

## **‘Disturbing disparity in education’: refugees’ self-positioning and resistance to barriers they face in Mexico**

Syifa Amelia<sup>1</sup>, Ribut Wahyudi<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

This study aims to raise awareness of refugee education due to the increased shortage of educational access for refugees. The language interplays within educational discourse to discover the narrative in the speech. This study analyzes Adriana Figueredo Costero's speech as a refugee representative in the United Nations conference under the discussion of refugee education. The study focuses on refugee portrayal based on the speaker's perspective on the discussion related to refugee education in Mexico. This research is conducted under a qualitative approach by using Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Halliday's systemic functional linguistic approach. The result of the study indicates that the disparity in refugee education is triggered by unfulfilled basic needs, administrative adversity, and public sentiment toward refugees. Second, the conference is used as a means of negotiation from refugees toward the society and government. Third, the conference is used to construct a positive portrayal of refugees through the subject positioning. The speech also reflects the social perspective toward refugees. This research has contributed to the applied theories in language study and its involvement in discourse and society.

### **Keywords**

education, refugee, systemic functional linguistic, three-dimensional model, transitivity

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<sup>1</sup> Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, English Literature, ORCID: 0009-0007-8513-7733, [syifaamelia906@gmail.com](mailto:syifaamelia906@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, English Literature, ORCID: 0000-0001-7124-1678, [ribut@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id](mailto:ribut@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id).

## Introduction

In a world where the human rights issue is no longer debatable, some groups still struggle with unfulfilled basic human needs. The most crucial thing to remember about refugees is they are all over the world facing trouble and inhuman treatment that has not at all changed until now (Lavanya & Anjumkhan, 2021). Education which plays a crucial role as a basic human necessity encounters several barriers to fulfillment for refugees due to social inequality. Urban refugee children in Maputo and Nampula fail to integrate into Mozambican schools due to stereotypes, bullying, and discrimination at schools and surroundings (Chirindza, 2023). In Lebanon, refugees face myriad obstacles in claiming their status which hamper their access to work and livelihood (Ozkul & Jarrous, 2021). Poor quality education and lack of prospects for belonging restrict their chance for the future, either refugees or other marginalized people who need schools (Dryden- Peterson et al., 2019). Within this condition, refugees rely their hope on the stakeholders to help them live better. United Nations, a global organization that contributes considerably to most social and political issues in the world considered to have control over navigating refugees. Other state actors and private organizations are expected to participate in providing education for refugees as well. Society barely realizes about refugee education because they are stuck on understanding refugees' effect on their everyday lives. In addition, Central American migrants are often labeled as criminals and delinquents by people which leads to xenophobia and racism in Mexico (Van Ramshorst, 2018). Further, (Rasgado, 2017) the mayor of Oaxaca described migrants as “troublemakers” and “unruly” linked to an increasing crime among the Central American migrants there (Van Ramshorst, 2018). The daily attitudes of Mexicans toward migrants from other countries in Mexico were full of racism (Soriano-Núñez, 2020). These portrayals place refugees in adversity to have access to education and other basic needs. This paper aims to contribute to explaining refugees' position at the United Nations conference as being unprivileged people who strive for qualified access to education, primarily refugees in Mexico. It explores the representation analysis regarding assisting refugees in their struggle to gain education.

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Several studies have been conducted regarding the refugee issue preceding this analysis which turns out as an inspiration to give solutions for this issue. The research conducted by (Hetz, 2022; Parker, 2015; and Taylor, 2014) focused on the analysis of refugees' portrayal in media and society based on third-speaker experience, which means they are a third party and they do not experience any displacement. This framework analyzes not only the discourse of refugee spread among society but also the reason why such discourse emerged and influenced refugee restriction. The conference employed a Venezuelan refugee who lived in Mexico since 2018 to be the main speaker as the representative of refugees. Her background story showed her struggle to claim refugee status. The speaker experienced a tertiary education provided by DAFI (Deutsche Akademische Flüchtlingsinitiative Albert Einstein) and became a global advocate for education and youth advocate for refugees and girls' education. It proves the idea that access to education could significantly change one's life better. In this study, we employed Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional model of analysis. Systemic Functional Linguistics believes that language provides three main functions are; experiential meanings represented by experience of the world, interpersonal meanings represented by the use of interactive features, and textual meanings which create coherent and cohesive texts (Alyousef, 2021). The experiential meanings are achieved through the transitivity process. This research emphasizes conveying how the discourse of refugee education emerged through the refugee's perspective within the first

