [Lost luggage], *Saklambac* [Hide-and-seek], *Bisiklet* [The bike], and *Her zamanki kafede* [At the usual café]) with an average of 762.2 words were selected among TSL reading materials prepared by PICTES (2021) project team for third-grade adaptation classes. As it corresponded to year 4/level 2 in the New Zealand curriculum, five thematically similar texts at gold level (entitled, *A gift for Auntie Nga*, *Breakdown*, *Always great, never late!*, *No big deal*, and *The Green Team*) with an average of 790.2 words were chosen from the Ministry of Education's *Ready-to-Read* and *Junior Journal* series (MoE, 2009). The qualitative data for gender and culture-based comparisons was therefore derived from a total of ten texts, whereas two sets of short and long-outlying texts (i.e. *Acil* [A&E] and *Her zamanki kafede* [At the usual café] vs. *A gift for Auntie Nga* and *The Green Team*) were purposively selected from TSL and ESL reading materials to comprise the corpus for grammatical and lexical complexity analyses due to the illuminative power of extreme case sampling (Patton, 2002).

## Data Analysis

During grammatical complexity analysis, the two sets of short and long-outlying texts were first divided into T-units (i.e. one main clause with any number of subordinate clauses), subordinate clauses (i.e. adjectival, adverbial, nominal and non-finite types) and sentences marked by full stops. Then, three complexity ratios were calculated by dividing: total number of words by total number of T-units (W/T), total number of clauses by total number of T-units (C/T) and total number of T-units by total number of sentences (T/S) to compare TSL and ESL reading materials in terms of T-unit length, subordination and coordination use respectively (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). During lexical complexity analysis, four lists of verb items in total were compiled for TSL and ESL outliers. After the identification of infrequent verbs that do not appear on two different frequency lists of first 50 verbs and 2500 most common words in Turkish and English, two (type/token) lexical complexity ratios were calculated by dividing: total number of verb types by total number of verbs (VT/V) and total number of sophisticated

verb types by total number of verbs (SVT/V) to compare TSL and ESL reading materials in terms of verb variation and verb sophistication (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998).

In addition to comparisons against grammatical and lexical complexity measures, all verbal and nonverbal texts were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine how gender and culturally-responsive these ten storybooks were. Following established criteria from the literature (e.g. Bag & Bayyurt, 2015; Goyal & Rose, 2020; Lee, 2014b; Lee & Chin, 2021), frequency counts were carried out for the number of: male and female characters in texts, male and female protagonists, unnamed and anonymous characters, male and female proper names, familial roles associated with men and women, occupational roles associated with men and women, male and female appearances in illustrations, and male and female-dominated images (i.e. with only men or women, and with more men or women) during the analysis of gender representations. For the comparison of their cultural contents, Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) patterns of cultural representation were employed. After the textual and visual elements referring to the learners' source cultures and their target-language culture (i.e. Turkish and English) were counted, frequencies and percentages of occurrence were tabulated appropriately. The overall percentage agreement was calculated as 93% for clause-verb identification and 94% for gender-culture identification within Miles and Huberman's (1994) acceptable range.

## Results and Discussion

For the purpose of determining how closely the current materials matched TSL and ESL learners' proficiency levels, the shortest and longest texts from each corpus were subjected to grammatical and lexical analyses. Comparisons between T-unit lengths and ratios of T-unit complexity and sentence coordination revealed in Table 1 that despite having an almost equal number of words, ESL texts not only employed fewer and longer T-units ( $W/T=6.49-7.41$ ) but they also made greater use of clause complexing ( $C/T=0.20-0.22$ ) and coordinated sentences ( $T/S=1.17-1.42$ ) to achieve cohesion in eight to nine-year-olds' readings. TSL texts, on the other hand, proved easier than their ESL counterparts because their T-unit lengths ( $W/T=3.84-4.28$ ) as well as subordination ( $C/T=0.03$ ) and coordination ( $T/S=1.06-1.11$ ) ratios fell outside the specified range of all three measures of grammatical complexity; that is, being below the average of 6.0 words and 1.07 clauses per T-unit for the lowest levels and 1.2 T-units per sentence at all levels (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Within groups, both outliers also varied only slightly in terms of T-unit complexity and sentence coordination, thereby ensuring uniformity in grammatical complexity.

