



20th Anniversary Symposium | October 19, 2024

Country Report: Germany

Christine Czinglar
Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany

Franziska Förster
Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany

Dorothee Steinbock
University of Potsdam, Germany

Christoph Schroeder
University of Potsdam, Germany

Alexis Feldmeier
University of Bielefeld, Germany

Abstract

This report examines the situation of LESLLA learners in Germany by presenting estimates of their numbers and analyzing the extent to which language policies, curricula, and literacy courses address their specific needs. An overview of instructional methods employed in literacy courses as well as of research conducted on this group of adult immigrants is provided. The report concludes by identifying existing gaps and challenges and by outlining perspectives for future research.

Keywords: Germany, language policy, literacy education, literacy instruction methods, research on LESLLA learners

Introduction

This report provides an overview of policies, practices, and research pertaining to LESLLA learners in Germany. A rough estimate of the number of LESLLA learners in Germany is first presented, based on survey data that highlight the extraordinarily high demand for German literacy classes. Subsequently, an outline of the educational policies and services available to LESLLA learners in Germany is provided. Attention is then given to methods of literacy instruction, and research conducted with regard to LESLLA learners in Germany is reviewed. Finally, suggestions are offered for future development and research.

LESLLA Learners in Germany

Despite the importance of reading and writing skills and the ubiquity of literacy demands in a society like Germany, the large-scale LEO Study (level-one study, germ. “Level-One Studie”), which in 2018 for the second time surveyed a representative sample of adult German speakers, revealed that a surprisingly high proportion of the adult working-age population lacks basic literacy skills. In 2018, 12.1% adults – an estimated 6.2 million adults – were unable to comprehend or produce simple connected texts in German (Grotlüschen et al., 2020, p. 131). Nearly half of them (47.4%) were second language (L2) speakers of German (Grotlüschen et al., 2020, p. 134), even though L2 speakers made up only 13.4% of the total sample (Heilmann & Grotlüschen, 2020, p. 119). This suggests that adult immigrants are at a significantly higher risk of acquiring only limited literacy skills in L2 German. As a consequence of the first LEO Study from 2010, the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Skills (“Nationale Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung”, short “Alpha-Dekade”) was implemented from 2016 to 2026 in Germany to reduce functional illiteracy (“funktionaler Analphabetismus”) in adults and to increase their basic skills in German (BMBF/KMK 2016; see section 2).

While the first LEO survey 2010 still used the terms “primary” and “functional illiterate”, the second LEO study 2018 adopted the internationally accepted and less stigmatizing term “adults with no/low literacy” (“Erwachsene mit keiner/geringer Literalität”¹; Grotlüschen et al., 2020, p. 130). Although the German term “Literalität” is derived from English, it is not fully congruent in meaning with “literacy” (Guerrero-Calle et al., 2023, pp. 9-11). In the context of literacy courses for immigrants, the term “Alphabetisierung” is more commonly used in German-speaking countries. It refers to print literacy and was established as one component of basic education (“Grundbildung”) in the 1990s (Tröster & Schrader, 2016). Basic education, like literacy in its broad sense, includes different kinds of literacy, e.g. numeracy, computer literacy, or health literacy.

According to the LEO surveys, low literacy means that a person can only read and write on the letter level (literacy level 1), the word level (level 2) or simple sentence level (level 3) (Grotlüschen et al., 2020, p. 129). If participants can solve reading and writing tasks involving short coherent texts, they are assigned to literacy level 4 or above. Hence, the definition of (low) literacy in Germany is confined to the technical skills of decoding and encoding print and does not yet embrace broader notions of social practice – just like the German term “Alphabetisierung” suggests. Nonetheless, in the LEO survey 2018, the researchers expanded their scope on low literacy to examine the connection between technical literacy competences and (domain-specific)

¹ As “low” is the most accurate translation of “gering” we use “low literacy” in this paper instead of “limited literacy.”

practices, following the international discussion on literacy as a social practice (Grotlüschen et al., 2023, p.4).

The literacy levels of the LEO study had a strong impact to the field of first and second language (L1 and L2) literacy in Germany and are frequently referred to in curricula, assessment and research. As the LEO alpha levels deviate from the levels of reading skill used in the PIAAC study (Rammstedt et al., 2024), the results of PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) and LEO do not easily compare. This might explain why the latest PIAAC results showing that 9% of the adult population in Germany have readings skills below level 1 (Rammstedt et al., 2024, p. 52) deviate somewhat from the LEO results.

In the following, we attempt to estimate the number of LESLLA learners in Germany. Our estimation draws on a survey of refugees in Germany by Wienberg et al. (2021, pp. 105-106), who estimate that up to 760,000 recently immigrated refugees needed German literacy courses in 2016 (which was a peak in refugee immigration in Germany due to the civil war in Syria). Adding this to the estimated 2.9 million adult immigrants of the LEO study, who have sufficient oral language skills (presumably due to longer residence in Germany), but limited literacy in L2 German, it seems fair to say that there is a high demand for literacy courses for adult immigrants in Germany. In addition to the adult population, there are also recently immigrated adolescents from 16 years onwards who may be in need of additional literacy courses and visit preparatory classes in state schools, mostly vocational schools. No concrete national figures are available here. In Berlin, the proportion of newly immigrated pupils in preparatory classes who had low literacy skills was estimated to be 13%, in total numbers 348 students, in 2023 (unpublished request for information submitted to the Ministry, February 2024).