speaker’s experience. It is about how the speaker positioned herself as a refugee in the issue during the conference. Refugee education inevitably relates to social and political context as it takes the involvement of government and society. An in-depth analysis is recommended as it conveys a wider scope of the issue. Meanwhile, transitivity is unable to bring the discursive strategy into a wider context as it just unfolds the linguistic feature. Therefore, this research is supplemented by social analysis. These approaches expect linguistic and visual choices to reveal a discourse in a text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021 in Way & Serafis, 2022). Through these approaches, we examine social practice to refer to a different level of organization related to refugee education in Mexico. Social practice looks to build the connection between properties of text, features of discourse practice, and wider sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 2013).

In purpose to solve the problem, the United Nations held this conference by employing the involved party of the issue, refugees. It is expected to give a positive portrayal which is beneficial to boost refugees’ access in public as people no longer negatively think about them. The speaker’s experience potentially constructs an understanding of society regarding education for refugees. We believe that creating an image is inseparable from narrative or discourse. Therefore, the linguistic study significantly contributes to analyzing the discourse in this research. It will specifically address the speaker’s use of word choice in delivering their discourse with the theory aforementioned. Meanwhile, social analysis is employed to discover how a discourse opens a wider scope because refugee is a social issue that is inseparable from social and political contexts. (El Houssine, 2022; Au-On, Trakulkasemsuk, & Vungthong, 2017) employed Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics to analyze international newspaper headlines regarding the Russian attack on Ukraine and analyze audience response regarding Rohingya refugees. Meanwhile, Fairclough’s three-dimensional model is employed by (Abamosa et al., 2020; Orwenjo et al., 2021) to analyze a news article and documents regarding refugees’ education and life sustainability.

There are several reasons why refugees’ portrayal should be included to raise people’s awareness of refugees. Firstly, first speaker experience is employed to persuade the audience to gain an equal understanding of refugee education. This paper contributes to the literature on refugees’ perspectives in dealing with education through the United Nations conference. Secondly, the prevalent narrative spread among society augments the disparity between refugees and other social groups. Third, the lack of funding and resources from the host country put refugees in inadequate camps with low facilities. It leads to overcrowding due to inequality between a huge number of refugees and limited camps. It may lead to increased crime which turns refugees to put their eyes on alert. Department of State of the US stated that the refugee camp in Matamoro faces regional violence such as murder, kidnapping, and sexual assault on a large scale (Kocher, 2021). In the South-Mexican border, there are administrative barriers due to accommodation and availability and affordability barriers due to out-of-pocket costs. Within this condition, they would not have been able to think about the future or education while their today’s safety is in danger. Thus, such problems aforementioned exacerbated the condition there.

## Materials and methods

This research intends to convey someone’s experience as a refugee, so this study belongs to the interpretive paradigm with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is expected to explore and understand the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social human issue

(Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the qualitative methodology has to closely focus on the rigidity and trustworthiness of the study, and provide readers with a reflexive explanation (Turale, 2020). The definition matches this research objective which attempts to investigate the use of a transitivity system presented by a female refugee to find out the ideational meaning of metafunction. Ideational metafunction is expected to build reality and express someone's experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). It is where the message and content of the text from the author's experience of the real world in the setting time and place manifest someone's vision of the world (Haratyan, 2011). Contextually, this research conveys how the speaker portrays refugees' educational circumstances in Mexico and her experience as a refugee at the conference.

To begin with, the analytical framework first follows Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) theory as the linguistic analysis started by dividing the text into a clause, categorizing it as a unit of systemic functional grammar that focuses on the three main components of the transitivity process (e.g. actor, process, and circumstance). This classification helps understand the process markers used in portraying the issue by investigating which process is used the most. Hereafter, to open up the social analysis, the employed analytical framework is Fairclough's (2013) theory of the three-dimensional model which brings textual practice, discourse practice, and social practice as the analytical dimension. Through this social analysis, we aim to convey the problem of refugee education based on the speaker's personal experience and other social practices in a profound way. Fairclough's model will be focused on social practice to produce a detailed analysis. Through discourse, genre, and style we discuss the way of representing, the way of acting, and the way of being specifically in terms of refugee education in Mexico. We combine transitivity and the three-dimensional model because transitivity is equal to the first practice of the three-dimensional model, the textual practice. Within this linguistic and social analysis, we expect to unfold the issue of refugee education. Further, the source used in this research is one of the United Nations conferences promoting the inclusion of refugee education posted on the YouTube channel.

