Languages and literacy in new migration. Research, practice and policy

Selected papers from the
14th Annual Symposium of LESLLA
(Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults)
4th - 6th October 2018

Mari D'Agostino and Egle Mocciaro (Eds.)

STRUMENTI E RICERCHE
Collana diretta da Mari D'Agostino

Languages and literacy in new migration. Research, practice and policy

**Selected papers from the
14th Annual Symposium of LESLLA
(Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults)
4th-6th October 2018**

Edited by

Mari D'Agostino and Egle Mocciaro

STRUMENTI E RICERCHE 10

Cover photo © Antonio Gervasi

Contents

SECTION 4. On the teachers' side: reception, training and other tools

Preface by the editors

This volume gathers together a selection of papers presented at the 14th Annual Symposium on *Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA 2018)*, which was held in Palermo, Italy, from 4th to 6th October 2018.

Almost fifteen years after the first symposium in Tilburg in 2005, the panorama of studies on LESLLA learners has been considerably enriched and refined, in the field of education and in that of second language learning/acquisition (although not to the same extent). This broadening of perspectives and interests, but also of the places and people involved, is well reflected in the Palermo symposium (during which, among other things, an important turning point in the history of the association was sanctioned, as, precisely in that year, LESLLA became a formally constituted international organisation, see https://www.leslla.org/our-story).

LESLLA 2018 brought together about 80 presentations (including plenaries, paper and poster sessions), 130 presenters and overall, more than 200 participants, both educators and researchers, from Belgium, Canada, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and US. Thematically, the symposium embraced a wide range of topics, organised in nine sessions, namely: 1) plurilingual repertoires, acquisition, metalinguistic awareness; 2) non-formal approaches to learning; 3) language, inclusion, participation; 4) testing and assessment; 5) literacy perspectives, approaches and practices; 6) teaching perspectives, practices and tools; 7) teacher training; 8) educational system and policies; 9) teaching perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, LESLLA 2018 was complemented by the one-day conference on *Alfabetizzazione e italiano L2. Ricerca, pratiche e politiche dalla scuola al volontariato* ('Literacy and L2 Italian. Research, practices and policies from school to volunteering'), held on 3rd October, 2018. This side event was entirely dedicated to Italy and to specific local situations involving the

LESLLA population, which represented an important territorial spin-off of LESLLA research and practices[1].

The 25 articles collected in this volume are grouped in four thematic sections. The first one, "Research perspectives", has been assigned an introductory role, as it offers some of the most topical views on the major themes outlined in the title of the book: people, languages and literacy in new migration. **Beacco** discusses how language policies developed by States to promote the integration of migrants, while reflecting specific ideological choices, must nevertheless comply with the recommendations of supranational authorities, particularly the Council of Europe, which is at the heart of the article and provides the general framework of values for individual national policies. **D'Agostino and Mocciaro** focus on the place of the conference, Palermo, expanding on the opening text of the symposium and accounting for the changes affecting the Italian migration context in recent years. Combining sociolinguistic and linguistic perspectives, they reconstruct the forms of linguistic exchange between the local and new migrants population in one of the main gateways of Europe and the specific conditions for acquiring the local languages by newcomers. By adopting the perspective of superdiversity, **Spotti** describes the sociolinguistic features of a Flemish centre for asylum seekers. In this space, two sociolinguistic regimes contrast: the normative one emerging from the daily life and the one that results from the use of the Web by "guests", which offers pop-culture models acting as a bond that transcends ethnic, religious and sociolinguistic differences. The section closes with a spotlight on the state of the art of LESLLA studies, pointed by one of its founders. On the basis of a review of the thirteen symposia that preceded the Palermo one, **Young-Scholten** discusses the approaches adopted and the themes addressed, the participants, the countries and languages involved and, above all, highlights how much of the association's objectives remain unfulfilled or still to be built, and suggests some ways to achieve them.

The other sections variously reflect the keywords that form the

---

[1] Cf. the Webpage of the conference at:
https://www.unipa.it/strutture/scuolaitalianastranieri/Ricerca-/Convegni/alfabetizzazione-e-italiano-l2.-ricerca-pratiche-e-politiche-dalla-scuola-al-volontariato-palermo-3-ottobre-2018/.

subtitle of the volume. Section 2, "Second language and literacy acquisition and teaching", gathers together contributions dedicated to LESLLA learners' language and literacy skills, as well as to their educational effects. **Asta and Pugliese** address the key issue of migrant learners' linguistic repertoires and the educational usage of these standard and non-standard languages. Based on a conversation analysis approach, they analyse the use of Nigerian Pidgin English during Italian L2 lessons, which is shown to support communicative needs as well as learning objectives. **Böddeker and Feldmeier García** describe *Alphalernberatung*, a project which offers literacy and basic education to adults with limited literacy. During its implementation, also training courses for counselling staff in the social area, learning counselling and self-learning materials in German and different L1 will be developed. **Chao García and Mavrou** analyse error types and spelling strategies in the written productions of adult migrant learners of Spanish and identify the positive or negative correlation of such errors and strategies with various variables, namely length of residence in Spain, learners' age, gender and level of education in L1. The article by **Cheffy, Haznedar, Minuz, Miles, Peyton and Young-Scholten** focuses on *Heritage language hub*, a new online tool whose aim is to support heritage languages of migrants with limited literacy, as well as their children's bilingualism through creating access to online resources, e.g., reading and teaching materials, in their languages. **DeCapua and Triulzi** focus on the assumptions underlying school tasks (in Germany and elsewhere), which reflect Western-style formal education and thus literacy. This makes access to educational content and educational success particularly difficult for LESLLA students. The case study proposed by **Di Rosa, Gucciardo, Argento and Leonforte** concerns Sicily. Based on a large-scale survey involving hundreds of unaccompanied minors who were receiving language instruction at a Territorial Centre for Adult Education, the authors highlighted the strong correlation between the language skills of minors and their social inclusion. Also the contribution by **Sabina Fontana** is dedicated to Sicily. She reports on a study conducted in a Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers, where professionals and migrants were involved in an experiential learning process, which showed the relevance of a narrative approach to deconstruct

stereotypes and prejudices. **Guerrero Calle** focuses on the acquisition of Roman alphabet literacy by Eritrean refugees who were literate in a different writing system. Conducted in the German-speaking Switzerland, the study tested the effectiveness of the syllabary approach, whose influence is said to be positive only in the initial teaching phases. **Marongiu, Berretta and Honegger** discuss an L2 teaching tool, the "Enquiry (*Inchiesta*)", inspired by the principles of active pedagogy. Aimed particularly at adolescents, it combines language learning and teaching with the real interests and needs of the individuals and the group in which they are involved. **Mocciaro** presents the theoretical-methodological premises of a research conducted with a group of new migrants living in a reception centre in Palermo, some of whom had limited literacy skills. The aim was to assess what role (if any) limited literacy plays in the acquisition of L2 morphosyntax and, therefore, the applicability of existing descriptions of L2 Italian to the LESLLA learners population. **Stratford and Mahoney** present "North East Solidarity and Teaching (N.E.S.T.)", a project led by student volunteers from Newcastle University and aimed at refugees and asylum seekers in the North East of the UK. What characterises N.E.S.T.'s learning activity is its strong focus on reducing social isolation among this migrant community. **Surian and Surian** report on an action-research experience combining Freire's approach to the learning of Italian L2 by migrants with limited literacy. Implemented in the Padua area (Italy), the project included literacy practices based on a syllabic approach and training, and reflective activities involving teachers.

    Section 3 groups together four articles dealing with "Digital learning and practices". **Malessa** argues that technology-enhanced language learning has the potential to improve the initial literacy acquisition of LESLLA learners. More broadly, it is imperative to promote the digital inclusion of LESLLA learners so that they can actively participate in a social context in which technology profoundly informs the way we interact, work and learn. **Salvaggio**'s article shows how digital technologies can be used to overcome the well-known paradox of teaching activities that involve oral skills but make use of written schemes. This situation creates problems especially for students with limited literacy, who cannot participate in class activities despite possessing adequate oral skills. In their collaborative

work, **Schumacher, Czinglar, Faseli and Mirova** describe a new literacy test developed to assess the literacy skills of students with L1 Dari and initial L2 German. The test is based on language-independent criteria and – the authors explain – can therefore be given without any knowledge of Dari on the part of the administrators. In the last contribution of the section, **Sokolowsky** discusses the experience that adult education centres in Germany have gained in recent years in the field of learning German as a non-mother tongue and basic education through the development and use of digital technologies.

The last section, "On the teachers' side: reception, training and other tools", brings together articles addressing the issue of language and literacy from the perspective of teachers and professionals. Inspired by Deridda's thought on hospitality, **Bucca and Melluso**'s contribution is a reflection on everyday practices addressed to migrants, both in institutional and non-formal contexts. These include various types of actions related to reception, social and legal assistance, and linguistic support. The section opens with an article by **Cowie**, who reports on a small-scale study conducted in the UK at a time of reduced funding for ESOL provision. Through questionnaires and interviews to providers and teachers, the author brings to light the vicious circle whereby the educational needs of LESLLA students are largely neglected, in favour of those students who are more likely to achieve results and, therefore, more likely to drain funding. **Della Putta** describes a training course for volunteer teachers of L2 Italian to migrants with limited schooling and literacy. The course had largely positive effects because it activated a virtuous circle of change in the teachers' educational practices. This emerged from the final questionnaire, which also brought to light the great difficulty that teachers experience in teaching literacy. **Minuz and Kurvers** present LASLLIAM, a tool promoted by the Council of Europe which proposes new descriptors below A1 to complement those of the Common European Framework for Languages. This is a response to the observation that literacy has always simply been assumed to be the entry level of the CEFR and therefore this tool cannot be used with learners with limited literacy. Finally, **Tammelin-Laine, Bogdanoff, Vaarala, Mustonen and Kärkkäinen** describe "Getting a grip on basic skills", a pilot teacher training project designed and

implemented in Finland to help LESLLA teachers to support their students' needs. The authors present the main outputs of the project, provide examples of good practice developed during its implementation and discuss the challenges of a long-term web-based training model.

We would like to conclude with some notes on the choice of hosting the 14th LESLLA Symposium in Palermo. The idea was launched two years earlier, during the 12th Symposium in Granada, in 2016. At that time, the *School of Italian language for Foreigners* of the University of Palermo (ItaStra) had already been involved for some time, since 2011 to be precise, in the reception and language training of the migrant population in Palermo, including the newcomers who in large numbers reach Sicilian coast by sea via the Mediterranean routes. ItaStra was also beginning to explore areas of linguistic and didactic research in the field of LESLLA that had hitherto been unknown in its tradition of studies. The time seemed ripe to engage in international debate.

Two years later, the symposium in Palermo opened on a rapidly changing political scene of violent nationalist enclosures in which policies of exclusion in the field of migration seemed to prevail[2]. The dramatic change of political course in those days was explicitly referred to in the speech read by Mustapha Jarjou, linguistic mediator of ItaStra and direct witness of the migratory experience, at the opening of the symposium. And the symposium itself turned out to be extremely topical in terms of the themes proposed and the wealth of experiences and people, which for days populated the corridors of ItaStra, as a living example of openness, diversity and resistance.

Three years on, the Italian political scene has experienced new changes and at least the harshest aspects of recent anti-immigration

---

[2] See in particular the Decree Law n. 53/2019, that is, the so called Security Decree, https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/06/14/19G00063/sg, which introduced important changes and restrictions in the reception system and procedures for international protection, de facto cancelling humanitarian protection. Not to mention the violent campaign against NGOs, which were accused of encouraging illegal immigration, and the fight against shipwreck rescue missions by imposing a ban on the entry into territorial waters of ships that rescued migrants and an enormous increase in sanctions against those who violated this ban.

legislation have been erased by subsequent laws[3]. While we were even so still far from a real policy of reception and inclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic intervened, drastically reducing mobility (also international) in other unexpected ways. In this rapid succession of events, ItaStra has continued to work behind closed doors, with hard work and obstinacy, like most people in the world. The delay in publishing this volume can be partly explained if we consider that ItaStra and the University of Palermo, together with many institutions and associations, have substantially contributed over the last two years to supporting migrant population in Palermo, especially young newcomers, suddenly deprived of work and economic resources.

Today, as the doors are slowly being reopened and the classrooms are once again filling up with old and new voices, the publication of this volume also acquires for us the symbolic and auspicious significance of a new (and hopefully stable) openness to people and their languages.

Palermo and Brno,
September 15th, 2021   Mari D'Agostino and Egle Mocciaro

---

[3] See the Decree Law 130/2020, then Law 173/2020, whose text can be read at the following link: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2020/12/19/20G00195/sg.

SECTION 1
Research perspectives

Des principes pour les politiques d'accueil linguistique des migrants. La perspective du Conseil de l'Europe

Jean-Claude Beacco

De nombreux états ont mis en place des dispositifs pour permettre aux personnes migrantes adultes d'acquérir une certaine maîtrise d'une des langues du contexte d'installation. Souvent la connaissance de celle-ci est l'une des conditions requises pour l'autorisation de séjour long ou l'accès à la nationalité, par exemple. Ces dispositions font ainsi partie des politiques migratoires que chaque état met en place en fonction des choix idéologiques de ses gouvernants élus et des caractéristiques sociodémographiques et géopolitiques de chaque territoire.

Il convient de mettre en regard de tels principes, qui sont contextualisés dans le temps et l'espace, avec les recommandations et les préconisations des organisations internationales et intergouvernementales à leurs états membres. Celles-ci sont essentiellement fondées sur des valeurs générales (droits de l'homme, démocratie, etc.) et elles ont vocation à servir de cadre aux politiques nationales. Dans cette intervention, on examinera comment une organisation comme le Conseil de l'Europe (qui regroupe 47 états membres) conçoit les politiques linguistiques destinées à ces personnes.

Mots-clés: politiques migratoires, politiques d'accueil et langue, Conseil de l'Europe.

Molti Stati hanno creato dei dispositivi per consentire ai migranti adulti di acquisire una certa padronanza di una delle lingue del contesto in cui si sono stabiliti. Spesso la conoscenza di quest'ultima è una delle condizioni richieste per l'autorizzazione di soggiorno lungo o l'accesso alla nazionalità, per esempio. Queste disposizioni fanno quindi parte delle politiche migratorie che ogni Stato attua in funzione delle scelte ideologiche dei suoi governanti eletti e delle caratteristiche sociodemografiche e geopolitiche di ogni territorio.

È bene mettere in relazione tali principi, contestualizzati nello spazio e nel tempo, con le raccomandazioni dalle organizzazioni internazionali e intergovernative ai loro Stati membri. Questi principi sono essenzialmente basati su valori generali (diritti dell'uomo, democrazia etc.) e sono destinati a fungere da quadro delle politiche nazionali. In questo intervento, esamineremo come un'organizzazione come il Consiglio d'Europa (che ha 47 Stati membri) progetta politiche linguistiche rivolte a queste persone.

Parole chiave: politiche migratorie, politiche di accoglienza e lingua, Consiglio d'Europa.

Many states have put in place arrangements to allow adult migrants to gain some command of one of the languages of their new context. Often the knowledge of it is one of the conditions required for the authorization of long stay or access to nationality, for example. These provisions are thus part of the migratory policies that each state puts in place according to the ideological choices and the socio-demographic and geopolitical characteristics of each territory.

These principles, which are contextualized in time and space, should be compared with the recommendations of international and intergovernmental organizations to their member states. These are essentially based on general values (human rights, democracy etc.) and they are intended to serve as a framework for national policies. In this paper, we will examine how an organization like the Council of Europe (which has 47 member states) designs language policies for adult migrants.

Keywords: migration policies, reception policies and language, Council of Europe.

1. Introduction

Je remercie très vivement les collègues qui ont organisé ce 14ème Symposium annuel de LESLLA de m'avoir convié à ouvrir cette rencontre. Je le fais avec d'autant plus de plaisir que la Sicile est en première ligne pour ce qui concerne l'accueil des personnes migrantes et qu'il importe de saluer ainsi cette implication.

J'ai choisi une thématique assez large, qui me semble adaptée à une intervention initiale, pour rappeler que les dispositifs d'accueil linguistique des personnes en migration ne sont pas à concevoir uniquement à partir des principes de la didactique des langues/*glottodidattica.* Ils doivent aussi correspondre aux droits de l'homme, conçus ici non uniquement dans leurs dimensions juridiques (la *Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme* de l'ONU), mais aussi comme conformes aux valeurs humaines et respectueuses de la dignité de tous, telle que les définissent par exemple la *Charte sociale européenne*[1]. Ces formations ont aussi à se conformer aux exigences déontologiques de tous ceux/toutes celles qui ont en charge l'ingénierie des formations en langues pour les migrants et celles/ceux qui les mettent concrètement en œuvre. Et je vois déjà dans les

---

[1] Cf. https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/163.

communications qui vont être présentées dans cette rencontre un accent mis sur des termes clés comme besoins langagiers, expression de soi, langue maternelle/première, identité plurielle…

Pour ce faire, je présenterai l'action du Conseil de l'Europe dans ce domaine (qui siège à Strasbourg et qui n'est pas à confondre avec l'Union européenne; https://www.coe.int/fr/). Car cette organisation intergouvernementale, qui regroupe 47 états, est en mesure, comme toutes les institutions internationales, de définir des principes qui vont au-delà des intérêts et des égoïsmes nationaux. Comme il ne me sera pas possible de rendre compte de la totalité des activités du Conseil dans cette intervention, je vous renvoie à son site multilingue consacré à ces problématiques: Intégration linguistique des adultes migrants (ILMA) ainsi qu'aux actes du Symposium de 2016 qui s'est tenu à Strasbourg (Beacco, Krumm et Little 2017).

2. La connaissance de la langue requise: réalisme et transparence

Le Conseil reconnaît l'importance pour les adultes migrants de l'apprentissage de la langue/d'une des langues de la société d'installation, car ils doivent être en mesure de communiquer au sein de leur pays d'accueil, afin de participer à la vie sociale et à gérer leur vie de tous les jours. Il invite les états-membres à se doter de dispositifs adéquats permettant d'accompagner ces personnes dans leurs acquisitions langagières. La connaissance de la langue du nouveau contexte est requise (et donc vérifiée) dans la plupart des états pour l'entrée sur le territoire, l'obtention d'un titre de séjour ou la nationalité. La tendance est d'augmenter les niveaux de compétence requis, comme le montre la dernière enquête réalisée sur ce thème (Extramiana et al. 2014). Le Conseil invite les états-membres à faire que ces tests de langue fixent des niveaux de compétences réalistes. Ils doivent être aussi transparents que possible et ne pas servir, indirectement en fait, à écarter les migrants, masquant ainsi des politiques de fermeture non affichées, ce que résume très clairement le titre d'une Recommandation de l'Assemblée parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe: *Tests d'intégration: aide ou entrave à l'intégration?* (Conseil de l'Europe 2014). De plus, on attire l'attention des décideurs sur le fait que la réussite au test n'est pas un signe de

l'intégration: on peut se sentir intégré même avec des ressources linguistiques limitées, si l'on adhère aux modes de vie de la nouvelle société et aux valeurs qui fondent sa cohésion. Il est aussi souligné que c'est le processus d'intégration qui conduit à l'acquisition de compétences langagières, lesquelles ne sont donc pas à considérer comme un préalable à celle-ci. Ces niveaux de maîtrise réputés nécessaires sont généralement établis à l'aide du Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues (CECR) qui propose des échelles de compétences. Mais le choix par les autorités nationales d'un niveau trop élevé peut conduire à exclure injustement les migrants et à enfreindre des normes internationales. L'Unité des politiques linguistiques du Conseil de l'Europe recommande, par ailleurs, de ne pas évaluer un niveau homogène mais un profil de compétences, chacune étant située à un niveau spécifique, par exemple à un niveau plus élevé pour les compétences de réception que de production, pour la compétence d'interaction orale que de production écrite etc. Ces dispositions doivent concourir à la qualité des formations proposées et des tests mis en place.

3. L'identité linguistique des adultes migrants

L'appropriation par les migrants d'une des langues du contexte d'accueil est généralement désignée par le terme *intégration linguistique*. Celle-ci ne se réduit pas à l'adoption d'une nouvelle langue qui permet de se fondre dans un nouvel environnement sociolinguistique. En fait, cette rencontre forcée avec une langue inconnue va susciter des attitudes différentes chez les migrants, lesquelles sont susceptibles de se manifester durant les apprentissages formels. Il importe de reconnaître ces attitudes, d'en comprendre l'origine et la fonction par rapport à l'identité linguistique et de les respecter. Au Conseil de l'Europe, on définit *intégration linguistique* comme *intégration d'une nouvelle langue dans le répertoire linguistique individuel*. On considère que tous les individus sont potentiellement ou effectivement plurilingues. Cette *compétence plurilingue* est la manifestation de la capacité de langage, dont tout être humain dispose génétiquement et qui peut s'investir dans plusieurs langues successivement et tout au long de la vie. Le

répertoire des langues connues par chacun (ou répertoire individuel) comprend des langues acquises de manière diverse et pour lesquelles on possède des compétences différentes (conversation quotidienne, lecture, écoute etc.) à des niveaux de maîtrise eux-mêmes différents (élémentaire, indépendant, expérimenté etc.). L'important est que ces langues peuvent recevoir des fonctions particulières, comme communiquer en famille, socialiser avec les voisins, travailler etc., et surtout exprimer son appartenance à un groupe. Apprendre et utiliser une nouvelle la langue, celle de la société d'accueil, ne constitue donc pas seulement une recherche d'efficacité pratique mais cela déclenche une remise en cause de l'identité linguistique.

Plusieurs formes d'adaptation des répertoires individuels au nouvel environnement linguistique sont possibles. Elles correspondent à différents projets et besoins des personnes migrantes. Le fait de considérer si elles sont satisfaisantes ou non relève de l'évaluation des seuls intéressés. On distinguera:

– *une faible intégration des langues du nouveau répertoire*: on apprend/utilise peu la nouvelle langue, même si les ressources en langue majoritaire ne sont pas suffisantes pour gérer, avec efficacité et sans effort excessif, les situations de communication. La communication implique souvent le recours à des tiers et son succès dépend grandement de la bienveillance langagière des interlocuteurs. Ces répertoires peuvent être ressentis par les locuteurs comme manquant d'efficacité et sont source de frustration. Ils peuvent donner prises à des attitudes d'exclusion de la part des natifs. Mais ils peuvent tout autant aussi être assumés, par la valorisation des langues antérieurement connues et par l'attribution d'un rôle exclusivement pratique à la langue majoritaire de la société d'insertion. La langue d'origine conserve une forte fonction identitaire;

– *une intégration fonctionnelle des langues du nouveau répertoire*: les ressources du répertoire (dont, essentiellement, celles en langue majoritaire) sont suffisantes pour gérer avec succès (relatif) la plupart des situations de communication sociale, professionnelle et personnelle. Elles assurent une certaine réussite aux échanges verbaux. Elles peuvent comporter des erreurs ou des fossilisations,

dont les migrants peuvent ne pas se soucier (s'ils recherchent avant tout l'efficacité) ou qu'ils cherchent à réduire en vue d'une meilleure naturalisation/banalisation linguistique, utile et acceptable à leurs propres yeux; la langue d'origine n'a pas nécessairement de statut identitaire proéminent;

– *l'intégration des langues du nouveau répertoire*: les personnes migrantes reconfigurent affectivement leur répertoire en y intégrant la langue majoritaire, qui y trouve sa place à côté des langues déjà maîtrisées; le répertoire n'est plus géré sous tension mais, naturellement, avec l'emploi des alternances de langues dans la vie sociale. Dans cette configuration des répertoires, la langue d'origine, qui a pu être seule identitaire, peut aussi demeurer co-identitaire. En ce sens, la présence de plusieurs langues identitaires dans un répertoire fait écho à des statuts comme celui de la double nationalité. La langue d'origine peut alors être valorisée au point de vouloir être transmise. Mais ce qui est devenu identitaire est le répertoire réorganisé.

Ces différentes attitudes influencent la motivation à l'apprentissage de la langue de la société d'installation. Il importe d'en tenir le plus grand compte dans les formations linguistiques destinées aux migrants. Une des conséquences simples de cela est que la langue maternelle/première des migrants doit être présente dans les cours. Il importe de lui faire une place pour la valoriser: on pourra imaginer des activités qui permettront de la faire entendre, d'en montrer l'écriture et même d'en tenir compte dans des activités de mise en relation de la grammaire de cette langue avec celle de l'italien/de la langue cible. Il ne s'agit aucunement de faire que les formateurs deviennent des linguistes, mais de les inviter simplement à s'informer, à des sources de divulgation d'accès immédiat, sur les caractéristiques majeures des langues présentes dans leur groupe.

4. La culture éducative des personnes migrantes

Il semble aussi fondamental de tenir compte de l'expérience que les personnes migrantes ont faite de l'école et de la formation en général.

Ils ont certaines conceptions de ce qu'est l'enseignement et l'apprentissage. Comme tous les apprenants qui changent de milieu éducatif, ils ont à s'adapter à de nouvelles normes de fonctionnement de l'institution éducative. On nommera *culture éducative* ces normes et les représentations que l'on s'en fait. Il faut considérer que c'est là une forme de rencontre interculturelle, celle de comportements d'enseignement/apprentissage et de valeurs éducatives, car toutes les sociétés ont créé, dans la longue durée, de dispositifs pour transmettre les connaissances.

Ces traditions différentes ont conduit à des pratiques didactiques connues et tenues pour légitimes, par exemple, à des genres d'exercices bien identifiés, comme répondre oralement à des questions, faire des exercices à trous écrits, produire certains genres de textes etc. Mais celles-ci ne sont pas universelles; ainsi, poser une question à l'enseignant n'est pas une pratique admise partout. A ces habitudes d'enseignement correspondent des comportements d'étudiant attendus (par ex. arriver à l'heure, s'adresser courtoisement aux autres apprenants, faire les activités demandées, se lever pour répondre). Tous ces traits, sont considérés comme naturels de part et d'autre mais, en fait, ils demandent à être identifiés, tout particulièrement pour ces publics migrants. La culture éducative du groupe doit être négociée.

La question du choix des méthodologies d'enseignement est à envisager dans cette perspective. Dans les formations proposées, on peut préférer une *didactique contemporaine (et européenne)*, à savoir des démarches actives impliquant les apprenants dans des tâches, simples ou complexes, répétitives ou ouvertes, dotées d'une certaine vraisemblance sociale. Mais il faut compter avec des pratiques comme apprendre par cœur, enrichir son vocabulaire au moyen d'un dictionnaire, *faire de la grammaire*, traduire etc. La meilleure stratégie d'enseignement n'est peut-être pas, pour tous ces publics, de bannir ces pratiques ou de privilégier des pratiques *modernes*. Il faut inventer, au cas par cas, une culture éducative appropriée, en tenant aussi compte de la nature des épreuves qui constituent les tests et les certifications en langues. En tout état de cause, il est important de prévoir des activités qui fassent une place à la parole des migrants en formation, non pour les exercer à l'oral mais pour leur donner

l'occasion de se raconter, de parler d'eux-mêmes et de leur expérience de vie.

5. La qualité des formations

Respecter les choix linguistiques des personnes migrantes et leurs croyances éducatives doit conduire, de la même manière à proposer des formations de qualité. En la matière, la qualité des formations linguistiques pour ces publics se définit à partir de quelques critères simples.

Le premier est qu'il n'existe pas de *cours standard* pour les migrants qui apprennent la langue de la société d'arrivée: *migrant* est une catégorie sociologique ou juridique, ce n'est en aucun cas une catégorie linguistique homogène. L'élaboration des formations doit tenir compte de la pluralité des contextes d'accueil et de la diversité des expériences et des connaissances générales et linguistiques de ces personnes. Car les objectifs à retenir varient selon la nature de la migration: réfugiés, travailleurs ou résidents de longue/moyenne durée, conjoints de migrants, nouveaux arrivants, etc.

D'autres facteurs à considérer relèvent des acquis antérieurs des migrants: la nature de leur capital éducatif (certains ont un degré d'instruction élevé, tandis que d'autres n'ont pas été scolarisés dans leur pays d'origine, ou seulement de façon limitée), celle de leur formation professionnelle. Il faudrait aussi tenir compte de leur répertoire linguistique, où peuvent figurer des langues, acquises ou non par enseignement, utilisées en Europe comme langues nationales/officielles ou enseignées comme langues étrangères (l'allemand, l'anglais, l'espagnol ou le français, par exemple). Il convient aussi d'utiliser les éventuelles proximités entre la langue d'origine et la/une langue du pays d'accueil.

L'autre critère de qualité est que ces formations correspondent aux besoins langagiers des personnes migrantes en formation. On désigne sous ce terme les ressources linguistiques nécessaires pour gérer avec succès les formes de communication dans lesquelles les migrants vont être impliqués à court ou à moyen terme. L'identification de ces besoins suppose d'identifier les situations de communication dans lesquelles la langue cible sera utilisée. Cette démarche d'analyse des

besoins langagiers permet de créer des enseignements sur mesure, seuls capables de répondre aux attentes de ces publics. Il convient de veiller à ce que les intéressés eux-mêmes soient impliqués dans cette identification des priorités pour l'enseignement. Les apprenants sont souvent amenés à appréhender leurs besoins à travers leurs expériences antérieures de l'enseignement et leur culture éducative. Ces attentes différentes impliquent une négociation avec ces adultes en formation pour rapprocher les besoins objectivés de ceux ressentis.

Les migrants sont confrontés à des problèmes, plus ou moins urgents, qui supposent de la communication verbale dans la langue de la société d'installation: trouver un logement, accéder aux soins médicaux, socialiser avec ses voisins, parler avec les enseignants de leurs enfants, gérer un entretien d'embauche, circuler en ville. De telles situations sont, en fait, des *scénario sociaux*, c'est-à-dire des activités de la vie en société bien identifiées et constituées d'une suite prévisible de situations de communication, aux caractéristiques elles-mêmes prévisibles (interlocuteurs, objets des échanges verbaux, lieux). Chaque scénario est constitué d'actions verbales et non verbales supposant des connaissances générales (par ex., où acheter un ticket de bus?) et des compétences langagières (par ex. remplir un formulaire). Ces scénarios fournissent *un schéma mental et linguistique* cadrant les *manières typiques* de traiter une situation. Ils sont très utiles pour analyser les besoins des migrants et surtout pour servir de base à l'organisation de l'enseignement destiné aux migrants adultes. Ils ont été employés à cette fin dès les années 1970 et plus récemment dans le site suisse: *fide* et dans la boîte à outils destinée aux volontaires qui organisent des activités en langue (Conseil de l'Europe 2017, disponible en sept langues; pages 54-56).

Comme on le voit ces principes pour l'organisation des politiques d'accueil linguistique proposés aux états membres ne sont pas abstraits. Ils s'adossent aux valeurs de la démocratie et des droits de l'homme, mais ils ont aussi des répercussions opérationnelles sur les modalités concrètes d'organiser les enseignements de langue destinés aux personnes migrantes et sur la gestion pédagogique de la classe. En ces temps de fermeture accrue de bien des états européens, on invite tous les opérateurs impliqués dans ces formations à mettre en œuvre ces principes au quotidien, même si les valeurs qui les fondent sont battues en brèche dans l'espace politique public.

Références bibliographiques

Beacco, Jean-Claude. 2008. *Les langues dans les politiques d'intégration des adultes migrants*. Strasbourg: Conseil de l'Europe (disponible aussi en version anglaise).
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Migrants_ConceptPaper_fr.doc

Beacco Jean-Claude, Hans-Jürgen Krumm and David Little (dir.). 2017. *The linguistic integration of adult migrants/L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Beacco Jean-Claude, David Little and Chris Hedges. 2016. *L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes. Guide pour l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre des politiques*. Strasbourg: Conseil de l'Europe (disponible aussi en version anglaise).

Conseil de l'Europe. 2001. *Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues (CECR). Strasbourg: Conseil de* l'Europe*.*

Conseil de l'Europe. *Intégration linguistique des migrants adultes (ILMA)*.
https://www.coe.int/fr/web/lang-migrants

Conseil de l'Europe. 2014. *Recommandation 2034 de l'Assemblée Parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe (APCE) au Comité des ministres:* Tests d'intégration: aide ou entrave à l'intégration?
http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=20482&lang=en

Conseil de l'Europe. 2017. *L'accompagnement linguistique des réfugiés adultes. La boîte à outils du Conseil de l'Europe*. Strasbourg: Conseil de l'Europe (en sept langues).
https://www.coe.int/fr/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/home

Extramiana Claire, Reinhilde Pulinx and Piet Van Avermaet. 2014. *Intégration linguistique des migrants adultes. Politique et pratique, Rapport final sur la 3e enquête du Conseil de l'Europe*. Strasbourg: Conseil de l'Europe.
https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016802fc3b2

Office fédéral des migrations (Suisse). Site *fide* (français en Suisse).
https://www.fide-info.ch/fr/webportal

New migration processes
and new frontiers for linguistic research

Mari D'Agostino – Egle Mocciaro[1]

Recent migrations show unprecedented characteristics in terms of migratory routes, individual profiles of migrants and condition of isolation in arrival contexts. Combining sociolinguistic and linguistic perspectives, the article reconstructs the forms of linguistic contact between local and migrant populations in one of the main gateways to Europe, Palermo (Italy), and the specific conditions of local language acquisition by newcomers. It is argued that notions of (im)mobility and segregation must be included in migration-centred linguistic research.

Keywords: new migrants, segregation, poor linguistic immersion, Sicily.

1. Palermo

Walking through the streets of the city centre or along the Palermo seafront, where improvised football matches are played every day, anyone will notice the presence of a large number of young Africans. Not only the visual dimension, but the auditory one is revealing. On arrival at voice distance, a few rare *cumpa'*, i.e., a Sicilian word for 'fellow', break the flow of largely unfamiliar sounds. The majority of these sounds comes from sub-Saharan Africa and belongs to languages such as Mandinka, Wolof, Pulaar, Bambara. This concentration of people and languages might induce to overestimate the foreign, and in particular African component in the city.

As of December 31st 2019, 25,522 foreign citizens were registered. If we also consider those who have acquired Italian citizenship since 2009 (4,002), the foreign presence almost reaches 30,000, i.e., about 4.5% of the total population of Palermo, a very modest percentage compared to many other Italian cities. Data by

---

[1] The article results from close collaboration of the two authors. However, Mari D'Agostino is responsible for sections 1 to 5 and Egle Mocciaro for sections 6 to 10.

nationality (derived from municipal registers) are also in stark contrast to the African presence mentioned above. In 2019, the most numerous groups of foreigners are from Asia, especially Bangladesh (5,405) and Sri Lanka (3,428). These are followed by Romanians (3,214, 12.6% of foreigners), Ghanaians (2,586, 10.1%), Filipinos (1,761, 6.9%), Tunisians (1,056, 4.1%), Moroccans (1,026, 4.0%), Chinese (997, 3.9%), Mauritians (867, 3.4%), and then all the other countries, for a total of 130 different nationalities. The vast majority of young people we have mentioned above is not part of this articulated and complex migratory scenario, which has been settled in the city for decades.

The African migrants we are talking about have arrived by sea in recent years and are not included in the data of the Municipal Registry Office. This is not only because of their extreme mobility, but also because of the difficulties in obtaining residence permits following the effects of the "Security Decree", in 2018[2]. Moreover, since their arrival, they have been included in a reception system with strongly segregating aspects. About 70% was initially placed in Extraordinary Reception Centres, in many cases far from inhabited centres. The rest was divided between Centres for Asylum Seekers, that is, government mega-structures where people wait for months (although the law provides for a maximum of 35 days), and the centres of the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, that is, a network of local authorities and non-governmental associations spread throughout the country. Here, migrants are housed in small structures or flats and are often involved in education and socio-occupational integration. In addition, there is the reception system for unaccompanied foreign minors or MSNA (i.e., minors who have arrived in Europe alone, without reference adults), which is divided into a first-level reception system (with large, and often very problematic, accommodation facilities) and smaller second-level reception facilities. We will refer to this complex and articulated migratory world with the label of "new migrants". This is not because of the time that has elapsed since their arrival in Europe, but rather of the characteristics of their migratory paths, individual profiles and needs (including linguistic ones).

The article is organised as follows: in Section 2, we briefly discuss the limits of new migratory movements and the need to

---

[2] Cf. https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/06/14/19G00063/sg.

include "(im)mobility" in linguistic research focused on migration; Section 3 addresses a terminological problem concerning the label to be used for migrants moving through illegal routes; Section 4 is dedicated to digital communication that massively involve new migrants; in Section 5, the notion of "migration trajectory" is described, which is to be understood as a complex displacement event affecting personal identities, aspirations and perspectives. Section 6 deals with the multilingual repertoires of new migrants, which however only marginally and rather belatedly include Italian; in Section 7, we provide a snapshot of the interlanguage that migrants can develop in situations of reduced contact and exposure to the language; in Section 8, we discuss the role of written input, from which learners with limited literacy are excluded, and of digital writing, which is very often a locus of informal (and multilingual) literacy; Section 9 shows that low exposure to oral and written input in Italian involves all new migrants and has dramatic effects on their interlanguage development. Some conclusions are drawn in Section 10, together with possible developments of the research.

2. Migration and linguistic research

The large-scale migrations that have crossed many areas of the world have always constituted a great challenge and a great opportunity for innovation in linguistic research. The description of patterns of acquisition of new languages, changes in the organisation of repertoires, and linguistic forms resulting from contact have been fertile moments for entire sectors of linguistics in the last century. Suffice it to think of the impressive fieldwork carried out between 1935 and 1948 by Einar Ingvald Haugen, who personally experienced migration and drew from that the sap for all his scientific reflection. In recent decades, (also) linguistic research has been focusing its attention on population movements with new characteristics, which require careful exploration.

The first characteristic of the new migratory flows is that they clash in a dramatic and generalised way with migration policies that drastically limit mobility. After so much emphasis on contact, global mobility, being "on the move", the theme of immobility and

confinement now offers us a new and extremely important analytical perspective. This certainly concerns the new migration processes (those involving the "invaders", to use a label that describes the way they are often perceived and represented), but it also affected the lives of all of us in unexpected ways during the pandemic period. This experience allows us to take a closer look at the restrictions on movement that characterise the lives of a very significant part of the world's population. This does not only include restrictions due to the costs of movement but rather what has been called a "mobility regime" (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). The usefulness of such a term lies in emphasising the role of policies, approaches, actions and perceptions in constructing the division between freedom of movement, on one side, and illegality of movement, on the other side. The term "bounded mobility" (Hackl et al. 2016) has a similar orientation in that it emphasises that mobility is regulated, mediated and intrinsically connected to forms of immobility and unequal power relations. An important part of today's international migrations differs greatly from the past not so much in terms of point of departure and previous social conditions, but first and foremost in terms of the forms of (im)mobility that migrants go through. The relationship between mobility and immobility, immersion and segregation, isolation and (digital) connections are crucial issues for a linguistics that focuses on new migration phenomena.

3. Terms, needs and profiles

So far we have used the terms "to migrate", "migrant", "migration" etc., that is, continuations of the Latin *migrō*, *migrāre* and *migrātiō*, *migrātiōnis* that have spread in various languages with a more or less similar meaning, that is, 'change in the space by people and/or animals, especially if at a distance and for long periods'. These terms were introduced in the specialist terminology of the last century as "[a]n umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons" (IOM 2019: 132).

In recent decades, a number of other terms have come into use that designate the migrant population with reference to legal status, e.g., "clandestine", "illegal migrant", "irregular migrant", "refugee", "asylum seeker", etc. In addition to bringing to the fore the way in which borders are crossed, i.e., the regime of control and denial of movement mentioned above, there is a progressive semantic shift in the term "migrant" itself. From a generic and inclusive term designating a set of very different situations, it has become, in the language of politics, in specialist terminology and in the language of the media, a synonym for "economic migrant" as opposed to "refugee" (and other categories identifying statuses recognised by international law). The previous generalist vision was found, for instance, in the UN definition of an international migrant as "any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country" (UN/DESA 1998: 9). This definition was irrespective of the causes, whether voluntary or not, and of the regular or irregular means used to reach the new country and the status conferred on it. The semantic change undergone by the term can be seen in documents produced by various international organisations, among which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (see UNHCR 2016). In this context, the opposition "migrant" vs "refugee", based on the criterion "choice" vs "need" (to move), is dominant: "Migrants are fundamentally different from refugees and, thus, are treated very differently under international law. Migrants, especially economic migrants, choose to move in order to improve their lives. Refugees are forced to flee to save their lives or preserve their freedom" (UNHCR 2013). In this narrow sense, "migrant" indicates one of the subcategories of which the set of people on the move is composed. Specifically, it designates the residual (but quantitatively predominant) category that emerges after the subjects for whom there are forms of administrative and/or legal protection ("unaccompanied foreign minors", "victims of trafficking", "asylum seekers", etc.) have been listed. This set of labels is often used in studies aimed at investigating the social, psychological, linguistic and educational aspects of men, women and children who arrive by sea or land, crossing state borders without having the required visa.

Almost always there is little or no awareness on the part of those who study new forms of migration about the danger and the ineffectiveness of using legal-administrative status to distinguish people who not only come from the same geographical area, but who have had the same migratory experiences, along the travel routes and on arrival. This status is attained only long after arrival and, once attained, it determines important changes in the life of the migrant, allowing access or not to a series of rights and services (relating to work, education, freedom of movement). In the first phase, which in Italy lasts for years, all the people who have just arrived "burning the borders" share spaces of collective life, integration paths, and hopes. It is almost always in that first phase that the descriptive and analytical use of the categories listed above appears most problematic. The construction of research models capable of capturing and explaining these new migratory flows (not only on a linguistic level) passes through the foregrounding of the real-life experiences of those who participate in them, often very distant from the categories of politics and legislation, and from media narratives (Crawley and Skleparis 2018).

In these pages, as mentioned in Section 1, we will therefore use the intentionally generic labels of "new migrants" and "new migratory processes" in order to remain far from the misleading categories listed above. The adjective "new" requires us to delve into worlds that have not yet been fully explored, within experiences marked by forms of isolation and confinement that are much more radical than those of other migratory experiences. At the same time, the use of digital connections before, during and after the journey profoundly changes the relationships with otherness, including linguistic diversity. But first of all, it is useful to recognise the presence of strong diversities within these migratory flows, not linked to statuses but to social and geographical characteristics, expectations and desires, and previous experiences of movement. An important element is that new forms of migration are mixed: socially diverse people, often coming from very distant places, with highly diversified linguistic repertoires, and not always with a common bridge language, walk the same route, get on the same boat, hide in the same woods, live in the same camp or in the same *squat*, as the abandoned sheds in Bosnia or Croatia are called. Along the central

Mediterranean route, young sub-Saharan migrants with extraordinarily rich but also highly heterogeneous linguistic heritages live side by side for a period of time that often extends over years. Thus, on the Balkan route, Afghans, Pakistanis, Iraqis, Iranians, Syrians, highly educated multilinguals and non-literates whose repertoire, at least at the start of the journey, is limited to a single language, move together (see D'Agostino 2021a).

4.   Connected migrants and (im)mobility

Most new migrants move within new communication models and tools. This aspect has often been described in terms of "connected migrants", starting with Diminescu's (2008) essay under this title. This essay does not defines migrants only on the basis of physical and psychic experience, and on their un-rootedness. Over the past few decades we have learnt to think of the migrants as individuals excluded from the political and social order of both the places they have inhabited and those they inhabit (see Abdelmalek Sayad's 1999 famous image of the "double absence"), and still more as individuals who live "in between", in a no-man's land, at the same time within and outside of the conflicts that they continually go through. We should start recognising a new dimension of living: that of being *here and there at the same time*. The use of digital technologies indicates a portability of networks of belonging and the possibility for connected migrants to maintain a sense of co-presence.

Diminescu's perspective belongs to a research trend that radically overcomes the classic sociological model characterised by integration and assimilation, and looks at movement, participation and connection within a range of social places and contexts of departure and arrival. There is also a complete revision of models of communication, as we are no longer dealing with the familiar model of conversation but with a new one containing forms of continuous presence and leading to important changes in migrants' lives:

Not only have migratory practices been revolutionized (in particular the activation of networks, remote organization, the monitoring of movements)

but also the way mobility is experienced and implicitly the construction of relational settlement. (Diminescu 2008: 572)

The possession of tools that connect people to other places greatly facilitates the organisation of the journey during the months or years of the "back way" (the term Gambians use for the difficult migration route that, so they hope, leads beyond the Mediterranean Sea) and reconfigures patterns of life upon arrival, particularly through the construction of transnational networks that help sustain movement within Europe. However, at the same time the massive use of digital media expose new migrants to the risk of being intercepted by the control and surveillance regime. Common forms of safeguards to protect digital identities and information on intended routes are, for example, the use of closed WhatsApp and Facebook groups and the use of Facebook with pseudonyms (see Gillespie et al. 2018: 5).

Digital communication crosses the widespread condition of segregation that characterise new migration and that is crucial for understanding its specific nature, including linguistic aspects. Segregation can occur into "connection houses" (i.e., temporary places of gathering and refuge for migrants during the journey), in prisons in Niger and Libya, in Croatian forests, in Bosnian makeshift camps, or in squats. This is followed by subsequent isolation in asylum-seeker hostels in Europe, in limited physical spaces far from inhabited centres. We are dealing with a regime of immobility and a physical separation that has few precedents in modern history and which continues for many months following the boat landings.

5. Migratory trajectories

The pairs "mobility and immobility", "immersion and segregation", "isolation and (digital) connections" run through the entire migratory trajectory, which is characterised by the duration and importance of the physical displacement phase, the "Journey".

One of the issues that most hinders the understanding of new migration dynamics is to look at the journey as a movement between two points without any attention to what happens – geographically, temporally, socially, psychologically, linguistically – in the space in

between. Research of the last decade has radically changed this approach by looking at the displacement phase as a crucial aspect of the whole experience (Collyer 2010; Collyer and de Haas 2012; Crawley et al. 2016 on Syrians and Afghans). The notion of "migration trajectories" is relevant in this context. These are defined "as open spatio-temporal processes with a strong transformative dimension. They may consist of multiple journeys going in different directions" (Schapendonk et al. 2018: 2). This definition is in opposition to the push-pull model, which sees migration as the mechanical result of moving from A to B based on a decision made in the place of origin and automatically relocates people to the place of arrival (Cresswell 2010). It rather focuses on the complexity of expectations and outcomes, on attempts (that continue even after crossing the Mediterranean, after arriving in Spain, Greece, or in Italy via the Balkan route) to reach a space in which to relocate existence satisfying the hopes of departure, on places of arrival other than those desired. "The journey is a profoundly formative and transformative experience and a 'lens' on the newcomers' social condition" (BenEzer and Zetter 2015: 302). Furthermore, "at the individual level, travel seems to effect the narrowing or expansion of personal boundaries, depending on its nature and the way it interacts with the individual's culture and personality. On the group level, these journeys may have an effect on the way members of a migrating/fleeing society perceive themselves as a group, including their social identity, and on the ensuing expectations regarding the receiving society and its reception of them" (p. 303). Migrants' trajectories have a logic of transformation, as prolonged movement in time and space affects personal identities, aspirations and perspectives. Individual decisions and experiences are profoundly linked to, and influenced by, actors that facilitate or hinder migration, be they individuals, social networks, political initiatives, and, first and foremost, by the regime of (im)mobility.

6. New migration and new forms of language acquisition

The isolation experienced by new migrants and the strongly segregating characteristics of their housing context have a striking

correlation in the scarce or null contact with the local population and, therefore, a scarce or null exposure to the local languages, namely (local) Italian and Sicilian. On the other hand, new migrants are exposed to a multifaceted linguistic input from other migrants with whom they travel or share the existential spaces in reception centres. As observed in Section 4, this (multi-)linguistic input includes the wider space of digital communication, which massively involves the new generations of connected migrants and constitutes one of the first and most important contexts of exposure to (written) language in recent migratory dynamics (D'Agostino and Mocciaro 2021).

New migrants' communicative spaces reflect the specificities of their sociolinguistic background. The first relevant aspect is the widespread plurilingualism of sub-Saharan migrants. In many communities of the sub-Saharan area, "[t]he idea of 'mother tongue' and someone's 'first language' has little relevance […]. [S]peakers use a number of different languages in different contexts, and live in multilingual families and multilingual neighborhoods. Their multilingual skills are part of their cultural lives and social integrity" (Lüpke and Storch 2013: 77). This certainly increases the degree of familiarity with diverse ways of acquiring new language skills, not rarely on the basis of very limited input, during different phases of people's life and in relation to different experiences:

In many African situations, languages are added to individuals' repertoires throughout their lives and occupy positions of varying centrality in them depending on a variety of factors. Adults continue to be socialized in languages they have "acquired" before, and in new ones, when they move house, migrate, marry, divorce, retire, and foster children. (Lüpke 2015: 308)

These articulated individual repertoires frequently emerge in migrants' narratives, as in the passage in (1), where a Senegalese learner (A), who has been in Italy for some years at the time of the interview, recounts his repertoire made of eight languages (Pulaar, Wolof, Mandinka, Bambara, Creole, Portuguese, English, French):

(1) Narrative of a Senegalese plurilingual speaker (D'Agostino 2021a: 121)

I learnt Creole with my friends, my schoolmates, and it's a language that I haven't used since I've been in Italy. They were the friends I played football with. We in

Senegal have a border in Guinea, a border in Mali, I played football in Guinea and came back, in Mali and came back. I played football in a team in Senegal under 16, then in a team in Ivory Coast, even there I learnt a language, there they speak Bambara. I speak it well and I learnt to speak it like this, I am good at speaking languages. […] When I started to have friends who come to us on holiday, we do something, I don't know how it's called, a game: players from Gambia come, they come to the sport centre where we play football and they come here, they stay three or four days, then they go back. Also people from Guinea ((i.e., Guinea Bissau)), they come to us, they stay two days, one week, so. I started speaking their languages and some of them also started speaking my language. They started speaking Pulaar, they started speaking Mandinka. […] But before they didn't understand, they couldn't speak Pulaar or Mandinka. They only speak Creole, those from Guinea, they speak Creole, they only study Portuguese.

This unsystematic and fragmentary way of being exposed to and handling different linguistic codes may help to explain the plasticity by which new migrants move through new communicative spaces and practices during migration. This largely involves African languages used as linguae francae in the home countries (e.g., Bambara, Mandinka and Wolof), which may serve the same function during the trip, alongside post-colonial languages (especially French and English) and other languages that reflect some aspects of the migration experience. The excerpt in (2) is from a conversation with a Burkinabe migrant, MLG, hosted in a reception centre in Palermo:

(2) Narrative of a plurilingual Burkinabe learner (Mocciaro 2020: 85-86, adapted)

MLG: Here I don't use Bissa because I haven't met anyone speaking Bissa.
INT: But you speak French.
MLG: I always use French and also Italian. […]
MLG: Where I work, here in Palermo, they speak Italian, more than French.
INT: Yes, sure, but do you speak French with the other guys who speak French?
MLG: Yes, even if I didn't speak well in French. In my country, I used to speak Bissa and Mòoré. Because in my village I didn't study at the French school. But when I arrived here in Italy, I didn't find anyone who spoke my language. I had to use French, that's why I now understand a bit more French than before. I started to understand French here in Italy. […]
MLG: I can say that I also learnt the Italian language. I can say that I know the name of many things in Italian, more than in French.

The nature of the linguistic competences that develop in contexts of high societal multilingualism and/or varied linguistic contact during

new migrations is captured by Blommaert's (2010: 106) notion of "truncated repertoires". These are "truncated complexes of resources often derived from a variety of languages, and with considerable differences in the level of development of particular resources. Parts of these multilingual repertoires will be fairly well developed, while others exist only at a very basic level". In terms of Jørgensen (2008), these repertoires are *polylingual* (rather than *multilingual* in the more traditional sense), that is, made up of fragments of different languages which coexist and overlap in the communicative practices.

Of course, the frequency, formal complexity and communicative effectiveness of these *pieces of competence* are a measure of the intensity of the communicative exchanges in which they originated. In the new migratory contexts, Italian develops in a situation of general fragmentariness. It appears quite late compared to other languages in migrants' repertoires, including those acquired while travelling, and typically results from low quantitative and qualitative input in the reception centres (and, later, at work), where learners are exposed to highly simplified versions of Italian. Furthermore, the emergence of Italian may also result from exposure to its use as a lingua franca by other migrants, rather than as an effect of interaction with local speakers. While this may enrich migrants' linguistic "mosaic" with new pieces that can be used in basic communication (cf. "the name of many things in Italian" in 2), they rarely manage to develop a sufficiently rich competence in Italian to allow them effective communicative exchanges in the place of arrival.

The process of acquisition in contexts of reduced language contact has not yet received the attention it deserves. In what follows, some examples of the output of such a process, that is, the interlanguages of some migrants, will be shown and commented upon. Our aim is not so much to provide a full description of their language skills – which needs dedicated research – as to try to extract clues about the process involved and its characteristics.

7. Acquisition under reduced contact: a snapshot

A picture of the language migrants may develop in situations of non-immersion is in (3). M is a 27-year-old Gambian with self-reported

L1 Mandinka, in Italy since about five years, during which he has developed very little competence in L2 Italian. After arriving in Italy, M attended a few hours of an Italian language course in the reception centre in a mountain area, several kilometres away from the city, where he lived in a condition of extreme segregation.

(3) Interview with a Gambian migrant (Archive of Narratives of ItaStra, University of Palermo)[3]

INT1	e non hai | sei mai andato a scuola?
M2	no però a quello:: tempo c'è:: mmh:: presona che fatto la escula, però non è:: loro no capiseh::: un'altra lingua, solo italiano così mmh:: la mia (xxx) detto loro basta […]
M3	quello così io non posto imparare bene mmh: scritto, non posto imparare scritto di italiano. […]
INT4	quanti mesi di scuola hai fatto al RECEPTION CENTRE?
M5	no::: là solo::: una mesi […]
INT6	senti e poi cosa facevi tutto il resto della giornata?
M7	questi giornata mmh non c'è: niente che fare là solo:: perché quel tempo io/:: quando non/: iscula io vai lavoro una (xxx)
INT8	vai al lavoro e che lavoro facevi?
M9	io ho fatto la+ lavoro in campagna c'è: un giorno io vai a lavoro negosio […]
M10	così prendere cartuna sistema la/: giubuta cosa/: io ho fatto questo/: di negozio […]
INT11	hai lavorato a piana degli albanesi e poi sei venuto a palermo?
M12	palermo/: palermo qua non è abita qua/: io vien+ qua due giorno tre giorno vai/: io sono abita là a calaveria mmh: […]
MED13	Calabria
[INT1[4]	and have you never been to school?
M2	no but at that:: time there is:: mmh:: person who made the school, but it's not:: they no understand::: another language, only Italian so mmh:: my (xxx) told them enough [At that time there

---

[3] The following table shows the transcription conventions we have adopted:

abcd+	interrupted word	/:	pause
(xxx)	unintelligible segment	*abcd*	different language
abc | efg	self-correction	((abcd))	external comment
:, ::, :::	lengthening	mmh:	disfluency mark

[4] Translations preserve the fragmentary character of M's speech. When it is not possible to grasp the global sense, an interpretive adaptation has been attempted in square brackets. The same has been done for the transcriptions in Section 9.

	was a person teaching at school who did not understand other languages, only Italian; so (xxx) told them I couldn't attend classes] […]
M3	that, so I can't learn written Italian.
INT13	how many months of school did you do at RECEPTION CENTRE?
M14	no:: there only:: one month
INT15	one month [...]
M7	these days mmh there is nothing to do:: because then I/:: when not/: school I going to work [These days, there was nothing to do, because when I was not at school I went to work]
INT22	you go to work and what job did you do?
M23	I did wo+ work in the countryside, there is/: one day I go to work shop [...] [I worked in the countryside, sometimes in a shop]
M24	so take packs, fix the /: jacket, what /: I did this, of shop. [So, taking boxes, arranging jackets, things like that; I've done this in the shop].
INT25	you worked in *piana degli albanesi*, and then came to palermo?
M26	palermo. palermo here, I do not live here, I come here two days, three days you go, I'm there in [calaveria] [Palermo, I do not live here, I come two or three days per week; I'm there, in Calabria]
MED29	Calabria']

The experience recounted by M is paradigmatic of that of many others, who have little relationship with the local context, therefore little possibility to practise a new language and to use reality as a learning environment. This means that the process of acquiring the local language(s) is very slow and, even a long time after arrival, migrants' comprehension and production skills are very limited.

This emerges clearly if we consider M's Italian morphosyntax. Let's take a look, in particular, at the verbal system, which is an excellent diagnostic to identify the stage of acquisition. In terms of Klein and Perdue (1997), M's interlanguage lies at the very transition between what they call *basic variety* (which is still prevalent) and the early *post-basic variety* (which is only emergent). This means that the forms of the verb largely convey bare lexical meaning whereas they remain unanalysed at the morphological level, i.e., they do not indicate person, number and tense, hence they do not agree with the subject as in the target language (e.g., M7 *io vai*:2SG *lavoro* 'I go work')[5]. These basic forms just begin to alternate with

---

[5] While in some interlanguages basic forms involve morpheme omission (e.g., English: *he speak*-Ø), in L2 Italian, verbal forms generally do not omit suffixes and

past participles, which introduce the first (aspectual) opposition in the verbal system, that between perfective (past) vs non-perfective (past) (e.g., M2 *fatto* 'done', *detto* 'said'). Basic forms also coexist with some forms of auxiliaries, which also express 1st person agreement (e.g., M9 *io ho*.1SG *fatto* 'I have done'), and with some overgeneralised forms of the copula (e.g., M12 *non è*.3SG *abita*.3SG *qua* '(lit.: it is not lives here) I do not live here'). These characteristics are indicators of a very initial level of interlanguage, which is generally quickly overcome by those learners who, on the other hand, are immersed in the target language (because they are included in society in terms of work and/or education). Furthermore, during the interview, not only did M show a morphosyntax very far from the target language, but he also exhibited extremely weak skills in terms of comprehension (as he did not decode simple questions and often required translation in Mandinka by the mediator, MED) and communicative autonomy and effectiveness (as he used English extensively and his utterances are often difficult to understand).

8. The other side of exposure: written input

In the case of M and many others, the situation of reduced contact and low linguistic immersion is exacerbated by the widespread lack of literacy or, at any rate, limited reading and writing skills on arrival, in any language of the repertoire[6]. This is a rather common phenomenon in the context of new migrations, which nevertheless still receives little attention in the relevant literature. Here we will consider the lack of literacy skills only in the fairly evident terms of further reducing the input to which migrants may be exposed[7].

---

are an overgeneralised form of the present or an infinitive (Banfi and Bernini 2003, to whom the reader is referred to for the description of the verb in L2 Italian).

[6] A survey conducted in Palermo in 2017-2018, revealed 30% of none or limited literacy among the local migrant population (D'Agostino 2021a, 2021b).

[7] There is consensus that adult learners with limited literacy acquire additional languages more slowly compared with educated adults, but there are divided views on the role of literacy. Slow acquisition, in fact, might depend on limited literacy or other factors related to literacy, e.g., low exposure to the target language or low or no access to written texts (Tarone and Bigelow 2005; Tarone et al. 2009; Vainikka and Young-Scholten 2007; Vainikka et al. 2017 inter al.).

Against this background, it may seem a contradiction that new migrants very often frequent other virtual places of writing, i.e., social media. These are the connected migrants referred to in Section 4. In contexts of social marginalisation and non-immersion in the language, social media such as Facebook become a fundamental context for naturalistic exposure to language. This involves not only competent writers but also those who are new to writing, who find here the chance to activate an informal literacy process, through practices of imitation, reinterpretation and reuse of pieces of written language which, in the subjects' perception, convey meaning (D'Agostino and Mocciaro 2021). This literacy process is played out simultaneously in several languages, as a consequence of exposure to that mixture of languages that appears to be a prominent feature of Facebook interaction. Consider the example in (4):

(4) Plurilingual post (**French**/*English*/<u>Wolof</u> (D'Agostino and Mocciaro 2021)

Writer 1   COURAGE BRO.ON TE SALUT profondement
Writer 2 **merci**   *star*   <u>nakal</u>   <u>dagabak</u>
                 thanks   star   how are you   are you fine
                 'Courage, bro(ther), I greet you deeply.'
                 'Thanks star, how are you?'

In terms of language selection, interaction on Facebook reproduces and multiplies the *polylingual* dimension that characterises new migrants' communicative exchanges. However, also in this case, Italian appears rarely and late in the production of new writers, as the network of digital relationships reflects their lack of contact with the local population. For new migrants, Facebook seems to be the place to connect a past and a present life inhabited by compatriots, other migrants met in the various stages of the Journey, including Sicily.

9. Acquisition under reduced contact: a second snapshot

The speaker portrayed in the second snapshot is AO, a 24-year-old Nigerian, with a twelve-year educational background. He was literate in English, but his oral repertoire also included pidgin English and Esan, the latter described as a mother tongue. Being literate, AO had

in principle full access to the written input, in any context including the digital ones. This contrasts with the situation of the Gambian migrant M depicted in Sections 7 and 8. On the other hand, AO's migratory experience as well as the living conditions in Palermo are consistent with those reported about M. When we first met him, AO had been housed in a reception centre in Palermo, but with very little connection to the city context. After arrival, he had only attended a two-month Italian language course in a volunteer-led context and did not go on to attend any other classes later. After a few months, he started working in a city market, but carrying out tasks not involving rich communicative exchanges with native speakers (i.e., loading and unloading goods). We met AO five times in a timespan of 13 months, during which his living conditions remained unchanged and, therefore, his exposure to the language. The excerpt in (5) is from the last interview, administered after 25 months from his arrival in Palermo:

(5) Interview with a Nigerian migrant (unpublished data for Mocciaro 2020)

INT1	ok e che cosa hai fatto qui a Palermo? raccontami
AO2	qua a Palermo scendi e là di Trapani […]
INT3	ok ok e cosa hai fatto? sei andato a scuola hai lavorato?
AO4	arrivato RECEPTION CENTRE
AO5	scuola:/ sentro VOLUNTEER-LED CENTRE
AO6	centro VOLUNTEER-LED CENTRE mmh: due mesi sì mmh:
INT7	e perché non hai continuato ad andare a scuola?
INT8	perché solo due mesi?
AO9	mmh::: bab+	papa mio chiame mmh: mama mio chiama mi
AO10	mmh: male la soldi soldi soldi la ospitale solo io de+ lavoro […]
INT11	ho capito ho capito quindi stai lavorando […]
AO12	marcato mmh: vedura mmh: frutta […]
INT13	ah /: ho capito e da qua+ da quanto tempo? /: da quando?
INT14	quanto a lungo hai lavorato lì?
AO15	io no capisci
INT16	*how long have you been working*
AO17	ok mmh: prima io lavorare /: io prima io lavorare mmh:
AO18	supermarcheto mmh: mo+ Moreale sì ora io lavorare sì
INT1	ok and what did you do here in Palermo? tell me
AO2	here in Palermo arrived and there from Trapani [I arrived here in Palermo from Trapani] […]
INT3	ok ok what did you do? did you go to school, did you work?

AO4	arrived RECEPTION CENTRE [arrived in RECEPTION CENTRE]
AO5	school/: centre VOLUNTEER-LED CENTRE [I attended school in VOLUNTEER-LED CENTRE]
AO6	VOLUNTEER-LED CENTRE mmh: two months yes mmh:
INT7	and why did you not continue going to school?
INT8	why only two months?
AO9	mmh::: dad+	my dad calls mmh: my mum calls me [because of my dad, my mum called me]
AO10	mmh: bad the money money money of the hospital just I mu(st) work [Dad was ill, they needed money for the hospital, I had to work]
INT11	I understand I understand so you are working […]
AO12	market mmh: vegetable mmh: fruit […]
INT13	ah /: I see and how long? /: since when?
INT14	how long have you worked there?
AO15	I do not understand
INT16	*how long have you been working*
AO17	first I work /: first I work mmh: [At first I worked]
AO18	supermarket mmh: mo+ Moreale yes now I work yes]

After more than two years in Palermo, AO's interlanguage exhibits the same forms as in the first conversation, namely mainly basic forms (e.g., AO2 *scendi* 'you come down', AO17 *lavorare* 'to work', both referred to the 1st person), occasional past participles (AO9 *arrivato* 'arrived') and several utterances where the verb is just lacking. Neither copula nor auxiliary forms can be observed at this stage. On the whole, his comprehension skills remain weak and the interviewer repeatedly has to reformulate her questions.

10. Discussion and conclusion

The linguistic productions of the two learners examined in 7 to 9 show a very reduced morphosyntactic development. This certainly concerns the characteristics of the verb we have examined. However, even a quick glance at the transcriptions allows us to argue, at least preliminarily, that the phenomenon encompasses the entire interlingual system, as well as communicative efficiency as a whole.

This scant development clearly indicates the lack of opportunities for linguistic contact with the local population and, hence, the reduced exposure to the local language(s). In the segregated condition in

which they live, the linguistic exchanges of the two learners take place mainly in the languages they share with other migrants and much more rarely, instead, they involve Italian (eventually that used by other migrants as lingua franca). Since they are not included, for various reasons, in the local educational system, the only opportunities for linguistic exchange in Italian (or in Sicilian, the other local language which we have not discussed here) would be those offered by the workplaces. However, these places do not seem to fulfil this function, neither in the inland countryside, where M works side by side with other migrants of various origins, nor in the city market stalls where AO works. Nor does it seem, from the data at our disposal, that the potentiality of decoding the written language (or digital writing) results in an effective increase of input in Italian for AO, since his linguistic production does not appear to be more developed or richer than that of M. The linguistic skills of the two migrants develop (possibly enriched by new contributions from other languages different from the local ones) within the space of immobility and segregation in which they are forced.

Through which theoretical construct can we describe the result of this fragmentary acquisition, as well as the process itself? The notion of fossilisation does not seem useful for this purpose, first of all because we are not dealing with isolated phenomena, no matter how widespread in interlanguages, but with a *global* arrest in the development of the system[8]. In addition, regardless of the scope of the phenomenon, fossilisation occurs by definition under specific conditions, that is, rich exposure to input, adequate motivation to learn, and plentiful opportunity to communicate in the target language (Han 2004: 175; see also Selinker and Lamendella 1979: 373).[9]

---

[8] Han (2004, 2013) has insisted on the need to restrict the scope of fossilisation to individual phenomena and to keep the notion distinct from that of (asymptotic) ultimate attainment. This is consistent with original formulation by Selinker (1972: 215), who however also recognised *fossilised competences* resulting from a learners' communication strategy (p. 217), which "dictates to them […] that they know enough of the TL in order to communicate. And they stop learning". Several expanded versions of the notion, discussed in Han (2004), are based on this broad definition. But see also Selinker (2014: 227).

[9] This is the case with long-standing immigrants who are well integrated into the world of work, who may become extremely fluent and have a rich and complex vocabulary, but often exhibit little more than a basic morphosyntactic system.

Apparently, we are dealing here with a different, if not opposite, situation. The interlanguages we have described are examples of an interrupted or blocked process, which reflects the context in which acquisition takes place. In this context, learners receive too occasional linguistic input for them to develop linguistic means that are, if not morphosyntactically complex, at least communicatively effective. In other words, we are dealing with the acquisition of a language that is only to a limited extent present in the linguistic space inhabited by migrants. Paraphrasing Blommaert (2010), we could experimentally call these forms of acquisition "truncated acquisition", a provisional label that we want to use here only as a research indication[10]. Truncated acquisition is acquisition seen from the perspective of the communicative spaces available in contexts of (im)mobility and segregation. An acquisition that is undoubtedly imperfect and fragmentary if we observe, as we have done, its products (i.e., Italian interlanguages). But other components of the context in which the acquisition process takes place should also be taken into consideration, first of all the linguistically composite – *polylingual* – character of the migrants' communicative space, the one described in the first sections of this work. In this context, the acquired fragments of local languages flow into and to some degree mix with the other partial competences in the learners' repertoire. The position Italian occupies in these complex competences, i.e., the functional spaces it takes up and the way it interacts with other languages (if it does), is in our view the task of future research on interlingual development in contexts of immobility and segregation.

References

Banfi, Emanuele and Giuliano Bernini. 2003. Il verbo. In Anna Giacalone Ramat (a c. di), *Verso l'italiano*, 70-115. Roma: Carocci.

BenEzer, Gadi and Roger Zetter. 2015. Searching for directions: conceptual and methodological challenges in researching refugee journeys. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 28(3): 297-318.

---

[10] Han (2012: 476) incidentally used "truncated learning" in the sense of incomplete learning, but we use the adjective in the stricter sense proposed by Blommaert.

Blommaert, Jan. 2010. *The sociolinguistic of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Collyer, Michael. 2010. Stranded migrants and the fragmented journey. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23(3): 273-293.

Collyer, Michael and Hein de Haas. 2012. Developing dynamic categorisations of transit migration. *Population, Space and Place* 18(4): 468-481.

Crawley, Heaven, Franck Düvell, Katharine Jones, Simon McMahon and Nando Sigona. 2016. *Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015. Unravelling the Mediterranean migration crisis (MEDMIG). Final report November 2016*.

Crawley, Heaven and Dimitris Skleparis. 2018. Refugees, migrants, neither, both: categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(1): 48-64.

Cresswell, Tim. 2010. Towards a politics of mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28(1): 17-31.

D'Agostino, Mari. 2021a. *Noi che siamo passati dalla Libia. Giovani in viaggio tra alfabeti e multilinguismo*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

– 2021b. Multilingual young African migrants: between mobility and immobility. In Anna De Fina and Gerardo Mazzaferro (eds.). *Exploring (im)mobilities*, 17-37. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

D'Agostino, Mari and Egle Mocciaro. 2021. Literacy and literacy practices: plurilingual connected migrants and emerging literacy. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 51, 100792.

Diminescu, Dana. 2008. The connected migrant: an epistemological manifesto. *Social Science Information* 47(4): 565-579.

Gillespie, Marie, Souad Osseiran and Margie Cheesman. 2018. Syrian refugees and the digital passage to Europe: smartphone infrastructures and affordances. *Social Media + Society* 4(1): 1-12.

Glick Schiller, Nina and Noel B. Salazar. 2013. Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(2): 183-200.

Hackl, Andreas, Julia Sophia Schwarz, Miriam Gutekunst and Sabina Leoncini. 2016. Bounded mobility: an introduction. In Miriam Gutekunst, Andreas Hackl, Sabina Leoncini, Julya Sophia Schwarz and Irene Götz (eds.), *Bounded mobilities. Ethnographic perspectives on social hierarchies and global inequalities*, 19-34. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Han, ZhaoHong. 2013. Forty years later: updating the fossilization hypothesis. *Language Teaching* 46(2): 133-171.

– 2004. *Fossilization in adult second language acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

IOM 2019 = International Organization for Migration. *Study on migrants' profiles, drivers of migration and migratory trends*. http://diana-n.iue.it:8080/bitstream/handle/1814/43964/IOM_Migrants_Study_2016_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Jørgensen, J. Normann. 2008. Polylingual languaging around and among children and adolescents. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 5(3): 161-176.

Klein, Wolfgang and Clive Perdue. 1997. The Basic Variety (or: Couldn't natural languages be much simpler?). *Second Language Research* 13(4): 301-347.

Lüpke, Friederike. 2015. Ideologies and typologies of language endangerment in Africa. In James Essegbey, Brent Henderson and Fiona McLaughlin (eds.), *Language documentation and endangerment in Africa*, 59-106. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Lüpke, Friederike and Anne Storch. 2013. *Repertoires and choices in African languages*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Mocciaro, Egle. 2020. *The development of L2 Italian morphosyntax in adult learners with limited literacy* (Strumenti e ricerche 9). Palermo: UniPa Press.

Sayad, Abdelmalek. 1999. *La double absence*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

Selinker, Larry. 2014. Interlanguage 40 years on. Three themes from here. In ZhaoHong Han and Elaine Tarone (eds.), *Interlanguage. Forty years later*, 221-246. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

– 1972. Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 10: 209-231.

Selinker, Larry and John T. Lamendella. 1978. Two perspectives on fossilization in interlanguage learning. *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin* 3(2): 143-191.

Schapendonk, Joris Ilse van Liempt, Inga Schwarz and Griet Steel. 2018. Re-routing migration geographies: Migrants, trajectories and mobility regimes. *Geoforum* 116: 211-216.

Tarone, Elaine and Martha Bigelow. 2005. Impact of literacy on oral language processing: implication for SLA research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 25: 77-97.

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2009. *Literacy and second language oracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UN/DESA 1998 = United nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 1998. Recommendations on statistics of international migration: Revision 1. New York: United Nation.
https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_58rev1e.pdf

– 2016. *Global trends. Forced displacements in 2016*.
https://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34.pdf

UNHCR. 2013. *Beyond proof, credibility assessment in EU asylum system*-https://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/51a8a08a9/full-report-beyond-proof-credibility-assessment-eu-asylum-systems.html

Vainikka, Anne and Martha Young-Scholten. 2007. The role of literacy in the development of L2 morpho-syntax from an Organic Grammar perspective. In Nancy Faux (ed.), *Low-educated adult second language and literacy acquisition (LESLLA): research, policy, and practice. Proceedings of the second annual forum*, 123-148. Richmond: The Literacy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Vainikka, Anne, Martha Young-Scholten, Colleen Ijuin and Samawal Jarad. 2017. Literacy in the development of L2 English morphosyntax. In Marcin Sosiński (ed.), *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: Investigación, política educativa y práctica docente*, 239-250. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

L2 learning and togetherness through infrastructures of globalization: exploring the role of socio-technological platforms in conditions of asylum seeking

Massimiliano Spotti

Taking the sociolinguistics of superdiversity as its point of departure, the contribution investigates the sociolinguistic regimes present in the spaces of an asylum seeking centre in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. It looks at the spaces present in the centre as loci where 'the guests' who inhabit them are confronted with normative regimes of sociolinguistic behaviour. This snippet of entrenched normativity emerging from the centre's daily sociolinguistic life, though, results to be in sharp opposition with the use that is being made of these very same spaces by the 'guests' once they have access to the web. There, in fact, these spaces become loci in which the intangible infrastructures of globalization – like the web, YouTube and its videos – allow for the construction of convivial fleeting encounters based on the use of pop-culture as the binding element that transcends ethnic, sociolinguistic and religious differences. The contribution concludes with some considerations on the validity of the concept of integration for asylum seekers in mainstream society dealing with whether and how conviviality through the resources that socio-technological platforms have to offer could work as a possible alternative to State-imposed sociolinguistic and sociocultural regimes of integration.

Keywords: second language acquisition, asylum seekers, YouTube, new speakers, language ideologies

1. Introduction

Globalization has brought about an intensification of the worldwide mobility of goods and information, but also of human beings. Asylum seeking is one of the by-products of this mobility and it links local happenings to (political) events occurring many miles away. The EU and the "floods of asylum seekers" that try to reach its soil are no exception to this. Yet, those who knock at the EU's doors pose a problem to border control authorities. Migrants, drawing to Stuart Hall insight that are forerunner of the current interest in cultural studies around the global South, cannot anymore be conceptualized as

people engaged in a linear move "from de margins to de centre" (Hall 1996). Rather, these globalized migratory flows are at present one of the most tangible testimonies of superdiversity. That is, they embody what Vertovec terms a process in which diversity moves beyond ethnic minority group membership and boundaries and gives way to "an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants" (Vertovec 2007: 124). It follows that present day globalization induced mobility and the consequent new flow of diversity calls for all sorts of urgent interventions that Europe, its member states and their institutions are trying to come to terms with. There is the question of border control at both European as well as nation-state level. Further, there is the question of nation-states confronted with obligations to their citizens in their asylum seeking policies and practices. Last, there is the question of securitization of borders that brings up issues of institutional framing of the identities of the newly arrived migrants within a regime of suspicion. In reaction to the above, the EU engages in deploying strenuous efforts and large sums of money to safeguard its maritime shores and territorial borders. Typical of these efforts are those measures that set up – to borrow Bigo's terminology (2006) – a "ban-opticon", that is, a means for channeling mobilities, modulating their intensities, speed, mode of movement and coagulation through measures of surveillance. From the above, two things appear to stand out clearly. An asylum seeking centre becomes the waiting room of globalization (see also Spotti 2018), that is, a place whose guests are the by-product of events happening many miles away and who are waiting for an institutional decision to take place. Furthermore, an asylum seeking centre becomes also a place made of (polycentric) spaces where institutional regimes of integration are present (cf. Spotti 2011). That is, these spaces are loci where the micro-fabrics of State, hence top-down, sociolinguistic regimes come to mingle with bottom-up negotiations of these regimes from the people who live in them. With this backdrop in mind, the present contribution focuses first on the current debates that characterize studies of L2 learning. From there, the contribution moves to subscribe to an understanding of space that is polycentric and thus other than a socio-cultural vacuum awaiting to be filled in by the agentive forces of its guests and institutionalized,

semi-institutionalized, and non-institutionalized personnel. Drawing then on linguistic ethnographic vignettes collected at the centre, very same spaces become *loci* in which – at specific times of the day – intangible infrastructures of globalization, i.e., the internet and its socio-technological platforms, allow for negotiation and resistance of the above mentioned regimes.

2. Engaging with L2 research: sociolinguistic norms and polycentric spaces of negotiation

While L2 research has typically drawn – and still does – on notions like learning, development, error and interference, focusing thus on the degree of fit – or lack thereof – between (taught) standard language norms and the mastering level of competence and performance of a given individual, linguistic ethnography and studies that avail themselves of a linguistic ethnographic methodology centered on L2 learning (cf. Rampton 2011) deal with social differentiation, identity projection, code-switching across socio-lectal forms of speech production and the use of non-standard conventions. In short, these studies focus on *languag-ing*, where the gerundive form of this verb shows the *in fieri* nature of language and the use human beings make of it in communicative interactions. Although I do not wish to step into teasing apart the products of the pop-up store like terminology that characterizes much of the present day sociolinguistics debate here, I am inclined to say that there still is a good doses of possible dialogue between SLA research on the one hand, and linguistic ethnographic work on the other. To this end, we have witnessed the emergence of studies whose epistemological shifting has gone to focus on speakers and how they navigate through the complex nature of *being a user of language X* deploying linguistic resources in dynamic social relationships. As Kramsch's (2009: 5) work dealing with the *Multilingual Subject* has it "imagined identities, projected selves, idealization or stereotypes of the other […] seem to be central to the language learning experience".

Where the above shows how, every stylistic move someone makes, whether it takes place in an L1 or L2, it is the result of an interpretation of the social world that language users come to face and

of the meanings attached to the linguistic elements within it. Elements that, in turn, contribute to the positioning of the language user with respect to the immediate world that surrounds his/her sociolinguistic doings and to the larger political and public debate on his/her need of civic integration through language. This social turn in studies of the sociolinguistic lives and doings of L2 leaners has, more recently, being corroborated by the work of Pujolar and Gozalez (2013) who, armored with the concept of *new speaker*, have dealt with the exploration of the linguistic constitution of the L2 learner as a subject who, while learning a language other than his own, is going through a change of *muda* – a term derived from the Spanish reflexive verb *mudar-se* – stressing the fact that in specific biographical junctures of L2 learners, there are being enacted significant changes in learners' sociolinguistic repertoires according to the ideologies that inhabit the socio-cultural spaces in which language is learnt, written, uttered or more simply put, used. Ultimately, these studies tend to stress that L2 learning should be examined through the eye of the total linguistic fact, i.e., an understanding of the ultimate sociolinguistic datum that looks at language as product of four elements, these being form, usage, ideology and domain (Wortham 2008). It is on this last element, i.e., domain that can give us a further conceptual hunch on which to explore sociolinguistics regimes within the space at hand, that of an asylum seeking centre. Henry Lefebvre, in his incredible voyage, moves away from a Cartesian understanding of space and of its ideological ends. Rather he views space as a social product that masks the contradictions of its own production and deconstructs the illusion of transparency. Further, in an effort to link human agents and spatial domination, Bourdieu (1972) focuses on the spatialization of everyday behavior and how the socio-spatial order of behavior is translated into bodily experience and practices (at times) of repression (see also Blommaert and Huang 2010). Bourdieu proposes the concept of *habitus*, a generative and structuring principle of collective strategies and social practices that makes new history while being a product of history itself. Michel Foucault, in his seminal work on the prison (1977) and in a series of interviews and lectures on space (in Faubion 1994), examines the relationship of power and space by positing architecture and the use of space as a technology of the government that tries to regulate the bodies of those who are under

detention. The aim of such a technology is to create "a docile body" (Foucault 1977: 136), that is, an almost subjugated body due to enclosure and the organization of individuals in space. On the other hand, De Certeau (1984) sets out to show how people's way of doing things make up for the means by which users re-appropriate space organized by techniques of socio-cultural production. These practices are articulated in the fine-grained details of everyday life and used by groups or individuals already caught in the nets of discipline, though in his work spatial practices elude the (implicit) planning of government control. Building again on De Certau (1984), power in space is embedded through territory delimitation and boundaries in which the weapons of *the strong* are classification, delineation and division – the so called strategies of spatial domination – while *the weak* use furtive movements' shortcuts and routes – also addressed as *tactics*. The latter is used to contest, negotiate or even subvert spatial domination and all that comes along with it that is the normativity of doing things as prescribed by the one in power. Understanding multilingualism and the deployment of sociolinguistic repertoires in the spaces of an asylum seeking centre requires therefore an understanding of the connections between spaces, the bodies who populate them and the sociolinguistic and socio-cognitive practice within an established set of orders of practices. As we will see, in the ethnographic vignettes that follow, what counts as perfectly sound and widely accepted display of someone's sociolinguistic repertoire gained through his/her trajectory of migration as an asylum seeker, may either seem odd or a *non-language* at a time when there are other discursive and sociolinguistic regimes at play. What is performed as *successfully acquired* at a given time in a given space may thus be elected as disqualifying someone's identity at another time of the day in the same place. Assessment of sociolinguistic practices and the outcomes for those who are involved and thus for their identities is the stake that is being bet here.

3. The centre and its guests

This study, part of a larger ethnographic interpretive inquiry entitled *Asylum 2.0* aimed at unravelling the implications of socio-

technological platforms in the lives of asylum seekers, builds on data collected through three rounds of fieldwork between 2012 and 2014 at a Red Cross asylum-seeking centre in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. The project, ethnographic in nature, combines insights, methods and epistemological as well as ontological stances stemming from linguistic ethnography (Creese and Coupland 2014) and socio-culturally rooted discourse analysis (Gee 1999). In both frameworks, there is the underlying assumption that the way individuals speak as well as speak about things reflects their culturally embedded understanding of human beings and their perception of the world. The data from which the ethnographic vignettes of the present contribution are drawn were collected in October 2013, during my first long term stay at the centre. My position there was that of a buffer zone between the assistants, i.e., staff members regularly employed by the Red Cross, voluntary workers, i.e., professionals on a pension who dedicate their spare time to the centre, and the guests, i.e., the asylum seekers who had filed an application for refugee status. When asked by the guests who I was and what I was doing there, I candidly explained to them that I was engaged in writing a book about what it means to be an asylum seeker and what asylum seeking implies, and that I was there to document myself about their daily lives. All the participants embraced my interest in them and, although they were given the opportunity to opt out, none of them did so. Rather, they reacted enthusiastically as they were made feel that their lives mattered and that there was somebody interested in them and their experiences. Living along with them, having breakfast with them, talking to them while drinking endless cups of sweetened Afghani tea, following their daily doings that ranged from Dutch language lessons to knitting lessons, to gym activities to simply hanging around on a centre bench kicking a ball about in the evenings. In other words, what I did there, was deep hanging out in the cultural ecology of this institutional space.

The centre, located in a formal catholic cloister, has big rooms assigned to families and smaller rooms assigned either to pairs of male or female residents, on a first come first served basis. Rather than using a nationality based criterion or an ethnic grouping criterion, the director of the centre had opted – where he and his team members felt it not to be a risk – to put together people of different ethnic,

linguistic and religious backgrounds. During this round of ethnographic fieldwork, the centre catered for 61 guests. Following the information gathered at the centre during intake talks, guests were from the following (often pre-supposed) national backgrounds: 13 from Afghanistan, 12 from the Russian Federation – mostly from Armenia and Chechnya – 9 from Guinea Conakry, 9 from Bangladesh, 7 from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Following the unofficial statistics kept at the centre, the remaining 11 guests originated from what had been categorized as "other" (*anders*). These were respectively 2 from Senegal, 1 from Somalia, 1 from Togo, 3 from China, 1 from Albania and 1 from Ukraine. 40 of these guests were male, 21 were female. 11 of them fell under the category of unaccompanied minors, though 3 of them still needed to give age proof through bone scans. Only 1 guest had entered the centre in 2010 while the rest had entered in 2011 or 2012. Only 2 guests had passed their 50s, confirming the trend – pointed out by the centre director – that seeking for asylum is mostly a practice for either unaccompanied minors or young (often male) applicants ranging from their early 20s to their late 30s. All names given in this case study are pseudonyms so to grant participants protection and privacy. Although video recording was not possible at times due to the resistance of some of the volunteers at the centre, audio recording always happened. If that had not been possible, I would have gone back to my informants when I felt that the talk I just had was particularly interesting and asked them whether they would have had any objections to being taped, else I would have relied on my field notes. As every Red Cross centre, the obligations toward the guests and their well-being were rather basic. The centre, in fact, had only the institutional obligation of providing them with a roof, a bed and food for their daily sustainment. Activities like those aimed at introducing the guests to the norms and values of mainstream Flemish society do not fall under the basic provision system offered by the centre. Notwithstanding this, the centre's director and its personnel all saw the centre as the first opportunity for the guests to mingle within the local community. As a result, a number of activities had been set up among which the possibility to get sawing lessons, the chance to grow someone's own vegetables and exchange them at the local market, as well as the chance to learn Dutch as L2 once a week for 1 and a half hours.

No explicit notice at the centre mentioned that Dutch had to be used as the only language of interaction among guests and assistants. Although the sociolinguistic landscape present on the centre's walls displayed an array of languages and scripts mastered, or at least familiar to the guests, it was a recurrent sociolinguistic practice to hear the sentence *in het Nederlands, alsjeblijft* ('in Dutch please': MS). This sentence happened to be uttered mostly by the assistants when guests went to the office asking for something that could have ranged from information about their lawyer appointment to asking for food they had bought and that had been stored in the common fridge the centre had. Was the interaction to be too hard for the guests, then English first and French second and where possible Russian and Farsi would have been deployed during the verbal exchange.

4. The centre, its *guests* and its spaces

The two episodes that follow focus on two spaces I have singled out during my fieldwork in that relevant for understanding how people that fell under the straight omnipresent category "migrant in need of integration" came to be challenged. The first space is the activity room, a large space in which several voluntary based activities would take place, among which we find the non-regular Dutch as L2 classroom that is key to the first part of our story. The second place, instead, is what I have termed in my fieldwork notes as "the three steps", i.e., three steps at the end of a blind corridor on the ground floor of the centre. It is exactly by sitting on those three steps, in fact, that guests often could get access to the best Wi-Fi connection in the building.

4.1. Waarom naam voor vrouw mitz zu [uh] klein leter?

The teaching of Dutch as L2 at the centre was carried out by an elderly lady on a pension with a background in teaching who we will call Frida, it being a pseudonym to protect her privacy. Her commitment to the centre had been in place for more than 12 years by then and she claims to enjoy what she does, given that at her age

"there are people who like to drink coffee while I like people, so that's why I do it" (Interview Frida 10102013:1). Once a week, Miss Frida teaches Dutch as L2 for one hour using the didactic resources that she sees most fitting to the needs of her students, these ranging from high to low literate and have varying degrees of mastering Dutch. The room in which she teaches has a number of desks and a white board where guests used to write up their thoughts or poems. The guests entering Miss Frida's class are not compelled to attend. Rather, they can walk in and out freely at any time during class, making sure though that they are no bother to those who have been attending class from its start. In what follows, we focus on a classroom episode that deals with Frida teaching Dutch vocabulary. We then move onto Frida's meta-pragmatic judgments about her students' owned sociolinguistic repertoires and literacy skills. It is October 10th, 2013 and class should start at 13:00 sharp. At 13:03, the lesson opens as follows:

> Armenian guy: if you find yourself […] from my room an'
> Frida: Niet, vandaag geen engelse les he', vandaag nederlandse les hey? Oke', dus we starten op bladzijde zes. Iedereen heeft een kopie?
> *[No, today no English lesson, right? Today is Dutch lesson, right? Okay so we start on page six, has everyone got a copy?]*

After wiping off what had been written on the white board and preparing her worksheets for the day, at 13:06 Miss Frida starts reading each word from the worksheet that she is holding while standing on the right hand side of the whiteboard facing the whole class. The lesson unfolds with a reading of a string of words that Frida's students have – as drawings – on their worksheets. As Frida starts, she reads these words slowly and loudly. While she does so, she is pointing at these words on the worksheet. She then comes to read out-loud the following line:

> Frida: Haan […] Jan […] lam […] tak […] een boom […]
> *[Hen [...] Jan [...] lamb [...] branch [...] one tree [...]]*
> Frida: Oke' […] hier is Nel, hier, hier, hier, hi[ii]er, hier is Nel. Nel is naam, naam voor vrow, Fatima, Nel, Leen, naam voor vrouw.
> *[Okay, here we have Nel, here, here, here, h[ee]re is Nel. Nel is name, name for woman, Fatima, Nel, Leen, name for woman]*

Armenian guy: Waarom naam voor vrouw mitz zu [uh] klein leter?
[*Why is name for woman with small cap?*]
Frida: Dat is basis Nederlands, BASIS [Frida onderstreep dit met een hardere toon: MS]. Eerst starten wij met de basis, wij lopen niet! Wij stappen […] na stappen, wij stappen vlucht, daarna gaan wij lopen, dus nu stappen wij [...] maar dat is juist.
[*That is basic Dutch, BASIC [Frida stresses this with a higher tone of voice: MS]. First we start with the basics, we don'twalk, we make steps, after making steps, we step faster, and then we get walking, sonow we make steps [...] though, that is right.*]

Miss Frida, whose aim was to increase the vocabulary breadth and – later on – the vocabulary depth of her Dutch as L2 students, is reading aloud clusters of monosyllabic words for them to combine a word to a picture as the one reported on the worksheet. Interesting is the way in which Frida states that in this class there is no English lesson going on that day, de-legitimizing the use of English and stressing this boundary through the use of the tag 'hey' (01). In line (04), Frida further stimulates other learning channels to make her students understand what the locative pronoun 'here' (*hier*) means. She repeats the word, stressing the [r] at the end and the length of the word. She also points her finger right to place on the ground where she is standing. Interestingly enough though the lesson snapshot above sees one of her students (who is from Armenia) asking a question that, although posed with the intent to mock the teacher's authority, it is also meant to show that he holds literacy skills. Frida's reply is further very telling for two reasons. She first reiterates firmly how she sees the learning of Dutch through the metaphor of "we do not walk, we make steps, after making steps, we step faster, and then we get walking so now we make steps". Further, through the adversative clause that ends her sentence in line (06) – "but that is correct" – she has to give up her native speaker authority admitting that the student's observation was actually valid. In the retrospective interview carried out with her so to gather information on her professional life as well as in order to understand what she thought she was doing while she was teaching, Frida asserted:

'Ja, als je gaat naar die landen eh, dat is alles met handen en voeten eh daar en hier is ook zo een beetje'

[*Yes, if you go to those places, right, it is all hands and feet, right, and here is also a little bit like that:* MS].
She then added:
'Kijk, deze mensen hebben verschillende talen, echt mooi talen hoor, maar ze zijn eigenlijk geen talen, snap je wat ik bedoel?'
[*Look these people have languages, really beautiful languages, but they are not languages really, if you know what I mean?* MS].

In her answers, there is a conceptualization of her L2 students through the lens of the homogeneous *other* coming – through the use of the distancing pronoun 'those places' – from somewhere far like the places that she admitted to have visited once she went on holiday. Second, she translates the communication impediments that she has encountered there 'by the other' where she had to communicate through the use of both hands and feet to the situation that she experiences in her class, although many of her students have reported to hold – to different degrees of proficiency – an array of languages. Further, we encounter in her discourse practices, the disqualification of the languages of her students. To her, as she states, 'these people', i.e., her students, do have languages, entities that she qualifies as 'really beautiful languages'. Though, as she adds through an adversative clause 'but they are not languages' followed by the adverb 'really'. This sentence allows us to take a peak – into Frida's own sociolinguistic awareness. The languages her students own, in fact, do not match the, albeit unvoiced, understanding of what a language is that she holds. This meta-pragmatic judgement on the languages of her students can have different explanations. Although speculative in that Frida did not go deeper into her rationale about 'what a language is' during the retrospective interview, it may be that Frida does not address the languages of her students as actual languages as these languages are no European languages. This though comes across as peculiar in that the vast majority of her students reported to be proficient in both English, German, Russian and French being these either reminiscences of the colonial past that has characterized their countries of origin or being these languages that they have encountered during their migration trajectory to Flanders. Another reason for her judgement could be a disqualification move of their

sociolinguistic repertoires, in that the languages that are present in her class are everything but Dutch.

4.2.   Doing togetherness through YouTube

In this second ethnographic vignette, instead, we encounter two young men called respectively Urgesh and Wassif. While Urgesh is of Bengali origin and – as he reports – he is proficient in Bengali, Panjabi, some Hurdu as well as English and "beetje beetje Nederlands" ('a bit bit Dutch': MS), Wassif reports to be of Afghani origin. As he had worked for the Red Cross in Afghanistan, he is proficient in English. Though, he also reported to know and use Farsi, Arabic (in its classical variety) as well as some Dutch. The two of them had grown fond of me, during my residence at the centre. They had understood that I was not an institutional figure either interested in their application for permanent residency or that could scold them if they did not behave accordingly to the rules. Rather, in the evening, they would always insist to talk to me about their reasons for coming to Belgium, as well as for their expectations for their future lives there in Flanders. After having listened to their stories, one night during my fieldwork, they wished to show me the power of the steps, i.e., three steps on the ground floor of the asylum seeking centre that were so willed by everybody in that there was the best possible internet connection in the whole building. As it was a quiet night, once we had moved there, they asked me whether I liked music. While telling them that I did like jazz, they wished to show me their favorite genre, heavy metal. The dialogue unfolded as follows:

> Urgesh: Look at this Sir, look at this.
> Wassif: These are cool bruv, these are cool.
> Urgesh: I have seen them on a gig.
> Wassif: Yeah, yeah, look at that, power, broer Max, puur power.
> (Asylum 2.0 fieldnotes 102013)

In the excerpt, these young men are convivially commenting the video using their own varieties of English – as the Bengali band broadcasted on their phone screen via YouTube – called Sultana Bibiana – plays a

cover from the American world famous band Metallica. In the above quote, several are the issues at play. First, as exemplified by the absence of Dutch in the exchange, except for the use of the colloquial expression *broer* 'bruv' and *puur* 'pure', we do not see any trace of centre implemented language policies being taken on board by the two language users. Second, as it emerged from their sociolinguistic repertoires, we see that the interaction at hand implies that the interlocutors are rather proficient language users of English. Last, we can also observe that they are proficient techno-literates in that they use the internet as a means for accessing pop-culture content (Spotti and Kurvers 2015). Although for space reasons I can only provide a glimpse of evidence leading to the construction of conviviality taking place at the centre, I believe that the vignette is worth some further considerations. Online streamed video music, and more precisely its heavy metal genre, is in fact the matter of the present conversation with me but, together with streamed online porn, it also had been a matter of many of the conversations I had overheard taking place through whichever language resource among the boys at the centre. Encounters around online sources of masculine popular culture taking place on the three steps had always one common characteristic. They did not have as their pivotal point *big* discourses taking place around the *heavy things* that characterize the lives of the guests at the centre. These being for instance, societal barriers encountered with native Flemish people or with the juridical system, their future in Flanders, the pressure to learn Dutch, or – as it had often been reason for confrontation – their differing ethno-religious backgrounds. Rather they were *light* moment of laddish aggregation. Although these insights should be taken with a pinch of linguistic ethnographic salt – as Rampton (2014) warns us – due to the risk of being blinded by addressing encounters like these as *a priori* convivial encounters, someone could advance that what these guests are doing on those steps gives way to a coagulation around a socio-technological platform which – as Goebel (2015) points out in his work on knowledge-ing and television representations – leads to moments of *doing togetherness*. More specifically, these two men are engaged in a moment in which the deep tangible differences among the two of them are shaded in the background and where the coagulating centre

of their encounter is a mobile phone, its screen, the YouTube channel being used and the music it plays (Arnaut et al. 2017).

5. Discussion and conclusions

A quick glance to the news feeding the public and political debate across Europe makes someone realize that European nation-states face a deep egoic crisis. In reaction to this crisis, nation-states come across as spastically engaged in authoring and authorizing discourses of integration and measures for implementing the learning of the official language and of the official norms and values belonging to a given national culture. They do so selling these two items as inseparable and as unique entry ticket for newly arrived migrants to integration. Yet again, there is escape to the fact that human beings – whether or not engaged in migratory movement like the guests at this centre – are and always have been mobile subjects. There is also no way to escape that group dynamics and the actual understanding of what a group means, both have gone through deep changes since the advent of the Internet and of globally networked transnational societies (Blommaert 2014; Castells 2010; Rigoni and Saitta 2012). Against this background, there is no easy way around the fact that, as Joshua Fishman pointed out in his seminal work on the sociology of language (Fishman 1969), the point of departure in the study of language in society is that language – in whichever form and through whichever channel – is constantly present in the daily lives of human beings and thus that the focus of the study of language and society is not language as such but the speaker who languages. The situation presented in the two vignettes here raises quite some issues worth considering with a view of shedding new light on whether individuals in conditions of migration, like those who were part of these vignettes, should fall into straightforward categories of belonging such as that of *guests*, of *other* or when referring to the official discourse authored and authorized by governmental bodies as "migrants in need of civic integration".

First, as showed in the excerpt coming from the non-regular classroom held in the activity room by Miss Frida, Dutch language is offered through a catechistic approach that sees the guests as blank

slates to be filled in by the authority of the class teacher. In there, such authority does not only reiterate a much larger dichotomy between native vs. non-native speaker of the official language. Further, it looks at the learner of Dutch as a second language through a homogenous image of *the other*, whose languages although many and beautiful become disqualified as not being actual *languages*. On the other hand, instead, the study documents how other spaces within the centre become coagulated centres of interest that grant these very same guests the possibility to avoid officially imposed sociolinguistics regimes, when all this is done through the use of socio-technological platforms that trigger togetherness and through that conviviality. In the emergent literature on digital literacies, online socio-technological platforms and the construction of identities therein, there appears to be a need for re-conceptualizing the concept of group and for the present case for re-conceptualizing the category 'L2 learner'. As Baym (2015) points out, for studies of particular websites or communication channels, like the one presented here, when the researcher is interested in how people come together around shared activities and goals, the situation pictured in the second episode confronts us with a question: what role can top-down policies have in the life of these globally mobile highly networked people? And is it still tenable to construct the identities of the guests at the centre as L2 learners in need of integration alone? A possible answer here could be that if these people can do conviviality and manage to integrate with one another around a digitally mediated content thanks to a global infrastructure such as an online video broadcasted via YouTube reproducing a popular culture artefact, then we should rather wonder about the meaning that integration has and ultimately whether there is any room left for institutional top-down language and culture measures aimed at integration in contexts that are characterized by globalization led mobility and technology.

References

Arnaut, Karel, Martha Sif-Karrebaek, Massimiliano Spotti and Jan Blommaert (eds.). 2017. *Engaging Superdiversity: Recombining Spaces, Times and Language Practices*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
Baym, Nancy K. 2015. *Personal Connections in the Digital Age.* Cambridge: Polity

Press.

Bigo, Didier. 2008. Globalised (In)Security: the field and the Ban-Opticon. In Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala (eds.), *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty. Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11*, 10-48. Abingdon: Routledge.

Blommaert, Jan. 2014. Infrastructures of superdiversity: Conviviality and language in an Antwerp neighborhood. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(4): 431-451.

Blommaert, Jan and April Huang. 2010. Semoitic and spatial scope: Towards a materialist semiotics. *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies* 62. https://kcl.academia.edu/WorkingPapersinUrbanLanguageLiteracies

Bourdieu, Pierre F. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Castells, Manuel. 2010. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Boston: Wiley.

Creese, Angela and Fiona Copland. 2014. Linguistic Ethnography. In Kendall King, Yi-Ju Lai and Stephen May (eds.) *Research Methods in Language and Education*, 339-351. London: Springer.

De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkley and London: University of California Press.

Fishman, Joshua A. 1969 [1975]. The Sociology of Language. In Pier Paolo Giglioli (ed.), *Language and Social Context*, 45-58. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Faubion, James (ed.). 1984. *Michel Foucault: Power*, 349-364. New York: The New Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Gee, James Paul. 1999. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory & Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

Goebel, Zane. 2015. *Language and Superdiversity: Indonesians knowledging at home and abroad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, Claire. 2009. *The Multilingual Subject*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, Stuart. 1996. De Margins and De Centre. In David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogue in Cultural Studies*, 450-464. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Pujolar, Joan and Isaac Gonzàlez. 2013. Linguistic 'Mudes' and the de-ethnicization of language choice in Catalonia. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 16(2): 138-152.

Rampton, Ben. 2011. From Multi-ethnic adolescent heteroglossia' to 'Contemporary urban vernaculars. *Language & Communication* 31: 276-294.

Rampton, Ben. 2014. Dissecting Heteroglossia: Interaction Ritual or Performance in Crossing and Stylization? In Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (eds.), *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy*, 275-300. New York: Springer.

Rigoni, Isabelle and Eugenie Saitta (eds.). 2012. *Mediating Cultural Diversity in a Globalized Public Space*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spotti, Massimiliano. 2011. Ideologies of success for superdiverse citizens: The Dutch testing regime for integration and the online private sector. *Diversities* 13(2): 39-52.

Spotti, Massimiliano. 2018. "It's all about naming things right": The Paradox of

Web Truths in the Belgian Asylum *Seeking* Procedure. In Nick Gill and Anthony Good (eds.), *Asylum Determination in Europe: Ethnographic Perspectives*, 69-90. London: Palgrava Socio-Legal Studies.

