The aim of this project is to add English language learning software such as Rosetta Stone to the current education curriculum at Mary’s Place in an effort to help refugees improve their English proficiency. The hope is that by bridging this language gap, refugee families can adjust and thrive better in their new home.

Each year, tens of thousands of refugees are resettled in the US, which is only a fraction of the millions of people that get displaced from their homes worldwide. Coming from dangerous, sometimes war-torn countries, this population is faced with innumerable challenges, even after arriving to this land of opportunity. Some of these struggles stem from the presence of a language barrier, which creates limitations in communication and leads to decreased job opportunities, increased isolation, and worse health outcomes for refugees and their children.

Mary’s Place is a refugee outreach center in Rochester whose mission is to serve as “an enrichment center for refugees to find independence and gain citizenship.” Among many of its services, Mary’s Place offers teacher-run didactic English language learning classes. While this is a wonderful resource, the number of refugees in these classes and their varied backgrounds and language skills create multiple challenges for both teacher and student. One method that may alleviate some of these stressors is incorporating computers into the classroom. Several studies have shown that combining electronic language-learning software, such as Rosetta Stone, with didactic teaching, especially in the dedicated student, may be more beneficial for learning a foreign language than didactic teaching alone.