Results

As refugee education is a worldwide program that needs public attention to put this issue onward, the narrative of refugee portrayal appears within the linguistic category and social contextanalysis is vital. The speaker fled her home country Venezuela to Mexico in 2018, she had the chance to complete her tertiary education and now Adriana has become a representative of refugees at the United Nations conference promoting the inclusion of refugee education. The current analysis seeks the speaker's portrayal of refugees as reflected in the transitivity process below. Meanwhile, the subject positioning will be analyzed in the social analysis. A detailed explanation is provided as follows (Table 1).

Table 1. Transitivity process

No.	Process Type	Frequency
1.	Material	7
2.	Relational	14
3.	Mental	12
4.	Verbal	1

Source: authors' own research

The table above shows that the relational process becomes the most frequent during the speech.

The relational process does indicate the process of being and having which means representing the speaker as an individual. It expresses that entities “have” identity and belongings. Therefore, focusing on self-positioning analysis would be the main discussion in this linguistic and social analysis. However, it is inseparable from other processes and factors. Here are several examples of each process in a detailed explanation (Table 2).

Table 2. Material process.

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>
We	are facing	barriers every single day
No one	choose	to be refugee
You	are responsible	to change to open the doors to education

Source: authors’ own research

Notice that in defining the subject of the sentence, the speaker uses several transitive verbs such as “facing” and “choose” which describe several notions.

First, the word “facing” refers to refugees’ struggles they had every day. Here, we notice that refugees are always related to life survival such as humanitarian crises, exclusion, restricted rights, and so on. Their barriers include discrimination, legal prohibition and political participation, arbitrary provisions that limit access to health and education, and administrative barriers (Sanchez-Montijano & Ortega, 2022). It does imply that refugees put themselves as the ‘doer’ to get their life better. In addition, the word “facing” represents hope and expectation after every effort and action she brought to a new country. We are realizing that migrating to another country is not easy because they need to struggle with asylum, camp, being displaced, violated, etc. Central American refugee women need to negotiate with the gatekeepers in Mexico to gain humanitarian assistance and social rights (Willers, 2022).

Second, the word “choose” indicates that being a refugee is inevitable for them as their country caused them to do. The economic and humanitarian crises due to government-led mismanagement have forced around five hundred thousand Venezuelans to flee in the last two years (O’Neil, 2019). It indicates a defense mechanism that they are ‘victim’ of this humanitarian problem.

Table 3. Relational process.

<b>Token</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Value</b>
I	am	a refugee
Education	is	the tool that will open us the opportunities in an unknown world
<b>Carriers</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>
I	had	the opportunity to be a DAFI scholar
we	are not having	the access to the proper documentation

Source: authors’ own research

In detail, the relational marker [am] functions to identify herself as a refugee to gain recognition from the audience. Understandably, self-identification is important here to emphasize her background and social group. The statement is the hook of the discussion that reflects her social status. Refugees have several restrictions to celebrate their rights as opposed to the host society.

This is because they have different social positions. Further, the second relational marker *[is]* defines one state of affairs. The speaker believes that education will bring a better life for refugees and this is the only thing they need. Further, the opportunity to meet education is not yet achieved by most refugees all over the world due to some financial problems, restriction of rights, and displacement. Eighty-five percent of the world’s refugees live in low- and middle-income countries where education has already struggled to provide quality opportunities and because education is not designed to accommodate refugees (Morrice, 2021). There are 48% of refugees are out of school shows the adversity to reach basic education. UNICEF has reported several barriers to refugee education enrolment in Latin America and the Caribbean which include a high cost of education, the absence of sustainable investment, and a lack of critical resources becoming the macro-level barriers (Caarls et al., 2021). The speaker convinces people to give proper facilities to refugees.

The speaker also mentioned that [the current education for refugees is lack of enrolment, class product with stress, and ineffective teaching]. It creates an overview of the status quo regarding refugee education to the audience which aims to give a shared understanding. The existing possessive relational marker [had/have] portrays something the speaker owns as a refugee. It stated that the speaker has the opportunity to access education [the opportunity to be a DAFI scholar] up to the tertiary level which means she has been through the process of learning that leads to the better life she has today. Lastly, [access to proper documentation] refers to the administrative barriers due to a lack of general knowledge regarding the documentation. In the relational process, the speaker tells her background, and experience, and explains other refugees’ shortages. This will be further explained in the next section (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Mental process.

Senser	Process	Phenomenon
I	know	from my perspective
We	need to	access education/continue studying

Source: authors’ own research

The different use of subject pronouns implies one state of affairs. The “I” refers to the speaker as oneself and reveals her thoughts and inner experience by equipping with “know”, while “we” represents all refugees. The word [We] implies a particular level of priority where it covers a group of society with the same problem. It is considered a major problem when it comes to many people, where major problems have to be prioritized. Thus, the word ‘we’ is employed. The verb “know” here implies the speaker’s knowledge of how refugees live based on her experience, it turns out to give an overview of refugee conditions. Meanwhile, the [need to] denotes the refugees’ realization of the needs to be fulfilled. It refers to their needs for education as the theme of the conference is all about refugee education. This is aligned with the Refugee Education 2030 strategy promoted by UNHCR which aims to erase the educational gap faced by refugees. Through the conference, it is expected that many stakeholders to participate in assisting refugees. Stakeholders’ involvement will be discussed further to recognize the social and political context of refugee education in the following section. To this point, three layers of analysis are employed such as discourse, genre, and style as a means to support the linguistic analysis by explaining its role, respectively.

***Discourse***

This part discuss the way of representing the issue among refugees in Mexico, the involved stakeholders, and the process of public participation. It is expected to encourage more people

to pay attention to this issue by clearly representing refugee education during the conference. The speaker said:

**Excerpt 1**

*“You’re responsible as decision makers to change that to open the doors to education to people who have been left behind”*

The speaker engages society and other institutions to take a role in refugees’ education by putting the audience in charge as the agent of change. Educational lag is a primary social problem as it represents an obstacle to the development of society (Requenes et al., 2023). In Mexico, migrant children entering school face a new system and culture such as less valued academic achievement, low-quality infrastructure and classrooms (Vargas-Valle & Glick, 2021). Also, the unclear and absent higher education policies for refugees enhance the challenge to access education in most host countries [not only in Mexico] (Berg, 2023). During the pandemic, schools were not supportive places for migrants in Tijuana and almost half of refugees (children) are out of school due to a lack of economic resources, identity documents, academic documents, and lack of information on how to enroll (Barajas et al., 2021).

International and national institutions, public and private organizations, and governments are responsible for assisting refugees. OHCHR stated that state and non-state actors become the duty bearers of international humanitarian and human rights law. Those agencies play a vital role in driving refugees to gain international protection as they have the authority to do so. We acknowledge the existing NGOs that contribute considerably to help refugees meet their basic needs. The speaker stated [wouldn’t have been able] which shows her dependency towards a particular organization. It does mean that the refugee issue is under everyone’s hands and all people can contribute. It is important to raise public awareness toward refugee education to open up wider opportunities for them. In addition, the speaker stated [I can’t predict any future development in Venezuela] to show the fragile condition in her home country. Understandably, being a refugee means facing barriers in almost all aspects of life. This conference is one of its purposes because people do not see this potential for refugees due to the lack of positive media exposure to refugees. The role of media is important in determining a particular issue which leads people to have empathy toward refugees and to do a movement through their narration and rhetoric. Media are supposed to give more descriptions of refugees continuously so people will raise their awareness. Further, newspapers or online media should present a clear description of refugees’ issues by promoting inclusion for refugees. To do so, an interview or field research is recommended to reach a better goal. Nonetheless, it is hard to conduct direct interviews or field research among millions of refugees. Therefore, employing Adriana as the speaker to describe refugee education is way more effective.

**Genre**

This part discuss how the speaker interacts in a particular meeting, press, and report, which produces social relations. The excerpt is taken from the UNHCR YouTube channel, which presents an official conference and discusses refugee education. Within this conference, the existence of a particular organization to handle refugees brings trusted information due to an in- depth analysis before the report. The call for the United Nations is a global organization dealing with social and political issues, it reaches more audiences than other conferences or media. It is purposefully done to expand wider exposure to refugee education, primarily international community or NGOs.