Spotti, Massimiliano and Jeanne Kurvers. 2015. ICT-based applications for civic integration in the Netherlands: Policy drivers and limits in practice. In James Simpson and Anne Whiteside (eds.), *Adult Language Education and Migration: Challenging Agendas in Policy and Practice*, 175-187. London: Taylor & Francis.

Vertovec, Steven. 2007. Super-diversity and its Implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(6): 1024-1054.

Wortham, Stanton. 2008. Linguistic Anthropology of Education. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 37: 37-51.

What do we know from 1 ½ decades of LESLLA symposia?

Martha Young-Scholten

This paper provides an overview of 13 years of plenaries, panels, papers, posters and workshops presented at Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA) symposia. These are described in terms of their methodology, their focus, where the presenters come from and/or work. When considering these presentations against the Mission Statement, it becomes apparent that the stated aims are still out of reach. Ways to begin to meet these aims are suggested.

Keywords: LESLLA symposia, methodology, research, WEIRD.

1. Introduction

The year 2005 saw the creation of a unique international and interdisciplinary organization, *Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults* (LESLLA), which aimed to bring together those researchers, teachers, trainers, programme managers and policy makers working with adult migrants with little or no formal schooling. What became LESLLA's mission statement was contained in an invitation sent out worldwide by the organizers to anyone who they thought would be interested.

Since the inaugural symposium in Tilburg, in 2005 (see Figure 1), which attracted some 25 delegates, symposia have been held for three days, from late summer through the autumn and have attracted up to 250 delegates (Minnesota, 2011). During the second symposium in an English-speaking country in 2007, the danger that LESLLA would be swallowed up by the English-speaking world was pointed out and steps were taken to make sure the organization would be international and multilingual. It was agreed that at least every other year the symposium would have to be in a non-English speaking country. This requirement was adopted from the 2008 symposium onwards and has

become part of the LESLLA Constitution ratified in August 2017 at the symposium in Portland (see https://www.leslla.org/constitution).

Linguistics, Language Acquisition and Literacy
Inaugural Workshop on Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition
Tilburg University – August 25-27, 2005, The Netherlands

Low-educated second language learners
There exists a substantial body of work on adult second language acquisition (SLA) and second/foreign language learning, yet most studies deal with adults with native-language schooling through at least secondary school. In many countries the majority of immigrants are low educated. A quick scan of five years of publishing in TESOL Quarterly, for example, shows that only a fraction of the articles concerns the most vulnerable second language (L2) learners: low or non-literate adults with at the most primary schooling in their native language. Previous studies of immigrants such as the European Foundation's 1980s study of adults from six different language backgrounds in five European countries have left unaddressed a range of issues whose resolution has the potential to directly impact educational policy. These include variation in input from different sources (extra-classroom, the classroom and written text) and variation in cognitive ability relating to language aptitude and working memory.

Non-literate second language learners
The literature on children's literacy is vast, yet studies of non-literate adults' L2 development are rare. Since initial interest in the 1980s there has been silence on this research domain apart from a few studies in European countries, in the Netherlands (Kurvers & Van der Zouw, 1990; Kurvers, 2002), in the USA (Young-Scholten & Strom 2004) and in Sweden (Skeppstedt, 2003). Studies of adults have either focused on educational practices (Condelli et al.) or have involved adults who failed to learn to read and write in their native language despite schooling. Unlike for children, there has been little investigation into the linguistic competence and the metalinguistic processes connected with reading development of immigrant L2 adults with little or no native language schooling. This gap is not only remarkable, it is unfortunate. For some decades now western countries have been dealing with immigrants who are gaining literacy for the first time in their life in order to start their educational 'career' and to apply for citizenship, while the response of educational policy makers has been inconsistent. Without a solid evidence base, this is to be expected.

A new workshop on a new research topic
Research on language acquisition and literacy has been carried out in different disciplines. The first of what we hope will be a new workshop series wants to bring together linguists, psycho-linguists, psychologists and educational scientists in order to establish a multi-country, and multi-target-language research agenda. There is no group that meets regularly to consider interdisciplinary research on adult immigrants learning to speak and write a language other than English. By bringing together those working on the acquisition or literacy development in any second language by adult immigrants with little or no schooling, this LESLLA (Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition) workshop's ultimate aim will be to provide comprehensive evidence at the international level that will more effectively inform language education policy in all those countries in which the neediest of immigrants' settle.

Figure 1. Invitation to the inaugural LESLLA symposium.

This further led in June 2018 to election of officers (see https://www.leslla.org/leadership-team).

2005	Tilburg University, the Netherlands
2006	Virginia Commonwealth University, USA
2007	Newcastle University, UK
2008	The Karel de Grotehogeschool, Antwerp, Belgium
2009	Bow Valley College, Calgary
2010	The University of Cologne
2011	University of Minnesota
2012	University of Jyväskylä, Finland
2013	San Francisco State University, USA
2014	Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands
2015	Flagler College, St Augustine, USA
2016	Universidad de Granada, Spain
2017	Portland State University, Oregon, USA
2018	University of Palermo, Italy

Table 1. Venues of the annual LESLLA symposium[1].

At these multi-day symposia (see Table 1), delegates have given more than 400 presentations ranging from plenaries, panels, papers, posters to workshops and demonstrations. A forum within which like-minded individuals come together and discuss ideas is fundamental to LESLLA. This sentiment expressed by a delegate is often expressed to organizers of the symposium: "Taking part in these events has profoundly shaped and benefitted my understanding of topics related to adult literacy and migration. More importantly, through LESLLA, I have met new colleagues, made new friends and built lasting professional networks" (PhD student in the UK from Germany, 2018).

2. What is our body of work?

The most important activity of the organization by far is its annual symposia. Therefore, almost halfway through LESLLA's second decade, it is not only useful but important to review what has been

---

[1] This paper focuses on the symposia which took place up to LESLLA 2018. LESLLA 2019 was held in Pittsburgh and LESLLA 2020, scheduled for Malmö, Sweden, was held virtually in August 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

shared by symposium delegates in terms of expectations of what all this sharing ought to result in.

This review is of 418 presentations of all types at symposia rather than of the papers published in proceedings produced after each symposium (https://www.leslla.org/proceedings). It is presentations which are much more likely to capture the full range of concerns of those who participate LESLLA both formally (by attending one or more symposia) or informally by following LESLLA on Facebook or Twitter. Academics and graduate students may write up their presentations and go through the review process for inclusion in the proceedings. However, for the many practitioners who also participate in LESLLA symposia, if they are unfamiliar with the anonymous review process, this additional step for sharing their ideas is less likely to be deemed to be worth their time and effort. Their voices along with those of academics and graduate students are equally heard during symposia.

The following subsections aim to paint a picture of symposia activity first by describing type of learner and then categorizing them on the one hand by approach and on the other hand by topic.

2.1. Learners

The learners in presentations have almost always been adults without formal schooling in their home language/languages of origin and accordingly, usually no literacy in this language/languages. This is the result of the requirement which symposium organizers convey to abstract reviewers. In some cases, however, abstracts which do not deal with LESLLA learners per se but do deal with topics relevant to those who work with LESLLA learners have been accepted, after discussion between organizers and reviewers. LESLLA revolves around literacy, and the literacy skills of reading and writing are typically gained in the classroom or through one-on-one tutoring. Presentations which do not refer to a pedagogical context of some sort are rare.

Because the classes many practitioners teach are mixed ability in terms of educational background and literacy skills there is frequent reference in presentations to those with some formal schooling and

hence some home language literacy. Across symposium presentations, learners are from the same large set of countries around the world with low rates of literacy due to instability, poverty as well as tradition. (See the LESLLA website for a list of languages learners speak: https://www.leslla.org/languages-of-leslla-learners.)

Some (around ten) presentations focus solely on women and some (about 25) have considered adolescents still in compulsory schooling. Interestingly, length of residence/LoR is usually not a variable unless the presentation explicitly focuses on newcomers. LoR is therefore not prominent in presentations. This relates to the recognized variation in how and when adult migrants first and later access language and literacy classes over often lengthy periods of residence in their new country.

2.2. Approach and topic

Before looking at what these presentations have been about, we will take a look at how they can be categorized in terms of approach, which here rather loosely refers to methodological approach. This is as varied as that in very large education research conferences such as the annual AERA conference (cf. https://www.aera.net/About-AERA) or in applied linguistics, the triennial AILA conference (https://aila.info/).

Under approach, this has included:

1. systematic studies of multiple variables: various skills and/or practice and/or provision and/or testing and/or training;
2. ethnographic research on one or several individuals;
3. policy overviews;
4. description of practice (with respect to approach, method, techniques, materials); of provision (programmes; resettlement processes); testing and assessment, training and professional development;
5. action research and/or small-scale classroom studies;
6. studies of language acquisition (morphosyntax, phonology, vocabulary);

7. studies of reading development from a psycholinguistic perspective.

Percentages for each category are shown in Figure 2.
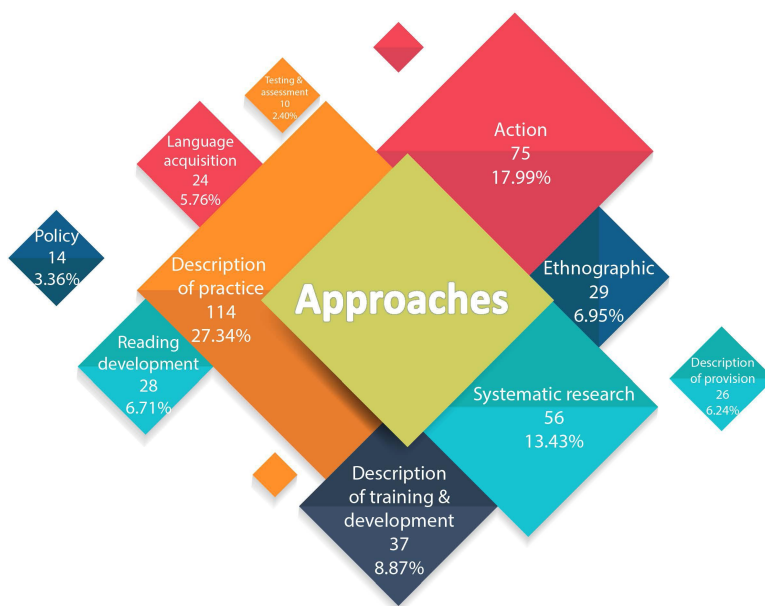
Figure 2. Methodological approach of LESLLA symposium presentations

Presentations can also be categorized by learner topic. 141 presentations are relatively broad and cover a range of language, literacy and life skills. The remaining 277 focus more narrowly on one of the topics in Table 2 (see percentages in Figure 3).

Agency/autonomy/empowerment/identity	Oral skills
Attendance	Phonology
Digital skills	Pragmatics
Health literacy	Practitioner awareness, knowledge and skills
Heritage languages	Trauma
Interaction with parents' children's schools	Visual skills
Literacy (general); reading (general); decoding; comprehension	Vocabulary
Morphosyntax	Workplace
Numeracy	Writing

Table 2. LESLLA presentation topics

In some approaches, the researcher looks at the effect of something (independent variable) on a learner outcome (dependent variable). As a whole, LESLLA symposia presentations do not lend themselves to this sort of description since quite often what's in the *topic* category is not a dependent variable given the types of presentations which LESLLA symposia delegates offer (i.e. plenaries, panels, papers, posters, workshops, and demonstrations).
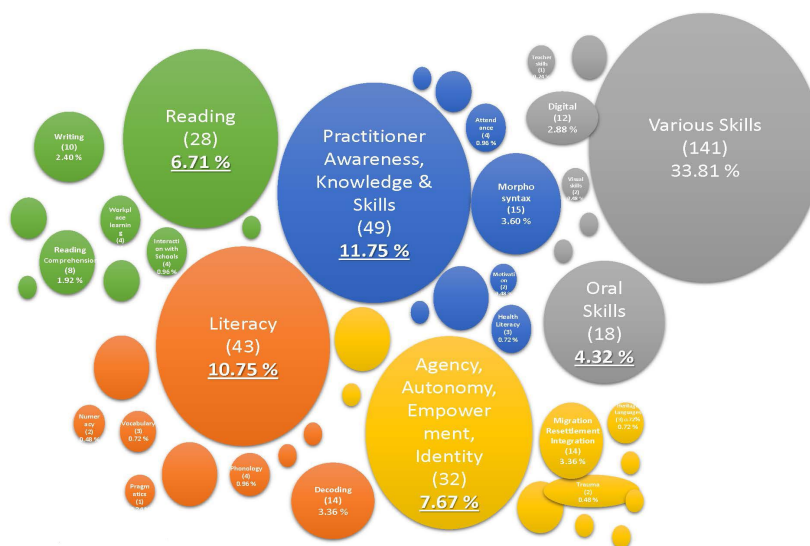
Figure 3. Distribution of the 418 presentation topics.

While the above description has been useful, we now turn to the importance of this overview of symposia. To what extent are these presentations achieving LESLLA's mission?

3. LESLLA mission: accomplished?

After the first symposium in Tilburg in the Netherlands, a mission statement was drawn up for inclusion on the new website in 2006:

> Research on language acquisition and literacy is interdisciplinary and international. LESLLA brings together researchers and practitioners

from many countries with backgrounds in linguistics, psycho-linguistics, psychology and education to establish an international and multi-target-language research agenda. During annual symposia and information sharing throughout the year, LESLLA participants will increase the body of knowledge and outline the areas of research that require investigation for low-educated second language learners. The group's ultimate aim is to use research to improve practice and inform second language education policy in all those countries in which the immigrants most needing educational support settle.

The group's – LESLLA's – ultimate aim is to use research to improve practice and inform policy. How have symposia presentations contributed to the achievement of this aim? It is difficult to draw any conclusions without far-reaching examination of a variety of aspects of the lives of adult migrants with little formal education with respect to the language and literacy of their new country. But we can take a look at the systematic studies of LESLLA learners to see what they might be telling us.

3.1. The contribution of systematic studies

The LESLLA website states that "the response of educational policy makers has been inconsistent. Without a solid evidence base, this is expected". It is systematic studies (13.43% of presentations under "approach" in Figure 2) which are most likely to contribute to a solid evidence base. These are larger-scale studies of up to 500+ learners which often examine the contribution and/or interaction of multiple variables (language, literacy, exposure, social, cultural, cognitive). Such studies include intervention studies with control and experimental groups who are pre- and post-tested to explore the effect of an independent variable such as a certain reading method on an aspect or aspects of literacy. One example of such a study was summarized at the inaugural symposium and written up in the first proceedings as Condelli and Wrigley (2006); for full report see Condelli et al. (2003).

Funded by the US Department of Education, the study asked what types of class arrangements and instructional variables correlate with improving learners' literacy and language and what student, program

and instructional variables relate to class attendance/persistence of adult ESL literacy students. There were 38 classes in 13 adult education programs in seven American states with 495 students who spoke 30 languages. 33.1% of these students had no formal education/were not literate in a home language. They were tested on their reading, writing, speaking and listening in English at 0, three and nine months into the study. Researchers also observed classes each month to see what teachers did. Results showed that reading skill growth correlated with:

– regular attendance;
– use of learners' home languages for explanations;
– instructional hours per week;
– use of real world materials/connection to outside classroom.

Oral skill growth also correlated with regular attendance and use of learners' home languages for explanations, as well as length of classes and focus on oral language with varied practice and interaction.

A meta-analysis of pooled data from the 13.43% and other relevant studies like this is needed to start to build a solid evidence base. The question arising will be whether these systematic studies are sufficiently similar to conduct a meta-analysis. But another question will be whether this is something the LESLLA community ought to undertake. Application of big data findings (e.g. meta-analyses) to policy is often for political and/or financial ends and may not always help practitioners or their students (e.g. on PISA results, Barrett and Crossley 2015).

The greatest proportion of symposium presentations (= 44.8%) falls under the description category. These are presentations that report on one or more aspects of working with LESLLA learners with respect to pedagogical practice (approach, method, technique, materials), provision (programmes), resettlement, testing and assessment and training and professional development. A presentation on one of these topics may refer to systematic studies but it may simply describe what the presenter (and colleagues) has done or has been involved in to address one of the many challenges these learners face. Such descriptions may be the inspiration for a larger-scale systematic study on the one hand, or a narrowly focused small-scale

study quantitative or ethnographic study on the other and this may also be the starting point for an MA or PhD study.

3.2. Basic research in LESLLA

While the "E" in LESLLA – education – has received considerable attention by symposium delegates, the "Ls" in LESLLA – literacy and language learning – have surprisingly received far less attention. In considering these Ls by approach, studies of reading development represent a mere 5.76% and studies of language learning/acquisition represent only slightly more, at 6.71%. Studies of reading development – of which there are some important ones under "systematic studies" category given their large sample size and inclusion of multiple variables – reach very similar conclusions. Adults learning to read for the first time but in a new language follow a route of development that in many ways resembles that of children; see Kurvers (2015) for an overview of such research in the Netherlands. It is not possible to draw such conclusions about the acquisition of syntax, morphosyntax, phonology or vocabulary because not only are too few studies over all but because within these three domains of language are numerous linguistic phenomena each of which could be studied on its own[2]. At first glance, it might not seem to matter whether a learner accurately produces the second person singular suffix in German, negative polarity questions in English, geminates in Italian or front rounded vowels in Swedish. But acquisition of linguistic competence is the bedrock upon which reading rests. Initial reading, being able to decode words, in an alphabetic orthography requires phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness, and this awareness piggybacks on phonological competence. Without morphosyntax and syntactic competence in the new language and knowledge of the meanings of nouns, verbs and adjectives, comprehension of text beyond words is impossible.

Prompted by pleas in Tarone and Bigelow (e.g. 2012), the second language acquisition research community has recently recognized the

---

[2] But see Mocciaro's presentation at LESLLA 2018, now in this volume, and her volume of 2020.

need to go beyond findings based on the population of White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) individuals to which Henrich et al. (2010) refer. Because this also applies to most researchers, samples are those of convenience: the students at the institution at which the researcher teaches or at which his or her graduate students have contacts. SLA researchers introduced new initiatives to replicate previous studies with a non-WEIRD population. Doing so is a challenge for those without contacts outside the vast world of educated second language learners. Members of the LESLLA community can make an important contribution to SLA by aiming over the next several years to quadruple the percentage of studies on language acquisition presented at symposia. One way to encourage such research is through small-scale studies.

3.3. The role of action research

The impetus for the establishment of LESLLA was two-way sharing of ideas, by academics with practitioners and vice versa. Action research plays a special role in this respect, and the 18% which represents this approach is encouraging. These are small-scale studies the conducting of which is usually efficient, requiring few resources since these are typically presenters' own classrooms. These studies have a high degree of ecological validity because they take place in real classrooms with real practitioners and thus results resonate with other practitioners. Such studies move from action to systematic when the practitioner is undertaking an MA and especially a PhD, and requirements result in more rigorous methodology. Aberdeen and Johnson (2015: 109) call for "multiple evidence-based teaching methods. We strongly encourage our colleagues to explore […] any and all other methods that they find appropriate."

   In the categorization of presentations by approach, the 18% excludes language acquisition and reading studies and instead covers studies of use of real world materials; making connections to outside the classroom; oral language focus with varied practice and interaction and use of learners' home languages for explanations. Aberdeen and Johnson helpfully spell out steps from Lodico et al. (2010): (1) identify the problem; (2) understand the current situation;

(3) review the literature; (4) create an action plan; (5) carry it out; (6) reflect on the results; (7) draw conclusions. Working with one's own learners is one way to increase the number of studies of language acquisition whereby the starting point of the seven steps is a linguistic phenomenon instead of a problem. The LESLLA community is extremely well placed to support studies that compare learner by home language, by target language, by orthography and writing system while also taking social and cultural factors into account.

4. LESLLA as an international organization

LESLLA is special in its international and multi-disciplinary orientation and is ideally placed to make a difference at a supra-national level. This makes cross-cultural studies straightforward, practitioner + researcher studies feasible. The aim is to confirm the value of good ideas, particularly those which have been discovered by non-academics, by those who are not disposed to carry out large-scale studies. *If it works in Burlington does it work in Berlin and Barcelona?* But so far, LESLLA has not realised its international potential and, as in academia, English and the USA dominate..
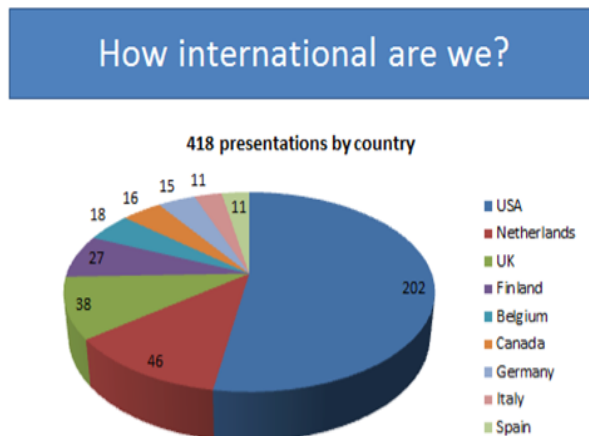
Figure 4. Presentations by country.

English dominance (see Figure 4) is further shown by the fact that 65% presentations were on L2 English. Dutch is second as the L2, 15%, for Flanders + Netherlands and this has to do with the high level of English proficiency of Dutch speakers, not to mention LESLLA having been hosted in three Dutch-speaking cities (Tilburg, Antwerp and Nijmegen). Some countries might be expected to be more active than they are in terms of percentage of migrants, e.g. in 2015, Sweden admitted 163,000 refugees (= 1.6% of the population) and in 2017, there were more foreign-born individuals in Sweden (17.6%) vs USA (15.3%). Low participation is likely due to the existence of a strong regional body whose work duplicates that of LESLLA, the Nordic Alpha Council; see https://nvl.org/Om-NVL/In-English.

Rich and Western receiving countries have dominated the symposia: only 2% of presentations have either been on or from those from other countries: Brazil, East Timor, Eritrea, Haiti, Israel, Japan and Rwanda (although at least Israel and Japan can also be included in the WEIRD category). The dominance of English is unfortunate because some of the major receiving countries in Europe – Greece, France, Spain and Italy (two of whom have hosted LESLLA for this among other reasons) – are not well represented. This does not account for low participation by practitioners from southern Europe at symposia other than the one in their own country. Rather it is likely to be practitioners' weak English skills connected to educational backgrounds that involve their home language rather than English.

5. Conclusion

In a mere 1 ½ decades, LESLLA has come a long way. With formalization in 2017-2018 and election of an executive committee, this thriving organization is well-placed to reach its potential in making a difference in how migrant adults with little or no formal schooling are supported in developing sufficient oral and literacy skills to become active and independent members of their new communities.

In 2013, the idea of "Partnerships in LESLLA" was introduced with the aim of stimulating a new culture of cooperation and collaboration. Calls to examine learners who are not WEIRD should

encourage members of the LESLLA community to start encouraging small scale research to rise to the challenge of meeting this call.

References

Aberdeen, Trudie and Elsie Johnson. 2015. Determining what LESLLA learners want to do in class: A principled approach to needs assessment. In Maricel G. Santos and Anne Whiteside (eds.), *Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA). Proceedings of the 9th symposium, San Francisco, California, August 7th-9th, 2013*, 192-218. San Francisco, CA: Lulu Publishing Services.

Barrett, Angeline M. and Michael Crossley. 2015. The power and politics of international comparisons. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 45: 467-470.

Condelli, Larry and Heide Spruck Wrigley. 2006. Instruction, language and literacy: What Works Study for adult ESL literacy students. In Ineke van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *Low-educated second language and literacy acquisition (LESLLA): Proceedings of the inaugural symposium*, 111-133. Utrecht: LOT.

Condelli, Larry, Heide Spruck Wrigley, Kwang Yoon, Stephanie M. Cronen and Mary Seburn. 2003. *What works for adult ESL literacy students. Volume II. Final Report*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research and Aguirre International.

Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine and Ara Norenzayan. 2010. The Weirdest People in the World? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33(2-3): 61-83.

Kurvers, Jeanne. 2015. Emerging literacy in adult second language learners: A synthesis of research findings in the Netherlands. *Writing Systems Research* 7(1): 58-78.

Lodico, Marguerite G., Dean Spaulding and Katherine H. Voegtle. 2010. *Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mocciaro, Egle. 2020. *The development of L2 Italian morphosyntax in low and non-literate adult learners*. Palermo: UniPa Press.

Mocciaro, Egle. 2021. The acquisition of L2 Italian by LESLLA learners: collecting and organising data (this volume).

Tarone, Elaine and Martha Bigelow. 2012. A research agenda for second language acquisition of pre-literate and low-literate adult and adolescent learners. In Patsy Vinogradov and Martha Bigelow (eds.), *Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA): Proceedings of the 7th annual symposium, September 2011*, 5-26. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Printing Service.

SECTION 2
Second language and literacy acquisition and teaching

Linguistic repertoires in Italian L2 classes: implications of the use of pidgin languages for learning and teaching

Giulio Asta – Rosa Pugliese

Research on language teaching to migrant students is currently being informed by a conceptual shift from the marginal role of their native/home languages to a view of these as a valuable asset for learning the target language. This paper presents an exploratory study on Nigerian Pidgin English as used by learners and, occasionally, by the teacher, during L2 Italian classes. Adopting a conversation analysis approach to audio-recorded naturally occurring interactions, we discuss some excerpts to show how the pidgin dialogue emerging pursues immediate communicative goals and further learning objectives. This paper not only highlights the need to take into consideration students' non-standard, as well as standard languages, but also suggests an interactional view of language – and subsequent empirical analysis – as the crucial starting point for conceiving effective approaches to teacher training.

1. Introduction

Italian L2 classes attended by adult migrant students, whether in institutional settings or in non-profit associations, are complex and dynamic linguistic landscapes. Observation and empirical analyses of the interactions taking place in them reveal two interesting points related to the various languages involved.

The first is that, although languages that have an official status (English or French, for example) or a status as a national language (Modern Standard Arabic, Mandarin, etc.) in the students' countries of origin are generally assumed to be those which will emerge during learning activities, a wider diversity is likely to arise, including sociolinguistically marked varieties, such as vernacular or home languages, non-standard mother tongues, pidgin languages and creoles. That is, diversity can be represented not only by more than one language, but also by more than one variety within a single

language; it occurs spontaneously through communicative routines, code switching, voluntary translations or similar phenomena. The second notable point is that these native/home languages, compared to the target one, are subject to a range of reactions by the teacher. They can be variously noted or ignored, accepted or 'banned', tolerated or discussed in the communicative exchanges in which they arise. Sometimes their use is encouraged during lessons and they may even be produced by the teachers themselves, as happens when their linguistic *repertoire* includes some knowledge of the migrant learners' local dialects – often due to the very fact of teaching in these educational settings. Italian L2 classes are places where "you learn a lot", as one teacher said during a recent interview.

If these ways of dealing with linguistic diversity are also implicit modes of establishing bottom-up micro-level language policies (Spolsky 2004; Yaman Ntelioglou et al. 2014) which are likely to influence the engagement of students with their learning, the teacher's use of their language(s), while helping them develop the target one, offers insights for systematic research.

This paper[1] deals with linguistically diverse Italian L2 classes from this perspective. Its core topic is Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), among other languages surfacing during interaction, mostly in beginner classes. The analysis we present draws on an exploratory study that grew out of a theory-practice dialogue, or rather a *co-learning* experience (Wei 2013) – a concept we will return to later with respect to the students – between the two authors: a researcher and university teacher in the field of Italian as a second language (Pugliese) and a Master's course student, at the time of the study, who was teaching Italian to adult migrants (Asta). The former was able to observe teaching practice by a teacher engaged in professional development to achieve a better understanding of his own 'instinctive' (at least, partly) pedagogy; the latter would access some key theoretical components and methodological tools for subsequent analysis. Therefore, a combination of both practical circumstances and theoretical interests led us to develop a collaborative project,

---

[1] The contents and the structure of this paper were jointly discussed by the two authors. Regarding the drafting, sections 1, 2, 4.2.1 and 5 were written by Rosa Pugliese; sections 3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.2.2, 4.2.3 and 4.3 were written by Giulio Asta.

whose starting point was the fact that, while teaching Italian to Nigerian students, the teacher had 'incidentally'[2] learnt their Pidgin English. That is, he had become partially competent in NPE, adding it to his individual *linguistic repertoire*, according to the conceptual reconfiguration of this notion, as proposed by Blommaert and Backus (2013) and discussed in recent works (cf. Spotti and Kroon 2017).

Although this type of learning experience as an outcome of "linguistic goodwill" (i.e. an unbiased, open-minded interest towards unknown languages; cf. the LIAM-project 2017) is still not widespread, it is certainly not an isolated one. In fact, although monolingual teachers are most likely still in the majority, similar examples involving situated multilingual learning are mentioned by other teachers of L2 Italian with respect to other languages (e.g. Wolof or Bambara). However, we do not know 'how' and 'to what extent' this occurs. As highlighted by the authors of the DIVCON Project (2010), "while it is a common claim that immigration not only changes the immigrants but the receiving societies as a whole, it is surprising how little we know about the actual character and extent of such changes". What is lacking in the Italian context, too, is a two-way perspective. By addressing this research gap in the field of education, our paper aims at contributing to fill it. We will further specify our goals, before referring to both the theoretical framework on migrant students' plurilingualism and the analytical tools we adopted. After presenting the specific context of the data collection and some basic information about NPE, we will examine three excerpts from classroom interaction and conclude by discussing some practical implications for teacher training and further research.

2. Aims of the study and theoretical-methodological framework

Our exploratory study aimed to (i) identify how and when the use of more than one language is enacted in and affects the ongoing interaction; (ii) provide evidence of how language diversity is experienced by the teacher and the students in L2 Italian lessons; (iii.)

---

[2] For the notion of 'incidental learning', see Hulstijn (2013).

consider, as mentioned above, the implications for teaching and for teacher training deriving from this descriptive basis.

These objectives join the international debate on (adult and young) migrants' plurilingualism and the current shift from a deficit view, where the target language was the main concern and the only *medium* of instruction, to an asset view drawing on the consideration of the L1 no longer as a peripheral resource, but rather as a central one. In this conceptual reframing, the native/home languages are paid increasing attention and even given centre stage. While the role that they can – and do – take in linguistic practice within beginner classrooms has previously been underemphasized or missed, because of the attention towards the target L2, much current academic thinking makes these languages central to the learning of the new language. Studies generally supportive of this idea are increasing and various authors not only consider the migrant students' native languages as a didactic asset, a bridge to the learning of the target language, and a stepping stone for further literacy acquisition and access to knowledge, but also document how native languages are used in a transition stage towards the L2 (cf. Conteh and Meier 2014; Cummins and Persad 2014; Garcia and Sylvan 2011; Yaman Ntelioglou et al. 2014, among others). Although we do not yet have a 'canon' of literature on the topic, this reconceptualization is a strong incentive towards change in L2 language education for migrants, as also recently stressed by van Avermaet (2019).

In the Italian context this paradigm shift draws the line between the long-standing discussion dominated by the view of lack of competence in the target L2[3] and a scientific debate that is now presenting a different picture, in the ways in which the non-standard languages are perceived and on the value they are acquiring. There have been some studies mainly concerning primary and secondary school settings, but there has not yet been systematic research on teaching to adult migrants, a field where the relationship between native languages and Italian as L2 on a practical level is less known.

In this context, our study seeks to extend the previous literature in two ways: it is concerned with a pidgin language and it provides a

---

[3] A view that has been marked by typical utterances such as "he/she does not even know *a single word* of Italian".

description of naturally occurring linguistic practices in the classroom. While official or national languages in the students' countries of origin have been discussed in recent surveys (ISTAT 2015), the extant Italian works focus on sociolinguistic investigations into social dynamics and specific migrant minorities (cf. Chini 2004, 2009; Guerini 2011, among others). Non-standard languages as resources to enhance the comprehension and learning of the target L2 have not so far been explored. Moreover, while available descriptions of the world's languages (Eberhard et al. 2019; Mahlerbe 2007) are useful references for teachers to compare migrants' languages and the target L2 in the immigration country, they remain, by their very nature, records of languages, descriptions of discrete entities or "coherent packages" (Spotti and Kroon 2017: 99). On the contrary, in-depth descriptions of languages in action and of the procedures enacted by speakers allow us to notice discursive dynamics and recurrent patterns, through which we can build up a thorough understanding, not only of language variation phenomena in the classroom, but also of what kind of 'spaces for learning' might be opened up in interactions. The analysis of the sequences that we propose later (cf. Section 4) follows the analytical line of classroom interaction within the broader field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and using the methodological contribution of Conversation Analysis (CA); this sociological, micro-analytical approach considers verbal activities as social actions and describes in detail their sequential organization and mechanisms, regardless of pre-established categories, while following the speakers' orientation to the conversation. Participants, in a CA approach, "are therefore competent subjects […] who apply a set of implicit knowledge" (Fatigante 2006: 225), repertoires and communicative resources to ordinary conversation or conversations oriented to a specific function (here, the acquisition of a second language). The application to the field of SLA (also known as CA for SLA) grounds the analysis of the development of language competence precisely "on and in action", as Seedhouse and Sert (2011: 4) write.

However, the theoretical-methodological framework of our study is a multi-layered one. Besides CA applied to classroom interaction and its multilingual dimensions (Kasper and Wagner 2014; Sert 2015), it uses core concepts such as the above-mentioned *language*

repertoire (Berruto 2005; Blommaert and Backus 2013) and *code-switching* (cf. Berruto 2015, among others), from well-established areas of inquiry – such as *languages in contact* and *interactional linguistics* (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2017) – as well as the notion of *translanguaging* (Garcia and Wei 2014), from recent lines of investigations. It also refers to pidgin and creole languages, both in the sociolinguistic descriptions available (cf. APiCS 2013), and in works on the relation of these languages to the dominant language instruction (Siegel 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Yiakoumetti 2011; Alby and Léglise 2018).

3. Context, participants and data collection

The excerpts examined in the following sections are taken from a small corpus of 9 audio-recordings (8 hours and 39 minutes in total) of Italian L2 lessons. The recordings were made during class activities delivered by an association which receives and assists asylum seekers and refugees in Bologna within the National Immigration Policy framework and agenda[4]. This Policy addresses a number of issues concerning housing, health assistance, legal assistance, social and work inclusion and education. It is the area of education, especially teaching Italian as a second language, that provides the context of this preliminary study.

Another background factor must be mentioned. Italian L2 courses are compulsory for asylum seekers and refugees, in order to receive legal status and social assistance. This means that if migrants do not attend these classes, they lose their rights to any sort of assistance.

---

[4] The audio-recording of the lessons was not originally carried out with a view to a systematic analysis. Rather, it responded to a practical professional need: to record some lessons in order to provide an opportunity for retrospective reflection on the ways in which lessons were managed, on the effectiveness of teaching and linguistic strategies adopted and on various other aspects that could not be the subject of particular attention during classroom activities, but could become such at a later time, in order to develop awareness of one's teaching. The idea of going beyond this reading of classroom interaction and to systematically observe it in its (micro) interactive manifestations, using the recordings as a small collection of data for examination with CA methodological tools, was agreed subsequently, during the co-learning experience mentioned previously (see Section 1).

The state education system is in charge of the majority of these courses, besides being the only organization allowed to provide valid certification for applications for long-term residency permits or citizenship. Thus, other organizations (associations and cooperatives) working with migrants are generally asked to provide classes to help students reach the level they need in order to be assessed by the public institution. Moreover, asylum seekers and refugees are very likely to attend their courses in the institutions they are living in.

Clearly then, the linguistic-cultural diversity found in reception centres is the same as within association-based language classes. Nigerians, for instance, might be considered as averagely fluent in Standard-English (even if such a consideration would not apply to the whole Nigerian population), although it is not rare to find social workers in Italy claiming that 'the Nigerian way of speaking does not really sound like English' or that 'their English is hard to understand'. This is not just an anecdotal point, but it can lead to possible misunderstandings when Italian social workers, as well as teachers themselves are not specifically trained. For this reason, linguistic and cultural mediation is likely to be provided in these settings.

4. Nigerian Pidgin English use in the Italian LESLLA classroom

Before examining some sequences of classroom interaction, a few structural points about the pidgin language here at issue will follow, in order to provide a better background for the subsequent analysis. In the given examples, we will refer to some utterances transcribed from the field recordings presented later, as relevant and useful complements to the ensuing interactional occurrences.

4.1. Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE): a few points

As Faraclas (2013) highlights, "home to a highly mobile, vibrantly enterprising, and intensely commercially-oriented population, the territory known today as Nigeria has for millennia been one of the most pluri-cultural and pluri-linguistic parts of the world". In fact, its people still speak about 517 languages, according to *Ethnologue*

(Eberhard et al. 2019). In this particular linguistic landscape[5], NPE plays an important role as it is used as a lingua franca all over the country, nowadays.

Some insights into the actual size of the NPE speaker community worldwide might be helpful. As reported in the *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures Online* (APiCS 2013), the "estimate in 2010 is well over 75 million speakers. Nigerian pidgin is therefore the African language with the greatest number of speakers, the pidgin/creole language with the greatest number of speakers, and the fastest growing pidgin/creole language in the world".

The Nigerian community in Italy has become one of the largest among migrants seeking asylum in the country, as well as in the metropolitan area of Bologna, since 2015. This means that a large number of migrants attending Italian L2 courses are likely to speak NPE at different levels of competence, including a basic knowledge of NPE as a lingua franca; this usage is common within reception centers, as reported by students themselves. Therefore, this particular non-standard English variety here at issue is worthy of attention.

Let us now look at some core features of NPE[6]. One noteworthy element is that NPE displays double-word structures (a phenomenon we might refer to as *full reduplication*, see Rubino 2013) to amplify or reformulate the meaning of the doubled word, such as:

(1)   *well well*; *plenty plenty*; *small small*; *fast fast*

         how do I learn speak Italy small small.
         'the way I'm going to speak Italian step by step.'

Some question clauses are widely used during spoken interaction. The most common one is *abi*, while others are more likely lexified from indigenous languages, such as the Yoruba *shebi*. They may be put at

---

[5] "From well before European contact to the present, the average West African child has grown up with a command of at least one or two local languages as well as a pidginized, creolized, and/or koineized regional market language. When the Europeans arrived, pidginized, creolized and standard varieties of European languages were added to this rich linguistic repertoire" (Faraclas 2013).

[6] For a survey of features and structures of NPE refer to https://apics-online.info/surveys/17; for an in-depth knowledge of them, refer to Faraclas (2013; 1996), among others.

the beginning of the utterance or at the end of it. In the following example, the question clause *abi* occurs in code-mixing with Italian. Its sequential context and the way it is prosodically produced suggest that its function is to introduce a question about the correctness of the utterance in the target language (i.e. Italian):

(2)   Question clause: *abi*

         abi quanto costa?
         'is it correct to say quanto costa?'
         'how much does it cost?'

Another NPE feature is the copula *nà* which we could possibly translate in English as 'is'. It is one of the most commonly occurring features of NPE, which in our data appears to be seamlessly used in code-mixing utterances, as in the following three-word sentence, involving three different codes: French, NPE and English:

(3)   Copula: *nà*

         après nà french
         'après is French.'

Here, a student (NPE speaker) was brokering the previous sentence, uttered in French by a francophone student to her fellow classmate (also an NPE speaker), who appeared confused about the meaning of the French word *après*.

A brief note on the verb system is necessary. Verbs are not morphologically conjugated; instead, they are often preceded by markers such as *go* and *don*, which change the time reference of the following verb to produce future or past 'tenses', respectively:

(4a)   Future Tense Marker: *go*

         they no go laugh you again
         'they will not laugh at you anymore.'

(4b)   Past Tense Marker: *don*
         I don speak dat one

'I've already said that.'

With regard to the previously mentioned tendency to misunderstand NPE by those who are not familiar with the language, this feature is one of the most likely to cause misunderstanding. Clearly due to the fact that the past tense marker *don* in NPE is phonologically close to the English *don't,* it is the kind of misunderstanding where the opposite of what is intended may be understood. This gap between Italian speakers' normative expectations towards standard English and the actual language spoken by NPE migrants should be noted when it comes to teaching the host language.

Further features of NPE to mention are prepositions, together with the resemantisation of some verbs. As shown in the example in (5), prepositions do not work in exactly the same way as Standard-English prepositions. Some of them present different phonology and orthography, others might be neutralized or resemantised and, therefore, used for multiple functions. A good example of this phenomenon is the use of *for* in terms of place preposition, as in the expression *for here* ('in this place'; see 4.2.2):

(5)   NPE *fit* (En. 'to be able to/can')

        e no fit be agbu for here
        'it cannot be/they cannot have goat meat, in this place.'

This example also shows that the resemantisation concerns a wide range of word classes. In fact, NPE displays a remarkable series of resemantised verbs and nouns, too. Another example can be added to the previous one:

(6)   NPE *hear* (En. 'to understand')

        maybe dis italy I will hear how to speak it o
        'maybe I will understand how to speak this Italian.'

Lastly, some idiomatic structures are worthy of consideration, for they are commonly used in ritual linguistic routines such as greetings, praise and approval display, dismay expressions, etc.:

(7a)   NPE *oya na* (Eng. 'come on')

      Oya na, let us go

(7b)   NPE *how far* (Eng. 'how are you')

      How far sista?   *I dey o*
      'How are you, sister?' 'I'm fine'

A teacher who is even partially aware of these and other idiomatic structures might choose to use some of them to ritualize greetings in class, as a way of establishing positive relations with their students, and − we would argue − of deploying a linguistically inclusive teaching approach, in line with what the LIAM project calls "linguistic goodwill" (see Section 1).

Let us now move on to see how some of these basic features of NPE have a role in the sequential dynamics of class interactions.

4.2. Analysis

In the following three excerpts, teacher and students will be referred to as TCHR and by the first three letters of the students' names respectively. Since both the teacher (a man) and the students (five women, from Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire) have large individual language repertoires, it is helpful to show this, while giving a few personal details (nationality and age) on the participants, and the languages they display[7]:

---

[7] Their voices were transcribed from the excerpts discussed and the transcription of utterances/turns in NPE (here highlighted in bold) was checked with the assistance of an NPE speaker and advanced learner of L2 Italian. However, it should be noted that the codification of NPE orthography is a debated issue. As Ojarikre (2013) observes in a review article, three possible options for writing NPE are considered in the literature: English Spelling/Alphabet (which implies a reader literate in English and may also give an impression of NPE as a deviant form of English); the Phonetic Alphabet (which makes the language accessible only to trained linguists) and New Modern Orthography, more an attempt towards this than a fully established system for a language "that is in need of a [standard] writing system" (Ojarikre 2013: 129), since it is evolving from the oral stage to a written status (cf.

- (TCHR): Italian; 28; (Italian, English, French, Arabic and NPE);
- (NAM): Ivorian; 21; (French, Jula[8], Italian and NPE);
- (ROK): Ivorian; 30; (French, Jula and Italian);
- (SAR): Nigerian; 22; (English, NPE and Italian);
- (GIF): Nigerian; 20; (English, NPE, Italian and Arabic);
- (BUN): Nigerian; 41; (English, NPE and Italian).

The first two excerpts are taken from a complete transcribed lesson, which can be thematically structured in four episodes and corresponding topics, as follows:

- 'The chances to learn Italian' (tt.1-640)
- 'Doing language practice at the supermarket' (tt.641–898)
- 'The people at home' (tt.899–995)'
- 'Come and eat with me' (tt.996–1047).

4.2.1. Excerpt 1: "They no go laugh you again"

From the first episode, this excerpt deals with the typical classroom practice of talking about (the target) language acquisition and use. After a turn uttered by SAR in English on the difficulties of speaking Italian 'at home' (i.e. the reception centre where all the students live), TCHR takes the interaction back to Italian:

209 TCHR: se tu non capisci bene è più difficile + allora brava S. + tu
               capisci e dopo hai bisogno/ di fare pratica giusto?
               if you don't understand well it's more difficult + so that's
               good S. + you understand and then you need/
               to practice right?

210   SAR: Sì
               'yes'

---

[8] Spoken by millions of people, also as a second language, in West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast and Mali, Jula (or Dyula) is one of the Mande languages, closely related to Bambara and Malinke.

211 TCHR: di parlare parlare parlare con le persone [giusto?
             to talk talk talk to people   [right?

212   ROK: [sì!
                                                         [yes!

213   SAR: sì!
             yes!

214 TCHR: ecco, a casa/ è difficile? perché/ le altre ragazze ridono? [eh?
             so, is it hard at home? because/ the other girls laugh?   [hein?

215   SAR: [sì:
                                                                         [ye:s

216 TCHR: eh! lascia + lascia ridere\=
             hein! let + let laugh \=

217   GIF: **= let dem make dem laugh**
             = let them laugh

218 TCHR: mh? lascia ridere + dopo[:
                                 then[:

219   NAM: [sì davvero =
                                     [yes really =

220 TCHR: = arriva un giorno + mh? che tu parli italiano/
             ((*schiocca le dita tre volte*))
                [benissimo
             = a day comes + mh? that you speak italian/
             ((*snaps his fingers three times*))
                [very well

221   GIF: [**fast fast**

222 TCHR: e loro + non ridono =
             and they + don't laugh =

223   GIF: **= they no go laugh you again**
             = they will not laugh at you anymore

224 TCHR: giusto? + loro non ridono
             right? + they don't laugh

In the first analyzable turn (209), as well as in the whole fragment up to turn 214, the TCHR is offering his understanding of the previous

students' talk, by glossing their English utterances in Italian. The connection with the previous students' turns is made explicit through the repeated question *right?* (tt. 211; 214). This action of interpretation or *formulation* – in conversation analysis terms – is confirmed by students, through minimal feedback (i.e. '*sì*'; tt. 210, 212, 213, 215), which also indicates their attention to the teacher's discourse. The first substantial element concerning the focus of our study is observable in turn 217, where GIF offers a consecutive interpretation, from Italian to NPE, of the teacher's turn (216) and his final suggestion (i.e. *lascia ridere* 'let them laugh') referred to the humiliating episodes in the household, described by the students and previously glossed (t. 214).

It appears, though, that GIF's utterance in turn 217 is actually slightly more sophisticated than the teacher's previous one. In fact, it displays an appropriate use of pronouns which was omitted or only implied by the teacher in turn 216. More specifically, the Italian sentence *lascia ridere* would more correctly be *lasciale ridere*, but the third plural suffix pronoun is not uttered by the teacher, probably in order to provide simplified input for his students. The same sentence, conveying a suggestion, is then repeated by the teacher (t. 218). NAM confirms and emphasizes it, as it is recognizable both in the added word *davvero* ('really') and in the slight overlapping between the two turns (218-219).

The subsequent use of NPE, again by GIF (tt. 221; 223), is noticeable in another brokering sequence of the teacher's turns (t. 220; 222). First, the utterance in turn 221 *fast fast* appears as a translation of the teacher's gesture (he snaps his fingers three times), more than his final comment in turn 220, as shown by the overlapping occurring. Subsequently, GIF keeps her broker's role by translating the teacher's turn (222) into NPE (t. 223). Again, we notice the appropriate understanding displayed by her through the NPE utterance. GIF sets the sentence in the future by means of /*go*/ (cf. 4.1) as a marker of a future tense, which does not appear in the teacher's turn, where a present tense is used, although with future value. The meaning of the sequence is maintained and in the following turn (t. 224), the teacher acknowledges the translation offered. We do not know whether the turns uttered in NPE in this excerpt are addressed to the whole group or self-addressed. Their interactional relevance, however, is in the

speaker's orientation towards understanding/facilitating understanding of the teacher's ongoing discourse by other Nigerian students.

4.2.2. Excerpt 2: "Melanzane, okro e agbu"

In the following excerpt, taken from the third episode in the transcription, NAM is recounting her conversational experience in Italian, at the African-Chinese store. Besides NPE, other languages are at play:

870   NAM: j'ai parlé italien j'ai ménagé je sait pas menager buongiorno e:: per favore oggi non c'è melanzana?
I spoke italian, I managed I don't know manage good morning a::nd please is there aubergine today?

871   TCHR: eh! brava!
yay! good

872   NAM: non c'è akoro?
is there any akoro?

873   TCHR: cos'è akoro? =
what is akoro?

874   NAM: = [[io ho bisogno
I need

875   GIF: [[**okro**

876   TCHR: ah! **okro**

877   NAM: io ho bisogno akoro io ho bisogne melanzana akoro carne mou mouton
I need akoro I need aubergine akoro meat mou sheep

878   ROK: cane::
(mea::t)[9]

879   TCHR: eh mouton è pecora!
well mouton (fr.) is sheep (it.)

---

[9] ROK does not utter the consonant /r/ which would differentiate the Italian words *carne/cane* (Eng. 'meat/dog'). Thus, the given translation (*mea::t*) refers to the interactional meaning of the sequence.

| 880 | NAM: | [[pecora! |
| | | [[*sheep!* |

| 881 | GIF: | [[/**agbu**:! |

| 882 | TCHR: | [[pecora pecora **that be sheep meat** |

| 883 | GIF: | **e no fit be agbu** do they **see agbu for here?** |
| | | *it cannot be agbu, do they have agbu, here?* |

| 884 | TCHR: | akbu? |

| 885 | GIF: | [[((*laughs*)) |

| 886 | SAR: | [[((*laughs*)) |

| 887 | ROK: | mouton na mu no me:: on appelle ça italiano comment? |
| | | *Sheep na mu no me:: how do you say that in Italian?* |

| 888 | TCHR: | pecora |
| | | *sheep* |

While recounting her conversational experience, NAM recurs to code-switching from French (in past tenses) to Italian (in the present tense), which is accounted for by the shift from the time of the narration (in the lesson) to the dialogue 'represented' through direct speech in Italian (t. 870). It is to this latter part of a multi-unit turn that the teacher's positive assessment (*brava!*), in t. 871, is emphatically addressed, as also the preceding paralinguistic marker of wonder (*eh*) displays. Beginning in turn 872, then, we can recognize a sequence of negotiation of meaning, via the effective tool of NPE used by GIF to resolve a comprehension problem between students and teacher. In fact, while NAM continues to narrate and 'perform' her dialogue (with the shop assistant in the store), it is GIF who replies in NPE (t. 875) to the teacher's question, allowing him to grasp the meaning of the word *okro* (t. 876) previously uttered as *akoro* (t. 872). The reference object of the word pronounced differently does not change[10]. What is significant here is that, since the teacher appears not to be familiar with NAM's pronunciation of the plant's name, GIF takes on and deploys her role of language broker, thus keeping the

---

[10] *Okra*, *okro* or *ochro* is a flowering plant of the mallow family, valued for its edible green seed pods.

class interaction flowing. In turn 876 the teacher's understanding is displayed through a paralinguistic comprehension marker (i.e *ah!*) and the repetition of the word, re-uttered with NPE diction.

The previous interaction is resumed in NAM's turn (877), but it quickly returns to a long meaning negotiation sequence (tt. 877–888). NAM is listing in Italian the ingredients she wanted to ask the shopkeeper for when she code-switches back to French, in order to list 'sheep meat' (i.e. '*mouton*'), as well. ROK intervenes in the sequence (t. 878) with an alternative pronunciation of the Italian word '*carne*' (Eng. 'meat'). The teacher then provides the Italian translation of the French word *mouton* (t. 879). Two out of four students overlap with the teacher (tt. 880–882), who provides a further explanation in NPE, given that GIF's overlapped turn displays another translation of the element here in negotiation (i.e. *agbu)*. Immediately afterwards (t. 883), GIF recurs to NPE to ask SAR for a further explanation of the chances of finding *agbu* in shops in Italy. Then it is the teacher's turn to require a meaning negotiation of the term *agbu*, which he utters as *akbu* (t. 884), in an attempt to pronounce the word and causing GIF's and SAR's subsequent laughs. Negotiation of the meaning is reached through an explicit request for translation into Italian, by ROK (t. 887) and replied to by the teacher (t. 888).

Generally, we find evidence of a conversational environment which is co-constructed in the class, through the uncommented, natural use of the various languages and their varieties.

4.2.3.   Excerpt 3: "Novità"

In this excerpt, drawn on a partially transcribed lesson of the corpus, a 41-year-old Nigerian woman is engaged in a short conversation with the teacher just before class:

1   TCHR: Allora (3s) news?
               So

2   BUN: news?

3   TCHR: news eh? nuovo is new rinnovare is renew /novità news (3s)
              abi? **So if you want to ask somebody you don't see from
              long time** (2s) **you go say /e::hy oya na: how far na:**
              /novità? capito?
              news?   understood?

4   BUN: any news?

5   TCHR: esatto any news? ah? it's like what's up? mh? (2s) ok? (3s)
              capito?
              exactly   understood?

6   BUN: sì
              yes

7   TCHR: ok

In turn 1, the teacher takes the floor with an Italian discourse marker
(*allora*; Eng. 'so') – a typical conversational 'starter' in an encounter
with someone you haven't seen for a while – to which he adds
(perhaps, unconsciously) the English word *news*? This code-mixing
apparently surprises the student, who repeats the English word with an
interrogative intonation (t. 2): sufficient indication for the teacher to
interpret it as an explanation request, as his repetition of the word
shows. It is worth looking closely at his subsequent, extended, multi-
unit turn: it goes from the word just considered to an impromptu
lexical (a word-formation-rule-based) explanation, which includes
Italian terms related to the first (the adj. *nuovo*) and their
corresponding English translation (*nuovo is new...*). This is then
followed by a request for confirmation of the student's
comprehension, also drawing on the NPE question clause /*abi*/. We do
not have any video-recording showing the student, who might have
nodded or lifted her eyebrows to let the teacher continue his turn. The
teacher actually keeps his turn for another kind of explanation, a use-
related and pragmatic one (*and So if you want to ask somebody...*).
Here we can observe the ways in which the teacher attempts to speak
NPE, by using the future tense marker /*go*/, some idiomatic greeting
formulas (i.e. *oya na*; *how far na*) and prosody.
    All this results in a contextual explanation based on
translanguaging to illustrate the communicative situation where the
very first expression (i.e. *allora, news?*) could be used appropriately.

The student reply (t. 4) in standard English (*any news*?) displays her comprehension, which is then ratified by the teacher (t. 5), who code-switches again to Italian and English, before prompting the student's feedback, given in Italian, soon after (t. 6).

4.3. Languages in action: a quantitative picture

Faced with this linguistic diversity at play, one might assume that Italian is used very little, and that the use of students' non-standard varieties in class might prevent sufficient L2 input being delivered. However, this does not appear to be the case. It is worth complementing the qualitative picture given here by the interactional sequences with a quantitative one about the languages occurring, in order to visualize the actual share of their distribution, as shown by Figures 1 to 3[11].
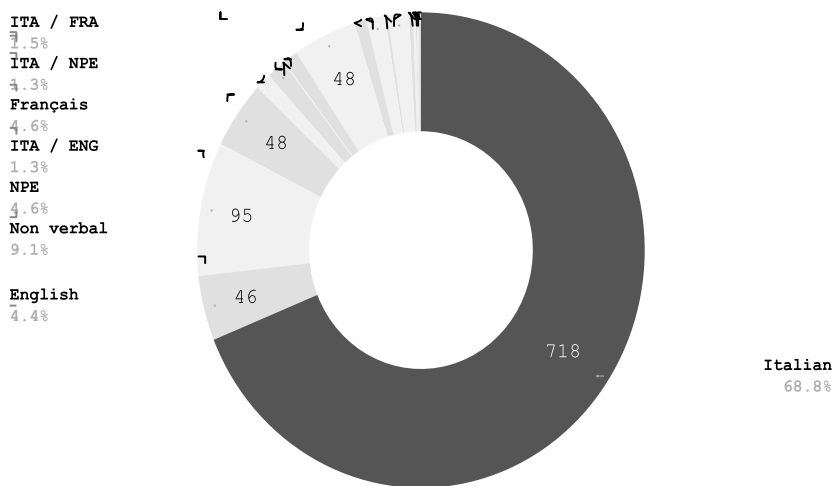
Figure 1. Languages and occurrences

ITA / FRA 1.5%
ITA / NPE 4.3%
Français 4.6%
ITA / ENG 1.3%
NPE 4.6%
Non verbal 9.1%
English 4.4%
Italian 68.8%

48
48
95
46
718

---

[11] The figures refer to the fully transcribed lesson.

Figure 2. Turn-taking distribution
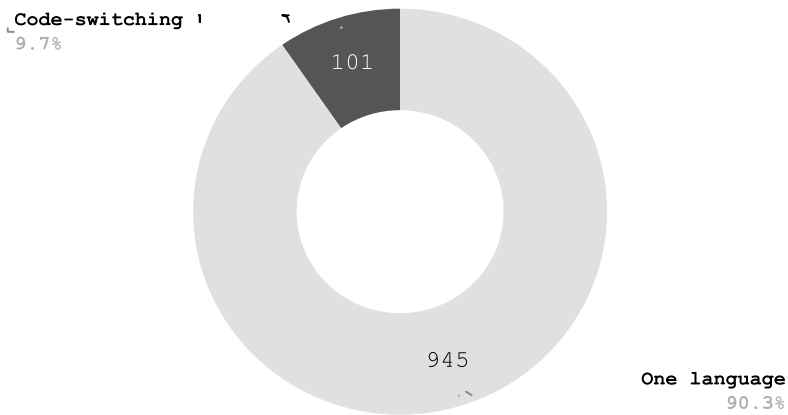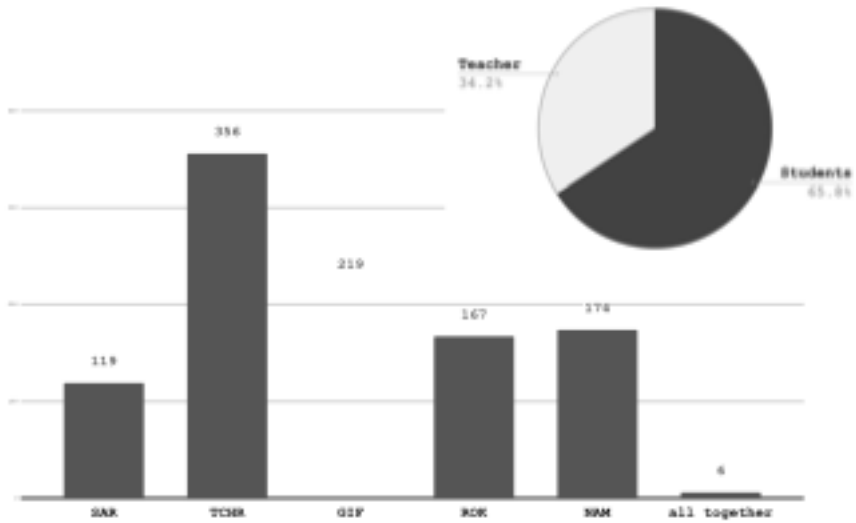
Figure 3. Codeswitching utterances in the whole interaction

As we can see, most of the interaction (65.8%) was conducted by the students, whereas the teacher took only 34.2% of the total turns. Moreover, almost 70% of the whole lesson was in Italian, while the

actual share of the different languages occurring shows that the main languages used are NPE, French and English.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Throughout the data examined, we have been confronted with language variation and hybridity, a process common to many migrant classes, where "students and also sometimes teachers make all their 'multilingual potential to maximize communication and learning' […]" (Alby and Léglise 2018: 2). Students' language practices involving NPE, French, English and Italian could be described as "flexible and dynamic, responding to their need for sense-making in order to learn", in Garcia and Sylvan's terms (2011: 397). We could also refer to the whole process as *translanguaging*, according to one of the current categorizations of the use of multiple languages in communicative exchanges. Garcia and Sylvan (2011: 385) define this as "the constant adaptation of linguistic resources in the service of meaning-making", to clarify the core sense of *translanguaging* as a sociolinguistic concept, while its pedagogical meaning is commonly used to refer to the teacher's communicative behaviour (Garcia and Wei 2014; Wei 2018).

From this perspective, looking at how the above interactions are sequentially, i.e. progressively, constituted, we can see evidence that, by relying on their languages, students also begin to make sense of their experience – in the classroom – *as learners* of Italian. In other words, their individual linguistic background appears to lend support to the learning of the additional language. If standardized foreign/second language programmes do not fit into educational settings such as those here (Krumm and Plutzar 2008: 6), it is also because the status as learners of beginner-level L2 students is not always taken into account. This is especially true for low-literate students, who might not be used to being in a classroom, but who are often proficient speakers of multiple languages.

The students' visible orientations towards collaborative brokering practices in the negotiation of meaning and their interest in talking about their learning demonstrate that their recurrent multilingual use acts as both as a motivation enhancement towards learning and as a

willingness to engage in the classroom conversation; this, together with a positive class dynamic, in turn fosters participation. We can also notice how the teacher draws upon his knowledge of the non-standard variety – spoken by his students, but less expected to be used in the classroom – to integrate it into the L2 instruction, with the aim of developing interactive practices of mutual recognition. Non-standard varieties are again at play on a reflexive and meta-communicative level, as both the students and the teacher resort to code-switching/mixing them when their concern focuses on the learning and the use of the target L2. In sum, these interactive practices appear to be the key to a *co-learning* process, i.e. "a process in which several agents simultaneously try to adapt to one another's behaviour so as to produce desirable global outcomes that would be shared by the contributing agents" (Wei 2013:169).

Clearly, there is a need for further and longitudinal interactional-based studies to gain a closer insight into the role that migrant students' home/native language varieties can play in facilitating L2 learning opportunities. However, despite their exploratory nature, the findings described here lead to some potentially useful implications for language teachers' training.

Given the wide linguistic diversity of migrant students' classes, one might wonder to what extent a teacher should give space to other languages and/or use them during lessons. On the one hand, it would be unreasonable to expect teachers to be knowledgeable about or familiar with the communicative repertoires of all their students from diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, "teachers' appreciation of the varieties' functions […] would serve as a solid foundation for students' learning", as Yiakoumetti (2011: 208) pointed out when dealing with non-standard language varieties in post-colonial educational contexts. Along the same lines, Siegel (2006a; 2006b) has provided insightful work on pidgin as a bridge to standard English and has called for a sociolinguistically-informed training approach based on "awareness programs" (Siegel 2010). Besides, acknowledging in a teacher "an attitude which recognizes that substandard dialects are regular systems of communication in their own right and are not disadvantaged, incomplete, immature, or irregular manifestations of a standard dialect" was already one perspective in the late 1960s in the area of research in teaching school-age pupils (Politzer 1968: 18).

Several pedagogical trends, nowadays, emphasize the educational importance of the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of adult and young learners in migration contexts. There is a need to "take account explicitly of the fact that students' L1s represent intellectual resources", as Cummins and Persad (2014: 6) say, while discussing – with reference to schools – a *teaching through a multilingual lens* approach. Similarly, in the Council of Europe's recent recognition of skills for language teachers working with adult migrants, 'learning' one or more migrant languages is seen as a potential part of "continuous professional development". The latter might usefully deal with language diversity in order to increase teachers' linguistic civility (LIAM Project 2017), to foster a shared linguistic culture and to promote the learning of an L2 target language by leveraging on the students' plurilingualism; in sum, to develop linguistically responsive teachers for contemporary multilingual classes. There is, therefore, a parallel need to reshape teacher education from this perspective, in order to ultimately support learners. In a recent publication by Haznedar et al. (2018), we find an interesting example of online teacher training and professional development modules, which were created by Leslla researchers in different countries, within the context of a European project (EU-Speak: Teaching adult immigrants and training their teachers).

Whatever the focus and procedures of future approaches to teacher training, it is important to keep an awareness of learners' language skills, as expressed by Blommaert (2013: 17): "differences in repertoires are rapidly converted into inequalities in life chances" […]. Tremendous human potential is wasted by the cavalier dismissal of the potentially valuable resources people bring along".

References

APiCS. 2013. *The Atlas of Pidgin and Creole language Structures on line*.
https://apics-online.info/surveys/17#section-2sociohistoricalbackground

Alby, Sophie and Isabelle Léglise. 2018. Multilingualism and translanguaging as a resource for teaching and learning in French Guiana. In Piet Van Avermaet, Stef Slembrouck, Koen Van Gorp, Svev Sierens and Katrijn Maryns (eds.), *The multilingual edge of education*, 115-137. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Berruto, Gaetano. 2005. *Fondamenti di sociolinguistica*, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Berruto, Gaetano. 2015. Tra linguistica formale e linguistica del contatto nell'analisi della commutazione di codice. In Carlo Consani, *Contatto interlinguistico tra presente e passato,* 33-54. Milano: LED.

Blommaert, Jan and Ad Bakus. 2013. Superdiverse repertoires and the individual. In Ingrid de Saint-Georges and Jean-Jacques Weber (eds.), *Multilingualism and multimodality. Current challenges for educational studies*, 11-32. Rotterdam, Boston and Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Blommaert, Jan. 2013. Writing as a sociolinguistic object. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 17(4): 1-19.

Chini, Marina (a cura di). 2004. *Plurilinguismo e immigrazione in Italia: un'indagine sociolinguistica a Pavia e Torino*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Chini, Marina. 2009. Introduzione. Plurilinguismo e immigrazione nella società italiana. Repertori, usi linguistici e fenomeni di contatto. *Studi Italiani di Linguistica Teorica e Applicata*, 38(1): 3-8.

Conteh, Jean and Gabriela Meier (eds.). 2014. *The multilingual turn in languages education: opportunities and challenges*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Couper-Kuhlen, Elizabeth and Margret Selting. 2017. *Interactional linguistics: Studying language in social interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cummins, Jim and Robin Persad. 2014. Teaching through a multilingual lens: The evolution of EAL policy and practice in Canada. In *Education Matters* 2(1): 4-40.

DIVCON Project (Diversity and contact). 2010. http://www.mmg.mpg.de/research/all-projects/diversity-and-contact-divcon/

Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2019. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world.* Twenty-second edition. Dallas: SIL International. http://www.ethnologue.com

Ekpenyong, Bassey. 2008. Oracy in Nigerian English-based Pidgin as a product of colonial encounter. In *TRANS. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 17. http://www.inst.at/trans/17Nr/1-3/1-3_ekpenyong17.htm

Faraclas, Nicholas. 1996. *Nigerian Pidgin*. London: Routledge.

Faraclas, Nicholas. 2013. Nigerian Pidgin. In Susanne M. Michaelis, Philippe Maurer, Martin Haspelmath and Magnus Huber (eds.), *The survey of pidgin and creole languages*. Volume 1. English-based and Dutch-based Languages. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://apics-online.info/surveys

Fatigante, Marilena. 2006. Teoria e pratica della trascrizione in Analisi Conversazionale. L'irriducibilità interpretativa del sistema notazionale. In Yvette Bürki and Elwys De Stefani (a cura di), *Trascrivere la lingua. Dalla filologia all'analisi conversazionale,* 219-256. Bern: Peter Lang.

Garcìa, Ofelia and Claire E. Sylvan. 2011. Pedagogies and practices in multilingual classrooms: Singularities in pluralities. *The Modern Language Journal* 95(3): 385-400.

Garcìa, Ofelia and Li Wei. 2014. *Translanguaging: language, bilingualism, and education*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Guerini, Francesca. 2011. Language policy and ideology in Italy. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 210: 109-126.

ISTAT. 2015. Diversità linguistiche tra i cittadini stranieri. https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/129285

Haznedar, Belma, Joy Peyton Kreeft and martha Young-Scholten. 2018. Teaching adult migrants: A focus on the languages they speak. *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 6(1): 155-183.

Hulstijn, Jan H. 2013. Incidental learning in second language acquisition. In Carol A. Chapelle (ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, 2632-2640. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kasper, Gabriele and Johannes Wagner. 2014. Conversation analysis in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 34: 171-212.

Krumm, Hans-Jurgen and Verena Plutzar. 2008. *Tailoring language provision and requirements to the needs and capacities of adult migrants*. https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/guiding-principles

LIAM Project. 2017. Council of Europe / Language Policy Unit (Strasbourg). https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/teacher-training

Mahlerbe, Michel. 2007. *Dizionario enciclopedico delle lingue del mondo*. Milano: Mondadori.

Ntelioglou, Burcu Yaman, Jennifer Fannin, Mike Montanera and Jim Cummins. 2014. A multilingual and multimodal approach to literacy teaching and learning in urban education: a collaborative inquiry project in an inner city elementary school. *Frontiers in Psychology* 5(533): 1-10.

Ojarikre, Anthony. 2013. Perspectives and problems of codifying Nigerian Pidgin English orthography. *Developing Country Studies* 3(12): 126-133.

Politzer, Robert. 1968. Problems in applying foreign language teaching methods to the teaching of standard English as a second dialect. *Research and development Memorandum* 40: 1-19.

Rubino, Carl. 2013. Reduplication. In Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath (eds.), *The world atlas of language structures online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. http://wals.info/chapter/17

Seedhouse, Paul and Olcaj Sert. 2011. Introduction: Conversation analysis in applied linguistics. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)* 5(1): 1-14.

Sert, Olcaj. 2015. *Social interaction and L2 classroom discourse*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Siegel, Jeff. 2006a. Keeping creoles and dialects out of the classroom: Is it justified? In Shondel J. Nero (ed.), *Dialects, Englishes, Creoles, and Education*, 39-67, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Siegel, Jeff. 2006b. Language ideologies and the education of speakers of marginalized language varieties: Adopting a critical awareness approach. *Linguistics and Education* 17(2): 157-174.

Siegel, Jeff. 2010. Pidgin in the classroom. *Educational Perspectives* 40(1/2): 55-65. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ877778

Spolsky, Bernard. 2004. *Language policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spotti, Massimiliano and Sjaak Kroon. 2017. Multilingual classrooms at times of superdiversity. In Stanton Wortham, Deoksoon Kim and Stephen May (eds.), *Discourse and education. Encyclopedia of language and education*, 3rd ed., 97-109. Springer: Cham.

Van Avermaet, Piet. 2019. Gated globalization. Social injustice in European citizenship and literacy policies. Paper presented at the Conference "Cittadinanza e analfabetismo", Reggio Emilia, Italy, 1-2 March 2019.

Wei, Li. 2013. Who's teaching whom? Co-learning in multilingual classrooms. In Stephen May (ed.), *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL and bilingual education*, 167-190. New York: Routledge.

Wei, Li. 2018. Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language. *Applied Linguistics* 39(1): 9-30.

Yiakoumetti, Androula. 2011. Re-invigorating teacher-training programmes in linguistic variation. In Issa M. Saleh and Myint Swe Khine (eds.), *Teaching teachers,* 195-214. Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Transcription conventions

>text<	fast talk
<text>	slow talk
text	emphasis
°text°	quiet talk
TEXT	loud talk
te::xt	extension of the sound or syllable
.	fall in intonation
,	continuing intonation
\	sharp fall in intonation
? o /	rising intonation
!	animated intonation
=	latched utterances
[text]	overlapping talk
(text)	problematic hearing; the transcriber is not certain about it
((*text*))	comments by the transcriber
+	a short pause; (0.0) timed pause in seconds

Community oriented literacy coaching for adults with limited literacy and with or without an immigrant background

Judith Böddeker – Alexis Feldmeier García

The paper presents the project *Alphalernberatung*, which aims at creating a non-formal offer for literacy and basic education work adults with limited literacy and with/without German as their first language. In this context, further training courses for advisory staff in the social area will be created on the basis of existing advisory approaches: client centred advice, systemic advice, individual psychological advice. Learning counselling materials and self-learning materials on the subject of learning will be developed in German and several first languages.

Keywords: low literacy, coaching approaches, learning counselling, reach out approach.

1. Introduction

The prevention of limited literacy has been a topic in Germany for decades, limited literacy is understood as: "die Unterschreitung der gesellschaftlichen Mindestanforderungen an die Beherrschung der Schriftsprache, deren Erfüllung Voraussetzung ist zur sozial streng kontrollierten Teilnahme an schriftlicher Kommunikation in allen Arbeits- und Lebensbereichen [Participation in written communication is subject to strickt rules of compliance with (socially) prescribed forms]" (Drecoll 1981: 31).

Public interest in this target group began in the 1970s and, at that time, it was recognised that the group of adults with limited literacy needed greater support. Therefore, the first adult literacy courses were initiated at educational institutions, such as the adult education centre (Stauffacher 1992). The presence of limited literacy in Germany, despite attending school, needs to be emphasised in education policy, and society should also be more aware of the issue. Many concepts, projects, plans and campaigns have been implemented since then to

resolve this problem and, in the context of the Alpha Decade from 2016 to 2026, many current projects focus on limited literacy (homepage Alpha Decade)[1]. One of these projects is the *Alphalernberatung* project, which is the focus of this article.

2.   Research background: The LEO – Level One Study

The LEO – Level One study provides reliable data on limited literacy in Germany for the first time, concerns individuals between 18 and 65 years of age, and is based on different alpha levels. Alpha level 1 refers to the letter level, individual letters are recognised and written, but word level is not reached when reading and writing (homepage vhs)[2]. According to the LEO – Level One study, 300,000 people of the German working age population are at alpha level 1 (Grotlüschen and Riekmann 2011). Alpha level 2 refers to the word level and is relevant when the level falls below the sentence level, meaning that a person can read or write individual words, but not entire sentences. Two million people of working age in Germany are at this level, according to the Hamburg study (Grotlüschen and Riekmann 2011). Alpha level 3 relates to the sentence level, persons who are able to read or write individual sentences, but who fail to be capable of writing short coherent texts and therefore avoid them (homepage vhs); the study states that 5.2 million of the employable population in Germany are at this level. Alpha level 3 also defines the border of literacy and limited literacy, and a total of 14.5 % of the adult population belong to the group of people with limited literacy at alpha levels 1 to 3; this corresponds to 7.5 million people (Grotlüschen and Riekmann 2011). Incorrect writing at the text level is the criteria for Alpha level 4, and individuals operating at this level can read and write using everyday vocabulary even at the text level, but they make a lot of mistakes. They are able to read texts comprehensively, but there are many spelling mistakes in their written work (homepage vhs). In Germany, 13.3 million of the adult population are rated as

---

[1]   Online at: https://www.alphadekade.de.
[2]   Online at: https://www.grundbildung.de/information/analphabetismus/alpha-levels/?L=0.

level 1 (Grotlüschen and Riekmann 2011). Of the adults with limited literacy, 41.8 % or 3.1 million people, have a first language other than German, so that many of them were originally immigrants (Grotlüschen and Riekmann 2011).

3. The *Alphalernberatung* project

The project has a duration of three years from October 2018 to October 2021, and is financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research; it is a cooperation project between Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bielefeld and the University of Münster. The project is intended to contribute to the improvement of literary competences for life, and to increase the chances of mastering everyday tasks, such as reading letters independently. The program aims to strengthen the purpose and motivation of adults with limited literacy to learn and to support them in improving their competences and their current situation permanently, by means of their activities.

3.1. Project goals

Just one to two percent of the 7.5 million adults with limited literacy named in the LEO – Level One Study in Germany attend literacy and basic education courses, which means that the vast majority of adults with limited literacy do not take advantage of literacy and basic education courses. It is difficult to understand why so few adults with limited literacy attend the literacy and basic education offers, and substantial research is needed to reveal the reasons. One possible explanation is that most are institutional services offered in the form of teaching, as is the case at many adult education centres. Therefore, if institutional education does not reach the adults with limited literacy, alternative learning modes would need to be created to appeal to as many people as possible, those with and without an immigrant background. Hence, the *Alphalernberatung* project has been developed with the aim of creating an informal literacy and basic education service, which does not presuppose that adults with limited literacy attend formal teaching classes. These methods will be located

much more often in places where people with alpha and basic education needs are suspected, therefore the *Alphalernberatung* project is an outreach service. The learning process takes place outside the classroom, in the everyday life of the adults with limited literacy, a linguistic and culturally sensitive approach is made to those affected in their first and second languages with the purpose of alphabetically oriented learning counselling. This should be supported by appropriate teaching and learning materials[3].

Self-directed learning processes outside a formally organised lesson will be combined with topics that can be taken into account in social space-oriented counselling services, so that the approach and the *Alphalernberatung* initiative are mutually supportive. The motivation for those seeking counselling in the social space is chosen as the basis for initiating self-directed written language learning processes within the alpha learn counselling framework since this relieves the written language burden on social space-oriented counselling. Adults with limited literacy can be found within the framework of various counselling services, which are not concerned with literacy and basic education, such as debt, housing or marriage counselling (Schneider et al. 2008). These different counselling services are appraised and consideration is given to how counsellors can better advise clients with literacy needs.

The first stage is observation of interviews between counsellor and client, and interviews with counsellors, then a training concept is developed for counsellors from different fields as a means to prepare them as literacy counsellors, based on the observations and interview.[4] After further training, the counsellor should be able to identify client's literacy needs and assess the corresponding alpha level. The intention is that the training also demonstrates how to communicate the topic of limited literacy sensitively in a target group-oriented manner during the counselling interview, and to describe how the literacy process is supported by focused, goal oriented and active questions, and culturally sensitive methods and materials.

---

[3] Material production started in October 2019. The current status can be viewed on the project homepage https://www.uni-muenster.de/Germanistik/alphalernberatung/ under "Materialien".

[4] The interviews have already been completed and evaluated. Contents for the training for counsellors in the field of limited literacy can be found under point 3.2.

An advanced training concept for the *Alphalernberater* will also be developed within the project timescale, meaning that counsellors, who are trained to become *Alphalernberater* can explicitly advise clients in the area of literacy. The prerequisite is that the counsellors already have a high level of field competence in German as a second language/German as a foreign language (DaZ/DaF). This training focuses on learning, supporting the client and advising him/her about how to improve his/her reading and writing difficulties in a specific area, for example how to better understand letters and reminders regarding debt counselling. Information material and brochures from counselling centres will also be translated into simple German, added with many pictures, and six other first languages, with special reference to the large group of low literalized people with an immigration background.

The aim of the project is to increase the motivation of those seeking counselling to learn to improve their reading and writing, as difficulties in reading and writing are often indirectly related to other counselling services. In debt counselling, for example, experience demonstrated that reading and writing difficulties were also responsible for the debts incurred by people when, for example, letters and reminders could not be read or understood correctly.

As part of the follow up actions, a handbook and training videos will also be produced and made available online as self-learning materials on the subject of literacy.

3.2.   Interview evaluation

Qualitative interviews were conducted with counsellors from eight different specialisms[5], using a structured interview guide, lasting approximately thirty minutes per counsellor, and recorded on a dictation machine[6]. Initially general questions were asked, which

---

[5] The specialisms are: social counselling, socio-educational support, government affairs, language course search, education, family and psychological situations, debt counselling and delinquent assistance.

[6] The advantages of working with a dictation machine are that the recordings can be recalled and transcribed at a later point in time. The statements of the different TNs can be compared transparently. It is also possible to quote from the interviews and it

related to the interviewee's professional and training specialism and experience as a counsellor, and to establish whether advice was given in different first languages, and if materials were made available or distributed in the counselling sessions. The next questions focused on literacy needs, for example regarding how counsellors recognised the nature of clients' needs and how to proceed if a client had difficulties reading and writing. It was also important to establish whether other materials were used when literacy needs were diagnosed, and whether the counsellor required support in this area[7].

The evaluation of the interviews with the counsellors showed that the majority took place in German but clients could have many different first languages, such as Arabic, Kurdish, Russian, Turkish, Greek, Polish, Bulgarian, Farsi or Serbian. The client's requirement for literacy support is recognised by the fact that letters are not understood, by the client's self-disclosure or even that forms written in his/her first language are not understood. Further indications are the application forms, which are completed by the clients and the details of their educational accomplishments; in some cases, it was possible to recognise that difficulties were present by the signature used in the letter[8]. However, the search for a suitable language course is supported or referred to. Most counsellors do not have special material for clients with literacy needs, and the this led to more advice being given with charts than with text. There were two main aspects for which counsellors require support: further training courses in literacy, which are requested by almost all counsellors, and initial training and materials. Strategies for conducting conversations, communication strategies, and practical examples of how to indirectly discuss the need for literacy were also in demand.

The other area concerns materials, for instance checklists are requested in order to identify literacy needs quickly and easily, as there is often no time within a consultation and additional tests are conducted to determine literacy needs. Lists of contact points/advice

---

is a more relaxed situation for interviewers and interviewees if they do not have to take notes all the time or ask questions if they cannot follow the writing down so quickly (Thaller 2009).

[7] See appendix 1 for the interview guide.

[8] Materials especially developed for literacy needs were not used in the counselling sessions because the counselling services (so far) have not been equipped with them.

centres for literacy learners and visuals instead of text-based documents, for instance, in information brochures, were also in demand. These requests for materials and the training courses will be implemented in the project over the next few months.

The aim of the requirements survey was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contents, methods, references materials, and alpha learner counselling. Preparation, in the form of the transcription of relevant passages from the interviews and the qualitative evaluation of the data collected, led to the development of a concept for the *Alphalernberatung*. This concept is derived from the counselling concepts used in basic education work to date,[9] and enables counselling of adults with limited literacy, within the framework of self-directed learning processes.

The theoretical basis for these counselling concepts varies and are discussed in more detail in the next section.

4. Coaching approaches

Three coaching approaches are described in detail in this section, the client centred coaching approach, the systemic coaching approach and the individual psychological coaching approach.

Counselling is defined by Rechtien (2004: 16) as:

[…] ein zwischenmenschlicher Prozess (Interaktion), in welchem eine Person (der Ratsuchende oder Klient) in und durch die Interaktion mit einer anderen Person (dem Berater) mehr Klarheit über eigene Probleme und Bewältigungsmöglichkeiten gewinnt. Das Ziel von Beratung ist die Förderung von Problemlösungskompetenz. [An interpersonal process (interaction) in which one person (the person seeking advice or the client), in and through interaction with another person (the counsellor), gains more clarity about his or her problems and coping potential. The aim of counselling is to promote problem solving competence.]

---

[9]   See   e.g.,   http://alfa-mobil.de/wp-content/uploads/Projektbeschreibung.pdf, AlphaKommunal - Vom Bürgeramt ins Lernangebot - Alpha-Dekade (alphadekade.de), Alpha-Quali_Projektsteckbrief.pdf (uni-erfurt.de) and other BMBF-funded projects that include advisory approaches.

The responsibility for the learning process is increasingly located with the learners, and this principle is particularly important in self-directed learning.

4.1. Client centred coaching approach

Most authors use the terms client centred counselling and person-centred counselling interchangeably, so that the person-centred approach focuses more on the concept of the person, and the client centred stance emphasises the roles of the counsellor and the client (Sander 2004). The method is based on the findings of the psychologist Carl Rogers (1902-1989) and concerns the experiences, experiential contexts and development of the individual. The person is considered in relationship to him/herself, in his/her interpersonal connections and environmental conditions (Straumann 2004). The focus is on the individual and not the problem, such that client centred counselling does not claim to solve a problem, but to help the individual to develop further within counselling interviews, in order to be able to solve his/her problem The client has the active role in the conversation and is given space for self-recognition and self-analysis. Therefore, consultancy can be considered successful if "Entscheidungen und Alternativen zur Problembewältigung erarbeitet sind, die die Rat Suchenden bewusst und eigenverantwortlich in ihren Umweltbezügen treffen und umsetzen können [Decisions and alternatives for solving the problem have been developed, which enable those seeking advice to consciously and responsibly make and implement solutions in their environmental relations]" (Straumann 2004: 643). The counsellor should not advise in a directive way, wherever possible, so that the individual's decision making and action potential are constructively expanded, and characterised by being self-responsible and socially responsible (Straumann 2004). The client should be enabled to develop his/her understanding, so that a change of behaviour or attitude is possible and rational, emotional and behavioural reactions which s/he triggers in other people should also be recognised, in order to be able to change them, if necessary. Client-centred counselling therefore aims at developing empathy for oneself and for other people, and is oriented towards longer term development

(Straumann 2004). The basic prerequisite for the counselling interview is that a positive counselling relationship can be established between the client and the counsellor, and it should be characterised by appreciation, recognition, acceptance and respect, so that trust develops between client and counsellor, and their relationship is one of equals. The method of conducting the conversation is not decisive, active listening, responding and reflecting content, paraphrasing and verbalising are presented as being supportive tactics (Hardeland 2014).

4.2.   Systemic coaching approach

In general systems theory, any social system can be defined as a "Insgesamt an Beziehungseinheiten (Elementen), die miteinander verknüpft sind [Total of relationship units (elements) that are linked to each other]" (Brunner 2004: 658).

Social systems consist of an interconnected network of relationships, so that those that are subjectively perceived are of interest. In systems theory, the influencing element of the relationship system in which the individual seeking advice is the most important. In this theory, the assumption is that the counsellor has no direct influence on the person seeking advice, as is the case in client centred counselling, and consequently, influence must be considered in the context of the structural coupling of systems (Brunner 2004). The counselling includes consideration of the learner's biography and his/her relationship with the social environment, especially with the family (Ludwig and Schramm 2012). The interrelationships between individuals in a system become visible via communication, according to the systemic consulting approach, so that the interpersonal communication structure is regarded as a starting point for a system theoretical approach. Communication processes are clarified and improved so that a change of perspective can be systematically practised by means of consultation. The systems are mutually and influentially interactive, so that a desire to effect change in one system, for instance the learning system, is only possible if the effect on the other systems is taken into consideration. Systemic counselling aims to enable the learner to recognise the systemic connections in

his/her life and environment, which is the sole basis for him/her to initiate change that is likely to be successful. The counsellor gives signals that could generate a change in the client's behaviour (Brunner 2004) and, which have a direct or indirect influence on the social relationship system that envelops him/her and evokes change in the entire system context (Hardeland 2014). In systemic consulting, it is important that the counsellor proceeds in a neutral manner, so that the counsellor has no preference for specific ideas or participants within the system, because resolving the problem solution can only take place within the system in which it occurs.

Another important feature of systemic counselling is that it is strongly solution oriented: "Es wird in Lösungen und nicht in Problemen gedacht [It is thought in solutions and not in problems]" (Jaehn-Niesert 2012: 114). No attributions of guilt are made, but structures and explanatory patterns are developed. In systemic consulting, a resource-oriented approach is needed, in other words it is assumed that the possible solution already exist in the system, but is not currently available because that the client is not aware of it. The purpose of the counselling process it to raise the client's awareness (Pätzold 2004). The client currently solves subjectively significant problems in a way that has negative side effects but, in order to reveal alternative possibilities, deep insight into the system is required, which can also be achieved by obtaining a detailed description of the client's past and present problems. Alternative patterns possible in the system that are currently unrecognised can only be found by describing a situation (Pätzold 2004). Circular work is also conducted, since the focus of interactions is communication. Jaehn-Niesert (2012:114) explains that action is always "Resultat eines vorausgehenden Handelns […] und gleichsam auf das neue Handeln reagiert wird [The result of a preceding action and related to the new action]".

4.3. Individual psychological coaching approach

The individual psychological counselling approach assumes that individuals struggle and exert themselves because they feel inferior, which is the driving force to achieve goals and to develop (Pätzold

2004). In contrast to the systemic approach, neutrality is not expected from the counsellor, who is able to emotionally strengthen the client, so that s/he can obtain an advantage over others. In individual psychological counselling, the client's life goals should be identified because s/he is not always conscious of them, in this context, misguided actions receive meaning when viewed from an external perspective. Clients are encouraged to take responsibility for the outcome of their (life) project and then to attribute the results to themselves (Reimann 1997). This includes the counsellor avoiding the offer of possible solutions because a solution may be useful from his/her perspective but may not be adopted by the client, since it is not appropriate to his/her specific situation, therefore, it is not a solution. However, if the client's situation suggests that this solution is appropriate, s/he is very likely to be able to find it without the counsellor's advice. If the counsellor introduces suggestions for solutions, which are inadequate for the client's situation, s/he promotes an unfavourable hierarchical divide between an expert, who can offer concepts, and an inferior patient, who is unable to accept them. A good example is written language deficits in adulthood, which can often be understood by a childhood learning block and, within the framework of individual psychological counselling, old patterns of action could be identified that would have been helpful in childhood, but do not lead to the desired goal in adulthood (uncovering the "inner logic" of those affected). On this basis, new patterns of action should be developed within the counselling session, which are better suited to the current learning problems (Tröster 2000).

4.4. Learning counselling and literacy

All three counselling approaches originate from psychotherapy, but were adapted for pedagogy and are also applied within learning counselling (Pätzold 2004). Learning support aims to help learners in foreign language learning, when the learner should take responsibility for his or her learning process. In learning counselling, the counsellor helps to determine the learner's learning goals and objectives, to select suitable learning strategies, and to evaluate results with the

learner; a major goal of learning counselling is the assumption of learner autonomy (Mehlhorn and Kleppin 2006).

In literacy and basic education work, there are also a few special features of learning counselling: counselling extends beyond pure learning counselling for the acquisition of written language and learning progress in the written language cannot be separated from a learner's personal development (Ludwig 2012). Learners often feel ashamed that they cannot read and write sufficiently well, despite attending school and the reasons frequently result from the lack of parental support, negative school experiences, possible trauma and fear of failure in written language situations (Grosche 2012). Feelings related to having been ignored and neglected, or of being regarded as a problem child, are also a childhood experiences that often occur in the biographical experiences of those affected by limited literacy. "Dieser Zusammenhang von funktionalem Analphabetismus und einer schwierigen Kindheit wurde auch in den zurückliegenden Alphauntersuchungen wiederholt festgestellt [This connection between functional illiteracy and a difficult childhood has also been repeatedly established in past alpha studies]" (Ludwig and Müller 2011: 35). Adults with limited literacy know that they have a deficit in reading and writing compared to other people, which does not correspond to societal norms, and their learning problems, some of which are biographically anchored, should be resolved by counselling interviews. Through counselling, the participants could "die Entstehung ihres negativen Selbstbildes im Laufe ihrer Lerngeschichte, ihre aktuelle Lebenssituation und die sich durch die Alphabetisierung ergebenden Veränderungen verstehen lernen und zu einem veränderten Selbstbild und neuer Handlungskompetenz gelangen" [Learn to understand the emergence of their negative self-image in the course of their learning history, their current life situation and the changes resulting from literacy. Counselling should help to arrive at a changed self-image and new competence to act]" (Fuchs-Brüninghoff 1991: 20).

There are also difficulties such as language, for example adults with limited literacy speak in colloquial language more often than in educational language. The counsellor needs to adapt to the client's language and must also notice and interpret non-verbal signals, since the ability low literalized people to express themselves verbally is

often limited. If the consultation does not succeed on a linguistic level, then it is of no value (Pätzold 2004).

The ability to reflect is usually not strongly pronounced in adults with limited literacy for instance: they find it difficult to reflect on internal and external learning conditions, to determine their learning goals and objectives, to select learning strategies and materials, and to evaluate their progress. Therefore, the counsellor must advise more directly than s/he would with clients of a higher educational level (Teepker 2015). In term of life goals, adults with limited literacy will be less likely to express what they wish to achieve in life and how this can be accomplished. Therefore, the need for learning guidance in the literacy field is particularly high, even if the added value of guidance is not always immediately recognisable, because this form of support is unknown. It is unusual for learners to be asked about learning initially, rather they are usually taught working methods and procedures on a direct basis.

5. Next steps

The first phase of the project, the data collection and evaluation, is almost complete and the second phase is beginning, this is the preparation of the training concepts, which form the theoretical basis for the consulting approaches, section 3.1. The training course theoretical development has not, so far, been particularly based on any of the three consulting approaches, therefore, it is likely that elements from all three approaches will be included. This strategy is supported by the fact that all three approaches have been successfully tested in alpha-betting projects. The *Deutscher Volkshochschul Verband* (DVV) learning counselling concept is an example of the procedure following individual psychological counselling and was guided by the feeling of inferiority, which is the focus of the individual psychological approach. The SeGel project of self-directed learning[10] investigated how the degree of self-management of institutional adult education services can be increased and how learning arrangements

---

[10] Online at: https://www.die-bonn.de/id/31915/about/html.

can be offered in which participants can learn more according to their individual needs. It is also oriented towards this approach.

The systemic counselling approach is also applicable to literacy work and is implemented by a team consisting of a course instructor and a counsellor, the literacy teacher is also advised regarding suitable pedagogy (Ludwig and Schramm 2012). The study conducted by Ludwig and Schramm (2012) shows that hypotheses are formed in case studies, which reflect the contributions of teachers and counsellors regarding difficulties low literalized people have in the course, and include their learning history. The focus is on questions that the participants ask, the reasons that prevent the learner from learning, the changes in the relationship environment and the perspective of life, which would result if the person seeking advice no longer had any problems with written language. The relief of individuals when they admit their problems in the presence of the closest reference persons in the process and in counselling interviews is emphasised by Jaehn-Niesert (2012), for example clients with their literate children, in the framework of Family Literacy (Jaehn-Niesert 2012 also Ludwig 2012).

In relation to the client centred approach, the University of Leipzig LeLeBe project is significant and has been published as "Learning Counselling for Participants in DaZ Literacy Courses" (Markov et al. 2015). However, this approach is also used in adult foreign language work as an integral part of language learning counselling. In the coming months, the final design of the training concept will be shared against the background of the current preparation of the training materials and a first test of these.

References

Brunner, Ewald. 2004. Systemische Beratung. In Frank Nestmann, Frank Engel und Ursel Sickendiek (Hrsg.), *Das Handbuch der Beratung. Ansätze, Methoden und Felder* (Band 2), 655-662. Tübingen: dgvt-Verlag.

Drecoll, Frank. 1981. Funktionaler Analphabetismus – Begriff, Erscheinungsbild, psycho-soziale Folgen und Bildungsinteressen. In Frank Drecoll, Ulrich Müller, (Hrsg.), *Für ein Recht auf Lesen. Analphabetismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 29-40. Frankfurt am Main.

Fuchs-Brüninghoff, Elisabeth. 1991. Personenbezogene Fortbildung für Beratungsaufgaben im Alphabetisierungsbereich. In Hans Tietgens (Hrsg.), *Forschung und Fortbildung,* 116-132. Bonn: DVV.

Grosche, Michael. 2012. *Analphabetismus und Lese-Rechtschreib-Schwächen. Beeinträchtigungen in der phonologischen Informationsverarbeitung als Ursache für funktionalen Analphabetismus im Erwachsenenalter.* Münster: Waxmann Verlag.

Grotlüschen, Anke and Wiebke Riekmann. 2011. Leo. – Level-One Studie. Literalität von Erwachsenen auf den unteren Kompetenzniveaus. Presseheft. https://alphabetisierung.de/fileadmin/files/Dateien/Downloads_Texte/leo-Presseheft-web.pdf

Hardeland, Hanna. 2014. *Lerncoaching und Lernberatung. Lernende in ihrem Lernprozess wirksam begleiten und unterstützen* (3. Auflage). Baltmannsweiler: Schneider-Verlag Hohengehren.

Jaehn-Niesert, Ute. 2012. Systemische Beratung von Lernenden. In Joachim Ludwig (Hrsg.). *Lernberatung und Diagnostik. Modelle und Handlungsempfehlungen für Grundbildung und Alphabetisierung*, 105-116. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Verlag.

Ludwig, Joachim. 2012. *Lernberatung und Diagnostik. Modelle und Handlungsempfehlungen für Grundbildung und Alphabetisierung*. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Verlag.

Ludwig, Joachim and Katja Müller. 2011. Lernen und Teilhabe – Ergebnisse aus dem Projekt SYLBE. In Projektträger im DLR e.V. (Hrsg.). *Zielgruppen in Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener. Bestimmung, Verortung, Ansprache,* 119-141. Bielefeld: WBV Verlag.

Ludwig, Joachim and Christin Schramm. 2012. Lernberatungsansätze und reflexionsfördernde Verfahren in der Alphabetisierung. In Joachim Ludwig, (Hrsg.). *Lernen und Lernberatung. Alphabetisierung als Herausforderung für die Erwachsenendidaktik.* Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Verlag.

Markov, Stefan, Christiane Scheithauer and Karen Schramm. 2015. Lernberatung für Teilnehmende in DaZ-Alphabetisierungskursen. Handreichung für Lernberatende und Lehrkräfte. Münster: Waxmann.

Mehlhorn, Grit and Karin Kleppin. 2006. Sprachlernberatung: Einführung in den Themenschwerpunkt. Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht. https://ojs.tujournals.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/index.php/zif/article/viewFile/365/354

Pätzold, Henning. 2004. Lernberatung und Erwachsenenbildung. Baltmannsweiler. Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.

Rechtien, Wolfgang. 2004. Beratung. Theorien, Modelle und Methoden (2. Auflage). München: Beck.

Reimann, Christine. 1997. Lernermutigung und Lernberatung beim Lesen- und Schreibenlernen im Anfangsunterricht der Schule. Frankfurt am Main: DIE.

Sander, Klaus. 2004. Personenzentrierte Beratung. In Frank Nestmann, Frank Engel und Ursel Sickendiek (Hrsg.), *Das Handbuch der Beratung. Disziplinen und Zugänge,* 331-344. Tübingen: dgvt-Verlag.

Schneider, Johanna, Ullrich Gintzel and Harald Wagner. 2008. Sozialintegrative Alphabetisierungsarbeit. Bildungs- und sozialpolitische sowie fachliche Herausforderungen. Münster: Waxmann.

Stauffacher, Verena. 1992. Lesen und Schreiben – ein Problem? Schule und funktionaler Analphabetismus. Luzern: Edition SZH.

Straumann, Ursula. 2004. Klientenzentrierte Beratung. In Frank Nestmann, Frank Engel und Ursel Sickendiek (Hrsg.), *Das Handbuch der Beratung. Ansätze, Methoden und Felder,* 641-653. Tübingen: dgvt-Verlag.

Thaller, Nicole. 2009. Ist selbst initiierter Wandel in Universitäten möglich? Das Beispiel der Promovierendenausbildung. München and Mering: Rainer Hampp Verlag.

Tröster, Monika. 2000. Lernberatung in der Alphabetisierung/Grundbildung. Zwischen brüchiger Tradition und neuen Herausforderungen. In Ekkehard Nuissl, Christiane Schiersmann and Horst Siebert (Hrsg.). *Beratung. Literatur- und Forschungsreport Weiterbildung.* Nr. 46, 127-133. Bielefeld: WBV Verlag.

Appendix. Interviewleitfaden für Berater*innen

1. In welchen **Bereich**(en) beraten Sie Beratungssuchende?
2. **Seit wann** beraten Sie bereits? Seit wann in diesem Feld?
3. Was haben Sie **gelernt/studiert**?
   (inhaltliche Schwerpunkte + Fortbildungen zum Fach oder zu Beratung?)
4. **Wie viele** Beratungen finden ca. pro Woche statt?
5. **Wie verläuft** eine Beratung in Ihrem Bereich üblicherweise?
   (Anzahl der Sitzungen, Ort, einzeln/Gruppen, Ziele, Direktivität, Methoden)
6. Welche **Muttersprachen** bringen die Beratungssuchenden mit?
   (Welche sind die häufigsten? Welches Sprachniveau? Nutzen Sie Dolmetscher?)
7. Geben Sie **Material** bei der Beratung aus oder bringen die Beratungssuchenden Material mit? Verschriftlichen Sie Informationen?
   (Formulare, Broschüren etc.)
8. Welche Ihrer **Kompetenzen** erachten Sie in Ihrem Bereich als besonders wichtig/hilfreich?
9. Haben Sie Klienten mit **Alphabetisierungsbedarf** in Ihren Beratungen?
10. **Woran erkennen** Sie Alpha-Bedarf bei Beratungssuchenden?
11. **Wie gehen Sie vor**, wenn Sie Alpha-Bedarf erkennen?
12. Nutzen Sie bestimmte **Materialien**, wenn Sie einen Verdacht auf **Alpha-Bedarf** haben?
13. Würden Sie sich **Unterstützung wünschen**, Alpha-Bedarf zu erkennen? Wenn ja, in welcher Form?
14. Würden Sie sich **Materialien wünschen**, die Sie bei Ihrer Beratung für Klienten mit **Alphabedarf** einsetzen könnten?
    Wenn ja, welche Materia

Acquisition of writing skills
by adult migrant learners of Spanish

Javier Chao García – Irini Mavrou

The aim of the study was to identify the most common error types and spelling strategies in the written productions of 43 adult migrant learners of Spanish who took the Diploma LETRA exam. The results showed a clear prevalence of morphostructural errors and of phonetic and phonemic strategies. Length of stay in Spain was negatively correlated with the number of morphostructural errors and the number of words, while age was positively correlated with the number of morphostructural and total errors. Neither gender nor education level in the first language appeared to have an influence on the linguistic variables of the study.

Keywords: literacy, migrants, spelling strategies, writing errors, Diploma LETRA.

1. Introduction[1]

The acquisition of literacy skills in a second language (L2) is a challenging task for many migrant learners. This is probably due to the lower priority given to written expression within the communicative approaches of L2 teaching and learning, as well as to the fact that many migrants – especially those with a low or incomplete education level in their first language (L1) – might lack sufficient motivation to improve their literacy skills in the language of the host country.

The concepts of social identity, investment and relations of power also come into play when we try to understand the process of language acquisition in migration contexts (Norton Peirce 1995, 2000). For instance, the effort invested in learning the target language is related to the expected outcomes and benefits and is closely connected to learners' social identity. As Norton Peirce explains (1995: 18), the exchange of information in the target language implies

that L2 learners "are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world". Moreover, inequitable relations of power are often the reason why many migrants hesitate to practice the target language outside the classroom or with fluent native speakers (Norton Peirce 1995, 2000).

Although the above arguments mainly apply to L2 oral production, they can easily be extended to writing and literacy practices in general. Writing is a key element for everyday transactions that migrants have to carry out in order to find a job and be adequately integrated into the receiving societies (home, workplace, target language community, etc.). Therefore, reaching a minimum level of writing competence in the target language becomes not only an obvious need for this population but also a worthwhile investment for their personal and professional growth.

However, writing also differs from oral production in many aspects: purpose, planning, goals, rhetorical resources (Hayes and Flower 1980). Berninger (1994) established a distinction between text generation processes and low-level processes related to orthography and spelling, with the latter representing one of the most visible idiosyncrasies of written language. Spelling acquisition in alphabetical scripts has been viewed as a succession of developmental stages characterised by certain types of strategies (Bear and Templeton 1998; Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982; Gentry 1982; Henderson and Templeton 1986; Kurvers and Ketelaars 2011). Although spelling acquisition and first contact with literacy in migration contexts have been the focus of a growing number of studies, especially within the LESLLA (*Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults*) framework (van de Craats et al. 2006), very little is known about the acquisition of L2 writing skills by migrant learners who have already mastered writing skills in their L1.