Note that the LEO study only assesses literacy skills in the majority language German and not in the L1 or in other languages. All low-literate persons speaking a language of origin other than German (“gering literalisierte Personen mit nicht-deutscher Herkunftssprache”, Heilmann & Grotlüschen, 2020, p. 116) are referred to as low-literate in general, regardless of their potential literacy or education in the language of origin. This conflates low literacy in German with low literacy in general. Hence, it is difficult to estimate the number of LESLLA learners in Germany. Grotlüschen et al. (2020, p. 135) state that 22.2% of the adult immigrants with low literacy in German reported that they were unable to read or write complex texts in their native language(s), yielding an estimated number of 656,000 LESLLA learners among those that are already in Germany for a while. Adding up to 750,000 recently immigrated adults with low literacy skills in their L1 (see above; Scheible 2018; Wienberg et al., 2021, p. 105-106), we arrive at an estimate of 1.4 million LESLLA learners in Germany.

LESLLA Related Policies and Educational Services in Germany

Germany is a federal republic in which education policies lie, in principle, in the hands of the sixteen federal states (“Länder”), which act independently, but are supported by the national state in more general questions. Regarding the LESLLA group, the national state is a much stronger player compared to the federal states. Nevertheless, education policies for the LESLLA group are impacted by different divisions of responsibilities: (1) policies of the BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, germ. “Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge”), (2) policies of the BMBF (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, germ. “Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung”) in cooperation with the federal states through the national campaign of the “AlphaDekade”, (3) policies of the federal states and the community level in case of young

LESLLA learners, who are still at school age, and (4) policies at the community level with local and partly private initiatives.

The year 2004 marks a turning point in immigration policy, as with the German Residence Act (“Aufenthaltsgesetz”), for the first time, the acquisition of German became a constitutive element of immigration policy. Thus, the integration of immigrants “into the economic, cultural and social life of the Federal Republic of Germany” (AufenthG § 43) was declared to be something that “receive[s] support” by the state. Foreigners were from then on “expected to undertake commensurate integration efforts in return” (AufenthG § 43). This is implemented in the Residence Act with a strong reference to language: language – meaning mastery of German – thus becomes the “key to integration” (Schroeder 2024, p. 18). In concrete terms, the law implements this by defining levels of competence in language proficiency, based on the Common European Framework of Reference – CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020).

Before that, language courses for immigrants were offered at community or at local level by adult education centers, some public schools, smaller non-governmental and migrant self-organization or, in some cases, by companies. German literacy courses were often tailored to L1 speakers of German, and not specifically to the needs of the LESLLA group (Vogelsang 2007, p. 38; Griebhaber 2017).

For adult immigrants, the Residence Act of 2004 resulted in the implementation of centrally organized language courses, the so-called integration courses (“Integrationskurse”, IK), by the federal government on the administrative level (1) mentioned above. Literacy courses for immigrants (“Alphabetisierungskurs”, AK) are one of several target-group specified subcategories of the integration course (IK). While the IK curriculum is designed to reach CEFR level B1, the curriculum of the literacy courses (AK) lowers the expectations to CEFR level A2. In the AK, learning to read and write is understood as an additional task that supports progression towards this CEFR level (Feldmeier, 2015a). A total of 1,300 instructional units (each 45 minutes in length) is allocated to achieve this goal. In terms of participant numbers, the AK is the second most frequently attended course after the regular IK (IK 68,3%, AK 22,2%).

To assess the expected language proficiency and participants' basic knowledge of the German legal and social system, a unified German language test for immigrants (“Deutschtest für Zuwanderer”, DTZ) and a knowledge of society test (“Leben in Deutschland”) test are administered. Test results below CEFR level A2 are not certified. This testing regime has been subject to repeated criticism, particularly in relation to the literacy courses (Rocca et al., 2020; Schroeder et al., 2022). In fact, depending on the year, 35-45 % of AK participants do not achieve the expected CEFR A2 level in the DTZ (BAMF, 2024). Participants perform better in the speaking components, whereas they rarely achieve CEFR level B1 in reading and, in particular, in writing on the DTZ. It is hence not surprising that nearly 80% of AK instructors consider the test format to be inadequate for AK participants (Kay et al., 2023, p. 129). While we maintain that the CEFR is not an adequate reference framework for language development in literacy courses (Schroeder et al., 2022), the recently developed LASLLIAM guide (Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants; Minuz et al., 2022) now provides a more appropriate reference; see chapter Gaps, challenges and recommendations, p. 8).

At the administrative level (2), projects financed by the “AlphaDekade” have rather small impact regarding LESLLA learners. The campaign aims to sustainably improve the reading and writing skills as well as the basic education level of adults in Germany through public relations work, research, learning opportunities, professionalization of teaching staff and institutionalization. One important project was KASA (“Kontrastive Alphabetisierung im

Situationsansatz”, contrastive literacy instruction in the situational approach), which organized literacy courses with home language support for LESLLA learners in a community-based approach (Marschke, 2022).

At the administrative level of the federal state (3), an institutional framework in which the LESLLA target group is also addressed, albeit again not explicitly, are secondary schools and vocational schools that set up preparatory classes for newly immigrated students with little knowledge of German. Preparatory classes foster German (academic) language and literacy to prepare students for the transition to regular school classes. In some federal states, they are organized as independent classes at schools, while other models combine separate language lessons with gradual integration into regular classes. In vocational education and training in particular, issues of literacy clearly play a role; in some cases, they are also explicitly included in the curricula (e.g. Gamper et al., 2017). However, there are few explicit educational policy approaches to the specific topic of literacy education in the context of preparatory classes, nor are there any precise figures available. Certain overlaps with the other institutional frameworks exist at the level of teachers, as teachers in school-based literacy classes have often initially worked in the BAMF literacy courses (AK) and bring their experience from there to the school-based literacy classes.

At the local/community level (4), youth and adult education services as well as migrant self-organizations play an important role in providing language courses with literacy training. Apart from the language courses funded by the BAMF, there are also voluntary programs offered by various initiatives. However, the distribution of offers within the municipalities is not uniform but depends on various factors. These include in particular the availability of resources, infrastructure (city vs. state) and the activities of individual initiatives (Vogelsang, 2007).

