CYR RC

Leibniz
Education

Integration-CAN-D: First Joint Research Workshop

August 29-31, 2018
German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF)
Frankfurt am Main

<u>Topics addressed</u>

1. **Doing research with refugee participants**
   Different approaches, procedures and methods that are especially relevant when dealing with refugee children and their families

   > In research with children who have experienced flight, expulsion and violence, it is discernable that some show a learning behavior that differs from the typical behavior of children with an immigrant background. On the first day of the workshop, we discussed conditions for transferring the methods used for research on immigrant children. Potential and challenges of both quantitative and qualitative approaches were discussed.

2. **Diagnostic language tests**
   Standardized methods and their use in refugee samples; new developments

   > Standardized methods can provide reliable results about language impairment in refugee children – if they are adapted to the children's specific needs. The potentials and problems of three tests, the sentence repetition task (SRT), the non-word repetition task (NWRT), and LiSe-DaZ, were discussed as well as possible combinations with other tests.

3. **Facilitating the exchange of research materials, instruments and data**
   Exchange on how to facilitate and improve communication between research partners – implementation needs and possibilities

   > On our third day, we summarized experiences about the exchange of research materials, data and information in the Canadian-German research cooperation. Where is further support necessary in order to facilitate and intensify the exchange? After clarifying possible objectives, structural and organizational opportunities were presented and discussed.

For the Agenda of the First joint Research Workshop (including the list of participants) see **Appendix 1.**

For the slides of the presentations **Appendix 2-4:**

 Appendix 2: **Doing research with refugee participants**

   Katrin Lindner: Doing research with refugee participants: experiences and challenges

   Annette Korntheuer: Doing qualitative research with refugee participants

   Mochine Ait Ramdan: Specific needs in literacy and language learning of refugee children: A comparison of Germany and Canada

   Anna Yamashita: Qualitative research with refugees in Toronto: Experiences and findings

 Appendix 3: **Diagnostic language tests**

   Cornelia Hamann: Standardized and newly designed language assessment. Former Experiences and some question: Which ones are applicable in the refugee context?

   Petra Schulz: The LiSe-DaZ – applicability to refugee populations?

   Angela Grimm: Nonword repetition, applicability to new arrivals/refugees

   Lina Abed Ibrahim: Some assessment tools in L1-Arabic

 Appendix 4: Facilitating the exchange of research materials, instruments and data

   Nicola Mühlhäußer: Results of the Survey

   Thomas Schwager: Data sharing in the CYRRC-network: needs and requirements

Summary of discussions

A) How to do good diagnostic cognitive tests on refugee children, how to test linguistic and literacy skills? → What factors matter in testing as well as in learning for refugee children? How to set up the data collection?

Agreement on the observation that refugee children are doing far worse in the main diagnostic tests than other bilingual children (both early and late bilinguals). This does not necessarily indicate specific language impairment (SLI) but may be confounded with it in standardized testing. An open question remains whether cognitive deprivation or traumatization – before and after immigration – may play a role.

Currently, so-called dynamic testing of refugee children is explored, which does not evaluate the language proficiency at a given point in time, but rather how quickly a child learns a certain skill, and how well skills can be transferred.

The specific factors that might influence the learning behavior of refugee children were collected and summarized at the workshop:

CYR RC

Leibniz
Education

# Language and literacy assessment of refugee children:
What FACTORS matter?
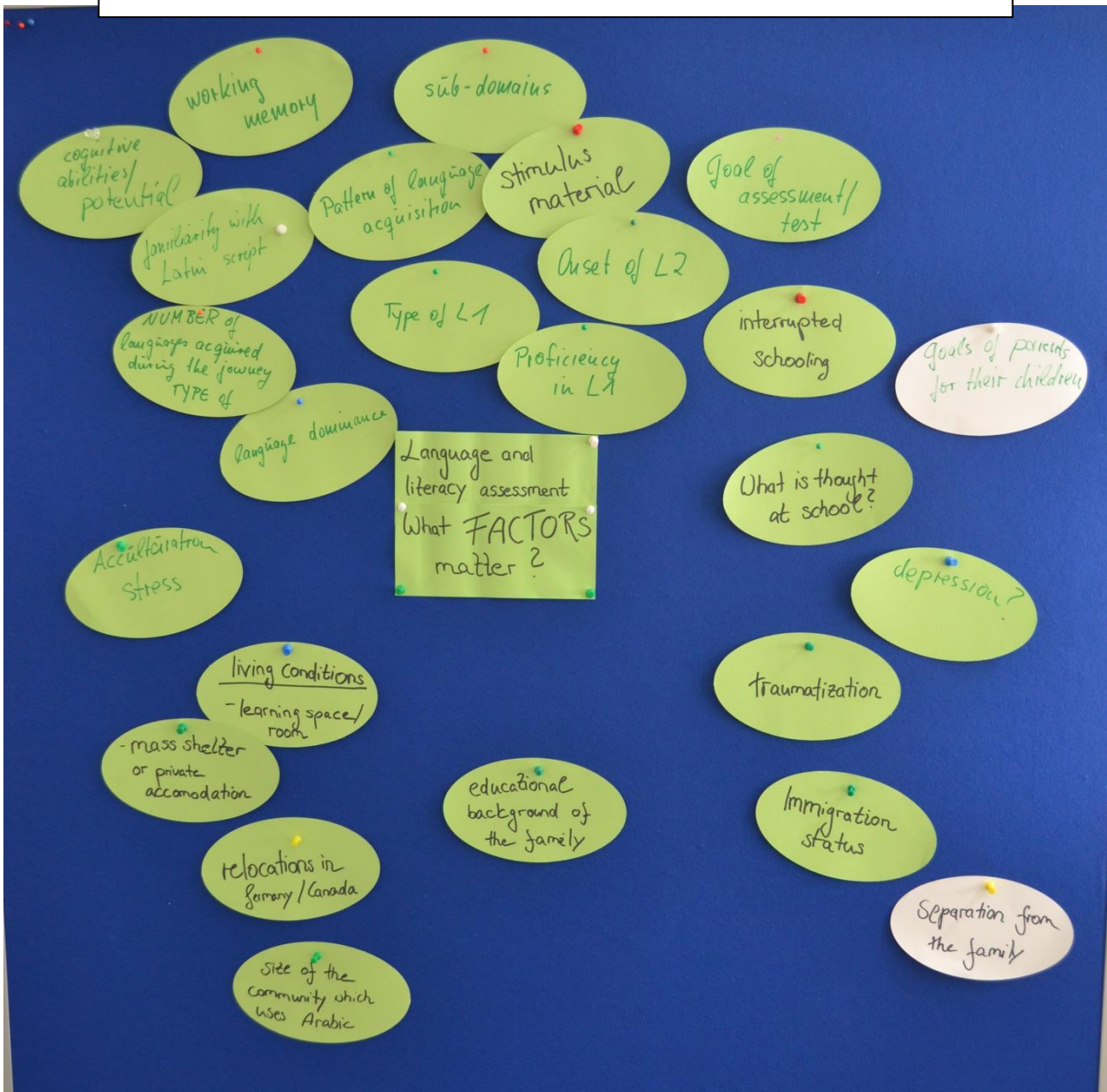
How to capture influencing factors with (parental) questionnaires and interviews?

These factors, as well as existing questionnaires of the participating projects from Alberta, Munich, Oldenburg, Toronto and Montreal informed a joint working process on collecting pertinent questionnaire items (summarized by Lina Abed Ibrahim), see **Appendix 5**.

Useful tips for good practice were collected and summarized during the workshop:

