

*“When I die, I hope I am reborn
as an English speaker”*

English Usage in Refugee Communities

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Agenda

Background

- Goals of research
- Definitions, statistics
- Methods

English usage

- Common mistakes
- Difficulties

Implications of learning English

- When to use English?
- Familial dynamics
- Impact of English on quality of life

English as a communicative tool

Common mistakes in English usage

Methods to overcome language barrier

Code switching

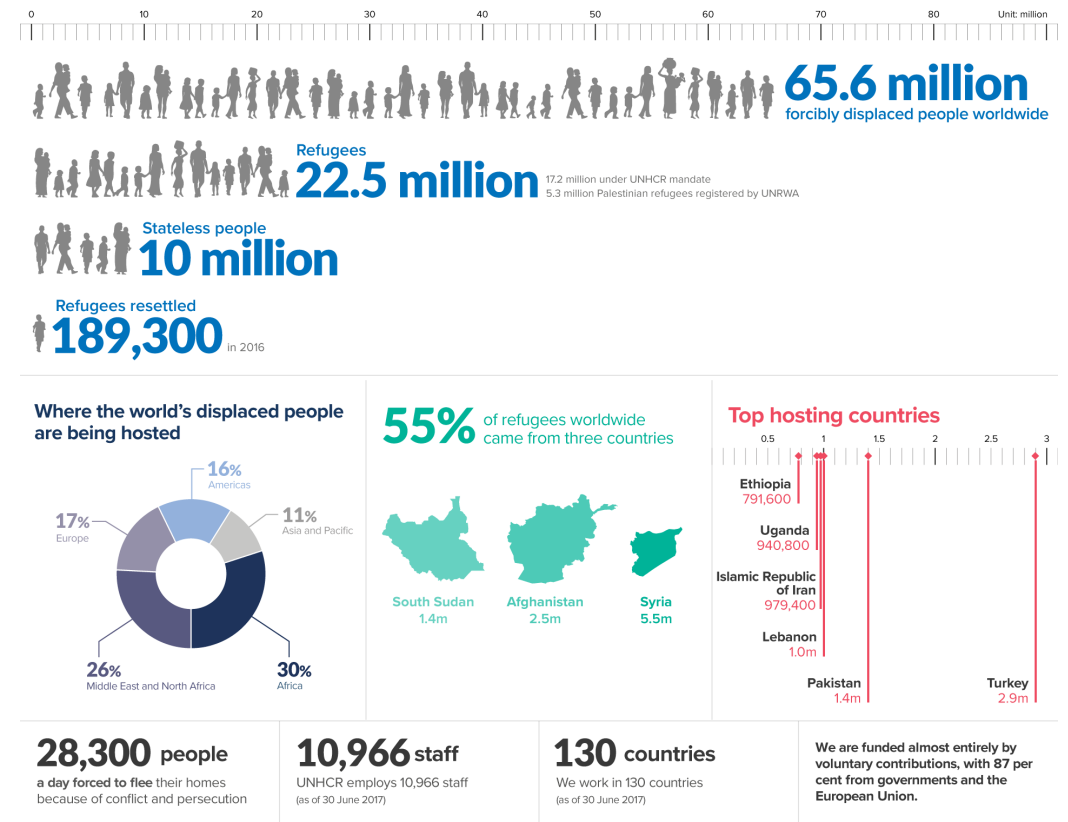
Refugee views towards English

Goals of
Research

Background

“A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group”

-UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)



Credit to UNHCR

Source: UNHCR / 19 June 2017





Methods

- Volunteering in the Athens/Atlanta area
- ESL teaching
- Meeting refugee families

Refugee Countries

Myanmar (formerly Burma)