Educational Methods for Literacy Instruction

Over the past 30 years, methods for literacy instruction have become more and more sophisticated in Germany. The fact that 46% of the participants in AK are LESLLA learners and 63% have poor oral skills (Kay et al., 2023) calls for well-trained teachers versed in teaching methods ranging from literacy-specific to general methods applied in foreign and second language teaching. Also, learner autonomy has become an important didactic goal for LESLLA classes (see the proposals in the national curriculum for IK; Feldmeier, 2015a), which requires specific teaching methods.

Following Paulo Freire’s principle of orality “speak, speak, speak, read, write” (Szablewski-Çavus, 2005, p. 13), literacy education of immigrants already emphasized teaching the German language early on (Szablewski-Çavus, 2005). After synthetic approaches to teaching written language skills became established as a methodological principle (Albert et al., 2015; Rokitzki et al., 2010;), Freire’s focus on orality was largely overlooked. Nevertheless, the importance of a systematic promotion of orality in literacy work is reflected not only in the national curricula for Germany and Austria (Feldmeier, 2015a; Feldmeier, 2021), but also in the LASLLIAM reference guide (Minuz et al., 2022). The teaching methods used in literacy courses and teaching materials in Germany are predominantly synthetic, i.e., starting with letters and syllables, moving on to morphemes, words, sentences, and finally to texts. The introduction of the syllabic-analytic approach (“silbenanalytische Methode”, Röber, 2009; see also Pracht, 2010, 2012; Feldmeier García, 2024) brought increased attention to the role of syllables. This method draws on the trochaic stress pattern and the relatively simple structure of unstressed (reduction)

syllables, both of which are characteristic features of German. It was developed as an alternative to approaches that emphasize alphabetic transparency over orthographic accuracy.

Many of the synthetic methods can also be found in methodological proposals based on Montessori's pedagogy, which have been discussed more intensively in recent years (Albert et al., 2015; Rokitzki, 2016). Furthermore, three methodological approaches that were originally discussed for literacy training for L1 German speakers with limited literacy have been primarily adapted for the literacy of immigrants (Döbert & Hubertus, 2000; Feldmeier, 2004; Magin, 1991). These are the morpheme method (cf. Albert et al., 2015, pp. 53-63), the language experience approach (Magin, 1991, pp. 76-86) and the ability approach ("Fähigkeiten Ansatz", cf. Kamper, 1987).

In the early 1980s and 1990s, L1-L2-contrastive approaches were also practiced alongside monolingual literacy training in German as a second language (Szablewski-Çavus, 1991, pp. 55-57; *ibid.*, 2005; see also Jockisch, 2005). Such approaches fell out of focus and have only been revived in recent years (cf. Albert et al., 2015; Buschfeld & Schöneberger, 2010; Marschke et al., 2013; Marschke 2022).

In recent years, teaching methods such as project-based work, station-based learning, or weekly learning plans have been discussed in connection with fostering learner autonomy. Additional approaches aimed at promoting learner autonomy have also been increasingly implemented, including the use of portfolios (Feldmeier García, 2022a, 2022b; Feldmeier, 2015b) and the development of learning strategies (Markov et al., 2015). Since the 1980s, advising approaches for L1 speakers of German with low literacy have been discussed (Fuchs-Brüninghoff & Pfirrmann, 1988; Magin, 1991). Advising in language learning ("Lernberatung") is particularly well-suited for placing negative learning experiences at the center of basic education. These approaches form a basis for current methodological proposals that emphasize learner autonomy and the establishment of a positive learning attitude in the literacy development of migrants (Feldmeier García et al., 2022a, 2022b; Feldmeier & Markov, 2016).

Recently, there has been growing interest in methods that target precursor skills essential for literacy acquisition. This primarily includes promoting phonological awareness (e.g., Bulut & Knopp, 2011; Feldmeier García & Morand, 2024; Löffler & Weis, 2016). Although the literacy of immigrant adults and adults with L1 German has been discussed several times (Hilmer, 2001; Hubertus, 1991; Koch & Fischer, 1991) and has inspired teaching materials tailored to these learner groups, no specific teaching methods for adults have been developed. Also, the primary focus in literacy courses remains on technical reading and writing skills (Schramm, 2022, p. 37), a trend also seen in literacy courses across Europe (Minuz et al., 2022, p. 31). Reading and writing activities grounded in the real-world needs of the participants do not yet play a significant role in Germany.

Research on LESLLA Learners in Germany

There is still little empirical research regarding L2 and literacy acquisition of LESLLA learners in Germany, although empirical research has noticeably increased since the 2010s - possibly as a response to the Immigration Act of 2005. A few recent papers review the state of the art of the research that has been done in Germany (e.g., Feick & Schramm, 2016; Guerrero-Calle et al., 2023; Lemke-Ghafir et al., 2021; Markov & Waggershauser, 2018; Schramm, 2022). Since academic communities often work independently, literacy research is typically split across different target groups and learning contexts: Research either focuses on (i) mono- and bilingual

literacy by children in primary school, (ii) school-based literacy acquisition in L2 German by children and adolescents, (iii) native German adult functional (il-)literacy (“Grundbildung”), or (iv) literacy acquisition by adult immigrants in L2 German in IK (Berkemeier, 2018, pp. 282–283). Research on LESLLA learners in Germany, i.e., target-groups (ii) and (iv), used to focus more on didactic topics than on L2 literacy acquisition per se, but recently this has changed, as shown in the following non-exhaustive overview.