### Excerpt 2

*“We know that **we need to continue studying** because education is the tool that will open us the opportunities in an unknown world”*

The excerpt above shows the willingness of refugees to get access to education. The modal “need to” shows the necessity of education, which the speaker knows would change refugees’ lives. It implies several notions. First, refugees hope that education becomes the ultimate key to life-changing opportunities. Refugees comprehend the value of education as achieving knowledge, insight, and skills that potentially bring them to achieve more in their lives. The sentence [we need to continue studying] implies limited refugee education access. It indicates a serious problem and needs some solutions to solve the issue (Wahyudi, n.d.). Such word choice shows their sincerity to change their life. She added a sentence and phrases [these are dreams and hopes], [your future], and [let’s think] which make her speech persuasive. Those words implicitly play one’s feelings which leads the audience to get empathy.

Besides, it emphasizes that refugees will grow better with education and bring positive impact to the future world. Opportunities to higher education are also essential for providing refugees to be self-reliant and build dignified and sustainable futures for them (Morrice, 2021). Skills and knowledge of pedagogy turn into more competent people which potentially able to contribute to the development. Mexico has intended to prioritize the integration of education and public health services for refugees. However, in north Mexico, the implementation of public health policies for refugees and other migrants still experiences a series of barriers to the exercise of the rights to health (Infante et al., 2022). Throughout history, Mexican legislation and policies have reflected ambivalent standpoints toward refugees (Freier et al., 2022). Further, the number of asylum seekers in Mexico increased per day leading to overpopulation there. Tijuana is seeking international aid and resources to address the overpopulation of migrants who continue arriving (Vazquez & Gutiérrez, 2022). By stating the condition, we expect more stakeholders, primarily the government of Mexico to put their attention on refugees.

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### Excerpt 3

*“I know that only six percent of refugee students are getting access to tertiary education right now and **these are dreams and hopes** we are talking about”*

The excerpt mentioned emphasizes the very small number of refugees who have access to college all over the world. The text is intended to ‘educational stakeholders’ mostly in tertiary education. The vocabularies used [important], [responsible], [digital infrastructure], and [survives] indicate the vulnerability of education among refugees. The phrase [*dreams and hopes*] means having the opportunity to create a better life and future preparation, which means only six percent of refugees potentially work in professional fields. She shared the understanding that tertiary education is the level where people will dig into more detail about skills that lead them to professional work. Nonetheless, the rest of the refugees will work in a non-professional field which tends to be an unsecured job. The majority of migrants in Mexico, who are unable to gain legal permission to stay and work in the host country experience low-wage vacancies, frequently with labor benefits (Ramírez-Plascencia, 2020). Children in Mexico often experience child labor such as sexual commercial exploitation and human trafficking. Mexico often becomes the target of white slave organizations that employ women from Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Eastern Europe as prostitutes (escorts) or dancers in nightclubs in Mexico (Ramírez-Plascencia, 2020). Thus, it will eradicate the opportunity to enhance the value of the human resource.

The speaker’s attendance at the conference shows that refugees have the freedom of speech despite being in a country they do not belong to. It reflects the speaker’s awareness of the importance of education in the future world and her background before migrating to Mexico. The tone of the text is formal yet story-telling, where the speaker tells about her experience, highlighting the words [without DAFI], [I was lucky], and [I know from my perspective]. The speaker’s educational background is more convincing to the audience since she is nailed to change her future. It persuades people to participate in providing education for refugees.

### **Style**

One key point in style is discussing subject positioning which brings the aspect of uncovered identity. Subject positioning is the idea of the discursive construction of subjectivity (Walshaw, 2007). Subject positioning means discussing social status. It will be about how refugees represent themselves and how they are represented. This main part has been subtly alluded to in the previous section, so this is a more detailed analysis.

### **Excerpt 4**

*“My name is Adriana Figueredo, I’m a refugee living in Mexico”*

The speaker identified herself as a member of a group means she wants the term “refugee” to be recognized and considered by many people. The statement is the hook of the discussion means she emphasizes her social status. Looking back on her background, the speaker fled her home country [Venezuela] to achieve education because her country was in the midst of a civil war. The existence of economic and political crises escalates poverty and political instability which cause 2 million Venezuelans to leave. The government’s mismanagement has led to inflation and a shortage of basic goods, which further led to becoming the most violent country in the world where human rights violations have become commonplace (Freier et al., 2022). After texting the speaker through Instagram, we found a supporting statement as follows.