Based on the above ideas, the aim of the current study was twofold: first, to identify the most common error types and spelling strategies in the written productions of a group of migrant learners of Spanish with varied educational backgrounds; and second, to examine whether gender, age, education level, length of stay in Spain, and duration of Spanish language courses had an influence on the number of errors, words, and spelling strategies.

2. Literacy

Broadly speaking, the term *literacy* refers to all language activities related to written texts. Images, mathematical symbols, multimodal texts, and technological system management are also seen as important aspects of individuals' literacy skills. Therefore, literacy should be conceptualised from a more dynamic viewpoint in order to take into account its evolution over time. According to UNESCO (2004: 13):

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.

Consequently, literacy is linked to several and, sometimes, quite different domains including cultural, historical, linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic spheres (UNESCO 2004), as well as executive, functional, instrumental, and epistemic ones (Wells 1987).

Literacy is also related to genre-specific knowledge. Discourse genres determine the ways in which the linguistic elements should be combined and used in specific communicative situations (Bajtin 1982). They represent complex and necessary solutions to deal with these situations (Günthner and Knoblauch 1995: 8). Therefore, it is important to understand how discourse genres are organised, what their formal features are, how these features vary depending on the situational or communicative context, as well as discourse genres' macrostructure (semantic content, global meaning) and superstructure (formal scheme) (van Dijk 1978). All of these interrelated concepts illustrate that rather than just a mental cognitive task, literacy is a social activity which arises within the society we live in and depends on pre-established sociocultural parameters (Cassany 2009: 23).

Drawing on literacy's sociocultural dimension, some authors (Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz 1981; Ong 2002) proposed a distinction between oral-alphabetised and written societies. It has been argued that such societies have an influence on individuals' ability to engage in and successfully carry out literacy tasks, since each society

promotes skills development in different ways (e.g. oral societies place emphasis on memorisation as opposed to abstraction, analysis, and reasoning in written societies).

However, this position has been challenged by Scribner and Cole (1978: 22), who claimed that:

There is no basis for assuming, without further evidence, that the individual child, born into a society in which uses of literacy have been highly elaborated, must personally engage in writing operations in order to develop "literate modes of thought". That *may* be the case, but it requires proof, not simply extrapolation from cultural-historical studies.

The authors conducted a study with the Vai in Liberia, who use a phonetic writing system that comprises a limited number of characters and is acquired outside of instructional settings, without teaching materials and on the basis of memorisation and reading practices. This writing system coexists with two other scripts, the Arabic and the Roman alphabets. Although they did not find differences in performance on logical and classificatory tasks between non-schooled literates and non-literates, literates outperformed non-literates in communication, memory, and language analytical tasks, leading the authors to the conclusion that "literacy-without-schooling is associated with improved performance on certain cognitive tasks" (Scribner and Cole 1978: 35). It is also important to acknowledge that the term literacy *in plural* is becoming increasingly popular. The notions of *literacies* or *multiliteracies*, as suggested by Cope and Kalantzis (2009), go beyond the traditional emphasis on alphabetical literacy and highlight the wide range of phenomena related to multilingualism, different modes of conveying meaning (i.e. verbal, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, tactile) and different communication strategies. From this perspective, one of the main goals of multiliteracies pedagogy is to create the conditions for learning that allow individuals to be "comfortable with themselves as well as being flexible enough to collaborate and negotiate with others who are different from themselves in order to forge a common interest" (Cope and Kalantzis 2009: 174).

3. Writing

Writing is one of the most complex language skills, learned and mastered by a reduced number of people globally and used only occasionally in many cases (Cassany 2004). The acquisition of writing skills is influenced by diverse sociodemographic, sociocultural and psycholinguistic variables, although certain factors, such as phonemic awareness, appear to have a significant impact on writing development. Phonemic awareness is directly related to the *alphabetic principle*, that is, the letter-sound correspondence. This correspondence is found in languages that use alphabetic writing scripts (e.g. European languages), while it is not applicable to either ideographic (Chinese) or abjad (Arabic) writing systems. It has been suggested that word recognition goes through different stages that influence reading comprehension (Boon 2014; Boon and Kurvers 2008; Kurvers 2007). These stages are characterised by the use of increasingly refined decoding strategies that become more sophisticated as linguistic competence increases (i.e. visual recognition, letter naming, letter decoding, partial decoding, and direct word-recognition).

Writing development is also linked to the notions of *invented writing* and *invented spelling*, which are manifested in the use of non-conventional elements such as drawings, scribbles or any other incorrectly employed writing symbol. According to Hofslundsengen et al. (2016), these terms could also be used interchangeably in order to address the issue of invented spelling in a more general sense. Invented spelling is a common feature of *emergent writing*, that is, the gradual development of the ability to understand and use writing and orthography as a means of representing oral language (Kurvers and Ketelaars 2011: 49). Emergent writing is subject to certain developmental stages that have been defined based on different criteria (Bear and Templeton 1998; Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982; Gentry 1982, 2000; Kurvers and Ketelaars 2011). Focusing on adult learners with low literacy skills (LESLLA), Kurvers and Ketelaars (2011: 50) made the following remark: "Unlike young children, adult non-literates will not easily take a pen and pretend they are writing when asked to do so. Nevertheless, if they do, their early writings can be analysed using the developmental features brought forward by

Gibson and Levin (1976), Gentry (1982) and Tolchinsky (2003)".
Indeed, methodology used in children's literacy acquisition research
has recently been applied to low-literate learners, demonstrating a
considerable qualitative leap in L2 acquisition by migrants. Drawing
on the results of their study with low-literate participants and inspired
by the proposals of Gentry (1982) and Henderson and Templeton
(1986), Kurvers and Ketelaars (2011) identified five types of writing
strategies: pre-phonetic strategies, semi-phonetic strategies, phonetic
strategies, phonemic strategies, and conventional writing. Moreover,
their findings showed a correspondence between these types of
strategies and literacy level, supporting the idea that writing
comprises several developmental stages, which are characterised by
the prevalence of a certain type of strategy. Boon (2014) obtained
similar results in her study on the acquisition of writing competence in
Tetum L2 by low-literate learners, although she did not include
phonemic strategies within her classification of writing strategies.
Lastly, it is worth mentioning that research in the field of literacy
development has predominantly focused on pre-school, primary and
secondary – both L1 and L2 – learners, as well as on highly literate
adult L2 learners. Studies examining literacy acquisition among low-
literate migrants have been practically null (van de Craats et al. 2006:
8) and the same applies to adult migrants with varied educational
backgrounds. Although a shift of interest has been recently observed,
writing has still received minimal attention from researchers with few
exceptions (Boon 2014; Kurvers and Ketelaars 2011).

4. Method

4.1. Participants

The written corpus was derived from 43 migrants, 18 males and 25
females, aged between 16 and 63 ($M = 34.26, SD = 11.71$), who
attended the 5th edition of the Diploma LETRA examination (see
Section 4.2) held in Madrid on the 28th and 29th of May 2016. Among
the participants, 20 were from Romania, 11 were from Cameroon, and
the remaining 12 participants were from Nigeria. It is important to
note that there was considerable variability regarding participants'

education level and the amount of time they had lived in Spain ranging from some months to 18 years ($M = 6.98$, $SD = 6.01$). Eleven participants had a university degree, 8 had obtained a vocational degree, 5 had stopped their studies after high school (12 years of schooling), 16 after secondary education and 3 after primary education (10 and 6 years of schooling, respectively). Education level was established according to the information provided by the participants during registration on the day of the exam.

4.2. Instruments

The Diploma LETRA (*Lengua Española para Trabajadores Inmigrantes* 'Spanish Language for Migrant Workers') is a language proficiency test addressed to migrants whose linguistic competence in Spanish is equivalent to the A2-n level. This level is somewhat lower than the A2 level established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001). According to the CEFR, a learner at the A2 level:

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. (Council of Europe 2001: 24)

Since the purpose of the exam is to assess migrants' communicative ability to carry out everyday transactions related to public and professional domains, grammar correctness criteria are relatively flexible (Baralo 2012). The Diploma LETRA comprises four sections: reading comprehension, audiovisual comprehension, oral expression and interaction, and written expression and interaction. The data collected and analysed for the present study belong to the writing section of the exam (only Tasks 2 and 3). This section consists of three tasks and has a total duration of 20 minutes. In Task 1, candidates must fill in a form with personal information. In Task 2, they have to write a short essay in reply to an advertisement of a good

or a service from the public or personal domains, while in Task 3 candidates must respond to an email (e.g. accept or reject an invitation). Two independent raters assess candidates' performance in Tasks 2 and 3 using both a holistic and an analytic rubric. The holistic rubric gauges communicative effectiveness, legibility, and linguistic competence related to vocabulary and grammar. The analytic rubric includes the following descriptors: global expression and interaction, organisation and discourse cohesion and coherence, sociopragmatic competence, vocabulary accuracy and control, grammatical accuracy and control, and spelling skills (Baralo 2012: 20-22).

4.3. Procedure

4.3.1. Error analysis

Errors were classified into four categories: spelling errors, segmentation errors, grammatical errors, and lexical errors. Whereas grammatical and lexical errors reflect global linguistic deficiencies or lack of knowledge and are common in both L2 oral and written production, spelling errors indicate problems related to the graphic representation of the target language; thus, they provide a more reliable index of literacy development. Classifying errors into the abovementioned categories proved to be a difficult task due to several reasons. First, some errors seemed to be mere lapses or accidental errors (e.g. words written both correctly and incorrectly by the same participant). Second, the boundaries between error categories were often blurred. For example, it was difficult to determine whether common errors in the use of the Spanish pronouns *mí* and *me* were related to phonological difficulties (i.e. inability to perceive the difference between *i* and *e*) or to linguistic deficits (i.e. incomplete knowledge regarding the syntactic function of these pronouns). Third, as letter and word deletions were quite frequent in the written corpus, it was not always possible to establish which element(s) corresponded to the participants' final version. In these cases, only the letter or word for which the printed intensity in the original exam seemed greater was considered. Moreover, the number of errors was partially determined by the inferences that had to be made regarding

participants' communicative intention. For example, in the sentence *busca un camarero* ('we are looking for a waiter'), both *se busca* (impersonal form of the verb *buscar* which means 'look for') and *busco* (first person present tense of the verb *buscar*) would have been grammatically correct and acceptable. However, such errors were primarily grammar errors; in other words, the error would always have been counted as grammatical regardless of whether it was structural (*se busca*) or morphological (*busco*).

Another difficulty we had to deal with concerned the presence of different types of errors within the same word. We decided to count only one error in the following cases: letter reversal or transposition (*nesecitar* [*necesitar* 'to need'], *trajabar* [*trabajar* 'to work'], etc.); use of apostrophe between the definite article and the noun (*s'enteresa* [*te interesa* 'you are interested']); agreement errors (*la *otra país* [*el otro país* 'the other country']); homophonic forms (*haber* [*a ver* 'let's see']); chunks usually acquired as a whole, especially by learners of Spanish at an elementary level (*magustado* [*me ha gustado* 'I liked it']); and word omissions. On the other hand, names and personal information, capitalisation errors, use of dots instead of spaces between words, merged words, and punctuation marks were not taken into account. Moreover, omissions of articles and prepositions in Task 2 (job advertisement) were not counted, as long as they did not affect global coherence and would have been considered acceptable when replying to a job advertisement.

4.3.2. Spelling strategies

Drawing on previous research on emergent writing (Boon 2014; Kurvers and Ketelaars 2011), we attempted to identify, completely or partially, the same spelling strategies and establish a possible link between these strategies and writing development beyond emergent writing. To this end, both transcriptions and original written productions were used, whereas error analysis described in Section 4.3.1 proved to be particularly useful in identifying any strategies other than conventional writing. When different strategies were detected within the same word (e.g. *empesa* [*empieza* 'it starts'] includes a phonetic strategy – the omission of /i/ – and a phonemic

one – the use of *s* for *z*), only the more elementary spelling strategy was taken into account (the phonetic strategy in the above example).

4.3.3. Word counting

Word counting was also a difficult task, especially because of the irregular handwriting demonstrated by many participants. In addition, some lexical elements appeared to be superfluous when measuring text length or written fluency. For instance, the fact that migrants are able to write – correctly or incorrectly – their name and surname does not necessarily mean that they are more fluent in the target language. Thus, names and surnames were deemed as one single lexical unit. The same counting process was applied in the case of nicknames, contact or telephone numbers, emails, postal addresses, dates, abbreviated elements, words containing slashes (**dependentista/o* [*dependiente* 'shop assistant']) or split by a hyphen (**nueve-cientos* [*novecientos* 'nine hundred']), any amount of money expressed in euros, and illegible words or chunks.

On the other hand, segmentation errors did not affect word counting (e.g. **alas cuatro* [*a las cuatro* 'at four o'clock'] was counted as three words). Words such as *teléfono* ('telephone') or *tfn* ('tel.') before contact numbers were counted as one single word, while non-lexical elements (bullets, emoticons, signatures) were discarded from word counting. We also observed that many participants copied and used part of the writing instructions in their texts, which in turn might have resulted in a higher degree of linguistic accuracy or fluency. However, we opted to count these words as it seemed quite difficult to determine the boundaries for what constituted a copied or genuine written production.

5. Results

5.1. Error analysis and spelling strategies

Qualitative analysis of written productions yielded the following error categories:

1. Spelling errors: strictly spelling errors without considering punctuation marks, letter capitalisation, word separation, etc. (e.g. *experencia [experiencia 'experience'], *hornada [jornada 'working day'], *traier [traer 'bring'], *nesesita [necesita 'he/she needs'], etc.). Within this category, we observed errors not attributable to poor spelling skills but rather to circumstantial factors, such as poor handwriting, lapsus or calligraphic errors. For example, in Task 2 candidate 006 wrote *ne instead of me, while she used the pronoun me correctly in other parts of her written discourse and demonstrated a clear ability to differentiate between n and m.

2. Segmentation errors: errors derived from the incorrect union or separation of two or more words (e.g. *voya [voy a 'I'm going to'], *auna [a una 'to one'], *acer [a ser 'to be'], *alado [al lado 'next to'], *seis cientos [seiscientos 'six hundred'], *invita me [invítame 'invite me'], etc.). We decided to include this category because of the difficulty in determining whether these errors resulted from poor spelling skills or the lack of vocabulary knowledge.

3. Morphostructural errors: errors related to syntactic and morphological aspects of Spanish as illustrated by the following examples: *quirero [quiero 'I want'], me *encantate [me encanta 'I love it'], *buenos tardes [buenas tardes 'good afternoon'], etc. It should be noted that syntactic errors mainly concerned prepositions (e.g. voy *invitar [voy a invitar 'I am going to invite'], diez *por la noche [diez de la noche 'ten o'clock at night'], etc.).

4. Lexical errors: errors in the choice of words (e.g. *suelo ['ground', instead of sueldo 'salary'], *preció ['price', instead of sueldo 'salary'], coche con mucho *lugar ['place', instead of espacio 'space'], etc.), omission of lexical elements (e.g. fiesta de *curso ['school year party', instead of fiesta de fin de curso 'end of school year party']), and language interferences (e.g., el *dominiu [sector 'sector, area'], *ball [pelota 'ball'], etc.).

With respect to spelling strategies, conventional writing clearly prevailed, followed by phonetic and phonemic strategies. No pre-phonetic strategies were found, while only one participant used a semi-phonetic strategy (*war [voy a 'I'm going to']). Features of phonetic and phonemic strategies were similar to those described by Kurvers and Ketelaars (2011). Regarding the former category, the phonetic structure of the word can be clearly identified but with errors in the use of its graphemes such as omissions (e.g. me *encata [me

encanta 'I love it'], **crso* [*curso* 'course'], **indefindo* [*indefinido* 'indefinite'], **nuesta* [*nuestra* 'our'], **compañante* [*acompañante* 'companion']), addition of redundant graphemes (e.g. **traier* [*traer* 'bring'], **contracto* [*contrato* 'contract']), and incorrect graphemes (e.g. **gustiria* [*gustaría* 'would like'], **guidad* [*cuidar* 'look after'], **quire* [*quise* 'I wanted']). On the other hand, the use of phonemic strategies shows that writers are aware of the phonemic structure of the word despite being unable to spell it correctly. In the present study, most confusions concerned the choice of graphemes such as *o/u, e/i, n/ñ/m* (**mananas* [*mañanas* 'mornings'], **tenporal* [*temporal* 'temporary']), *c/q/k* (**quarto* [*cuatro* 'four']), *d/t* (**posibilitades* [*posibilidades* 'possibilities']), *ch/c/s* (**nesesario* [*necesario* 'necessary']), *z/s* (**tailandeza* [*tailandesa* 'Thai']), *j/h* (**hornada* [*jornada* 'working day']), *s/x/z* (**escusas* [*excusas* 'excuses'], **hofresco* [*ofrezco* 'I offer']), and the use of *ni* or *ñi* instead of the Spanish letter *ñ* (**niñio* [*niño* 'kid'], **mañiana* [*mañana* 'tomorrow, morning']). Also frequent were the omission of the Spanish silent letter *h* (**orario* [*horario* 'schedule, timetable'], **asta* [*hasta* 'until']) and the use of double-letter words (**marrido* [*marido* 'husband'], **mess* [*mes* 'month']). This type of strategy also included words spelled incorrectly probably because of the influence of certain Spanish dialects (e.g. the omission of *-s* at the end of words).

5.2. Determining factors of writing skills

Based on the qualitative analysis described in Section 5.1, we conducted several quantitative analyses in order to determine the influence of certain individual and sociodemographic variables on writing errors and spelling strategies. Table 1 summarises the descriptive statistics for the following variables: participants' age; length of stay in Spain measured in years (LSS); duration of Spanish language courses (DSLC); number of words used in Task 2 (T2WORDS) and Task 3 (T3WORDS) of the writing section of the Diploma LETRA; number of spelling (SPEL), morphostructural (MORPH), lexical (LEX), and total errors (TOTAL) in each task; total number of errors in both tasks (T2T3TOTAL); and number of

phonetic (PHONETIC) and phonemic (PHONEMIC) strategies in each task.

	COUNTRY	MEAN	SD
Age	Romania	34.85	13.93
	Nigeria	37.25	6.80
	Cameroon	29.91	11.11
	Total	34.26	11.71
LSS	Romania	7.90	6.04
	Nigeria	9.75	6.43
	Cameroon	2.27	1.27
	Total	6.98	6.01
DSLC	Romania	7.50	6.18
	Nigeria	6.08	6.60
	Cameroon	2.45	2.21
	Total	5.81	5.84
T2WORDS	Romania	36.35	13.80
	Nigeria	35.75	12.54
	Cameroon	40.18	10.09
	Total	37.16	12.44
T2SPEL	Romania	1.50	2.04
	Nigeria	3.08	2.81
	Cameroon	2.27	2.57
	Total	2.14	2.45
T2MORPH	Romania	2.20	2.38
	Nigeria	3.83	3.54
	Cameroon	3.45	2.21
	Total	2.98	2.75
T2LEX	Romania	0.20	0.41
	Nigeria	0.50	0.67
	Cameroon	0.55	1.21
	Total	0.37	0.76
T2TOTAL	Romania	3.90	3.84
	Nigeria	7.42	5.66
	Cameroon	6.27	5.08
	Total	5.49	4.86
T3WORDS	Romania	33.85	9.52
	Nigeria	28.50	11.76
	Cameroon	37.91	10.63
	Total	33.40	10.79
T3SPEL	Romania	1.15	1.53
	Nigeria	1.75	2.01
	Cameroon	1.09	1.92
	Total	1.30	1.75
T3MORPH	Romania	1.95	2.16
	Nigeria	3.08	2.43

	Cameroon	3.18	4.07
	Total	2.58	2.82
T3LEX	Romania	0.10	0.45
	Nigeria	0.17	0.39
	Cameroon	0.64	1.29
	Total	0.26	0.76
T3TOTAL	Romania	3.20	3.02
	Nigeria	5.00	3.91
	Cameroon	4.91	5.77
	Total	4.14	4.10
T2T3TOTAL	Romania	7.10	6.48
	Nigeria	12.42	7.74
	Cameroon	11.18	9.74
	Total	9.62	7.95
T2PHONETIC	Romania	0.55	0.89
	Nigeria	1.75	1.91
	Cameroon	1.36	1.63
	Total	1.09	1.49
T2PHONEMIC	Romania	0.75	1.02
	Nigeria	1.25	1.71
	Cameroon	0.36	0.67
	Total	0.79	1.21
T3PHONETIC	Romania	0.50	0.69
	Nigeria	1.17	1.47
	Cameroon	0.73	1.49
	Total	0.74	1.18
T3PHONEMIC	Romania	0.65	1.04
	Nigeria	0.25	0.45
	Cameroon	0.27	0.47
	Total	0.44	0.80

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed in order to examine the relation between the variables of the study (Table 2). The results showed negative and statistically significant correlations between length of stay in Spain, on the one hand, and the number of morphostructural errors in Task 2 ($r = -.333$, $p = .029$) and the number of words in Task 3 ($r = -.363$, $p = .017$), on the other. The same pattern of correlations was obtained with respect to the duration of Spanish language courses: participants who spent more years studying Spanish made fewer morphostructural errors in Task 2 ($r = -.390$, $p = .010$) and wrote shorter essays in Task 3 ($r = -.319$, $p = .037$). Age was positively correlated with the number of morphostructural errors and the total number of errors in Task 3 ($r = .322$, $p = .035$, and $r =$

.340, p = .026, respectively) and presented moderately low correlations with the number of spelling errors (r = .272, p = .077) and phonetic strategies in Task 3 (r = .268, p = .083), though the latter correlations were not statistically significant at the .05 level.

	Age	LSS	DSLC
T2WORDS	-.046	-.277	-.085
T2SPEL	.245	-.027	-.078
T2MORPH	-.009	-.333[*]	-.390[*]
T2LEX	.024	-.113	-.092
T2TOTAL	.122	-.220	-.274
T3WORDS	.137	-.363[*]	-.319[*]
T3SPEL	.272	-.185	-.238
T3MORPH	.322[*]	-.067	-.162
T3LEX	.011	-.155	-.150
T3TOTAL	.340[*]	-.153	-.241
T2T3TOTAL	.250	-.214	.119
T2PHONETIC	.166	-.093	-.178
T2PHONEMIC	.250	.131	.072
T3PHONETIC	.268	-.119	-.139
T3PHONEMIC	.128	-.267	-.243

Table 2. Correlations between age, length of stay in Spain, duration of Spanish language courses and linguistic aspects of written production.

To examine whether participants' gender had an influence on the linguistic variables of the study (words, errors, and spelling strategies) we ran a series of independent samples t-tests. As shown in Table 3, there were no statistically significant differences between male and female participants in the number of errors, words, and strategies they employed in Tasks 2 and 3.

Finally, an analysis of variance in years of formal education was carried out, for which 3 groups were established due to the small sample size: participants with low education level (primary and secondary education), participants who attended high school or vocational training programmes, and those who attended university. As can be seen in Table 4, there were no statistically significant differences, except for the number of words used in Task 3, as texts produced by tertiary education participants were longer ($F(2,40)$ = 3.862, p = .029).

	t	Sig.
T2WORDS	1.252	.218
T3WORDS	1.357	.182
T2TOTAL	1.566	.125
T3TOTAL	0.863	.393
T2T3TOTAL	1.405	.168
T2PHONETIC	1.106	.275
T2PHONEMIC	0.965	.340
T3PHONETIC	- 0.625	.536
T3PHONEMIC	- 0.366	.716

Table 3. Gender differences in linguistic aspects of written production**.**

	F	Sig.
T2WORDS	1.684	.199
T2TOTAL	0.247	.782
T3WORDS	3.862	.029
T3TOTAL	0.558	.577
T2T3TOTAL	0.432	.652
T2PHONETIC	0.247	.782
T2PHONEMIC	0.108	.898
T3PHONETIC	0.027	.974
T3PHONEMIC	1.656	.204

Table 4. Influence of education on the linguistic aspects of written production.

6. Discussion

The present study aimed to identify the most common error types and spelling strategies in the written productions of a group of adult migrant learners of Spanish. Moreover, it sought to determine whether certain individual and sociodemographic variables had an influence on these errors and strategies.

Qualitative analysis yielded four categories of writing errors: spelling, segmentation, morphostructural, and lexical errors. These categories provide a clear picture of the kind of difficulties adult migrant learners of Spanish have to face while engaging in writing tasks with a communicative purpose (for similar results, see Chireac 2010; El-Madkouri Maataoui and Soto Aranda 2009; Mavrou and Santos-Sopena 2018a, 2018b). Although the present study did not attempt to examine the influence of L1 on interlanguage nor to

establish categories for specific error types, it provides descriptive and complementary information regarding the typology of the most frequent errors in a quite challenging context for migrant learners of Spanish (i.e. language proficiency examination). In addition, the clear prevalence of morphostructural errors in our corpus highlights the need to reinforce these aspects in the L2 classroom and eventually help migrant learners of Spanish achieve higher success rates in exams similar to the Diploma LETRA.

Regarding literacy strategies, we did not observe all developmental stages of literacy acquisition identified by other researchers (Boon 2014; Kurvers and Ketelaars 2011). These discrepancies may be attributable to methodological differences related to the research context, tasks, and migrants' linguistic background. For instance, the Diploma LETRA certifies a basic knowledge of the Spanish language (close to an A2 level).

Moreover, in our study both low- and high-literate learners coexist. In other words, contrary to previous studies that focused on learners who had a low level of linguistic competence in the target language, many participants of the present study had a relatively high degree of literacy in their L1. In the former case, it seems easier to observe the acquisition of the alphabetic principle, that is, the correspondence between phonemes and graphemes, which is reflected in the use of pre-phonetic and semi-phonetic strategies, rather than in phonetic and phonemic ones. Further, previous studies used dictation tasks and participants had to transcribe specific words. In the current study, however, participants had to carry out semi-open writing tasks, which promote the use of specific strategies when it comes to the choice (or avoidance) of certain words and grammatical structures.

As for the results yielded by quantitative analysis, they were complex and quite varied. Older participants tended to make more morphostructural errors in Task 3. This finding is congruent with previous studies that focused on both oral (Mavrou and Santos-Sopena 2018a, 2018b) and written production (Condelli and Wrigley 2006) of migrant L2 learners and could be attributable to either certain abilities that usually decline with advanced age or the fact that older migrants might be less motivated to learn the language of the host country or might believe that it is too late to invest in learning to write

in an L2 (for similar results, see also Huguet et al. 2007; Kurvers 2015; Kurvers et al. 2010; Mavrou and Doquin de Saint Preux 2017).

Age was also correlated with the number of phonetic strategies in Task 3. Although this correlation failed to reach statistical significance, it might indicate that older migrant learners tended to use more *basic* strategies. However, it is also possible that educational background exerted some influence on the abovementioned relationship. In other words, older participants probably used fewer conventional writing strategies not because of their age, but rather because of their lower education level. Future studies with larger sample sizes should try to elucidate this issue.

Length of stay in Spain was negatively correlated with the number of morphostructural errors in Task 2 and the number of words in Task 3. There is compelling evidence suggesting that length of stay in the host country enhances migrants' communicative competence in the target language. Studies that corroborate this relationship include those of Roesler (2007) carried out with 11 Romanian learners of Spanish, Oller and Vila (2011) with Romanian and Arabic migrant learners of Spanish and Catalan, and Mavrou and Santos-Sopena (2018b), who also found a negative correlation between length of stay in Spain and the number of errors made by Romanian and Portuguese migrants in the oral section of the Diploma LETRA (see also Huguet et al. 2007; Kurvers et al. 2010; Kurvers and van de Craats 2007).

A similar pattern of results was obtained with respect to the duration of Spanish language courses, that is, participants who had spent more time studying Spanish made fewer morphostructural errors in Task 2 and wrote shorter essays in Task 3. Kurvers (2015) observed that class attendance rate and time spent on self-study turned out to be strong determining factors of the writing competence of migrant learners of Dutch L2. Therefore, the results of the present study seem to suggest that L2 class attendance rate might have a positive impact at least on particular linguistic dimensions such as accuracy among migrant learners of Spanish.

Lastly, neither gender nor education level appeared to have an influence on writing errors and strategies. However, participants who attended university wrote longer essays in Task 3. Empirical evidence on migrant populations suggests that literacy level in the L1 plays a key role in the development of linguistic competence in the target

language (van de Craats et al. 2006). On the other hand, oral competence seems to be more influenced by variables such as immersion experiences, length of stay in the host country, and the amount of interaction with native speakers (Cummins 2001; Mavrou and Doquin de Saint Preux 2017). Therefore, the lack of statistically significant results could be attributable to the limited sample size and the fact that the education level of the majority of our participants was above primary education.

7. Conclusions

Language, migration, and literacy are interconnected and mutually influential concepts. Migration is a growing phenomenon that influences our lives; it is a reality that requires the conjoint collaboration of all implicated agents, the acceptance of diversity, and equal opportunities for all (Pujol Berché 2009). Decisions to migrate to a different country – if migration movements are to be successful – imply decisions related to language (Moreno Fernández 2009: 139). However, such decisions are not always viable and, sometimes, not even an option. Migration decision-making is also determined by factors such as employment opportunities, admission requirements, and possibilities of permanence and citizenship in the receiving country, among others (Otero Roth 2011). Whatever the case, the transition from a certain degree of stability (at least when migration is an option, rather than a forced decision) to the rapid integration into the host society and labour market may entail a significant culture, linguistic or self-identity shock.

Since literacy is a key element in enabling migrants to feel like and participate as full members in the receiving society and to avoid discrimination, we would like to highlight the importance of consolidating literacy-related contents within the teaching of Spanish L2 for migrants. In order to pursue such a goal, a formally established educational framework is required, which will necessarily imply new governmental policies regarding the allocation of funds and resources for the implementation of a specific curriculum for the teaching of Spanish for migrant learners.

References

Bajtin, Mikhail M. 1982. *Estética de la creación verbal*, 10th edn. México: Siglo XXI.

Baralo, Marta. 2012. Diseño de certificación lingüística comunicativa: ¿cómo evaluar la expresión e interacción escritas y orales? *Revista Internacional de Lenguas Extranjeras* 1: 11-30. https://bit.ly/2RvHG1u

Bear, Donald and Shane Templeton. 1998. Explorations in developmental spelling: Foundations for learning and teaching phonics, spelling, and vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher* 52(3): 222-242. https://bit.ly/2Ppgpf4

Berninger, Virginia W. 1994. *Reading and writing acquisition: A developmental neuropsychological perspective*. Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark.

Boon, Danielle A. B. 2014. *Adult literacy education in a multilingual context: Teaching, learning and using written language in Timor-Leste*. Tilburg: University of Tilburg dissertation.

Boon, Danielle A. B. and Jeanne Kurvers. 2008. Learning to read in Portuguese in East Timor: Strategies of adult literacy learners. In Martha Young-Scholten (ed.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Research, policy, and practice. Proceedings of the Third Annual Forum, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, England, September 2007*, 75-90. Durham: Roundtuit Publishing.

Cassany, Daniel. 2009. Leer, comprender e interpretar en EFE en línea. In Agustín Vera Luján and Inmaculada Martínez Martínez (eds.), *El español en contextos específicos: enseñanza e investigación* (Vol. 23), 19-39. Comillas: Fundación Comillas.

Cassany, Daniel. 2004. La expresión escrita. In Jesús Sánchez Lobato and Isabel Santos Gargallo (eds.), *Vademécum para la formación de profesores. Enseñar español como segunda lengua (L2)/lengua extranjera (LE),* 917-942. Madrid: SGEL.

Chireac, Silvia-María. 2010. *La adquisición del catalán y del castellano por los escolares inmigrantes de origen rumano y chino. Un análisis sistemático de los usos correctos y erróneos en la expresión oral*. Lleida: Universidad de Lleida dissertation.

Condelli, Larry and Heide Spruck Wrigley. 2006. Instruction, language and literacy: What works study for adult ESL literacy students. In Ineke van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *Low-Educated Adult Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium Tilburg University, August 2005*, 111-133. Utrecht: LOT.

Cook-Gumperz, Jenny and John J. Gumperz. 1981. From oral to written culture: The transition to literacy. In Marcia Farr Whiteman (ed.), *Writing: The nature, development, and teaching of written communication. Vol. I Variation in writing: Functional and linguistic-cultural differences*, 89-109. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cope, Bill and Mary Kalantzis. 2009. "Multiliteracies": New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal* 4(3): 164-195. https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800903076044

Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Craats, Ineke van de, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten. 2006. Research on low-educated second language and literacy acquisition. In Ineke van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium, Tilburg University 2005*, 7-23. Utrecht: LOT.

Cummins, Jim. 2001. ¿Qué sabemos de la educación bilingüe? Perspectivas psicolingüísticas y sociológicas. *Revista de Educación* 326: 37-61. https://bit.ly/3iehQvx

Dijk, Teun A. van. 1978. *La ciencia del texto: Un enfoque interdisciplinario*, 3rd edn. Barcelona: Paidós.

El-Madkouri Maataoui, Mohamed and Beatriz Soto Aranda. 2009. Aproximación pluridimensional a la influencia interlingüística: La adquisición del español como lengua de acogida en población marroquí inmigrada en España. *Segundas Lenguas e Inmigración en red* 2: 3-37. https://bit.ly/2RqsAKu

Ferreiro, Emilia and Ana Teberosky. 1982. *Literacy before schooling*. Exeter: Heinemann Educational Books.

Gentry, J. Richard. 2000. A retrospective on invented spelling and a look forward. *The Reading Teacher* 54(3): 318-332. https://bit.ly/2QCLpNh (accessed 4 July 2019).

Gentry, J. Richard. 1982. An analysis of developmental spelling in GNYS AT WRK. *The Reading Teacher* 36(2): 192-200. https://bit.ly/2SzgZZI

Günthner, Susanne and Hubert Knoblauch. 1995. Culturally patterned speaking practices - the analysis of communicative genres. *Pragmatics* 5(1): 1-32. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.5.1.03gun

Hayes, John R. and Linda S. Flower. 1980. Identifying the organization of writing processes. In Lee W. Gregg and Erwin R. Steinberg (eds.), *Cognitive processes in writing*, 3-30. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Henderson, Edmund H. and Shane Templeton. 1986. A developmental perspective of formal spelling instruction through alphabet, pattern, and meaning. *The Elementary School Journal* 86(3): 304-316. https://doi.org/10.1086/461451

Hofslundsengen, Hilde, Bente Eriksen Hagtvet and Jan-Eric Gustafsson. 2016. Immediate and delayed effects of invented writing intervention in preschool. *Reading and Writing* 29(7): 1473-1495. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-016-9646-8

Huguet, Ángel, José-Luis Navarro and Judit Janés. 2007. La adquisición del castellano por los escolares inmigrantes. El papel del tiempo de estancia y la lengua familiar. *Anuario de Psicología* 38(3): 357-375. https://bit.ly/2QA5C6F

Kurvers, Jeanne. 2015. Emerging literacy in adult second-language learners: A synthesis of research findings in the Netherlands. *Writing Systems Research* 7(1): 58-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/17586801.2014.943149

Kurvers, Jeanne. 2007. Development of word recognition skills of adult L2 beginning readers. In Nancy Faux (ed.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Research, policy, and practice. Proceedings of the Second Annual Forum, The Literacy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University 2006*, 23-43. Richmond: The Literacy Institute.

Kurvers, Jeanne and Elleke Ketelaars. 2011. Emergent writing of LESLLA learners. In Christiane Schoeneberger, Ineke van de Craats and Jeanne Kurvers (eds.), *Low-Educated Adult Second Language and Literacy Acquisition,* 49-66. Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Willemijn Stockmann and Ineke van de Craats. 2010. Predictors of success in adult L2 literacy acquisition. In Theresa Wall and Monica Leong (eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Proceedings of the 5th Symposium, Banff 2009,* 64-79. Alberta: Bow Valley College.

Kurvers, Jeanne and Ineke van de Craats. 2007. Memory, second language reading, and lexicon: A comparison between successful and less successful adults and children. In Nancy Faux (ed.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Research, policy, and practice. Proceedings of the Second Annual Forum, The Literacy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University 2006*, 65-80. Richmond: The Literacy Institute.

Mavrou, Irini and Anna Doquin de Saint Preux. 2017. La influencia del nivel educativo en la competencia lingüística en ELE de un grupo de inmigrantes adultos de la Comunidad de Madrid. In Marcin Sosiński (ed.), *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: Investigación, política educativa y práctica docente,* 161-174. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Mavrou, Irini and Òscar O. Santos-Sopena. 2018a. Aproximaciones cuantitativas y cualitativas a la evaluación de la corrección oral de aprendientes inmigrantes de español. *Calidoscópio* 16(2): 340-354. https://doi.org/10.4013/cld.2018.162.15

Mavrou, Irini and Òscar O. Santos-Sopena. 2018b. Factores determinantes de las competencias oral y lingüística en ELE de un grupo de inmigrantes nativos de rumano y de portugués. *Lengua y Migración / Language and Migration* 10(2): 137-163. http://hdl.handle.net/10017/35640

Moreno Fernández, Francisco. 2009. Integración sociolingüística en contextos de inmigración: marco epistemológico para su estudio en España. *Lengua y Migración / Language and Migration* 1(1): 121-156.

Norton Peirce, Bonny. 1995. Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly* 29(1): 9-31. https://doi.org/10.2307/3587803

Norton Peirce, Bonny. 2000. *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Oller, Judith and Ignasi Vila. 2011. Interdependencia entre conocimiento de catalán y castellano y efectos de la lengua familiar en la adquisición de las lenguas escolares. *Cultura y Educación* 23(1): 3-22. https://doi.org/10.1174/113564011794728588

Ong, Walter. 2002. *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*. New York: Routledge.

Otero Roth, Jaime. 2011. Lengua e inmigración en el contexto educativo social. *Lengua y Migración / Language and Migration* 3(1): 105-114.

Pujol Berché, Mercè. 2009. Políticas lingüísticas y de integración en materia de emigración en Europa como reflejo de la construcción de los estados-nación. *Lengua y Migración / Language and Migration* 1(1): 75-120.

Roesler, Patrick M. A. 2007. La integración lingüística de inmigrantes rumanos en Alicante. *redELE: Revista Electrónica de Didáctica de ELE* 11. https://bit.ly/2AxQLAF (accessed 4 July 2019).

Scribner, Sylvia and Michael Cole. 1978. Unpackaging literacy. *Social Science Information* 17(1): 19-40. https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847801700102

UNESCO. 2004. *The plurality of literacy and its implications for policies and programs: Position paper*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Wells, Gordon. 1987. Aprendices en el dominio de la lengua escrita. In Amelia Álvarez (ed.), *Psicología y educación. Realizaciones y tendencias actuales en la investigación y en la práctica: Actas de las II Jornadas Internacionales de Psicología y Educación*, 57-72. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia.

A *Heritage Language Hub*:
connecting users to reading and teaching materials for LESLLA learners

Ian Cheffy – Belma Haznedar – Fernanda Minuz – Katharine Miles
Joy Kreeft Peyton – Martha Young-Scholten

With increasing rates of migration in nations around the world, official estimates reveal that there are around 750 million adults with limited or no education and literacy across the world. A high number of these migrants are female adults and their children. Given that migrants are expected to become part of social and economic life in the host country they have settled in, people with limited or no education and limited literacy skills are faced with greater challenges than educated individuals. Most second language and literacy education programs focus on adult migrants' learning the language of the country they have settled in as part of their social and cultural integration, usually at the expense of losing their heritage language. On similar grounds, teacher education programs do not necessarily support migrants' heritage languages. The aim of this chapter is to address issues in regard to this learner population and ways to support their own heritage language and literacy maintenance and their children's bilingualism through creating access to online resources in their languages. The paper first gives an overview of the key terms in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts to pave the way for a better understanding of heritage languages in bi-multilingual communities. It then provides information about the heritage language resources hub, with special reference to reading and teaching materials for these learners.

Keywords: bilingualism, heritage language resources hub, literacy, migrants, multilingualism, EU-Speak.

1. Heritage languages in bi-multilingual communities

1.1. Bi-multilingualism

Due to linguistic and cultural diversity in almost every society today, bilingualism/multilingualism is a fact of modern life and is widespread across the world. Millions of children begin to learn another language in early childhood. Recent statistics show that

almost two-thirds of the global population is either bilingual or multilingual (Bhatia and Ritchie 2013; Grosjean 2012). There are just over 7,000 languages spoken in about 200 countries (Eberhard et al. 2019). These figures might reflect the widespread nature of bi-multilingual communities worldwide.

The terms bilingualism and multilingualism refer to the use of more than one language on a regular basis (Butler 2013; Grosjean 2008). However, bilingualism can take many forms, depending on where the two languages are used, with whom, and in what circumstances. Simultaneous bilinguals, for instance, refer to learners who are exposed to two languages from infancy (DeHouwer 2009); successive/sequential bilinguals are those whose exposure to another language begins after the first language (L1) has been acquired, i.e. at the age of three to five years (Haznedar 2013; Unsworth 2013). It is also important to note the distinction between additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism, the former referring to situations where the both (or all) of the learner's languages are supported in their community and school settings, the latter referring to situations where the learner's mother tongue is not given much value at the expense of the acquisition of the society/majority language (e.g. Lambert 1981; Cummins 2005; García 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas 1981). It should also be noted that bilinguals and multilinguals are quite heterogeneous groups of individuals whose diverse social and linguistic conditions lead to varying degrees of proficiency. Therefore, being bi-multilingual does not necessarily mean equal competence in the languages concerned (e.g. Baetens-Beardsmore 1982).

1.2. Migrant communities

Another term we can apply in bilingual communities is the notion of heritage languages, often used to refer to languages spoken by migrants and ethnic communities (Fishman 2001; García 2009; Valdés 2001). A heritage language speaker refers to first-generation migrants who speak the language of their home country in a new country, where another language is spoken, as well as to second and later generations who are exposed to the immigrant language and understand or speak it to some extent. Many people around the world

acquire their heritage language to some degree by hearing their grandparents, parents, or members of the community speak it and may stay receptive. Children in this situation might learn fewer registers, have a smaller vocabulary, and show less variety in their grammar and discourse than native speakers of the language, and they might not acquire the more difficult aspects of the language (Polinsky 2007). Due to lack of systematic use of the language and language contact situations, migrant parents may also start to use their language differently than those living in their home country. Second and third generation heritage language speakers may also be exposed in their community to a different variety of the heritage language than their parents or grandparents speak. If their heritage language exposure is limited to home contexts, children will usually not become literate in the heritage language. As Polinsky (2007) notes, several decades ago people, whose knowledge of the heritage language was assumed to range from limited to non-existent, were called semi-speakers (Dorian 1981), or incomplete acquirers (Montrul 2002; Polinsky 2007) or pseudo bilinguals (Baker and Jones 1998). Researchers who study the social context of language acquisition with such learners observe a shift over three generations from the heritage language, the minority language of the host country/region, to the majority language of the host country/region. The first generation is monolingual in the minority language and starts to acquire the majority language, the second generation is bilingual, and the third generation is monolingual in the majority language. By the fourth and later generations, the heritage language is no longer used within the family, and the community they live in becomes monolingual (e.g. Benmamoun et al. 2010).

It should be noted that the use of two or more languages in a society is not limited to certain geographic regions in the world; many African, Asian, and European countries are bilingual or multilingual. Even in the so-called monolingual societies, or those which adopt monolingual language policies, there are abundant numbers of bilingual/multilingual individuals. For instance, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), more than 350 different languages are spoken in homes in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that over 20% of the population speaks a language other than English at home, the largest group being Spanish heritage speakers (comprising

13% of the population in the U.S.). Likewise, India, a highly multilingual society, is home to more than 400 languages (Eberhard et al. 2019). In Germany, nearly 18% of the population speaks a language other than German (Shin 2013). As can be seen in these percentages, linguistic and cultural diversity are key properties of today's society. In Europe, for instance, both the EU institutions in Brussels and the Council of Europe in Strasbourg encourage all citizens to learn and speak at least one or two additional languages in order to improve mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue (Enever 2011).

Given the increasing number of migrants in every part of the world, their participation in the social, educational, and economic system of the host country has become the key component of their integration into the society. However, for adults with limited educational background, this situation presents great challenges in comparison to educated migrants (e.g. Condelli et al. 2003; Kurvers et al. 2010; Schellekens 2011). Moreover, most adult second language and literacy programs are based on the majority language of the society, often to the detriment of the heritage language. While they focus on preparing newly arrived migrants for employment and daily life conditions, not much attention is paid to the home languages of these heritage speakers. On the contrary, the linguistic capabilities of migrants have largely been ignored, and in many countries the maintenance of the heritage language has been discouraged. Most models of bilingual education range from equal proficiency in both languages to full proficiency only in the majority language. Majority language or transitional bilingual education aims to support children in the heritage language temporarily until they gain sufficient majority language proficiency to cope with teaching only in that language (Baker and Wright 2017). This subtractive bilingual perspective enhances linguistic and cultural assimilation, leaving minority and migrant populations with the feeling that the majority language is valued and the home language is not (García 2009: 116).

This model is also found in non-immigrant contexts such as sub-Saharan African countries such as Nigeria and Uganda where, after three or four years of instruction in their home language in primary school, which includes reading and writing in the language, children transition to the national (e.g., French) or an international language

(e.g., English) as part of a colonial legacy (Tembe and Norton 2008; Obondo 1997) or the desire to be able to interact in contexts where English is used. In many classrooms children are expected to perform in a language they do not necessarily have much competence in, let alone having access to it outside the school context. However, this model not only deprives the world of the many important talents of bilingual speakers of a wide range of languages but also has a negative effect on heritage communities and, in some circumstances, contributes to the loss of languages.

1.3. Heritage language maintenance

While most of these views have long been associated with the notion of social cohesion in the host community, today, there is an urgent need for a new angle while thinking about bilingualism. There is now a growing trend which sees bilingualism as a resource rather than an impediment. Under this view, hybrid linguistic cultural experiences are welcomed (García 2009). To this end, it is fair to say that there is another way to maintain the language of the heritage community as well as to enable the speakers of the language to retain their identity: (i) through education in the heritage language, i.e. bilingual education where the two languages are used in the subjects a student takes (Cummins 2005) and (ii) raising awareness of opportunities for heritage language maintenance and offering programs that are designed to address the needs of heritage language speakers, children and adults.

Maintaining heritage languages involves not only immigrant languages but also non-immigrant languages, where languages are revitalized. These include such languages as Inuit in Arctic Canada (Allen at al. 2006) and Irish in Ireland (Ó'Giollagáin et al. 2007). There is varied success with language reintroduction. At one end of the spectrum is Scotland's introduction of the Celtic language, Gaelic, in schools, but the absence of monolingual Gaelic speakers reduced communicative incentive for children to acquire it. At the other end of the spectrum is Hebrew in Israel which, despite the non-existence of modern Hebrew, when it was introduced, quickly became a strong majority language (Spolsky and Cooper 1991).

Indeed, recent years have witnessed a shift from the view that migrants should adopt the majority language over their home language in order to integrate into their new country (Bigelow 2009; Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011; Cummins 2005; Cummins and Danesi 1990; Polinsky and Kagan 2007). Adopting the notion of super-diversity (see Vertovec 2007), Simpson (2017), for instance, rejects this view of migration, which assumes the prestigious nature of the majority language, and argues that social integration should be multilingual, taking the migrants' heritage languages into consideration. On similar grounds, Beacco, Little and Hedges (2014) also argue that learning the language of the host country is not enough for integration. Following the Council of Europe's core values, which promote multilingualism and plurilingualism in Europe, they maintain that programmes designed to support linguistic and social integration of migrants need to promote the languages that migrants already know (Beacco et al. 2014: 14).

Heritage languages can be taught in diverse instructional settings, such as heritage language-based programs (often called community-based schools), kindergarten through primary and secondary school, as well as in higher education. As can be seen in various publications and initiatives, there is growing interest around the world in school-based and community-based efforts to recognize and develop proficiency in heritage/home/community languages (e.g., Peyton et. al. 2001; Wiley et al. 2014) (for some initiatives, see e.g., Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages, http://www.cal.org/heritage; and National Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools, http://heritagelanguageschools.org/coalition, in the United States; International and Heritage Languages Association in Canada, http://www.ihla.ca; and National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults in the UK, http://www.natecla.org.uk).

1.4. EU-SPEAK

Among many initiatives and scientific studies for over a decade, one recent attempt is the three-phase EU-SPEAK project, which focused on adult migrants with little or no formal education in their mother

tongue or any other language. In EU-SPEAK-1 (2010-2012), in order to examine the educational experiences of adult migrants learning to read for the first time in the majority language of their host country, workshops were held across Europe on curriculum, methods, techniques, materials, testing and assessment, and teacher training/development in the context of six EU countries with different languages, cultures, systems of education provision, and policy.

In EU-SPEAK-2 (2014-2015), following Condelli et al.'s (2010) view that working with well-qualified teachers improves migrants' chances of success in reading development, the focus was on teacher training and professional development. Data from surveys identified a set of skills and knowledge which those who work with low-literate adult migrants wish to have but do not have. The results of the second phase of the project revealed that there were few opportunities anywhere for practitioners to gain most of these skills and knowledge.

EU-Speak-3 (2015-2018) sought to fill this gap by addressing the need for teacher training so that teachers could be qualified. The project was conducted across the globe, by offering free online modules for teachers working with these adults in the five languages of the project team -- English, Finnish, German, Spanish, and Turkish. Each module was delivered twice between 2015 to 2018. Information about future opportunities to participate in these modules will be available at: http://www.leslla.org.

2. The *Heritage Language Hub*: connecting users to reading and teaching materials for LESLLA learners

The idea of a *Heritage Language Hub* (hereafter Hub) has roots in the above outlined perspectives on multilingual societies and individuals. The Hub collects and organises links to digital libraries and platforms that contain books and multimedia materials in migrant adults' home/heritage languages. Thus, it offers a tool to facilitate access to online resources, foster L1 literacy, and support the maintenance and development of the heritage languages.

The idea of a Hub was introduced during a LESLLA (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults) conference

(Young-Scholten et al. 2017) and is being implemented by an international team through three actions:

1. Creating a database of links to resources that will be classified according to specific search criteria.
2. Producing guidelines for educators on how to use the resources in formal and informal educational settings.
3. Devising an outreach and dissemination plan so that resources are visible and accessible.

2.1. Structure of the *Heritage Language Hub*

2.1.1. Users

We expect different groups of users. The adult migrants who speak one or more heritage languages, have limited education and literacy in these languages, and are now living in a country where a different language is spoken, read, and written are our target group. They are likely to be neglected because they lack the social capital to maintain their languages in resettlement and are geographically dispersed across post-industrialized societies. In learning the language of the host country, they would benefit from strengthening their literacy. Research has investigated many facets of the positive relations among literacy and second and third language acquisition and learning (August and Shanahan 2010; Eisenchlas et al. 2013; Swain et al. 1990; Tarone et al. 2014. See Van de Craats et al. 2006 and Kurvers et al. 2015 for overviews), L1 literacy and learning to read and write in L2 (Koda 2008), and intensive reading and literacy development (Krashen 1993). Easy access to high-quality reading materials could foster new literacy habits in adult learners, such as, for example, reading for leisure (Young-Scholten and Maguire 2009).

We assume the perspective that looks at reading as an individual activity embedded in social practices (Vygotsky 1986). Consequently, we look at this population of learners not only as language learners but also in their multiple societal roles, as citizens, members of communities, parents, workers, and so on. For example, providing them with books to read to children in their family or during

community events addresses them as parents and community members. Other potential users whom we envisage are the many different figures who form the social networks of these adults and influence their reading attitudes and skills as facilitators. They could be family and community members, professionals, volunteers, and activists engaged in both literacy and heritage language enhancement. They are, for example, literacy and second language teachers and facilitators, literacy teachers in heritage languages, mediators and cultural institution staff who work as facilitators in heritage language maintenance and intercultural initiatives, and librarians in multilingual libraries. Third-generation children of migrant families and students of heritage languages as a second language could also be interested in the resource repository. The Hub will also help teachers and tutors to convey to parents the reasons to use reading materials in their heritage languages, the benefits of using them, and ways they can use them.

2.1.2. Resources

As said above, the Hub is a tool to provide links to online resources in adult migrant learners' languages. Most of the resources are available online, in collections that include books, audio files, videos, and pictures. They provide access to a range of materials in hundreds of languages spoken around the world. For example, the site "African Storybook" (http://www.africanstorybook.org) contains illustrated books in 173 languages, rated according to reading levels and accessible by languages, titles, and authors. Most of the resources are for children. They are included in the Hub because they can support family literacy.

General resources, country-specific resources, and language-specific resources have already been identified. General resources are now accessible on the LESLLA website (https://www.leslla.org/hub-overview), while access to language-specific resources is planned for release in 2019. An online spreadsheet will facilitate searching for resources by language. A separate section will contain a list of libraries where physical resources can be found.

Identifying immigrant languages and collecting, classifying, and organising the resources is a complex process, in which we would like

the LESLLA community – teachers, tutors, program managers, and researchers – to participate. To date, we have been involved in two steps: the identification of the relevant languages and resource collections in those languages to include in the Hub and the writing of guidelines on how to use them.

2.1.3. Languages

The languages in which links to collections are made available were selected through the involvement of the LESLLA community in two steps: during a face-to-face and online free discussion during and after the LESLLA conference in 2017 (Young-Scholten et al.), and through an online survey in 2018. The collected data were successively compared with the languages contained in the general resources and combined with migration statistics to determine which languages have fewer resources in the countries where the migrants live and, therefore, need to be included in the Hub.

The focus is on languages which are less widely spoken, or more dispersed in the diasporas, and do not have easily accessible literature. For this reason, larger migrant languages such as French, Spanish, Italian, and Arabic are not the primary focus. Currently, 155 languages spoken by migrants have been identified.

Languages are being organised in a spreadsheet, which is a seminal "Hub search tool", to be developed into a search device. It provides the users with access to the resources by language and relevant information. Each resource in the Hub search tool has the URL address and information about the number of the books and multimedia materials, the themes of the books, if they are fiction or nonfiction, the recommended reading ages of the resources (as given by the resource itself), and age appropriateness (as given by the resource).

The general resources do not represent some languages that migrants in Europe and North America speak. Reading materials in some languages (such as Bambara) that informants signalled as spoken by adult migrant students are available mostly in some language/regional specific resources (for example, *Bibliothèque électronique Bambara*, http://cormand.huma-num.fr/biblio/).

The languages collected in the Hub search tool, and the number of these languages, are affected by the selection criteria, as foreseeable. The reported languages reflect approximately the origins of survey respondents' students. A different composition of the respondent group, in terms of countries of origin or working positions, could have provided perhaps a slightly different list of languages. Taking an example from Italy, from where 65% of the answers to the online survey came, respondents were mostly teachers and language facilitators who worked in reception facilities for refugees and asylum seekers. That could explain the high number of languages from Francophone African countries, such as French, Mandinka, and Bambara in the answers, differently from what statistics of the immigrant population in Italy show: Romanian, Arabic, and Albanian are the most spoken languages (together they are spoken by 45.5% of the migrants) and African languages range below the ten most frequent immigrant languages, together spoken by 75% of migrants (ISTAT 2014). On the other hand, African languages are among the less supported languages in the refugees and asylum seekers reception facilities in Italy (Translators Without Borders 2017).

Three consequences follow from these findings. First, the next step in the Hub construction will lead to a systematic matching between the three information sources: general resources, language/regional specific resources already identified, and data from the LESLLA community and professional involvement. Second, the results from the survey suggest that the languages most frequently reported by informants should be provisionally the focus of attention. Finally, the search tool appears to make a substantial contribution in the field of heritage languages, since it offers one point of access to multiple resources and allows users to search the resources starting from a language.

2.2. Guidelines on how to use the *Heritage Languages Hub*

Some respondents to the online survey expressed interest in the Hub, but also perplexity over how to use it in their everyday teaching activities. The Hub website will include guidelines on uses of the resources, which will provide teachers, language facilitators, tutors,

mediators, and cultural institution staff who work as facilitators in heritage language maintenance with

- an introduction to the Heritage Languages Hub, its background and structure
- a brief overview of research and policy statements on bi-/multilingualism and multiple literacies
- instructions on how to find resources
- suggestions on possible uses of the resources in the Hub
- Under "Suggestions" the user will find both recommendations (e.g. "Help the reader to focus his/her interests, curiosity, passions, needs") and examples of practices, most of which are collected from teachers' and facilitators' experiences.
- Suggestions consider four contexts of use:
- families, communities, associations, and schools that are active in supporting heritage languages and cultures
- schools (including volunteer associations) where literacy learning in L1 takes place
- schools where literacy and L2 learning take place
- cultural centres/institutions

To better target the guidelines to users, a preliminary needs analysis was carried out in Italy (Sept. 2018- Feb. 2019) to detect possible uses of the materials, users in addition to those identified, contexts in which the materials might be used, and other resources available and where to find them. Five focus groups were carried out involving 53 teachers, facilitators, mediators, and volunteers working in public centres for adult education (CPIA) and reception facilities for asylum seekers and refugees in five different towns, for a total of about 6 hours. The focus groups covered three main areas: a) the value that participants accord to students' bi-/multilingualism, b) the actual and possible uses of materials in students' languages, and c) possible uses of the Hub.

The needs analysis is not yet complete, but some trends are discernible. Teachers and educational agencies (schools, NGOs working with refugees, and volunteer associations) value the information about their students' languages and consistently collect information about them during the registration procedure and

placement tests. While there was agreement on this practice as a way to draw more accurate learner profiles, tailor courses, and empower students by recognising their cultural diversities, opinions differed when participants discussed the role of mother tongues in second language and literacy teaching. Some participants advocated the use of Italian as the only teaching language, according to a long-lasting language teaching tradition, on the basis of more effective learning, especially when students live in relative isolation or belong to relatively closed communities. Especially teachers and facilitators working in the reception centres for asylum seekers stressed the relevance of the actual teaching contexts in making a choice about languages to use in the classroom setting. Asylum seeker reception centres often are isolated facilities, where students can have rare contacts outside, and where the weekly four hours of language lessons are the only opportunity to be exposed to the Italian language. Furthermore, relying on the mother tongues appears difficult in diverse groups, which are very frequent, where up to five or more different languages are spoken.

On the other hand, some teachers provided examples of how to deal with linguistic diversity and heritage languages in the classroom. They highlighted both pedagogical and linguistic uses of resources in students' mother tongues. Storytelling, bilingual books, comparison of a text genre in different languages (e.g. national anthems), songs, and multilingual messages are some examples of feasible activities that teachers reported. They stressed that these activities were useful to not only create a more welcoming ambience for students, where everyone could feel at ease, but also have deep learning effects because they allow linguistic comparison and foster metalinguistic awareness. Observing the word order in sentences in Italian and in the heritage languages and noticing the presence of articles are some of the examples given. Some teachers also stressed the intercultural awareness that bringing languages together can prompt. Language learning is not confined in the classrooms and examples, and participants discussed practices on the community level, such as the events in the "Mamma lingua" (Mommy-tongue) project which gathered parents from different origins to read aloud to children. The Hub Guidelines will report examples of such activities.

In all focus groups the shift of most participants' attitude towards the use of mother-tongue resources was apparent. As a result of the peer-to-peer discussion, some participants claimed to be interested in experimenting with the activities which their colleagues proposed.

All participants expressed their interest in the Heritage Language Hub, as a source of resources for both teaching and community-based activities, especially since they complained about difficulties in accessing materials in the heritage languages.

3. Conclusion

The Heritage Language Hub is an ongoing work by its nature. Heritage languages in host societies change with the constant changes of migration routes and migrant populations, as the recent refugee and displaced people movements have shown. Accordingly, learner needs change (Minuz 2017). New relevant digital libraries and catalogues are being established, to respond to both the promotion of literacy worldwide (e.g. Global Book Alliance, http://globalbookalliance.org already posted on the Language Hub) and the trend towards a full recognition of native languages in the countries of origin of migrants (e.g. Association des éditeurs francophones au Sud du Sahara 2016).

We believe that the endeavour of starting a Language Hub is worthwhile and that publishing it as a work in progress is important and timely. It can contribute to the recognition and support of the heritage languages. It fits into the visions of pluralistic societies that place multilingualism at the centre. By collecting and presenting to readers, teachers, tutors, facilitators, and language mediators the languages spoken by adult migrant students, the Language Hub makes these languages visible, while it allows easy and structured access to many resources that are otherwise dispersed. It provides a tool to support multilingual approaches that are promoted in language teaching (Beacco et al. 2016) and to develop them for literacy and second language teaching to adults. The interest in overcoming the traditional focus on the majority language of the new country and moving towards bi-/multilingual approaches seems to be increasing, but resources and teacher training are needed if such approaches are to became an established reality.

The Language Hub is hosted on the LESLLA website (http://www.leslla.org), as a contribution to the implementation of the LESLLA goals. We invite the LESLLA community to collaborate, with comments and additions to build and disseminate it.

References

Allen, Shanley, Martha Crago and Diane Pesco. 2006. The effect of majority language exposure on minority language skills: The case of Inuktitut. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 9(5): 578-596.

Association des éditeurs francophones au Sud du Sahara. 2016. *Rapport général du salon de l'écrit et du livre en langues africaines (SAELLA)*. Bamako: SAELLA.

August, Diane and Timothy Shanahan. 2010. Response to a review and update on developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on language minority children and youth. *Journal of Literacy Research* 42: 341-348.

Baker, Colin and Wayne E. Wright. 2017. *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Baker, Colin and Sylvia P. Jones. 1998. *Encyclopedia of bilingualism and bilingual education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Baetens Beardsmore, Hugo. 1982. *Bilingualism: Basic principles*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Benmamoun, Elabbas, Silvina Montrul and Maria Polinsky. 2010. *Prolegomena to heritage linguistics*. White Paper, Department of Linguistics, Harvard University.

Beacco, Jean-Claude, Michael Byram, Marisa Cavalli, Daniel Coste, Mirjam Egli Cuenat, Francis Goullier and Johanna Panthier. 2016. *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Beacco, Jean-Claude, David Little and Chris Hedges. 2014. *Linguistic integration of adult migrants: Guide to policy development and implementation*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Bhatia, Tej K. and William C. Ritchie (eds.). 2013. *The handbook of bilingualism and multilingualism*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bigelow, Martha. 2009. Social and cultural capital at school: The case of a Somali teenage girl. In Nancy Fox (ed.), *Low-educated second language and literacy acquisition: Research, policy, and practice. Proceedings of the second annual forum*. Richmond: The Literacy Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University.

Bigelow, Martha and Patsy Vinogradov. 2011. Teaching adult second language learners who are emergent readers. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 31: 120-136.

Butler, Yuko G. 2013. Bilingualism/multilingualism and second language acquisition. In Tej K. Bhatia and William C. Ritchie (eds.), *The handbook of bilingualism and multilingualism*, 109-136. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Condelli, Larry, Heidi S. Wrigley, Kwan Yoon, Stephanie M. Kronen and Mary Seburn. 2003. *What works for adult ESL literacy students.* Volume II. Final Report. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research and Aguirre International.

Condelli, Larry, Stephanie M. Kronen and Johannes Bos. 2010. *The impact of a reading intervention for low-literate adult ESL learners*. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Institute of Education Sciences. Alexandria, VA: US Department of Education.

Cummins, James. 2005. A proposal for action: Strategies for recognizing heritage language competence as a learning resource within the mainstream classroom. *The Modern Language Journal* 89(4): 585-592.

Cummins, James and Marcel Danesi. 1990. *Heritage languages: The development and denial of Canada's linguistic resources.* Montreal: Our Selves Education Foundation.

DeHouwer, Annick. 2009. *Bilingual first language acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Dorian, Nancy C. 1981. *Language death: The life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic dialect.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fenning (eds.). 2019. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. 22nd edition. Dallas: SIL International. https://www.ethnologue.com

Eisenchlas, Susana A., Andrea C. Schalley and Diane Guillman. 2013. The importance of literacy in the home language: The view from Australia. *SAGE Open* October-December: 1-14.

Enever, Janet (ed.). 2011. *ELLIe: Early language learning in Europe*. London: British Council.

Fishman, Joshua A. 2001. 300-plus years of heritage language education in the United States. In Joy Kreeft Peyton, Donald A. Ranard and Scott McGinnis (eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource,* 81-97. Washington, DC and McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

García, Ofelia. 2009. *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Grosjean, François. 2008. *Studying bilinguals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haznedar, Belma. 2013. Child second language acquisition from a generative perspective. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism* 3(1): 26-47.

Koda, Keiko. 2008. Impacts of prior literacy experience on second-language learning to read. In Keiko Koda and Annette M. Zehler (eds.), *Learning to read across languages*, 68-96. New York: Routledge.

Krashen, Stephen D. 1993. *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. Englewood: Libraries Unlimited.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Ineke van de Craats and Roeland van Hout. 2015. Footprints for the future. In Ineke van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers, and Roeland van Hout

(eds.), *Cognition, literacy and second language acquisition by adults*, 7-32. Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Willemijn Stockmann and Ineke van de Craats. 2010. Predictors of success in adult L2 literacy acquisition. In Theresa Wall and Monica Leong (eds.)*, Low-educated second language and literacy acquisition. Proceedings of the 5th Symposium*, 47-62. Calgary: Bow Valley College.

Lambert, Wallace E. 1981. *Bilingualism and language acquisition*. New York: Academy of Science.

Minuz, Fernanda. 2017. Changing roads, changing needs. Keynote presented at the 13th LESLLA Symposium. Portland, OR. 10-12 August.

Montrul, Silvina. 2002. Incomplete acquisition and attrition of Spanish tense/aspect distinctions in adult bilinguals. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* 5: 39-68.

Obondo, A. Margaret. 1997. Bilingual education in Africa: An overview. In James Cummins and David Corson (eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Bilingual education,* 25-32. Dordrecht: Springer.

Ó'Giollagáin, Conchúr, Seosamh Mac Donnacha, Fiona Ní Chualáin, Aoife Ní Shéaghdha and Mary O'Brien. 2007. *A comprehensive study of the use of Irish in Irish-speaking areas*. Dublin: National University of Ireland.

Peyton, Joy Kreeft, Donald A. Ranard and Scott McGinnis (eds.). 2001. *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource*. Washington, DC, and McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Polinsky, Martha. 2007. Incomplete acquisition: American Russian. *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 14: 161-219.

Polinsky, Martha and Olga Kagan. 2007. Heritage languages: In the 'wild' and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 1(5): 368-395.

Schellekens, Philida. 2011. *Teaching and testing the language skills of first and second language speakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge ESOL.

Shin, Sarah J. 2013. *Bilingualism in schools and society: Language, identity and policy*. Abington: Routledge.

Simpson, James. 2017. Translanguaging, superdiversity and ESOL: A summary of the 2017 TLang e-seminar. *Working Papers in Translanguaging* 32. http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/index.aspx

Simpson, James and Anne Whiteside (eds). 2015. *Adult migrant language education: Challenging agendas in policy and practice*. London: Routledge.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 1981. *Bilingualism or not: The education of minorities*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Spolsky, Bernard and Robert L. Cooper. 1991. *The languages of* Jerusalem. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swain, Merrill, Sharon Lapkin, Norman Rowen and Doug Hart. 1990. The role of mother tongue literacy in third language learning. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 3: 65-81.

Tembe, Juliet and Norton, Bonny. 2008. Promoting local languages in Ugandan primary schools: The community as stakeholder. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 65(1): 33-60.

Translators Without Borders. 2017. *Putting language on the map in the European refugee response. Research Report.* Translators Without Borders, Mixed Migration Platform, UKAID.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2017. *Literacy rates continue to rise from one generation to the next.* http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs45-literacy-rates-continue-rise-generation-to-next-en-2017_0.pdf

Unsworth, Sharon. 2013. Assessing age of onset effects in (early) child L2 acquisition. *Language Acquisition* 20 : 74-92.

Valdés, Guadalupe. 2001. Heritage language students: Profiles and possibilities. In Joy K. Peyton, Donald. A. Ranard and Scott McGinnis (eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource,* 37-77. Washington, DC, and McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Vertovec, Steven. 2007. Superdiversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30: 1024-1054.

Vygotsky, Lev S. 1986. *Thought and language.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Wiley, Terrence C, Joy Kreeft Peyton, Christian Donna, Sarah C. Moore and Na Liu. 2014. *Handbook of heritage, community and native American languages in the United States: Research, educational practice and policy.* New York: Routledge.

Young-Scholten, Martha and Donna Maguire. 2009. Stories for extensive reading for LESLLA. In Jeanne Kurvers and Ineke van de Craats (eds.), *Low educated adult second language and literacy acquisition. Research, Policy and Practice. Proceedings of the 4th Annual Conference,* 145-157. Utrecht: LOT,

Young-Scholten, Martha, Joy Kreeft Peyton and Belma Haznedar. 2017. A Repository of Heritage Language Resources. Paper presented at the 13th LESLLA Symposium. Portland, OR., 10-12 August.

Learning for work:
hidden challenges for LESLLA learners

Andrea De Capua – Marco Triulzi

We consider the challenges LESLLA learners face when confronted with literacy-based decontextualized tasks inside and outside of school that demand ways of thinking intrinsic to Western-style formal education, work, and modern life. We frame our work in the context of preparing LESLLA learners in Germany for the trades in adult education programs. Specifically, we focus on how ways of learning, familiarity with literacy-based decontextualized tasks and academic ways of thinking impact the ability of LESLLA learners to access content and succeed on assessments in adult education programs. Our work has applications beyond Germany: the assumptions underlying school tasks and ways of thinking form the "invisible challenge" of school and vocational training for LESLLA learners.

Keywords: low-educated, low-literacy, migrants, refugees, vocational training.

1. Introduction

In 2018, an estimated 68.5 million people were forced from their homes, of whom more than twenty-five million were classified as refugees (UNHCR 2018). Receiving countries face numerous challenges in accommodating and serving so many migrants and refugees, especially in providing employment opportunities for adults. Many of these have training and skills that, once they develop at least some proficiency in the language of the host country, can transfer to their new countries or will lead to employment with minimal training. However, among them is also a large subset of LESLLA learners: those who have not had age-appropriate Western-style formal education or job training, have low or no literacy, and therefore face limited work opportunities beyond the most menial.

In preparing these LESLLA learners, adult education programs in the receiving countries face multiple challenges. They must teach LESLLA learners basic literacy skills in a new language, deliver content and workplace knowledge and skills, and help them develop

new ways of thinking. Western-style formal education develops specific cognitive pathways (Cole 2005; Gauvain et al. 2011; Säljö 2009), which we refer to as "academic ways of thinking" (DeCapua and Marshall 2011). Since LESLLA learners had no or little prior educational opportunities, these types of thinking are unfamiliar to them and yet are essential in school, work, training, and everyday life in a modern society (Duran and Şendağ 2012; Hein et al. 2015). Crucially, they are not accustomed to engaging in logical modes of thinking based on scientific principles and conventions (Flynn 2007) and formal syllogistic reasoning (Olson and Torrence 1996). Yet these challenges are invisible to educators because these ways of thinking are assumed to be universal. For example, we take it for granted that books are categorized by genre and subgenres. Classifying concepts by identifiable shared characteristics in this way is taken for granted by educators but be unfamiliar to LESLLA learners.

2. Ways of learning

2.1. Informal ways of learning

LESLLA learners may come from backgrounds where informal ways of learning are the norm. This is learning that takes place within the sociocultural context of daily life in which survival and providing for oneself and one's family are central (Rogoff 2003, 2014). Learning takes place in the community, the home, the workplace. Learning follows the mentor or apprenticeship model of observation, imitation, and feedback that is largely non-verbal and centered around demonstration (Mejía-Arauz et al. 2012). Learning is pragmatic, concrete, immediately relevant, and focused on the here and now.

    Learning and knowledge do not come from print; literacy is not an essential nor necessary part of the learning process. Knowledge and skills are grounded in real-world experience. As one LESLLA learner once said while making a fist, "moon is no big, because even when full, not as big as my hand." From their perspective of standing on earth, this LESLLA learner is not wrong. But from the perspective of science, the size of the moon is empirically measured.

2.2. Western-style formal education

Western-style formal education consists of highly systematized learning that emphasizes rational thought and empirical observation (Ngaka et al. 2012). Education takes place in formal institutional settings and structured curricula, and knowledge is divided into subject areas, such as math, science, and language. Intuition and real-world practices are generally discounted in favor of knowledge based on logical and systematic ways of understanding and interpreting the world (Ardila et al. 2010; Santos 2007). Tasks for learning and demonstrating mastery are decontextualized, literacy-based and demand academic ways of thinking derived from scientific principles. Formal education is learning how to learn, developing academic ways of thinking, and future-focused (Bruner 1961; Green 1990).

3. The German context

In 2015 and 2016 Germany experienced an unprecedented wave of immigration as a result of Chancellor Merkel's policy of welcome towards refugees, particularly those from Syria and other regions of the Middle East. Between 2015 and 2016 there were over one million asylum applications (BAMF 2016, 2017). Though fewer in number, refugees and migrants continue to enter Germany, including many adults seeking employment. The majority of refugees (51.8%) are adults older than 18 (Statista 2018). In November 2018, government employment data indicated that there were 459,336 refugee job seekers (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2018a). Over 172,00 of these had no secondary school certificate of completion, i.e., no school certificate qualifying them for employment. An additional 99,201 did not provide any information about their education status (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2018b), suggesting that many, if not all, are LESLLA learners.

3.1. Adult education for migrants and refugees

Since the 2015-2016 influx of migrants and refugees, the German

educational system has been partially reconceptualized and restructured to accommodate and support the influx of migrants and refugees of all ages from widely diverse educational backgrounds. This process has acknowledged that the adult learners have skills, needs, and goals that must be incorporated into vocational language education and training in new and different ways.

The goal of adult education for migrants and refugees in Germany is twofold: first, help them learn German; and second, offer education and/or training to develop workplace skills. The *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* – BAMF (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) provides the most widely-offered "integration" courses for adults. These courses consist of (1) language; and (2) orientation to German culture and society. Learners must initially complete 600 teaching units of language of 45 minutes each, ranging from A1 level – basic user – to B1 level – independent user (cf. Common European Framework of References for Languages, https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-%20languages). The language instruction covers everyday topics, such as housing, shopping, and work. Upon completion, learners then attend a 100-hour orientation. The orientation introduces learners to the German legal system, rights and obligations in Germany, and core aspects and values of German culture and society.

Other programs specifically designed for newly arrived migrant and refugee adult job seekers are also offered. The ESF-BAMF *Berufsbezogene Sprachföderung* ('Vocational language training', i.e., German for work) is geared towards job seekers not of school age who have already completed an integration course. The ESF-BAMF courses combine German language learning, workplace skills, and options for learning more about a trade through job placements (BAMF 2017b).

Although these courses are intended for those who have completed K-12 education, LESLLA learners can often be found in these courses. *Perspektiven für Flüchtlinge – PerF* ('Perspectives for refugees') is another vocational training program for refugees under the age of 25. The program lasts between four and six months and provides instruction in vocational German, fundamentals of a healthy lifestyle, practical workplace experience, and support in preparing job applications (Bundesamt für Arbeit 2017). In addition, there is the

trade initiative, *Perspektiven für junge Flüchtlinge im Handwerk –
PerjuF-H* ('Perspectives for young refugees in trades'), which
provides young refugees orientation to at least three different trades,
as well as German language training. Lasting four to six months, it
takes place in a trade enterprise (KOFA n.d.).

New textbooks emphasizing workplace German have been
published to support migrant and refugee integration. Most cover
topics applicable to a wide range of jobs, such as introducing oneself
at work, applying for a job, travelling professionally, and resolving
conflict. Despite the stated emphasis on workplace German, the
primary focus remains generic everyday German (cf. e.g. Angioni et
al. 2017), although more textbooks specifically intended for particular
fields, such as gastronomy or cleaning, are being published.

What all these course offerings and textbooks share is the
expectation that learners are literate, will have had age-appropriate
formal education and/or vocational training, and be familiar with
common classroom learning activities. This means that LESLLA
learners must adapt to ways of instruction and learning that German
educators often take for granted. There are few, if any, provisions or
accommodations for LESLLA learners.

4.   The invisible challenges

The increasing number of teaching materials for workplace German is
critical for supporting teachers working in the programs outlined in
3.1. However, we argue here that these materials are unsuitable for
LESLLA learners because they are based on Western-style
educational assumptions about learners and learning. Central to these
assumptions is that learners are ready and able to engage in literacy-
based decontextualized classroom tasks that draw on academic ways
of thinking. This does not hold for LESLLA learners (DeCapua 2016;
DeCapua and Marshall 2011). Their most obvious challenge is
literacy. LESLLA learners have low or no literacy skills in any
language; are still learning to make sense of letters, words, and
sentences; and have never or rarely had the experience of learning
from a book.

But an equally crucial challenge is the types of tasks and associated ways of thinking demanded in school and formal training settings. LESLLA learners are not familiar with or accustomed to decontextualized school tasks based on academic ways of thinking (DeCapua and Marshall 2011; Marshall and DeCapua 2013). We propose that fostering familiarity with academic ways of thinking among LESLLA learners is as essential as developing their literacy skills and content knowledge. Even when LESLLA learners enter the workforce without plans for further studies, decontextualized tasks and academic ways of thinking pervade contemporary life and are, to some degree or other, essential for movement into and upward beyond the most basic entry-level and menial jobs. To compound the problem, the structure of the German educational system and program offerings slot LESLLA learners in courses and levels that are inappropriate for their needs.

We illustrate the invisible challenges of decontextualized school based-tasks and academic ways of thinking in the context of analyzing a typical task from a general vocational language training textbook. This textbook is for Level A2 learners and designed to develop business German oral and writing skills (Sander et al. 2015). Reaching level A2, as defined by the Common European Framework, means that students

[c] understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need." (Council of Europe 2001: 24)

4.1. Sample task: my dream job

This task occurs after students have completed a series of learning activities, including listening and reading comprehension exercises. It is intended to assess whether they can apply the previously presented and practiced material to a different, but related, context.

German original	English translation
Mein Traumberuf	**My Dream Job**
Schreiben Sie einen Steckbrief für Ihren Beruf oder Ihren Traumberuf und stellen Sie ihn im Kurs vor. Beschreiben Sie auch Ihren Arbeitsort, die Arbeitszeiten und Ihre Kollegen.	Write a description of your profession or your dream job and present it to the class. Describe your place of work, working hours and colleagues.

Table 1. Level A2 sample task: *Mein Traumbrief* ('My dream job')
(Sander et al. 2015: 29).

4.1.2. Analysis

On the surface, *My dream job* appears to be a straightforward writing and oral presentation task. However, the task is quite complex. For one, the written part assumes and demands literacy skills at a much higher level than LESLLA learners will generally have. The task is focused on language skill mastery, i.e., writing and speaking in German, not teaching learners basic literacy. Even if they are placed in an A2 course, LESLLA learners are still developing literacy and view reading, writing, and language differently than do those who are literate (Kurvers et al. 2008). Being literate entails engaging in reading and writing as constructive processes for acquiring, creating and exchanging meaning, as well as being facile in moving between the real world and the imaginary and conjectural world of print (Ardila et al. 2000; Dooley 2009). To be able to engage in decontextualized school tasks like *My dream job*, learners need to be at the stage where they can conceptualize of print as conveying and transmitting information and knowledge removed from lived experience (Abadzi 2004).

    LESLLA learners are not at that stage. It has been our experience in both teaching and classroom observations that when confronted with a task such as *My dream job*, LESLLA learners pose questions such as: Why does a textbook, this collection of sheets of paper, ask me questions? How can a book demand I do something? Why is it important to do this? Why should I write by myself something I'm

going to share with others? (See also Altherr Flores 2017). These kinds of questions illustrate how *My dream job* is a task that has no meaning for LESLLA learners. The task is not relevant to their lives nor reflects familiar learning processes. They have previously learned what they needed in real-world contexts when they needed it. Writing about an imaginary job description has, from their perspective, no context and no discernable purpose.

However, from the perspective of an educator in Western-style formal education, this task is relevant and contextualized because it practices writing skills that will most likely be useful in the future. And the topic itself is "relevant" because the learners are hoping to start careers. But from the perspective of LESLLA learners, because the task is disconnected from their experiences and lives it is not relevant. They have not had careers. If they worked previously, they had jobs. Although "job" is sometimes used to refer to "career," the opposite does not hold true. A job is what people do to earn money or goods to live on a day-to-day basis. A career requires study and/or advanced training and is goal-oriented toward further training, greater responsibilities, and possibilities for advancement. Even when LESLLA learners do picture an imaginary career, they generally have no concept of what that career entails. They will often say that they want to be a doctor or journalist, but not know what doctors or journalists do, the hours they work, or with whom they work with beyond "helping sick people" or "telling news on TV."

Literacy is more than decoding, copying, and memorization. It is being able to engage in specific types of academic ways of thinking such as abstraction disconnected from lived experiences (Abadzi 2004; Luria 1976). My Dream Job highlights how academic ways of thinking underlie decontextualized classroom tasks. To write about one's dream job requires being able to analyze past, present and future together; to consciously formulate hypotheses for an imaginary future; to abstract from the present situation and construct a hypothetical world. Not only does the task require learners be able to imagine the situation, but they must also create a particular type of written product, namely a job description, a text genre that serves a particular function, and that follows a relatively conventional written format (Casanave 2013).

The creation of the written job description is not the end product of the task. There are two steps, first the written, followed by the oral. Those who have formal education know what they need to do because they will have encountered this type of decontextualized school task in their schooling. Writing about something and then presenting it orally (or vice versa) is a common classroom procedure. For them, the task is about learning to write in and speak German. They do not need to have explicitly pointed out to them that this is an oral presentation based on a written component, which must be completed first in order to serve as the basis for the second, oral part. They also understand (more or less capably) how for both parts of the task, the information must be presented in a certain "logical" order to be "coherent" and "clear," and must address all the points indicated in the task instructions.

LESLLA learners, even when they have the language skills, are often unable to grasp the requirements or follow the procedures for completing such tasks because they do not understand the purpose or the conventions. This results in the common conclusion on the part of educators that LESLLA learners fail because they lack literacy, language, and background knowledge (Lukes 2014). While we do not disagree with these factors, our position is that the largely invisible challenges of academic ways of thinking and literacy-based decontextualized tasks pose equally great hurdles that are rarely, if at all, taught to adult learners. We propose that educators must teach LESLLA learners explicitly how to engage in these tasks and ways of thinking that are typical of formal education and work and life in Germany and in other modern societies. The question is how to foster simultaneously the development of literacy, language, and academic ways of thinking, and the ability to engage in classroom tasks.

We hold that the best way to do so is to transition LESLLA learners to the demands and expectations of formal education through the implementation of the *Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm* (MALP). This instructional model is mutually adaptive in that both learners and teachers adapt. MALP incorporates key priorities of LESLLA learners and places these priorities into a framework that integrates key elements of Western-style formal education. In the MALP model, learning is seen as consisting of three major components: conditions, processes, and activities. Conditions for

learning refers to what must be present in the classroom for learners to feel confident and ready to engage. Processes for learning is how people prefer to exchange and build knowledge and information. Activities for learning encompass the tasks in which learners engage to build and demonstrate mastery. MALP is a mutually adaptive instructional model, meaning that educators accept conditions for learning important to LESLLA learners; combine the processes for learning key for both LESLLA learners and in formal education; and focus on academic ways of thinking and associated activities new to LESLLA learners (DeCapua and Marshall 2011; Marshall and DeCapua 2013).

To understand what MALP is and how it is implemented, we turn now to Mr. Maahs' class (Section 5), followed by an analysis of the lesson through the lens of MALP (Section 5.2). Mr. Maahs, based on one of the authors and the observations of the other author, teaches a vocational German course in Berlin. The required textbook is DaF im Unternehmen, in which the task My Dream Job appears. The class is an A2 level class with mix of migrant LESLLA and non-LESLLA learners.

5. Classroom scenario: Mr. Maahs

Mr. Maahs' starting point is not the textbook itself per se. Instead, he engages the learners in a series of activities intended to introduce and practice the vocabulary, concepts, and grammar in this chapter before having the learners work with the text.

Mr. Maahs begins by asking the learners to bring in photos of jobs they, friends, or family members have done. He also has a collection of photos of jobs that learners can choose from if they don't have access to photos. Mr. Maahs has also brought a photo of himself in the classroom. In small groups, the learners talk about their photos in any language they wish, e.g., What job is this? What is the person doing?

After learners have had a chance to discuss, Mr. Maahs and the class create a list of jobs, such as *der Metzger / die Metzgerin* ('the butcher'), *der Koch / die Köchin* ('the cook'), *der Mechaniker / die*

Mechanikerin ('the mechanic')[1]. Mr. Maahs, using oral contributions from the learners, adds a few keywords, e.g., *kochen* ('cook'), *die Küche* ('the kitchen'), *der Topf* ('the pot'). The learners chorally and individually practice reading the jobs and associated keywords.

Mr. Maahs then distributes cards with a job and short description. In small groups, the learners decide which of the cards match the job in their photos and attach them to the photos. Next, the learners must sort the photos with the attached job descriptions into categories Mr. Maahs has designated, e.g., a job is done indoors or outdoors, with family members or outsiders, traditionally done by adults or children or both, requires special tools, and so on.

Subsequently, Mr. Maahs shows his photo to the class and talks about his job, "Ich bin Lehrer. Ich arbeite in der Schule. Ich habe studiert und dann bin ich Lehrer geworden. Frau Wu ist meine Chefin. Sie ist sehr kompetent. Ich habe drei Kolleginnen. Sie sind sehr net" ('I am a teacher. I studied to be a teacher. I work in the school. I studied to be a teacher. Mrs. Wu is my boss. She is very capable. I have three (female) colleagues. They are very nice').

Mr. Maahs shares the written version of this talk with the class. Once the class has practiced reading it, the learners orally describe either a current job or one they did previously to a partner, similar to what Mr. Maahs did. To encourage greater discussion, Mr. Maahs allows them to include words and sentences from other languages they know. The learners then produce their own written job descriptions in German, using Mr. Maahs' written description as a model. They share their descriptions with the rest of the class.

Once the learners have read and/or listened to the job descriptions of their classmates, Mr. Maahs asks them to choose one job described by a classmate that they themselves have not done but would like to do. He also chooses one for himself and models, "Ich bin Lehrer. Ich arbeite in der Schule. Ich möchte Geschäftsführer sein. Ich möchte im Büro arbeiten" ('I am a teacher. I work in the school. I would like to be a manager. I would like to work in an office'). He writes his

---

[1] In German, jobs must indicate gender, i.e., male butcher (*der Metzger*) or a female butcher (*die Metzgerin*). All nouns have gender and the definite article must match the gender of the noun, e.g., *Topf* ('pot') is masculine and must take *der* ('the') while *Küche* ('kitchen') is feminine and must take *die* ('the'). Language learners must learn the gender and article of each new vocabulary word.

sentences on the board, has the class read them aloud while pointing out how he changed the verbs since this is a job that he doesn't do. When he is sure the learners have the idea of the hypothetical, Mr. Maahs has them discuss their dream job in the same way he did. To help them, he provides sentence frames and, as he and the class review them, reminds the learners that they are now talking about a job they are not doing or have not done, but would like to do[2].

Ich bin **Lehrer**. Ich arbeite in **der Schule.**	Ich möchte Geschäftsführer sein. Ich möchte **im Büro** arbeiten.
(I am a **teacher**. I work in a school.)	(I would like to be a **manager**. I would like to work in **an office**.)
Ich bin_____. Ich arbeite_____ .	*Ich möchte_____sein. Ich möchte* _____ *arbeiten*.
(I am a teacher. I work in a school.)	(I would like to be_____. I would like to work_____.)

Table 2. Sample sentence frames (with translations).

After practicing orally, the learners write their new sentences, exchange them with another classmate when they have finished, and practiced reading each other's sentences aloud.

For the next lesson, Mr. Maahs returns to the categorization activity and works with the learners on using information from here about their own job and to explain why they would like the job they chose, first orally and then written. For example, Said came up with "Ich bin Hirte. Ich kann hier arbeiten nicht. Ich möchte Lehrer sein. Herr Maahs ist mein Lehrer. Herr Maahs arbeitet in der Schule. Ich auch möchte in der Schule arbeiten" ('I am a shepard. I no can work here. I would like to be a teacher. Mr. Maahs is my teacher. Mr. Maahs works in the school. I also would like to work in the school').

---

[2] Because German has three genders as well as four cases, Mr. Maahs posts other key information to help learners. We have chosen not to include examples here because they do not add to the discussion and can lead to unnecessary confusion on the part of readers not familiar with German.

6. Mr. Maahs and MALP

To make *My dream job* accessible to all learners and a genuine learning experience, Mr. Maahs introduces and practices the lesson material in the section prior to this task through the MALP model. He carefully differentiates his instructions and expectations for the other non-LESLLA learners so that they too are learning according their abilities, which, however, will not be discussed here since our focus is on the LESLLA learners.

As we see here, Mr. Maahs has accepted conditions for learning (Section 6.1), combined processes for learning (Section 6.2.), and focused on activities for learning (Section 6.3) using familiar language and content.

6.1. Accept conditions for learning

Conditions for learning are those elements necessary to create an optimal learning environment. In the case of LESLLA learners, two highly essential elements are immediate relevance and interconnectedness. Immediate relevance is essential since their prior learning experiences have been rooted in real world experiences. They don't go to school to learn the essentials of food preparation, food handling, or food storage. They learn to cook what they have in order to prepare meals for their families (Rogoff 2014). In the classroom when tasks and materials mean something personal to LESLLA learners, they become more confident and motivated to engage in learning (Nuwenhoud 2014). As we saw in Section 4.1.2, decontextualized school tasks are meaningless to LESLLA learners because they do not see the connection between the task and their lives.

To transition LESLLA learners to being able to distance themselves from school-based tasks and personal experiences, teachers must begin by incorporating material immediately relevant to the learners. Immediate relevance to learners' own lives is an important condition that teachers can easily incorporate into learning, but that entails a shift in perspective. Teachers do not begin with material from a text or curriculum, even if they think it is relevant.

Instead, teachers have a strong sense of who their LESLLA learners are and what prior experiences and strengths they bring to the classroom; relevance is learner-generated rather than teacher imposed. Since Mr. Maahs was teaching a vocational German course, he knew that jobs and employment were immediately relevant to his learners. However, rather than starting with jobs in general or from the photos and descriptions in the textbook, Mr. Maahs had the learners bring in photos of their own jobs, those of family members, and of friends. Thus, the learners talked, wrote about, and engaged in activities using job content immediately relevant to them personally.

The second essential element is interconnectedness, that is, a sense of relationship and belonging. Teachers build interconnectedness among LESLLA learners and themselves by going beyond their traditional role of delivering instruction to one where they connect closely with learners on a personal level (Borrero et al. 2013; Suárez- Orozco 2009). When interconnectedness has been fostered among the learners and their teachers, teachers are also better able to ensure that they are incorporating material immediately relevant to the learners' lives, not what the teacher thinks will be relevant. Mr. Maahs promoted interconnectedness by having the learners share about their jobs and the jobs they would like to have. Regardless of whether or not the jobs they had previously before coming to Germany would lead to employment there, all jobs were acknowledged and respected. To make himself an integral part of the group, Mr. Maahs talked about his job and one that he would like to do. Everyone, the learners and Mr. Maahs, learned more about each other.

6.2. Combine processes for learning

Process for learning refers to how people prefer to exchange and develop knowledge and skills. For LESLLA learners, their preference is to do so orally and together through mutual support. In Western-style formal education, this is done primarily through print, and learners are expected to learn and perform individually. To honor and capitalize on the preferences of LESLLA learners while yet transitioning them to those demanded in formal classrooms, teachers

combine those processes preferred by LESLLA learners with the required processes of formal education.

First, the development of literacy skills is consistently supported by oral interaction and connections are regularly made from print to spoken language and the reverse. This requires that teachers employ different strategies than those typically used in language teaching (Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011; Vinogradov 2010). Mr. Maahs carefully combined the oral and the written. He intentionally began with the oral allowing the LESLLA learners to start from a position of strength before turning to the written. In working on the written, Mr. Maahs incorporated early literacy strategies, such as choral reading and repetition. He also had the learners read to each other what they had written so they could assist each other in a low-stakes environment.

LESLLA learners have been accustomed to learning with others. In formal education, learners are expected to learn and work on their own, and are assessed on their individual performance, even in situations of group collaboration or mentoring. In MALP, teachers provide activities that allow for group responsibility where LESLLA learners can work together, but yet at the same time they must produce something on their own. Mr. Maahs provided many opportunities for the learners to work together and rely on each for help and support. Together, they described job photos, matched job descriptions to photos, sorted the jobs, and talked both about their jobs and one they would like to do. Nevertheless, learners were each individually responsible for presenting their work orally and producing their own written piece.

6.3. Focus on activities for learning using familiar language and content

As we have stressed, decontextualized school-based tasks and associated underlying academic ways of thinking represent hidden challenges for LESLLA learners. They are used to doing pragmatic tasks that take place in the here and now with concrete, tangible results (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). To make the hidden challenges transparent, teachers must explicitly teach classroom tasks and ways

of thinking by using familiar language and content (DeCapua and Marshall 2011; Marshall and DeCapua 2013). Leveraging language and content LESLLA learners already know allows them to concentrate fully on what is new for them – the decontextualized task and the academic way(s) of thinking on which the task is dependent.

Mr. Maahs, for instance, asked the learners to sort the jobs into categories he knew would be recognizable to them, even though they had most likely never thought about jobs in this way. By the time the learners engaged in this activity, the language and the content were familiar so that they were able to focus on the categorization activity without being distracted by new language and material. Later, Mr. Maahs had the learners match cards with job descriptions to the corresponding photos. Matching is another example of a decontextualized school-based task commonly found in textbooks and worksheets. Having practiced both the language and content previously, these were now familiar to them when they did this matching task. Such scaffolding prepares LESLLA learners for decontextualized matching tasks such as those in the same textbook in which *My dream job* appears requiring learners to match photos in the book with the printed descriptions (c.f. Sander et al 2015: 30). This type of practice also helps learners engage in print-only matching exercises, another common activity both in classrooms and on assessments.

After the learners engaged in activities related to the here and now, Mr. Maahs introduced hypothetical thinking by having them make connections between themselves, the photos, the jobs, and their dream – or at least desired – jobs. The content and most of the language were now very familiar to the learners. That which was new, the conditional, Mr. Maahs carefully scaffolded so that the learners were not overwhelmed and could concentrate on the new way of thinking, envisioning the hypothetical.

7. Conclusion

When migrants and refugees with formal education and/or training come to Germany or similar receiving countries, tasks such as My Dream Job pose primarily a linguistic challenge. For LESLLA

learners, on the other hand, the linguistic challenge is only one of several, including the primacy of print and decontextualized tasks based on academic ways of thinking. For these challenges, they require significant focused support. To this end, we introduced the MALP instructional model and examined the implementation of this model by Mr. Maahs in his vocational German class. As exemplified by Mr. Maahs, MALP moves educators away from a deficit approach, i.e., what LESLLA learners can't do to a difference view, i.e., they come with vastly different prior learning and literacy experiences. Because MALP is mutually adaptable, it honors and respects who LESLLA learners are and what they know while transitioning them to the expectations and demands of formal classrooms, the workplace, and life in modern society. The MALP model is not tied to any specific curriculum and can be infused into any curriculum, in any class, or program.

We realize that in all too many cases LESLLA learners are not identified and separated into their own classes but placed together with other low-proficiency non-LESLLA learners. We believe, however, that all learners, with appropriate differentiation practices, can benefit from MALP. For LESLLA learners, in contrast, not implementing MALP is likely to leave them feeling frustrated and alienated by classroom practices and impeding their success.

References

Abadzi, Helen. 2003. *Improving adult literacy outcomes: Lessons from cognitive research for developing countries*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Altherr Flores, Jenna A. 2017. Social semiotics and multimodal assessment of L2 adult emergent readers from refugee backgrounds. In Marcin Sosiñski (ed.). *Alfabetación y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: investigación, política educativa y práctica docente (Literacy education and second language learning by adults: Research, policy and practice. Proceedings of the 2016 LESLLA Symposium*, 9-31. Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada.

Angioni, Milena, Ines Hälbig and Viola Stübner. 2017. *Einfach besser! Deutsch für den Beruf B1-B2. Kurs- und Arbeitsbuch*. Frankfurt am Main: telc GmbH.

Ardila, Alfredo, Paolo Bertolucci, Lucia Braga, Alexander Castro-Caldas, Ted Judd, Mary Kosmidis, Esmeralda Matute, Ricardo Nitrini, Feggy Ostrosky-Solis and Monica Rosselli. 2010. Illiteracy: The neuropsychology of cognition without reading. *Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology* 25(8): 689-712.

Ardila, Alfredo, Feggy Ostrosky-Solis and Victor Mendonza. 2000. Learning to read is much more than learning to read: A neuropsychologically based reading Program. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* 6: 789-801.

BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). 2017b. Das ESF-BAMF-Programm.
http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/DeutschBeruf/Deutschberufesf/deutschberuf-esf-node.html

BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). 2017a. *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016. Asyl, Migration und Integration*. Nürnberg: BAMF.
https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2016.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=16

BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). 2016. *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015. Asyl, Migration und Integration*. Nürnberg: BAMF.
https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=16

BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). 2015. *Konzept für einen bundesweiten Integrationskurs*. Nürnberg: BAMF.
https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Integration/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-integrationskurs.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7

Bigelow, Martha and Patsy Vinogradov. 2011. Teaching adult second language learners who are emergent readers. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 31: 120-136.

Borrero, Noah, Diane Lee and Amado Padilla. 2013. Developing a culture of resilience for low-income immigrant youth. *Urban Review* 45(2): 99-116.

Bruner, Jerome. The act of discovery. *Harvard Educational Review* 31: 21-32.

Bundesagentur für Arbeit. 2017. *Perspektiven für Flüchtlinge (PerF)*.
https://con.arbeitsagentur.de/prod/apok/ct/dam/download/documents/dok_ba014364.pdf

Bundesagentur für Arbeit. 2018a. Arbeitsuchende und Arbeitslosenach Staatsangehörigkeit. Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit.
https://www.statistik-arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Fachstatistiken/Arbeitsuche-Arbeitslosigkeit-Unterbeschaeftigung/Produkte/Zeitreihen-Arbeitslose-Arbeitsuchende-Arbeitslosenquoten/Zeitreihen-Arbeitslose-Arbeitsuchende-Arbeitslosenquoten-Nav.html

Bundesagentur für Arbeit. 2018b. Migrations-Monitor Arbeitsmarkt: Personen im Kontext von Fluchtmigration. Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit.
https://www.statistik-arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Interaktive-Angebote/Migration-Arbeitsmarkt/Migration-Personen-im-Fluchtkontext-Nav.html

Casanave, Christine P. 2013. *Controversies in second language writing: Dilemmas and decisions in research and instruction*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Cole, Michael. 2005. Cross-cultural and historical perspectives on the developmental consequences of education. *Human Development* 48: 195-216.

Council of Europe. 2001. Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-%20reference-languages

DeCapua, Andrea. 2016. Reaching students with limited or interrupted formal education: a culturally responsive approach. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 10: 225-237.

DeCapua, Andrea and Helaine W. Marshall. 2011. *Breaking new ground: Teaching students with limited or interrupted formal education*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Dooley, Karen. 2009. Re-thinking pedagogy for middle school students with little, no or severely interrupted schooling. *English Teaching* 8(1): 5-22.

Duran, Mesut and Serkan Şendağ. 2012. A preliminary investigation into critical thinking skills of urban high school students: Role of an IT/STEM program. *Creative Education* 3(2): 241-250.

Flynn, James. 2007. *What is intelligence?* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gauvain, Mary, Heidi Beebe and Shuheng Zhao. 2011. Applying the cultural approach to cognitive development. *Journal of Cognition and Development* 12: 121-133.

Green, Andy. 1990. *Formation: The rise of education systems in England, France and the USA*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Grigorenko, Elena. 2007. Hitting, missing, and in between: A typology of the impact of western education on the non-western world. *Comparative Education* 43: 165-186.

Hein, Sasha, Jodi Reich and Elena Grigorenko. 2015. Cultural manifestation of intelligence in formal and informal learning environments during childhood. In Lena A. Jensen (ed.), *Oxford library of psychology. The Oxford handbook of human development and culture: An interdisciplinary perspective*, 214-229. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kommunales Integrationszentrum Köln (KOFA) (n.d.). Internationale Förderklassen an Kölner Berufskollegs.
https://www.bildung.koeln.de/imperia/md/content/migranten/internationale_foerderklassen_an_berufskollegs_fuer_jugendliche.pdf

Kurvers, Jeanne, Roland Van Hout and Ton Vallen. 2008. Print awareness of adult illiterates: A comparison with young pre-readers and low-educated adult readers. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 22(8): 863-887.

Lukes, Marguerite. 2014. Pushouts, shutouts, and holdouts: Educational experiences of Latino immigrant young adults in New York City. *Urban Education* 49(7): 806-834.

Luria, Alexander, 1976. *Cognitive development: Its cultural and social foundations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Marshall, Helaine W. and Andrea DeCapua. 2013. *Making the transition to classroom success: Culturally responsive teaching for struggling language learners*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Mejía -Arauz, Rebecca, Amy D. Roberts and Barbara Rogoff. 2012. Cultural

variation in balance of nonverbal conversation and talk. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation* 1(4): 207-220.

Ngaka, Willy, George Openjuru, Robert E. Mazur. 2012. Formal and non-formal education in Uganda: the quest for recognition and integration of the diverse learning options for sustainable livelihoods. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities & Nations* 11 (6): 109-121.
https://www.academia.edu/2191994/Ngaka_Willy_Openjuru_George_Robert_%20E._Mazur_2012_Formal_and_Non-%20formal_Education_in_Uganda_The_Quest_for_Recognition_and_Integration_o%20f_the_Diverse_Learning_Options_for_Sustainable_Livelihoods

Nuwenhoud, Annemarie. 2014. The red book: A role-based portfolio for non-literate immigrant learners. In Ineke van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Roeland van Hout (eds.), *Adult literacy, second language and cognition*, 217-234. Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies (CLS).

Olson, David and Nancy Torrance. 1996. *Thought: Explorations in culture and cognition*. New York: Cambridge.

Paradise, Ruth and Barbara Rogoff. 2009. Side by side: Learning by observing and pitching. *Ethos* 37(1): 102-138.