CYR RC

How to do research with refugee children/youths and families
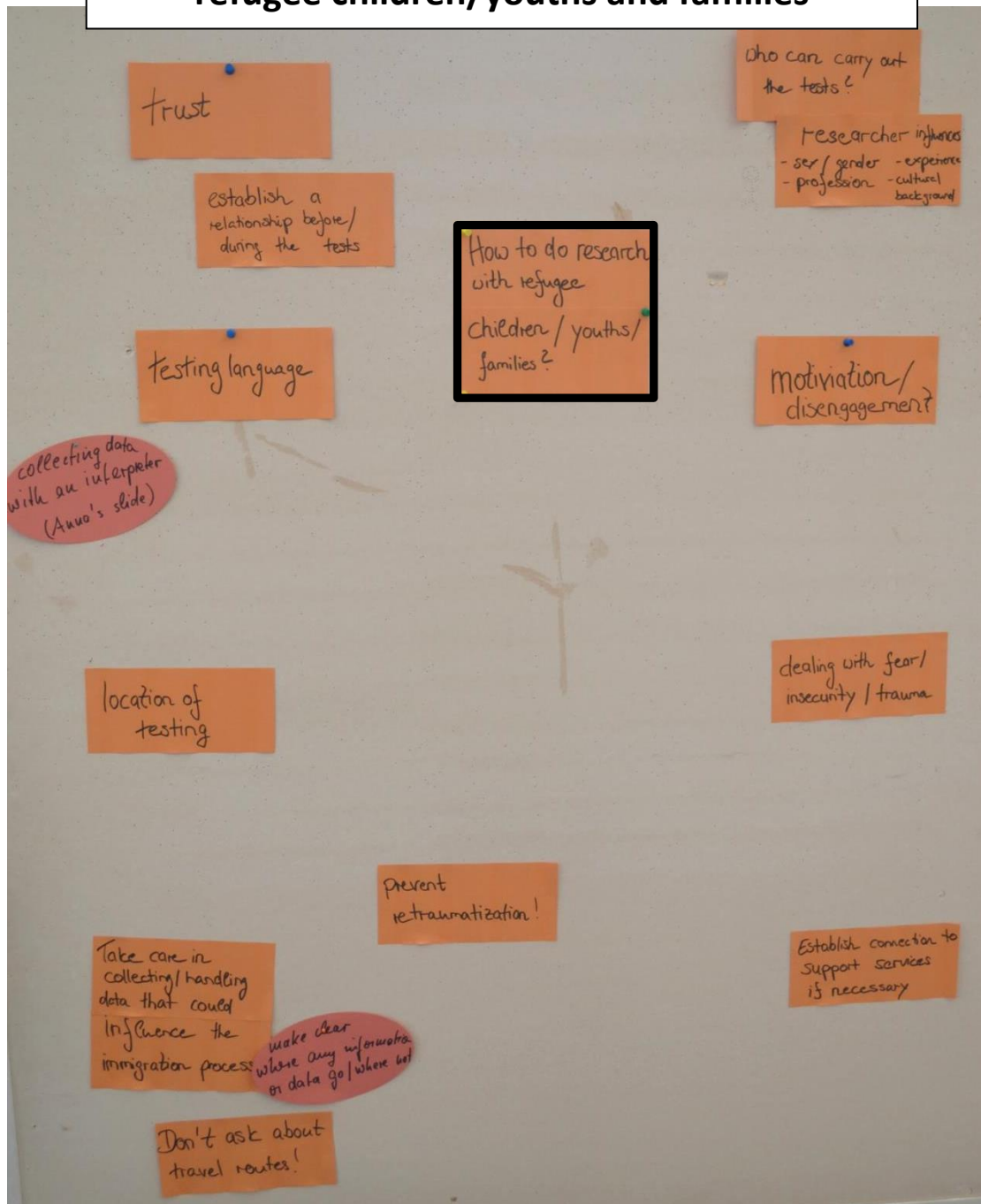
Structural differences between Canada and Germany?

There are systematical differences between Canada and Germany and therefore at some points also different influencing factors. These differences can be productive but have to be carefully considered. For an introduction to the structural contexts of both countries see, for example, Korntheuer, A., Pritchard, P. Maehler, D. (eds.) (2017). *Strucutral Context of Refugee Integration in Canada and Germany*. Köln: GESIS Schriftenreihe. Accessible also online: https://www.gesis.org/fileadmin/upload/forschung/publikationen/gesis_reihen/gesis_schriftenreihe/GS_15_-_Refugee_Integration_in_Canada_and_Germany.pdf.

SPONSORED BY THE

Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

CYRURC

Leibniz
Education

B) How to adapt standardized testing for refugee children in order to obtain valid assessments of language impairment:

"How can we determine whether language difficulties in a bilingual (refugee) child are due to **insufficiently early/frequent/rich exposure to and use of the language, to traumatic experience, interrupted schooling, immigration status …** or to **language impairment**?"

Participants agree on the observation that current tests of specific language impairment yield false positives for a number of refugee children, diagnosing them as language-impaired when in fact they are typically developing. Possible adaptations are discussed:

- the adjustment of norms;
- the variation in test language (L1 or both L1 and L2);
- different coding, disregarding case errors, for example.