Investigating precursors of literacy, the studies by Scheithauer (2010) and Landgraf et al. (2012) both indicate that phonological awareness is a strong predictor for reading and writing competencies. For research on cognitive and metacognitive abilities in the context of teaching, Feldmeier (2011) examined word-level decoding strategies used by participants in literacy courses. Bøddeker (2018) allowed LESLLA learners to freely choose their preferred vocabulary learning strategies, which led to significantly better outcomes. Several dissertations on specific teaching methods resulted from the project Alphamar (Albert et al., 2015). Rokitzki (2016) successfully adapted the Montessori approach of literacy teaching to adult learners, while Heyn (2013) showed that a contrastive language approach involving the home language supported the understanding of grammatical phenomena in the L2. Investigating adolescents with initial literacy in L1 Arabic, Leupolz-Oebel (2020) showed that writing and reading speed, as well as movement patterns in handwriting, were affected by script contrast and writing direction. To integrate the acquisition of spoken and written language more coherently, Pracht (2010) developed and tested a concept of schema-based basic literacy acquisition, which was grounded in the usage-based approach and the syllabic-analytic approach (“silbenanalytische Methode”). Focusing on the heterogeneity of participants, Böttinger (2023) found that while most of the 200 teachers investigated valued internal differentiation and many supported learner autonomy by encouraging reciprocal support in pair work, only few applied open teaching methods such as project work (“Projektarbeit”) or weekly learning plans (“Wochenplanarbeit”).

Drawing from sociocultural approaches to literacy, Waggerhauser (2015) conducted an ethnographic and Förster et al. (in press) an interview study on the informal and everyday literacy practices of adult migrants. Their findings highlighted the importance of understanding literacy as a situated and domain-specific practice, in an L2 context often emerging from problem-solving needs. The participants’ use of their multilingual experiences and compensating strategies involving translation apps show how digital literacy and prior literacy experiences are valuable resources for L2 communication.

Although important studies on the second language acquisition of migrant workers were carried out in Germany early in the 1970ies and 1980ies (e.g., Clahsen et al., 1983; see also Young-Scholten, 2013), LESLLA learners and their literacy acquisition have not been in the focus of systematic acquisition research in Germany. The LEO study generated some data on LESLLA learners, but the literacy assessment tasks used in the LEO study (Grotlüschen, 2010) or in other contexts (Ossner et al., 2018) are tailored to L1 speakers of German and not to LESLLA learners. For data on literacy development of adult migrants, one has to rely on studies by the BAMF itself, as independent researchers are seldomly granted access to those courses. While underlining the importance of L1 literacy knowledge, the BAMF studies have up to now relied entirely on self-reported data (e.g., Scheible, 2018), which do not consistently reflect the literacy skills measured by tests in heterogeneous populations, e.g., immigrants (Edele et al., 2015).

Recent studies focused on developing assessment tests for LESLLA learners in L2 German but also in major home languages: Markov et al. (2015) developed tasks to assess phonological awareness of LESLLA learners during individual coaching sessions by using tasks in German and

major L1s like Arabic and Turkish. Morand et al. (in press) developed a digital assessment tool for phonological awareness in adult L2 learners of German based on metalinguistic tasks involving language-specific non-words for German, Arabic and Tigrinya. Expanding the Literacy Rating Scale (Tarone et al., 2009), Schumacher et al. (2021) created a rating tool (Lit-L1-L2) to assess LESLLA learners' behavior during reading/writing and the resulting texts in L1 Dari and L2 German. Franz Dos Santos (in press) develops a theoretical model of functional literacy using the LASLLIAM scales (Minuz et al., 2022) and investigates ways to assess LESLLA learners' functional literacy.

While the assessment tools described so far have not yet been used with larger samples of adult migrants, Guerrero Calle (2020) administered a battery of tests to measure language and literacy acquisition in L2 German in Switzerland. She showed that one third of 57 non-Roman literate learners were able to attain A1 level in German after 300 hours. The ELIKASA project (Development of basic literacy skills by contrastive literacy instruction, germ. "Entwicklung literaler Kompetenzen in der Kontrastiven Alphabetisierung") developed a multilingual test battery to measure basic literacy in L2 German and in the L1s Arabic, Farsi-Dari and Turkish (Czinglar et al., 2025, in press). Ranging from computerized letter and word recognition, word-level spelling to a text-level reading fluency task, ELIKASA assessed the basic L1 and L2 literacy skills and other factors such as L2 receptive vocabulary, education and L2 input of 124 participants in KASA literacy courses. The different measures of basic literacy correlated well with each other and structural equation modelling showed a significant impact of L1 literacy skills on L2 literacy performance (Czinglar et al., 2025, March 10-12). Further research is needed to use the instruments developed so far with larger samples of LESLLA learners, to complement and adapt them if needed to investigate how they acquire literacy in German as a second language.

Gaps, Challenges, and Recommendations

From an SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research perspective, many questions regarding the acquisition of L2 German by adult migrants with no or limited literacy skills remain unanswered. Existing research largely aligns with findings from other countries and emphasizes that the linguistic resources learners bring to the task – particularly their prior literacy experiences and oral L2 skills – must be integrated into both literacy instruction and assessment in L2 German. Newly developed multilingual assessment tools need to be validated with larger participant samples and adapted to align with existing literacy scales (e.g., PIAAC, LEO or LASLLIAM). The aforementioned LASLLIAM scales are a big step forward, but they still await empirical validation. Additionally, L1 instruments need to be developed for other major migration languages.

Such endeavors require expertise across diverse fields such as applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, and language assessment research and call for multidisciplinary teams and collaboration. Progress in this area cannot be achieved by single case studies and projects alone; larger research initiatives and increased funding are urgently needed. This includes the necessity for the BAMF to grant broader access to independent researchers to AK (and IK) data.