Robinson, Kenneth. 2011. *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. New York: John Wiley.

Rogoff, Barbara. 2014. Learning by observing and pitching in to family and community endeavors: An orientation. *Human Development* 57(2-3): 69-81.

Rogoff, Barbara. 2003. *The cultural nature of human development*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sander, Ilse, Regine Grosser, Claudia Hanke, Viktoria Ilse, Klaus F Mautsch and Daniela Schmeiser. 2015: *DaF im Unternehmen A2. Kurs und Übungsbuch. ['German as a Foreign Language in Work A2. Text and Workbook']*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Sprachen.

Santos, Boavetura de Sousa. 2007. Beyond abyssal thinking: From global lines to ecologies of knowledge. Review 30(1): 45-89.
http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt/media/pdfs/Beyond_Abyssal_Thinking_Review_2007.PDF

Suárez-Orozco, Carola., Allyson Pimentel and Martin Margary. 2009. The significance of relationships: Academic engagement and achievement among newcomer immigrant youth. *Teachers College Record* 111(3): 712-749.

UNHCR. 2018. Figures at a glance, June 2018. https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html

Vinogradov, Patsy. August 2010. Using oral language skills to build on the emerging literacy of adult English learners. CAELA Network Brief.
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED540592.pdf

Educational requirements and skills for social inclusion: the CPIA resources for unaccompanied migrant minors

Roberta T. Di Rosa – Gaetano Gucciardo
Gabriella Argento – Silvana Leonforte

The work hypothesis of the paper is a correlation between language proficiency and social inclusion. From the alphabetization to the Italian language and prospects of social inclusion, the survey conducted in Sicily in 2017, analyses educational needs by interviewing 503 unaccompanied migrant minors (UAM) attending the CPIA in the whole Sicily. By analysing linguistic skills, family, social conditions of departure and permanence in Italy, the research defines the main socio-linguistic profiles and possible paths for training offer and services addressed to UAMs, as key points to start a process of inclusion that transforms in resource what is instead is seen as a problem.

Keywords: unaccompanied minors, skills, social inclusion, education, social work.

1. Introduction[1]

Every day we are witness to both a degeneration of the public debate regarding hospitality and an increase in anti-foreigner sentiments, fuelled by the manipulative style and contents of communication and the media. The scenario of receiving migrant adults and minors (both refugees and not), in the face of hostile policies, is changing, placing at risk the experience accumulated thus far and the wealth of knowledge and good practices geared towards the reception system and inclusion politics.

These on-going changes at the political level, as in the whole of Italian society, and the material consequences within the welcoming organization, make it even more urgent to document and describe

---

[1] The chapter is the result of the joint reflection of the authors; however, in order to attribute authorship to the parts drafted, Section 1 is to be attributed to Gabriella Argento, Sections 2 and 4 to Silvana Leonforte, Section 3 to Gaetano Gucciardo, and Section 5 to Roberta T. Di Rosa.

good practices and interventions of a positive nature, along with the methods of integration and the training courses for the unaccompanied migrant minors (henceforth UAMs).

This paper presents the results of wide-ranging research into the reception systems and the CPIA (Centro Provinciale per l'Istruzione degli Adulti 'District Centres for Adult Education') in Sicily, the Region that accommodates the greatest number of unaccompanied migrant minors (Di Rosa, Gucciardo, Argento and Leonforte, 2019). In fact, 38% of the UAMs entering Italy are received here (data on 31/12/2018, in Greco and Tumminelli 2019: 40). Around a third of the UAMs presently in Italy attend courses (Di Rosa et al. 2019: 52) at the CPIAs, with afternoon and evening classes geared towards middle-school and secondary school leaving certificates; as a consequence, these centres today have a particular significance as "local cultural and educational centres" (Floreancig 2018: 15). Our focus, therefore, has fallen on the CPIAs and this specific sector of the school population, whilst remaining aware that the introduction of these youngsters into the CPIAs is not devoid of problems, since a huge effort of understanding and reciprocal adaptation is demanded, both on the part of the new arrivals and the school structure itself (Grigt 2017: 28).

2. Research into Sicilian CPIAs

As a part of the project *Italiano lingua seconda in soggetti migranti a bassa alfabetizzazione. Ricerca, formazione, didattica* ('Italian as a second language for migrants of low literacy levels. Research, education, teaching'), financed with FFO 2015 funds and run by Mari D'Agostino, we carried out a survey aimed at pinpointing these people's social characteristics, social-cultural background and migratory routes, within a wider-ranging project regarding educational needs of migrant minors in Italy (Di Rosa et al. 2019). We needed to be aware of the fact that "there was a multitude of interlinked aspects in the biographical and educational histories of the learners: cultural and social aspects, aspects relating to gender and age, without neglecting the particulars of their life experiences, and the diversity of their own social and cultural capital which the various

learners might exploit" (Zoletto 2018: 32). An effort was made to investigate the extent to which schools actually managed to tackle the complexity of these persons and their legal requirements. As regards the methodology adopted, over five hundred minors were interviewed; they had been attending courses at the 11 CPIAs in Sicily and been selected on the basis of the number of foreign subjects in the centre of reference. In selecting, as a guideline, we stuck to their distribution in the CPIAs, whilst leaving the interviewers free to select on the basis of availability.

The definitive sample maintains a proportional division of the minors, in line with their incidence in the various Sicilian CPIAs and their division by gender. The sample of 503 UAMs represents about a quarter of the total number of unaccompanied foreign minors attending Sicilian CPIAs. All the questionnaires were administered via direct interviews, most of which were in Italian (over 70%) and the remaining ones in French, in English or with the help of a linguistic mediator. The profiles of these pupils were examined as regards who they were, where they came from, their expectations of the schools and how these expectations were met, which and how many resources were activated for them. Apart from the interviewees' socio-cultural profile, the questions dealt with reasons for emigration, the times and modes of reception, possible contact with relatives, friends, and acquaintances who had already emigrated. The extent of inclusion was investigated with questions about courses attended, opportunities for learning Italian and how free time was being spent. Lastly, an assessment of skills possessed was carried out, especially with regard to which and how many languages were spoken, competence with technological appliances, above all regarding use of smart-phones.

At the same time, with regard to the reception structures, the managers of the CPIAs and a few teachers were interviewed via (ten) semi-structured interviews and (four) focus groups. The school managers were requested to pinpoint their requirements, problems, the potential of the foreign minors attending, the skills activated and the difficulties encountered by the teaching staff. In the focus groups with teachers the needs of the minors were discussed, as well as the skills required to teach foreign minors and the teaching strategies adopted. An analysis of the experiences of the adults assigned to teaching the

UAMs, as regards the challenge they were facing, did, in fact, seem to be an essential step in thinking out dynamics, strategies and teaching tools that might be appropriate for courses which were also, and above all, a "gateway" to social inclusion.

3. Unaccompanied foreign minors in CPIAs: profiles and skills

Ninety-nine per cent of minors interviewed had arrived by sea and the majority were males (95.4%). For both genders, the predominant age-group was 17-year-olds (60.3%), sixteen-year old accounted for little over a fifth of the total; 9.6% of the minors were aged 15 and 6.7% were under the age of fifteen.

From the stories we documented, various types of motivation constituted the reason for migrating; there were those who were fleeing from war-zones, conflict or persecution; others were driven out by a collapse of the family and social unit (orphans or minors whose peer-group had been progressively decimated by emigration) and there were minors in search of new employment prospects (Figure 1).

16; 3%

148; 30%   168; 34%

164; 33%

Fleeing from conflict and persecution

Family and social problems

Seeking work

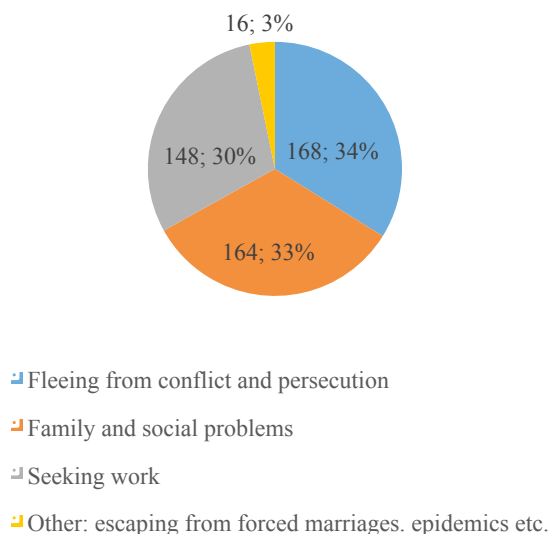Other: escaping from forced marriages. epidemics etc.

Figure 1. Reasons for migration of the UAMs interviewed in Sicily, 2017
(Di Rosa et al. 2019).

With regard to their country of origin, 92.7% of interviewees came from Africa (north, west and sub-Sahara); 5.8% came from Asia. The first five nationalities (by number) in the sample were: Gambia (133), Senegal (71), Nigeria (54), Mali (52) and Ivory Coast (52).

A total of 72.4% said that they had attended state schools, 14.1% private schools and 7.6% Koranic religious schools. The latter data regarding this type of religious institution is deemed to be rather unreliable, since this information hints at possible links with the world of Islamic fundamentalism.

In the overall cross-section, it is important to stress that only one out of ten had attended school for more than ten years and one out of five had never gone to school (Table 1). Most of the minors in the sample came from west Africa and, on the basis of these numbers, it was, on the whole, those from north Africa who had attended school for the longest.

		N°. of years				
		Never attended	From 1 to 5 years	From 6 to 8 years	From 9 to 13 years	Over13 years
Country of origin	North Africa	0	6	5	5	0
		0.0%	37.5%	31.3%	31.3%	0.0%
	West Africa	99	140	125	80	1
		22.2%	31.5%	28.1%	18.0%	0.2%
	East Africa	2	1	0	0	0
		66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Asia	2	13	17	1	0
		6.1%	39.4%	51.5%	3.0%	0.0%
Total		103	160	147	86	1
		20.7%	32.2%	29.6%	17.3%	0.2%

Table 1. Country of origin and years of schooling, 2017 (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

Almost half of the total sample declared that they had been working before migrating (48.9%); 30.4% had been studying and 17.6% had

been neither studying nor working. Those that had been working had been mainly employed in the primary or secondary sectors, with the most common occupations being shepherd, agricultural worker, construction worker, carpenter and mechanic. With regard to their family, over a half stated that their fathers had died (53.3%), whereas those still alive were employed as agricultural workers, labourers, craftsmen, small-time businessmen or were unemployed. Deceased mothers accounted for about a third (32%); those still living worked, with half of these working at home. The death of one's mother often led to the son leaving home and often to a break-down in relations with the rest of the family. From the interviews there emerged several cases of minors, whose reason to migrate emerged in the wake of misunderstandings arising with the father's new family, especially regarding relations with the new wife. The effect of losing one's father seemed to have a different effect. The UAMs found themselves with a family mandate that required them to contribute to the family's economic demands.

Contact with the family in one's county of origin is sporadic; in fact, although all of them state that they use a smartphone (96.2%) and, moreover, every day (31.8% from two to four hours, and as many as 39.4% for more than five), calls home is not very frequent. Only three out of ten speak to their family several times a month, whilst a half speak at most once a month and one out of five never. These figures are influenced by the number of cases of orphans or youngsters who have broken off relations with their family, but we might also assume that the relative infrequency of calls to the family is conditioned by the reluctance to inform one's parents that one is not working, not earning and is still in no condition to start repaying the debt incurred by the family to pay for the initial journey.

With what resources do UAMs introduce themselves into this new context of immigration? Above all, languages: we know that "in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa the situation of multilingualism (is) very common" (D'Agostino 2017: 143, 145), and, in fact, we found that over half the youngsters spoke at least three languages, whilst knowledge of at least one *lingua franca* is very common. Practically nine out of ten (86.1%) spoke French or English (47.9% saying that they spoke English and 45.3% French. 2% spoke both English and French). On the other hand, with regard to Italian, a third of the

youngsters understood little or nothing and over 80% spoke a little or so-so. Strangely, however, 87.5% of the sample said they could write in Italian. As we have seen, their level of schooling was low and also of poor quality: in fact, 20.3% of those interviewed, stated that they had never gone to school, 7.6% had gone to Koranic schools and 23.6% had abandoned their studies after 5 or 6 years at most.

Therefore, over a half of the minors interviewed were practically without basic skills. How could these skills be recuperated? 84.7% of the UAMs interviewed were attending or had attended Italian language courses in their reception centres, an experience that had provided them with basic notions, at least at the level of comprehension, which, in some way, may have facilitated their clash with the school system. However, despite the possibility of attending a literacy course in Italy, the absence of schooling in the country of origin affected language comprehension significantly (Table 2).

| | | Did you attend school in your country? | | |
		Yes	No	Total
How much Italian do you understand?	None	3	4	7
		42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	Little	120	46	166
		72.3%	27.7%	100.0%
	Some	165	36	201
		82.1%	17.9%	100.0%
	A lot	113	16	129
		87.6%	12.4%	100.0%
Total		401	102	503
		79.7%	20.3%	100.0%

Table 2. Comprehension of Italian and school attendance, 2017 (Di Rosa et a. 2019).

In order to examine the skills possessed by the minors (Augelli et al. 2017), a skills index was constructed, thanks to which we can obtain

synthetic information regarding the UAMs' linguistic competences and education.

The index was organized on the basis of a) number of languages spoken by the minor; b) competence, as stated by the interviewee, with regard to comprehension of spoken Italian; c) competence, as stated by the minor, in speaking Italian; d) competence in writing Italian; e) assessment, carried out by the interviewer, of the interviewee's understanding of Italian. The theoretical maximum score is 5; in detail, the average score is 3.1. There is no difference in average scores between males and females. The score increases exponentially in line with age; fourteen-year-olds have an index of 2.3; fifteen-year-olds 3; sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds have a score of 3.1. Those who have attended school have a significantly higher score than those who have not (3.2 versus 2.7) and the greater the number of years of attendance the higher the score for competence.
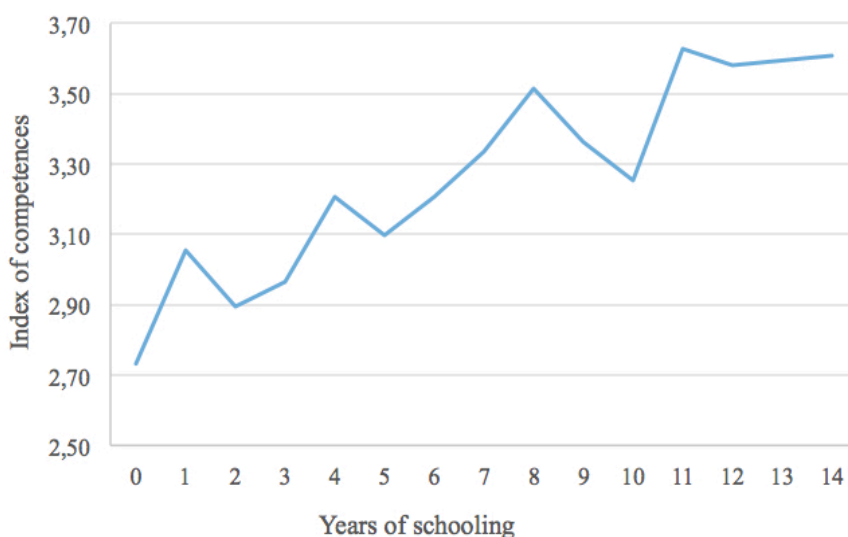

Figure 2. Index of linguistic competence (0-5) per n. of years of schooling, 2017 (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

The index is higher if the youngsters are inserted in higher levels of study (this fact also serves to confirm the validity of the index) and have been in Italy for a longer time (Table 3). There are no differences

in linguistic competence on the basis of the religion of the country of origin.

Level of course of study in which one is inserted.	No.	Average	Std. deviation.
A1	201	2.81	0.78
A2	145	3.38	0.52
B1	21	3.41	0.48
B2	2	3.69	0.11
Third year secondary	112	3.41	0.61
Did not answer	22	2.70	0.59
Total	503	3.13	0.72

Table 3. Index of linguistic competence (0-5) per level of insertion in course of study, 2017 (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

How many months have you been in Italy?	No.	Average	Std. deviation
From 1 to 2 months	10	1.96	1.02
From 3 to 4 months	32	2.79	0.82
From 5 to 6 months	53	2.94	0.69
For more than 6 months	408	3.21	0.67
Total	503	3.13	0.72

Table 4. Index of linguistic competence (0-5) per duration of stay in Italy, 2017 (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

With regard to nationality, youngsters from Asiatic countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan) had higher scores than those from Africa (among whom, the highest scores emerged from Cameroon, Liberia, Libya, Tunisia).

Among the minors interviewed, the level of schooling was rather low and also rather inadequate; one child out of five had never been to school and was to be considered illiterate (20.3%); this figure could be supplemented by those who had only attended religious schools (7.6%). A further fifth had left school without gaining any qualifications (23.6% had completed 5/6 years of school). It can be

concluded that over half of the minors interviewed were seriously lacking in basic skills.

However, it is useful to point out that they actually possess other skills, primarily linguistic, which, if stimulated, might serve as a resource for learning Italian, as well as actual abilities from which teachers could start to reformulate their teaching approaches, in accordance with the educational and language requirements of the UAMs.

Those learners whose language skills cannot be described using the CEFR (*Common European Framework of Reference for languages*) have no real place in this framework, which, as we know, was designed for those possessing reading-writing skills (Arcuri and Mocciaro 2014, 2016). The term "competence" connotes, in this context, those areas of scholastic education that are concerned with the language field and the use of technology; arrangements for individualising other skills would have demanded the utilization of supplementary instruments that were capable of dealing with them.

With regard to linguistic competence, we encountered significant multilingualism among the UAMs interviewed: "the minors, although they may not be able to read or write, are often competent multi-linguists" (Amoruso, D'Agostino and Jaralla 2015). Here we are offered an important resource for social integration within a European model.

The most relevant factor to emerge from the research, which is of importance in discussing the role of Italian as an instrument of social inclusion, is that, among the UAMs interviewed, there was a noticeable presence of a particular profile of "competent illiterates". In fact, if we consider the pre-migratory educational records of these minors, there emerges a picture characterized by profiles of poorly-educated youngsters.

On the other hand, the data regarding ability in several languages was different: on average, the UAMs interviewed knew three languages. On closer inspection there did emerge linguistic abilities, for 56.6% of those interviewed, that varied from a minimum of three languages to a maximum of seven, with a majority being adolescents (65.6%) stating that they spoke at least two or three languages. On the other hand, UAMs who speak only one language account for 7.8%, whereas there is no shortage of cases of those who speak five or more

languages (8.9%). One out of five speaks at least four languages, over half speak three and 92.2% speak at least two. Furthermore, 40.8% speak English and 38.2% French, whereas 7.1% speak both English and French. Therefore, almost nine youngsters out of ten are able to communicate in French or English and a few also in both languages. Among the other principal languages spoken we find Bambara (18.5%), Wolof (29%) and Mandinka (37%). There also speakers of Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Bangla, Sousou, Pular and others.

Therefore, a striking element is represented by the linguistic skills possessed by a significant number of UAMs; a considerable number of these speak a minimum of two languages and a maximum of four; in addition to the increase in the number of languages spoken there is a concomitant increase in abilities in world languages such as French and English. With regard to the resources possessed by the UAMs these represent important and strategic skills from the social perspective. Effective avenues for social inclusion might well be built on these foundations. Previously acquired linguistic skills represent a strongpoint, something to be enhanced and not a hindrance or impediment to learning the language of the hosting country (Favaro, 2011). In fact, it is widely acknowledged that multilingualism fosters processes of interaction, reciprocity of exchange, the development of intercultural skills. Generally speaking, and not only for the UAMs, multilingualism, regardless of the level of competence, is considered a fundamental benefit, in the same way as a complete mastery of one's mother tongue and the guarantee of being able to conserve it within the frontiers of the hosting country (Council of Europe, 2002).

3.1. Italian language skills

With regard to Italian language skills, only 1.4% of the UAMs encountered in the Sicilian CPIAs did not understand the language at all; 33% understood a little, whereas 40% stated that they understood sufficiently well and 25.6% said they understood a lot (see Table 1).

Of the UAMs interviewed, 84.7% were attending or had attended Italian language courses in the reception centre that was hosting them at the time of the interview; the minors at the CPIAs had already mostly received the basics of the language in the reception structures,

an experience that provided them with the basics, at least at the level of comprehension, which in some ways alleviated the initial impact of the school system. It should be stressed, however, that these initial experiences of studying Italian are neither homogeneous from one centre to another, nor within the same centre over the course of the years: the provision of Italian lessons is subject to variations linked to budget availability, the quality of welcome of the various centres and also the professional preparation of the actual teachers. The latter are often not professional teachers of Italian, but general teachers or mere volunteers, who help to provide the basic rudiments of the Italian language in the period following arrival, but before the minors are inserted in the school system.

How much Italian do you understand?	%
Little	33.0
Just enough	40.0
A lot	25.6
I don't understand it	1.4
Total	100.0

Table 5. Self-assessment of level of comprehension of Italian of UAMs interviewed (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

School attendance in the country of origin has a significant effect on language comprehension, as shown in Table 6:

Did you go to school in your native country?	No	Yes	Total
How much Italian do you understand?			
Nothing	57.1	42.9	100.0
Little	27.7	73.3	100.0
Just enough	17.9	82.1	100.0
A lot	12.4	87.6	100.0

Table 6. Relationship between self-assessment of Italian language comprehension and school attendance (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

As regards Italian language speaking skills, the most frequent answers were "little" and "so so". Only 18.9% think that they speak very well (see Table 7).

The first decisive element is the length of stay. In fact, the longer one has been in Italy, obviously, the more language one learns and speaks in a variety of situations.

How well do you speak Italian?	%
Not at all	40.6
So and so	40.6
Well	18.9
Total	100.0

Table 7. Self-assessment of Italian speaking skills on the part of the MSAs interviewed (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

The second pivotal factor in the learning curve is the relationship with the context of incorporation. In fact, when juxtaposing one's perceived language competence and the experience of contact with the hosting context, it can be seen that, the better one's Italian language skills, the more opportunities arise for socializing and communicative exchanges outside school, with people of different nationalities and with groups of Italians of the same age (see Table 8).

In what situations do you use Italian?	How much Italian do you understand?	
	None or very little	Enough or a lot
Only at school	60.0%	40.0%
With the staff and school	57.4%	42.6%
With the staff and friends	17.6%	82.4%
With friends and school	16.7%	83.3%
Total	34.5%	65.5%

Table 8. Situations in which Italian is used at the declared level of comprehension (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

Those who have the opportunity to speak Italian with friends demonstrate a better level of Italian than those who have no friendships or, nonetheless, do not speak Italian with their friends. Naturally, there is a reciprocal relationship between the two factors, but, in any case, having friends who provide opportunities for

interaction in Italian represents a pivotal factor for swift and effective learning of the local language. As regards Italian writing skills, 87.5% state that they know how to write, whereas 12% say that they cannot write Italian.

3.2. Use of technology

Reference to the use of technology on the part of UAMs may represent an interesting dimension for understanding how this might be linked to the learning of Italian. In fact, 96.2% of the UAMs interviewed use mobile phones or smartphones.

The figures relating to the time spent on the device reflect the extent to which young people rely on their phones. Interview data reveals that 33.1% use them for 2 to 4 hours per day, whereas 40.9% use them for more than 5 hours per day.

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	31	6.4
Between 1 and 2 hours	95	19.6
Between 2 and 4 hours	160	33.1
More than 5 hours	198	40.9
Total	484	100.0

Table 9. For how many hours per day do you use your mobile phone/ smartphone? (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

Naturally, the smartphone is used for multiple functions: phoning, going on social network sites, listening to music, but also listening to the Koran, watching football matches or films in their native languages, for games, music, reading, translation and study. Only a small number (4.6%) use them only for phoning or only for social networking (9.3%) or do not actually own one. However, at the same time, the specific category of young immigrants who have arrived unaccompanied, often use their mobile phones/smartphones for particular purposes; in fact, applications for translation into Italian and study in general are widespread (33.1%), as are applications to remind one of the moments for prayer and reading of the Koran (14%).

The data gathered from the interviews confirms that, for the UAMs, the mobile phone/smartphone plays a crucial role in both the pre-migratory phase, to organize the journey, and during the actual journey and the reception phase. In fact, for these minors, once they have arrived in the hosting country, it is only through these devices that they can keep in touch with family, maintain a sense of belonging, see photos and hear the voices of their relatives (Save The Children 2017).

The stated uses were examined (Lo Verde 2018) with particular reference to the distinction between the social and relational interlinks initiated by the migrants. Firstly, as instruments of social bonding, which is to say, maintaining links with one's native community, with social bridges, as a means for building and maintaining contact with other communities. Secondly, as social links, this time in the sense of instruments of exchange and linking with local institutions.

Attempts were also made (Kozachenko 2013) to verify whether the function varied in accordance with different moments of the migratory experience: its utilization in the pre-migratory phase, instrumental in acquiring information and contact with persons and essential resources for the success of the journey; its utilization in the phases of arrival and adaptation in order to orient oneself and re-programme the subsequent stages; utilization on completing the undertaking of incorporation, as an expressive moment of the level of inclusion achieved.

In the case of the minors interviewed, all of whom found themselves in the phase of initial adaptation, intensive use of the smartphone was observed, particularly in relation to the maintaining of emotional ties with the family and community, and as an instrument of identity-fixing, and adherence to rules. In other words, the mobile phone enables one to preserve one's cultural roots and personal identity in a new context lacking principal reference points; with a mobile phone one can always entertain oneself, make friends, plan one's subsequent steps on the road to integration, as well as getting to know the customs and rules of the hosting country, even learning Italian better via specific applications or simply by tuning in to social networks or video channels.

A new instrument and, at the same time, a new space emerges for young immigrants on their way to social inclusion: the virtual world,

entered and exploited mainly via the mobile phone/smartphone; this should be borne in mind for its potential strategic role and for the great impact it has on minors (Premazzi 2010).

Use of mobile phone/smartphone	Frequency	Percentage
Only for calling the family	23	4.6
Only for going on the social network	47	9.3
Only for listening to music	11	2.2
For all the hypotheses mentioned	215	42.7
For telephoning and for the social network	59	11.7
For telephoning and listening to music	18	3.6
For social networking and listening to music	103	20.5
Other	10	2.0
Does not use cell phone/smartphone	17	3.4
Total	503	100.0

Table 10. Use of mobile phone / smartphone (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

3.3. Work experiences

With regard to skills, it might be pointed out that 48.9% of those interviewed stated that they had worked in their country of origin, whereas only 30.4% stated that they had studied.

Activity carried out	Frequency	Percentage
Worked	246	48.9
Didn't work	84	16.7
Studied	153	30.4
Other	12	2.4
Didn't answer	5	1.0
Not applicable	3	0.6
Total	503	100.0

Table 11. Activities carried out in country of origin (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

Starting working at an early age in contexts characterized by very little legal protection for minors (if not exactly exploitation) seems to

be one of the basic elements in the ambivalent relationship of UAMs with the school. On the one hand they perceive the school as an essential resource for entering the world of work; on the other hand, however, they have to go through the existential shift they underwent even before leaving, towards a day-to-day existence that offers no time for study. Their commitment to keep on with their studies and education should be interpreted in its connection to their past experiences. The most widespread UAM profile is that of a male close to adulthood, who comes from a large family, in which the parents are often absent, from a low social background, linked to a rural cultural background. The high school drop-out rate of these minors back in their country of origin should also be considered. Furthermore, those who attended school did so for very few years or had attended a Koranic school; these schools were mainly informal with regard to schooling and literacy. The classic 3 Rs approach (reading, writing, arithmetic) is seen to be fragmented and there is an abundance of total illiteracy (D'Agostino 2017).

4. Teaching and organizational solutions to educational needs of UAMs

Because of its constitutive regulations, the CPIA might represent an essential resource for UAMs, since the envisaged teaching activity in the CPIA (geared towards adults, with particular reference to disadvantaged groups), would be supplemented by welcoming activities, orientation and accompaniment; furthermore, this would aim to provide "assistance in creating one's own learning path", to support "recognition of educational credits and certification of learning progress" and to foster "the fruition of orientation services throughout one's life".

However, the UAM, as a new type of student, represents a complex educational challenge for the teaching staff, with regard to both his/her learning profile and because of the migratory memories that carried from their past; these painful experiences make teaching even more difficult, in the shape of background interference accompanying and affecting the minors' relationships with their new experiences. These traumatic experiences leave a profound mark on

the youngsters and affect their behaviour in class, their ability to concentrate their attention during lessons, their degree of participation in class dynamics, both with the teacher and others in the peer-group.

Managers and teachers are investing intense reserves of energy and resources in responding to these "special" needs" (Bartoli, Carsetti and Mammarella 2013), experimenting with new methods such as learning through realistic tasks, the structuring of teaching by modules, planning teaching activity around creative techniques, music and theatre. What makes the CPIA experience "special" today is the positive feeling generated by the combination of the capacity to invest and the experimentation on the part of managers and teachers; there are obvious organizational limitations but there is also an elevated motivation to learn on the part of the minors, who are determined to obtain the maximum from the lessons they attend, regardless of the duration and continuity of their attendance. Teaching in the CPIAs is based on an educational relationship with the minor, through novel techniques which do without books and involve mime and, more generally, through scaffolding with non-verbal communication. This experimentation has brought considerable benefits; in fact, our research showed that the learning of Italian was proceeding quite rapidly even though the minors interviewed had actually had little schooling.

However, observation of the present reality shows how, in order to be able to carry out this integration successfully, it will be necessary to invest in the CPIAs in terms of development and consolidation of the courses, in order to overcome the existing difficulties as regards premises and personnel, to update and experiment in teaching, with co-ordination between internal and external activities and between projects and general activities.

From the point of view of proposed contents, there is a widespread feeling of inadequacy among teachers regarding the subjects offered (as dictated by ministerial protocols and mostly linked to "ordinary" courses of literacy), compared to the actual needs of the UAMs, to whom a more flexible curriculum should be offered (IT courses, an increase in the number of L2 Italian courses at various levels; introduction of pre-A1 level courses).

The teachers confirmed that, although these minors struggle to endure long periods of learning with teacher-based lessons, they are

actually capable of activating resources and skills in lessons integrating new educational approaches that are more accessible to individuals with their characteristics (Amoruso et al. 2015; D'Agostino and Sorce 2016). These same teachers have pointed out the fact that the educational needs of the UAMs often simply consist in the need for a more psycho-social type accompaniment and orientation in the acknowledgement of abilities and skills by the hosting society, a requirement to which they are not always able to respond (Di Rosa 2017)

Another relevant theme is the lack of relations and collaboration between teachers and representatives for the minors (tutors or responsible persons from the community). A feeling of isolation in their educational commitment is especially noticeable among the teachers, particularly with regard to an absence of continuity between school activities and time spent outside school, in which there is very little space and time to consolidate the learning initiated during school hours. The interviews with representatives of the community, carried out during our research, show that it is also true that community representatives are subject to a rapid turnover, which makes it difficult to have stable interlocutors; in the communities themselves, generally speaking, few resources are destined for interaction with the local area, or as a back-up to the minors' studies (Di Rosa et al. 2019).

Lastly, various difficulties that emerged from different areas at certain moments of this research, deriving from the organization of CPIAs, should be taken into consideration. In fact, in the face of a considerable investment, the limitations arising from the quality of the workforce and the resources available to the managers were carefully noted. These often proved to be an obstacle, as in the case of accepting new registrations during the year, due to the unpredictability of new arrivals and newly welcomed minors. Then there was the absence of specific teacher-training for teaching foreign pupils, as well as poor incentives for teaching flexibility and the absence of mediators within the workforce.

Teachers do not often receive support from professional figures in the linguistic-cultural field, who might help facilitate the relationship with the students in overcoming the difficulties that arise in class, both in communication between teachers (who usually only speak Italian) and pupils (who often speak other local languages and a

lingua franca), and in relational dynamics linked to more specifically cultural aspects.

The CPIAs do boast significant strongpoints: above all, being a state school should be a guarantee of seriousness and homogeneity throughout the country; this constitutes an essential resource in moving from the initial emergency, i.e., the merely material act of welcoming, to ways of integration and safeguard of minors' rights, also as regards preventing social unrest and deviant behaviour. However, in order for this role to be fully enacted there is a need for a dual investment: in teacher-training with regard to specific teaching methodology and the supplementing of educational activities with psycho-social and transcultural intervention, capable of making the most of the minors' skills and, in this way, betting on the added value that positive integration of these minors might bring to our society.

5. The Italian language: the road towards social inclusion

The data gathered regarding the UAMs' experience regarding the opportunities offered by the CPIAs and the experiences of the teachers and managers involved in the training, permits us to reaffirm with even greater emphasis the central importance of the combination of Italian language skills with prospects for social inclusion, especially now that the latest regulatory provisions envisage cuts in reception organizations, with an actual repudiation in the providing of migrants with literacy-skills.

For UAMs, and for immigrants in general, the Italian language is, above all, the language of "survival" (D'Agostino 2017b: 142), but during one's stay it also becomes a badge of belonging (Vedovelli 2010).

In fact, learning Italian is not only instrumental to a successful migratory project, but it also contributes to the process of defining one's identity in the context of reception, whilst, at the same time, contributing to strengthening what is defined as the "cultural tearing" of these young people (Bichi 2008), overcoming the state of "temporariness" (Sayad 2002) not only in spatial terms, but on the relational, emotional and cultural levels.

Lack of language is one of the principal indicators of poverty, which manifests itself in a context of marginalization and represents an obstacle to the process of being welcomed. Schooling is a fundamental element in supporting minors in the necessary redefinition of their terms of self-representation and self-identification (Biagioli 2015), in the transition from a condition of sharing symbolic cultural codes, in facing the new and unknown reality of the hosting society, a context full of identity fractures, frustration and lack of representation for newcomers (Moro 2006).

Among the numerous stages faced by UAMs for incorporation into the context of reception (sanitary checks, identification through photos and fingerprints, accommodation in reception centres. etc.), participation in Italian language courses takes on three important aspects: legality, since knowledge of the language is a prerequisite for the renewal of residence permits; functionality, in that it enables one to participate actively and autonomously in the daily life of the hosting society; and finally, relationality, leading to belonging (becoming a citizen), access (being able to participate and survive in Italian society) and, maybe, equity (being able to participate on a level equal to Italians), guaranteeing the conditions for obtaining a new citizenship (Bianchi, 2016).

Knowledge of the Italian language becomes a tool with which to decipher the surrounding reality, shifting grammar from the field of notions to that of democratic opportunity. For this reason, Italian language literacy provides an opening towards social inclusion, not only because it provides access to education and work, but, above all, because it secures the possibility of fully exercising one's civil, political and social rights; this then means being fully incorporated into a society (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali 2016).

Access to schooling can therefore be considered the pivotal point where minors have the possibility of acquiring the right to participate in public life as new citizens of a country that is to accommodate them (Augelli et al. 2018).

In order for this to be transformed into actual opportunities for integration, it is necessary to guarantee them a learning experience in an educational context that is ready to tackle the challenges offered by their presence and provide appropriate courses for their socio-linguistic profiles.

The aim of inclusion of UAMs through literacy today no longer seems to be on the national agenda, in contrast to that which was implemented in 2017: Law no. 47/2017 "Regulations regarding protection measures for unaccompanied foreign minors: guidelines for the right to study of pupils removed from their family of origin", adopted by the *Ministero per l'Istruzione, l'Università e la Ricerca* and the *Autorità garante per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza*, December 11th, 2017. The changes applied following the Decree-law, Oct.4, 2018, no.113, "Urgent regulations regarding international protection and immigration, public security […] witnessed the first cuts in the reception system, in the shape of access on the part of new arrivals to Italian courses and education in general, with serious repercussions on the quality of the reception system and safeguard of the UAMs' right to study.

This does not mean that guaranteeing migrant minors access to education is any less urgent and necessary and from observation of the CPIAs, in fact, one might conclude and emphasize that the primary importance of access to schooling and education for the UAMs is in providing access to legal protection, rights and participation.

The data obtained from research provides us with a picture in which one can see how, for the UAMs, the learning of Italian has been advancing quite rapidly, even though the adolescents interviewed have a low level of schooling. Bearing in mind this background of poor or insufficient schooling it is important to recognize the widespread multi-lingual ability and competence in world languages.

The relatively young age, allied to the multilingualism typical of life in many parts of Africa (given the mixing of tribes and colonialism, which imported additional languages) where these adolescents were brought up, has made them particularly receptive with regard to language-learning.

For these young people, the opportunity to have access to school in Italy represents the main gateway to sharing a way of life that will be an improvement on the one they are leaving and which, in any case, offers them the hope of having better future prospects and more success than in the countries they are leaving behind.

Schooling for the UAMs can serve as a psycho-social, as well as educational intervention, in such a way as to mitigate not only the difficulties of learning the host country's language, but also

overcoming the shortcomings from insufficient previous education experiences and possible cultural deprivation they suffered in the country of origin, often linked to economic difficulties.

These considerations lead one to stress the importance of providing minors with study courses linked to their need for language; if not taken into consideration at the time of working out the study-plan, these might well compromise the minor's relationship with learning opportunities (Emerson 2009), rendering possible access to education fruitless; consequently the minor may miss out on an opportunity to build upon his/her life experiences, exploiting specific cultural assets, as well as affecting his/her future migratory plans.

Naturally, the minors' immediate educational needs are to learn Italian, but the testimonies of managers and teachers describe how complicated teaching in class can be, with students of varying age, language and preparation; however, *riottosità all'apprendimento* ('opposition to learning') does not actually emerge (D'Agostino 2017). Problems arise because of irregular attendance, there being limited and unequal access; on the one hand, the CPIAs are not in a position to accommodate all the UAMs and, on the other, not all foreign minors are given the opportunity to attend. In line with other research (Grigt 2017: 35), analysis of the data collected from this field research highlights the challenges that the Italian school system will have to face in order to guarantee refugee youngsters and UAMs their right to study and to quality education. In fact, a comparison of the most recent studies regarding this issue (Santagati and Colussi 2019; Traverso 2018) demonstrates that its greater investment in training teachers is indispensable.

Above and beyond the limitations that we might highlight and imagine with regard to this local experience, it clearly emerges that inclusion of UAMs in CPIAs is crucial to any strategies on the road to integration; all this might have led us to hope for specific and increased attention, both at the scientific and political levels, in the wake of the Guidelines published in 2017 (Autorità Garante Infanzia 2017), were it not for the emergence of a political alignment moving in the opposite direction.

Together with managers, teachers and the actual students, we remain of the firm opinion, and foster the resolute conviction, that schooling should be provided for migrants arriving in Italy, since this

establishes the basic condition for future social inclusion; therefore, apart from these unsettling glimpses of fresh scenarios, research into the Sicilian situation reveals how the CPIAs have proved to be educational contexts capable of being all-inclusive, in spite of structural and cultural limitations; in fact, they have managed to "enhance the Freirean link between language and processes of emancipation" (Zoletto 2018: 36) having, thus, endeavoured to foster effective ways towards acquiring citizenship for the UAMs.

References

Amoruso, Marcello, Mari D'Agostino and Youssuf Latif Jaralla. 2015. *Dai barconi all'università. Percorsi di inclusione linguistica per minori stranieri non accompagnati* (Strumenti e ricerche 5). Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Arcuri, Adriana and Egle Mocciaro. 2016. Il profilo professionale del docente di italiano L2 per utenze fragili. In Anna De Marco (ed.), *Lingua al plurale: la formazione degli insegnanti*, 309-317. Perugia: Guerra.

Adriana Arcuri and Egle Mocciaro (eds.). 2014. *Verso una didattica linguistica riflessiva. Modelli di formazione iniziale per insegnanti di italiano come lingua non materna* (Strumenti e ricerche 4). Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Augelli, Alessandra, Linda Lombi and Pierpaolo Triani. 2018. Unaccompanied minors: Exploring needs and resources to plan socio-educational programs into school settings. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education* 10(1): 43-61.

Bartoli, Cecilia, Marco Carsetti and Chiara Mammarella. 2013. *Integrazione in classe e gestione della dinamica di gruppi multilingui e multiculturali*. In Maria Rosa Turrisi (ed.), *Insegnare italiano nella classe plurilingue. Un'esperienza di formazione in servizio* (Strumenti e ricerche 3), 57-75. Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Biagioli, Raffaella. 2015. *Le attuali emergenze pedagogiche: i minori stranieri non accompagnati. Indagine nelle scuole della Regione Toscana*. https://flore.unifi.it/retrieve/handle/2158/1063250/181397/Biagioli%20pdf

Bianchi, Lavinia. 2016. Umanizzazione di Frontiera. Una teoria grounded per la relazione educativa con i minori stranieri non accompagnati. *Osservatorio Isfol* 1-2: 87-100.

Bichi, Rita. 2008. *Separated children. I minori stranieri non accompagnati*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Consiglio d'Europa. 2002. *Quadro comune europeo di riferimento per le lingue. Apprendimento, insegnamento, valutazione*. Trad. it. a cura di Daniela Bertocchi e Franca Quartapelle. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.

D'Agostino, Mari. 2017a. Analfabeti nell'Italia di ieri e di oggi. Dati, modelli, persone, parole. La lezione di Tullio De Mauro. *Bollettino del Centro di Studi filologici e linguistici italiani* 28: 102-142.

D'Agostino, Mari. 2017b. L'italiano e l'alfabeto per i nuovi arrivati. *Testi e linguaggi* 11: 141-156.

D'Agostino, Mari and Giuseppina Sorce (eds.). 2016. *Nuovi migranti e nuova didattica. Esperienze al CPIA Palermo 1* (Strumenti e ricerche 6). Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Di Rosa, Roberta Teresa. 2017. Politiche. servizi e migranti: questioni aperte sull'integrazione. *La Rivista Delle Politiche Sociali* 1: 121-131.

Di Rosa, Roberta Teresa, Gaetano Gucciardo, Gabriella Argento and Silvana Leonforte. 2019. *Leggere. scrivere. esserci. Minori stranieri non accompagnati: bisogni formativi e processi di inclusione.* Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Emerson, Eric. 2009. Relative child poverty, income inequality, wealth and health. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, p. 425, January 28, 2009. http://www.precaution.org/lib/09/prn_effects_ofchildhood_poverty.090115.htm

Favaro, Graziella. 2011. *A scuola nessuno è straniero*. Firenze: Giunti.

Kozachenko, Ivan, 2013. Horizon scanning report: ICT and migration. *Working Papers of the Communities & Culture Network*. Leeds: Whiteroses University Consortium. https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/114761

Lo Verde, Fabio Massimo. 2018. *Migranti, social media e percorsi di socializzazione di lungo raggio: ancora sull'uso del social media.* In Serenella Greco and Giuseppina Tumminelli (eds.), *Migrazioni in Sicilia 2017.* Osservatorio Migrazioni. Istituto di Formazione Politica "Pedro Arrupe", Centro Studi Sociali. Milano e Udine: Mimesis Edizioni.

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali. 2016. *Piano Accoglienza 2016*. Roma.

Moro, Marie Rose. 2006. *Bambini di qui venuti da altrove. Saggio di transcultura*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Premazzi, Viviana. 2010. *L'integrazione online. Nativi e migranti fuori e dentro la rete.* Torino: FIERI.

Saglietti, Marzia and Cristina Zucchermaglio. 2010. Minori stranieri non accompagnati. Famiglie d'origine e operatori delle comunità: quale rapporto? *Rivista di Studi Familiari* 1: 40-58.

Save The Children. 2017. *Atlante dei Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati*. https://www.savethechildren.it/sites/default/files/AtlanteMinoriMigranti2017.pdf

Sayad, Abdelmalek. 2002. *La doppia assenza*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.

Vedovelli, Massimo. 2010. *Guida all'italiano per stranieri. Dal Quadro comune europeo alla Sfida salutare.* Roma: Carocci.

Learning by doing: de-constructing linguistic attitudes and stereotypes through narration

Sabina Fontana

The study describes the results of an Experiential Learning (EL) course directed to the professionals of a C.A.R.A. (an Immigration Centre for asylum protection, located in Eastern Sicily). An emic and etic approach was used to understand attitudes and stereotypization processes within and outside the migrant community of the Centre. The results highlight the importance of working with professionals and migrants by using a narration approach in order to develop mutual cultural understanding and ultimately to promote effective models of inclusion.

Keywords: plurilingualism, norms, linguistic attitudes, ethnography, experiential learning.

> *No one educates anyone else*
> *nor do we educate ourselves,*
> *we educate one another*
> *in the context of living in this world*
> (Freire 1968)

1. Introduction

Although recent countries of in-migration, like Italy, are currently trying to come into terms with the increasing pluralism of their population, various difficulties are faced not only because of the lack of a reception protocol but also because of the unawareness of the implications linguistic and cultural diversity may have.

Generally, any policy of inclusion intends to go far beyond the simple idea of providing facilities for migrants. This is highlighted in the Resolution [1437 I.4 (2005)] of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:

The concept of integration aims at ensuring social cohesion through accommodation of diversity understood as a two-way process. Immigrants have to accept the laws and basic values of European societies and, on the other hand, host societies have to respect immigrants' dignity and distinct identity and to take them into account when elaborating domestic policies.

In this sense, all host countries have been invited to re-think all kinds of public services, housing, admission to the labour market and education programmes to meet the needs of immigrants. However, to promote "a two-way process" and to take into account immigrants dignity implies also to understand what their needs are. Observational data shows that often services are not re-thought following migrants' real needs but rather practitioners' representations of what their needs are. For example, a map designed for migrants should show not only where the main public services are, but also what kind of service the newcomers can ask for. An effective reception protocol should be tailored to the newcomers' needs, perceptions and expectations in order to prepare and inform them about norms and habits of their host country and allow them to adapt and function appropriately in the new society. However, this appears to be quite difficult when discursive formulations tend to frame migration as 'forced' or 'voluntary', legal or illegal, oversimplifying the complexity of this phenomenon (Mayblin 2019). We know that migration is a complex process that goes beyond our capacity of governing or guiding it and that resists any kind of generalization. People come from a multitude of countries, they move for various reasons and during their journey, meet a wide range of factors, such as changing immigration laws, smuggling chains, humanitarian support, abuses. Any overgeneralization or reduction of the complexity affects their life and the host countries policies. Allegedly, current deficits in the reception and in the process of inclusion of migrants are the starting point of populist arguments against any kind of migration policy. For example, in their attempts of understanding migration, policy-makers have developed narratives of steering (Boswell et al. 2010) in order to frame the nature and scale of the problem and the possible solutions and interventions. However, their attempts have led them to drastically simplify it by framing it as a security problem and promoting policies mainly in this direction.

Overgeneralization and ethnocentrism seem to drive migrant policies with the following results: 1. we tend to forget that behind the category 'migrant' there are many different worlds; 2. we think we know what they need and we tend to reduce cultural complexities to linguistic differences. The result is that the reception system in Italy is

not based on a stable and consolidated migration policy but on a series of actions which are disconnected and are justified by a continuous emergency and urgency. The current situation then, does not allow both migrants and professionals to cooperate to design a sustainable project of life. For this reason, we maintain that when starting from analysing the nature of communication and of relationships, we have to think about what is possible to do for migrants at the individual and community level.

Our analysis starts from the meaning of the word *reception* that implies an attitude based on the acceptation of diversity. Reception means to be open to someone, to include otherness within a community and within our own inner self. In other words, reception is based not only on the accommodation of the community but also of the individual. Reception is based on acceptation, accommodation, inclusion and excludes judgement. It is based on empathy and on the capacity of understanding the emotional states of other people. Any communication arises from an emotional dialogue and is shaped by empathy and modified by interaction. The second fundamental step is the capacity of listening. It is an emotional active capacity that enables an empathetic understanding (I listen to you to understand your story, your life, the person you are) (Fontana 2017). This paper will explore a policy of reception that promotes an *accommodation of diversity* based on a co-production approach (Ostrom 1996) that has been experimented in Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers (C.A.R.A.), in Sicily, a centre for immigrants, where about 3,000 immigrants live waiting for their political refugee status (Fontana 2017). Migrants' inclusion policies co-produced and co-designed by migrants and practitioners together are more likely to be successful as they develop what matters for the people who receive services by sharing responsibilities. Integration can become a two-way process only if the migrants take part and contribute to this exchange that enriches both migrants and people of the receiving countries.

2. When sharing a language is not enough

To understand what language is, we start from a few examples of communication failure taken from our data. Food, parenting and

health care seem to represent some of the most critical areas as they involve daily practices, beliefs, rituals and traditions. Practitioners tend to be strongly ethnocentric (Taylor 1994) and to interpret culturally-bound behaviour as something "wrong". For example, the headmaster of one school in the nearby complained about the fact that all Muslim children felt discriminated at school because they could not eat ham. He argued that this "useless habit" was a factor of discrimination and that "either newcomers accept our rules or they come back home". Cultural variations in parenting beliefs and behaviours are also significant. Individuals experience unique patterns of caregiving and parental cognitions are thought to shape parenting practices. Therefore, a social support worker who saw a mother holding her child upside down, could not imagine that she was doing a typical African massage for newborn babies. Accommodation of diversity means also to take into account migrants' prejudices. During my research in the C.A.R.A., mediators that were previously migrants told me that before leaving home they were recommended to be careful of the white men who can steal their blood. This information was very useful to understand the reason why some newcomers literally refused to have their blood drawn.

As we have seen, different cultural and social background can make mutual understanding difficult even though linguistic mediation is provided because language is not only grammar but also "a meta-language, that is a system to talk about the world" (Cardona 1985: 34). Language is dynamic and conveys many different meanings that participants at the communicative events are able to interpret because they share that specific historical, social and cultural dimension. This means that language users are able to use the language not only correctly but also appropriately. Given that the linguistic competence is the knowledge of the language code, i.e., its grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics), communicative competence includes the sociolinguistic competence that is the capacity of making the appropriate linguistic choice. It includes also gestures made with the body, with the face, and with the hands that are culturally bound (Kendon 2004; McNeill 2005). In fact, in communicative events, it is necessary to learn what aspects or traits could be considered part of a socio-linguistic and cultural attitude. For example, Eritrean people may not look straight at professional's eyes to express respect. The

same behaviour in Italy will be interpreted as rude, ambiguous, and inappropriate. Being appropriate implies the knowledge of the taboos in a culture, of politeness indices, of the politically correct term to use in each different situation, of how a specific attitude (irony, authority, courtesy, friendliness) is expressed.

[…] a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others (Hymes 1974: 277).

In other words, appropriateness is related to the setting of the communication, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. In cross-cultural communication, assumptions made about other cultures can affect their reciprocal understanding. If we consider that values, beliefs, perceptions and concepts are not the same, it may easily happen that assumptions based on one's own cultural experience may readily crystallise into a set of biases and prejudices about the migrant. This could ultimately represent a great obstacle in setting a dialogue and understanding their needs.

3. Exploring the notion of culture and identity in a C.A.R.A. community

When migrants arrive at the C.A.R.A. of Mineo, they have to learn where they are, what they can or should do, who is the "European white man", the implicit and explicit norms of behavior and interaction within a community composed of migrants waiting for permission, professionals and staff members, police, military forces and health support service. For example, they have to learn to trust police and military forces that often they may have experienced as corrupt in their countries and that the white man is not interested in his/her blood as people of their community told them. As we have previously argued, linguistic competence is not enough to

communicate. We need to accommodate our communication to the expectations of one or more addressee in a particular context.

There is a constant accommodation in the C.AR.A.: migrants enter a new environment with their own representations, their prejudices and beliefs, professionals and staff receive the newcomers starting from their prejudices, beliefs and experience of migrants. Approaching the concept of community means to consider the differential distribution of power in society and in the social environment (Goffman 1961). This is true also in a C.A.R.A., where as Goffman (1961: 285) noted, "some persons (clients) place themselves in the hands of other persons". Community is not a label nor a feature of a category of people. It is a relational issue that has two dimensions: the community and the individual level that are mutually dependent. Community is a multi-level and multidimensional process that occurs in a space, mental, physical and/or virtual. In more specific terms, a micro-, meso- and macro-level can be distinguished (see Asselin et al. 2006). Interaction between persons, their attitudes towards each other and towards the professionals that manage the social environment are included in the micro-level of analysis. The nature of this interaction can be dyadic, triadic or group-based. It is dyadic when it occurs between two people that can be in the same community position (both are migrants) or with a different status (one is migrant and the other one is a professional or a staff member); it is triadic when it involves the newcomer, the professional and the mediator; it is group-based when people belong to the same nationality or institution. However, this does not apply when professionals and migrants share the same nationality. Some mediators coming originally from African countries, have told the researcher that they are not trusted by migrants because they think that they have lost their identity.

When we look at the meso-level, we consider the impact relations between newcomers, staff members and professionals may have in the social environment. For example, the foundation of a mosque within the C.A.R.A. is the result of this interaction.

On the macro-level, processes can result of goal-oriented action of professionals or/and newcomers outside the C.A.R.A aiming at improving or empowering newcomers or at making services more effective.

The *Parliament of CARA* is the result of the accommodation between professionals' services and newcomers' needs. Professionals answered newcomers' needs starting from their own experience of representativeness which is often unknown to migrants. Many of them voted for the first time at the Parliament of CARA. The Parliament of C.A.R.A represents migrants also in public events, when members of the local Prefecture or the Italian government came to visit the Centre.

In this perspective, it is interesting to highlight identity strategies which are:

[…] procedures worked out (at the conscious or at the unconscious level of elaboration) by a social actor (individual or collective) for the attainment of one, or more than one, (conscious or unconscious) objectives; these procedures are elaborated as a function of the interactive situation, depending on diverse determinations (socio-historical, cultural, psychological) of that situation" (Camilleri et al. 1990: 24).

Migrants often can react in function of the representation they have about what is the problem, the identity victory or gains and the objectives perceived, but also in relation to the community where they live the pressure they receive in one or another direction (Camilleri et al. 1990). What does identity mean in a C.A.R.A.? When we create categories for identities, we run the risk of framing them as "cookie cutters" or as objective notions ready to be picked up, described and classified by researchers (Geertz 1999). The concept of identity has been quite debated and includes notions like self, sameness and otherness. These concepts are better understood in terms of processes that involve the people living in a C.A.R.A. Sameness is a wide concept that in a foreign country can be related to the skin colour, to the country or even to the continent. Otherness is represented by people working at the CARA and the system of norms, value, the cultural norms they share. Self is a process involving the individual, his/her aims and projects and affecting the micro and macro community (Baofu 2012).

Identity is then a relational dynamic concept because self, sameness and otherness always interact in a different way. Chakravorty Spivak (1999) maintains that when western policies promote otherness, they represent it as separate and build a sort of

conceptual apartheid. There is not a single way to be Italian, Egyptian or Syrian: there are different modes of behaviour that are individual but at the same time can become typical of a certain group, but when they turn into labels they automatically might turn into stereotypes. Identity, culture and language imply a systematicity to self and others that cannot be dealt with as given.

All languages/cultures share the norms of a particular system of cultural, social, historical, sociolinguistic and linguistic values that are continuously negotiated within and outside the communities. The meaning of what is right and wrong, good and bad, masculine and feminine, desirable and disgusting is defined by a cultural frame. Under this perspective, the notion of culture can be an artefact itself. There is one reason why it is necessary to go beyond the concept of culture and it is expressed by Abu-Lughod (1991: 466) in her essay "Writing against culture":

The notion of culture (especially as it functions to distinguish "cultures"), despite a long usefulness, may now have become something anthropologists would want to work against in their theories, their ethnographic practice, and their ethnographic writing. A helpful way to begin to grasp why is to consider what the shared elements of feminist and halfie anthropology clarify about the self/other distinction central to the paradigm of anthropology.

Culture is in the relationships between individuals, in the way languages ipo-codify or over-codify the environment. The way we live and interact with the world, the way we interact with each other is framed by interpretive narrative that are created and play the role of making sense of the events.

The very fact that we recognize these cultural narratives and frames means that they are instantiated physically in our brains. We are not born with them, but we start growing them soon, and as we acquire the deep narratives, our synapses change and become fixed. (Lakoff 2002: 33-34)

These simplified narratives became often policy imaginaries that allows individual to build a perspective on an event or situation. Beliefs, personal circumstances, social processes contribute to build up hegemonic imaginaries and pattern social behaviours. Social

construals emerge in this way and if they become hegemonic, tend to frame institutional responses to policy issues. The risk is to consider these concepts as labels within a western ethnocentric paradigm and analyse them following our perceptions.

A possible way to explore the relationship between individuals and community, is to start with a cultural script approach. Scripts are the narratives that people use in shaping their life plans and telling their stories (Appiah 1994). For this reason, a cultural script approach (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2004) allows outsiders to understand speech practices and culture-specific norms when based on an emic perspective. Cultural scripts are made accessible by narration and self-narration because the way we tell a story or talk about an event generally displays culture-specific patterns.

The Experential Learning path promoted in the C.A.R.A aimed at understanding the nature of cultural scripts with C.A.R.A. professionals by using narration and self-narration to develop not only linguistic awareness and a sense of belonging but also for understanding identity and diversity (Bamberg 2004).

4. The research: theoretical and methodological aspects

The present study is part of a wider research study conducted in the C.A.R.A. of Mineo. This is literally a small town with terraced houses about 15 km from any local town nearby that can host up to 3,000 people. They are hosted until a special Commission of the local Prefecture approves or rejects their refugee status. The C.A.R.A. is organized in four main areas of management: food; support for families and children; social services (including social support services, psychological support, legal support, mediation); job centre (training courses on computer and Italian). This research took place from 2015 to 2018 and involved the professionals (psychologists, mediators, social support workers, lawyers) and the migrants of this Centre. At the beginning of the research, the newcomers hosted in the C.A.R.A. came from the countries listed in Table 1, which includes migrants that were living or were registered from November 2015 to June 2016 in order to give an idea of the number and different nationalities of people living there.

Nationalities	From 1.10.2015 to 30.6.2016
Afghanistan	7
Bangladesh	354
Benin	8
Burkina Faso	24
Camerun	7
Ciad	6
Congo	2
Costa d'Avorio	138
Egitto	2
Eritrea	1720
Etiopia	94
Gambia	842
Ghana	286
Guinea	124
Guinea-Bissau	40
India	7
Iran	9
Iraq	68
Kenya	2
Libano	9
Liberia	16
Libia	2
Mali	728
Marocco	6
Mauritania	4
Niger	12
Nigeria	1432
Pakistan	505
Palestina	89
Repubblica Centrafricana	1
Senegal	586
Sierra Leone	23
Siria	513
Somalia	437
Sudan	349
Togo	15
Tunisia	3
Turchia	2
Yemen	1
Total	**8473**

Table 1. Countries of the newcomers in the C.A.R.A.

Whether during that time span they left or not, was not taken into account, being the main aim of this research to explore whether communication between professionals and migrants is effective and how expectations and perceptions of migrants are met. Asylum seekers are people coming from various countries, with many languages, different religions, education levels, genders, ages.

The present study explored communicative events where professionals and migrants are involved in order to show how the

discursive representation of migrants can affect services and support. Communication has been analysed in terms of what is expected to be said and what is not, what is implicit and what needs to be explicit (Hymes 1974). The ultimate goal of this research was to tailor an experiential learning course (Kolb 1984, 2015) for professionals and promote a co-production approach in the C.A.R.A. that will be discussed in the present paper.

The research is based on two main assumptions that can be summarized as follows: first, since any analysis of migration can have significant implications for people's lives, an approach based on the ethnography of communication will be used in order to explore communication practices (Duranti 2007; Hymes 1974).

In order to understand language functioning, it is crucial to access to what is called traditionally an emic knowledge that is accounts, descriptions, and analyses are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the members of the culture under study. This knowledge is validated by the consensus of native informants, who must agree that the construct matches the shared perceptions that are characteristic of their culture. Etic constructs, which are models and categories of analysis of researchers, should be based then on emic accounts in order to build effective models of inclusion. The second assumption is that language is multimodal and in order to explore and understand communication, speech and gestures should be taken into consideration.

Data were collected through the participant observation technique which is an ethnographic method that includes observation, interviews and document analysis as means to collect data for qualitative analysis. It is based on an open, nonjudgemental attitude, being interested in learning what is meaningful for the individual and/or community under analysis (DeWalt and DeWalt 1998). In this way it was possible to collect the emic accounts that were validated by the community or by the individual that took part to the event. For methodological purposes, newcomers were observed during the meetings and were not interviewed because it is very difficult to ask the appropriate question without actually influencing the answer. Observation often provides data that the researcher could have not imagined or asked. Professionals were interviewed because we need

to collect explicit explanation of what their aim is when they provide support services or set up informative events.

Communicative events have been chosen following some criteria that are: their accessibility for the researcher; the representativeness of the events occurring in the speech community; the representativeness of the communicative phenomenon under study. For this reason, only face to face interactions were taken into account. Written form of communication such as notices, letters and advice were excluded as they would have required a different methodological approach.

The research was divided into three different steps: the first step was devoted to the exploration of the setting in order to understand how communications and interactions between professionals and migrants took place and whether they were successful or not. This step shaped the *toolbox* and helped to define the different activities of the Experential Learning Course that will be discussed in the next paragraphs and that represents the third step of this research study.

5. Telling stories to understand: an experiential learning path

There are many different ways to intend Experential Learning (E.L.). It is a process by which the learners create meaning from direct experience. Kolb (2015:38) considers it "a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". In fact, learning through experience is a holistic process that involves both learners and instructors in the pedagogical path. Participants have a personal stake in the subject and go through different steps: experience, reflection and application. The role of the instructor is to choose carefully experiences and promote reflection, critical analysis and synthesis. E.L. is strongly based on relationships: participant to self; participants to others and participants to the world at large.

What is important in E.L. is the process rather than the product of learning. In fact, as shown below, all different steps are interconnected.

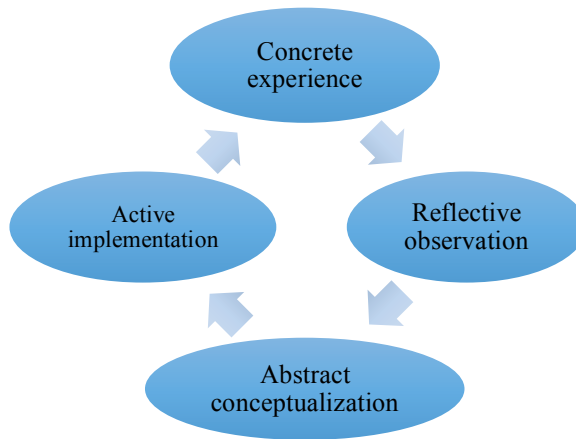Each step of this experience involves the students and the instructors in shaping the path of the pedagogical process.

Figure 1. Experience Learning Cycle (Kolb 2015).

In the first step, "Concrete experience", students perform a hands-on minds-on experience with little or no help from the instructor. Results, observations and reaction are shared during the "Reflective observation". During the "Abstract conceptualization", participants focus on the issues, problems and themes that emerged as result of the experience. Finally, when participants apply what they learned to similar or different situation, they are promoting an "Active implementation".

5.1. Course design

The E.L. course promoted in the C.A.R.A. was designed following the results of the first step of this research. During the observation, the researcher observed different situations where communication was not functioning appropriately (see Section 2). The E.L. was inspired by Kolb's experiential learning conceptual frame and was shaped by the participants during the path. The starting point of the E.L. course is that narratives are attempts to develop plausible interpretation of complex phenomena or events (Roe 1994). In fact, each participant was invited to use narration as an identity tool at the end of each step to share issues, insights and meaning with the group. There were a

few rules that the participants were expected to respect which were: active listening because it generates the feeling of *being together* and promotes reciprocal trust; non-judgemental attitude because it makes everybody feel much more free to tell what he/she feels. Reciprocal accountability was the core of the E.L. project as it was crucial that all participants share the vision, the aims and are involved in designing the path.

The starting point was to understand what belonging to a community means. This activity was named "exploring who I am to understand the others". Looking at the Kolb's experiential learning circle, this is an activity based on their concrete experiences. Specifically, the researcher encouraged professionals to answer the question by drawing a tree where the roots represented metaphorically their own family or community, the trunk their own self and the branches their expectations, wishes and hopes. Another step of this activity was to explore their linguistic identities and to understand which language they use in which context and why.

This was a way to introduce and discuss the mechanism of stigma and stereotypization and shift to the second step of the Circle, "Reflective observation", whose aim was "living the stigma and stereotypization". Starting from telling their own experience of stigma and stereotype, the researcher reversed the situation by asking them to write down on a piece of paper when they have been prejudiced and why. This offered to the participants the opportunity of exploring together what happens when the stigmatization is suffered and when it is acted. The possibility of writing about their experience of acting stigmatization processes and sharing them without necessarily saying who is the actor allowed all professionals to explore some aspects and processes of stigmatization and connect them to their job.

During the step of the "Abstract conceptualization", participants focused on the activity "I explain what I do and for whom". The aim of this step was to explore their way of working with migrants by exploring successful and unsuccessful actions. Finally, the "Active implementation" step was based on generalizations and resulted from the discussions and analysis of the previous step.

Each step revealed various forms of stereotypization that were based on overgeneralized beliefs (Barna 1985) and sometimes also on prejudices.

5.2. Participants

Participants to the E.L. course were professionals working in the service area and in particular: psychologists; social support workers; teachers of Italian; mediators; lawyers. They were mainly Italian and female in the 28-61 age range. Only few of them came originally from sub-Saharan Africa and work as mediators. 5 mediators out of 6 experienced migration themselves. The majority of them were men in the 21-43 age range. Thirty people regularly participated to the E.L. activities guided by the researcher.

Profession	Female	male	Country of origin
Psychologists	1	4	Italy
Social Support Workers	5	1	Italy
Teachers of Italian	2	2	Italy
Mediators	3	5	Italy 2 (1 male and 1 female) Africa 6
Lawyers	3	4	Italy

Table 2. Professionals involved in the project.

6. Discussion

During this path, all participants (including the researcher) learnt and co-educated. The de-construction of stereotypes was promoted through the different steps of the E.L. path through narration. This activity allows the participants to identify, define and explore insights that can ultimately schematize scattered events. During the E.L., learners were able to recognize their stereotypes and stereotyping tendencies as well as those of people taking part to the EL course. We learned that many inaccurate predictions about behaviors were based on stereotypes. Most stereotypes were based on western perspectives on civilization, education, culture that emerged in narration and were discussed, de-constructed and re-constructed by including the perspective of otherness. Ethnocentric attitudes related to different aspects of everyday life were revealed and discussed. In particular, professionals learn how and what to ask to their colleagues, to the newcomers, to the direction. They learn that communication is made

by the language and by the body, is explicit and implicit. They learnt how to tell a story about them and about their job, to talk about their failures and their success. Finally, they learned to teamwork and to practice active listening. The researcher learnt how and what to ask professionals and how and what to tell to elicit specific behaviors or answers. The ability of analyzing the correct linguistic behavior and the disadvantages of stereotypes showed meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic awareness and control.

Finally, the E.L. path might be overwhelming and require to work within a green zone. It consists of a safe area where everyone is self-confident and relaxed with the themes that are being discussed. This is not always so easy because for example when some mediators were invited to tell their own stories and to draw the tree, they end up re-living the distress of their migration journey.

The ultimate goal of the research[1] was to promote co-production services practices. Although this is not the aim of this paper, it is important to highlight the fact that the E.L. promoted also empowerment for the mediators coming originally from Africa, as they became more aware of their role in relation to other professionals and they fixed some deontological norms much more in order for their service to serve better the migrants.

References

Asselin Olivier, Françoise Dureau, Lucinda Fonseca, Matthieu Giroud, Abdelkader Hamadi, Josef Kohlbacher, Flip Lindo, Jorge Malheiros, Yann Marcadet and Ursula Reeger. 2006. Social Integration of Immigrants with Special Reference to the Local and Spatial Dimension. In Rinus Penninx, Maria Berger, Karen Kraal (eds.), *The dyanamics of international migration and settlement in Europe. A State of Art*, 133-170. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. Writing agaisnt culture. In Richard G. Fox (eds.), *Recapturing Anthropology. Working in the Present*, 137-162. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

---

[1] The stories of the professionals have been collected in a book (Fontana 2017) edited by the researcher and by one of the psychologists who took part to the E.L. path, who collected the stories of some migrants living in the C.A.R.A.

Appiah, Anthony K. 1994. *Identity against culture. Understandings of multiculturalism*. Berkely: Hunza Graphics.

Bamberg, Michael. 2004. Narrative discourse and identities. In Jan Christoph Meister (ed.), *Narratology beyond literary criticism*, 213-237). Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Baoufu, Peter. 2012. *The future of post human migration. A preface to the new theory of sameness, otherness and identity*. Newcastle upon Thyne: Cambridge Scholar publishing.

Boswell, Christina, Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten. 2011. The role of narratives in migration policy making. A Research Framework. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13: 1-11.

Barna, Laraym. M. 1985. Stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. In Larry Samovar and Richard Porter (eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader*, 330-338. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Camilleri, Carmel, Joseph Kastersztein, Edmond-Marc, Lipianski, Hanna Malewska Peyre, Isabelle Taboada-Leonetti and Ana Vasquez-Bronfman. 1990. *Stratégies Identitaires*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Cardona, Giorgio Raimondo. 1985. *I sei lati del mondo. Linguaggio ed esperienza*, Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Council of Europe. 2005. *Resolution [1437 I.4 (2005)] of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: Migration and Integration: a challenge and an opportunity for Europe*. http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=17325&lang=en

DeWalt Kathleen M and Billie DeWalt. 1998. *Participant Observation. A guide for fieldworkers*. California: Altamira Press.

Duranti, Alessandro. 2007. *Etnopragmatica. La forza nel parlare.* Roma: Carocci.

Fontana, Sabina. 2017. *Dentro il C.A.R.A di Mineo. Storie di chi accoglie-Storie di chi arriva*. Lugano: Agorà.

Geertz, Clifford. 1999. *Mondo globale, mondi locali. Cultura e politica alla fine del ventesimo secolo*. Bologna: Il Mulino

Goddard, Cliff and Anna Wierzbika. 2004. Cultural Scripts. What are they and what are they good for? *Intercultural Pragmatics* 1-2: 153-166.

Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums. Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. New York: Random House.

Jessop, Bob. 2009. Cultural political economy and critical policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies* 3(3-4): 336-356.

Hymes, Dell. 1974. *Foundations in sociolinguistics – An Etnographic Approach*. London: Tavistock Publications Ltd.

Kendon, Adam. 2004. *Gesture: Visible action as utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kolb, David A. 2015 [1984]. *Experential learning. Experience as the source of learning and development*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Lakoff, George. 2002. Moral politics: How liberals and conservatives think. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mayblin, Lucy. 2019. Imagining asylum, governing asylum seekers: complexity reduction and policy making in the UK home office. *Migration Studies* 7(1): 1-20.

McNeill David. 2005. *Gesture and Thought*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mignosi, Elena and Sabina Fontana. 2016. The role of caregiver in inclusion processes of separated children: linguistic and psycho-pedagogical reflections. In Aurelio Angelini (ed.), *Separated Children,* 105-123. Roma: Aracne.

Mishler, Elliot. 2000. *Storylines: Craft artists' narratives of identity.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ostrom, Elinor. 1996. Crossing the great divide: coproduction, synergy and development. World Development 24(6): 1073-1087.

Roe, Emery. 1994. *Narrative Policy Analysis: Theory and Practice*. Duhram, NC: Duke University Press.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. Toward a history of the vanishing present*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1994. *Multiculturalism. Examining the politics of recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Assessing the impact of the syllabary approach on German literacy gains for Tigrinya non-Roman alphabet literate learners

Santi Guerrero Calle

This article presents the preliminary results of a research project on the acquisition of literacy by non-Roman alphabet literate refugees in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. It addresses the written production (dictation) of 39 Eritrean participants whose mother tongue is Tigrinya. The results indicate that the syllabary approach could have a positive influence on learning success during literacy acquisition and for the standardized A1-level test but not on subsequent language lessons at A1 level. The findings also demonstrate a highly significant negative influence on the variable of the institution, suggesting that this variable should receive more attention in studies.

Keywords: syllabary approach, adult L2 literacy, Tigrinya, non-Roman alphabet literates, dictation.

1. Introduction

The problem of illiteracy was first addressed in industrialized countries during the 1970s. Although there has been significant research on this topic since, there is still no universal definition of the term "illiteracy" or of other related categories (cf. Löffler and Korfkamp 2016: 9). Although non-Roman alphabet literates[1] cannot be included in the illiteracy category because, unlike non-literates, they are at least semi-literate[2] in one language, they are nevertheless enrolled in the same literacy courses as non-literates in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. The aim of such literacy courses is to

---

[1] "Learners are literate in a language written in a non-Roman alphabet" (Burt and Peyton 2003 5) or German second language learners (literate) (cf. Acevedo et al. 2016: 5).

[2] In German-speaking countries, semi-literate refers to persons who have written language skills but do not meet the minimum social requirements (e.g., filling out a form) (cf. Abraham and Linde 2009 92).

impart basic knowledge in reading and writing (cf. Hammann et al. 2013: 25), with the intention of starting a level A1 (Council of Europe 2018) course afterwards. Thus, non-Roman alphabet literates often attend a literacy course because they possess inadequate reading and writing skills in German or in another Roman alphabet language, which is why they cannot start an A1-level course directly. The extent to which a learner is semi-literate or not is often difficult to determine in practice because the particular social benchmark and thus the minimum requirements must be known, as well as the respective mother tongues and writing systems (cf. Tröster and Schrader 2016: 44-45). As such, it is difficult in practice to classify participants as semi-literate, since examiners seldom master the languages of origin. This is also often the case with non-Roman alphabet literates; the characteristic of these learners is usually linked to the number of school years. For example, non-Roman alphabet literates in Germany must have several years of school education and/or vocational school qualifications (cf. BAMF – Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2018: 10).

Conversely, in English-speaking countries, on the other hand, non-Roman alphabet literates with less than 10 years of education or a disrupted education are classified with literacy needs because they often require support in developing strategies and skills normally acquired through formal education (Acevedo et al. 2016: 5). The determination of non-Roman alphabet literates is measured by school years, rather than by literacy skills in L1[3], because this can be assessed by anybody, even those without mastery of the language of origin. Nevertheless, literacy screening devices, which are available in the participants' languages of origin, are often evaluated by people with insufficient or even no knowledge of the target language, as in the case of the Native Language Literacy Screening Device (cf. New York State Education Department 1999).

Identifying non-Roman alphabet learners by their schooling experience, is problematic in so far as school alone does not guarantee successful learning (cf. Feldmeier 2010: 21-22) and the education

---

[3] L1 is used singularly in this article because it captures the dominant language of the participants (cf. Oksaar 2003: 16). This means that they were required to fill in the questionnaire in their dominant written language.

system of the country of origin is, in many cases, poorly recorded. For example, it may well be that a person has several years of school experience but is unable to use this profitably in class (cf. Feldmeier 2010: 20-21) or that a person has no school education and is nevertheless able to read and write at a high level. In contrast to non-literates, non-Roman alphabet literates have knowledge and skills in a written language: they know what a word is, often understand how words are synthesized and recognize rhymes (cf. Feldmeier 2010: 20). This last point is categorized under phonological awareness and is of great importance for learning an alphabetical writing system.

In the theory of adult illiteracy, scholars agree that the L1 of the participant has a positive influence on second language acquisition; a positive transfer takes place. Spruck Wrigley (2008), for example, stresses the decisive advantage of non-Roman alphabet literates over non-literates, since they can read and write in a language and thus often decode words more quickly, which leads to a shorter learning period, especially for reading (cf. Spruck Wrigley 2008: 3).

In contrast, most authors agree that the process of acquiring writing skills in a second language is slower than that of reading (cf. Tranza and Sunderland 2009: 22). Especially since components from the first language, such as grammatical patterns that differ from those in the second language, are often erroneously transferred one-to-one into the second language. Accordingly, non-Roman alphabet literates often experience difficulties in spelling acquisition (cf. Cook 2005: 427; Spruck Wrigley 2008: 3).

Although there are a number of studies on first and second language acquisition, which mostly use students, there are considerable gaps in the research on second language acquisition by refugees with or without an educational background. In the words of Gillespie (2001: 91), "To date, we know relatively little about how the development of writing ability in adult literacy learners compared with that of young children or of basic writers at the college level". There are few studies in this area as of yet (cf. Rackwitz 2016: 51)[4].

The results of this article are part of the researcher's dissertation on literacy acquisition in non-Roman alphabet literates (Guerrero

---

[4] The following studies are worth mentioning here: Kurvers (2015); Kurvers, Vallen and Hout (2006).

Calle 2020). The aim of the dissertation is to assess whether or not it is possible for non-Roman alphabet literates to achieve an A1-level after 300 course lessons, as proposed by the German curriculum for non-Roman alphabet literates (cf. BAMF – Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2018). While the dissertation analyzes spoken language, listening comprehension, written production, oral reading fluency and non-words, this article focuses on the participants' written production and presents data from the evaluation of written dictation tests at three measurement points.

The participants in the dissertation research have a variety of ethnic backgrounds and first languages; the present study focuses on participants from Eritrea whose first language is Tigrinya. This group both represents the majority within the whole participant group and is generally overlooked in current research.

2. Syllabary approach in German

In the German language, syllables are key for the pronunciation of words and helpful for explaining regularities in spelling. Recognizing the syllabary structure of words is as important for adults' natural flow of speech as for that of children. This point of view obviates an oft-raised disadvantage of the syllabary approach: the avoidance of synthesis at the sound level. According to this argument, learners must first master synthesizing at the sound level so that they can read words consisting of complex syllables (cf. Feldmeier 2010: 63). Linguists, however, are not confident that this argument is logical because the syllable is decisive for, among other things, spelling (cf. Schründer-Lenzen 2013: 33). Despite these considerations, the syllabary approach has a firm position in the most common German literacy textbooks.

The syllabary approach has been used for some time in the field of German adult literacy (cf. e.g., Feick and Schramm 2016: 220) and was adapted from primary school teaching methods, such as the initial approach to reading and early promotion of reading and spelling (cf. Rokitzki, Nestler and Sokolowsky 2013: 98). The syllabary approach was first applied to adult learners by the educator Paulo Freire in the 1960s, whose focus was on impoverished adult populations in Brazil

(for more information, see Boulanger 2001; Spener 1990). However, to what extent a German syllabary approach can be based upon this precedent is questionable since, among other things, consonant clusters are less represented in Portuguese than in German (cf. Albert, et al. 2015: 46-47).

The syllabary approach belongs to the category of analytical-synthetic methods[5], which take various word components as a starting point (cf. Feick and Schramm 2016: 219). As the name suggests, the syllabary approach works with syllables. The aim of the approach is to combine spoken and written language and simultaneously train auditory and visual perception, which are needed to automate reading and writing in the literacy process. Using a syllabary approach can simplify the process of word recognition during reading and convey writing construction principles by making learners aware of regularities right from the start (cf. Mayer 2016: 19). In contrast to other synthetic methods, the immediate contraction of consonant and vowel is practiced (cf. Rokitzki et al. 2013: 98-99). This leads to a more fluent reading process (cf. Albert et al. 2015: 47). To this end, a distinction between three levels can be applied to literacy classes, in which the next level can be started after confident mastery of the current level:

1. The elementary level introduces words without consonant clusters (e.g., Tomate [English tomato]). The class should focus on phonetically accurate vowels, diphthongs and umlauts to simplify hearing and speaking. More difficult consonants (e.g., <z>) are then added. The goal of this level is to become proficient in phonetically accurate writing and start reading simple texts.
2. At the next level, syllables with consonant clusters (e.g., Frage [English question]) are introduced.
3. In the final stage, which presupposes reliable syllabic division, words with certain orthographic regularities (e.g., Liebe [English love]) and exceptions can be thematized (cf. Rokitzki et al. 2013: 99-102).

---

[5] A general distinction is made between three methods: synthetic methods, analytical-synthetic methods and analytical methods (cf. Feick and Schramm 2016: 219).

Auditory and visual perception can be trained by rhythmic speaking, syllable swinging, syllable clapping or syllable walking. This gives learners confidence in their syllable segmentation on a physical level. This can, in turn, help them to master clearer articulation (cf. Albert et al. 2015: 48-49).

2.1. Syllabary approach research overview

In their project *Alphamar,* Albert et al. (2015) investigated the syllabary method with non-literates and non-Roman alphabet literates. They proved that the syllabary approach has a positive effect on learning among non-Roman alphabet literates. The syllabary approach after the Montessori approach and the contrastive use of the mother tongue resulted in a positive increase in learning with a group of 12 participants. The syllabary approach also had the highest average learning success of all of the learning methods in the study, with learning progress in 10 of 12 competencies. Only the writing accuracy and the completion of structural schemes showed negative learning progress (cf. Albert et al. 2015: 100-117). However, due to the rather small sample size and the unclear allocation of learners to illiterate and non-Roman alphabet literate or semi-literate learner groups, these results should be viewed with caution.

The present project aims to build upon and enhance the work of Albert et al. (2015), using a larger sample and more methodical allocation of learners to groups.

1. Tigrinya

Martin (2015) proposes a taxonomy of written scripts into five categories: alphabet, abugida, abjad, syllabary and morphosyllabary (cf. Martin 2015: 15). Tigrinya script can be classified as abugida because the writing system combines features of alphabets and syllabaries (cf. Bhide et al. 2014: 74).

Tigrinya uses an alphasyllabic script with Ge'ez symbols (cf. Piper and van Ginkel 2017: 38). Tigrinya includes five full (a, e, i, o,

u) and two central (ə, ä) vowels and has a rich consonant system (cf. Weninger 2011: 1155).

	front	central	back
close	i(:)		u(:)
half-closed	e(:)	ə	o(:)
half-opened		ä	
open		a(:)	

Table 1. Vowels in Tigrinya (Weninger 2011: 1155)

	fricative voiceless	voiceless	occlusive/affricate glottalized	voiced	fricative voiced
labial	f	[p]	ṗ [p']	b [b, ß]	[v]
dental		t	ṭ [t']	d	
alveolar	s		ṣ [ᵗs']	z	
palatalized	š	č	č [ᵗš']	ǧ	[ž]
velar		k [k, X]	ḳ (q) [k', X']	g	
labiovelar		kʷ [kʷ, Xʷ]	ḳʷ (qʷ) [kʷ', Xʷ']	gʷ	
pharyngeal	ħ [ḥ]				' (')
glottal	h		' (')		

Table 2. Consonants in Tigrinya (Weninger 2011: 1154).

Tigrinya contains a total of 248 symbols (cf. Piper and van Ginkel 2017: 38) and has a simple phonological structure that "allow[s] vowel (V), consonant-V (CV) and CVC combinations of syllables, with clusters of consonants broken up with the insertion of a vowel to conform to the CV and CVC syllable structure" (Asfaha, Kurvers and Kroon 2009: 711).

Tigrinya is spoken by about 12 million people; half are from Ethiopia and almost as many are from Eritrea (cf. Addis Ababa University 2019). As indicated in Table 3, half of the Eritrean population speaks Tigrinya as their mother tongue and more than 80% can communicate in Tigrinya (cf. Bereketeab 2010: 178). A total of nine native languages that represent three language families (Semitic, Cushitic, Nilo-Saharan) (cf. Asfaha, Kurvers and Kroon 2008: 225)

are spoken in Eritrea, and three different writing systems (Latin, Arabic, Ge'ez) are used.
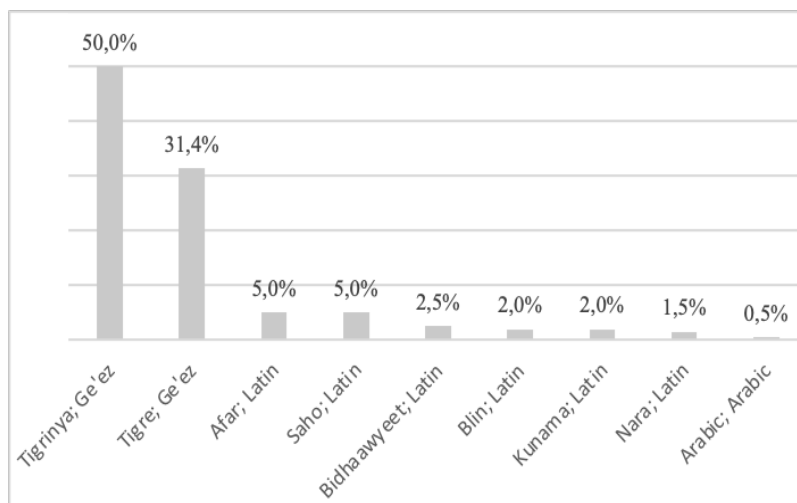
Table 3. Languages and writing scripts in Eritrea
(cf. Asfaha et al. 2008: 224-225; Bereketeab 2010: 158).

Tigrinya, Arabic and Amharic are the largest Semitic languages (cf. Weninger 2011: 1153) and are written with the Ge'ez writing system (cf. Asfaha et al. 2008: 225).

2. German

The German writing system can be categorized by its alphabet, which features a syllabary structure and is characterized by phoneme-grapheme correspondence. However, alphabetical scripts, including German, rarely display one-to-one correspondence. German exhibits a transparent phoneme-grapheme correspondence (forward regularity), since a given grapheme normally symbolizes the same phoneme. The phoneme-grapheme correspondence (backward regularity) is less clear, as individual sounds can be represented by different graphemes (cf. Mayer 2016: 16-18).

The German orthographic system can be explained through three determining principles: phonological, syllabary and morphemic (cf. Mayer 2016: 19).

The syllabary principle is increasingly employed in writing and reading pedagogy (cf. Nickel 2006: 61-63). Most German words include a stressed first syllable (the main syllable) and a second unstressed syllable. Deviations from this structure are often loan words from other languages or function words (cf. Mayer 2016: 22). In German, CV, VC, CVC, VCV, CVCV and VCVC-structures are possible (cf. Mayer 2018: 86). German contains 26 letters (30 including umlauts and Eszett [ß] 30), eight vowels and 21 consonants.

	front		central	back
close	iː	yː		uː
	ɪ	Y		ʊ
half-closed	eː	øː	ə	oː
half-opened	ɛ(ː)	œ	ɐ	ɔ
open			a(ː)	

Table 4. Vowels in German (Dahmen and Weth 2018: 36).

	Plosive		Nasal	Fricative		Affricae	Approximant	Lateral
Bilabial	p	b	m			(pf)		
Labio-dental					f			
				v				
Alveolar	t	d	n	s	z	(ts)		l
Post-alveolar				ʃ	ʒ	(tʃ)		
Palatal				ç			j	
Velar	k	g	ŋ					
Uvular				X	ʁ			
Glottal				h				

Table 5. Consonants in German, voiceless: left in a box, voiced: right in a box (Dahmen and Weth 2018: 34).

2.1. German versus Tigrinya

Table 6 below summarizes the differences between Tigrinya and German:

German	Tigrinya
Alphabet script	Ge'ez script
26 letters (30 including umlauts and Eszett [ß])	248 symbols
transparent	transparent
8 vowels	7 vowels (cf. Weninger 2011: 1155)
21 consonants	rich consonant system (more consonants than in German)
CV, VC, CVC, VCV, CVCV and VCVC	V, CV and CVC
diacritics at umlaut (cf. Dürscheid 2016: 122)	many diacritics
written from left to right	written from left to right (cf. Kifle 2011: 18)
frequently used punctuation marks: colon (:), comma (,), full stop (.), question mark (?), exclamation point (!).	frequently used punctuation marks: "commas (፡) and (፣), a semi-colon (፤), colon (፥), preface colon (፦), full stop (።) and question mark (፧ or ?)" (Kifle 2011: 18)
the writing of the letter starts at various places (e.g., *a* and *b*)	symbols are written from the upper left to the lower right and always from up to down (cf. Haile 1996: 575)
parts of certain letters are written under the line (e.g., *g*)	all parts of all letters are strictly above the line
there are sometimes pen-lifts when writing a letter (e.g., T)	the pen is repeatedly set off when writing a symbol
upper- and lower-case	no upper- and lower-case

Table 6. German versus Tigrinya, differences and similarities.

3. Participants

A total of 65 participants started the courses that provide the foundation for this research project; six later dropped out due to personal circumstances. The remaining 59 participants were all non-Roman alphabet literate German learners. All were adult refugees and had been learning German for a maximum of two years. None of them could write or read accurately in German at the start of the project.

The majority of participants (41 of 59) were Eritrean. Thirty-nine of the 41 Eritrean participants had Tigrinya as their language of origin; the remaining two had Arabic and Saho respectively. This article focuses on the 39 Eritrean participants with Tigrinya as their L1. There were 21 men and 18 women, aged 19 to 51; just over half were under 30 years old. With the exception of one 51-year-old participant, the remaining participants were between 30 and 44 years of age. All 39 participants were educated; the majority had received between seven and nine years of education.
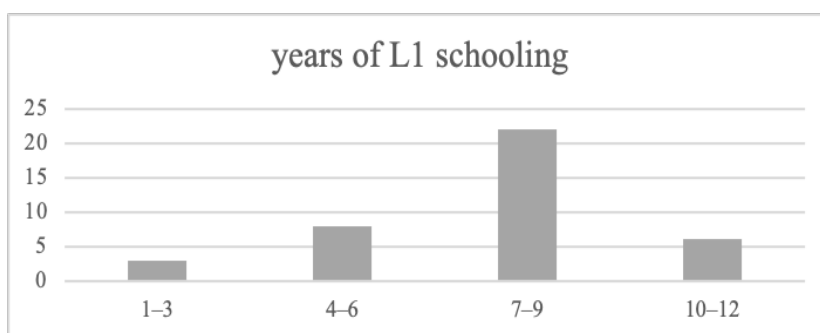
Table 7. Years of L1 schooling (n=39).

4. Methods

A field experiment was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the interventions of the curriculum for non-Roman alphabet literates and the syllabary approach. For this purpose, the participants were randomly divided into either treatment group 1 (the curriculum from Germany for non-Roman alphabet literates) or treatment group 2 (the curriculum for non-Roman alphabet literates plus syllabary approach) after a placement test. The total of six groups, which were divided into two treatment groups, had between 8 and 11 participants each. The intervention of the syllabary approach was used throughout the course. The six groups were taught at one of two different institutions in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Each institution had three levels: high, medium and low. The participants were given a level according to their score in the placement test (O_1) and randomly allocated to one of the two institutions. A total of two follow-up

measurements (O_2 and O_3) and a final standardized test *telc* (The European Language Certificates) A1 (O_4) followed.

This article addresses the written production of the Tigrinya-speaking learners only. Spelling is particularly important for learners that come from a different writing system (cf. Randall 2005: 121-123), which is why the study used dictations (cf. e.g., Küppers 2006: 91). Dictation has shown a strong correlation with TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and overall language proficiency (cf. Rahimi 2008: 33-34). Dictation plays a central role in European teaching (cf. Kazazoğlu 2013: 1339), as well as in literacy courses (cf. Feldmeier 2005: 12). The evaluation system of Backhaus and Rackwitz (2011: 35) was used to assess the dictation and the following understanding: A1 learners are not yet required to write without errors (cf. Albert et al. 2015: 47).

The educational background questionnaire, foreign language skills, language knowledge and other factors were surveyed through a background questionnaire in the participants' language of origin[1]. Because non-literate learners could not read the questionnaire, let alone complete it, this also ensured that only non-Roman alphabet literates attended the courses. In the last part of the questionnaire, the participants had to write something about themselves or their family that could be fictitious.

This text was then evaluated by native translators and the researcher using an evaluation grid. The aim was to determine if participants with a larger vocabulary and higher grammatical knowledge in their L1 achieved higher results in German than participants who did not master their L1 as well. Participants who scored below an A2 level in this assessment were not admitted to the course. The participants achieved different scores for their texts, which they had to write in their L1: seven participants at A2 or A2+ level, eigth participants at B1 to B2 level and 24 above B2 level. The majority of the participants scored above B1 in their native language

---

[1] Using the questionnaire in the dominant language, which was based on the characteristics for non-Roman alphabet learners (cf. BAMF – Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2018: 10-11), it was possible to collect various relevant information from the participants. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and translated by experienced translators.

text, which reflects the adult literacy rate in Eritrea of almost 70% (cf. UNICEF 2013).

4.1. Instruments

The dictation was carried out three times in total: classification before the lessons began, the first follow-up 1 after 100 course lessons (45 minutes) and the second follow-up 2 after 200 course lessons. The words were taken from the frequency words, based on a 4.2-milion word corpus, of Tschirner (2016), levels A1 and A2. Because certain participants had already taken literacy courses, a total of 17 A1 words and five A2 words per dictation were randomly selected. More difficult words had to be added to differentiate between participants in the upper quartile. As recommended in the ESL Benchmark (cf. Acevedo et al., 2016, p. 71), a total of eight sentences with three to five words each were dictated, in addition to the words. Thirty percent of the items from the placement test were defined as retest items and thus repeated at all three measurement points.

5. Results

Learning success is defined as the increase in points from the placement test, i.e., from before the start of the course to the first measurement time after 100 lessons and the second measurement time after 200 lessons.

The test consists of 30 items with five points each. Because learning success is regarded as an average value across all items and a negative learning success is also conceivable, the learning success can assume a value between -5 and 5.

5.1. Descriptive analysis

A qualitative assessment of the results suggests that the participants with the syllabary approach made greater learning progress (an

increase of 0.46 points) than those without the syllabary approach (0.35 points) during the first 100 lessons, i.e., during the literacy phase. At A1 level, i.e., after 100 lessons, they recorded a lower learning success (0.29 points) compared to the participants who were taught without the additional focus on the syllabary approach (0.41 points). Overall, over the 200 lessons, i.e., from the placement to the second measurement, both groups demonstrated an approximately equal positive increase in learning, with the participants without the additional focus on the syllabary approach recording an average increase of 0.76 points and the participants with the additional focus on the syllabary approach increasing by an average of 0.75 points. In the standardized telc A1-level test, the groups using the syllabary approach achieved a higher score in writing (35.36 points compared to 33.16 points). According to these figures, the syllabary approach may be a sensible method during the literacy phase but is possibly of limited use at A1 or further levels.

syllabary method		0–100 lessons, O_1	100–200 lessons, O_2	0–200 lessons, O_3	telc writing A1
no	mean value	0.35	0.41	0.76	33.16
	N	21	21	21	19
	standard deviation	0.34	0.34	0.48	26.52
yes	mean value	0.46	0.29	0.75	35.56
	N	18	18	18	18
	standard deviation	0.37	0.27	0.47	22.46

Table 8. Learning progress at the time of measurement.

The syllabary approach could also be helpful for the written part of standardized tests. An analysis of variance with repeated measurements – with corresponding Greenhouse-Geisser correction due to the significant Mauchly test for sphericity (Mauchly-$W(2)=.747$, $p = .005$) – indicates that the differences between measurements are highly significant ($F(1.6,60.6) = 76.58$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .67$). Unfortunately, t-tests could not statistically confirm any of the above-mentioned variances; for this reason, more research is highly encouraged.

5.2. Predictors of learning success

For a linear regression, the learning progress from the placement test (O_1) to the last measurement time (O_3) was selected as the dependent variable and various factors as the independent variables (Table 9).

Model	non-standardized coefficients		standard coefficient	T	p
	regression coefficient B	standard deviation	Beta		
(constant)	58.12	13.41		4.33	.001
institution	-13.89	4.32	-.72	-3.21	.008
course level low	8.93	5.80	.46	1.54	.152
course level average	6.72	5.19	.34	1.30	.222
syllabary approach	-1.98	4.72	-.11	-.42	.683
gender	-12.09	5.17	-.64	-2.34	.039
age 19	30.43	9.55	.52	3.19	.009
age 30-39	-11.76	4.23	-.55	-2.78	.018
age 40-49	-11.37	4.87	-.45	-2.33	.040
age >50	-23.05	8.84	-.40	-2.61	.024
vocabulary in Tigrinya B1/B2	-5.35	8.56	-.19	-.63	.545
vocabulary in Tigrinya C1/C2	12.99	6.89	.61	1.88	.086
correctness in Tigrinya B1/B2	3.98	5.81	.20	.68	.508
correctness in Tigrinya C1/C2	-3.10	5.70	-.16	-.54	.598
foreign language	3.91	4.86	.16	.81	.438
years of L1 schooling 1-3	-9.73	5.47	-.28	-1.78	.103
years of L1 schooling 4-6	-14.57	5.15	-.64	-2.83	.016
years of L1 schooling 10-12	-19.12	5.53	-.69	-3.46	.005
apprenticeship	-4.87	5.69	-.16	-.86	.410
working experience	8.05	3.55	.43	2.27	.044
having childcare obligation	3.30	4.63	.17	.71	.492
health conditions	-6.64	2.14	-.71	-3.11	.010
contact with native speakers 1-3 days per week	6.12	6.00	.32	1.02	.330
contact with native speakers 4-7 days per week	-1.53	5.38	-.07	-.28	.782
attended German language course	-7.70	5.84	-.34	-1.32	.215
course absence	-.58	.20	-.62	-2.96	.013

Table 9. Linear Regression of learning success (O_1 to O_3). $R^2 = .867$, corrected $R^2 = .566$.

The model has an R^2 of .867, indicating that 87% (R^2corr. = .566) of the variance of the learning success can be explained by these variables. According to the results of the linear regression, there are

various statistically significant independent variables such as institution, gender, age, 4 to 6 and 10 to 12 years of L1 schooling, working experience, health conditions and course absence.

The variable of institution has a significant p-value of .008. The regression coefficient B = -13.89 indicates a markedly lower learning success of participants from one of the two institutions. There thus appears to be an institution-dependent difference. One possible reason for this difference could be the different educational backgrounds of the respective teachers.

Another significant variable is gender. Female participants scored 12 percentage points less than male participants. This may be due to different roles in their professional and private lives and accords with the findings of other studies (cf. Scheible and Rother 2017: 15).

There is a negative correlation between age and learning success: 19-year-old participants achieved 30 percentage points higher than the reference category of 20 to 29-year-olds. Older learners than this reference category demonstrated weaker learning success. This corresponds with empirical findings found elsewhere, which clearly indicates that age can have a negative impact on second language acquisition (cf. Esser 2006: 103-109).

Years of native-language schooling shows significant correlations, albeit differently than expected: participants with 4 to 6 and 10 to 12 years of school experience both achieved lower learning success in writing than participants with 7 to 9 years of school experience. This result contradicts common sense and theory, which positively link school education and second language learning (cf. Acevedo et al. 2016: 5-6; Perlmann-Balme and Dengler 2007: 11). More studies on this subject are needed to corroborate these findings and find or refute possible explanations.

The regression coefficient for participants who have worked in their home country is positive. Working experience seems to have a beneficial effect on the acquisition of writing in German as a second language. The state of the person's health also plays a significant role in the acquisition of written language. The better the participants feel, the lower their learning success in writing. This is somewhat unexpected, and more research might shed light on this result.

The final variable is course absence. Rather unsurprisingly, the more often participants were skipping class, the lower their learning

success in writing. Concerning the use of the syllabary approach, which showed a positive but relatively low increase in learning success in the descriptive analysis, no statistically significant relationship can be found in the linear regression.

8. Discussion

This article illustrates the preliminary results of a research project on the acquisition of literacy by non-Roman alphabet literate refugees in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Most success factors concern the learners themselves. However, the variable of institution exhibits a highly significant negative influence. It can therefore be assumed that this variable should be considered to a greater extent in further studies. Participants who were given the syllabary approach, while failing to be statistically significant, demonstrated a higher learning success in the first 100 course lessons and in the telc A1-level test. The syllabary approach, which can be classified under phonological awareness, appears to be useful for Eritreans in the initial literacy process and for the standard telc A1-level test but not in the A1 German course. Future research should examine whether this limited usefulness only applies to the syllabary approach or if it extends to further aspects of phonological awareness. Accepted theories make clear that phonological awareness plays a decisive role in the acquisition of an alphabetical script, especially in the acquisition of written language (cf. Schnitzler 2008: 64). Davidson and Stucker (2002: 313), for example, assume that phonological awareness should not only be practiced in literacy courses but also in further language courses (A1 up). To what extent this applies to Eritreans and whether or not it is beneficial to advance phonological awareness in further courses must be investigated further, preferably with a higher sample size.

References

Abraham, Ellen and Andrea Linde. 2009. Alphabetisierung/Grundbildung als Aufgabengebiet der Erwachsenenbildung. In Rudolf Tippelt and Aiga von

Hippel (eds.), *Handbuch Erwachsenenbildung/Weiterbildung*, 889-903. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Acevedo, Jennifer, Emily Albertsen, Judith Bond, Mary Jean Davis, Shelagh Lenon, Svetlana Lupasco, Heidi Macfarlane et al. 2015. *ESL for adult literacy learners (ALL)*. Ottawa: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. https://listn.tutela.ca/wp-content/uploads/ESL_Literacy_Jan_8_2015_e-version.pdf

Addis Ababa University. 2019. Overview. College of humanities, language studies, journalism & communication. Addis Ababa University. http://www.aau.edu.et/chls/academics/department-of-tigrigna-language-literature-and-folklore/overview

Albert, Ruth, Anne Heyn Christiane Rokitzki and Frauke Teepker. 2015. *Alphabetisierung in der Fremdsprache Deutsch: Lehrmethoden auf dem Prüfstand*. Marburg: Tectum Verlag,.

Asfaha, Yonas Mesfun, Jeanne Kurvers and Sjaak Kroon. 2009. Grain size in script and teaching: literacy acquisition in Ge'ez and Latin. *Applied Psycholinguistics* 30(4): 709-724.

Asfaha, Yonas Mesfun, Jeanne Kurvers and Sjaak Kroon. 2008. Literacy and script attitudes in multilingual Eritrea. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12(2): 223-240.

Backhaus, Alex and Rüdiger-Philipp Rackwitz. 2011. *Lesen & Schreiben: Ein Verfahren zur dialogischen Förderdiagnostik in der Alphabetisierung Jugendlicher und Erwachsener – Auswertungshinweise*. Siegen: UniPrint Universität Siegen.

BAMF = Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. 2018. *Konzept für einen bundesweiten Integrationskurs für Zweitschriftlernende (Zweitschriftlernerkurs)*. Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrations kurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konzept-zweitschriftlernende.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

Bereketeab, Redie. 2010. The politics of language in Eritrea: equality of languages vs. bilingual official language policy. *African and Asian Studies* 9: 149-190.