It is also concluded that non-word repetition tasks and a respective L1 tests are preferable to assess specific language impairment. Together they might allow a preliminary assessment of the child as typically developing. If there is a doubt, further testing - preferably dynamic testing - will be necessary.

Taking into account the effects of possible deprivation and trauma in refugee children, participants agree tentatively on a step-wise testing strategy:

1. Testing of basic cognitive abilities, including working memory
2. Non-word repetition task to assess specific language impairment
3. Sentence repetition and other language tests for an assessment of different domains

A major open question remains "How to achieve L2 literacy without a solid L1 to build on?"

Participants agree to explore further where differences in results across the different labs may come from and to complement diagnostic experiments and surveys with a more qualitative case-study approach. Mixed-method research projects could facilitate the research.

Further questions that were discussed:
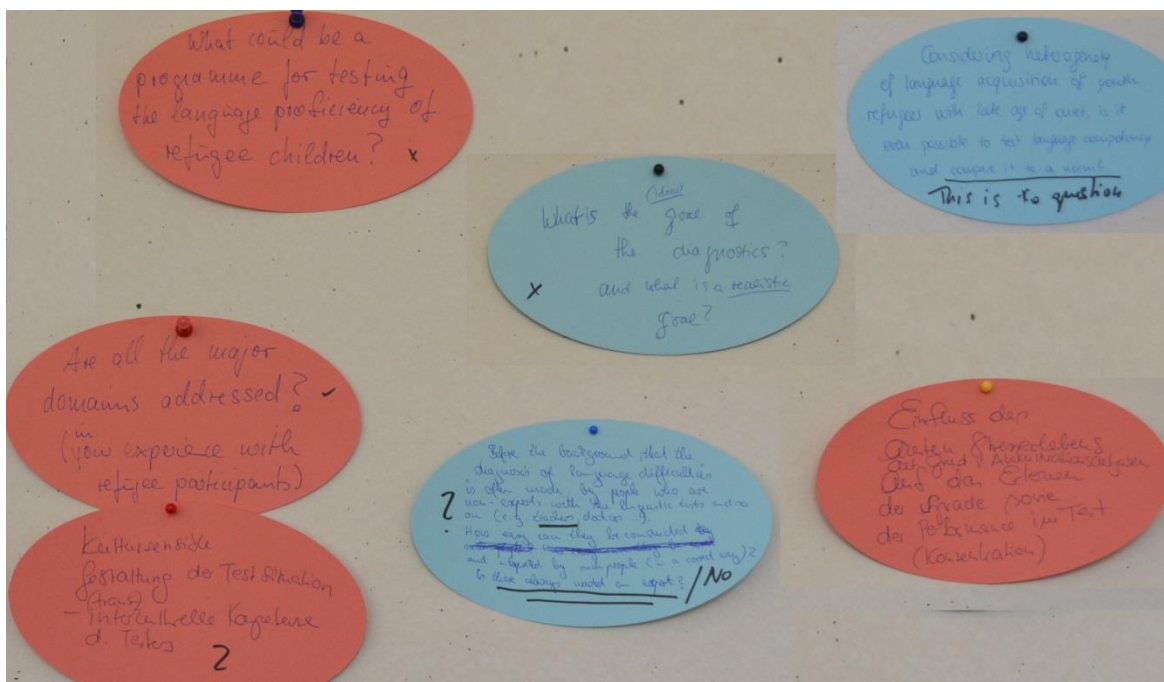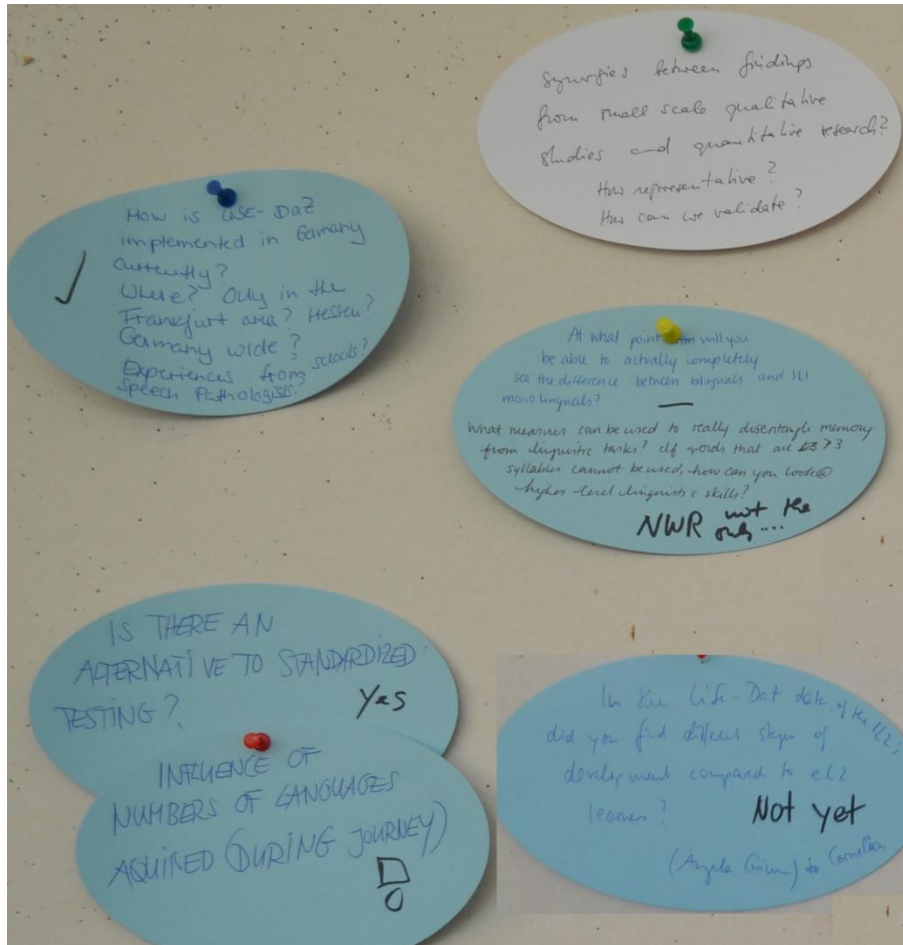
Next steps:
Doing research with refugee participants

