

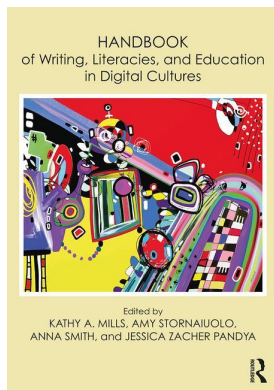
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8

Global Refugee Crisis

Literacy Concerns and Media Coverage

Ariel Loring and Vaidehi Ramanathan

Movements of displaced people are not new phenomena: According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide (Global trends, 2016). However, in 2015 alone, 12.4 million people were newly displaced from conflict or persecution, of which over 1 million migrants and refugees, predominately from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, sought asylum in Europe (Global trends, 2016; Migrant crisis, 2016), leading to the current moniker “global refugee crisis.” To be labeled a refugee, one must be “outside the country of his nationality [and] unable or . . . unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” due to “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion” (UN General Assembly, 1950). Legally speaking, a refugee is someone whose asylum claim has been approved; an asylum seeker is seeking refugee status but has not yet been granted such status (Mitchell, 2006). What distinguishes refugees from other migrants is threefold: their movement is not voluntary; having suffered from prior trauma, they often have physical and mental health issues and limited/interrupted education; and they hold special legal status granting them access to welfare and education, albeit limited (Feuerherm & Ramanathan, 2016). Economic migrants, another commonly employed term, would not be considered refugees if they are seeking employment opportunities without a fear of persecution.

Part of the “crisis” stems from the unprecedented numbers of displaced individuals, and part stems from Europe’s political and humanitarian responses. Some countries have openly welcomed refugees, some have raised fences, and others have shuttled refugees into neighboring countries. These are some initial reactions to the arrival of migrants and refugees; subsequent decisions countries must make concern the duration and type of refugee assistance and policies for permanent residency and naturalization. Influencing and influenced by this political agenda is each country’s news media and its linguistic treatment of refugees. In reporting on political events, media discourse often transmits political rhetoric to its constituents who then translate it to everyday conversations (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). News media also offers a window into language attitudes of the general population because not only does the media affect public opinion (Bell, 1991; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Garrett & Bell, 1998), but it also reflects the sentiments of its readers who often subscribe to newspapers that share their own world views (Crowley & Sriskandarajah, 2005).

Media in an increasingly digital era necessitates an increasingly savvy consumer. A media literate person has the ability to “decode, evaluate, analyze and produce both print and electronic media” (Koltay, 2011, p. 212). This overlaps with the term “digital literacy,” which encapsulates access and knowledge of how to acquire information in ways made possible by technology

(Dobson & Willinsky, 2009). Often, these digital communications occur across geographic locales and languages, necessitating the competency and inclination to send and receive messages to those who are different (linguistically, culturally, economically, etc.) (Hull & Nelson, 2009). Such views of literacy follow those scholars within New Literacy Studies who view literacy as the socially determined ways to make and transmit meaning through written text or other modalities (Gee, 2015; Mills, 2010; The New London Group, 2000). These scholars break from traditional theorists who saw literacy as solely the ability to read and write (see Gee, 1987, 2015). As Gee (2015) remarks, even those who can read and write in their *primary discourse* may not be familiar with the socially prestigious *secondary discourse* learned through formal schooling or from being raised in a mainstream household. Thus, he defines literacy as the ability to use the necessary secondary discourses in socially and contextually appropriate ways—essentially, possessing the rules to participate in different linguistic domains. These more unacknowledged literacy demands can prove especially challenging for refugees and certain types of migrants who must first learn the *de facto* sociopragmatic requirements to partake in different discourse and policy procedures from their new country and later learn the country's national language(s) (if need be) and procedures for continual residency.

The purpose of this chapter is to bring attention to the media's treatment of the "global refugee crisis," situated within established research on discursive representations of migrants, refugees, and resettlement and reconceptualizations of citizenship in terms of access and inclusion (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016b; Ramanathan, 2013a, 2013b). Interwoven within this research is the topic of literacy, and digital literacies in particular, which have a twofold relationship: refugees' expected adeptness of (digital) literacies and the news media's use of (digital) literacies in representing refugeehood and resettlement. These connections have implications for linguistic gatekeeping and naturalization policies, pedagogical aspects of refugee education, and demonstrations of critical literacy/citizenship.