Another determinant of complexity related to the range and utility of verbs, besides repertoire size, inputted by TSL and ESL texts. Table 1 also presented the findings from comparative lexical analyses against two different type/token ratios. The initial comparison by the total number of verb items might have suggested the superiority of TSL narratives over ESL ones. However, the higher proportion of verb types to overall verbs indicated that ESL texts generated more verb types ( $VT/V=0.32-0.46$ ) in either case, and were capable of exposing L2 learners to more varied lexical input. A further comparison by their selection of high-frequency verbs demonstrated that the materials writers paid almost equal attention to providing third-graders with the most useful vocabulary. TSL outliers covered 52-66% of first 50 verbs in the Turkish National Corpus (TNC) and 11-15% of 455 verbs listed among the most frequent 2500 words in Turkish, whereas ESL outliers covered 48-66% of first 50 verbs in the New General Service List (new-GSL) and 9.5-11% of 558 verbs listed among the most frequent 2500 words in English (Aksan et al., 2017; Brezina & Gablasova, 2015; TNC, 2022). Therefore, both



corpora displayed a similar tendency to fluctuate only mildly between 0.03-0.04 (based on a frequency list of 2500 most common words in Turkish and English) and 0.16-0.18 (based on a frequency list of 50 most common verbs in Turkish and English) sophisticated verb types per verb, while the short ESL outlier turned out to have both more verb types ( $VT/V=0.46$ ) and more sophisticated verbs than the others ( $SVT/T=0.07-0.28$ ). Since larger ratios on verb variation and sophistication measures are identified as indicators of greater lexical proficiency, the short ESL outlier, despite also being the most concise of all, can be claimed to embody the greatest lexical complexity (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998).

**Table 1**

*Comparisons Between TSL and ESL Texts on Grammatical and Lexical Complexity Measures*

Measures \ Outlying texts	TSL		ESL	
	Shortest	Longest	Shortest	Longest
Words (W)	682	869	660	870
Clauses (C)	5	7	18	30
T-units (T)	159	226	89	134
Sentences (S)	149	202	76	94
W/T	4.28	3.84	7.41	6.49
C/T	0.03	0.03	0.20	0.22
T/S	1.06	1.11	1.17	1.42
Verb types (VT)	56	78	63	69
Sophisticated VT (SVT <sup>a</sup> )	6 (30)	11 (45)	10 (39)	10 (36)
Verbs (V)	164	248	135	214
VT/V	0.34	0.31	0.46	0.32
SVT/V	0.03 (0.18)	0.04 (0.18)	0.07 (0.28)	0.04 (0.16)

<sup>a</sup>Unbracketed figures show infrequent verbs that are not listed among the most frequent 2500 words in the TNC/new-GSL. Bracketed figures show infrequent verbs that are not listed among the first 50 verbs in the TNC/new-GSL.

Previous research on the influence of different complexity measures over text difficulty has also shown that lexical complexity was a more definitive factor than syntactic complexity in estimating the comprehensibility of simplified and authentic materials for especially beginning learners, and materials providers were recommended to select appropriate readings on the basis of word frequency lists, or in other words, tune difficulty level according to their use of less or more sophisticated words rather than of shorter or longer sentences (Arya et al., 2011; Barrot, 2013; Mehrpour & Riazi, 2004; Nouri & Zerhouni, 2018). For this reason, one can conclude that both collections would benefit from extension with further readings embodying greater lexical diversity, if they were to cater for relatively more proficient readers among refugee third-graders, whose mother tongue literacy can also vary widely given adequate, limited or no

prior schooling. There is, however, another aspect of ESL materials that might result in more inclusion. Unlike text-only TSL materials, their free online texts are accompanied by audio versions, so that students with different learning styles and/or (dis)abilities can equally enjoy the stories through different mediums.

