

3. Knowing the students and understanding their needs

What will be covered

- 3.1 Cultural background information
- 3.2 Building up a student profile
- 3.3 Understanding student needs
- 3.4 The impact of disrupted schooling
- 3.5 How to identify students' English language needs

3.1 Cultural background information

Key understandings

- Understanding and showing an interest in your students' cultures helps to create a supportive environment.
- Making Australian cultural practices explicit is helpful.

Culture includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and other habits acquired by the members of a society. Understanding your students' cultures helps to create a supportive environment for them. Showing an interest in the students' cultures and making Australian cultural practices explicit also helps.

The following website contains links to a number of useful sources of cultural background information:

http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/esl/RefSupp_Settlement.htm#1

Useful links include:

- The World Guide,
<http://www.theworldnews.com.au/Worldguide/index.php3>
- the CIA's World Factbook,
<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

The following websites have a particular focus on refugee situations:

- the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>
- the UNHCR website, <http://www.unhcr.ch/>
- Education and Refugee Students from Southern Sudan,
<http://clickhost.clickwork.com.au/~survivor/publications.php>

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3.2 Building up a student profile

Key understandings

- We need to focus on the students as individuals with unique likes, interests, strengths and personal experiences.
- We need to understand these in order to:
 - see students as individuals rather than to stereotype them;
 - better meet their needs;
 - build on their strengths and interests; and
 - be respectful and value diversity.

Activity 3.1

Look at diagram 3.1. It gives an idea of the some of the interests and situations in which one young person, Solyn, operates. Such a diagram is often called a 'sunshine' diagram.

Develop a similar diagram for a student you know using the template in diagram 3.2. Alternatively, watch the video/DVD of Roni and use the information about him for the activity.¹⁵

You could use a similar activity with a student as a way of exploring more about their interests. This information could be used as a springboard to learning and to build on individual strengths. You and the student could also do it together in order to build a relationship. Your tutor input could include information such as: I am Mary, a mother of two who likes music and enjoys having dinner with friends.

¹⁵ ABC (2003), *Our Boys- Episode 3- Roni* [Video], Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney. 'Roni' is available from the LMERC library in Carlton (Ph: 03 93491418 , email: lmerc.library@edumail.vic.gov.au). If the DVD is unavailable, Appendix B of the presenter notes, *Moses' Story* can be substituted.

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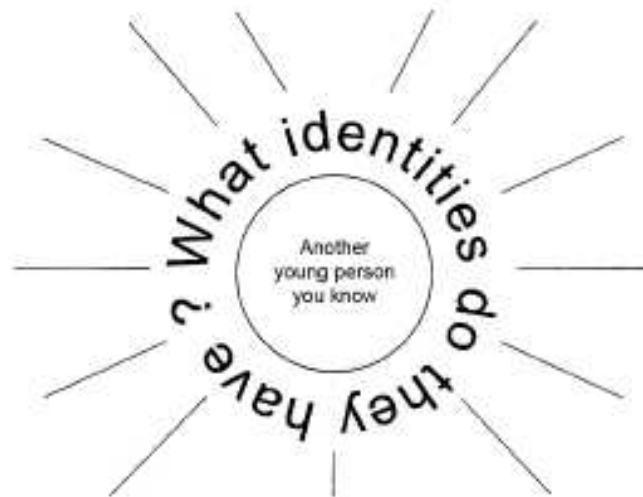
Diagram 3.1: Solyn¹⁶



¹⁶ Diagram 3.1 is sourced directly from Language Australia and DET&E (1998), *Early Literacy and the ESL Learner*. Diagram 3.2 is adapted from this source.

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Diagram 3.2: Sample sunshine diagram for you to use



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3.3 Understanding student needs

Key understandings

- Refugee background students have a range of settlement needs that can affect their capacity to develop and learn.
- Tutors can encourage and support students to develop their potential.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a framework for understanding student needs and how these might affect their performance. Maslow initially proposed five needs. Table 3.1 includes an additional two needs that have since been proposed (needs 5 and 6).

Needs in order of priority	How these needs are satisfied	Comment
1. Basic biological and physiological	Air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep, etc.	These are the strongest needs with the highest priority.
2. Safety	Protection, security, order, limits, safety, stability, comfort, peace, etc.	When all physiological needs are satisfied, the need for security becomes the next priority. Children, in particular, often show signs of insecurity and the need to be safe.
3. Belonging and affection	Positive relationships including family and friendships, acceptance, group membership, etc.	When the needs for safety and physiological wellbeing are satisfied, the need for love, affection and belonging emerge.
4. Esteem	Self-esteem, achievement, independence, status, recognition of strength, dignity, approval, etc.	When the first three classes of needs are satisfied, the need for positive self-esteem becomes important. This also involves a need for recognition from others. Humans need a stable, high level of self-respect, as well as respect from others. When these needs are satisfied, the person feels self-confident and valued. When these needs are frustrated, the person feels inferior, weak and worthless.