A follow up research meeting on language and literacy would be beneficial to discuss results with the scientific community and the stakeholders on the political and administrative levels, as well as in the field.

Research cooperation, joint projects and sharing research materials and experiences can facilitate the research and should be supported and extended. Both Integration CAN-D and CYRRC are planning more research workshops as support for further exchange.

C) Exchange of research materials, instruments, data – Needs and possibilities

Participants agree on the aim of sharing materials on the topics discussed within the network. These materials include questionnaires and test instruments including manuals, parts thereof, as well as pertinent project reports, grey literature and other materials on methods and contexts. For a sub-set of co-operation partners, sharing of empirical data is considered. All decisions on access of materials or empirical data shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

From the workshop discussion as well as the feedback from a short set of questions that was collected from the Integration CAN-D Network beforehand, the following issues were considered especially challenging:

- there is very little information available on "what is out there in the network" although a broad exchange would be beneficial;
- (technical/ legal) differences between research institutes/universities render the exchange difficult;
- data security and privacy are important issues and necessary measures have to be taken to guarantee a secure way to exchange data and research materials;
- since a personal relation is so far the condition for successful exchange, an index of existing projects, research materials and data would support a broader exchange

Next steps: Sharing materials

Index of existing projects materials and data

1. Collecting information about existing projects, materials, data and contact persons: Which research materials and data exist and could be exchanged?
2. Developing suitable sets of meta-data to describe the existing research materials and data
3. Creating an information-retrieval-concept and providing the information to the network, for example on one of the websites of the network

Outlook/possible further development: Extend the source of information to a platform of exchange (dependent on financial, personnel and technical resources)

1. Extending the collected information on the existing research data: establish a list of data characteristics
2. Determining the possibilities regarding the financial, personnel and technical resources
3. Creating the technical infrastructure (including manuals and instructions to guarantee easy accessibility; maintenance service)

If there is the intention of sharing data with co-operation partners, this information must be included in the declaration of consent (of the parents and the research participants). Integration CAN-D will provide examples of consent forms used in an international context.

Content of the separately attached appendix: