Chapter 16
Designing Text Message Learning to More Equitably Reach Students Wherever They Go:
UNICEF SMS Lessons for Venezuelan Migrants/Refugees

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how TESOL educators can partner with global aid organizations, local communities, and learners themselves to leverage low-tech yet innovative learning solutions like text-message lessons with the goal of more equitably reaching learners, particularly those affected by disruption to their education such as those who are migrants/refugees. Taking such action as advocates committed to closing opportunity gaps arising from social issues affecting language learning not only involves the TESOL educator in the six principles for exemplary teaching of English learners but also UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework, trauma-informed teaching and learning, and the concept of text messages used as micro-learning. Through a UNICEF case study of practice in action, the author provides a stepwise how-to for redesigning curriculum into micro-learning appropriate for text-message delivery and offers considerations and recommendations for its dissemination, evaluation, and potential application to many other contexts and learner populations at scale.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the advocacy aspect of critical praxis in TESOL as it relates to supporting TESOL educators committed to positive social change and working with others to close opportunity gaps and

solve injustices related to languages and language learners around the world. In this case, the opportunity gap relates to Venezuelan migrant/refugee (see Key Terms and Definitions) student access to continue learning that has been disrupted due to their movement through Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru in hopes of resettlement, and specifically needed during the COVID-19 pandemic occurring in the midst of their migration and resettlement (ECW, 2020). In particular, this practical chapter highlights an option for closing the stated gap through action TESOL educators can take as advocates (TESOL, n.d.b) to more equitably reach Venezuelan migrant/refugee learners wherever they go; using TESOL's Six Principles (TESOL International Association, 2021; Hellman, Harris & Wilbur, 2019; Short, et al., 2018) and the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UN, n.d.) as frameworks, it provides a protocol for teachers to plan and enact collective change efforts to address a social issue that impacts language learning by means of redesigning curriculum to ready it for dissemination to learners who can access it via text message. The author presents considerations, a stepwise how-to, recommendations and implications for creating a text-message learning campaign (see Key Terms and Definitions) based on her work as a consultant for UNICEF on education in emergencies for the most vulnerable learners (see Key Terms and Definitions) in Latin America and the Caribbean (Guevara, 2020; UNICEF LACRO, n.d.) from May 2020-January 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the work of other TESOL educators who strive to be action-oriented advocates at the intersection of sustainable development goals, trauma-informed teaching and learning (see Key Terms and Definitions), and micro-learning (see Key Terms and Definitions) via accessible technology has significant potential for more equitably reaching and benefiting all kinds of learners and during times of non-emergency/crisis as well.

CONCEPT

TESOL's Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners (TESOL International Association, 2021; Hellman, Harris & Wilbur, 2019; Short, et al., 2018) provide a conceptual framework for analyzing the author's UNICEF text-message learning campaign for Venezuelan migrants/refugees as a case study yielding practical recommendations and a how-to for replication by other TESOL educators. Principle 1: Know Your Learners requires a unique non-TESOL specific critical orientation through the lens of UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 Quality Education and how progress on that goal plays out with real Venezuelan migrant/refugee learners in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and using data from aid organizations rather than traditional academic research sources like peer-reviewed journals. Principle 2: Create Conditions for Language Learning involves a look at how Venezuelan migrants/refugees can continue learning at all despite constraints and by using creative yet low-tech solutions that provide access to learning. Principle 3: Design High-Quality Language Lessons occurs in the Evidence-Based Practice Section as the Learning Activity, a list of considerations in the form of questions to answer before designing a text-message learning campaign (see Table 1), and Portrait of Practice, a stepwise how-to for designing the text message lessons themselves. Principle 4: Adapt Delivery as Needed comes into play with the adaptation of existing curriculum on which the text-message learning campaign is based through the lenses of access, context, and trauma-informed teaching and learning (see Table 2). Principle 5: Monitor and Assess Language Development can be seen within the design of the text-message learning campaign itself as recommended messages 4 and 5 in each lesson sequence (see how-to steps) and mentioned in the Discussion. Principle 6: Engage and

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