Tensions for Refugees in the Resettlement Process

Literacy demands punctuate the many hurdles that refugees experience throughout their displacement and resettlement process, beginning with who is labeled a refugee and who is not and ending¹ with the decision to become a naturalized citizen. For the sake of simplicity, only one country's migration policies (the US) will be expounded upon as an example of how literacy concerns overlap with the resettlement process. Before 1980, the US only defined a refugee as one leaving a communist nation or the Middle East. A broader definition from UNHCR was quoted above: A refugee is unable or unwilling to return to his country of origin due to a fear of persecution. Under this definition, someone fleeing a natural disaster or global warming is not legally a refugee, which some policy makers would dispute (Ludwig, 2016). Those who remain in their country of naturalization while still being displaced from their home (e.g., victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy in the US) are sometimes colloquially referred to as refugees but legally are not so (Ludwig, 2016). With these problematic discrepancies, it is not surprising that the general public does not always understand the legal differences between categories of migrants.

One early tension asylum seekers are met with is the need to demonstrate a history of persecution and a legitimate fear of returning to their home country. The US Immigration and Nationality Act specifies that "the burden of proof is on the *applicant* to establish that the applicant is a refugee" (INA Section 208, italics added for emphasis). Linguistic and literacy capabilities have been a component in assessing the veracity of an applicant's claims, for example by demonstrating the ability to speak the national language of the country of origin. Linguists have rightly pointed out the vast problems in using language proficiency as a barometric of nationality (Blommaert, 2009; Eades, 2009), which conceptually conflates language and nationhood as static and singular (Piller, 2011). When an asylum seeker's perceived eligibility rests on his linguistic repertoire matching outsiders' expectations of

which language are exclusively spoken in which countries (Blommaert, 2009), we see the sweeping impact literacy judgments can have.

Once (and if) an asylum seeker legally becomes a refugee, he has a period of time to receive government support, including “cultural orientation, language and vocational training, as well as programs to promote access to education and employment” (Resettlement, n.d., para. 8). Literacy plays heavily into this stage of resettlement: Refugees are expected to use these services to develop greater linguistic competency in the national language(s), to learn sociopragmatic norms for interactions, and to determine the means by which to acquire unknown information, often digitally. In the US, these social services are supposed to be available for up to eight months (Bruno, 2011), but some US states’ services differ and last for less than six months (Tyeklar, 2016). The overall objective of refugee resettlement is to ensure a refugee’s economic and cultural self-sufficiency, but many question whether this is functionally achievable in such a short period (Bruno, 2011; Tyeklar, 2016).

In the US following resettlement, refugees apply for permanent resident status after one year of residence. This gives the refugee (and any immigrant) permanent legal authority to live and work in the US. National discourse portrays the decision to apply for naturalization as a symbolic demonstration of attachment and assimilation, but there are various reasons why permanent residents choose to become citizens. These reasons are shaped in part by language policies and ideologies, and they affect not only the attitudes of prospective citizens, but also the attitudes of the host country’s population (Loring & Ramanathan, 2016a). Without becoming a naturalized citizen, permanent residents experience certain constraints such as restrictions on travel time abroad, the threat of deportation, and the reduction of social security benefits. However, the intricacies of the naturalization test often deter otherwise-qualified permanent residents from applying (Loring, 2013a, 2013b).

To become a naturalized citizen in the US, one must demonstrate three requirements through a naturalization application and oral interview: a knowledge of history and government; the ability to read, write, and speak English; and good moral character. The literacy component became a prerequisite for naturalization in 1917, but it wasn’t until 1952 that literacy became required in *English* in particular (Orgad, 2011). It is debatable to what extent these stipulations for naturalization are actually achieved in practice, as the history and government test has a fixed number of memorizable questions, the English proficiency component can be practiced through published vocabulary lists and memorizing question responses, and the good moral character requirement is merely defined as an absence of certain undesirable traits (Kunnan, 2009; Loring, 2013a, 2015). However, there are unstated test requirements as well; reading and understanding the English application is not counted as part of the English requirement, and it includes specialized terminology (*procured, narcotics, alimony*) and complex morphology and syntax (Loring, 2013a). Additionally, because the language of the test itself is English, the entire test becomes a *de facto* policy of English literacy (McNamara & Shohamy, 2008).

Undergoing naturalization gives one citizenship in an adopted country. In this legal sense, citizenship is defined in terms of rights and responsibilities; political theorists additionally reference membership, community, and participation (Castles, 1998; Marshall, 1950; Touraine, 1997). However, citizenship has a wider range beyond its legal realm. The US news media often equates *citizenship* with desirable ethics, values, and principles (Loring, 2013a, 2016a). Recently, scholars have shifted to analyzing citizenship in terms of what it permits, namely access to fuller participation (Heller, 2013; Ramanathan, 2013a, 2013b; Wiley, 2013; Wodak, 2013). More than exclusively referring to civic or legal participation, *full participation* is the ability to access any or all societal resources constrained by language, literacy, and culture, such as health care (Ziegahn et al., 2013), professional jobs (Ricento, 2013), equal educational opportunities (Lillie, 2016), and language communities outside one’s nation-state (McPherron, 2016). While not legally categorized as citizens, many inhabitants do already participate in their community and nation in ways that are unacknowledged in traditional citizenship policies (Leymarie, 2016).

Current Media Studies of Migrant Groups

Throughout the resettlement process, a country's populace can decide how to interact with and think about its country's newcomers. Helping to inform their choices and actions, the news media has the capability to frame the discussion of current events and set a dominant narrative. The rhetoric used to report on minorities and foreigners can incite xenophobia and racism in its readers and listeners, or profess a humanitarian connection between people of difference. Even though a news article may be a factual report, its choice of quotes, quote placement, visuals, metaphors, caricatures, and catchphrases can show the political leaning of its author and institution (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). A choice of a particular frame renders some facts more salient than others, giving them more weight when the audience forms attitudes. This section outlines some key scholarship in the analysis of news media's coverage of immigrants, migrants, and refugees, also summarized in Loring (2016b).

Wodak (2007) analyzed Austrian anti-Semitic post-war discourse to unearth instances of everyday racism, which she called *syncretic racism*. This type of oblique racism occurs when the discourse of exclusion is de-referentialized so that the audience can *infer* discriminatory understandings through shared knowledge and collective memories. In other work on anti-Semitism in post-war Austria, Wodak (2003) examined stereotypes, labels, allusions, minimizations, and quotations in oral and written news accounts to demonstrate how racist rhetoric is coded in discourse. Austrian discourse was also investigated in van Leeuwen and Wodak's (1999) study of official rejection notices concerning immigrant families' reunion applications. The discursive strategies of legitimation and justification create rejection letters based on "objective" reasons that would seem justifiable while simultaneously appearing sensitive to human rights issues. Legitimation was additionally analyzed in Martín Rojo and van Dijk's (1997) study of political discourse of the Spanish Secretary of the Interior in a speech on the military expulsion of "illegal" African migrants.

In the UK, several studies have analyzed the discursive representation of refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers through critical discourse analysis, corpus analysis, or both. Baker and McEnery (2005) compared concordances of *refugee(s)* and *asylum seeker(s)* in articles from British newspapers and the UNHCR Office. The researchers found that refugees tended to be described in terms of their country of origin and current country of residence. Notably, they unearthed several common metaphors used to depict refugees, in overarching discourses of victimhood, natural disasters, tragedy, crime, and nuisance (Baker & McEnery, 2005).

Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) reported on a ten-year data sample of nineteen UK newspapers concerning refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants (RASIM). Analysis revealed that the vast majority of themes commonly associated with RASIM were negative and included references to destinations, numbers, economic problems, residence, repatriation, legality, and plight. The researchers concluded that in doing so, the British press created and sustained what can be described as a moral panic (Hill, 2008) around RASIM (Baker et al., 2008; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008).

Turning to the US, Santa Ana (2013) analyzed all television network stories reported on the four largest national networks in 2004 to discover what type of Latino news stories were covered and what percentage of these stories concerned immigration. He found that through the story framing, networks portrayed immigrants and refugees from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico in a different light: Mexican migrants were depicted as irresponsible parents and criminals, while Cuban migrants were described with admiration and positive regard (Santa Ana, 2013).