In addition to the grammar and lexicon, all verbal and nonverbal texts were examined in terms of gendered representations to ascertain whether the materials really catered to the needs of girls and boys equally. As shown in Table 2, male characters (57-58%) outnumbered female characters (42-43%) in both learning situations, and the difference was even greater when it came to hero-making, especially in TSL texts (m=76%; f=25%). A closer look at TSL texts provided that male characters with prestigious jobs (e.g. managers, doctors) engaged in occupational (e.g. having company meetings, delegating tasks), purchasing (e.g. gifting, ordering food and drinks, sponsoring family trips) and mobility (e.g. cycling, driving, flying) activities, whereas female characters were stereotyped as housebound housewives cooking, cleaning, sewing and tending, or objects of pity (e.g. six-year-old girl with a broken leg whining for mum), desire (e.g. Romanian beauty captivating her future husband at the lost property office) and ridicule (e.g. clumsy stewardess spilling cherry juice all over male senior shirt manufacturer) due to physical and psychological features potentially common to both sexes. Conversely, ESL texts tried promoting equity between fictional characters and occasionally depicted role models as humans equally skilled at domestic tasks (e.g. the boy sometimes getting her breakfast and checking up on his mother) and equipped with intellectual and moral virtues (e.g. Mr. Marlow frowning at misplaced crayons in the classroom while Gemma knowing from her brother's experience, noticing Cody's problem and helping them both with colour-blindness).

Despite equality in anonymity (m=60%; f=40%), ESL texts (m=56%; f=44%) also differed from TSL ones (m=48%; f=52%) in using more masculine than feminine names. At first glance, it might appear that TSL texts had a more even distribution of familial roles probably due to the curricular emphasis placed on the teaching of Turkish kinship terms. But all in all, women in both materials (58-83%) were more often designated as mother or wife and the primary caregiver. In line with this archaic gender role, women in TSL texts were underrepresented as people in employment (m=52%; f=48%) and assigned low-paying and/or female-stereotyped service jobs (e.g. hairdressing, seamstressing, teaching, clerking). ESL texts, on the other hand, linked female characters to a greater number (m=43%; f=57%) and variety of occupational roles (e.g. courier, model, garden centre owner). They also insinuated the increasing presence of single working mothers, who, besides breadwinning, could cope with multitasking (e.g. shopping, driving kids around, handling car issues and physical work) and get identified with extraordinariness by their male only-children. As evidenced in Table 2 by the higher concentration of female character appearances and female-dominated images (56-58%), women in ESL materials can be concluded to have better visibility than those in TSL materials (33-37%). In addition to illustrating more women than men, ESL materials cared more about equal sharing of the visual realm. Two same and mixed-gender pairs (e.g. Ara-her mother, Lucca-his grandfather, Nico-his gran, Shai-her father) were once pictured cooking together to win the culinary competition between schools. TSL materials still managed to downplay women's agency in the storyline by either removing from display, or depicting them negatively as the weaker sex, fanning oneself faintly, leaning on husband's shoulder, or pulling father's shirt even in female-dominated images.

**Table 2***Comparisons Between TSL and ESL Texts on Gender Equity Measures*

Indicators	Mode <sup>a</sup>		TSL				ESL			
			Verbal		Visual		Verbal		Visual	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
Characters	15 (58%)	11 (42%)					16 (57%)	12 (43%)		
Protagonists	9 (76%)	3 (25%)					9 (56%)	7 (44%)		
Unnamed characters	6 (60%)	4 (40%)					6 (60%)	4 (40%)		
Proper names	12 (48%)	13 (52%)					10 (56%)	8 (44%)		
Familial roles	59 (42%)	81 (58%)					16 (17%)	77 (83%)		
Occupational roles	11 (52%)	10 (48%)					6 (43%)	8 (57%)		
Total character appearances			33 (63%)	19 (37%)					56 (42%)	76 (58%)
Gender-dominant images			12 (67%)	6 (33%)					12 (44%)	15 (56%)

