

**“The language is a part of them”:  
How teachers navigate the educational inclusion of refugee students**

Millions of children globally are displaced from their countries of origin and face the challenge of attending school in languages they do not understand. Nowhere is this challenge more evident than in Uganda, a linguistically diverse country that hosts the largest refugee population in Africa and the third largest in the world. Despite the global trend toward integrating refugees into national systems of education in countries of exile like Uganda, there is little research about the pedagogical implications of this policy shift for the educators tasked with the inclusion of refugees in national classrooms. Through lesson observations and interviews with Ugandan head teachers (principals) and teachers working in three integrated schools in Kampala, I examine the ways that educators approach the educational and linguistic inclusion of refugee students. I find that, despite linguistically diverse classes in which children speak as many as fifteen different languages, educators must navigate national English-only policies without training or official guidance. As a result, head teachers rely on their own perceptions of refugees and multilingualism to determine how to implement national language-in-education policy. Likewise, teachers turn to their preexisting understandings of refugees and multilingualism to embrace, accommodate or resist head teacher language-in-education expectations, with widely divergent pedagogical practices. This paper has implications for both policymakers and educators engaged in the inclusion of refugee students in national education systems and for the increasing populations of children globally seeking education in settings of exile.