Loring (2016a, 2016b) used a corpus and critical discourse analysis of articles and blogs in 2011 from the *New York Times* to investigate the treatment of the words *citizenship*, *refugee*, *alien*, and *immigrant*.² A ten-word concordance strand of *citizenship* revealed that the word was commonly coupled with a specific nationality (similar to Baker and McEnery's [2005] finding), especially when

a person did not reside in his or her original country of origin. European and Middle Eastern stories that referenced *citizenship* thematically concerned conflict and strife while American stories addressed immigration (often *illegal immigration*) and the birther movement (Loring, 2016a). The word *refugee* commonly collocated with a geographic locale, such as “refugee from Eritrea,” “Haitian refugees,” and “refugees coming into Peshawar, Pakistan.” Four metaphors were regularly employed in refugee discourse: quantification, tragedy, veracity, and crime and nuisance (Loring, 2016b); the first three have been encountered in other studies of public news corpora (Baker & McEnery, 2005; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Santa Ana, 2002), and the fourth metaphor is an iteration of US government policy discourse. Use of the word *immigrant* also metaphorically referenced quantification and tragedy but uniquely addressed the themes of legality and movement. Also significant was the considerable preference for the phrase *illegal immigrant* (95 instances) instead of *undocumented immigrant* (three instances) (Loring, 2016b).

Digital Media Reporting on Migrant Groups

To investigate the “global refugee crisis” that began in 2015 through the lens of digital literacy, we analyzed the first three webpages returned from a Google search of the phrase “refugee crisis” in May 2016³: “Refugee crisis: When is a tragedy a massacre?,” an editorial from Richard Seymour at *Al Jazeera* from April 2016; “Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts” from the *BBC* in March 2016; and “The global refugee crisis” from *The Atlantic*, a collection of 12 expandable articles written in September and October 2015. We looked at general trends and prototypical discursive strategies in the media’s reporting and consumers’ responses to this issue to lend credibility to our theoretical claims.

The three webpages analyzed are more digitally complex than print articles: they include images, Instagram photos, Twitter handles, hyperlinks, advertisements (some from external sources and some self-promotional), charts, large quotes of the article’s key phrases, options to expand a synopsis to a full article, and opportunities to add comments as a user. Thus, fully understanding the webpages requires more than English comprehension; it also necessitates the navigation of a digital document and an awareness of avenues for follow-up readings. For example, the first sentence in the first article of *The Atlantic*’s page is “David noted yesterday the tendency of presidential candidates to make Holocaust analogies, but Godwin’s Law isn’t an American monopoly, and in some cases the comparison may be historically apt” (Calamur, 2015, para. 1). The words “noted yesterday” appear in blue, which the reader needs to know signals a hyperlink, taking the reader to an article written the previous day in *The Atlantic* by David Graham. The article ends with three icons (for Facebook, Twitter, and email), which a savvy user understands are clickable links to share the article across various platforms. Even before understanding the content of each article, it is clear that users must know how to access the available digital tools, or even know what are appropriate “guesses” in the sense of what to click on and look for.

The following subsections use these three articles to illustrate prevalent themes from media reporting of refugees and migrants, many of which have been confirmed in the literature. The final subsection (Anti-migrant sentiments) is a collection of overtly discriminatory anti-refugee themes found in the *Al Jazeera* article’s comment section.

Dangerous water. All three articles characterize refugees’ presence as “dangerous water,” to use Santa Ana’s (2002) metaphor (what Baker and McEnery [2005] call “refugees as movement”). This is seen in the phrases “small trickle relative to total migration,” “latest surge,” “stemmed the flow,” “stop the flow,” “largest flow,” “unregulated flow,” the quote “stemming the flow of African migrants” and the quote of other media coverage itself: “Waves of asylum seekers

flowing into European countries in a ‘relentless stream.’” Reducing people to flowing bodies of water prompts readers to see refugees and migrants as a natural disaster (a flood) and constant pressure. This is a commonly found representation in media discourse of immigration and migration, and its effects are that individuals are likened to a faceless, homogenous mass (Baker & McEnery, 2005; Loring, 2016b).

