

Este volumen ofrece una colección de estudios de investigadores, profesores y, en general, agentes educativos vinculados a la asociación LESLLA (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults, Alfabetización y Aprendizaje de Segundas Lenguas por Adultos) cuyos miembros trabajan con migrantes que, debido a un bajo nivel de instrucción formal recibida en los países de origen, necesitan una atención especial para alfabetizarse y adquirir la lengua del nuevo país de residencia.

Es una obra multidisciplinar y bilingüe —español e inglés— que refleja la diversidad de intereses de sus más de veinte autores, procedentes fundamentalmente de Europa y Estados Unidos. Encontrará en ella trabajos de investigación así como propuestas e informes de experiencias didácticas.



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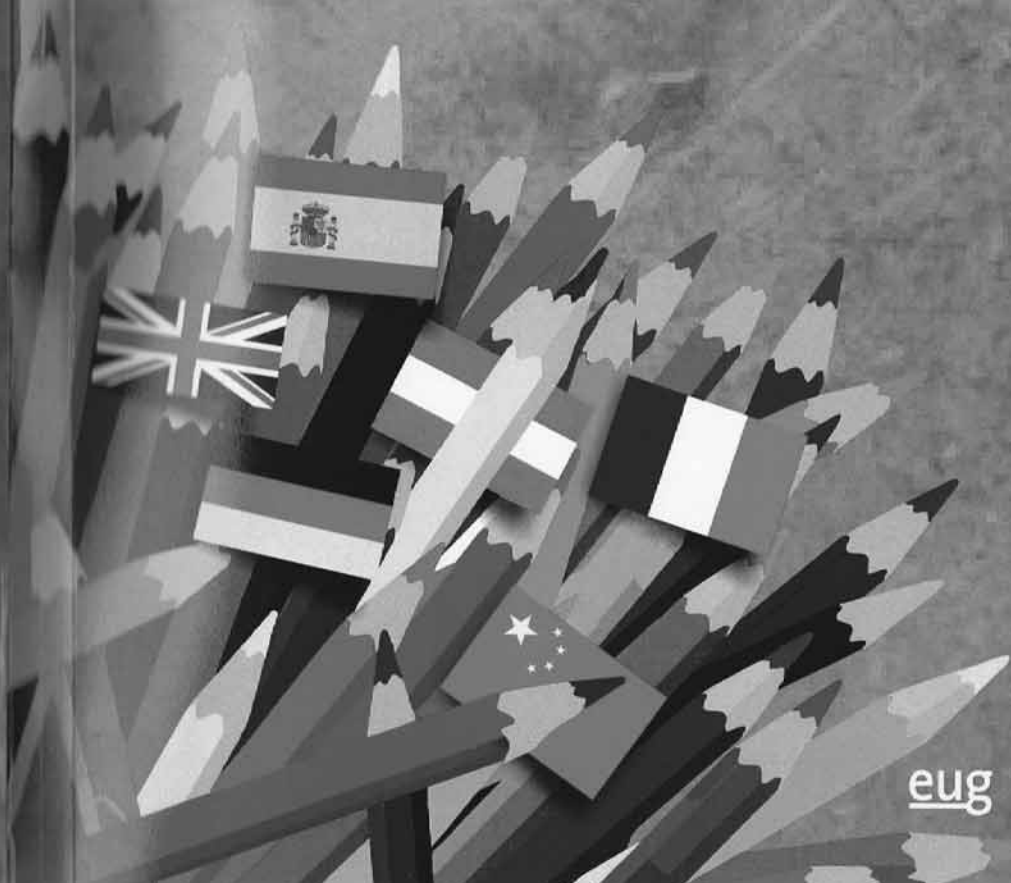
Literacy Education and Second Language Learning by Adults

Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos:

Investigación, política educativa y práctica docente

Literacy Education and Second Language Learning by Adults: Research, Policy and Practice

Marcin Sosiński (ed.)



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(ed.)

ALFABETIZACIÓN Y APRENDIZAJE DE
IDIOMAS POR ADULTOS:
INVESTIGACIÓN, POLÍTICA EDUCATIVA
Y PRÁCTICA DOCENTE

LITERACY EDUCATION AND SECOND
LANGUAGE LEARNING BY ADULTS:
RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

GRANADA
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PRESENTACIÓN

El artículo 26 de La Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos proclama que «toda persona tiene derecho a la educación. La educación debe ser gratuita, al menos en lo concerniente a la instrucción elemental y fundamental». No obstante, en los países desarrollados existe un grupo que frecuentemente está privado de ese derecho: inmigrantes adultos que no llegaron a completar la etapa de educación primaria en sus países de origen. Es un colectivo relativamente poco numeroso y, por lo general, con escasos recursos económicos, lo cual provoca una situación de marginación en varios sentidos —sobre todo por la dificultad de acceder a una educación de calidad adaptada a sus necesidades— y, en última instancia, es un grave obstáculo para la integración en las sociedades de los nuevos países donde la tasa de analfabetismo es muy baja.

Afortunadamente, desde más de una década ha venido desarrollando sus actividades la asociación internacional LESLLA (en inglés: Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition), un grupo informal y multidisciplinar, que trabaja para cambiar esa realidad a través de actividades como los simposios anuales en los que participan tanto profesores como investigadores, buscando un provechoso equilibrio entre la teoría y la práctica, creando un espacio de intercambio de ideas entre los campos de la lingüística, la pedagogía, la enseñanza de idiomas, etc.

Por el afán de internacionalización de las actividades de LESLLA, se ha convertido en una tradición alternar el lugar del encuentro entre países de habla inglesa y los no angloparlantes y, así, el Simposio de 2014 fue organizado en Nijmegen (Países Bajos), el de 2015 tuvo lugar en St. Augustine (Estados Unidos) y, por último, el de 2016 se celebró en Granada (España).

En esta ocasión, entre los días 8 y 10 de un septiembre inusualmente caluroso, la Universidad de Granada acogió el duodécimo Simposio que reunió a más de ochenta ponentes y 30 asistentes, de más de diez países diferentes y de varios continentes, unidos por el interés común en la alfabetización y enseñanza de lenguas a inmigrantes adultos con un bajo nivel de instrucción formal. En tres días de intenso trabajo, fueron pronunciadas dos conferencias, se presentaron treinta y ocho comunicaciones, once talleres, dos mesas redondas y un póster; sin olvidar un espectáculo flamenco y una cena en el Albaicín, el antiguo barrio árabe de Granada.

Estas actas recogen más de veinte contribuciones y reflejan el carácter multidisciplinar de la Asociación LESLLA: podrán encontrar en ellas investigaciones, propuestas

didácticas, descripciones de experiencias didácticas, etc. Esperamos que la lectura resulte de su agrado y sea un estímulo para seguir trabajando.

INTRODUCTION

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that "everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages." However, in developed countries there is a group that is often deprived of this right: adult immigrants who did not complete primary education in their country of origin. Whilst a relatively small group, it is frequently without economic resource to access suitable education. This is a serious obstacle to social and economic integration in the new host country, where rates of illiteracy are usually low.

LESLLA (Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition), an international organization, has been developing activities for more than a decade to raise awareness of the wide-ranging problems faced by this group of adults. LESLLA activists, an informal and multidisciplinary group of people, hold annual symposia which are open to all professionals and researchers. Their aim is to achieve a balance between theory and practice, and create a space for the exchange of ideas between the fields of linguistics, pedagogy, language teaching, etc.

To widen its reach, LESLLA alternates these annual symposia between English-speaking and non-English speaking countries: the 2014 Symposium was held in Nijmegen (the Netherlands), the 2015 Symposium in St. Augustine (United States) and in 2016 we met in Granada (Spain), where the event was hosted by the University of Granada.

This twelfth Symposium took place between 8 and 10 September, which was an exceptionally hot month. Some 80 speakers and 30 delegates from more than ten different countries across many continents came together, united by their common interest in literacy and language teaching to this specific group of adult immigrants. Over the three intense days two lectures were given, thirty-eight papers were presented, as well as eleven workshops, two panel discussions and one poster. And, of course, we should not forget the social side of the symposium, when delegates attended a flamenco show and dinner at the Albaicín, in the old Arab quarter of Granada.

These proceedings contain more than twenty contributions which reflect the multidisciplinary nature of LESLLA. You will find research and classroom reports, didactic proposals and a host of other reports which we are sure will be of interest, help to stimulate you to continue your work with LESLLA students, and provide a tool to help raise awareness of the issues faced by LESLLA learners.

Marcin Sosiński

SOCIAL SEMIOTICS AND MULTIMODAL ASSESSMENT OF L2 ADULT EMERGENT READERS FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

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ABSTRACT: The goals of this action research are to create a feasible set of assessments for refugee background adult emergent readers from non-Western countries, and to gain an understanding of how this population makes meaning from multimodal texts. The research draws on Critical Applied Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, and critical multimodal social semiotics to analyze the multimodal written assessments used by a community ESL language and literacy program. Investigating writing, still image, and layout, data was gathered in three ways: multimodal social semiotic analysis of the assessments, artifact analysis of student assessments, and semi-structured qualitative interviews. Findings are beneficial for assessment and pedagogical practices for adults with refugee backgrounds who have emerging literacy, and are from non-Western countries.

KEYWORDS: visual literacy, multimodality, social semiotics, adult emergent readers, assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

This research is action research with a goal of creating a feasible set of assessments for L2 adult emergent readers from refugee backgrounds and non-Western countries. Focusing on writing, still image, and layout, the research seeks to understand how this population makes meaning from multimodal texts. The research presented is a critical analysis of the written assessments used by the Adult ESL Refugee Program (AERP)²,

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2. Denotes pseudonym.

a community ESL language and literacy program. This pilot study is part of a larger project that also includes the analysis of the program's oral assessments. The data presented are preliminary results from data collection during spring and summer 2016.

2. CONTEXT

2.1. PEOPLE FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS IN ARIZONA AND SECO COUNTY*

In FY 2015, Arizona resettled the 4th highest number of refugees in the United States. Seco County received 961 of the 4,449 refugees resettled in Arizona in FY 2016; most of Seco County's refugees originated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Somalia, Iraq, and Burundi (Arizona Refugee, 2016: n.p.). In recent years, individuals from African nations comprised the largest population resettled in Seco County.

2.2. ADULT ESL REFUGEE PROGRAM (AERP)

AERP, part of Seco Community College Adult Basic Education, has been operating since the late 1970s. AERP is funded by the Department of Economic Security/Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program, and grants; it is a free program that provides English as a Second Language and English literacy instruction to adults from refugee backgrounds who have been in the United States for fewer than five years. AERP consistently serves on average 600 students annually; in FY 2016, the program served 678 students. The classes, which have open enrollment and no attendance policy, are intensive, meeting for two hours a day, four days a week.

Mirroring Seco County's resettled refugee population, AERP's classes are diverse. The study occurred in a class where students originated from Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria, and spoke Arabic, Amharic, Bembe, Dari, French, For, Gouran, Gumuz, Italian, Jula, Kifuelo, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Kiswahili, Lingala, Masalit, Moro, Somali, Spanish, Zaghawa, and/or Zoba.

2.3. CURRENT WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

The tests AERP uses to assess traditional literacy skills, *i.e.* reading and writing, were created many years ago by a previous AERP teacher. The program support technician, who has no training in assessment or education, has altered the tests numerous times since they were first made.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What ideologies are hidden in the composition of the original written assessment?
- How do non-Western adult emergent readers from refugee backgrounds make meaning from multimodal texts?

I will now briefly review terminology and the theoretical frameworks used in this research, and then turn to the data analysis.

4. TERMINOLOGY

4.1. ADULT EMERGENT READERS

Previously, scholars characterized people without print literacy as preliterate, nonliterate, or semiliterate; however, these perspectives define individuals according to something they lack. In opposition to these notions of deficit, Bigelow and Vinogradov (2011) proposed the term *emergent reader* as it "expresses the sense of becoming literate" (p. 121). Students who are non-Roman alphabet literate can also be said to have emerging English literacy. This paper is concerned with students who are L2 adult emergent readers, that is, they are becoming literate for the first time, and doing so in a language other than their first language, and with students who are non-Roman alphabet literate.

4.2. LITERACY, VISUAL LITERACY, TEXTS

The definition of literacy I use for this research extends beyond just reading and writing. Per New Literacy Studies, literacy is embedded in a social context (Barton, 2009); it is also the ability to interact with and understand a variety of text forms including "visual images and their relationship to the written word" (New London Group, 1996: 61).

Bruski (2011), Burt, Peyton, and Schaetzel (2008), and Linney (1995) note that charts, maps, clipart, graphs, pictures, and drawings can be perplexing for students with emerging literacy and limited visual literacy. Emergent readers with emerging visual literacy may not recognize meaning in a printed image, particularly if depicted objects are from outside the student's home culture. As Stein (2008) notes, "meaning-making is 'sense-making';" it is tied to how humans understand objects, and to the extent that interacting with an object makes sense within their frames of reference (p. 32).

For the purposes of this paper, I define a text as any product that is written or spoken, is a visual image, or is a combination of words and images; thus, a text can be multimodal (Fairclough, 1995: 4; Kress, 2010: 59).

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Drawing on Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx), this paper also employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and critical multimodal social semiotic analysis (Pennycook,

2001: 78-79). These various threads in the literature are interwoven, and held together by their common concerns of language, power, and social contexts.

5.1. CRITICAL APPLIED LINGUISTICS

A central element of Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx) is “a way of exploring language in social contexts that goes beyond mere correlations between language and society, and instead raises critical questions to do with access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance” (Pennycook, 2001: 6). Concerned with macro and micro relations, CALx relates applied linguistics to the broader social, cultural, and political domains, and aims to highlight how any classroom, text, or conversation must be studied in relation to these larger domains (Pennycook, 2001: 5, 11). The classroom – its content, texts, materials, curriculum, and languages used – are a microcosm of the broader social order; dominant ideologies of the outside world are reproduced in the classroom (Pennycook, 2001: 115). Keeping these macro and micro realms in mind, Critical Applied Linguistics involves constant skepticism or questioning of the assumed norms of applied linguistics, and aims to enact change through critical, reflective praxis.

5.2. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse is the whole process of social interaction whereby discursive events shape social structures, institutions, and situations, and are also shaped by them (Fairclough, 1995). Critical Discourse Analysis describes, interprets, and explains relationships between texts and the social world, and considers these relationships at the micro and macro levels. It is concerned with mediation between the textual and the social, and how people move between them.

5.3. CRITICAL MULTIMODAL SOCIAL SEMIOTICS

Expanding the concept of discourse to include non-linguistic modes of meaning-making, Kress uses a multimodal social semiotic approach to study how and what meanings are made (2010: 57). Image, writing, layout, music, gesture, and speech are examples of modes used in representation and communication (Kress, 2010: 80). Modes are the “socially made and culturally available material-semiotic resources for representation” (Kress, 2011: 208); these modal resources can be similar or different across cultures. Kress defines *multimodality* as “the many material resources beyond speech and writing” that can be used to make meaning” (2011: 208). Multimodality is founded on the notion that the meaning of signs created from multimodal semiotic resources is social, contextual, and temporal. Modal systems, such as an entire test or set of assessments, can be studied as texts, with a focus on their use in the given social context.

Kress’s approach is not a critique of discourse but one concerned with how meanings are designed and re-designed through interaction, and how meanings materialize

through mode or a multimodal ensemble. A critical multimodal social semiotic theory goes beyond description, and analyzes multimodal texts and their role in creating, re-producing, and transforming social practices.

5.3.1. *Multimodal Composition*

Investigating writing, still image, and layout, this research uses Kress’s approach to analyze the multimodal composition of AERP’s assessments; it also utilizes Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (1996) visual grammar to read the images in the assessments.

5.3.1.1. Writing

The mode of writing has socially-constructed affordances that differ from the mode of speech. “Writing has words, clauses, and sentences; graphic resources such as font, size, bolding, spacing, frames, color, punctuation marks; and visual means such as space between words or around paragraphs” (Kress, 2010: 79). The mode of writing is spatially displayed, governed by the culturally/socially-determined directionality of the line, and tied to syntactical orderings (Kress, 2010). The use of writing is socially and culturally regulated and contextually dependent.

5.3.1.2. Still Image

Unable to be expressed by words, sounds, phonology, or syntax, still images are based in the logic of space; meaning is established by both spatial arrangement and the relationship between depicted entities (Kress, 2010). This mode of communication is also culturally-specific and socially regulated (Kress, 2010). Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) grammar of visual design (for Western cultures), comprised of narrative representations and conceptual representations, is useful for the consideration of still images. The visual grammar is concerned with the set of socially-constructed resources for the construction of meaning.

5.3.1.3. Layout

Layout can orient viewers to notions of centrality and marginality, Ideal and Real, and Given and New (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). For Western cultures, the top, as the generalized essence of the information, is Ideal, and the bottom, the details, down-to-earth, practical information, is Real. In a culture with a left-right reading direction, the visual reader starts at the Given and ends at the New (Kress, 2010). Because layouts are organized according to socially-constructed norms such as left-right and top-down, they ascribe readers to a particular audience. Readers who do not belong to the intended audience may misunderstand the intended message, gleaning a different message from the composition by benefit of their sociocultural resources.

6. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study is tripartite (see Table 1). 1) I employed a critical multimodal social semiotic textual analysis on the assessments, focusing on the modes of writing, still image, and layout. 2) I analyzed the artifacts (the assessments) created by the students, examining what they wrote, how they wrote it, and where they wrote it, as well as what students chose to not write. 3) I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews in the students' L1 with the help of three interpreters. I met with each participant individually, and asked questions about the original and first two revised assessments; each participant took part in one interview after the second revision of the assessment. The interviews, which ranged from 30 minutes in length to 1 hour and 25 minutes, were recorded with a video camera; the camera was aimed at the assessments on the table so that deictic gestures could be recorded. All the data were coded according to theme, and triangulated with the other analyses.

To ensure that a difference in score or meaning-making was not due to learning over time, students were given the original and first two revised assessments on three consecutive class days. The original assessments were on day one; the first revised assessment, which contained the same questions as the original assessment but with different images, was day two. The second revised assessment, created with the data obtained from the critical textual analysis of the original assessment, was given on day three. Finally, the data from the interviews, coupled with the data from the original and first two revised assessments and participant artifacts, was used to create the third version of the revised assessment. The third revision of the assessment was given to students approximately eight weeks after the second revision; the data from this third revision is in the process of analysis. Not all participants took the original version and first two revisions of the assessment due to the program's open enrollment and open attendance policy; furthermore, not all students who took the assessments participated in the interviews, though all interview participants took the assessments. Finally, students were interviewed only once to ensure that the act of interviewing and asking them about their meaning-making did not affect how they interacted with the assessments on subsequent, near-future sittings.

	Spring 2016	June 2016	June/July 2016	Aug. 2016	Sept. 2016	Post Sept. 2016
Data Collection Part 1	*Original assessment					
Data Collection Part 2		*Students took the original assessment on the first day *Students took the first revised assessment on the second day *Students took the second revised assessment on the third day			*Students took the third revised assessment	
Data Collection Part 3			*Students participated in semi-structured interviews (1 interview per student)			
Analysis Part 1: Critical multimodal social semiotic textual analysis	*Original assessment textual analysis	*First revised assessment textual analysis *Second revised assessment textual analysis		*Third revised assessment textual analysis	*Third revised assessment textual analysis	

	Spring 2016	June 2016	June/July 2016	Aug. 2016	Sept. 2016	Post Sept. 2016
Analysis Part 2: Artifact analysis of students' writings		*Original assessment artifact analysis *First revised assessment artifact analysis *Second revised assessment artifact analysis				*Third revised assessment artifact analysis
Analysis Part 3: Interview data			*Interview data concerning original assessment, first revised assessment, second revised assessment analyses	*Interview data concerning original assessment, first revised assessment, second revised assessment analyses		

Table 1: Phases of Data Collection and Analysis

7. PARTICIPANTS

Participants were students from the literacy class the researcher teaches for AERP; their participation was voluntary. Their ages ranged from 18 – 63 years old; both males and females participated. 28 students gave permission to study their tests; 18 of those students participated in interviews. Of those 18 students, nine countries were represented (Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Congo [DRC], Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ethiopia, Iraq, Sudan).

8. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I discuss the multimodal aspects of the assessments. This discussion is based on the multimodal social semiotic analysis of the assessments, the students' artifacts, and the interviews. The quotes that are provided in the following discussion section are each one person's response. Occasionally more than one person provided a


similar response; however, numbers for such responses are not indicated below. Responses were selected to showcase what was thematically representative of the data gathered, as opposed to quantitatively represented. The data was categorized into six thematic groups: clip art image, directions, layout; boxes and parentheses; lines and layout; narrative images and symbols; stylized words; and conceptual images. Participant responses for each of these categories will be discussed in the following sections.

8.1. CLIP ART IMAGE, DIRECTIONS, LAYOUT

On the original assessment, the top of page 1 has an image of a clip art pen to the left of a set of bolded words (Figure 1).

Date _____

_____23



Fill out the form

1. Last Name _____ ()

2. First Name _____ ()

3. Male Female

Figure 1: Image and Directions on the Top of p. 1. Original Assessment.

The pen is meant to supplement the words, providing the student with guidance for completing the page; this meaning was not recognized by most participants (Example 1). When asked what the image to the left of the directions is, representative student responses included:

Example 1.
 "fish"
 "insect"
 "I don't know"
 "pen"

These responses highlight the range of interpretations that occurred. The students' responses were experiential, relying on previous knowledge to both make a connection and understand the image. Follow-up questions clarified how the participants' lived experiences affected their interpretation of the image, with students referencing the fish, insects, and pens they have seen and interacted with, as well as the students who said they had never seen such a thing.

The bolding of the directions in Figure 1 is a graphic means of writing that shows the words' importance, much like how significance is designated by a change in volume or intonation in speech. Example 2 details some of the responses students provided when

asked if there was a relationship between the words and the image, and if so, why the words were bolded, and how the image and words were related to the entire page.

Example 2.

"The color is the same; they are the same because they are black."

"Here they used a lot of ink... Maybe this one they put ink just show that this is bigger than this."

"No, I don't know for sure."

"Because if you have a pen, you write."

Example 2 shows that some of the participants did not make a connection between the still image and the writing (the bolding), and they also did not understand the significance of the layout. As defined previously, Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework for analyzing layout states that the Ideal, the generalized information, is located at the top of the page, and the Real, the practical information, is located at the bottom. Because this still image and these words are located at the top of the page, they are the Ideal, and the remaining section is the Real; here, the Ideal is the directions, and the Real is the answers students are meant to provide. The clip art and bolded words add to the salience of this layout. As noted in the examples above, however, many students did not see this relationship of the Ideal and the Real, and the clip art and bolded words. Both Figure 1 and Example 1 exemplify a common image type, writing style, and layout of the original assessments, and the sorts of responses students gave.

8.2. BOXES AND PARENTHESES

As seen in Figure 1, the first page of the original assessment is composed of single words or short phrases with a line on the right. This fulfills Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) Given/New concept where the question or prompt is the Given, and the answers are the New. Here, the boxes to the right of the words "male" and "female", and parentheses along the right side of the page are the New; they should be marked in some fashion (Figure 1). Artifact analysis showed that many students marked both boxes; they did this with either different marks (Figure 2), or the same mark (Figure 3).



Figure 2: Different Marks in the Boxes to the Right of the Words "Male" and "Female" on p. 1. Original assessment.

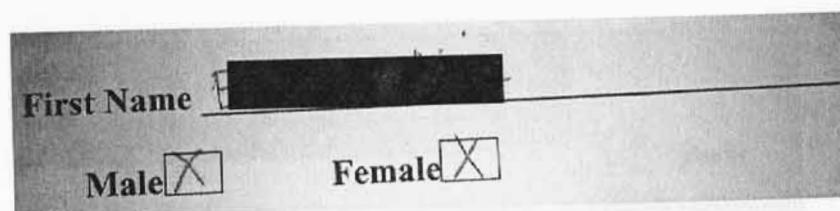


Figure 3: Identical Marks in the Boxes to the Right of the Words "Male" and "Female" on p. 1. Original Assessment.

The interview data revealed that some students thought they should put an "x" in the box for the gender they were not, and a tick in the box for the gender they were (Example 3).

Example 3.

"I mark here because I am male, and here because I am not female."

Some students wrote the same mark in both boxes because they believed they must interact with all the empty boxes (Example 4).

Example 4.

"I think I will tick everywhere. Both."

There are empty parentheses, representing the New, at the end of every line on the right side of the first page of the original assessment (Figure 4); here, the New is the score students earned for every line.

5. City _____)

6. State _____)

7. Zip Code _____)

Figure 4: Parentheses on the Right Side of p. 1. Original Assessment.

The graphic resources, writing, and layout do not make clear that students should not write in this area. It was common for students to write in the parentheses (Figure 5).

Date _____

23

Fill out the form

1. Last Name _____ (✓)

2. First Name _____ (✓)

3. Male Female

4. Address 1400 _____ (✓)

5. City _____ ()

6. State _____ (✓)

7. Zip Code _____ (✓)

8. Phone number (Home) _____ (Cell) none ()

9. Date of Birth _____ ()

10. Signature _____ (✓)

10

Figure 5: Marks in the Parentheses on the Right Side of on p. 1. Original Assessment.

Some students believed it was necessary to write in the parentheses, and that they could write whatever they wanted (Example 5), while others thought they needed to write in the parentheses only if they wrote on the line to the left (Example 6).

Example 5.

"I can put here the number. ... I can put any number ... 5, 0, 3."

"I have to put in a word."

Example 6.

"If I write, I can make a mark."

"I will put my name here, and then I will tick here."


The effort to write in all potential areas (specifically boxes and parentheses) of the assessment either shows the students' determination to respond to every request, or a perceived notion of requirement for different varieties of blank spaces. This evidence demonstrates the students' willingness to try, but also their emerging knowledge of schooling and assessment.

8.3. LINES AND LAYOUT


On the second page of the original assessment, there is a section in the middle with another stylized clip art pen and directions that are surrounded by two heavy black lines (Figure 6). Regarding the questions at the top of the page, per the Ideal/Real composition, the questions are the Ideal, the essence of information, and the answers are the Real, the practical details.

(✓) Answer


1. What is this used for? 2. This sign means? 3. How much money is this?



A. Laundry.
B. Recycling
C. Trash



A. Women's Restroom.
B. Men's/Women's restroom
C. Men's restroom




A. \$2.11
B. \$0.10
C. \$1.11



(✍) Write

4. Complete the sentence.

He is at the _____



5. What is the best price per pound?

Savory Market	LEE'S MARKET
	
\$0.59 lb	\$0.55 lb

It is _____ per pound.

Figure 6: Top and Middle Section of p. 2. Original Assessment.

As seen in Figures 7 and 8, rather than writing a check mark next to the correct answers, students wrote the answer from the top section between these two lines. Figure 8 shows an inconsistent use of the check mark above, and use of the lines in the middle of the page.

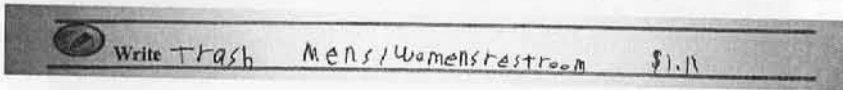


Figure 7: Student Writing on Lines in Middle Section of p. 2. Original Assessment.

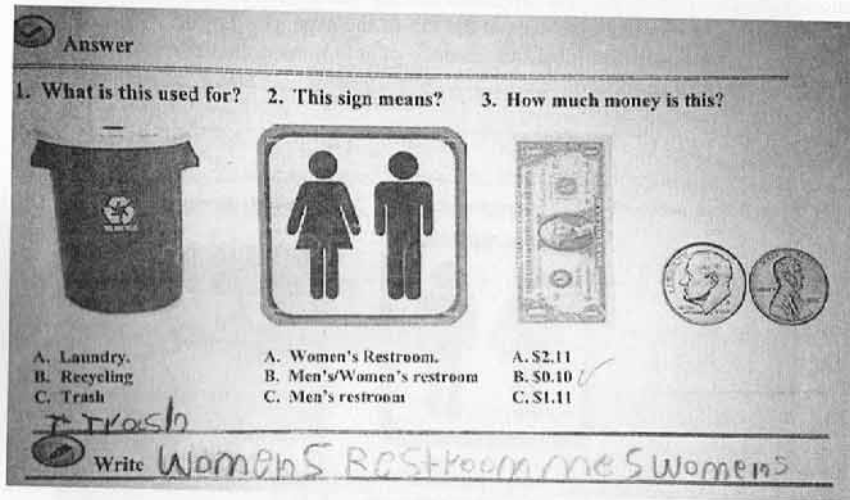


Figure 8: Student Writing on Lines in Middle Section of p. 2. Original Assessment.

Participants' responses (Example 7) concerning why lines were in the middle of the page, and what, if anything, should be written there, are as follows:

Example 7

"I can write here."

"[I write] ... The answer to the questions above."

Participants also noted that they preferred to write about images below them, and that they preferred multiple choice answers to be placed above the image (Example 8). This preference for provided answers above the image is an inversion of the (Western) Ideal and Real; this data evidences that students prefer the generalized essence to be below the details/practical information. This information explains the writing in Figures 7 and 8.

Example 8.

"The writing would be better on the bottom, and the circling on the top."

On revised versions of the assessment, though the multiple-choice answers had been placed above the images, participants continued to write on dividing lines which had been changed to dashed lines (Figures 9, 10).

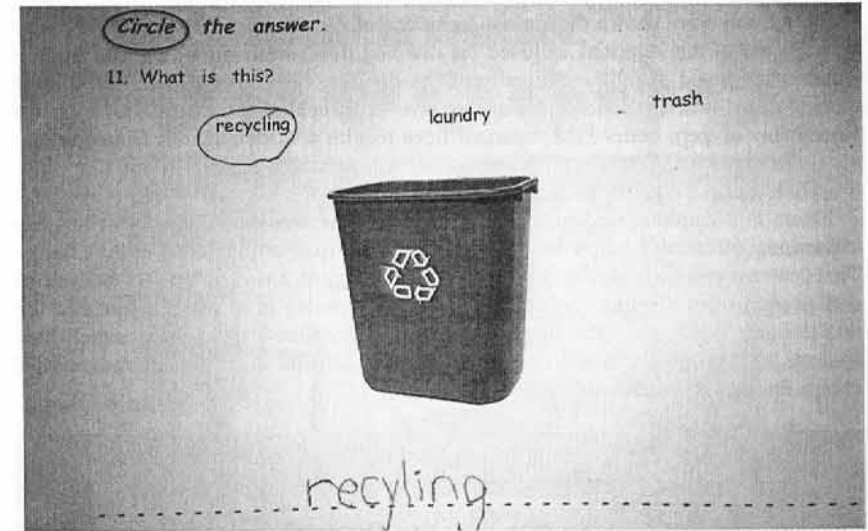


Figure 9: Student Writing on Dividing Lines. First Revised Assessment.

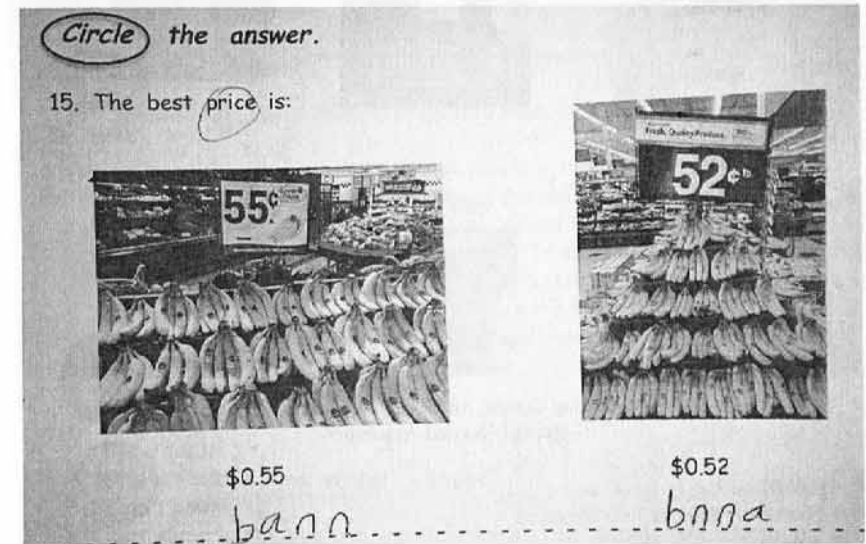


Figure 10: Student Writing on Dividing Lines. First Revised Assessment.

Participants were shown the various iterations of the assessments during their interviews; some of the iterations included the dividing lines, while others did not. Participants, when asked about the necessity of the dividing lines, regardless of if solid or dashed, stated that it was not necessary to have lines separating the sections of the test since many of them believe the separator lines require a written answer (Example 9).

Example 9.

"It means I have to write here."

Figure 11 exemplifies students choosing the correct answer above, and not writing any extraneous information below because dividing lines were not included in the section. This demonstrates a successful revision of the assessment, based on artifact analysis of earlier assessment versions, as the students made meaning in a way that matched the text designer's intention. The interview data supported the artifact data; namely that students preferred to not have dividing lines in texts, and that students preferred multiple choice answers to be provided above the images.

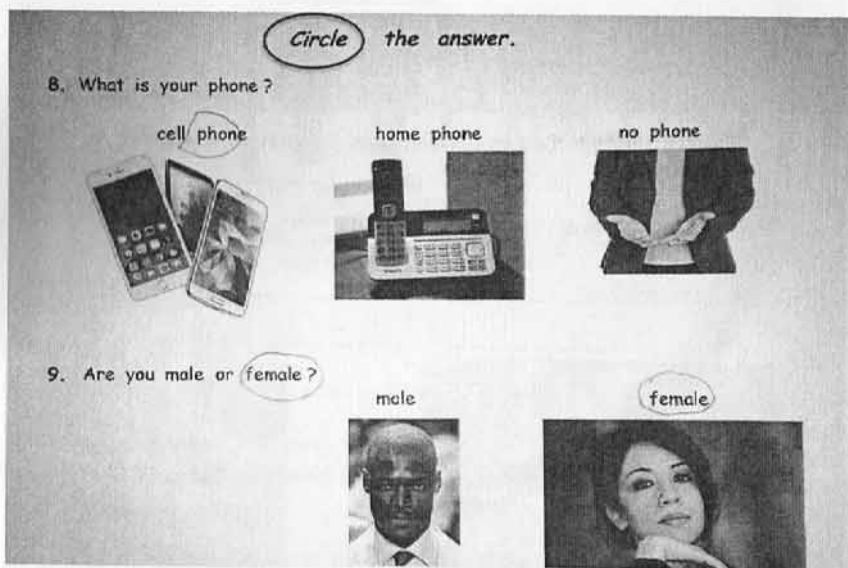


Figure 11: Student Choosing Correct Answer Above Image; no Additional Writing. Second Revised Assessment.

8.4 NARRATIVE IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

There is a narrative image with a row of seven symbols above it on the second page of the original assessment (Figure 12). The image and symbols are meant to be read in concert, with the symbols providing a second layer of information about the visual ensemble. Utilizing Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework, the image is a narrative process where the man, the Actor, hands money to the teller, the Goal, and a reactional process shows the other woman, the Reactor, looking at the man, the Phenomenon.

4. Complete the sentence.



He is at the _____.

Figure 12: Clip Art Image of People at a Bank. Original Assessment.

There are also Possessive Attributes for the people in this clip art image. The woman standing behind the counter has the attributes of the counter and the money; these attributes index her as a bank teller. The man at the counter has the Possessive Attribute of the briefcase, which indexes him as a businessman. The attributes and narrative process indicate this is a bank; however, these are Western content schemata.

Example 10 details the responses students gave when asked what was happening in the image, and where the people in the image were.

Example 10.

"This is an office."

"That woman is mopping."

"It is a school."

"They are exciting one another ... angry."

"I don't know."

"They came to see this one who fell down. This money here and people are having money. For example, this one falls down and he has to go to the hospital and he will be needing money to pay."

These responses demonstrate the salience of lived experiences and personal history in meaning-making. Most of these students do not have jobs, and, as told to the researcher during both the semi-structured interviews and during the classes she teaches, they do not regularly visit banks; participants therefore map this image onto their personal

experiences, seeing an office that may be similar to their resettlement office, a school because two people have bags, or a woman mopping because it looks like how they clean their homes. The participant who believes that the man in the lower right corner has fallen down, and the others are doing something with money to help him, is also constructing socially-contextualized meaning from this multimodal ensemble in a way other than it was intended. Furthermore, the grainy quality of this clip art image could potentially affect how students make meaning from it.

Many students saw no relationship between the dollar symbols and the image, or they did not know what the symbols were (Example 11). Their lack of understanding of the symbol meant that they did not receive additional support to help them comprehend the image below it. The participant who responded with "dollar" is the one referenced above who concluded that the man fell and needed money; his response seems to have been partially guided by the interpretation of the dollar symbol above the image.

Example 11.

"S with a line through it."

"S"

"Flowers"

"I don't know."

"Dollar"

The first revised assessment included a photograph of a bank teller to determine what type of meaning students made from it (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Bank Teller With Money. First Revised Assessment.

During the interviews, participants were asked about who and what were in the photograph, what was happening in the photograph, and where the people were; many students said this was a woman who had cash, but they did not connect that woman to working in a bank (Example 12). This image was chosen for its iconic and culturally-specific features, e.g. a person behind a counter who is handing over money, the hint of a computer keyboard, the blurry shape of the wad of cash in the background, the unattached hand of the person receiving money, etc. As noted in participant responses, it seems this image was too iconic and culturally specific for students to recognize the bank teller's job or her location.

Example 12.

"That is a woman. She has money."

"Cash"

The second revised assessment included an image of a woman at a grocery store (Figure 14). This image was chosen because it had more concrete, recognizable features such as the grocery cart, the full body of the woman and child, the vegetables on shelves, etc.



Figure 14: Woman Shopping at the Grocery Store. Second Revised Assessment.

During interviews, all participants were able to correctly respond to “where is she?” and “how do you know?” Participants explained that they had similar experiences which allowed them to recognize the woman’s location (Example 13).

Example 13.

“Because I see it.”

“She is picking some items – food – and is putting in, and this baby, this small baby is sitting.”

“I see the peppers and the vegetables.”

Photographs therefore must have recognizable details and reflect students’ lives. While this shopping experience appears quite American, potentially making it unrecognizable for this population, an explanation posits students are now regularly participating in similar shopping environments, and have created a frame of reference for understanding the photograph. Banks, on the other hand, as shown in the prior photograph, could be unrecognizable since students are not frequenting them; conversely, the image of the bank, as noted previously, could not have enough identifiable features.

8.5 STYLIZED WORDS

Figure 15 is a grainy clip art image; it has stylized directions with the word “look” appearing as if it has eyes.

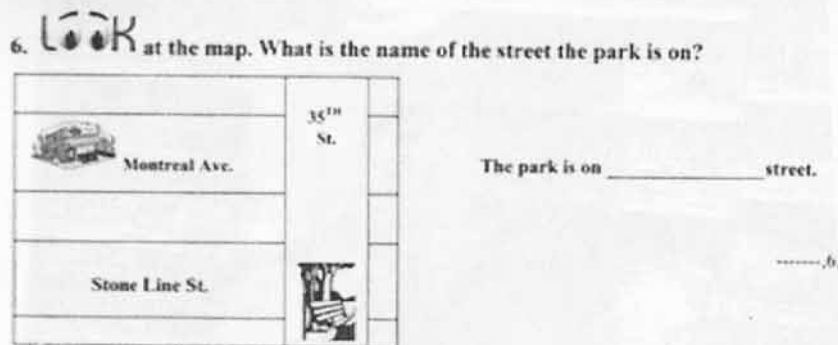


Figure 15: Stylized Directions; a Neighborhood Map. Original Assessment.

Participants’ responses (Example 14) to the questions “what are these?” and “what is their relationship to the rest of the word(s)?” are:

Example 14.

“Eggs”

“Chicken eggs”

“I don’t know.”

“Eyes ... a face.”

Most did not recognize the stylized letter “O” or acknowledge a relationship. Some participants identified the “O”s as eyes, but did not see a significance between them and the rest of the page.

8.6 CONCEPTUAL IMAGES

Per Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) framework, the image underneath the stylized eyes is an analytical process (Figure 15). The store in the upper left is a Carrier with signs, shelves, light poles, and an awning as the Possessive Attributes that make up the whole of the store. The image of the park in the lower right corner consists of the park as the Carrier, and the bench and tree as the Possessive Attributes that compose it. The lines and two analytical processes of the store and park create an analytical process of a neighborhood map where the map is the Carrier, and the store and park are the Possessive Attributes. There is a high degree of abstract visual literacy, Western content schemata, and Western visual grammar needed to correctly comprehend this image, and answer the question.

The majority of the participants were unable to identify the store (Example 15), park (Example 16), or map (Example 17) as exemplified in these responses.

Example 15.

“I see a camera.”

“That is a car.”

“It is a house.”

“I don’t know.”

Example 16.

“This is a tree.”

“I don’t know.”

Example 17.

“I don’t know.”

“This is a person [with his arms up]. ... This is the face of the person and this person is having a car, and will go in this car. ... These are tires.”

The second answer in Example 17 is salient as the participant combines all aspects of the multimodal visual ensemble, pointing to the eyes as the face, the park as a man with his hands up, the store as the car of the man/face, and the tires of the car. The participant, however, does not make meaning as the creator of the original assessment intended.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Turning from how meaning is made in these multimodal assessments, we must now consider principles of language assessment in reference to AERP’s original written assessment. Utilizing Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) principles of language assessment (practicality, authenticity, reliability, validity, and washback), it is evident AERP’s original assessment violates the principles of reliability, validity, and authenticity. The test content and items must be unambiguous to the test-taker for the test to be considered reliable; this research has shown many items that are ambiguous to the test taker. Additionally, the tests are not valid because they do not measure what they are supposed to measure (*i.e.* English literacy skills and English language skills), but instead measure how meaning is constructed from Western multimodal texts. The assessments do not offer useful, meaningful information about a test-taker’s ability as the content

being assessed is different from the desired content; thus, the tests are not valid. Finally, the assessments are not authentic. While the first page of the assessment is similar to the type of form a student may see at his resettlement agency's office, the majority of the images presented throughout the assessment are not authentic. Students would not witness events that looked like these images in everyday life, nor are students able to draw from their prior social context to understand them. The revised assessments strive to follow the principles of language assessment.

Tests are administered by powerful institutions and can have detrimental effects on test-takers (Shohamy, 2001). Regular discouraging assessment could lead students to have negative thoughts and deep fears about assessments with very high stakes such as the U.S. naturalization test. Because of the power tests hold, it is essential for assessments, even low-stakes program-specific assessments, to be realistic and achievable as high levels of anxiety or self-consciousness can negatively affect student performance. Thus, if instructors and administrators desire an accurate view of the English language and literacy skills and knowledge of adult emergent readers, they should provide students with assessments that mirror and support how students make meaning from writing, still image, and layout.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The data from this action research pilot study provided rich results. The revisions and analysis of the literacy level assessments will continue in the future; the oral assessment, not discussed in this paper, will be revised and piloted, as well as the intake and diagnostic exams, and the exams for the program's upper levels. A similar methodology as was used in this pilot study will be utilized in the future research. A standardized set of rubrics will also be created, and the instructors and administrators of the program will be trained on their use.

Because this was a pilot study with a relatively small number of participants, the results may not be generalizable to all L2 adult emergent readers from refugee backgrounds and non-Western cultures. Additionally, because not all students who took the original and revised assessments participated in the interviews, there may be some gaps in the study's results. The methodology also allowed only a limited amount of time for researching different varieties of photographs; future research will consider different varieties of photographs in more depth in interviews.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The following answers have emerged to the research questions posed: 1) What ideologies are hidden in the composition of the original written assessment? and 2) How do non-Western adult emergent readers from refugee backgrounds make meaning from multimodal texts? Regarding the ideologies hidden in the composition of the original assessment, it is evident that the original written assessment presents an ideology of Western knowledge and schooling; it does not take into account the lived experiences and personal histories of the students. The assessment a) utilizes test-taking norms that may be unfamiliar to students from this population, b) assumes a high level of visual literacy, and c) presupposes knowledge of Western visual grammar and content schemata.

Additionally, in consideration of how non-Western adult emergent readers from refugee backgrounds make meaning from multimodal texts, we can see that they make meaning in different ways than literate students from Western cultures. This is evidenced from what they write on lines and in boxes, and how they understand layout, images, and relationships between images and layout. A successful redesign of the assessments will provide a more accurate depiction of the language and literacy skills and knowledge held by L2 adult emergent readers from refugee backgrounds.

The study's findings have provided a glimpse of which types of writing, still image, and layout are most appropriate for adults with refugee backgrounds from non-Western countries, who also have emerging literacy. These findings are useful for both assessment practices and for pedagogical practices. It is recommended that instructors 1) use realistic photographs with recognizable, contextualized details, 2) do not clutter pages with additional lines, boxes, and/or parentheses, 3) do not use abstract, symbolic images whether they be photographs, clip art, graphic devices, or line drawings, 4) recognize that students may make meaning in ways different than the instructor assumed. L2 adult emergent readers may also benefit from classroom instruction in (Western) visual and multimodal literacy in addition to traditional literacy.

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“TEACHER OF ITALIAN AS A NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE FOR LOW
EDUCATED USERS”. A NEW PROFESSIONAL PROFILE.¹

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ABSTRACT: In last years, migrants' cultural features and age have changed and an increasing amount of people landing on Italian shores is constituted by unaccompanied foreign minors, mostly belonging to the category of LESLLA. This scenario imposes the definition of new competencies, suitable for the training needs of these new users. In fact, teachers of Italian L2 have to acquire literacy skills, which traditionally do not fall within their professional background. Moreover, these competencies should be markedly oriented in a strategic way, as the timeframe for learning is typically long for illiterate adults, in contrast with the urgent needs of pragmatic use of the language. The paper describes the new professional profile of the “Teacher of Italian as a non-native language for low educated users”, as it has been defined within the research and teaching experience of the School of Italian Language for Foreigners of the University of Palermo.

KEYWORDS: Italian L2, teachers' training, unaccompanied minors, strategic competencies.

1. THE LABEL AND ITS CONTEXT: AN INTRODUCTION

In last years, the School of Italian Language for Foreigners of the University of Palermo (henceforth, ItaStra) welcomes an increasing number of learners belonging to various categories of the low educated users, that is, users non-literate in their L1 or

1. The whole paper results from close cooperation of the authors. However, Adriana Arcuri is responsible for Sections 2.2 and 3.2, Mari D'Agostino for Sections 1 and 4, and Egle Mocciano for Sections 2.1 and 3.1.

who have experienced a very short educational period. A substantial part of these users is constituted by unaccompanied foreign minors (see Amoruso et al., 2015; Amoruso et al., 2016), that is, minors “who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so”, according to the definition given by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child².

The educational effort that, starting from 2011, ItaStra addresses to such learners (by means of dedicated courses, as well as other activities aiming at social inclusion) has imposed an upgrade of the analytical and methodological tools characterizing our research activity and didactic practice. A significant aspect of this reflection has involved teacher training and has resulted in the definition of a new professional profile specifically dedicated to low educated users, namely, the “Teacher of Italian as a non-native language for low educated users”.

The planning and the realization of such a new profile have been entrusted to the 2nd level Master in “Theory, design, and didactics of Italian as L2 and LS”, a postgraduate university course closely related to the ItaStra activities³.

The new profile is characterized by specific skills – above all, concerning literacy – which traditionally do not fall within the teachers’ professional background. Moreover, these competencies should be markedly oriented in a strategic way, as the timeframe for language learning is typically long for illiterate adults, in contrast with the urgent needs of use of the language. In addition, due to the migrants’ working needs and also because they undergo frequent relocations, it is hard for them to attend medium-long learning pathways. As a consequence, teachers have to learn how to design activities which, despite the short period of guided learning, may produce autonomous lifetime learning competencies.

In what follows, we will try to describe the features characterizing the professional profile of the “Teacher of Italian as a non-native language for low educated users”, according to the model tested at the University of Palermo.

This profile consists in a set of competencies that can be summarized as follows:

- a) “doubting”, that is, to be talented at problem posing before than problem solving, and used to verifying and rethinking their own patterns of behavior and patterns of action (cf. the notion of “puzzlement” described by Hanks, 2015);
- b) “constructivism”, that is, to be able to accumulate key knowledge and exploit it in a new way, as well as to focus on learners’ resources rather than shortcomings, such as the oral language skills at their disposal rather than their weaknesses in Italian language;

2. Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General comments* (General Comment No. 6 “Unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin”, par. 7 and 8, September 2005).

3. In particular, Master student-teachers’ training is largely carried out within the classrooms of ItaStra or in other educational contexts cooperating with it, such as family homes hosting unaccompanied minors (some of these experiences have been described in Arcuri et al., 2015). More recently, ItaStra and Master – whose relationship is actually made by a continuous exchange of information, experience, as well as people – have been engaged in a wide project involving the newly instituted CPIAs (Territorial Centers for Adult Education), to which they address training courses for both adult illiterate learners and teachers of Italian L2 (see D’Agostino & Sorce, 2016).

- c) “expertise” in Italian language (not merely a native speaker), acquisition processes, and theories of language;
- d) “decentralization”, that is, to be able in recognizing and accepting all kinds of difference between themselves and the learners;
- e) “research”, that is, to be able to face the lack of specific and tested materials, ready to check systematically the results of the educational action, as well as the assumptions on which the didactic action is founded, to falsify them whenever the systematic observation in the classroom forces in this direction.

While a)-c) can be considered general features of any teacher of Italian as an L2, d) and e) represent instead stricter requirements for the teacher of Italian for low educated users.

The paper is organized in two parts: in section 2) we discuss the specific competencies that the teacher of Italian L2 for low educated users should possess; in section 3) the training path actually tested at ItaStra will be presented. In section 6 we propose a summing up.

2. SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

2.1. COMPETENCE 1: “DECENTRALIZING” TEACHER

The more the two poles of the didactic relationship “teacher vs. learner” share cultural features, the more the teacher’s “spontaneous” (that is, internalized) way of working will be suited to the learners; the more they differ, the more teachers need to introduce and experience new didactic elements to meet learners’ needs.

The differences at work in the relationship between teacher and learner mainly involve three cultural sub-domains, namely: presence vs. absence of a written culture, schooling culture and socialized learning, and variety of the linguistic repertoire.

In the case of non-literate or semi-literate learners, the fundamental distance lies in the presence vs. absence of a written code and, related to this, in the presence vs. absence of textual competencies concerning written texts, including the pragmatic dimension of the text, paratext, inferential strategies involving the wide domain of the textual implicitness, hence the shared encyclopedia.

Literacy also affects the cognitive level, as it conditions, more or less directly, our way to know and to represent the world, as well as to perceive spoken language; quoting Nicholas (2012: 268), “literacy has both the dimensions of reading the world and reading the word”. However, we will not deal here with the effects of illiteracy on “words”, that is, on the problems related to the phonological awareness and the ability in segmenting the phonetic continuum (the reader is referred to Amoruso et al., 2016).

Another aspect of culture directly affecting cognition is what can be called *socialized learning*. Any individual learns learning models and patterns within and through the processes of socialization (i.e., within social contexts, such as family, school etc.). Thus, learning models are conceived of as “socialized” or, in other words, they are social products. In the case of illiterate learners, the teacher deals not just with a *different* learning model (as in the case, for instance, of a German learner learning the Chinese language), but with the lack of a school learning model as a whole, as illiterate are, by

definition, low educated and, hence, lacking a school culture (e.g. awareness of student/teacher relationship, peer relationship, method of studying, endorsed learning styles, etc.). As learning models seem to influence learning styles, we can assume that non-formal experiences of learning favor learning styles far from the scholastic ones. Thus, "learning to learn" becomes one of the major goal of the didactic action. As Feldmeier (2008: 12) claims, it is essential "to make the learning process transparent and offer the learners tools for setting, planning, conducting and evaluating their own learning" or, in other words, for developing autonomy and responsibility on the learning process itself (Feldmeier, 2016: 93).

The first consequence of the cultural distance is that teachers for low educated learners have to make the effort of "defocusing" from their known cultural world to a greater extent than in other educational contexts. In other words, they should operate on their own styles (first, on the style of teaching, which is typically an after-effect of the individual learning style).

"Decentralization" also involves the recognition of a specific knowledge on the part of the learners, which is both a cultural (and experiential) baggage and a linguistic one. Very frequently, in fact, illiterate learners are endowed with a plurilingual oral competence, deriving from both the life context and the experience of migration. On this topic, Tarone & Bigelow (2012: 8) have observed that:

Interesting, and perhaps ironic to some, is the fact that very high levels of low print literacy frequently co-occur with very high levels of multilingualism.

Take the case of Burkina Faso where only 21% of the adult population can read and write. School life expectancy is 6 years for girls and 7 years for boys. However, Burkina Faso has 68 living languages, many which have fewer than 1000 speakers. While exact numbers of languages and speakers is disputable, we can assume that many people in Burkina Faso who are illiterate frequently learn each other's languages. [...] Clearly, multilingualism does not depend upon literacy or formal schooling, as many may believe in more monolingual contexts.

The case of Burkina Faso reported by Tarone & Bigelow particularly fits our description, as a large part of illiterate learners at ItaStra arrives from Sub-Saharan Western Africa.⁴ Within this area, numerous (non Bantu) Niger-Congo languages are spoken, belonging to different groups and subgroups and frequently coexisting within the same linguistic community. As Grandi (2008: 272-273) notes, we are dealing with heavily indented areas from a linguistic point of view, where the official language is in fact the native language only of a minority of the population. In this situation of marked multilingualism, it is quite usual that the repertoire of a linguistic community has an average of 15 languages. Any adult, indeed, speaks at least a "mother language" (which is, literally, the language spoken by the mother, in the frequent cases in which the father belongs to a different ethnic group or is emigrated due to work), possibly the language of the father (alongside the first language or even during the adolescence)

4. Especially from Gambia, Senegal, Benin, Mali, Ivory Coast, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau. Other major groups of low educated learners at ItaStra come from North Africa (e.g. Egypt) and Bangladesh.

and the vehicular language, used to communicate with neighboring villages; European languages of colonial legacy have generally an official status and are quite widespread as L2s, especially among the highly educated population (Adegbija 1994; Turchetta, 1996: 39-40; 2008: 495). These linguistic repertoires, which begin to take shape since childhood, increase over time in relation to the individual mobility, which may include the migration journey (Amoruso et al. 2015).

As a rule, learners' repertoires are not part of teachers' linguistic competence and, as they cannot be used and controlled directly, they are not conceived of as expendable materials in the teaching acting. This is a false belief, as plurilingual competence, if properly used, may be a crucial resource in the construction of learning paths, regardless of the teacher's own competence. An example of this is given by the so-called "autobiographical method", illustrated by Di Benedetto et al. (2016).

If teachers cannot acquire a plurilingual control corresponding to learners' competencies, they are however asked to develop a "typological sensibility" that provides a set of criteria to guide them *within* learners' languages, including their Italian interlanguage, since, like any other natural language, an L2 fits coherently within the typological panorama. This sensibility is stimulated by means of dedicated courses on grammar and typology aiming at showing, on the one hand, the relativity of certain phenomena, which are central in some languages and peripheral or absent in others (e.g. the definite article or the geminate stop consonants etc.) and, on the other hand, the limits of cross-linguistic diversity, whose boundaries are drawn by the structures of human cognition (Mocciaro 2014: 102-103).

In sum, becoming aware of the cultural distances just described⁵ constitutes an essential prerequisite of the teaching action, referred to as the "reflective approach" (see 3.2).

2.2. COMPETENCE 2: "RESEARCHER" TEACHER

Our training model allows teachers to acquire techniques and methods to manage orality, textuality, reading and writing, and autobiographical activities.

On the bases drawn in 2.1, teachers' training is articulated around five pivotal points on which their teaching action should be founded.

The first point consists in structuring teaching situations at all the identified levels simultaneously (socialized learning, learners' cultural and linguistic competencies).

Second, in our approach, four areas of teaching action strictly interact and potentiate each other: orality, reading and writing, textuality, autobiography.

A third wide area of intervention embraces the domain of textuality. More in the spirit of De Beaugrande & Dressler (1981) and Coseriu (1997), texts are conceived of as "communicative units", rather than as mere linguistic contexts for single words to appear and be studied. The overall pragmatic value of texts will help learners to formulate

5. There are, of course, other cultural features deserving attention. Among these, an interesting direction of research could be the use of technological devices on the part of non-literate learners. This could allow teachers, on the one hand, to understand which strategies are used in absence of written abilities; and, on the other hand, to structure learning paths based on technologies (see also Naeb, 2016).

hypotheses and to make inferences about the meaning of words they cannot decipher yet, exactly due to the link with the context of occurrence. Based on this theoretical scenario, student-teachers' training involves an extensive use and the practice of pragmatic texts⁶ (e.g. descriptive texts, such as plaques, and regulative texts, such as road signs, prohibitions, instructions etc.). By structuring didactic situations based on real tasks, they guide learners to recognize the meaning of texts according to their pragmatic purpose and to use them depending on their own practical aims (to get to a destination, use a drug, etc.), even in cases they are not able to fully decipher the words occurring in these texts. A strong tenet of the area of textuality is the early approach to complex written texts, seemingly incompatible with illiteracy, in order to stimulate a precocious competence in *anticipating* the sense, when the decoding competence is not yet developed. In other words, we work on strengthening the top-down process (as anticipation is), when the bottom-up process is still scanty, so that when the decoding competence will reach the whole syllabic inventory, a strategic approach is already developed and it will be possible for learners to proceed straight along this way.

The fourth point concerns learners' competence of study tools, that is, attention is drawn to the structure and use of specific formats of texts which learners face for the first time and whose role and structure is anything but obvious (such as textbooks, school works, types of exercises, diaries, manuals, etc.).

Fifth, fostering assessment as a learning situation, that is, assessment should not only be used as a way to obtain information on the learning processes at work, but also for its own educational dimension. This can be achieved by sharing and discussing with the learners the evaluation results while simultaneously stimulating self-assessment. Through the recognition of their progress and difficulties, learners are oriented (for the first time) within their own learning processes and specificities as learners (e.g. cognitive styles, preferred methods, recurrent errors, etc.).

To sum up, based on the learner's profile we are dealing with, we have been testing a didactic action providing *strategic* competencies, so that, in a short time, non-educated learners can use the language as a real means for social interaction, in a way that their merely linguistic competence would not allow.

3. THE TRAINING MODEL

3.1. TRAINING CONTEXTS

The training proposal is articulated in three different contexts, whose addressees are quite different groups of student-teachers, namely initial training and two paths of in-service training, as represented in Figure 1.

6. Other types of texts are used within different paths of the training, e.g. the linguistic autobiography has a strong narrative characterization.

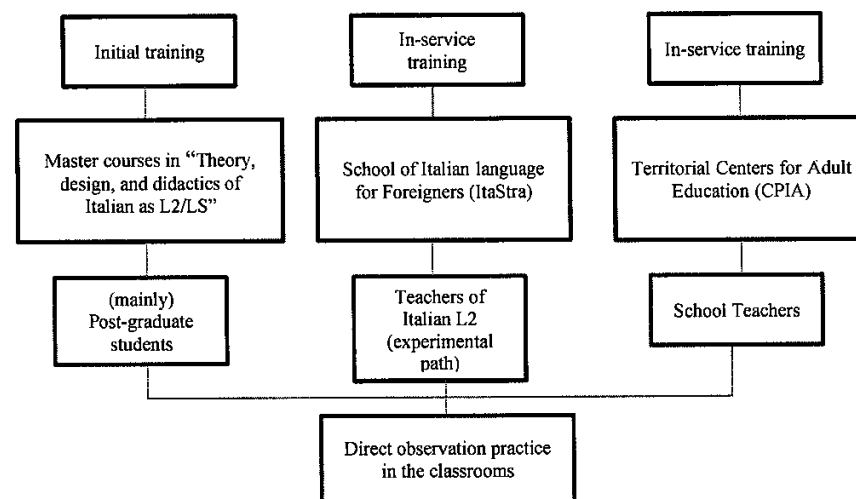


Fig. 1: Schema of the Training Paths for LESLLA Teachers.

Initial training consists in a postgraduate course, the 2nd level Master in "Theory, design and didactics of Italian as a second and foreign language" of the University of Palermo, mainly (but not only) addressed to postgraduate students.

The first type of in-service training takes place at ItaStra, where teachers with an already solid training in Italian as an L2 are involved in new experimental paths of both training and teaching.

The second one, instead, concerns the neo-instituted Territorial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA), having the task of guiding learners towards the obligatory educational degree (the first level of the high school) and the certification of the A2 level of Italian (Q CER), both essential steps to obtain a residence permit.

Despite many relevant differences in realizing the training action and its contents, obviously due to their different training needs, these groups are equally involved in a complex observation activity within the classrooms, although in the case of in-service training student-teachers act within their own classrooms.

3.2. WAYS OF TRAINING

Irrespective of the differences among the groups of training described in Section 3.1, the training model presents a few systematic features.

First, it uses a "reflective" approach, in the sense of Schön (1983). The reflective teachers we aim at are able to identify and recognize their own patterns of action and to modify them in order to reach a higher level of effectiveness. The reflective teachers consider themselves as learners, with specific cognitive features (e.g. cognitive preferences, studying approach, etc.) and a personal learning history (relationship with teachers and learned language, socialization in learning, etc.).

The second stable feature is auto-observation. This is an aspect of the reflective practice involving language: knowledge on second language acquisition, as well as internal plurilingualism, are acquired starting from tasks of auto-observation and auto-analysis as speakers of Italian as L1. In the same direction, students are asked to write a linguistic autobiography.

Third, the model is characterized by a strong interaction between linguistic and didactic training. In this case, the reflective practice embraces the core of the disciplines, and is aimed at individuating the link between theory and didactic practices, through the observation practice in the classrooms. The intertwining among didactic activities, linguistic theories, and theories of language acquisition produces a new kind of first-hand knowledge, particularly effective on the training level. This intertwining is realized within a “crossed” module accompanying all the other courses and allowing the actualization of such a reflective activity. We metaphorically refer to such a module as *tessuto*, lit. ‘woven’. The reflexive path has its final step in the realization of the “learning auto-biography”.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have presented two tightly related aspects that contribute to define the professional profile of the teacher of Italian L2 for low educated learners, namely: the features of this particular kind of learners, up to now little or by no means present in Italian classrooms, and the way in which teachers’ competencies should be shaped to meet the specific educational needs of such learners.

The description is based on the training experiences carried out at the University of Palermo, where, starting from 2011, new paths of research and experimental teaching aimed at low educated learners have enriched an already established training model for teachers of Italian L2.

In particular, we have developed – and tested – a model of strategic intervention aimed at balancing the specificities in learning exhibited by low educated adults and their urgent needs of social inclusion.

The results arising from the tests conducted so far of the model seem to confirm the validity of the teaching and training hypotheses implemented⁷.

7. Among these results, see ItaStra (2016-2017), a course of Italian for low educated adult learners, that reflects the methodology here discussed into, transferring it into a concrete teaching practice; the course is focused on strategic competencies and proposes an early use of complex texts (see www.pontidiparole.com).

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A POC A POC (LITTLE BY LITTLE)
MATERIAL FOR A CATALAN LANGUAGE COURSE AIMED AT ADULTS WITH
LOW LEVELS OF FORMAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: The article presents the teacher's and the students' books for a 45-hour Catalan course. It specifies the target audience considering the sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia and the legislation about language integration in the territory. It also specifies the educational criteria used to develop the material. Finally, it explains why having edited and published material so that adults with low levels of formal education can learn the target language is important.

KEYWORDS: LESLLA, teacher materials, course book

1. SOME DATA ABOUT THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN SPAIN AND
THE POSITION OF CATALAN IN THIS LANDSCAPE AND THE SPECIFIC
LANGUAGE AND INTEGRATION POLICY

In Spain, there is an official language for the whole State and co-official languages in five regions. Thus, in the autonomous community of Galicia the official languages are Spanish and Galician; in the Basque Country they are Spanish and Basque, and in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and Valencia they are Spanish and Catalan. Unlike Basque, Catalan and Spanish are Romance languages and have many points in common. Catalan has also some common aspects with French.



Fig. 1: Languages in Spain (from: <http://nohemingwaysspain.blogspot.com.es/2011/11/shared-language-shared-culture-spains-4.html>)

As Francesco Pasetti explains: “Act 4/2000 is the first legal measure that introduced immigrant integration on to the political agenda in Spain”. Based on this law, the central government designed the Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration (known as PECEI, from the Spanish acronym) which is the core tool for integration. Two plans have been issued so far: one for the period 2007-2010 (PECEI I) and another for the period 2011-2014 (PECEI II). The second plan sets out language policy for integration in Spain.

The main institution responsible for managing and implementing the Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration is the Secretary General for Immigration and Emigration with the central government in Madrid. But the geopolitical composition of Spain, with 19 regional governments, 50 provinces and 8,124 local authorities requires a multi-level governance model, in which local authorities are responsible for some of the plan's objectives, regional governments for others and the central authorities for the other objectives specified in the plan.

Regional governments work with their local authorities and together they are in charge of issuing reports required for permit renewals, such as the Report on Efforts to Integrate and the Report Demonstrating Social Ties. Central government is responsible for citizenship.

In this system, each regional government establishes the language requirements for obtaining one of the reports mentioned so the language policies for Catalonia may not be the same as those for the Basque Country or Andalusia, for example. Catalonia is one of the few regional governments (if not the only one) which has established criteria for language requirements with Decree-Law 150/2014, of 18 November, concerning reception services for immigrants and returnees to Catalonia, which stipulates that a person who wants to obtain a Report Demonstrating Social Ties should be able to use the two official languages (Catalan and Spanish) and, if this is not possible, must prove 90 hours of training in each of the two languages.

These 90-hour courses in Spanish and Catalan are free in Catalonia and can be taken at Adult Education Centres, other public institutions associated with the Catalan regional government and NGOs authorised to teach Catalan and Spanish.

2. SOME DATA ABOUT NEWCOMER ADULTS IN CATALONIA WITH LOW LEVELS OF FORMAL EDUCATION

According to the Catalan Statistical Institute (Idescat), of the 7,508,106 people living in Catalonia in 2015, 1,028,069 were born outside Spain: 13.69% of the total Catalan population.

The Moroccan group is the largest (214,250 people), representing 20% of the total population born abroad. In second place, with less than half this number, are Romanians (93,668).

Looking at Catalan immigration figures by continent, in first place we see Europe with 33.37% of the total of foreigners. The countries leading the ranking are Romania (93,668 people), as mentioned above, followed by other countries from central and Eastern Europe (58,143 people mainly from Russia and Ukraine). In second place, we find the population from Central America, the Caribbean and South America, amounting to 245,969 (about 23% of residents born outside Catalonia).

We can therefore conclude that migration to Catalonia consists primarily of people of Latin American origin and secondly newcomers from Morocco, with Romanians in third position.

We have no official data on these newcomers' level of formal education, but we can draw some conclusions from the Idescat information regarding the level of education of the adult population of Catalonia.

According to the Institute¹, there are 10% of adults aged over 16 who cannot read or write and 13% with only primary school education or who did not complete primary school. Given that the vast majority of the population born in Catalonia has gone through compulsory primary schooling, we believe this 23% of adults consists either of newcomers or people aged over 70 who had to leave school just after the Spanish Civil War, which forced thousands of families facing poverty to migrate and make their children work.

3. TARGET STUDENTS FOR A POC A POC BEGINNING CATALAN FOR ADULTS I

A poc a poc is aimed at the 13% of adults who live in Catalonia and have a very low level of formal education. This 13% includes adults from Africa and some Asian countries (mainly Pakistan and India). However, the material is also suitable for newcomers who have compulsory secondary and higher education but are not familiar with the Latin alphabet because no English, French or Spanish is included in the curriculum in their countries of origin. This is the case of newcomers to Catalonia originally from Russia, Ukraine, China and Pakistan. These people, however, will clearly learn much more quickly.

1. Data from 2011.

For learners from Central America, the Caribbean and South America this material may not be appropriate, as their knowledge of Spanish makes the acquisition of Catalan quicker and easier. However, we realise that South Americans with little formal education (mainly from Bolivia and Central America) are also an appropriate audience for this material. In their case, their low educational level outweighs their knowledge of a language as closely related as Spanish.

Our material does not cover the 10% of people who cannot read or write because it is not adult literacy material, but it is suitable for people whose skills in reading-writing in the Latin alphabet are at a very early stage. However, as explained later, it is possible to use the material only for oral comprehension and production. In this case, the learner is doing a course in Catalan without learning to read and write in Catalan.

For adult literacy in Catalan, the Secretary for Equality, Citizenship and Migration (Department of Welfare and the Family) has prepared material² in Catalan which is available to all organisations that apply for it. The Department of Education's Adult Education Centres³ also offer instrumental instruction, which includes literacy in Catalan and Spanish.

4. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATERIAL

A poc a poc Beginning Catalan for Adults 1 is material for a 45-hour Catalan course. A second part (*A poc a poc* Beginning Catalan for Adults 2) is planned, to reach the 90 hours of education required by Catalan law for refugees and immigrants.

The content of the material falls within the parameters proposed for the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference and focuses on the initial Catalan program from the General Directorate for Language Policy⁴. We should say, however, that, considering the learner profile, we have simplified the curriculum in terms of complexity and the amount of information displayed⁵. So we might say we are dealing with an intermediate level between A0 and A1 (it could perhaps be described as A0.5).

The course book works on everyday expressions and very basic phrases related to communicative use in areas close to learners in their personal, social and professional situations. For example:

- Being able to identify people: "It's me"
- Being able to give their date of birth: "23rd of April 1972"
- Being able to ask for the price of a product: "How much is this?"
- Knowing the name of basic transport: "train, car, plain, metro, bus, bicycle, motorbike, on foot"
- Understanding shop opening hours: "open, closed, summer timetable"

2. Lletres per a tothom (Letters for everybody) (2011) http://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/details/Article/article_programa_lletres_tothom

3. 120 Adult Education Centres offer literacy all over Catalonia.

4. Catalan language programme beginners' level, General Directorate of Linguistic Policy, Department of Culture, Government of Catalonia (2011)

5. In order to simplify the A1 curriculum we have also used what the Cervantes Institute proposes for Spanish.

- Being able to ask about the basic features of an apartment: "How many rooms has the apartment got?"

The material prioritises comprehension and oral expression over other competences. Reading is secondary and writing work appears only sporadically. The main activity in the classroom is oral interaction between the teacher and the class group, between the teacher and a learner, and finally the conversation among learners.

A poc a poc Beginning Catalan for Adults 1 consists of three pieces of material: the learners' book, the teacher's book and a website. The main material is the teacher's book, the learners' book is secondary and serves to reinforce what has been worked on orally or is useful for the work the learner does at home. Finally, the site is designed to support the teaching and the additional content provided there will be briefly explained at the end of this article.

Before starting to design the material, the authors carried out research to analyse the materials published in the world for this level. We were surprised that it was very difficult to find published material. The most complete material published we found was one by Pearson Education (US) called *English for results*. This has a first level (they call it introduction level) very suitable for LESLLA students. This material offers an American student's book, a teacher's book and a book with multi-level communication activities.

In Europe, we have found a textbook from a French publisher, Editions Maison des Langues, aimed at immigrants learning French, which is also useful and appropriate for LESLLA students. It is called *Rendez-vous* and consists of a students' book that incorporates a CD with audio.

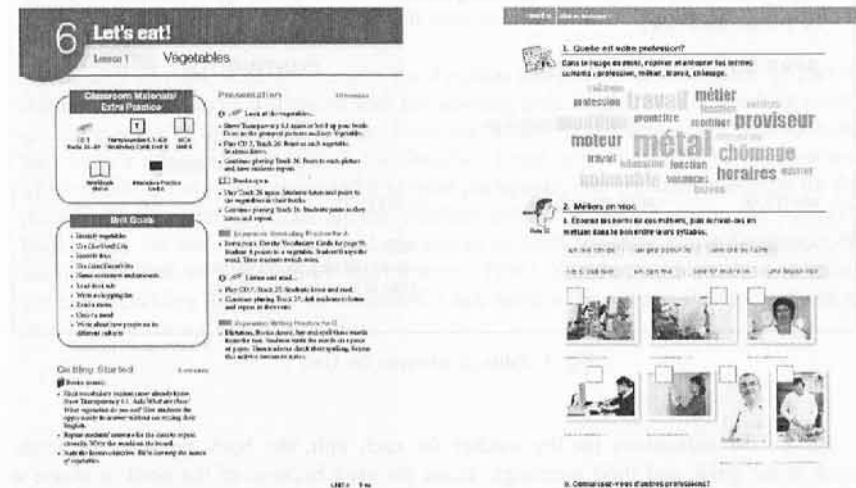


Fig. 2: On the left, an example page from the Teacher's Book from *English For Results*. On the right, an example page of the Students' Book from *Rendez-Vous*.

We have not found any publisher in Spain or Catalonia with textbooks for this level or target students. In the case of Spain, we found that the material comes from NGOs that receive a subsidy to publish material. Usually the material is posted on a website and the teacher has to download and print it.

In the case of Catalan, some public institutions have published material which they distribute to students in the form of portfolios or upload to a website so the teacher has to download and print it. Some publishing houses in Catalonia have textbooks which they say are initial level but they are in fact for A1 and are not appropriate for adults with low levels of formal education, as in the case of LESLLA learners.

5. THE TEACHER'S BOOK

This material is divided into two parts: the first is the teaching guide for the teacher and the second is a set of colour prints required for running the course.

At the beginning of the teacher's guide, there is a table of contents and objectives for the six units that comprise the course. For each unit, there is the number of hours required, which sections each unit contains, and the objectives and content to be worked on each section.

UNITAT 1		UNIT 1
Hola com va?		Hello how is it going?
(6 hores lectives)		(6 teaching hours)
APARTAT	OBJECTIUS	CONTINGUTS
A. Hola i adéu	Saludar i acomiadar-se.	—Hola, Adéu —Bon dia, bona tarda, bona nit —Com va? Bé, gràcies
SECTION	OBJECTIVES	CONTENTS
A. Hello and Bye	Greeting	- Hello, Goodbye - Good morning, good afternoon, good night - How is it going? Fine, thanks

Fig. 3: Table of contents for Unit 1.

Before the indications for the teacher for each unit, the book presents the icons used in the guide and their meanings. Icons are used because of the need to create a visual guide that is quick and easy to use. We are aware that some teachers who use the guide are volunteers with no training in language teaching and not used to reading guides of this kind.

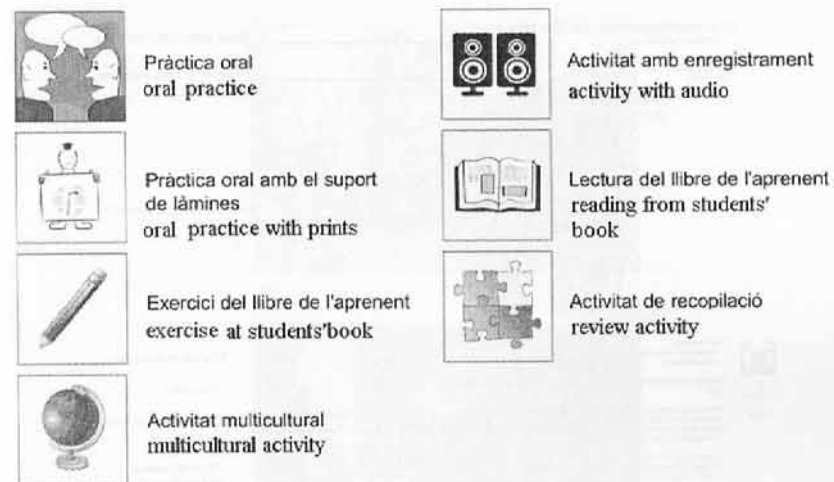


Fig. 4: Icons from the Teacher's Book.

As mentioned above, the units are divided into sections. At this point, the book works in a conventional way in the sense that all language learning textbooks structure the content in units and then divide each unit into smaller areas of content, called sections in our book.

For each of these sections, we give the duration and provide a photograph of part of the learner's book to be worked on with the teaching points required. The teaching points are the essence of the teacher's book. They are numbered and referenced with an icon; they have a title, and they contain the linguistic items to be worked. The explanations of the teaching points are organised into brief paragraphs that are understandable for the teacher. These teaching points are the smallest didactic guidance unit in the teacher's book. They are not independent and are linked to other teaching points forming a didactic sequence, as proposed by Martin Peris (1996). So what we have done is create six units, dividing each unit into sections. Each section has several didactic sequences that include several teaching points.

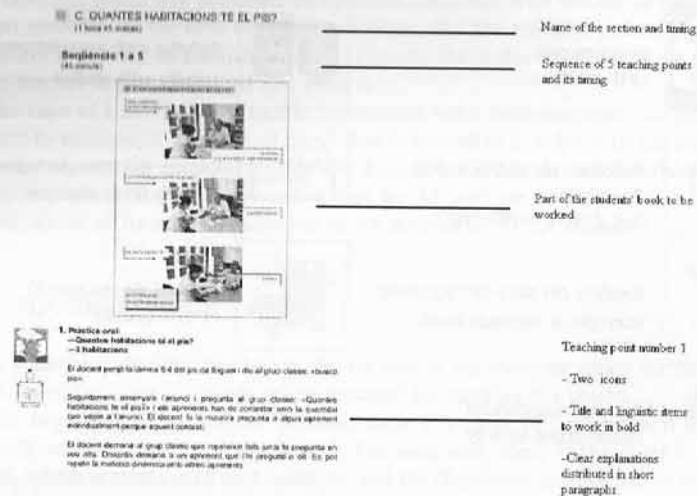


Fig. 5: Example of the Teacher's Book

All the didactic sequences begin with dynamic oral practice activities in which the teacher dramatises communicative situations with the involvement of learners. Dramatisations are a good strategy for working on the same linguistic item in different ways and making it recurrent. As explained in Ellis (2001), a high degree of exposure to the same item (token or type frequency) is needed for it to be learned, and dramatisations do not lead to demotivating repetition.

Only after several teaching points involving oral competence are any written activities done. We considered that there should be more oral work preceding the written work because LESLLA learners have low levels of competence in reading and writing, as presented in Burt et al. (2008).

As real material provides motivation, as pointed out in Condelli et al. (2006), we have included recordings of real comprehension activities, such as announcements at a train station. It also includes some teaching points about the social situation in the host community and learners are encouraged to compare this with their places of origin and think about the differences and similarities.

At the end of the material the teacher has 118 colour photographs indexed so they can easily be located through the explanations of the teaching points. We have prioritised the use of photographs instead of illustrations because learners recognise them more easily. Illustrations contain a certain degree of abstraction, which is an impediment for learners with low levels of formal education, as pointed out by Bigelow and Vinogradov (2011).

Similarly, the photographs used in the prints are the same as the ones appearing in the learner's book. This is to make it easier to transmit the content that has been worked on orally into the reading and writing practice in the learner's book.



Fig. 6: Two prints for Unit 1.

6. THE LEARNERS' BOOK

As explained previously, the learners' book is intended as learning material for secondary use after working orally in the classroom communicative situations.

We have therefore offered a book for the learner in colour and with a lot of photographs. One of the criteria we established was to provide decent material at these initial levels and provide the learner more than just unbound black and white photocopies. Along the same lines, the material is meaningful for working on certain communicative situations, not just vocabulary.

We tried to ensure the amount of information distributed on each page was not excessive so learners do not have the feeling of having to focus their attention on many linguistic items.

Communicative situations are presented in the form of dialogues with bubbles of different colours for each speaker. The speech presented has previously been worked on orally, so there should be no problems in interpreting the dialogues presented in bubbles coming out of the characters' mouths in the pictures.

As shown in Figure 5, we use capital letters for text as well as colours, so names always appear in blue, noun determiners in orange, verbs in green, words expressing time in violet, words expressing location in brown, etc. We wanted to introduce the modularity of language in an implicit way and avoid learners having to memorise chunks of linguistic sets related to a communicative action. The font we have used is Ariel, as it is one of the most commonly one used and should easily be recognised by students.

HOLA, BON DIA,
EM DIC SOFIA,
ENCANTADA.

HELLO, GOOD MORNING
MY NAME IS SOFIA
NICE TO MEET YOU



HELLO
MY NAME IS SALIM
NICE TO MEET YOU

HOLA,
JO EM DIC SALIM.
ENCANTAT.



BON DIA

GOOD MORNING
BON DIA. QUÈ VOLS?

GOOD MORNING. WHAT DO YOU NEED?



QUANT VAL
I QUILO DE PATATES?

0,90 € (NORANTA CÈNTIMS)

HOW MUCH IS
I KILO OF POTATOES? (NINETY CENTS)

Fig. 7: Dialogues with Bubbles in Colours.

In the same way, we have used one of the easy reading criteria for complex sentences, segmenting the sentence using grammatical or pragmatic criteria. For example, we segmented "HELLO", "MY NAME IS SALIM" and "NICE TO MEET YOU" on three different lines because they are communicatively different. Sometimes the criterion has been grammatical, as in the case of "HOW MUCH IS" and "I KILO OF POTATOES."














The book also contains exercises so the learners can practice what they have read in theory. The vast majority are reading exercises and only a small proportion of them involve written production. There are mainly two types of activities: choosing between

two or three options or relating items. As you can see in exercise 1, the student has to relate each means of transport with a sign they can see in the street. In exercise 7, the student has to choose between three options (street, square or avenue) according to the photograph.

1. Relate

I. Relaciona



abc

	metro	metro	
	plane	avió	
	car	cotxe	
	train	tren	
	on foot	a peu	
	motorbike	moto	
	bus	autobús	
	bicycle	bicicleta	



7. Choose

7. Tria



abc def

street square avenue carrer plaça avinguda carrer plaça avinguda street square avenue

street square avenue carrer plaça avinguda c. pl. av. st. sq. av.

st. sq. av. c. pl. av. c. pl. av. st. sq. av.

Fig. 8: Type of exercise.

We have used lowercase type, always in black, without using the colour system of the theory because we wanted the learner to focus on the mechanics of the exercises. The instructions are greatly simplified and are accompanied by icons to reinforce them.

The content of the exercises is consistent with the approach of the theoretical part of the learners' book. Thus, there is no explicit linguistic grammar work, but the idea is to strengthen the acquisition of vocabulary and language items presented in the theoretical part of the book.

At the end of the book there is an appendix with sound and letter correspondence in Catalan and typical questions arising from classroom dynamics.

7. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Finally, we built a website⁶ designed for teachers with continuous contributions so that the material would not be static. So, apart from samples of the units, teacher's book and learners' book, there is also a page dedicated to reinforcement and extension activities for each unit of the book and the audios of the exercises.

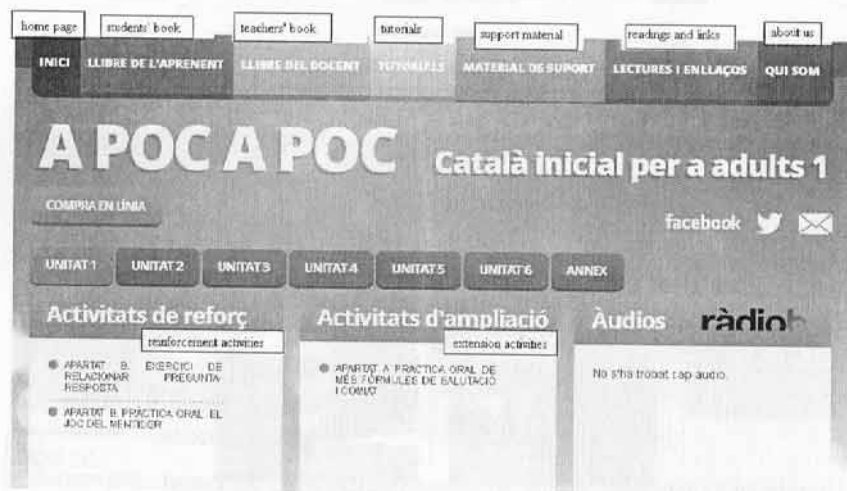


Fig. 9: Website with reinforcement and extension exercises

The site also includes tutorials on some of the methodological techniques presented in the teacher's book, such as vocabulary for working with the prints. We have also included links that we believe may be of interest to Catalan language teachers of adults with low levels of formal education, and there is also a section with articles related to the subject. These articles contain a short summary of the content and a link to the entire article.

6. www.catalainicialperadults.cat

For articles and links, we have included material in Catalan but also from other parts of the world where there is bibliography on teaching a second language to adults with low levels of formal education.

Finally, it seemed important to us to have a social media profile not only to publish news we generate, such as the creation of new exercises for the units, but also to share everything related to literacy and language teaching for adults with low levels of formal education. This includes reports with statistical data, events in the field, articles about research or new resources for LESLLA teachers. We have friends and followers from associations worldwide that work with language education for refugees and immigrants, but particularly NGOs from Spain and the different regional areas. Analysing individuals, the majority of our fans on our Facebook page are women from Spain and our Twitter audience also is also dominated by Spanish women.

8. CONCLUSIONS

A poc a poc has already been in existence for three years, and during this period we have been able to talk to the teachers who have used it for their classes. Before publication we piloted some units to see how students and teachers responded. Observing the preliminary classes, we realised that teachers tend to not to use the teacher's book much, preferring to prepare classes from the student's book. This is a problem for our material because the real focus was the teacher's book, with sheets and detailed instructions on how to create oral activities.

In general, we found that teachers have a hard time using the oral support and that they need the student's book and the board for classes. In some ways this is understandable because teachers are "victims" of a lifetime of schooling, and it may be a great effort for them not to use all the written tools they have used throughout their lives, which are also used all the time by the society they come from.

We should perhaps consider the possibility of the teachers being LESLLA alumni who want to help people (voluntarily or for payment) and who have previously done teacher training, with expert support and supervision always available.

Finally, I would like to end the article by highlighting the need to have more published material for this type of learner. In fact, the reason why the authors began this project was that we found there was very little published material for teaching a second language to adults with low levels of formal education. The publications we found were either aimed at schoolchildren or contained too complex a level of language, with too many items to assimilate for the profile of learner we are talking about, or had work only on vocabulary, ignoring communication activities.

From our own experience, we know that the private publishing houses are generally not committed to publishing textbooks for LESLLA profile learners with few economic resources. We think governments and authorities should be the ones to invest in adult education policies.

If we want a cohesive society where nobody feels excluded, governments must support access to language classes for the most disadvantaged. It is not enough to think that this learning will happen by assuming that adults will interact with local people at some point. Reality shows us that there are many people who live and survive in language communities without interacting with the outside. This might be the case for women from African and Asian countries.

Last but not least, everyone also has the right to learn to read and write because literacy is essential in our society. Certainly in Catalonia, a figure of 23% of the adult population with a very low or no level of formal education is not a desirable one.

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'A GOOD TEACHER HAS TO LAUGH A LOT':
TALKING ABOUT PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS OF LESLLA MIGRANT
MOTHERS IN A SMALL FLEMISH CITY

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ABSTRACT: In this contribution we present and discuss the perceptions on and beliefs about language and literacy acquisition of a small group of LESLLA learners in Tienen, a city located in the center of Flanders (Belgium). LESLLA learners often perform poorly in official language and literacy programs. Recent studies indicate that experiences of cultural dissonance may be at the root of the issue. In order to find out whether this assumption is true, we conducted in-depth interviews with nine low-educated migrant mothers during home visits. The analysis of the interviews led to an unexpected kaleidoscope of views on learning, second language learning and literacy. Based on our findings we draw a few conclusions that may be relevant to LESLLA teachers.

KEYWORDS: Literacy, second language acquisition, LESLLA-learners, cultural dissonance

1. INTRODUCTION

In Flanders, the northern part of Belgium, LESLLA learners tend to benefit less from the official language and literacy programs set up for adult migrants (Berben 2003; De Niel et al., 2016; Plichart, 2003). In 2003, a study by Berben (2003) showed that one in three LESLLA students drop out before they reach the end of their A1-program of

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the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2014). A recent study adds to these findings by indicating that only 24% of lower educated adults and only 10% of the adult learners who enter a literacy program without any prior schooling or literacy experience manage to pass from level A1 to level A2 courses. In the academic year 2014-2015, only 20% of the lower educated learners and only 3% of the learners who were non-literate at the start of the program obtained the official language certificate within ten months of education (A2) (De Niel et al., 2016).

Research provides us with several reasons why official language and literacy programs do not seem to lead to the desired results for LESLLA learners in general. The first strand has to do with findings in cognitive psychological research showing that non-literate adult second language learners do not show the same metalinguistic skills as low- or literate adult second language learners. "Alphabetic literacy changes the way L2 learners process oral L2 input" (Tarone, 2010:75; see Pettitt & Tarone, 2015, or Young-Scholten, 2013 for an overview). LESLLA learners, for example, do not notice recasts on changes to language form, whereas they do notice recasts on meaning and even learn from them (Tarone, 2010). Isolation of words and word segments seems to be very hard for LESLLA learners (Kurvers, 2015). Also, when non-literate or low-literate learners are asked to make judgments about word length, their answers are related to referential content rather than to word length in itself (Kurvers, 2015). Kurvers (2002, cited in Young-Scholten, 2013: 447) even concluded that "literacy makes more of a difference than age." In one of her studies concerning non-literate learners, non-literate adults turned out to differ more from the adult readers than from the pre-reading children, suggesting that literacy is crucial for the development of metalinguistic knowledge. Furthermore, the differences between literate and non-literate adult learners cannot merely be explained by language (learning) abilities that are promoted by literacy. Lukes (2009: 166) indicated, for example, based on classroom observations, that a non-literate female student "despite rich and varied life experiences, [...] needed to begin to learn classroom norms and behaviors, teacher expectations, how to use a book, how to hold a pencil, how to write the alphabet, letter-sound correspondence, and so on." Therefore, language-learning programs should take into account what we understand of the non-literate adult mind.

The second explanation is related to the sociocultural aspects of learning. More in particular, it has to do with the beliefs and perceptions on learning of the teacher on the one hand and the students on the other hand. The ideas of learning a second language, learning how to read and write, or learning in general of adults with few or no education are fostered by informal experiences of learning in non-institutionalized contexts and/or testimonials of others who did get access to formal schooling. In informal contexts, people generally learn through observation and listening or overhearing, awaiting to participate in the community (Keller, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003). In some (usually non-Western) communities, harmonious family relationships and respect to other community members are highly validated (Keller, 2003). For socialization to be efficient within this context, learning has to be situated and collective, and thus involving participation in 'the community of practice'. Learning is a social process and occurs through experiences of participation in one's daily life (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In some other (usually Western) socialization contexts, on the other hand, the focus is on individual goals, and learning is considered to be most successful in a separated

classroom, with standard curricula and a trained teacher (Decapua & Marshall, 2015; Keller, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 2003). DeCapua & Marshall (2015b) speak in terms of 'cultural dissonance'.

2. CONTEXT AND TARGET GROUP OF OUR SMALL-SCALE STUDY

2.1. NON-LITERATE MIGRANT MOTHERS: A VULNERABLE YET IMPORTANT TARGET GROUP

Among the LESLLA learners arriving in Flanders, there are an important number of mothers who had very little or no access to schooling at all in their home countries. These mothers are a very vulnerable group of learners. First, without intensive outreaching action, they are difficult to be reached by formal learning institutions. Yet, their learning is crucial for the educational success of their children; children of low educated mothers tend to have more learning difficulties (Belfi et al., 2011; Belfi et al., 2014). Secondly, the standard official second language and literacy programs are not tailored to these mothers' needs: they have difficulties finding day care where they can bring their baby to during the course, and they often have to interrupt their learning due to pregnancy and child care. As a consequence, progress is slow in their language and literacy acquisition; a lot of them drop out after several attempts, leaving them frustrated and without a certificate (De Niel et al., 2016; Drijkoningen, 2012).

2.2. A FLEXIBLE PROGRAM LEADING TO A PRIVILEGED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MOTHERS

A flexible literacy program³ tailored to these mothers' needs was established in the rooms of a charity organization that distributes food parcels three times a week in Tienen, a small city in Flanders. Tienen is located somewhat in the center of Flanders. The city is characterized by its population of older natives and migrant very low-educated families that are coming in, while young higher educated natives are leaving. 5,13% of the inhabitants is of foreign origin, 9,77% received Belgian nationality within the last year. More than one in ten children is born in a low-income family (Stad Tienen, 2012). This means that they are born in a family with a low income, a low level of education of the parents, poor housing and health conditions. Yet few socio-cultural events are organized or actions taken by the city to increase social cohesion or to promote education. Until recently, in Tienen, there was for example no officially funded provision for the unique learning needs of non-literate second language learning adults.

Through this program, we were able to reach 20 non-literate or very low educated migrant mothers aged 25 to 48, together with their young children who were allowed to come along to the meetings. As the program allowed us to follow these women over four years of services, a rapport and a relationship of confidence was established with them. This privileged relationship made it possible to get access to the personal life and minds of the mothers.

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3. FRAMEWORK

As we already indicated in the introduction, two learning paradigms can be distinguished: a Western-style formal way of learning and teaching, sometimes called Assembly-Line Instruction (Rogoff, 2014), and a non-Western, informal way of learning, also called 'Learning by Observing and Pitching In (LOPI)' (Rogoff, 2014). Although these learning paradigms make a continuum of ways of learning and teaching (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015a; Rogoff et al., 2003), they can be very different in certain aspects. In informal learning settings, there is typically a strong relationship between teachers and learners. Furthermore, it is essential that the subjects that are studied during the course have immediate relevance to the learners. Learning in an informal setting is contextual and is often rather incidental than explicit and structured (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b). In formal learning settings, on the other hand, learning is typically structured by a trained teacher and a standardized curriculum. Relationships between teachers and students can be close, but it does not have to be the case for learning and teaching to be effective (Rogoff, 2014; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015a).

The perceptions and beliefs of LESLLA learners about learning in general, learning a second language and learning through a Western educational schooling system seem to have been fostered by informal experiences of learning in non-institutionalized contexts. Perceptions and beliefs of teachers on how to teach literacy and a second language, on the other hand, are shaped by the Western educational setting they experienced themselves.

In the table below (Table 1), we compare the beliefs and perceptions that are possibly generated in the mind of teachers who have been socialized in the Western-style formal education on the one hand to the perceptions and beliefs LESLLA-learners may have built up through non-formal learning (cf. Keller, 2003; Rogoff et al., 2003; Rogoff, 2014).

Perceptions and beliefs of Western teachers about learning in an institutionalized Western educational context	Perceptions and beliefs on learning fostered by non-formal learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is an individual process, taking place in the head of the learners. • Learning is best organized in spaces exclusively designed for that purpose and isolated from daily activities. • Learning a language is a separate 'subject', isolated from its social context and purpose. • Taking up an active role in the classroom is a sign of motivation of the learner. • What is to be learned is first de-fragmented into smaller units and then transmitted in a certain order, defined by the linguistic complexity. • Learning is a one-way process in which the teacher is the expert, giving him a dominant position in the relationship. • Intensive exposure to the L2 exclusively, is 'the' way to enhance L2 learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is a collective process, taking place while participating in social events. • A safe and familiar place is crucial to make learning possible. • Learning can only take place when learners get access to crucial social practices. • Learning is an integrated process, taking place by gradually moving from observation to taking an active role in a social practice. • The importance of a specific social practice defines the urgency of what has to be learned. • In the learning process, equality, mutual respect, trust and flexibility in the roles are crucial.

Table 1: Perceptions and beliefs of Western Teachers about learning in an Institutionalized Western Educational Context versus Perceptions and Beliefs fostered by non-formal Learning

Since most of the LESLLA learners have had very little to no experience with the Western-style formal education, they may experience 'cultural dissonance' when entering a formal Western-style educational system: they may experience the differences between their ways of learning and the Western-style ways of learning, and they may get confused about learning and teaching strategies (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b; Rogoff, 2014).

In order to overcome this 'cultural dissonance' in the classroom, DeCapua and Marshall (2011; 2015a) and Marshall and DeCapua (2013) developed MALP, the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm. With this alternative pedagogical approach, which is a type of Culturally Responsive Teaching (cf. Gay, 2000, as cited in DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b: 49) teachers are able to "transition students to formal school settings through a mutually adaptive approach" (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015a: 154). According to the researchers, the cultural differences between low-educated students and their teachers' ways of learning must be made explicit in order to develop effective learning and teaching strategies. By combining learning strategies from both views on learning, transition is likely to occur more easily. In order to do so, DeCapua & Marshall (2015b) propose to combine oral and written communications, among other things, and to provide opportunities for the learners to become familiar with these 'new' ways of learning.

Interaction and negotiation between teachers and their LESLLA students on the possible mismatch in their perceptions and expectations should therefore form an integral and crucial part of every learning program set up for non-literate learners. Research shows that this is unfortunately not always the case in Flanders and the Netherlands (both Dutch speaking parts of Europe). Teachers often tend to hold very specific views on what seems to be going on in the mind of their learners, while few report on the discussion of these issues with their learners. For example, according to a study conducted in the Netherlands, teachers in adult basic education often think of their non-literate immigrant students as too passive, which results in them thinking their students do not want to learn Dutch at all. Teachers want their students to be 'active learners', but the students think it is more appropriate to be 'passive learners' and to attribute a central role to the teacher (Lunenberg & Volman, 1999, p. 442). Regarding views on learning, for most students in basic education, the *intake* of knowledge is the most important mental model of learning (cf. Vermunt, 1992), because they think of learning as a "process of memorizing" (Lunenberg & Volman, 1999: 440). According to teachers, on the other hand, the *use* of knowledge is the general aim for these learners. With regard to the students' learning orientation, many learners refer to the aspiration to learn language for everyday use, to participate in Dutch society. For example, they want to go to the doctor or they want to be able to communicate with their children's teachers (Lunenberg & Volman, 1999). A study conducted in Flemish basic education showed similar results (Plichart, 2003). Plichart (2003) asked a number of LESLLA teachers about the perceptions on learning of their learners. According to the teachers, non-literate learners show a lack of insight in their learning process, especially at the beginning of their learning. They also lack educational competences such as concentration, active listening to other learners or sitting still; they are reported to have problems with abstract reasoning. Another observation mentioned by teachers was that non-literates only discover their specific learning needs after a period of schooling and that their learning needs are often limited to basic social interactions. For learners with children, they show interest in education and school. And last, according to their teachers, LESLLA learners rarely express the need to learn to read and write.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DATA COLLECTION

During the program in Tienen, we noticed that the women taking part in the meetings regularly expressed the need to share their personal feelings about the learning process and the impact on their learning of a certain behavior or incident with one of the teachers or volunteers. They made it clear that these issues were very important to them and needed to be discussed before any further learning could take place. During a private talk at the home of a mother D. for instance, she expressed her astonishment and disappointment about one of the volunteers in the program: The volunteer had explained to the group how she prepared eggs in a salad. When D. in turn wanted to explain ways in which she prepared eggs, the volunteer had cut her off. For D. this was a very negative experience: 'How can I learn from someone who only wants me to listen to her explanation and who is not interested in how we prepare eggs in our cooking tradition?' An incident another mother was upset about, was that a younger volunteer, aged 24, had given her a light slap on the bum, as a joke. When we asked her why she did not want to work with this volunteer in a next session, she explained to one of the older teachers 'You can do that but not E.: She is younger than me, it is not up to her to reprimand me'.

With the framework as described above in mind and due to these interactions, we became more and more interested in the social and sociocultural aspects of their learning. The existence of a potential mismatch between the views on learning of the teacher and those of the students and the lack of interaction and negotiation on this subject, might well explain some of the drop-out rates and the failed programs in adult basic education.

In particular, we started looking for answers to the following research questions:

Can we collect more utterances like the ones expressed spontaneously by the learners that confirm that non-literate adult second language learners are well aware of and reflect upon the influence of the social conditions on their learning?

and

Do the utterances and reflections of the non-literate learners themselves confirm the robustness of the framework described in Table 1?

We decided to setup in-depth interviews with the mothers at the end of the program. We conducted home visits, something we had already done on several occasions in the course of the program. We tried to get answers to a preset list of questions, at the same time showing interest in their daily preoccupations. Family members or friends translated if needed. As our relationship with the mothers was of major importance, we did not insist for the sake of an answer when the mother did not fully answer all of the questions. In this way, we recorded 9 in-depth interviews.

We analyzed the recordings independently from one another for each mother, by transcribing the interviews and selecting all utterances about perceptions and views on language and literacy acquisition. These reports were discussed in order to provide answers to our two research questions.

In Table 2 we provide some background information about the nine mothers we interviewed. A selection of what came out of the interviews with the mothers Z., R., M., B., F. and S. is described in chapter 4. Findings.

Mother	Age	Country of origin	Years of schooling	Religion	Number of children	Mother Tongue
Z.	40	Kosovo	0	Muslim	5	Roma/Serbian
R.	36	Kosovo	0	Muslim	7	Roma/Serbian
M.	43	Iraq	0	Muslim	5	Kurdish
B.	34	Iraq	0	Muslim	2	Kurdish
F.	38	Iraq	0	Muslim	5	Arabic
S.	31	Iraq	3	Muslim	6	Arabic
	38	Iraq	0	Muslim	6	Kurdish
	48	Iraq		Muslim	2	Arabic
	28	Morocco		Muslim	3	Arabic

Table 2: Demographics of the Participants

5. FINDINGS: WHAT THE MOTHERS SHARED

Mother 1, Z.: belongs to the Muslim Roma population in Kosovo. She fled from Kosovo at the end of the Balkan war together with her husband, whom she was forced to marry at the age of thirteen. They first spent some time in Germany, before coming to Belgium.

Z. has 5 children. Only the last one, 11 years old now, was born in Belgium. Her oldest son married in Belgium 4 years ago at the age of 19 and already has a son as well. By lack of financial means, the young couple and their little son were forced to stay and live in the house of Z. Z's grandson only speaks Roma, no Dutch (yet), except for the word 'auto' (car).

Z. was completely non-literate; she never went to school as a child, because her father had decided that only the boys could go to school. She always thought of that as really awful. Z. is convinced that a child of three years of age is too young to learn another language. At the same time, she claims that now it is very hard for her to learn how to read and write because she is too old.

The very first time she went to Dutch class, she thought she would never be able to do this, that she would never be able to learn how to read and write. She likes to learn rather in small groups than in a class with a lot of other people, because the other mothers always talk in Arabic. When that happens, she cannot really focus. She also believes that reading is much harder than writing. She is much better at writing, but she really wants to learn to read and write. She told us that she was so glad when she discovered that she was able to read the word 'fish' on the window

of the fish shop. 'Of course, 'fish' for a fish shop.' Another thing she mentioned was that she was so glad that the teacher told her and the other mothers in one of the classes that they make sweaters from plastic bottles. She said: 'nobody ever told me that before. If I had known ...' On the other hand, she thinks that in Belgium, people spend so much time going to school, at least ten years, and that is too much. If she could choose, Z. would go back to Kosovo. Her mother lives in Pristina. It has become so beautiful. It is like 'little Paris'.

Mother 2: R. is a Roma from Kosovo as well. She has 7 children. Three of them go to a school for special needs. Two of them suffer from a chronic kidney disease. Therefore they spend a lot of hours at the local hospital.

R. has an incredibly good memory. She told us for example during the interviews that she only needs a recipe the first time she cooks something new, but the next time, she just knows it by heart. Learning by doing is her habitual way of learning. For example, she wanted to tile the wall in the living room once. She just did it without anyone telling her how to, nobody ever needed to 'teach' her to do it. Her brothers and sisters went to school in Kosovo, but she never did, because as the oldest one in the family, she had to help at home. She did not mind, did not regret it. She told us the following: 'there is no real difference between me and my siblings; they just know how to read and write, that's all'. When she just started with Dutch class, she thought she would only have to go there once and then afterwards she would manage to read and write on her own. Learning for R. is a term that is especially related to learning in a formal setting. All the rest is just 'doing'.

Mother 3: M. belongs to the Kurdish minority in the north of Iraq. She married her nephew at the age of 16. Together they have six children. Her husband fled Iraq 6 years before her. During that time she had to raise her children on her own. A lot of her family members are still a member of the Kurdish army and are still fighting in the conflict area.

M. was completely non-literate when she entered the program. Nevertheless, she thinks it is really important to talk a lot with your children, one-to-one or all together. She wants them to know what is right and what is wrong. She wants them to express what they think but not just like that. M.'s daughter said that before her mother started to participate in the program, she rarely left the house. Now, she can manage going to the doctor or the shop on her own. However, in the beginning, M. thought she would not be able to learn; now she realizes she can. Although, because of problems at home, with the children, the war in Kurdistan, sometimes, there is not enough space left in her head for learning. According to her, learning is easier in a small group of mothers. Some of the mothers are talking too much. It should be quiet in the classroom. Even if the other mothers would stop coming to the course, she would still come, because she really wants to learn. In Kurdistan, children only go to school from the age of six or seven. Young children learn from other children or other people in the streets, not from a teacher. For young children it is easier to learn. Therefore it is a pity that there is no school for very young children in Kurdistan. Besides, the youngest child in the family learns from all the other family members. Her son said: 'Kurdish, of course, that's our mother tongue, so we learned it from our family'.

Mother 4: B. also belongs to the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq. She fled with her husband when her first child was born. Her second son was born in Belgium

and is now four years old. She entered the program when she had just arrived in Belgium. M. and another mother introduced her to the program.

When B. joined the group, she was very shy and silent. During the interview she said she really loves school. She loves the idea that all the mothers come and learn together as a group. She thinks it is better to learn at school than at home. Her father was a teacher in Iraq. And still he did not send her to school, while he must have known how important that is. She is still very angry about that. B. is also glad that she took A., her youngest son, with her to the course. When he first went to kindergarten, the teacher immediately asked her if A. had been to daycare. The teacher was surprised that he had already learned so many things: holding a pencil, playing with other kids, or sitting on his chair.

Mother 5: F. Joined the program immediately after arriving in Belgium. She comes from a town in the south of Iraq. She has never been to school in Iraq and was completely non-literate. As soon as the war started, the girls were the first to be refused to go to school.

F. said she is glad that she can go to the course, although she would like A. (her baby) to go to daycare rather than take him with her to the course. She even asked herself: 'What would I have become in Tienen, if this group had not existed?' She said she learned the most when the teacher came to her house when A. was still a baby. A. talks a lot. He learned a lot of words in Dutch from his sister, words like 'stop' 'hello' 'high five'. Maybe A. will be a professor, who knows. However, F. thinks it is more important for A. to be able to walk at the age of one than to be able to talk. In Iraq, if a child is not able to walk at one year and two months, they give it an injection. F. also told us she likes to read books with a lot of pictures. She doesn't like books with small letters because she cannot read them.

Mother 6: S. comes from the south of Iraq. She went to school until she was nine years old. She joined the program the first week she arrived in Tienen: in the Iraq refugee community in Belgium, women of a family already living in Belgium have the obligation to invite the wife of a newly arrived family to their homes and introduced them to society. S. had four children upon arrival in Tienen. In the course of the program, she gave birth to twins. In the first years of the program they lived in very poor housing conditions.

S. was really sad when her father told her she could not go to school anymore when she was nine. Therefore, she is glad that in Belgium, children have to go to school.

S. wants to learn to talk and write in Dutch. According to her, when you arrive in a new country, you have to learn the language. Even if you are not sure you can stay in the end. At least, you learned something. However, when you are still unsure about your situation, and afraid if you can stay or not, learning the language is not so easy. S. believes that you have to repeat what you learned, try to speak in Dutch as much as possible. Otherwise what you learned "flies away". She also thinks that learning together with a lot of people is good: you see what others already learned and that motivates you to learn as well. Somewhat later during the interview, she told us that she thinks learning in small groups is better. Anyway, by going to the course, she is not afraid anymore to go to the shop. Going to the doctor is still difficult.

6. DISCUSSION: A SURPRISING KALEIDOSCOPE OF VIEWS ON (SECOND) LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACQUISITION

Even if the mothers were not able to answer all of the questions directly, they provided us with a lot of statements that can be related to a more collective socialization context and the non-formal learning situations that they participated in when in their native country.

Examples include mother B., who loves the idea that all the mothers come and learn together as a group. Mother F., who claims she learned the most when the teacher came to her house when A. was still a baby. Mother B. brought up that her baby learned a lot just by bringing him along to the meetings.

On the other hand, some of their statements show a shift towards the appreciation of more Western standards of formal schooling. Statements like 'It is a pity that there is no school for very young children in Kurdistan' or 'My father knew how important school was, and yet he did not send me to school' reveal that the mothers are influenced by the way Western society values formal schooling.

Furthermore, learning Dutch is typically associated with a Western-style formal setting; most of the mothers indicated it as something only adults or bigger children are able to do. The utterance of mother Z. illustrates it: 'My grandson [aged three], he is too young to learn another language.'

Within the interviews, mothers shifted from one view to the other, thus sometimes expressing contradictory feelings about their preferred conditions of learning, like mother S.

However, the outcome of the in-depth interviews clearly indicates that these LESLLA learners are capable of reasoning and talking about learning processes, in contrast with the findings of earlier research conducted in the Netherlands (Lunenburg & Volman, 1999) and Flanders (Plichart, 2003): They think learning would be better in small groups, or the other way around; they think it is easier for younger children to learn in a formal instructional setting than it is for them, and learning to speak, write and read Dutch makes them feel more confident.

7. CONCLUSIONS

We are convinced that our small-scale study confirms that LESLLA-learners are able to reflect on their learning process, thereby contradicting general teacher beliefs on non-literate learners. Therefore interaction and negotiation of these issues with the learners should take an important place in the learning program for LESLLA-learners. Ingredients we believe in are asking learners feedback after an incident observed, talking with the learners in the classroom, asking about their perceptions on (second) language and literacy learning, about their aspirations and motivations. Use of their mother tongue is indispensable in this case in our opinion.

The analysis of our in-depth interviews with originally non-literate or very low-educated mothers shows that these new learners are navigating between old and new perceptions of learning. However, we can conclude from the results of our small-scale study that the framework described in the background section above could be a useful tool for new teachers to make them aware of possible differences between their beliefs and perceptions about learning on the one hand and the ones of non-literate or very low educated adult second language learners who enter their classroom on the other

hand. We do not claim that the model we presented in this contribution is complete, but it can be a starting point.

Teachers should be careful not to interpret a particular behavior of a LESLLA learner automatically from their own framework, but they should be supported in looking for ways to make this issue an integral part of the learning process.

Furthermore, the results of our study show that each learner is an individual with her own views on learning that cannot be brought back to the country of origin, ethnicity, religion, or years of schooling. Teachers have to be trained so as not to think about LESLLA learners as a homogeneous group holding identical views on learning.

We realize our small-scale study does only cover a very specific aspect of the very complex process of language learning that uneducated or very low educated adult learners and their teachers go through. Yet we emphasize the importance of giving the learners themselves a voice in a research area of which the social relevance is in itself already underestimated. We hope that our workshop at the LESLLA conference in Granada and its proceedings will in one way or another contribute to a more comprehensive teacher training for LESLLA teachers.

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READING STRATEGIES OF L2 SPANISH BASIC USERS WITH
AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND
ESTRATEGIAS DE LECTURA EN USUARIAS BÁSICAS DE ELE
DE ORIGEN INMIGRANTE

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ABSTRACT: This article analyses the reading strategies used by three immigrant L2 Spanish learners in their everyday reading in Spanish. A pre-test was utilised to gauge the students' reading competence, and data regarding the representative everyday text genres as well as reading strategies were collected by using specific tools for this research context. The results justified the classification of the strategies in four groups, according to the learners' level of skill, which would be used in the future to implement a reading strategy training. Furthermore, striking differences were observed among the students' performance, which suggested the necessity of restructuring the group, although the lack of resources in this educational context would impede that solution. This fact reflected a common dilemma within L2 teaching to immigrants.

RESUMEN: Este artículo analiza las estrategias de lectura que empleaban tres alumnas inmigrantes de español como lengua extranjera (ELE), al leer textos de su vida cotidiana en español. Mediante un pre-test se estableció su nivel de comprensión lectora, y los datos relativos a los géneros textuales representativos de los contextos reales en los que se desenvolvían las aprendientes, así como a las estrategias que empleaban cuando leían dichos textos, se recogieron mediante herramientas creadas para este contexto. Los resultados permitieron clasificar las estrategias en cuatro grupos en función de su dominio, lo que permitiría en un futuro implementar un entrenamiento en estrategias de lectura. Se observaron además diferencias notables entre los resultados de las informan-

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tes, lo que haría recomendable reestructurar el grupo meta, aunque la falta de recursos en este contexto educativo impidió dicha alternativa. Ello reflejó un problema habitual que encuentra la docencia de segundas lenguas a inmigrantes.

KEYWORDS: reading comprehension, Spanish L2, immigration, strategies, text genres

PALABRAS CLAVE: comprensión lectora, ELE, inmigración, estrategias, géneros textuales

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

¿Qué podemos hacer, desde nuestra posición de docentes, cuando nuestros alumnos experimentan problemas para comprender los textos escritos? Una de las respuestas más habituales a esta pregunta, en los diversos ámbitos en los que se puede dar, es que podemos ayudarles a ser unos lectores más *estratégicos*, mediante el empleo de las estrategias adecuadas, definidas aquí como procedimientos conscientes que el lector es capaz de activar para superar los diversos obstáculos que aparecen en la lectura. De hecho, cuando hablamos de estrategias *adecuadas* queremos recalcar que no existe un modelo estratégico efectivo a priori, sino que debemos estudiar las características de cada tipo de una manera individualizada y decidir qué estrategias son las más apropiadas en su caso.

El recurso a las estrategias de lectura como medio de ampliación de la competencia lectora se apoya en una serie de conceptos que conviene definir brevemente, el primero de los cuales es la comprensión lectora, entendida como una de las destrezas o habilidades lingüísticas contempladas en el enfoque comunicativo de la enseñanza de lenguas (Mayor Sánchez, 2004: 45). Consideramos, de acuerdo con este enfoque, que la lectura no consiste meramente en la decodificación del texto escrito, sino que abarca múltiples dimensiones y trasciende el binomio *decodificación-significado*, hasta el punto de alcanzar los conceptos de *interpretación* y *sentido* (Acquaroni Muñoz, 2004: 944). Por otra parte, muchos autores conciben la destreza lectora como una dicotomía entre *proceso* y *producto*, es decir, entre lo que sucede en la mente del lector mientras lee y el resultado final de la lectura. Ambas vertientes pueden observarse y enseñarse de maneras relativamente independientes. A pesar de que el enfoque comunicativo ha querido acentuar la importancia del proceso en sus inicios, en los últimos años se ha recuperado el interés por el producto, gracias, entre otros factores, a las dificultades intrínsecas a la medición de los procesos cognitivos de la lectura.

Cabe igualmente mencionar los modelos explicativos de dichos procesos de lectura, en particular el *modelo ascendente*, según el cual el lector es un mero decodificador de signos mediante una secuencia serial o modular, desde signos aislados a otros elementos cada vez más amplios (Mayor Sánchez, 2000: 7), o el *modelo descendente*, que propone igualmente una secuencia serial, pero inversa, desde los conocimientos que el lector posee, hacia elementos cada vez más simples del texto. Ambos modelos comparten su carácter unidireccional, y se diferencian en la importancia que conceden, respectivamente, a la decodificación o a la interpretación (Acquaroni Muñoz, 2004: 947). Una serie de circunstancias, como la aparición de la *teoría de los esquemas*, o el desarrollo de la Lingüística del Texto, propició la aparición del *modelo interactivo*, adoptado en el planteamiento del presente estudio, que combina los planteamientos de los dos anteriores, dado que se considera que la lectura es un proceso paralelo —no serial—, que sigue ambas direcciones,

y que el significado se construye de una manera única en cada interacción entre un texto y un lector dados (ibídem: 947).

En cuanto a las estrategias de lectura, existe en primer lugar una confusión generalizada a la hora de definir el concepto de *estrategia*. En nuestro trabajo seguimos la postura de Martín Leralta (2007: 8) cuando sitúa las estrategias en el conocimiento procesual y las diferencia de otros conceptos como procesos, técnicas, tácticas, actividades, etc., utilizados en ocasiones sin una base teórica adecuada para su delimitación, lo que ha propiciado la aparición de clasificaciones exhaustivas de dudosa utilidad para la enseñanza (ibídem: 9). En nuestro planteamiento aceptamos los requisitos que utilizan Wenden y Rubin (1987: 7-8), adoptados asimismo por Miñano López (2000: 27) y Zenotz Iragi (2009: 59) para delimitar las estrategias:

- Son actuaciones específicas, y no rasgos del alumno.
- Pueden ser observables desde el exterior o no.
- Son desarrolladas y empleadas como respuesta a un problema o necesidad de la comunicación.
- Pueden contribuir al aprendizaje de una lengua, tanto de manera directa como indirecta.
- Pueden ser empleadas de forma consciente, o bien ser automatizadas y mantenidas por debajo de la consciencia.
- Son procesos que pueden ser modificados, suprimidos o adquiridos en un momento dado.

El último de estos requisitos admite la posibilidad de que las estrategias sean aprendidas, y por lo tanto enseñadas, postura que nosotros defendemos frente a los autores que niegan esta posibilidad. Cuando nos referimos a las estrategias de lectura en particular, aparece una problemática derivada de la dificultad para observar y registrar la actuación del lector, en consonancia con el segundo de los requisitos anteriores. En efecto, una gran parte de las estrategias de lectura no se pueden observar, lo que creemos que realza la importancia de creer en su carácter consciente y en la posibilidad de medirlas y describirlas.

Otra cuestión destacada que afecta a las estrategias de lectura es el papel que en ellas juega la metacognición, esto es, la capacidad de un individuo para observar de forma consciente sus propios procesos lectores. Mokhtari y Reichard (2002) sostienen que los individuos que poseen un bajo nivel de comprensión lectora no son conscientes de su uso de estrategias para monitorizar la comprensión del texto o el propio uso de estrategias. Este principio nos condujo, en las circunstancias de la presente investigación, a encontrar una clasificación de estrategias de lectura particular, inspirada en el criterio triple establecido por Mokhtari y Reichard (2002), un referente internacional en este campo, con tres categorías: *estrategias globales*; *estrategias de resolución de problemas*; *estrategias de apoyo*. Se realizaron modificaciones en él para encontrar un criterio propio, más simplificado, con solamente dos categorías:

- *Estrategias de prevención*: activadas a priori, antes de encontrar un obstáculo concreto en el texto, para amortiguar su impacto cuando aparezca (por ejemplo, intentar adivinar lo que se va a leer a continuación).
- *Estrategias de resolución*: activadas como respuesta a un problema concreto que ha aparecido (por ejemplo, leer en alto un pasaje que no se comprende).

Por otra parte, habida cuenta de que el estudio que aquí presentamos aborda la enseñanza de segundas lenguas a aprendientes inmigrantes, es necesario delimitar el concepto de *inmigrante* establecido aquí, ya que se trata de un término ambiguo que puede designar a una gran variedad de individuos. En este caso hemos considerado que la categoría de inmigrante se aplica a nuestras alumnas en cuanto que individuos adultos con un bajo nivel de cualificación, que llegan a España para formar parte del mercado secundario de trabajo, es decir, para ocuparse de empleos relativamente precarios o de escasa consideración social. La necesidad de gestionar trámites jurídicos, administrativos o laborales, y otras transacciones cotidianas, obliga a los inmigrantes a enfrentarse a textos escritos en español, lo que crea la necesidad de encontrar una manera adecuada de potenciar su comprensión lectora en el aula de español. Se da la paradoja de que, aunque la enseñanza de español a inmigrantes es una necesidad social de primer orden, tiene un coste que estos alumnos generalmente no se pueden permitir. Por ello, se suele contar con la aportación voluntaria de profesores y de organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro, lo que sin embargo no justifica que esta enseñanza derive en procedimientos alejados de las tendencias docentes actuales (Villalba Martínez y Hernández García, 2005).

Al mismo tiempo, cabe considerar las necesidades particulares de lectura que puede tener la población inmigrante en España, y en concreto los tipos de géneros textuales que deben leer para la realización de las actividades cotidianas mencionadas más arriba. El género es un factor que determina en gran medida la comprensión de un texto, sea escrito u oral, y lo hace tanto desde el punto de vista del lector como del texto: para el lector, el hecho de conocer previamente la organización del discurso, la manera en la que se distribuye la información, o cómo se marcan los cambios de contenido dentro de él, supone una notable ayuda para la comprensión (Alderson, 2000: 39-40). Pero además existe un aspecto de especial relevancia para la presente investigación, y es que cada género textual suele leerse con unos propósitos de lectura específicos, lo que obliga a considerar que las estrategias de lectura dependen en gran medida del tipo de actividad lectora o de tarea a realizar (Martín Leralta, 2007: 24-25). Desde el punto de vista del propio texto, se considera que ciertos géneros conllevan una mayor dificultad intrínseca que otros, en función de la diversidad o complejidad de sus características formales y de sus contenidos (Alderson, 2000: 64).

El objetivo general del presente estudio era analizar las estrategias de lectura que empleaban las alumnas de origen inmigrante en un curso de español como segunda lengua cuando se enfrentaban a la lectura de textos similares a los que deben leer en sus vidas cotidianas. Ese análisis permitiría formular un diagnóstico inicial para llevar a cabo posteriormente la implementación de un entrenamiento en estrategias de lectura, con el fin de subsanar las deficiencias lectoras halladas.

2. METODOLOGÍA

2.1. INFORMANTES Y DISEÑO

Las participantes del estudio eran tres mujeres — A, B y C— inmigrantes, con un bajo nivel de formación académica, adultas y de nacionalidad marroquí, que habían vivido en España entre cinco y diez años y aprendían español como segunda lengua dentro de un grupo de *Español para la integración* perteneciente a la asociación Cáritas Diocesana de

Lugo. A lo largo de las clases previas se había detectado que estas alumnas poseían una notable fluidez en el español oral, y podían comunicarse sin problemas tanto dentro como fuera del aula, a pesar de los errores gramaticales que existían en su expresión, pero sin embargo experimentaban claros problemas a la hora de enfrentarse a textos escritos de carácter cotidiano, desde documentos administrativos de cierta complejidad formal a otros géneros textuales considerablemente más sencillos. Además, se había observado que la dificultad para afrontar la lectura en español producía reacciones afectivas pronunciadas, y se había percibido en ciertas ocasiones frustración y ansiedad durante las clases. Con el fin de subsanar estos problemas se puso en marcha el presente proyecto de investigación.

Se trataba de un estudio observacional, descriptivo, exploratorio, en el que consideramos dos variables: los géneros textuales en español que las informantes leían de manera cotidiana, y los tipos de estrategias que empleaban durante la lectura de dichos géneros. Las preguntas de investigación que sirvieron como punto de referencia para guiar el desarrollo del proyecto fueron las siguientes:

- ¿Cuáles son los géneros textuales en español que las alumnas leen con mayor frecuencia?
- ¿Qué estrategias emplean para solucionar los problemas que existen en la lectura de los textos en cuestión?
- ¿En qué medida ayudan las estrategias a solucionar los problemas y alcanzar una comprensión suficiente del texto²?

Dado que existía un vacío considerable en el campo de las estrategias de lectura en aprendientes inmigrantes de segundas lenguas, consideramos necesario desarrollar en este proyecto una metodología específica y unas herramientas específicas, a partir de aquellas que otros investigadores habían empleado previamente en otros contextos.

2.2. RECOGIDA DE DATOS

En la primera etapa del estudio se realizó una prueba de nivel, a modo de pre-test, consistente en un examen LETRA³ (ver figura 1). A pesar de que el nivel del grupo había sido estimado por el profesor en un A2, de manera aproximada, esta prueba indicó que el nivel de la informante B se encontraba marcadamente por debajo del umbral A2-n que constituye el criterio de superación de este examen⁴. Es más, la diferencia de nivel observada entre la citada informante y sus compañeras pareció demasiado grande como para mantener la homogeneidad en el grupo, lo que constituía un requisito deseable de la investigación, por lo que se barajó la posibilidad de reubicar a esta informante en un grupo diferente.

2. En el trabajo se define comprensión suficiente como *un grado aceptable y verosímil de comprensión del texto*.

3. Correspondiente al Diploma de Lengua Española para Trabajadores Inmigrantes, diseñado por el Grupo de Investigación en Lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza del español de la Universidad Nebrija.

4. El nivel A2-n combina ciertos descriptores del nivel europeo A2 con otros propios de un nivel A1, relativos a la corrección gramatical.

TAREA 2	2	•	•	•
	3	•	•	•
	4	•		•
	5	•		•
TAREA 3	1	•		
	2	•	•	•
TAREA 4	3			
TAREA 4	1			•
TOTAL (/16)		11	5	12
NOTA (sobre 10)		<u>5.95</u>	<u>2.6</u>	<u>7.2</u>

Figura 1: Prueba de nivel (examen LETRA).

Sin embargo, en nuestro contexto educativo, en el que se impartía una enseñanza sin ánimo de lucro, basada en un profesorado voluntario y con una carencia notable de recursos, no era posible modificar los grupos preexistentes, por lo que no se pudo encontrar un grupo más apropiado para la informante B y el estudio tuvo que continuar tal como estaba previsto. El único aspecto de la investigación que se modificó a raíz del resultado de la prueba de nivel fue que, en lugar de referirse a las alumnas como *aprendientes de nivel A2* en el proyecto, se emplearía a partir de aquí la denominación de *usuarias básicas de español*, término general con el que el MCER designa a los niveles A1 y A2 (Consejo de Europa, 2002: 25-26).

La segunda etapa de la investigación consistió en la recogida de los datos relativos a la variable *géneros textuales*. Mediante una entrevista se registró en el diario del profesor qué géneros reconocían leer habitualmente las informantes, para lo que se empleó una lista elaborada previamente por el investigador y ampliada por las propias alumnas a lo largo de la entrevista. Entre dichos géneros se podía encontrar, entre otros, documentos administrativos, facturas, informes médicos y folletos publicitarios. Se consideraron como valores para esta variable todos aquellos géneros reconocidos por al menos una de las informantes (ver figura 2).

Género textual		Reconocido por
1	Altas y bajas mensuales en la Seguridad Social	3
2	Factura de una tienda de electrodomésticos	3
3	Resolución de la Agencia Tributaria	3
4	Declaración de la Renta	3
5	Informe médico de Urgencias	3
6	Historia de Vida Laboral	3
7	Folleto publicitario de un supermercado	3
8	Contrato de alquiler de un piso	3
9	Subtítulos en español de películas y otros programas	3
10	Sitios web: redes sociales, portales de segunda mano	3

Figura 2: Géneros textuales.

Llegados a este punto tendría lugar la siguiente fase del estudio, la recogida de datos relativos a la variable *estrategias de lectura*. Tal como se ha indicado, sería conveniente emplear unas herramientas adecuadas a nuestro contexto específico de investigación, debido al vacío existente en este campo, lo que condujo al diseño de dos herramientas: el *cuestionario de estrategias de lectura para aprendientes inmigrantes* (CELAI) y las *preguntas de elicitación/introspección* (PEI). Ambas se inspiraron en el cuestionario MARSÍ, creado por Mokhtari y Reichard (2002), que es un referente internacional en el campo de las estrategias de lectura, pero que sin embargo fue concebido para aprendientes de lenguas extranjeras en contextos universitarios y no se consideraba pertinente su uso aquí.

El CELAI consistía en una serie de enunciados referidos a estrategias de lectura — por ejemplo, *uso diccionarios para entender lo que leo*— que incluían una escala de 5 respuestas para conocer la frecuencia con la que las informantes empleaban dicha estrategia, entre *nunca* y *siempre*. En su versión final se añadió una respuesta adicional, *no sé*, con el fin de detectar problemas en el uso de la herramienta. Los 29 ítems de los que constaba finalmente el CELAI sirvieron para establecer los valores considerados en el estudio para la variable *estrategias de lectura*. Cabe señalar que este cuestionario era una herramienta de *reportaje* de estrategias, ya que las informantes declaraban en ella el grado de uso de cada estrategia según su criterio subjetivo. Las PEI por su parte consistían en grupos de preguntas referidas a diversos textos que las informantes debían leer previamente. Con las preguntas se intentaba observar las estrategias recogidas en el CELAI, aunque de un modo alternativo: mediante la *elicitación*, con preguntas que trataban de provocar el empleo de una estrategia determinada, que podría ser observada en el análisis de la respuesta correspondiente; o bien mediante la *introspección*, la reflexión consciente del informante acerca de los procesos mentales que acaba de experimentar, en los casos en los que la elicitación no fuera viable. Se esperaba por lo tanto que los datos del CELAI y las PEI, obtenidos mediante procedimientos diferenciados, se complementasen entre sí y facilitasen una perspectiva relativamente amplia del

fenómeno estudiado, las estrategias de lectura. Una vez diseñadas ambas herramientas, se procedió igualmente en esta fase del proyecto su validación, mediante un pilotaje con informantes de características similares a las de la muestra, lo que permitiría modificar aquellos ítems que resultaran problemáticos, antes de exponer la herramienta a la recogida de datos en el propio estudio.

3. RESULTADOS Y DISCUSIÓN

Una vez recogidos los datos, pretendíamos analizar qué tipos de estrategias eran capaces de emplear las informantes, para responder a la segunda pregunta de investigación, de manera que se compararon los resultados del CELAI con los de las PEI. En esta comparativa se prestó atención especialmente a aquellos ítems del cuestionario que se consideraban *potencialmente observables*, esto es, los que aparecían a priori, en cada una de las PEI, como objetivos a observar⁵ (ver figura 3). Se apreciaron claros desajustes entre ambas fuentes, ya que las estrategias reportadas con una mayor frecuencia en el CELAI no se correspondían con aquellas que resultaron más observadas en las PEI. Además, seis de las diecisiete estrategias potencialmente observables no se llegaron a observar en ningún caso. Dado que la no observación de una estrategia dentro de una tarea concreta no implica que las informantes no sean capaces de emplear dicha estrategia en otras situaciones, pareció conveniente considerar que estos desajustes se debieron a un diseño inadecuado de las PEI o bien a un número insuficiente de las mismas.

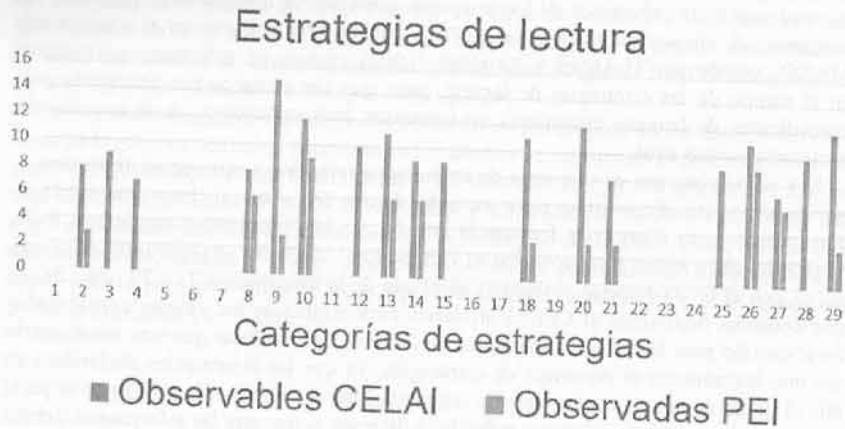


Figura 3: Análisis comparativo de estrategias (CELAI/PEI).

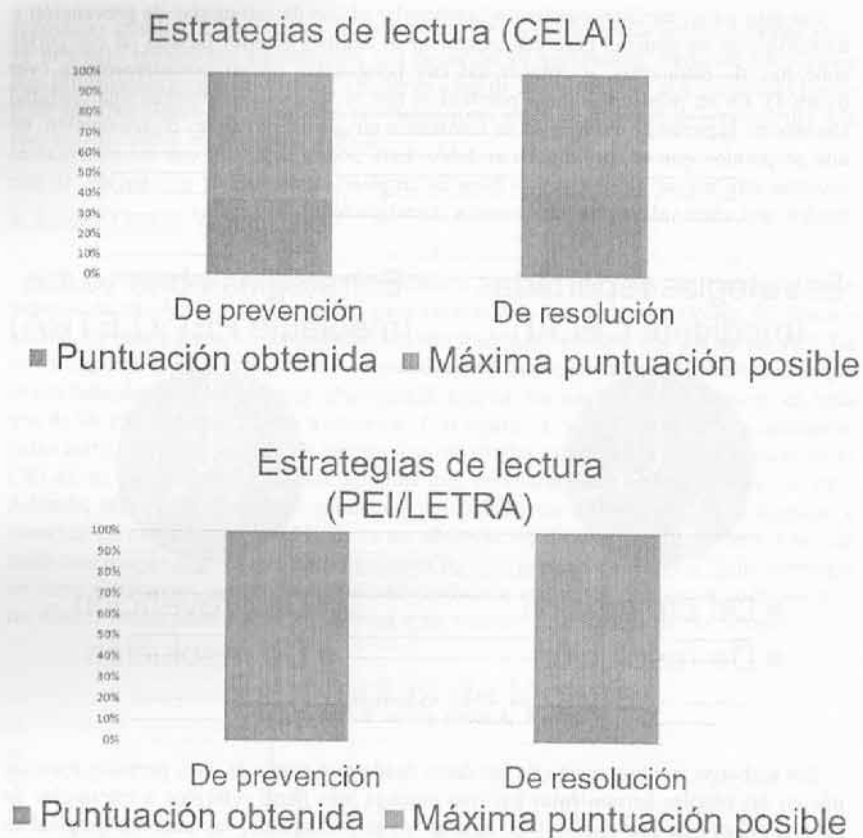
5. A estos ítems potencialmente observables se añade la estrategia 14, que fue observada paralelamente en el examen LETRA realizado en la prueba de nivel, como se recoge en la memoria del proyecto.

Por otra parte, también queríamos contemplar el uso de estrategias de prevención y de resolución en general, para complementar el análisis anterior basado en categorías concretas de estrategias, y obtener así una perspectiva global complementaria (ver figura 4). En un primer momento percibimos que las alumnas empleaban una cantidad claramente superior de estrategias de resolución en detrimento de las de prevención, en una proporción que se aproximaba al doble. Esto podría significar que las informantes tuvieran una mayor dificultad a la hora de emplear estrategias de prevención, lo que tendría una clara relevancia para nuestra investigación.



Figura 4: Análisis global de estrategias.

Sin embargo, la observación de los datos desde otro punto de vista permitió apreciar que en las propias herramientas existían muchos más ítems referidos a estrategias de resolución que de prevención (ver figuras 5 y 6). Asimismo, las alumnas empleaban porcentajes muy similares de estrategias de prevención y de resolución cuando se comparaban las puntuaciones con las máximas posibles en cada herramienta: en el CELAI se obtenía en torno a un 40% en ambas, y en las PEI en torno a un 20%. Estos datos nos permitieron concluir que, en general, no existía una desigualdad perceptible en cuanto a la capacidad de las alumnas para emplear uno u otro tipo de estrategias.



Figuras 5 y 6: Porcentajes de empleo de estrategias en cada herramienta.

Finalmente, a partir de los resultados obtenidos mediante el CELAI, las PEI y el examen LETRA⁶, se crearon cuatro grupos de estrategias según su grado de dominio (ver figura 7). En primer lugar, se dividieron las estrategias en función de su posición por encima o por debajo de la puntuación media obtenida en el CELAI, y los dos grupos resultantes se subdividieron, a su vez, en función de los resultados obtenidos en las PEI. De este modo, cada estrategia pasó a encuadrarse en uno de los cuatro grupos, A-D, que tendrían un orden descendente de prioridad a la hora de diseñar el entrenamiento estratégico subsiguiente.

6. Aunque el examen LETRA se había concebido en un principio únicamente como un pre-test, se empleó posteriormente como una herramienta de elicitación, ya que los resultados de sus ítems permitían observar el uso de algunas estrategias.

Un hecho relevante en este punto fue que el bajo nivel observado en los resultados de la informante B en las PEI provocó la inclusión de una gran mayoría de estrategias en los primeros grupos, es decir, los menos dominados por las alumnas. De hecho, en el grupo D solo se incluyó finalmente una estrategia, la correspondiente al ítem 26 del CELAI. Ello reflejó una vez más cómo la heterogeneidad impuesta en este grupo meta afectaba a las decisiones tomadas en la investigación.

¿CÓMO DOMINAN CADA ESTRATEGIA?



Figura 7: Agrupación de estrategias en función del dominio observado.

Por otro lado, para hallar una respuesta a la tercera pregunta de investigación, es decir, para determinar en qué medida les ayudaban esas estrategias a comprender, se analizaron los resultados de las PEI y del examen LETRA, ya que durante la recogida de datos se había marcado con un color distintivo aquellas estrategias que, aunque habían sido empleadas por las informantes, no conducían a la resolución de la tarea correspondiente. Se obtuvo una respuesta satisfactoria para casi todos los ítems, excepto para el 10 y el 13. Dado que la estrategia 13 ya se encontraba entre las menos dominadas por el grupo meta, esto es, en el grupo A, la única decisión que se tomó en este punto fue la de incluir la estrategia 10 en el grupo C y no en el D, para que recibiese una mayor atención en el entrenamiento estratégico que se pretendía implementar con posterioridad a este estudio.

4. CONCLUSIONES

Los resultados expuestos y analizados permitieron cumplir con los objetivos específicos establecidos y se pudo formular el diagnóstico que constituía el objetivo general del estudio, lo que nos permitiría perseguir en un futuro la finalidad del proyecto, mediante la implementación de un entrenamiento en estrategias de lectura para aumentar la competencia lectora del grupo meta. Por otra parte, el predominio observado de las estrategias de resolución frente a las de prevención no pareció tener relación con la

capacidad de las informantes para emplear cada tipo de estrategias, sino más bien con la mayor presencia de estrategias de resolución en las herramientas, lo que podría sugerir una mayor importancia de ese tipo de estrategias en el presente contexto de lectura y nivel lingüístico.

Se ha puesto de manifiesto cómo las características del contexto educativo, el aula de español para inmigrantes con un bajo nivel formativo, influyeron en la interpretación de los resultados. El hecho de que una de las alumnas presentase un nivel de competencia en la lengua objeto notablemente inferior a la de sus compañeras no motivó la reubicación de dicha alumna en un grupo diferente, lo que probablemente sí habría sucedido en otros contextos. Aparte de esta diferencia de nivel, y probablemente como consecuencia de la misma, se encontró una gran desigualdad entre la actuación de esta misma alumna y sus compañeras en las PEI. Estas diferencias obligaron a incluir un número elevado de ítems entre los grupos de estrategias menos dominadas, y por tanto más prioritarias para el entrenamiento posterior, lo que impediría la concentración de recursos didácticos en un número menor de estrategias. En definitiva, la necesidad de que los inmigrantes aprendan el español para su integración, unida a la falta de recursos que caracteriza este tipo de enseñanza, obligó, como sucede en numerosas ocasiones, a adaptarse a una situación educativa impuesta.

En relación con las limitaciones del estudio, cabe señalar la posible interferencia de la afectividad en los resultados obtenidos para la informante B. Su puntuación en las PEI fue considerablemente más baja que las de sus compañeras, algo en cierto modo esperable dado que ya había sucedido en la prueba de nivel. Sin embargo, llamó la atención que sus resultados en el CELAI no reflejaran esas diferencias. Al margen de la posibilidad de que la alumna alterase su reportaje de empleo de estrategias en el CELAI para reflejar una competencia estratégica superior a la real, cabe pensar que las bajas puntuaciones en las PEI y en la prueba de nivel podrían deberse a reacciones afectivas de la informante ante estas pruebas⁷, aunque el replanteamiento del estudio de cara a considerar la afectividad como una nueva variable no estaba dentro de las posibilidades de este proyecto. Asimismo, las notables diferencias de nivel detectadas entre la informante B y sus compañeras pudieron constituir otra variable interviniente impuesta por el contexto, como se ha mencionado. Otra limitación destacable fue la falta de recursos disponibles para la validación de las herramientas diseñadas para la ocasión, tanto el CELAI como las preguntas. Es probable que con un mayor número de participantes en el pilotaje de las PEI se hubiera observado un mayor número de estrategias, y convendría igualmente revisar las modificaciones resultantes de los pilotajes, como los ítems añadidos a las PEI, en cuyas respuestas se observaron algunas incoherencias. También sería conveniente disponer de un mayor número de respuestas y comentarios acerca del CELAI, de cara a aumentar la validez y fiabilidad de la herramienta.

Entre las aportaciones que puede presentar este trabajo, podemos mencionar dos referidas a la ausencia de trabajos sobre estrategias de lectura en aprendientes inmigrantes con escasa formación: en primer lugar, el diseño y la validación de unas herramientas

⁷ Algunas observaciones registradas en el diario del profesor apoyan esta idea: la informante parecía bloqueada en ocasiones e hizo comentarios como *es demasiado nivel para lo que quiere aprender, llegamos aquí mayores y esto son cosas para nativos, no para nosotras*.

de toma de datos adaptadas a las características de nuestro contexto de investigación, que podrían ser reutilizadas y readaptadas a los contextos de proyectos similares; en segundo lugar, dado que se ha arrojado luz sobre un área de estudio poco considerada hasta el momento, pretendemos que el proyecto haya comunicado un componente motivacional y que pueda funcionar como un estímulo para quien se plantee ampliar el conocimiento disponible en este campo. De esta manera, esperamos que el presente trabajo cumpla un deseo expresado en el Manifiesto de Santander (Villalba Martínez y Hernández García, 2005).

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PHONOLOGICAL FLUENCY AMONGST ADOLESCENT LOW LITERACY
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT: There is a long-standing belief that teaching vocabulary in semantic sets to second language learners aids later language acquisition. This paper reports a study of how adolescents with English as an Other Language with low levels of literacy in English organise words. 45 young learners aged 16-19 from an inner-city further education college participated in the study: 15 ESOL low literacy learners, 15 ESOL learners and 15 as a non-ESOL control group. They were tested on phonological verbal fluency tasks and, contrary to expectations, the ESOL group with literacy needs outperformed the ESOL group. This suggests that effortful learning of letters and sounds may produce deeper processing. On the other hand, there was evidence of semantic interference in output, suggesting learning words in semantic sets might not always be optimal for learners with low literacy.

KEYWORDS: EAL; literacy; adolescent verbal fluency

1. INTRODUCTION

Learners who are able to decode alphabetic scripts differ from those with low levels of literacy, not just in phonological awareness but also in phonological processing; speech perception and listening strategies may be more challenging for the latter (Morais et al., 1989; Reis & Castro-Caldas, 1997). Cultural, economic and educational factors influence performance in phonological fluency tasks, as do differences in access to implicit and

1. I would like to thank Chloë Marshall, UCL- Institute of Education, London, for originally suggesting this study and advice on conducting the verbal fluency tasks.

explicit learning strategies (Rosselli et al., 2009; Reis & Castro-Caldas, 1997). Drawing on Craik & Lockhart's levels of processing in linking new words in second language acquisition and cognitive processes, Ellis and Beaton (1993) argue that implicit and explicit mechanisms for vocabulary acquisition are applied by second language learners. These include implicit recognition of words, which involves identifying their perceptual aspects as sound and logographic features, the explicit frequency of exposure to words and the development of motor knowledge through practice in the reproduction of the sounds of new words. Exposure to print aids new word-learning but, when that language is in a different script or where there is a limited literacy home environment, second language acquisition becomes an even greater challenge. Learners who have literacy have already acquired metalinguistic knowledge and gained access to explicit learning, such as phonological strategies, as well as implicit learning, which may rely on semantic strategies (Tarone et al., 2009; Reis & Castro-Caldas, 1997). Learners who must also learn English using a different writing system or who have limited literacy in their own languages face the additional challenge of establishing sound-letter associations when learning new words and their spellings. If there is limited experience of formal education, they will often lack the explicit learning strategies needed for phonological processing.

This paper presents a study of verbal fluency in adolescents who are ESOL learners with low levels of literacy. Verbal fluency tasks assess phonological and semantic fluency by looking at how people are able to retrieve words from memory. They are considered measures of cognitive flexibility that reflect access to and retrieval from memory stores, and executive function, which controls inhibition and working memory. Phonemic fluency is related to executive function and is more taxing on working memory. It continues to mature through childhood and adolescence whereas semantic fluency can reach maturation by age 12 (Charchat-Fichman, et al., 2011; Koren et al., 2005). The number of words produced and speed of word output and accuracy are taken into consideration together with the ways in which a person might organise words into lexical categories and switch between categories or generate sub-categories of words. Storage of words in semantic categories has provided evidence that the mental lexicon makes use of semantic organisation, which has influenced second language vocabulary teaching that focuses on lexical or semantic sets. The teaching of vocabulary in semantic sets, it is argued, reflects the natural organisation of words in the brain making them subsequently easier to retrieve from memory (Channell, 1981; McCarthy, 1990; Grandy, 1992; Aitchison, 1996). However, there is also conflicting research that indicates that learning words in semantic sets is more taxing for learners, in particular lower level learners, and word retrieval of items takes longer (Nation, 2000; Erten and Tekin, 2008; Lázaro Ibarrola & Hidalgo Gordo, 2014; Altarriba & Mathis, 1997; Finkbeiner & Nicol, 2003).

Verbal fluency tasks have also been used in studies of bilingual and monolingual subjects to measure vocabulary across languages and determine whether bilinguals are adversely affected by competing languages and reduced word range (Bialystok et al., 2008). Performance on phonological fluency measures is typically weaker than on semantic fluency measures, which tend to reflect vocabulary size, and is also influenced by levels of education because of the links between phonological awareness and reading ability, and the ability to segment speech sounds (Charchat-Fichman et al., 2011; Morais et al., 1989; Ratcliff et al., 1998). One of the most commonly used phonological fluency tasks uses the letters F, A, and S because they are high frequency initial letters in English words and they represent easy phonemes. A difficulty with this measure is

that a focus on letters has implications for participants with literacy barriers and it may be more useful to focus on phonemes instead to allow for lower education levels of participants and to avoid interference from other letters (Koren et al., 2005; Ratcliff et al., 1998). By focusing on sound, rather than letter, it could be assumed that education levels would not have a significant effect on phonological performance.

Verbal output is not just measured by the number of words produced within a set time (typically one minute), but also by clustering and switching. Troyer et al. (1997) highlight the 'multifactorial' aspect of fluency and the operation of different brain regions in different fluency tasks evident in clustering and switching. Clustering is the production of words in temporal spurts that relate to a particular category or subcategory and are defined as two or more related words adjacent to one another, for instance, *sling, slug, slap* (initial two letters the same), or semantic, *Argentina, Antarctica*. Clusters provide an insight into how vocabulary is organised and in terms of cognitive function, involve accessing words in the memory store. Switching is the shift from a clustered word to a non-clustered word or a word from a different category for example a change in second letter: *sling-slug-slap-snow* or semantic category: *Argentina-Antarctica-apple*. In terms of cognitive function, switching involves strategic search processes and cognitive flexibility in the shift between subcategories. However, it has been suggested that single words may represent not just the absence of a cluster but also a retrieval failure - that is, the inability to locate other words within a particular category (Abwender et al., 2001).

While studies have looked at the levels of literacy and formal education on verbal fluency tasks, very few have looked at performance in another language. There is some acceptance that bilinguals may have greater cognitive flexibility, but the cognitive demands of lexical search and retrieval processes for bilingual learners has not been established because studies have tended to focus on verbal fluency in the subject's first language with a focus on adults or children.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed at answering the following research questions:

- How do EAL learners with low levels of literacy respond to phonological fluency tasks?
- How does this differ from EAL learners who already have developed literacy?
- What does this imply for the organisation of the lexicon in their additional language?

All the ESOL subjects in this study were at elementary level in English and had arrived in the United Kingdom within the previous three years (see Appendix). For some of the learners, this was their first experience of being in a formal educational setting and learning how to write. The low-literacy learners were compared with ESOL learners with established literacy skills, alongside a control group of native English speakers in order to see how they responded to verbal fluency tasks and what this might imply for organisation of the lexicon in their additional language. Participants were assessed with standard verbal fluency tests: 'F', 'A' and 'S'. The use of letters, rather than sounds, was to try and see what differences in performance in their L2 there might be between low-literacy learners who had benefited from some literacy-focused teaching and their peers.

It was expected that all the ESOL subjects would perform weakly in the phonological fluency tasks for all categories in comparison with the non-ESOL group and that the ESOL with literacy needs group would perform weakest, producing a greater number of errors for F and S. All the ESOL learners were producing words in the target language, which they would have acquired within a shorter time and so, unlike younger children learning language for the first time, were learning the speech-sounds and the semantic referents simultaneously. Because word production has been associated with the use of cognitive strategies of switching and clustering (Kosmidis et al., 2004), this study also analysed clusters and switching to try to see if any particular cognitive strategies were evident. Clusters are two or more words that appear in sequence and belong to a shared category. It was expected that the ESOL with literacy needs group would produce fewer clusters and switches than the ESOL group.

3. METHOD

Three groups of learners totalling 45, aged 16-19, from an inner-city further education college undertook phonological fluency tests. The groups were ESOL, ESOL with literacy needs (ESOL Lit) and a control group of non-ESOL students. The ESOL with literacy needs were learners who were in specialist ESOL literacy classes or who were in mainstream ESOL classes but had been identified as having literacy needs or a literacy profile by their tutors and receiving additional learner support in class. The non-ESOL group was selected on the recommendations of their tutors in order to rule out learners for whom English was not their first language or who had a recognised learning difficulty; only native English speakers or bilingual learners were chosen for this group. Of the bilingual learners, those with a native-English speaking parent and who had English as a main language in their home were selected, as were those who had another language at home but received formal education in a country where English is the *lingua franca*.

All ESOL learners were mostly recent arrivals in the UK, some within the previous six months and some unaccompanied. They were chosen according to the English language levels from their college initial and diagnostic assessments. It was necessary to accept only learners previously assessed as being at Entry Level 2 speaking and listening so that they would be able to follow instructions and understand the nature of the research project; this also aimed to address the question of variable performance when evaluating L2 output as it was not possible to control for prior learning of English for the ESOL groups (Kempster et al., 1998). All the participants in the ESOL sample reported having studied some English alongside their regular studies before arrival in the UK, and both ESOL groups had participants with uneven attendance in college due to travel to home countries, work or carer commitments. In the ESOL-only sample, 15 learners (7 male, 8 female) aged 16-19 (mean age 17.2) were selected where they had been in full-time education in their home or other countries from an early age (varying from 4-6 years old); their first languages were French, Italian, Spanish, Romanian, Portuguese and Polish.

The ESOL with literacy needs group (ESOL Lit) was selected from initial college writing assessments that were assessed as pre-entry or Entry Level 1. The low-literacy group comprised 15 learners aged 17-19 (mean age 18.2) with no or limited formal

education in their own language and learners who use a different alphabetic writing system (Arabic, Farsi, Pashto and Dari). The learners who had limited education had either never attended school or had attended only until the end of primary school. They came from Somalia, Afghanistan, Albania, Eritrea, Guinea and Angola and reflected the predominantly male make-up of young low-literacy learners who often travel to the UK unaccompanied. They included learners who had already spent up to three years in the college learning English.

The non-ESOL learners (11 male, 4 female, mean age 18.2) were those who had English as a first language and were drawn from three departments in the college. They had all been in continuous formal education from the ages of either 4 or 5. They included one bilingual (Greek and English) and two who had received early education in Jamaica.

All learners were initially given a Wide Range Achievement Test blue word-recognition reading task followed by a spelling task to establish literacy levels in English. In order to see whether there were differences in organising words between the two ESOL groups, the phonological task used the letters F, A, S which, while sharing other letter and sound phonemes (/f/ and /s/) may reveal issues in phonological awareness in second language learning for learners with literacy issues. It was expected that the ESOL low-literacy group would have greater difficulties in this task and rely on sound, rather than initial letter, in producing words. Participants were given a practice instruction: *You have one minute to say as many words as you can beginning with the letter 'T'*. Instructions for each task were then given: *You have one minute to say as many words as you can beginning with the letter 'F'*, and so on.

Categories for errors for the results included repeats, unclear responses, wrong words where a word was included that had a different letter such as 'girlfriend' for 'F' or where there was L1 interference. Phoneme error was added to determine whether participants were confusing the sounds for 'F' with other letters that share the phoneme /f/ (examples being *photograph, phone*) and 'S' (examples being *CD, psychology*). Personal names were also included as a separate error because it frequently arose and for some ESOL learners, recourse to names from their native language would have avoided the search and retrieval mechanisms in English. Clusters were identified as phonemic where two or more words were generated in sequence with the same initial two letters (*spicy, spinach*), differed by a vowel (*sat, sit*), rhymed (*flight, fright*), or shared a semantic category (*artist, actor, architect*). Following Raskin et al.'s (1992) approach semantic clusters were also identified in order to investigate whether ESOL learners employed semantic organisation as a strategy for organising lexical items, even when they were focusing on initial letters.

4. RESULTS

The results for mean correct scores are presented below followed by results for clusters, switches and error types. Correct scores were calculated excluding repeated words, unclear responses, wrong words, phoneme error and personal names.

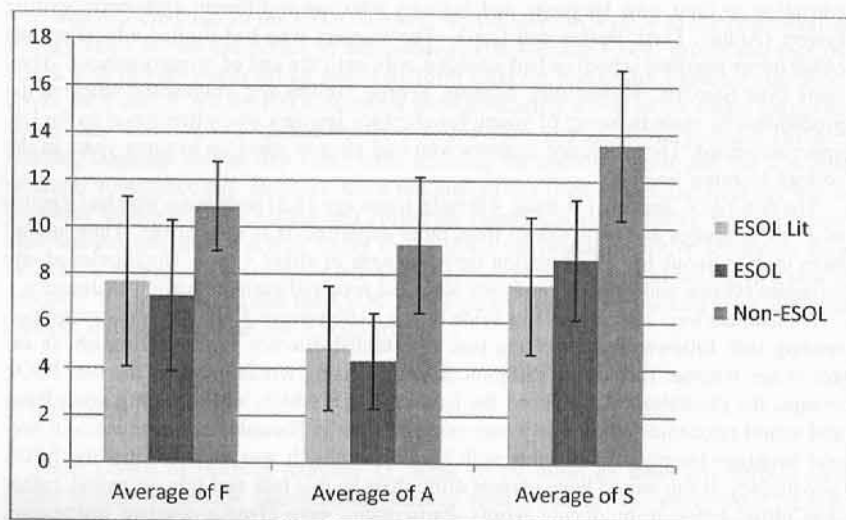


Figure 1: Mean Correct Scores of Phonological Fluency Tasks; $n=45$

A 3 (category: F, A, S) \times 3 (group: ESOL Lit, ESOL, Non-ESOL) ANOVA revealed significant effects of category, $F(2, 84) = 33.107, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.441$, and of group $F(1, 42) = 19.983, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.488$. A set of pairwise comparisons for the different groups revealed significant effects of category and group, with Non-ESOL, as expected, producing a greater number of responses to the phonological categories than ESOL Lit and ESOL groups. Further pairwise comparison tests were carried out in order to determine interaction within the groups for the different phonological categories and for ESOL Lit there were significantly more responses than ESOL for 'F' $p < .001$.

An ANOVA undertaken to determine whether there was an effect of school within the ESOL lit group revealed lower F statistics, but there was no change to the effects of category or group: 3 (category: F, A, S) \times 3 (group: ESOL Lit, ESOL, Non-ESOL) revealed significant effects of category, $F(2, 76) = 29.745, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.439$, and of group $F(1, 38) = 18.671, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.496$.

The following tables present results for errors, clusters and switches.

	'F'		'A'		'S'	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Total output	8.93	(4.11)	6.47	(2.64)	8.60	(3.14)
Correct	7.67	(3.74)	4.87	(2.72)	7.53	(3.02)
Repeats	0.40	(0.63)	0.20	(0.20)	0.07	(0.26)
Unclear	0.07	(0.26)	0.07	(0.26)	0	(0)
Wrong	0.40	(0.74)	0.80	(0.68)	0.13	(0.35)
Phoneme	0.20	(0.41)	n.d.	n.d.	0.40	(0.74)
Personal name	0.20	(0.56)	0.60	(1.24)	0.33	(0.72)
Clusters	1.40	(1.06)	0.73	(0.96)	1.20	(0.86)
Cluster size	1.84	(1.04)	1.13	(1.30)	2.13	(1.49)
Switches	6.07	(3.26)	4.27	(1.53)	5.73	(2.37)

Table 1: ESOL Lit Error Type, Clusters and Switches

	'F'		'A'		'S'	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Total output	8.07	(3.13)	6.07	(2.76)	9.47	(2.39)
Correct	7.07	(3.31)	4.33	(2.09)	8.67	(2.64)
Repeats	0.07	(0.26)	0.20	(0.56)	0.07	(0.26)
Unclear	0.00	(0)	0.07	(0.26)	0.13	(0.52)
Wrong	0.13	(0.35)	0.73	(1.03)	0.27	(0.46)
Phoneme	0.20	(0.41)	n.d.	n.d.	0.07	(0.26)
Personal name	0.60	(0.99)	0.73	(1.58)	0.33	(0.82)
Clusters	1.20	(1.01)	0.60	(0.63)	1.93	(1.28)
Cluster size	1.77	(1.35)	1.13	(1.13)	1.94	(0.57)
Switches	5.40	(2.56)	4.07	(2.52)	6.27	(2.02)

Table 2: ESOL Error Type, Clusters and Switches

	'F'		'A'		'S'	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Total output	11.67	(1.91)	9.93	(2.43)	14.67	(3.18)
Correct	10.87	(1.96)	9.27	(2.99)	13.53	(3.31)
Repeats	0.33	(0.82)	0.27	(0.59)	0.20	(0.41)
Unclear	0.00	(0)	0.00	(0)	0.00	(0)
Wrong	0.00	(0)	0.13	(0.35)	0.00	(0)
Phoneme	0.27	(0.46)	n.d.	n.d.	0.00	(0)
Personal name	0.27	(0.80)	0.27	(0.80)	0.80	(1.01)
Clusters	2.47	(0.99)	2.07	(1.28)	2.80	(1.78)
Cluster size	2.54	(0.95)	1.88	(0.84)	2.25	(0.86)
Switches	7.27	(1.94)	6.40	(2.32)	9.33	(2.16)

Table 3: Non-ESOL Error Type, Clusters and Switches

Clusters were categorised where two or more words belonging to a particular category were grouped sequentially. A 3 (Category: F, A, S) x 3 (group: ESOL Lit, ESOL, Non-ESOL) ANOVA was carried out to determine significance between category and group for mean total number of clusters, mean cluster size and number of switches. There were significant effects of category for mean cluster size: $F(2, 84) = 8.072, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.161$, mean cluster size: $F(2, 84) = 6.715, p < 0.002$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.138$ and switches, $F(2, 84) = 17.485, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.294$. There were also significant effects of group for total number of clusters, $F(2, 42) = 24.630, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.395$, mean cluster size $F(2, 42) = 3.472, p < .040$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.214$; and switches $F(2, 42) = 8.285, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.283$.

In order to test for the effects of school, a repeat ANOVA was carried out with the four school participants removed from the ESOL Lit group ($n=11$) and revealed for total number of clusters, category: $F(2, 76) = 7.618, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.167$, and for group, $F(2, 38) = 12.172, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.390$. Mean cluster size: category- $F(2, 76) = 6.702, p < .002$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.150$ and for group - $F(2, 38) = 3.726, p < .033$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.164$. Switches: category - $F(2, 76) = 14.621, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.278$, and for group, $F(2, 38) = 8.400, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.307$.

In terms of total number of clusters, ESOL produced 39 phonemic clusters and 16 semantic clusters whereas ESOL Lit produced 38 phonemic clusters and 10 semantic clusters. (Non-ESOL produced 82 phonemic, 18 semantic. In order to investigate the differences between the three groups in terms of cluster sizes and types of clusters, t -tests were conducted on the following variables: Mean total number of clusters, mean cluster size, semantic clusters, switch and error type. There was only one vowel change (*some, same*) cluster in the whole cohort produced by one ESOL learner so this cluster was not analysed. As expected, there were significant differences between the two ESOL groups and the Non-ESOL group for all categories in total number of clusters. Surprisingly, there were no significant differences in any of the cluster variables measured between ESOL Lit and ESOL. Total output were significantly highly correlated, except for Non-ESOL in 'S', $r = .382, p < .160$.

5. DISCUSSION

Contrary to expectations of a poor performance across all the phonological tasks, ESOL Lit scored higher than the ESOL group in the letter 'F', and was only marginally lower in 'A'. This contradicts the view that disadvantages in phonological awareness yield a poorer performance in phonological tasks. It could also reflect the benefits of explicit and effortful learning whereby ESOL learners focus more on letter-sound associations and pronunciation when learning new words. Learners with low levels of literacy may need to be more effortful in learning the letter-sound associations of the English alphabet when learning to read and write, particularly if it is their first experience of acquiring literacy. They may therefore be engaging in the sorts of explicit learning strategies for developing phonological awareness, to which Reis and Castro-Caldas (1997) refer. In a literacy specialism class where there will be an emphasis on phonics teaching and teaching letter sets, /f/ is taught early alongside its letter associations 'f' and 'ph'. Differences between the ESOL Lit and Non-ESOL learners for 'F' are also interesting, and may reflect the greater difficulty Non-ESOL learners have with this phoneme producing a greater number of errors (for example *phone, phenomenal*).

In terms of errors, ESOL made significantly more errors than the ESOL Lit group, with a frequent reliance on L1 interference and personal names. For example one ESOL learner produced eight responses for the category 'A', of which six were personal names found in his native language. He produced three responses out of eight in the category 'S', which also included two Spanish cities. This greater number of errors in the ESOL group may indicate difficulties associated with competing literacies and control of inhibition when accessing words in English.

This study looked at semantic and phonemic clustering in the phonological fluency tasks. In terms of the scoring for total clusters, where there were overlaps, phonemic clusters were favoured. For instance, in one response: *apple, apricot* were classified as a phonemic cluster sharing the same initial two letters, rather than a food cluster. The two items were then counted separately as a semantic cluster in follow-up analysis in order to investigate whether students made use of semantic clustering in organising vocabulary. In terms of phonological clusters, vowel change was only used by one ESOL learner. This was included in the overall cluster count but not analysed as a cluster category.

Semantic clustering was evident in the output of all three groups for the phonological fluency tasks with Non-ESOL learners, as expected, exhibiting greater accurate lexical retrieval from memory and, as a consequence, inhibitory control in their output. The lack of significant differences between ESOL lit and ESOL for semantic clustering suggests that both groups make use of similar strategies for word retrieval in accessing semantic sets of items, or have a similar range of vocabulary. This would appear to support arguments in favour of teaching in lexical sets as it shows clearly that semantic organisation is used to store second language vocabulary. It may indicate the greater security of certain word families and analysis of the types of semantic clusters would be useful to determine the frequently occurring categories. However there was evidence of semantic interference in the ESOL lit group with three of the participants producing clear errors as a result of semantic clustering (for example *family, friends, girlfriend, boyfriend* for 'F') and two others producing errors that were not part of a cluster, but appeared as trace interference (for example *food, feet, potato* or *animals, Africa, Arabic, elephant*). For one ESOL Lit learner in particular, there was clear evidence of semantic

interference taking place that persisted throughout her output in all three tasks in her production of country names. This learner produced errors in *A* and *S*. While the /s/ phoneme was identifiable in the country and city names (*Asia* and *Istanbul*) it was not the initial letter. It may be that semantic organisation was hampering the processing of speech sounds for this ESOL Lit student, creating the sort of interference that Finkbeiner and Nicol refer to when spreading activation creates confusion over co-activated similar lexical items (Finkbeiner & Nicol, 2003). Although Finkbeiner and Nicol focus on accuracy of semantic sets, learning new vocabulary in semantic sets has been reported to take longer to process and leads to retrieval failures (Altarriba & Mathis, 1997; Erten & Tekin, 2008). These retrieval difficulties are also more evident in lower-level language learners and it has been argued that successful teaching in lexical sets is evident for advanced learners (Nation, 2000). All the ESOL learners in the present study were at Entry Level 2 speaking and listening and both groups showed some semantic clustering. However, the difficulties with retrieval for the learner highlighted above indicate a lack of security in producing words according to initial letters because of semantic clustering, and raise questions about input of new vocabulary for ESOL learners with basic literacy whose phonological awareness is weaker. Semantic interference was not present in any of the errors produced by the ESOL group, which suggests that their greater control in generating semantic clusters according to initial letter could be indicative of a more efficient storage system, perhaps attributable to their already acquired literacy.

What is not always clear with analysis is whether examples of semantic interference with phonological output are questions of spreading activation or issues of continuing development of inhibitory control. A difficulty with investigating verbal fluency with this age group, however, is that even though the brain has nearly matured by adolescence, some aspects of executive function are continuing to develop, such as control of inhibition and processing speed (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Huttenlocher, 2002). It would be worth investigating this further with different age groups. If the greater number of switches indicates greater cognitive flexibility (Troyer et al., 1997), this would appear to be evident with the greater number of switches in the non-ESOL group carrying out the tasks in their first language. This view is supported by the pattern shown by ESOL Lit, who produced a higher count of switches with 'F', consistent with higher scoring for other measures.

6. CONCLUSION

This study sought to look at how EAL learners with low levels of literacy respond to phonological fluency tasks in relation to their peers with developed literacy in order to see how they organised words in English. On a number of measures within the tasks there were no significant differences between the two ESOL groups. The disadvantages in phonological awareness of the low-literacy group did not appear to be explicit, with the ESOL Lit group outperforming the ESOL group in one of the tasks. This suggests that the ESOL Lit group, while disadvantaged through limited experience of formal learning, may in fact gain a more secure understanding in their learning of phonemic items than mainstream ESOL learners. This could be a result of explicit instruction that includes a focus on phonics and letter sets; participants from the ESOL lit group were from a specialist ESOL literacy class or were in receipt of additional literacy support.

It may also be that the difficulties of acquiring literacy in a second language demands effortful learning, and effective encoding of lexical items aids subsequent lexical retrieval.

All groups made some use of semantic organisation, which would appear to support arguments in favour of teaching of new vocabulary in lexical sets in order to reflect how vocabulary is stored in the brain. However for low literacy learners, semantic overload may interfere with processing of letter/sound associations and raises questions for the way in which ESOL basic literacy is taught when considering the cognitive demands and priorities that are faced by the learner.

The examination of the ESOL Lit group would have benefited from the inclusion of participants who had and had not attended school in order to test more effectively for the effects of experience of formal education. Future studies would also benefit from consideration of time spent in ESOL classes, specifically with ESOL literacy-focused teaching, as well as testing for age and gender to examine whether they have an influence on performance in verbal fluency.

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APPENDIX: LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS ESOL

N.	Country of origin	Languages written and spoken	Age	Gender	Prior education
1.	Senegal	French, Italian	18	F	14 years Italy
2.	Ivory Coast	French, Italian	16	F	9 years Ivory Coast and Italy
3.	Colombia	Spanish	19	F	10 years Colombia and Spain
4.	Colombia	Spanish	19	F	14 years Colombia and Spain
5.	Russia	Romanian, Russian, Italian	17	M	13 years Romania, Russia and Italy
6.	Italy	Italian	16	F	11 years Italy
7.	Colombia	Spanish	16	F	12 years Colombia and Spain
8.	Portugal	Portuguese	17	F	12 years Portugal
9.	Bolivia	Spanish	16	M	10 years Spain
10.	Poland	Polish	18	M	11 years Poland
11.	Italy	Italian	16	F	10 years Italy
12.	Romania	Romanian and Spanish	18	M	14 years Romania and Spain
13.	Romania	Romanian	18	M	14 years Romania
14.	France	France	18	F	14 years France
15.	Italy	Italian	17	F	11 years Italy

ESOL WITH LITERACY NEEDS

N.	Country	Languages spoken	Age	Gender	Prior education
1.	Afghanistan	Dari*	19	M	10 years Afghanistan
2.	Iran	Farsi *	18	M	8 years Iran
3.	Afghanistan	Pashtu, * Dari	18	M	10 years Afghanistan
4.	Iraq	Arabic, * French	19	M	10 years Iraq and Syria
5.	Eritrea	Amharic	18	F	7 years Quran school Sudan
6.	Afghanistan	Pashtu, Dari	18	M	3 years Afghanistan
7.	Somalia	Somali	18	M	2 years Quran school Somalia 1 year Ethiopia
8.	Guinea	French	18	M	6 years Guinea
9.	Somalia	Somali, Arabic	19	F	No school
10.	Afghanistan	Pashtu	19	F	No school in own country London secondary 3 months
11.	Afghanistan	Pashtu, Dari, Farsi	19	M	5 years Afghanistan and Iran
12.	Albania	Albanian	17	M	4 years Albania
13.	Angola	Portuguese, Dutch	19	M	No school in own country 2 years Netherlands
14.	Albania	Albanian	18	M	5 years Albania
15.	Albania	Albanian	17	M	5 years Albania

* Written and spoken

THE VALUE OF LANGUAGES IN LINGUISTIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY.
TEACHING EXPERIENCE WITH LOW-EDUCATED UNACCOMPANIED
MULTILINGUAL MINORS¹

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ABSTRACT: At the core of linguistic autobiography lays one of our main educational purposes: leading students to appreciate and to take advantage of their own plurilingualism. The knowledge of different languages becomes a tool of useful compensation strategies in the process of learning a second language. This research aims to show the results obtained by the Unaccompanied Minors with an extremely low level of schooling attending literacy courses at the School of Italian Language for Foreigners of the University of Palermo. Thanks to the narrative devices used in linguistic autobiography it is possible to acquire a great amount of data about learners' plural identities and, by analyzing different variables of the users, to reflect upon the specific results in L2 proficiency. Students are involved in emotional activities that give them the opportunity to share complex stories, starting from the analysis and the appreciation of languages.

KEYWORDS: Plurilingualism, literacy, Unaccompanied Minors, narration, identities, L2 proficiency.

1. This paper is the result of the joint research conducted by Laura Di Benedetto, Valentina Salvato, Chiara Tiranno. Valentina Salvato is the responsible for the first section, Chiara Tiranno for the second, the third and the fourth sections, and Laura Di Benedetto for the fifth section.

1. INTRODUCTION

Autobiography is a writing tool that aims at reflecting upon life experiences and sharing them. This literary genre could become a useful didactic tool in L2 classroom, by focusing on the use of languages by multicompetent language users. Through the practice of linguistic autobiography, students are encouraged to reason for the first time about languages as systems and about meeting points existing between languages and cultures (Groppaldi, 2010: 90).

The value of languages and cultures is the basis of recent political European action plan. The latest measures and documents issued by the Council of Europe aim to protect cultural and linguistic identities. One of the most important and powerful tools for integration is linguistic education. Indeed, a true social inclusion in a new reality is possible only after learning basic skills of the new language.

Following two of the main documents on language issues in education drafted by the Council of Europe, *A European reference document for languages of education* (Council of Europe, 2007) and *Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* (henceforth, FREPA; Council of Europe, 2010), it is possible to notice a remarkable change of perspective in order to give dignity to every language through moments of reflection upon plurilingualism in the classroom. Moreover, this could offer the opportunity to transfer competences and skills from a language to another one. Thus, linguistic autobiography becomes a useful tool in the conceptual scenario outlined in FREPA, where it is possible to find four pluralistic approaches: intercultural approach, awakening to languages, the intercomprehension of related languages, and integrated didactic approaches to different languages studied.

The didactic path of linguistic autobiography follows, in particular, one of these plural approaches: awakening to languages. As underlined in this passage from FREPA:

The approach concerns the language of education and any other language which is in the process of being learnt. But it is not limited to these "learnt" languages, and integrates all sorts of other linguistic varieties – from the environment, from their families... and from all over the world, without exclusion of any kind... Because of the number of languages on which learners work – very often, several dozen – the awakening to languages may seem to be the most extreme form of pluralistic approach. It was designed principally as a way of welcoming schoolchildren into the idea of linguistic diversity (and the diversity of their own languages) at the beginning of school education, as a vector of fuller recognition of the languages "brought" by children with more than one language available to them and, in this way, as a kind of preparatory course developed for primary schools, but it can also be promoted as a support to language learning throughout the learners' school career. (Council of Europe, 2010: 9)

The didactic model adopted by the School of Italian Language for Foreigners (henceforth, ItaStra) of the University of Palermo aims to include all of these plural approaches. During the Italian language courses, many didactic activities take place to reach these goals. This research focuses on the value of different languages in LESLLA² learners by

2. LESLLA is the acronym for Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition for Adults. By using it we refer also to adolescent learners.

using autobiographical narrative devices. A complex linguistic identity emerges through the writing of personal stories and experiences which focused on the use of languages.

The adoption of autobiographical technique in the classroom follows the whole tradition of linguistic autobiography in didactic programmes. In Italy it was introduced by Tullio Telmon and Sabina Canobbio with the original purpose to evaluate the use of dialect in the Piedmont region. The data collection was carried on in other Italian regions too, in particular in Veneto and Sicily (Arcuri et al., 2014: 143). This method is performed in L2 teaching to know learners' linguistic background in a systematic way. By considering plurilingual competence not only as a requirement but also as a goal in the process of teaching-learning, didactic planning has changed: it regularly includes activities such as linguistic autobiography (Arcuri, 2014: 69). It is adopted with students who have a vast cultural background and children of primary school. Recently this technique has been experimented also in didactic paths concerning the learning of a second language³. The use of this practice reveals positive outputs, especially for those people who experienced a complex story of migration. Indeed, thanks to the writing of linguistic autobiography and the expression of their feelings, they can link and explore the past and the present, home country and host country (Groppaldi, 2010: 91).

By considering these insights and previous experiences (Strazzari, 2016), the path of linguistic autobiography was planned and tested with LESLLA learners during the last two years in ItaStra literacy courses. In this paper, we focus on the practice adopted with newly arrived Unaccompanied Minors (henceforth UAM) and on the comparison of the results with other kinds of LESLLA users.

2. PURPOSES

Linguistic autobiography serves various purposes both for students and teachers. On the one hand, the most relevant aim consists in making students aware of their own plurilingualism. This awareness can stimulate the learning process. On the other hand, this technique offers teachers new diagnostic instruments which are suitable to discover and analyse the linguistic background of the students. Teachers can better understand linguistic education of learners' mother tongue, evaluate similarities and differences between their languages, and perceive the difficulties that students can find in learning a second language (Groppaldi, 2010: 90). The inclusion of linguistic autobiography in teaching programmes represents a functional device to improve students' proficiency in L2. It is truly important especially for those migrants that can have the opportunity to narrate the long and hard journey by sea and land. All the students, even those who apparently cannot communicate, are able to share their own stories through different expressive means, such as drawing and acting.

By performing some activities included in the autobiographical path, students can understand how the lack of linguistic competence in target language can be solved by

3. Previous experiences with foreign learners of Italian language are described in Groppaldi (2010).

means of compensation strategies. Meanwhile, other activities make students use their native languages and L2 in order to transfer linguistic competences, which were already acquired in L2, to their first languages. Thus, the use of this kind of strategies occurs not only in a unidirectional way but also in a mutual one, promoting the learning process and making the students aware of the relevance of plurilingualism (Arcuri, 2014: 70). These activities are part of literacy programmes, since they have important communicative and linguistic aims. Teachers can choose to adopt linguistic autobiography only after one hundred literacy hours, in order to reinforce and test the competences acquired by students during the whole learning process.

3. USERS

The proposed autobiographical model has been previously tested on different types of learners characterized by different features⁴: children of primary school in L2 and FL context; low-educated migrant women participating at FEI project⁵; adult and UAM participating in a university project with CPIA⁶.

This paper focuses on a recent project involving UAM who attended experimental literacy courses⁷. These were aimed at training students before compulsory education provided in CPIA, in order to fill the lack of linguistic competences in writing and reading. This lack is a serious obstacle to UAM integration in the host country and the Italian educational system does not offer appropriate solutions, such as literacy courses for adult and adolescents.

Most of the UAM comes from areas of the world characterized by a low level of schooling, specifically from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In our classes the UAM coming from Gambia and Senegal are the majority. Other students' origin countries are Benin, Mali, Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Egypt and Bangladesh. Students were aged 16-18 years old and almost all of them are newly arrived males, who usually attend Italian courses one month after their arrival. Data concerning years of schooling, which were acquired by means of entrance tests and confirmed with didactic activities, show the low level, or even the absence, of literacy. UAM generally attended school for a maximum period of three years, while some of them attended Koranic school. They face a dramatic journey to come to Italy, where they live in hosting centres sharing habits and state of soul. It is worth to stress that difficulties concern not only cohabitation, but also the process of inclusion in the new reality (D'Agostino et al., 2016: 11).

4. Among these features, in our research we consider: age, sex, origin countries, languages, different cultural background and life expectancies.

5. "I saperi per l'inclusione" was realized by the University of Palermo with European fund for the integration of third-country nationals (2007 -2013).

6. CPIA is the Center of Adult Education.

7. Such courses were held in the frame of the project "Italiano lingua seconda in soggetti a bassa scolarizzazione. Ricerca, formazione, didattica" of the University of Palermo (2016).

4. CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES, METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

In order to respond to the above-mentioned purposes, didactic planning is customized to fulfil the requirements of different users. It is the case of our experience in adopting linguistic autobiography with adult migrant women and UAM. Teaching practices are structured in different phases answering linguistic and communicative aims: some of them were already introduced during the classes, while others are brand new ones. The whole plan requires a minimum of twenty hours and it is entirely based on workshop activities. Students can use different narrative devices in order to talk about their personal stories and rethink their troubled experiences (Di Nuzzo, 2013). According to the main educational purpose, and due to the students' lack of linguistic competence in L2, some activities are performed by using students' own mother tongues.

At the core of the first activity lays the relevance of learners' mother languages, by emphasizing their sounds. Sharing mother tongue's sounds represents a useful opening moment in which students choose and pronounce a selected word in the native language. This activity aims to stress the variety of languages, and consequently students' heterogeneous cultural backgrounds, with equal dignity in the classroom (Strazzari, 2016).

In the second step, students fill out a form with personal data, including: name and its meaning, age, country of origin, country of residence, people they live with, mother tongue and other languages, years of schooling. This form is used to practice single words and review communicative acts introduced in the first one hundred hours of lessons, such as sentences useful to talk about themselves and their housing contexts.

The third step recalls the previous one since here many daily contexts are introduced. Teacher selects two contexts (i.e. at home and at the market) and students pretend to be actors reproducing a daily conversation. This role-play is performed and later written down in a comic strip in students' first and second language. The aim is to investigate the amount of linguistic inputs and the languages in use.

Then, portraying student's own body in life-size is considered as a necessary tool to explore and reflect upon body parts and their functions, introducing this lexicon. Only after this step, students can understand how to associate their languages with one or more body parts. The success of this fourth step depends on many factors and, probably, one of them is students' desire to share their feelings. This phase introduces the fifth step in which students can deeply reflect upon their journey experience.

Here teacher shows how the world map works and then, together with students, reproduces the map on the floor. Later, students are free to move in the space and to tag the crossed countries to show their journey. Then all the students retrace on a personal map their course to recollect the languages heard and used to communicate. In this fifth step they are able to express journey's memories and experiences. Retracing on a map the course of the journey is one of the most interesting activities realized in literacy classes of UAM. It is exactly this map that shows the multilingual background which takes shape during the journey to Europe. This is a fundamental step to value students' plurilingualism and also to decode a complex text such as a geographical map. Autobiography starts and ends with an impressive moment: sounds' appearance of all the native languages of the participants.

5. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Linguistic autobiography offers diagnostic instruments able to value students' linguistic background, to test linguistic competence in the target language and to plan specific didactic activities. The data collected in this paper are drawn from a large corpus of UAM's classwork. Our analysis highlights the vast linguistic knowledge of LESLLA learners. We observe that students are initially unwilling to use L1 in class activities, but this reluctance decreases gradually up to the point in which they eventually start using all the known languages, and discover the important role they play in the process of learning L2. Most of UAM coming from Sub-Saharan Africa are plurilingual, but in different ways: some of them speak more than two languages and can understand languages typologically close to their mother tongues, while other know more than three languages. There are also few cases of monolingual speakers, usually coming from Bangladesh.

Linguistic autobiography also contributes to improve L1 linguistic skills. Many activities, which require the use of written code in mother tongues, enact the reflection upon some linguistic aspects. LESLLA learners were able to transfer competences from L2 to their own first language. This metacognitive process is one of the most relevant aims of the plural approaches (Curci, 2016: 143). It represents another crucial point in the development of personal identities: mother tongue, which was not learnt at school, becomes a concrete purpose of the study, especially by focusing on the sounds and signs which were introduced in our literacy courses.

UAM reconsidered the power of their plurilingualism also in the host country, since they live in a complex linguistic context together with people coming from different parts of the world. The large amount of exposure to many linguistic inputs let students practice and switch various codes in the new daily life. In the frame of this wide range of languages the knowledge of L2 emerges.

Focusing on our analysis, one of the most distinctive features of the autobiographical techniques experimented with UAM, is the description of their journey across many different countries in order to escape from wars and poverty to find better life conditions. The journey usually counted from a minimum of three months up to four years. The main objective of working with geographical maps is to associate languages used in each country. As a result, the creation of linguistic maps gives students the chance to rethink languages as tools of communication and survival. Finally, students came to reevaluate their personal skills and troubled experiences thanks to the appreciation of the linguistic knowledge used and improved during the journey.

The abovementioned results reveal interesting features when compared to another specific kind of users, i.e. adult migrant women attending literacy courses. By comparing UAM linguistic autobiographies with those written by FEI and CPIA women, it is possible to notice that the latter come from a monolingual context and live in Italy for a long time in a monolingual reality; while most of the newly arrived UAM comes from a plurilingual context and lives in plurilingual hosting centres, characterized by a larger amount of exposure to L2 outside the classroom. The analysis of data acquired from linguistic autobiographies shows different levels of proficiency in L2 between monolingual and plurilingual students. The latter can easily use compensation strategies to fill the lack of knowledge in the target language and their acquisition process seems faster. After the first part of the literacy course (around 100 hours), UAM have

stronger abilities to read and write than women. We should take into consideration that UAM attended an Italian literacy course at ItaStra following an experimental didactic model in the frame of a research project related to the acquisition of second language in low educated students.

In order to better understand these results we show two illustrative cases as a sample of two of the largest groups of learners: Karimou (UAM) and Kadija (FEI project women).

Karimou (UAM)	Kadija (FEI project)
Origin country: Gambia.	Origin country: Morocco
Age: 17 years old	Age: 45 years old
Years of schooling: 0	Years of schooling: 0
Linguistic background: plurilingual (Mandinka, Wolof and English)	Linguistic background: monolingual (a variety of Arabic spoken in Morocco)
Daily context: plurilingual	Daily context: monolingual
About the journey: many countries crossed by bus and boat to find better conditions of life	About the journey: by plane to join a family member
Time of permanence in Italy: 3 months	Time of permanence in Italy: 8 years
Results after 100 literacy hours:	Results after 100 literacy hours:
- reading and writing simple sentences dictated to him;	- reading and writing simple disyllabic words (CVCV) with teacher's assistance;
- oral communication skills: sufficient	- oral communication skills: lacking

Table 1: UAM and FEI Learners' Backgrounds and Results: a Sample

We can compare, in the table above, the different features which characterized Karimou's and Kadija's backgrounds before attending the literacy courses and their progress after one hundred hours of teaching. Data were acquired from specific tests and activities used in linguistic autobiography. Karimou's results are the following: he can read and write, without teacher's assistance, words containing simple syllable structure which consists of alternating consonants and vowels (CV); moreover, his reading and writing process of short sentences dictated to him has already begun. In oral communicative competence he shows a good ability to remember and reuse many expressions useful in daily life contexts. Different results emerge from Kadija's data. Her reading and writing process appears slower than Karimou's one, since she can read and write, with teacher's assistance, only single and disyllabic words (CVCV) and she is not able to use complex communicative sentences accurately.

This complex frame encourages the rise of new approaches devoted to the study of the relations between literacy and plurilingualism. Actually, following the results of our recent teaching experience, we are dealing with challenging research questions: is it possible to find a clear link between proficiency in L2 and plurilingualism? Do

plurilingualism and L2 exposure affect the process of literacy? We do believe that the faster literacy process in plurilingual individuals probably depends on their metalinguistic awareness, as underlined by the scholar Măra Dirba. Following the research of Ulrike Jessner, Dirba concludes that this specific awareness allows these individuals to develop different features:

- a) divergent and creative thinking (e.g., a wider variety of associations, original ideas);
- b) interactional and/or pragmatic competence (cultural theorems of greeting, thanking, etc.);
- c) communicative sensitivity and flexibility (language mode); and
- d) translation skills, which are considered a natural trait in the majority of multilinguals. (Dirba, 2016: 18)

Moreover, some researches, conducted on bilingual children, show that they can read earlier than the monolingual ones, thanks to metalinguistic awareness. The latter has positive effects on both linguistic and non-linguistic areas (Sorace, 2007: 194-195). In our teaching experience data acquired after two hundred literacy hours strengthen our hypothesis: the learning gap between the two groups is, indeed, persistent. Other examples confirm this. Monolingual students, similar to Karimou in terms of the characteristics listed in the table (with the exception of the specific linguistic background), show a lower proficiency in the literacy process.

Finally, we noticed that the first language takes advantage of the newly acquired competences: the ability to transfer knowledge and strategy permits the development of linguistic skills in mother tongue. This consolidates the sense of identity and self-confidence, by promoting positive attitudes towards language learning among all the students. Nevertheless, it is still an early stage of the research to draw clear-cut conclusions, but we do believe that probably the different proficiency in L2 between the above-mentioned case studies could depend also on their different linguistic exposure to target language. New research is expected to be undertaken to deepen our hypothesis.

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INQUIRY-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN EMPOWERMENT MODEL FOR LESLLA TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: Over the course of four months, five LESLLA practitioners met to explore their practice through participation in a professional learning community (PLC). This article presents the narrative account of that experience through the collective voice of our PLC. We share our motivations for participating in this professional development experience, how this experience impacted our practice and our overall impressions of this type of professional learning activity.

KEYWORDS: Reflective teaching, professional development, teacher knowledge, professional learning community, teacher learning

1. INTRODUCTION

In the LESLLA context, teachers *and* learners are navigating new learning environments and exploring new ways of being and knowing. In a sense, they are all learning how to 'do LESLLA' together. LESLLA teachers are generally dedicated, passionate practitioners who are often very aware of the important role(s) they play in the lives of adult newcomers who are striving to find their sense of place in a new country. Most teachers arrive to the LESLLA classroom with previous L2 teacher preparation

(e.g., CELTA, TESOL Certificate, BA in Linguistics, MA TESOL), yet they are often discovering that much of what they deemed successful with adults who had formal schooling and L1 literacy is not necessarily effective in the LESLLA classroom. With a sense of great responsibility for these learners, many teachers actively seek support through colleagues, publications, online resources, conferences, workshops and courses.

Since the founding of LESLLA in 2005, the availability of research and resources has grown tremendously. LESLLA professionals have endeavored to fill a gap in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research (Tarone & Bigelow, 2011) by contributing studies on second language and literacy acquisition by adults with limited formal schooling and emerging literacy. Efforts to close the gap have resulted in a steadily growing research base--one must simply visit www.leslla.org and browse the proceedings of the annual symposia as a starting point.

Studies are leading to theories of oral language processing and the impact of literacy on language acquisition (Bigelow, delMas, Hansen, and Tarone, 2006; Tarone and Bigelow, 2005a; Tarone and Bigelow, 2005b). We have a better understanding of what does and doesn't work when teaching L2 adult emergent readers (Condelli, Wrigley, Yoon, 2009; Marrapodi, 2013; Wrigley & Guth, 1992; Vinogradov, 2008; Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2010). We have also investigated LESLLA teacher development and how to best support LESLLA teachers as they reconceptualize their knowledge base (Farrelly, 2013, 2014), adopt effective classroom practices, and work in community with other LESLLA teachers to theorize practice (Vinogradov, 2012, 2016).

2. TEACHER LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Teacher learning is a reflection of the process that takes place when teachers are developing their teacher cognitions, including their beliefs, attitudes, sense of self, and various types of knowledge (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). Teacher learning involves the sense-making that teachers employ when mapping their knowledge to their practice while continually reflecting on the interactions between them. Teacher learning is not a process that ends with the culmination of a teacher education program or training session but is an on-going endeavor that spans the length of a teacher's career. Johnson (2009) posits, "a sociocultural perspective on human learning transforms how we understand teacher learning, language, language teaching, and the enterprise of L2 teacher education" (p. 2).

When considering the best approaches to professional development for teachers in general and teachers of LESLLA learners in particular, it is widely accepted that they should be collaborative and teacher-directed. Johnson (2009) promotes an inquiry-based approach to professional development that gives teachers the chance to interact with both theory and practice. In fact, she promotes abandoning this dichotomy altogether to embrace the more "fluid construct of praxis" (Johnson, 2009: 98; Freire, 1970). Further supporting inquiry-based professional development, Sharky (2005) says, "Teacher knowledge is generated in inquiry and is facilitated by learning communities. Teacher learning involves teachers and others engaged in critical inquiry into their experiences, beliefs and assumptions..." (p. 135). Johnson (2009) adds that situating professional development in communities of practice is in keeping with a sociocultural perspective because peers can scaffold one another's learning.

3. EMBARKING ON OUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING JOURNEY

As a group of LESLLA practitioners, we came together to create a professional learning community (PLC). We opted to incorporate several professional learning activities including a study circle (Vinogradov, 2013), paired inquiry using lesson study (Takemura & Shimizu, 1993), and independent reflective writing assignments (Farrell, 2013, 2015). This chapter provides a glimpse into our experiences. The larger study from which these narrative accounts are extracted, examines our reflective practices through a framework for reflection (Farrell, 2015). In this chapter, we highlight the overall impact of this professional learning experience on us as LESLLA teachers.

4 WHO ARE WE?

Raichle is a teacher educator in the Applied Linguistics Department and MA TESOL Program at St. Michael's College (SMC) in VT, USA. She began work as a LESLLA teacher in 2006 with a group of Burundi women who were resettled in Salt Lake City, Utah. During that time, she went through the once-typical trajectory of a new LESLLA teacher--fumbling and flailing while trying to understand why someone with an MA TESOL degree could be such a failure at teaching beginners. She sought support among the few colleagues in town who worked with LESLLA learners, and together they experimented with materials design and classroom strategies. At that time, the majority of the materials available for developing literacy skills were designed for young learners. Many LESLLA teachers were discovering two key resources, which are still in use today: the *Tutor Curriculum Guide for Teaching Adult ESL Pre-literate Learners* by Cielito Brekke, which was updated in 2009 and *Making It Real: Teaching Pre-literate Adult Refugee Students* by Alysian Croydon (2005). These resources provide ways to teach English language and literacy skills alongside life skills, while honoring that our adult learners deserve to be taught with age appropriate, authentic, and relevant materials.

During the course of the six years that Raichle taught LESLLA learners, she also co-designed a course with her colleague, Ellen Knell entitled Teaching English to Adult Emergent Readers. They offered this course to graduate students in the MA TESOL program as well as to community-based LESLLA teachers. The course involved a community engaged learning component through which students implemented what they were learning in the course with LESLLA learners in the community. Ultimately, Raichle wrote a dissertation on a study of the challenges faced by LESLLA teachers and has since published and presented on the topic (see Farrelly, 2013, 2014). Upon arriving in Vermont, Raichle sought out the nonprofit organizations that specifically aim to meet the needs of refugee background learners acquiring English as an additional language (EAL). She also identified LESLLA teachers who were affiliated with her institution. She uncovered an unmet need in the area for teacher preparation for work in the LESLLA context. This led to the idea of developing this PLC for the purpose of investigating teachers' reflective practices and development over time. Raichle's roles in the PLC included organizer, facilitator, and participant, however as a participant, she was rarely reflecting on her practice but rather actively listening to the teachers and fostering discussion about their interpretations of their praxis.

At the time of the study, Annie was a volunteer teacher for a local nonprofit called Vermont Adult Learning (VAL). Her students were refugee-background adults with interrupted and/or limited formal education experience. Her class ranged in size from two students to ten students on any given day. Their first languages included Karen, Maay, Somali, and Kirundi. She had been teaching the class for one and half years, meeting the learners twice a week for two hours per session. The class met at a family center, which offered free childcare for students. All of Annie's students were mothers and they sometimes brought their young children to class. The students in Annie's class had very immediate needs and goals, such as getting a job, navigating the city, and helping their children with schoolwork. According to Annie, they were very motivated and had positive attitudes towards learning. Many of them had been coming to classes at the same center for many years and were making slow but steady progress. As a consistent group, they had created a cohesive, supportive learning community together. At the time of writing this article, Annie was completing her student teaching for her MA TESOL and K-12 licensure. She continues to work closely with refugee background students, but now most of them are adolescent and young learners. She hopes to start volunteering for VAL again soon.

Robyn is a volunteer English tutor for the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP). Robyn teaches one-on-one in her student's home, twice a week for one hour. Her student is an adult emergent reader from Somalia. She has been living in Vermont for nearly two years with her seven children (two of whom have disabilities) while her husband remains in a refugee camp in Yemen. Her first language is Maay Maay, which does not have a writing system; she also understands some Somali and Arabic, and her children speak Arabic at home. They have established a friendly relationship, which promotes a comfortable learning environment. Robyn's student is comfortable asking her for help with day-to-day tasks (e.g., reading mail, listening to voicemails, and pointing out appointment dates on a calendar). Robyn's student is a motivated learner, and is particularly engaged when the English they are studying relates directly to her daily life. This student's main focus is her children, and on being successful at her job; much of her day is spent working (3pm-11pm). Her work needs have provided content for lessons; but changing work schedules has also presented its challenges to consistency.

Steph is also a volunteer English teacher for VRRP. She works with a family of three older (late 60s, early 70s) learners who are originally from Bhutan, but lived in Nepal prior to resettlement. Her students have been living in the U.S. for five years with their extended family. Since there are a couple of people in the family who speak English well, these students have not been able to acquire English easily or quickly. They have limited interactions with people beyond their family and cultural community. Steph teaches these learners in their home two times per week for one and a half hours per session. The setting of the classes is their furnished basement, which Steph notes is less than ideal given the "chaotic" environment that sometimes exists in the household.

When Steph initially discussed goals for this class with her students, they were most interested in learning the alphabet and working on letter and sound identification. They really wanted to learn how to read in English. As time passed, Steph noticed that they were studying for the US Citizenship test and so she shifted the focus of her lessons to incorporate more citizenship content. While she initially tried to integrate literacy and citizenship, she ultimately abandoned the citizenship content all together, noting that it was too challenging and students were losing interest. Her greatest challenges with this

group include striking a balance between developing literacy skills and helping them acquire oral language for basic communication. Her focus during the study group was to determine how to work toward both long and short-term goals in a way that seemed feasible.

Kim has been employed as an EAL teacher for VRRP for seven years. She has taught a number of different classes but during this study, we focused on her current class for newcomers. Her classes always represents multiple levels because it's the only evening class held in her town, so it is the go-to class for those with day jobs who live in the area. Her students' educational experiences range from 0-11 years of formal schooling, with the majority having less than 5 years. She meets them twice a week for two hours. Her students are men and women from various countries of origin, with cultural and linguistic influences from countries in which they lived in refugee camps. Her students' countries of origin include Bhutan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, Somalia, Iraq, Burundi, and Togo. She perceives one of their primary goals for learning to be gaining confidence as they navigate daily life. They focus on practical tasks such as filling out forms, shopping, using American money, and communicating at work. Those that do not work but are at home all day with small children meet their social needs of communicating and being with friends when they come to class.

5. MOTIVATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN A PLC

We had a range of reasons for participating in this professional learning opportunity. We shared an interest in collaboratively exploring the current research on work in the LESLLA context. Below are several other themes that shape our motivations.

5.1 RAISE A CHILD OR LEARN ABCs--SEEKING A BALANCE OF PRIORITIES

For Robyn, a driving factor for her participation in this PLC was a sense that her lessons were being "derailed" by the need to address issues that felt pressing to her student--such as going grocery shopping, finding a bank that was within walking distance, sorting through mail, and staying in touch with family members who live elsewhere. Robyn had the impression that in comparison to these life issues, learning the alphabet carried less importance for her student. She knew that if she could find a way to create lessons that were more relevant to her student's daily life, she would be able to motivate her to learn the lesson content. She joined this group in part to find ideas to address that challenge. Annie also perceived barriers to her students' opportunities to learn in various life commitments, including challenges around childcare and fluctuating work schedules. She was hoping to identify strategies for how to work with these students and plan instruction that would also be responsive to their unique life situations.

5.2 IF I DON'T GET IT HERE, WHERE WILL I GET IT?

As is the case with many refugee organizations, the needs are many and the resources are limited. Some organizations have the capacity to offer professional development op-

portunities for their volunteer and paid teachers, however many are simply struggling to keep up with the day-to-day demands of a steady stream of clients. A driving reason behind all four teachers' interest in this PLC was simply that they weren't getting support for this work elsewhere.

Steph was approaching her final semester in the MA TESOL program at the start of our collaboration and she felt quite prepared to begin work in a K-12 setting. However, she noted that she was taught very little, if anything, about working with adult emergent readers during the program. She recognized that working with these adults was her passion, and therefore she decided to seek out ways to best support them. She "struggled for months" to find resources and information about teaching this particular population, and it wasn't until she joined the PLC that she learned about LESLLA and the tremendous effort that has gone into supporting teachers of this population.

Robyn had the sense that she was "reinventing the wheel" in designing age-appropriate lessons for her student--and she wasn't confident that she was the best "inventor." Robyn believed that her success with her student depended heavily on using age-appropriate and level-appropriate materials, but she was not finding any. She came into the PLC with a specific goal of identifying materials that she could use and adapt for her learner.

Kim joined the PLC with quite a bit of experience teaching EAL in general, and seven years experience teaching refugee background students in particular. She was eager to partake in this professional development experience because she had never been afforded such an opportunity through her work. She felt that she had become "stuck in a rut" with her teaching and hoped that engaging in collaborative inquiry through discussions of professional articles would offer new strategies and methods to try out with her learners.

Annie also brought experience to the table when she joined the PLC. However, although she had been teaching this population for over a year, she had been "working in the dark." She decided to make time for this experience because she had no other guidance on how to teach LESLLA learners. The nonprofit that she volunteered for didn't offer resources or trainings, and she didn't know anyone else who was teaching this population. Similar to Steph, Annie was approaching the completion of her MA TESOL program of study, and none of her classes addressed working with the lower level students. Annie's TESOL courses focused on lesson planning and activity design for a learner population that was experienced with 'doing school'--coming prepared, keeping regular attendance, arriving on time, and doing homework--behaviors which didn't match those of her adult learners.

Steph, Robyn, Kim and Annie all added that they were interested in meeting others who worked with refugee background adults. Steph believed this PLC would cultivate emotional support among colleagues who share an understanding of the unique challenges of teaching and learning in the LESLLA context. Robyn, being the newest to the TESOL profession and the MA TESOL program believed that receiving help from more experienced professionals would help her become a better EAL instructor.

6. TAKEAWAYS FROM THEORIZING PRACTICE

The range of 'take-aways' from our time in the PLC varied depending on pre-existing knowledge coming into this experience. The opportunity to read LESLLA specific research and glean strategies from the studies to try in our classes, allowed us to engage

in praxis--a cyclical process of taking theory to practice and practice to theory through reflection-for-action and reflection-on-action.

6.1 LEARNING THROUGH LIVING: LEARNER GENERATED TEXTS

According to Steph, one of the most critical pieces of information that she learned in this process was the importance of making the material relevant for adult learners. In the K-12 school system, there is a set curriculum that guides teachers through developmentally appropriate topics and lessons, however when working with adults in a community based setting, there is no set curriculum with a sequence of topics that targets the specific needs of a range of adult learners. She notes that in line with prioritizing relevance, a LESLLA teacher must be responsive and flexible when the unexpected arises in class, such as a request for support with a particular task (e.g., reading mail, making a phone call).

Related to ensuring learning is meaningful for learners, Kim's discovery of the Language Experience Approach (LEA) emerged as the most useful for her practice. She also praised the wealth of strategies presented in the readings for building literacy around learner-generated texts (e.g., Vinogradov, 2008, 2009). She also found the balanced literacy framework of Whole-Part-Whole (Fish, Knell, & Buchanan, 2007; Vinogradov, 2008) to be something she could incorporate into most lessons. Based on the readings, Kim is more proficient at designing lessons that introduce words orally and in context (e.g., story, dialogue) and attaching oral language to print for practice with decoding, recognizing sight words, developing phonological awareness, and then moving back to the context for additional fluency and comprehension work. Kim designed various literacy tasks around her books, including cloze exercises, sequence tasks with story strips, segmenting words to build phonological awareness, categorizing sight words alphabetically, and reading aloud. Kim provided copies of each book so they could practice reading the story outside of class. They also posted large versions of the stories around the class so they could continue working with the texts.

Robyn and her student explored LEA together with great success. The first book they made together revolved around the topic of her students' workplace. They went together and took pictures related to the various workplace tasks she was responsible for. Based on those pictures, Robyn and her student used this book to study work-related vocabulary and develop basic print literacy skills. In their second book, they developed a reader based on the topic of shopping. The book included pictures, vocabulary of items that her student often purchased, and prices so she could begin to practice learning money and the language of transactions.

Steph also used learner generated texts and the Language Experience Approach to make topics and texts relatable to her students. On one occasion, she and her students went on a 'field trip' to the local community garden. Her students have a large garden plot there and through the growing season, they cultivate a variety of foods to feed their extended family. On their field trip, they took pictures of all the fruits and vegetables from the garden and created a book about what they grow and how they harvest it at the end of the summer. This activity was particularly meaningful for the students because they are very connected to the work they do in their garden and take pride in being able to feed their family from the land.

6.2 REPETITION, TIME ON TOPIC & ROUTINE

Steph initially believed that she was effectively repeating topics and recycling information in her class. However she also felt the need to move on to new topics rather than stay with one topic for too long. The readings and our discussions allowed her to reformulate what 'too long' actually means in this context. She noted that she now has "research-based permission" to slow the class down and move at the pace that better supports her learners. Robyn also latched onto the notion of expanding on topics. She reported gains in her student's understanding and mastery of topics when they slowed the pace. She also saw the benefit of adding routines to her lessons (e.g., starting each lesson the same way, perhaps with a review of days, dates, weather, time). Incorporating routine boosted her student's confidence because she could anticipate the stages of the lesson and feel prepared during activities she had experienced before, such as flyswatter to review vocabulary and build phonological awareness.

6.3 ASSESSMENT

One of the more useful strategies that Steph tried out as a result of this PD group was a phonemic awareness assessment. One of the readings offered strategies for orally assessing learners' phonemic awareness through various tasks such as phoneme isolation, phoneme identification, and phoneme blending (see Curtis & Kruideneri, 2005). Prior to assessing her students' phonemic awareness through adapted versions of these suggested tasks, she thought they would test at similar levels. She identified stark variations in their abilities on the various tasks, which gave her a starting point for identifying individual strengths and differentiating learning accordingly. Robyn was equally inspired by the idea of using these types of tasks to help her student develop phonemic and phonological awareness. However, she realized that the tasks--specifically segmenting and blending--were too difficult for her student. It was a learning experience for her in understanding how to recognize how far she can push her student on certain types of tasks. Steph similarly discovered that several resources and materials we explored were too advanced for her learners. Assessment of LESLLA learners is still a challenging endeavor for teachers and programs. We continue to contend with knowing how to select level appropriate materials and activities.

7. ON THE VALUE OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Three of us work in isolation, teaching in learning spaces that are not part of any particular language program or institution. Kim, for example has a classroom in an old mill that houses several businesses that close before her class begins. Her class meets in a corner space in the basement of the enormous brick building. Robyn and Steph teach in their students' homes, which not only isolates the teachers from colleagues, but keeps the learners from venturing out to join a learning community of their own. Of course, there are valid reasons why these learners study at home, but nonetheless it contributed to a sense of isolation that motivated us to come together. Annie utilized a classroom in a community center and did come into contact with one other teacher

before and after her classes, however there was still rarely time for collaboration. In addition to being together for our PLC meetings, we were all eager to visit one another's classes and observe new strategies in action.

7.1 LEARNING THROUGH OBSERVATION

Robyn was able to observe Kim and Steph in their teaching environments. She found the experience useful because while she volunteers for a sizeable organization, she never has interactions with other teachers. As part of her observations, she gave Kim and Steph feedback--noting both strengths of the lessons and opportunities for growth. Steph noted that observing peers in the classroom was particularly beneficial to her because she learns best when she sees human activity unfold in reality, rather than simply reading about it. As she observed, she noted strategies she could use or adapt with her learners. Because Robyn was teaching in a one-on-one arrangement, she decided not to have anyone observe her teaching; however, she was still able to process and reflect on her practice with the rest of us. As the facilitator, Raichle found opportunities to observe Annie, Kim and Steph in action. She found that her responses to teachers' questions, concerns, and ideas were more robust once she had a better sense of who and where they were teaching.

7.2 ADVENTURES WITH LESSON STUDY

Lesson Study (Takemura & Shimizu, 1993) is another fruitful approach to professional learning that stands out for its direct application to the context of the teachers. A community of practice working with lesson study chooses a particular content area or class to focus on. Together, they collectively develop a lesson based around research, shared knowledge, the experience of those involved, and innovative practices they would like to implement. Once the lesson has been designed, a teacher elects to pilot the lesson with her class, allowing others in the group to observe in person or videotape for later reflection.

Within our PLC, two variations on lesson study were implemented. Robyn and Steph paired up to co-design a lesson based on Wh-questions. Because the proficiency levels of their respective students were slightly different, as was the class structure (one-on-one vs. small group), the lessons were differentiated slightly. However, they held each other accountable to delivering lessons based on their co-planning decisions. Implementation of the lessons was debriefed during our PLC sessions. Robyn found that simply introducing her student to a simple "What is this?" option led her student to ask that question often about many things she wanted to have a word for in English. Steph's implementation further revealed that she had to slow the pace of her instruction. Introducing all Wh-question words in one lesson was very confusing for her learners. She thought introducing the question words with pictures of people, places, things, and times would lead to high production with these words; they struggled and she adjusted her plans accordingly.

Annie and Kim embarked on a lesson study together. They both reported this activity to be one of the most insightful professional learning activities from the PD experience.

Lesson study made sense for the two of them because their classes were similar. They both had access to an actual classroom space with whiteboards and tables. They taught a slightly larger group of learners with a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, ages, and formal schooling experiences. First they brainstormed a topic that would fit both sets of learners and allow them to integrate an LEA into the lesson. Incorporating the LEA meant that they had to be creative to find a topic that would work for both locations. Ultimately, they decided to review body parts, introduce senses and do a walk around their respective buildings to find things they can see, touch, smell, hear, and taste.

While they planned the lessons together, the execution of the lessons ultimately differed. Annie had the opportunity to observe Kim teaching first, which gave her some new ideas for her lesson. As they debriefed their implementation of the same lesson, they shared with us what they learned from watching each other teach the lesson they co-designed. In their first lessons, after a review of body parts and introduction to the five senses, they walked around their buildings and took photographs of the students smelling, touching, seeing, hearing and tasting things.

In her second lesson, Kim had the students recall their walk and generate sentences about the experience on chart paper; however, at that point she didn't have the pictures for the story. For the third lesson, she printed the pictures onto pages, which she stapled into a book--one for each student. At this point, they realized that some of the sentences from their recall activity on day two didn't match the pictures, but this resulted in an interesting negotiation activity. Each student copied the sentences from the chart paper into their books, making changes where needed.

In Annie's implementation of her second lesson, she brought a single copy of each picture on individual sheets of paper with space to write a caption. She started the lesson by having the students sequence the pictures in the order the events happened. Then, for each picture, she elicited sentences to match. Each of the students took a turn writing a sentence for each picture in the master book, which she later copied and distributed to everyone. Both Kim and Annie noted how nice it was to see everyone's different handwriting in one text. In comparing their lessons, Kim noted that she preferred Annie's approach and later implemented another LEA in the same fashion with great success.

8. OVERALL IMPACT OF THE EXPERIENCE

Our PLC met for four months and during that time, we not only explored research and theorized our practice, but we shared meals, laughter, and personal stories. We submitted a proposal for the 11th Annual LESLLA symposium, which was accepted, and thus we traveled as a group to Spain! All in all, our experience with this PLC has been overwhelmingly positive and rewarding. Below are a few final reflections on the impact of this experience on us as LESLLA practitioners.

8.1 GROWING FROM COMMUNITY

Similar to many LESLLA teachers, none of us was sufficiently prepared to work with adult emergent readers and much of what we have done thus far entailed a level

of action research--identifying a problem, coming up with pedagogical solutions, and trying it out. However, we were doing so in isolation. While some language service providers working with refugee background adults do provide professional development support to their teachers, it often does not directly apply to work with LESLLA learners. Thus, one of the most important element of the PLC for all of us was the chance to get together with other teachers who could provide us context-specific input and feedback on the strategies we were trying out, the materials we were using, and the puzzles we were trying to solve. Steph believes that professional learning communities serve to empower teachers and validate their practices, and she said this was true of her experience in this PLC.

For Robyn, the one-on-one teaching can feel very isolated, so it was useful to get outside help when planning lessons and selecting strategies. In sharing, she was able to get immediate, face-to-face feedback on her recent lessons and suggestions for how to make a classroom goal (e.g., identifying onset letter-sounds) align with a student goal (e.g., learning to drive). Robyn identified the theme of keeping learning relevant as a guiding principle for this work. As she made continuous efforts to let this principle inform her practice, she found her identity as a teacher shifting to include many additional roles, including case manager, driving instructor, sous chef and friend.

As Robyn participated as an observer in our classrooms, she gained a sense of ease with entering students' homes and learning spaces. Professionally, she says those experiences gave her newfound confidence and prepared her for a job she just accepted, which requires her to meet new American families in their homes, conduct needs assessments, and connect them with community-based supports. She views this PD experience as a stepping-stone for her at a critical point in her career path.

8.2 THE CHALLENGE OF TIME

In order to partake in a PLC, participants have to want to commit, show up and support one another. Everyone realized up front that the time required of us for this PD experience would be significant, on top of all other commitments. However, even though we had to make time to attend, do our readings, engage in reflective writing, prepare lessons incorporating new strategies, and observe one another--we all agree that it was worth it.

Professional development opportunities are readily available for many teachers in the K-12 setting in our state, however teachers working with LESLLA students rarely receive the support they need to pursue LESLLA specific professional learning opportunities. Both Kim and Steph noted that once a teacher has been through a study circle, she is equipped with the skills to launch her own study circle. Though extra time for opportunities like this are not always on our side, we attest that the value of the experience was such that we hope to find time to start or join another PD group as we continue along our paths as TESOL professionals. Steph commented that it is simply something you have to identify as useful for you, and then create the opportunity for yourself. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) note, the ultimate goal of participation in a professional learning community is not to produce findings, but to "ultimately alter practice and social relationships in order to bring about fundamental change in classrooms, schools, districts, programs, and professional organizations" (p. 135).

9. CONCLUSION

There is ample evidence to support the efficacy of participation in professional learning communities, communities of practice, and collaborative inquiry for professional development. This opportunity has allowed us to reflect on our practice, engage meaningfully with research relevant to our context, and develop relationships with peers who are now our professional colleagues and friends.

Two points emerge as evident from this experience. First, L2 teacher education programs must be responsive to the changing learner profiles in our schools and communities. Teachers should be prepared to work with L2 adult learners with limited formal schooling and emerging literacy skills. We should continue to demand high standards for professionalization in the LESLLA teaching context and stand as advocates for the learners (Vinogradov, 2013). We assert that TESOL teacher education programs should include modules, if not entire courses devoted to preparing teachers to work with LESLLA learners through a focus on developing the five core domains of the LESLLA teacher knowledge base (Vinogradov, 2013). Faculty in MA TESOL programs could also seek to develop partnerships with local language service providers and cultivate professional development opportunities with community-based teachers. Secondly, LESLLA should continue its path toward becoming a professional organization to maintain the rate at which we can collectively continue to contribute to our growing understanding of this work through research, collaborations, curriculum and materials design, and conferences.

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WHEN STANDARDIZED TESTS FAIL:
ASSESSING ESL LITERACY LEARNERS IN CALIFORNIA

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ABSTRACT: In California, standardized language assessments are typically administered to adult English as a Second Language (ESL) students upon enrollment; students then take these same tests throughout the academic year to demonstrate progress. As these tests only assess listening and reading skills, schools often utilize their own agency-developed assessments to more accurately place students and subsequently to determine level promotion. Engaged in participatory action research, this study interviewed personnel at adult schools and learning centers, documenting the varying assessment policies and procedures employed at each facility, and highlighting the practices of ESL literacy instructors who devise their own measurements to track emerging literacy and oral language development in their students. This study underscores the discrepancies between the state's policies and actual pedagogical needs, and proposes ways to improve ESL assessment throughout the state.

KEYWORDS: literacy, adult learners, standardized testing, informal assessments, state assessment policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Every year over 200,000 adults in California enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at their local adult school (California Department of Education and the California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2015: web). As California adult schools generally offer up to six levels of ESL instruction, ESL assessments are administered during initial registration to inform new students' language proficiency and level. Students are then given periodic assessments to indicate progress and determine level promotion. However, many adult schools take issue with the current standardized assessment options and may choose to supplement or substitute these tests with internally created assessments to determine students' language abilities.

The goal of this study is to document the various ways adult schools and adult education agencies 1) determine ESL level during initial assessment, 2) track academic gain, and 3) set policies regarding level promotion, as well as 4) note additional considerations for assessing ESL literacy-level learners. This study underscores the local, informal assessment measurements and practices conducted by education agencies.

2. BACKGROUND

U.S. adult schools (public education programs for adults 18+), are required to use assessment tests approved by National Reporting Services (NRS) to receive federal payment points for student gain. There are three main standardized test batteries approved by the NRS for adult ESL reporting: Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Life and Work and Beginning Literacy assessments, BEST Literacy and BEST Plus 2.0, and TABE Complete Language Assessment System–English (TABE CLAS–E) (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2016: 19-21). CASAS, BEST and TABE CLAS-E are utilized not only for initial placement of new ESL students, but are also administered periodically to track student gains, which then inform level promotion.

The California Department of Education (CDE) has contracted with CASAS to collect and report all adult school data across the state since 1999 (CASAS, n.d -a: web). The CDE only accepts data measured by CASAS' Life and Work Reading and Listening series, as well as the Beginning Literacy Reading assessments. The CDE awards payment points to adult schools who can demonstrate student gain using these specific CASAS assessments (as well as EL Civics, which is not focused upon in this study). The source of such funds comes from Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (California Department of Education: web). Most adult schools receive the bulk of their funding from two sources – the Adult Education Block Grant, new monies (since 2015) meant to streamline adult education services between community colleges and adult schools, and the WIOA-based payment points, both which provide critical dollars to sustain adult education programs.

California adult schools can use any test they wish to assess their students; however, they will only receive funding for gains demonstrated using CASAS tests. While CASAS has developed additional oral and written assessments (the latter approved by the NRS), the CDE does not accept these measurements. By only accepting multiple-choice listening and reading tests, the student performance data does not provide a holistic profile of a student's linguistic proficiency.

Not only are these measurements limited in skill area, but there is concern regarding a lack of alignment between these standardized tests and classroom instruction (Van Horn, 1996: 15), (Askov et al., 1997: 68), (Menard-Warwick, 2009: 13-14). In California, there exist varying adult ESL standards from which schools may base their curriculum, including 1) the ESL Model Standards for Adult Education Programs, and 2) the new English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) for Adult Education, which correspond to 3) the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS); additionally, the CASAS tests are based on 4) the CASAS Competencies and CASAS Content Standards.

CASAS has developed content standards for five areas - Math, Reading, Listening, Writing, and Speaking- each with skills designated per level (CASAS, 2009). These exist side-by-side with the CASAS competencies, which include thematic areas such as

basic communication, health, community resources, employment, learning and thinking skills, and consumer economics (CASAS, 2008). The CASAS Life and Work and Beginning Literacy assessments, then, include both CASAS' standards and competencies. The CASAS Beginning Literacy Reading assessment (forms 27R and 28R) is the lowest level test available, and is appropriate for beginning ESL learners. Tasks on these assessments include a mix of literacy and life skills, such as matching upper case with lower case letters, matching a single word with an appropriate symbol (such as a women's restroom sign), or identifying U.S. currency.

In 2016, CASAS published new reading standards which will be reflected in a new test series (coming in 2018) which will be aligned with CCRS and the 2016 NRS Educational Functional Levels (CASAS, n.d.-b: web). Released in 2013, the CCRS emphasizes the 21st century skills necessary for academic and job place success (Pimentel, 2013: 1-2). However, the lowest level (Level A) is considered to span ESL Literacy through Beginning High (corresponding to grades K-1), and as such does not designate standards that are specific for ESL literacy students (Pimentel, 2013: 10). Correspondingly, the newly released ELPS are a set of 10 standards spanning five proficiency levels which highlight the language skills necessary for students to be successful in an academic-rich environment (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, 2016: 1-4).

Developed in 1992, the ESL Model Standards span 7 ESL levels, defining course content per the following categories for each level: accuracy, topics, culture, language skills, language functions, and language forms (California Department of Education, 1992: 21-39). Furthermore, these standards have an emphasis on life skills, covering topics such as medicine labels, banking, job ads, and housing. There is some level of overlap between the topics listed in the ESL Model Standards and the CASAS tests; for example, on CASAS test form 27R there are questions regarding personal information, time, numbers, and the calendar. However, the ESL Model Standards for literacy level students include topics such as family, cultural norms such as handshaking or waving, pragmatic skills such as showing gratitude, classroom commands such as "stand" and "sit," which are not included in the CASAS test battery. Furthermore, there is no mechanism for students to demonstrate level-appropriate writing skills incorporated in these same standards, such as copying and tracing. Conversely, the CASAS Beginning Literacy assessment includes items not included in ESL Model Standards, such as cursive writing, cooking measurements, and abbreviations.

In addition to issues of alignment, there is also the argument that standardized tests may not adequately assess students at the lowest ESL level (Wrigley & Guth, 1992: 135-136), (Burt & Keenan, 1995: n.p.), (Warriner, 2008: 315). It can take an extraordinary amount of time for an illiterate adult to gain literacy in a second language, and studies have shown it best to build oral skills first in to serve as the foundation for the forthcoming literacy skills (Croydon, 2005: 1), (Spiegel & Sunderland, 2006: 34). However, the approved adult ESL tests in California, which do not test speaking skills, fail to account for this critical oral language development. Furthermore, ESL literacy students may not yet possess the basic skills necessary to decode the current CASAS Beginning Literacy Assessment. Print tests alone are not an adequate measurement to document the multitude of gains made by such students as they pass through the various stages of acquiring literacy (Pettitt and Tarone, 2015: 35). Furthermore, for a true beginner, it can take an incredibly long time before having the ability to take a multiple-choice

test (Wrigley, 2001:4). Nonetheless, to gain federal benchmark dollars, a school has no option but to use the approved standardized tests.

It is common, then, for ESL practitioners to consider these standardized test results irrelevant given the test content and inadequacy to document student achievement (Askov et.al., 1997: 67), (Menard-Warwick 2009: 13-14). Consequently, many adult education agencies create their own informal tests to initially place students within their ESL program and to measure student gains throughout the academic year (Burt and Keenan, 1995: n.p.), (Askov et.al., 1997: 70), (Van Duzer & Berdan, 1999: n.p.). While informal assessments are incredibly under-researched, they provide a wealth of knowledge to the assessor and to the student themselves. Furthermore, the richness of using multiple measurements, including standardized tests as well as teacher observation and other demonstrations of language in context, provides a more comprehensive insight into a learner's proficiency (Shohamy, 2001: 389). However, school staff often lack the training required to develop reliable, valid test batteries, and as such their assessments may not capture what they intend to (Van Duzer & Berdan, 1999: n.p.). While such assessments provide critical insight into student performance, they must align to the standards, provide diagnostic information, be fair, and demonstrate technical quality, utility, and feasibility (Abedi, 2010: 185-188). Yet, without proper training and an agreement on what the standards are, each staff member is at risk of interpreting student work differently than their colleagues (Leung & Lewkowicz, 2006: 221-2).

3. RESEARCH STUDY

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How is an adult ESL student's language level determined during initial intake and placement in California's adult schools?
2. What are the individual school policies for level promotion of adult ESL students?
3. What sorts of additional assessments have schools and instructors implemented to supplement standardized testing, and how much importance is given to these informal assessments vs. standardized testing?
4. What additional considerations are present when assessing and promoting adult ESL literacy level learners?

Applying a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, I utilized my existing community of adult education practitioners who shared their experiences at their respective sites. In Part I, interviews were conducted with 10 California adult school principals, vice-principals, assessment specialists, and ESL Coordinators at 8 different California adult schools. In Part II, 11 shorter interviews were conducted with ESL literacy teachers in California with regards to how they assess their learners. These interviews consisted of 8 ESL literacy level instructors at 6 adult schools (one who is also counted above in their role as ESL Coordinator), one instructor at a non-credit continuing education program, and two individuals from community based organizations who both held ESL instructional as well as administrative roles. It was a purposeful decision to include ESL literacy instructors at both adult schools as well as other adult learning facilities as adult ESL literacy students are particularly under-researched (Bigelow & Tarone,

2004: 689-690), (Tarone, 2010: 82). Furthermore, ESL literacy students initially often do not have the minimal skills required to take standardized tests, so it is imperative to document the alternative ways these instructors track their students' progress.

All interviews took place during the spring of 2016, and were conducted either face to face, via telephone, Skype, or email. The notes from the interviews were then analyzed for common themes, such as type of assessment task, skill area, opinion regarding formal vs. informal assessments, and suggestions for improvement locally or statewide.

4. RESULTS

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICIES IN CALIFORNIA ADULT SCHOOLS

4.1.1. *Initial Placement*

In California adult schools, initial ESL placement assessment systems tend to vary, using both standardized and informal measurements. Of the eight schools interviewed, only one school solely utilized agency-created tests to assess oral and writing proficiency; conversely, only two schools solely used CASAS tests and procedures to determine students' placement levels. The other five schools utilized a combination of agency-created and standardized assessments, including CASAS tests, structured/semi-structured/unstructured oral assessments or interviews, formal and informal writing samples, agency-created level tests, and other standardized tests, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Type of Assessments Administered	# of Adult Schools
CASAS listening assessment only	1
CASAS dictation and CASAS oral interview script, along with CASAS reading and Math tests	1
Agency-created oral and written assessment only	1
Internal oral interview and writing prompt, other standardized tests and CASAS reading and listening test	1
Internal oral interview and writing prompt in addition to CASAS reading test	3
Agency-created listening and reading/grammar at the beginning of school year, and CASAS tests throughout rest of school year	1

Table 1: Determining Initial Placement Level

Type of Agency-Developed Assessment	# of Adult Schools
Oral	5
Written	5
Listening	1
Reading/grammar	1

Table 2: Agency-Developed Assessments Utilized During Initial Placement

The high usage of CASAS assessments is not surprising, as under current policy California adult schools receive payment points from the CDE when student gain is demonstrated. Nonetheless, it appears most participants felt the CASAS assessment alone was not an accurate method of determining ESL level. In all but one case, adult schools added their own agency-created assessments or, as was the case at one adult school, did not utilize the CASAS assessments at all. One interviewee specified that their internal ESL levels did not correlate with CASAS levels, and another stated that the classroom content did not match the content of the assessments. These agency-created initial placement assessments generally focused on active skills (speaking and writing) which, given that the CDE has only approved CASAS reading and listening assessments, seemed to be a clear display of supplementation.

4.1.2. Accommodations for ESL Literacy Learners

Two sites aimed to locate incoming ESL literacy students early on during initial registration. One coordinator stated they intended to alleviate "anxiety" often felt by ESL literacy students going through the registration process. Another participant sought to avoid a situation in which an ESL literacy student was surrounded by a roomful of new students busily taking an assessment test, and might therefore feel uncomfortable to reveal their own inability to do the same in such a public setting. Both stated they identified such students by noticing who had difficulty filling out the initial registration form; one site employed a technique of approaching students waiting in line for registration, asking questions such as, "Zero English?" "No ABC?"

A few sites ensured that their agency-created assessments included level-appropriate tasks for ESL literacy learners. For example, one site designed a special writing assessment which included having literacy students write the alphabet, copy words, and respond to a picture prompt. Five sites implemented some sort of internally-created oral assessment in the form of an interview, which allowed ESL literacy learners to demonstrate their oral English proficiency.

4.1.3. General Level Promotion Policies

There was no consistent policy regarding ESL level promotion among the schools interviewed. There were only two schools who solely used CASAS scores for promotion. Of these, one participant stated there was continual pressure from administrators to promote students whose CASAS reading scores indicated level promotion, even if their instructors insisted that the student was at or below level in other skill areas. At the other six sites, administrators understood that CASAS scores were but a single indicator of student level, and as such had developed or were developing more comprehensive methods of determining level promotion. Table 3 shows the varying ways in which an adult school facility decided to promote an adult ESL student to the next level. There was a strong preference towards teacher discretion to determine level promotion, being a single teacher's choice or some collective teacher process.

Criteria	# of Adult Schools
CASAS Score only	2
Teacher discretion only	2
Exit criteria collaboratively developed by teachers	2
Teachers meet once per quarter to discuss who should be promoted	1
Internal teacher-created level test scores in combination with EL Civics scores and other classroom assessments	1

Table 3: Determining Level Promotion – Administrator Responses

4.2. ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF ESL LITERACY INSTRUCTORS IN CALIFORNIA

4.2.1. Use of CASAS Standardized Test Data

10 of the 11 ESL literacy instructors worked in schools which utilized CASAS tests. Of those 10 instructors, three stated they use CASAS competency reports as a general indication of subjects that need review, another three indicated they only used such data to confirm student progress, and one instructor said they used this data 'sparingly.' Three instructors did not use CASAS reports - one because they were not given such reports, and another because their community-based agency hand-scored CASAS tests and did not have access to competency reports.

4.2.2. Tracking Progress of ESL Literacy Learners

These same ESL literacy instructors were asked what assessments they perform in the classroom to measure student gain. While 10 out of 11 instructors mentioned general observation of students in-class, overall there was no consistent method used. Table 4 shows the varying responses, which include both formative (speaking with ease, homework assignments, daily journal) as well as summative (textbook unit tests, EL Civics objectives) assessments.

Skill Area	Assessment Type	# of Instructors
ALL	General observation of students in-class	10
	EL Civics	2
	Level checklist or gradebook	1
	Agency-created pre- and post-tests	1
	Results from ESL software program	1
Writing/Listening	Spelling tests/dictation	3

Skill Area	Assessment Type	# of Instructors
Writing	Copying correctly	1
	Teacher-created writing assessment	1
	Daily writing journal	1
	Portfolio of student work	1
Reading/Writing	Correcting homework/handouts	4
	General quizzes	1
	Textbook unit test	1
Reading/Speaking	Can read aloud	1
Speaking	Pronunciation	1
	Speaking with ease	2
	Periodic audio-recording of students	1
Speaking/Listening	Teacher-created oral assessment	1
	Conversation task	1
	Asking/answering questions	1
Listening	General comprehension	2
	No assessments at this level	1

Table 4: Tracking Student Progress in the Classroom – Instructor Responses

Aside from ‘general observation’ of student performance, we see few overlapping responses. However, when grouped by skill area, we observe a greater focus on writing (8 responses) and speaking (7 responses) performance.

4.2.3. Promotion Policies for ESL Literacy Students

Earlier results indicated that adult school administrators, assessment specialists and ESL coordinators overwhelmingly favored teacher discretion in determining ESL level promotion. Correspondingly, six ESL literacy instructors stated they had the authority to decide when their students were promoted. The others either taught a multilevel class (where promotion did not occur), worked at a facility where CASAS scores exclusively warranted promotion, or simply did not provide a response. Table 5 highlights responses from the instructors who held the authority to determine student promotion, and the subjective and/or objective criteria they used.

<p>“Nothing formal. My gut based on observation, I guess. When a student is quickly finishing written work, seems to understand most of what I am saying, is leaning over to help the student next to him/her, is translating what I am saying for another student - it's time to go!”</p>
<p>“There is no fixed metric...when their oral English skills (and even their written English) improves to a certain point we can't keep them stuck in a class where they are learning numbers and “mother/father/brother sister” all the time.”</p>
<p>Course completion requirements, including: 80% average score on unit tests and spelling tests; 70% minimum score on writing assessment – teacher's use a rubric; minimum CASAS score of 185; EL Civics objective pass or other speaking assessment). “It is often clear when a student is ready (e.g. finishes work quickly, knows all the answers).”</p>
<p>“Students are promoted if they can:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand and follow basic oral instructions in English (for example: Stand up. Point to the chair.) 2. Answer questions with “Yes” or “No” about topics studied in class. 3. Answer personal questions in English. 4. Ask basic questions practiced in class. 5. Read and write numbers and letters in English. 6. Read, copy, and write some words in English. 7. Write 15 or more words in one minute. 8. Complete a simple form with personal information. <p>In addition, some grasp of personal pronouns and the verb To Be. Pronunciation is adequate enough to be understood.”</p>
<p>“When the student finishes each task quickly and looks around, when the student asks me in English to go to another level and explains why, when the student show self-confidence and helps other students who are struggling, when the student writes with speed and clarity, when the student is able to ask and answer questions quickly demonstrating comprehension, when the student uses the material learned in the classroom.”</p>
<p>“When I consider advancing students I evaluate on their classroom performance, confidence...they usually respond... If they have a good grasp of the language, understand readily, do consistently well on spelling tests and worksheets, and have an appropriate casas score then I confirm they are ready to advance.”</p>

Table 5: Personal Responses Regarding Level Promotion of Literacy Students

We can see a few overlapping themes in their answers, such as a student's demonstration of speed and comprehension. Once again there was an emphasis on active skills; writing and speaking performance far dominated in the interviewees' answers. Spelling tests, writing assessments, speaking assessments, asking and answering questions, pronunciation, and copying were common themes. Furthermore, there was mention of less measurable criteria, such as a student displaying confidence and helping others.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

California provides adults schools with much autonomy with regards to classroom instruction. There is no federal pressure over which standards to use, and no state con-

trolled curriculum. Given this freedom, schools and instructors may choose to create their own internal assessment measures and systems to supplement standardized assessments. However, collectively there is a lack of continuity in our assessment procedures, as well as concern regarding the validity of our methods. Taking the results of this study into account, what follows is a summary of recommendations.

5.1 MORE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS FOR PLACEMENT AND TRACKING STUDENT GROWTH

In this study, most of the schools invested funds to develop their own internal assessment measures to obtain a more comprehensive representation of the student's ESL level, emphasizing that standardized tests alone did not provide enough of a holistic student profile. These agency-created measurements were used to inform initial ESL placement as well as determine when a student's performance merits level promotion. Given that the CDE has only approved CASAS reading and listening tests, it is suggested that adult schools be allowed to use speaking and writing assessments as an additional option, to provide a more complete picture of a student's language ability. This would allow schools to measure students' abilities and growth in all skill areas, in accordance with either the ESL Model Standards, the CASAS Competencies and Content Standards, CCRS, and/or ELPS. Furthermore, since ESL literacy level students often do not possess the basic skills necessary to take the CASAS reading or listening tests, the schools would benefit from some way to document students' verbal and written gains as they progress through the various stages of English oral proficiency and literacy acquisition. As such, instead of the current one- or two-skill assessment approach, a focus on multi-skill assessments is encouraged.

One option is to use existing CASAS writing and speaking assessments. Additionally, alternative assessments could be developed that are in alignment with the content standards for ESL literacy, such as documenting the ability to trace and copy (writing skills), tracking phonemic decoding skills in oral reading tasks, or responding to basic conversation dialogues. Ideally, these additional assessments would also be approved by the CDE to formally recognize the student's achievements in these crucial skill areas. To approve such tests should not imply that these tests are mandated; instead, it would simply provide a formal mechanism to evaluate student growth if desired.

5.2. TRAINING FOR PRACTITIONERS ON QUANTIFYING PROGRESS IN THE ESL LITERACY CLASSROOM

Calls have been made for our field to develop adequate and uniform assessment measures for literacy learners (Wrigley, 2001: 5) and students deserve to demonstrate their progress via quantifiable, incremental measurements beyond the personal observation of the instructor. In this study, one instructor mentioned students finishing tasks 'quickly.' But what does 'quickly' signify, and how can we mutually agree on this term? For example, one ESL literacy instructor in this study expected their student to be able 'to write 15 words per minute.' By replacing the term 'quickly' with a quantifiable measurement (ie, 15 words), student performance can now be measured and shared, as opposed to simply being subjectively determined. Other instructors mentioned assessments which were quantifiable, such as periodic audio-recordings to track oral progress (tracking lexical

and syntactic gains, for example), or maintaining student portfolios to compare student writing improvements (length, penmanship, grammar, etc). By quantifying expectations of student performance, we then provide tangible goals to the student while documenting calculable gains. Therefore, practitioners would benefit from a training on how to quantify their informal evaluations of students. These measurements can then be shared with the student, the administrator, and across agencies, thereby enriching our current bank of assessment tools throughout our region.

6. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this study, 20 individuals representing many facets of adult education in California discussed issues of adult ESL assessments; however, this represents an extremely small portion of all adult schools and adult education centers in the state of California. It would be of great benefit to expand this study to include a larger number of participants, allowing for more comprehensive data. Furthermore, the conversation must be taken beyond the simplistic four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) framework and discuss where pragmatics, pronunciation, and other "real" language skills fall into the assessment conversation. While limited, I hope the findings from this study provide useful insight into adult second language assessment.

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GIVING LESLLA LEARNERS A FAIR CHANCE IN TESTING

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ABSTRACT: LESLLA learners have two specific challenges, which both affect their results on language tests: their lack of general literacy on the one hand, and their lack of test literacy on the other. Both challenges need to be taken into account when large-scale language test developers design their tests in order to give LESLLA learners a fair chance to show their language abilities. This paper shows how *Skills Norway (Kompetanse Norge)* has worked to construct a standardized language test that gives this group of learners a fair chance. The results presented in this paper show that despite some room for improvement, we are on the right track towards a fair test for this group of learners. A main point of the paper is that in order to construct a fair test for LESLLA learners, collaboration between test developers and LESLLA teachers and researchers is necessary.

KEYWORDS: standardized tests, LESLLA learners, fairness, justice, test literacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

LESLLA learners have long been part of the immigrant population, but until recently, they have not formed a significant part of the population who take large scale, standardized tests. The past five to ten years, however, this has begun to change and it has become increasingly common for policy makers to set formal language requirements for citizenship and permanent residency, as well as for entrance to the labour market (Extramina et al., 2014). This is the case in Norway as well as the rest of Europe and beyond. Such requirements apply to all immigrants, LESLLA learners included. Adult L2-learners with little or no prior schooling and limited, literacy skills, have some specific challenges when it comes to learning a second language (e.g. Tarone et al., 2009) as well as when it comes to performing well on language tests (Allemano, 2013; Carlsen et al., 2013). The focus of this paper, is to show how test developers at *Skills Norway*

(*Kompetanse Norge*), are working in order to give LESLLA learners a fair chance in testing by taking this group and into account when planning and developing the test of Norwegian for adult immigrants.

2. JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS IN LANGUAGE TESTING

As language testers, we develop tests that have a great impact on the lives and opportunities of certain members of society. However, language testers do *not* usually make the political decision that a test be introduced or decide who has to take it, what function the test will have in society, and how the results will be used and by whom. Integration policymakers, education policymakers, or even employers, make the choices that decide the impact of the tests we make.

Samuel Messick's definition of validity has been highly influential in language testing and assessment since it was first introduced in 1989. Its innovation was its focus on the social consequences of test scores, and its emphasis that validation studies should not limit themselves to investigations of whether or not a test measures what it is supposed to measure, but encompass the interpretation and use of test results. Despite the obvious advantages of including test use and consequences in the definition of validity, it places an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of language test developer. No matter how much we may want our tests to be door openers for those who take them, no matter what we may think about the use of language tests for citizenship or for permanent residence, these are decisions that are out of our hands.

In light of this, I find McNamara and Ryan's distinction between justice and fairness in language testing extremely useful. In their terms, *justice* is a matter of social and political values of test constructs, and it has to do with the way others choose to use the tests or the scores of tests:

Questions of the *justice* of tests include considerations of the consequential basis of test score interpretation and use but also, and particularly, the social and political values implicit in test construct (McNamara & Ryan, 2011: 167).

Justice questions regard matters such as whether or not it is just to use language tests for university admission, whether or not it is just to use language tests as gate-keepers to certain professions or to the labour market in general and whether or not it is just to set language requirements for citizenship, for permanent residency, for family reunification, or for entrance to the host country. Similarly, justice applies to whether it is just or not to set such requirements for all immigrants, the low-educated and refugees.

Fairness, however, has to do with ensuring that all candidates have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their skills, in this case, language skills. It has to do with the absence of bias, i.e. of systematic discrimination of certain groups for reasons other than differences in the skill being measured (Kunnan, 2007; Shaw & Imam, 2013). If a language test favours people with certain professions, one gender over the other, people from western societies over people from other parts of the world etc., the test is unfair. Important fairness questions are for instance whether the test measures language ability in a stable and reliable way, whether test developers provide sufficient preparatory material for candidates to know what is expected of them, whether test scores are communicated

in an understandable way to all users, i.e. to learners, teachers, employers and policy makers, thereby preventing the misuse of test scores due to a lack of understanding of what the scores mean. It is uncontroversial to claim, as we do in this paper, that it is the responsibility of language test developers to guarantee that their test yields fair results, is not biased and gives everybody an equal chance to show their abilities, and herein lies the focus of this paper.

3. LESLLA LEARNERS' DOUBLE CHALLENGE

Several studies have shown that LESLLA learners perform significantly worse on verbal tests than test takers with more schooling (Kim et al., 2014). Ostrosky-Solis et al. (1998) and Allemano (2013), among others, claim that LESLLA learners' lack of success on verbal tests is a consequence, not only of a deficit in the ability being tested, but also of a lack of experience with the testing situation itself. Ostrosky-Solis et al. argue that "[...] testing itself represents a nonsense situation that illiterate subjects may find surprising and absurd" (Ostrosky-Solis et al. 1998: 657), a claim which is echoed by Allemano (2013: 67) who says that "[a] major barrier to assessment of beginner readers seems to be the examination process itself". These studies indicated that, when developing a language test which is fair for LESLLA learners, we need to take into account their double challenge in testing: their lack of general literacy, i.e. lack of reading and writing skills' on the one hand, and their lack of testing literacy, i.e. their lack of test experience and test strategies, often referred to as test-wisness, on the other.

The degree of test literacy necessary to perform a certain test task, will vary according to the kind of task you are asked to perform: task types range from those which are similar to tasks one would perform in so-called "real-life", to those which require a large degree of prior test taking experience in order to understand what is expected. Research results showing which tasks LESLLA learners have particular problems with, are of great value to language test developers. For example, research has shown that LESLLA learners have limited metalinguistic awareness of phonological and other structural features of language (Homer, 2009; Kurvers et al. 2006, Kurvers & Uri 2006; Olson, 2002; Read et al.1986). Connected to this is their poor recognition of pseudo-words (Kosmidis et al., 2004; Tarone, 2010). Knowing this, it is obvious that more artificial, inauthentic tasks like cloze tests, C-tests or nonsense-word tests, discriminate against LESLLA learners. On the other hand, it should be noted that authenticity or real-life-likeness, does not guarantee that a test task is suitable for LESLLA learners. So-called integrated tests, where candidates listen to an audio clip, read a text, look at pictures or graphs, and reply in writing, are popular because of their resemblance with how we use language outside the test situation. Here too we need to be cautious: while integrated tests may work well for advanced learners, for instance as a university admission test, we could argue that it is highly inappropriate as a task type for LESLLA learners in a high stakes test. This is because their lack of reading and writing experience would in

1. In this paper, I build on Tarone et al.'s (2009) definition of literacy as alphabetic print literacy.

such a test, make it impossible for them to show their competence in oral skills. We will return to this point later in this paper.

4. TEACHING AND TESTING OF NORWEGIAN TO ADULT IMMIGRANTS

In Norway, refugees, asylum seekers, and those in the family-reunification program have the right, as well as the obligation, to follow courses of Norwegian and knowledge of society (KOS). The courses consist of 550 hours of language, and 50 hours of KOS, and KOS is given in a language the learners understand. Courses are free of charge. After the courses, participants take a compulsory language test as well as a KOS-test; the KOS-test is developed in 28 minority languages (Vox, 2012). Adult immigrants are divided into three different teaching tracks depending on their degree of prior schooling or education. These tracks have different speeds and different learning goals. Track 3 is for those with a medium to long educational background. The courses are intensive and the aims are relatively high (level B1 in both oral and written skills). Track 2 has medium progression and somewhat lower learning aims (levels A2 or B1 in both oral and written skills). Track 1 is for low-educated learners, and as formulated in the curriculum, this is a heterogeneous group:

Track 1 is tailored to participants with little or no prior schooling, some of whom will have no literacy skills, while others will be able to read, but have little experience in using the written language as a tool for learning [...]. (Vox, 2012: 8, own translation)

Track 1-learners, or LESLLA learners, can get up to 3000 hours of tuition free of charge, progression is slower than in the other tracks, and learning goals for the written skills are lower (A1 or A2 in written skills), while they are the same as for Track 2 in the oral skills (A2 or B1).

The Test of Norwegian for adult immigrants (*Norskprøven for voksne innvandrere*, hereafter *Norskprøven*), is based on the *Curriculum of Norwegian for adult immigrants* (Vox, 2012) and on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (hereafter CEFR, CoE, 2001), and it measures at levels Below A1, A1, A2, B1 and B2. *Norskprøven* is a standardized test, administered twice a year, and has around 20 000 test candidates per year. It measures the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking in four separate tests. The tests of listening, reading, and writing are on computer, and the tests of listening and reading are partly adaptive (van der Linden & Glas 2000) in that the concept that all learners, regardless of their level of proficiency, start out with items at the same level, but depending on how well they perform on the first items, they will get a test tailored to their level of proficiency. This way, LESLLA learners avoid having to face tasks that are beyond their reach, and advanced level test takers will not have to perform too many low-level tasks, which they may find dull and irrelevant. The oral test is a paired format test where two candidates talk to each other in certain tasks, and alone in others, to avoid an asymmetrical conversation between a candidate and an examiner, and at the same time ensure that all candidates get a chance to show their abilities. Their oral performance is scored locally by trained raters according to a common rating grid, while the written performances are scored centrally.

Since its introduction, *Norskprøven* has gradually become more high-stakes: Norwegian tests have been compulsory following Norwegian courses since autumn 2013,

but for a while, there were no sanctions if one did not manage a certain level on the test. This changed in 2015 when the government, consisting of the Conservative party and the right-wing Progress Party, introduced a series of restrictions with the purpose of “[...] making it less attractive to apply for asylum in Norway” (Regjeringen 2015). From January 2017, immigrants who want to apply for Norwegian citizenship, LESLLA learners and others, have to prove a certain level of oral Norwegian as well as passing the KOS-test, in Norwegian. Similar requirements have been agreed for permanent residency and family reunification, but with a lower level requirement in Norwegian and a KOS-test in one of the 28 minority language versions of the test.

5. TAKING LESLLA LEARNERS INTO ACCOUNT IN TEST DEVELOPMENT

Making a standardized test for adult immigrants, which takes LESLLA learners into account, was a new experience for the test developers in *Skills Norway*. Before 2013, we only had a test measuring language from level A2 and above, and LESLLA learners only took a test if they wanted to or if their teachers considered it likely that they were at an A2-level in all four skills, which was a prerequisite in order to pass the test. When the test was made compulsory in September 2013, we knew we needed to make some changes for the test to be fair for all test takers, including the new candidate group of low-educated learners. Given our limited experience with this group, we needed help. Therefore, we invited LESLLA teachers to meet and discuss test formats, the structure of the tests and concrete tasks with us. We established a reference group of LESLLA teachers, and we also invited LESLLA learners to give their comments on tasks and task response formats. In September 2015 we carried out a survey among LESLLA teachers to get their opinions about how the test and the tasks worked for LESLLA learners, the results of which will be presented later in this paper.

Let's return to LESLLA learners' two challenges as presented in the introduction of this paper; the lack of general literacy on the one hand, and the lack of test literacy on the other.

For test developers to meet the first challenge, it's paramount to ensure that candidates' limited reading and writing skills do not affect scores on listening and oral production tests (oral skills). To avoid reading skills in the oral tests, we introduced the use pictures both as task prompts and as task responses. We use pictures of a situation, for example a father cooking, a mother setting the table, a girl playing with a cat, a boy watching TV, a brother and sister quarrelling, etc., to allow candidates at lower levels to name objects in the picture, but at the same time providing the opportunity to candidates at A2 and B1-levels to describe what the people are doing, relations between the people in the picture, and, for example, the emotions they are showing. In the listening task, we use the same kind of picture but ask candidates to listen and to follow the instructions: “Click on the cat”, or “Click on the person who is cooking”. We also use pictures as task responses and distractors, for example in a listening task where candidates listen to a text and then choose one of four pictures that matches what they hear. Skills Norway has hired an illustrator who works full time and in close collaboration with the item writers. This is a great advantage for us. It is hard to find pictures or drawings that are suitable, and having an illustrator working with the item-writers makes it much easier. It also means that we can order pictures containing just the right vocabulary at different

levels of proficiency, and we can make sure the pictures contain no content that may be provocative or sensitive.

Measuring the four language skills in separate tests yielding independent test scores is of paramount importance in order to give LESLLA learners a fair chance in testing. Probably the most important message the reader should take away from this paper is that even though integrated tasks measuring reading, listening, writing, and maybe speaking, in the same task, may well be authentic and well suited for educated learners, it may be disastrous for LESLLA learners, hindering them from showing their real abilities in listening and speaking. In addition, a test measuring the four skills separately allows candidates to re-sit only parts of the test. If for instance candidates get the score they need in speaking and listening, they would not need to take those parts again because they didn't get the score they needed in writing or reading. The tests of Norwegian prior to the current test, only had pass/fail-scoring. This was very demotivating for the LESLLA learners, some of whom after up to 3000 hours did not get a certificate because they failed the written production part and therefore failed it all. A test that takes LESLLA learners seriously should measure also at the lower levels, A1 or below A1. It is particularly important that learners with slow learning progress get a chance to take a test that shows their incremental improvement.

The second challenge we had to take into consideration, was LESLLA learners' lack of test literacy, i.e. their lack of experience with the test situation. It is a central principle in all assessment that the test measure the skill in question, for example language, and be influenced as little as possible by irrelevant skills or abilities. Test-wiseness is a construct-irrelevant factor in a language test (Bachman, 1990:114). This principle is even more important to bear in mind when LESLLA learners form part of the test population. Firstly, we have consciously avoided using artificial task types like C-tests, nonsense-word-tests or cloze-tests. As far as possible, we try to use test types that are authentic in Spolsky's sense, i.e. meaningful and relevant (Spolsky, 1985). We also try, as far as possible, to avoid hypothetical tasks that require candidates to imagine a situation: When given a written production task, for instance, it is easier for LESLLA learners to respond to a prompt like: "Write a text about what you like to eat for dinner", than to a prompt like: "Imagine that you are inviting some friends over. What would you make for dinner?". Our prior experience in test development, as well as LESLLA teachers, have stressed the importance of avoiding hypothetical tasks and making it as simple and concrete as possible to limit the effect of test literacy.

For candidates with limited schooling and little prior test experience, it is more important than for other groups to know what is expected on the day of the test. It is always important to have ample practice material, for test takers, but for LESLLA learners it is indispensable. Before *Norskprøven* was administered for the first time, practice materials illustrating every task format that candidates would meet, were made available online. We also made available benchmark texts written by learners at the different levels of the test, and we video-recorded the oral exam so that candidates could see how this part of the test worked in practice and could get familiar with the tasks types they would encounter in the real test. The purpose of this was two-fold: to make candidates familiar with the test tasks, and thereby reduce the effect of test literacy on test scores, and, to reduce stress and anxiety, which might introduce another source of construct irrelevant variance to the test-score.

Skills Norway has chosen not to allow the use of electronic spell check, grammar check and/or a dictionary in the written production test, as we fear it would introduce another source of construct irrelevant variance, that is, another non-linguistic skill candidates would need to master. We fear that this would be an advantage to the more educated candidates, who might already have these skills, but a disadvantage to the low-educated ones, who would not. To our knowledge, little research has been carried out on the use of electronic aids during computerized tests by LESLLA learners, but at present a pilot study with the aim of gaining more insight into this area being conducted at Skills Norway (Lauvik, 2016).

5.1. RESULTS

So far, this paper has presented how we have worked in order to give LESLLA learners a fair chance when tested. In the next part of the paper, we will look at some results in an attempt to answer the question of whether or not we succeeded. Firstly, we will look at some analyses of how LESLLA-candidates performed as compared to candidates with a higher level of schooling. Secondly, we will look at the results of a survey amongst nearly 60 LESLLA teachers asking them about their opinions related to both the test system, the test tasks and the consequences of *Norskprøven* on LESLLA learners.

5.2. TEST SCORES

Figure 1 displays mean scores across skills and tracks: The CEFR-levels have been transferred into numeric scores to allow for calculation of the mean.

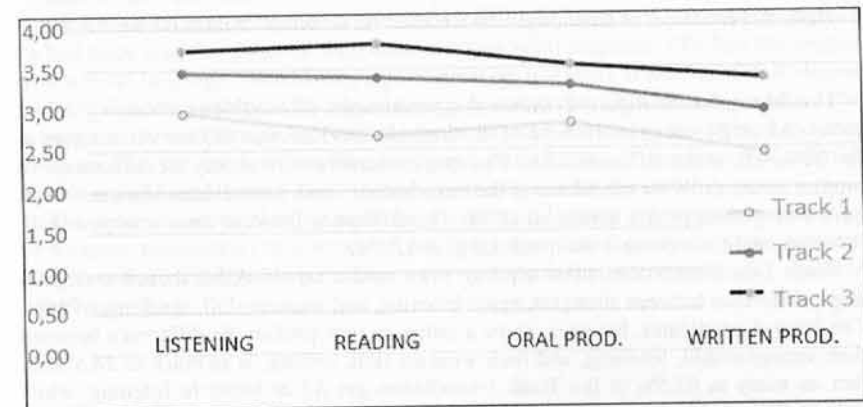


Figure 1: Mean Scores across Skills and Tracks.

Track 1 = LESLLA-learners, Track 2 = medium school background, Track 3 = lengthy school background. CEFR-scores were converted to numerical variables to allow calculation of means: 4=B1, 3=A2, 2=A1, 1= Below A1.

As is obvious from the graph, there are differences in scores between the three tracks for all four skills, and the effect of track on test scores is significant at the $p < .001$ level for all skills: Track 1 (LESLLA learners) perform the lowest, Track 3 the highest on all skills. In addition, we can see that the profile of the Track 1-candidates differ somewhat from the profiles of the more educated learners: Both Track 2- and Track 3-candidates perform better in the receptive skills than in the productive skills, while the Track 1-candidates perform better in oral production than they do in reading. Track 1-candidates perform better in listening than in reading, while the opposite is true for the Track 3-candidates.

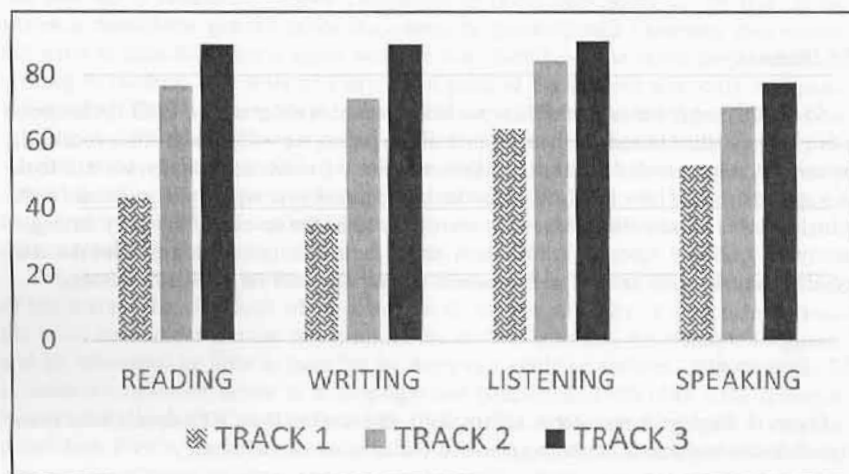


Figure 2: Percentages of Candidates who Obtained A2 or Better across Skills and Tracks.

This histogram in Figure 2 shows the percentages of candidates obtaining A2 or better (A2 or B1, since at the time of the analysis, *Norskprøven* did not yet measure at the B2-level), in the different skills. This graph visualizes very clearly the differences in profiles across skills for candidates of the three tracks: Track 3-candidates (dark columns) have a very even profile across all skills. The difference between their strongest skill, listening, and their poorest skill, speaking, is 12.6%.

Track 2-candidates also show a pretty even profile across skills, though a slightly larger difference between strongest, again listening, and weakest skill, speaking, of 14%. The Track 1-candidates, however, show a rather uneven profile: the difference between their strongest skill, listening, and their weakest skill, writing, is as much as 28.5%. In fact, as many as 63.5% of the Track 1-candidates get A2 or better in listening, while only 35.2% get A2 or better in writing.

This graph shows two things: Firstly, it underlines the importance of measuring the four skills separately in order to give LESLLA learners a fair chance to show their abilities, and secondly, it shows that Skills Norway has succeeded in giving LESLLA learners a chance to do exactly this. If we had measured integrated skills, or if we had, like we used to, required candidates to pass all subtests in order to get a test score,

only 35.2% would have succeeded. Instead, LESLLA-candidates and others can obtain good scores in, listening and speaking, whilst working to improve their writing and reading skills, if needed.

N=2082	% of score variance explained by Track	Sig.
Reading	23,9%	$p < .000$
Writing	18,4%	$p < .000$
Listening	13,4%	$p < .000$
Speaking	13%	$p < .000$

Figure 3: Nominal Regression Analysis of Track Effect on Skills.

Nominal regression analysis shows how much of the score variance is explained by track. The analysis shows that there are significant effects of tracks for all four skills at a $p < .000$ -level. In addition, it shows the largest effects for the two skills that require literacy, reading and writing. Again, this analysis shows that we have succeeded in isolating the oral skills and preventing LESLLA learners' scores to be negatively affected by their lack of general literacy.

5.3. RESULTS – LESLLA TEACHER SURVEY

In September 2015, a year after *Norskprøven* was introduced, a survey among LESLLA teachers was carried out to solicit their opinions about the test regarding: 1) the test system, 2) the test tasks, and 3) the consequences of the test for LESLLA learners. 53 Track 1-teachers replied to the survey. They were highly qualified and experienced; 45% had more than five years of experience teaching adult migrants, 75% had Norwegian as a second language (second language acquisition research) in their academic degree and 51% had experience with administering *Norskprøven* for LESLLA learners (The reason why this percentage isn't higher may be because the survey was carried out only one year after the test was first introduced, and many LESLLA learners would still not have reached a level where they would be prepared to take the test).

The teachers were asked to reply on a Likert scale from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely) to a series of positively formulated questions about the test. The results are displayed in percentages of respondents that *Agree mostly* (4) or *Agree completely* (5).

	Agree mostly/completely
1. It's good that the test measures the four skills separately	100 %
2. It's good that you can re-sit only parts of the test	100 %
3. It's good that the test is computer-adaptive	98 %
4. It's good that the test is not pass/fail	89 %
5. It's sufficient information about the test	85 %
6. It's good that no electronic aid is allowed	72 %
7. Sufficient example material is provided	47 %
8. It's good that candidates take all four skills the first time	40 %
9. It's good that the test is digital	40 %

Table 1: Questions² about the Test System.

As the table above shows, teachers are very pleased that the test measures the four skills separately and that candidates need only re-sit parts of the test. 98% think it is good that the test is adaptive and 89% think it is good that everybody obtains a score instead of pass/fail. Most of the teachers think candidates receive enough information about the test, and 72% agree with the test developers' opinion that it is better not to allow electronic aids for LESLLA-candidates. On a less positive side, only 47% think there is enough practice material, and only 40% are in favour of the (political) decision that everybody has to sit for all four parts of the test the first time they take it. In addition, only 40% think it's good for LESLLA learners that the test is digital. This may however be due to the fact that they were asked only a year after the test was administered the first time, and LESLLA learners may need more time to familiarize themselves with using a computer. Note that this contradicts the responses to the fourth question shown above, that to be able to use a computer is a prerequisite for computer-adaptive testing, which 98% of the LESLLA teachers applauded.

2. The questions were translated from Norwegian to English for the purpose of this paper.

	Agree mostly/completely
1. It's good that <i>Norskprøven</i> uses pictures as prompts	96 %
2. It's important that the tasks are not hypothetical	96 %
3. It's important that the task aren't provocative or sensitive	96 %
4. It's good that <i>Norskprøven</i> uses pictures as task responses	94 %
5. The oral interaction task functions well	82 %
6. It's good that the oral exam uses paired format (candidate-candidate)	79 %
7. The test works well on a whole	77 %
6. Describe picture task works well in the oral production task	77 %
9. It's good that the examiner can be the candidates' own teacher	73 %
10. Describe picture task works well in the written production task	67 %
11. It's easy for LESLLA-candidates to understand what to do on the tasks	62 %
12. LESLLA-candidates have enough time for the written production test	41 %

Table 2: Questions about the Test Tasks.

Almost all teachers are pleased with the use of pictures as prompts (96%) and task responses (94%), and they are relatively pleased with the oral test and the measures we have taken to reduce stress and anxiety, such as including a paired format and allowing the candidates' teacher to be the examiner. The only question regarding test tasks where teachers were more negative, was the time allocated to the written production tasks. Only 41 % of the LESLLA teachers thought their learners had enough time to write. As a consequence of this feedback, we decided to augment the time with 1/3 from 60 to 90 minutes from November 2015.

	Agree mostly/completely
1. <i>Norskprøven</i> has a positive washback effect on teaching and learning for this group	67 %
2. It's motivating for LESLLA-learners to take <i>Norskprøven</i>	64 %
3. <i>Norskprøven</i> contributes to raising LESLLA-learners status	59 %
4. <i>Norskprøven</i> contributes to giving LESLLA-learners priority (access to computer room)	51 %
5. Taking <i>Norskprøven</i> is not a scaring experience for LESLLA-learners	44 %

Table 3: Questions about the Test Consequences.

As stated in the introduction, it is not up to the test developers to decide how the test is used and its impact on peoples' lives. However, it is interesting to know whether LESLLA teachers are in favour of a test for this group and how they think the test influences them: We were pleased to learn that almost 70% think the test affects LESLLA learners' learning process positively and that the effect on classroom activities is positive. 64% thought it

was motivating for this group to take *Norskprøven*, and almost 60% find that it contributes to raising LESLLA learners' status in the school. Unfortunately, still only 44 % agree that it is not a daunting experience for LESLLA learners to take the test. Nevertheless, several teachers did indeed comment on the opposite effect, ie. that LESLLA learners felt they were taken seriously, as this quote from one of the teachers shows:

Being met with certain expectations by the teacher, by the school or by society is experienced by most LEL2-learners as positive. That way, they feel they are given the same opportunities, even though their point of departure is different (Respondent 56, own translation).

6. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This paper has described how Skills Norway has worked to make a standardized, high-stakes test of Norwegian for adult immigrants a fair test for LESLLA learners. A comparison of test scores of LESLLA-candidates and candidates with more schooling showed that it is indeed possible to give LESLLA learners a chance to show their skills in a standardized test if certain measures are taken from the start. A good test for these learners needs to measure the four language skills in separate parts which yield independent scores. The results of the study presented in this paper show that *Norskprøven* does give LESLLA learners a chance to perform well at the listening and speaking tests, which do not rely on their limited reading and writing skills. Furthermore, it is important to avoid hypothetical and artificial tasks in order to prevent test scores from depending too heavily on test literacy. LESLLA teachers in the survey presented in this paper underline the importance of this, and the majority agree that *Norskprøven* is a good test for LESLLA learners on the whole.

The evidence presented in this paper shows that we are on the right track, but there is still some room for improvement: For example the LESLLA teachers who responded to the questionnaire are particularly unhappy with the fact that learners need to sit for the four parts of the test the first time they take it. This is a political decision, but something the test developers may try to change. In addition, they feel there is not enough practice material to prepare LESLLA learners for the test. This is something we will have to take into account and work to improve. In addition, around 50% of the LESLLA teachers surveyed fear that the test is a daunting experience for their learners. This too needs to be addressed, and we can see how more practice material may help making candidates feel more familiar, less stressed about taking the test, and change teachers' views of how daunting the test is.

In her presentation at the 2016 LESLLA-symposium, Gonzalves touched upon an important dilemma when assessing LESLLA learners: standardized tests are often not suited to LESLLA learners and, if they have a choice, LESLLA teachers therefore often choose to develop their own tests for this group. LESLLA teachers, however, may know the learner group well, but do not necessarily know how to develop a good test and often refer to their assessment as gut-feeling based. This is reminiscent of Charles Alderson's important argument that language testing is too important to be left to language teachers, but also too important to be left to language testers (Alderson, 2001). One of the main purposes of this paper is therefore to argue in favour of closer collaboration between LESLLA teachers and researchers on the one hand, and large scale test developers on the other. We need to draw upon each others' competence in order

to take LESLLA learners into account when designing large scale tests – tests that are increasingly used by policymakers as part of integration policy, and which may have serious consequences on immigrants' lives.

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EXPLORING WHAT LOG FILES CAN REVEAL ABOUT LESLLA LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR IN AN ONLINE CALL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT: The topic of the present paper is CALL research involving LESLLA learners. To date, both CALL and LESLLA have received scant attention in the research literature. Learner behaviour can be tracked to obtain insightful information about actual computer-user interactions in CALL environments. Log files are introduced in this paper as an accurate and precise, yet currently underemployed, research tool to investigate LESLLA learners' decoding skills. Based on log file information both the performance of LESLLA learners and their process of learning in a computer environment can be investigated. Previous studies have found that log files contain valuable information indicating learner engagement, preference and productivity. CALL applications have the potential to enhance the individual learning process and can be seen as a feasible solution for enhancing initial late literacy development of LESLLA students.

KEYWORDS: Computer-assisted language learning, log-files, learner behaviour, grapheme phoneme awareness, decoding

1. CHALLENGING LESLLA EDUCATION

Worldwide educators struggle with the challenge to provide language and literacy education to a very special population of adult second language (L2) learners that have traditionally been neglected by SLA research (Tarone et al., 2009; Van de Craats et al., 2015; Young-Scholten, 2015). Faced with this lack of academic research and growing numbers of low-educated adults immigrating to highly literate countries, LESLLA teachers are urgently seeking innovative and effective ways to support the L2 learning process of LESLLA learners.

Acquiring simultaneously oral and literacy skills is an enormous challenge for LESLLA learners. Their learning process is slower compared to literate learners with at least an intermediate or high level of compulsory education and LESLLA learners' L2 development is at risk of fossilization at an earlier stage (Van de Craats et al., 2006: 10). LESLLA learners also struggle to attain "a reasonable level of oral proficiency in L2 classes" (ibid.). It is important to bear in mind that L2 oral skills alone are not sufficient for LESLLA learners' successful integration in the highly literate societies LESLLA learners reside in. Literacy is seen as one major component in successful functioning and active participation preventing social exclusion (Van de Craats et al., 2006: 13).

Teaching LESLLA learners basic literacy skills can, nevertheless, be very challenging as LESLLA learners cannot benefit from native language (L1) academic and literacy skills. Further traumatic experiences, family responsibilities and worries might slow down their literacy progress (Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015: 53). Young-Scholten and Strom (2006: 50) highlight that weak L2 competence in general is detrimental for reading development, slowing down development of decoding skills and phonological awareness of LESLLA readers.

Previous research has established that due to their reciprocal relationship oral skills are indispensable for literacy development and must be enhanced accordingly (Lesaux & Geva, 2006; Young-Scholten & Strom, 2006; Tarone & Bigelow, 2005). This is highlighted by Birch (2011: 490) stating that "reading always recruits phonology". However, due to the lack of research, little to date is known about LESLLA learners' alphabetic literacy development (Kurvers, 2015: 58).

In Finland, Tammelin-Laine (2014) investigated the development of oral and written L2 skills of non-literate adult immigrants. It was found that none of the participants achieved consistent emerging literacy skills during their first Finnish language and literacy course including 1400 hours of instruction over a period of ten months (Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015: 53). The insufficient provision of literacy training of LESLLA adults compared to L1 literacy training of children has further been pointed out by Van de Craats and Young-Scholten (2015: 130). A provision of more teacher-lead instruction time or an increase of educational staff seems, nevertheless, due to current and possibly future expenditure cuts in adult education, highly unlikely.

In the light of the challenges learners face, and in order to enhance the learning experience, LESLLA teachers are calling for new efficient and enjoyable methods and ways to speed up learning development and prevent learner frustration and language fossilization. Tarone and Bigelow (2005: 89) call for efficient teaching strategies providing oral and contextual support for developing grapheme/phoneme and other linguistic segmentation skills. Can CALL answer this call? Studies on Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) published since the 1990s have highlighted the potentials specifically in L2 learning, e.g. Dunkel, 1999. Computer technology has further been developed and used as a tool to help enhance language learning and academic skills as well as develop progressive learner behaviour. In addition, previous research showed positive effects on learning instruction for students with mild and moderate disabilities (Fitzgerald & Kory, 1996).

The following section introduces (CALL) for LESLLA learners and discusses its benefits for LESLLA learners.

2. EXPLORING LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH CALL

2.1. BENEFITS OF CALL FOR LESLLA LEARNERS' BEGINNING LITERACY SKILLS

There are many advantages of CALL applications: the computer is patient, motivating and self-pacing, providing the learners with immediate feedback and enabling them thus to notice and learn from mistakes (Brown, 2007: 270). The stress-free CALL environment allows learners to practice at their own pace as often and long as they want (Cucchiariini et al., 2013: 97). According to Pennington (1996: 5), CALL input is more focused and individualized than many other learning media. This in turn increases and diversifies the learning opportunities for learners. Finally, CALL has also been found to enhance the learning experience, as learners tend to find CALL activities enjoyable (Luke, 2006: 31).

In addition to the individualized instruction provided by the CALL system itself, CALL also facilitates more individualized support for struggling students by freeing the teacher from tasks the CALL application can take on. Teachers can thus focus on "what only a teacher can do, for example involve learners in the interaction with other learners" (Van de Craats & Young-Scholten, 2015: 2). CALL seems therefore a liable solution for meeting the increasing demand for individual learning support of LESLLA learners, preferably in a blended learning approach.

Previous studies found a remarkably positive correlation between CALL training and LESLLA learners' oral test results (Strube, 2014: 269). Similarly, a study on LESLLA learners' literacy development by Kurvers and Stockmann (2009) discovered that time allocated to individual computer activities correlated positively with the participants' reading scores. Whole-group activities, on the other hand, were seen to have a negative influence on individual literacy development (Kurvers, 2015: 73).

For emerging literacy, systematic instruction in connecting sounds with letters, blending sounds, and identifying patterns in words is crucial to develop the necessary skills for making grapheme-phoneme correspondences and for identifying word boundaries. Usually explicit instruction is necessary (Tarone et al., 2009: 117). A CALL application could provide this essential instruction with plenty of opportunities to practice, ideally fostering both the development of literacy and language skills.

One innovative practice environment for the very first steps in learning to decode the alphabetical code is provided by the Digital Literacy Instructor (DigLin), an online literacy training system. DigLin, a multilateral European project, ran from 2013-2015 and included five partners from four European countries.¹ DigLin's main aim was to advance literacy training for adult immigrants learning to read for the first time in a language other than their L1. For this purpose L2 literacy material was developed and tested in English, Finnish, German and Dutch.²

DigLin's phonics-based structure method aimed to provide the beginning reader with an understanding of the structure of the spelling system and to foster connections between phonemes and graphemes. The seven different exercise types were designed to enhance different decoding sub-skills necessary for analysing words and their parts,

¹ For more information, see www.diglin.eu.

² Approximately one out of ten immigrants in Europa is non- or low-literate (Cucchiariini et al., 2013: 96).

blending graphemes and phonemes as well as to enhance the process of automatization necessary for reading development. In addition, DigLin also aimed to enhance vocabulary learning by providing visual cues for all words that could be practised, amounting to a total of 210-300 words depending on the exercise type.

The DigLin software was tested by LESLLA learners in different settings and countries by the participating partners in the UK, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands. The participants' use of DigLin was tracked by log-files during the whole field-testing which lasted four to six months. The log file database provided the data from the LESLLA participants in Finland for the study of Malessa (2016). Filimban (in progress) obtained the DigLin log file data from participants tested in the United Kingdom. The following section introduces log files and illustrates their value as a research tool in tracking student behaviour.

2.2. LOG FILES – AN INNOVATIVE TOOL TO TRACK LEARNER BEHAVIOUR

One way to track learner behaviour in a CALL environment is to employ log files. Log files provide a precise and continuous interaction record between the user and the CALL environment in question. As log files are automatically created by the computer system, relevant events in a CALL environment are consistently and objectively documented in fine detail. Further log files provide temporally highly accurate information, as they are constantly time-stamped (Bodnar et al., 2016: 199). As a result, log file data analysis enables a very detailed post-activity investigation of learner behaviour. Chapelle (2007: 98-99) highlights that based on log file information learners' knowledge, strategies and processes can be examined and assessed. This in turn provides a holistic overview of learner behaviour pre- and post-production. In addition, Chun (2013: 256) emphasized that log file research can provide "valuable insights into both second language acquisition and pedagogical design", as log file data can serve as a way of confirming what learners actually do in CALL contexts.

Surprisingly, far too little attention has to date been paid to the fact that log files provide a great research tool to investigate students' learning behaviour in depth, as they are "temporally accurate and can log at a detailed level and with consistency and objectiveness" (Bodnar et al., 2016: 199). Bodnar et al. (ibid. 204) suggest that system logs can be employed to (1) evaluate reliability of learner self-report data, (2) cross-check what learners report with what they actually do, and (3) search for links between practice events and motivational outcomes.

Up to now, tracking data, such as log files, haven't been employed and analysed sufficiently even though tracking user behaviour can significantly contribute to SLA research (Chun, 2013: 256). It is remarkable that Bodnar et al. (2016: 200) found only one study investigating autonomous CALL practice. This study by Heilman et al. (2010) employed computer logs to examine learner behaviour during vocabulary practice. No published studies investigating CALL and LESLLA students have been found. To our knowledge, no previous study has investigated log files of LESLLA learners. This paucity of empirical research might originate in the extensiveness of the collected interaction record, being one reasons why "log file data is more often collected than analysed" (Bruckman, 2006: 1449). This is illustrated by the log file excerpt provided in Figure 1, showing a user-computer interaction in the DigLin environment, lasting 34 seconds.

```
7632;["04FIN""314"";,"FIN";"2014-10-30 09:21:20";"2014-10-30 09:23:58";"Drag the letters
4a";{"type":"","play_word_sound" data":"","sauna" timestamp":"","2014-10-30
09:21:20" data_extra":"",""} {"type":"","hide_word_picture" data":"",""}
timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:21" data_extra":"",""}
{"type":"","show_word_picture" data":"","sauna" timestamp":"","2014-10-30
09:21:21" data_extra":"",""} {"type":"","letter_drag" data":"","s"
timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:26" data_extra":"",""}
{"type":"","letter_drag_right" data":""," timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:28"
data_extra":"",""} {"type":"","letter_drag" data":"","a"
timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:32" data_extra":"",""}
{"type":"","letter_drag_right" data":""," timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:34"
data_extra":"",""} {"type":"","letter_drag" data":"","u"
timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:34" data_extra":"",""}
{"type":"","letter_drag_right" data":""," timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:42"
data_extra":"",""} {"type":"","letter_drag" data":"","n"
timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:44" data_extra":"",""}
{"type":"","letter_drag_right" data":""," timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:45"
data_extra":"",""} {"type":"","letter_drag" data":"","a"
timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:49" data_extra":"",""}
{"type":"","letter_drag_right" data":""," timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:49"
data_extra":"",""} {"type":"","play_word_sound" data":"","päivä"
timestamp":"","2014-10-30 09:21:52" data_extra":"",""}
{"type":"","show_word_picture" data":"","päivä" timestamp":"","2014-10-30
09:21:54" data_extra":"",""}

```

Figure 1: Example of a DigLin Log File Extract in the Finnish Dataset.

In order to assess DigLin, the software was tested with the help of literacy teachers and their students. The learners' use of the software was tracked by log-files during the whole field-testing. The computer system documented all mouse and keyboard movements as well as microphone recordings. As shown in Figure 1, DigLin log file entries contain a log file ID (7632) followed by the user's personal (04FIN, 314) and language code (FIN). Each log file contains the exact start date (30.10.2014; 09:21:20) and end date (30.10.2014; 09:23:58). Further the individual user's actions are stored in the workload including details on the type of exercise involved (Drag the letters 4a), the type of actions taken (play word sound, show/hide word picture, letter drag), the data provided by the user (letter drag "s", "a", "u", "n", "a"), the feedback given by DigLin (Malessa 2016).

The following section presents the background of the two studies by Malessa (2016) and Filimban (in progress) that set out to discover what log-files can reveal about learner behaviour in DigLin, a CALL application developed to enhance LESLLA learners' individual literacy development.

3. INVESTIGATING LESLLA LEARNERS' LOG-FILE INFORMATION

3.1. SET-UP OF THE STUDIES BY MALESSA (2016) AND FILIMBAN (IN PROGRESS)

Malessa's study (2016) investigated the learner behaviour of non-literate and low-literate adult L2 learners learning to read for the first time in Finnish. The research focus of this pedagogically-motivated study was on the learning process of establishing phoneme-grapheme connections and developing decoding and recognition skills. This study was motivated by previously attested benefits of CALL in literacy development of LESLLA learners (see Kurvers & Stockmann, 2009).

The heterogeneous participant population of this case study included six female and one male participant. The age range was large, with the youngest participant being 18 years old and the oldest learner being 60 years old. Three participants stated Iraq and two Somalia as their country of origin. The individuals from Iraq identified Arabic, Turkmen and Kurdish as their first language. The Somali participants stated Somali as their L1. The only male Arabic-speaking participant came from Egypt. One Arabic L1 participant emigrated from Syria to Finland. The participants' L1 literacy backgrounds varied from non-literate and low-literate to fully-literate. It is important to note that the participants' L1 literacy proficiency was only estimated by their L2 literacy teachers and the participants themselves, and was not tested (Tammelin-Laine, 2016). It is therefore possible that the participants' L1 literacy levels have to some degree been inadequately assessed.

The L2 Finnish oral skills of all but one participant were estimated to be below A1 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). The L2 oral skills of the youngest participant, who had arrived to Finland almost four years prior to the DigLin testing, were reported to be A1 (CEFR). One reason for the weak L2 oral skills might be the fact that a remarkable discrepancy between the length of residence and length of education was found particularly for participants residing in Finland for longer than two years, whereas participants that arrived more recently to Finland were more likely to start language and literacy instruction in due course.

The data analysis in Malessa's (2016) study was carried out by employing a mixed-method approach to obtain a comprehensive account of student behaviour in the online environment of the Digital Literacy Instructor (DigLin). Log files were seen to provide empirical evidence for LESLLA learner behaviour in DigLin and have been for the first time analysed by Malessa (2016). The exact timestamps in combination with the consistent record of interaction were seen to provide an extensive and accurate documentation of the learners' actions in this CALL environment. In Filimban's (in progress) study, a mixed method approach was also employed and data was then analysed using MAXQDA (a qualitative data analysis software program; MAXQDA 11, Verbi Software 2011). The data was coded thematically according to the different behaviours learners displayed.

Filimban (in progress) investigates the effectiveness of the use of DigLin on the development of decoding on low-literate adult learners learning English as a second language. The research focused on whether the use of computer-assisted instruction can help learners enhance the development of phonological awareness and decoding. Sustained and systematic research is needed to (1) identify instructional approaches that show promise of maximizing adults' literacy skill gains, (2) develop scalable instructional programs and rigorously test their effectiveness, and (3) conduct further testing to determine for whom and under what conditions those approaches work.

This study consisted of a group of 10 immigrant adults from a variety of countries. They were all enrolled in classes at the lowest level of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), namely pre-entry (sub-CEFR A1 level). This heterogeneous group included participants whose L1's were Arabic, Urdu, Russian, Dari and Tigrinya; and their age varied between 25 to 55 years. Despite long-term residence, some learners still had a limited English knowledge and were therefore placed in pre-entry classes on the basis of their sub-A1 oral proficiency and literacy.

In the next section results and observations made by Malessa (2016) and Filimban (in progress) are given and discussed.

3.2. REVEALING OBSERVATIONS

3.2.1. *Revealing learner engagement and learner preference*

An initial quantitative analysis found that a total of 2497 event log files were stored in the Finnish DigLin database for the seven participants in Malessa's (2016) study.³ The UK database, employed by Filimban (in progress), stored 1609 log files for the ten participants in the field testing. Compared to the Finnish participants, the UK participants' testing time was far less.

Quantitative analysis showed further that log files contain valuable information about the actual time spent on-task due to their precise time-stamps. Malessa's (2016) total testing time results indicate that the users were actively engaged with the exercises. The total time spent off-task, so-called no event data, was insignificant. Only three users spent 10 to 30 minutes off-task during the entire field training testing. This study observed that students were very engaged with DigLin throughout their interaction. It was found that student engagement, as an indicator of student motivation, can be elicited from the log file information by studying the amount of on-task time and number of letter drags and word drags in DL and LF (cf. Cocea & Weibelzahl 2007, 2009).

There was, nevertheless, a great variation between the participants. The most active user, spent almost 40 hours testing the Finnish DigLin system, more than twice as much time then the least active tester (16 h 30 min). None of the participants achieved, however, the expected training time of 50 hours (see Deliverable 5.1, 2015). The log files showed that the users tested DigLin very regularly, typically twice a week, sometimes even more often. Particularly at the beginning of the field-testing DigLin was used up to five times a week. Based on the time-stamps it was concluded that DigLin practise was almost entirely limited to classroom time. Even though participants were encouraged to use DigLin in their leisure time, Malessa's (2016) study found only two occasions in which DigLin was used outside the classroom. In Filimban's (in progress) English data, there were only three out of the ten learners who completed 10 hours which was far less than the Finnish data. The log files also showed that the learners mostly used DigLin in the classroom with very few exceptions.

3. The event log file dataset excluded no event log files. Log files were grouped as no event when a new task was started, but immediately ended, resulting in NULL session, session_end or session_stop data.

These findings indicate that the issue of availability of both CALL tasks and hardware needs to be emphasized. The tested CALL application runs only online on computers systems. Its availability and thus its usage should be increased with an off-line version and/or applications for other electronic devices such as tablets or smartphones. It is also possible that the studies' participants were not able to see the connection between the CALL tasks and their L2 tasks outside the classroom.

The log file amount of a user clearly indicates exercise preference, as a new log file is created for each new exercise the user starts. Malessa's (2016) study found that, out of seven exercise types, users clearly preferred the vocabulary exercise 'Words' (W) followed by the drag-and-drop-exercise 'Drag the letters' (DL). Similarly, Filimban's (in progress) study has shown comparable results with log files showing a strong preference for both W and DL. However, while the Finnish users preferred W, the UK users favoured DL (see Table 1 below).

	'Words'	'Drag the letters'
Finnish log file dataset (% of the total database)	915 (36.64%)	649 (25.7%)
UK log file dataset (% of the total database)	397 (24.67%)	452 (28.09%)

Table 1: Participants' Exercise Preference as Revealed by the Log File Database.

3.2.2. Observing learner performance and the learning process

Every single log file contains a work load that can vary significantly from another log file's workload, regarding the time spent on the exercise in question and the interaction with the CALL system (see Figure 1). Accordingly, user preference cannot be equated with user activeness. Based on the quantitative data analysis alone, conclusive statements regarding the users' activeness can, thus, not be made. For this reason, 103 log files created for DL were additionally analysed by Malessa (2016) also qualitatively. The qualitative data analysis included, moreover, 30 log files tracking the computer-user interaction in the 'Listen and form the words' (LF) exercise task. These two exercise types, DL and LF, were chosen for further qualitative analysis as they both focus on the very initial decoding steps, the creation of visual/aural grapheme-phoneme correspondences.

In addition to learner engagement and preference, Malessa's (2016) results, based on logged information for learner output, also provided insights into learner performance which was unexpectedly successful. In addition to learner performance, tracking learner behaviour with log files further enables the investigation of the learning process. Malessa's (2016) study found that learner performance and productivity were not automatically related as successful decoders were not necessarily the most productive ones. The same applied to weaker decoder. However, a correlation between productivity (activeness) and proactiveness (help tool usage) was detected. More successful decoders were apparently able to make use of provided help tools, in the form of letter and word sounds, whereas weaker users were found not to use help tools in an efficient way. This might be possibly due to a knowledge gap or the learners' inability to learn autonomously. The final section presents concluding remarks of this current paper.

4. LOG FILE REVELATION = LESLLA REVOLUTION?

There are still many unanswered questions about LESLLA learners' L2 development, however, CALL and log files can help identify answers that have not yet been revealed. This paper identified log file analysis as a reliable research method to obtain more knowledge about CALL of LESLLA learners by examining post-activity learners' online movements while practising in a CALL context. It is clear that, without sufficient evidence, researchers and teachers should abstain from assuming learners to follow instructions and act in an intended way. It is, therefore, crucial to obtain reliable knowledge regarding learners' real-time actions and log files represent a reliable research tool to verify both what students do in CALL environments and whether specific CALL applications and designs enhance students' learning as intended. This is particularly important in order to design and develop CALL activities targeted at specific language learner individuals and groups. Based on the empirical evidence gathered by Malessa (2016) and Filimban (in progress), CALL activities have shown to enhance LESLLA learners' decoding development and learner motivation during the learning process.

Log files provide unique and innovative research data for CALL, L2 and LESLLA research. Currently log file analysis is, however, very time- and work-intensive requiring expertise knowledge of computer systems and log file coding. In a modified format, log files could provide LESLLA teachers with valuable information about individual learner performance and progress. They also indicate what teachers need to focus on showing whether/ how learners use resources they are presented with. CALL has the potential to facilitate individual learning, thus lessening the teaching load and this is believe to support teachers to focus on learners who may require more assistance.

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**THE INFLUENCE OF FORMAL EDUCATION ON THE LINGUISTIC
COMPETENCE IN SPANISH AS A FL OF A GROUP OF ADULT
IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN MADRID**

LA INFLUENCIA DEL NIVEL EDUCATIVO EN LA COMPETENCIA
LINGÜÍSTICA EN ELE DE UN GRUPO DE INMIGRANTES ADULTOS DE LA
COMUNIDAD DE MADRID

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ABSTRACT: The present study is part of a larger project called INMIGRA, focusing on linguistic integration and certification of Spanish at an initial level for immigrant workers. The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which the formal education of a group of adult immigrants living in Madrid had an impact on their linguistic competence in Spanish as a foreign language, which was assessed by the Diploma LETRA. The results showed that older participants with less years of formal education scored lower on the exam, particularly on the sections of reading comprehension, audiovisual comprehension, and written expression and interaction. On the other hand, neither age nor years of formal education seemed to play a significant part in their oral competence.

RESUMEN: El presente estudio se enmarca dentro del proyecto de integración lingüística y de certificación de español, nivel inicial, para trabajadores inmigrantes INMIGRA. El objetivo de este estudio fue determinar en qué medida el nivel educativo de un grupo de inmigrantes adultos de la Comunidad de Madrid influye en su competencia lingüística en español como lengua extranjera, evaluada mediante el Diploma LETRA. Los resultados obtenidos mostraron que aquellos informantes de mayor edad y con un menor nivel de alfabetización obtuvieron puntuaciones más bajas en el examen en comparación con aquellos informantes con un nivel educativo superior. Dichas diferencias se detectaron en las pruebas de comprensión lectora, comprensión audiovisual y expresión e interacción escrita. Por otro lado, ni la edad ni el nivel educativo resultaron factores determinantes de la competencia oral de estos informantes.

KEYWORDS: INMIGRA, Diploma LETRA, Spanish as a Foreign Language, immigrants, formal education

PALABRAS CLAVE: INMIGRA, Diploma LETRA, Español como Lengua Extranjera (ELE), inmigrantes, nivel educativo

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

España, en las últimas décadas, ha pasado de ser de un “país de emigrantes” a un “país de inmigración” (Huguet, Navarro y Janés, 2007; Navarro, Huguet, Sansó y Chireac, 2012), multiplicándose el número de inmigrantes y, por tanto, multiplicándose también las necesidades de integración. Las medidas políticas llevadas a cabo, así como los informes de varias investigaciones sobre el tema, pusieron de manifiesto que la adquisición de la lengua española es la base de la integración social y laboral. Asimismo, se insistió en que la enseñanza del español como segunda lengua (L2) o lengua extranjera (LE) debía abordarse desde las aportaciones de los estudios en el ámbito de Adquisición de Segundas Lenguas (ASL) teniendo en cuenta las especificidades del contexto de inmersión en el que tiene lugar el aprendizaje, así como las particularidades y las necesidades de esa población inmigrante.

En este contexto, se ha desarrollado un amplio proyecto de investigación llamado INMIGRA, financiado por la Comunidad de Madrid y el Fondo Social Europeo, cuyo objetivo es facilitar la integración y la acogida de la población inmigrante de la Comunidad de Madrid. En la primera fase del proyecto (2007-2010) se diseñó e implementó un examen de certificación para evaluar la competencia lingüística comunicativa de trabajadores inmigrantes en ámbitos laborales y administrativos. Para ello, el Grupo de Investigación en Lingüística Aplicada a la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras (LAELE) de la Universidad Nebrija desarrolló un proyecto específico y se integró en el Grupo de Investigación Interuniversitario INMIGRA 2007, que tenía como objetivo general desarrollar diferentes estudios sociolingüísticos sobre la lengua española en entornos de población inmigrante. Como resultado del trabajo realizado, hemos conseguido diseñar, validar e implementar una prueba de español de nivel inicial para trabajadores inmigrantes, el Diploma LETRA, que se implementó en 5 convocatorias, entre 2010 y 2016, con un total de más de 1500 candidatos y de hasta 29 lenguas maternas distintas.

El presente estudio se enmarca en la segunda fase del proyecto INMIGRA (INMIGRA-2_CM) que se desarrollará de 2016 a 2018. En esta fase del proyecto pretendemos analizar el corpus obtenido de las 5 convocatorias del Diploma LETRA con el fin de detectar, analizar y encontrar soluciones a las dificultades específicas de la población inmigrante. Este diagnóstico incluye tanto el análisis de las dificultades lingüísticas (gramaticales, léxicas, fonéticas, pragmáticas) a las que se enfrentan los inmigrantes que residen en la Comunidad de Madrid como la realización de investigaciones sobre la influencia de una serie de variables contextuales e individuales en la consecución del examen LETRA. El presente estudio constituye el primer intento, dentro del proyecto INMIGRA, de establecer la posible influencia del nivel educativo formal en la competencia lingüística en español como LE alcanzada por parte del grupo meta.

2. METODOLOGÍA

2.1. OBJETIVOS E HIPÓTESIS DEL ESTUDIO

Como se señaló anteriormente, el objetivo de este estudio fue examinar la influencia del nivel educativo formal de un grupo de trabajadores inmigrantes que viven actualmente en Madrid en su competencia lingüística en español como LE, así como en su nota final en las cuatro pruebas del Diploma LETRA, esto es, comprensión lectora (CL), comprensión audiovisual (CAV), expresión e interacción escrita (EIE) y expresión e interacción oral (EIO). La hipótesis de partida fue que aquellos informantes con un nivel educativo superior obtendrían una mayor puntuación en el examen LETRA, así como en cada una de sus subpruebas, en comparación con los que tenían un nivel de alfabetización bajo.

2.2. INFORMANTES

Para la realización del estudio, se consideraron los datos de los candidatos que se presentaron en la tercera y cuarta convocatoria del Diploma LETRA (2013 y 2014). De los análisis efectuados se excluyeron los datos de los informantes que no realizaron todas las pruebas del examen, así como los datos de aquellos que no proporcionaron información sobre su nivel educativo.

La muestra final estuvo compuesta por 492 informantes, 171 (34.8%) hombres y 321 (65.2%) mujeres, de edades comprendidas entre los 16 y los 71 años ($M=33.74$, $Mediana=32$, $SD=10.66$). A pesar de que se consideró un total de 12 familias lingüísticas (véase Tabla 1), la mayor presencia es la de las familias lingüísticas afroasiática ($n=174$; 35.4%), eslava ($n=85$; 17.3%), romance ($n=83$; 16.9%), y afronigeriana ($n=76$; 15.4%). En cuanto al nivel de alfabetización, 177 (36%) informantes se podría considerar informantes LESLLA (*Low Educated Second Language Learners*) ya que tenían un nivel educativo bajo (sin estudios, primaria o secundaria obligatoria), mientras que los demás 315 (64%) habían cursado bachillerato o habían recibido formación profesional o universitaria (véase Tabla 2).

Lengua materna	Frecuencia	Porcentaje
Germánica	14	2.8
Romance	83	16.9
Eslava	85	17.3
Indoirania	9	1.8
Urálica	1	0.2
Caucásica	3	0.6
Altaica	1	0.2
Sino-tibetana	4	0.8
Afroasiática	174	35.4
Afronigeriana	76	15.4
Austronesia	38	7.7
Otros	4	0.8
Total	492	100.0

Tabla 1: Distribución de informantes por familia lingüística.

Nivel educativo	Frecuencia	Porcentaje
Sin estudios	18	3.7
Primaria	53	10.8
Secundaria	106	21.5
Bachillerato	94	19.1
Formación profesional	54	11.0
Formación universitaria	167	33.9
Total	492	100.0

Tabla 2: Distribución de informantes por nivel educativo.

2.3. INSTRUMENTOS DE RECOGIDA DE DATOS

La competencia lingüística del grupo meta fue evaluada a través del Diploma LETRA, el cual, como se señaló anteriormente, está compuesto por cuatro pruebas: CL, CAV, EIE y EIO. El objetivo fundamental de dicho examen es promocionar, facilitar y garantizar que los trabajadores inmigrantes hayan alcanzado un cierto dominio de competencia lingüística comunicativa en español. Los objetivos específicos de su implantación se dirigen a que la persona migrante pueda:

- Disponer de una competencia lingüística suficiente para el desempeño de su profesión.
- Entender lo que escucha y lo que lee, hablar y escribir en español para realizar interacciones comunicativas relacionadas con el mundo laboral: búsqueda de trabajo, elaboración del currículum vitae, comprensión de los anuncios de ofertas de trabajo, etc.
- Poseer un conocimiento léxico, pragmático y sociocultural sobre el ámbito laboral en el que se mueve (personas, instituciones, trámites), así como sus derechos y obligaciones como trabajador y como ciudadano.

En definitiva, con este examen el candidato podrá demostrar que es capaz de desenvolverse con cierta eficacia en su ámbito laboral y de realizar trámites administrativos.

Las características de las pruebas de CL, CAV, EIE y EIO (géneros textuales, área temática, canal de comunicación, contexto y extensión de los textos o producciones requeridas) se recogen en la Tabla 3 (para más información sobre los objetivos y las características del examen se remite a la página: www.diplomalettra.com).

	GÉNEROS	ÁREA TEMÁTICA	CANAL	ENUNCIADOR	ENUNCIATARIO	EXTENSIÓN
1 CL	Anuncio	Laboral Profesional	Escrito	-Empresas -Constructoras...	-Adulto extranjero en edad laboral y situación de mejora laboral	8-30 palabras
2 CL	Carta	Personal (ámbito cotidiano)	Escrito	-Trabajador y estudiante extranjero de español	-Estudiante extranjero que se interesa por la experiencia laboral	100-120 palabras
3 CL	Hoja informativa	Laboral Sanidad	Escrito	-Ministerio de Sanidad y Política Social	-Personal laboral de una empresa	30-50 palabras
4 CL	Correo electrónico	Personal	Escrito	-Amigo	-Amigo	30-40 palabras
5 CAV	Conversación cara a cara (informal)	Personal	Oral (vídeo)	-Amigo	-Amigo	212 palabras aprox.
6 CAV	Conversación cara a cara (formal)	Administrativo	Oral (vídeo)	-Administrativo	-Ciudadano extranjero en busca de empleo	312 palabras aprox.
7 EIO	Conversación cara a cara (formal)	Laboral Profesional	Oral	-Jefe -Director... -Personal de empresa de trabajo temporal	-Ciudadano extranjero en busca de empleo	165 palabras arox.
8 EIE	Formulario	Administrativo	Escrito	-Administración General del Estado	-Ciudadano extranjero que solicita documentación	7 ítems a rellenar palabras aisladas
9 EIE	Correo electrónico	Personal	Escrito	-Representante de un CEPI	-Ciudadano extranjero en inmersión	30-50 palabras

Tabla 3: Características de las pruebas de CL, CAV, EIE y EIO del Diploma LETRA.

Es preciso señalar que la evaluación de las pruebas objetivas se basa en el número de aciertos, mientras que la evaluación de las pruebas de EIE y EIO se realiza mediante el uso de plantillas de evaluación en las que se consideran los siguientes parámetros:

- Expresión e interacción global
- Organización y cohesión/coherencia discursiva
- Competencia sociopragmática
- Alcance y control de vocabulario
- Alcance y control gramatical
- Control ortográfico/articulatorio

En cuanto a la prueba de EIO, se cuenta con dos evaluadores, el entrevistador, quien realiza la entrevista al candidato y evalúa su competencia oral a partir de una escala de evaluación holística, y el evaluador, quien califica la actuación del informante mediante una escala de evaluación analítica.

3. RESULTADOS

Los estadísticos descriptivos de la puntuación final de los informantes en el examen LETRA, así como en las pruebas de CL, CAV, EIE y EIO, se presentan en la Tabla 4. Con el objetivo de examinar hasta qué punto la edad de los informantes podría convertirse en una variable *confound*, se efectuó un análisis correlacional entre esta variable y la puntuación final de los informantes en el examen. Los resultados arrojaron una correlación negativa y estadísticamente significativa ($r = -.166, p < .001$), lo cual significa que los informantes más jóvenes tendieron a obtener una puntuación más alta en el examen.

	M	SD
Puntuación final en el examen LETRA	8.22	1.63
Puntuación en la prueba de Comprensión Lectora	8.60	2.10
Puntuación en la prueba de Comprensión Audiovisual	8.37	1.76
Puntuación en la prueba de Expresión e Interacción Escrita	7.64	2.19
Puntuación en la prueba de Expresión e Interacción Oral	8.50	2.02

Tabla 4: Estadísticos descriptivos de las puntuaciones en el examen LETRA.

En vista a los resultados anteriormente presentados, en los Análisis de Covarianza (ANCOVA) que se efectuaron para abordar el objetivo principal del estudio, la variable edad se introdujo como variable de control. Según los resultados obtenidos, hubo un efecto significativo del nivel educativo en la puntuación final en el examen LETRA ($F(5, 485) = 25.72, p < .001$). Asimismo, y como cabría esperar, la variable covariada edad se vinculó de manera significativa con la puntuación final ($F(5, 485) = 23.09, p < .001$). A fin de examinar qué grupo difiere con qué otro, se llevaron a cabo las comparaciones múltiples mediante el método de Sidak. Como se puede apreciar a partir de la Tabla 5, los informantes con un nivel educativo menor alcanzaron puntuaciones más bajas en el examen LETRA.

Nivel educativo	Media	Error Estándar	95% Intervalos de Confianza	
			Límite inferior	Límite superior
Sin estudios	5.85 ^a	.339	5.18	6.52
Primaria	7.01 ^a	.198	6.62	7.39
Secundaria	7.82 ^a	.141	7.55	8.10
Bachillerato	8.71 ^a	.148	8.42	9.00
Formación profesional	8.66 ^a	.195	8.27	9.04
Formación universitaria	8.69 ^a	.112	8.47	8.91

Tabla 5: Medias marginales estimadas de la puntuación final en el examen LETRA corregidas respecto a la variable covariada Edad.

El mismo patrón de resultados se obtuvo con respecto a las puntuaciones obtenidas por los informantes en las pruebas de CL, CAV y EIE. Más precisamente, se observó un efecto significativo del nivel educativo en CL ($F(5, 485) = 41.04, p < .001$), CAV ($F(5, 485) = 26.34, p < .001$) y EIE ($F(5, 485) = 45.64, p < .001$), siendo los informantes con

menor nivel educativo (sin estudios, primaria, secundaria obligatoria) los que obtuvieron puntuaciones más bajas en comparación con aquellos informantes que tenían un nivel educativo superior (véase Gráfico 1). Es preciso señalar también que no hubo diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre estos tres últimos grupos, a excepción de la prueba de EIE en la que aquellos informantes con una formación profesional y universitaria alcanzaron puntuaciones más altas que los que habían cursado el bachillerato, y estas diferencias resultaron significativas.

En cuanto a la prueba de EIO, aunque los resultados revelaron diferencias significativas en función del nivel educativo de los informantes ($F(5, 485) = 2.78, p = .017$), dichas diferencias se detectaron solo entre los que habían cursado estudios de primaria y el resto de los informantes, siendo los primeros los que obtuvieron puntuaciones más bajas en la prueba de EIO (véase Gráfico 1).

Por último, la variable covariada edad se vinculó de manera significativa con las puntuaciones en las pruebas de CL ($F(5, 485) = 22.78, p < .001$), CAV ($F(5, 485) = 36.57, p < .001$) y EIE ($F(5, 485) = 25.63, p < .001$) pero no con las de la prueba de EIO ($F(5, 485) = 3.40, p = .066$), lo cual indica que la edad de los informantes influyó en su competencia lectora, audiovisual y escrita (a menor edad, mayor puntuación en CL, CAV y EIE) pero no en su competencia oral.

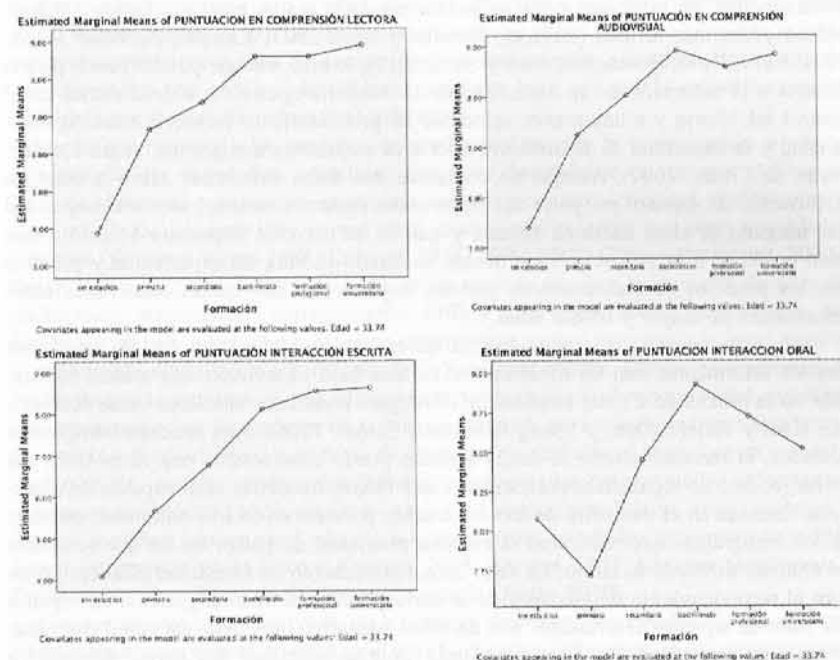


Gráfico 1: Representación gráfica de las medias marginales estimadas de las puntuaciones en CL, CAV, EIE y EIO por nivel educativo corregidas respecto a la variable covariada Edad.

4. DISCUSIÓN

El principal objetivo del presente estudio fue examinar la influencia del nivel educativo formal de un grupo de inmigrantes residentes en Madrid en su competencia lingüística en español como LE. Los hallazgos obtenidos mostraron que tanto la edad como el nivel de alfabetización de estos informantes determinaron su puntuación en las pruebas de CL, CAV y EIE, así como en su puntuación final en el examen LETRA. Más precisamente, los informantes con un menor nivel educativo y de mayor edad obtuvieron puntuaciones más bajas en dichas pruebas. Por otro lado, no se observaron diferencias con respecto a la competencia oral, es decir, ni la edad ni tampoco el nivel educativo tuvieron un impacto significativo en la puntuación del grupo meta en la prueba de EIO.

Por lo que se refiere a la edad, los resultados del presente estudio están en consonancia y son bastante similares a los obtenidos en otras investigaciones (Kurvers, 2015; Kurvers, Stockmann y van de Craats, 2010) en las que se observaron correlaciones negativas y estadísticamente significativas entre la edad y la lectura y la escritura en poblaciones inmigrantes (rango de r en los estudios citados: de $-.16$ a $-.23$). Según de Bot (2004), el nivel de activación de los segmentos utilizados en la producción lingüística depende, entre otros factores, del contacto y uso de la LE, así como de la edad de adquisición de dicha lengua. Asimismo, estudios que han examinado los procesos de escritura han mostrado que las personas mayores suelen producir textos más restringidos, menos fluidos y con más errores (Kemper, Herman y Lian, 2003; Kemper, Hermnan y Liu, 2004; Véliz, Riffo, Hernández, Sáez y Sáez, 2013), lo cual, aunque parcialmente, podría deberse a la reducción de su capacidad de la memoria operativa, a deficiencias en el control inhibitorio y a una menor velocidad de procesamiento (sobre la relación entre la edad y la capacidad de la memoria operativa en adultos inmigrantes véase Kurvers y van de Craats, 2007). Aunque no contamos con datos suficientes sobre la edad de adquisición del español por parte del grupo meta, podemos afirmar con cierta seguridad que ninguno de ellos nació en España y que en su mayoría llegaron a Madrid a una edad posterior a la pubertad. Este hecho, así como la falta de experiencia y práctica con los procesos de lectoescritura, podrían explicar las diferencias observadas entre informantes de mayor y menor edad.

En lo que concierne a la competencia lectora, los resultados del estudio mostraron que los informantes con un nivel educativo más bajo obtuvieron una menor puntuación en la prueba de CL del examen LETRA (para resultados similares véase Kurvers, van Hout y Vallen, 2006, y Young-Scholten y Strom, 2006). Para muchos inmigrantes iletrados, el reconocimiento de letras aisladas puede considerarse una tarea fácil; sin embargo, esto no significa necesariamente que dichos hablantes sean capaces de manipular fonemas en el momento de leer o escuchar palabras en la LE. Asimismo, muchos de los inmigrantes que realizaron el examen provienen de países en los que se utiliza un alfabeto diferente al latino. La falta de automatización en el uso del alfabeto latino y en el reconocimiento de sílabas y de la correspondencia fonema-grafema en español por parte de aquellos informantes con un nivel educativo más bajo, así como carencias lingüísticas relacionadas con el vocabulario, podrían constituir una mayor dificultad a la hora de procesar *input* escrito y fragmentos de discurso más largos, es decir, más allá del nivel de palabra (Kurvers, 2007, 2015). Como sostienen varios autores, la conciencia fonémica (*phonemic awareness*) se adquiere con los años de alfabetización, depende más bien de la experiencia y la práctica, no de factores biológicos o de la madurez

cognitiva, e incluso algunos años de educación formal pueden tener una influencia positiva en el desarrollo de esta habilidad (van de Craats, Kurvers y Young-Scholten, 2006; Young-Scholten y Naeb, 2010; Young Scholten y Strom, 2006;). Por tanto, las diferencias observadas en el presente estudio entre informantes con un nivel educativo alto y bajo podrían deberse a diferencias en la habilidad fonémica.

En cuanto a la prueba de CAV, de nuevo los resultados mostraron que los informantes con un nivel educativo superior obtuvieron una mayor puntuación en comparación con los que tenían un nivel educativo bajo. Es preciso señalar que las actividades de CAV del Diploma LETRA han sido diseñadas para simular situaciones y actividades que requieran del candidato la puesta en práctica de los mismos procesos metacognitivos que suponen las situaciones de la vida real (Bordón, 2006; Buck, 2001; Martín Leralta, 2010), y pretenden incluir 5 niveles de comprensión -fonético, semántico, sintáctico, pragmático y cinestético (Flowerdew y Miller, 2005)- para que la comprensión que se evalúe mediante dicha prueba sea la más cercana posible a una situación real y auténtica. Sin embargo, desde un punto de vista cognitivo, es cierto que la comprensión audiovisual es un proceso activo y complejo, en el que el significado se construye a partir de una interacción entre (i) las características del *input*, (ii) los tipos de conocimiento declarativo implicados y (iii) el uso de estrategias específicas para aumentar la comprensión (Chamot, 1995; Martín Leralta, 2010). El uso de estas estrategias dependerá de factores individuales como la edad, el nivel educativo y la formación recibida, entre otros (Martín Leralta, 2010). De ahí que las diferencias observadas en el presente estudio pudieran atribuirse a la falta de desarrollo de procedimientos estratégicos por parte de los informantes con un nivel de alfabetización más bajo, sea por la escasa formación recibida o por tradiciones educativas diferentes.

Por lo que respecta a los procesos de producción escrita, la investigación empírica ha mostrado que la escritura constituye una tarea demandante en recursos atencionales y de memoria, e interactúa de manera compleja con otros factores contextuales y afectivos, lo cual la convierte en una tarea mucho más exigente que otras actividades humanas (Flower y Hayes 1981; Kellogg, 1986, 1999, 2008; Olive y Passerault, 2012). Según Kellogg (2008), llegar a ser un escritor experto requiere más de dos décadas de maduración, instrucción y entrenamiento. Juffs y Rodríguez (2008), por su parte, señalan que un bajo nivel educativo lleva consigo una menor exposición a *input* escrito, lo cual puede dificultar la adquisición de la habilidad escrita. Dichas afirmaciones, el hecho de que la escritura en una LE supone un mayor grado de complejidad cognitiva en comparación con la escritura en la lengua materna, así como la mayor importancia concedida a la adquisición de un nivel de competencia oral alto, al menos en un contexto de inmersión, podrían explicar las diferencias observadas entre aquellos informantes que nunca recibieron o recibieron muy poca instrucción formal en su lengua materna y los que contaban con un nivel educativo superior (para resultados similares con poblaciones inmigrantes véase Boon y Kurvers, 2008, Kurvers, 2015, Kurvers, Stockmann y Dalderop, 2015, y Kurvers, Stockmann y van de Craats, 2010).

Contrariamente a lo observado en las demás destrezas, los resultados del presente estudio mostraron que ni la edad ni el nivel educativo influyeron en las puntuaciones obtenidas por los informantes en la prueba de EIO. Este resultado se debe seguramente al hecho de que los informantes del estudio, inmigrantes residentes en la Comunidad de Madrid, estén todos en situación de inmersión y hayan desarrollado de forma más significativa su capacidad de expresión e interacción oral en situaciones de la vida

cotidiana. De hecho, para muchos de ellos la situación planteada en la prueba de EIO (proporcionar datos personales, describir y comentar para qué sirven una de serie de documentos -como la tarjeta de residencia o la sanitaria- con los que la mayoría de los inmigrantes están familiarizados, etc.) podría considerarse relativamente sencilla.

Los estudios sobre adquisición de LE en un contexto de inmersión demuestran que dicho contexto favorece el desarrollo de la competencia oral (DeKeyser, 1991; Lafford, 2004). Asimismo, las investigaciones que comparan la adquisición de una LE en un contexto de inmersión y de no-inmersión coinciden en que la interacción con nativos en un contexto de inmersión mejora la capacidad comunicativa y de interacción oral (Cook, 1991; Klein, 1986; Krashen, 1988), a diferencia de lo que ocurre con los procesos de lectoescritura, cuyo desarrollo requiere instrucción explícita y formal (Meara, 1994). De ahí que hubiera sido especialmente interesante examinar en qué medida los años de residencia en España o el tipo y las características del *input* al que están expuestos los informantes influyen en sus resultados en esa prueba. Con esto se reconoce una de las limitaciones del presente estudio.

La segunda limitación que se ha de mencionar es de carácter metodológico, pues no se consiguió una homogeneidad con respecto al sexo y al número de informantes por nivel educativo. La mayoría eran mujeres y el número total de informantes con un nivel educativo bajo fue menor al de aquellos con un nivel educativo superior.

Por último, es imprescindible señalar que en los resultados obtenidos podrían haber influido una serie de variables no controladas pero de suma importancia a la hora de interpretar las diferencias en el nivel de competencia lingüística en una LE por parte de diferentes hablantes, entre otras, el número total de horas de instrucción formal en español, el nivel de alfabetización en la lengua materna evaluado mediante instrumentos estandarizados, y el nivel de competencia lectora, escrita, audiovisual y oral en el momento de llegada al país de acogida. Efectivamente, todas estas limitaciones dificultan la extrapolación de los resultados del presente estudio a inmigrantes de otras LE o a inmigrantes residentes en otros países.

5. CONCLUSIONES

A modo de conclusión, los hallazgos del presente estudio revelaron la importancia que desempeña el nivel educativo en la lengua materna de un grupo de inmigrantes de la Comunidad de Madrid en su competencia lingüística en español como LE, tal y como esta fue evaluada a través del Diploma LETRA. Recordemos que el Diploma LETRA se creó con el objetivo de motivar al alumnado inmigrante a desarrollar una competencia lingüística en español que le permita involucrarse de manera satisfactoria en los ámbitos laboral y administrativo. Los resultados de esta investigación remarcan una necesidad de reforzar las prácticas educativas mediante el diseño de actividades específicas para que todos los candidatos, y especialmente los iletrados, puedan desarrollar estrategias adecuadas para alcanzar un nivel de competencia más alto en la lengua española, sobre todo en lo referente a las habilidades de lectoescritura. Partiendo del postulado de que un mayor dominio de la lengua de la comunidad de acogida favorecerá y facilitará el proceso de integración de la población inmigrante y mejorará su situación emocional y laboral (Baralo, 2014), la investigación futura debería indagar sobre cómo una serie de variables individuales, contextuales y afectivas influyen en el proceso de aprendizaje

y adquisición de LE en el contexto del aula, así como en la consecución de exámenes, como el LETRA, que han sido diseñados específicamente para poblaciones inmigrantes. Dicha investigación debería complementarse con un diagnóstico riguroso de las dificultades específicas comunes a alumnos inmigrantes con lenguas maternas afines. Todo ello, con el afán de aportar soluciones y mejoras que faciliten la integración social y laboral de la población inmigrante de España.

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MY PLAN: COACHING FOR LESLLA LEARNERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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ABSTRACT: 'My Plan' is a weekly group conversation used by LESLLA learners for discussing their long-term and weekly goals for learning outside the classroom. The GROW model used in coaching has been adapted for a LESLLA classroom context. The teacher takes on the role of a coach and has a non-directive attitude toward the learners. The coaching teacher asks questions that lead to awareness, responsibility, confidence and ownership by the learner, such as 'Why do you want to learn Dutch?' 'How much time do you want to spend on study and practice?' and 'What do you want to do this week to learn Dutch?' The teacher can gradually withdraw as the leader of the group conversation, so that the learners can coach each other in pairs. Coaching can help learners become more aware of their motivation and goals, develop confidence and take over ownership of their learning.

KEYWORDS: coaching, classroom practices, LESLLA learners, self-directed learning, learner autonomy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As courses for LESLLA² learners in the Netherlands tend to get both shorter and less intensive, the need for learners to study and practice outside the classroom is greater than ever. In order to reach full literacy, learners need to do considerable work on their Dutch in their own time, during and after the course. Fortunately, learners have free access to online learning programs, such as DigLin.eu (Cucchiari et al., 2015: 251-278) and Oefenen.nl (Vaske, 2015: 333-354). For those who do not have a computer at home, public libraries provide computers with internet access throughout the country that can be used free of charge. Furthermore, a large group of Dutch volunteers is willing to support learners during their learning process. So there are several resources in the Netherlands, independent of classroom teaching, that the learners can use to reach their literacy and language learning goals. But how can learners plan and direct their study and practice outside the classroom?

Teachers often report that their non-literate students show little skill in self-evaluating and self-directing their learning. Learners often have a passive attitude, depending heavily on the directions of the teacher (Vanbuel & Bultynck, 2016). Furthermore, learning a second language and also learning, for the first time, how to read and write is a tremendous endeavour, demanding a lot of time and energy. Emerging learners often seem to be unaware of the demands and challenges, since it is the first time they have gone to school to learn how to read and write. Still, in order to become fully literate, it is important that these learners become more autonomous, confident and aware of their motivations, goals and plans. Coaching can help learners to take matters into their own hands. It can raise learner awareness and responsibility and help to build confidence. This article describes an approach in which teachers coach learners and learners coach each other in a classroom context on setting goals for using the language outside the classroom.

2. BACKGROUND

The approach of 'My Plan' is based on coaching. The term "coaching" can refer to many different things, such as mentoring, advising, guiding, or helping. The coaching described in this article is non-directive coaching, as developed by Whitmore (2009).

2.1 PRINCIPLES OF COACHING: THE GROW MODEL

The approach in our experiment was based on coaching as defined by one of the founders of coaching, Sir John Whitmore. In his book, *Coaching for Performance* (2009), Whitmore states that the essence of coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance. A coach believes that people are capable of much more than

2. LESLLA stands for Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults. See www.leslla.org

they show and sees them in terms of their potential, not of their past failures. To use coaching successfully, the coach has to adopt a more optimistic view of the dormant capability of the person being coached (the "coachee").

The first key element of coaching is awareness. That awareness leads to skill was discovered in the eighties when this form of coaching was being developed for sports (Whitmore, 2009: 10). Awareness is empowering, because one is able to control that of which one is aware. Responsibility is the second key concept of coaching. Telling someone to be responsible does not make someone feel responsible. This involves choice. When the coachee truly chooses and takes responsibility for his goals, his commitment to them rises, and so does his performance. Third, building self-belief is a major goal of the coach. Experiencing success is the most effective way to build this self-belief. The coachee needs to know that his success is due to his own efforts.

In order to provoke awareness and responsibility, the coach follows a sequence of questions called the GROW model:

Goal setting for the session in both the short and long term

Reality checking to explore the current situation

Options and alternative strategies or courses of action

What is to be done, **When**, by **Whom**, and the **Will** to do it (Whitmore, 2009: 55)

2.2 COACHING IN A LESLLA CONTEXT

Coaching as described above can be problematic in a LESLLA classroom context for several reasons. Individual coaching demands considerable time. Also, the learner needs a high level of L2 proficiency and abstract thinking to be able to follow a classical coaching session. In the reality of a LESLLA classroom, there is often little time for individual learners, as learners have a low L2 proficiency level and are not yet familiar with abstract thinking.

There is also the issue of other cultural orientations. Non-directive coaching is a concept that was developed in the Western world. Coaching implies typical Western values, such as the individual being the central point of focus, and self-realization being a noble goal to achieve in life. Also, the way the coach and the coachee communicate is typically Western: The coach asks direct, personal questions, and the coachee is supposed to answer them openly and honestly, without worrying about losing face or hurting anyone's feelings. Rosinski (2003, pp. 54-55) offers a framework for what can help coaches to become more sensitive to other cultural orientations.

2.3 THE ERASMUS+ PROJECT - AUTONOMOUS LITERACY LEARNERS: SUSTAINABLE RESULTS

From 2014 to 2016, six European partners participated in the project Autonomous Literacy Learners: Sustainable Results (ALL-SR), which developed and piloted an approach to self-directed literacy learning. In this European Erasmus+ project, coaching was used to help learners develop their own literacy skills through self-directed learning. The results of the project are available online at www.itta.uva.nl/learnerautonomy.

My Plan is based on similar coaching principles as ALL-SR, but has a different focus and scope. My Plan was used in a classroom setting to allow learners to become more aware of their motivation, goal and plans to practice, while the ALL-SR project focused on developing personal learning strategies through coaching, independent from a classroom setting. Also, the ALL-SR was a much larger project, with coaching pilots in different settings in three countries: UK, in the workplace, the Netherlands, in community settings and in Germany, at schools (Feldmeier, 2016).

3. CONTEXT OF THE COURSE

My Plan was developed and piloted during a ten-week course on Dutch in the Workplace, from January 2016 to April 2016. The group consisted of five learners, all cleaners at a mental health care institute in the Amsterdam area in the Netherlands. The learners were offered a 20-week course on Dutch in the Workplace that was financed by the Dutch trade union for cleaners. The curriculum of the course was already set and focused on using the Dutch language at work. Examples of language goals in the curriculum are: understanding instructions, calling in sick, knowing your rights and duties as an employee, describing tasks, and interacting with patients and colleagues. After 20 weeks, the learners had to take an oral assessment, in which their communication skills at work were tested in several role plays. The goal of the course was to reach level A2 for the practical oral tasks³. Figure 1 shows the background of the five learners.

Learner	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Time in the Netherlands	Years of previous education	Years of experiential learning Dutch in the classroom	Dutch proficiency level reading & writing	Dutch proficiency level speaking & listening
D.	m	48	Ghana	6 years	none	None	0	A1
H.	m	51	Morocco	22 years	5	2	A1	A1
L.	f	38	Spain / Morocco	3	7	None	A1	A1
M.	m	42	Nigeria	4 years	4	None	A1	A1
N.	f	22	Pakistan	4 years	10	1	A1	A1

Figure 1: Background of the Learners.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 A SIMPLIFIED GROW MODEL

The GROW model was adapted by simplifying the sequence of coaching questions to a set of here-and-now questions that came up every week. Less context-rich questions

³ A2 is a proficiency level described in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001).

were left out; e.g., typical coaching questions such as “What steps can you identify, and what is their time frame?” and “What if you knew the answer? What would it be?” All the questions a coach can ask about the goal, reality, options and plan of the coachee were reduced to five questions for long-term goal setting and five questions for short-term goal setting, by and large following the order of the GROW model.

4.2 SETTING LONG-TERM GOALS

The first sessions of My Plan were group conversations about long-term goals. The teacher asked each learner:

1. Why do you want to learn Dutch?
2. What is your plan?
3. How much time do you need to reach your goal?
4. How much time do you want to invest?
5. When do you want to take time to study?

The teacher would invite another member of the group to summarize the plan of the other, and so facilitate understanding each other, listening to each other, and improving the attention span of the learners.

4.3 MAKING A PLAN FOR THE WEEK

In subsequent sessions the coaching took place in pairs and focused on setting a learning goal for the coming week. The questions were:

1. What are you going to do this week to learn Dutch?
2. Where are you going to this?
3. When are you going to this?
4. Who can you ask for help?
5. Can I ask you next week how your plan went?

The learners were able to coach each other without the help of the teacher. Sometimes they would coach differently from the teacher, for example, by asking many questions all at once or by advising their peers (see Figure 2).

D:	When the chicken soup is finished, I'm going out. I go to the house of my friend. Then I'll talk a bit. Then I go back home and look at the Dutch lessons.
M:	At what time are you going to read? And at what time are you going to ask someone if your reading and your talking is good? When can you ask someone for help?
D:	It's difficult with my friends. Nobody speaks Dutch well.
M:	Look, I am telling you this now, look, you're taking Dutch classes now, right? As for me, I used to hang out only with Africans and I only spoke my own language. That was not good for me. Now I look for people I can practice my Dutch with. You should do the same. Look for a man, a woman, it doesn't matter who it is. Not only 'Ghana Ghana Ghana'. That's not good.

Figure 2: Fragment of the Transcript of a Conversation between Learners D. and M.

As shown in Figure 3, the learners memorized the coaching questions, sometimes mixing them up, but still staying close to the essence of coaching.

N:	What do you study?
L:	My book, about working in the Netherlands. And also the homework.
N:	What are you going to learn from your book?
L:	I want to learn phrases. It is good for me to repeat them. So, to repeat the phrases. Also, I want to do the homework.
N:	Is this book difficult or easy for you?
L:	The book is fine, but there are days that my head is completely full, then looking at it is really difficult.
N:	Okay, so do you have someone to help you at home?
L:	There are days I ask my daughter. When there are phrases I don't understand, I ask her. I ask her to take a look, if it's correct or not.
N:	Okay, and if your daughter doesn't understand it either, then what?
L:	No, it's fine you know, because my daughter speaks Dutch really well. She learned it at school.
N:	L., do you practice every day?
L:	No, I can't every day.
N:	What times? And which days?
L:	Three or four times a week.
N:	Friday or Saturday? Which day do you practice?
L:	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday also. Not on weekends, then I'm really busy.

Figure 3: Fragment of the Transcript of a Conversation between Learners N. and L.

4.4 LOOKING BACK AT LAST WEEK'S PLAN

Every week the learners asked each other how the plans of the week before had turned out. This step was important, both for cultivating awareness about reality and for building confidence. Often, learners were confronted with unexpected events that made them change their initial plan. They became aware of how hard it was to carry

out a plan when you have so many other responsibilities and tasks. However, they were often successful at carrying out their plans. Every success, however small, was celebrated by the group.

4.5 WEEKLY GROUP DISCUSSION

As shown in Figure 4, My Plan formed a part of the weekly lesson program. The questions were always the same, allowing the learners to memorize them. In the beginning, only the teacher took on the role of the coach and led the group conversation. After the third lesson, the teacher started experimenting with peer coaching. The learners would coach each other in pairs. There were also small group conversations, but the teacher did not direct the conversation as much anymore.

Les 11 Dinsdag 5 april 2016	Translation:
☺ ☺ samen praten mijn plan	Lesson 11 Tuesday April 5, 2016
📖 ✍️ lezen en schrijven	Talking together: <u>My plan</u>
🎱 de bal uitspraak oefenen	Reading and writing
☺ ☺ samen praten: wat heb je gedaan?	Practicing pronunciation: the ball
🏠 → naar huis 15.00 uur	Leaving for home (3 p.m.)

Figure 4: My Plan as Part of the Lesson Program Every Week.

5. RESULTS

The five learners in this case worked with My Plan for only ten weeks, so long-term results cannot yet be reported. However, the learners and the teacher did report an increase of confidence and a rise in awareness and responsibility. Every learner had a long-term goal and an intrinsic motivation for learning Dutch and improving literacy. Some wanted to find a better job, others wanted to communicate better at work. The learners experienced great enjoyment in the coaching and noticed an increase in team spirit and well-being.

When asked about learning activities outside the classroom, the learners reported that they had not managed to do everything they planned to do, but that they did get more done at home. They were proud of that, and at the same time they realized that there was still much to be done to reach their goals.

The teacher found that in comparison to learners in similar language training courses without coaching, these learners were more active outside the classroom. They also developed more realistic ideas of what it takes to learn Dutch and were more aware of their motivation and goals. The teacher's most surprising finding was that the learners adopted her coaching attitude. They had carefully observed their teacher and after a few

weeks imitated not only her sentences, but also her tone and even her body language when coaching. This brings into mind the research of Rogoff et al. (2003: 175-203), that describes how keen observation and listening-in are valued and used in some cultural communities in which children are part of mature community activities. Observing and imitating the teacher as a coach may well be a way of learning that suits the cultural orientations and learning styles of the learners.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER USE

Coaching for LESLLA learners can be applied in various other contexts than the one described here. The non-directive coaching approach can be integrated into classroom settings, in informal learning with the help of non-professionals, or in support groups of refugees. Some recommendations for further use of My Plan are presented below.

6.1 NEED FOR GOOD COACHING TRAINING

The most important condition is having a teacher who is well trained as a coach. Teachers who want to use coaching in their classroom will have to invest time and energy to become familiar with the principles and practice of coaching, through self-study or training. This will take some effort, since coaching is not a trick or a simple technique. Coaching demands a non-directive attitude of the teacher, and it might take some time for teachers to get used to this. Asking the right coaching questions in simple language is not easy: It needs a lot practice and includes trial and error.

6.2 IMPLEMENTING COACHING TECHNIQUES IN A TEAM OF TEACHERS

Coordinators and program developers who would like the teachers in their program to adopt a more coaching attitude are advised to implement coaching in a sensitive manner. It would be somewhat contradictory to introduce coaching top-down in a team, while free choice is at the very essence of coaching. Coaching should be an option, not a mandatory way of working. When a team is enthusiastic about coaching and wants to start a training course, they will need time and opportunity to study and practice. It is recommended that coaching training is embedded in a broader learning environment. For example, after the training, teachers could continue to learn through peer review. To facilitate their own self-directed learning in the longer term, it is conceivable that the teachers will be supported by a coach themselves.

6.3 EXPLAINING COACHING TO THE LEANER

Not only the teachers, but also the learners may need time to get used to coaching in the classroom, since learners often expect the teacher to direct the learning process, including giving homework and telling the learners what else to do to practice at home. Talking about the reason for coaching with the learners is recommended. This can be

done in simple words, for example, by asking the learners how children learn to walk. When and where do they practice? How often? Is it easy? Do they get help? How long does it take before they can walk really well? Most learners know how children learn to walk: they have seen it around them many times. They will tell their teacher that children practice all the time, that they often fall, but that they do not give up trying, that they use the couch and the coffee table and their older brothers and sisters for support. The teacher can then explain that learning to read and write in a new language is similar. Coming to class a couple of hours a week to practice is not enough to learn the language. Children do not learn how to walk by practicing a couple of hours a week either. However, the learners are adults, not children. This is why learners are invited to make a plan for practicing. It is important to make a plan, because adult learners usually have more to do in a day than just studying. That is an important difference from a small child, who can dedicate all of his/her time to a specific goal. Teachers may discover that learners are very capable of reflecting on the reasons for working with My Plan, as long as the subject is embedded in a context they can relate to, such as the example of the child who learns how to walk.

6.4 THE L2 PROFICIENCY LEVEL

What level of the L2 do the learners need to have to be able to work with coaching? It is preferred not to set a certain minimum proficiency level, since the skill of LESLLA learners is often hard to assess with a standardized test. It takes time and the trust of learners to discover their true ability to communicate in the L2. Naturally, learners need to have a basic vocabulary in the L2 to be able to understand and answer the coaching questions, somewhere between CEFR A1 and A2. Teachers are encouraged to try out coaching and carefully observe how learners react. In our experiment, the learners could follow My Plan at CEFR level A1. They greatly appreciated the interest of the coaching teacher in their goals, lives, and plans, which motivated them make an effort to speak in the L2. When working with the approach of My Plan, the same questions are repeated every session, so emergent learners get time to come to understand the questions over the weeks. They also build vocabulary. One of the learners in our case was mostly listening in the first sessions. He understood, but he couldn't or wouldn't talk. Around the seventh week, he suddenly told the group more about his plan. He had been thinking about it all the time.

The learners described in our case were emergent learners. They all had a proficiency level around CEFR A1. When tested, they wouldn't pass level CEFR A2, because none of these learners was able to speak in more-or-less correct sentences yet. However, they were able to talk about much more than just very familiar topics close to their own world, which is typical for level A1. The reason for this was that their world was quite large, because they all worked. They had to communicate in Dutch in a range of situations at work every day. Learners are often remarkably adept at getting a message across with very limited L2 proficiency. The learners in this case understood each other, but native Dutch speakers who are not used to "foreigner talk" were unable to follow what they were saying. So it is also dependent on the ability of the teacher to understand and translate learner language to standard L2.

Working in a group with various language levels is an advantage. The learners who are more proficient can help learners with a lower level. Learners also learn the L2

through the coaching. Since My Plan is repeated every week, learners build vocabulary by listening to each other and by repeating the questions. Not all the learners understand My Plan the first time, but after a couple of weeks they get the meaning of it.

Also, it is important to realize that learners generally understand much more than they can express in the L2. Furthermore, we are dealing with responsible adults, who are parents, workers, partners, and citizens. The fact that they are low-literate or non-literate does not mean they have a low intelligence.

When working with learners who have hardly any understanding of the L2 yet, the L1 can also be used. This could be especially practical in groups with a shared L1, such as Eritrean or Syrian refugees. In this case, the coaching teacher will need the help of a more advanced student to translate the coaching questions and answers.

For successful coaching in the L2, the language use of the coaching teacher is just as important as the proficiency level of the learners. Much is dependent on the competence of the teacher to speak in correct but simple sentences and to make abstract concepts concrete and real for the learner. Also, a teacher who has clarity himself about what he/she is doing as a coach would logically communicate much more clearly than a teacher who is still trying to figure it out himself.

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ANÁLISIS DE LOS PROGRAMAS DE ESPAÑOL COMO SEGUNDA LENGUA PARA ALUMNOS INMIGRANTES CON BAJO NIVEL DE ALFABETIZACIÓN EN DIFERENTES CENTROS

ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING OF SPANISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TO LESLLA LEARNERS IN DIFFERENT CENTRES

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to carry out an analysis of the most significant characteristics of the Teaching of Spanish as a Second Language to immigrants in a NGO context. It usually involves the work of unqualified volunteers who try to find alternative ways to complement this kind of teaching so that it improves.

RESUMEN: El objetivo principal de este trabajo es realizar un análisis de las características principales de la enseñanza de español como segunda lengua destinada a alumnos inmigrantes adultos dentro del contexto de una ONG; una enseñanza que suele estar frecuentemente en manos de voluntarios no cualificados para esta labor, quienes buscan diferentes soluciones para mejorar su trabajo.

KEYWORDS: Spanish, teaching, immigrants, volunteer, programme, analysis

PALABRAS CLAVE: español, enseñanza, voluntario/a, programa, análisis

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

La enseñanza de español como segunda lengua a inmigrantes ha sido durante mucho tiempo considerada como una disciplina separada del resto de ramas dentro del campo de la didáctica de lenguas. Además, debemos añadir que esta docencia está frecuentemente en manos de personas voluntarias sin formación específica en enseñanza de segundas

lenguas y que, con los escasos recursos que ofrecen las ONG en las que suelen impartirse las clases, no es fácil el desarrollo de ese contexto de enseñanza.

Por ello, este trabajo tiene como finalidad profundizar en el conocimiento organizativo de diferentes programas de español para inmigrantes ofrecidos en centros de la ONG Cáritas Diocesana en la provincia de Albacete y averiguar cuáles son sus principales características como pueden ser el perfil de los docentes y alumnos, los materiales o recursos, la metodología empleada en las clases, así como las instalaciones de que disponen, entre otros aspectos.

Este análisis también pretende dar a conocer estos cursos de español y evitar así el aislamiento que frecuentemente los caracteriza y proponer, en el caso de que fuese necesario, propuestas de mejora que faciliten el desarrollo de esta labor.

En cuanto a la estructura del artículo, podemos señalar cinco partes diferenciadas: un breve acercamiento a la enseñanza de español a inmigrantes en el contexto de una ONG, la descripción de la metodología empleada en la investigación, el análisis de los datos obtenidos sobre los programas de español ofrecidos por diferentes centros, así como una interpretación crítica de estos datos, para finalmente presentar unas conclusiones y propuestas de investigación futuras.

2. LA ENSEÑANZA DEL ESPAÑOL COMO SEGUNDA LENGUA EN EL CONTEXTO DE UNA ONG

La creciente llegada de la «inmigración económica», es decir, aquella inmigración que busca la mejora de sus condiciones de vida en otro país y que se caracteriza por ser el grupo «más motivado y el más necesitado de trabajo urgente y eficaz acercamiento a la segunda lengua» (Andión, 2006:20) es la que frecuentemente acude a los programas de español ofrecidos por diferentes ONG, pues sus condiciones socioeconómicas no les permiten asistir, por lo general, a cursos de español estándar. Este tipo de aprendientes debe alcanzar de manera relativamente rápida un nivel de español mínimo que les permita desenvolverse en su día a día y poder integrarse en la nueva sociedad.

Diferentes ONG ofrecen, entre otras acciones de apoyo y promoción social a grupos en riesgo de exclusión social, cursos de español para inmigrantes con el fin de colaborar con su integración en el nuevo país, en este caso España. Sin embargo, es frecuente que estos centros no cuenten con los recursos tanto humanos como materiales necesarios que faciliten la labor docente.

En lo que respecta a Cáritas Diocesana, nacida en España en 1942, cuenta, además de con otras acciones sociales, con programas relacionados con la lengua como pueden ser el apoyo de traductores e intérpretes y centros interculturales y lo que más nos interesa, los centros de formación encargados de la alfabetización y la enseñanza de la lengua.

Frecuentemente, la enseñanza de español a inmigrantes suele estar empañada por unas connotaciones negativas en lo que al perfil de los alumnos se refiere. Son habituales los estereotipos negativos que caracterizan a los alumnos inmigrantes por sus carencias, normalmente sociales o económicas y no por sus virtudes o habilidades, dejando de lado, como señala Miquel (1994:5), que «son hablantes de su lengua materna» y «tienen la visión del mundo organizada a través de su lengua y a través de su cultura» por lo que poseerán una serie de mecanismos y estrategias que les ayudarán a la hora de aprender nuestra lengua.

Estos estereotipos negativos, entre los que está el desconocimiento de nuestra lengua, son solo la punta del iceberg del perfil de los alumnos inmigrantes, como bien señala Ojeda (2008: 1). Si conociésemos mejor a este colectivo, seríamos testigos de las capacidades que tienen como aprendientes de segundas lenguas y que muchas veces quedan encubiertas por las ya citadas debilidades o carencias.

En este contexto de enseñanza, es común que los programas de español estén orientados hacia la alfabetización del alumnado, una alfabetización que no en todos los casos se desarrolla con éxito bien por falta de recursos, bien por falta de formación de los docentes, entre otras causas.

Además, tenemos que señalar que la alfabetización deberá ser siempre una opción del alumno, pues a pesar de que puede llegar a ser un obstáculo importante en su integración, «la falta del conocimiento de la lectoescritura no implica siempre la necesidad de aprenderlo» (Molina, 2007: 2) puesto que «la alfabetización no es necesaria para el aprendizaje de lenguas» (Villalba y Hernández, 2010: 170).

Esta alfabetización deberá asentar sus bases en la metodología comunicativa, pues es la que responde perfectamente a las necesidades de los alumnos inmigrantes y solo sobre ella tendremos que construir los programas, pues los alumnos son el centro del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje y deberán participar en la toma de decisiones, así como fomentar en ellos el autoaprendizaje y su capacidad estratégica (Villalba y Hernández, 1995). La lengua será considerada como instrumento de comunicación, pues «su necesidad más imperiosa es entender el mundo que les rodea y poder comunicarse en los ámbitos que deben desarrollarse» (Miquel, 2003: 4).

3. METODOLOGÍA

Para llevar a cabo el análisis de los programas de español de los diferentes centros de Cáritas de Albacete, partimos de la teoría de Richards & Rodgers (1986) gracias a la cual podremos establecer en ellos distintas áreas de estudios. En primer lugar, tendremos en cuenta el perfil del profesor y más específicamente su formación, su papel en la organización de los cursos, su experiencia en la enseñanza del español, su motivación, las principales dificultades a las que tiene que hacer frente y la interacción con sus alumnos. En segundo lugar, en cuanto al papel del alumno, analizaremos el origen, la edad, la formación, su papel en el programa, sus motivaciones, las principales dificultades que tienen, así como su evaluación. En tercer lugar, nos centraremos también en el papel de los materiales de enseñanza, pues será necesario conocer si los voluntarios disponen de variedad de materiales y si estos están adaptados al perfil de los alumnos, las destrezas que ponen en práctica, así como las opiniones y valoraciones de los discentes y docentes en relación con estos. En cuarto lugar, nos fijaremos en la naturaleza de las actividades que se proponen en el aula para averiguar así la metodología que emplean los voluntarios y su modo de entender la lengua.

Todos estos aspectos nos permitirán obtener una panorámica de los cursos que nos facilitará la labor de caracterizarlos y determinar sus puntos fuertes y débiles con el fin de proponer mejoras y orientar a los voluntarios en su trabajo como docentes de español.

Nuestra muestra, aunque pueda parecer poco significativa por el escaso número de participantes que tiene, supone una representación realmente importante del contexto en el que nos hemos introducido para realizar esta investigación. Nuestros participantes

serán 5 voluntarios encargados de desempeñar la labor de docentes de español para inmigrantes adultos en diferentes centros de Cáritas situados en algunas de las principales localidades de la provincia de Albacete, provincia que cuenta con un 14% de la población total de inmigrantes en edad de trabajar de la comunidad de Castilla La-Mancha. Las localidades que han formado parte de esta investigación han sido Albacete, Almansa, Caudete y Villarrobledo.

Los métodos de recolección de datos empleados en esta investigación han sido resultado del enfoque mixto que se ha adoptado, el cual nos permitiría llevar a cabo una triangulación de los datos obtenidos. Así, debemos señalar que se ha empleado tanto un instrumento cuantitativo, un cuestionario, como un instrumento cualitativo, entrevistas personales semiestructuradas. El primero nos permitió obtener un primer acercamiento a la naturaleza de estos programas de español para posteriormente conocer más de cerca e indagar más sobre ellos y descubrir si existían diferencias entre las respuestas ofrecidas en las encuestas y aquello que nos contestaran durante las entrevistas para poder llevar a cabo una triangulación de los datos. Por último, una vez finalizado el análisis de los resultados de ambos métodos, se procedió a un análisis global de dichos resultados con el fin de obtener las conclusiones de nuestro proyecto de investigación.

4. ANÁLISIS DE LOS DATOS OBTENIDOS

4.1. CUESTIONARIOS

Como dijimos anteriormente, los cuestionarios nos ofrecieron las primeras ideas acerca de estos cursos de español con el fin de orientar la segunda parte de la recolección de los datos, es decir, la elaboración de las entrevistas personales.

Los principales resultados obtenidos de estos cuestionarios pueden dividirse en dos grupos, por un lado, aquellos resultados que son comunes a todos los centros encuestados (Tabla 1) y, por otro, diferentes y significativas desigualdades que presentan los citados centros:

Características comunes a los 4 centros
Voluntarios procedentes del sector educativo
Creación de una programación propia
Elaboración de materiales propios
No utilización de recursos de voluntarios anteriores
Ausencia de medios audiovisuales
La enseñanza y aprendizaje de la gramática como principal obstáculo
Combinación de los métodos sintético y analítico para la alfabetización
Desarrollo de las 4 destrezas en clase
Edad media de los alumnos de unos 35 años y origen magrebí o de Europa del Este
Satisfacción con los materiales disponibles
Materiales adaptados a los alumnos
Mayor número de alumnos no alfabetizados
Alta motivación de los alumnos

Tabla 1: Características comunes de los centros.

En lo que se refiere a las principales desigualdades, la primera de ellas está relacionada con la experiencia previa en enseñanza del español con la que cuentan los voluntarios. Así, más de la mitad de los encuestados manifestaron que sí tenían, la cual fue desempeñada en el centro escolar donde trabajan o trabajaban con niños hijos de inmigrantes no hablantes de español y también en la enseñanza de español como L1 o de otra L2 (en este caso inglés) a hablantes nativos de español. En segundo lugar, en cuanto al tiempo que llevan los voluntarios enseñando español en la ONG comprobamos que existían voluntarios con una experiencia que va desde los 15 años hasta otros que llevaban enseñando esta lengua únicamente un año. En tercer lugar, señalaremos que la desigualdad es también significativa cuando hablamos del número de horas de docencia que se imparten, pues hay centros en los que las clases alcanzan las 24 horas mensuales, mientras que en otros únicamente se imparten 8 horas cada mes. Además, es diferente también el número de personas que se encargan de este programa de español, puesto que encontramos centros con un único voluntario hasta otros que cuentan con hasta 5 de ellos. Por último, el número de alumnos es también destacable, dado que hay centros con exclusivamente 4 alumnos y otros con hasta 20 alumnos, independientemente del número de docentes.

4.2. ENTREVISTAS

Las entrevistas personales a los voluntarios fueron un instrumento clave para el análisis de los programas puesto que de ellas obtuvimos datos muy significativos acerca de la naturaleza de los cursos de español, datos que en algunas ocasiones entraron en contradicción, como veremos en el próximo apartado, con las respuestas ofrecidas en los cuestionarios previos. En la siguiente tabla (Tabla 2) ofrecemos las principales categorías comunes obtenidas de las entrevistas a los encargados de los programas de español:

Sobre el programa
Creación de programas propios en la mayoría de los centros
Trabajadora social como intermediaria
No coordinación con otros centros que ofrecen cursos de español
Sobre materiales
Creación de materiales propios
Uso de documentos reales
Alfabetización con métodos sintéticos
Sobre la gestión del aula
Buena aceptación de dinámicas
Enseñanza oral y alfabetización simultáneas

Metodología principalmente tradicional
Ausencia de actividades fuera del aula
No evaluación de los alumnos
Sobre los alumnos
Realización de análisis de necesidades
Dificultades en la vida diaria por desconocimiento de la L2
No uso del español fuera del aula
Asistencia a clase por motivaciones externas (ayudas económicas y alimentos)
Reducción sucesiva del alumnado una vez adquiridas competencias básicas o por motivos laborales
Asistencia regular
Motivación y actitud positivas hacia el aprendizaje
Sobre las valoraciones de los voluntarios
Materiales adaptados al perfil de los alumnos
Autosuficiencia en su labor como docentes de español
Ausencia de aspectos negativos o dificultades

Tabla 2: Categorías de las entrevistas.

5. INTERPRETACIÓN CRÍTICA DE LOS DATOS

5.1. CONTRADICCIONES

Una vez contrastados los datos obtenidos tanto de los cuestionarios como de las entrevistas, descubrimos que existían ciertas contradicciones en las respuestas que los voluntarios ofrecieron en los dos instrumentos de recolección de datos.

La principal contradicción compartida por los cuatro centros es aquella relacionada con el método de alfabetización de los alumnos pues, como se observa en el análisis de las encuestas, todos los voluntarios afirmaron que esta se realizaba mediante la combinación de métodos sintéticos y analíticos, mientras que en realidad el método empleado era aquel que suele emplearse con hablantes nativos en los primeros años de la escolaridad, es decir, el método sintético puro tal y como dedujimos de la observación de materiales de enseñanza.

Otro aspecto es el relacionado con la existencia de una programación de contenidos, puesto que a pesar de afirmar en la encuesta que sí se contaba con ella, posteriormente uno de los voluntarios con menos experiencia dijo explícitamente que no.

El tema de los materiales empleados en los cursos también dejó entrever contradicciones. En la encuesta la mayoría de los encuestados afirmaba hacer uso de manuales de español, entre los que podían incluirse el editado por Cáritas y llamado *Manual de Lengua y Cultura* (1996). Sin embargo, en las entrevistas se pudo comprobar que en

gran parte de los centros eran materiales de alfabetización o lecto-escritura los que se empleaban en clase. Asimismo, a pesar de que todos los voluntarios señalaron en la encuesta que los materiales que empleaban eran los adecuados para sus alumnos, más de uno de ellos señaló que tal vez no fuesen los mejores, pues era frecuente que los voluntarios usasen materiales de Primaria o publicaciones anticuadas o poco atractivas para los alumnos.

La puesta en práctica de las destrezas supuso diferencias en las respuestas de algunos de los voluntarios. Así, a pesar de que en la encuesta se señaló que prácticamente las 4 destrezas se trabajaban en el aula, la realidad del aula era otra, pues estas no se trabajan generalmente desde la perspectiva comunicativa. En algunos centros algunas de las destrezas, especialmente la expresión oral no se trabajaba, tal y como nos indicó uno de los voluntarios. Este hecho puede explicarse con la no disponibilidad de materiales actuales que tengan en cuenta los preceptos del MCER (2001) o del Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006) y que partan de la enseñanza comunicativa sean cuales sean los perfiles de los alumnos.

Por último, la experiencia previa en enseñanza de español indicada por los voluntarios en la encuesta se vio matizada en las entrevistas, pues comprobamos que ninguno de los voluntarios, antes de hacerse cargo de este programa de español, había sido docente de español como segunda lengua a inmigrantes adultos.

5.2. ASPECTOS POSITIVOS

A pesar de las deficiencias encontradas en estos programas, son muchos los aspectos positivos que podríamos señalar, puesto que muchos de ellos son destacables y objeto de valoración, pues a pesar de la escasez de medios disponibles y la no formación en enseñanza del español como segunda lengua, los voluntarios se esfuerzan por ofrecer una enseñanza de calidad y que se adapte a los alumnos. Los principales aspectos positivos que podemos indicar son aquellos relacionados con la gran motivación y satisfacción que poseen y demuestran tanto los alumnos como los docentes de los cursos. Esta motivación se refleja en una asistencia regular de los alumnos, quienes con estos cursos ven mejoradas sus condiciones de vida, y en un buen clima en las aulas, aunque como sabemos, la continuidad de los alumnos no suele ser frecuente en los alumnos inmigrantes, quienes dan prioridad lógicamente a las oportunidades de trabajo y a sus familias antes que al aprendizaje del español. Además, los voluntarios, siempre guiados por su labor humanitaria, suelen obviar los aspectos negativos o dificultades a los que tienen que hacer frente, aunque no estén exentos de ellos.

Otros aspectos positivos tienen su origen en los cursos que tienen una trayectoria más larga o un docente con formación en enseñanza de lenguas, pues gracias a ello, los cursos cuentan con una programación previa en la cual se proponen actividades comunicativas, se emplean documentos reales y los contenidos culturales ocupan un lugar importante en el aula, contenidos que suponen un gran refuerzo para los alumnos y contribuyen a su integración en la sociedad de acogida, pues el aula, además de ser un lugar para el aprendizaje, es un espacio para el intercambio de experiencias y opiniones el cual supone un enriquecimiento mutuo entre alumnos y profesores y entre alumnos. A ello podemos añadir que es frecuente realizar análisis de las necesidades de los alumnos lo que se traduce en cursos que tienen en cuenta sus expectativas.

5.3. ASPECTOS NEGATIVOS Y PROPUESTA DE SOLUCIONES

En cuanto a los aspectos negativos, señalaremos que todos ellos tienen una clara justificación: una escasa o nula formación de los voluntarios en cuyas manos están los programas de español y la naturaleza voluntaria de esta labor. La finalidad humanitaria de estos cursos tiene como consecuencia que en algunas ocasiones «todo valga» en la enseñanza y que las clases sean impartidas por personas que nunca antes habían tenido que alfabetizar o formar en una segunda lengua a personas adultas inmigrantes. Esta falta de formación conlleva que la metodología y los materiales empleados no se adapten a unos perfiles de alumnos muy diferentes y pequen en muchas ocasiones de formalidad, dejando de lado los aspectos comunicativos, que son los verdaderamente necesarios para los alumnos. Unido a lo anterior, encontramos la escasez de recursos humanos y materiales de que disponen los cursos, lo que conlleva que un escaso número de personas e incluso que solamente una deba hacer frente a una enseñanza tan compleja haciendo uso de unos materiales anticuados y que ralentizan el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, a lo que debemos añadir las pocas horas lectivas de algunos de los cursos. Además, el aislamiento de estos cursos en relación con otros centros públicos dificulta aún más la enseñanza, pues el intercambio de materiales, alumnos y experiencias les permitiría mejorar conjuntamente.

Las posibles soluciones a las carencias de estos programas tendrían que contar con el apoyo no solo de la ONG, sino también con el de los especialistas en el ámbito de la enseñanza de segundas lenguas a inmigrantes. Así, la principal solución que favorecería sobremanera a estos cursos sería la formación y orientación de los voluntarios, pues como afirman Villalba y Hernández (2008: 30): «Creemos que la formación del profesorado es un paso imprescindible para alcanzar mayores cotas de eficacia en la tarea docente» y continúan: «El reconocimiento profesional de esta actividad educativa es otro de los aspectos centrales para avanzar en la eficacia de los programas». Es más, si fuese posible dar a conocer a los voluntarios las últimas corrientes de la metodología comunicativa, así como los diferentes métodos de alfabetización o los últimos materiales publicados, podríamos facilitarles mucho más el trabajo al que tienen que enfrentarse en la ONG y podrían ser testigos de una evolución de los alumnos más significativa.

A pesar de que son muchos los trabajos y las investigaciones realizadas sobre la enseñanza de segundas lenguas a inmigrantes, el análisis de los datos de la presente investigación nos muestra que no todos parecen haber llegado a las aulas de español de Cáritas, pues sus voluntarios están lo suficientemente ocupados con compaginar sus trabajos y ocupaciones diarias con las de un trabajo para el cual en muchas ocasiones no han sido formados, ser profesores de español en uno de los contextos en los que más necesaria es una formación previa.

De esta manera, el punto de partida en la enseñanza de español para inmigrantes es la profesionalización de dicha actividad a la cual se llegará mediante la formación del profesorado. Como consecuencia de dicha formación, podrá otorgársele a esta labor el lugar que le corresponde para dejar de ser exclusivamente una labor humanitaria y convertirse así en una enseñanza rigurosa y lo que es más importante, que se adapte a las necesidades de los alumnos.

6. CONCLUSIONES Y LÍNEAS FUTURAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Como consecuencia del reducido número de informantes con el que hemos contado, es lógico pensar en las limitaciones que puede presentar nuestra investigación. Sin embargo, tras el análisis de los datos creemos firmemente que la homogeneidad en las respuestas obtenidas, tanto en las encuestas como en las entrevistas personales, nos permiten afirmar que son significativas las características comunes entre los diferentes centros de Cáritas con los que hemos trabajado, características que, debido a la similitud de las condiciones de trabajo en las que los voluntarios deben desempeñar su labor de docentes de español, podrían extrapolarse a otros centros y organizaciones de la misma naturaleza que Cáritas Diocesana. A este respecto, debemos señalar que son de suma importancia los aspectos positivos que caracterizan a los cursos de español analizados, pues es de ellos de donde tenemos que partir para proponer las mejoras de aquellos que presentan más carencias, las cuales tienen, como hemos visto, solución en la orientación y formación de los docentes.

