

Institution: University of South Wales		
Unit of Assessment: D27 English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: English Language Teaching for Forced Migrants in Wales: Education for Integration		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Mike Chick	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior lecturer in ESOL	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2008-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Since 2014, dramatic cuts to adult language education budgets, combined with a rise in numbers of people seeking asylum, have meant that an urgent need developed for increased provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Dr Mike Chick's research into ESOL has led to substantial improvements in its provision for many people resettled in south Wales. Working with the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) in Cardiff and with Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) Borough Council, he developed models of ESOL language provision for forced migrants through collaborative activity. This has increased access to language education, improved integration outcomes and contributed to Welsh Government policy.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>It is widely acknowledged that language skills are essential to the cultural and linguistic integration of refugees and asylum seekers and that English language competency is key to accessing work, educational, social and cultural opportunities in the UK. Since 2015, nearly 1500 refugees have been rehomed in Wales as part of resettlement schemes (such as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme [VPRS]). In addition, there is a further population of both refugees and asylum seekers; in summer 2020 alone there were nearly 3000 asylum seekers dispersed amongst the four cities of Swansea, Newport, Cardiff and Wrexham. These newly dispersed migrants can, however, face long delays before they can access accredited ESOL classes (S.1 p.33).</p> <p>Chick's research focuses on teacher education and English language instruction for social integration, specifically the organisation of effective models of ESOL provision for forced migrants. This research has informed and enabled his on-going collaborations: with the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) since 2014 and with Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) Borough Council since 2015. Through this work he has developed a deep understanding of the challenges faced in delivering viable ESOL provision. The development of initiatives to address these difficulties has been informed by his earlier research into language teaching pedagogy.</p> <p>For example, Chick's earlier research from 2015 (R.1), on the education of language teachers, highlighted the value of a participatory and dialogic approach to adult education. The importance of a pedagogy that allows learners to bring their own ideas and interests to the classroom necessitates a reactive approach to teaching and highlights the need to educate trainees to develop a view of the classroom as a space of spontaneity, replete with learning opportunities.</p> <p>In R.3, Chick examines the challenges faced in organising language provision for families resettled in areas away from traditional dispersal cities (in Wales, these are Swansea, Cardiff, Newport and Wrexham), bringing particular attention to the need for tailored class cohorts and for informal language classes to complement the prescribed, assessment-focussed formal provision. One of the key recommendations from that research was the need for specialist advisors to help newly arrived migrants who are unfamiliar with the culture, systems and</p>		

opportunities that exist to support people into education or employment.

In research conducted for R.4 in 2019, he identifies a number of obstacles that need to be overcome to provide effective language instruction, illuminating the scarcity of classes, accessibility issues and the importance of taking a student-centred approach. One of the recommendations made in the article was that adult migrants on refugee resettlement programmes (such as the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme [SVPRS]) be provided with a less prescribed, more participatory form of language education that addresses their real-life, emergent, language needs. That suggestion supported findings from his previous research into ESOL provision (R.3).

Chick's collaborative research with the Welsh Refugee Council was completed in summer 2019 (R.5). Through the use of interviews, focus groups, case studies and questionnaires, the project collected data on 58 refugees from Syria, who are being resettled in convergence areas of Wales, and from 26 stakeholders involved in the resettlement process. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected from: the Syrian resettled families; casework providers from the convergence areas; Local Authority stakeholders; management and teachers at local schools and colleges. The project identified ways in which language provision can assist refugees' paths to employment and independence and ways in which learner needs can be met within the economic realities of adult education budgets. As with R.3, it was recommended that specialist education advisors were needed to support forced migrants' integration. In February 2020, Chick was awarded a £4k grant from Advance HE to research the outcomes of USW's Asylum Seeker Scholarship Scheme and develop further models of support for the future.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R.1. Chick, M., 'The education of language teachers: instruction or conversation?' *English Language Teaching Journal* 69: 3 (2015), pp. 297-307. DOI: 10.1093/elt/ccv011

R.2. Chick, M. (University of South Wales and Welsh Refugee Council), 'Higher education and Voluntary Sector Collaboration for ESOL Provision' in "If you could do one thing..." *Local actions to promote social integration*, British Academy Report, December 2017. <https://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/British%20Academy%20ICYCDOT%20Essays.pdf>

R.3. Chick, M., 'Refugee resettlement in rural Wales – a collaborative approach' in F. Mishan, ed., *ESOL provision in the UK and Ireland: Challenges and Opportunities* (Dublin: Peter Lang 2019), pp.109-31

R.4. Chick, M. and Iona Hannagan Lewis, 'Language education for forced migrants: governance and approach', *Languages* 4:3 (2019), 74. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages4030074>

R.5. Chick, M. and Iona Hannagan Lewis, *An Investigation into the Barriers to Education and Employment for Forced Migrants in the Convergence Areas of Wales* (November 2020). ISBN: 978-1-909838-49-9.