*“... I have learned that all of us (Refugees) share a story, and it is the story of leaving our country without a choice to stay...in my case, I was not able to continue with my education nor have opportunities for my future development (when I flee Venezuela we were kind of in a middle of a civil war) so...basically, if you want to understand more about refugees the main point is that we are fleeing our countries in conflict/humanitarian situations to pursuit a better future”*

Throughout the conference, what the speaker said was fully categorized as an autobiographical description where she explained her experience and its relation to social practice. Her subjectivity is good enough to be equipped to create a representation of refugees. Her efforts to objectify herself as a good refugee are shown at the conference by describing her/their reasons for leaving the home country. The speaker presented the main problems they face every day and their willingness to move on to reach a normal life.

## **Discussion**

### **Barriers to education in Mexico**

Realizing the problem of refugee education is not only triggered by the scarcity of educational

facilities, but the disparity between refugees and the host society in some aspects brings this issue in a worse condition. UNHCR in June 2022 stated that refugees have most recently become the targets of kidnapping and violence. Technically, Mexico has not been regarded as a “safe” place for refugees for several reasons. First, a lack of access to full or fair procedures for refugees to seek asylum because only four Mexican Commission offices which leaves many refugees without access to international protection. Further in Tijuana, the increased influx of migrants every day escalates the potential of attack, protest, and threat for refugees. In Mexico, migrants become the scapegoats of social discontent and the subject of maltreatment and xenophobia (Ramírez-Plascencia, 2020). It is a signal of administrative barriers faced by refugees. She added a sentence [we don’t have access to internet or electricity]. This sentence reflects the exclusion of refugees. Internet and electricity are basic needs today as we are living in the digital world. Not having access to the internet and electricity means not having access to information, proper education, and other facilities. Next, Mexico is regarded as a nation full of hatred because of xenophobia and is treated as a criminal (Farina, 2022). Refugees experienced being restricted and displaced which shows severe conditions. Further, as documented in Cartagena Declaration and UNHCR, Mexico is committed to giving full access to basic needs such as health and education at all levels. However, in terms of healthcare access, Mexico is limited in infrastructure, personnel, and shortage of medicine, and practically hard to provide effective access for the whole population (Bojorquez-Chapela et al., 2020). Second, the economic condition of Mexico in recent years has underperformed which affects the public service provision for refugees. As reported by the World Bank on April 2023, Mexico has experienced underperformed which escalates the poverty rate up to 44% of the total population (World Bank, 2023). Therefore, due to Mexico’s economic condition, such problems are not significantly solved.

Next, UN-Habitat (2015) reported that Mexico is one of the countries where informal settlement shares features of urbanization in the extreme form such as poverty, large agglomeration of houses in poor condition, close to disaster-prone, people tend to have limited to public space and exposed to disease and violence (Sandoval & Sarmiento, 2020). Simply put, one obvious barrier for refugees is the presence of humanitarian crises which contribute to health problems and improper living which cause them easily to be the target of violence.

The idea of accepting refugees would trigger several crucial problems for the host country in the sectors of economics and welfare. Bangladesh has accepted more than one million refugees resulting in the country's struggle to face multifaceted challenges along with social, environmental, legal, and financial impacts (Babu, 2020). Acknowledging the massive influx of migrants in Mexico every day increased the population, leading to overcrowding camps. Further, the increased rates of crime such as kidnapping and violence, proved the insecurity for refugees while they deserve to get international protection. Migrants in Mexico face continuous violence from the state, criminal groups, and groups that are in charge of their protection (Bustamante, 2022). Middle-income country such as Mexico is challenged to provide social protection for the local citizens and the needs of migrants (Berens & Deeg, 2022). In addition, the humanitarian crises contribute to health problems such as severe disease, malnutrition, and improper living.

WOLA in June 2022 described several refugee barriers to inclusion in Tapachula, mainly due to the administrative barriers (Brewer, Tejada, & Meyer, 2020). First, the backlogged legal process by the service providers has left people struggling to survive and vulnerable to abuse and arbitrary treatment. Second, the massive influx of asylum claims. The failure to respond adequately different needs of migrants. The disability to request at an entry port creates further risk and contributes to an undue barrier to seeking asylum. Even further, the limited funding creates other significant barriers for refugees. UNHCR reported that Mexico only reached 39%

of the total financial requirement for refugees. Even more, 67% of the local population is living in poverty. These two significant factors hamper the fulfillment of refugees’ basic needs.