- Karen
- Karenni
- Chin

Thailand

Dem. Rep. Congo

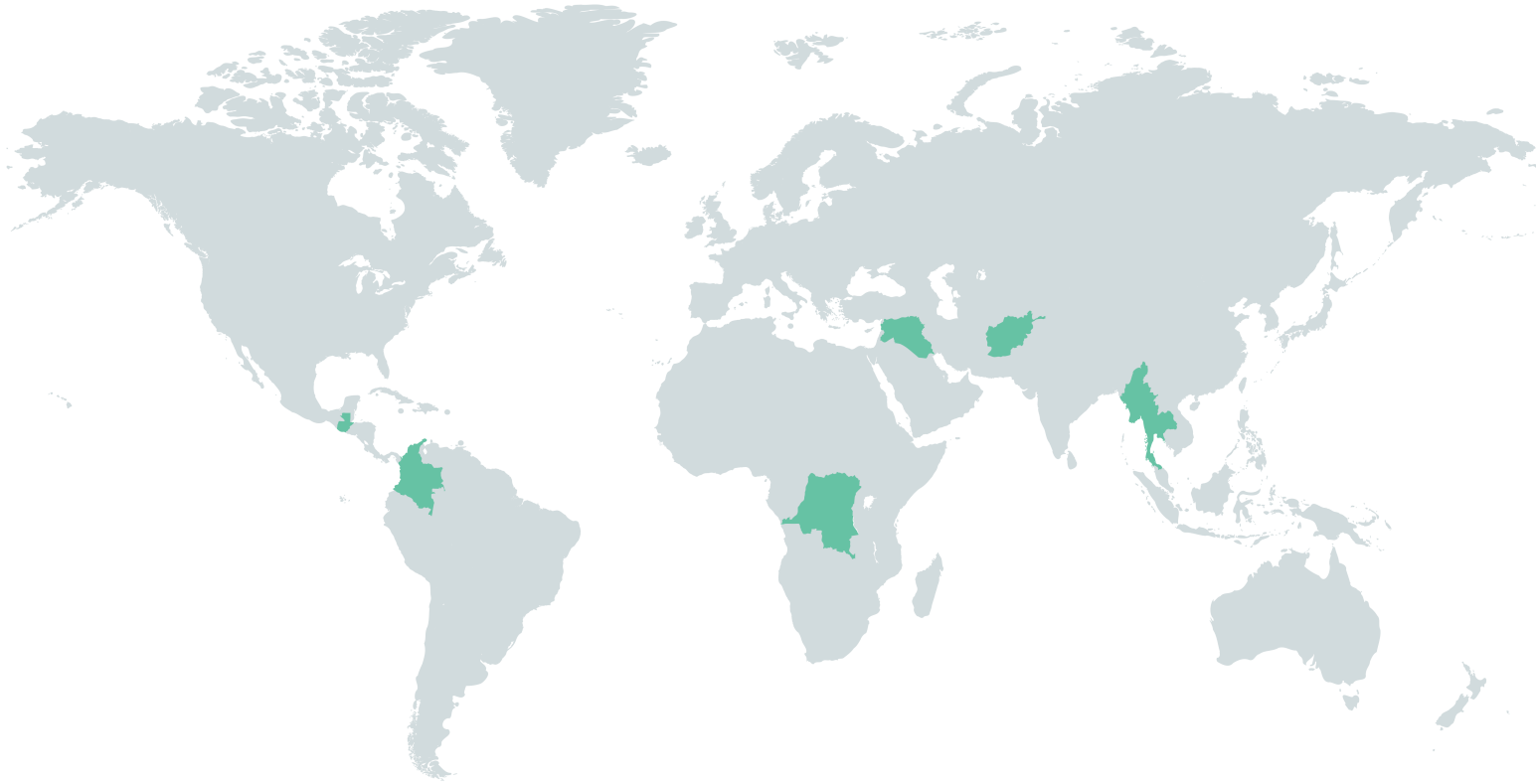
Syria

Iraq

Afghanistan

Guatemala

Columbia

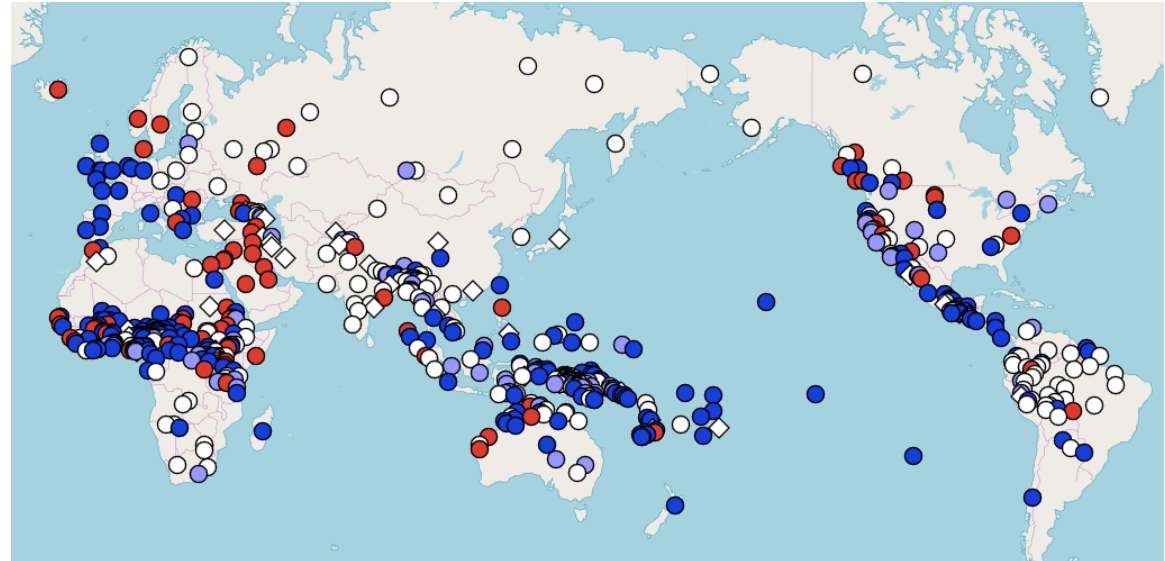


Navigating a Language Barrier

- Translators
 - Professional or informal
- Gestures
- Circumlocution

Common Mistakes in Refugee English

- Verb tenses
 - Present tense
- Verb conjugations
- Possessive markers
- Modal verbs
- Article usage (see map)
- Grammar



Values

- Definite word distinct from demonstrative
- Demonstrative word used as definite article
- Definite affix
- ◇ No definite, but indefinite article
- No definite or indefinite article

Credit to WALS

Other Difficulties

- Fossilization of L2 grammar
- Phonetic pronunciations of English words
 - Especially if their native language lacks the phoneme(s)
- Negative view towards their own English

English in Personal Life

- When English vs. L1 was used
- Levels of fluency vary greatly within family
 - Children are usually more fluent
- Familial dynamics and fluency

What English Means

- Sense of independence
 - Do errands independently
 - Visit doctors
 - Talk to strangers
 - Get jobs
- Prestige of English

Pamphlet on English Towards Refugees

- Teach people with no/minimal prior experience with refugees how to respectfully communicate with them
- Educate on:
 - Definitions
 - Statistics
 - Misconceptions
 - Cultural differences



*A Karenni Hymn Book
Photo Courtesy of Author*

COMMUNICATING WITH REFUGEES

*A resource on English usage
with a minority population*

Leah M. Dudley

Summary

*“English language acquisition
is vital in the process of
integration.”*

Credit to Amanda C de C
Williams and Tania Salvo

Cited Sources

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