Large numbers. Similar to this theme is the constant framing of refugees and migrants in terms of their large numbers: “more than a million,” “huge numbers,” “massive scale,” “thousands of migrants.” Sometimes the numbers are vague, as seen above, and sometimes the numbers are precise: “60 million people” and “70,000 refugees.” This theme is called “quantification” by Baker and McEnery (2005) and often suggests a core sentiment of apprehension or distress. In a similar vein, magazine covers use “infinityline” and “mass of heads” metaphors to visually depict large numbers of migrants (Chavez, 2001). An underlying assumption behind this discourse is that a greater number of immigrants threatens the status quo. It also reduces the immigrant experience to a mere description of numbers, indicating that their quantity is more important than their backgrounds or personalities.

Tragedy. The tragedy metaphor is seen in discourse that uses words such as *despair*, *stricken*, *dying*, and *tragedy* itself. It constructs refugees (as well as other minority groups) as powerless and unfortunate (Baker & McEnery, 2005). Loring (2016b) found this metaphor more commonly used in *immigrant* discourse than *refugee* discourse, “imply[ing] that immigrants are down on their luck and in unfortunate situations. In Kim’s (2012) study of Korean editorials, overly sympathetic discourse similarly painted migrants as “helpless victims.” Discourse describing the global refugee crisis uses many instances of “drowning,” “death,” “dying,” and “fatalities,” as well as more evocative constructions such as “massacre,” “brutal detainment,” “harassment at sea,” “tragic consequences,” and “throes of conflict.” Thus, these authors frame migrants as powerless and rarely as empowered.

Problems. Under the broad theme of refugees and migrants “as a problem” are mentions of high costs of processing and resettlement (*The Atlantic* even calculates a figure—\$15,714 per person, from Syria to the US). Referencing high costs can give readers who struggle with their own finances a visceral negative reaction. Mentions of refugees in terms of crime and nuisance (Baker & McEnery, 2005) and burden on society (Kim, 2012) would also be included under this theme. Labeling refugees as an “economic burden” (Loring, 2016b) and “disproportionate burden” paints them as a problem. General mentions of “tensions,” “dimensions of the problem,” and “scale of the problem” from the global refugee crisis webpages are not overtly discriminatory but do frame the crisis by its challenges.

Borders. When a country’s borders are seen as representative of political, linguistic, and cultural divisions, its inhabitants feel a sense of unity (Shohamy, 2006). They are seen as an authentic and legitimate way of making sense of political and nationalist divisions. Therefore, crossing into a foreign country is symbolic for entering a neighbor’s house. This is seen in the expression “Germany had opened its doors” (*The Atlantic*), which compares the border to a front door (Santa Ana, 2002). Also employed are less metaphorical expressions: “closed its borders” and “cross into Hungary.” Although more literal, these expressions still rely on an interpretation of borders as a veritable and legitimate division.

Transaction. A recently-used theme in the global refugee crisis discourse describes the relationship between refugees and the countries they are moving into as a transaction or commodity. Oft-repeated is the phrase “take in [particular number of] refugees.” This language objectifies refugees as a commodity or transactional item to be passed from one country to another (Kim, 2012). Other similar phrases such as “will be allowed to stay” and “accepted more refugees” also highlight the hierarchical relationship between the powerless refugees and the authoritative host countries and governments.

Table 8.1 Anti-migrant Sentiments Expressed through Online Readers' Comments

Theme	Example phrase
Blame	"Refugee crisis is the result their own mistakes..."
Pass the buck	"Let the refugees migrate to another Muslim country..."
Stay and fight	"...Why are these people not staying to fight Issad and ISIS???"
Resistance to (cultural) integration	"Europe doesn't want these Muslims. Once established in their ghettos they... attempt to force their practices and customs on them."
Slippery slope	"What is the alternative that is being proposed? Opening the boarders and allowing everyone through?"
Priority of Europe's problems	"But please continue dragging Europeans through the dirt. Countries that are themselves failing on a mass scale."
Fairness	"Why can't *I* get processed for free??"
Exhausted charity	"I don't blame them at ALL for doing what they do. But it DOES NOT MEAN they have some guaranteed, transcendental right of acceptance on the part of their host country."
Choice	"The Europeans didn't put those fools on a boat and send them to Europe; they did, and they got what they deserved for being stupid."

Coping. Two of the three articles reference "coping," another theme newly in use. This word is seen in the phrases "unable to cope with the flow," "Europe cannot cope," "to show the country can cope with migrants," and "countries struggle to cope with the influx." This theme relates to the problem and transaction themes: All three position migrants and refugees as a burden that higher status countries can choose to assist. The word "cope" signals the imbalance of power and global inconvenience of mass displacements of people.