Coming to a new country has to pass several requirements provided by the host country, it is so-called asylum. Refugee status claims in Mexico are under “well-founded fear”, generalized violence, and other macro-level conflict categories. The applicants need to be interviewed to determine their refugee status. The “refugee” status is identified as someone who has passed the requirement and is eligible to get permanent public service and should not be returned to their country of origin without safety. In this context, the ongoing economic and political instability in Venezuela becomes another factor of why Venezuelan refugees have not yet returned to their country. As reported (Acosta, 2020) Venezuelan migrants have returned to Venezuela due to COVID-19, yet they are re-migrating as they found the conditions there are getting worse than elsewhere (Wolfe, 2021). Thus, the speaker should remain in Mexico and not return to Venezuela.

Further, we are considering the above problems, the representation of refugee education is interlinked with the speaker’s background because the speaker’s way of thinking is determined by all the things that happened in her life and how she was raised. She emphasized her message by saying [we need access to education] to justify the above status quo. It means asking for proper educational facilities such as classrooms, internet, and teachers. It is a sign for educators and other stakeholders to put their concern on refugee education. The phrase and sentence such as [wouldn’t be possible without education] and [we don’t want anyone’s future to be put on hold] show her expectation of a better world. It means significant solutions should be taken either by the government or society. Thus, the first speaker's experience plays a vital role in representing refugees to change people’s perspectives towards refugees. The speaker knows how refugees live so she can expose the condition in a clear scenario.

Further, the lack of opportunity for refugees to voice their experiences and obstacles hamper their way of moving. Employing a refugee during the conference is a good idea to enhance public participation and awareness of this social issue. The increasing prejudice toward refugees is caused by the absence of an informed civil society which turns this migrant issue into a more complex social phenomenon (Ramírez-Plascencia, 2020). US and Mexican printed media describe migrants as illegal, lazy, unhealthy, and criminals which reinforces stereotypes (Galindo, 2019). To eliminate those representations, giving refugees space to talk about their experiences is the best idea because it provides fact-based information for the audience.

The desired opportunity to speak in public will lead to clarification from refugees to explain their actual experiences. It is expected to protect refugees from hate speech and bad perceptions that describe refugees as burdens, threats, and creating fears outside of society. Refugee's bad definition in the US asylum law is called “floodgate fears” as a means to rationalize denying asylum to prevent an increase in future asylum-deservingness (Gorman, 2021). However, several barriers and exclusions by the stakeholders restrict refugees’ chances to speak in public. In Tapachula, despite they are guaranteed by the law and have routine interaction, Central American immigrants are struggling with human resource scarcity because Mexican bureaucrats and officials conduct discriminatory and illegal practices (Carte, 2017).

## Introducing refugees as a group of society in a positive portrayal: Refugees in Mexico

Educational problem is not merely addressed by educators, but also by linguists who believe that language highly contributes to the emergence of any discourse within its social context. This research is focused on the discourse of educational circumstances among refugees in Mexico and how it is portrayed through the speaker's self-positioning during the conference. Subject positioning is one of the key discussions in Fairclough (2013) which brings an aspect of uncovered identity. This conference aims to raise awareness about refugee education issues by focusing on a female refugee as the conference speaker. If only people realized refugee education, it would be regarded as a crucial issue and need to be solved immediately. To achieve that, the conference aims to spread this discourse to all people. There are several reasons why the conference would bring a significant result by employing a refugee. First, the speaker, as the first person of her experience has the authority to describe the real condition of refugee education. The linguistic portrayal such as [we need to continue studying] denotes a desire to have opportunities to access education. She added [to reach the opportunities everyone else is getting] which indicates that refugees are not included in educational programs. Thus, Adriana shows her gratitude and sincerity as she gets the chance to study, compared to the many refugees rarely access. The existence of DAFI, Yes We Can, and the Habesha Project has helped refugees a lot in education. DAFI became the contributing organization to aid tertiary refugee education showing Germany's strong involvement in refugees because DAFI was created in partnership between Germany and UNHCR. Meanwhile, other mentioned organizations are non-governmental organizations, aims to inspire society to be aware of refugee education. Refugees are often excluded and experience resentment from the host country with several narratives representing them which hamper them from being accepted. For instance, Trump started the war on migrants which put additional pressure on the Mexican government to put the National Guard on the southern border which affected migrant mobilization (Marchand, 2021). Europeans' preferences for asylum seekers are shaped by economic contribution, humanitarian concerns, and anti-Muslim bias (Bansak et al., 2016).

