

Title – Teaching English to Refugees through Storytelling

Program of Study – Teaching English as a Second Language

Presentation Type – Choose one of the following: Oral Presentation

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Abstract: Many refugees are trying to learn English while assimilating to a new culture. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has identified several needs and goals of refugees including competence in the language of the receiving culture and participation in a new, welcoming community. Storytelling can be implemented for teaching English to refugees who have these goals. Storytelling, which is expressing or receiving a narrative through oral or written communication, links academic learning such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills with real life experiences. In addition to using storytelling as a meaningful way to interact with language, storytelling also fosters a community within the classroom. The teacher is responsible for fostering a supportive community in the classroom through authenticity and mutual sharing of life experiences. Storytelling creates a context where both the teacher and the students can learn from each other's life, language, and culture. As students share their stories and listen to others, they are learning from their peers and building relationships with them. This research investigates several case studies including Stewart (2010), who implemented storytelling in her high school classroom, Colvin (2019), who reported on a trauma center using storytelling, and four missionaries who were interviewed about their experiences serving refugees in Austria, Greece, Jordan, and the US. These case studies all show the unique

academic, cultural, or psychological needs of refugees and demonstrate how storytelling creates a positive community from which psychological healing and immense academic benefits can come about. Lastly, this research provides easily implementable pedagogical strategies for using storytelling and creating a positive community in an English classroom for refugees.

Christian Worldview Integration: God's will for His people is that they love and care for others and for the church to meet needs of all types of people. In John 15:12, Jesus says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (ESV). Further, Philippians 2:4 calls Christ followers to, "look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (ESV). God loves and deeply cares for refugees, and He wants to use His church to reach them with His love. One way this is accomplished is through meeting physical needs and building relationships. Since many refugees are wanting to learn English, English teachers can love refugees while providing a needed service. This research will focus on showing how storytelling is a teaching strategy that encourages relationship building along with academic and psychological benefits. Jesus used storytelling when he spoke in parables to his followers in order to relate to their human experience. "All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable" (Matthew 13:34). Storytelling is a powerful way to connect with other people deeply. If the mission for believers is to love other people as Jesus loves them, then they should relate to others through telling stories and then listening to their stories. Storytelling fosters community more so than other types of classroom activities because it utilizes personal experiences. Many refugees need a supportive community, and this research will show how storytelling in an English classroom can provide that community. Christian teachers should be dedicated to glorifying God with their job by teaching with

excellence, building relationships that show the love of Christ, and leading a community of people of care and support each other.