¹⁷ Adapted from the framework found at: <http://www.businessballs.com/maslow.htm>, accessed 23 November 2006.

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Needs in order of priority	How these needs are satisfied	Comment
5. Cognitive	By engaging in learning activities.	The need to learn and acquire knowledge.
6. Aesthetic	By surrounding oneself by finding or creating beauty.	The need for beautiful & aesthetically pleasing imagery.
7. Self-actualisation		The need for self-actualisation can only be realised when all of the earlier needs are satisfied.

Activity 3.2

Discuss how Maslow's framework might help us to understand Roni's needs and the consequent effect on his educational performance.

In pairs, discuss the implications of this framework for your work as a tutor in an OSHLSP. Does it help you to understand your students' needs and the support that they require?

It is important to note that:

- Maslow's hierarchy is not static. People's ability to meet their needs will change, depending on circumstances in their lives. The refugee experience may dramatically affect people's capacity to meet many of their needs.
- Many young people from refugee backgrounds aspire to the goals of their community rather than individual goals.

Ways in which educators can assist students to reach their potential include:

- encouraging them to be self aware;
- helping them discover their vocation in life;
- encouraging them to understand that life is precious, and that seeing the good in all kinds of situations makes life worth living;
- accepting them as they are and helping them to learn their aptitudes and limitations and to build on their potential;
- trying to ensure that their basic needs are satisfied, including safety, belonging and esteem needs;
- encouraging them to appreciate beauty and goodness in nature and in everyday living;
- encouraging them to focus on serious rather than trifling problems; and
- giving them practise in making good choices.¹⁸

¹⁸ Simmons JA, Irwin DB & Drinnien BA (1987), *Psychology – The Search for Understanding*, West Publishing Company, New York. Available at: <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/maslow.htm>, accessed 23 November 2006.

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Activity 3.3

Take time on your own to reflect on whether you would incorporate these approaches into your work with students and, if so, how you could do this.

Discuss your thoughts with the rest of the group.

3.4 The impact of disrupted schooling

Key understanding

- Many refugee background students have had significant disruptions to their schooling. Because of this they will face many additional challenges and need extra support to develop their English language and literacy skills and understanding of learning tasks.

Activity 3.4

With a partner, brainstorm how disrupted schooling may affect students and their learning.¹⁹

Be prepared to summarise your discussion to the group.

¹⁹ DE&T (2006), Moving in New Directions PD Module 1 (unpublished draft).

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3.5 How to identify students' English language needs

Key understandings

- English language development includes:
 - listening, speaking, reading and writing;
 - learning about how English works; and
 - learning to recognise and use appropriate English for the context.
- We need to identify students' English language needs.

There are a number of techniques you can use to determine a student's English language development:

- Ask about where and when they use English and when they use other languages. For example, domestic activities and much socialising may be done in the student's first language so they may not have experienced English in these situations.
- Chat with the student and check their understanding. Can they:
 - follow instructions
 - listen for detail
 - identify key words and main ideas?
- Listen to the student. Can they:
 - express themselves clearly
 - use simple grammatical forms (e.g. past tense, adjectives, prepositions)
 - pronounce English sounds
 - use English rhythm and intonation
 - use English for a variety of purposes (e.g. to describe something or someone, to explain, to express an opinion)?
- Ask the student to choose a book and listen to them read or ask them to read and retell what they have read. Do they:
 - enjoy reading
 - choose an appropriate book, i.e. one that has accessible language (sentence structure, vocabulary, content)
 - understand what has been read?
- Look at the student's work, such as a writing sample. Do they:
 - enjoy writing
 - write drafts
 - use appropriate sentence structure
 - use appropriate vocabulary
 - use structure appropriate to the text type
 - link ideas
 - identify spelling errors
 - use appropriate punctuation?
- Look at the student's homework. Do they:
 - understand the task
 - approach the task confidently
 - need support to get started
 - need support to complete the task?

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Activity 3.5

With a partner, discuss the ideas for identifying students' language needs.

Are the suggestions clear? List any points that need clarifying.

Would you use these ideas as a guide in your work? Why or why not?

Is there anything important missing? List your ideas.

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Activity 3.6

Watch and listen to the boy who identifies himself as a refugee on the DVD
Not a Matter of Choice.

This is his definition of what a refugee is:

I'm a refugee. Refugee is the people that come from the other country cause they can't live in their own country because there is a war and for their lives they go to other countries to live there.

In small groups, discuss the following:

What are his language strengths?

How could you help him express the concept of a refugee more correctly?