Furthermore, stakeholders should acknowledge that research methodologies become increasingly complex (e.g., statistical know-how, interpretative methodologies, design-based research, multilingual competence, SLA theory). In future research, the participation of learners as research subjects and intersectional perspectives will be more important.

One of the biggest challenges is the complexity of the research topic itself, for literacy in today's digital, multilingual, and multiscript migration societies is a moving target. To pay

attention to the real-life contexts of the learners helps modelling the L2 language and literacy acquisition. This calls for a stronger focus on socio-cultural perspectives of literacy, which have thus far been largely neglected in the German-speaking research community.

There is a need for research-based development and implementation of LESLLA-specific didactic approaches taking into account the criticism of BAMF language courses mentioned above. Considering the increasingly heterogeneous learner groups, different didactic approaches need to be harmonized. And also, autonomous learning processes within individualized instruction will need to receive greater attention in future research and development (Berkemeier, 2018, p. 282). Adult learners would also profit from implementation of action- and participant-oriented approaches, based on their goals and needs and authentic materials (Schramm, 2022, pp. 35-36). The concept of family literacy has the potential to connect adult literacy efforts with the intrinsically motivated desire of parents to support their children (Nickel, 2011). Especially for LESLLA learners, the potential of L1 use in L2 language and literacy learning should be acknowledged and investigated further – particularly given persistent monolingual language policies.

The field at issue here is not one that is only dealt with at an academic level. Since the German state is comparatively strongly committed to language education for immigrants, this also brings politics to the forefront. Above all, it is urgently necessary that the LASLLIAM scales should replace the CEFR framework as reference for curriculum design of the BAMF literacy courses. This must go hand in hand with the abandonment of the high-stake testing regime for the vulnerable group of LESLLA learners. Instead, the curriculum needs to put literacy first, and the heterogeneity of the learners must be met with different course offers and learning environments to fit different needs and learning goals (Schroeder et al., 2022).

Another policy-related concern is the lack of sustainability. This applies in particular to the results of project-based work, such as diagnostic tools, didactic materials, including valuable experiences and expertises, which tend to get lost or scattered after funding ceases. There is a need for secure funding at the national level ensuring the establishment of institutional roofs for the field. One example of this would be degree programs at university level in literacy and basic education, as these can consolidate project results and disseminate them as part of teacher training.

Finally, we want to underline that LESLLA learners need allies, as they are systematically marginalized and their voices are seldomly heard (Lemke-Ghafir & Steinbock, 2024; eur-alpha, 2011). Although neither academia, nor literacy teaching leave much opportunity, time or nerves to engage in lobbying, we need to keep up with the struggle for empathy and awareness among policy makers.

References

- Albert, R., Heyn, A., Rokitzki, C., & Teepker, F. (2015). *Alphabetisierung in der Fremdsprache Deutsch. Lehrmethoden auf dem Prüfstand*. Verlag Tectum.
- Berkemeier, A. (2018). Schriffterwerb und L2-Alphabetisierung. In W. Grieshaber (Ed.), *Schreiben in der Zweitsprache Deutsch. Ein Handbuch* (pp. 282–299). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110354577-019>
- Böddeker, J. (2018): *Der Einsatz von Vokabellernstrategien in Alphabetisierungskursen*. Tectum Verlag.
- Böttinger, A. (2023). *Binnendifferenzierung im Alphabetisierungskurs im Bereich Deutsch als Zweitsprache*. Peter Lang.

- Bulut, N., & Knopp, E. (2011). Psycholinguistische Erkenntnisse im Hinblick auf die Alphabetisierung Erwachsener. *Alfa-Forum*, 78, 25–29.
- Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF). (2024). *Bericht zur Integrationskursgeschäftsstatistik für das erste Halbjahr 2024*. BAMF. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/Integrationskurszahlen/Bundesweit/2024-1-hj-integrationskursgeschaeftsstatistik_bund.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung & Kultusministerkonferenz (BMBF & KMK). (2016). *General Agreement on the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Skills*. https://www.alphadekade.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/weitere_dokumente/en_general_agreement_on_the_na_for_literacy_and_basic_skills.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1
- Clahsen, H., Meisel, J.M., & Pienemann, M. (1983). *Deutsch als Zweitsprache. Der Spracherwerb ausländischer Arbeiter*. Narr.
- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing. <https://www.coe.int/lang-cefr>
- Czinglar, C., Arslan, Z., & Karges, K. (2025). Mehrsprachige Diagnostik basaler Lesekompetenzen von erwachsenen DaZ-Lernenden. *Workshop Deutsch als Zweitsprache, Migration und Mehrsprachigkeit*, 18, 127–146. <https://doi.org/10.18452/33017>
- Czinglar, C., Arslan, Z., & Schroeder, C. (in press). Assessing L1 basic literacy of adult migrants in Germany: Spelling and reading fluency skills in Turkish and their impact on L2 German literacy. In C. Czinglar, K. H. Perry, & K. Schramm (Eds.), *Adult migrants learning literacy in a new language*. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Czinglar, C., Karges, K., Förster, F., & Golcher, F. (2025, March 10-12). *Measuring the Impact of L1 Literacy on Basic L2 Literacy in Adult Migrants in Germany* [Conference Session]. 2nd Literacy Summit, Cologne, Germany.
- Döbert, M., & Hubertus, P. (2000). *Ihr Kreuz ist die Schrift. Analphabetismus und Alphabetisierung in Deutschland*. Bundesverband Alphabetisierung.
- Edele, A., Seuring, J., Kristen, C., & Stanat, P. (2015). Why bother with testing? The validity of immigrants' self-assessed language proficiency. *Social Science Research*, 52, 99–123.
- eur-alpha (2011). Manifest. Die Stimme von Lernenden aus Lese- und Schreibkursen in Europa. eur-alpha. https://www.eur-alpha.eu/IMG/pdf/manifesto_gerbat3.pdf
- Feick, D., & Schramm, K. (2016). Alphabetisierung mit Migrantinnen und Migranten. In C. Löffler & J. Korfkamp (Eds.), *Handbuch zur Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener* (pp. 214–225). Waxmann.
- Feldmeier, A. (2004). Unterrichtsmethoden in der muttersprachlichen Alphabetisierung und ihre Anwendbarkeit im fortgeschrittenen Alphabetisierungsunterricht in der Zweitsprache Deutsch. *Deutsch als Zweitsprache*, 2, 8–17.
- Feldmeier, A. (2011). *Alphabetisierung von Erwachsenen nicht deutscher Muttersprache. Leseprozesse und Anwendung von Strategien beim Erlesen isoliert dargestellter Wörter unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der farblichen und typographischen Markierung von Buchstabengruppen*. [Doctoral dissertation, University Bielefeld], (http://bieson.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/frontdoor.php?source_opus=1814).
- Feldmeier, A. (2015a). Konzept für einen bundesweiten Alphabetisierungskurs. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. <http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kur>