Bhide, Adeetee, Soniya Gadgil, Courtney M. Zelinsky and Charles A. Perfetti. 2014. Does reading in an alphasyllabary affect phonemic awareness? Inherent schwa effects in Marathi-English bilinguals. *Writing Systems Research* 6(1): 73-93.

Boulanger, Daniela. 2001. Alphabetisierung Nach Paulo Freire. *Alfa-Forum* 48: 26-29.

Burt, Miriam and Joy Kreeft Peyton. 2003. *Reading and adult English language learners: the role of the first language*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED482586

Cook, Vivian. 2005. Written Language and Foreign Language Teaching. In Vivian Cook and Benedetta Bassetti (eds.), *Second language writing systems*, 424-441. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Council of Europe. 2018. Global scale - Table 1 (CEFR 3.3): common reference levels. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale

Dahmen, Silvia and Constanze Weth. 2018. *Phonetik, Phonologie Und Schrift*. Paderborn: Schöningh.

Dürscheid, Christa. 2016. *Einführung in die Schriftlinguistik*. 5. Aktualisierte und korrigierte Auflage. Göttingen: UTB.

Esser, Hartmut. 2006. *Sprache und Integration. Die sozialen Bedingungen und Folgen des Spracherwerbs von Migranten*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag.

Feick, Diana and Karen Schramm. 2016. Alphabetisierung mit Migrantinnen und Migranten. In Cordula Löffler and Jens Korfkamp (eds.), *Handbuch zur Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener*, 214-225. Münster and New York: Waxmann.

Feldmeier, Alexis. 2010. *Von A bis Z – Praxishandbuch Alphabetisierung Deutsch als Zweitsprache für Erwachsene. Lehrerfortbildungsmaterial*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Sprachen.

Feldmeier, Alexis. 2005. Die Bedeutung der Deutschkenntnisse für die Alphabetisierung multinationaler Lernergruppen. Am Beispiel der Übungsform 'Diktat.' *Deutsch als Zweitsprache* 3: 8-15.

Gillespie, Marilyn K. 2001. Research on writing: implications for adult literacy education. In John Comings, Barbara Garner and Christine Smith (eds.), *Review of adult learning and literacy*, Vol. 2, 63-110. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Haile, Getatchew. 1996. Ethiopic writing. In Peter T. Daniels, Peter T. Daniels and William Bright (eds.), *The world's writing systems*, 569-576. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hammann, Andrea, Tina Stein, Diana Feick and Anja Pietzuch. 2013. Rahmenbedingungen Und Grundlagen Der Alphabetisierungsarbeit. In Diana Feick, Anja Pietzuch and Karen Schramm (eds.), *Alphabetisierung Für Erwachsene*, 19-33. München: Klett-Langenscheidt.

Kazazoğlu, Semin. 2013. Dictation as a language learning tool. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Akdeniz Language Studies Conference, May, 2012, Turkey, Vol. 70: 1338-1346.

Kifle, Nazareth Amlesom. 2011. Tigrinya applicatives in lexical-functional grammar. Dissertation, University of Bergen. https://www.amananet.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/42478_Nazareth_Kifle_materie.pdf

Küppers, Almut. 2006. Diktate, Diktieren Und Diktiertes Bearbeiten. In Udo O. H. Jung (ed.), *Praktische Handreichung Für Fremdsprachenlehrer*, 90-94. Bayreuther Beiträge Zur Glottodidaktik. Frankfurt a. M: Peter Lang.

Kurvers, Jeanne. 2015. Emerging literacy in adult second-language learners: a synthesis of research findings in the Netherlands. *Writing Systems Research* 7(1): 58-78.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Ton Vallen and Roeland van Hout. 2006. Discovering features of language: metalinguisitc awareness of adult illiterates. In *LOT Occasional Series* 6: 69-88.

Löffler, Cordula and Jens Korfkamp. 2016. Einführung. In Cordula Löffler and Jens Korfkamp (eds.), *Handbuch zur Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener*, 9-10. Münster and New York: Waxmann,.

Martin, Katherine I. 2015. L1 impacts on L2 component reading skills, word skills, and overall reading achievement. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1717095010?pq-origsite=gscholar

Mayer, Andreas. 2018. *Gezielte Förderung Bei Lese- Und Rechtschreibstörungen*. 3., Überarbeitete Auflage. Praxis Der Sprachtherapie Und Sprachheilpädagogik. München: Ernst Reinhardt Verlag.

Mayer, Andreas (ed.). 2016. *Lese-Rechtschreibstörungen (LRS)*. UTB. München and Basel: E. Reinhardt.

New York State Education Department. 1999. Native language literacy screening device. Glenmont: The University of the State of New York. http://www.ohioable.org/files/PDEventMaterials/2013%20Spring%20PD%20Day/Native_Language_Literacy_Screening_Device/intro1.pdf

Nickel, Sven. 2006. *Orthographieerwerb Und Die Entwicklung von Sprachbewusstheit: Zu Genese Und Funktion von Orthographischen Bewusstseinsprozessen Im Frühen Rechtschreiberwerb in Unterschiedlichen Lernkontexten*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH.

Oksaar, Els. 2003. *Zweitspracherwerb: Wege Zur Mehrsprachigkeit Und Zur Interkulturellen Verständigung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Perlmann-Balme, Michaela and Stefanie Dengler. 2007. Einstufungssystem für die Integrationskurse in Deutschland. Handreichung für Einstufende. Goethe Institut.

Piper, Benjamin and Agatha J. van Ginkel. 2017. Reading the script: how the scripts and writing systems of Ethiopian languages relate to letter and word identification. *Writing Systems Research* 9(1): 36-59.

Rackwitz, Rüdiger-Philipp. 2016. Pseudowörter als Diagnosehilfe in der Alphabetisierung Jugendlicher und Erwachsener: Entwicklung und Erprobung eines Verfahrens zur Lernstandserhebung und Lernverlaufsbeobachtung. Dissertation, Pädagogische Hochschule Schwäbisch Gmünd.

Randall, Mick. 2005. Orthographic knowledge and first language reading: evidence from single word dictation from Chinese and Malaysian users of English as a foreign language. In Vivian Cook and Benedetta Bassetti (eds.), *Second language writing systems*, 122-146. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters,.

Rokitzki, Christiane, Doreen Nestler and Celia Sokolowsky. 2013. Lernabenteuer Schriftsystem. In Diana Feick, Anja Pietzuch and Karen Schramm (eds.), *Alphabetisierung Für Erwachsene*, 91-108. München: Klett-Langenscheidt.

Scheible, Jana A. and Nina Rother. 2017. Schnell und erfolgreich Deutsch lernen – wie geht das? Erkenntnisse zu den Determinanten des Zweitspracherwerbs unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Geflüchteten. Working Paper 72 der Forschungsgruppe des Bundesamtes. Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/WorkingPapers/wp72-erfolgreich-deutsch-lernen-wie.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

Schnitzler, Carola D. 2008. *Phonologische Bewusstheit Und Schriftspracherwerb*. Edited by Luise Springer and Dietlinde Schrey-Dern. Forum Logopädie. Stuttgart: Thieme.

Schründer-Lenzen, Agi. 2013. *Schriftspracherwerb*. 4., Völlig überarbeitete Auflage. Wiesbaden: Springer.

Spener, David. 1990. The Freiran approach to adult literacy education. https://www.aiu.edu/online/assignments/english/SHS011e.pdf

Spruck Wrigley, Heide. 2008. Adult ESL and literacy: issues and options. Montreal: The Centre for Literacy. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED547395

Tranza, Efisia and Helen Sunderland. 2009. Literature review on acquisition and development of literacy in a second language. Prepared for National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). London: London South Bank University. https://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Acquisition%20and%20Dev elopment%20of%20Literacy%20as%20level%202%20- %20literacy%20review_1.pdf

Tröster, Monika and Josef Schrader. 2016. Alphabetisierung, Grundbildung, Literalität: Begriffe, Konzepte, Perspektiven. In Cordula Löffler and Jens Korfkamp (eds.), *Handbuch zur Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener*, 42-58. Münster and New York: Waxmann.

Tschirner, Erwin. 2016. *Lextra Deutsch als Fremdsprache nach Themen: Grund- und Aufbauwortschatz*. Berlin: Cornelsen.

UNICEF. 2013. Eritrea statistics. https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/eritrea_statistics.html

Weninger, Stefan. 2011. Tigrinya. In Stefan Weninger (ed.), *The Semitic languages. An international handbook*, 1153-1169. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

L'inchiesta: pratica di pedagogia attiva e insegnamento della L2 con adolescenti

Debora Marongiu – Giada Beretta – Sara Honegger

L'inchiesta è uno strumento di insegnamento della L2, messo a punto con gruppi di adolescenti e utilizzabile in contesti educativi caratterizzati da metodologia affine alle pratiche della pedagogia attiva. Esso consente di 1) inserire l'apprendimento della lingua in un obiettivo di ricerca di gruppo intorno a una tematica di particolare interesse, a un materiale linguistico vivo, urgente e condiviso; 2) tenere insieme l'apprendimento delle strutture linguistiche e la loro sperimentazione in contesti non protetti; 3) tenere insieme i bisogni dei singoli e la costruzione del gruppo, come pure i contenuti e la lingua per affrontarli.

Parole chiave: pedagogia attiva, ricerca, gruppo.

Enquiry is a L2 teaching tool, developed within groups of adolescents. It can be used in educational environments that practice active learning methods. Enquiry-based learning permits 1) to learn a language while making a research on a topic of interest; 2) to practice the grammar rules of a language during real-life dialogues that take place out of school; 3) to connect individual needs with the construction of a team.

Keywords: active pedagogy, research, group.

1. Cornice metodologica

L'inchiesta è uno strumento educativo e didattico sperimentato dal 2015 nell'insegnamento della lingua italiana L2 all'interno della Scuola Sperimentale di italiano per adolescenti di origine straniera (minori stranieri non accompagnati e minori ricongiunti) di Asnada[1].

---

[1] *Asnada*, Milano (http://www.asnada.it/), è un'associazione di promozione sociale attiva a Milano dal 2010. Sviluppa ricerca pedagogica sui processi di migrazione e integrazione attraverso due scuole sperimentali di lingua italiana e attività territoriali, volte a connettere l'esperienza didattica con il territorio, la ricerca pedagogica con la contemporaneità. Nell'analisi dei contesti contemporanei trova un

Lo strumento presentato si inserisce in un orizzonte pedagogico di cui si illustrano i principali pilastri metodologici, maturati negli anni attraverso un approccio di ricerca-azione:

- *La lingua del desiderio*. Affinché si inneschi un processo di apprendimento, è necessario che l'allievo sia interessato all'apprendimento stesso (Bruner 1973). Interessarsi ha origine dal latino *inter-esse* 'essere in mezzo, prendere parte'. L'apprendimento è efficace e duraturo solo quando *scoperto* in prima persona, anche a costo di una grande fatica. Per questo, nelle scuole di Asnada non ci si avvale di libri di testo uguali per tutti che, per quanto brillanti, non possono tener conto degli specifici bisogni e desideri degli apprendenti che compongono il gruppo classe in quel determinato momento (Freire 1973; Scuola di Barbiana 1968). Lo studio della lingua viene organizzato mediante la programmazione settimanale, volta a individuare i temi che i singoli, e il gruppo nella sua interezza, portano, e gli strumenti per affrontarli. Fra questi, la grammatica esperienziale (Montessori 2017), brani di letteratura, suggestioni storico-geografiche, miti, narrazioni autobiografiche, immagini di alta qualità (arte presente e passata, fumetto, illustrazione).
- *La lingua come luogo di accoglienza*. Migrare significa tagliare le proprie radici, vagare, perdersi (La Cecla 2000). È un processo che vive momenti repentini (la partenza, l'arrivo), ma al contempo si caratterizza per lunghi, talvolta lunghissimi, periodi di latenza, di sospensione, aggravati dalle peculiarità del sistema di accoglienza: non si è più a casa, ma non si è neanche definitivamente arrivati (Sayed 2002). Il rapporto che si instaura con la nuova lingua si inserisce quindi in una relazione complessa, e spesso conflittuale, con il proprio percorso migratorio (Kristof 2005), per i più piccoli particolarmente doloroso a causa del precoce abbandono della famiglia (minori non accompagnati) o del ritrovamento di figure affettive importanti ma per lo più sconosciute (minori ricongiunti). La scuola può e deve venire incontro al bisogno di radicamento (Weil 2013) e di casa (Farah

---

punto di riferimento nella rivista di educazione e intervento sociale *Gli Asini* (https://gliasinirivista.org/).

2003) offrendosi come luogo plasmabile, dove sentirsi accettati per quel che si è, per quel che si porta. La lingua diviene accogliente nel momento in cui si apre a ogni singolo studente per la storia che incarna e che chiede di essere valorizzata e risignificata nel nuovo contesto di vita (Honegger 2018).

– *Gruppo*. Asnada lavora sempre con gruppi eterogenei di studenti. L'eterogeneità di sesso, genere, provenienza geografica, status giuridico e religione è considerata valore aggiunto per gli obiettivi educativi e didattici della scuola. Essa permette ai singoli di godere di una varietà di risorse e di competenze linguistiche, sociali, relazionali e di apprendere la lingua attraverso un approccio cooperativo dove ogni diversità ha modo di essere valorizzata.

– *Democrazia.* La scuola ha la responsabilità di favorire una cultura democratica del vivere comune attraverso la sua tematizzazione (educazione civica) e mediante la sperimentazione continua del processo democratico: ascolto individuale, ascolto di gruppo, presa di parola, costruzione di processi collettivi di pensiero, presa di decisioni comuni, azione.

– *Aula diffusa*. La scuola è immersa in un contesto urbano ricchissimo di stimoli e di contraddizioni che gli studenti vivono, come ogni cittadino, quotidianamente. Se è vero che il mondo fuori può essere portato dentro la scuola, è altrettanto vero che la scuola diviene viva, reale e presente quanto più è capace di liberarsi dalla protezione dell'aula e accettare la sfida dell'incontro non controllabile con l'esterno (Aiello 2017; Zoppoli 2014).

– *Apprendimento esperienziale*. La lingua viene appresa il più possibile attraverso prove ed errori, a partire dell'osservazione delle sue regolarità e irregolarità, ricavando le regole grammaticali per confronto, classificazione e ordinamento, secondo modalità di riflessione metalinguistica (Vedovelli 2002). Le strutture della lingua sono rese accessibili anche a chi è privo di scolarizzazione attraverso oggetti fisici che le rappresentino simbolicamente (Montessori 2014, 2017) e che permettano di afferrarne la funzionalità attraverso concreti posizionamenti e spostamenti all'interno di una frase, di un paragrafo, di un testo. Infine, è incluso nell'apprendimento esperienziale il coinvolgimento dello studente nella complessità della sua persona, con un corpo e una

storia. Per questo, una parte della scuola si svolge in cerchio ed è dedicata ad attività espressive di tipo ludico, canoro e teatrale, grazie alle quali le persone si mettono in gioco con il corpo e con la voce, fino a trovare il coraggio di padroneggiare la lingua orale.

- *Laboratori manuali*. Proposti a seconda della necessità (Freinet 1978), svolgono diverse funzioni: a) permettono a tutti, anche a chi ha pochissima lingua, di esprimere attraverso le mani il proprio mondo interiore; b) favoriscono lo sviluppo della manualità fine senza l'utilizzo di esercizi noiosi e mortificanti; c) favoriscono un buon clima di gruppo e sollecitano in modo indiretto il desiderio di contribuire in modo personale alla vita emotiva e intellettuale della scuola; d) aiutano i docenti a individuare le urgenze degli studenti.

2. Il lavoro con gli adolescenti

L'intervento didattico-educativo con minori stranieri non accompagnati e minori ricongiunti, di età compresa tra i 14 e i 18 anni, ha imposto una revisione metodologica di alcuni aspetti dell'orizzonte pedagogico sopra descritto, a partire da alcune osservazioni svolte durante il primo anno di scuola:

- L'età compresa tra l'infanzia e l'età adulta è per sua natura un'età di continua ricerca. Gli adolescenti sono alla ricerca di punti di riferimento, di confini e di potenzialità della propria identità (Laffi 2014). Questo atteggiamento interrogativo e interrogante necessita di trovare spazio dentro la scuola e può diventare un vero e proprio sostegno al processo di apprendimento (Bruner 1973).
- Gli adolescenti sottopongono a continua verifica la solidità e la coerenza delle proposte educative e didattiche attraverso domande che ne indaghino il senso e che permettano loro di testare l'affidabilità degli adulti che hanno intorno, per scegliere tra i diversi modelli a loro disposizione. Questo processo relazionale richiama il processo di *pruning* che nella corteccia prefrontale conduce alla selezione degli apprendimenti ritenuti essenziali e all'eliminazione delle sinapsi considerate inutili (Poletti 2009). Come nei confronti degli adulti e dei modelli genitoriali a loro

disposizione, anche nel funzionamento neuronale, gli adolescenti attraversano una fase di vita in cui poter scegliere quali insegnamenti trattenere e quali lasciar andare. Per compiere questa scelta e diventare grandi, sfide e quesiti, talvolta irriverenti e provocatori, sono strumenti elettivi: "perché facciamo questo? È vero quello che dici?". Ancora non adulti, ma certamente non bambini, hanno bisogno di trovare approcci e interlocutori che facciano leva sulla loro parte costruttiva e che siano capaci di contenere e dare senso alle paure legate all'ingresso nel mondo adulto, spesso incomprensibile nelle sue tante contraddizioni.

‒ In questi anni abbiamo osservato che, a differenza degli adulti, molti adolescenti stranieri non desiderano indagare il passato prossimo (l'infanzia, la vita nel proprio paese), così come sono generalmente poco interessati al futuro, se non strettamente collegato alle loro urgenze di vita (ad esempio, il compimento del diciottesimo anno di età e la conseguente uscita dal sistema di protezione). Sono, al contrario, molto interessati a comprendere il presente e necessitano di una proposta educativo-didattica che abbia significato e valore nel qui e ora della loro esperienza di vita (Bruner 1973; Scuola di Barbiana 1968).

‒ Abbiamo inoltre rilevato negli adolescenti una scarsa attrazione verso la lingua in quanto tale. Da ciò, la necessità di trasformarla da *obiettivo* da raggiungere a *mezzo* indispensabile al conseguimento di fini ritenuti più appetibili e corrispondenti al proprio percorso di vita.

A partire da queste osservazioni, abbiamo messo a fuoco la seguente ipotesi metodologica: l'adolescente impara tanto più rapidamente la lingua quanto più l'apprendimento è inserito all'interno di un obiettivo di ricerca, personale e di gruppo, che gli permetta di interrogare sé stesso e il mondo.

L'inchiesta è stata scelta quale strumento sperimentale utile a testare questa ipotesi (Marongiu 2016). Essa permette di dare spazio a tematiche urgenti nella vita degli adolescenti e di utilizzare la lingua come mezzo per elaborare domande e condividere pensieri, desideri, dubbi, paure, esplorazioni. Ad oggi (2019), abbiamo svolto 5 inchieste con 110 adolescenti fra stranieri e italiani (in veste di *peer tutor*).

3. L'inchiesta: uno strumento complesso

Impostare un'inchiesta richiede tempo, cura e pensiero ai differenti passaggi che la compongono (Asnada 2018). In primo luogo, è necessario individuare insieme agli studenti un tema e un luogo entro cui circoscrivere la ricerca. Entrambi devono essere sufficientemente ampi da permettere a ognuno di relazionarcisi in modo personale e abbastanza contenuti da consentire un'esplorazione efficace. L'individuazione del tema può richiedere anche alcuni mesi. La necessità di uscire da scuola e raccogliere delle interviste cittadine deve maturare all'interno del gruppo via via che le tematiche condivise emergono in una complessità non risolvibile attraverso lo studio o la spiegazione di un docente. Quando le fonti convenzionali del sapere non risultano utili, diviene necessario varcare la soglia della scuola e accedere all'aula "diffusa".

3. Le domande

Strumento elettivo delle nostre inchieste è l'intervista. Preparare un'intervista significa innanzitutto raccogliere domande di ricerca. In questo modo, da oggetti di interrogazione gli studenti divengono soggetti interroganti, attivi ricercatori di nuove visioni.

Come formulare buone domande? Buone domande sono le domande legittime (Armellini 2008; Conte 2015; Lorenzoni 2014), cioè quelle di cui nessuno ha una risposta valida per tutti. Buone domande sono quelle che generano ulteriori interrogativi e che aprono nuove finestre invece di accontentarsi della prima risposta. Buone domande sono le domande aperte, a cui non si possa rispondere con un sì o con un no. Fare buone domande è un'abilità da affinare, al pari di un mestiere artigianale. È importante sperimentare e via via distinguere domande acute e domande inutili, domande invadenti e domande delicate, domande introduttive e domande per incalzare. Familiarizzare con le domande significa riappropriarsi della propria capacità di interrogare il mondo e diventare padroni di uno strumento di conoscenza che, per sua natura, è relazionale e non può prescindere dall'uso della lingua viva. Il verbo "chiedere" è profondamente legato al complemento di termine "A chi? A cosa?". Domandare significa

entrare in relazione con la città, con le persone sconosciute, con il gruppo di scuola, con sé stessi. Formulare e porre domande significa anche riflettere sulla propria lingua, sulla propria postura, sulle modalità di relazione, sulla propria capacità di ascolto.

Da un punto di vista strettamente didattico, il focus sulle domande permette di comprendere il funzionamento sintattico nel passaggio dalle frasi affermative a quelle interrogative e di avviare l'analisi logica nonché di esplorare gli avverbi interrogativi. In Figura 1, si osserva un esempio di avvio del processo di trasformazione dalle prime affermazioni alle prime domande, i primi dubbi generativi.

Figura 1. Costruire a scuola le prime domande.

3.1.2. Dentro e fuori

Il lavoro d'inchiesta è scandito da una continua alternanza tra dentro e fuori (Aiello 2017).

L'uscita (il fuori) costituisce la fase di raccolta dati: è il momento in cui si svolgono e si registrano le interviste per strada, come in Figura 2, Piazza Gae Aulenti, Milano 2019. A essa si alterna continuamente la fase di analisi e approfondimento, che invece si svolge a scuola (il dentro). Una volta avviata l'inchiesta, dentro la scuola il lavoro didattico parte dall'ascolto e dalla sbobinatura di una selezione dei file audio che sono stati registrati. Tale lavoro è utile sia

per gli studenti che hanno un livello avanzato di lingua orale e scritta, sfruttando la possibilità di concentrarsi attentamente sulla struttura della frase e sul significato di alcune parole all'interno di un discorso; sia per gli studenti scarsamente alfabetizzati, che oltre ad accrescere le capacità di ascolto e di comprensione, sono coinvolti in attività di correzione ortografica a partire da un dettato svolto da voci differenti da quelle abituali delle insegnanti.

Figura 2. Portare fuori da scuola le domande.

Figura 3. Ritornare a scuola.

Il momento della sbobinatura di una o più frasi di una persona intervistata in città permette un senso di familiarità con quella interazione, quel dialogo, quella voce. Gli studenti si sentono agganciati e sanno contestualizzare il lavoro ortografico a un'esperienza comune. Durante la sbobinatura ci concentriamo sul particolare: dopo aver scelto su quale frase ci interessa lavorare, la ascoltiamo e la riascoltiamo, a volte interrompendo e riavvolgendo l'audio svariate volte, finché non siamo completamente sicuri di aver trascritto ciò che viene detto dall'intervistato.

In Figura 3 si osserva un momento di correzione collettiva di una trascrizione con l'alfabetario. Rileggendo la trascrizione, cominciamo a interrogarci sul senso di quello che abbiamo ascoltato. È in questo modo che le citazioni tratte dalle interviste danno avvio a degli approfondimenti tematici, condotti attraverso delle discussioni in gruppo, dei laboratori narrativo-manuali, dei testi della letteratura o ulteriori interviste.

Figura 4. Cosa abbiamo capito fuori da scuola? Cosa vogliamo domandare ancora?

In Figura 4 possiamo vedere un momento di studio, scrittura e comprensione a partire dalle frasi, via via estrapolate dalle sbobinature e trascritte insieme.

4. Una restituzione

Se la valorizzazione del processo è importante per interrogarsi, continuamente e ripetutamente, circa gli strumenti di conoscenza da proporre in una scuola, in quanto risponde alla domanda (utile tanto agli studenti quanto ai maestri) "Come conosciamo ciò che non conosciamo?", un buon esito necessita di un prodotto che descriva, ma anche interpreti, rilegga, rinarri ciò che è avvenuto. La domanda in questo caso è "Come tenere traccia di ciò che intuisco, scopro, apprendo?". Il prodotto finale ha infatti la funzione fondamentale di tenere traccia, cioè lasciare un segno.

Il segno, sia esso grafico in un libro, visuale in un film, sonoro in una canzone, implica rielaborare l'esperienza emotivamente e cognitivamente, guardarla con una distanza, circoscriverla in un racconto che ha un inizio e una fine, e che parli un linguaggio comprensibile anche a chi quella esperienza non l'ha vissuta. L'esposizione del prodotto agli sconosciuti è il delicato momento in cui nutrirsi di un riconoscimento di presenza e valore, oltre che di commenti e domande che permettono una riflessione ulteriore.

5. Conclusioni

Fare una ricerca strutturata, quale è l'inchiesta, permette di mantenere una stretta connessione tra il *chi*, il *cosa* e il *come: chi siamo, cosa facciamo, come lo facciamo*.

La proposta metodologica riguarda, infatti, in modo specifico gli adolescenti. L'età che corre tra l'infanzia e l'adultità è per sua natura in ricerca: di modelli di riferimento, di un proprio posto nel mondo, dei propri confini. *Chi sono io? Di cosa faccio parte? Cosa vedete di me?*

In altre parole, l'inchiesta tiene saldamente uniti i fini e i mezzi della proposta educativo-didattica.
Essa consente di riflettere sulla lingua, mentre la si apprende e la si costruisce. E, al contempo, permette di sperimentarla senza pensare, in virtù di un'urgenza viva nell'incontro con la città e gli intervistati.

Riferimenti bibliografici

Aiello, Michele (a cura di). 2017. *Resistenza attiva. Le passioni e le sfide di chi non si accontenta di stare dentro le mura scolastiche*. Trento: Erickson Live.

Armellini, Guido. 2008. *La letteratura in classe. L'educazione letteraria e il mestiere dell'insegnante.* Milano: Unicopli.

Asnada. 2018. *Laboratorio d'indagine sull'Italia di oggi. Kit didattico*. http://www.asnada.it/2018/10/06/laboratorio-dindagine-sullitalia-di-oggi-kit-didattico/. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Bruner, S. Jerome. 1973. *Il significato dell'educazione*, Roma: Armando editore.

Conte, Massimo. 2015. Scuola obbligata. In Stefano Laffi (a cura di), *Crescere nonostante, un romanzo di formazione*, 9-31. Roma: Edizioni dell'Asino.

La Cecla, Franco. 2000. *Perdersi. L'uomo senza ambiente*, Roma: Editori Laterza.

Farah, Nuruddin. 2003. *Rifugiati*. Milano: Meltemi.

Freinet, Celestin. 1978. *La scuola del fare*, voll.2. Trieste: Emme edizioni.

Freire, Paulo. 1973. *L'educazione come pratica di libertà*. Roma: Mondadori.

Honegger, Sara. 2018. Lingua vecchia, lingua nuova. *Gli Asini. Rivista di educazione e intervento sociale* 56: 42-46.

Kristof, Agota. 2005. *L'analfabeta*. Bellinzona: Edizioni Casagrande.

Laffi, Stefano. 2014. *La congiura contro i giovani*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Lorenzoni, Franco. 2015. *I bambini pensano grande, cronaca di una avventura pedagogica.* Palermo: Sellerio Editore.

Marongiu, Debora. 2016 L'inchiesta. Una scuola in ricerca. *Gli Asini. Rivista di educazione e intervento sociale* 36/37: 26-27.

Montessori Maria. 2017. *Psicogrammatica*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Poletti, Michele. 2009. Sviluppo cerebrale, funzioni esecutive e capacità decisionali. *Giornale italiano di Psicologia. Adolescenza* 36(3): 555-581.

Sayad, Abdelmalek. 2002. *La doppia assenza. Dalle illusioni dell'emigrato alle sofferenze dell'immigrato*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Scuola di Barbiana. 1968. *Lettera a una professoressa*. Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina.

Vedovelli, Massimo. 2002. *Guida all'italiano per stranieri. La prospettiva del 'Quadro comune europeo per le lingue'*. Roma: Carocci.

Weil, Simone. 2013. *La prima radice*. Milano: SE.

Zoppoli, Giovanni. 2014. *Fare scuola, fare città*. Roma: Edizioni dell'Asino.

The acquisition of L2 Italian by LESLLA learners: collecting and organising data

Egle Mocciaro

In the last decades, Italian research has provided accurate descriptions of L2 Italian acquisition morphosyntax, but learners' home literacy has never been assumed as an explicit variable in data collection and analysis. However, limited literacy and/or schooling are important components of migrants' background in recent flows to Italy (and Europe) and deserve new attention. The research project "The acquisition of L2 Italian morphosyntax by low and non-literate learners" (University of Palermo, 2016-2019) is an effort in this direction. Part of the broader research and pedagogical activity carried out at the School of Italian for Foreigners of Palermo, the project aims at verifying the degree of applicability of existing descriptions of L2 Italian to learners with limited literacy and at comparing the resulting data with research products on other L2 acquired by this population of learners. In this paper, the theoretical and methodological assumptions on which the research was based are presented and discussed.

Keywords: L2 Italian morphosyntax, learners' limited literacy, adult learners.

1. LESLLA learners: reasons for a corpus

During the last three decades, Italian research has provided descriptions of L2 Italian acquisition paths and learners' morphosyntax. An important aspect of this research has been its corpus-based character, which has allowed the systematic analysis of a substantial amount of data (Chini 2021; Giacalone Ramat 2003)[1].

---

[1] Cf. the databank of the Pavia Project (see Andorno 2001). Other important corpora of L2 Italian which collect oral and/or written texts are: ADIL2 – Archivio Digitale di Italiano L2 (Università per Stranieri di Siena; see Palermo 2005, 2009), LIPS – Lessico Italiano Parlato di Stranieri (Università per Stranieri di Siena; see Gallina and Barni 2009), Corpus parlato di italiano L2 (Osservatorio sull'italiano di stranieri e sull'italiano parlato all'estero, Università per Stranieri di Perugia; see Atzori and Spina 2009), Italiano scritto L2 (Università di Salerno; see Turco and Voghera

However, none of these studies assumed learners' early literacy in a home language as an explicit variable in data collection and analysis. As a consequence, the role that this variable plays on the acquisition of L2 Italian has so far remained largely unexplored[2]. Nonetheless, limited literacy is an important component of migrants' background, especially in recent flows towards Italy (and Europe in general) and requires new attention and in-depth analysis so that the relevance of this neglected factor can be verified on the basis of consistent data. The main context in which such research should be conducted is represented by the international forum LESLLA (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults, www.leslla.org).

The research project "The acquisition of L2 Italian morphosyntax by low and non-literate learners", started in 2016 at the University of Palermo and concluded in 2019, was an effort in this direction[3]. The project was part of the broader research activity on adult and young adult migrants carried out at the School of Italian language for Foreigners of Palermo (henceforth, ItaStra) since 2012. In this local context, an increasing amount of data on migrants' interlanguage has been collected over the years, largely resulting from interviews conducted for various preliminary studies (see Mocciaro 2019, 2021).

In 2016-2019, this nucleus has been expanded on by new data collection, specifically designed for the research project on the acquisition of morphosyntax. The new sub-corpus consists of the recordings and transcriptions of young adult migrants' speech, both literate and with limited literacy, in different stages of their acquisition path. This LESLLA learner corpus is the starting point for:

- verifying the degree to which the existing descriptions of L2 Italian also apply to LESLLA learners (in terms of route, rate and end-state of the second language acquisition process);

2010), VALICO – Varietà Apprendimento Lingua Italiana Corpus Online (Università di Torino; see Corino and Marello 2017).
[2] To my knowledge, the only systematic study on the role of L1 literacy on the acquisition of L2 Italian is Maffia and De Meo (2015) on the development of L2 prosodic competence in low-literate Senegalese learners.
[3] This paper is based on the presentation given at the 14th Annual LESLLA Symposium, held in Palermo in 2018. The research was completed in 2019 and the results are now published in Mocciaro (2020).

–   analysing LESLLA learners' interlanguages in the light of current theoretical insights on the role of literacy in second language acquisition;
–   comparing the resulting data with the research products on other L2s acquired by such learner population[4].

In this paper, I will present and discuss the theoretical background of the project (Section 2). The attention will be focused on the research context (Section 3.1), the participants' profile (Section 3.2) and the criteria for data collection (Section 3.3) and elaboration (Section 3.4). This first phase of the research has brought to light some difficulties, representing, however, important challenges at the theoretical and methodological level (Session 4). Two of them appear to be specifically related to the migrant population, namely the difficulty of isolating the variable "literacy" and the high attrition rate in the sample that makes a longitudinal survey particularly difficult. In addition, some problematic aspects related to data elaboration criteria are addressed, which involve learner corpora in general. It is suggested that the choices made in this respect may affect the analysis of LESLLA learners' interlanguage, eventually bringing to the fore possible preferences in selecting specific form/function pairs.

2.   L1(s) literacy and L2 acquisition

2.1.   Studies on literacy and Second Language Acquisition

The impact of L1(s) literacy is still a peripheral area in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and is largely carried out by scholars who gravitate to some extent towards the LESLLA forum. In this context, there is consensus that L1 (alphabetic) literacy correlates with certain aspects of L2 acquisition, although the nature of this relationship is anything but clear and different scholars emphasise different aspects, also depending on their theoretical premises.

---

[4] Cf. for instance the Dutch LESLLA corpus described in van de Craats (2011) and Sanders et al. (2014).

Vainikka and Young-Scholten (2007a: 144) summarised the debate around this topic as in Table 1, which, after more than ten years, still illustrates well the main tendencies within the few LESLLA studies which have been carried out since then. Table 1 shows the contrast between:

− the strong generativist hypothesis (arguing against any external, not strictly linguistic influence on language acquisition) and the weak continuity generativist hypothesis (i.e., the Organic Grammar approach which admits the possible influence of external factors such as literacy on L2 acquisition, cf. Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1998, 2006, 2007b);
− the generativist perspective as a whole and the line of research directly inspired by cognitive psychology experimental studies on phonological awareness and working memory (cf. the research conducted by Tarone and colleagues since the early 2000s).

	HYPOTHESIS	TESTABLE BY	EVIDENCE FROM	HYPOTHESIS STATUS
STRONG GENERATIVIST HYPOTHESIS	Literacy does not affect acquisition	Looking at L2 learners regardless of their literacy, etc.	Existing studies of immigrants	supported
INDIRECT INFLUENCE HYPOTHESIS	Literacy affects morphology which in turn affects syntax	Comparing nonliterate and literate L2 learners	Tarone, Bigelow and colleagues' work	some support
INDIRECT INFLUENCE HYPOTHESIS II	Literacy affects phonology which affects operation of triggers (morphology) which affects syntax	Comparing nonliterate and literate L2 learners	Weak generativist hypothesis: Vainikka and Young-Scholten	some support
INTERFACE HYPOTHESIS	Literacy affects processing which affects acquisition of morphology and syntax	Comparing nonliterate and literate L2 learners	Tarone, Bigelow and colleagues	some support

Table 1. The role of literacy in the acquisition of L2 morphosyntax
(Vainikka and Young-Scholten 2007a: 144).

The cognitive trend rests on the assumption that alphabetic literacy affects the ability to segment the speech into non-semantic units – in particular, into phonemes – and to manipulate these units (Castro-Caldas 2004; Goswami and Bryant 1990; Huettig and Mishra 2014; Reis and Castro-Caldas 1997). On the other hand, literacy does not affect the ability to process oral speech in semantic units. The awareness of phonology is an explicit, that is, metalinguistic skill, whereas the semantic processing is implicit. Illiterates and literates process oral language differently, as only alphabetic literacy provides strategies to process oral language segments irrespective of the semantic content. As Reis and Castro-Caldas (1997: 445) observe,

Learning to match graphemes and phonemes is learning an operation in which units of auditory verbal information heard in temporal sequence are matched to units of visual verbal information, which is spatially arranged. This type of treatment of auditory verbal information modulates a strategy in which a visual-graphic meaning is given to units that are smaller than words, and thus independent of their semantic representation. […] If we, as normal adult readers, are asked to spell a word, we evoke a visual image of its written form. The awareness of phonology also allows us to play with written symbols (which can be transcoded to sounds) to form pseudo-plausible words, independently of semantics. Therefore, learning to read and write introduces into the system qualitatively new strategies for dealing with oral language; that is, conscious phonological processing, visual formal lexical representation, and all the associations that these strategies allow.

Phonological awareness also entails the ability to segment the oral input into words as phonological units, independent of lexical semantics, that is, to identify word boundaries in the speech continuum (Reis et al. 2007).

While the impact of literacy in explicit processing operations is widely recognised in LESLLA studies, there are different views on the role that the explicit processing in turn plays on SLA. Some assume that explicit processing of the oral input is a necessary condition for adults to acquire a second language, as postulated in Schmidt's (1990) *noticing hypothesis*. If a learner can't consciously notice formal segments in the speech stream, then s/he will not acquire relevant functional units, such as grammatical morphemes (e.g., English plural -*s*, third person singular -*s*, past tense -*ed*). As a

consequence, learners who have not experienced literacy will produce bare forms (i.e., not inflected verbs and nouns) more often than literates do (cf. Bigelow and Tarone 2004; Tarone 2010; Tarone and Bigelow 2005; Tarone, Bigelow and Hansen 2007, 2009). In addition, if non-literates lack a non-semantic notion of word (Kurvers, van Hout and Vallen 2007; Onderlinden, van de Craats and Kurvers 2009), we should also expect that they will struggle in acquiring purely functional words (e.g., articles, auxiliaries etc.)

Alternatively, other assume that SLA is a fully implicit process, activated through the pure exposure to the linguistic input (cf. Schwarts 1993). External factors and general cognitive mechanisms (such as metalinguistic awareness) cannot be conceived of as direct input for SLA. Along these lines, Young-Scholten and Strom (2006) find a positive correlation between morphosyntax development and literacy, but are cautious in hypothesising a relation of causality, as different factors can still interfere. According to Vainikka and Young-Scholten (2007a: 143), literacy affects phonological attainment, which in turn may result in incomplete analysis of morphological constituents. This analysis develops the hypothesis formulated in previous research (Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1998: 97) that whereas bound morphemes (e.g., inflectional affixes) typically trigger L1 morphosyntax acquisition, it is free morphemes that do so in L2 acquisition, and it is possible that a bound morpheme can never act as a trigger: "If a particular parameter can only be triggered by a bound morpheme, such a parameter may be difficult or impossible to set in L2 acquisition, resulting in a fossilized non-target grammar". They propose that the distinction between bound and free morphemes as triggers may depends on phonology (p. 106): "Free morphemes such as auxiliaries typically constitute at least a phonological foot, while bound morphemes typically involve units smaller than a foot. Lack of phonological attainment may in turn result in incomplete analysis of sub-foot constituents in the learner's L2". Vainikka et al. (2017) claim that non-literate learners tend to overgeneralise specific function words and sequences (*placeholders*) to mark morphosyntactic functions in L2 English (e.g., *in the* to mark progressive aspect, as in *in the drink*, *in the no cooking*); while these forms can be not directly related to the actual verbal head, their occurrence still shows that non-

literate learners are able to subconsciously identify functional forms in the input.

An aspect which clearly emerges from all the LESLLA studies here reported is the necessity – yet the difficulty – to isolate the different variables at work in adult migrants' acquisition process which correlate and may interact in a quite complex way:

- first, literacy and schooling/education should be measured separately, also because they do not necessarily implicate each other;
- second, literacy should be kept distinct from (the quantity and quality of) exposure to the target language, since low levels of literacy typically correlate with migrants' low interaction with native speakers, which results in a low amount of linguistic input.

As a consequence, the two variables easily overlap and it is a difficult task to assess which of them does actually affect morphosyntax acquisition. Not to mention that low literacy itself corresponds to as low exposure, as learners cannot access the written input.

2.2. Italian research on second language acquisition

The most systematic Italian SLA research has been conducted in the functionalist framework, according to which language consists of bidirectional function-to-form mappings (Cooreman and Kilborn 1991: 197). In this theoretical perspective, linguistic description should account for: a) the grammatical forms, b) the semantic functions (e.g., semantic roles, temporality and aspect etc.) and the pragmatic functions (e.g., topic/focus relationships) encoded by the grammatical forms, and c) the mechanisms governing the grammatical expression of these functions (Giacalone Ramat 2003; Tomlin 1990).

One of the main initial results of functional approaches to SLA has been the definition of a *basic variety*, a simple yet structured stage of interlanguage which "reflects the necessary, rather than the more accidental, properties of the human language capacity" (Klein and Perdue 1997: 304). The basic variety shows a "non-finite utterance organization", that is, utterances contain verbs and are structured

according to their valency, but there is no trace of inflection. Nouns and verbs occur in an invariant form which corresponds to the stem, the infinitive or the nominative for nouns of the target language. Information about temporality, aspect, person, number, gender may be conveyed by non-inflectional means, such as lexical items (e.g., adverbs, quantifiers), such as the numeral *tre* 'three' in (1), which quantifies the uninflected noun *lingua* 'language':

(1)	**io**	**parla**	**tre**	**lingua**
	I	speak:PRS.3SG	three	language:SG
TARGET	*io*	*parlo*	*tre*	*lingue*
	I	speak:PRS.1SG	three	language:PL

'I speak three languages.'

The emergence of the basic variety represents the overcoming of a pre-grammatical stage characterised by an entirely pragmatic mode (no stable syntax, word order governed by pragmatic principles only, such as topic/focus organisation). Many learners, especially in on-going conditions of low exposure, tend to fossilise at the basic variety stage, which satisfies basic communication needs despite the lack of sophisticated grammatical organisation. Under adequate conditions of exposure, however, the acquisition develops through a series of successive varieties, whose internal organisation is systematic, as is the transition from one variety to the next (see Table 2).

	Variety		
	Pre-basic	*Basic*	*Post-basic*
GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES	None	Verb/Arguments	Verb/Arguments
MORPHOLOGY	None	Basic forms (uninflected)	Inflected nouns and verbs
ORGANISATION OF THE UTTERANCE	Pragmatic	Semantic-syntactic	Syntactic
DEPENDENCY FROM THE CONTEXT	High	<………>	Low

Table 2. Initial interlanguages (Banfi and Bernini 2003: 84, adapted).

The basic variety approach to SLA has many advantages:

 – it allows the analysis of interlanguage per se, as any other natural language and not in relation to the target language;
 – despite relevant differences in the basic theoretical assumptions (as well as explicit criticisms, cf. Vainikka and Young-Scholten 2006), it exhibits a high degree of comparability to other approaches relevant to the analysis of LESLLA learners' interlanguages[5];
 – the basic variety approach is one of the main theoretical frameworks of Italian research on SLA, which is in turn the benchmark for data analysis in the research presented here.

It goes beyond the scope of this article to detail the Italian research results. However, an interesting aspect that emerges from many studies is that all learners have difficulties in acquiring morphology, largely due to language internal factors, such as low perceptual salience of (unstressed) morphological endings and (clitic) articles; accumulation of grammatical categories (e.g., gender and number in Ital. *giall*-e 'yellow.F.SG'); homonymy of morphs (e.g., Ital. -*e* 'M.SG / F.SG / F.PL') (Chini and Ferraris 2003; Valentini 2016).

The degree of exposure to the linguistic input, which can be more or less rich and intense, affects the rate of access to L2 grammar and the degree to which grammatical forms are acquired, that is, the outcomes of SLA (with possible persistence of initial stages). Whether or not the lack of alphabetical skills (and, hence, the related ability to explicitly segment the oral speech) leads to a further slowdown or arrest in the acquisition process or produces different results with respect to those described in the existing literature still needs to be verified, first of all by trying to isolate the variables at work in a more explicit way.

---

[5] Cf. Vainikka and Young-Scholten who argue that at the beginning of the acquisition path learners do not project any functional syntax, despite the opportunity of transferring this from their L1s. Learners' initial interlanguages are "minimal syntactic trees" whose headedness is based on their L1s. When it comes to acquire functional elements, because they differ across languages, they must be acquired in response to the input. The Organic Grammar's minimal tree has many points of contact – and therefore is compatible for the purposes of the description – with Klein and Perdue's (1997) description of the basic variety as a "non-finite utterance organisation".

3. Corpus design: context, participants and data collection

3.1. The research context

Since 2012, the School of Italian Language for Foreigners of the University of Palermo (ItaStra) has dedicated considerable efforts in organising language and literacy instruction for the local migrant population. Based on agreements with city and national authorities and with various European funding support over the years, migrant learners – a fairly new typology for classes held at universities – have been offered specific literacy paths and/or they have been involved in regular language courses, side by side with the more usual learners, such as international students, PhD and visiting scholars, and professionals. This choice responds to both ethical needs of social inclusion and linguistic needs, as it ensures rich and articulated linguistic input and increases the opportunities for using the target language by learners typically living in contexts of little exposure (Amoruso, D'Agostino and Jaralla 2015).

Data on the linguistic and sociolinguistic composition of the migrants at ItaStra derive from a survey conducted in 2017-2018 for the AMIF project "The strength of the language" (D'Agostino 2018). It involved a sample of 774 migrants, both long-term resident and newly arrived from North Africa, various countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, China and South Asia (especially Bangladesh) and to a lesser extent Europe (Serbia).

Only 15% were monolingual. Plurilingualism especially characterises learners from Sub-Saharan Africa, due to the high degree of societal multilingualism in this area. Individual repertoires may include several languages used with different levels of competence, e.g., languages spoken within the family or used to communicate with neighbouring villages, former colonial languages (still official languages and used in formal education, i.e., French and English), pidgins (e.g., Nigerian Pidgin English) and sometimes language acquired during the migration experience (e.g., Arabic).

While information on plurilingual repertoires was collected through a questionnaire, data on L2 Italian derive from a language test, which revealed a competence from A1 downwards for 58.5% of

the sample. Low competence in Italian also involves 49.22% middle- and long-term residents (D'Agostino and Lo Maglio 2018: 24).

Data on literacy derived from a dedicated test (Amoruso and Lo Maglio 2018). It can be administered in various L1s (Bambara, Mandinka, Pulaar, Wolof) and schooling languages (Arabic, English, French, Italian) and in different writing systems (Arabic, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Roman, Tamil). About 31% of the sample was not fully literate in the L1 or in an early learnt language. These data do not overlap with self-declared schooling, as almost 60% of non- or very low-literate individuals declared a short school experience.

Inconsistencies between data on literacy and data on schooling can be explained if we consider the low standards of education in many of the home countries involved, which can hardly guarantee full literacy (UIS/EFA GMR 2015). Moreover, in Western and Middle Africa, learners' native languages are not involved in formal education (thus, in primary literacy), even when these languages have an autonomous writing system (e.g., Wolof). In these areas, education is still entrusted to languages spoken by a small minority of the population, namely English and French (cf. UNESCO 2012). In this context, several years of school attendance are not equivalent to full (and sometimes not even partial) literacy (D'Agostino 2017).

The spread of Qur'anic schools in many countries involved in the survey (especially African countries such as Gambia, Mali and Senegal, as well as Bangladesh) makes the scenario even more complex. In fact, at least in the most traditional schools, education promotes memorisation of the Qur'an in Arabic (that is, a foreign language) through oral repetition. As Saleem (2018: 28) observed, "before starting the actual memorization memorizers are taught Arabic letters and sounds, and how to make 'words' out of them. This learning of 'words', however, is restricted to phonological form in that they do not learn the meaning." In other words, memorisers fluently read a text they do not actually understand. These learning practices, whose purpose is the accurate recitation of the Qur'an, appear to remarkably increase learners' memory capacity and to enhance their prosodic skills (e.g., in reproducing the L2 pitch contour, cf. Maffia and De Meo 2015). However, they can be hardly

considered as literacy practices in the strict sense, nor they promote the acquisition of the Arabic language[6].

3.2. Selection of the research sample

The research is based on a sample of 20 newcomers recruited during literacy testing at ItaStra in 2017-2018. It involved selection from a larger initial pool of 40 learners, a group which has undergone a significant contraction over time; whenever longitudinal data were not complete, learners were removed from the research sample.

The 20 subjects are young adult learners, male, aged between 18 and 30 years. They arrived from Western Africa (Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal) and Bangladesh. They speak various African West Atlantic (e.g., Pulaar), Mande (e.g., Bambara, Mandinka), Benue-Congo (e.g., Esan, Igbo, Ika), Gur (e.g., Senufo) languages and Bangla. Especially African learners have plurilingual competence, which may have a functional space in the interaction with other learners.

Plurilingual repertoires still did not include Italian at the time of learners' arrival on the Sicilian coasts, between 10 and 21 months before the first interview. Most of them had attended Italian language courses after arrival, especially in volunteer contexts. This experience, if not too short or discontinuous, was important especially because it provided an opportunity for interaction with the natives, which is in general rare for migrants, and allowed many of them to enter the very initial stages of L2 Italian acquisition. In fact, the presence or absence of this initial linguistic experience marks a gap between those who were (although minimally) able to interact in Italian during the first interview and those who used only languages other than Italian (e.g., English). However, none of them had gone much beyond the non-morphological stage (that is, the basic variety or the immediate post-basic one) despite a length of residence of many months. In fact, apart from possible language courses, their exposure to Italian was on the

---

[6] In the sample discussed in this paper (see Section 3.2), learners who attended the Qur'anic schools do not include Arabic among the languages of their repertoires. Learners who report competence of L2 Arabic acquired this language through contact with Arabic-speaking people, frequently during their migratory trip.

whole inconsequential, because of the condition of segregation in hosting centres where migrants live separated from the local community and excluded from any form of true linguistic immersion.

Learners' degree of schooling and literacy in a native or early learnt language varied considerably. Based on the literacy test, learners were ranked on three levels:

– Group 1: no literacy (not able to read and write isolated words in any writing system);
– Group 2: low literacy (recognition of letters/characters, in the Roman alphabet or other writing systems; spelling of words into syllables; linking of multiple syllables; slow deciphering of a few words; writing her/his own name or individual letters/characters or individual words);
– Group 3: moderate to high literacy (fluent reading and writing of simple to complex sentences or texts).

The three levels of literacy did not perfectly correspond to an ideal continuum "no schooling > low schooling (less than 5 years) > schooling (at least 10 years)" (see Minuz 2005: 39). Group 1 also included learners who had only attended a Qur'anic school[7] or cases where learners had experienced such a low amount of schooling that it left no mark on literacy competence; group 2 included learners who had developed the rudiments of writing and reading (isolated words) outside the school context, typically during their migration or during the initial language courses in Italy; group 3 included learners who had attended high school.

	LITERACY		SCHOOLING
Group 1	No literacy		No schooling
			2-5 years of school (any type)
Group 2	Low literacy	early	10 years of Qur'anic school
		late	Experience of literacy in informal and/or
			volunteer-led contexts
Group 3	Literacy	early	Schooling (8-12 years of high school)

Tab. 3. Literacy and schooling.

---

[7] It is interesting to observe that none of these learners included Arabic among the languages of their repertoires. When Arabic is part of the repertoire, as in fact happens in other cases among migrants, it has been learnt through contact with Arabic-speaking people, not infrequently during their migratory journey.

3.3. Data collection

Data were collected longitudinally for 13 months, in 5 individual sessions carried out in non-school settings, i.e., in the hosting centres. Sessions included mainly monological tasks (guided conversations and narrative tasks; see Pallotti et al. 2010).

Session 1 included two steps, that is, a preliminary interview and the ItaStra literacy test. The interview was aimed at collecting sociolinguistic information (e.g., age, origin, linguistic repertoire, schooling and self-reported literacy). Interviews were conducted in Italian whenever possible, otherwise in English; thus, they also provided preliminary information on learners' L2 Italian competence. Data from both the interviews and the literacy test, as well as metadata, were then stored in a digital database.

Session 2 took place the day after Session 1 and was divided into two tasks. First, a short wordless video (adapted from the web) showing in parallel the day of two adults was shown to each learner individually, who was then asked to recount it. The choice of the video depended on the simple, realistic and non-childish character of the story and, above all, on the linear structure of the narrative. It represents a sequence of basic daily activities (e.g., sleeping, cooking, drinking a coffee etc.), which are representative of various event types (action, states, processes) and require a basic vocabulary probably known by learners. The task was aimed at eliciting data on basic lexical categories, that is, whether nouns and verbs: a) were encoded as distinct categories (pragmatic or post-pragmatic phase); b) if distinct, they were represented by basic forms (basic variety) or inflected forms (post-basic varieties). The second task was to select and order a set of images on paper, which once again represented basic daily events, and recount the day before the test with the help of this visual support. The aim was to elicit data on the encoding of temporal-aspectual information (by virtue of the shift to the past) and the verb person (by virtue of the shift to the autobiographical 1st person, instead of the 3rd required by the previous task).

Session 3 took place after about 6 months. Learners were involved in a new narrative-descriptive task. This time, they were asked to talk about their life in Palermo, focusing on an event or a person in particular. This task required more linguistic and communicative

autonomy compared to the previous ones. It aimed at eliciting the same linguistic phenomena as Session 2, namely, nominal and verbal inflection and its possible development after a certain timespan.

Session 4 took place after another 4 months and consisted in two steps. First, there was a conversation about learners' life experience between the third and the fourth sessions, in order to assess their ability to refer to past events and decontextualized experiences and situations. At the same time, the task allowed gathering relevant information about language exposure in the meantime (at school, at work, etc.). The second step was a narrative task based on the wordless video *The pear film* (Chafe 1980). Also in this case, learners were asked to recount the story in order to elicit data on the possible development of their nominal and verbal morphosyntax.

Session 5 was carried out after another 3 months (and 13 months from the beginning of the survey). It included all the tasks already performed in the previous sessions, namely: a semi-guided conversation (on learners' life in Sicily, possible school experience, their native country etc.), the recounting the first video and *The pear film*. Retrieving already used tools was aimed at making data collected at this final stage more straightforward to compare with those elicited in the previous sessions.

The sessions in which data collection was organised are schematically reported in Table 4.

SESSION	ACTIVITIES	DATA ELICITED	TIME	SUPPORT
1	Interview Literacy test	Sociolinguistic information	After 7 to 13 months from the arrival	Paper template
2	Narrative tasks	Presence of nouns and verbs Nominal and verbal inflection	After 7 to 13 months from the arrival	Audio recording
3	Interview Literacy test	Nominal and verbal inflection	After 6 months	Audio recording
4	Interview Narrative task Literacy test	Nominal and verbal inflection	After other 4 months	Audio recording
5	Interview Narrative tasks Literacy test	Nominal and verbal inflection	After other 3 months	Audio recording

Table 4. Synopsis of data collection sessions.

3.4. Data elaboration: transcription and annotation

Sessions 2 to 4 were audio-recorded in .wav format and then manually transcribed using the ELAN software. Each transcription contains as many tiers as there are speakers involved, typically two, i.e., the learner (indicated by an abbreviation) and the interviewer (INT). Transcriptions adopt conversational principles (Jefferson 1984, 2004) in that they provide an orthographic representation of units of language (based on Italian or the other languages used) and also account for speech phenomena, self-corrections and changes in the morphological plan (indicated by the symbol |, as in 2), pauses (indicated by the symbol /:) and interaction (e.g., turn overlap):

(2)	**mio**	**amico:** |	**amici:**	**parla**	**wolof**
	my:M.SG	friend:M.SG	friend:M.PL	speak:PRS.3SG	Wolof

'I speak Wolof with my friends.'

At this stage, the research does not involve the automatic annotation of morphosyntactic categories, which is a crucial yet still unsolved issue in SLA in general. As Andorno and Rastelli (2009) observed, one of the main problems in adopting a shared system of annotation lies in the inherently unstable character of the interlanguage whose forms are difficult to trace back to expected categories. This makes the creation of tools to perform automatic coding operations extremely difficult. This is especially true if one adopts the internal perspective of interlanguage (working on form-function pairs as they occur in learners' utterances), rather than measuring its degree of deviation from the target language (cf. Bley-Vroman's 1983 notion of *comparative fallacy*).

In the absence of a more sophisticated labelling system, which only larger and collaborative research projects can design in the future, interlinear glosses are adopted for data analysis. These are conceived as a space of preliminary reflection on the analytical categories to be used to interpret the interlanguage forms. A mainly internal perspective is adopted, although, for the sake of simplicity, the description of the forms is based on the target language in so far as interlanguage and target language converge at the surface. But it should be observed that morphological glosses only provide a formal

description of the forms produced by learners and are not aimed at interpreting them based on the similarity to hypothetical and reconstructed target forms. This can be observed in (3), in which the lack of number agreement emerges from the labels:

(3)   **mio**   **amici:**
        my:M.SG   friend:M.PL
        'My friends.'

This also involves non-target lexical bases constructed according to target morphology (e.g., *bross-are* < Eng. *brush*, see also Jezek 2005: 187; Rosi 2010: 81).

The basic forms of the verb are described on the basis of the target morphology, since any alternative description would require a preliminary choice on what should be interpreted as a basic form; this is shown in (4):

(4)   **io**   **guarda**   **film**
        I   look:PRS.3SG   film
        'I watch movies.'

Interlanguage forms which deviate from the target at the phonetic or morphological levels are preserved.

Expected but not encoded forms, e.g., auxiliaries (*noi cucinato pasta* for **noi* abbiamo *cucinato la pasta* 'we have cooked pasta'), remain unspecified.

Underspecified labels occur when the interlanguage form lacks morphological information, as in (5), where '+' means 'interrupted word' and the zero-marking indicates lack of gender and number information, which is compulsory in Italian (**mia amica*):

(5)   **anche**   **lei**   **tu+**   **amig+**
        also   she   your:Ø   friend:Ø
        'She's your friend too.'

Underspecified labels are also adopted when the morphological category is unclear, as in the case of *comportamenti* in (6), which is formally (i.e., in the target language) a plural noun ('behaviour-s') but

it is unclear whether it is used as a noun or as a verb; as a consequence, the gloss preserves the radical semantics only, reported within square brackets:

(6) **comportamenti   tutti   bene**
     [behav-]   all   well
     'People's behaviour is good / All people behave well.'

Besides formal (i.e., morphological) labels, also some functional labels have been adopted, which are conceived as the locus of interpretation of interlanguage data and have their dedicated space below the morphological glosses.

A functional label occurs when a formally target form conveys a non-target function (i.e., a specific interlanguage function), as *siamo* in (7):

(7) **noi   siamo   mangiare**
     we   be:PRS.1PL   eat:INF
                      TS.PS.N
     'We eat.'

In (7), the two target forms *siamo* 'are' and *mangiare* 'to eat' combine in a non-target verbal construction (*be + INF does not exist in Italian), where *siamo* conveys temporal (TS), person (PS) and number (N) information (expressing the value PRS.1PL) instead of the uninflected lexical verb. In other words, *siamo* is an interlanguage lexical marker of agreement or an auxiliary (cf. Banfi and Bernini 2003: 106-108; Benazzo 2003).

Similarly, functional labels are attributed to forms which lexicalise notional categories when no grammatical encoding co-occurs, e.g, the adverbial item *ieri* 'yesterday' in (8):

(8) **ieri   io   va   escola**
     yesterday   I   go:PRS.3SG   school
     TEMP
     'Yesterday I went to school.'

The adverb *ieri* 'yesterday' is assigned a functional label TEMP, in order to highlights that temporal information, which lacks in the uninflected verbal form, is however lexically encoded in the context.

Functional labels are only tentative at this stage. They have important advantages, but also present some problems. The main problem is that they are not always inherent to specific segments, but seem to have scope over the larger context of the sentence. This seriously limits the possibility of applying this type of analysis to more extended corpora and, more important, of translating it into an automatic annotation system (Andorno and Rastelli 2009: 63). On the other hand, functional labels allow questions to be formulated such as "through which forms is the plural expressed?" (not only "what does the X form express?", cf. Andorno and Rastelli 2009). In other words, they allow to identify the not (or not fully) grammaticalised encoding of categories which are typically conveyed through morphological means in the target language and are entrusted instead to lexical (or lexical-syntactic means) in the interlanguage. Such linguistic items would go unnoticed if we just observed the form of the words.

This approach seems particularly interesting in the perspective here adopted, as it can bring out possible systematic preferences by LESLLA learners: more specifically, whether LESLLA learners select specific form/function pairs or function words in the input when they start to develop the L2 grammar (Vainikka et al. 2017: 247). For instance, data suggest that both literate and non-literate learners develop interlanguage constructions, that is, non-target analytical tools to express notional categories, which are grammaticalised in the target language, e.g., the 'be'-construction in (7), but the incidence of such forms seems to be stronger in learners with limited literacy[8].

4. Discussion and conclusion

The preliminary research activities, i.e., the selection of the sample and the collection of the data, have brought to light some problems that seem to specifically correlate to the LESLLA learner population.

---

[8] See Mocciaro (2020) for final results of the research, which in fact confirm this preliminary conclusion.

The first problem is methodological and concerns the difficulty of isolating the variables involved in the process of second language acquisition by LESLLA learners, namely L1 literacy and early schooling, on the one hand, and the "LESLLA" condition as a whole and the (quantity and quality of) exposure to the target language, on the other hand. The ItaStra literacy test allowed us to separately measure learners' degree of literacy and shed light on the complex interrelation of this variable with the self-reported schooling experience. Isolating literacy from the degree of exposure to the target language results in a more problematic task, since all migrants have a very low level of interaction with native speakers. As we have seen in 3.2, the role of literacy appears to be irrelevant at the very beginning of the L2 acquisition path (i.e., in the pre-morphological stages), when the only variable at work is exposure to input. The observation of data suggests that the interrelation of the two variables becomes more complex in successive phases, that is, when morphosyntax starts (or should start) to develop.

A second order of problems that slow down and significantly limit the organisation of the research depends on the extremely high rate of attrition of this learner population. Attrition derives from several causes: first, migrants are subject to frequent relocations or voluntary transfers; second, they are forced into difficult existential situations (exhausting work pace and, at the same time, isolation from the local community) that make them much less accessible than other learner categories. As a consequence, longitudinal research is particularly challenging and requires continuous redesign and a very high degree of flexibility on the part of the researcher (as pointed out by Bigelow and Tarone 2004: 697).

A final problem relates to the process of data elaboration in any learner corpus. Although annotation was not included among the objectives of the research, it was necessary to question the possible theoretical choices for the description of data and, on an experimental basis, it was decided to work manually with a set of functional labels, rather than with morphological labelling only. This option is potentially relevant for the analysis of LESLLA learners' interlanguage in particular, as it could bring to light possible preferences in selecting specific form/function pairs in the path of

development of grammar, which would remain unnoticed with a pure morphological labelling.

In the near future, it will be necessary to broaden the perspective of the research to include: on the one hand, the design of an automatic annotation tool which takes into account the need to extract functional information to ensure a more fine-grained interlanguage analysis; on the other hand, an increase of the debate, also through concrete collaborations, among researchers working on the acquisition of different L2s by LESLLA learners, in order to reach a more systematic comparison among different acquisition paths eventually providing information on the common features (if any) in LESLLA learners' interlanguage.

References

Amoruso, Marcello and Angelo Lo Maglio. 2018. I test e la griglia di valutazione. Una sperimentazione continua. In Mari D'Agostino (a cura di), *La forza delle lingue, nella migrazione e nella inclusione* (Strumenti e ricerche 8), 181-183. Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Amoruso, Marcello, Mari D'Agostino and Yousif Latif Jaralla (a cura di). 2015. *Dai barconi all'università. Percorsi di inclusione linguistica per minori stranieri non accompagnati* (Strumenti e ricerche 5). Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Andorno, Cecilia (ed.). 2001. *Banca dati di italiano L2. Progetto di Pavia, CD Rom*. Pavia: Università di Pavia.

Andorno, Cecilia and Stefano Rastelli. 2009. Un'annotazione orientata alla ricerca acquisizionale. In Cecilia Andorno and Stefano Rastelli (a cura di), *Corpora di italiano L2: tecnologie, metodi, spunti teorici*, 49-70. Perugia: Guerra.

Atzori, Laura and Stefania Spina. 2009. Corpora di italiano L2: difficoltà di annotazione e trascrizione allargata. In Cecilia Andorno e Stefano Rastelli (a cura di), *Corpora di italiano L2: tecnologie, metodi, spunti teorici*, 93-100. Perugia: Guerra.

Banfi, Emanuele and Giuliano Bernini. 2003. Il verbo. In Anna Giacalone Ramat (a cura di), *Verso l'italiano. Percorsi e strategie di acquisizione*, 70-115. Roma: Carocci.

Benazzo, Sandra. 2003. The interaction between the development of verb morphology and the acquisition of temporal adverbs of contrast. In Christine Dimroth and Marianne Starren (eds.), *Information structure and the dynamics of language acquisition*, 187-210. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Bigelow, Martha and Elaine Tarone. 2004. The role of literacy level in second

language acquisition: doesn't who we study determine what we know? *TESOL Quarterly* 38(4): 689-700.

Bley-Vroman, Robert W. 1983. The comparative fallacy in interlanguage studies: the case of systematicity. *Language Learning* 33(4): 1-17.

Castro-Caldas, Alexandre. 2004. Targeting regions of interest for the study of the illiterate brain. *International Journal of Psychology* 39: 5-17.

Chafe, Wallace (ed.). 1980. *The pear stories: cognitive, cultural, and linguistic aspects of narrative production*. Norwood: Ablex.

Chini, Marina. 2021. Trent'anni di studio sull'italiano L2. In Margarita Borreguero Zuloaga (ed.), *Acquisizione e didattica dell'italiano: riflessioni teoriche, nuovi apprendenti e uno sguardo al passato*, 51-94. Bern: Peter Lang.

Chini, Marina and Stefania Ferraris. 2003. Morfologia del nome. In Anna Giacalone Ramat (a cura di), *Verso l'italiano. Percorsi e strategie di acquisizione*, 37-69. Roma: Carocci.

Cooreman, Ann and Kerry Kilborn. 1991. Functionalist linguistics: discourse structure and language processing in second language acquisition. In Charles A. Ferguson and Thom Heubner (eds.), *Crosscurrents in second language acquisition and linguistic theory*, 194-224. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Corino, Elisa and Carla Marello. 2017. *Italiano di Stranieri, Corpora VALICO e VINCA*. Perugia: Guerra.

D'Agostino, Mari (a cura di). 2018. *La forza delle lingue, nella migrazione e nella inclusione* (Strumenti e ricerche 8). Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

D'Agostino, Mari. 2017. L'italiano e l'alfabeto per i nuovi arrivati. *Testi e linguaggi* 11: 141-156.

D'Agostino, Mari and Angelo Lo Maglio. 2018. Profili dei migranti: competenze linguistiche e alfabetizzazione. In Mari D'Agostino (a cura di), *La forza delle lingue, nella migrazione e nella inclusione* (Strumenti e ricerche 8), 23-29. Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Gallina, Francesca and Barni Monica. 2009. Il corpus LIPS (Lessico dell'italiano parlato da stranieri): problemi di trattamento delle forme e di lemmatizzazione. In Cecilia Andorno e Stefano Rastelli (a cura di), *Corpora di italiano L2: tecnologie, metodi, spunti teorici*, 139-151. Perugia: Guerra.

Giacalone Ramat, Anna (a cura di). 2003. *Verso l'italiano*. *Percorsi e strategie di acquisizione*. Roma: Carocci.

Goswami, Usha and Peter Bryant. 1990. *Phonological skills and learning to read*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Huettig, Falk and Ramesh K. Mishra. 2014. How literacy affects the illiterate mind. A critical examination of theories and evidence. *Language and Linguistic Compass* 8(10): 401-427.

Jefferson, Gail. 2004. Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In Gene H. Lerner (ed.), *Conversation analysis: studies from the first generation*, 13-31. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Jefferson, Gail. 1984. Transcript notation. In J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage (eds.), *Structures of social action. Studies in conversation analysis*, ix-

xvi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Klein, Wolfgang and Clive Perdue. 1997. The Basic variety (or: couldn't natural languages be much simpler?), *Second Language Research* 13(4): 301-347.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Roeland van Hout and Ton Vallen. 2007. Literacy and word boundaries, in Nancy Faux (ed.), *Proceedings of the 2nd annual forum of LESLLA*, 45-65. Richmond, VA: The Literacy Institute.

Maffia, Marta and Anna De Meo. 2015. Literacy and prosody: the case of low literate Senegalese learners of L2 Italian. In Ineke van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Roeland van Hout (eds.), *Adult literacy, second language and cognition*, 129-148. Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies.

Minuz, Fernanda. 2005. *Italiano L2 e alfabetizzazione in età adulta*. Roma: Carocci.

Mocciaro, Egle. 2021. L'acquisizione delle categorie morfologiche in apprendenti adulti analfabeti. In Margarita Borreguero Zuloaga (a cura di), *Acquisizione e didattica dell'italiano: riflessioni teoriche, nuovi apprendenti e uno sguardo al passato*, 249-268. Bern: Peter Lang.

Mocciaro, Egle. 2020. *The development of L2 Italian morphosyntax in adult learners with limited literacy*. Palermo: UniPa Press.

Mocciaro, Egle. 2019. La morfologia nominale nell'italiano L2 di minori stranieri non accompagnati: analfabetismo, acquisizione, didattica. In Bruno Moretti, Aline Kunz, Silvia Natale and Etna Krakenberger (eds.), *Le tendenze dell'italiano contemporaneo rivisitate. Atti del LII Congresso internazionale di studi della Società di Linguistica italiana (Berna, 6-8 settembre 2018)*, 257-272. Milano: Officinaventuno.

Onderdelinden, Liesbeth, Ineke van de Craats and Jeanne Kurvers. 2009. Word concept of illiterates and low-literates: worlds apart? In Ineke van de Craats and Jeanne Kurvers (eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the 4th symposium, Antwerp 2008*, 35-48. Utrecht: LOT.

Palermo, Massimo. 2009. *Percorsi e strategie di apprendimento dell'italiano lingua seconda: sondaggi su ADIL2*. Perugia: Guerra.

Palermo, Massimo. 2005. L'ADIL2 (Archivio Digitale di Italiano L2). *Studi Italiani di Linguistica Teorica e applicata* 34: 357-373.

Pallotti, Gabriele, Stefania Ferrari, Elena Nuzzo and Camilla Bettoni. 2010. Una procedura sistematica per osservare la variabilità dell'interlingua. *Studi italiani di linguistica teorica e applicata* 39(2): 215-241.

Reis, Alexandra and Alexandre Castro-Caldas. 1997. Illiteracy: a cause for biased cognitive development. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* 3: 444-450.

Reis, Alexandra, Luís Faísca, Susana Mendonça, Martin Ingvar and Karl Magnus Petersson. 2007. Semantic interference on a phonological task in illiterate subjects. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 48(1): 69-74.

Saleem, Amjad. 2018. Memorization without comprehension: a window onto the 'extremities' of the capability of human brain. *Al-Idah* 36(1): 25-40.

Sanders, Eric, Ineke van de Craats and Vanja de Lint. 2014. The Dutch LESLLA Corpus. In Nicoletta Calzolari, Khalid Choukri, Thierry Declerck, Hrafn Loftsson, Bente Maegaard, Joseph Mariani, Asuncion Moreno, Jan Odjk and

Stelios Piperidis (eds.), *Proceedings of the 9th international conference on Language resources and evaluation (LREC-2014), Reykjavik, May 2014*, 2715-2718. European Languages Resources Association (ELRA). http://www.lrec-conf.org/proceedings/lrec2014/pdf/227_Paper.pdf

Schmidt, Richard W. 1990. The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics* 11: 129-158.

Schwartz, Bonnie D. 1993. On explicit and negative data effecting and affecting competence and linguistic behavior. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 15: 147-163.

Tarone, Elaine. 2010. Second language acquisition by low-literate learners: an understudied population. *Language Teaching* 43(1): 75-83.

Tarone, Elaine. 1985. Variability in the interlanguage use: a study on style-shifting in morphology and syntax. *Language learning* 35: 373-403.

Tarone, Elaine and Martha Bigelow. 2005. Impact of literacy on oral language processing: implications on SLA research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 25: 77-97.

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2009. *Literacy and second language oracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2007. The impact of alphabetic print literacy level on oral second language acquisition. In Nancy Faux (ed.), *Proceedings of the second annual forum of LESLLA. Research, policy, and practice*, 99-121. Richmond, VA: The Literacy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Tomlin, Russell S. 1990. Functionalism in second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 12(2): 155-177.

Turco, Giuseppina and Miriam Voghera. 2010. From text to lexicon: the annotation of pre-target structures in an Italian learner corpus. In Massimo Moneglia and Alessandro Panunzi (eds.), *Bootstrapping information from corpora in a cross-linguistic perspective*, 1-33. Firenze: Firenze University Press.

UIS/EFA GMR 2015. A growing number of children and adolescents are out of school as aid fails to meet the mark. Policy paper 22, Fact sheet 31 July 2015. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233610

UNESCO 2012. Why language matters for the millennium development goals. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215296

Vainikka, Anne and Martha Young-Scholten. 2007a. The role of literacy in the development of L2 morpho-syntax from an Organic Grammar perspective. In Nancy Faux (ed.), *Proceedings of the second annual forum of LESLLA. Research, policy, and practice*, 123-148. Richmond, VA: The Literacy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Vainikka, Anne and Martha Young-Scholten. 2007b. Minimalism and Organic Grammar. In Simin Karimi, Vida Simiian and Wendy K. Wilkins (eds.), *Phrasal and clausal architecture: syntactic derivation and interpretation*, 319-338. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Vainikka, Anne and Martha Young-Scholten. 2006. The roots of syntax and how they grow. Organic Grammar, the Basic variety and Processability theory. In Sharon Unsworth, Teresa Parodi, Antonella Sorace and Martha Young-

Scholten (eds.), *Paths of development in L1 and L2 acquisition*, 77-106. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Vainikka, Anne and Martha Young-Scholten. 1998. Morphosyntactic triggers in adult SLA. In Marie-Louise Beck (ed.), *Morphology and its interfaces*, 89-113. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Vainikka, Anne, Martha Young-Scholten, Colleen Ijuin and Samawal Jarad. 2017. Literacy in the development of L2 English morphosyntax. In Marcin Sosinski (ed.), *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: Investigación, política educativa y práctica docente. Literacy education and second language learning for adults: research, policy and practice*, 239-250. Granada: University of Granada.

van de Craats, Ineke. 2011. A LESLLA corpus: L1 obstacles in the learning of L2 morphosyntax. In Christiane Schöneberger, Ineke van de Craats and Jeanne Kurvers (eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the 6th Symposium, Cologne 2010*, 33-48. Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies (CLS).

Valentini, Ada. 2016. La prospettiva psicolinguistica sull'input in L2. In Ada Valentini (a cura di), *L'input per l'acquisizione di L2: strutturazione, percezione, elaborazione*, 25-42. Firenze: Franco Cesati.

Young-Scholten, Martha and Nancy Strom. 2006. First-time L2 readers: Is there a critical period? In Jeanne Kurvers, Ineke van der Craats and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *Low Educated Adult Second Language and Literacy: Proceedings of the 1st Annual Forum*, 45-68. Utrecht: LOT.

What is *North East Solidarity and Teaching* (N.E.S.T.)?

Bridget Stratford – Ellie Mahoney

This paper explains how students can be used to help with the integration for the refugee populations within their local communities. North East Solidarity and Teaching are used as an example of this being carried out successfully, as they have produced a timetable of activities to encourage the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the North East of England. This has reduced social isolation within the migrant population in this area and created a community of people that are able to communicate and respect one another's background and cultures.

Keywords: integration of refugees and asylum seekers, student volunteering.

1. Introduction

North East Solidarity and Teaching (N.E.S.T) is a Newcastle University Students' Union Go Volunteer project managed completely by student volunteers. It is a project which educates and empowers the refugee and asylum-seeking community in the North East.

With approximately 300 students running sessions seven days per week, N.E.S.T provides a tailored ESOL curriculum and a holistic community integration programme, which supports around 250 refugees and asylum seekers of all ages and backgrounds. Volunteers and learners alike have described N.E.S.T as an extended family that helps each other to grow. They have said that relationships between learners are encouraged and fostered in order to decrease social isolation among the refugee community. N.E.S.T is a home that removes the label of refugee and instead allows a person to become a human with hope for the future. It represents the spirit and the soul of the North East of England, not just in its name, but in all that it does and everyone that it touches. N.E.S.T provides everyone who comes through its doors with an opportunity to become part of a family. They are treated as someone with individual needs and their own goals and ambitions.

Founded in August 2016, N.E.S.T began as a small project called the "Homework Club", which involved eight students from Newcastle University travelling to a neighbourhood near the university where many recently settled refugees live, to spend two hours on a Saturday to support one family of Syrian refugees. The project has since expanded, moving to Newcastle University as increasing numbers of students have been inspired to get involved and more learners have attended.

N.E.S.T aims to bring in aspects of collaborative care and a multidisciplinary approach to tackling social isolation and community integration. N.E.S.T provides a holistic care package to refugees and asylum seekers who attend which is designed to not only improve their own standard of living and quality of life but also to empower them to be independent, integrated and valued members of the local community. This is achieved by having a social aspect to the sessions before, after, and during the break in our longer sessions, where learners and volunteers are encouraged to socialize without the education constraints of the classroom. In turn, this helps the learners practice their conversational English whilst learning vocabulary and cultural differences that are not in the usual classroom syllabus.

The project has raised over £43,000 and currently has £24,000 worth of grant applications awaiting decisions. It also receives referrals from regional councils, job centres, colleges, and charities. The project has a vast support network of national stakeholders including local MPs, organisations such as Newcastle City Council and national bodies such as The Refugee Council and the UNHCR.

2. Literature review

Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015: 478) outline integration "as a situation in which a group may maintain its own identify but become part of a wider society to the extent that the host population and refugees can live together in an acceptable way". Research shows that in order for a forced migration population to feel welcome in a potential settling place for them, they have to be accepted despite their cultural differences (Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015). It is inherent that their existing skills are used and appreciated by the host

community so that both parties are changing to progress into a highly skilled and economically thriving society. This is supported by Coley et al. (2019), who state that integration is necessary from all sides of the relationships or will be otherwise unsuccessful as a result of one party refusing to change their ways. At N.E.S.T the focus is on integrating refugees and asylum seekers in a way that is helpful to their situations and needs. For example, childcare is provided so that parents who may be unable to attend English lessons, are able to.

Hayes et al. (2008: 1) define social inclusion as "inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power". This definition strongly relates to what refugees and asylum seekers often face due to being shunned by their communities or being unable to communicate with those around them. In order to combat this, there has to be an element of teaching from those who are local in order to socially integrate. There also has to be a power balance, where those at risk of social inclusion are given a voice to use in their communities. This voice has to first come with being able to use the common language of the region, a service which N.E.S.T aims to provide to the forced migrant populations and therefore empowering them within the local community.

Research demonstrates that increased cultural diversity within cities is a strong predictor of economic performance, especially in creative industries. By integrating our learners into communities in the North East, we are improving their chances of gaining employment and contributing to the economy. Community integration works both ways and breaking down stigma and educating around the topic of forced migration is a hugely important step to reducing racial and religious discrimination. Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore (2017) agree as they highlight that anxieties occur when people are displayed as different to what they are used to in the comfort of their own geographical space. Investing in creating cohesion between different populations within the North East generates a warm and vibrant region which boasts strong roots in diversity and attracts business and tourism. Through N.E.S.T students who form a large percentage of the population are also integrating into local communities, learning about the culture of the North East and bridging the perceived gap between socioeconomic status groups.

3. Structure of N.E.S.T.

3.1. What sessions does N.E.S.T provide?

N.E.S.T runs unique sessions 7 days a week, most of which are based at Newcastle University. Each session has a different aim to increase English language skills, improve integration and reduce social isolation amongst the refugee community. These sessions include:

1. *N.E.S.T Create (Tuesday)*
Create began in October 2017 and is a set of creative art and cooking sessions, encouraging the natural progression of English language through dynamic and interesting mixed ability sessions, as well as promoting friendship and a community atmosphere. Sessions, made up of 20-30 learners, allow learners to express themselves and work towards projects over a number of weeks.

2. *N.E.S.T Conversation (Wednesday)*
In 2016-2017 the Conversation class would attract around 10-15 learners each night but has since expanded to around 25-35 learners per session. It has evolved from a low-key role play and Q&A session to a high energy English Language games night. Learners from all backgrounds, including Syrian and Sudanese learners, work and laugh together, increasing social inclusion and encouraging a development in English ability.

3. *N.E.S.T Outreach (Thursday and Friday)*
Outreach sessions are a service where N.E.S.T takes the one-to-one English teaching to the Nunsmoor Centre in a suburb of Newcastle, where the previous English Conversation group took place. This rebranding encouraged more learners to join and make it a more accessible session to parents as it was during the day.

4. *N.E.S.T Community (Saturday and Sunday)*
This is the largest service, running between 11am and 1pm on weekends, and typically supports 60-90 adult learners and 10-30 under-18s with the support of 30-50 student volunteers. This huge increase from last year demonstrates the continued popularity and

importance of these sessions. N.E.S.T Community sessions originally used a one-to-one teaching format. However, as numbers grew, needs of the learners were assessed and multiple different classrooms were introduced. These allowed us to provide the most relevant education and encourage learners to help each other. These classes include a grammar class, a beginner's class, a conversation class, a fundamentals class and IELTS support.

5. *N.E.S.T STEM (Saturday and Sunday)*
During the N.E.S.T Community sessions of 2016-2017, childcare was provided for two Syrian families while the parents attended the usual Community sessions. After receiving more funding in 2017, N.E.S.T was able to improve safeguarding and training, and the service was expanded after referral pathways from multiple organisations were introduced. It currently runs alongside Community sessions, in order for parents to continue to receive English acquisition at the weekend. After the introduction of a nursery beside the STEM sessions, N.E.S.T supports over 30 children and babies with a variety of needs. Originally the sessions were designed to introduce basic science and technology topics as most of the children were fluent in English due to being at school. However, as children arrived that did not speak English, it too became a needs-based programme which taught English as well as dealing with the emotional needs of the children.

6. *N.E.S.T Explore (Sunday)*
Explore began in January 2018 and has become one of the most popular and in-demand services that N.E.S.T provides, taking groups of learners on trips throughout Northumbria, the region where Newcastle lies. These trips help introduce learners to free facilities, such as the city library and its resources. Explore also runs larger scale trips, such as the 74-person visit to Bamburgh, a historic seaside town near Newcastle, with a tour of Bamburgh Castle and a boat trip around the Farne Islands to see seals. The project has multiple benefits, including educating learners on Northumbria and its culture, as well as encouraging them to interact with new people, aiding their integration into the community. Volunteers are able to gain new experiences, enhance their skillsets and take on increased

responsibility. As Explore has progressed, we have realised that it has also improved relationships between the volunteers and learners.

7. *N.E.S.T Beyond Barriers (General/Online)*

It is N.E.S.T's online digital platform for teaching English. Lessons are uploaded so that learners can continue to learn outside the lessons. Beyond Barriers was in its early stages in 2017 and the progression in quality of the filming produced is rapidly advancing. In 2018/19, the focus has been on promoting N.E.S.T, making videos about trips and sessions. This has aided volunteer recruitment and funding support. (See Appendix.)

In 2017, due to funding by Newcastle City Council, N.E.S.T took on a large-scale expansion, improving existing facilities, resources and teaching to create a better service and expanding the sessions we provide to respond to increasing need and widen our impact. Since the 2018 LESLLA conference, N.E.S.T have added three sessions:

8. *Magic Mondays (Monday)*

Some of these sessions are designed to increase vocabulary and reading competency whilst others help to aid community integration by increasing employability skills with employability workshops, such as how to write a CV. We have collaborated with academics within the university who provide basic literacy English books for our learners to encourage them to not only improve their oral skills but also their reading skills; this will help to improve their vocabulary as well as their confidence in their English abilities.

9. *N.E.S.T Football (Thursday)*

Inspired by a fantastic football game on Tynemouth Beach which was enjoyed by volunteers and learners of all genders, ages and backgrounds, N.E.S.T football sessions were introduced where both learners and volunteers can play together. This has been very popular, and we hope to work towards creating a league.

10. *N.E.S.T Basketball (Friday)*

Basketball is the most recent addition to the N.E.S.T timetable and has been a fast-growing project. It started with only a few learners and

volunteers but now has approximately 30 regular learners and 10 regular volunteers. These sessions are an escape from the usual classroom environment that N.E.S.T provides and encourages a healthy and fun way to learn English.

3.2. Leadership model

N.E.S.T currently has over 30 students in leadership roles that range from working with learners to marketing and creating social media presence. The Project manager oversees the entirety of the project and ensures its progression and sustainability. Below the project manager there are two main sections to the model. The section that manages the actual sessions and the section that deals with the administration of the project. The administration team collect figures of volunteers and learners whilst also dealing with social media outputs. The Operations coordinator supervises the day-to-day running of the project and aids the project leads who run each session independently.

Many of the young refugees and asylum seekers are of a similar age to the majority of the volunteers (18-25). Having a direct demonstration of welcoming and warmth from a peer is incredibly powerful and N.E.S.T provides just that, in a way which is both educational and inspiring for both students and refugees. Students run and lead the project with the input of their peers attending the project. This is completely unique to N.E.S.T and it is what makes this project so incredibly powerful and influential in the region.

3.3. Training

There is a training session at the beginning of the year in which new volunteers are given information on the best ways to help the learners. N.E.S.T has had training previously for a few of its volunteers by International House in Newcastle, which was used to help to train the new volunteers as well.

During each session the resources, such as textbooks and word games, are all provided and can be used by volunteers to aid their teaching experience. There is also a project lead at each session that

they can look to for pedagogical advice. First aid training is also given to all students in a leadership position as well as any other volunteer who would like it.
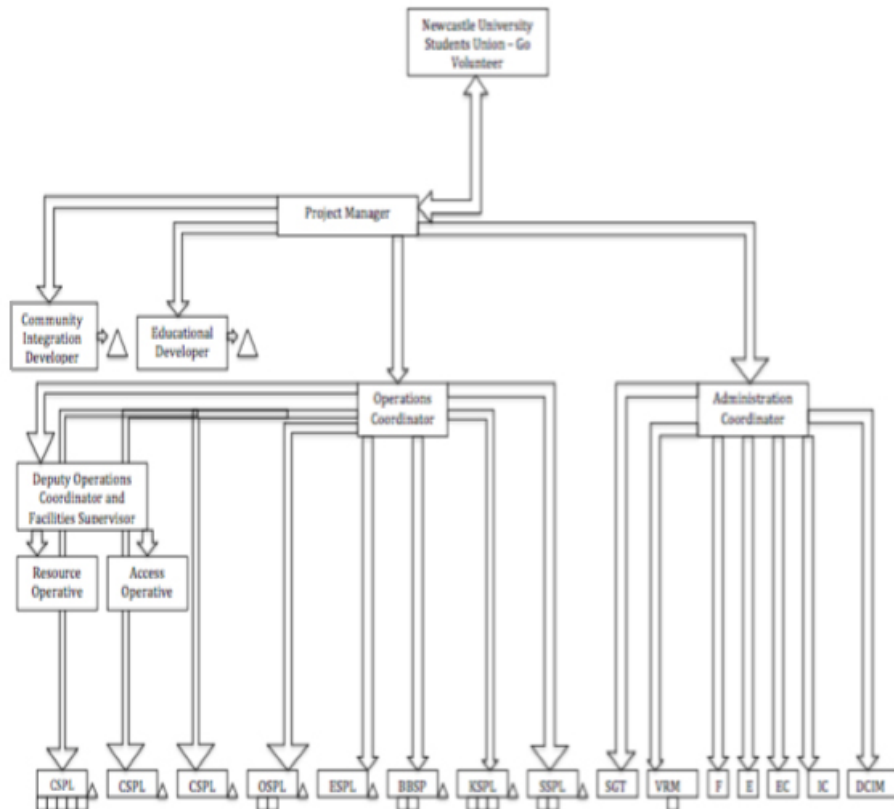
Figure 1. Leadership structure.

3.4. Procedures

N.E.S.T implements certain policies and procedures throughout the sessions to ensure the safety of learners and volunteers. This includes a volunteer brief at the beginning of every session where safety procedures are enforced, such as fire risks, as well as not exchanging contact details with learners. This is when the session plan is explained. There is also a debrief after every session, where

volunteers report back to the session leads about any issues they had and discuss as a group possible solutions that need to be employed.

4. N.E.S.T outcomes

4.1. What impact does N.E.S.T have on learners?

4.1.1. English language provision

The project provides one to one English language support which is available to everyone (including families) seven days a week. Not only does that help to increase the standard of English language amongst members of the forced migration community in the region but it also reduces the need for translators at organisations such as the Job Centre, NHS services or schools, meaning that this money can be used elsewhere, mitigating any negative impact of refugees and asylum seekers. Providing refugees and asylum seekers with the ability to communicate gives them the tools they need to begin talking to their neighbours, speaking with their children's teachers, making friends at school and college, and working towards gaining qualifications and employment.

4.1.2. Regional understanding and awareness

N.E.S.T Explore is a branch of N.E.S.T which takes the learners who attend the sessions into the community and into the region to help them to become accustomed to their new home. The project runs trips to local facilities such as the city library, the local markets and shops and the free museums and galleries. Many of the learners report that simply walking through the doors of an establishment can be the most difficult aspect of accessing support, so we are there to help them make those first steps.

When learners were taken on a trip to the city library, they were showed how to behave appropriately in the library so as not to disturb existing members. They were then helped how-to take-out books and volunteers supported them in signing up for a library card and

accessing the internet. Volunteers were able to take the strain off of the staff by teaching the learners the procedure, so they were able to access life-changing facilities without any negative impact to the local community. N.E.S.T also runs trips using public transport so that the learners get support in how to use the metro and the bus so that they feel confident getting around and there is a prevention of any potential negative circumstances arising caused by a lack of knowledge.

N.E.S.T is also helping its learners to get into areas of Newcastle and Northumberland which are perhaps less accustomed to seeing diverse populations. For example, it took 70 refugees and asylum seekers into rural Northumberland to learn about the local history of the region. They talked with local residents and with local business owners about who they were and what they were doing. They introduced the local community to the learners and facilitated conversations which were warm and both sides reported conveyed a positive reaction towards the interactions.

4.1.3. Immediate reduction in social isolation

At N.E.S.T there is an extremely diverse group of refugees and asylum seekers who attend, as well as an extremely diverse group of students who make up the volunteer base. At every point in the session, both the learners and volunteers are working together and learning from one another. There is a community spirit and despite the vast differences in gender, religion, upbringing, nationality, sexuality, cultural norms and political view, a common goal is shared: to work together to teach and learn English and enjoy each other's company. During a session there is also a break where everyone comes together to have refreshments and talk to one another.

At an average community session there might be 70 individuals, including volunteers and learners, with an age range of 8 months to 75 years and with over 20 different nationalities. It is demonstrated to all that attend and everyone who is informed about this project that it is possible to overcome differences and create forward thinking groups. N.E.S.T is a safe-space for everyone who attends but it can also be seen that the learners are not only connected with each other but are mirroring the internal communities in their own neighbourhoods.

4.1.4. Case Study

Kamal started attending N.E.S.T sessions regularly in 2017. He began with very basic English skills and improved rapidly with the help of volunteers. When asked to write about his time at N.E.S.T, he wrote:

For months, I have looked for places to learn English without paying fees. My friend told me that N.E.S.T. runs a class in Newcastle University. I went there and started to learn English as a second language. As my interests were sparked, I started joining all the sessions regularly. I was impressed by the way the volunteers were able to bear with me at the start as I had made a lot of mistakes. It was amazing. At the start it took a lot of effort from the amazing volunteers and at times from me to learn, but it is clear to me now that I have improved. I don't use it like before, meaning that previously I had to stop and think for a while when I was writing because I didn't know how to say this or that. Let alone writing in English. How was I going to say certain words? How is this number written? Or was my grammar correct? I found help from the volunteers at N.E.S.T they taught me that using English is not as difficult as I imagined. I used English in everyday conversation with people around me and in N.E.S.T sessions. I felt that instead of a foreign speaker of English language I was like the true speakers. I became one of them. My English has improved and my language became good and strong.

4.2. What impact does N.E.S.T have on the local community?

4.2.1. Understanding of local issues

The volunteers know that a large part of the North East population is happy to have refugees and asylum seekers here, but it is also understanding that difficulties caused by cultural differences and perceptual misunderstandings can occur often where there may be deprivation and sudden increases in demand on local services and support. Part of this may come from a lack of understanding of the social norms and typical behaviour which is accepted in Britain. It may also come from frustrated local communities who feel unable to express their opinions without being castigated as racist. In addition, pressure on certain services may increase waiting lists and reduce

available places leaving some members of the existing community feeling unjustly unsupported. The volunteers are aware of the cost of translation services and also the financial consequences for issues such as inappropriate waste disposal. It is understood that specifically there are issues with prejudice against Muslims and N.E.S.T wants to reduce the mistrust and misunderstandings which occur. On top of this, it wants to make the integration which does occur meaningful and not simply organised communication.

4.3. What impact does N.E.S.T have on students?

A total of 320 volunteers completed at least 2 hours (one session) volunteering with N.E.S.T during the 2017/18 academic year. 35% of the volunteers have volunteered on a regular basis (10 volunteering hours or more). Excluding the two project managers, the total number of volunteering hours for 2017/18 is 3923 hours. The project managers have contributed 1,802 hours each this year. This is based on them both volunteering 35 hours a week every week. The 35 hours includes the time they volunteer directly with the learners but also the time spent on the logistics and admin of N.E.S.T. Including the project managers hours it makes a total of 7,527 volunteering hours. To put that into context, 7,527 hours is equivalent to 313.5 days.

To understand the impact on those who volunteer at N.E.S.T, a questionnaire was created. A total of 60 people responded and of those, 15% volunteered 1-5 times, whilst half volunteered on over 20 separate occasions during the academic year. When volunteering, the most popular session was N.E.S.T Community, with 2/3 of respondents having been involved. In contrast, only 5% had been involved in N.E.S.T Beyond Barriers.

During their time at N.E.S.T, all volunteers felt that at least one of their skills had been developed. For every attribute listed, at least half of the respondents believed that they had felt an improvement; the top 3 most selected being communication skills (95%), teaching ability (88.3%) and the ability to work cross-culturally (80%).

The impact on volunteers outside of their employment-related skills was even stronger. 83.3% said that volunteering at N.E.S.T had given them a better understanding of the issues faced by others and

helped them get to know people that they would not have done otherwise, 80% said that N.E.S.T had provided them with a sense of purpose and 75% said that their understanding of different cultures and their confidence had improved.

Please select the option(s) that are appropriate to you. "Volunteering at N.E.S.T has improved my..."

60 responses
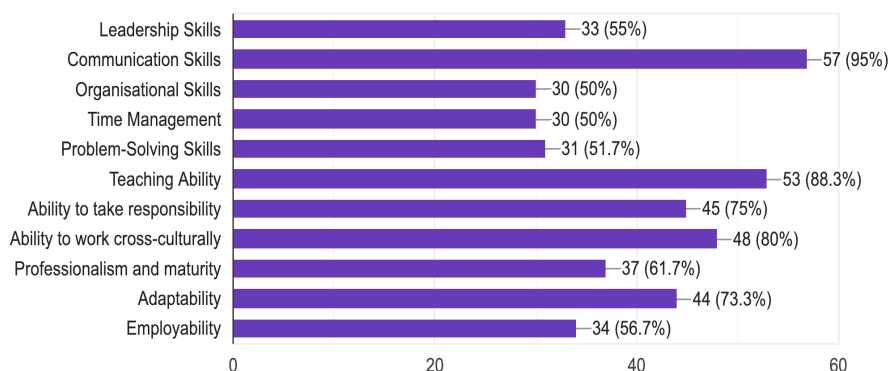
Figure 2. Benefits of volunteering at N.E.S.T survey results.

Dimitris, a student who volunteered for N.E.S.T from its conception says that it is:

One of the most eye-opening experiences I had was when I was helping a learner read a text about celebrities and the cinema and singing industry. Sarah Jessica-Parker, Madonna, Brad Pitt, the Oscars; people and things we have all at least heard of and consider rather universal knowledge. He had never heard of them. And there it struck me, that what N.E.S.T. does is bigger than merely teaching the alphabet and proper grammar. It plays a role in the integration of those people in our society. Obviously, knowing Madonna and the Oscars is not what I mean by integration. How to queue, how to go to the supermarket and find what you're looking for, how to communicate in different occasions. For instance, myself not being English, I realized several times that I needed to ask an English friend about the difference in how two similar words are perceived by the listener, how to find the post office and send a letter, how to go to the doctor, how often should I say "please". At N.E.S.T. we have the fantastic chance to show to

refugees settled in the area how welcome they are and how life is here. To show our solidarity. The key words of our tittle are "teaching" and "solidarity" and in my opinion, showing solidarity is the most valuable aspect of N.E.S.T. Our solidarity is not expressed through some kind of activism (which I whole heartedly support) but through teaching. Just try to understand what it feels like not to be able to communicate with the people around you and consequently struggling to restart your life. We can only assume what it feels like. And yet, that assumption is more than enough for us, for you, to give a little bit of your time and energy and join us in helping the refugee community of Newcastle and Gateshead. And possibly beyond.

The N.E.S.T volunteer base is made up of around 600 students with around 300 active student volunteers. Putting aside the direct benefit to student volunteers, it is important to consider what it means to have 300 young people who work, study and live in the region to demonstrate first hand integration not only to themselves, the fellow student community (making up a large percentage of the local population) but also the local communities who interact with students. Students who are part of N.E.S.T will leave the project promoting support for the forced migration community and talking of the positive experiences that they have had with them. It is unusual to have such strong support from this demographic. If the local community observes how students are interacting with refugees and asylum seekers, the students may act as enablers for meaningful interactions and they could facilitate the growth and cohesion of the local community.

5. What is the future of N.E.S.T?

N.E.S.T is now at a stage where it is beginning to reach capacity as a completely volunteer-led project. The project manager volunteers around 35 hours every week in order to manage the project and allow it to move forward at the pace that it is currently progressing. Whilst support is needed to fund the project itself, the current priority and absolute necessity is to employ a project manager who can take on the role of running and developing the project so that it can strive to meet its potential in all areas.

With a high increase in the number of children using the service there is a look towards improving the service that can be provided to them and to their families. N.E.S.T would like to introduce a School Liaison Service where they can assist families at parent's evenings and work with teachers to ensure the best care for the children. They are considering offering a more specific service to 13 to 18 year olds where there is a need within the community; opening a youth club style session could help with this. There is also a push to help the children who are multilingual to gain recognition for their communication skills and give them the opportunity to support other children and learners at N.E.S.T, promoting their leadership skills.

N.E.S.T is working towards making it a more immersive experience for learners by working with each individual to set aims and targets and then adapting the service already provided for each of them to help them to achieve this. This is taking time both to implement and to introduce as well as costing more money to divide resources. However positive effects are already starting to be seen in the attitude and motivation of learners and so the aim is to be persistent in establishing individualized practice and also searching for funding to support this.

As N.E.S.T expands there is a determination to maintain a down-to-earth attitude towards service provision and centre all developments around a needs analysis basis. There is a recognition of the large skill set of the learners that attend the sessions and the volunteers understand that the people who know best what they need and are most motivated to and vital in creating change, are the learners themselves. In order to continue to move in the right direction across all session and to honour the community environment which N.E.S.T embodies, across 2019 and 2020 a user-led service would like to be established. There would be an introduction of learner leads for each session who will be a representative for the learners attending that session. This will encourage N.E.S.T to further understand the needs of the learners and help to promote their leadership, team working and communication skills. Eventually this would be replicated within the STEM children's sessions, with the help of the children and their parents.

References

Coley, Joseph, Marie Godin, Linda Morrice, Jenny Phillimore and Carolyne Tah. 2019. *Integrating refugees. What works? What can work? What does not work? A summary of the evidence second edition.* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812891/intergrating-refugees-2019.pdf

Grzymala-Kazlowska, Aleksandra and Jenny Phillimore. 2017. Introduction: rethinking integration. New perspectives on adaptation and settlement in the era of super diversity. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341706

Hayes, Alan, Matthew Gray and Ben Edwards. 2008. Social inclusion: origins, concepts and key themes. http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/142909/20130920-1300/www.socialinclusion.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/si-origins-concepts-themes.pdf

Platts-Fowler, Deborah and David Robinson. 2015. A place for integration: refugee experiences in two English cities. *Population, space and place* 21(5): 476-491. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1928

Appendix

Beyond Barriers Videos

Teaching videos

How to make a doctor's appointment: https://youtu.be/wZbGfDirNFM
How to say hello: https://youtu.be/W1NwrGKPBEU
How to describe your day: https://youtu.be/XrDjBjA52Gs
How to talk about sports and hobbies: https://youtu.be/mPtROCSKmo4
Phonics Lesson: https://youtu.be/IbIh8GpnpR8
Phonics lesson two: https://youtu.be/y2qlRp0PG_c

Promotional videos

A day in the life of a N.E.S.T volunteer: https://youtu.be/L5q7fBxbz8Y
Christmas celebration: https://youtu.be/fF4tN0S6-fY
A N.E.S.T Explore trip into Northumberland:
https://youtu.be/cZGZspWs65U
A N.E.S.T Explore trip to Elsdon:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyVWzkc8amg
A message from freshers at Newcastle University:
https://youtu.be/13QE95UUmus

Insight videos

Volunteer leadership training camp: https://youtu.be/hMS7aRyi0o8
Insight into volunteer training camp: https://youtu.be/4LnYm-vKLPI
One session at N.E.S.T Create: https://youtu.be/7wz68rWw5Tw
Children enter national drawing marathon: https://youtu.be/9eZItv6OmbI
Attending a conference in London: https://youtu.be/rBwdIzkw-wE
Easter party: https://youtu.be/1D2Pt5976aU
Behind the scenes volunteering:
Our first year at N.E.S.T: https://youtu.be/VGklCmJ9v14
Volunteers describe their experiences at N.E.S.T (year one):
https://youtu.be/XOKTpLeA7D4
Volunteer perspective: https://youtu.be/t67UFlGwD0M

A Freire based action-research approach to learning Italian as foreign language by migrant adults

Alessio Surian – Consuelo Surian

The paper presents the work of an action-research group that aims at connecting Paulo Freire's adult education approach to learning Italian as foreign language by migrants in the Veneto region. It offers a brief description of this literacy approach followed by a critical analysis of some of the key issues in adapting it to illiterate migrants focusing on generative (key) words and how to use them within the learning process. Examples are provided on how to identify and to play with syllables in order to create cluster families and to generate new words and sentences. Further information is provided on the first year (2018-19) of action-research work involving teachers of Italian as foreign language in different contexts around Padova where the project is co-ordinated by the CPIA adult education centre. The common focus and reflective practice is centred on structuring learning units that make use of playful and participatory activities and that follow the gestalt approach, i.e. going through four steps, including motivation, global approach, analysis, synthesis and reflection.