<https://wrc.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Refugee-Council-Report-A4.pdf-DEC-18.pdf>
[https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/publications/an-investigation-into-the-barriers-to-education-and-employment-for-forced-migrants-in-the-convergence-areas-of-wales\(02a1bfc9-ec12-4f9f-a993-6efd5e1c5202\).html](https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/publications/an-investigation-into-the-barriers-to-education-and-employment-for-forced-migrants-in-the-convergence-areas-of-wales(02a1bfc9-ec12-4f9f-a993-6efd5e1c5202).html) (Hard copy available on request.)

Interim report (Dec 2018) available at: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/EDBiDQZHCgwJw/>

Supporting Grant:

R.6. Chick, M. and Iona Hannagan Lewis, 'An Investigation into the barriers to education, employment and language instruction experienced by new migrants in convergence areas', KeSS (Knowledge, Economy, Skills) MRes Scholarship supported by European Social Funds through the Welsh Government in partnership with the Welsh Refugee Council (2017-18):

£39,487 (fEC), £14,596 (ESF grant).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Chick's research has significantly impacted on the provision of English language education for forced migrants within Wales in the period 2014-20 as follows:

i) Increased capacity for ESOL classes for forced migrants in Wales

Chick's research has led to improved access to, and quality of, ESOL classes in Wales, through collaborations with the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) and Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) Borough Council. With thirty years' experience and over 20 full- and part-time staff, the WRC is the largest charity in Wales that advocates for asylum seekers and refugees. Since 2015, RCT Borough Council has resettled over fifty people across its area with more families planned to arrive. In 2014, Chick began advising on the design and implementation of the ESOL provision delivered at the WRC's offices in Cardiff (S.3). Since 2015, trainee language teachers from USW have provided learner-centred ESOL classes, based on the real-life needs of the students. Without these classes, newly arrived migrants often faced up to 12 months wait before being able to access formal ESOL provision. Classes at the WRC attracted approximately the following numbers of students each week: 2015 – 90; 2016 - 90; 2017 – 80; 2018 – 50; 2019 – 70. In 2020, the provision was transferred online with a vibrant WhatsApp group consisting of nearly 70 ESOL learners and eight Zoom classes taking place each week (S.9).

The partnership approach to tackling the ESOL waiting list problem has been very successful. It led to funding from the Welsh based anti-poverty charity, the Waterloo Foundation, which qualified WRC to employ a full-time ESOL/Education officer (2015-17) (S.3). The USW/WRC partnership also enabled the WRC to deliver six hours each week of Welsh Government-funded ESOL classes during 2017 and 2018 (S.3). The collaboration won the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) national award for community cohesion in 2016 (S.8) and, in 2017, was detailed as a case study in a British Academy report on integration (R.2).

Much data from learners has evidenced the advantages of accessing participatory ESOL provision through this collaboration as the following exemplifies:

'The English classes are very important for us. Now, going to the doctor, going shopping, going out... is easy for us. Two months ago we had zero English, now OK. Without the classes we (would) have big problems.' Asylum Seeker, Syria (R.2, p.35)

WRC evidence shows that the classes provide 'not just a linguistic but a social lifeline' (S.4 p.11). The CEO of WRC testifies that '*hundreds and hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees have benefitted from the social, psychological and linguistic support that the classes provide*' (S.3).

Furthermore, since 2016, Chick has been working closely with officials from Rhondda Cynon Taff on ESOL provision for the resettled families (R.3). Classes at USW were attended by 10 ESOL students in 2018 and 25 ESOL students in 2019. The Head of Migrant Resettlement for RCT testifies to the impact of this approach in the region:

'The support of the USW TESOL department has been priceless over this time enabling the refugee families to access English classes, meet local people and speed up their integration in the community. The classes have been extremely popular and have provided a real lifeline to the families who have made RCT their home. [This] work has been a central factor in the refugees' integration in our area.' (S.5)

ii) Influence on policy around ESOL provision in Wales

Policy makers have drawn on Chick's expert evidence in formulating the strategy around

ESOL provision and integration of forced migrants in Wales (R.2, S.1, S.4). The Welsh Government ESOL Policy 2018 (S.4, p.11) drew attention to his work as an ‘innovative’ solution to the problem of a shortage of ESOL classes and noted the ‘terrific opportunities’ that emerge when universities work with charitable organisations. In December 2018, interim research findings from Chick’s SVPRS study (R.5) were presented to the Welsh Government lead on Refugees and Asylum Seekers and highlighted the need for specialist employment and education advisors. In April 2019, the Welsh Government appointed three specialist employment / education advisors for forced migrants. The influence of Chick’s research on this decision is evidenced by Welsh Refugee Coalition meeting minutes which note that ‘*specific meetings with [...] USW had been held to ensure that their research findings informed the scope of the Restart project – for example around ESOL provision and the need for specialist employment advisors for refugees*’ (S.6). As a further outcome, WRC also appointed an Employment and Education Officer in autumn 2020 (S.3).