- [straeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-ik-mit-alphabet.pdf?_blob=publicationFile](#)
- Feldmeier, A. (2015). Encouraging learner autonomy: Working with portfolios, learning agreements and individualized materials. *LESLLA Symposium Proceedings*, 10(1), 89–114. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8024383>
- Feldmeier García, A. (2021). Rahmencurriculum für Alphabetisierungskurse. Österreichischer Integrationsfonds. https://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Rahmencurriculum_fuer_Alphabetisierungskurse_2022.pdf
- Feldmeier García, A. (2022a). Über Lernautonomie zu Lernberatung: Portfolios als Grundlage für die Lernberatung. In A. Feldmeier García, M. Haddara, M. David, S. Wind, & J. Böddeker (Eds.), *Alphalernberatung – in der Grundbildungsarbeit beraten. Grundlagen und Praxisbeispiele* (pp. 13–32). Waxmann.
- Feldmeier García, A. (2022b). Das Alphalernberatungsportfolio: ein Bindeglied zwischen Lernautonomie, Lernberatung und Unterricht. In A. Feldmeier García, M. Haddara, M. David, S. Wind, & J. Böddeker (Eds.), *Alphalernberatung – in der Grundbildungsarbeit beraten. Grundlagen und Praxisbeispiele* (pp. 103–116). Waxmann.
- Feldmeier García, A. (2024). Sonorität im Alphabetisierungsprozess: die Sonoritätsmethode. *AlfaForum. Zeitschrift für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung*, 106, 32–38.
- Feldmeier, A. & Markov, S. (2016). Konzepte und Lernmaterialien in der Alphabetisierung. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. Sonderheft 2016. Erich Schmidt Verlag, 72–77.
- Feldmeier García, A. & Morand, M.-A. (2023). Die erste Hürde zum Lesenlernen. Phonologische Bewusstheit in verschiedenen Sprachen fördern. *Alfa-Forum*, 104, 40–46.
- Förster, F., Aboamer, Y. & Czinglar, C. (in press): “Yes, I know these things, but the difficult things, I don't know” – Everyday literacy practices of Arabic speaking adult migrants learning German as a Second Language. In C. Czinglar, K. H. Perry, & K. Schramm (Eds.), *Adult migrants learning literacy in a new language*. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Franz Dos Santos, M. (in press). Assessing LESLLA learners’ functional literacy competencies. In C. Czinglar, K. H. Perry, & K. Schramm (Eds.), *Adult migrants learning literacy in a new language*. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Fuchs-Brüninghoff, E., & Pfirrmann, M. (1988). *Lernprobleme – Lernberatung*. Pädagogische Arbeitsstelle, Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband.
- Gamper, J., Steinbock, D., Gutzmann, M., & Schroeder, C. (2017). *Curriculare Grundlagen Deutsch als Zweitsprache*. Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg. https://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/bbb/themen/sprachbildung/Durchgaengige_Sprachbildung/Publicationen_sprachbildung/DaZ-Curriculare_Grundlagen.pdf
- Grießhaber, W. (2017). Migration + Linguistik. In L. Di Venanzio, I. Lammers & H. Roll (Eds.). *DaZu und DaFür - Neue Perspektiven für das Fach Deutsch als Zweit- und Fremdsprache zwischen Flüchtlingsintegration und weltweitem Bedarf*. 43. Jahrestagung des Fachverbandes Deutsch als Fremd- und Zweitsprache an der Universität Duisburg-Essen 2016 (pp. 31-52). Universitätsverlag.
- Grotlüschen, A. (Ed.). (2010). *lea. – Literalitätsentwicklung von Arbeitskräften. Diagnose*. Waxmann.
- Grotlüschen, A., Buddeberg, K., Dutz, G., Heilmann, L., & Stammer, C. (2020). Low literacy in Germany. Results from the second German literacy survey. *European journal for*

- Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 11(1), 127–143.
<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:18848>
- Grotlüschen, A., Buddeberg, K., & Solga, H. (2023). Interdisziplinäre Analysen zur LEO-Studie 2018 – Leben mit geringer Literalität. In A. Grotlüschen, K. Buddeberg & H. Solga (Eds), *Interdisziplinäre Analysen zur LEO-Studie 2018 – Leben mit geringer Literalität. Vertiefende Erkenntnisse zur Rolle des Lesens und Schreibens im Erwachsenenalter* (pp. 1–9) Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-38873-7>
- Guerrero Calle, S. (2020). *Zweitschriftlernende in der deutschsprachigen Schweiz. In 300 Kurslektionen Alpha und A1?* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Freiburg].
<https://doi.org/https://folia.unifr.ch/unifr/documents/308703>
- Guerrero Calle, S., Studer, T., & Lenz, P. (2023). *Alphabetisierung von erwachsenen Migrantinnen und Migranten: Konzepte und empirische Untersuchungen: Ein Literaturbericht*. Institut für Mehrsprachigkeit. https://centre-plurilinguisme.ch/sites/default/files/2023_001_Alphabetisierung_197x265_Web_2.6.23.pdf
- Heilmann, L., & Grotlüschen, A. (2020). Literalität, Migration und Mehrsprachigkeit. In A. Grotlüschen & K. Buddeberg (Eds.), *LEO 2018 – Leben mit geringer Literalität* (pp. 115–142). Wbv. <https://doi.org/10.3278/6004740w>
- Heyn, A. (2013): *Sprachen lernen mit Methode: Der Rückgriff der Muttersprache im Sprachunterricht*. Tectum Verlag.
- Hilmer, J. (2001). Alphabetisierung von Ausländerinnen und Deutschen: Geschichten erfinden. *AlfaForum*, 48, 30–35.
- Hubertus, P. (1991). Deutsche und Ausländer in einem Kurs? Zur Problematik von gemischten Alphabetisierungskursen. *Alfa-Rundbrief*, 17/18, 10–14.
- Kamper, G. (1987). *Elementare Fähigkeiten in der Alphabetisierung*. Band 1. Erkennen und Fördern unzureichend ausgebildeter elementarer Fähigkeiten bei Lernschwierigkeiten im Schriftspracherwerb. Systemdruck GmbH.
- Kay, R., Babka von Gostomski, C., Saif, S., Homrighausen, P., Eckhard, J., & Rother, N. (2023). *Zwischenbericht III zum Forschungsprojekt “Evaluation der Integrationskurse (EvIk)”. Analysen und Erkenntnisse zu Kursteilnehmenden, Kursspezifika, Lehrkräften und Integrationskursträgern zu Kursbeginn*. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.48570/bamf.fz.fb.46.d.2023.evik.zb3.1.0>
- Koch, J., & Fischer, V. (1991). Alphabetisierung von ausländischen Erwachsenen in der Zielsprache Deutsch. Einige vergleichende Überlegungen zur Alphabetisierung von Aus- und InländerInnen. *Alfa-Rundbrief*, 17/18, 23–25.
- Landgraf, S., Beyer, R., Hild, I., Schneider, N., Horn, E., Schaadt, G., Foth, M., Pannekamp, A., & van der Meer, E. (2012). Impact of phonological processing skills on written language acquisition in illiterate adults. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 2 (Suppl 1), 129–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2011.11.006>
- Lemke-Ghafir, C., & Steinbock, D. (2024). A(usbildung)B(eteiligung)C(hancen)-Ticket Seiteneinstieg in die Berliner Willkommensklassen an beruflichen Schulen mit Alphabetisierungsausrichtung. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, 4 (61), 234–240.
- Lemke-Ghafir, C., Rezzani, M., Schroeder, C., & Steinbock, D. (2021). *Erste Schrift und zweite Sprache. Migrant_innen ohne oder mit geringer formaler Bildung in Alphabetisierungskursen*. IMIS Working Paper 11, Institut für Migrationsforschung und

- Interkulturelle Studien (IMIS) der Universität Osnabrück.* <https://osnadocs.uni-osnabrueck.de/handle/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-202106255174>
- Leupolz-Oebel, B. (2020). *Alphabetisierung in der Zweitschrift Deutsch. Eine Untersuchung zur handschriftlichen Realisation der lateinischen Alphabetschrift von arabisch erstalphabetisierten SeiteneinsteigerInnen der Sekundarstufe I.* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Education Freiburg]. https://phfr.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/818/file/Dissertation_Leupolz-Oebel.pdf
- Löffler, C., & Weis, S. (2016). Didaktik der Alphabetisierung. In C. Löffler & J. Korfkamp (Eds.), *Handbuch zur Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener* (pp. 365–382). Waxmann UTB.
- Magin, U. (1991). Methodische Ansätze der Alphabetisierung in der Muttersprache Deutsch. Überlegungen für den Einsatz in der Alphabetisierung von MigrantInnen. *Deutsch lernen: Zeitschrift für den Sprachunterricht mit ausländischen Arbeitnehmern*, 1/2, 62–116.
- Markov, S., Scheithauer, C., & Schramm, K. (2015). *Lernberatung für Teilnehmende in DaZ-Alphabetisierungskursen.* Waxmann.
- Markov, S., & Wagershauser, E. (2018). Alphabetisierung und Schreibentwicklung in der Erwachsenenbildung. In W. Grieshaber, S. Schmolzer-Eibinger, H. Roll & K. Schramm (Eds.), *Schreiben in der Zweitsprache Deutsch. Ein Handbuch* (pp. 395–410). De Gruyter Mouton.
- Marschke, B. (Ed.) (2022). *Handbuch der kontrastiven Alphabetisierung.* Erich Schmidt. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37307/b.978-3-503-20655-1>.
- Marschke, B., Kalkan, Ö. & Sischa, K. (2013). ABCami – Alphabetisierung und Bildung in der Moschee. *Alfa-Forum*, 84, 18–21.
- Minuz, F., Kurvers, J., Schramm, K., Rocca, L., & Naeb, R. (2022). *Literacy and second language learning for the linguistic integration of adult migrants. Reference guide.* Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/literacy-and-second-language-learning-for-the-linguistic-integration-of-adult-migrants>
- Morand, M.-A., Feldmeier García, A., & Studer, T. (in press). How to measure phonological awareness as well as early reading and writing skills in the context of contrastive literacy? A tool for adult migrants with differing levels of literacy. In C. Czinglar, K. H. Perry, & K. Schramm (Eds.), *Adult migrants learning literacy in a new language.* De Gruyter Mouton.
- Nickel, S. (2011). Literalität – Familie – Family Literacy. Die Transmission schriftkultureller Praxis und generationenübergreifende Bildungsprogramme als Schlüsselstrategie. *Psychologie & Gesellschaftskritik* 35(3), 53–77. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-390760>
- Ossner, J., Rosebrock, C., & Scherf, D. (2018). *Alpha-Kurzdiagnostik. DVV-Rahmencurriculum Schreiben und Lesen.* Deutscher Volkshochschulverband. <https://www.grundbildung.de/downloads/alpha-kurzdiagnostik/lesen-schreiben-alpha-kurzdiagnostik-rc.pdf>
- Pracht, H. (2010). Funktionale Basisalphabetisierung im Deutschen. *Alfa-Forum*, 74, 22–24.
- Pracht, H. (2012). *Schemabasierte Basisalphabetisierung im Deutschen. Ein Praxisbuch für Lehrkräfte.* Waxmann.