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The experience of crossing borders with being restricted in many ways must be inevitable. The speaker emphasizes the term "refugee" as her social group shows her identity and instills in the audience that they are eligible to be given access to public service and such opportunity will lead to potential benefits as she experienced. The speaker mentioned "*All of us (refugees) share a story, and it is the story of leaving our country without a choice to stay*" to augment the refugees' personal stories to gain wider exposure to create a positive discourse about refugees. The way refugees interact at the table reduces the mistrust, misperception, and misunderstanding toward refugees that has hampered their ways to move on. People perceived refugees as a threat to economic well-being depending on to government's ability to provide a safety net for economic well-being (Koos & Seibel, 2019). Specifically, Mexico as the host country might have been struggling for sustainability which decreases its capability to aid others. We are acknowledging that receiving refugees and migrants is a politicized topic that influences a particular aspect of the host country such as sovereignty, culture, language, and economic sector. It is a politicized topic because it increases the country's strength in the international community. The US and Germany become the largest donors for refugees which leverages their strength across the globe.

We acknowledge that the speaker plays a vital role in determining refugees' condition to the people means such linguistic portrayal is well-chosen before the conference. It leads the audience to perceive the phenomenon related to refugees by emphasizing that [*dreams and*

*hopes*] are the only things they have. Second, refugees will grow better with education and bring a positive impact on the future world. The idea that better human resources will lead to better economic growth in the country means refugees have the potential to participate in developing the host country. Thus, the speaker was bridging between other refugees and the host country’s system.

The refugee issue will not end without the help of society and it is not only in the hands of the government and official institutions. Several private organizations have participated in refugee education such as DAFI, Yes We Can Foundation, and other NGOs. It means having more organizations participate to assist refugees in education is better. As previously mentioned the “need to study” emphasizes that education would bring a better life. To achieve education, we need funding and proper facilities such as classrooms, books, and technology. It means without economic welfare from the host country, they can’t provide proper education for refugees. Thus, we expect more people to raise awareness to help with refugee education.

## Conclusion

This research has contributed to the extent of the refugee issue by raising the motion of refugee education in the case of refugees in Mexico. Within the linguistic analysis, this research presents the refugee’s portrayal based on first-speaker experience. The self-positioning made by the speaker placed refugees as a victim and disadvantaged parties of all the chaos while they must have achieved proper treatment from the host country as they have reached the asylum for protection. It reflects their social position with complete resistance toward the host society with a strong description of their attributes that leads to a discussion about refugee education. The relational marker presents to identify the speaker (refugees) as an active doer or protagonist character. It is further followed by the mental process which indicates the speaker’s perspective used in the conference. Nonetheless, as the first speaker experience, her perspective is worth taking into account in the discussion. The speaker tries to create a positive portrayal of refugees through word choice to eliminate the negative representation that hampers them from getting the service and engaging with more people to help with refugee education. Drawing upon the above explanations, refugees positioned themselves as the actor of their change with resilience. Throughout the conference, what the speaker said was fully categorized as autobiographical self. It is where the explanation of someone’s life experience and its relation to social practice.

In the social context analysis, we found the social perspective toward refugees and the factors involved. In the case of Mexico, the disparity of refugee education is triggered by internal problems such as basic needs unfulfillment, limited funding, and society’s negative representation which hamper refugees from getting their freedom. We come to say that refugees have passed many obstacles before getting asylum and they need proper facilities to help them live better, including education. Second, the conference is used as a form of negotiation and engagement with the public with actual information to avoid misinformation. Refugees are rarely given a place to speak which adds extra barriers for them to be accepted in society. The less participation in many social practices from refugees escalates the disparity to achieving the intended quality. Thus, the speaker presented the main thing that refugees face everyday barrier and their willingness to move on to reach normal life in the middle of society.

After going through the research process, here are the proposed suggestions for future

researchers. First, the study of systemic functional linguistics would be promising for future linguistic education. Within this topic, language contributes to the emergence of the discourse and how it is influencing other social practices. Second, to achieve a more comprehensive analysis, in the need to explore a wider analysis of language use, it is supported by social analysis, using Fairclough's three-dimensional model as it unfolds the social layer of analysis. Thus, this research inspires future researchers that linguistic study can contribute to the discussion of society and politics.

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## Conflict of interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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