Keywords: generative word, non-literate migrants, adult learning, action-research.

1. Introduction

Since the 1960's Paulo Freire's approach to literacy (Freire 1976; see also Brandão 1981; Feitosa 2008) goes beyond the mere acquisition of reading skills while it privileges raising awareness of socio-cultural challenges. It focuses on real-life situations, relevant questions, dialogue, hope and possibility. This approach favours a strong relationship between the ability to develop a growing familiarity with phrases, words and syllables and the everyday life and concerns of those who are participating in the learning process. In turn, this implies a critical and creative attitude by the group of learners. Such approach has relevant implications as far as the role of the teacher is concerned. The focus is on the ability to trigger and to scaffold dialogue with and among illiterate learners and to offer them literacy

tools in relation to contexts that are relevant to them. This also means that the literacy process cannot be organised with a top-down approach. It should be implemented by the group of illiterate learners with the facilitation and support by the teacher. Freire (Shugurensky 2014) suggests the "bank" metaphor to identify the education that does not favour the learners-teacher dialogue. The "banking" approach considers the learner as an empty box that the teacher should fill in on the basis of a pre-established curriculum. On the contrary, Freire claims that education is centred on the learners-teacher interaction and that both are learning from each other: "nobody educates anybody, nobody is educating her/himself, people educate each other in real life situations". Thus Freire considers dialogue as an essential element of education as liberation practice. Such dialogues should address real-life situations. Important ideas in working with such situations include: they should be simple to identify and yet retaining a complex dimension, i.e. can be analysed from a plurality of views. The core idea is to symbolize such real-life situations through words and images. Such exercise helps learners to make connections between the concrete and the abstract while engaging in processes of de-coding and coding. But the educational process should not focus only on de-coding and coding. It should imply ways to build better knowledge of the social reality, mapping and exploring the causes of daily challenges, and the collective ways to cope with them and to transform problems and social contexts. The real-life situations at the core of the learning process should not end up in a slogan but rather be addressed as learning situations that have a potential to spark a critical reflection by the learners.

The role of the teacher/educator/facilitator is not to suggest her/his own worldview but rather to acknowledge how there are several worldviews. In doing so s/he tries to be *with* the learners avoiding the dichotomy teacher-learner. In this way s/he tries to steer the awareness raising process of the illiterate learner focusing on reading the world in different ways through enhanced knowledge and awareness. As illiterate people are often prevented access to various aspects of social life, enhancing their knowledge should also lead to enhanced awareness a critical view of the world we live in. Thus the literacy process is viewed as a civic and political emancipation process.

2. Literacy phases according to the Freire's approach

According to Freire, especially at the beginning of a learning process, educators should invest time in getting to know the world of the learners. He stresses the importance to read the world along with reading the word, acquiring critical analytical skills reading along with writing skills. The way we do it is important as well, i.e. the development of creative attitude and ability acknowledging both the collective and the individual dimension in knowledge construction. In the words of Freire, "As a young teacher, I changed my teaching and gave greater value to creativity. This was also a basis for me to understand later that creativity in teaching is linked to creativity in politics" (Freire and Shor 1987: 20). Based on this rationale Freire insists on the value of encouraging learners to write their own personal text, even simple texts, in order to develop their creativity.

Within Freire's approach, a key literacy element is the ability to choose the right generative words in order to organize the literacy process around a selection of significant words containing the relevant phonemes. Learners' motivation depends on the generative words choice as well.

Freire's (1967) approach to literacy includes five main steps:

1. The search for the words that are most frequently used and that play a significant role in the lives of the learners.
2. The identification of generative words and themes taking into account syllabic richness and the potential for experiential involvement.
3. Dealing with real-life situation through a first coding of these words into visual images (drawings; pictures).
4. Triggering and facilitating dialogues and debates on the basis of basic canvas to be handled in a flexible way in order not to "cage" the learning process.
5. The decoding and re-coding of the generative words by the learner's 'culture circle'.

The way these steps are implemented should be adapted to the local context, taking into account the place, the people, their experiences, their habits etc. This means that one the main challenges for the

teacher concerns how to encourage the learner to take care and ownership of the learning process without delegating it to the teacher.

3.   Specific features of foreign language literacy

Before the start of a literacy course in a foreign language it is useful to assess the learners' abilities with the support of linguistic mediators in order to have a proper knowledge of the learners' initial situation: their age, formal education degree, ability to read in the mother tongue; for example it is useful to have them reading a few short sentences and to have them copied in order to understand their literacy level. When the illiterate person does not know any word in the language that is going to be taught, it is of fundamental importance to start focusing on the oral language, both in terms of understanding and oral expression. It is important that the learner is able to understand what s/he is going to write and read.

From an operational perspective, we were and we are convinced that Freire's approach to literacy, based on generative words, can be instrumental to learning a foreign language as well. As already stated, the choice of generative words is of fundamental importance in order to motivate learners towards the learning process.

We also addressed the question concerning using only uppercase letters or also lowercase letters and whether to use both block and italic letters. We opted for using both uppercase and lowercase letters and to focus on block letters as these are the letters that allow reading a printed written text.

The focus is on activities that are close to learners' proximal zone of development, keeping activities simple, but making sure that they are challenging and motivating as well. Whenever possible we make use of drawings and photos. Learners are presented with few written texts and they are encouraged to produce their own texts. They are encouraged to write their own sentences and texts in a safe and supportive environment that attempts to create the conditions for them to express themselves freely and creatively.

Within our work, specific attention is given on how to apply generative words to the learning of a second language. Our experience with the Freire's approach to the literacy process in a

foreign language is that the use of generative words becomes relevant when at the oral level there is at least a minimal knowledge of the language that is being learned. The higher the number of words that is known by the learners, the more they are able to combine different syllables, to generate words and to feel involved in this process. The learning context focusing on a foreign language is very different when compared to a cultural circle that operates on the basis of a common mother tongue. The limited proficiency in the foreign language makes it harder to develop the dialogue within the group, a key factor in facilitating mutual feedback and individual reflection concerning the generative words. Often our learners come from very different migratory backgrounds and this makes it harder to find immediate common ground. Nonetheless, areas and generative words of common interest and dialogue are always available, for example concerning the way to cope with the new context in relation to mobility, bureaucracy, home, work etc.

4. Foreign language literacy specific challenges and responses

When the second language is totally unknown to learners, two conditions would be helpful at the beginning of the learning process: the support of a linguistic mediator and/or the teacher(s) being competent in a language that is known to the learners.

Throughout the learning activities, Freire's approach involves some degree of repetition in pronouncing and in writing the families of syllables based on the generative words. Especially when it is being done in a collective way, this habit of repeating the syllables generates focus and involvement by the learners. In our experience this has been particularly useful to those learners who are familiar with the Latin alphabet but tend to mistake sounds and syllables with one another as they have a poor knowledge of Italian.

4.1. Telephone, work and paper-work

Hereby we offer a short introduction to some of the activities that were implemented in Padova, in the North-East of Italy, during 2017-

2018 in collaboration with the adult education centre (CPIA) "Diego Valeri". Based on this experience, in June 2018 the CPIA "Diego Valeri" started an action-research group involving teachers from the North-East of Italy focusing on migrant adult learners with different degree of proficiency in the Italian language.

Interviews were conducted with the learners before starting the learning process. Based on this interview, the learning process was structured around a core educational activity divided into four learning unit focusing on the theme "labour" and on four generative words: *telefono* (telephone), *lavoro* (labour/work), *document* (document), *colloquio* (interview). In order to structure our learning units, we have taken into account similarities between the Freire's and the *gestalt* approach. According to *gestalt* pattern perception principles for organizing sensory stimuli into meaningful perception, we first process what we perceive in a global / holistic way and only at a later stage we proceed to analyse details (Rock and Palmer 1990). Therefore, each learning unit was structured according to the following four main phases:

– The first phase focuses on motivation: the learners are invited to watch/listen to an audio-visual input (video, song, pictures etc.) that has been selected to elicit their attention.
– In the second phase, in a holistic way, the theme at the core of the audio-visual input is addressed by presenting the generative word and its syllables.
– In the third phase words are being decoded and recoded, producing new words and matching images and words.
– The fourth and final phase privileges synthesis and reflection by encouraging learners to process what they have learned, play with it, produce new sentences and texts. Game activities included crosswords, memory, Kim's game as they favour a variety of learning approaches and a more relaxed way to review what has been previously learned.

Participants appreciated that the educational approach was different from their previous schooling and educational experiences. They demonstrated interest and appreciation for the games especially because they offered them an opportunity to recall and to scaffold

what they had previously tried to memorise. In this way they were able to familiarise with the words and to pronounce them in ways that would tie the syllables with one another rather than pronounce the single syllables one after another. As time and learning units went by, they grew accustomed to this approach and were suggesting more and more words. This experience suggests to us the importance for the teacher to be well acquainted with the world of the learners as claimed by educators such as Paulo Freire (1967), Alberto Manzi (1972), Mario Lodi (1982). This is directly related to the way generative words are identified as well as to the necessary attention for the type of visual items that are used throughout the learning process. For example, some of our participants associate working with drawings in the educational setting with children's learning and prefer to relate to photo's. In the same way, we opted for using block letters uppercase and lowercase as this is instrumental to reading a printed text. While there are many constraints in the way Italian language course for migrants are organised, there are still valuable opportunities to plan courses that are learner centred and close to their specific desires. Within this framework Freire's generative words approach seems particularly important. Equally important is the ability to adapt the learning setting and interactions to the actual learning interactions and to the proposals that are suggested by the learners. Hereby we offer a sample of the activities that can be triggered by working with the generative word *telefono* (telephone). The word "TELEFONO" is introduced and "associated" with a corresponding picture such as:

TELEFONO

Figure 1. Word-image matching.

The word is being written on the blackboard or on a flipchart. The teacher pronounces it several times while s/he pointing at the word's letters with one finger.

After pronouncing it aloud several times together, the word is being written again making sure to highlight the syllables: TE-LE-FO-NO. This time the word is being pronounced again several times while the teacher points at each word' syllable with one finger. Students can be invited to tap or to clap their hands to each syllable.

A way to introduce phonemes is to explain that each word includes several "parts". A house includes a kitchen, a bathroom, one or more room(s). In the same way, a word includes parts that we call syllables and phonemes. *Telefono* includes the following four: te-le-fo-no. Their reading is repeated several times. Each part belongs to a family. In the case of *telefono*, the "TE" family includes: ta-te-ti-to-tu. These syllables are being pronounced several times. The same exercise applies to all syllables and phonemes. This can be organised into four different sheets, with the syllables written in uppercase:

TA	TE	TI	TO	TU	(first sheet)
LA	LE	LI	LO	LU	(second sheet)
FA	FE	FI	FO	FU	(third sheet)
NA	NE	NI	NO	NU	(fourth sheet).

Once they are properly mastered, the four of them can be presented into one single sheet of paper. Now we can play with phonemes and syllables by pronouncing them and by pointing at the phonemes and syllables with one finger. They are read horizontally, vertically and diagonally, and then at random. Before moving ahead, the teacher checks that the previous step is being understood properly.

It is useful to repeat the same exercise by reading the same syllables with the syllables written in lowercase letters:

ta	te	ti	to	tu	(first sheet)
la	le	li	lo	lu	(second sheet)
fa	fe	fi	fo	fu	(third sheet)
na	ne	ni	no	nu	(fourth sheet)

Once they are properly mastered, the four of them can be presented into one single sheet of paper.

5. Analysis phase

Once the group is able to recognise the various phonemes families, the teacher goes back to the original word: *telefono*. The word was pronounced as a whole and then divided into syllables and now the *telefono* syllables are identified across the available twenty syllables and re-united. The same exercise can be applied to other words. The teacher asks the students whether they can identify other words, but avoiding being pushy. In case nobody dares to take the initiative, the teacher can suggest the first word, for example "*fine*":

TA	TE	TI	TO	TU
LA	LE	LI	LO	LU
FA	FE	FI	FO	FU
NA	NE	NI	NO	NU

In this phase what is important is that students are motivated to look for new words. The key issue is to try to combine phonemes into words, even invented words. Then they can try to distinguish existing from newly invented words. The teacher invites them to create as many word as possible and to write them down. Examples of Italian words that can be recognised by combining *telefono*' syllables are: *fila* (cue), *fine* (end), *fune* (rope), *foto* (photo), *fata* (fairy), *telefonino* (smartphone), *telo* (sheet), *tela* (canvas):

1) TELO   a)

2) FOTO   b)

3) FILA   c)

4) FATA   d)

5) FUNE   e)

6) TELEFONINO   f)

Figure 2. Word-image matching activity: for example 1) & b).

5.1. Syllables memory

In our experience the "Syllables memory" is an effective activity to focus students' attention on syllables learning. The syllables of the word "telefono" are written onto a significant amount of cards, using both upper and lower cases: TE, LE, FO, NO, te, le, fo, no. The cards are placed on the table or floor so that the syllables are hidden. Players take turn in uncovering a card and then uncovering a second

card, trying to match the first one with a card that presents the same syllable. When this happens the two cards are left so that the syllables remain visible. When the second card' syllable does not match the first one, the two cards are lefts again on the table or floor so that the syllables are hidden again.

The winner is the player that collects a higher number of matching cards.

6. Synthesis and reflection phase
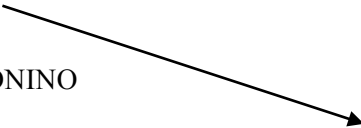
6.1. Fill-in activities

These activities make use of the same words that were used in the Word-image matching activity:

1) T E _ _
2) _ _ T A
3) T E L E F O _ _ _ _
4) _ _ N E
5) F I _ _
6) _ _ T O

6.2. Upper-lower cases matching activity

This activity asks students to identify and to match identical words such as in the following example: 1) & d):

1) FATA   a) fila
2) FILA   b) telo
3) TELEFONINO   c) fune
4) FOTO   d) fata
5) TELO   e) telefonino
6) FUNE   f) foto

With the words that they have identified, students can produce phrases and write them down.

7. Discussion

According to Shugurensky (2014:64) a core issue within this literacy process is that when learners reconstruct words from independent syllables and as they experience a shift from illiterate to literate individuals, an important transformation begins to occur. This has implications for the motivation and accuracy concerning writing about their own experiences, reading each other's writings, and seeking solutions to their problems as a collective. This development could be observed with the group of learners that participated in the activities mentioned above as well. Therefore we are collecting positive evidence to answer our initial question concerning the applicability of the Freire's approach in the present Italian situation and when teaching Italian as second language. We see significant results when approach the teaching of Italian as foreign language on the basis of generative words within the Freire's approach. Learners provide positive feedback during the learning units and show significant achievements over a short period of time.

Within contexts where the learners are becoming literate in a language different from their mother tongue it becomes even more important Freire's attention for the centrality of the illiterate learner within the learning process and for her/his ability to take an active role. It is important that learners become aware of their achievements and at the same time are motivated to generate and to structure written texts.

Concerning the use of generative words in effective ways we have observed three core issues:

- Generative words have to be carefully selected, paying attention to phonetic difficulties as well as to themes that are of actual concern for the learners;
- Generative words are effective when they are being used within a gestalt approach to the learning units which requires both preparation work and an awareness of the group dynamics and interpersonal communication with and within the group of learners;
- Generative words demand the teacher to be able to adapt the educational materials and to improvise concerning the way they

are being used throughout the learning process according to the specific features of the learners.

The main difficulties concern the fact that in the Italian context it is very rare to be able to teach Italian as foreign language with a group that has a significant degree of homogeneity in terms of il-literacy level and cultural and linguistic background. Nonetheless, we see that within heterogeneous learners contexts it is possible to identify significant themes and areas of common interest. Freire himself was describing his approach as a canvas that was open to be re-invented according to the different contexts and learners.

References

Brandão, Carlos Rodrigues. 1981. *O que è método Paulo Freire*. Sao Paulo, Brasil: Editora Brasiliense.

Casi Paola. 1995. *L'italiano per me. Leggere e scrivere. Materiali didattici per l'alfabetizzazione iniziale di adulti italiani e stranieri*. Recanati: ELI.

Feitosa, Sonia Couto Souza. 2008. *Método Paulo Freire. Vol II. Educação de Adultos*. Brasilia: Liber Livro Editora.

Freire Paulo. 1967. *Educaçáo como prática da libertade*. Rio di Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Freire, Paulo and Ira Shor. 1987. *Pedagogy for Liberation. Dialogues on Transforming Education*. London: Macmillan.

Lodi, Mario. 1982. *Guida al mestiere di maestro*. Roma: Editori Riuniti.

Manzi, Alberto. 1972. *Insieme*. Bergamo: Janus.

Rock, Irvin and Stephen Palmer. 1990. The legacy of Gestalt psychology. *Scientific American* 263(6): 84-90.

Shugurensky, Daniel. 2014. *Paulo Freire*. London: Bloomsbury.

SECTION 3
Digital learning and practices

From computer-assisted to technology-enhanced learning. Lessons learnt and fast forward toward (digital) literacy of LESLLA learners

Eva Malessa

As a result of digitalization, societies are faced with new digital opportunities and challenges. Adult migrants with limited education experience, settling in highly literate and digitalized countries, are at risk of becoming socially excluded if they do not acquire sufficient L2 language, literacy and digital skills. This paper calls for the digital inclusion of LESLLA learners to enable them to actively participate in societies in which technology is rapidly changing the way we interact, live, work and learn. Based on previous research this paper suggests that technology-enhanced language learning can potentially enhance LESLLA learners' initial literacy acquisition.

Keywords: adult learner, late literacy, digitalization, technology-enhanced language learning, log files.

1. LESLLA learners encountering highly literate digitalization

Recently researchers have become more and more interested in LESLLA research (*Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults*, see https://www.leslla.org/), thus adding up to knowledge on the development of L2 alphabetic literacy of adult migrants who are not literate in their first language (Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011; Tarone et al. 2009). This research trend has to some degree been accelerated by the ongoing forced displacement of large numbers of adults migrating from countries of low-literacy to highly literate countries (for recent research see Shapiro et al.'s 2018 overview of empirical studies investigating language and literacy education of refugee-backgrounds students in the US, Canada and Norway).

Settling in highly literate contexts poses a considerable challenge to adults who are not literate in any language. They are expected to

acquire oral and literacy second language (L2) skills simultaneously. Miller and McKenna (2016: viii) highlight that "never before has so much depended on literacy. […] As knowledge increasingly becomes a product as well as a tool, the economic welfare of any nation will be ultimately and inextricably tied to the literacy of its citizens". LESLLA learners are generally also required to have digital skills. The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) emphasizes in the manifesto for adult learning in the 21st century that

Everyone now needs to have a sufficient level of digital competence in order to play an active part in society […] Digitalisation has already changed and will continue to change our living circumstances, mobility, environments, communication and most other areas of life. This will also alter the skills necessary to manage these changes and the needs of learners to participate in society. (Ebner and Motschilnig 2019: 15)

Technology has become indispensable in many areas of human life as "the digital revolution has changed the way almost half the world lives and works, learns and socializes" (Zelezny-Green et al. 2018: 8). This development applies for most European countries, especially for Finland, declared the most literate country in the world (Miller and McKenna 2016), and ranked the third most digital country worldwide, following Norway and the United States (Business Finland 2018: 61). In the 21st century, literacy practices have become entrenched in digitalized environments. Reder et al. (2012: 48) stress that "digital literacy must be included into the scope of literacies needed by LESLLA learners and digital literacy instruction needs to be incorporated broadly into learning opportunities for LESLLA adults". In order to avoid social exclusion and a digital divide, immediate action is urgently needed to reflect current and best practices and to envision future LESLLA learning and teaching (see Colliander, Ahn and Andersson 2018).

The growing digitalization can also provide alternative learning opportunities for low-skilled or low-literate displaced populations. Ideally, digital tools and solutions for displaced populations are "about supporting these people as they adapt to new environments which can be intimidating and overwhelming" (Zelezny-Green et al. 2018: 63). One example for such a digital tool is the free video-based

platform *Suomi taskussa* 'Finland in the pocket' (www.suomitaskussa.eu), available since 2017, created to support the integration of immigrants in Finland. The short, two-minute long educational videos, accessible via mobile devices, are intended to provide language practice starting with the beginnings of the Finnish language, gradually accumulating vocabulary and facilitating language skills needed to communicate in real-life, everyday situations immigrants are likely to encounter.

1.1. More CALL or MALL for late literacy learners? Let research TELL!

Researching technological tools, their integration and use in language learning and teaching is a relatively new research field; yet due to the growing digitalization, a very fast-paced and quickly evolving field with a long-standing tradition of creating acronyms for its specific subfields. During the last five decades, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has become an established research area offering multidisciplinary insights into how computers can enhance language learning (Chun 2011: 663). The narrow definition of CALL refers to learning and teaching languages via one specific digital tool, the computer. CALL has also been defined more broadly as "the study and practice of teaching languages through digital media" including "a wide range of digital technologies such as tablets and smartphones" (Buendgens-Kosten and Elsner 2018: xiv).

By adopting a narrow definition, his paper emphasizes that the digital tool used in CALL is the computer, in contrast to mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones employed in mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). It has been suggested that "in view of the advent of alternative means of delivering electronic materials […] the term CALL has outlived its usefulness and should be replaced with Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)" (Naeb 2015: 81). Nevertheless, at the time being both acronyms are used, often interchangeably. In this paper, the term TELL is used in a general sense, not representing a specific tool or device, but to refer to the study and practice of language learning with the help of technology.

Defining literacy, a multi-faceted concept, is a rather complex endeavor. It is important to note that literacy, despite its varying and evolving definitions, is always culturally and socially embedded. The dominant views and beliefs in a society determine the role and status of literacy. As a result, some learners "might not understand the usefulness of literacy since they have coped fine without it" (Suni and Tammelin-Laine 2018: 39). Conversely, in highly literate countries, literacy is "seen not only as a basic skill but also as a prerequisite for becoming a full, active member of a society whose members depend on their reading and writing to protect their rights and exercise their civic responsibilities" (Suni and Tammelin-Laine 2018: 39).

Inevitably, differing opinions on the necessity and importance of literacy, arising from the L1 socialization to literacy practices, are likely to influence learners' reading development (Grabe and Stoller 2011: 53). Likewise, attitudes towards technology hold by LESLLA learners and teachers might differ and thus affect the pedagogical effectiveness of technological tools. Faux and Watson (2018: 27) claim that "instructors, administrators, and students alike have seen the value of using technology with LESLLA learners". This paper questions the global applicability of this statement and encourages LESLLA teachers and educators to mediate the empowering function of digital and literacy skills in Western societies instead of focusing on (digital) literacy as an obligatory skill in highly literate societies. Attending literacy and language classes is for adults "often a luxury of time and resources" (Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011: 124). Similarly, van de Craats and Young-Scholten (2015: 129) stress that fewer instructional hours and the lack of individualized instruction are among the reasons why LESLLA learners' initial literacy development is less successful compared to that of children. Technology can be harnessed to provide more additional instructional practice in a more individualized approach. Spruck Wrigley and Guth (2000: 68) highlight that often "adults enjoy the privacy that using the computer affords and appreciate being able to move though activities at their own speed". Previous research with LESLLA learners in the Netherlands has revealed a positive correlation between individual CALL activities and oral test results (see Strube 2014) as well as individual CALL training time and reading scores (see Kurvers 2015).

While Suni and Tammelin-Laine (2018: 35) conclude that "including literacies for and through new technologies is […] a realistic and a necessary part of literacy instructions", most LESLLA research has tended to focus on emergent print literacy. Less attention has been paid to investigating digital teaching and learning methods in late literacy training. It needs to be established how initial late literacy acquisition could be supported with digital solutions. Our increasingly digitalized world expects emergent LESLLA readers to become literate in both traditional print as well as digital literacy. This often implicit expectation conflicts sharply with the lack of appropriate digital tools for language and literacy training of LESLLA learners, possibly defensive teacher attitudes towards the use of technology and an unfortunate lack of evidence-based knowledge on how LESLLA learners could learn best with digital interventions in literacy courses. Aberdeen and Johnston (2015: 109) appeal to the research community stressing that "the LESLLA field needs multiple evidence-based teaching methods […]. We strongly encourage our colleagues to explore […] any and all other methods that they find appropriate."

The following section presents the author's previous study investigating a CALL instructional tool, and is followed by an introduction to the author's ongoing study, which explores opportunities and effects of TELL, particularly gamification, in the initial late literacy learning and teaching process of LESLLA learners.

2. Tracking LESLLA learners' digital footprints in an online literacy training environment

The Digital Literacy Instructor (DigLin), a CALL application for initial literacy training of adult migrants with limited education experience, was designed and developed from 2013-2015 in a collaborative project with different European partners (www.diglin.eu). An online learning environment was created for four different alphabetic languages and tested with LESLLA students (for more information see van de Craats and Young-Scholten 2015). The main aim of this tool was to enable students to discover and decode the alphabetic code of their L2 at their own learning pace (Cucchiarini et al. 2015). The students' software use was tracked by log files. This

objective, temporally accurate and unobtrusive documentation of user-computer interaction enabled a detailed, post-activity exploration of learner behavior (see Naeb 2015: 160-66 for a concise yet detailed account on log file data collection as a user behavior tracking method). Malessa and Filimban (2017: 157) found that CALL activities implemented in the DigLin platform had a positive and motivational effect on LESLLA learners' decoding development in Finnish and English (see Filimban 2019).

2.1. Lessons learnt by looking at log files and listening to learners

In Finland, seven learners (IA-IG), whose log files were analyzed, were also interviewed by Taina Tammelin-Laine (TL), the principal investigator of the Finnish team (for more information on the Finnish DigLin content and creation see Cucchiarini et al. 2015). Three participants had no formal education background and low-literacy in their L1 (Arabic, Somali). Three participants had had little education in their home country and were either non-literate (L1 Turkmen), low-literate (L1 Arabic) or literate (L1 Kurdish). The only male participant had had over 10 years of formal education in his home country Egypt and was literate in his L1 Arabic. The participants' L1 literacy proficiency was, however, merely estimated by their L2 Finnish teachers (Tammelin-Laine 2016).

The interviews, conducted in Finnish, English and one with an interpreter in Arabic, revealed what the participants thought about working with the software. Following Chapelle's (2001: 59) approach, Malessa (2016) explored the CALL appropriateness of the Finnish DigLin version using a combination of log-file and interview transcript data. The following sections report on benefits as well as limitations of DigLin, based on log file and interview data, and provide suggestions for future TELL implementations.

2.1.1. Learning opportunities

Malessa (2016: 46) found that the amount of different digital exercise tasks and available word sets in the Finnish DigLin offered sufficient

study opportunities. A total amount of 210-300 words (contained in 15 distinct word sets) could be practiced in seven different exercise types. The log files revealed not only what users did, but also showed what they did not do: "Sometimes the absence of activity can be as revealing as its presence" (Bruckman 2006: 1451). Previous studies have confirmed that learners do not always use every available option (Heift 2002: 296). In DigLin, learners did not employ all digital resources, including specific word sets, exercise types and help tools. Possible explanations include the technological (im)practicality of certain exercise types and the software's design. Malessa (2016: 30) reasoned that the decreasing amount of completed words in a word set with a higher number was due to the layout design, presenting a list of words sets starting with the lowest number at the top of the list. Further, the log files showed that participants preferred the A-part of word sets and rather ignored the B-part (cfr. Figure 1). Based on the amount of log file entries, the data indicated individual exercise preferences and popularity of different exercise types (Malessa 2016: 27). While the objective log file entries provided a precise account for user preference, the subjective interview answers were not always that accurate: "Do you have a favorite exercise type?" (TL); "All of them are wonderful" (IA1). Furthermore, a discrepancy between the log file documentation and the individual report of one user on her preferred exercise type was detected. The interviews, however, complemented the log file entries, as they provided answers to why the users preferred certain exercises: "Why? What was good about them?" (TL), "It was easy to progress " (IB1).

1A Vedä kirjaimet	1B Vedä kirjaimet
2A Vedä kirjaimet	2B Vedä kirjaimet
3A Vedä kirjaimet	3B Vedä kirjaimet
4A Vedä kirjaimet	4B Vedä kirjaimet
5A Vedä kirjaimet	5B Vedä kirjaimet
6A Vedä kirjaimet	6B Vedä kirjaimet
7A Vedä kirjaimet	7B Vedä kirjaimet
8A Vedä kirjaimet	8B Vedä kirjaimet
9A Vedä kirjaimet	9B Vedä kirjaimet
10A Vedä kirjaimet	10B Vedä kirjaimet
11A Vedä kirjaimet	11B Vedä kirjaimet
12A Vedä kirjaimet	12B Vedä kirjaimet
13A Vedä kirjaimet	13B Vedä kirjaimet
14A Vedä kirjaimet	14B Vedä kirjaimet
15A Vedä kirjaimet	15B Vedä kirjaimet

Figure 1. Screenshot of a list of word sets in the Finnish DigLin.

The difficulty of exercise types and/or word sets can be regarded as decisive factors regarding DigLin's learner fit. The tested version did not include different proficiency levels. Malessa (2016: 46) thus proposes an introduction of different language and literacy levels, graduated according to the learner's ability, to a future TELL application.

2.1.2. Learner fit and engagement

The log-file data indicated that students spent time on-task and were very engaged (Malessa 2016: 26). Based on the interview responses, the participants were generally satisfied with the learning content and its difficulty ("It is easy, simple – especially the beginning of the words how to write them taught me a lot. I used to learn the sounds and then write the words and from there I started learning how to write and read" [IE1]) as well as the digital implementation ("The program is very nice, especially that it has everything associated with the picture so this is something very good for us. At the same time, we are learning the sounds. I learn the word; I learn the picture and at the same time I am learning the sounds. Now I am learning every sound individually" [IF1]).

The testing sessions averagely lasted 60 minutes, but could also exceed two hours (Malessa 2016: 25). Sessions were thus very long, which was also declared by one user: "The time we were using it was very long. That was the only issue. Shorter time would be better" (IE2). Future research should be undertaken to investigate the effect of practice time spent in digital learning environment on LESLLA student performance and engagement.

One key pedagogical feature seen to significantly enhance learning development was the automated and corrective feedback provided by the system (van de Craats and Young-Scholten 2015). The interviewees' answers support the log file findings. One participant in particular underlined the importance of feedback regarding learner development and engagement: "The way it gives you feedback and the way that it corrects you, gives you the right answer, has helped me a lot and has also encouraged me and gained

me self-confidence as that has made me work more and more to improve my reading" (IA2).

Malessa (2016: 47) found that "incorrect correction, i.e., indicating the presence of an error without supplying the correct form "was not suitable for all learners, in particular struggling readers, as "the burden of correction" was placed on learners who were due to lack of necessary linguistic knowledge not able to self-correct (Sheen and Ellis 2011: 600). Malessa (2016: 47) suggests "explicit correction after a certain amount of wrong drags. Further "automatic advice could be provided if the user does not use provided help tools (in the form of a blinking button or a recorded advice in the user's L1), but is not able to progress in order to prevent frustration and fossilization" (Malessa 2016: 47).

Extensive training is necessary for emerging alphabetic late literacy of adults that are, compared to young children, not in a position to spend a long time with grapheme-phoneme correspondences, word boundary identification etc. Consequently, extensive individual training, focusing on specific, often detailed features that are usually not possible to include in a repetitive, yet reasonable manner in a human-human or classroom interaction, can be enabled by CALL activities. The repetitive function that digital activities can assume was perceived by one user as beneficial: "Repetition has made me learn more and made me motivated" (IF2). The embedded sound features, endlessly repeatable, enabled the students to focus on details and this function was observed as being favorable for the learning development: "It has helped in hearing the small differences in the words like one sound different and the meaning of the word changes." (IF3)

2.1.3. Meaning focus

Words chosen for the DigLin content were chosen mainly according to their usefulness for literacy acquisition and their "degree of simplicity" (van de Craats and Young-Scholten 2015: 3). Word frequency and relevance for adult migrants were viewed as less significant. Therefore, the learners' attention was not primarily directed towards the meaning of the language. However, one selection

criterion was representability, thus "concrete basic words" with clear meanings were chosen (Cucchiarini et al. 2015: 98), which were then in turn accompanied by a real-life photograph. Drawings were not used as LESLLA learners understand photographs better than drawings (van de Craats and Young-Scholten 2015: 3). The importance of the words' visual representation was also highlighted during the interview, see IF1 in 2.1.2. Malessa (2016: 47) recommends a separate L1-L2 vocabulary section. Furthermore, a personal progress tracker is proposed to enhance individual learning.

2.1.4. Authenticity

The participants announced that DigLin helped with the reading of words: "Yes [it helped] to read longer words" (IB2). The DigLin training was perceived as a facilitator of both vocabulary and pronunciation/perception skill acquisition: "It helped me a lot, especially in spelling and writing. Now I can read and write words. I really learned, especially pronouncing the words" (ID1). The tested DigLin software restricted word length to eight letters (Cucchiarini et al. 2015: 259). The rich Finnish morphology, however, notably lengthens words and longer words require more decoding practice, this was also noted by IF(4): "Long words are still difficult".

The need for literacy practice on a sentence-level was stressed by several participants: "Of course we have to start from words and then come up with phrases and small sentences" (IA3); "If there would have been sentences it would have been better" (IE3); "The program helped a bit to read single words, but it would be good to have longer texts" (IG1); "More words we need in daily life" (IC1). It seems clear that the users were rightfully calling for more contextualized, authentic language and future applications should include sentences including phrases, questions and longer text.

2.1.5. Impact

Based on the interview data, the learners seemed to have had a positive learning experience with technology. Malessa (2016: 47)

advocates the integration of oral L1 instructions "that guide the learner through the program (e.g. click on the green button to hear the word, click on the grey button to see a picture)" to further enhance navigation in a digital environment. Many learners reported that they improved their digital skills during the DigLin training: "Now I know how to open computer; I know the difference between small and big letters and so on. I had no idea how to use computer before this" (IF5).

The computer training also enabled learners to become more independent learners: "I feel more comfortable with using computer […] if you already have the computer you don't need to ask anybody for any help. Sometimes when I go home, I ask my kids if they can help me and they become annoyed. I like working on the computer as I don't need anybody" (IA4).

One user reflected on the advantage of having additional digital support: "The computer is very good. It is just like extra training. It teaches pronouncing, spelling. I already knew how to use computer but this helped even more. This is for me like an extra curriculum work. It is improving me. Computer is like an extra teacher" (ID2). The users emphasized the vital role of the human teacher in their digital training: "Small details I didn't understand but if necessary, I have asked and was helped" (IC2); "It [DigLin] made me learn. Especially when the teacher was teaching with the program. It has made a difference" (ID3). One main benefit of TELL activities is that they facilitate "more individualized support for struggling students by freeing the teacher from tasks the CALL application can take on" and consequently enabling teachers to focus on human-human interaction and support (Malessa and Filimban 2017: 151).

2.6. Practicality

With regard to digital learning opportunities, it is necessary to investigate the fundamental issues of practicality and availability. Asked whether she used DigLin outside the classroom, one interviewee declared that "no I did not as I don't have a computer at home" (ID4). Unfortunately, the tested DigLin version could only be accessed via computer, not by mobile devices. Consequently, even

though the participants could theoretically have accessed the software outside the classroom, in practice the Finnish DigLin version was almost exclusively used in class. In total, the software was used 163 hours in class compared to three occasions when it was tested after class by two users for 50 minutes (Malessa 2016: 26).

Future studies need to focus on the availability of TELL activities to digitally include low-skilled and low-literate users. The choice of technological device is crucial to ensure that learners are able to access TELL activities also outside the educational facility. The mobile phone is the most frequently used digital device available to nearly all displaced persons (Zelezny-Green et al. 2018: 60). Faux and Watson (2018: 28) highlight the practical benefits of using mobile devices with LESLLA learners: "Using fingers to navigate seems much more intuitive than using a mouse. They can just follow along or select with a finger instead of navigating with a mouse and then clicking."

Regrettably, not all DigLin language versions including the Finnish one were developed further from their tested prototypes into fully- fledged versions nor are the initial DigLin versions available to the general public anymore. However, at present, there is a Dutch DigLin+ version on the market, based on the main principles of DigLin. DigLin+ includes sentences and short texts, as well as new exercise types (vocabulary memory games and other gamified tasks) and was developed by Jan Deutekom and Ineke van de Craats (https://www.nt2.nl/en/lesmateriaal/jeugd/diglin/100-363_DigLin-jaarlicentie). A DigLin+ English platform (https://en.diglin.eu) revised by Rola Naeb and Jan Deutekom as well as Spanish version (https://test.diglin.eu/menu/24) by Marcin Sosinski are currently freely available online.

3. Literacy and language development is serious business: we need serious games!

More studies methodically examining LESLLA learners' interaction with educational technology are necessary to develop evidence-based digital teaching methods. Currently, there is no published empirical research on LESLLA learners' literacy training with digital games nor

on the use of digital literacy applications in LESLLA classrooms in Finland. The author's current study explores initial literacy acquisition and TELL, particularly gamification. Gaming is seen to increase intrinsic motivation and thus bears potential for engaging emerging literates. In the light of positive findings on the impact of digital game-based practice on children's literacy acquisition in Finnish (see Ojanen et al. 2015), this study hypothesizes that also adult emerging Finnish readers could benefit from such a technology-based intervention.

Ekapeli 'First game', an evidence-based digital learning game, a so-called serious game, was designed for L1/L2 Finnish literacy intervention of children (see Richardson and Lyytinen 2014). For lack of technology-based literacy support tools specifically designed for LESLLA learners, Tammelin-Laine (2018) reported that some LESLLA teachers use the Ekapeli game in class (see Figure 2, the Ekapeli app on the left side is marked by a horizontal line before it). This observation was supported by findings of a web-based survey of adult late literacy teachers conducted by the author in 2019.
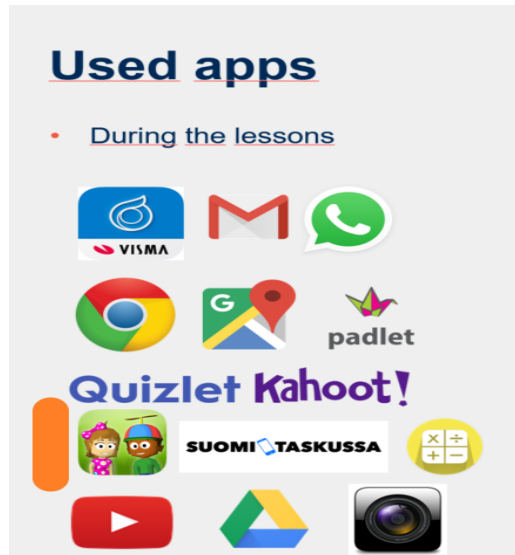
Figure 2. Screenshot of apps used in Finnish LESLLA classrooms (Tammelin-Laine 2018).

To date, there are no empirical findings on the Ekapeli game's actual pedagogical effectiveness with LESLLA learners. On the one hand, it is clear that "just like children becoming literate in an L2, older learner at the same level must also learn the basics of literacy (i.e., alphabetic, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension)" (Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011: 122). On the other hand, there are certainly also disadvantages and limitations of using children's materials with LESLLA learners, as pointed out by Faux and Watson (2018: 29).

This study's aim is to conduct literacy interventions with LESLLA learners in order to explore digital game practices. potential benefits or deficits that might even hinder late literacy development of adult learners. For this purpose, a new digital literacy support game, similar to Ekapeli and also mainly developed for children, will be tested with LESLLA learners. During the field-testing, the players' interactions with the game will be tracked by log files. Both LESLLA learners and teachers will be interviewed on their testing experience as well as their attitudes towards TELL to enhance interpretation and understanding of the log file data. This study intends to expand the body of knowledge on adult late literacy and digital learning and to provide results with, on and for LESLLA learners and teachers.

4. Outlook and log out: successful steps towards (digital) literacy

"Educating adult L2 learners who are emergent readers requires paradigm shifts in a number of areas" (Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011: 130), including teacher education, educational programs and facilities, educational practices and policies. At present, one of the most fundamental shifts needs to be towards digital inclusion to ensure that students acquire "the skills (language or otherwise) they need to get jobs, keep their jobs and participate in the community (in their children's school for example)" (Faux and Watson 2018: 27). Suni and Tammelin-Laine (2018: 35) also highlight the social impact of digital (literacy) skills, as "transnational relations depend on mobile technologies, and this is equally true for immigrants". Today, the question about technology use in LESLLA teaching is not *whether* to use digital devices but *how* to make best use of them.

Technology-based tools and activities have the potential to enhance digital literacy and inclusion of LESLLA learners. Naeb (2015: 83) states poignantly that "the integration of technology in language learning settings can be summarized in two respects: the technologies used and the reasons they are used". Spruck Wrigley and Guth (2000: 69) warn that "deficit-oriented software, such as programs that begin teaching the alphabet without reference to context, can actually hinder literacy development by making adults feel less competent than they are" and further emphasize that "technology decisions are value decisions. Every time administrators and teachers choose a certain type of software […], they make a statement about their beliefs about the nature of language, literacy, and learning" (Spruck Wrigley and Guth 2000: 80).

This paper explored the role and necessity of TELL for LESLLA learners and identified its potential for LESLLA learning, referring to the author's previous CALL and ongoing TELL study. LESLLA learners' digital literacy development is a complex phenomenon, with little research, but it is evident that the implementation of TELL cannot be "simply a matter of teaching learners to click and then putting them in front of computer-based learning materials that are nothing more than digital workbooks" (Reder et al. 2012: 49). This paper calls for a balanced blended learning approach, where the content of a digital learning platform is prioritized over its delivery device. It is essential that practitioners understand that technology is not a method, only a tool to deliver the method.

LESLLA education needs "teachers prepared to reach across the experimental and literacy abyss to educate them in ways that are thoughtful and effective" (Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011: 130). The most important aspect for researchers to study and teachers to implement is the pedagogy, not the technology employed in TELL. In order to successfully use TELL with LESLLA learners, teachers have a pivotal role, therefore, new teaching competencies are needed to take advantage of technology (Heift and Chapelle 2012: 565).

Further studies investigating the role of TELL for LESLLA teaching would be worthwhile. Moreover, it is important to have evidence-based teaching and learning material for LESLLA education, ideally lessening the workload of teachers, enabling them to work with individual students that need more help. Future learning

technologies need to meet the needs and interests of LESLLA learners. The omnipresence of technology should not be seen as a threat to LESLLA teaching but as a trump card for LESLLA learners, as they "have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that have currency in the modern world. No longer are LESLLA learners primarily defined by their perceived "deficits" (lack of literacy, lack of L2 proficiency)" (Reder et al. 2012: 63). It is high time to value late (digital) literacy learners and under-valued LESLLA education.

Acknowledgements

References

Aberdeen, Trudie and Elsie Johnson. 2015. Determining what LESLLA learners want to do in class: a principled approach to needs assessment. In Maricel G. Santos and Anne Whiteside (eds.), *Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Proceedings of the 9th Symposium*, 92-111. Lulu Publishing.

Bigelow, Martha and Patsy Vinogradov. 2011. Teaching adult second language learners who are emergent readers. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 31: 120-136.

Bruckman, Amy. 2006. Analysis of log file data to understand behavior and learning in an online community. In Joel Weiss, Jason Nolan, Jeremy Hunsinger and Peter Trifonas (eds.), *International handbook of virtual learning environments*, 1449-1465. Dordrecht and New York: Springer.

Buendgens-Kosten, Judith and Daniela Elsner. 2018. Multilingual CALL: Introduction. In Judith Buendgens-Kosten and Daniela Elsner. Multilingual computer assisted language learning. *Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, xi-2. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Business Finland, Liikenne- ja viestintäministeriö, Teknologiateollisuus ja Verkkoteollisuus. 2018. Digibarometri 2018. Helsinki: Taloustieto Oy.

http://www.digibarometri.fihttp://www.digibarometri.fi/uploads/5/8/8/7/588776
5/digibarometri_2018.pdf

Chapelle, Carol A. 2001. *Computer applications in second language acquisition.
Foundations for teaching, testing and research*. Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press.

Chapelle, Carol, Joan Jamieson and Yuhsoon Park. 1996. Second language
classroom research traditions: How does CALL fit? In Martha C. Pennington
(ed.), *The power of CALL*, 33-54. Houston: Athelstan.

Chun, Dorothy M. 2011. Computer-assisted language learning. In Eli Hinkel (ed.),
Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning, Vol. 2, 663-
680. London: Routledge.

Cucchiarini, Catia, Marta Dawidowicz, Enas Filimban, Taina Tammelin-Laine,
Ineke van de Craats and Helmer Strik. 2015. The digital literacy instructor:
developing automatic speech recognition and selecting learning material for
opaque and transparent orthographies. In Ineke Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and
Roeland van Hout (eds.), *Adult literacy, second language and cognition*, 251-
278. Nijmegen: CLS.

Ebner, Gina and Ricarda Motschilnig. 2018. Manifesto for adult learning in the 21st
century: The power and joy of learning. Brussels: EAEA. https://eaea.org/wp-
content/uploads/2019/02/eaea_manifesto_final_web-.pdf

Faux, Nancy and Susan Watson. 2018. Working with LESLLA Learners. In Martha
Young-Scholten, Rola Naeb, Yvonne Richie and Rebecca Musa (eds.), *EU-
Speak 3 European speakers of other language: Teaching adult immigrants and
training their teachers*, 3-29. Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University.
https://research.ncl.ac.uk/eu-speak/eu-speakbooks/english/English%20M-
Event%20volume%20done%2029%20Oct%202018.pdf

Filimban, Enas. 2019. *The effectiveness of a computer software program for
developing phonemic awareness and decoding skills for low-literate adult
learners of English*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University dissertation.

Grabe, William and Fredericka L. Stoller. 2011. Teaching and researching reading.
2nd edition. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Heift, Trude and Carol A. Chapelle. 2012. Language learning through technology.
In Susan M. Gass and Alison Mackey (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of
second language acquisition*, 555-565. London: Routledge.

Heift, Trude. 2002. Learner control and error correction in ICALL: Browsers,
peekers, and adamants. *CALICO Journal* 19(2): 295-313.

Helena Colliander, Helena, Song Ee Ahn and Per Andersson. 2018. Actions and
conceptions: Exploring initial literacy teaching practice for adults. *Journal of
Language, Identity & Education* 17(5): 306-319.
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15348458.2018.1465344

Kurvers, Jeanne. 2015. Emerging literacy in adult second-language learners: A
synthesis of research findings in the Netherlands. *Writing systems research*
7(1): 58-78.

Malessa, Eva and Enas Filimban. 2017. Exploring what log files can reveal about
LESLLA learners' behaviour in an online CALL environment. In Marcin
Sosiński (ed.), *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos:*

Investigación, política educativa y práctica docente. Literacy education and second language learning for adults: research, policy and practice, 149-159. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Malessa, Eva. 2016. *Cracking the code – from Start to Finnish. D-E-C-O-D-I-N-G CALL of LESLLA learners in The Digital Literacy Instructor (DigLin)*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University MA thesis.

Miller, John W. and Michael C. McKenna. 2016. World literacy: how countries rank and why it matters. New York: Routledge.

Naeb, Rola. 2015. Focus on form(s) and meaning in a technology-enhanced language learning environment (TELL). Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University dissertation.
https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/dspace/bitstream/10443/3928/1/Naeb%2c%20R%2c%02015%20%283yr%20res.%29.pdf

Ojanen, Emma, Miia Ronimus, Timo Ahonen, Tamara Chansa-Kabali, Pamela February, Jacqueline Jere-Folotiya, Karri-Pekka Kauppinen, Ritva Ketonen, Damaris Ngorosho, Mikko Pitkänen, Carol Suzanne Puhakka, Francis Sampa, Gabriel Walubita, Christopher Yalukanda, Ken Pugh, Ulla Richardson, Robert Serpell and Heikki Lyytinen. 2015. GraphoGame–catalyst for multi-level promotion of literacy in diverse contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (671).
https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00671/full

Reder, Stephen, Jenifer Vanek and Heide Spruck Wrigley. 2012. Supporting digital literacy development in LESLLA learners. In Patsy Vinogradov and Martha Bigelow (eds.), *Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the 7th Symposium*, 22-41. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Richardson, Ulla and Heikki Lyytinen. 2014. The GraphoGame method: The theoretical and methodological background of the technology-enhanced learning environment for learning to read. *Human Technology* 10(1): 39-60.
http://dx.doi.org/10.17011/ht/urn.201405281859

Shapiro, Shawna, Raichle Farrelly and Mary Jane Curry. *Educating refugee-background students. Critical issues and dynamic contexts*. Bristol: Multilingual Matter.

Sheen, Younghee and Rod Ellis. 2011. Corrective feedback in language teaching. In Eli Hinkel (ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*, 593-610. London: Routledge.

Spruck Wrigley, Heide and Gloria J. A. Guth. 2000. Bringing literacy to life. Issues and options in adult ESL literacy. *Literacywork International* 2010.
http://teacheslvideos.org/Literacywork.com/Resources_files/Bringing%20Literacy%20to%20Life.pdf

Strube, Susanna. 2014. Grappling with the oral skills: *The learning and teaching of the low-literate adult second language learner*. Utrecht: LOT.

Suni, Minna and Taina Tammelin-Laine. 2018. Language and literacy in their social context. In Martha Young-Scholten, Rola Naeb, Yvonne Richie and Rebecca Musa (eds.), *EU-Speak 3 European speakers of other language: Teaching adult immigrants and training their teachers*, 30-45. Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University.

https://research.ncl.ac.uk/eu-speak/eu-speakbooks/english/English%20M-Event%20volume%20done%2029%20Oct%202018.pdf

Tammelin-Laine, Taina. 2016. *Personal conversation* (16.06.2016).

Tammelin-Laine, Taina. 2018. Digitalization and need of change in learning and teaching late literacy skills. Paper presented at the *Autumn Symposium of the Finnish Association for Applied Linguistics (AFinLA)*, University of Eastern Finland, 9 November 2018.

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2009. *Literacy and second language oracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van de Craats, Ineke and Martha Young-Scholten. 2015. Developing technology-enhanced literacy learning for LESLLA learners. In Maricel G. Santos and Anne Whiteside (eds.), *Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the 9th Symposium*, 129-150. Lulu Publishing Services.

Zelezny-Green, Ronda, Steven Vosloo and Gráinne Conole. 2018. Digital inclusion for low-skilled and low-literate people: a landscape review. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261791/PDF/261791eng.pdf.multi

The paradox of oral skills at CEFR level A1 and the role of digital technologies

Federico Salvaggio

At CEFR level A1 the socio-communicative tasks envisaged are predominantly related to the resort to oral skills. Theoretically speaking, new students even when unable to write and read in their language/s of origin and/or in the target language, could thus directly join an A1 group without risking to find themselves in an irredeemably disadvantaged situation when compared to their literate classmates. Yet in current teaching practices and materials, because of the way spoken activities are generally presented (i.e. mostly by means of dialogues, samples, and exercises in written form), they are likely to find serious difficulties in starting from an A1 group and normally end up in pre-A1 courses. The present contribution argues that digital technologies could represent a way out from this apparently unsolvable paradox.

Keywords: non-literacy, L2 teaching, digital technologies.

1. Introduction

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) proposes a road map towards L2 proficiency based on a series of increasingly complex communicative goals, to be achieved throughout the learning process, related to various real-life situations. Thus CEFR-based learning, teaching, and assessment practices present learners, as they move ahead in their study of a particular language, with a progression of socio-communicative tasks (SCT) that reflect actual language uses in a variety of authentic contexts. Such SCT range from common everyday beginner tasks, such as *introducing oneself* or *asking for directions,* to advanced and specialized tasks, such as *writing an academic essay* or *giving a public speech*.

When the SCT envisaged at each CEFR level are analyzed on the basis of their association with spoken activities (reception, production, interaction, mediation) and written activities (reception, production, interaction, mediation) we find that level A1 shows:

a clear predominance of oral skills at the expenses of written skills [...] due to the fact that SCT at lower levels mainly refer to daily situations in which learners have to cope with different conversational basic tasks such as *the fulfillment of needs of concrete types, presenting themselves, asking for the price of an item*, that are predominantly associated with oral skills. (Giolfo and Salvaggio 2018: 62)

If this is actually the case and if at lower levels (and in particular at level A1, as illustrated below), as a consequence of the specific nature of the SCT involved, that are predominantly related to oral skills and spoken activities, new students, even when unable to write and read in their language/s of origin and/or in the target language, could, from a strictly theoretical standpoint, directly join an A1 group without necessarily finding themselves in an irredeemably disadvantaged situation when compared to their classmates who can read and write. Yet in everyday teaching practice we witness a quite different situation with those students experiencing extremely serious difficulties in starting immediately from an A1 group and normally ending up being grouped in so-called A0 (or pre-A1) courses.

The present contribution aims at illustrating how such a separation of beginner non-literate students (i.e. students unable to write and read in their language/s of origin and/or in the target language) and literate students into distinct A0 and A1 classes is not an ineluctable necessity in itself (at least not always, not in all cases, and not necessarily throughout an entire specific language course) and has to do not only with differences between beginner non-literate and literate learners in their capacity to cope with A1 SCT but also with the way such SCT, mostly based on oral skills, are conventionally presented.

We are confronted here with a paradoxical situation. At CEFR level A1 the vast majority of tasks imply the resort to listening and speaking skills and yet the level is not directly accessible to non-literate students because those oral tasks, despite being oral, are predominantly and conventionally taught through written texts consisting of transcriptions of dialogues, written conversational formulas, and relative written exercises. We argue that digital technologies can represent a possible way out from this apparently unsolvable paradox.

By managing different sets of data through distinct output channels (audio vs. video) digital technologies enable the separation of spoken and written activities throughout the learning and teaching process. This is particularly critical at level A1, and especially when dealing with non-literate learners, since digital technologies may help us to work on spoken activities directly via aural inputs thus avoiding transcriptions of oral conversations when not strictly necessary. In this way digital technologies permit us to reproduce the complexity of the distribution of SCT related to spoken and written activities at lower levels and especially at the entrance level, A1.

By the present contribution, without underestimating the implications of literacy also on the development of oral skills, we hope to stimulate language pedagogists and teachers to consider the unexplored potentialities of digital technologies as a means to avoid unnecessary transcriptions and experiment new approaches for dealing simultaneously with mixed groups of non-literate/literate beginner learners especially when working on the enhancement of oral skills at level A1.

2. Spoken and written activities at CEFR level A1

In order to show the relation between spoken and written activities and different SCT at level A1, we can analyze the SCT envisaged by CEFR at level A1 and observe how they relate to spoken and written activities (reception, production, interaction, mediation). To establish the association of spoken activities (SA) and written activities (WA) with SCT at level A1 we will initially refer to CEFR general overview of proficiency levels or global scale (Council of Europe 2001: 24).

Of course both the original CEFR (Council of Europe 2001: 26-29) and its *Companion volume with new descriptors* (Council of Europe 2018: 55-102) do provide more detailed descriptions of the SCT involved at each level. Nevertheless, the choice to start our analysis by referring to the global scale lies in its conciseness which gives us an overall and immediate idea of the main and essential features, goals, tasks, and skills that characterize each particular level and which explicitly aims at providing "teachers and curriculum planners with orientation points" (Council of Europe 2001: 24).

As we can see from the following table, at CEFR level A1, all the SCT involved are almost exclusively related to spoken activities.

Level	"Can do" descriptors
A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.
	Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has.
	Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Table 1. Distribution of language activities at CEFR level A1.

It is a quite remarkable fact that the concise description of level A1 provided by the global scale presents us with a list of "Can do" descriptors that seem to refer almost exclusively to oral tasks. This scenario is due to the fact that CEFR global description of level A1 focuses on basic conversational SCT such as *using everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type* or *asking and answering questions about personal details* that are normally carried out by the sole use of oral skills.

As discussed in the next section, we should not jump to the conclusion that written skills are irrelevant and not represented at level A1 or that the time dedicated to their enhancement will be minimal in comparison to that dedicated to oral skills. Although not included in the global scale, CEFR, in more detailed descriptions, does list SCT that require written skills at level A1. Such SCT include understanding "familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues", writing "a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings", and filling in "forms with personal details, for example entering" one's "name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form" (Council of Europe 2001: 26). Thus both spoken and written activities are essential to achieve proficiency at this level, but, at the same time, the level itself seems to be mainly characterized by its association with SCT that mostly require the resort to oral skills.

3. Current teaching practices and materials

As seen in the previous section, CEFR global scale (Council of Europe 2001: 24) does not list any SCT directly related to the use of written tasks at the entrance level A1. Thus if a set of skills had to be chosen to define the main goals of A1 level that would undoubtedly be the set of oral skills. This notwithstanding, as already stated above, this does not mean that written skills are not represented at level A1 or that they are not essential to the achievement of the communicative goals envisaged at level A1. Nor does this imply that the time dedicated, in the teaching practice, to the enhancement of written skills should be marginal in comparison to that devoted to oral skills. In fact both the CEFR first version (Council of Europe 2001: 26) and its *Companion volume with new descriptors* (Council of Europe 2018: 55-102) do provide us with a detailed list of A1 SCT that require the resort to reading and writing skills. The following table sums up the main SCT related to written activities listed in the *Companion volume* (Council of Europe 2018: 60-65, 75-77, 93-97).

Written reception

Overall reading comprehension	Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.
Reading correspondence	Can understand short, simple messages on postcards. Can understand short, simple messages sent via social media or email (e.g. proposing what to do, when and where to meet).
Reading for orientation	Can recognise familiar names, words and very basic phrases on simple notices in the most common everyday situations. Can understand store guides (information on which floors departments are on) and directions (e.g. to where to find lifts). Can understand basic hotel information, e.g. times when meals are served. Can find and understand simple, important information in advertisements, in programmes for special events, in leaflets and brochures (e.g. what is proposed, costs, the date and place of the event, departure times etc.).
Reading for information	Can get an idea of the content of simpler informational material and short simple descriptions, especially if there is visual

and argument	support. Can understand short texts on subjects of personal interest (e.g. news flashes about sports, music, travel, or stories etc.) written with simple words and supported by illustrations and pictures.
Reading instructions	Can follow short, simple written directions (e.g. to go from X to Y).
Reading as a leisure activity	Can understand short, illustrated narratives about everyday activities that are written in simple words. Can understand in outline short texts in illustrated stories, provided that the images help him/her to guess a lot of the content.

Written production

Overall written production	Can give information in writing about matters of personal relevance (e.g. likes and dislikes, family, pets) using simple words and basic expressions. Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.
Creative writing	Can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do. Can describe in very simple language what a room looks like. Can use simple words and phrases to describe certain everyday objects (e.g. the colour of a car, whether it is big or small).
Written reports and essays	*No descriptors available.*

Written interaction

Overall written interaction	Can ask for or pass on personal details in written form.
Correspondence	Can write messages and online postings as a series of very short sentences about hobbies and likes/dislikes, using simple words and formulaic expressions, with reference to a dictionary. Can write a short, simple postcard. Can write a short, very simple message (e.g. a text message) to friends to give them a piece of information or to ask them a question.

Notes, messages and forms	Can write numbers and dates, own name, nationality, address, age, date of birth or arrival in the country etc. such as on a hotel registration form. Can leave a simple message giving information on e.g. where he/she has gone, what time he/she will be back. (e.g. 'Shopping: back at 5 p.m.').
Online conversation and discussion	Can write very simple messages and personal online postings as a series of very short sentences about hobbies, likes/dislikes, etc., relying on the aid of a translation tool. Can use formulaic expressions and combinations of simple words to post short positive and negative reactions to simple online postings and their embedded links and media, and can respond to further comments with standard expressions of thanks and apology.

Table 2. SCT related to written activities at level A1.

As we can see, the *Companion volume*, at level A1, enumerates several SCT that entail the resort to writing and reading activities. For all the SCT envisaged though, the resort to written skills is limited to the reception and production of *short* and *simple* written texts that make use of *basic*, *familiar* and *predictable* vocabulary. Moreover the ability to cope with those written communicative tasks is not considered as a preliminary condition for the access to level A1, rather is supposedly developed as the result and the goal of the learning process taking place at such a level.

This may seem an uncalled for remark, and from a theoretical point of view it certainly is, but when looked at from the point of view of current teaching practices and materials the obviousness of such a consideration should not be taken for granted.

Figure 1, taken from a popular series of Italian L2 textbooks, can perhaps help to illustrate this point. The series, following the progression of CEFR's levels, is specifically tailored to the needs of adult migrant learners and is widely appreciated for its choice of appropriate vocabulary and exemplifications as well as for its selection of simplified texts and exercises. In the image, we can see the second and third page of the very first unit of the textbook dedicated to level A1. Thus the transcription of the dialogue, with related exercises, the exemplifications, and the tables, as well as all the titles and instructions for the exercises, are, in most cases, the first written texts that the targeted beginner students are likely to encounter

I

Figure 1. From Cassani et al. (2008: 6-7).

during their learning process. According to CEFR principles SCT presented to learners should be progressive and should reflect real-life situations.

The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing

themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures. Thus, the criterion suggested for assessment is communicative ability in real life, in relation to a continuum of ability (Levels A1-C2). (Council of Europe 2018: 27)

From CEFR's point of view, a written text that describes a dialogue between people introducing themselves, such as that illustrated in Image 1, does not represent the kind of written texts that a beginner learner will come across in a real-life situation. Students at this stage, according to CEFR, should be presented with very short written messages related for instance to understanding "store guides (information on which floors departments are on) and directions (e.g. to where to find lifts)" or "basic hotel information, e.g. times when meals are served" (Council of Europe 2018: 27) and even those basic tasks could be considered quite demanding if approached during the very first lesson. Moreover written messages, such as *formula frasi come nell'esempio* 'formulate sentences following the example' or *fa' attenzione alla è con accento* 'pay attention to the *è* with a stress mark', that can be found among the exercise instructions in the pages reproduced above, are definitely not related to any possible authentic communicative context.

This evident inconsistency of the proposed materials with CEFR principles cannot be ascribed to a peculiar pedagogic choice of the authors. It rather reflects the conventional way in which spoken activities are commonly presented in L2 textbooks. It is evident that the unit does focus on typical A1 SCT such as *introducing oneself* or *asking and answering questions about where one lives or comes from*. It is also clear that such SCT have to be ultimately carried out orally and that the written texts and explanations are only conceived as the means to reach that goal and not as samples of the actual written texts that, according to CEFR descriptors, students should approach at this particular level. Nevertheless, the unit is fundamentally based on written texts and we should not be surprised if non-literate learners find very serious difficulties when trying to directly join an A1 lesson like the one illustrated above. No wonder then that teachers are often forced to separate non-literate students from literate beginner students by creating *ad hoc* A0 or pre-A1.

We are confronted here with the paradox of a level, A1, in which written activities play a minor role in terms of communicative goals to

be achieved and that is, this notwithstanding, precluded to non-literate learners because of the way oral skills are currently taught and enhanced.

In our opinion, in order to overcome this apparently unsolvable contradiction, one should start by clearly disentangling, from a theoretical stance, the resort to written skills for the sake of enhancing students' ability to cope with the specific written SCT envisaged at CEFR level A1, from the resort to written skills with the ultimate goal of improving oral skills. Then one should look for alternative ways to teach oral skills that minimize the resort to written skills where not necessarily required. In the next section we will try to show how digital technologies could help us design inclusive tools for the enhancement of oral skills at level A1 that could hopefully benefit both literate and non-literate beginner students.

4. Digital technologies and the enhancement of oral skills at level A1

In order to understand how digital technologies can help us minimize the resort to written skills, when not strictly required by the SCT associated with a specific level and in particular with level A1, we will first have to consider how spoken and written skills relate to digital technologies in human-computer interaction (HCI).

When humans and computer interact they exchange information through different input and output apparatuses. Each of the two sides (humans and computers) produces outputs and receives inputs. What is produced by one side as an output is received by the other as an input and vice versa.

A person's interaction with the outside world occurs through information being received and sent: input and output. In an interaction with a computer the user receives information that is output by the computer, and responds by providing input to the computer – the user's output becomes the computer's input and vice versa (Dix et al. 2004: 13). As we can see in the Table 3, computers' productions take the form of aural and visual outputs that reach humans as inputs received through human perceptive systems and interpreted by means of their perceptive skills (listening and reading).

Computer		Human	
Output	**Output Device**	**Perceptive System**	**Language Skill**
aural	speakers/headphones	auditory system	listening
visual	monitor/screen/etc.	visual system	reading

Table 3. Perceptive skills in HCI: human systems and computer devices involved.

Computers' aural outputs are produced by computers via speakers and headphones and reach humans in form of inputs that are received by their auditory system and interpreted by humans by means of listening skills. Computers' visual outputs are produced by computers via screens and monitors and reach humans in form of inputs that are received by their visual system and interpreted, as they involve the understanding of written language, by means of their reading skills.

Computer Channel	Output Device	Human sense	Skill
audio	speakers/headphones	hearing	listening
video	screen/VR helmets/etc.	sight	reading

Table 4. Computers' channels, listening and reading skills, and senses.

As shown in Table 3, computers' aural outputs are related to humans' listening skills and computers' visual outputs to humans' reading skills. Moreover computers' aural and visual outputs are generated through distinct output devices (speakers vs. screen). The consequence of this situation is that, as we can see in the following table, digital technologies, by using different output channels (audio vs. video), allow the separation of activities involving listening skills from activities involving reading skills. Digital technologies thus allow the reproduction of oral texts in the form of aural outputs. This,

though it might sound as a tautology, is extremely important in that it avoids presenting learners with written transcriptions of oral conversations, interviews, etc. Such transcriptions, as discussed in the previous section, are very common in current teaching materials and, among other factors, may account for the difficulties encountered by non-literate students in joining directly an A1 course. Digital technologies can thus represent an alternative to writing for sound reproduction. As already suggested by Ong (1982) the act of writing can be conceived in itself as a technology for sound reproduction.

Because we have by today so deeply interiorized writing, made it so much a part of ourselves [...] we find it difficult to consider writing to be a technology as we commonly assume printing and the computer to be. Yet writing (and especially alphabetic writing) is a technology, calling for the use of tools and other equipment: styli or brushes or pens, carefully prepared surfaces such as paper, animal skins, strips of wood, as well as inks or paints, and much more [...] It initiated what print and computers only continue, the reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from the living present, where alone spoken words can exist. (Ong 1982: 80)

Of course the integration of sound reproduction technologies, such as tape-recorders, record players (and more recently CD and MP3 players), in the teaching practice is no novelty at all. In fact the shift from traditional grammar-based methods to methods focusing on the development of oral skills alongside written skills would not have been conceivable

without the advent of technologies enabling an approach to language in its use. [...] For a language pedagogy that focuses on listening and oral production skills, on phonetics and sound articulation, on direct contact and full immersion in the foreign language, having at one's disposal a tool allowing the replication of an oral text for a virtually infinite number of times without variations, means to have at one's command an extremely valuable and priceless resource to work on students' linguistic habits (Chini and Bosisio 2014: 238; *translation* FS).

Nevertheless we argue that in order to face the challenge of the inclusion of non-literate students in A1 courses we are perhaps in

need of a further paradigm shift. This entails an approach to the resort to sound reproduction technologies to enhance oral skills which is consistent with CEFR principles illustrated above and which harmonizes with the distribution of oral skills at level A1. Thus aural input introduced in the teaching practice should not, as is often the case, simply work as a mere duplicate of what is concurrently presented in written form. Instead it should work as a real alternative to written presentations of contents whose ultimate aim is the improvement of oral skills. Digital technologies represent the condition of such a paradigm shift in that, compared to other traditional technologies for sound reproduction (tape-recorders, record players, etc.), they enable the management of aural contents in a more complex and flexible way. We suggest that the potentialities of digital technologies in enhancing oral skills are to be fully explored and the implications of the use of digital technologies at level A1 in a way more consistent with CEFR principles require further investigation and experimentation. We argue that such an experimentation in the designing of digital tools for the enhancement of oral skills at level A1 and for the inclusion of non-literate students in the A1 classroom should take into account the following suggestions:

- clearly disentangling the resort to writing in order to train written skills from the resort to writing to improve oral skills;
- avoiding the resort to written transcriptions of oral texts where not necessarily required by the SCT involved;
- presenting learners with new contents according to the progression of SCT and relative language skills as conceived by the CEFR;
- using digital technologies for the reproduction of oral texts in the form of aural outputs in a way that is consistent with the remarks advanced in the present contribution;
- using digital technologies (computers in particular) to emulate the main features of writing by organizing aural outputs in strings that, as in the listening process, can be fragmented, repeated, navigated backward and forward, reordered, completed, matched with images, etc. (traditional technologies for sound reproduction such as tape-recorders and record players, but also more recent CD and MP3 players, are not easily adaptable to these tasks);
- trying to include non-literate students in the A1 classroom

whenever possible and especially when focusing on oral skills in order to make use of everybody's language resources.

5. Conclusions

Technologies and pedagogic approaches are significantly interdependent. The success of different pedagogical approaches can be often related to the concurrent availability of specific technologies that support the implementation of those approaches. For instance, traditional grammar-based approaches, that mainly focus on reading and writing skills, almost exclusively rely upon printed materials such as grammars, handbooks, and dictionaries. On the other hand, communicative methods that emphasize the harmonious development of both oral and written skills would not be imaginable without the resort to technologies that allow the use in the classroom of different authentic materials related to meaningful real-life socio-communicative contexts. In the present contribution we maintained that digital technologies can play a crucial role in helping develop teaching strategies for the enhancement of oral skills at level A1 that are more consistent with CEFR principles. Through digital technologies, pragmatic fakes, such as those represented by written oral conversations (i.e. oral conversations reproduced in written form), can be avoided in the teaching practice and substituted by digital materials based on realistic and progressive aural inputs. We believe that such materials will benefit all beginner learners, both literate and non-literate. One should not, of course, underestimate the relation between literacy acquisition and the development of oral skills and in particular the implications of the acquisition of writing and reading skills for the processing of oral language and for phonological awareness (cf. Tarone et al. 2009). Hence written skills should also be progressively and carefully developed throughout the whole learning process and from its beginning. Nevertheless the engagement in realistic, meaningful and progressive spoken activities, in its turn, will also hopefully have a positive impact on the acquisition of written skills on the part of all beginner learners. Research shows that the preliminary acquisition of new vocabulary in

L2 is considered a fundamental prerequisite for the development of writing skills.

Numerous research findings in language pedagogy and the psycho-linguistic field confirm the importance of the relation between the development of lexical competence and reading abilities. (Cardona 2008: 10; *translation FS*)

More specifically, as demonstrated by recent neurolinguistic studies (Kolinsky et al. 2014: 179), the possibility to draw on an orally acquired vocabulary repertoire supports the automation of the mechanisms involved in the process of script decoding when learning a new writing system (this of course applies to all new language learners). In conclusion it is essential to engage non-literate students in written activities from the very beginning of their learning process since literacy acquisition is a complex, delicate, demanding, and long process that, with some non-literate learners, can take up to 500 hours of tuition before the inclusion into a proper A1 level (see the case of "pre-Alfa" non-literate learners in Borri et al. 2014: 27). Moreover literacy has an impact not only, as obviously expected, on the development of written skills but also on that of oral skills. At the same time the exclusion of non-literate students from A1 courses, in our opinion, does not depend only on the differences between the respective language abilities of non-literate learners and their literate classmates but also on the way learning activities, and spoken activities in particular, are commonly presented in teaching materials. We suggest that while it is essential to work separately with non-literate students when working on their writing skills, non-literate students could also be included in some A1 activities, together with literate classmates, especially when the class group is involved in spoken activities based on the use of specifically tailored inclusive digital teaching materials. We hope that the considerations exposed in the present contribution will stimulate L2 teachers and language pedagogists to explore new ways in which digital technologies could be used to develop tools designed to help both non-literate and literate students cope with spoken SCT envisaged at level A1 and foster the initial acquisition of language vocabulary and structures. Thus in accordance with the tenets of an inclusive approach, such tools will hopefully be beneficial not only to non-literate students but also to

literate beginner learners and will allow teachers to work simultaneously, when dealing with those particular spoken activities, with mixed groups of non-literate and literate learners thus maximizing "learning opportunities for every student" (Rose and Meyer 2002: 6).

References

Borri, Alessandro, Fernanda Minuz, Lorenzo Rocca and Chiara Sola. 2014. *Italiano L2 in contesti migratori. Sillabo e descrittori dall'alfabetizzazione all'A1*. Quaderni della ricerca 17. Torino: Loescher.

Cardona, Mario. 2008. L'abilità di lettura e lo sviluppo della competenza lessicale. *Studi di Glottodidattica* 2: 10-36.

Chini, Marina and Cristina Bosisio. 2014. *Fondamenti di glottodidattica. Apprendere e insegnare le lingue oggi*. Roma: Carocci.

Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*: *Learning*, *teaching*, *assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Council of Europe. 2018. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume with new descriptors*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Dix, Alan, Janet E. Finlay, Gregory D. Abowd and Russell Beale. 2004. *Human-computer interaction*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Giolfo, Manuela E. B. and Federico Salvaggio. 2018. *Mastering Arabic variation: a Common European Framework of Reference integrated model*. Roma: Aracne.

Kolinsky, Régine, José Morais, Laurent Cohen, Ghislaine Dehaene-Lambertz and Stanislas Dehaene. 2014. L'influence de l'apprentissage du langage écrit sur les aires du langage. *Rev Neuropsychol* 6(3): 173-181.

Ong, Walter J. 1982. *Orality and literacy. The technologizing of the word*. London and New York: Routledge.

Rose, David H. and Anne Meyer. 2002. *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2009. Literacy and second language oracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Ek, Jan. A. and John L. M. Trim. 1991. *Threshold Level 1990*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

A tool for assessing literacy skills of adolescents and (young) adults in Dari as first language and German as second language (Lit-L1-L2)

Anne-Christin Schumacher – Christine Czinglar
Farzona Mirova – Sarah Faseli

The assignment of adolescent and adult learners to preparatory classes or language courses should not only be based on their knowledge of their second language (L2), but also on their literacy skills in the first language (L1). In this article, we describe a tool (Lit-L1-L2), which was developed to assess the literacy skills of learners with L1 Dari and with little knowledge of their L2 German. It can be administered without any knowledge of Dari, as it is based on language independent criteria for assessment of behavior and handwriting.

Keywords: German as a Second Language, Dari, multilingual diagnostics, reading and writing skills.

1. Introduction

Although flight and migration of young people from crisis zones and the integration of late-entry pupils in the school system are not new phenomena, there are surprisingly few studies on how adolescents and (young) adults with little schooling or with limited literacy skills acquire a second language. With only a few exceptions, our theories and hypotheses on second language acquisition are based on empirical studies, in which highly educated and literate learners are examined: e.g., college students or the children of people with university degrees (e.g., Tarone and Bigelow 2012; Young-Scholten 2013). However, with respect to the speed of acquisition of a second language among adolescents and adults, a heterogeneous picture is apparent, which is dependent upon many influencing factors, including school education and literacy experience (cf. Czinglar 2018).

In different *Bundesländer* (Germany's component states), different kinds of "preparatory classes" are meant to prepare recently

immigrated pupils for regular school or for vocational training, whereby, per Gamper and Schroeder (2016), the mastery of literacy structures is key for the linguistic integration and subsequent educational path of refugees, both adolescents and (young) adults. Basic skills in the written language (reading and writing) are the presupposition, although recently immigrated learners have, for the most part, to develop oral and written skills in the second language (L2) at the same time. In contrast to learners of a second written language, for learners who are not sufficiently literate in their first language (L1), this can be a very long, drawn-out process. Studies of L2 acquisition of English have shown that highly developed literacy skills in the first language accelerate the acquisition of educationally-relevant linguistic abilities (e.g., Collier 1989; Cummins 2000).

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the L1 literacy skills of L2 learners. Usually, to this end, learners are asked about their educational biography (e.g., Van de Craats et al. 2006; Weber 2016). However, the length of schooling in the country of origin is often not a reliable predictor for L1 literacy skills of the learner (e.g., Tarone et al. 2009). Despite mandatory school attendance for 6 to 14 year-olds in Afghanistan, only 25 percent of children attend school for nine years and only 10 percent reach the twelfth grade (cf. nuffic education 2015). And even in the case of longer schooling, successful acquisition of literacy skills is not guaranteed, such that Afghan adolescents can often only read and write in their first language at primary school level (cf. Faseli 2018). In addition, due to war, fleeing from crisis areas, and a lack of infrastructure or material resources, the educational biographies of these young people are often interrupted. In many cases, basic literacy skills are thus lacking, such that the number of years of schooling reported by the learners is only tendentially informative as a predictor of their literacy skills, but not in every individual case.

Hence, we have combined the tool of Tarone et al. (2009) with other tests to develop Lit-L1-L2, a new tool for assessing the literacy skills of adolescents and (young) adults with L1 Dari. Ravid and Tolchinsky (2002) distinguish between two facets of *literacy*: (i) the discursive style of the written language, presupposing knowledge of registers and genres, and (ii) writing as a notational system that uses a set of graphic signs to compose messages in the written modality.

With regard to our target group, we focus on the narrow definition of literacy skills in (ii), i.e., on the basic abilities that are required to be able to read and write in a language. Numerous studies, both on mono- and bilingual children (e.g., Bialystok 2002; Krafft 2014; Verhoeven 2007 for German) and on monolingual adults (e.g., Castro-Caldas et al. 1998; Huettig and Mishra 2014; Huettig and Pickering 2019), demonstrate the influence of literacy skills on other linguistic and cognitive abilities. Along with Tarone et al. (2009), we start from the assumption that literacy skills in both L1 and L2 (and possibly in other languages) are relevant for the process of acquiring an L2.

In section 2, we first describe briefly the situation of recently immigrated adolescents and young adults in Germany and especially in the State of Hesse, i.e., the *Bundesland* in which our study is situated. In section 3, we present the Lit-L1-L2 tool for assessing literacy skills and, in so doing, examine both the modeling of literacy skills and the details of the methodological approach adopted in the development and testing of the tool. In section 4, we present the results of the application of Lit-L1-L2 to 18 adolescent and adult L2 learners of German with L1 Dari and validate them by using various methods.

2.   Recently immigrated adolescents and adults in Germany

In 2015, for the first time, more than half of newly immigrated children and adolescents in Germany as a whole came from Asia: the largest numbers from Syria (27.9%) and Afghanistan (11.8%). Of the 640,561 new immigrants in 2015, 31.26% were school age (6 to 18 years old). The proportion of these late-entry pupils in the school system was thereby doubled (cf. von Dewitz et al. 2016). Another 47.48% immigrated to Germany as young adults between the ages of 19-25. In this age group, pupils from Afghanistan are in the majority (39%), most of them are male and identify Dari or Farsi as their L1 (cf. Baumann and Riedl 2016: 58-66). Dari is, in addition to Pashto, an official language in Afghanistan, and, like Farsi in Iran and Tajik in Tajikistan, it is a variety of New Persian (cf. Strobl 2013). Although these recently immigrated adolescents tend to have more education than the average in their country of origin, the proportion of

the adolescents who have not gone to school at all, and presumably have no or only minimal literacy skills in their first language or in other languages, is still 11.6%. At least another 13.3% have, on their own account, completed only one to five years of schooling in the country of origin (cf. Baumann and Riedl 2016: 89-99).

Depending on the *Bundesland*, the support measures and models of integration for assisting recently immigrated adolescents and young adults to start their careers differ greatly (Massumi et al. 2015: 45). In Hesse, adolescents up to 16 years of age usually attend secondary schools with different kinds of preparatory courses for German as a Second Language, while for older adolescents from 16 years onwards completely parallel preparatory classes were installed at vocational schools. For a maximum of two years they attend these classes exclusively with other recently immigrated pupils, which are supposed to prepare them for the transition into vocational training or for transfer into another educational track (so called *InteA*-classes, which stands short for *Integration und Abschluss*: "integration and graduation"; cf. Hessisches Kultusministerium 2015). Learners who have reached the age of majority or are adults attend literacy courses (*Alphabetisierungskurse*) that are offered by educational institutions. These courses are based on the concept for a countrywide literacy course developed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BMBF) (cf. Feldmeier 2015). Two-thirds of the adult asylum applicants from Afghanistan in the first six months of 2017 are not able to demonstrate any schooling (BAMF 2017b). 10% of all Afghan immigrants since 2013 are illiterate; if we also include functional illiterates, the number rises to 16% (BAMF 2017a). According to UNESCO figures, the literacy rate in Afghanistan is under 50% (UNESCO 2016). On the other hand, around one quarter of the adult Afghans had attended high school or university before coming to Germany (BAMF 2017b). Since 2014, residency status is no longer required for admission to German institutions of higher education, so that, in principle, refugees can begin a course of studies. For the purpose of the Higher Education Entrance Qualification, they must, among other things, demonstrate their knowledge of German e.g., via TestDaF (Test for German as Foreign Language) or DSH (German Language Examination for University Entrance). In the BMBF-

financed *Integra*-courses, they are given targeted linguistic and technical preparation for these German exams (BAMF 2016).

3. Lit-L1-L2: A tool for measuring basic literacy skills

The diagnostics tool Lit-L1-L2, developed as part of the project "German as a Second Language in Unaccompanied Refugee Minors" (DaZ-UMF) at the University of Kassel, is designed to determine the basic literacy skills of Dari speaking adolescents and young adults.

3.1. Preliminary methodological considerations and the pilot study

As concerns the formulations and the content of the tasks, a tool for assessing basic reading and writing skills of adolescents and (young) adults who only recently began to acquire German as a second language must be of simple design, since otherwise it is vocabulary and knowledge of grammar that will be tested. Oral knowledge of Dari can be presupposed for all learners, but not necessarily reading and writing knowledge – hence even in L1, the tasks designed must be simple in nature to promote their successful accomplishment. Like German, Dari belongs to the Indo-Germanic family of languages, but it is written from right to left using Arabic letters and according to the principles of a so-called abjad script, i.e. a consonantal writing system in which (short) vowels are normally not written (cf. Adli 2014; Strobl 2013).

Following the fundamental idea of Tarone et al. (2009), we started out using three tools for measuring basic reading and writing skills that were developed in the USA: the *Native Language Literacy Screening Device* (NLLSD; Hudson River Center for Program Development 1999) accompanied with the *Literacy Rating Scale* of Tarone et al. (2009), and the *Native Language Literacy Screening Manual* (NLS; Florida Department of Education 2014). For the purpose of a pilot study, these tasks were translated into Dari and German and adapted to the target group of adolescent learners, and further criteria for evaluating behavior and handwriting were added. This pilot version was tried out, evaluated and validated by a

linguistic analysis with 18 male unaccompanied refugee minors (Schumacher et al. 2019). It became apparent that some changes in the tasks proposed and the evaluation criteria were needed, in order to improve the validity of the tool. On the basis of the pilot version and a broad review of the literature on various testing instruments (among others, Faddy et al. 2008; Ledl 2003; Naville 1997), a completely new tool was developed by Schumacher (2020). This new tool is described in greater detail in the following section.

3.2. Tasks and tested skills

All of the tasks are designed in such a way that even learners with very limited L1/L2 skills can attempt them, so as to save face. The Lit-L1-L2 tasks are divided into four parts: A. reading comprehension and spelling abilities, B. handwriting fluency, C. reading fluency and D. free text production. Part A includes tasks in which subjects are asked to evaluate the semantic correctness of simple statements like "Fish live in the water" (true/false) or to mark syntactic or orthographic errors in a short sentence. Since at least basic knowledge of vocabulary, morphosyntax and orthography in German or, respectively, in Dari are required to master these tasks, this part is only done in the stronger language and the choice of language is left to the learners.

درست	نادرست	
✓	✖	بطور مثال: ماهی ها در آب زندگی می کنند. ←
✓	✖	رنگ آفتاب آبی است. ←

Figure 1. Example of a reading comprehension exercise in Part A of Lit-L1-L2 in Dari: the highlighted part shows how to mark true/false; see Schumacher (2020).

In Part B, among other things, writing speed under time pressure is measured, by having the learner write the same simple sentence as often as possible in 60 seconds (see Figure 2). Learners who write faster have achieved a higher level of automatization of motor handwriting ability. Greater handwriting fluency has a positive impact on text quality, since the working memory is less burdened by motor

tasks and has more resources available for higher order processes of text planning and text editing (e.g., Connelly et al. 2005). The working memory is tested by a single sentence being written from memory and the number of deviations being counted.
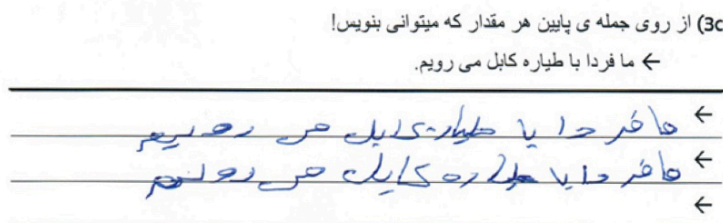

Figure 2. Writing speed under pressure: Subj03 manages to write it two times during 60 seconds, a skilled writer manages about seven times; see Schumacher (2020).

Part C tests reading fluency using a reading task in which the learner has to read aloud two texts that differ in linguistic level (e.g., only main clauses, first-person perspective, repetitions vs. main and subordinate clauses, more abstract statements in the third person) and in layout (e.g., line spacing, font size, one sentence per line vs. justification). Here, just the time required to read the texts, regardless of correctness, already tells us a great deal about how much the working memory is still employed with basic reading processes like phonological decoding, which has a negative impact on the understanding of the text (e.g., Souvignier 2013). Part D presents the learner with the task of producing a short text at his or her level relatively freely. In order to assure a minimal comparability of the texts, the two main characters (Tom and Wahid), the type of text (a story) and six content-words are given. The content-words are provided both as text and image. Thus, a text can be produced relatively freely according to each learner's linguistic level and a minimum length of the texts is guaranteed. Moreover, the task can also be solved without writing skills by simply copying the six words.

3.3. Rating procedure and evaluation criteria

In order to ensure an assessment procedure that is as objective as possible, a rating sheet with detailed instructions on all assessment

criteria and measurement values was created (see Table 1). The detailed instructions help the raters to choose a value on a four-point (0-3) scale. The assessment criteria were already tried out and adapted in the pilot study, and they were subsequently further secured by way of targeted teaching observations (Schumacher 2020). The performance of the subjects was assessed on three different levels (3.3.1 to 3.3.3).

3.4. Evaluation of behavior

While the subjects were accomplishing the tasks, the raters were evaluating their behavior using a rating sheet (see Table 1), which includes, among others, the following criteria: (i) Uncertainty when reading and writing that becomes apparent by e.g., facial expression/gestures, or explicit verbalizations. (ii) Measures for managing one's own attention or for focusing: e.g., tracing words or sentences with pen or finger; subvocalizing or audible reading along; a seated position that reduces the distance between eyes and paper. (iii) Automatization of motor processes when reading and writing, e.g., handwriting fluency; tensing of the writing hand.

	⦀	0	1	2	3	Pkt.
Außenwirkung						
Mimik und Gestik		sehr unsicher, frustriert	eher unsicher und angestrengt	ab und zu angestrengt	entspannt, locker, sicher	
Berührungen am Kopf (Mund, Stirn etc.)		durchgehend	> 10x bzw. > Hälfte d. Zeit	< 10x bzw. < Hälfte d. Zeit	nie	
verbales Verhalten						
Kommentare zu schwieriger Bewältigung		> 3x	2-3x	1x	nie	
Nachfragen		> 3x	2-3x	1x	nie	
Maßnahmen zur Fokussierung						
Sitzhaltung		sehr unruhig, ständig anders	meist unter 45° geneigt	meist über 45° geneigt	gerade bis leicht geneigt	
Folgen der Wörter mit dem Stift oder Finger		durchgehend	oft	ab und zu	nie	
stille Mundbewegung oder hörbares Lesen		durchgehend	oft	ab und zu	nie	

Table 1. Excerpt from the *Rating Sheet for Evaluating Behavior* in Part A including detailed instructions for the use of the four-point-scale; see Schumacher (2020).

3.4.1. Evaluation of handwriting

For the evaluation of the handwriting, only such criteria were used as can be judged by raters who do not know the script in question:

1. Level of development of fine motor skills, to the extent that this can be seen from the handwriting: e.g., pen pressure (high/normal), trace of line (sure/unsure, inconsistent/uniform).
2. Fitting of the text within the page and/or the line margins: e.g., going over the margins, bunching up at the end of a line or one sentence per line.
3. Segmentation of words and sentences: e.g., irregular spacing between letters or words, missing punctuation at the end of sentences.
4. Consistency of grapheme form in each context: e.g., size of writing or letters, slant of the grapheme, formation of the same grapheme, recognizability and maintaining of x-height, ascenders and descenders.

The handwriting was evaluated in Part B and Part D, whereby Part B includes tasks that facilitate the comparison of graphemes in the same context, since the subjects had to write the same sentence several time.

Figures 3 and 4 show two texts from Part D: one from Subj13, the subject with the lowest rating, and one from Subj06, whose handwriting in Dari achieved the highest rating of all 18 subjects. One can see that the text by Subj13 in Figure 3 fills fewer lines than that of Subj06, the pen pressure is clearly stronger, the spacing between the grapheme groups is too large, the letters slant in different directions, and the descenders are almost missing.
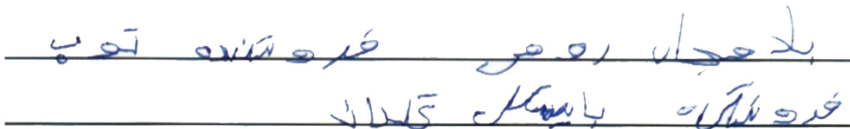
Figure 3. Free text production task (Part D) of Subj13.

In contrast, the slant of the letters for Subj06 in Figure 4 is uniform, x-height, ascenders and descenders can be easily identified, and no excessive spacing between grapheme groups is noticeable.

Figure 4. Free text production task (Part D) of Subj06.

3.4.2. Skill measurement

In certain places, it was possible to establish measured values, e.g. for fluency in writing and reading aloud (see Section 3.2), which enter the overall evaluation by way of the same four-point scale as 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. These scores complement the higher inference ratings, and the exact scores can be used for validating the rating procedure (cf. Lotz et al. 2013): In fact, there is a close connection between writing and reading speed and the overall scores in Lit-L1-L2 (Schumacher 2020).

3.5. Participants and implementation of Lit-L1-L2

The completely redesigned tool Lit-L1-L2 was tested in dari and German with 18 male subjects who fled to Germany as adolescents or

(young) adults. In the interview on their linguistic biographies, most of the subjects reported that, in addition to German, they also speak Arabic, English or Pashto. On their own account, however, their writing and reading skills are most highly developed either in German or in Dari. The age of the 18 subjects is between 15 to 40 years and at the time of the survey, they had lived in Germany from 6 to 31 months. They had been attending a school or a German course in Germany for at least one month and for at most two years. Their school experience before arriving in Germany also differs greatly: Some participants had already attended school in their country of origin (mostly Afghanistan, some Iran) for 12 years and some had, in addition, completed or started a university degree program, whereas others had no school experience in their country of origin at all (Schumacher 2018).

		Age	LOR	First written language		L1 school attendance		L2 German school/course	Higher literacy skills in
				Language	Age	Afgh.	total	total	
Code	Group	Yrs.	Mos.		Yrs.	Yrs.	Yrs.	Mos.	Dari/Ger
Prob01	*Integra*	37	18	Dari	6	12	12	7,5	Dari
Prob02	*Alpha*	27	24	Dari	15	1	1	2	Ger
Prob03	*InteA*	19	19	Dari	6	10	10	12	Dari
Prob04	*Integra*	24	25	Pashto & Dari	7	12	12	20,5	Dari
Prob05	*InteA*	19	26	Dari	11	3	3	18	Dari
Prob06	*Integra*	40	25	Dari	5,5	9	12	8	Dari
Prob07	*Integra*	27	25	Farsi	7	4	12	8	Dari
Prob08	*Integra*	27	31	Farsi	7	0	12	10	Dari
Prob09	*InteA*	20	28	Dari	6,5	6	6	20	Dari
Prob10	*InteA*	19	28	Dari	8	1	1	18	Dari
Prob11	*InteA*	23	28	Dari	7	7	7	19	Dari
Prob12	*Integra*	21	29	Dari	5	10	10	21	Dari
Prob13	*Alpha*	17	28	German	15	0	0	24	Ger
Prob14	*Alpha*	15	6	Dari	6	0	0	3	Dari
Prob15	*InteA*	21	19	Dari	5	11	11	17	Dari
Prob16	*Alpha*	40	15	Dari	7	2 + 6	8	4	Dari
Prob17	*Alpha*	19	18	Dari	6	5	5	24	Dari
Prob18	*Alpha*	17	8	Dari	7	0 (5)	1 (6)	1	Dari

Table 2. Information on the heterogeneous backgrounds of the 18 subjects.

The subjects can be arrayed into three different groups (six subjects per group), which are expected to differ significantly in their schooling and literacy experience in L1 Dari and L2 German. Group 1 (*Integra*) consists of participants in so-called Integra-courses at the University of Kassel (see Section 2). The members of this group are mostly young adults who have already started or completed a

university degree program in their first language and are preparing for the German test that is a requirement for university admission. Mid-to-high-level literacy skills, both in Dari and in German, are to be expected from them. The pupils in Group 2 (*InteA*) were preparing for a German secondary school certificate ("*Hauptschulabschluss*") in *InteA*-classes at a vocational school in Kassel (see Section 2). In German, we expect low-to-mid-level literacy skills from them, but without a test, it is hard to predict their literacy skills in Dari. The members of Group 3 (*Alpha*) are mostly young adults attending literacy courses in German. They have no or very low-level literacy skills in German and possibly different (but presumably rather low) levels in Dari. As we did not find enough young adults in these courses at the time, the study includes also three subjects at the age of around 40 years (see Table 2).

The test was conducted by the first author with each subject individually. It lasted, on average, 54 minutes for both languages (plus, on average, 12 minutes for a monolingual biographical interview) and was done first in the language in which the subject reported to be more literate in. The subjects all used the same pen for writing and identical paper print-outs of the tasks, and, while doing the tasks, they were filmed with a digital video camera mounted on a tripod. Afterwards, the video recordings were evaluated by two specially trained students of GFL/GSL, independently of one another, using the rating sheet that was developed. The two raters did not have mastery of the Dari (written) language; neither did they know the subjects nor could they assign them to one of the three groups. In order to test whether raters who are able to read and understand the texts produced in Dari would possibly arrive at different assessments, the handwriting in the Dari texts was also evaluated by two raters (a teacher and a student) with written language abilities in their L1 Dari.

3.6. Validation by a linguistic analysis of the texts

For the purpose of further validation, the freely written texts from Part D were evaluated by linguistically trained native speakers (of German and Dari, respectively) in terms of basic linguistic categories, in order to determine an indicator for the subjects' writing, reading and textual

skills that is largely independent of the assessments in Lit-L1-L2. The following criteria were chosen for the linguistic analysis, on the basis of relevant literature (e.g., Grießhaber 2012; Housen et al. 2012; Reich et al. 2008) and with regard to the fact that they should also apply to very simple texts in German and likewise in Dari: (i) lexicon and grammar (four indicators): text length in tokens (words), lexical diversity (lemmas/tokens), syntactic complexity (sentences were coded as T-units: words/T-unit, dependent clauses/T-unit). (ii) literacy skills (four indicators): orthography (correctly spelled words/tokens), fulfillment of the task (number of actually used words from those specified), text structure (recognizable stringing together of words, sentences or textual parts), cohesive devices and individual textual design (number of anaphora, sentence conjunctions, temporal expressions, adjectives etc./tokens). Each of these indicators were normalized to the maximum (1) and added together (max. 8; Table 4).

4. Results and validation of Lit-L1-L2

In this section, we present an extract of the results that we were able to obtain with Lit-L1-L2 and show how the assessment procedure can be validated through comparison with data that is gathered by other means. Table 3 contains the total number of Lit-L1-L2 points that results from the addition of the scores of the two German-speaking raters, who arrived at very similar assessments independently of one another (interrater reliability: Spearman's Rho .732, see Schumacher 2018). A comparison of the handwriting assessments of the German- and Dari-speaking/writing raters shows no divergences. The latter achieve outstanding interrater reliability among themselves (Spearman's Rho .821), and the agreement with the results of the German-speaking raters is also high (Spearman's Rho .738).

   Table 3 is constructed in such a way that the lines are sorted in ascending order per the overall Lit-L1-L2 results for German and Dari. The range from a minimum of 346 to a maximum of 668 points shows that the tool is capable of distinguishing between subjects with different levels of literacy. Despite the small number of subjects, the three subject groups are relatively well reflected by the results sorted in ascending order: the learners in literacy courses (in white) are at the

very bottom of the scale, the *InteA* pupils (in a medium shade of grey) are approximately in the middle, and the participants in *Integra*-courses (in dark grey) obtain the best results (Schumacher 2018). Only Subj16, Subj03 and Subj17 do better than would be expected from their group assignment, especially Subj17 stands out very positively, since he obtained the fifth-best result of all subjects while participating in an Alpha course.

Group	Subjects	Lit-L1-L2 (max. 718)	Lit-L1-L2 w/o A (max. 612)	Part A (max. 106)	L1 minus A (max. 306)	L2 minus A (max. 306)	L1 vs. L2: L1 is...
Alpha	Subj02	346	322	24	169	153	equal
Alpha	Subj13	445	376	69	170	206	worse
Alpha	Subj18	455	397	58	234	163	better
Alpha	Subj14	481	448	33	242	206	better
InteA	Subj05	512	456	56	227	229	equal
InteA	Subj09	530	445	85	239	206	better
Alpha	Subj16	542	476	66	262	214	better
InteA	Subj10	556	484	72	245	239	equal
InteA	Subj15	562	491	71	262	229	better
InteA	Subj11	573	489	84	244	245	equal
Integra	Subj04	593	513	80	255	258	equal
Integra	Subj08	596	501	95	273	228	better
InteA	Subj03	601	515	86	263	252	equal
Alpha	Subj17	616	536	80	284	252	better
Integra	Subj01	629	532	97	270	262	equal
Integra	Subj06	636	539	97	280	259	equal
Integra	Subj12	642	543	99	267	276	equal
Integra	Subj07	668	567	101	281	286	equal
	Median	*567,5*	*490*	*80*	*258,5*	*234*	*equal*

Table 3. Results of the 18 Subjects sorted per their scores in Lit-L1-L2.

In addition, the results of Part A are separated out in Table 3 to compare the results for Dari and German, for which a point differential of more than 10% from the median in L1 Dari was established as threshold for a clear deviation (25 points). As the grey scale corresponding to the ranking shows, Lit-L1-L2 without Part A yields very similar results as Lit-L1-L2 overall. Part A was only done in the stronger language, which for all subjects besides the two weakest ones (Subj02 and Subj13) was their L1 Dari. Subj13 is also the only learner who performs considerably worse in Dari than in German. All other subjects either perform about equally well in both languages or better in Dari, which they also reported to be their stronger language in the interview. The Lit-L1-L2 results thus also

correspond to the subjects' comparative assessments of their literacy skills in L1 and L2 (see Table 2). It can be noted that the subjects' stronger language accounts for 57% of the overall evaluation and the weaker language for only 43%, which, in light of the fact that vocabulary and knowledge of grammar were also tested in Part A, seems fair to us. The weighing of the individual test parts by the number of points should, however, be systematically taken into consideration in the next revision. It would be interesting to make a detailed comparison between the performances in L1 and in L2 in the spirit of the interdependence hypothesis (Cummins 2000; Berthele and Lambelet 2018). However, a considerably larger number of subjects would be needed to investigate this issue, since the subjects differ greatly with respect to other influencing factors: above all, exposure to and instruction in German.

The linguistic analysis of the freely produced texts in German and Dari examined eight indicators (16 for L1 and L2 together; see Section 3.5). The data in Table 4 are sorted according to the results of the linguistic analysis (LingA), which largely matches the assessment by Lit-L1-L2 and even seems to reflect the three subject groups better than the Lit-L1-L2 assessment, as Subj17 is included in the *Alpha*-group, whereas he is rated much better by Lit-L1-L2.

Group	Literacy Skills	Subjects	LingA L1+L2 (max. 16)	LingA L1+L2 (%)	Lit-L1-L2 (max.718)	Lit-L1-L2 (%)
Alpha	no-to-low	Subj02	5,44	34%	346	48%
Alpha	no-to-low	Subj13	5,64	35%	445	62%
Alpha	no-to-low	Subj17	6,60	41%	616	86%
Alpha	no-to-low	Subj14	6,96	43%	481	67%
Alpha	no-to-low	Subj16	7,26	45%	542	75%
Alpha	no-to-low	Subj18	7,51	47%	455	63%
InteA	low-to-mid	Subj05	8,86	55%	512	71%
InteA	low-to-mid	Subj10	9,18	57%	556	77%
InteA	low-to-mid	Subj15	9,68	60%	562	78%
InteA	low-to-mid	Subj09	9,90	62%	530	74%
InteA	low-to-mid	Subj11	11,65	73%	573	80%
Integra	mid-to-high	Subj04	11,91	74%	593	83%
InteA	low-to-mid	Subj03	12,19	76%	601	84%
Integra	mid-to-high	Subj12	12,22	76%	642	89%
Integra	mid-to-high	Subj06	12,23	76%	636	89%
Integra	mid-to-high	Subj08	12,57	79%	596	83%
Integra	mid-to-high	Subj07	12,92	81%	668	93%
Integra	mid-to-high	Subj01	13,39	84%	629	88%

Table 4. Comparison between linguistic analysis and Lit-L1-L2 (sorted according to LingA).