- Rammstedt, B., Gauly, B., Kapidzic, S., Maehler, D. B., Martin, S., Massing, N., Schneider, S. L., & Zabal, A. (2024). *PIAAC 2023. Grundlegende Kompetenzen Erwachsener im internationalen Vergleich*. Waxmann. <https://www.waxmann.com/buecher/PIAAC-2023>
- Röber, C. (2009). *Die Leistungen der Kinder beim Lesen- und Schreibenlernen. Grundlagen der Silbenanalytischen Methode*. Schneider Verlag.
- Rocca, L., Hammes Carlsen, C., & Deygers B. (2020). *Linguistic integration of adult migrants: Requirements and learning opportunities. Report on the 2018 Council of Europe and ALTE survey on language and knowledge of society policies for migrants*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Rokitzki, C. (2016). *Alphabetisierung von erwachsenen Migranten nach Montessori. Ein methodischer Ansatz für die Fremd- und Zweitsprache Deutsch*. Verlag Tectum.
- Rokitzki, C., Teeper, F., & Order, A. (2010). Fertigkeit Lesen: methodische Anregungen für ein problemorientiertes Vorgehen im fremdsprachlichen Alphabetisierungsunterricht. *Alfa-Forum*, 74, 18–21.
- Scheible, J. A. (2018). Literacy training and German language acquisition among refugees: Knowledge of German and the need for support among integration course attendees learning a second alphabet and those with no literacy skills. *BAMF brief analysis 1-2018*. BAMF. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-67559-8>
- Scheithauer, C. (2010). Diagnose phonologischer Bewusstheit in der Zweitsprache – Erprobung im Integrationskurs mit Alphabetisierung. In H. Bolte, H. Roll, & K. Schramm (Eds.), *Alphabetisierung in der Zweitsprache Deutsch* (pp. 75–90). Osnabrücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie.
- Schramm, K. (2022). Didaktisch-methodische Themenfelder der DaZ-Alphabetisierung. In B. Marschke (Ed.), *Handbuch der kontrastiven Alphabetisierung* (pp. 25–38). Erich Schmidt. <https://doi.org/10.37307/b.978-3-503-20655-1.02>
- Schroeder, C. (2024). Immigration-related language policy in Germany. In A. Zi Wang, A. Muranaka, & F. Coulmas (Eds.), *Immigration and quality of life in ageing societies. How attractive for migrants are Japan and Germany?* (pp. 17–31). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003425359-2>
- Schroeder, C., Steinbock, D., Rezzani, M., & Lemke-Ghafir, C. (2022). *Für eine Reform der „Integrationskurse mit Alphabetisierung“*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/a-p-b/19284.pdf>
- Schumacher, A.-C., Czinglar, C., Mirova, F., & Faseli, S. (2021). A tool for assessing literacy skills of adolescents and (young) adults in Dari as first Language and German as second language (Lit-L1-L2). *LESLLA Symposium Proceedings*, 14(1), 363–383.
- Szablewski-Çavus, P. (1991). Lesen- und Schreibenlernen in der Emigration: Zur Alphabetisierung sprachlicher Minderheiten in der Bundesrepublik. *Deutsch lernen: Zeitschrift für den Sprachunterricht mit ausländischen Arbeitnehmern*, 1/2, 62–116.
- Szablewski-Çavus, P. (2005). “Ja, wenn es unsere Buchstaben wären...“. Zur Rolle der Muttersprache in der Alphabetisierung. *Alfa-Forum*, 58, 22–24.
- Tarone, E., Bigelow, M., & Hansen, K. (2009). *Literacy and Second Language Oracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Tröster, M., & Schrader, J. (2016). Alphabetisierung, Grundbildung, Literalität. Begriffe, Konzepte, Perspektiven. In C. Löffler, & J. Korfkamp (Eds.), *Handbuch zur Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener* (pp. 42–58). Waxmann UTB.

- Vogelsang, E. (2007). Alphabetisierung von Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund. [Diplomarbeit Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz]. <https://andereslernen.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ALPHA-QUINTO-Diplomarbeit-final1.pdf>
- Waggershauser, E. (2015). *Schreiben als soziale Praxis. Eine ethnographische Untersuchung erwachsener russischsprachiger Zweitschriftlerner*. Stauffenburg.
- Wienberg, J., Dutz, G., & Grotluschen, A. (2021). Language learning of migrants: Empirical evidence from the German integration course system with a focus on literacy courses. In G. S. Levine, & D. Mallows (Eds.), *Language learning of adult migrants in Europe: Theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical issues* (pp. 95–118). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79237-4_5
- Young-Scholten, M. (2013). Low-educated immigrants and the social relevance of second language acquisition research. *Second Language Research*, 29(4), 441–454.