Anti-migrant sentiments. The *Al Jazeera* webpage was the only one of the three to allow readers to post comments, receiving 34 posts by 28 unique users. The majority of these comments demonstrate popular tropes of refugees as viewed by the anti-refugee community. Table 8.1 presents the nine themes referenced more than once in the comments section with an example phrase for each.⁴ Common within the example sentences above are the referential labels used to describe the migrants and refugees; there are many instances of "these people," "these Muslims," "they," and "them," along with "these economic migrants." The positioning of "us"/"them" language is not new, but what is interesting are the many occurrences of "*these* people/migrants/Muslims" that not only emphasize the "other-ness" of the group but also lump them together stereotypically. Possibly, these fearful, self-preservation responses are triggered by the number of migrants in Europe exceeding a tacit threshold.

Implications for Educational Practice

Issues such as the above force us to consider what we can alter in our current respective pedagogic domains to raise awareness about media coverage regarding refugees. For clarity's sake, we list them below:

1. Engaging in simple discourse analysis: For a start, we can engage students in the kind of simple discourse analysis shown here. Alerting them to how online journalism tends to overgeneralize by speaking of refugees as singularities is a necessary first step.
2. Realizing the differences between newcomers: Raising awareness among students and educators about differences between various groups of "newcomers"—refugees, immigrants, voluntary migrants—each of whom has very different histories and starting points seems crucial.

3. Understanding the special needs of refugees: Educators should be sensitized to the special needs of refugees that stem from an interrupted education, past history of trauma and instability, and probable repercussions for mental and physical health (Feuerherm & Ramanathan, 2016). While many refugees may lack formal education and literacy in their native language(s) (Camps, 2016), others possess strong speaking skills in the target language which, while valuable, may mask the need for cultural competency education (Feuerherm, 2016). These differences speak to the divergent needs of refugee groups and the deficiencies of a one-size-fits-all approach to refugee education.
4. Developing sites for participatory research: Creating contexts whereby refugees themselves can shape the direction of their program through voicing their own educational objectives (Feuerherm, 2016) would be empowering. Once the curricular outcomes have been agreed to, educators of refugees and permanent residents can lead their students to develop familiarity with necessary school-based literacy practices (“classroom literacy”) (Loring, 2013a, 2013c). Having the instructor demonstrate and exemplify the academic practices necessary to completing certain handouts would ensure that students have equal access to classroom participation.
5. Promoting inclusion: To promote inclusion, scholars recommend including a tutoring component in the program (Feuerherm, 2016) or organizing frequent collaborations with target language speakers and community members (Elmeroth, 2003). Additionally, such participatory curriculum would help prepare refugees for the diverse set of literacies expected of them upon resettlement: “navigating the job market, creating resumes, understanding the job search process,...computer literacy,...banking,...using credit, navigating the US health-care system,...tenant’s rights,...understanding the school system, [and] grocery shopping” (Tyeklar, 2016, p. 169–170).
6. Rethinking “Survival English” to additionally value home languages: Often, refugee literacy education in the US is geared toward finding and keeping an entry-level job and is subsumed under the label of “survival English.” Survival English problematically treats language instruction as “a means to an economic end” and as “a remedy for a perceived deficiency” (Camps, 2016, p. 63). This framing oversimplifies the ubiquity of English in the nation as a whole and the individual workplace in particular, and it ignores the multilingual interplays that English affords *in addition to* whichever first languages are already spoken. Additionally, teaching English with a survivalist mentality can more readily lead to teaching English, citizenship, and literacy in a minimalist and cursory way. Instead, ESL/citizenship classes for refugees could not only teach basic English but also recognize the linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of students’ native languages and commemorate their multilingualism and multiculturalism. Furthermore, these classes could endeavor to promote refugee students’ critical literacy and citizenship: thinking critically, questioning prescribed responses, making comparisons with one’s home country, and identifying societal inequalities (Loring, 2013a)—components that the next section will elucidate.