A more detailed look at his performance, however, shows that this is not necessarily the case and rather points to certain weaknesses in the linguistic analysis. In the interview, Subj17 reports that he has been attending a German course for two years (in comparison to the others, this is a relatively long time). The teacher, on the other hand, regards his presence as irregular and his behavior as unreliable. He is, however, very active in a boxing club and in a football club, and he has a lot of contact with native speakers. On his own account, he only went to school for five years in his country of origin and did so reluctantly and irregularly. Nonetheless, his orthography and his grammar in Dari are faultless, and, moreover, in contrast to all other subjects, he uses the register of the written language in Dari, as becomes clear in the use of certain verbs and prepositions. Despite his limited school experience, Subj17 obtained the best score for Dari in Lit-L1-L2, as based on his confident and fluent writing behavior, his harmonious handwriting and his confident and fluent reading aloud. In addition, on the basis of the video, his reading performance was judged as entirely correct by a native Dari speaker. For this learner, the length of his school attendance in his country of origin does not at all provide the right predictions about his actual literacy skills. This makes clear the need for an assessment tool like Lit-L1-L2.

Evidently, our linguistic analysis is not sufficiently differentiated, in order to suitably identify all necessary literacy skills: Subj17 obtains only 43% of the maximum score in the linguistic analysis of his Dari text and only 40% of the maximum score in that of his German text. Above all, the brevity of his texts (33 words in Dari vs. a maximum value of 149 words and 32 words in German vs. a maximum value of 195 words) has a negative impact here. In his case, we impute this less to lacking skills than to lacking interest or excessive nonchalance. Although the other indicators for text length are relativized to the number of words/tokens, a short text provides only limited opportunities for text arrangement and for using cohesive and individual textual design devices. In contrast to Lit-L1-L2, the handwriting is not included in the analysis and the written language register is only taken into account by way of grammatically-oriented indicators like average sentence length, the portion of embedded dependent clauses, and cohesive or individual textual design devices.

The analytical criteria were first developed on the basis of the German texts, which did not contain any differences in register. For the purpose of further validation, it would thus be desirable in the future to broaden the linguistic analysis to include features like handwriting and written language register, which can be quantified in both languages.

5.   Summary and outlook

A large group of recently immigrated adolescents and adults currently speak Dari as their first language (L1) and confront both researchers and teachers with major challenges, when it comes to diagnosing their basic reading and writing skills in their L1. As we have shown, surveying the duration of school attendance in the country of origin is not sufficient for estimating L1 literacy.

In this article, we have presented a tool for diagnosing basic reading and writing skills of adolescent and adult L2 learners of German with L1 Dari (Lit-L1-L2). We focus on the presentation of the methodological approach adopted in the development, testing and validation of the assessment tool Lit-L1-L2. The tasks are designed in such a way that they can be done by adolescents and adults with limited literacy skills in both languages. Following several pilot steps, the tool was tested with 18 male adolescents and adults with divergent literacy skills. The results show that the tool is reliable and valid:

1. German speaking raters assess the Dari handwriting very similarly to two raters with L1 Dari,
2. there is overall a high degree of interrater reliability, and
3. the Lit-L1-L2 results largely match the learners' actual literacy and linguistic skills.

The latter was tested by way of a linguistic analysis of the texts produced. This linguistic analysis needs to be further developed in the future. Needless to say, given the small number of subjects, the result is not representative. In the future, the tool should be tested with a larger group of subjects and further optimized in terms of the organization and weighing of the individual test parts.

Acknowledgements

References

Adli, Aria. 2014. Das Persische und das Kurdische. In Manfred Krifka, Joanna Błaszczak, Annette Leßmöllmann, André Meinunger, Barbara Stiebels, Rosemarie Tracy and Hubert Truckenbrodt (eds.), *Das mehrsprachige Klassenzimmer*, 175-195. Berlin: Springer Spektrum.

BAMF. 2016. *Hochschulzugang und Studium von Flüchtlingen. Eine Handreichung für Hochschulen und Studentenwerke*. https://www.daad.de/medien/der-daad/handreichung_hochschulzugang_geflüchtete.pdf

BAMF. 2017a. *IAB-BAMF-SOEP-Befragung von Geflüchteten 2016. Studiendesign, Feldergebnisse sowie Analysen zu schulischer wie beruflicher Qualifikation, Sprachkenntnissen sowie kognitiven Potenzialen*. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Forschungsberichte/fb30-iab-bamf-soep-befragung-gefluechtete-2016.pdf

BAMF. 2017b. *Volljährige Asylerstantragsteller in Deutschland im ersten Halbjahr 2017. Sozialstruktur, Schulbesuch und ausgeübte Berufstätigkeiten*. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Kurzanalysen/kurzanalyse9_sozial-komponenten-halbjahr2017.pdf

Baumann, Barbara, and Alfred Riedl. 2016. *Neu zugewanderte Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene an Berufsschulen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang.

Berthele, Raphael and Amelia Lambelet (eds.). 2018. *Heritage and school language literacy development in migrant children: Interdependence or independence?* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Bialystok, Ellen. 2002. Acquisition of literacy in bilingual children: A framework for research. *Language Learning* 52(1): 159-199.

Castro-Caldas, Alexandre, Karl Magnus Petersson, Alexandra I. D. Reis, Sharon Stone-Elander and Martin Ingvar. 1998. The illiterate brain. Learning to read and write during childhood influences the functional organization of the adult brain. *Brain* 121: 1053-1063.

Collier, Virginia. 1989. How long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly* 23(3): 509-531.

Connelly, Vincent, Julie E. Dockrell and Jo Barnett. 2005. The slow handwriting of undergraduate students constrains overall performance in exam essays. *Educational Psychology* 25(1): 97-105.

Cummins, Jim. 2000. *Language, power and pedagogy. Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Czinglar, Christine. 2018. Zweitspracherwerb im Jugendalter. Die Bedeutung des Alters und literaler Kompetenzen von neu zugewanderten Jugendlichen. In Nora von Dewitz, Henrike Terhart and Mona Massumi (eds.), *Neuzuwanderung und Bildung. Eine interdisziplinäre Perspektive auf Übergänge in das deutsche Bildungssystem*, 158-173. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

Faddy, Kathrine, Annie McCluskey and Natasha Lannin. 2008. *Handwriting Assessment Battery for Adults. Training, Administration and Scoring Manual*. http://strokeed.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/HAB-Training-Administration-and-Scoring-Manual-V5-Oct-08-minor-revisions-May-2009.pdf

Faseli, Sarah. 2018. *Schreibkompetenz entwickeln und evaluieren. Eine Studie im Bereich Deutsch als Fremdsprache in Afghanistan*. Dissertation an der Ruhr-Universität Bochum. https://d-nb.info/1150509392/34

Feldmeier, Alexis. 2015. *Konzept für einen bundesweiten Alphabetisierungskurs*. Nürnberg: BAMF.

Florida Department of Education. 2014. *Native Language Literacy Screening Manual*. http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7522/urlt/0061376-native.pdf

Gamper, Jana and Christoph Schroeder. 2016. Sprachliche Bildung für Neuzugewanderte. Ein Plädoyer für einen erwerbssequenziellen Ansatz. *OBST. Osnabrücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie* 89: 217-230.

Grießhaber, Wilhelm. 2012. Zweitsprachkenntnisse und Literalität in sehr frühen Lernertexten. In Bernt Ahrenholz and Werner Knapp (eds.), *Sprachstand erheben – Spracherwerb erforschen. Beiträge aus dem 6. Workshop "Kinder mit Migrationshintergrund"*, 155-171. Stuttgart: Fillibach bei Klett.

Hessisches Kultusministerium (ed.). 2015. *Erfolgreich Deutsch lernen. Förderkonzept für Kinder und Jugendliche mit Migrationshintergrund in Hessen*. https://kultusministerium.hessen.de/schule/individuelle-foerderung/hessisches-gesamtsprachfoerderkonzept

Housen, Alex, Folkert Kuiken and Ineke Vedder (eds.). 2012. *Dimensions of L2 Performance and Proficiency: Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency in SLA*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Hudson River Center for Program Development. 1999. *Native Language Literacy Screening Device (NLLSD)*. http://www.ohioable.org/NLLSD

Huettig, Falk, and Ramesh K. Mishra. 2014. How literacy aquisition affects the illiterate mind. A critical examination of theories and evidence. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 8(10): 401-427.

Huettig, Falk and Martin J. Pickering. 2019. Literacy advantages beyond reading: Prediction of spoken language. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 23(6): 464-475.

Krafft, Andreas. 2014. *Zur Entwicklung metasprachlicher Fähigkeiten bei Kindern mit ein- und mehrsprachigem Hintergrund*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider.

Ledl, Viktor. 2003. *Kinder beobachten und fördern. Eine Handreichung zur gezielten Beobachtung und Förderung von Kindern mit besonderen Lern- und Erziehungsbedürfnissen bzw. sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf*. Wien: Jugend & Volk.

Lotz, Miriam, Katrin Gabriel and Frank Lipowski. 2013. Niedrig und hoch inferente Verfahren der Unterrichtsbeobachtung. Analysen zu deren gegenseitiger Validierung. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 59(3): 357-380.

Massumi, Mona, Nora von Dewitz, Johanna Grießbach, Henrike Terhart, Katarina Wagner, Hippmann, Kathrin and Lale Altinay. 2015. *Neu zugewanderte Kinder und Jugendliche im deutschen Schulsystem. Bestandsaufnahme und Empfehlungen*. Köln: Mercator-Institut für Sprachförderung und Deutsch als Zweitsprache, Zentrum für LehrerInnenbildung der Universität zu Köln.

Naville, Suzanne. 1997. *Vom Strich zur Schrift. Ideen und Anregungen zum graphomotorischen Training*. Dortmund: verlag modernes lernen.

Nuffic education, the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education. 2015. *Education system Afghanistan. The Afghan education system described and compared with the Dutch system*. https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-afghanistan.pdf

Ravid, Dorit and Liliana Tolchinsky. 2002. Developing linguistic literacy: A comprehensive model. *Journal of Child Language* 29: 417-447.

Reich, Hans H., Hans-Joachim Roth and Christoph Gantefort. 2008. Der Sturz ins Tulpenbeet. Deutsche Sprachversion. Auswertungsbogen und Auswertungshinweise. In Thorsten Klinger, Knut Schwippert and Birgit Leiblein (eds.), *Evaluation im Modellprogramm FörMig (= FörMig Edition Band 4)*, 209-237. Münster: Waxmann.

Schumacher, Anne-Christin. 2020. Lit-L1-L2: Verhaltensbeobachtung und Schriftbildbeurteilung als Mittel zur Einschätzung literaler Fähigkeiten am Beispiel junger Erwachsener mit der Erstsprache Dari. Inklusive Testheft. *Berichte und Materialien*. www.daz-portal.de (Band 4).

Schumacher, Anne-Christin, Farzona Mirova and Christine Czinglar. 2019. Ist es möglich, literale Kompetenzen von Deutschlerner*innen ohne Kenntnis der Herkunftssprache einzuschätzen? In Malgorzata Barras, Katharina Karges, Thomas Studer and Eva Wiedenkeller (eds.), *IDT 2017. Band 2: Sektionen (XVI. Internationale Tagung der Deutschlehrerinnen und Deutschlehrer in Fribourg)*, 104-110. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

Souvignier, Elmar. 2013. Diagnostik von Leseverstehensleistungen. In Johanna Fay (ed.), *(Schrift-) Sprachdiagnostik heute. theoretisch fundiert, interdisziplinär, prozessorientiert und praxistauglich*, 149-163. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.

Strobl, Heinz. 2013. Persisch als Plurizentrische Sprache? http://othes.univie.ac.at/30629/1/2013-11-11_8403571.pdf

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2009. *Literacy and second language oracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tarone, Elaine and Martha Bigelow. 2012. A research agenda for second language acquisition of pre-literate and low-literate adult and adolescent learners. In Martha Bigelow and Patsy Vinogradov (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2011 LESLLA Symposium*, 5-26. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

UNESCO. 2016. *50th anniversary of International literacy day: Literacy rates are on the rise but millions remain illiterate. UIS Fact Sheet.* http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs38-50th-anniversary-of-international-literacy-day-literacy-rates-are-on-the-rise-but-millions-remain-illiterate-2016-en.pdf

Van de Craats, Ineke, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten. 2006. Research on low-educated second language and literacy acquisition. In Ineke Van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *Low educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the inaugural symposium, Tilburg University 2005*, 7-23. Utrecht: LOT.

Verhoeven, Ludo. 2007. Early bilingualism, language transfer, and phonological awareness. *Applied Psycholinguistics* 28: 425-439.

von Dewitz, Nora, Mona Massumi and Johanna Grießbach. 2016. *Neu zugewanderte Kinder, Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene. Entwicklungen im Jahr 2015*. Köln: Mercator-Institut für Sprachförderung und Deutsch als Zweitsprache, Zentrum für LehrerInnenbildung der Universität zu Köln.

Weber, Melanie. 2016. Methoden und Materialien zur ganzheitlichen pädagogischen Diagnostik von neu zugewanderten Jugendlichen aus der Praxis der SchlaU-Schule. In Verena Cornely Harboe, Mirka Mainzer-Murrenhof and Lena Heine (eds.), *Unterricht mit neu zugewanderten Kindern und Jugendlichen. Interdisziplinäre Impulse für DaF/DaZ in der Schule*, 131-158. Münster: Waxmann.

Young-Scholten, Martha. 2013. Low-educated immigrants and the social relevance of second language acquisition research. *Second Language Research* 29(4): 441-454.

Digital learning opportunities for second language learning and basic education. Key criteria and experiences for development, operation and use

Celia Sokolowsky

The adult education centres in Germany and their umbrella organisation have been gathering experience for several years in the development, operation and didactic use of digital learning opportunities in the field of German as a second language and basic education. The aim of this contribution is to share these and thus to put them up for critical discussion.

Keywords: digital learning, blended learning, mobile learning.

1. German Adult Education Association as a developer and operator of digital learning services

For more than 15 years, the German Adult Education Association (*Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*, DVV) has been developing and operating digital learning offers with courses in the areas of literacy and basic education, for learning German as a second language and for preparing students for the catching-up of school-leaving qualifications in adulthood. In 2002, the association first began developing a learning portal for basic literacy education (ich-will-schreiben-lernen.de), followed by various projects that were further extending the digital learning offers. The projects provided digital learning solutions for different target groups (adult illiterates, early school leavers, immigrants with residential status, recently arrived refugees, etc.), different content and learning goals (basic literacy, numeracy and budget management, vocational integration, first steps in language acquisition, etc.) and various technical formats and solutions (online portal, smartphone app) (Hanemann 2018: 39, 2015; Sokolowsky 2019, 2017, 2015)

DVV is the Federal Association of Adult Education Centres, of which there are around 900 institutions (with more than 3,000

branches) throughout Germany. The association represents the interests of adult education and adult education centres at the federal level, acquires projects which - implemented at the national level – provide solutions for adult education centres and adult education institutions in general. With its projects in the field of digital learning, DVV creates an infrastructure in which even small adult education centres with low resources can offer digitally enriched courses and blended learning, i.e. a combination of online learning with traditional place-based classroom methods. With its digital learning offers, which are generally free of charge for learners, DVV also reaches people who are unable to attend a course in an adult education institution due to their personal, family, professional and/or economic situation. Digital services thus play an important role in implementing an "education for all" model that is a guiding principle of the association.

Figure 1. Screenshot of the landing page vhs-Lernportal.

The digital learning offers are very well accepted, hundreds of thousands have attended and completed courses on the learning portals of DVV for German as a Second Language and Literacy Education. Just one highlight: in 2017 alone, the German as a second

language portal iwdl.de counted one million learning sessions with an average duration of 18 minutes per learner. In 2016, the DVV started a comprehensive relaunch project for its learning portals: The offers for basic skills and literacy education, German as a second language and the catching-up of school-leaving certificates are brought together in a new learning portal, vhs-Lernportal (https://vhs-Lernportal.de), optimized for learning on the smartphone and with all digital offers and courses available by a single login. Conclusions were drawn from many years of experience in the development and operation of digital learning offers and incorporated into the new portal. The new development was also influenced by new framework curricula and – of course – technical innovations. The aim of this paper is to present, share and discuss these insights and decisions.

2. Requirements for digital learning in literacy education and linguistic integration

Only a few years ago, many teachers were convinced that even with the best will in the world, they could hardly work with digital media in class, because the technical equipment of many adult education centres did not allow this at all or only with severe restrictions. But today, teachers and educational planners can rightly assume that every learner has a smartphone that exceeds the performance of the computers in the PC cabinets of the average language schools or education centre. On the one hand it is thus possible to work with the mobile devices of participants in class, on the other hand these personal devices enhance learning far beyond the classroom – they and the various learning offers on the internet and in app stores (and other contents that can be the basis for learning) are also available outside the classroom, accessible already before the course starts and still there when the course is finished. Making use of the learner's smartphone is therefore not only a 'makeshift solution' for the often poorly equipped adult education centres, which are chronically underfunded. We rather see a great potential of the smartphone to become a *learning companion* that has a lasting and particularly close relationship with its owner.

The smartphone also plays an important role in the migration process, becoming an outstanding problem-solving instance and guardian of information that reaches into the past as well as the present and future. "As important to me as water", refugees describe the vital help the smartphone provided them on their way to and in Europe (St George 2017). UNESCO (2018) and others rightly describe the great potential for learning on smartphones for refugees. We would like to add and emphasize that this also applies for other marginalized groups: With the spread of the smartphone, large population groups that previously had little access to (digital) education have a "lifeline to learning" (UNESCO 2018). The smartphone is an instrument for independent, self-directed learning – this not a far-fetched idea but rather an already established practice. In order to promote and support an effective learning process via smartphones, attractive and high-quality offers are needed.

Notwithstanding the potential and availability, learning with a smartphone is subjected to restrictions, e.g. due to screen size or input options. Content and design therefore have to meet high standards, because every exercise and its individual components should be meaningful and relevant, at the same time be attractive and feel good to use.

The constant availability and wide range of applications in the everyday use of the smartphone as a digital companion offers great opportunities for flexible and individual learning. This advantage can, however, stand in the way of a constant, above all undisturbed learning, since each incoming notification can lead to the interruption or even termination of the learning program and process. A challenge, therefore, is to design learning opportunities in such a way that they remain interesting in the longer term and feel so comfortable in practical use that they are less 'susceptible to interruption'. While Stockwell (2014: 202) on the question of how mobile learning succeeds strongly emphasises the appropriateness of the technical solution, that "learners must feel comfortable with the technology such that they do not have reservations about using it without supervision or assistance", we consider the didactic concept to be just as crucial. All in all, a useful and successful mobile learning application does not only require the right technology and design, but

also a satisfactory solution to questions of didactic structure and content.

For us, a key to the design of our courses lies in the creation of a context for the practical use of language and a reference to everyday life. Thus, learning units in vhs-Lernportal are always introduced by a scenario, which embeds the learning goal and content of the following sequence of exercises into a certain situation. Protagonists with identification potential accompany the learners through the portal, mastering everyday challenges and thereby illustrating the learning goals and introducing into theme, context and content of the learning unit. In the following exercises, we frequently refer to the introductory scenario: the source material of the scenario (situation, pictures, texts as well as the linguistic structures and vocabulary preserved therein) serves as the basis for the exercises, which successively extend the learning content and lead beyond the introductory scenario.

Figure 2. Group of protagonists in vhs-Lernportal.

One of the strengths of digital learning programs undoubtedly is that they provide immediate feedback in closed exercises, enabling

learners to follow their own pace, quickly confirming or correcting their learning performance. Thus it supports autonomy in learning as it helps learners to control, reflect and evaluate their own efforts.

Interaction with the digital program must offer variety, and monotony in exercises must be avoided. At the same time, too much diversity in exercise types can be counterproductive, as learning should not be distracted and the learner's focus not shifted from content to functionality in the exercises. From our experience we deduce that in general a basis of a dozen exercise types offers sufficient diversity for the presentation, reproduction and automation of learning content and at the same time is quickly functionally mastered by the learner, therefore concentration is not strained and the learning flow is not disturbed.
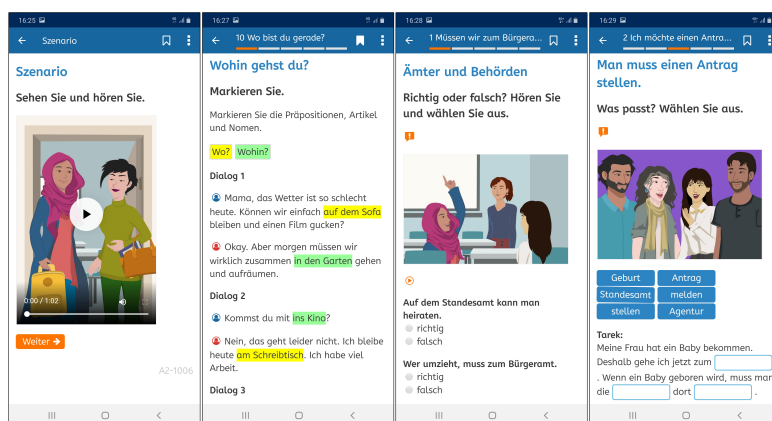
Figure 3. Series of exercise types.

At the end of a learning sequence designed to introduce, reproduce and automate learning content, we offer a limited transfer into productive language use in the form of a semi-open writing task. For example, after having worked on the learning goal "introducing yourself" over three learning units using Nasrin Fani and Rafael Ortega as examples, learners are asked to introduce themselves in a short text. Such free text productions are sent to a tutor for feedback.

Every learner has a tutor at his/her side in the learning portal. Tutors can be teachers who have registered as such on the platform. Tutor-teachers can set up learning groups on the portal to which

learners can subscribe (by entering a code communicated to them). Learners who are not part of a group learn with a DVV tutor. Tutors receive the free text productions of their learners for correction and feedback, can assign exercises to the learners individually or as a group and check learning status and learning activities. Learners and tutors can also communicate on the platform via an internal messaging system. Our experience shows that the tutoring of learners on the platform is a significant quality feature and strongly influences the success of digital courses.

Learners quickly seek a relationship with the tutor. Often, in the case of DVV tutors, to whom learners are assigned via the system and who they have not encountered in a classroom situation, it seems necessary for many learners to ask at first whether one is actually dealing with a person ("Are you real?"), later learners apologize if they have not learnt for a while or have been less active than they expect from themselves. Gratitude is also expressed, successes outside the learning platform are shared, e.g. a passed exam, a new job, etc. Some learners also report intimate stories to the tutor – sign of a special and trustful relationship that can arise during the learning activity on the platform.

Learners receive rewards for their learning performance through badges that are awarded for completed lessons as well as for "special events" such as the tenth writing task sent to the tutor, being an 'early bird' and learning before 7 a.m., etc. The badges are also awarded for completed chapters and courses. Badges are displayed on the learner's dashboard, as are the individual results of tests and lessons. In addition, tutors praise learners for their activities to maintain motivation, thereby supporting continuous and committed learning in the portal.

In summary, we consider the question of feedback to be crucial in the learning process and therefore attach great importance to well-programmed feedback, well-trained tutors and bagdes that additionally support the learning activity by distinguishing continuous work.

High-quality feedback is also the prerequisite for self-directed learning, since learner autonomy is not necessarily given and must be developed in parallel. Reinders and Hubbard (2014: 361-362) conclude that "technology can play a role in the development of

learner autonomy by supporting learners in a number of ways", but also that "specific training" is needed, "not only on how to use the software, but also on the skills necessary for self-directed learning". Tutors do support learners in understanding how their own digital learning is most effective. This also happens against the background that many learners do not (cannot) attend traditional courses.

vhs-Lernportal offers the possibility of systematically improving linguistic skills in the second language German without attending a tradional classroom-based course at a Volkshochschule. This is important because not all migrants in Germany have access to (state-subsidised) German and literacy courses. There are currently no federal education programmes for refugees to whom the state ascribes no "good prospects of staying", although some courses are financed at the level of the states or municipalities, since refugees often spend many years in Germany without an official "good prospects of staying" (Bruhn et al 2018).

The adult education centres are committed to ensuring that everyone has free access to education, regardless of their social or residence status or the prospects of remaining in Germany. The free access to the learning portal is one way of implementing the right to education for all. We understand well that for many people, the attendance of a course in the classical classroom is very important because it is motivating to have a learning group and peers and because the communicative use of oral language can be best trained and practiced in a direct encounter. We therefore advocate the use of the learning portal in blended learning concepts that combine online/mobile learning with classroom-based learning activities.

3. Blended learning as a successful model

Courses in blended learning are successful when teachers thoroughly select the learning content for classroom and online phases and when the setting offers the learners a recognizable advantage. There is no 'right' form of blended learning, but in general we find that phases for consolidating, repeating and automating language structures and vocabulary can be very successfully outsourced from classroom teaching and shifted to a digital environment. In such phases the

support of a digital learning program offers real benefits through automated correction in closed exercises: learners receive immediate feedback from the program as to whether a solution is right or wrong and can correct themselves immediately. This does not only speed up learning processes in the acquisition of the second language, but also fosters learner autonomy by providing the learner with more control over the learning process.

If phases of individual practice, like repetition and automatization, are outsourced from the classroom, then the learning group in its meeting phases has more room for communicative and group-related activities such as role plays, projects, exchange of experiences in partner and group work as well as plenary discussions. The classroom or meeting phases have the important task of constituting the course as a social group, so that there is a trusting atmosphere between learners and their teacher or tutor in the online phases. In addition, communicative action in the second language can be tested, experienced and trained in the protected classroom setting, something that is only to a limited extend possible in digital space. In final analysis, social and cultural aspects also play a role, such as the accepted distance and proximity of interlocutors, speech volume, etc., which are learned rather tacitly in face-to-face interaction. Advantages of blended learning, such as increased motivation and problem solving skills, have recently been tested and documented for higher education (Lu et al. 2018; Luna and Winters 2017; Shu and Gu 2018; Kintu and Zhu 2017) but to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies on blended learning in the context of literacy education, migrant integration and LESLLA learners. Existing studies show that face-to-face meeting are important for the interaction among learners and their motivation, blended scenarios therefore have an advantage over pure e-learning solutions. They also point to the critical role of a technically appropriate and user-friendly learning platform.

As a general rule for blended courses in Volkshochschulen, the meeting phases in blended learning are more frequent and demand more space in beginner courses, which usually address newly arrived immigrants. At an advanced language level, courses that combine short face-to-face meetings with extended online phases are also well accepted and successful. Advanced learners in B1-B2 German courses have already attained a good oral ability, but must improve in

particular their written language skills and – while meeting the criterion of comprehensibility – must work hard on grammatical correctness and linguistic expression for professional development.

Blended learning courses are therefore particularly popular among those migrants that are part of the labour force who, because of their professional activities, have little time to attend face-to-face courses and who at the same time find out in working life that they have concrete language learning needs when, for example, deficits stand in the way of advancing from unskilled to skilled work. Due to the reduced attendance time, blended courses can also reach shift workers and are specifically designed by adult education centres so that they reach a certain group of workers – for example, workers in logistics centres who attend a two hours of face-to-face class on non-working Saturdays combined with a weekly learning activity of five hours in vhs-Lernportal. Evaluating these programmes and correlating data on the learning process with individual statements by learners and teachers is not only an important task for educational research, but also with regard to the concrete programme planning of adult education centres and the training and further education of teachers.

References

Bruhn, Christina, Klaus Ritgen, Celia Sokolowsky and Kay Sulk. 2018. Sprachvermittlung und Spracherwerb. In Hubert Meyer, Klaus Ritgen and Roland Schäfer. *Flüchtlingsrecht und Integration*, 439-459. Kommunal und Schulverlag Wiesbaden.

Hanemann, Ulrike. 2018. *Language and literacy programmes for migrants and refugees: challenges and ways forward*. Background paper prepared for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls, 39. UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000266077

Hanemann, Ulrike. 2015. *Ich will lernen (I want to learn), Germany*. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/ich-will-lernen-i-want-learn-germany

Kintu, Mugengyi Justice and Chang Zhu. 2017. Blended learning effectiveness: the relationship between student characteristics, design features and outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 14: 7. Springer Open.

Lu, Owen, Anna Huang, Jeff Huang, Albert Lin, Hiroaki Ogata and Stephen Yang. 2018. Applying learning analytics for the early prediction of students' academic

performance in blended learning. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society* 21: 220-232.

Luna, Yvonne and Stefanie Winters. 2017. "Why did you blend my learning?" A comparison of student success in lecture and blended learning introduction to sociology courses. *Teaching Sociology* 45: 116-130.

Reinders, Hayo and Philip Hubbard. 2014. CALL and learner autonomy: Affordances and constraints. In Thomas, Michael, Hayo Reinders and Mark Warschauer (eds.), *Contemporary computer-assisted language learning*, 359-375. London: Bloomsbury.

Shu, Hang and Xiaoqing Gu. 2018. Determining the differences between online and face-to-face student–group interactions in a blended learning course. *The Internet and Higher Education* 39: 13-21.

Sokolowsky, Celia. 2019. Das neue vhs-Lernportal für Grundbildung und Integration. *ALFA-Forum* 95: 41-44.

Sokolowsky, Celia. 2017. "Einstieg Deutsch" – A German language learning app for refugees. In Marcin Sosiński (ed.), *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: Investigación, política educativa y práctica docente. Literacy education and second language learning for adults: research, policy and practice*, 219-229. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Sokolowsky, Celia. 2015. Ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de: A learning portal for second language and literacy acquisition in heterogeneous classes. In Ineke van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Roeland van Hout (eds.), *Adult literacy, second language and cognition*, 319-334. Nijmegen: CLS.

St George, Tanya Vivienne. 2017. *'As important to me as water': how refugees in Rome use smartphones to improve their well-being*. Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of International Development at Massey University, Palmerston North, Manawatū, New Zealand. https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/11712

Stockwell, Glenn. 2014. Mobile assisted language learning. In Thomas, Michael, Hayo Reinders and Mark Warschauer (eds.), *Contemporary computer-assisted language learning*, 201-216. London: Bloomsbury.

UNESCO. 2018. *A Lifeline to learning: leveraging mobile technology to support education for refugees*, UNESCO Publishing Paris. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261278

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL. 2018. Ich will lernen (I want to learn), Germany, case study. https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/ich-will-lernen-i-want-learn-germany

SECTION 4
On the teachers' side:
reception, training and other tools

Language and hospitality.
The function of language in shaping a welcoming setting

Anna Germana Bucca – Fausto Melluso

"The invitation, the hospitality, the giving of accommodation, they pass through the language or through addressing to the other", Derrida writes. The paper is inspired by this statement and by reflections related to daily practice with migrants, in institutional and/ or not formal settings. We focus on the actions to be carried out to improve the welcoming practices, in the linguistic field (verbal and non verbal level) and in the social and legal support areas. We think we need an ever greater intertwining and dialogue between the various contexts that the migrant crosses, i.g. schools, information desks, NGO, institutional services.

Keywords: vulnerability, reception, setting, language rights, skills.

> *Theseus: Who could ever refuse the friendship of such a man?*
> *First of all, he can always find asylum*
> *in our hospitable house*
> (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*)

1. Introduction

The journey that a school and its teachers prepare to welcome a foreign student is one of the visible forms the same school has to deal with the topic of the 'other'. It is something usually faced from a technical perspective. […] It is equally important to acquire the attitude to manage such an ambiguous practice in a non-naive way. When we find ourselves in front of a foreign student, each and every attitude we show is inevitably full of assumptions we can never completely free ourselves from. We must learn to be aware of those assumptions as they profoundly influence the outcome of our practices. (Zoletto 2007: 9)

That is how Danilo Zoletto opens his essay *Foreign in the classroom.* Indeed, those who join a plurilingual and multicultural class, or a class and/or a group setting (be it formal or informal), know that the *Welcome-in* phase is the foundational moment that shapes the entire group evolution. This is a tiered phase as it goes through various levels: the gestures, the way we look at somebody, the tone of voice,

the proximity and the distance, the things we say and how we say them, the space settings. We should keep in mind that if we want to welcome somebody it is not enough to invite that person to sit, administer different sorts of tests, wait until s/he completes them, smile politely and get it done with. On the contrary, we need a definitely more complex process, one related to places and people. And this is a process that crosses language first: as Lévinas reminds us, "the essence of language is friendship and hospitality". A similar observation was the starting point of a conversation dating back to the mid-90s between Anne Dufourmantelle and the French-Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida, transcribed in the brochure *Of hospitality* (1997). Through a series of seminars, the two started a reflection on the foreigner and the language, understood as an ensemble of culture, experiences, values, norms and meanings that permeates it: "Invitation, hospitality, the giving of accommodation, they all pass through language or through addressing the other" (Derrida 1997: 30).

What we intend to focus on in this article is the question of the *through*, or the physical and virtual places where the act of hospitality is built. The reflection proposed is inspired by some observations of the daily welcoming practices used in institutional contexts (i.e., schools) or informal ones (i.e., information desk for migrants). The *through*, the crossing: to be real, the act of hospitality cannot take place only via the teacher/social worker, nor only via the student migrant. Only in the middle can we meet; approaching each other a small step at a time, we can build a relationship. We can maybe also misunderstand each other, but hope to find points of greater proximity: "Tu t'assoiras d'abord un peu loin de moi, comme ça, dans l'herbe. Je te regarderai du coin de l'œil et tu ne diras rien. Le langage est source de malentendus. Mais, chaque jour, tu pourras t'asseoir un peu plus près" ['You will first sit a little away from me, like that, in the grass I'll look at you out of the corner of my eye and you will not say anything. Language is a source of misunderstanding. But, every day, you can sit a little closer'], says the fox to the little prince (Saint-Exupéry 1943: 70).

Only in the middle can we build the act of welcoming and hospitality, thinking of it as something that happens not *on a threshold* but *through a threshold,* the threshold of the school, of the

information desk, in our daily relationships. A threshold always at risk of being fragile, which can be entry and exit, reception and rejection.

2. Hostility and hospitality

Once again, Derrida's reflections are of great help here, especially those he conducts starting from the etymology of words. The foreigner is *hostis* in Latin (he was *xenos* for Greek people), he is one who comes from outside, he is usually one who doesn't speak like the others but speaks instead a strange language. In ancient times, the guest was offered precious gifts: today what do we offer to our guests? The foreigner, barely or badly speaking the language, is in danger of being defenceless in the face of the host country laws. S/he is – first and foremost – foreign to the language:

S/he must ask for hospitality in a language that by definition is not her/his, the one imposed by the landlord. [...] The host demands the translation in his own language, and that is the first violence. The question of hospitality begins here: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language in the broadest meaning of the term, in every possible meaning, before accepting the stranger in our home, and indeed as a necessary condition? (Derrida 1997: 40)

Hospitalité, *hostilité*, *hospitilité* are the three French words (two existing words and one neologism) around which a part of Derrida's reasoning revolves: in English, these terms sound like 'hospitality, hostility, hospitility'. So, in *hospitilité/hospitility*, Derrida mixes two Latin words, *hospes* and *hostis*, the guest – in the double meaning of s/he who welcomes and s/he who is hosted – and the enemy: as if to remind us that the welcoming risks having its opposite inside.

In which language can the foreigner ask a question? Language is understood in a broad sense as the set of culture, values and meanings that inhabit it. If a person shares my way of life or a culture, I can feel s/he is *less stranger* to me even if s/he does not speak my language.

Then, going back to Zoletto's (2007) reflection, the place of reception can be a border or a frontier. But if the border only separates, the frontier separates and connects, it can block and let

pass. Therefore, in this context we are interested in imagining our places as frontier lands, as middle lands, where being in the middle refers both to the relationship, to the ability to find a common point with our interlocutor, and to the language. Stay in the middle of the language and know how to look at it.

Staying in the middle means creating opportunities for socialization, grasping the importance of learning in workshop activities, which is a condition where people can perceive themselves as peer and one can more easily meet each other; it means bringing the pupils to see a theatrical show; it means that teachers can be curious about the words of the other languages. It also means to pay attention to the language of the others when we teach our language as L2, Italian language in our case, especially with languages that have very different structures from Romance or Germanic languages. Having minimum knowledge serves to avoid misunderstandings, as could happen in teaching students from Bangladesh. Therefore it is useful to know that in the Bangla language there are no uppercase or lowercase characters; there is no block characters or italics; you do not use the verb "to have" in the present tense; there are no prepositions but postpositions; there is a greater use of impersonal expressions, and the construction of the sentence varies, as we can see in these sentences:

(Bangla)	(Italian)	(English)
Tomar shordi-kashi hoeche	(lit.: Di te raffreddore diventato)	(lit.: Of you cold became)
	Hai preso il raffreddore	You got a cold
Tomake aj ektu shushto lagche	(lit.: A te oggi un po' bene si attacca)	(lit.: To you today a little good stick)
	Oggi sembri stare un po' meglio	Today you seem to feel a little better

Table 1. Examples of Bangla, Italian and English correspondence (Salvaggio 2018: adapted; see also Radice 1994: 110).

Being in this place that we call "in the middle" means as well, for teachers of a second language, to learn how to live with the idea of not having a complete mastery of our own language and therefore keep

this thought constantly in focus, if they want to teach their language in a hospitable way. Moreover, as Gregory Bateson reminds us, it is also important "to welcome doubt, as a normal function of the individual mind, that we must exercise responsibly" (Bateson 1972: 105).

Once again we are encouraged by the reflections of Jacques Derrida who wrote "I have only one language and it is not mine" (Derrida 1997: 64), while referring to the times of structuring his cultural and linguistic identity. Derrida was born in Algeria and there he attended French school; in reference to the French language he considered it at times "langue maternelle et langue étrangère [mother tongue and foreign language]".

Strangers in our own home, foreigners to our mother tongue. And we believe that being able to relearn one's own language together with the people to whom we teach that language, staying on the frontier, is a great opportunity. Moreover, important scholars and researchers on language, such John Gumperz or Dell Hymes suggest not to undervalue the potentiality of misunderstanding, which offers the chance to reflect about the mechanisms of language and of our mind (Gumperz 1982; Hymes 1986).

By accepting none of us is a complete master of the language and living without drama the idea of not knowing how to always give a correct answer, we can enhance our opportunities in the things in which we are not able to, we can give an answer on a topic that we feel is "our topic", starting a common research path, starting also from the observation of what happens outside the classroom. We too, as the foreigners, can feel we are *hospes*, guests, in the double meaning of s/he who welcomes and s/he who is welcomed, strangers in our own home, in our own language.

We can use some concrete examples from teaching experiences in adult schools: during an Italian literacy lesson, with irregular verbs as a subject, the teacher explains the present indicative of *essere* 'to be' and *stare* 'to be, to stay'. The verbs belong to two different groups and in Italian they have a similar meaning and a similar use. One of the students asks what the difference is between them. The teacher answers from a grammatical point of view and also refers to the meaning, and the question returns as *What exactly is the difference?* The adverb "exactly" could undermine self-confidence in one's mastery of teaching.

Another example comes from the use of intransitive verbs or verbs of movement and the auxiliary verb to connect, or from some multi-meaning word such as *prego* 'please, you're welcome'. *Prego* could be used in response to thank you, or when you are at the bar or in a pub it could mean 'what do you want?', or when you meet someone it could mean 'you can pass', or you can use it when you ask something in a polite way and so on.

3. After welcoming: reception centers

After welcoming, the hospitality passes through the language and addressing others: therefore, also through the gestures, the methods used, and the approach. This is linked to the contexts and subjects of interlocution/mediation that we meet. The person who arrives must ask for hospitality in a language that is not her/his own, and must go through a first mediation tool, such as translation. But it is also possible – for the one who arrives – to meet people and use tools that can help to join different worlds and cultures (mediators, services), and it is possible – for the one who welcomes – to acquire basic skills to put the one who arrives more at ease. As we can see in the next lines, this does not happen often.

In our opinion, these are the first rules of hospitality and welcoming: to make someone feel that we are taking care of her/him, even with small gestures, and make her/him feel that an interaction is being established. Many times, these rules are not followed, especially in institutional settings, and this affects the condition of migrants and their vulnerability. This migrants' vulnerability is therefore not absolute but relative: it is due to the lack of a *welcoming* context that should be organized to ensure their rights beyond the very language skills and should promote with appropriate tools the importance of learning the language.

Paradoxically, our experiences in supporting and listening to migrants' stories have shown us that those who have had detention experiences in Italy have actually developed better language skills than those who are in public reception centers. The prison context seems, on the one hand, to promote greater interaction with Italians and, on the other hand, to represent with greater credibility the need to

learn the language. The detention experience creates a sort of symmetry and equality in the relations between people, despite the differences that do exist outside the structure, and therefore it can lead to a greater motivation for interaction.

It is rather common in large reception centers for migrants that the *guests* – as the state bureaucracy defines them, with a term that is certainly not neutral – do not attend language courses, even if they are motivated to do so. Thus, when managers are criticized for the very poor language skills gained by the so-called guests after a long experience of reception, they often justify this by a lack of motivation from the guests.

It is quite clear and it can't be ignored – by the migrants themselves – that the language is an instrument of rooting and emancipation within the new context. Although it is out of date with respect to a debate that aims at the migrant's "empowerment", for this category of (non-)people any kind of contextual reasoning is hence excluded considering the overall reasons that lead to behaviors exceeding the individual perspective and the category.

The large reception centers for migrants (the most relevant Sicilian example is the CARA, *Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo* 'Reception Center for Asylum Seekers' of Mineo, Catania, with an average of over 2000 guests and peaks of over 5000) are typically extremely isolated and most of the time it is very difficult for the subjects to have relations outside the center. After their long and most often risky journey, migrants enter a complex and uncertain bureaucratic path that places them in a transitory and uncertain situation. It is common indeed that identical situations lead to very different ways and times of reception. The Italian reception system, which can't be reduced only to the reception centers but also includes at least the institutions involved, is generally inefficient in the sense that it does not motivate people to acquire useful skills to feel better and adapted to the new context. This context is indeed inevitably experienced as hostile, although it is a very different kind of hostility from that experienced in transit countries such as Niger or Libya.

Even when there is no spatial isolation of the reception centers, the public discourse on migration, which do influence and are themselves influenced by the waves of xenophobic hegemony, profoundly impacts the quality of relationships that the migrants have

in the new context and therefore the quality of reception, understood in a holistic sense. In fact, it is evident that the psychological conditions of newly arrived migrants are progressively deteriorating, both those who are admitted and those who, either expelled from the reception or without papers, are at greater risk of social exclusion.

Furthermore, it has to be said that often the reasons for such *boredom* and discomfort are both contextual and to be found in the disappointment of expectations regarding the migration plan: many people who arrive in Italy want to reach communities, friends or relatives who are in other places in Europe. Often, after having crossed the sea and the desert in precarious and dangerous conditions, these plans happen to be impossible. Then, the strong disappointment obviously has important psychological impacts on subjects and makes the condition of discomfort already described particularly violent and complex.

It should be further considered that the vision of vulnerability as contextual – nobody is absolutely vulnerable; everyone is vulnerable in a relative sense – can lead to an analysis of our dual reception context. Will a place that is not welcoming for those who do not know the linguistic codes lead to a tension towards language learning – since it is a tool to be integrated and equal in a community that does not welcome you with your differences? Or on the contrary will it lead to a progressive marginalization that will also demotivate language learning? Experiences in the Sicilian context lead us to support the second hypothesis. Having lived and analyzed a context in which often hospitals, public offices, services, do not have adequate tools to break down the linguistic barriers, it is evident how these contexts produce a loss in the motivation to learn. On the contrary, small urban places where caring relationships do exist and where there is more care for this kind of vulnerability are certainly more motivating and have better results.

Furthermore, this is evident for refugees and asylum seekers who have to face legal, territorial or other bureaucratic contexts. The fact that they do not speak the language can lead them to misunderstanding and vulnerability vis-a-vis the laws of the country they are in. They then find themselves in that situation that the sociologists Abdelmalek Sayad and Pierre Bourdieu have well identified as "double absence": absence from the country of departure

because they have now left, and absence in the country of arrival because foreigners, strangers, without a voice, without a place.

On the one hand this double absence leads to a lack of motivation to conduct activities, for example training activities. This then results in a feeling of having no roots in a reality in which you do not feel welcomed. On the other hand, the double absence leads to the refusal of returning home, despite disappointed expectations, whatever the conditions of departure.

Learning the language is a tool to emancipate oneself within the new context in order to be autonomous and independent and to take root in a place. If I know the language, I become part of the community, but if I feel expelled from it, I will not be motivated to do so.

The matter of the Territorial Commission for the recognition of refugee status has certainly been discussed many times among Italian non-governmental organizations and the policy makers, but little has been done from a linguistic point of view. Asylum seekers are entitled to interview in their own language, but often they have to conduct the interview in the "colonial" language, e.g. English or French.

This can happen for several reasons: often the subjects feel uncomfortable to expose their personal and intimate life story to a translator who is a member of the same community. The choice of the colonial language can also be due to the fact that the migrant believes that it is better to express her/himself in a language more familiar to the members of the commission despite it not being his own. But it is also true that the choice is substantially constrained by the difficulty to find a translator of one's own language or dialect. The accuracy of the translation and of the memorandum itself is also a central issue which is difficult to investigate since in most of the cases nobody else is present apart from the migrant and the commissioners.

If it is known that the translation is always a sort of *betrayal*, in this case it is double: first, the translators are often not particularly qualified people and have poor language skills and second, the memorandum, as it is a summary of a discussion of a couple of hours in two or three pages necessarily simplifies a lot the story of the person and the events that have happened to her or him. These two elements are very central issues in our experience.

4. To conclude

Until 2016 the examination of the applicant was done collectively by a Territorial Commission composed of 4 members. Today this examination is conducted by only one of the commissioners, who will thus present the memorandum on which the entire committee will express its opinion. It is therefore clear that the person who conducts the interview and is in charge of the memorandum is of exceptional importance, because s/he basically prepares the elements for the collective decision. In this respect, it is very common that migrants, for whom the moment of the commission is a source of high tension, are not in the condition to evaluate the content of the memorandum or to ask for changes before countersigning it. When it happens that migrants have the opportunity to translate the memorandum into their mother tongue with the support of people they trust, they often say that they do not find the translation accurate and that if they would have realized what it was written during the commission they would have asked for changes. It is a pity, however, that this written story will remain with her/him not only in the judgment of the Commission, but also in the subsequent appeal, given that in the light of recent regulatory innovations the jurisdictional levels have been reduced quantitatively but also qualitatively, in the sense that the appeal procedures almost always exclude the questioning of what has already been documented. If the issue of language learning is an underestimated but important issue in assessing the effectiveness, and the quality of the Italian reception system, at least since the so-called *North African emergency* in 2011, a completely different discourse can be made for the second-generation migrants. The children of families now settled in Italy – children of people who have been in Italy for years and are able to reflect on their own future and the one of their family – strongly believe in education and improvement through studies, even more than Italians. This leads to situations in which school results and educational success rates are better among second generation migrants than among Italians with the same family income. It is the case of the first district of Palermo, which includes the so-called historical center. This last example shows that it is possible, within our societies, to build successful paths starting from the achievement of language skills, focusing on interaction among

people, motivating people, which should be the main goals of the school. In other words, it shows that "hospitality passes through language or through addressing the other", as Derrida wrote.

References

Balbo, Laura. 2006. *In che razza di società vivremo? L'Europa, i razzismi, il futuro*. Milano: Mondadori.

Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1997. *De l'hospitalité*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

Dittmar, Norbert and Christiane von Stutterheim. 1984. Sul discorso dei lavoratori immigrati. Comunicazione interetnica e strategie comunicative. In Anna Giacalone Ramat (a cura di). *L'apprendimento spontaneo di una seconda lingua*, 149-196. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Gumperz, John J. 1982 [2005]. Interethnic Communication. In Scott F. Kiesling and Christina Bratt Paulston (eds.), *Intercultural discourse and communication: the essential reading*, 33-44. London: Blackwell.

Hymes, Dell. 1986 [2005]. Models of the interaction of language and social life: toward a descriptive theory. In Scott F. Kiesling and Christina Bratt Paulston (eds.), *Intercultural discourse and communication: the essential reading*, 4-16. London: Blackwell.

Quassoli, Fabio. 2006. *Riconoscersi: differenze culturali e pratiche comunicative*. Milano: Cortina.

Radice, William. 1994. *Teach yourself Bengali*. London: Hodder Headline.

Salvaggio, Federico. 2018. Il retroterra culturale, sociale e scolastico dell'alunno di origine bangladese. Lecture held in Palermo on 5 May 2018 for the Master 'Organizzazione e gestione delle Istituzioni Scolastiche in contesti multiculturali'.

Sayad, Abdelmalek. 2002. *La doppia assenza. Dalle illusioni dell'emigrato alle sofferenze dell'immigrato*. Milano: Cortina.

Saint-Exupéry, Antoine. 1943. *Le petit prince.* Paris: Folio

Sofocle. 2008. *Edipo a Colono.* Milano: Lorenzo Valla Edizioni

Vedovelli, Massimo. 1981. La lingua degli stranieri immigrati in Italia. *Lingua e nuova didattica* 10: 17-23.

Zoletto, Davide. 2007. *Straniero in classe. Una pedagogia dell'ospitalità*. Milano: Cortina.

What is happening to specialist provision for LESLLA learners in the UK and why does this matter?

Ann Cowie

At a time of large reductions in ESOL provision across England as a result of reduced funding, the learning needs of LESLLA learners seem to be getting largely overlooked. England lacks a national strategy for ESOL and this seems to have contributed to a rather piecemeal approach to provision, with providers concentrating on students who achieve their outcomes and therefore bring in funding, rather than on the needs of local learners. This small-scale study investigates the current state of provision in a number of institutions, using questionnaires to providers and interviews with teachers, to determine how this group of learners are being provided for in the climate of austerity. It then makes the case for specialist provision for LESLLA learners.

Keywords: LESLLA learners, ESOL literacy provision, Pre-entry learners.

1. Introduction

When I started teaching ESOL literacy to groups of women mainly from the Horn of Africa, I assumed the argument for specialist ESOL classes for LESLLA learners centred on the learners' need to develop the initial sub-skills of reading and writing already possessed by their literate peers, and this was reinforced when I attended specialist training on working with this group of learners. The course was entitled "Teaching Basic Literacy to ESOL Learners" and as the title suggested, it focussed on developing learners' reading and writing skills. There was little mention of strategies for teaching ESOL to learners with low literacy. Reflecting on my practice it was clear that it was necessary to largely avoid using the written word for explanations, task instructions, and prompts.

As I spent longer with the group, I realised that there was also something else going on as learners seemed to have difficulty with some beginner level grammar features as they were, for example, generally unable to hear or repeat the 3rd person 's'. I also found that

learners were confused by scenarios that involved fictitious characters as found in typical course books, but responded much better to stories about real people.

It was when I took a module in second language acquisition as part of my MA that I became aware of the work on noticing by Richard Schmidt (1983) and later work by Bigelow and Tarone (2004), Tarone, Hansen and Bigelow (2013) and others on the effects of not being literate in any language on your ability to process grammatical phonemes. This prompted me to undertake my own research; a case study of a non-literate learner. Using an interview, analysis of some free conversation and an elicited imitation task in which the learner was asked to repeat sentences including regular and irregular past tense verbs, question words with *do/does/did*, and plural nouns, it became clear that he was unable to perceive or to reproduce the grammatical morphemes, but was able to utilise other indicators of time and number. This reflected the findings of other work done with non-literate learners of English. My participant also reported being more focussed on communication of meaning rather than in accuracy, and saw learning a language as a process of acquiring words to express meaning. Like Schmidt's subject Wes (1983), my participant, whom I shall refer to by the pseudonym Thierry, possessed strong speaking skills and saw himself as a good communicator. The work of Olson (1996) seemed to explain the difficulties learners had with abstract concepts. This led me to reflect on the fact that this rather different approach to language learning, along with the processing challenges arising from lack of literacy, and possibly stronger speaking skills as a result of growing up in a largely oral culture, provided additional reasons for LESLLA learners to be taught in specialised classes that would take account of their difficulties and build on their strengths.

From 2006 onwards, "saving ESOL" had become almost an annual event in the ESOL teaching community in England, as funding cuts further threatened provision that never had been sufficient to cater to all who wanted it. Hearing on the grapevine that specialist provision for LESLLA learners was being particularly hit by funding cuts, I was prompted to conduct a study to determine whether this was the case. I produced a survey which was distributed via an online discussion forum of ESOL practitioners, and also interviewed 6

teachers working in a variety of contexts in London. They were asked for details of provision for LESLLA learners in their institution, and how they felt that LESLLA learners were faring both in specialist provision and in "mainstream" ESOL classes.

2. Policy and funding background

Since a high point of state funding for ESOL in England in 2006 when half a million students attended classes, funding for ESOL provision has steadily declined with a significant impact on learner numbers (NATECLA 2016). Between 2010 and 2016 the ESOL budget was halved from £203m in 2009/10 to £90m in 2016 by which time learner numbers had fallen to 90,000 (Marsden 2018). Full funding for ESOL learners (other than for those actively seeking work) ended in 2006, resulting in the introduction of fees for many learners. Research conducted by the college teachers' union found significant numbers of learners no longer able to afford classes, identifying women on low incomes experiencing fees as a significant barrier to accessing classes (UCU 2007). At the same time, cuts to college budgets led to closure of support services such as college nurseries, which again severely impacted women with young children (Wonder Foundation 2016). A further consequence of reduced funding for ESOL seems to be a reduction in the variety of courses providers were able to offer. The UCU report quoted providers stating that more specialised courses such as 'ESOL literacy' were closed in favour of generic ESOL courses for learners at higher levels. Therefore, it appears that cuts in funding have affected some groups of learners more than others.

Unlike Scotland and Wales, England lacks any national strategy for ESOL. According to a DEMOS report this has resulted in "a poor understanding of the scale of need and of the quality of provision, as well as a dearth of information for potential learners" (Paget and Stevenson 2017: 11). The report also describes ESOL policy as suffering from "fragmentation, a lack of clarity about the aims and intended outcomes of learning, disagreement over the analysis and description of English language levels and abilities, and a general tendency to take a short-term view" (Paget and Stevenson 2017: 11).

With the forthcoming devolution of funding for adult education to mayoral authorities in August 2019, this lack of consistency can only get worse. One consequence of this absence of a national policy is the lack of agreement concerning the name of provision for LESLLA learners. The national curriculum uses the term "pre-entry", previously used to refer to learners with special educational needs, to describe learners whose skills are below entry 1. However, it seems that while some providers use "pre-entry" to describe learners with low literacy, little or no formal education but whose speaking skills may be elementary or higher, others use this term to refer to learners who are literate in their L1 but are complete beginners in English, which is typical of some newly arrived migrant workers from the EU. As will be discussed later, these groups have very different needs. Other terms such as "ESOL beginners" or "Emerging Entry 1" are equally ambiguous (Learning and Work Institute 2016). "ESOL Literacy" or "Basic Literacy for ESOL" may be clearer but not used consistently by providers.

Organisations such as Action for ESOL and NATECLA (National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults) have called for a national strategy incorporating a statutory entitlement to ESOL classes which it is felt would safeguard quality provision that would meet the needs of a diverse group of learners. The ESOL Manifesto emphasises the need to recognise that ESOL learners are a diverse group and calls for a range of provision including "beginner literacy" (Action for ESOL 2012). The NATECLA document "Towards an ESOL Strategy for England" calls for recognition that skills levels of adult migrants vary enormously and that a variety of programmes is needed. It mentions teaching literacy to new readers and writers as being "particularly challenging" (2016: 5). Elsewhere it mentions the need for "different kinds of ESOL, including delivery that is not based on achieving qualifications" (2016: 10). It does not call specifically however for discrete provision for LESLLA learners.

The Association of Colleges in its report "ESOL Qualifications and funding in 2014: issues for consideration", is very clear that in provision of ESOL there is considerable diversity of needs and "One size does not fit all". It states that both the funding system and the qualification framework are based on the concept of an "average

ESOL learner", who probably does not exist (2013: 9). It makes the point that the amount to be learned between one level of the ESOL curriculum and the next is considerably larger than for example its literacy counterpart. An NRDC report (2007) found that learners with less experience of schooling took longer to make the same progress to the next level. This group of learners took time to adapt to learning in a formal setting, and needed time to develop study skills and also their confidence as learners. Providers are encouraged to use nationally accredited qualifications for learners and as the funding depends on learner outcomes (i.e. achieving qualifications), they need to pay close attention to success rates. The AOC report states that "for learners at the lowest level of skills, particularly those with little or no educational background, there is a need to make it possible to mark achievement in a longer, slower process, through smaller steps in qualifications or by finding ways to fund a 'slow track'" (2013: 6). Unfortunately, from 2013 qualifications have been funded at a fixed rate regardless of hours needed for delivery, which means that providers are reluctant to take on learners who will take longer to achieve. There is a possibility of using non-regulated provision for limited groups of learners including those assessed at Entry 1a (the lowest entry point) for a year or two until they are deemed ready to achieve a qualification. According to research quoted in the same report, it has been estimated that an average of 150-200 hours of study is required for a learner to progress one level of the UK ESOL curriculum (2013). For a 36-week year this would mean 4.5-5.5 hours of study per week for the "average learner". As we have seen, students who have missed out on previous schooling would seem to need longer.

In addition to direct changes to provision, there are also indirect consequences of Government policy agendas. Teachers in the post 16 sector are experiencing worsening conditions of service as their employers are forced to make financial savings. New contracts have been introduced whereby teachers have a higher weekly teaching commitment and consequently fewer hours for lesson preparation and providing individual support for their learners. Cuts to support services within colleges and outside, such as welfare and careers advice, as well as to administrative support, have teachers feeling obliged to take on some of these roles with regard to their students.

The strong focus on pass rates and general accountability has led to an increase in recordkeeping which again prevents teachers from focussing on their lesson preparation. The teacher's union recently reported 74% of teachers feeling stressed by excessive paperwork and "change fatigue" (UCU 2018).

Finally, in the UK, as in many other places in the world currently, and particularly since the Brexit referendum, there has been a rise in right wing rhetoric that has attempted to blame immigrants for the painful consequences of the austerity agenda. Refugees and asylum seekers are particularly targeted, as is the Muslim community. David Cameron's Government in 2016 blamed low educated Muslim women for the increase in radicalisation, suggesting that they were reluctant to learn English or to integrate (Mason and Sherwood, 2016). According to Home Office statistics, there was a sharp spike in race-hate crime at the time of the EU referendum (Dearden 2017). The Coalition and Conservative Governments, via two immigration acts in 2014 and 2016, have deliberately created a "hostile environment" aimed at making life as unpleasant as possible for immigrants by denying them to employment, benefits, housing, healthcare, education, banking and other basic services in the hope that they would give up and leave, and in order to deter further arrivals (Liberty 2018). Asylum seekers from outside the EU are frequently given the status "no recourse to public funds" as their application progresses, leaving them potentially destitute and unable to access state-funded ESOL classes. This is the reality of daily life for many current and potential LESLLA learners.

3. The study

This small scale mixed-methods research study took place in May-June 2018. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews with six teachers working in further and adult education in London and from an on-line questionnaire on the ESOL Research Forum. Invitations to participate in the study were sent out to 43 ESOL teachers teaching ESOL in the sector and six responded. The teachers were all known to the researcher, which is of course a source of potential bias as perhaps the volunteers saw the process as an opportunity to complain about

the current state of affairs. This should not be seen to be a problem as long as the data collected is viewed as a snapshot into how some teachers think and work, rather than an attempt to generalise (Dornyei 2007).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the workplace and were recorded and then transcribed. Common themes were identified in the first reading and these were then used as the basis for structuring the results. In addition a couple of vignettes emerged. The on-line survey, designed on Survey Monkey, consisted of 10 questions relating to "ESOL provision for learners with little or no literacy". It was felt that this terminology was more widely understood amongst teachers than "LESLLA learner". Invitations to respond were sent out via the ESOL Research Forum. Responses were received from 26 ESOL teachers and organisers, working across England, including 13 from Further Education colleges, nine from adult education centres and two community organisations. The fact that the 26 respondents from a population of over 1,000 volunteered to complete the survey rather than being selected at random, again means that the results cannot be seen as representative.

3.1. Results from the surveys

The first question asked respondents whether their institution had discrete provision for "ESOL learners who have low levels of literacy", and if so, at how many levels. Of 26 institutions, nine had no specialist provision for LESLLA learners, and a further 10 had only one level. Three institutions provided two levels and four provided three or more levels. It is not clear whether learners in institutions where there was only one level were allowed to repeat the year. When asked what happened to LESLLA learners when there was not a discrete class for them, 10 institutions of the 26 reported putting them in mainstream ESOL classes and a further three turned them away. The next question asked about the number of taught hours per week provided for LESLLA learners. The results showed that nine providers had no specialist provision; seven provided 1-3 hours per week; six provided 3-6 hours per week; two provided 6-9 hours per week; and one provided more than nine hours per week.
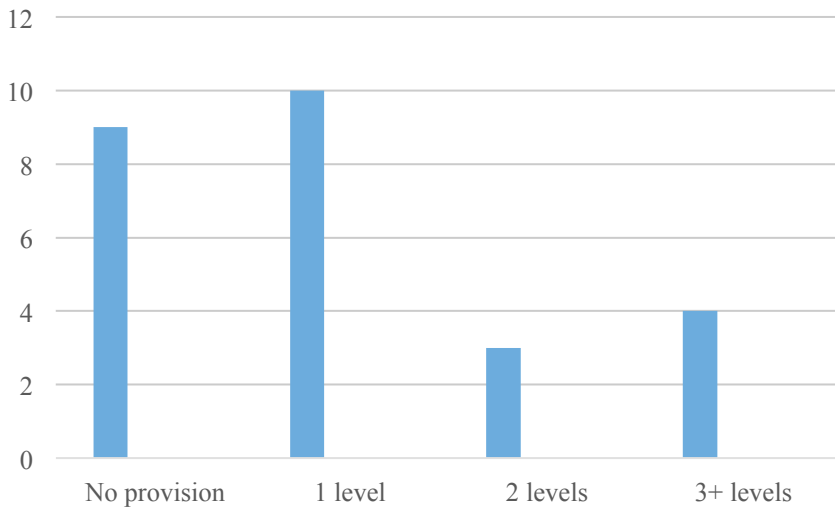
Figure 1. Number of levels of specialist provision for LESLLA learners. Total = 26.
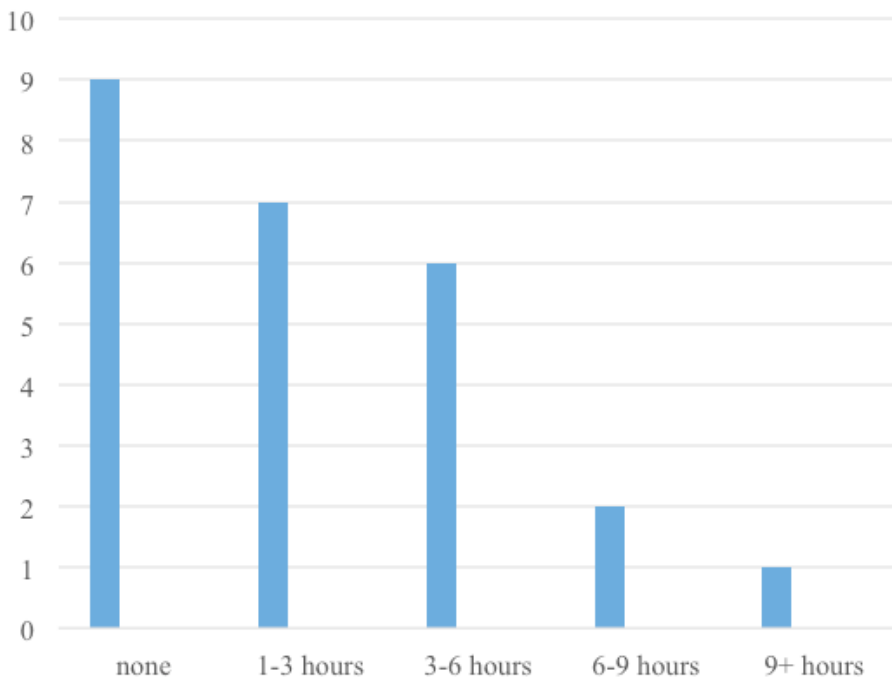
Figure 2: Hours per week of classes provided for LESLLA learners.

Respondents were then asked about the accreditation used, if any, for LESLLA learners. While eight institutions used the Recognising and Recording of Progress and Achievement (RARPA) system, meaning that learners were accredited for individual targets set, and one used a college certificate which again could presumably be tailored to individual needs, the rest relied on formal exams such as those designed for ESOL by exam boards including ESB, Ascentis and Functional Skills.

The next question was problematic as it asked whether teachers at the institution had received any specialist training for working with LESLLA learners but it became clear that several respondents did not have access to information regarding staff training. Two respondents reported that teachers at their institution had received specialist training for working with LESLLA learners of more than two days, and a further four stated that teachers had received half to a full day of specialist training. Due to the ambiguous question, it was not clear from the responses how many teachers employed at the institution were working with LESLLA learners, and of these how many had received any specialist training.

Question nine asked whether the overall provision for LESLLA learners at the institution had grown, shrunk or remained the same over the previous five years. In four cases the provision had grown, whereas in four it had shrunk in terms of hours per week and in a further three it had shrunk in terms of the number of levels offered. In ten institutions the level of provision remained the same. One respondent mentioned a rapid increase in the number of classes provided for students sent by the Job Centre as a condition of retaining their benefits.

Finally, respondents were asked for any comments they wished to make. The comments mostly related to the desire to provide more for this group of learners, and regret that funding cuts were making this impossible:

The part time ESOL was originally ACL provision and ESOL literacy classes were provided from Pre-Entry to Level 1, however when the provision moved to FE, ESOL literacy was no longer delivered. This was due to a lack of understanding of the needs of these learners by new managers of the provision. I am still highlighting the need for this.

We receive many referrals of learners the local FE college won't teach because of low literacy. We are a charity relying on volunteer teachers. Some have great experience and expertise but we need professional paid teachers teaching ESOL pre-entry classes too. We need more classes for beginner reader/writers - it should not fall on volunteers.

The 16-18 provision doesn't have any literacy classes, students are placed in mainstream without LSA or 1:1 support. When asked for literacy support for younger students, management says that there isn't funding for it as it is an ESOL/Educational issue and not a learning difficulty or disability. The adult provision has literacy classes at E1 & 2, 10hrs/week.

Provision for basic - pre-entry - ESOL has shrunk. Students with no literacy skills are placed in one session a week S&L classes and the tutor is implicitly expected to teach them to read and write so that they can do the reading and writing exam modules the following year. This is impossible. Tutors may end up doing one to one literacy sessions - unpaid, of course.

3.2. Results from the interviews

Respondents demonstrated a similar dissatisfaction with the levels of provision offered by their institution but in addition gave a clearer picture of the challenges faced by teachers trying to accommodate LESLLA learners. This was reported to be a challenge both in discrete classes and also in mainstream classes. As regards course hours it was generally felt that there was not enough time to get through the curriculum: "It's a very steep hill to make up lost education. It takes a very long time. They're [LESLLA learners] not getting it". Those working with LESLLA learners in mainstream ESOL classes found that the fast pace necessitated by reduced course hours made it particularly difficult for LESLLA learners to keep up: "The reduced hours is starting to leave a lot of students out who can't attain these things. Particularly literacy students who need a lot more time. They are not offered enough classes to bring them up enough to do the exams". In the past this had not been such an issue: "When I started students got 15 hours a week of classes. Literacy students were able to integrate more easily". There was some confusion as to the target groups for classes named "pre-entry" or "complete beginners" with a resulting mix of literate newly arrived beginners and LESLLA

learners who may have been in the country for a number of years and whose learning needs were quite different.

Most of the respondents felt that their lessons were overly focussed on getting students to pass their exams: "There's a lot of pressure to prepare students for inappropriate exams. The exam and attendance become more important than the students' learning". Teachers felt there was pressure from managers to maximise success rates and therefore funding for the following year. League tables of individual teachers' success rates were published in some colleges (with the threat that at some point this might be linked to their pay) and so teachers who were otherwise sympathetic to the needs of LESLLA learners, reluctantly complied with the policy of either not recruiting students who did not appear to be a safe bet for passing their exams, or "managing them out" of the class at an early stage. One teacher reported that his college managers insisted "students have to be 'exam-ready' when you interview them, otherwise you don't take them on the course. It's so wrong". As stated earlier, LESLLA learners are seen to need more time to make progress through the curriculum as they are having to learn basic study skills and literacy in addition to the language. The teachers felt they were also less likely to pass exams that often-required good levels of literacy and world knowledge that they might be unfamiliar with having never been to school. "Now that our standard ESOL classes are reduced to four hours per week, it is much harder for learners who have come from a low or no literacy background to pass the exams they need to progress". They were therefore particularly affected by the 'exam-ready' policy, which meant that they were perhaps denied access to classes or that they were asked to leave because of their slow progress.

Three examples provide an insight into the extent to which the focus on exams creates a negative washback effect on other aspects of the curriculum: "With only six hours a week I'm only really following the course book grammar and exam preparation". This curriculum content is unlikely to suit many students but would be particularly inappropriate for those with weak literacy skills. Another teacher was prevented from taking her LESLLA learners to an organised workshop that may well have been their first opportunity to visit a museum: "I wanted to take my students to the British Museum. It was

doing ESOL workshops. But my boss said, 'No, you can't. They have to do exam practice. They don't need to see the Rodin sculptures'". A third teacher explained her strategy for preparing students for a writing exam when time was short:

With the writing exam, they get ticks for the criteria to pass, so it doesn't matter if it's rubbish what they've written, as long as they've used 2 adjectives they get a tick for that, as long as they've written 1 sentence with a capital letter and full stop they get a tick for that, it could be gibberish what they've written, but as long as they get the ticks, they pass […]. So, this year, we're just working on the criteria to pass. We're doing 2 weeks on punctuation, 2 weeks on planning, because planning is another criteria. It's boring stuff and difficult to make interesting.

LESLLA learners clearly need to work on development of their writing skills, but this very targeted approach, born out of necessity, assumes some prior writing skills and is unlikely to help learners develop their basic skills. Research suggests that LESLLA learners seem to learn best when content is meaningful, relevant and contextualised, finding analytical tasks such as multiple choice or true/false questions that focus on features of language particularly challenging (Vinogradov and Bigelow 2010). This would make some exam preparation work unsuitable for these learners.

A consequence of reduced lesson preparation time appears to mean that instead of preparing their own resources to suit the needs of their learners, teachers tend to use course books or materials downloaded from the internet to a greater extent than before: "I used to knit my own lessons but now you can't do it quick enough, so I use books". And: "Now I mainly use course books. It is now very rare that I make something new because I don't have time". This again indirectly disadvantages the LESLLA learners. Most EFL course books were written for a very different demographic and the level of literacy assumed, as well as the world knowledge, and Eurocentric viewpoint found in them (Risager 2018) usually renders them unsuitable for use with LESLLA learners. Beginner level teachers reported the type face used in course books, and the spaces provided to write in, were too small for learners who were in the early stages of learning to write. One teacher spoke about the lack of published resources suitable for LESLLA learners and the amount of time she

needed to produce suitable resources for this specialist area of teaching. Two teachers of specialised ESOL literacy classes spoke about the fact that they liked to tailor their resources to the specific learners they have in each class, using for example their names, countries etc. as examples, but with less preparation time they are now rarely able to do so.

Only two of the teachers interviewed had received more than a half day's training in working with LESLLA learners. Both of these had taken a six-day course run by the now defunct Language and Literacy Unit, which they had found to be very useful. Another teacher had recently found a reduced version of the course available at a cost of £200 but her centre was not able to fund this due to budget constraints.

Finally, other areas of cutbacks that impacted disproportionately on LESLLA learners were mentioned, including the disappearance of on-site college nurseries. A large percentage of LESLLA students are women (due to the number of girls globally who miss out on education) and the closure of nurseries has created a barrier for many learners with young children. Also, the reduced funds for Additional Learning Support, that previously could be used to provide extra help in the classroom or outside for students with weak literacy, has meant less help in the classroom for over-stretched teachers and less support for weaker learners.

4. Discussion

From both sources of data, we get a picture of LESLLA learners being disproportionately disadvantaged by various changes to provision and practice that have arisen as a consequence of underfunding of adult education in general and ESOL in particular. It seems that cuts to provision have in some institutions meant the closure of specialist provision for LESLLA learners. The introduction of fees and the closure of nurseries has led to mothers on low incomes being unable to access classes. Reduced course hours in several institutions have led to an increased pace in lessons, and students who learn at a slower pace are getting left behind, especially when they find themselves in mainstream ESOL classes. Reduced course hours have also resulted,

in some cases, in teachers omitting skills work in favour of a stream-lined curriculum focussed on grammar input and exam practice, which would be unlikely to provide LESLLA learners with the literacy and study skills they need. The heavy focus on exam success is a consequence of the funding rules and ultimately the marketization of the sector, and in some cases at least is leading to unfair course entry criteria whereby students who have had less previous education are denied access to classes because they are less likely to pass. This seems to be the ultimate consequence of planning and delivering a curriculum based on maximising funding rather than on student need. If a provider insists that students should be 'exam-ready' before they start then LESLLA learners are unlikely to be given the opportunity to develop their skills.

No doubt as a consequence of the approach to recruitment and curriculum planning described above, it seems fair to assume that LESLLA learners unable to access funded courses in FE or adult education centres are now increasingly being taught in voluntary sector provision where teachers may be unpaid and unqualified, as well as lacking in specialist training for working with LESLLA learners. While more informal provision, perhaps without the constraints of outcomes-led funding may suit some LESLLA learners in their initial contact with education, it is unlikely that deprofessionalisation of staffing for this group of learners can sustain their learning in the long term.

The data collected from both the interviews and the surveys paints a picture of teachers who are very committed to their learners but who are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the individualised support needed to give LESLLA learners what they need. They reported going far beyond their contracted hours to do their best to provide an inclusive experience for all their learners: "Teachers end up doing one-to-one literacy sessions – unpaid of course". One teacher described how bending the rules to help students nearly cost him his job. He allowed a LESLLA learner (who had no hope of passing the exams but seemed to get a lot from the class) to sit in on classes without paying the fees, but the situation was exposed when she had a medical emergency in class and an ambulance had to be called for her.

Neither the respondents to the survey nor the teachers interviewed spoke much about good practice as regards teaching LESLLA learners. It is likely that this was due to the sampling method used and the fact that perhaps it attracted respondents who wanted an opportunity to complain about what they saw as the degradation of provision for LESLLA learners. However undoubtedly good practice still exists in the sector. At three institutions three levels or more of classes were available for LESLLA learners allowing for an extended period of time in specialised classes and the opportunity to progress through several levels. In eight institutions outcomes were measured by achievement of individual targets allowing for an approach centred on the student, her needs and motivations. Some teachers were not only fully qualified in ESOL theory and pedagogy but had also completed a specialist course in working with LESLLA learners. Where possible teachers either adapted published materials to better meet the needs and interests of their group, or they designed their own resources. And in all cases the teachers were firmly committed to doing the best they could for their learners, albeit in difficult circumstances.

5. Conclusion

The arguments for specialist provision for LESLLA learners are compelling. The opportunity to learn the initial stages of reading and writing, as well as learning how to be a student generally, seems to require classes that are slower paced than the average ESOL lesson, and without doubt lessons that focus on the initial sub-skills required for literacy must be preferable to snatched moments of extra support within a mainstream ESOL class. LESLLA students also struggle to keep up with the oral skills work in mainstream ESOL classes as it is often the case that prompts and tasks for speaking and listening activities are presented in written form and there is an assumption that students will be able to read the texts, task instructions etc. In addition to this, from recent research it is clear that being a beginner in literacy also affects one's ability to process grammatical morphemes and therefore to assimilate some of the grammar input they will come across. Furthermore, there is also the view that LESLLA learners are

less able to deal with abstract concepts and respond better to lessons built on concrete real-world situations.

The respondents in this study report that in their institutions the effects of austerity cuts and marketization of provision are disproportionately affecting LESLLA learners in a number of ways that result in them losing access to quality provision. This is in effect denying a second chance of education to women who have already missed out on their first chance. It seems important that in the general defence of ESOL provision and in arguing for a national ESOL strategy, we must be making it clear that ESOL learners have a wide variety of needs and we need classes that are not one-size-fits-all. Within this, it is important to specifically cater for this group of learners who are facing multiple sources of disadvantage. They need specialised provision at several levels and of sufficient hours per week for them to be able to develop basic literacy skills alongside their language development. Anything less will have the effect of excluding this already disadvantaged group from realistic opportunities to develop their skills, and denying them the benefits that language and literacy can bring.

References

Action for ESOL. 2012. *The ESOL Manifesto*. http://actionforesol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ESOL-manifesto-leaflet-v4b-online.pdf

Association of Colleges. 2013. *ESOL Qualifications and Funding in 2014: Issues for consideration.* https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/ESOL.Qualifications%20Report%20(Jan%202014).pdf

Bigelow, Martha and Elaine Tarone. 2004. The role of literacy level in second language acquisition: Doesn't who we study determine what we know? *TESOL Quarterly* 38(4): 689-700.

Dearden, Lizzie. 2017. Hate-crime reports rise by almost a third in year as Home Office figures illustrate EU-referendum spike. *The Independent*. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/hate-crimes-eu-referendum-spike-brexit-terror-attacks-police-home-office-europeans-xenophobia-a8004716.html

Dornyei, Zoltan. 2007. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: OUP.

Learning and Work Institute 2016. Pre-Entry ESOL: A Factsheet for the South East Region. https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Pre-entry-ESOL-factsheet-Final.pdf

Liberty 2018. *A Guide to the Hostile Environment.* https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/sites/default/files/HE%20web.pdf

Marsden, Gordon. 2018. ESOL is chronically underfed – this must change. FE Week. https://feweek.co.uk/2018/03/26/esol-is-chronically-underfed-this-must-change/

Mason, Rowena and Harriet Sherwood. 2016. Cameron 'stigmatising Muslim women' with English language policy. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jan/18/david-cameron-stigmatising-muslim-women-learn-english-language-policy

Olson, David. 1996. *The World on Paper: The Concepts and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NATECLA 2016. *Towards an ESOL Strategy for England.* https://www.natecla.org.uk/content/631/ESOL-Strategy-for-England#main_document

NRDC 2007. *Effective Teaching and Learning ESOL Summary Report.* https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/22304/2/doc_3379.pdf

Paget, Ally and Neil Stevenson. 2017. *On Speaking Terms*. London: Demos. https://demosuk.wpengine.com/files/On_speaking_termsweb.pdf?1408395571.

Risager, Karen. 2018. Representations of the World in Language Textbooks. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Schmidt, Richard. 1983. Interaction, acculturation, and the acquisition of communicative competence. In Nessa Wolfson and Elliot Judd (eds.) *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*, 137-174. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Tarone, Elaine, Kit Hansen and Martha Bigelow. 2013. Alphabetic literacy and adult SLA. In Julia Herschensohn and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*, 187-203. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

University and College Union 2007. *Increasing exclusion, raising barriers: the real costs of charging for ESOL*. https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/2379/Increasing-exclusion-raising-barriers-the-real-costs-of-charging-for-ESOL-UCU-briefing-Nov-07/pdf/ucu_esolbriefing_nov07.pdf

University and College Union 2018. It's your time: workload campaign. https://www.ucu.org.uk/workloadcampaign

Vinogradov, Patsy and Martha Bigelow. 2010. Using Oral Language Skills to Build on the Emerging Literacy of Adult English Learners. *Caela Network Brief* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED540592.pdf

Wonder Foundation 2016. *Empowerment Through Education: Women Breaking the English Barrier*. https://www.wonderfoundation.org.uk/resources/report-women-breaking-english-barrier

L'influenza di un corso di formazione per insegnanti volontari di italiano L2 sullo sviluppo di prassi pedagogiche adatte ai bisogni di cittadini migranti.
L'analisi di un caso studio.

Paolo Della Putta

In this paper we present the characteristics and outcomes of a training course for volunteer teachers of L2 Italian to low educated and/or literate migrants. We will analyse the training needs of the teachers and the school, the characteristics of the training intervention and its effects on the teaching practice of the teachers involved, detected through the administration of questionnaires drawn up to analyse the effectiveness of the different modules of the training intervention. The results indicate that the course under study has triggered some virtuous changes both in teaching practice and in the organization of the school. It is also noted that the obstacle most perceived by the teachers involved is the management of the lack of literacy, a problem that affects about 20% of the students of the school.

Keywords: teacher training, volunteering, teachers' beliefs, teaching practices.

1. Introduzione

Il saldo migratorio, l'indice demografico che misura il rapporto fra cittadini immigrati ed emigrati in una determinata area geografica (Weeks 2015: 270), è stato, nella storia del Regno d'Italia prima e della Repubblica Italiana poi, pressoché sempre negativo e soltanto da pochi decenni a questa parte tale tendenza è cambiata significativamente. Le ondate emigratorie italiane si collocano in tre momenti: il cinquantennio compreso fra il 1870 e il 1920, con spostamenti di cittadini principalmente verso le Americhe; il trentennio 1946-1976, in cui l'emigrazione è avvenuta soprattutto verso i Paesi nord europei e la meno conosciuta – ma non per questo meno studiata (cfr. Giergji 2015) – terza ondata emigratoria, iniziata in concomitanza con la crisi economica globale del 2008. Quest'ultimo ciclo vede un numero ingente di giovani cittadini italiani

cercare lavoro, spesso qualificato, principalmente in Nord Europa. I dati (cfr. Chini 2018: 19) indicano che a fine 2015 sono circa 5.200.000 gli italiani residenti all'estero, con un forte aumento dell'emigrazione avvenuto nel decennio 2008-2018. Tuttavia, e per la prima volta nella storia italiana, a un fenomeno emigratorio di ampia portata corrisponde un altrettanto ingente spostamento di masse di cittadini verso la Penisola. Come riportato da Chini (2018), il saldo migratorio passa, infatti, da un +0,8 del quinquennio 1995-2000 a un +6,4 del quinquennio 2005-2010, per poi riequilibrarsi notevolmente in anni recenti: nel 2018, per esempio, gli ormai più di cinque milioni di italiani residenti all'estero sono controbilanciati dai 5.145.000 stranieri residenti in Italia, dei quali 3.714.000 sono cittadini non comunitari (Conti e Guarnieri 2018). Inoltre, nel 2016, al 34% dei cittadini non comunitari è stato concesso il permesso di soggiorno per motivi di protezione umanitaria (Conti e Guarnieri 2018). Sul territorio italiano è quindi ingente il numero dei migranti forzati (Thomas Cameroon 2014), ovvero di quelle persone emigrate loro malgrado dal Paese d'origine a seguito di eventi traumatici di natura bellica o politica. Lo scenario migratorio italiano d'oggi si rivela dunque unico nella storia del Paese: da un lato assistiamo a una ripresa dell'emigrazione, con cause economiche del tutto simili a quelle passate ma con attori più giovani e più istruiti; dall'altro lato, l'Italia è diventata approdo di un cospicuo numero di cittadini che non la scelgono realmente come destinazione ma che, piuttosto, vi arrivano seguendo le cosiddette "rotte dei migranti", percorsi obbligati gestiti spesso da gruppi malavitosi internazionali (cfr. McAuliffe e Laczko 2016 per dati e ricerche sul fenomeno).

Le istituzioni italiane difficilmente riescono a fare fronte alle mutevoli e cangianti necessità di uno scenario demografico di tale complessità e rapidità evolutiva. Considerato il ruolo fondamentale della conoscenza della lingua nel processo di integrazione nella società ospitante (Pulinx e Van Avermaet 2017), l'organizzazione di corsi di italiano L2 adatti a un pubblico migrante spesso a scarso livello di alfabetizzazione e istruzione è una misura cruciale per favorire l'integrazione socio-economica di questi cittadini. Tuttavia, è facile constatare come questa offerta non sia sufficiente o, comunque, non abbastanza ben organizzata per far fronte alle necessità lavorative, culturali e formative di un pubblico così complesso. Ai dati emersi dal

rapporto ISTAT pubblicato più di 10 anni fa (2008), in cui si rilevava che meno del 10% dei cittadini stranieri frequentava corsi di lingua italiana (cfr. discussione in Minuz e Pugliese 2012), fanno eco i rilievi del decennio 2011-2012, *post* Decreto Ministeriale del 4 giugno 2010[1], che riportano come solo il 17,5% di persone immigrate frequentino corsi di italiano organizzati da canali istituzionali (Bagna e Perez 2018). Inoltre, una più recente indagine compiuta nel comune di Roma rileva che fra il 30 e il 60% della domanda di corsi di lingua rimane insoddisfatta dagli apparati istituzionali (Battista e Cardenia 2014); per soddisfare i loro bisogni di apprendimento linguistico, molti cittadini migranti si rivolgono, dunque, alle scuole fondate e gestite da insegnanti volontari, organizzazioni che, in molti casi, colmano un vuoto istituzionale e forniscono un servizio necessario alle persone approdate in Italia dopo vissuti traumatici[2].

In questo contributo presentiamo le caratteristiche e gli esiti di un corso di formazione tenuto agli insegnanti volontari della Scuola di Babele[3], un'associazione non profit fondata nel 1990 a Legnano, una cittadina di circa 60.000 abitanti appartenente all'ampia area post-industriale situata fra le provincie di Milano e Varese. Sin dalla sua nascita, la Scuola di Babele ha favorito l'integrazione degli stranieri tramite l'insegnamento della lingua italiana. Un nucleo storico di insegnanti, che oggi ha anche funzioni di coordinamento e direzione della scuola, si affianca a un gruppo più giovane di cittadini spinti da motivi etici e ideologici alla partecipazione alle attività didattiche. L'autore del presente contributo segue da anni le attività della scuola come esperto esterno e formatore: ciclicamente, la direzione mi contatta per organizzare corsi di formazione e aggiornamento agli

---

[1] Si tratta del D.M. che obbliga i cittadini non comunitari a superare un esame attestante un livello di conoscenza dell'italiano "A2" per ottenere il permesso di lungo soggiorno.

[2] Accanto al ruolo delle scuole volontarie e delle organizzazioni che esse tendono a creare (la Rete delle Scuole senza permesso di Milano, www.scuolesenzapermesso.org, o la Rete Scuole Migranti di Roma, www.scuolemigranti.org), è importante riportare le recenti collaborazioni fra università e istituzioni nell'organizzazione di corsi di italiano L2 e nella formazione degli insegnanti. Si pensi, ad esempio, alla sinergia fra la Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri dell'Università di Palermo e il CPIA Palermo 1 (cfr. D'Agostino e Sorce 2016).

[3] Cfr. www.scuoladibabele.it.

insegnanti. A gennaio 2018 è stato varato un progetto formativo più strutturato, della durata di 18 ore distribuite in 4 incontri preceduti da alcune osservazioni delle attività di classe e seguiti da una riunione valutativa finale. Data la possibilità di una maggiore pianificazione del corso e data la partecipazione di un pubblico discretamente folto e motivato di insegnanti, si è deciso di verificare quali ricadute un'attività formativa di questo tipo possa avere sulle prassi didattiche e sull'organizzazione interna di una scuola interamente dedicata a un pubblico di apprendenti così peculiare, che possiamo far ricadere nella macrocategoria degli studenti LESLLA (*Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults*; cfr. Young-Scholten 2013). Una seconda parte del corso di formazione, di cui diamo conto in Della Putta (2021), è avvenuta fra maggio 2018 e febbraio 2019; sia sufficiente specificare, qui, che questa seconda fase formativa, non inizialmente in programma, è stata dedicata alla discussione e alla restituzione delle attività didattiche ideate a corso concluso.

Nel prosieguo del capitolo descriveremo le caratteristiche della Scuola di Babele e le sue necessità formative, rapportandole a quelle identificate da altri studi dedicati alle scuole e agli insegnanti LESLLA (Sezione 2). Nella Sezione 3 presenteremo il corso di formazione proposto, riassumendone i contenuti e motivandone le scelte e le modalità di erogazione. La quarta Sezione sarà dedicata all'analisi dei risultati e alla risposta delle domande di ricerca, mentre nella quinta Sezione saranno presentate le conclusioni del lavoro.

2. La Scuola di Babele e le necessità formative dei suoi insegnanti

Legnano è collocata in un'area altamente industrializzata che in tempi recenti ha sofferto, però, numerose delocalizzazioni e chiusure di complessi produttivi, con la conseguente parziale crisi economica del territorio. I fenomeni immigratori hanno coinvolto la città sin dalla metà degli anni '80 del secolo scorso, quando i primi cittadini stranieri si sono trasferiti qui per le possibilità di impiego che la rete industriale del territorio offriva. La crescita della presenza di stranieri è stata esponenziale ed ha superato il 10% della popolazione residente nel 2010, assestandosi attorno alle 7000 unità. Inoltre, i dati ufficiali non rilevano la forte presenza di clandestini, spesso impiegati

illegalmente nell'indotto produttivo della città. In questo contesto, un gruppo di cittadini si è costituito associazione di volontariato e ha fondato, nel 1990, la Scuola di Babele in cui, sin da subito, si è insegnato l'italiano L2 ai migranti, con o senza permesso di soggiorno. Oggi la scuola è un vero e proprio avamposto multiculturale: oltre ai corsi di italiano L2 (che coprono il 70% delle attività didattiche), si propongono anche corsi di lingua araba e cinese a cittadini italiani, incontri e dibattiti su tematiche inerenti alle migrazioni e all'accoglienza e si organizzano eventi ricreativi per favorire l'incontro e lo scambio interculturale.

Il servizio offerto dalla Scuola di Babele ha intercettato le necessità dei migranti presenti sul territorio che, nonostante negli anni abbiano cambiato caratteristiche demografiche – *in primis* la provenienza[4] –, sempre più numerosi si sono iscritti ai corsi di italiano della scuola. Nella Figura 1 vediamo il numero di iscritti degli ultimi dieci anni.
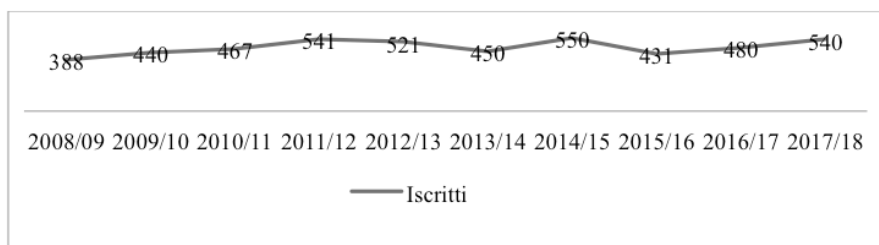
Figura 1. Studenti iscritti ai corsi di italiano negli ultimi dieci anni.

Nella Figura 2 è riportata la provenienza degli iscritti all'anno scolastico 2017/2018. Le nazioni più rappresentate sono la Cina (20% dei corsisti), il Pakistan (13%), il Marocco (11%), la Nigeria (8%) e il Perù, sempre con l'8% degli studenti. Come emerge dalla Figura, gli studenti europei sono pochi e, fra questi, le nazioni più rappresentate sono la Bielorussia e l'Ucraina. La scuola intercetta quindi sempre meno cittadini immigrati regolari già inseriti nel tessuto sociale di Legnano e si occupa sempre più di persone con esistenze travagliate e

---

[4] Nei primi anni novanta, i cittadini stranieri che maggiormente frequentavano la scuola erano albanesi e marocchini. Oggi i cittadini cinesi e pachistani sono, invece, la maggioranza.

non integrate, spesso provenienti da culture distanti. L'età migratoria media degli studenti è molto bassa: il 73% degli iscritti nel 2017 era in Italia da meno di 14 mesi. I dati inerenti alla storia scolastica dei corsisti dicono che il 6% ha frequentato le scuole per meno di due anni. Il 16% degli studenti ha avuto istruzione formale per un periodo compreso fra i 2 e i 5 anni, mentre il 48% ha ricevuto un'istruzione formale nel proprio Paese per almeno 5 anni.
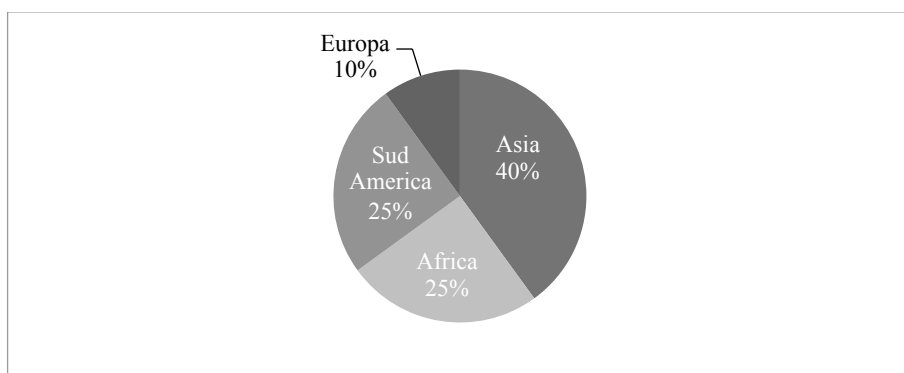

Figura 2. Provenienza degli studenti nell'anno scolastico 2017/2018.

All'apertura delle iscrizioni e agli arrivati a lezioni già iniziate, la scuola somministra un test d'ingresso per valutare le competenze in entrata. Il test è una prova di comprensione scritta e orale, di competenza grammaticale in strutture altamente frequenti e di competenza lessicale di parole riguardanti campi semantici comuni, come il lavoro, la salute e i mezzi di trasporto. Grazie a tale prova, gli iscritti vengono suddivisi in 5 livelli di competenza diversi, riassunti nella Figura 3, in cui vediamo i dati riguardanti gli iscritti nel 2017.
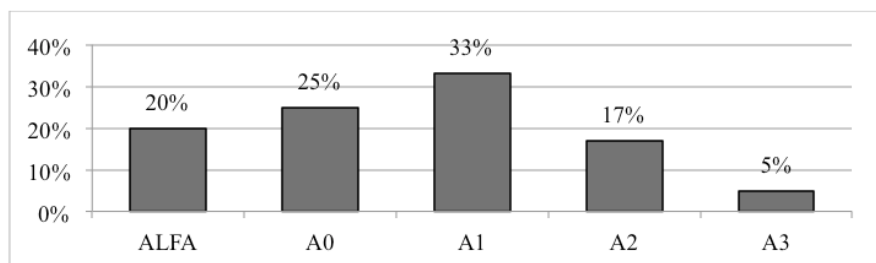
Figura 3. Suddivisione dei livelli di competenza nel 2017.

Il livello ALFA – alfabetizzazione – corrisponde a studenti analfabeti totali o alfabetizzati solamente nell'alfabeto latino. La questione dell'analfabetismo, dobbiamo rilevare, è trattata con eccessiva superficialità: nel gruppo ALFA sono presenti persone analfabete totali, persone con una sola (a volte scarsa) competenza di lettura in una lingua scritta non a caratteri latini e persone alfabetizzate nella loro lingua madre ma non nei caratteri latini. Tutto questo va a discapito della complessità del problema e delle sue importanti ricadute didattiche, ben discusse da D'Agostino e Lo Maglio (2018). Gli A0 sono apprendenti debolmente scolarizzati e con nessuna conoscenza dell'italiano, mentre il gruppo A1 è composto da studenti debolmente scolarizzati, con una minima conoscenza dell'italiano e parlanti lingue distanti dall'italiano. Appartengono al livello A2 studenti debolmente competenti in italiano ma parlanti una L1 romanza, mentre il livello A3 include apprendenti con una competenza più avanzata, di solito già in grado di sostenere una conversazione con un parlante nativo. Come notiamo, il livello di competenza medio dei corsisti è tendenzialmente basso e l'analfabetismo riguarda il 20% degli studenti.

2.1. Le necessità formative della scuola

Come sottolineato da numerosi studi (per esempio, Naeb e Young-Scholten 2017; Trulli 2014;), l'accesso a una formazione di qualità, che favorisca una prassi didattica efficace e consapevole, è una delle principali necessità degli insegnanti volontari. La Scuola di Babele non è un'eccezione: i primi tentativi di formazione e aggiornamento sono stati interni, con piccoli corsi a iniziativa spontanea ideati e condotti dai volontari in forza all'associazione. Questi tentativi, tuttavia, non hanno dato i risultati sperati e la scuola, allora, ha richiesto interventi esterni, negli ultimi sei anni tenuti sporadicamente da chi scrive.

   Nel 2017 il comitato direttivo ha deciso di organizzare un intervento formativo più articolato, caldeggiando la presenza di tutti gli insegnanti. Il corso oggetto di riflessione in questo contributo è dunque iniziato a febbraio 2018 ed è durato, complessivamente, due mesi. Per determinare le necessità formative della scuola, ho chiesto

di poter osservare alcune lezioni – cinque ore complessive –, di poter parlare con alcuni insegnanti e di distribuire un questionario piuttosto libero in cui si raccontassero i problemi esperiti durante le attività di classe.

L'osservazione delle lezioni ha messo in luce alcune caratteristiche rilevate da altri studi condotti con insegnanti volontari in contesti simili (cfr. Minuz e Pugliese 2012): durante le attività di classe, ampio spazio viene dedicato alla spiegazione e alla presentazione di regole grammaticali seguendo un percorso deduttivo e dicotomico, in cui la lingua è presentata come oggetto di studio e non come mezzo per comunicare. La capacità di lettura e scrittura sono esercitate molto frequentemente e gli insegnanti le ritengono prodromiche a un apprendimento efficace. Durante le lezioni si aprono spesso lunghe digressioni esplicative, di natura sia lessicale sia grammaticale, su argomenti anche non centrali all'attività in atto. Gli insegnanti usano molti *realia* didattici che hanno attinenza con la vita quotidiana dei corsisti (come biglietti del treno, scontrini etc.) ma, anche, testi di complessità troppo elevata o poco pertinenti con l'esperienza dei discenti. Molto sforzo è dedicato alla motivazione degli studenti, ma spesso questo avviene a latere della lezione, invitando i corsisti a partecipare a eventi o a scambi con gli italiani; durante la lezione l'atmosfera è sempre piuttosto formale e controllata e lascia raramente spazio alla spontaneità comunicativa degli studenti. Gli esercizi e le attività proposte sono a carattere prettamente manipolatorio e il ricorso al testo scritto, appena possibile, è talvolta prioritario all'oralità. D'altro canto, le attività che favoriscono l'interazione orale sono poche perché, come poi segnalato da alcuni insegnanti, "è difficile farli parlare proprio perché sanno ancora troppo poco l'italiano".

I colloqui con gli insegnanti (12) e i questionari distribuiti al corpo docente (26 persone, di cui 23 hanno risposto) sono in linea con quanto emerso dalle osservazioni e mostrano sei punti critici già rilevati da altri studi condotti in contesti simili (cfr. Bresciani e Aloisi 2012; Minuz e Pugliese 2012; Vinogradov e Linden 2009): 1) il primato della grammatica nell'insegnamento della lingua; 2) l'uso di un sillabo composto da entità discrete, ordinate secondo una sequenza nozionistica e non funzionale (cfr. il cosiddetto *Monday morning's menu* di Long 2007); 3) la scarsa consapevolezza che una lingua si

può imparare anche incidentalmente; 4) la difficoltà a gestire una frequenza molto saltuaria alle lezioni; 5) la difficoltà a entrare in contatto con la "dissonanza culturale" (Ibarra 2001) di questo pubblico di studenti, spesso non avvezzo a pratiche didattiche di stile occidentale e 6) la convinzione che, nei casi di (semi)analfabetismo, l'insegnamento linguistico debba necessariamente essere preceduto da un lungo percorso di apprendimento della letto-scrittura. Gli insegnanti hanno infatti esplicitamente richiesto di essere aiutati a stendere sillabi più efficaci e più compatibili con le possibilità di apprendimento di studenti LESLLA, di avere più informazioni sulla realtà psicologica e sociale di questi apprendenti, soprattutto per superare situazioni di impasse comunicativo e di disorientamento culturale, e di ricevere istruzione su come insegnare a leggere e a scrivere ai corsisti analfabeti. L'ultimo problema, forse il più sentito, riguarda la frequenza dei corsi e la motivazione degli allievi: come già rilevato, la presenza degli studenti alle lezioni è molto frammentaria e saltuaria e molti sono percepiti come difficilmente motivabili verso lo studio. È stato quindi chiesto di avere indicazioni su come favorire la motivazione e su come poter innalzare il livello di frequenza.

3. Il corso di formazione

Il corso di formazione è stato concepito pensando in primo luogo alle esigenze dei docenti della scuola e alle caratteristiche della didattica da loro praticata. Oltre a questo, però, sono state prese in considerazione le riflessioni condotte sui bisogni e sulle caratteristiche degli studenti LESLLA e dei loro insegnanti. Infine, come quadro teorico generale della formazione degli insegnanti di lingue, è stato adottato il modello modulare di Kumaravadivelu (2012), sulla base del quale è stato impostato l'intervento formativo oggetto di analisi.

Il modello di Kumaravadivelu vede la formazione degli insegnanti come un atto dinamico, in grado di aiutare i docenti a sviluppare armonicamente e criticamente cinque dimensioni focali della loro professione, chiamate da Kumaravadivelu "moduli". Il primo modulo – *knowing* – riguarda le conoscenze sulla lingua insegnata, sul modo in cui essa è acquisita e sul contesto socio culturale in cui il suo insegnamento avviene; il secondo modulo –

analyzing – fa riferimento alla capacità di analizzare le necessità e le motivazioni degli apprendenti, mentre il terzo modulo – *recognizing* – è metariflessivo e consente all'insegnante di riconoscere e modificare i valori assegnati alla sua professione e le convinzioni verso l'insegnamento via via strutturate con l'esperienza (i cosiddetti *teachers' beliefs*, cfr. Davin et al. 2018). Gli ultimi due componenti di questo modello riguardano, rispettivamente, la capacità di osservare criticamente la propria attività di classe – *seeing* – e il modulo *doing*, ovvero la messa in atto di tecniche didattiche efficaci e la capacità di pianificazione del corso sulla base delle necessità degli studenti e del contesto socio-culturale in cui l'insegnamento avviene.

