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# Sociolinguistics: The Study of Language in Society

Key Stage 4

English Language

Resource 4

2019



# Resource Four Overview



Topic "You can't do anything if you don't speak English."

GCSE Modules Critical reading. Writing for impact.

Objectives By the end of this resource you will have:

- ✓ Commented on your awareness of the impact limited proficiency in English can have on new arrivals
- ✓ Reflected critically on language inequality

Instructions

1. Read the data source
2. Complete the activities
3. Explore the further reading

Context This resources looks at case studies from two articles, one from The Guardian and the other from The Metro. Both case studies explore language barriers faced by refugees and what they do to overcome these barriers.



# Resource Four

## Data Source



### Case Study 1

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/nov/16/language-barrier-refugees-english-classes-integration-esol>



#### 'I used to cry when I had to talk to someone'

Makida is a 40-year-old mother of three living in Brighton who fled Ethiopia because of political upheaval. She has attended English classes since she arrived in the UK 10 years ago, but found the language hard to learn and often missed classes to care for her sick mother. She needed to use a translator for a long time and said she also struggled with self-confidence when trying to communicate in public. "I used to cry when I had to talk to someone," she explains. "It's the way I was brought up; it wasn't really respectful [in Ethiopia] to go up and talk to somebody, because I'm a woman."

Makida says it was only once she started having home tuition two years ago, in addition to her ESOL classes, that she gained confidence and started to pick up English. She now runs a catering company with her husband, making Ethiopian food for community events, and has made friends with her neighbours: "In the past couple of years I've got to know an Albanian woman who lives a few doors down. We drink coffee and speak English together every day".

### Case Study 2

<https://metro.co.uk/2018/06/07/as-a-refugee-you-cant-do-anything-in-the-uk-if-you-dont-speak-english-7606662/?ito=cbshare>

#### As a refugee, you can't do anything in the UK if you don't speak English

You can't do anything if you don't speak English. Cooking classes are giving refugees a purpose when they have nothing else. That's what I told MPs at an All-Party Parliamentary Group meeting this Monday, on the topic of loneliness. As a Burundian refugee and student, I explained why the government must increase funding for English lessons as part of its integration strategy, in order to tackle isolation and enable refugees to contribute to their new communities. My family and I lived in a refugee camp in Kenya for six years, after we fled Burundi. We were told that we'd be relocating to England in 2016, when I was 23-years-old, and I was happy to be moving away from the hardship. I

# Resource Four

## Data Source



had always dreamed of living in the UK, because it's a free country. But, you can't do anything if you don't speak English. Learning the native language is essential for refugees, so that they feel part of their new communities and because it enables them to work, volunteer and follow their dreams. My dear mother died after battling breast cancer, just two months before we received the call from the UN Refugee Agency, telling us that we were being resettled in the UK. After everything we'd been through, it felt like the end to the suffering we'd endured. But, I didn't know how I was going to survive without my mum. I am the eldest of four children, I felt alone and uncertain about how we would cope in a new country.

We arrived in the UK on Tuesday August 9, 2016. The weather was cold and it was raining. Upon our arrival, we were welcomed by an interpreter and staff from the charity Refugee Action. Although it was exciting, it was also very emotional – we cried in the taxi, all the way from the airport to the place we would call home. We could see the way, but it was like our eyes were blinded by everything new to us. We had support from the charity and the local authority. I began to feel hopeful and was relieved, because I knew that I was not alone anymore.

When we arrived, I could speak and understand a little bit of English, but I was not confident enough to reply to people, which made me very eager to learn. I applied to a local adult learning centre, but it was full and they put me on a long waiting list. I tried a further education college, but it was also closed to new learners and had a long wait for lessons. Then, I joined a community centre, which provided informal lessons, but it wasn't at the right level. Left at home, while my brothers

# Resource Four

## Data Source



and my sister went to school, I felt bored and isolated. I started to think about the past, which didn't help me. That's why I needed to keep myself busy and do things that would benefit me in the future. I had to find a school where I could study English, and I didn't give up. Instead of staying at home, I went to a British Heart Foundation store and asked if I could volunteer. I worked there for four months, started to make friends and learned new things.

# Resource Four Activities



**Activities** For each of the questions below, write a mini-essay (1-2 pages of A4):

1. How are these two stories written and why did the authors of the articles make those choices? In answering that question, bear in mind the grammatical choices made, the 'voice' used and the style of the 2 articles.
2. Do they sound like the other articles in this pack? If not, why? What makes them different?
3. Write down in 1 or 2 short sentences if and how the stories in these articles affect the way you perceive migrants. Do you think the young lady in the first article is right? Is it the UK government's responsibility to support these migrants by funding English lessons? Why or why not?

# Resource Four

## Further Reading



### Explore

1. Watch the short film 'Your languages, Your future' on YouTube. Does it change your views on the importance of 'minority languages'?



- ✓ [Your Languages, Your Future](#)



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