iii) **Enhanced awareness and changed attitudes towards forced migrants and ESOL in Wales**

Nearly 50 trainee ESOL teachers have now undertaken their teaching practicum at the WRC since 2015. The trainees involved have found the experience had a deep impact on their wider understanding of concepts such as equality, language policy and social inclusion. This is exemplified by the following comments from Learner teachers:

‘When I first began at the WRC, I recall how I used to often be surprised at the academic or professional achievements of the students. I am now ashamed at my previous surprise reactions. Why shouldn’t people from other countries be just as educated as people from my country?’ (R.2, p.35).

‘I realised that the media’s portrayal of refugees only offers an image of a minute proportion – the people I worked with are some of the most kind and genuine people I have ever met.’ (R.2, p.36)

‘Interacting with [the refugees] made the situations they dealt with [in] their home country a lot more real for me and have made a positive impact in my life.’ (R.2, p.36)

‘I hope that my learners have taken as much as I have from the lessons. I also hope that they can thrive in our community.’ (R.2, p.36)

As a direct result of Chick’s leadership, USW’s Refugee and Asylum Seeker Scholarship Scheme was launched in 2017 (S.7). This scheme provides free English language tuition for eligible students prior to starting an undergraduate degree at the university, as well as covering the cost of an English Language assessment test. So far, 16 people seeking refuge in Wales have benefitted from the scheme. In June 2019 Chick was appointed Refugee Champion for the University, a role which enables him to introduce further initiatives. His work won the USW 2019 award for Best Societal Impact sponsored by Chwarae Teg, the Wales-based charity working for gender equality. In March 2020, USW became only the second HE institution in Wales to be awarded University of Sanctuary status conferred by the City of Sanctuary Charity (S.7).

The BBC has drawn on Chick’s expertise to inform their reporting on the experiences and needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales (S.2). In 2020, the Learned Society of Wales’s ‘Black Lives Matter’ series showcased a video filmed at their request by Chick which highlighted USW/WRC’s online Refugee Week events (15-19 June 2020) and featured the launch of USW graduate Hamed Amiri’s *A Boy with Two Hearts* (simultaneously featured on Radio 4’s ‘Book of the Week’) (S.10).

Above all, the beneficiaries of this research have been the forced migrants who have gained opportunities to develop skills, obtain qualifications and meet others. A Syrian refugee who

arrived in Wales in 2016 without English, entered the WRC English classes, progressed to FE college and onto the USW Refugee Sanctuary Scheme, winning in 2019 a national award from the Learning and Work Institute (S.11). His journey exemplifies the structures now in place to enable such a pathway for other refugees wishing to enter HE.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S.1. Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Report, *"I used to be someone": Refugees and asylum seekers in Wales* (April 2017). Chick provided expert opinion to the Committee and his comments were quoted at length in the final report.

<https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11012/cr-ld11012-e.pdf>

S.2. Interview with Chick on BBC Wales providing expert comment: Jordan Davies, 'Syrian refugee language classes 'shortage' in Wales', BBC Wales News, 29 November 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-42155782>

S.3. Testimonial from the Chief Executive Officer, Welsh Refugee Council, to corroborate the work done with refugees at the WRC in Cardiff.

S.4. Welsh Government, *ESOL Policy for Wales* (2018). Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-11/english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-esol-policy-for-wales.pdf>

S.5. Testimonial from the Head of Migrant Resettlement, Rhondda Cynon Taff Borough Council.

S.6. Welsh Refugee Coalition meeting, minutes 23/10/2018, 10-11.30am.

S.7. USW Refugee Sanctuary Scheme and University of Sanctuary status: <https://www.southwales.ac.uk/news/news-2020/usw-receives-university-sanctuary-status/>

S.8. National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) Award for Community Project of the Year 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTT55kK90aw&t=7s>

S.9. Article for Bevan Foundation on the process of transferring WRC ESOL provision online during the COVID pandemic:

<https://www.bevanfoundation.org/commentary/providing-social-spaces-for-forced-migrants-the-important-role-of-esol/>

S.10. Learned Society of Wales, Black Lives Matter series, Hamed Amiri: *The Boy with Two Hearts*: <https://www.learnedsociety.wales/black-lives-matter-series/>

S.11. Award winning refugee student: <http://www.learningandwork.wales/our-work/promoting-learning-and-skills/adult-learners-week/inspire-award-winners-2019/tarek-zou-alghena/> Syrian refugee (Link broken - pdf provided.)