<sup>a</sup>m: male; f: female

The comparisons against gender equity measures have therefore shown that the desired balance between the genders could be achieved in neither case. Although ESL materials overall seemed to adopt a more progressive worldview more visually than verbally, they cooperated with TSL counterparts in the imposition of male supremacy mainly through use of male overpopulation, negative stereotypes and character designation by domestic and professional roles. Regardless of the culture they were produced for and by, whether western, non-western, or westernised, a plethora of learning materials for different subject areas and grade levels was similarly found to embody imbalances in linguistic and nonlinguistic inputs and criticised for reinforcing and legitimising gender inequality in the 21st century classroom, which should instead be working towards the goal of education for all (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009; Goyal & Rose, 2020; Lee, 2014a). In three other studies, which investigated the genderedness of textual and visual content presented by primary English coursebooks locally produced in China and Turkey, disparities in female-to-male appearances, men's occupational choices and women's engagement in housework likewise continued to plague different editions, and notwithstanding small improvements in familial roles and imagery, latent sexism could still be recognised (Bag & Bayyurt, 2015; Lee, 2014b; Lee & Chin, 2021). As a result, it is not too far-fetched to predict that the gender gap will worsen, let alone close, particularly for refugee girls

with increased vulnerability to school dropout, forced marriage and gender-based violence. Consequently, modifications made to materials design and actual use should go beyond the cosmetic level. Active engagement in gender awareness raising should also be maintained across the curriculum by all stakeholders, parents, teachers, teacher educators and educational authorities.

**Table 3**

*Comparisons Between TSL and ESL Texts on Cultural Equity Measures*

Indicators <sup>a</sup>	Mode		TSL				ESL			
			Verbal		Visual		Verbal		Visual	
	C2	C1	C2	C1	C2	C1	C2	C1	C2	C1
Cultural elements	51 (69%)	23 (31%)	12 (71%)	5 (29%)	40 (48%)	44 (52%)	18 (29%)	45 (71%)		

<sup>a</sup>C2: target culture; C1: source cultures.

Ultimately, the cultural contents of TSL and ESL materials underwent comparative analysis so as to discover to what extent they included children with diverse cultural backgrounds. According to Table 3, ESL texts can be claimed to have a more pluralistic composition both verbally and visually due to the larger proportion of elements referring to the learners' own cultures (C1=52-71%). As to whose culture(s) received more focus in the multicultural classrooms of New Zealand, Maori culture, of the largest minority, predominated, and particularly, Rarotongan life was foregrounded in the narrative, *A gift for Auntie Nga*. ESL texts were also distinguished by the fact that they provided information not only on a wider range of cultural products; that is, local geography (e.g. Cook Islands, white-sand beaches), animals (e.g. hermit-crabs, shells), food (e.g. coconuts, pineapples), clothes and accessories (e.g. floral shirts, flower garlands), along with musical instruments (e.g. ukuleles), but also on cultural practices and the more implicit perspectives, such as saying *karakia*, prayers before meals, *tivaevae*, quilt-making in women's groups, and gift-giving as a show of love, honour and respect. No reference was actually made to the home (Arab) culture of Syrian refugees, but other immigrant groups were amply represented especially in *the Green Team*, where Greek, Indian, Italian, Kurdish and Samoan schoolmates presented their own traditional dishes (e.g. bhaji, palusami, spanakopita) prepared with the New Zealandian silverbeet from school garden. In an apparent effort to promote social cohesion, ESL materials also used images of ethnically mixed communities and classrooms, while they tended to represent the target-language culture elements (C2=29-48%) in the verbal mode; that is, through proverbs (e.g. place for everything, and everything in its place), riddles (e.g. When is a door not a door? When it's ajar), idioms (e.g. oldie but goodie), place names (e.g. Auckland) and sports (e.g. cricket).

For TSL materials, the reverse was true. The target-language culture elements (C2=69-71%), consisting of a full list of Istanbul's top attractions (e.g. Grand Bazaar, Hagia Sophia), popular holiday destinations (e.g. Bodrum, Marmaris), local specialties (e.g. Turkish breakfast) and the custom of tea and coffee drinking, outweighed those of the learners' source cultures (C1=29-31%). More precisely, there were cursory mentions of different nonnative groups, that is, their nationalities (e.g. Japanese), countries (e.g. Germany), place names (e.g. Ottawa). But Syrian refugees' home (Arab) culture was most stereotypically personified with the male protagonist's (e.g. Sharif Zakaria from Cairo) physicality; that is, his complexion, facial features and hair