Il modello di Kumaravadivelu, ancorché non pensato esplicitamente per insegnanti volontari e non nato in seno al contesto socio-culturale italiano[5], ci è sembrato adatto alle necessità di una scuola di insegnanti volontari perché in grado di promuovere una visione integrata dell'insegnamento linguistico, dalla quale emergono dinamiche e motivi di complessità della glottodidassi, le cui caratteristiche devono essere in linea con il delicato contesto psico-sociale in cui l'insegnamento ad adulti migranti è situato. In un contesto pedagogico di alta complessità didattica, linguistica, psicologica e sociale come quello in oggetto (Minuz 2014), non è possibile disgiungere, durante l'evento formativo, riflessioni di carattere socio-psicologico sui discenti da approfondimenti pratici sulla gestione dell'attività di classe quotidiana. È altresì necessario che gli insegnanti sappiano porsi obiettivi didattici compatibili con le complessità acquisizionali che un pubblico di studenti LESLLA spesso presenta. Riflettere sui motivi di tale complessità, che sono da ricercare nella realtà biografico-culturale dei discenti (Young-Scholten 2013), può lenire la frustrazione nell'esperire le difficoltà e la poca efficacia dell'insegnamento talvolta percepita. Infine, ci è parso utile provare a dare a questi insegnanti degli strumenti metariflessivi sulla loro attività, spingendoli a confrontarsi fra loro e ad analizzare con maggiore piglio critico le loro attività didattiche.

---

[5] Anche se, a ben vedere, molte delle componenti del modello di Kumaravadivelu sono ben presenti in vari modelli pedagogici europei, riassunti criticamente da Margiotta (2008).

Nel prossimo paragrafo presentiamo più puntualmente come è stato organizzato e declinato il corso.

3.1. Contenuti e organizzazione dell'intervento formativo

Al corso sono stati invitati a partecipare 26 insegnanti e la presenza media agli incontri è stata di 21,3 persone. Il profilo dei partecipanti è eterogeneo: 10 docenti insegnano italiano L2 a studenti LESLLA da almeno 2 anni, 11 hanno un'esperienza didattica a cittadini migranti di meno di 14 mesi e 5 corsisti sono ex insegnanti di scuola pubblica. I corsisti si sono da subito dimostrati molto motivati e interessati alla formazione. Per non ostacolare la partecipazione, il corso è stato tenuto il sabato mattina, in incontri a cadenza bisettimanale di circa 4 ore ciascuno. Durante gli incontri è stato favorito il confronto e la partecipazione ma, dato l'alto numero di presenze, non è stato possibile concedere troppo spazio alle riflessioni dei singoli sulle proprie esperienze. I contenuti del corso, collocati all'interno del modello di riferimento delineato nel paragrafo precedente, sono ispirati da precedenti ricerche e riflessioni sulle necessità didattiche degli studenti LESLLA nonché, come accennavamo prima, alle analisi dei bisogni della scuola. Abbiamo quindi cercato di aiutare i formandi a raggiungere i seguenti obiettivi teorico/pratici:

- Avere consapevolezza che l'alfabetizzazione cresce in parallelo alla competenza di uso orale della lingua (Bigelow e Vinogradov 2011).
- Contestualizzare l'insegnamento "nella vita attuale" degli allievi (Vinogradov e Linden 2009).
- Usare *realia* collocati nell'esistenza degli allievi (biglietti del treno, carta d'identità, volantini pubblicitari, bugiardini di farmaci etc.).
- Promuovere un apprendimento attivo e favorire l'incontro fra oralità e scrittura (Bigelow e Vinogradov 2011; Naeb e Young-Scholten 2017).
- Usare metodi integrati per insegnare la lettoscrittura. Considerare i diversi gradienti di analfabetismo (D'Agostino e Lo Maglio 2018) ed evitare l'insegnamento mnemonico dell'alfabeto (cfr. Nitti 2017).
- Consapevolezza che il processo di apprendimento della morfosintassi italiana è rallentato dalla minor quantità di input raggiungibile dagli apprendenti analfabeti o quasi analfabeti (Young-Scholten 2013).

– Accettare questa lentezza. Spostare il focus da progressi grammaticali e/o di lettura a progressi comunicativi e di ambientamento generali.
– Essere informati su come la realtà psicologica e sociale degli apprendenti LESLLA influisca sul processo di apprendimento e sulle dinamiche di approccio alla classe di lingua (Ibarra 2001).
– Venire a contatto con accorgimenti e tecniche didattiche utili per lavorare con questa tipologia di apprendenti: il sillabo a spirale, il processo induttivo di insegnamento della grammatica e la creazione e messa in atto di task, utili per ridare autonomia ai discenti e per favorire l'apprendimento incidentale dell'italiano (Arcuri 2016: 37-38; Bigelow e Vinogradov 2011; cfr. anche Lenz e Barras 2017).

I contenuti sono stati suddivisi in cinque macro aree, a cui è stato dato un diverso peso all'interno del corso, come riportato qui di seguito:

1. Dimensione socio-psicologica degli apprendenti LESLLA: shock culturale, progetti migratori, dinamiche di inserimento nella società italiana, ricerca del lavoro, diversi tipi di motivazioni, fenomeni di chiusura psichica a seguito di traumi. Tre ore di lavoro.
2. Principi di andragogia: l'adultità come condizione di vita; il ruolo di convinzioni e conoscenze precedenti nell'adulto; la dimensione affettiva dell'adultità. Tre ore.
3. Principi di linguistica acquisizionale: distinzione fra insegnamento e acquisizione; i limiti di esposizione all'input dei discenti (semi)analfabeti; basi di nozioni di interlingua; i limiti dell'insegnamento esplicito. Tre ore. Seguendo le riflessioni di Ellis (2010) sulla difficoltà di molti insegnanti ad acquisire le nozioni della linguistica acquisizionale, abbiamo deciso di limitare le riflessioni ai contenuti strettamente necessari alla prassi didattica.
4. Attività di riflessione e introspezione sulle prassi didattiche: osservazione e commento di materiali didattici; creazione di attività e unità didattiche (cfr. punto 5); riflessione critica sulla propria esperienza di studente e di insegnante di lingua. Quest'ultimo punto è stato importante per favorire l'allontanamento da prassi e convinzioni didattiche obsolescenti (cfr. Davis et al. 2018 sui *teachers' beliefs*). Cinque ore.
5. Organizzazione lezioni e indagine delle motivazioni degli apprendenti: unità didattica, sillabo a spirale e percorso induttivo di insegnamento della grammatica. Introduzione e creazione di task che leghino la classe al mondo esterno; come indagare la spinta allo studio dei discenti. Quattro ore.

In particolare, sono state caldeggiate riflessioni corali sul ruolo della motivazione all'apprendimento delle lingue facendo riferimento alle esperienze scolastiche ed extrascolastiche dei corsisti.

Considerazioni dello stesso tipo sono state fatte sulla motivazione allo studio: tramite l'analisi delle esperienze passate dei formandi, è stato esplorato il legame fra l'innalzamento della motivazione, la piacevolezza delle attività di classe e il loro maggior grado di contestualizzazione nella vita dei discenti (cfr. Balboni 2014: 60).

Lo spazio dato all'insegnamento mnemonico e ripetitivo della grammatica è stato discusso dai corsisti, con alcune "fazioni" a sostenere l'imprescindibilità della conoscenza grammaticale per una buona competenza comunicativa e con altri docenti a sostenere l'ipotesi opposta e a subordinare la conoscenza grammaticale alla capacità comunicativa. La nozione di interlingua, la distinzione fra insegnamento e acquisizione e una riflessione sui limiti dell'attività didattica sono state utilmente introdotte in questa discussione, cercando di far oscillare il pendolo didattico verso la seconda ipotesi.

È stata infine discussa l'importanza, in particolare per il pubblico dei migranti adulti, di legare l'esperienza quotidiana con le attività di classe, favorendo la ricerca spontanea di informazioni – linguistiche e non – all'esterno delle lezioni e incoraggiando poi la negoziazione e la restituzione di queste esperienze durante l'attività formativa. Si è così cercato di modificare l'obiettivo dell'attività didattica: da un generale accumulo di conoscenze esplicite sulla lingua a un miglioramento della competenza comunicativa, con lo scopo di aiutare i discenti a diventare attori sociali per dare così inizio a un circuito virtuoso di apprendimento creato dalle viepiù maggiori possibilità di socializzazione e uso dell'italiano.

Delineiamo a questo punto tre domande di ricerca sull'efficacia dell'intervento formativo appena descritto:

1. Il corso ha favorito un cambiamento virtuoso nell'attività didattica dei docenti della Scuola di Babele?
    In particolare, in quali aspetti dell'attività didattica ha avuto un'influenza positiva?
2. Il corso ha favorito atteggiamenti psicologici di maggiore apertura e comprensione verso le potenzialità e i limiti degli studenti LESLLA? Ha, inoltre, inciso positivamente nella disposizione d'animo con cui gli

insegnanti approcciano la loro attività didattica, riducendo, ad esempio, l'ansia della gestione di classi non sempre semplici?

3. Il corso ha inciso su alcuni aspetti organizzativi della scuola? Sono state, ad esempio, riviste le modalità di somministrazione del test di ingresso e la suddivisione degli studenti in livelli di competenza? Sono state introdotti momenti di confronto e di riflessione corale fra gli insegnanti, utili per condividere pratiche, materiali e decisioni?

4. Metodologia e risultati

Per rispondere alle domande di ricerca appena enucleate abbiamo fatto ricorso al *Teachers Training Evaluation Questionnaire* (TTEQ) di Guskey (2000), uno strumento valutativo che permette di avere un quadro piuttosto completo dell'efficacia di un corso di formazione tramite l'uso di questionari a scale Likert focalizzati su cinque aree:

1. Reazioni dei partecipanti: il corso è piaciuto? Ha suscitato interesse? Ha trattato i temi giusti?
2. Apprendimento dei partecipanti: le nozioni presentate sono state apprese?
3. Impatto sulla scuola in cui lavorano i docenti: il corso è servito a organizzare meglio il lavoro/le mansioni/la struttura dei corsi e delle attività didattiche?
4. Uso e integrazione delle nuove conoscenze: i docenti usano quello che hanno imparato? Integrano le nuove conoscenze nella loro prassi? Sono più favorevoli a «disapprendere» vecchie prassi in favore di nuove? Il corso ha favorito una disposizione psicologica migliore verso l'insegnamento e l'attività di classe?
5. Impatto sull'apprendimento degli studenti: gli studenti dimostrano di apprendere meglio dopo il corso? la sfera psico-affettiva degli studenti ha beneficiato del corso?

Per motivi organizzativi e per evitare di dover sottoporre gli studenti della scuola a un momento di valutazione formale della conoscenza dell'italiano, abbiamo ritenuto corretto evitare la valutazione dell'indicatore numero 5. La valutazione dell'indicatore 2, invece, è in atto tramite alcune osservazioni dell'attività didattica durante l'anno scolastico 2018/2019 (cfr. Della Putta 2021).

Ci limitiamo quindi all'analisi degli indicatori 1, 3 e 4. Sono stati distribuiti tre questionari valutativi: il primo ha indagato l'adeguatezza dei contenuti, la metodologia con cui sono stati presentati e la loro rilevanza per il contesto didattico della scuola; questo primo questionario ha previsto anche la possibilità di scrivere dei commenti aperti sul corso di formazione. Il secondo questionario ha verificato la presenza di cambiamenti nella prassi didattica dei docenti e il terzo ha analizzato la disposizione psicologica dei docenti. Il secondo e il terzo questionario sono stati somministrati due volte, a pochi giorni dalla conclusione dell'intervento formativo e a due mesi dalla sua fine. In tal modo abbiamo voluto verificare quanto l'attività didattica abbia ridimensionato e rideterminato i giudizi dati sul corso. Tutti i questionari sono stati costruiti su una scala Likert con un punteggio compreso fra 0 (valore negativo) e 4 (valore massimamente positivo). Per valutare l'impatto che il corso ha avuto sull'organizzazione della scuola, abbiamo incontrato, a due mesi dalla conclusione del corso di formazione, il comitato direttivo e abbiamo preso nota dei cambiamenti implementati o in fase di implementazione.

Vediamo ora punto per punto i risultati dei questionari, che 18 corsisti hanno riconsegnato compilati nelle modalità richieste.

4.1. Reazioni dei partecipanti

Nella Figura 4 riassumiamo le risposte dei 18 partecipanti, ricordando che i punteggi sono misurati secondo una scala compresa fra 0 e 4.
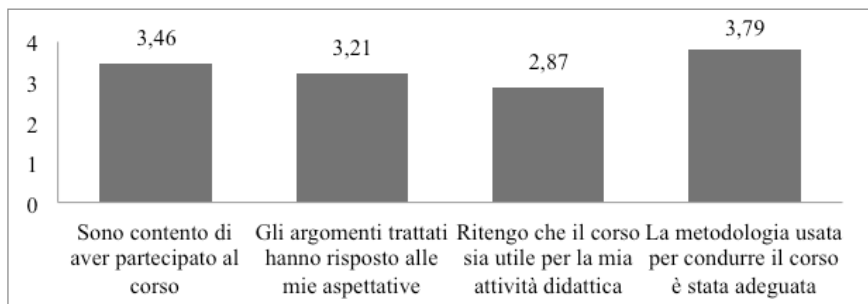
Figura 4. Reazioni dei partecipanti

Sebbene il livello di gradimento del corso sia alto, dalla sezione di commento aperto in calce al questionario sono emerse alcune aree di criticità. In primo luogo, otto corsisti hanno scritto che avrebbero gradito una maggiore attenzione al problema dell'analfabetismo e a come superarlo. Sono stati infatti richiesti "più strumenti pratici per insegnare a leggere e a scrivere". Inoltre, in cinque casi è stata messa in evidenza la difficoltà di alcuni concetti linguistici inerenti all'area di linguistica acquisizionale del corso. Un certo numero di corsisti ha trovato discretamente ostica quest'area più teorica della formazione, fenomeno messo in luce anche da Ellis (2010) in un saggio sulla formazione degli insegnanti. Infine, sei corsisti hanno richiesto di poter osservare delle lezioni, preferibilmente su supporto video e non di persona, così da avere un "modello" pratico e osservabile a cui fare riferimento.

4.2.   Cambiamenti nella prassi didattica

Nella Figura 5 riassumiamo le risposte date al secondo questionario che indaga l'uso e l'integrazione delle nuove conoscenze nell'attività didattica. Ricordiamo che la somministrazione è avvenuta due volte, a pochi giorni e a due mesi dalla fine del corso. Notiamo che il primo rilievo mostra risultati confortanti, dato che gli insegnanti rispondono molto positivamente a tutte e sei le domande. In particolare, il corso sembra aver aiutato a comprendere meglio i bisogni dei discenti e a bilanciare e selezionare i materiali didattici per i corsisti. La risposta con punteggio più basso è la numero 2: come già rilevato nel questionario precedente, l'insegnamento della lettoscrittura si rivela il punto su cui i corsisti si sono sentiti meno aiutati.

   Il quadro cambia parzialmente a distanza di due mesi: il punteggio di tutte le risposte si abbassa, ad eccezione della numero 3, il cui scarto in positivo con il primo rilievo, però, ha significatività statistica limitata ($p = .052$[6]). Peggiorano la capacità percepita di strutturare e organizzare la lezione e di aiutare i discenti analfabeti (risposte 1 e 2, entrambe con scarti valoriali statisticamente significativi, con $p = .03$

---

[6] Tutte le analisi di statistica inferenziale che riportiamo sono state tramite un t-Test condotto grazie al programma SPSS versione 20.

e .042 rispettivamente) e peggiora anche la capacità percepita di comprendere i bisogni degli studenti, dato che lo scarto fra i punteggi delle due somministrazioni della domanda 5 ha significatività statistica (p = .021). Sebbene i valori delle risposte rimangono comunque sempre alti, notiamo che la percezione dell'efficacia del corso nel favorire prassi didattiche più efficaci si faccia meno positiva con il trascorrere del tempo e con la ripresa dell'attività didattica.
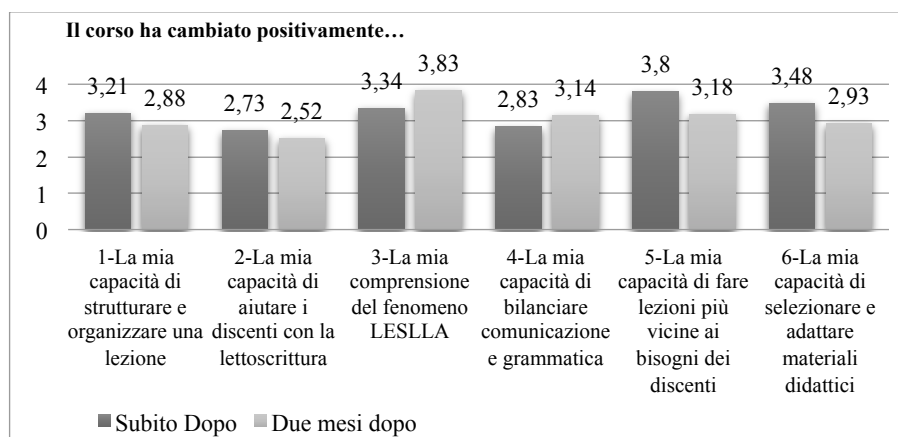

Figura 5. Cambiamenti nella prassi didattica.

4.3. La disposizione psicologica dei corsisti

Nella Figura 6 riassumiamo le risposte date al terzo questionario che indaga l'impatto del corso sulla disposizione psicologica degli insegnanti e sul loro atteggiamento verso l'attività didattica. Ricordiamo che la somministrazione è avvenuta due volte, a pochi giorni e a due mesi dalla fine del corso.

Rileviamo, anche per questa terza dimensione di analisi, risultati nel complesso soddisfacenti, ad esclusione del punteggio ottenuto nel primo rilievo della domanda 6, che rimane molto basso. Anche la domanda 2 segnala una percezione non positiva da parte dei corsisti. Tuttavia, entrambi i quesiti registrano punteggi significativamente migliori nella seconda somministrazione del questionario (p = .04 e .01 per le domande 2 e 6, rispettivamente). Le domande 1 e 4 registrano percezioni positive in entrambe le somministrazioni che,

seppur migliorando, non hanno variazioni statisticamente significative. Sono apprezzabili anche miglioramenti nella percezione del proprio livello di ansia (domanda 2, con scarti debolmente significativi, p = .055), mentre critica rimane la percezione dell'importanza dell'alfabetizzazione degli studenti che vede un peggioramento significativo fra il primo e il secondo rilievo (p < .001). La disposizione psicologia dei corsisti mostra un andamento positivo e, in 5 punti su 6, i corsisti ritengono che il corso abbia influito positivamente sulla modalità di approccio all'attività di classe. Come già rilevato nelle Sezioni precedenti, però, l'analfabetismo rimane il punto debole della formazione.
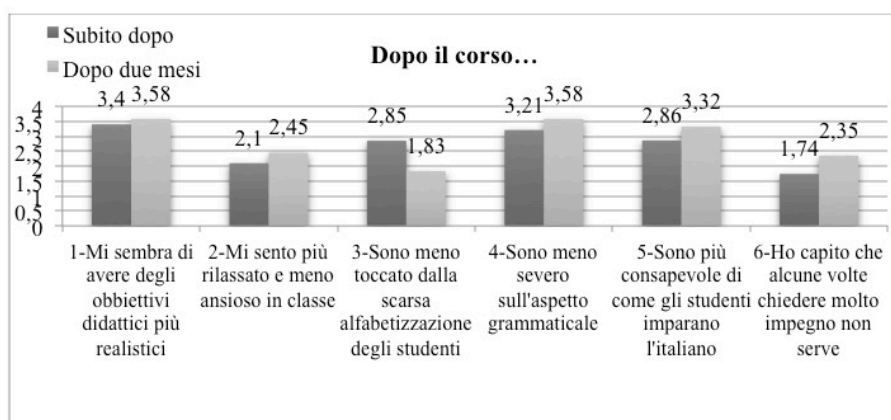
Figura 6. Disposizione psicologica dei corsisti.

4.4. L'impatto sull'organizzazione della scuola

I temi trattati nel corso hanno spinto la direzione ad attuare alcuni cambiamenti organizzativi che, nel complesso, ci paiono positivi date le necessità di docenti e studenti. La prima modifica riguarda l'introduzione di un database informatico e cartaceo dove raccogliere i materiali creati dagli insegnanti, rendendoli così disponibili a tutto il corpo docente. Tali materiali sono catalogati per tipologia (esercizi, *task*, *realia* e letture) e per tipologia di studenti a cui sono destinati. Un secondo cambiamento positivo è l'introduzione di un test d'ingresso orale da somministrare a tutti gli studenti, non solo a chi si

dichiara analfabeta. Questo permette di avere una valutazione in entrata più oggettiva, capace di intercettare le reali capacità linguistiche dei discenti. L'introduzione di momenti di incontro fra i docenti è un altro punto di cambiamento virtuoso: è stato proposto di organizzare riunioni bimestrali fra insegnanti impegnati su classi con lo stesso livello linguistico per favorire una programmazione didattica di base e uno scambio di pratiche e idee. Nell'anno scolastico 2018/2019 questi incontri sono realmente iniziati, con buona soddisfazione da parte dei partecipanti. Infine, la consapevolezza che l'apprendimento di una lingua avviene in larga parte in modo incidentale ha portato la scuola a incentivare attività extrascolastiche che spingano i discenti all'uso della lingua in contesti reali: vengono quindi organizzate uscite al supermercato o in altri luoghi della città, precedentemente adeguatamente didattizzate, viene favorito l'uso di App pensate per l'apprendimento dell'italiano e si consiglia ai docenti di chiedere compiti di realtà agli studenti, quali la realizzazione di brevi interviste a italiani e di brevi ricerche sul campo a Legnano.

5. Conclusioni

Possiamo a questo punto dare risposta alle tre domande che guidano questa ricerca. In merito al primo quesito, siamo in grado di affermare che il corso ha inciso positivamente, ancorché con dei peggioramenti fra il primo e il secondo rilievo, sulle prassi didattiche degli insegnanti. In particolare, i corsisti mostrano di aver acquisito una migliore consapevolezza delle caratteristiche e delle peculiarità pedagogico/attitudinali degli studenti LESLLA; tuttavia, le risposte non sono altrettanto positive negli aspetti più procedurali della formazione, come la gestione della scarsa alfabetizzazione, la selezione di materiali didattici adeguati e la pianificazione di lezioni vicine ai bisogni degli studenti. Questo, crediamo, non deve in fondo sorprendere: la componente procedurale dell'attività didattica ha bisogno di tempo per migliorare ed è acquisibile solo con una pratica ragionata, in cui ogni insegnante trova il "suo" modo di declinare teorie e riflessioni nella glottodidassi (Ellis 2010).

Alle domande di ricerca 2 e 3 possiamo, invece, rispondere più positivamente: la disposizione psicologica dei corsisti è decisamente

migliorata e le decisioni organizzative prese dalla direzione della scuola paiono virtuose e promettenti. Rimane molto sentito il problema dell'analfabetismo, che è uno scoglio molto complesso da superare.

In conclusione, possiamo dire che la scelta di impostare il corso seguendo il modello dinamico di Kumaravadivelu è stata adeguata: prevedere un coinvolgimento attivo ed esperienziale dei docenti alla formazione, spingerli a vedere lo stretto legame fra la glottodidassi e il quadro sociale e psicologico in cui si trovano a operare e aiutarli a sviluppare una visione critica e riflessiva sulle loro prassi sono state componenti importanti di questo percorso formativo. Inoltre, aver aiutato la riflessione su prassi e convinzioni passate e averla messa in crisi sulla base di nozioni nuove e di esempi di didattica "meno convenzionale" agli occhi di un insegnante volontario ha favorito un approccio più critico verso l'insegnamento e, almeno in parte, può aver innescato un circolo virtuoso di revisione della didattica, probabilmente non ancora pienamente apprezzabile dopo soli due mesi dall'intervento. Occorre inoltre riflettere sulla necessità di una maggiore attenzione al problema della scarsa o nulla alfabetizzazione: da un lato, probabilmente, sarebbe il caso di ridimensionare questo problema che, probabilmente, colpisce molto gli insegnanti più legati a un insegnamento "scolastico", in cui la lettoscrittira è considerata *conditio sine qua non* per imparare una L2. Dall'altro lato riteniamo comunque utile dare, in corsi di formazione destinati a tale pubblico, più strumenti per facilitare l'alfabetizzazione, sia per un loro uso concreto sia anche solo per rassicurare gli insegnanti che si trovano a lavorare con studenti (semi)analfabeti.

Nel contesto migratorio italiano attuale, le scuole e le associazioni di insegnanti di italiano L2 forniscono un supporto prezioso e insostituibile all'integrazione dei cittadini migranti. Come visto in precedenza, il bisogno di formazione è molto alto e, oggettivamente, necessario per migliorare consapevolezze e prassi didattiche. Auspichiamo quindi che la ricerca sulla formazione degli insegnanti volontari in Italia possa continuare (cfr. Bagna et al. 2017 per un recente progetto di formazione in Toscana) e che possa anche solo minimamente beneficiare dei risultati del presente studio.

Riferimenti bibliografici

Arcuri, Adriana. 2016. Il progetto: formazione degli insegnanti, sperimentazione didattica. In Mari D'Agostino e Giuseppina Sorce (a cura di), *Nuovi migranti e nuova didattica. Esperienze al CPIA 1 a Palermo* (Strumenti e ricerche 6), 29-48. Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Bagna, Carla e Monica Perez. 2018. Le lingue dei cittadini stranieri. In Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (a cura di), *Vita e percorsi di integrazione degli immigrati in Italia*, 219-244. Roma: Streetlib.

Bagna, Carla, Luana Cosenza e Luisa Salvati. 2017. New challenges for learning, teaching and assessment with low-educated and illiterate immigrants: the case of L2 Italian. In Jean-Claude Beacco, Hans-Jürgen Krumm, David Little and Philia Thalgott (eds.), *The linguistic integration of adult migrants: some lessons from research,* 411-417. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Balboni, Paolo. 2014. *Didattica dell'italiano come lingua seconda e straniera*. Bonacci: Torino.

Battista, Angioletta e Cardenia Daniela. 2014. Premessa. In Marco Catarci, Massimiliano Fiorucci e Massimiliano Trulli (a cura di), *L'abc sulla cittadinanza. Indagine sulle scuole di italiano per stranieri promosse dall'associazionismo a Roma e provincia,* 11-14. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Bigelow, Michelle e Patsy Vinogradov. 2011. Teaching adult second language learners who are emergent readers. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 31: 120-136.

Bresciani, Rosa e Elisabetta Aloisi. 2012. Per una formazione dei docenti-volontari nell'insegnamento dell'italiano a immigrati adulti: riflessioni da un'esperienza. In Roberta Grassi (a cura di), *Nuovi contesti di acquisizione e insegnamento: l'italiano nelle realtà plurilingui*, 61-69. Perugia: Guerra.

Conti, Cinzia e Antonella Guarnieri. 2018. L'immigrazione straniera. Da migranti a nuovi cittadini. In Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (a cura di), *Vita e percorsi di integrazione degli immigrati in Italia*, 17-34. Roma: Streetlib.

Chini, Marina. 2018. Il contesto socio-demografico e scientifico. In Marina Chini e Cecilia Andorno (a cura di), *Repertori e usi linguistici nell'immigrazione*, 15-36. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

D'Agostino, Mari e Angelo Lo Maglio. 2018. Profili dei migranti: competenze linguistiche e alfabetizzazione. In Mari D'Agostino (a cura di), *La forza delle lingue, nella migrazione e nell'inclusione* (Strumenti e ricerche 8), 23-31. Palermo: Scuola di Lingua italiana per Stranieri.

Della Putta, Paolo. 2021. Caratteristiche ed esiti di un corso di formazione per insegnanti volontari di italiano L2. Suggerimenti per favorire lo sviluppo di prassi didattiche efficaci. In Sandro Caruana, Karl Chircop, Phyllisienne Gauci e Mario Pace (a cura di), *Politiche e pratiche per l'educazione linguistica, il multilinguismo e la comunicazione interculturale*, 237-249. Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

Davin, Kristin, Ida Chavosan e Richard Donato. 2018. Images of past teachers: present when you teach. *System* 72: 139-150.

Ellis, Rod. 2010. Second language acquisition, teacher education and language pedagogy. *Language Teaching* 43: 182-201.

Giergji, Iside. 2015. *La nuova emigrazione italiana*. Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

Guskey, Thomas. 2000. *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Ibarra, Robert. 2001. *Beyond affirmative action: Reframing the context of higher education*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2012. *Language teacher education for a global society*. Oxon: Routledge.

Lenz, Peter e Malgorzata Barras. 2017. Does teaching chunks and fluency make a difference in migrants' language learning? In Jean-Claude Beacco, Hans-Jürgen Krumm, David Little and Philia Thalgott (eds.), *The linguistic integration of adult migrants: some lessons from research,* 195-200. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Long, Mike. 2007. *Problems in SLA*. Mahwah-London: Erlbaum.

Margiotta, Umberto. 2008. Un profilo europeo per la formazione iniziale degli insegnanti. In Paolo Balboni e Umberto Margiotta (a cura di), *Formare on line i docenti di lingue e italiano L2*, 5-39. Torino: Utet.

McAuliffe Marie e Frank Laczko (a cura di). 2016. *Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A global review of the emerging evidence base*. Geneva: IOM.

Minuz, Fernanda. 2014. La didattica dell'italiano in contesti migratori. *Gentes* 1: 107-112.

Minuz, Fernanda e Rosa Pugliese. 2012. Quale didattica per l'italiano L2 nelle classi di volontariato? Risultati di una ricerca-azione su lingua e cultura. In Roberta Grassi (a cura di), *Nuovi contesti di acquisizione e insegnamento: l'italiano nelle realtà plurilingui,* 37-60. Perugia: Guerra.

Naeb, Rola e Martha Young-Scholten. 2017. International training of teachers of low-educated adult migrants. In Jean-Claude Beacco, Hans-Jürgen Krumm, David Little and Philia Thalgott (eds.), *The linguistic integration of adult migrants: some lessons from research,* 419-424. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Nitti, Paolo. 2017. Alfabetizzare gli adulti stranieri. *Nuova Secondaria* 8: 24-28.

Pulinx, Reinhilde e Piet Van Avermaet. 2017. The impact of language and integration policies on the social participation of adult migrants. In Jean-Claude Beacco, Hans-Jürgen Krumm, David Little and Philia Thalgott (eds.), *The linguistic integration of adult migrants: some lessons from research,* 59-66. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Thomas Cameroon, Bobby. 2014. Reflections on refugee studies and the study of refugees: implications for policy analysts. *Journal of management and public policy* 6: 4-13.

Trulli, Massimiliano. 2014. Profilo e pratiche delle organizzazioni coinvolte nell'indagine. In Marco Catarci, Massimiliano Fiorucci e Massimiliano Trulli (a cura di), *L'abc sulla cittadinanza. Indagine sulle scuole di italiano per stranieri promosse dall'associazionismo a Roma e provincia,* 27-69. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Vinogradov, Patsy e Astrid Linden. 2009. Principled training for LESLLA instructors. In Ineke van de Craats and Joanne Kurvers (eds.), *Low educated*

second language e literacy acquisition. Proceedings of the 4th symposium, 133-144. Utrecht: LOT.

Weeks, John. 2015. *Population. An introduction to concepts and issues.* Belmont: Thomson.

Young-Scholten, Martha. 2013. Low-educated immigrants and the social relevance of second language acquisition research. *Second Language Research* 29: 441-454.

LASLLIAM.
A European reference guide for LESLLA learners

Fernanda Minuz – Jeanne Kurvers

From the very start of the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, it became clear that literacy is presupposed at the entry level. Research conducted in the last decades highlights the need for CEFR descriptors below A1. Moreover, research on language acquisition among low-literate learners reveals the complex needs of non-/low-literate learners. The "Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants" is a tool, promoted by the Council of Europe, to design curricula, courses, teaching materials and assessment instruments aimed at adult migrants, with a special attention to literacy learners.

Keywords: literacy, framework, descriptors, progression, syllabi.

1. Background and rationale

"Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants. A Reference Guide" (hereafter LASLLIAM) is a tool to design curricula, courses, teaching materials and assessment instruments aimed at adult migrants, with a special attention to literacy learners (non-literate and low-literate adults)[1].

LASLLIAM explicitly refers to the Common European Framework (CEFR), particularly to the notion of communicative language competence as a multidimensional competence and the action-oriented approach and intends to complement the CEFR for the educational needs, language contexts and users that the CEFR does not explicitly address. The CEFR is a descriptive and flexible tool, but since its publication in 2001, scholars, curricula designers and

---

[1] The members of the authoring team of LASLLIAM are Fernanda Minuz, Alexis Feldmeier Garcia, Jeanne Kurvers, Rola Naeb, Lorenzo Rocca, Karen Schramm and Taina Tammelin-Laine.

teachers have highlighted inadequacies when it is adopted in second language teaching to immigrants.

The main goal of the CEFR was to develop a shared understanding on teaching objectives and the assessment criteria across Europe, to enhance transparency of courses, syllabi and qualifications, and promote international co-operation in the field of modern languages (Council of Europe 2001: 1). It served the overall aims of the Council of Europe to achieve greater unity among member states, by converting the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures from being a barrier into being a source of "mutual enrichment and understanding" (Council of Europe 2001: 2). Thus, the CEFR focuses on foreign languages more than on second language learning. Furthermore, it assumes that the user is an adult learner who speaks one or more European languages, understands cultural and axiological references that are common to European societies, albeit in their diversity, and is (well) educated (Van Avermaet and Rocca 2013). Little attention is paid to the specific difficulties and training needs of learners who speak languages which are typologically far from the European languages, and which are spoken mostly by migrants (Vedovelli 2002). Implicit social assumptions underlie some descriptors, which sometimes refer to rituals (for example, "propose a toast" at level A1, Krumm 2007) that immigrants may not know or to levels of social equality in communication, whilst communication between immigrants and natives is often asymmetrical (Dittmar and Stutterheim 1984; Krumm 2007). Domains of great importance in the life of adult immigrants, such as the occupational and administrative domains (Beacco et al. 2014; Krumm 2007) and the educational domain, especially adult education and vocational training (Kuhn 2015), are not sufficiently considered.

Finally, literacy is presupposed at the entry level both by the CEFR and its recent Companion volume (Council of Europe 2018), which articulates level A1 of the CEFR in the two levels, Pre-A1 and A1. The introduction of a level before level A1 responds to the need to plan the initial teaching of a new language and assess the competence achieved in the first contact with it by the same literate learners who the CEFR targets. For example, the Pre-A1 learner can "give basic personal information in writing (e.g. name, address,

nationality), possibly using a dictionary", a task which may require a substantial period of training for an adult literacy learner.

1.1. Research background

Research conducted in the last decades highlights the need for CEFR descriptors below A1 specifically aimed at the needs of adult literacy and language learners (e.g. Borri et al. 2014a; Markov et al. 2015; Rocca et al. 2017). These are adults who are facing the complex and demanding task of learning a language while at the same time either learning to read and write for the first time (non-literates) or developing their literacy competencies (low-literates). From an educational perspective, there is an obvious mismatch between common language courses provision, targeted towards and designed with literate learners in mind on one hand and the needs and expectations of non-literate or low-literate learners. Moreover, studies conducted at the national level in different countries indicate that the types of tests used in educational contexts fail to assess what low-literate learners can do insofar as these tests presuppose literacy and familiarity with print and test materials (Gonzalves 2017). Several studies revealed that non-literate adults progressed more slowly in L2 reading and writing development compared to adults who could already read in a non-Roman script and found convincing evidence for the important impact of L1 literacy on L2 reading and L2 learning in general (Abadzi 2012; Condelli and Spruck-Wrigley 2006; Gardner et al. 1996; Kurvers and Stockmann 2009; Warren and Young 2012).

From the perspective of cognitive sciences and language acquisition, research into these non-literate or low-educated learners indicates why this task is so demanding: a slower pace in learning, problems with focusing on linguistic features in L2 learning, difficulties in achieving fluency, with standard exercises and with the standard way of testing.

Factors identified in the literature that affect progress include lack of skills that are normally presupposed in L2 teaching, such as metalinguistic skills, different ways of processing oral language and abstract visual information, working memory, and less experience with study skills.

1.1.1. Metalinguistic awareness

Research revealed convincing evidence that non-literate adults or adults not familiar with an alphabetic script do not show awareness of phonemes (Morais et al. 1979; Read et al. 1986; Reis et al. 1997, 2007; for an overview see Van de Craats et al. 2015). Other studies pointed to limited awareness of word boundaries (Homer 2009; Kurvers et al. 2007; Rachmandra and Karanth 2007). In most of these studies even low educated readers significantly outperformed nonliterates in phonemic and lexical awareness, while awareness of syllables and rhyme revealed less clear-cut differences between non-literates and adult readers. Learning an alphabetic script implies becoming aware of those linguistic features that are represented in the writing system. Similar findings that point to limited metalinguistic abilities were revealed in studies on the acquisition of oral L2 skills, such as interpreting or correctly recalling a recast, answering context-poor questions or the use of grammatical markers in storytelling (Strube 2014; Tarone et al. 2007, 2009).

1.1.2. Processing (linguistic) information

More recent studies have been using new methodologies in information processing that tap more or less directly into the processing of linguistic or visual information. Several studies revealed that adult non-literates did not differ from low-educated readers in repeating existing words, but differed significantly in repeating (non-existent) pseudowords, in memorizing pairs of phonologically related words, and in naming fluency based on a formal criterion (e.g. words beginning with p) (Dellatolas et al. 2003; Kosmidis et al. 2004; for an overview see Huettig 2015). All studies pointed to the fact that effective processing of phonological information turned out to be dependent upon having had a formal (literacy) education.

Several studies also investigated the processing of visual information, such as recognizing or copying line drawings or abstract figures. Nonliterates consistently obtained significantly lower scores on measures relating to naming line drawings and the recognition or copying of abstract figures (Dellatolas et al. 2003; Huettig, Sing and

Mishra 2011; Kosmidis et al. 2004). Several studies also revealed that verbal working memory was significantly influenced by literacy (Da Silva et al. 2012; Ostrosky-Solís and Lozano 2006) and that high-literates processed phonological information much faster and more efficiently than low-literates.

In sum, adult nonliterates do not differ much from literates in semantic processing, in recognizing and recalling known objects and figures, and in processing context-bound and familiar information. But they do differ in literacy related information processing: processing phonological information, recalling and remembering pseudowords, judging word length, and in recognizing and reproducing abstract (nonsense) figures.

The outcomes of these (neuro)psychological studies converge with empirical classroom studies. Nonliterates can easily process semantic information embedded in a concrete, communicative context of familiar domains, while even those readers who have recently learned to read have additional formal mechanisms available to process spoken language. And contextualizing teaching constantly is being considered one of the main predictors of success in adult literacy classes (Condelli and Spruck-Wrigley 2006; Kurvers, Stockmann and Van de Craats 2010; Warren and Young 2012).

Ardila et al. (2010: 689) conclude that literacy and schooling affect the networks and pathways in the brain used in cognitive processing: "Without written language, our knowledge of the external world is partially limited by immediate sensory information and concrete environmental conditions".

1.1.3. Situated cognition

Many studies have highlighted the important role of situated cognition (Kirshner and Whitson 1997; Reder and Davila 2005; Robbins and Aydede 2009) in the processing of information by first-time literacy learners. Although the definitions of situated cognition slightly differ, most definitions highlight the importance of lived experiences (embodied) and interaction with the concrete and daily context (embedded) in the development of cognitive processes and the building of cognitive representations (Robbins and Aydede 2009).

Non-literates gradually learn to abstract knowledge from specific contexts (Bereiter 1997). It seems likely that written language plays an important role in this respect and that in becoming literate, cognitive processing transfers from the concrete extra-linguistic context to the linguistic (con)text (Reder and Davila 2005; Robbins and Aydede 2009).

Non-literates enter the classroom relying on well-developed semantic and pragmatic information processing skills in a familiar language about familiar topics, and gradually begin to grasp features of language. Most predictors of success in the adult L2 literacy classroom do point to the importance of the semantic-pragmatic information processing that is already familiar to the student. Or, as Whiteside (2008) suggested: adult literacy teachers should start with language that is grounded in the familiar, instead of starting with written input.

All these factors should be addressed while planning a course in second language and literacy. From an educational perspective, there is an obvious mismatch between common language course provision, targeted towards and designed with literate learners in mind on one hand and the needs and expectations of non-literate or low-literate learners on the other. Moreover, studies conducted at the national level in different countries indicate that the types of tests used in educational contexts fail to assess what low-literate learners can do insofar as these tests presuppose literacy and familiarity with print and test materials (Gonzalves 2017).

1.2. Towards a new Framework for second language and literacy acquisition

In many countries it was felt necessary that the CEFR had to be complemented with descriptors for levels below A1, including levels for those migrants with no or hardly any previous schooling, or for low-educated semi-literate migrants, who can read and write in a non-alphabetic script. Soon after the CEFR was launched in 2001, several countries providing adult education for non-literate migrants started to develop a basic L2 Literacy Framework of references and syllabuses, for example in the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Austria, Finland

and Italy (Beacco et al. 2005; Borri et al. 2014a; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015, 2018; Cito 2008; Feldmeier 2009; Finnish National Board 2012; Fritz et al. 2006; Markov et al. 2015; Stockmann 2004). In most countries, the developed frameworks only covered learning the written language, mostly from both a technical literacy point of view (learning to read and write the written code) and from a functional point of view (learning to use written language in personally relevant everyday situations), following the CEFR categorisations of purposes and genres (e.g. reading for information, reading correspondence etc.). In some countries the framework was complemented with a portfolio as a tool to guide, assess and reflect on development for learners and teachers (e.g. Cito 2008; Stockmann 2006). The Italian framework also presented descriptors for oral second language acquisition and a general overview of notions, genres and functions and used four domains (private, public, vocational and educational) for illustrative descriptors (Borri et al. 2014a).

These endeavours became the more important, since most countries introduced language requirements for permanent residence or citizenship and because of the empirical evidence that in the standard CEFR-based tests most of these candidates got the result "below A1" and were unable to show the progress they had made. This problem motivated a group of researchers at the 2016 LESLLA conference in Granada in 2016 to launch the idea to apply for a European Literacy and Second Language Framework for this group of vulnerable learners.

As Europe's leading human rights organisation, the Council of Europe also has denounced the discriminatory effect of educational practices that do not consider the specificity of adult non-literate and low-literate migrants. In particular, in its documents on language and education policy, the Council of Europe (2017) has urged member states to provide literacy courses along with language courses (Council of Europe 2017). Therefore, the Council of Europe has promptly supported LASLLIAM, as a tool to enhance the quality of language instruction for those vulnerable subjects and immigrants in general. The LASLLIAM falls within the broader initiative of the Language Policy Division in the context of migration, specifically through the portal LIAM (Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants, https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants), which was launched in

2007. Over the last decade, LIAM has conducted surveys to monitor the misuse of the Framework in the examination of compulsory language for third-country nationals, has conducted research studies and developed guidelines and policy recommendations as well as tools, such as the "Toolkit" for language support offered to asylum seekers and refugees (https://www.coe.int/it/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees). The LASLLIAM hopes to make a significant contribution to longstanding – and urgently needed – efforts to improve language learning opportunities for non- and low-literate immigrants.

1.3. A complementary approach to literacy

As said, the LASLLIAM reference guide endorses the CEFR approach, especially the notion of communicative language competence, which is understood as the learners' ability to act socially, using strategic language resources – in mother tongue and in second language – together with other available resources, such as cognitive, learning, personal, and relational. As a social agent, the learner relies on these resources in language and literacy learning.

The CEFR does not prescribe a teaching methodology, but "relates to a very general view of the language use and language learning" (Council of Europe 2001: 9); LASLLIAM relates in a similar way to a view of literacy, literacy teaching and learners.

Literacy is polysemic word, which encompasses different concepts and may have different translations. In a narrower sense, literacy refers to the initial teaching/learning of reading and writing by children and adults, as well as the acquired ability to read and write. It corresponds to the terms *alphabétisation* and *alphabétisme* (French), *alfabetizzazione* and *alfabetismo* (Italian) (UNESCO 2005; see Minuz 2019 for an overview). Literacy learning goes beyond learning to code and decode spoken and written language, which was traditionally considered the scope of literacy teaching. Mastering written language involves two aspects: "written language as discourse style – the recognition that the kind of language used for writing is essentially different from the one used for speech; and written language as a notational system – the perception and growing command of the

representational system that is used in the written modality" (Ravid and Tolchinsky 2002: 433). The technical skills connected with the code go alongside with the knowledge of the characteristics of written texts distinguished by register, genre, and modality.

Against this view of literacy mostly as an individual practice and a set of cognitive skills, a different view of literacy focuses on writing and reading, as well as literacy learning, as socially situated practices. One cannot separate the activity of reading and writing from the social contexts that define and legitimate literacy practices (Gee 2011 [1991]; Orsolini and Pontecorvo 1991; Street 1981), nor from the power relationships between both subjects and classes (Freire 1970). Attention is paid to different forms of literacy, the "multiple literacies", which include not only decoding and understanding the words, but also on the interpreting of signs, symbols, pictures and sounds and the use of information and communication technologies (Cope and Kalantzis 2000; The New London Group 1996). Recently, the importance of a "literacy environment" has been highlighted: for the individual process of literacy to be successful, it is necessary to create an environment in which literacy, the practice of writing, is widespread and pervasive (Easton 2014).

We share the position of those who consider the two approaches complementary and not antithetical, two non-exclusive perspectives from which to look at literacy and literacy learning/teaching (Ravid and Tolchinsky 2002; Tarone et al. 2009). While talking about learning the written language, one should take into account both the learning subject and the spaces, functions and values attributed to the written language by the large and restricted community in which the subject learns to read and write. Following the latest definition of literacy by UNESCO (2017), we consider literacy "as 'communication involving text'. Literacy 'involves text' because text is increasingly mixed with other modes, such as image and symbol, across manuscript, print and electronic media. Literacy is 'communication' since its function and value lie in communicating with others or oneself, alongside verbal and non-verbal modes" (UNESCO 2017: 14). Thus, literacy and literacy learning not only represent getting access to the written code, but they also represent a component of the communicative language competence and the

learning to read and write by adults as an enrichment of the resources on which they can rely while acting in the world.

2. The LASLLIAM

2.1. Structure of the LASLLIAM

The LASLLIAM reference guide provides a curricular framework/scaled can-do descriptors from non-literacy and beginner oral competence in L2 to A1. It is developed based on the already existing frameworks for L2 literacy in English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian, and Finnish, including other frameworks, such as the *Canadian Benchmarks 2000 – ESL for Literacy Learner* (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks [2001] 2015). Although the instruments are organized differently, they echo the same view of the education needs of literacy and second language learners. They also share "the idea of literacy as a kind of education which, leading to the acquisition of instrumental competences, is a way to decode a wider range of socially relevant meanings – conveyed in written language –, in order to integrate even usually marginalized people" (Borri et al. 2014b:7).

Learners' educational needs, specifically the experience with written language, combined with experience in the oral target language, contacts with target language and distance between the first language and the target language define the learner profiles, which will be described in the introduction to the LASLLIAM. Those who work in the different branches of education are the envisaged users of the LASLLIAM: for curricula, education authorities and directors of education institutes; for teaching material, authors of manuals, teachers and volunteers giving linguistic support to migrants and refugees; for course and class planning, teachers; for assessment, the organizers of diagnostic tests, exams and certifications.

The framework describes language and literacy "can dos" in four domains of primary use: the personal domain, the public domain, the occupational domain, and the educational domain. Descriptors for both the technical and functional aspects of literacy learning and for oral L2 acquisition are scaled in four levels. The scales represent

tables of descriptors (see annex) for each level, that highlight progressions in terms of:

–   Literacy in terms of technical skills
–   Communicative language abilities (reception, production interaction and mediation)
–   Strategies (related to learning and language use)
–   Digital competence
–   Linguistic inventories (functions, genres and general notions)

Levels 3 and 4 overlap with the Pre-A1 and A1 levels of the *CEFR* and *Companion Volume* in the description of reception, production and interaction activities. This does not imply that the literacy process ends in the Pre-A1 and A1 phases. The ability to use the acquired literacy skills to carry out some very simple actions, such as finding some information (time, address, and price) in a simple text, is to be considered as a stage in a functional literacy process that proceeds parallel to language learning and continues well beyond level A1. Literate learners do not have to follow this path because they are able to transfer the literacy skills from their L1 to the new language.

The LASLLIAM is still a work in progress, which will be concluded by December 2021, after a one-year piloting phase. This paper presents the approach the authors have chosen in developing the scales for technical literacy and communicative language abilities.

2.2.   Technical literacy scales

Technical literacy is defined as the ability to access to the written code in order to read and understand short sentences and texts featuring familiar language with some fluency and to write words, sentences and short texts featuring familiar language at a basic level. In European languages the written code is an alphabetic script, in which letters or graphemes represent phonemes in spoken language.

The four levels are defined as a continuum from getting to know the features and functions of written language and learning some words by heart, to being able to read and write fluently simple familiar sentences and short texts as in CEFR level A1.

Level 1 covers becoming aware of and recognizing letters and phonemes, learning by heart some personally relevant words (e.g. name and address) and a number of orthographically simple words that can be used as an anchor to learn the basics of the alphabetical principle. From the second level on the levels are defined by learning to decode and recode simple words and sentences, according to the conventions of each of the languages, to gradually learning to read and write more linguistically and orthographically complex words and sentences, and gradually becoming more fluent.

The indicators of progress are partly the same as for all scales (see below) and partly specific for technical literacy. These specific indicators can be defined in a general way, but the application will differ for each of the languages involved, because of differences in the repertoire of phonemes, in regularity of spelling to sound principles (or transparency of the orthography), in the syllabic make-up and the morphological richness of the languages (Verhoeven and Perfetti 2017; Ziegler and Goswami 2006). These specific indicators are defined along the dimensions of linguistic complexity (from linguistically simple to more complex), orthographical regularity (from regular to irregular), the learning process (from memorizing to slow decoding to fluent reading), and practice (from practiced words to new words).

As said before, the levels represent a continuum which also indicates that there is no need to stick to input as defined in the levels. These principles are mainly important for what students are expected to read or write independently. With guidance students can deal with personally relevant and more complex linguistic material, as long as they are not expected to work alone.

2.3. Communicative language abilities

Communicative language abilities are, as in the CEFR, at the heart of the LASLLIAM. Like in the CEFR and the updated Companion Volume, the communicative language abilities are divided into reception (oral and written), production (oral and written) and interaction (oral and written). The LASLLIAM developers however are well aware that new and fast developing technologies will likely

challenge the clear-cut boundaries between several modalities. In online interaction for example, oral and written language can be used at the same time (e.g. using an online translation tool or speech technology) and written language will often be used together with visual symbols like emoji's. Differently from the CEFR, the illustrative descriptors in the thematic LASLLIAM scales are not provided for different genres (like correspondence, messages and notes in writing or monologue and dialogue in oral language). Instead, the LASLLIAM scales are overall scales plus scales specified for the four domains listed in the CEFR (private or personal domain of house, family and family life, the public domain of the relevant public services and shopping, the occupational domain of job and workplace, and the educational domain of teaching and learning). Most of the descriptors are defined in the form of "can do function X by applying technical skill Y or strategy Z" (e.g. can understand a very simple instruction by reading practiced words and using visual cues). Indicators of progression are described along the dimensions of autonomy (e.g. working with guidance before working alone, relevance (from personally relevant to generic), modality (oral before written and reception before production), context (from more to less context), meaning (meaning before form) and practice (practiced before new). Although the scales are developed for oral and written production and interaction for four different levels, it is important to stress that the linguistic abilities for an individual might differ across the different aspects. An adult migrant might enter a second language and literacy class with already a basic oral proficiency, but without any experience with reading and writing, another one might be a proficient reader in a different script and equipped with several study skills. In other words, a learner might be at level 1 for reading and writing, but close to CEFR A1 in oral L2 proficiency. The profile of the learner will be, next to his personal needs and ambitions, an important starting point for the teachers.

3. Conclusion

In developing the LASLLIAM, the authors are aware of ethical issues connected with language and literacy teaching in Europe. In specific,

they discourage the reference to LASLLIAM descriptors as standards to be achieved in formal certifications, instead of as criteria to define learner profiles. Moreover, they are not in favour of the use of LASLLIAM to develop high-stake and large-scale exams as a practice which results in an unethical and unfair discrimination against non-literate and low-literate adults. That is especially true with regard to compulsory tests related to any kind of legal requirements for entry European countries, residence permits and citizenship.

As already indicated, the LASLLIAM is a *tool* to design curricula, courses, teaching materials and assessment instruments aimed at adult migrants, with a special attention to literacy learners (non-literate and low-literate adults). This tool is still work in progress. The scales with the descriptors for technical literacy, communicative language abilities, mediation, strategies, digital competencies and the linguistic inventories are in the making. It is crucial that the first drafts of the scales are carefully piloted and validated in several countries and several languages. The LESLLA community can be very valuable it this process.

References

Abadzi, Helen. 2012. Can adults become fluent readers in newly learned scripts? *Education Research International* 2: 1-8.

Adami, Hervé. 2001. Oralité et métalangue dans les rapports au langage des scripteurs/lecteurs en insécurité à l'écrit. *Mélanges CRAPEL* 26: 7-36.

Allemano, Jane. 2013. Testing the reading ability of low educated ESOL learners, *Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies* 7(1): 67-81.

ALTE-LAMI. 2016. *Language tests for access, integration and citizenship: An outline for policy makers*. Cambridge: Association of Language Testers in *Europe* on behalf of Council of Europe.

Ardila, Alfredo, Paulo H. Bertolucci, Lucia W. Braga, Alexander Castro-Caldas, Tedd Judd, Mary H. Kosmidis, Esmeralda Matute, Ricardo Nitrini, Feggy Ostrosky-Solis and Monica Rosselli. 2010. The neuropsychology of cognition without reading. *Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology* 25: 689-712.

Beacco, Jean-Claude, Mariela De Ferrari, Gilbert Lhote and Christine Tagliante. 2005. *Niveau A1.1 pour le français. Référentiel et certification (DILF) pour les premiers acquis en français*. Paris: Didier.

Bereiter, Carl. 1997. Situated cognition and how to overcome it. In David Kirshner and James Whitson (eds.), *Situated cognition. Social, semiotic and psychological perspectives*, 281-300. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Borri, Alessandro, Fernanda Minuz, Lorenzo Rocca and Chiara Sola. 2014a. *Italiano L2 in contesti migratori. Sillabo e descrittori dall'alfabetizzazione all'A1*. Torino: Loescher.

Borri, Alessandro, Fernanda Minuz, Lorenzo Rocca and Chiara Sola. 2014b. *Italian language for adult migrants. Syllabus and descriptors for illiterate, semi-literate and literate users. From illiteracy to A1 level. Introduction.* https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMConten t?documentId=09000016802fc1db

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. 2018. *Konzept für einen bundesweiten Integrationskurs für Zweitschriftlernende (Zweitschriftlernerkurs)*. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Integration/Integrationskurse/Ku rstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konzept-zweitschriftlernende.html?nn=284228

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. 2015. Konzept für einen bundesweiten Integrationskurs mit Alphabetisierung. Überarbeitete Neuauflage – Mai 2015. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge.   www.bamf.de

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks – Centre des niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens. 2015 [2001]. *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for literacy learners / Alphabétisation pour immigrants adultes en français langue seconde (FLS)*. Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks and The Government of Manitoba. www.language.ca

Cito. 2008. *Raamwerk Alfabetisering NT2*. Arnhem: Cito B.V.

Condelli, Larry and Heide Spruck Wrigley. 2006. Instruction, language and literacy: What works study for adult ESL literacy students. In Ineke Van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *Low-educated adult second language and literacy acquisition. Proceedings of the inaugural Symposium, Tilburg 2005*, 111-133. Utrecht: LOT.

Cope, Bill and Mary Kalantzis (eds.). 2000. *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London and New York: Routledge.

Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe. 2017. *Adult migrants: integration and education. Extracts from conventions, recommendations, resolutions and reports.* Compiled by the Language Policy Programme. https://rm.coe.int/recommendations-resolutions-on-adult-migrants-and-education-rev-2017-/168079335c

Council of Europe. 2018. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume with New Descriptors.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe, Language Policy Division. 2014. *Linguistic integration of adult migrants: policy and practice. Final report on the 3rd Council of Europe survey.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Da Silva, Catarina, Luís Faísca, Martin Ingvar, Karl M. Petersson and Alexandra Reis. 2012. Literacy: Exploring working memory systems. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology* 34(4): 369-377.

Dellatolas, Georges, Lucia Willadino-Braga, Ligia do Nascimento Souza L., Gilbert Filho, Elisabeth Queiroz and Gerard Deloche. 2003. Cognitive consequences of

early phase of literacy. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* 9(5):771-782.

Dittmar, Norbert and Christiane von Stutterheim. 1984. Communication strategies of migrants in interethnic interaction. In Auer Peter and Aldo Di Luzio (eds.), *Interpretive Soziolinguistik*, 179-214. Tübingen: Gunter Norr.

Easton, Peter. 2014. *Sustaining literacy in Africa: developing a literate environment*. UNESCO Digital Library, Paris: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225258

Feldmeier, Alexis 2009. *Konzept für einen bundesweiten Integrationskurs mit Alphabetisierung*. Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge.

Finnish National Board of Education. 2012. *National core curriculum for literacy training for adult migrants.* Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Education.

Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Fritz Thomas, Renate Faistauer, Monika Ritter M. and Angelika Hrubesch. 2006. *Rahmen Curriculum*. Wien: Universität Wien, Verband Wiener Volksbildung, AlfaZentrum für MigrantInnen der Volkshochschule Ottakring.

Gardner Sheena, Eleoussa Polyzoi and Yvette Rampaul. 1996. Individual variables, literacy history, and ESL progress among Kurdish and Bosnian immigrants. *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL du Canada* 14(1): 1-20.

Gee, James Paul. 2011 [1991]. *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. Oxon: Routledge.

Gonzalves, Lisa. 2017. When standardized tests fail: Assessing ESL literacy learners in California. In Marcin Sosiński (ed.), *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: investigación, política educativa y práctica docente*, 132-134. Granada: University of Granada.

Homer, Bruce. 2009. Literacy and metalinguistic development. In David R. Olson and Nancy Torrance (eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of literacy*, 487-500. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Huettig, Falk, Niharika Singh and Ramesh Kumar Mishra. 2011. Language-mediated visual orienting behavior in low and high literates. *Frontiers in Psychology* 2(285), doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2011.00285.

Huettig, Falk. 2015. Literacy influences cognitive abilities far beyond the mastery of written language. In Ineke Van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Roeland van Hout (eds.), *Adult literacy, second language and cognition*, 115-128. Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies.

Kirshner, David and James A. Whitson (eds.). 1997. *Situated cognition. Social, semiotic and psychological perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kosmidis, Mary Helen, Kirana Tsapkini, Vasiliki Folia, Christina H. Vlahou and Grigoris Kiosseoglou. 2004. Semantic and phonological processing in illiteracy. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* 10: 818-827.

Krumm, Hans-Jürgen. 2007. Profiles instead of levels: The CEFR and Its (Ab) Uses in the Context of Migration. *The Modern Language Journal* 91(4): 667-669.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Roeland van Hout and Ton Vallen. 2007. Literacy and word *boundaries*. In Nancy Faux and Hillary Major (eds.), *Low educated second language and literacy acquisition: Research, policy and practice. Proceedings of the second annual forum,* 44-64. Richmond, VA: The Literacy institute.

Kurvers, Jeanne and Willemijn Stockmann. 2009. *Wat werkt in Alfabetisering NT2. Leerlast en succesfactoren*. Tilburg: Universiteit van Tilburg.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Willemijn Stockmann and Ineke van de Craats. 2010. Predictors of success in adult L2 literacy acquisition. In Theresa Wall and Monica Leong (eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the 5th Symposium*, 64-79. Calgary: Bow Valley College.

Kurvers, Jeanne, Ineke van de Craats and Roeland Van Hout. 2015. Footprints for the future. Cognition, literacy and second language acquisition by adults. In Ineke Van de Craat, Jeanne Kurvers and Roeland van Hout (eds.), *Adult literacy, second language and cognition,* 7-32. Nijmegen: Centre for Language Studies.

Markov, Stefan, Christiane Scheithauer and Karen Schramm. 2015. *Lernberatung für Teilnehmende in DaZ-Alphabetisierungskursen.* Münster: Waxmann.

Minuz, Fernanda 2019. L'apprendente adulto analfabeta: una definizione internazionale. In Fabio Caon and Annalisa Brichese (eds.), *Insegnare l'italiano ad analfabeti*, 11-22. Torino: Loescher.

Morais, José, Luz Cary, Jésus Alegria and Paul Bertelson. 1979. Does awareness of speech as a sequence of phones arise spontaneously? *Cognition* 7: 323-331.

Orsolini, Margherita and Clotilde Pontecorvo. 1991. *La costruzione del testo scritto nei bambini*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.

Ostrosky-Solís, Feggy and Asucena Lozano. 2006. Digit span: effect of education and culture. *International Journal of Psychology* 41(5): 333-341.

Rachmandra, Vijayachandra and Prathibha Karanth. 2007. The role of literacy in the conceptualization of words: Data from Kannada-speaking children and nonliterate adults. *Reading and Writing* 20: 173-199.

Ravid, Dorit and Liliana Tolchinsky. 2002. Developing linguistic literacy: A comprehensive model. *Journal of Child Language* 29(2): 417-447.

Read, Charles, Yun-Fei Zhang, Hong-Yin Nie and Bao-Qing Ding. 1986. The ability to manipulate speech sounds depends on knowing alphabetic writing. *Cognition* 24: 31-44.

Reder, Sthephen and Erica Davila. 2005. Context and literacy practices. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 25. 170-197.

Reis, Alexandra and Alexandre Castro-Caldas. 1997. Illiteracy: A cause for biased cognitive development. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* 3: 444-450.

Reis, Alexandra, Luís Faisca, Susana Mendonca, Martin Ingvar and Karl M. Petersson. 2007. Semantic interference on a phonological task in illiterate subjects. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 48(1): 69-74.

Robbins, Philips and Murat Aydede. 2009. *The Cambridge handbook of situated cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rocca, Lorenzo, Fernanda Minuz and Alessandro Borri. 2017. Syllabus and descriptors for illitterate, semi-literate and literate users. From illiteracy to A1 level. In Marcin Sosiński (ed.), *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: investigación, política educative y práctica docente*, 207-218. Granada: University of Granada.

Stockmann, Willemijn. 2004. *De toegepaste kunst van geletterdheid*. Tilburg: Universiteit van Tilburg.

Stockmann, Willemijn. 2006. Portfolio methodology for literacy learners: The Dutch case. In Ineke Van de Craats, Jeanne Kurvers and Martha Young-Scholten (eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium*, 152-163. Utrecht: LOT.

Street, Brian Vincent. 1981. *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strube, Susanna. 2014. *Grappling with the oral skills: The learning and teaching of the lowliterate adult second language learner*. Doctoral dissertation. Nijmegen: Radboud University.

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2007. The impact of alphabetic print literacy on oral second language acquisition. In Nancy Faux and Hillary Major (eds.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition: Research, Policy and Practice. Proceedings of the second annual forum*, 99-122. Richmond, VA: The Literacy Institute.

Tarone, Elaine, Martha Bigelow and Kit Hansen. 2009. *Literacy and second language oracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The New London Group. 1996. A pedagogy of multiliteracies: designing social future. *Harvard Educational Review* 66(1): 60-93.

UNESCO. 2005. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006. Literacy for Life*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. 2017. *Reading the past, writing the future*. Paris: UNESCO.

Van Avermaet, Piet and Lorenzo Rocca. 2013. Exploring language frameworks. *Studies in Language Testing* 36: 11-44.

Vedovelli, Massimo. 2002. *Guida all'italiano per stranieri: la prospettiva del quadro comune europeo per le lingue*. Roma: Carocci.

Verhoeven, Ludo and Charles Perfetti (eds.). 2017. *Learning to read across languages and writing systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Warren, Mackenzie and Sarah Young. 2012. *From metalinguistic awareness to social context: The role of L1 literacy in adult SLA*. Ling 746 Final Project. USA: Georgetown University. In Martha Young-Scholten (ed.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Forum*, 99-107. Durham: Roundtuit Publishing.

Whiteside, Anne. 2008. Who is 'You'?: ESL Literacy, written text and troubles with deixis in imagined spaces. In Martha Young-Scholten (ed.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Forum,* 99-107. Durham: Roundtuit Publishing.

Ziegler, Johannes C. and Usha Goswami. 2006. Becoming literate in different languages: Similar problems, different solutions. *Developmental Science* 9: 429-436.

"Getting a grip on basic skills".
Toward professional development of LESLLA teachers

Taina Tammelin-Laine – Minna Bogdanoff – Heidi Vaarala
Sanna Mustonen – Katarzyna Kärkkäinen

"Getting a grip on basic skills" is a project, which aimed to develop and pilot an in-service teacher training model for promoting the skills of LESLLA (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults) teachers in supporting the development of basic skills of immigrant adults. In this article, we will describe the project, planned and implemented in Finland, discuss observations and implications of the pilot, and give some examples of the good practices developed and observed during the project. Additionally, we will contemplate the challenges of the long-term web-based training model and the teachers' everyday work.

Keywords: LESLLA teachers, in-service teacher training, immigrant education, professional development, blended learning.

1. Introduction

Immigration is a rather new phenomenon in Finland, and the adult education system is not current from the perspective of L2 Finnish and literacy teaching and learning. According to Nieminen et al. (2015), the most recent estimation from 2014 suggests that approximately 3% of all adult immigrants living in Finland had a maximum of 2-3 years of schooling from their childhood, but the percentage of adults who are new to print literacy was unknown. At 7.5%, the number of people whose first language is not among the official languages of Finland (Finnish 87.3%; Swedish 5.2%; Sami languages 0.04%) is rather small when compared to other Western countries, but at the national level, the growth from 1.5% in 1997 is significant (Official Statistics of Finland 2020). The number of immigrants is expected to continue to increase in the future.

In this article, we present the key elements of the project "Getting a grip on basic skills: pedagogical design for teachers and advisers in

immigrant education"[1], which promoted the skills of teaching and advising personnel in supporting the development of basic skills of adult students who have experienced interruptions in formal, school-based learning in their childhood. As there is no systematic pre- or in-service training system for this target group in the country, this project aimed to fill the gap.

The definition of the basic skills is based on OECD's (2013) *The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies* (PIAAC) survey, which measures adults' proficiency in basic skills – literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments. In the survey, information about how adults use these skills at home, at work, and in the community were collected.

First, *literacy skills* mean using written texts (print-based or digital) for one's everyday life (OECD 2013). In our project, literacy was not limited to reading and writing only. According to Luukka (2003, 2013), texts as multimodal entities can also consist of or include visual or auditory elements such as voice, pictures, or movement; the ability to construct meanings is the most important feature of a text. *Numeracy* means "the ability to access, use, interpret and communicate mathematical information and ideas in order to engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adult life" (OECD 2013: 59). According to this definition, mathematical skills are not limited to cognitive aspects, but also involve the ability to engage with mathematical challenges (Malin et al. 2013). Lastly, *ICT-based problem solving* includes, for instance, digital skills and the evaluation of information (OECD 2013). Thus, technological basic skills are not enough, but it is also important to be able to utilise these skills to solve everyday problems, for example, in public transportation (Reder 2015).

According to Malin and colleagues' (2013) analysis of the results of PIAAC, Finnish adults' basic skills are excellent in literacy and numeracy, and considerably above average in ICT-based problem solving when compared to all OECD countries. On the other hand, they also noted that in Finland, about 11% of adults have insufficient

---

literacy skills, 13% are struggling with numeracy, and 30% have great difficulties with ICT-based problem solving. This means there is an obvious need for educational solutions explicitly targeting the improvement of adults' basic skills.

Finally, we see *study skills* as an important component of all the above-mentioned skills. They are linked with success in both academic and non-academic (e.g., employment) settings. According to Hoover and Patton (2007), and Devine (1987), in learning new skills or knowledge, learners use a variety of academic "tools" (e.g., strategies and cognitive skills) to support their learning; these study skills enable learners to, for example, acquire, organise, remember, and use any kind of information.

In this article, we first describe the project and our pedagogical thinking, and then discuss the good practices, challenges, and further ideas that we came across during the project. We talk about *participants* when referring to the LESLLA teachers/advisers who participated in the training, and *immigrant students* when referring to the learners in their classes. Finally, by *educators* we mean the project personnel.

2. The project and its participants

In "Getting a grip on basic skills: pedagogical design for teachers and advisers in immigrant education" (2017-2020), we developed and piloted a national teacher training model for promoting the skills of LESLLA teachers and advisers in supporting the development of basic skills of immigrant adults. The project was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

The piloted training was based on blended learning. The participants primarily used the online learning platform, Peda.net, though face-to-face meetings also took place during the training. Peda.net is used in every form of education in Finland and it offers a comprehensive selection of tools for online teaching and learning for teachers and students. Peda.net allows teachers to build different task types, discussion forums, and learning environments for students, and it also enables the teachers to give feedback to the students. The students have access to the course materials and tasks and they also

have a personal profile space where they can store their assignments to demonstrate their learning.

The teacher training pilot was divided into six modules (see Figure 1). The participants could choose to study either all of them or select modules as part of the training.
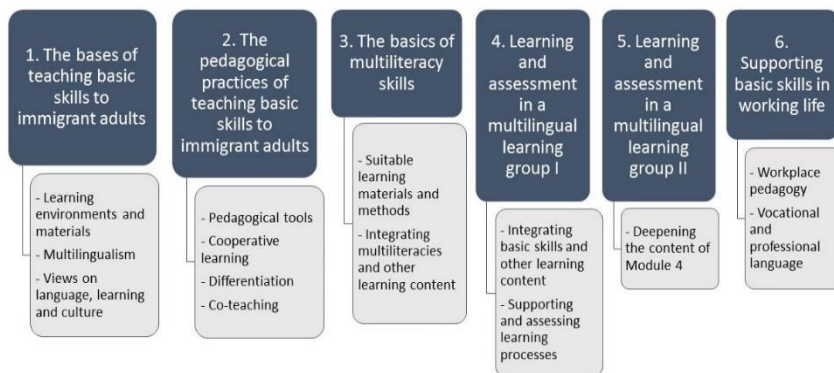

Figure 1. The modules of the teacher training pilot.

By the end of the registration period, 107 teachers or advisers expressed interest in enrolling for the training, for instance, to get new pedagogical tools for teaching basic skills to LESLLA students and to find peer support. Altogether, 71 teachers or advisers participated in the training: some of them took part in the training from the beginning and completed all the modules, whereas others started in the middle of the training. The participants worked in different kinds of institutions, which organise adult education for immigrants. The most common study path options that are available for adults with immigrant background are introduced in Figure 2. The following forms of education were represented among our participants: adult liberal education, adult basic education (ABE), integration training, general upper secondary school for adults, and vocational education. The participants were teachers of literacy skills, L2 Finnish, L2 Swedish, foreign languages, special education, mathematics, and social studies. There were also special needs assistants and study advisers among the participants. Additionally, some of the participants worked either

voluntarily in NGOs or as paid staff in asylum seeker reception centres. Most of the participants were qualified teachers.
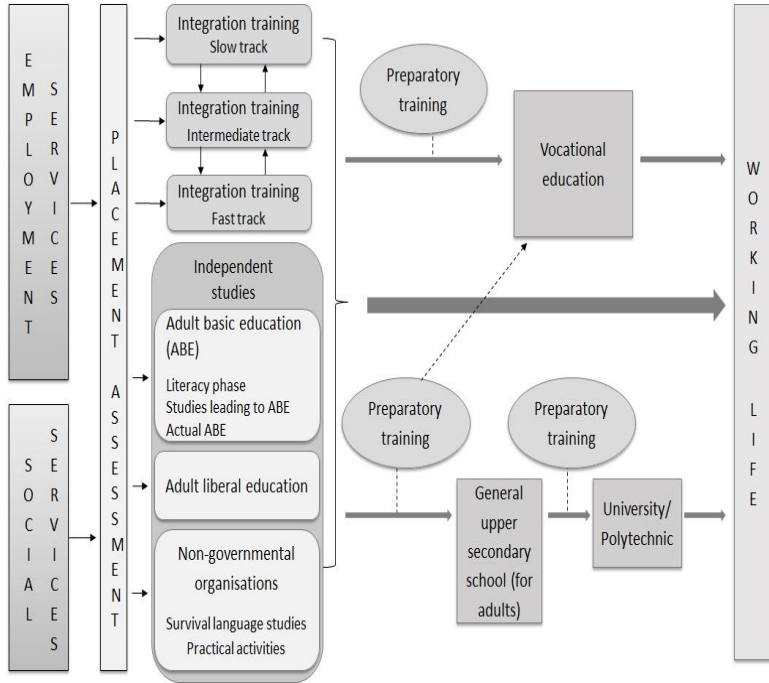
Figure 2. Study path options for adult immigrants living in Finland. Updated version of Ohranen et al. (2015).

However, some participants worked under two job titles concurrently, for example, as an L2 Finnish teacher and a study adviser, and it is rather common that the jobs change occasionally. The courses or programmes in which the participants were teaching were free of charge for the students.

3. What is behind the pedagogy?

3.1. New literacies

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2011), the combination of online learning and new literacies challenges the structures of

education. Teachers need more information about using pedagogically motivated technology in their teaching, and they benefit when they learn about new literacies and the new textual landscape, where texts are significantly more multimodal and multilingual. This made the designing of our online course challenging: we as planners had to motivate the participants to work online for a relatively long period and familiarise them with the rich world of new literacies. The participants' professional knowledge was challenged positively when they were designing meaningful digital learning material for LESLLA students. The combination of online learning and new literacies was a complex process that gradually developed during the project. The process also goes on in the work of the teachers in the future.

3.2. Design for learning

The whole project was built on the underlying principle of learning as a process in which the agency of a learner and their interaction with others plays a crucial role. This kind of a socio-constructivist perspective is the basis of all the current curricula in Finnish education – but there is still a need to develop the pedagogical practices. Hence, the training design supported the participants in developing their pedagogy in interaction with each other and the educators; to rethink their views on language and learning, receive feedback and share pedagogical innovations. In the modules, we utilised the teaching model developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). In general, this model focuses on learning outcomes rather than content, exercises or pedagogical tricks only. In line with this pedagogical thinking, the design of the training began with careful planning of the goals and the assessment according to the learners' needs. Only after this were assorted communicative exercises designed to suit these goals.

3.3. Language conceptualisations

When talking about immigrant education, it is crucial to pay attention to the teacher's views on languages and language learning. Teachers'

conceptualisations of language affect learning situations, teaching materials, assessment of the students' skills, and talk about language (Dufva et al. 2011). Salo (2009) suggests that every teacher has an idea of how language learning happens and how language teaching should be organised; however, these conceptualisations are not always equivalent to the actions in the classroom, and sometimes they are not even articulated. To be able to act in an appropriate way as a teacher, it is important to recognise and to be aware of the conceptualisations that affect and regulate teaching. Contrary to the monological language conceptualisation which treats languages as separate entities and puts stress on mastering the linguistic forms and structure, the dialogical conceptualisation stresses meaning and functions as well as the changing and dynamic character of language; it also sees language learning as learning to do things with the language (see Dufva et al. 2011). In the development of our training, we subscribed to the dialogical conceptualisation. In the piloted training, the participants were emboldened to verbalise their thoughts and develop their views on language from the first module. In every module, the participants were instructed to consider their relationship to language and language learning, and they were encouraged to try teaching methods that reflect the dialogic language conceptualisation.

4. Recognising good practices for LESLLA

4.1. Co-creation

The piloted training design supported learning through technology-enhanced interaction offered to participants (e.g., interaction between participants in the discussion forum and educators' feedback). Participants were active agents of their professional development and were treated as experts in their own field. They were therefore encouraged to co-create training materials by sharing their well-established practices. Educators facilitated the learning process by structuring the training and guiding participants in their learning, for example, by giving timely feedback, support, and inspiration. Many of these pedagogical solutions (e.g., the co-creation of material by different stakeholders and the availability of a range of interaction)

were possible thanks to using Peda.net as a learning platform. The platform proved to be a successful tool for the co-creation of the training. Innovation was an integral part of this training design. Participants were exposed to pedagogical innovations throughout the training and were encouraged, for instance, to utilise new pedagogical design in modules 4 and 5. The co-created pedagogical tools used in the training (e.g., peer-assessment, phenomenon-based learning) could be modelled by participants in their current and future work or serve as inspiration for their professional development.

4.2. New concepts and continuous reflection

The 1.5-year-training served as an ideal tool for the development of pedagogical thinking and creation of intercultural and language-aware mindsets (see e.g., Piller 2012). The approach follows an idea, discussed by e.g., Brookfield (2017) and Burbules (1993), that becoming a critically reflective educator is a long-lasting process. In our training, the participants were continuously encouraged to dialogue on diverse topics in relation to existing theories, their own work, the experiences of peers, and feedback from colleagues. They were also given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with pedagogical innovations and reflect on them, which is the first step towards innovation becoming a part of professionality. The continuous reflection was also stressed in assessment practices. Through different reflective and portfolio tasks, participants had the chance to build new knowledge in connection with the knowledge gained in previous modules, in line with ideas behind experiential learning in adulthood (e.g., Jarvis 2012). For example, in module 3, the professionals were encouraged to reflect on the reading circle in relation to the material gathered in the Peda.net platform. Portfolio tasks were seen as a logical continuum rather than separate entities.

4.3. Innovation through collaboration and learning-by-doing

Collaboration and exchanging new ideas through dialogical approaches was at the centre of the development work within the

project and training concept itself. The training concept was developed in close collaboration with a range of experts familiar with the Finnish context. It was also possible to utilise already internationally recognised good practices, for example, in module 3 (see Suni et al. 2018). The designers of the training share various professional backgrounds in terms of research field and teaching experiences. In the process of designing the training and creating the training materials, experts from other national universities were constantly consulted with to secure the quality of the training. Nevertheless, the developmental work was not without setbacks and can be best described as a continuous process of experimentation and learning.

Previous research shows both deficiencies and potential related to the utilisation of already existing expertise in educational institutions (Kärkkäinen 2017; OECD 2016). Therefore, one of the main ideas of the training concept was to provide participants with the opportunity to exchange their experiences within the same institution and across different workplaces. For instance, the participants completed their portfolio tasks in small groups based on their workplace and residence. They were continuously encouraged to share and comment on good practices surrounding activities and assessment practices.

The collaboration and innovation were further enhanced by engaging of different stakeholders in the participants' learning. For example, the module 6 which devoted to the development of basic skills in workplaces, engaged participants into close collaboration with employees and immigrant students through listening to their voices and experiences. The material gathered by immigrant students in their workplace in the form of photos and recordings of the meaningful learning moments was further discussed with students themselves and employers to broaden teachers' perspectives and practices related to immigrants' basic skills.

4.4. Flexibility

The flexibility was seen in ways of completing separate modules and the whole training. The training design recognised participants' different backgrounds, life and work situations as well as expectations

and needs. The participants were encouraged to complete their portfolio in the format most suitable for them (e.g., video, blog post, PowerPoint) and to focus as closely as possible on their current work responsibilities, their professional needs, and the needs of their work community.

To ensure active agency in their own learning, the participants first chose the aspect of practice on which they wanted to focus. Then they selected the literature for the learning tasks that corresponded with their chosen perspective, e.g., communicative competence. By providing ready-to-try-out pedagogical models and the opportunity to exchange good practices, the training met the needs of the participants stated in the pre-training questionnaire. For participants who were unable to participate in the face-to-face guidance sessions, there was the option of discussing their progress online.

4.5. Face-to-face guidance

Guidance visits in the participants' workplaces were at the core of this training design. In order to realise this practice, the participants were divided into study groups according to their place of residence and mentored by two educators. The main topic of each guidance session was a current portfolio task and its further development. Additionally, the hosts of the visit had the opportunity to introduce their institution and share good practices. Further, participants were also encouraged to meet and discuss their work outside of these formally scheduled meetings. These face-to-face guidance sessions proved to be an excellent tool for increasing collaboration and the flow of ideas and innovations between participants and institutions. The sessions were also a good arena for giving timely feedback to participants and receiving feedback on the training design and its content from them.

4.6. Motivating students

Some of the previously mentioned good practices, like the study groups and face-to-face guidance, enhanced the participants' motivation to continue with the training, and supported the exchange

of ideas and innovations. Similarly, peer-assessment, modules following a clear structure throughout the training, and the descriptions of modules and tasks getting shorter over time eased operating in the online environment and helped to finalise parts of the modules and the entire training. The first session organised in face-to-face form was of value from the perspective of becoming confident with the course and module structure and working in an online environment. The initial session also allowed the participants the opportunity to get to know each other personally. In addition, the materials used and especially the variety of materials (e.g., videos, texts, presentations, models ready to be tried out) aimed to increase engagement in the learning process. The materials also included multiple voices, such as experts, employees, and immigrant students. In particular, provocative talks, lectures, and interviews were found to work well as inspiration and stimulus for discussion.

4.7. Modules 4 and 5

As an example of the implementation of previously presented good practices, we will highlight modules 4 and 5, *Learning and assessment in a multilingual learning group I* and *II*. The focus in these modules was to give the participants tools for integrating the teaching of basic skills with content and language and to raise their awareness of suitable assessment practices. First, the participants received two reflection tasks. Following this, participants could start the portfolio task, in which they had to design a learning unit to implement in their own teaching groups.

Reflection task 1. The aim of this task was for participants to reflect on their own actions and attitudes related to language and teaching. First, participants watched a video, which addressed two different approaches to language learning: the functional and the formalist approach. Then they analysed their own teaching from the perspective of how these two approaches are visible in their work. During an online discussion with the whole group, the participants then discussed their pedagogical solutions and weaknesses based on the photos and notes taken during the lessons.

Reflection task 2. The aim of this task was to draw attention to opportunities for informal learning outside the classroom. The immigrant students were asked to choose one situation from their everyday life and make a one-minute video based on this situation, which was then viewed in class. The participants' task was to reflect on what kind of basic skills the students' situations demanded. Further, the participants reflected on how these everyday situations can be used as a part of teaching, learning, and assessment.

The portfolio task. The aim of the portfolio task was to implement the teaching model developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). The model contributes to creating a pedagogy in which the goal orientation of the learning process and the assessment are first designed carefully and according to the learners' needs. To achieve these goals, a variety of communicative exercises was then created. This forced the participants to challenge the traditional mindset in which the planning of a learning unit often begins with finding different and sometimes only loosely connected tasks. The participants designed a learning unit using this model.

Once developed, the design of the learning unit was implemented in classrooms, and it was documented by photos, notes, videos, or audio recordings, and collecting the output and feedback from students. In their portfolio, which could be written text, audio, or video, the participants were asked to reflect on the unit in response to selected questions.

During both modules, the participants repeatedly received feedback from their peers and the educators. The learning units were also discussed in the face-to-face guidance sessions.

5. Challenges and possible solutions

5.1. Participant engagement

As in many other web-based courses and training sessions (see Lee and Choi 2011), we experienced a dropout of 27 participants. The reasons behind quitting were usually related to the changing situations in working and personal life. The participants were preoccupied with their daily duties, and heterogeneous and occasionally changing

student groups added to their workload. Additionally, the participants often had temporary jobs because of the continuous competitive tendering, and they needed to change workplaces from time to time. There were also different practices in institutions concerning the employees' possibilities to participate in training during working hours. Accordingly, it was a challenge to engage and motivate the teachers to participate in long-term online-based training.

Given these obstacles, how can the training be made more attractive for participants? One solution is to further emphasise that the core idea of the training is to support the participants' daily work. Throughout the training, all assignments were connected to the practices in participants' classrooms and individual adaptations were possible and even desirable. The educators did not simply assign rigid topics but offered for example input and affordances to enhance development. The self-direction in the training was underscored, but due to an established tradition of teachers being leaders, it was not easy to adapt to new ways of acting as a learner. This issue was also directly linked to the participants' view of learning which was reconsidered during the training.

As the teacher training pilot aimed to develop new kinds of pedagogical practices, the changes and even conflicts in the conceptualisations of language and learning also posed challenges, as well as the utilisation of new technology and applications. Based on our experience, in order to engage the participants, the types of tasks and counselling need to be carefully planned. It is also important to find a good balance of different activities: the number of tasks should be reasonable, and they should be connected to participants' world of experiences as much as possible. Further, it is crucial to be diplomatic in giving feedback. The feedback should support sharing ideas and broadening the mindsets of the participants and also the educators. It is also important that the educators do not give the impression of being superior to the participants, who are experts in their work and own learning.

Sharing and interaction were the goal and the most successful part of the training – but the blended training and the structure of the modules or the assignments did not always encourage the participants to learn from each other's work in an optimal way. In this case, the question is how to make participants more motivated to participate in

online discussions, so that the discussions would be as interactive as possible, rather than simply presenting one's own views.

One of the key solutions was to make time frames within the training as flexible as possible, meet the individual and shared needs, and frame the discussions as appealingly as possible. This required that the educators were familiar with the field. Peda.net as a platform could also have been utilised in an even more versatile way. Peda.net offers a lifelong personal profile space where one can compile resources, materials, ideas, and links; to keep a journal, share social media updates, follow news of one's own interests or create photo galleries to build one's own expertise. This space could have been utilised more systematically and effectively to support the self-directed studies and to deepen the participants' pedagogical thinking. This could have been one of the ways to strengthen the agency of the participants even more – and accordingly, to engage and motivate them. It would also have been useful to collect and share the innovative practices of all participants throughout the training. This of course occurred within the regional groups, but as the groups worked separately for most of the training, synergy was not always exploited to its full potential. On the other hand, working in groups enabled the tailoring of the training according to the special needs of every regional group and even individual participants. All in all, the training worked in an optimal way when there was more than one participant from the same institution. Peer feedback and support proved to be essential, and this is something that should be taken into consideration during future realisation of the training.

The question is also if fees should be charged for the training, as this might engage some participants. Or should the qualification demands of the teachers be taken into account? If the training provided an official qualification or if the course credits were registered as academic studies, it would benefit the participants even more when applying for jobs.

5.2. Heterogeneity

The design of the training was challenged by participants being a heterogeneous group in terms of their backgrounds and expectations

as well as work and life situations. Participants also expressed different professional interests: some were interested only in teaching language to literacy learners, whereas others were working in integration or vocational training.

There is a risk that the educators – even if they do possess a lot of experience in teaching and connections to the field — cannot fully appreciate the difficulties or the strengths and resources of the participants working in different kinds of institutions. In line with previous studies (e.g., Kärkkäinen 2017), observations done in this project also show that vocational teachers' and language teachers' ideas on immigrant education and integration may differ considerably. Vocational teachers may identify strongly with teaching their subject, which may be a barrier to taking advantage of creative, language-supportive methodologies even though these would greatly enhance immigrant students' understanding of the newly learnt content (e.g., Kärkkäinen 2017).

One of the suggestions for further development of the training design is providing tools for adjusting and transferring of certain practices to different contexts and needs. Furthermore, providing the participants with more opportunities to dialogue on the pedagogical thinking behind some of these practices may be a tool for broadening perspectives on variety of pedagogies and seeing more value in unconventional ways of teaching. To develop the educators' understanding of the current needs, challenges, expectations, and conceptions of the participants, a period of observation and field studies might be useful at the beginning of the training. It would also be possible to have the participants directly involved in designing the model to bridge the possible gap between theory and practice.

6. Discussion

In Finland, there is no established pre- or in-service training system for teachers or advisers working with immigrant LESLLA students. However, based on the large number of teachers who applied for this piloted training, there is an obvious need and demand for this kind of training. Therefore, one of the goals of the project was to fill the gap and to establish a training model that can eventually be included in the

pre-service teacher training system. The innovative, technology-supported structure of the training design, with face-to-face guidance sessions in the participants' workplaces being an integral part of the training enabled us to contribute to upgrading the LESLLA teachers' professional skills nationwide.

The aim of the training was to build a wider understanding of the basic skills and to support effective pedagogical practices. The training equipped participants with ready-to-try-out pedagogical tools as well as new ideas that they can use in their work as such or as inspiration for further development of their teaching. The model can also serve as an example of working towards improvement as part of a common effort among educators, experts from different fields and immigrant students themselves.

Additionally, this project added to a better understanding of the specifics of the LESLLA teachers' professional needs and gave new insight into their professional development. Based on the observations, the training contributed to changing the participants' mindsets mainly thanks to dialogue, collaboration, and openness to trying new approaches, which are at the core of the training design. This thinking was visible in the online learning environment as well as during the face-to-face guidance. Thus, participants developed professionally, and due to the reciprocal structure of the training, the educators got a chance to develop their understanding of the phenomena as well. Developing the pedagogical design was then a continuous and mutual process.

Engaging the heterogeneous group of participants over a long period of time was the main challenge of the training. The heterogeneity of adult learners within a group is usually to be anticipated, though in this group, heterogeneity also related to a variety of conditions, contexts, and ways of implementing education for LESLLA learners. As solution to these differences, we propose rethinking the duration of the training and offering participants the opportunity to complete only individual modules. The participants' professional needs were also considered by allowing flexibility in the choice of readings as well as tasks and the way they were completed. In addition, practices such as division into local study groups, peer feedback, and face-to-face guidance worked well for the purpose of participants' engagement.

The model created in this project can be used in diverse contexts such as universities, open universities, and polytechnics. It can be adapted to both blended, online, and offline. The online assignments can be carried out also face-to-face. However, the shape and the duration of the training should be carefully considered to ensure the maximum engagement of the participants. For the present, the training model is available for free only in Finnish, but we can see its potential also internationally.

References

Brookfield, Stephen. 2017. *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. 2nd edn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Burbules, Nicholas C. 1993. *Dialogue in teaching: Theory and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Devine, Thomas G. 1987. *Teaching study skills: A guide for teachers*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Dufva, Hannele, Minna Suni, Mari Aro and Olli-Pekka Salo. 2011. Languages as objects of learning: Language learning as a case of multilingualism. *Apples. Journal of Applied Language Studies* 5(1): 109-124.

Hoover, John J. and James R. Patton. 2007. *Teaching study skills to students with learning problems: A teacher's guide for meeting diverse needs*. Austin: Pro-Ed.

Jarvis, Peter. 2012. *Adult learning in the social context*. New York: Routledge.

Kärkkäinen, Katarzyna. 2017. *Learning, teaching and integration of adult migrants in Finland*. Jyväskylä studies in education, psychology and social research 594. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Lankshear, Colin and Michele Knobel. 2011. *New literacies*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

Lee, Youngju and Jaeho Choi. 2011. A review of online course dropout research: Implications for practice and future research. *Educational Technology Research and Development* 59(5): 593-618.

Luukka, Minna-Riitta. 2003. Tekstitaituriksi koulussa [Becoming a text virtuoso at school]. *Virittäjä* 107 (3): 413-419.

Luukka, Minna-Riitta. 2013. Opetussuunnitelmat uudistuvat: Tekstien lukijasta ja kirjoittajasta monilukutaituriksi [Renewing curriculums: From readers and writers to masters of multiliteracy]. *Kieli, koulutus ja yhteiskunta* 4(5). https://www.kieliverkosto.fi/fi/journals/kieli-koulutus-ja-yhteiskunta-joulukuu-2013/opetussuunnitelmat-uudistuvat-tekstien-lukijasta-ja-kirjoittajasta-monilukutaituriksi

Malin, Antero, Sari Sulkunen and Kati Laine. 2013. *PIAAC 2012. Kansainvälisen aikuistutkimuksen ensituloksia [PIAAC 2012. The first results of the*

international survey of adult skills]. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja 2013:19. Helsinki: Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö.

Nieminen, Tarja, Hanna Sutela and Ulla Hannula. 2015. *Ulkomaista syntyperää olevien työ ja hyvinvointi Suomessa 2014* [Working and wellbeing of people with foreign origin living in Finland 2014]. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus.

OECD. 2016. *Supporting teacher professionalism. Insights from TALIS 2013*. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264248601-en

OECD. 2013 = *OECD Skills outlook 2013: First results from the survey of adult skills*. OECD Publishing.

Official Statistics of Finland. 2020. *Population structure 2019*. http://pxnet2.stat.fi/ PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11rl.px/ta ble/tableViewLayout1/

Ohranen, Sari, Heidi Vaarala, Ari Huhta, Kristel Kivisik, Marja Feller and Elina Stordell. 2015. *Selvitys aikuisten maahanmuuttajien suomen/ruotsin kielen taidon arvioinnista: Suunnitelma kotoutumiskoulutuksen lähtötason arviointimallin valtakunnallistamisesta. Loppuraportti 30.6.2015*. [Report on assessment of adult immigrants' Finnish/Swedish skills: Plan of getting the placement assessment model of integration training into nationwide use. Final report 30.6.2015]. Jyväskylän yliopisto: Soveltavan kielentutkimuksen keskus.

Piller, Ingrid. 2012. Intercultural communication: An overview. In Christina B. Paulston, Scott F. Kiesling and Elizabeth S. Rangel (eds.), *Blackwell handbooks in linguistics: The handbook of intercultural discourse and communication,* 1-18. Malden, MASS: Wiley-Blackwell.

Reder, Stephen. 2015. *Digital inclusion and digital literacy in the United States: A portrait from PIAAC's survey of adult skills*. Commissioned paper. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51bb74b8e4b0139570ddf020/t/551c3e82e 4b0d2fede6481f9/1427914370277/Reder_PIAAC.pdf

Salo, Olli-Pekka. 2009. Dialogisuus kielikasvatuksen kehyksenä [Dialogue as a frame for language education]. *Puhe ja kieli* 29(2): 89-102.

Suni, Minna, Taina Tammelin-Laine and Mari Vertainen (eds.). 2018. *EU-Speak-3. Muunkieliset Euroopassa: Koulutusta aikuisille maahanmuuttajille ja heidän opettajilleen. Yhteenveto opintojaksoista*. [EU-Speak-3. Speakers of other languages in Europe: Teaching adult immigrants and training their teachers. A compendium of module content.] Newcastle: Newcastle University. https://research.ncl.ac.uk/eu-speak/eu-speakbooks/suomi/

Wiggins, Grant and Jay McTighe. 2005. *Understanding by design*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

List of authors

Gabriella Argento
Università di Palermo
Palermo, Italia
gabriella.argento@unipa.it

Giulio Asta
Dico Education
Bologna, Italia
giulio@dico.education

Jean-Claude Beacco
Université de Sorbonne Nouvelle
Paris 3, France
jcb.mdg@wanadoo.fr

Giada Beretta
Asnada
Milano, Italia
giadaberetta@gmail.com

Judith Böddeker
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität
Münster, Deutschland
jboeddek@uni-muenster.de

Minna Bogdanoff
Jyväskylän yliopisto
Jyväskylä, Suomi
minna.k.bogdanoff@jyu.fi

Anna Germana Bucca
CPIA Nelson Mandela
Palermo, Italia
anbucca@gmail.com

Javier Chao García
Universidad Antonio de Nebrija
Madrid, España
jchaog@alumnos.nebrija.es

Ian Cheffy
SIL International
Stokenchurch, UK
ian_cheffy@sil.org

Ann Cowie
Canterbury Christ Church University
Canterbury, UK
ann.cowie@canterbury.ac.uk

Christine Czinglar
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität
Jena, Deutschland
christine.czinglar@uni-jena.de

Mari D'Agostino
Università di Palermo
Palermo, Italia
mari.dagostino@unipa.it

Andrea DeCapua
University of North Florida
Jacksonville, Florida, USA
drandreadecapua@gmail.com

Paolo Della Putta
Università di Torino
Torino, Italia
paoloantonio.dellaputta@unito.it

Roberta T. Di Rosa
Università di Palermo
Palermo, Italia
robertateresa.dirosa@unipa.it

Sarah Faseli
Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Bochum, Deutschland
sara.faseli@ruhr-uni-bochum.de

Alexis Feldmeier García
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität
Münster, Deutschland
alexis.feldmeier@uni-muenster.de

Sabina Fontana
Università di Catania
Catania, Italia
sabina.fontana@unict.it

Gaetano Gucciardo
Università di Palermo
Palermo, Italy
gaetano.gucciardo@unipa.it

Santi Guerrero Calle
Universität Freiburg
Freiburg, Deutschland
santi.guerrerocalle@unifr.ch

Belma Haznedar
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi
Istanbul, Türkiye
haznedab@boun.edu.tr

Sara Honegger
Asnada
Milano, Italia
sara.honegger@gmail.com

Katarzyna Kärkkäinen
Jyväskylän yliopisto
Jyväskylä, Suomi
katarzyna.karkkainen@gmail.com

Jeanne Kurvers
Universiteit van Tilburg
Tilburg, Nederland
j.j.Kurvers@uvt.nl

Silvana Leonforte
Azienda Ospedaliera Policlinico
Catania, Italia
silvanaleonforte@gmail.com

Ellie Mahoney
N.E.S.T.
Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
nest.union@ncl.ac.uk

Eva Malessa
Jyväskylän yliopisto
Jyväskylä, Suomi
eva.i.malessa@jyu.fi

Irini Mavrou
Universidad Antonio de Nebrija
Madrid, España
emavrou@nebrija.es

Katharine Miles
FlashAcademy
Birmingham, UK
katharine@flashacademy.com

Farzona Mirova
Universität Kassel
Kassel, Deutschland
farzona.mirova@yahoo.com

Sanna Mustonen
Jyväskylän yliopisto
Jyväskylä, Suomi
sanna.s.mustonen@jyu.fi

Rosa Pugliese
Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna
Bologna, Italia
rosa.pugliese@unibo.it

Anne-Christin Schumacher
Universität Kassel
Kassel, Deutschland
anne.schumacher.mail@web.de

Massimiliano Spotti
Universiteit van Tilburg
Tilburg, Nederland
M.Spotti@tilburguniversity.edu

Alessio Surian
Università di Padova
Padova, Italia
alessio.surian@unipd.it

Taina Tammelin-Laine
Jyväskylän yliopisto
Jyväskylä, Suomi
taina.tammelinlaine@icloud.com

Marco Triulzi
Università La Sapienza, CLA
Roma, Italia
marco.triulzi@uniroma1.it

Debora Marongiu
Asnada
Milano, Italia
debora.marongiu@gmail.com

Fausto Melluso
Arci Sicilia
Palermo, Italia
faustomelluso@gmail.com

Fernanda Minuz
John Hopkins University, SAIS Europe
Italy
fernandaminuz@gmail.com

Egle Mocciaro
Masarykova univerzita
Brno, Česká republika
egle.mocciaro@mail.muni.cz

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, DC, USA
joy@peytons.us

Federico Salvaggio
Università di Udine
Udine, Italia
federico.salvaggio@uniud.it

Celia Sokolowsky
Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV)
Deutschland
sokolowsky@dvv-vhs.de

Bridget Stratford
N.E.S.T.
Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
nest.union@ncl.ac.uk

Consuelo Surian
Cooperativa sociale "Orizzonti"
Padova, Italia
csurian@gmail.com

Heidi Vaarala
Jyväskylän yliopisto
Jyväskylä, Suomi
heidi.vaarala@jyu.fi

Martha Young-Scholten
Newcastle University
Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK
martha.young-scholten@newcastle.ac.uk

Volumi pubblicati nella collana
STRUMENTI E RICERCHE
della Scuola di Linua italiana per Stranieri dell'Università di Palermo
diretta da Mari D'Agostino

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE UMANISTICHE UNIVERSITÀ DI PALERMO

Egle Mocciaro (2020)
The development of L2 Italian morphosyntax in adult learners with limited literacy*

Mari D'Agostino (a cura di) (2018)
La forza delle lingue, nelle migrazioni e nella inclusione

Chen Ying, Mari D'Agostino, Yang Lin, Vincenzo Pinello (a cura di) (2018)
Fra cinese e italiano. Esperienze didattiche

Giuseppe Paternostro, Vincenzo Pinello (a cura di) (2016)
Echi da Echi. Dialoghi letterari sulle migrazioni per accorciare le distanze

Mari D'Agostino, Giuseppina Sorce (a cura di) (2016)
Nuovi migranti e nuova didattica. Esperienze al CPIA Palermo1

Marcello Amoruso, Mari D'Agostino, Yousif Latif Jaralla (a cura di) (2015)
Dai barconi all'università. Percorsi di inclusione linguistica per minori stranieri non accompagnati

Adriana Arcuri, Egle Mocciaro (a cura di) (2014)
Verso una didattica linguistica riflessiva. Percorsi di formazione iniziale per insegnanti di italiano come lingua non maternal

Maria Rosa Turrisi (a cura di) (2013)
Insegnare italiano nella classe plurilingue. Un'esperienza di formazione in servizio

Chiara Amoruso (a cura di) (2012)
Stranescuole. L'italiano per i nuovi arrivati e per tutti

Mari D'Agostino, Chiara Amoruso (a cura di) (2009)
Imparare con gli alunni stranieri

*Dal 2020 la collana è pubblicata da Unipa Press

This volume brings together a selection of papers presented at the 14th Annual Symposium on Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA 2018), which was held in Palermo from 4th to 6th October 2018. The 25 papers collected here (out of about 80 presentations) testify to the broadening not only of perspectives and interests, but also of the places and people involved, that characterises LESLLA studies almost fifteen years after the first symposium in Tilburg in 2005. At a time when all too often international borders are closed, whether by political choices or for health policy reasons, this volume is also a voice against the tide in support of a new and stable openness to people and their languages.

Mari D'Agostino is full professor of Italian Linguistics at the University of Palermo, where she directs the School of Italian Language for Foreigners. For years her research interests have gravitated around the theme of the relationship between languages and migration. Her publications include *Sociolinguistica dell'Italia contemporanea* (Bologna, 2017 2nd ed.) and *Noi che siamo passati dalla Libia. Giovani in viaggio tra alfabeti e multilinguismo* (Bologna, 2021).

Egle Mocciaro is assistant professor of Italian linguistics at the Masaryk University in Brno. Her research interests include L2 Italian morphosyntax, with particular attention to learners with limited literacy, as well as various semantic and morphosyntactic phenomena of Latin and ancient and contemporary Italian-Romance vernaculars. She has recently published *The development of L2 Italian morphosyntax in adult learners with limited literacy* (Palermo, 2021).