Recommendations and Forward Thinking

The goal of this chapter is to explore media representations of refugees and possible implications for literacy practices regarding refugee education. In focusing on the initial displacement and migration of refugees during the “global refugee crisis,” the media tends to frame the issue largely in terms of the population impact on European countries. Frequent exposure to discourse that focuses on refugees’ and migrants’ large numbers, difficulties, and economic and demographic effects on the host country may result in a tendency to think about refugees as a homogenous mass in a negative light.

Consequently, dehumanizing language can lead to political and social actions that treat immigrants and refugees as a problem—one more challenge refugees face in their displacement and resettlement. Many commenters reacting to the news cycle fixate on the decisions leading to and the aftermaths of border-crossings in ways that recycle xenophobic and discriminatory discourse more overtly. By presenting displacement as a “choice,” the discourse places the onus on the refugee to account for “mistakes” and “stay and fight” for one’s native country. A similar discursive construction appears in asylum and naturalization policy, where the burden of proof is on the applicant to prove his qualifications before being granted rights and privileges of protection (Blommaert, 2009; Loring, 2013a).

What these discourse patterns ignore are the ongoing resettlement processes and the difficulties in resettling from *the refugees’*, not the host country’s, perspective. As mentioned, after less than a year of financial and linguistic assistance, it is assumed that refugees can live self-sufficiently (speaking the national language(s), having employment, knowing their rights, and being culturally adjusted). Not only are these feats difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish in eight months, they are also more gradable than they appear: *Having* an entry-level minimum-wage job is one obstacle, but working in a position matched to the strengths and qualifications of the applicant is far more difficult to manage. One compounding factor is the fact that not all educational degrees or credentials are internationally transferable (Feuerherm, 2016; Tyeklar, 2016). As Tyeklar (2016) muses, “should not truly supportive resettlement ultimately include the development of those particular literacies necessary beyond just survival?” (p. 161).

By “particular literacies,” Tyeklar is acknowledging the meaning-making activities that compose a person’s day-to-day life (navigating to and from locations in one’s community; participating in transactions of goods and services; asking/responding to questions, requests, favors, and complaints; accessing (digital) information; understanding legal, local, bureaucratic, and *de facto* policies; interacting with friends and strangers in socioculturally appropriate ways, etc.). These types of knowledge are multiple, broad, and domain specific, and must be learned to be “read” (Gee, 2003). These literacies are often unacknowledged but arguably present the most comprehensive challenge for resettlers. As we have argued elsewhere, there is often a mismatch between *legal* citizenship and *de facto* citizenship, where *de facto* citizenship entails a knowledge of how to navigate government websites and offices to obtain information and access documents, how to act within government buildings, and inclusion and participation in one’s community (Loring, 2017; Loring & Ramanathan, 2016; Ramanathan, 2013a, 2013b). Likewise, comfort in such literacies is a measure of *de facto* access and integration.

Many scholars have called attention to the literacy needs for an active citizenry (Banks, 2008; DeJaeghere, 2008; Loring, 2013a, 2013b; Mulcahy, 2011), where questioning judgments, ideologies, and dominant discourses transforms normative structures and informs curricular development (Luke, 2014; Mulcahy, 2011). In a pedagogic model of critical literacy, teachers and students together use “new literacies to change relations of power, both people’s everyday social relations and larger geopolitical and economic relations” (Luke, 2014, p. 28). This entails a critique of both the consumption and production of discourse (Janks, 2014). A critical citizen demonstrating critical literacy is one who becomes a critical evaluator of how one’s own and others’ language can be used for gate-keeping and marginalization.⁵ By bringing attention to these issues, this chapter reminds researchers and educators of the consequences of power-laden political discourse and the opportunities they have in interacting with refugees and migrants.

Notes

1. We use “ending” to represent the final legal status change, but we acknowledge that (literacy) hurdles do not end with naturalized citizenship.
2. The 2016b study drew on the full corpus of 270 articles and blogs that had at least one mention of the word *citizenship*. Data used in the 2016a study came from a three-month subsection of the corpus, which totaled 171 articles and blogs.

3. This excluded the Wikipedia page and the section “In the News” with the most recent articles posted a few hours before the search.
4. The quotes are displayed verbatim, including misspellings, original punctuation, and capitalized words.
5. For instance, when media discourse tends to reproduce dominant discourses and ideologies of those who are different, a critical citizen questions assumptions and consequences that these views instigate (Loring, 2013a).

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