type, standing in sharp contrast to his female counterpart (e.g. Monica from Bucharest) at Istanbul airport. This was possibly because adopting a tourist's perspective and representing culture solely in terms of more tangible and less sensitive topics such as food and travel could seem easier or even safer to materials writers and producers, and more appealing to younger readers, despite concerns about materials-induced prejudice and superficial learning (Simsek, 2018; Yuen, 2011). Independent of the type of learning context (TSL/ESL), coursebook origin (local/global), educational level (primary/tertiary) and goal-orientation (for general/specific purposes), many different L2 materials had also been reported to simply concentrate on transmitting surface knowledge of target-language culture elements and blamed for robbing increasingly diverse classrooms of opportunities to encounter new language in culturally-relevant contexts (Basal et al., 2014; Huang, 2019; Pashmforoosh & Babaii, 2015; Rai & Deng, 2016; Shin et al., 2011; Tum et al., 2012).

There is now a growing consensus that due to the centrality of cultural content to language comprehension and meaningful output production, materials should be made to contain not just the local culture, including the students' own experience, their school, family and community to relate to, reflect on and explain to others but also cultural features outside their world, from various countries in order for the learners to eventually "maintain an equal, mutually-respectful relationship" with the global community (Forman, 2014; Matsuda, 2012, p. 177; McGrath, 2002; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020). In the case of refugee learners, already struggling with multiple hardships, such as discrimination, insecurity, and poverty, integration of their native language and culture into the L2 classroom has indeed become of prime importance in lowering the affective filter and scaffolding their L2 learning. As a result, the cultural content of TSL materials needed serious expansion in terms of both depth and breadth so as to engage rather than alienate Syrian refugee students, whereas the culturally more diverse ESL materials had still room for improvement for minority representation.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Corpus-based comparative analyses of grammatical and lexical complexity as well as gender and cultural equity revealed that despite both being far from achieving the ideal composition for creating an ILFE, TSL reading materials for refugee children were lagging further behind their ESL counterparts in all three respects. Both kinds of materials depended on almost uniform sets of easy-to-read narratives predominantly embodying simpler grammatical features and high-frequency words, and thus needed extension with relatively elaborate ones inputting more sophisticated verbs to accommodate mixed-ability classes. Gender disparities were institutionalised typically through male overrepresentation in hero-making, negative stereotyping, familial and occupational identification, and engagement in monetary and mobility activities, but occasionally ameliorated, in the ESL case, by reversing conventionally-gendered domestic, technical and intellectual skills in texts and images. The widest gap between TSL and ESL materials was still observed in cultural representations because the former, written from a tourist's perspective, focused on imposing superficial knowledge of target-culture elements, and conversely, the latter on ensuring relevance through greater use of elements from the students' diverse cultures.

The proposed modifications to the composition of the current materials may simply require more egalitarian choices of lexicogrammatical, gendered and cultured contents, but their merits are twofold. Increasing variety and thus ensuring relevance for all may cost L2 practitioners less effort than maintaining discipline in diverse classrooms. The longstanding strategy of differentiation can support all other students, but will probably mean the world to refugee

children, who desperately need something to hold onto amidst a sea of unknowns. In the long run, the joint effort to break language barriers can also be paid back with academic and workplace success on the part of refugees, and with social harmony and peace on the part of host countries. Cowart, Lanford, and Beatty (2011), too, pointed out that educators do know how to teach all students successfully, and in providing newcomers with appropriate instruction, they can influence a quality of life both refugee families and the American society will enjoy. In terms of such transformative power, not many learning mediums can be argued to exist comparable to the L2 teacher and textbook.

However, this study concentrated on corpus-based comparative analysis of two sets of locally produced extensive reading materials for third-grade refugee learners. Since storytelling was assumed to promote gender and cultural-awareness raising, non-fiction texts were not included in the corpus. The size of the corpus (ten narratives), language level (basic) and focus on extreme cases (short and long-outlying texts) during analyses of lexical and grammatical complexity could be listed among its other limitations. Given dire predictions about climate-forced displacement, environmental migrants may contribute to the new majority in future classrooms. Consequently, L2 practitioners as agents of change should be empowered to build community resilience through increased social cohesion between added varieties. Future researchers are finally recommended to focus on devising a guiding framework for both designing and evaluating inclusive materials, developing teachers' gender and cultural awareness, and expanding their repertoire of materials adaptation strategies and plurilingual activities.

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