La formación de los voluntarios estaría, en términos de enseñanza de lenguas, enfocada a la acción, por lo que dejaríamos de lado la terminología compleja y nos dedicaríamos a responder a las necesidades, ya no solo de los alumnos, sino también de los voluntarios, quienes obtendrían un mayor rendimiento de los alumnos.

Además, creemos que la enseñanza de español en estos centros se encuentra aislada, pues no existe comunicación con otros centros públicos cercanos que también desempeñan esta labor. Así, un diálogo entre ellos fomentaría un intercambio de experiencias, metodologías o materiales que enriquecerían el trabajo con los inmigrantes, quienes realmente deben ser el centro de la enseñanza.

Consideramos que esta investigación podría tener una continuidad en numerosos aspectos. En primer lugar, podría aumentarse el número de centros que forman parte de la muestra para comprobar así si los datos obtenidos son extensibles a más centros. En segundo lugar, proponemos realizar observaciones de las clases de los voluntarios de los programas de español con el fin de identificar de manera más clara los problemas que existen en ellas para proponer así soluciones que se adapten a los alumnos y respondan a sus necesidades. En tercer y último lugar, la gran variedad de perfiles de alumnos con los que cuentan los centros nos permitirían avanzar en la investigación sobre el aprendizaje o adquisición de segundas lenguas por inmigrantes en contextos de inmersión y también se podrían proponer programas de formación de voluntariado que faciliten su labor como docentes de español.

Los inmigrantes que acuden a las aulas de español de las ONG no son tan diferentes del resto de alumnos que desean aprender nuestra lengua, a pesar de lo que se suele pensar. Cuando el objetivo de la enseñanza es mejorar las condiciones de vida de una persona y ayudarle a encontrar su lugar en la sociedad, no hay meta que no se pueda conseguir a pesar de las trabas que nos encontremos en el camino. Por ello, es necesario ayudar, orientar y aconsejar a los voluntarios que tanto ayudan a los inmigrantes y que dejan sus vidas de lado para dedicarse a los más necesitados.

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CLÉA: A BASIC SKILLS FRAMEWORK FOR LOW EDUCATED PEOPLE?

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ABSTRACT: In France, French language is seen as a vocational skill. Companies are able to put in place French language vocational training for employees, mostly from foreign origin with very different sociolinguistic backgrounds. Many of these employees never went to school and, with vocational training, learn to read, write French and numeracy. Since 2016, a basic skills framework designed for low-educated adults called *CléA* (Key for Adults) has been developed by the French government so as to make every worker or unemployed people more autonomous, efficient at any workplace. Through an immersive ethnographic approach, we present the first outputs of developing *CléA* into two training courses. We analyse this basic skills framework, the way people are evaluated, if they pass the assessment, what training is put in place in case of failure, how this new approach is perceived by trained people, by their companies...and if *CléA* could change things for low-educated people in France.

KEYWORDS: framework, basic skills, vocational training, French language, assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

France has sustained a tradition of French language policy over many years. In 2004, the ability to communicate in French was officially recognised as a vocational skill in common with other technical skills. This very new paradigm has permitted companies to put in place French language vocational training for their employees. In the first part of this paper, we will set out a brief history of French language policy in France, at the workplace. This brief overview will lead us to 2016. This year, a new official basic skills framework designed for adults with limited education (especially LESLLA), called *CléA*, has been put in place. *CléA* is presented as the "Foundation-level Vocational Knowledge and Skills" every worker and unemployed person ought to master so as to

be autonomous, efficient at any workplace. The second part of this paper will consist in a presentation of the *CléA* framework. As *CléA* is very new, in the third part of this paper, we will analyse through two pilot courses still in progress, how *CléA* is being implemented in two different contexts: a cleaning company and a staff canteen. Using an ethnographic approach, we can give the first results of these pilot courses and see how people have been assessed, how training courses have been organised, how learners and trainers deal with *CléA*. These first outputs show us that it is often difficult to deal with such an official framework and there is a lot to manage in order to ensure that low-educated people improve their basic skills, especially their French.

2. FRENCH LANGUAGE POLICY IN FRANCE

2.1. FRENCH LANGUAGE POLICY THROUGH A FEW DATES

Since 1539 and the Ordinance of *Villers-Côterets*,¹ France has been maintaining the pre-eminence of the French language. At this time, the Latin was being replaced by French. One of the goals of that ordinance was to begin a kind of linguistic unification all over France.

Later, after the French Revolution, in 1794, Abbé Grégoire continued the programme of linguistic unification writing a report on the necessity and means to annihilate patois and to universalise the use of the French language.² At that time, the main goal of the Revolution's spirit was to unify the whole country for a better efficiency between regions and different administrations and French language became compulsory in all administrations in 1794, July 20th.³

French became the language of instruction at the end of the nineteenth century. More and more, the state had been trying to promote French over regional languages even when no law imposed "French only" at school.

French was formally recognised as the language of France in 1992 in the context of European Union and the Maastricht Treaty.⁴ At that time, the second article of the French Constitution was changed and a new clause added: "The language of the Republic is the French language".

One last important date is 1994 with the *Toubon* law.⁵ The main point of this law was to assert the right to use French at work, in courts, when people buy something, read a user manual or a guarantee, for example.

1. "We intend that henceforth all decrees and other proceedings, whether of our sovereign courts or others, subordinate and inferior, or whether in records, surveys, contracts, commissions, awards, wills, and all other acts and deeds of justice or of law, that all such acts are spoken, written, and given to the parties [concerned] in the French mother tongue, and not otherwise". *Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts* signed by Francis I of France (August 10th, 1539).

2. "Idiom's unicity is part of the Revolution" (author's translation) Abbé Grégoire (1794).

3. 1st article of the decree of the same date

4. 1992, February 7th

5. Assemblée Nationale (1994).

2.2. FRENCH LANGUAGE PLANNING AND MIGRANTS

If French is the language of the nation, of the French Republic, obviously migrants should speak, understand, read and write French.

Firstly, instead of migrants being forced to speak French as suggested in the Benisti report,⁶ a specific diploma has been created for low-educated people, the *DILF*: a pre-elementary A1.1 level French diploma. This diploma has been designed for "people with minimal skills in French: real beginners and new migrants to France, often less or badly educated in their own country, sometimes non-readers, non-writers when they begin to learn French".⁷ As we can see, this level is linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages⁸ (now CEFRL) and sits below the A1 level, a kind of survival level. It is important to notice that it was not compulsory but more and more recommended for non-European migrants wishing to stay in France. Indeed, in 2007, a compulsory welcoming contract of integration (*CAI*)⁹ was put in place for new migrants wishing to settle. When people are judged (based on an interview and some informal assessment) unable to speak and read French, the *DILF* has become mandatory.

In 2011, the process of naturalization was re-examined and the government made intermediate level oral skills a precondition to become French: B1 level.¹⁰

Till now, no new decrees or laws have been put in place but there are some proposals relating to foreigners in France. One¹¹ from the Senate is linked to the French language level required for resident status (B1 level in all competencies) and for French nationality (B2 level in all competencies). With Europe exposed to a wave of migration from the Middle-East and Africa, with Presidential and legislative elections this year in France, it seems possible that French language requirements for foreigners could be an issue.

2.3. FRENCH LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE WORKPLACE

In France, since 1971,¹² companies have been forced to contribute to a levy for vocational training. Each month, a percentage of the employee's social taxes goes to a training account. To pay has been compulsory since 1971 but not to train. That is why companies (mostly little ones) have been paying for many years without training their own employees for many different reasons (they did not want to, they could not substitute, employees did not want training, funding from the levy was insufficient, etc.). The main point is that vocational training is a right in France and some money is available to fund it.

In 2004, French language become a recognised vocational skill. That was more or less revolutionary in that it made companies responsible of the French language skills

6. Benisti, Jacques Alain (2004).

7. In CIEP (October 2007).

8. Council of Europe (2001).

9. Contrat d'Accueil et d'Intégration: art. 5 of the Law relating to immigration's command, integration and asylum (2006, July, 24th)

10. Decree n° 2011-1265 (2011, October, 11th)

11. Kennel, Guy-Dominique (2015, October 1st).

12. Law n° 71-575 (1971, July, 16th).

of their employees (though, in fairness, some companies were already offering French courses to their employees before this law). Anyway, in 2004, it was decreed that French could be learnt at school during compulsory education and at the workplace through vocational training. The law of 2004 is very important because it gives the same rights to French people and foreigners: "Training people against non-literacy and learning the French language are included in lifelong learning".¹³ Effectively, in France, a distinction is drawn between people with limited literacy (*personnes en situation d'illettrisme*) and analphabetic people (*analphabètes*). In the law, the first expression refers to French people of low educational attainment, limited basic skills; the second one refers to migrants with limited knowledge of writing systems based on the Latin alphabet. French language, thanks to this law, could have been teaching to everyone in vocational training.

Different laws, agreements¹⁴ address the importance of French language at work. The most significant, still in progress, is the 2013 National agreement about vocational training. It is really fundamental because it changes the paradigm of the 1971 law. Nowadays, companies have to train their employees whether they receive levy funding for this or not. Vocational training is now compulsory. Moreover, each person, from the age of 15 to pension age, can create a vocational training personal account¹⁵ entitling them to vocational training hours that they can access throughout their career. We can imagine that this account could facilitate the Lifelong learning process.

In this agreement, a Certifications Committee had been asked to "define vocational basic skills before the end of the first 2014 semester". Two years later, this definition of vocational basic skills has been formalised through the "Foundation-level Vocational Knowledge and Skills Framework", known as *CléA*: Clé for Key, A for Adults.

13. Law n° 2004-391 (2004, May 4th).

14 See bibliography.

15 *Compte Personnel de Formation* everyone can create on the web.

2. CLÉA

2.1. WHAT IS IT FOR? WHO IS CONCERNED?



Figure 1: The Framework¹⁶

As we can see on this front page, the "Foundation-level Vocational Knowledge and Skills Framework" (now *CléA*) is a framework which has been negotiated between trade union organisations and employer organisations. Every organisation has signed, so all of them should engage them in the promotion of this framework.

A preamble defines the main goal of the framework: *CléA* "has to be considered as the knowledge and competencies/skills package a person, whatever his job or his professional sector, must fully attain, to facilitate his employability and his access to vocational training".¹⁷ Hence, *CléA* is seen as a first priority to work in any sector and also as a first step before other training courses. This is confirmed later, in the same preamble, when it is written that *CléA* represents "the very first level of vocational competence".

Assessment in the *CléA* competencies is a pre-requisite to obtaining an occupational certificate. That is why *CléA* is seen as a first step, a recognised step, to progress.

16 COPANEF (2015).

17. All the extracts from *CléA* have been translated by the author of this paper.

2.2. SEVEN DOMAINS OF COMPETENCY, 28 AREAS OF COMPETENCE, 108 ASSESSMENT ITEMS

After the preamble, comes the real framework (page 3 to 14). Seven domains of competency “have been fully covered”¹⁸ by the framework. These take into account the following skills:

> S'EXPRIMER EN FRANÇAIS	<input type="checkbox"/>	French Language
> CALCULER, RAISONNER	<input type="checkbox"/>	Numeracy
> UTILISER UN ORDINATEUR	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using computers
> RESPECTER LES RÈGLES ET TRAVAILLER EN ÉQUIPE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Working in team with regulations
> TRAVAILLER SEUL ET PRENDRE DES INITIATIVES	<input type="checkbox"/>	Working alone with taking initiatives
> AVOIR L'ENVIE D'APPRENDRE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wanting to learn
> MAÎTRISER LES RÈGLES DE BASE : HYGIÈNE, SÉCURITÉ, ENVIRONNEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mastering basic rules of Health, Safety & Environment

Figure 2: the 7 *CléA* Competency's Areas

First of all, we see that all the usual basic skills feature in the framework. It's very close to the 2010 *Reference For Key Skills in Work Situations*¹⁹ setting out the skills that underpin occupational competence, including four generic basic skills (French communication, writing, reading, numeracy) and six employability skills (IT, specific technologic terminology, health and safety, attitude at work, non-verbal communication and body language, cultural awareness). It's very similar in all but the sixth competency domain: Willingness to learn, in other words *learning to learn*. We might place *CléA* closer to the Canadian Essential Skills framework²⁰ (Reading, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Thinking, Computer Use, Continuous Learning) from 1994 and the OECD Key Competencies²¹ framework (Communication in the mother tongue, Communication in a foreign language, Mathematical literacy and basic competencies in science and technology, ICT skills, Learning to learn, Interpersonal and civic competencies, Entrepreneurship, Cultural awareness) from 2003, for example. Even if *CléA* could be really useful, it is hardly groundbreaking.

As mentioned in the preamble,²² this framework has been designed as a tool to adapt in any situation so as to make “every sector, every professional world, able to appropriately adapt, contextualize, according to each occupational area or professional environment”. That is why we may see *CléA* as a foundation framework for other

18. Written in the preamble

19. *ANLCI* (2010).

20. For more information, see http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/essential_skills/index.page

21. Dominique S. Rychen, Laura H. Salganik (2003).

22. It was the same with the ANLCI's reference as it is written in the preamble.

frameworks, a kind of super framework.

Therefore, the main point is to adapt each domain of competency to each context without forgetting any of the competency areas. For example,²³ with the French language competency domain, competency areas are: listening and understanding, talking, reading, writing, describing-formulating.

Moreover, as people are entitled to get a certificate with *CléA*, they need to be evaluated (using a number of the 108 assessment items). The *CléA* process has been articulated under three steps: an initial assessment, training (as necessary) and a final assessment, the approach “test, t each, test”.

3. AN IMPLEMENTATION IN PROGRESS: LOOKING INTO TWO PILOT COURSES

3.1. OUR FIELD OF RESEARCH AND WORK

Our field of research is directly linked to our work. As a training organisation manager, with a team of trainers, vocational basic skills training is organised for (mainly) low educated-people at the workplace. As a PhD student, I do a research with an immersive ethnographic approach in my own workplace. Hence, I “have been studying the hum of the world”²⁴ of our field and following the lines of Goffman or Austin.²⁵ Vocational language learning at the workplace could be seen at the crossroads of many fields: Language policy (Calvet), Linguistic competencies (Beacco, Hymes), Basic skills and Work (Leclerc), Working sociology (Le Boterf, Zarifian), Language and Work (Boutet, Murlon-Dallies, Grünhagge-Monetti), Sociodidactics (Adami)...

Indeed, in order to understand this complex field, we shall take all these fields into account. So, to be efficient, we have been working with a field book and android mobile (to record audio files, take pictures, movies) hoping we could catch different kinds of material that could be more relevant in our research. During training sessions, assessments, meetings (officials and unofficial) with trainees, trainers, companies, branch sectors, symposiums, we gathered audio records, pedagogical practices, pedagogic materials, interviews and so on.

To highlight *CléA*'s implementation, we have been studying two different pilot courses. Such a study highlights contrastive analysis between two assessments and training processes in progress. We present these two pilot courses in the inserted table hereunder:

23. See the framework for more details of each area. Cf footnote 19.

24. «étudier le ronronnement du monde», Winkin Yves (1996).

25. Cf. bibliography.

	Cleaning company	Staff canteen
People trained	Cleaners and team leaders	Store-keeper and dishwasher
Education, origins and Languages	4 non-literate people (Cape Verde, Morocco), 2 people 3-5 five years schooled with different writing systems (Sri Lanka, Cape Verde), 7 people educated at different levels with different writing systems (Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal, Sri Lanka, India)	5 non-literate people (Mali, Algeria, Tibet, Cape Verde), 2 people 3-5 five years schooled with different writing systems (Algeria, Cape Verde), 4 people educated at different levels (France)
Where ?	Client's corporate building	In their own head office
Objectives	Being more efficient at the workplace, more confident, autonomous even at home and help them to take basic skills cleaning mastering certificate and cleaning CléA certificate	Help them to achieve a store-keeper vocational technical training and to take technical certificates, to take general CléA certificate (for a part of them)
CléA assessment and CléA training	Assessments and training managed by the same training organization specialising in Basic skills at the workplace (willingness of the Cleaning Sector ²⁶)	Assessments and training managed by two different training organizations (State's requirement ²⁷ and willingness of the branch sector to get two different providers): the assessment organisation specialises in technical training; the training organisation specialises in Basic skills training at the workplace
Assessment	Continuing: 12 hours in the first 70 hours of training by an assessor different from the trainers	Preceding the training: done by an occupational psychologist with the national grid of the assessment provider
Training link	The knowledge of basic skills by the assessor reinforces the training. The assessor assesses to facilitate the training and gives some qualitative results directly linked to the training.	There is neither possibility to know how assessment has been done, nor results that could help the trainers. The results are too linked to the 108 questions, too quantitative (a grid is filled with acquired/not acquired)

Table 1: Pilot Courses

3.2. THE FIRST RESULTS

Obviously, as CléA is being implemented this year, it is not possible to get a lot of results. However, the two previous pilot courses still in progress, with their differences, could be seen as the first steps of how trainers, assessors manage approach the new framework.

The first feedback we get is as follows:

26. When a training organisations is habilitated by the branch sector, it is possible to do both (asses and training) but with different trainers/assessors.

27. On behalf of the French State, the COPANEF has accredited 6 national to be able to assess and train people relating to CléA.

	Cleaning company	Staff canteen
Assessors	It has been very difficult to assess people because there was a lot of absenteeism due to work. The 12 hours assessment engaged took 24 hours so as to assess each one 12 hours. The assessor asked himself many questions: "how to assess 10 people with 28 competency areas in 12 hours?" / "as we do the same assessment, is it possible to assess 3-4 people at the same time?" / "when I assess somebody in ICT, if the person has never seen a computer, it is difficult to explain to her that she could manage later and I have to show her she has failed" / "I know easily who is able to write or not, to count or not: is it compulsory to assess all the competency areas?"	Nothing have been said but "we did the assessment". After a long talk between assessors and trainers, a few comments have been emailed so as to make the CléA results understandable for the trainers and help them to imagine possible training.
Trainers	"when assessment is being proceed, sometimes, I have no one to teach" / "it is easy to train people 'cos I know how assessment is done" / "'cos of absenteeism, I have to teach the same things many times"	After the beginning of the training "if you are able to register this person to all the competency areas, it would be useful to him" / "of course, I don't make any link with assessment" / "hopefully, assessors explain a little, otherwise, I wouldn't understand why this person passed all technical oral assessments but not CléA oral assessments"
Trainees	"I am fed up with assessments, I want to learn" / "I don't want to be assessed today, let me learn"	"we didn't really understand why we have been assessed" / "we did the assessment at home and treated it as a joke" / "I am good at numeracy, why should I learn what I know?"
Companies	"how are things going on with the pilot?"	"we know we are putting in place CléA as experimentation pilot, that's why there are some slip-ups"
Training organisations	"To make assessment easier at the workplace, we put one assessor and one trainer in the same session, that is expensive"	"we put in place training without knowing which are the real needs of the trainees" / "we have no confidence in the assessment results"

Table 2: Feedback

As these two pilots have not been managed in the same way, these results are not really surprising. According to us, the most interesting part is the trainees' comments about assessment: they seem not to be really involved in it. They did it because they had to. These people are working, they want to be trained and they need to be trained. This statement made us wonder about the need of such an assessment at the workplace. Moreover, when the assessment is disconnected from reality, it may be very difficult to involve them. As CléA requirements enforce a compulsory initial assessment, it is firstly necessary to contextualize the framework with people at the workplace. Secondly, when people don't write, it is not necessary to assess their writing competency.

4. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Are low-educated people the first beneficiaries of *CléA* framework? Who really wants to introduce such a framework? Do companies need *CléA*? Does a *CléA* qualification help individuals to progress? How do trainers and assessors deal with *CléA*?

The very beginnings of *CléA* foresee an unsteady future. Till now, a lot of assessments have been put in place but there is little training. A very big state communication campaign promotes *CléA* and the six accredited networks to assess people are struggling to put themselves into the limelight. Indeed, assessments are well-paid, training not.

By the way, for a company, it is very easy to get money for *CléA* training and occupational sectors are promoting *CléA* heavily, and besides, doing *CléA* with your vocational training personal account could be the best way to get vocational training.

So, trade unions, the State, companies, occupational sectors, trainers, training organisations... should work in the same direction: the learners. *CléA* seems to be a good framework to help low-educated people become autonomous, more efficient, more able to find a job or get promoted. To reach these results, things are missing today.

There is a missing bottom up link between all these actors especially in a very competitive market – because vocational training is really a market.

It is absolutely necessary that trainers and assessors work together to improve the aim of the framework.

How can we engage low-educated people (the target of *CléA*) in *CléA* training?

Even if anyone can use his vocational training personal account to be trained with *CléA*, how is a low-educated person able to use his own account if he is not aware of this possibility or if he's not able to create it on the web? Should everyone be responsible for his own training, especially vocational training, a fortiori *CléA* training?

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SYLLABUS AND DESCRIPTORS FOR ILLITERATE, SEMI-LITERATE AND LITERATE USERS. FROM ILLITERACY TO A1 LEVEL

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ABSTRACT: The need for descriptors of language proficiency for first levels in migration contexts has become apparent. Specifically, yet not exclusively, focused on illiterate and low educated adults, *Italiano L2 in contesti migratori. Sillabo e descrittori dall'alfabetizzazione all'A1* sets standards and recommends criteria for teaching both literacy and L2. It endorses the *Common European Framework of Reference* approach, especially the notion of language communicative competence as a multidimensional competence and a part of a more general action competence. It is coherent with an approach to literacy as a process that leads to a broader linguistic and communicative competence, beyond the acquisition of the technical abilities. The general purpose is to enhance the quality of the language provision aimed at vulnerable sections of the migrant population. A validation procedure of *Italian L2*, conducted in public and voluntary course providers, showed its positive impact on the L2 and literacy learning in Italy.

KEYWORDS: descriptors, standards, criteria, migration context

1. INTRODUCTION

Italiano L2 in contesti migratori. Sillabo e descrittori dall'alfabetizzazione all'A1 (Italian L2 for adult migrants. Syllabus and descriptors from illiteracy to A1 level) (Borri, Minuz, Rocca, Sola 2014) intends to provide a response, for the Italian L2, to the increasing international demand for tools for course design, curricula planning, language and literacy assessment aimed at illiterate and low educated adult migrants.

Although courses, teaching materials and educational research in the field of L2 for illiterate and low educated migrants have been in development since the end of the 1980s (Minuz, 2005), the topics of literacy and language teaching has come to a foreground at the turn of the century and it has become a specialised area of Language Teaching.

In 2001 the Canadian “ESL and Literacy”, just revised the past year, provided the first systematic guideline for a curriculum (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2001). In Europe, the language and literacy needs of migrants have led to the reviewing and integration of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (Council of Europe/Conseil de l’Europe, 2001). The need for descriptors below the level A1 has emerged in order to account for the learning paths both of speakers of languages typologically far from the European illiterate and low literate adults. We are now facing the new educational goal of teaching literacy while teaching the second language. Furthermore, teachers and course planners have to identify scenarios relevant to the adult migrants in the domains foreseen by the CEFR (private, public, occupational, educational).

Syllabuses for German, French, Dutch, Finnish, Swedish and Italian as L2s have been proposed. They are different in formats and focuses: the “can do” that identify stages of literacy in L2 (Beacco et al., 2005), the progression in the acquisition of literacy skills and study skills (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2009; Fritz et al., 2006), the relation between technical and functional literacy (Beroepsodewijs en volwasseneneducatie, 2008; Finnish National Board, 2012; Markov et al., 2015), the certification for low educated adults at A1 and A2 levels (Rocca, 2009). However, all of them define a progression towards A1 that is different from the progression of the literate learners, in contents and goals. Thus, they define curricula for illiterates and low literates that are parallel to the “ordinary” ones. In a first stage, which is defined alternatively “foundation”, “découvert”, “basis”, or “Grundlagen”, the learners explore the writings in their environments, become aware of the functions of the written words and what reading and writing entail, and acquire the first technical literacy skills. In the last stage, they can read and write short texts autonomously as means to interact in the host societies (Minuz, 2013). We agree that much more than the sheer ability to read and write is needed for an individual “to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential and participate fully in community and wider society”, as the UNESCO (2005) definition of literacy states. Therefore, a specific focus on the acquisition of the writing is required, which is the perspective of the above-mentioned syllabi.

2. AIMS AND APPROACH

In designing *Italian L2* we aimed to the following objectives.

1)	Respond to needs of the adult migrants, insofar as they are different from the needs of other target groups of learners.
2)	Provide teachers, course designers and educational authorities with an instrument which is coherent with the other tools commonly in use, primarily the Common European Framework, and the syllabuses, guidelines and language profiles based on it;
3)	Integrate the descriptors for language competence with those for literacy learning;
4)	Provide referentials for language learning as well as literacy;
5)	Provide a single and coherent frame for beginner learners, which could accommodate different users' profiles.

Table 1: Objectives

The coherence with the CEFR responds to a theoretical view of both literacy and literacy teaching and learning.

Adult literacy is a polysemic phrase, whose meanings vary along times, languages and national educational traditions. Following the OECD definition (2016), we restrict the term literacy to the ability to deal with written texts, which nowadays can be printed or digital, multimodal and multicode. Thus, we consider literacy as a component of the communicative language competence and the learning to read and write (*alfabetismo* in Italian) by adults, as an enrichment of the resources on which they can rely while acting in the world. This view differs from the approaches to literacy learning that focus *firstly* on the acquisition of the technical skills needed to read and write, although necessary. On the other hand, the proposed approach diverges from the views of literacy as the ability to deal with all the codes different from speech, among which is also the written language, or as a broader notion which coincides with basic education. Literacy and L2 teaching is a new field, which draws its methodologies both from language teaching and adult education. Referring to the conceptual frame of the language teaching helps to focus on the written language as semiotic code and on literacy learning as an appropriation of this code.

Adults learn to deal with the writing in L2 while creating and negotiating meanings. Literacy teaching, as well as language teaching, is founded on the oral and written texts that are produced in the classroom communication or brought into the classroom from the “outside world”. Literacy learning is rooted in the oral communication, from which the subject builds up the phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic competences involved in the first acquisition of the written language (Tarone & Bigelow, 2005).

Illiteracy and literacy are the poles of a continuum. The levels that the syllabuses propose are to be considered as steps that are meaningful from a cognitive, operational and social point of view. Since individual learners draw on their personal resources in their “can dos”, we are to expect shifting and imbalances among the components both of the communicative language competence and literacy.

3. The Learners

Italian L2 foresees four stages, three of them preceding the A1 level of the CEFR and the fourth coinciding with the A1 level, related to four profiles of literacy (Table 2). Pre-literates are Non-educated adults whose mother tongue is not written or is not the medium of education in the country of origin. Illiterates cannot read and write in their own L1s and have never been educated. Semi-literates have received a low level of education in their mother tongue (in general, less than 5 years of schooling) or partially lost the literacy skills because they do not read and write. Literates are educated in their mother tongue or other language(s).

<i>Learners profiles and learning stages</i>				
Stage	Pre alpha A1	Alpha A1	Pre A1	A1
Users	Pre-literate and/or illiterate "slow learners"	Illiterate	Semi-Literate	Literate
Program	Orientation and Pre-literacy	Orientation and Literacy	Close to CEFR	CEFR
Learning Hours	100	250	150	100
Progress	READING AND WRITING			
	Recognizing	Succeeding (early attempts)	Beginning to know how	Knowing how
	SPEAKING INTERACTION			
	Succeeding (early attempts)	Beginning to know how	Knowing how (first and second phase)	

Table 2: Learners Profiles and Learning Stages

If the learners Pre-A1 and A1 are literate using a writing system different from the Latin, they may require a period of familiarisation of the new system, but are not to be considered illiterate. Furthermore, we must stress that the four profiles are types, from which individual learners may differ and whose boundaries are loose.

The four stages configure either a progression or specialised path. They do not represent the steps towards the level A1 for all students, rather, they set objectives, which meet the literacy needs of non-educated or low educated learners, and are irrelevant for the educated ones. The learners of profile A might go through all four stages, although they may accelerate, slow down or even stop due to individual and contextual factors. The learners of profiles B, C, D enter the stage corresponding to their literacy competences. Note that the learning goals of every stage are "exit levels", that is the competences reached *at the end* of course.

Some learners who reach the objective of the Pre A1 stage necessitate tailored courses in order to consolidate and improve their literacy competences.

4. THE STRUCTURE

The structure of *Italian L2* is coherent with the above mentioned approach. *Italian L2* consists of two parts (Table 3). The Syllabus defines six areas related to the CEFR domains. For instance: for the personal domain it proposes the thematic areas "My person" and "My home". Three types of tables (A,B,C) organize the descriptors. The tables A reflect the CEFR approach and define levels of competence in terms of "can do", that is the actions which a learner should be able to perform in the four domains – private, public, professional, educational – and about six main topics. The table B lists the language contents that a learner should know to perform those actions. They are based on the Italian output of the European project "Reference Level Descriptions" (Spinelli & Parizzi, 2010) with the necessary integrations and modifications. The C Table, which we shall treat below, presents the "Literacy goals". A "Word list" completes the lexical area.

Italian L2 gives indications on how to develop the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences that are component of the communicative language competence. For example, the general and specific notions and lexical list cover the semantic area whereas functions and texts address the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects. The progression in "Phonetics and orthography" complements the descriptors for literacy.

Syllabus	Thematic Areas						Macro sections
	Personal domain		Public domain		Occupational domain	Educational domain	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Descriptors	TTA						Progression
	TSA.1	TSA.2	TSA.3	TSA.4	TSA.5	TSA.6	Functions
	TTB1						General notions
	TTB2						
	TTB3						Specific notions
	TSB3.1	TSB3.2	TSB3.3	TSB3.4	TSB3.5	TSB3.6	
	TTB4						Textual genres
	TTB4.1	TTB4.2	TTB4.3	TTB4.4	TTB4.5	TTB4.6	
	TTB5						Grammar
	TTB6						Phonetics and orthography
	TTC						Literacy goals
	Word list						Lexical goals

Table 3: Thematic Areas

5. LITERACY GOALS

The Table C, "Literacy goals", complements the other sections with descriptors concerning the acquisition of the technical literacy, that is, of the notions and skills

necessary to code and decode writings, and to make meaning from the output of these activities. So, regarding the reading skill at stage Pre-alpha A1 on the theme "My home", one finds the descriptor "Recognising some words begins to orient him/ herself in buildings" in TA and "Begins to read the simplest and most frequent words in the HC language, especially if he/she knows the meaning" in TC.

The table C consists of two parts: "Pre literacy and basic literacy skills (technical skills) and "Study skills".

The descriptors of this table primarily regard the notions that are pre-requisites for reading and writing, such as the awareness of the representational and conventional nature of the writing. We have taken into account the relevant research, such as studies on the development of the notion of word, and the role of the phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, metalinguistic awareness, and size of vocabulary (for the relevant bibliography, see Minuz et al., 2016).

Concerning the reading skill, the Table C lists descriptors both for the sight reading and the analytic-synthetic reading, following the "dual route" model (Coltheart, 1978) and its applications in literacy learning for the Italian language (Vegni, 2007).

The section on the study skills presents the learning strategies that the teachers can intentionally foster. It also takes into consideration the difficulties that those who never attended school, or only attended for a short period, may face when confronted with the conventions and activities of the specific communicative context, which is the language lesson.

The following example illustrates how *Italian L2* has been used during the validation process. The writing is the result of a teaching unit on food, which took place after 50 hours of instruction and involved students in several activities – such as speaking, copying, sentence and word segmentation – through different techniques. The photo shows, above the sentence, a previous exercise aimed at developing phonological awareness.

The student, a Malian young man without previous schooling, wrote the sentence with a strong guidance by the teacher and the aid of syllabic tables, cards and words written on the blackboard. We tested the relevant objectives of *Italian L2* in assessing the item. At a phonological and orthographical level, we considered the descriptor: "He/she succeeds in writing syllables and words autonomously". Among the relevant descriptors for literacy acquisition we cite: "he/she understands the alphabetic principle (correspondence between graphemes and phonemes)"; "He/she understands the notion of word and starts to understand the idea of sentence"; "if supported, he/she starts to write very short familiar sentences".

The student starts to write single familiar, well-trained words correctly (*latte/milk, biscotto/cake, io/I*), and he is able to reproduce familiar phrases with a degree of accuracy (*a colazione – a colazione/ at breakfast*). He seems to have understood the representational nature of written language, but some areas are still in a developing stage. The attribution of a given phoneme to the correspondent grapheme is sometimes incorrect. In *benve – beve (he drinks)*, the student seems more focused on the graphic form of the word than in the representation of the sounds. In *manego – mangio (I eat)*, the complex syllables combination is normalized in three syllables CV, the most common type in the Italian language and the first to be taught. In both cases, one can assume difficulties in the segmentation of words into phonemes and phonemic groups, probably due to difficulties in treating the new phonetic system. The delimitation of the words (*io – latte/manego*) seems uncertain. As far as the language competence is concerned, the sentence shows that the system of verbs (*benve – bevo*), as well as the noun syntagma

(*biscotto – un biscotto, biscotti*) are not completely acquired. The incorrect repetition of the pronoun *io* is due probably to the focus on the good reproduction of the sentence, in terms writing conventions.



Figure 1: Activity from Validation Process

6. THE VALIDATION PROCESS

A validation procedure has been set up, in order to assess accuracy, validity and impact of *Italian L2* (Minuz & Borri, 2017). With the term "accuracy", we intend the descriptive power of *Italian L2*. Can it guide the users in identifying levels of competence in language learning and literacy with an acceptable degree of precision and discriminatory power? "Validity" here means its appropriateness to an end. Is *Italian L2* useful, and user-friendly? Is *Italian L2* useful in setting realistic learning objectives? The third goal of the trial has been to assess the impact on the quality of the language courses and testing. Has *Italian L2* affected approaches to language teaching, course planning – i.e. in the progression of language contents, selection of the texts, or techniques in literacy teaching, and test design?

The trial has focused on the development of writing ability, starting from instrumental and functional literacy. Methodology and steps were as follows.

1. *Sampling of the participants.* Ten educational agencies were selected taking into account the diversity of the language teaching provision (State Adult Education Centres, NGOs and associations, vocational training agencies), and the geographical distribution. 17 teachers participated on a voluntary basis, after a short training.
2. *Overview of the teaching situations.* We asked teachers to fill in two types of questionnaires, in order to identify the research participants' profiles, the size and compositions of the classes, and the learners' profiles and backgrounds.

3. *Collection and analysis of samples of learners' written productions.* In order to assess the accuracy of the descriptors, we tested them on samples of writing produced by the students (about 800 pages of their exercise books), focusing on the new proposed levels Pre-Alpha, Alpha A1, Pre-A1.
4. *Feedback from the research participants.* In order to assess the validity of *Italian L2* and its impact on teaching practices, we instructed the research participants to experiment *Italian L2* by integrating it into their everyday practices. At the end of the trial, we asked for feedback through structured-interviews.

The research participants used *Italian L2* to plan and implement 14 courses: 2 AlphaA1/preA1; 10 A1 with literate and illiterate participants; 2 multilevel classes.

The average duration of the courses was 60 hours, from a minimum of 30 to a maximum of 100 hours. 167 students attended the course, 104 men and 63 women, from 18 countries, and with 19 mother tongues. 48 of them claimed to be able to speak at least one Second language (11 L2 other than Italian).

Research confirmed heterogeneity and irregular attendance as critical issues in L2 courses in Italy. Most of the classes were highly diverse in terms of language competence, literacy, and linguistic backgrounds of the students, in some cases ranging from illiterates without any knowledge of Italian to A2 educated students. Furthermore, individual students rarely presented homogeneous profiles. For example, pre-A1 students in writing skills could speak Italian up to B1. Thus, teachers – all of them with extensive experience and/or specific qualifications – claimed to use differentiated teaching techniques, mostly based on cooperative learning approaches. Course attendance was irregular, even when learners showed strong interest and motivation to language learning. In any case, the majority of teachers commented that the class environment was pleasant, cooperative and motivating; two reported that illiterates sometimes showed “distress”, “discouragement”, “confusion”.

As a positive feature, the participants pointed out, the coherence with the CEFR, as they are used to turning to it for course, material and test design. In particular, they appreciated the articulation between early literacy teaching and language teaching from a communicative perspective.

Overall, the validation results confirmed the accuracy of *Italian L2* as a descriptive and assessment tool and its validity in representing the development of communicative language skills and literacy. According to all research participants, it proved useful in outlining the profiles of students, thus in better designing tailor-made courses. It has sharpened their diagnostic skills, drawing their attention to aspects less in foreground in the standard entry assessment tools, such as the main domains in which learners habitually use the Italian language or their multilingual repertoires. The stress on different forms of illiteracy, in the continuum between illiterates and strong literates, has been appreciated.

Italian L2 has helped in reviewing current practices and notions. Participants quoted, for example, the notions of levels and profiles, the role of oral competence in literacy learning, the teaching and learning pace, the different rates of acquisition of spoken language and literacy, the difficulty of focusing on relevant and stimulating themes for the most vulnerable students such as the asylum seekers in hosting centres.

Problems have been signalled in the complex structure of the tool and, by one participant, in the distinction between illiterate and pre-literate learners.

7. OPEN QUESTIONS

The validation process has focused on at least three topics that need either to be made explicit or require further research.

7.1. LEVELS AND PROFILES

Italian L2 does not represent *one* progression but *progressions*.

Migrants use the language of their plurilingual repertoire strategically, including the L1, L2s, and their varieties, to act as adults in the host society. They develop a heterogeneous communicative language competence due to their linguistic backgrounds, the language skills more frequently employed, the types of interactions in which they participate, the most familiar language domains, language varieties and registers with which they come into contact. The heterogeneity touches both the levels of competence and the language areas. The oral skills could be stronger than the written skills. Morphological forms typical of the basic stage of the interlanguage may occur with elaborated pragmatic structures or a precise vocabulary.

Literacy and communicative language competence are not to be understood as unitary profiles, but as indicators of competence that must be re-assembled case by case (Beacco, 2008, Minuz et al., 2016).

As far as the teaching practices and methodologies are concerned, further research should better understand the heterogeneous profiles and how to deal with them, also in terms of formal language tests such as certification exams.

7.2. ACQUISITION OF THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Italian L2 assumes that the incoming learner is at a minimum level of oral ability or is not able at all; therefore, it defines sequences of language contents that proceed in parallel in terms of written and oral abilities. However, the relationship between oral abilities and levels of education, for adult illiterates in particular, is not yet fully understood. Teachers' experience emphasizes that illiterate subjects most likely need longer time to learn oral language, than semi-literate or literate subjects. The practical data is confirmed by psycholinguistic research, even though still at an early stage. Illiteracy seems to be related to a lower ability to be aware of and to process linguistic forms (i.e. phonemes, morphemes, words), which influences the development of oral language.

Moreover, illiterate people and people with low literacy skills cannot access the variety of texts and uses of language that reading and writing allow; the language input is less rich and varied

7.3. LITERACY PROFILES NOWADAYS

The Profile A (pre-literate) is well established in the literature on literacy in L2. Like others (Canadian Benchmark, 2015), we considered maintaining this profile appropriate, while we are uncertain about the term. Learners responding to the profile are relatively

frequent among asylum seekers coming from some geographical areas, while their presence is not significant among adult illiterates who reside in Italy and are constantly in contact with a highly textualized society.

However, we think it necessary to refocus the characteristics, individual resources and educational needs of the illiterate adults who speak a language that is not written, or that is not the language of schooling and public communication in the countries of origin. An important issue is the role of information and communication technologies in the representation of the written and spoken language, an issue that we are investigating.

8. CONCLUSIONS

We are convinced that the ongoing revisions of the CEFR, in order to make it more suited to the language learning and teaching to migrants, is a European endeavor, to which the experiences rooted within national contexts can contribute best.

Migration has both local and international dimensions, as the constantly changing routes and forms of people's movements show.

Although *Italian L2* focuses on the Italian language, we propose it as a contribution to a European L2 and literacy syllabus. For this reason, translations in English and French have been made available (<http://ida.loesch.it/italiano-l2-e-alfabetizzazione>) and a large extract of *Italian L2* is published on the CoE LIAM (Linguistic Integration Adult Migrants) website (<http://www.coe.int/it/web/lang-migrants/literacy>).

In addition, in ALTE (Association of Language Tester in Europe) two Special Interest Groups (LAMI - Language Assessment Migration and Integration group, and TT-Teacher Training group) are assessing the adaptability of *Italian L2* descriptors to other European contexts. The first results are expected in 2017. We would like to engage in the developing of a common tool international researchers and practitioners.

As the validation procedure of *Italian L2* showed, accurate tools for course planning and language and literacy assessment can positively affect the quality of teaching. Furthermore, a European framework could bring the attention of educational policy makers towards the needs of a vulnerable group among the migrants themselves, that is, the low educated and non-educated learners.

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"EINSTIEG DEUTSCH" - A GERMAN LANGUAGE LEARNING
APP FOR REFUGEES

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ABSTRACT: "Einstieg Deutsch" is a German language learning app for refugees developed by the German Adult Education Association (DVV) and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

The app aims to establish a basic ability to communicate in German as a second language (L2) through chunk learning. Exercises focus on listening, understanding, and reproducing oral phrases in order to improve oral proficiency at level A1 (CEFR). Protagonists are people from Eritrea, Syria, and Afghanistan. The chapters deal with issues related to everyday life and help refugees communicate in situations where usually no translation is available; e.g., talking to a doctor, shelter staff, or security personnel. The "Einstieg Deutsch" app is completely translated into ten languages (Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Kurmanci, Pashto, Tigrinya, Turkish and Urdu). It is free of charge and available for iOS and Android in the App Store and the Google Play Store.

KEYWORDS: digital media, mobile learning, e-learning, app, chunk learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, more than a million refugees are estimated to have arrived in Germany, and 441,899 people submitted a first application for asylum – the numbers of people arriving and applying for asylum in Germany, a country in the middle of Europe and surrounded by "safe countries", are much higher than in previous years. Most of these refugees come from Syria and from other countries in the Middle East (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan), the Balkans, and the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Eritrea). (BAMF, 2015: 2; Eurostat, 2015: web).

Even though the conflicts that force the people in these countries to flee are not new, Germany was unprepared to handle the high influx of people seeking protection and was

confronted with what was called and perceived as a "refugee crisis". All of the departments in the German federal government were called on to help solve the situation. Within this context, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBWF) commissioned the German Adult Education Association (DVV) to develop a German language learning app for refugees to give new arrivals to Germany a basic tool for everyday communication in the language of their new environment.

The app aims to help refugees communicate in German and give them their first opportunity to learn simple phrases, expressions, and basic vocabulary.

The app is not meant to replace a language course, but language courses for refugees are a rare commodity these days. On the one hand, the infrastructure of language schools offering German as a second language was ill-equipped to handle the rapid rise in demand for German courses. The numbers of courses offered falls far short of actual demand due to a shortage of teachers and lack of space, but also as a result of inadequate public funding. On the other hand, the integration courses financed by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) are only open to asylum-seekers who the BAMF rates as having "good prospects of being granted permission to stay in Germany". In autumn 2015, this applied to refugees from the countries of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Eritrea. Somalia has also been part of this group of countries since summer 2016. Asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, or other crisis-torn countries in the Middle East, the Maghreb, and Africa have no way to attend state-funded language courses and receive so little financial support that it would be impossible for them to pay for classes on their own.

The German Adult Education Association takes the view that all immigrants and refugees, without exception, should have access to German courses and language training. Digital learning courses for German as a second language, however, is one way to reach people who would otherwise be excluded from courses and learning opportunities due to insufficient mobility, their immigration status, financial restrictions, etc. They are also accessible to people who are waiting for a course and already want to start learning or who want to continue learning after their course has ended (see also Sokolowsky 2015).

2. DIDACTIC CONCEPT

The "Einstieg Deutsch" app is explicitly geared toward refugees with different cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds who have just arrived in Germany and have no previous knowledge of German. It aims to give learners a quick start in the German language. It is designed both as a kind of basic phrase book and as a starting point for learning German as a second language. It assumes a basic and immediate need for communicative action and aims to help learners achieve spoken proficiency in German quickly.

A total of 15 lessons dealing with specific topics are available to students. These lessons do not progress chronologically, which means that learners can take lessons based on interest or an immediate communication need. Lessons don't have to be taken in any particular order, and they can be skipped or left out altogether. The topics focus on the everyday lives of refugees and their language needs. The content differs from a typical A1 course for immigrants to Germany, which focusses on the everyday life questions of people who enter Germany with residential status and work permit.

Therefore, in addition to topics such as *About me*, *Health* or *Food*, the app also includes topics like *In the camp* (Communication with shelter staff and Security personnel) or *Reporting an emergency*¹.



Figure 1: Overview Chapters.

The programme follows an approach dedicated to learning principles that focus on developing competence and the capacity for action and interaction, and prioritises the principle of chunk learning. This means that the app works specifically with complex sequences, which are memorised as entire units to give learners – in this case refugees – the capability to speak, interact, and act as quickly as possible.

The goal is also to achieve rapid success in communicative action. Groups of words – known as chunks – are memorised as a fixed collocation or routine and produced in ways that are appropriate to the situation, linguistically correct, and with a natural flow. This helps learners, for example, to successfully initiate or hold a conversation in which the other person, who is more competent in the second language, is then more willing

1. It is a sad reality that there were 1,000 attacks on refugees in Germany in 2015, including 94 arson attacks on shelters. The situation in the "Reporting an emergency" lesson, therefore, deals with how to report a fire. The titles of all 15 topics in detail are: Greeting, About me, Health, Shopping, Appointments, Authorities, In the camp, Reporting an emergency, Clothes, Out and about, Questions and requests, Children and learning, Food, Housing, Free time.

to provide support in the dialogue; e.g., when formulating a request or transmitting information.² Successful communicative action in turn is a motivation to continue learning a language, because the learner realises that he can reach goals through language. With this in mind, the app's focus on success in interaction plays a central role.

Chunk learning relies on the acquisition of patterns and sequences or formulations that are commonly used and conventionalised and can, therefore, be expected in certain situations. Chunks can vary in size and occur both as entire, virtually rigid, unchangeable phrases (e.g., "Wie geht es Ihnen?" (How are you?) as a way to ask after someone's state of health or a standard greeting) as well as sentence patterns with slots for variables (e.g., "Ich hätte gern..." (I would like ...) as a pattern of an order or a request for a product or service). They are not formed anew every time they are used but processed as a single element as perception and memory units. Chunks are formed by linking smaller units to one another and then memorising them - as grammatically correct and phonologically coherent phrases. The speakers are not aware that these sequences contain grammatical information - some of it highly complex - such as case, inversion, or subjunctive (e.g. dative pronoun in "Wie geht es Ihnen?", subjunctive verb form in "Ich hätte gern...").

The "Einstieg Deutsch" app does not teach grammar explicitly. Grammatically correct sequences, however, are acquired with the chunks. These sequences support the development of grammar acquisition and can be used as a basis for cognitive processes at a later stage. "Routines lead to grammar" doesn't just apply to a child's first language acquisition, but also to second language acquisition, regardless of whether the language structures are ultimately learned unconsciously or are explicitly identified, analysed, and compared with grammatical features of the first language after routines and chunks are introduced (Edmondson 2006: 211).

Chunks are fixed sequences with a clear link to a situation. They help the learner act "with fluency" with language that is appropriate to the situation, idiomatically correct, and without hesitation. In addition to conversation routines such as "Guten Tag!" (Hello) or "Das tut mir leid." (I'm sorry to hear that), the lessons include noun-verb compounds such as "eine Auskunft geben" (to give information), idiomatic phrases such as "Gern geschehen!" (Don't mention it) or "Kein Problem!" (No problem) and sentence patterns like "Wo finde ich...?" (Where can I find...?).

Everyday language - whether spoken or written - is full of these kinds of "fixed components": the portion of chunks is estimated to be up to 70 percent among competent speakers of a language (Wray & Perkins 2000: 1-2). As a result, some researchers consider chunking to be a prerequisite to fluency. "The high speed at which competent speakers usually speak and understand could not be explained if a significant part of linguistic processing were not based on automatism"³ (Aguado 2016: 31; see also Pawley & Syder 1983).

2. With reference to Wildner-Bassett, Edmondson emphasises the communicative, strategic use of routines in second language acquisition with five specific functions: facilitating initial contact, developing conversational skills, increasing behavioural confidence, demonstrating social affiliation, and saving time (Edmondson 2006: 210). Wray & Perkins (2000) assign specific purposes to two overarching functions, namely social interaction and the speed at which language is processed (pp.14-16).

3. Translation of the original German: "Die hohe Geschwindigkeit, mit der kompetente Sprecherinnen und Sprecher normalerweise sprechen und verstehen, wäre nicht erklärbar, wenn nicht ein erheblicher Anteil des Verarbeitungsprozesses auf Automatismen beruhen würde."

If chunks are part of competent language proficiency, learners must be sensitised to them; i.e., they must specifically watch for them and incorporate them into their repertoire formulations. Chunks are thus an important prerequisite for participation in target cultural practices, which is one reason to have them available early in the lessons. Mastering these chunks gives the learner a sense of confidence and independence in dealing with the target language, which positively underpins any further communication in the language and any other language learning.

The "Einstieg Deutsch" app presents chunks in the context of a topic that is introduced in a slide show. The protagonists are Samira Aziz (from Syria), Yonas Mehari (from Eritrea), and the Fani family (from Afghanistan), who communicate successfully in certain situations; i.e., tell the doctor they have a sore throat and ask the doctor to write down his recommendation for medicine, ask for winter shoes for their children's growing feet, or notify the fire brigade in an emergency. In the scenario, the learner is first asked to watch the slide show with German audio texts (with subtitles available in ten languages that can easily be switched to German) for meaning. Later, individual phrases and sequences are provided for repetition, followed by entire roles.

Exercises to teach basic vocabulary also start with presentation and semantisation (conveying the meaning). The new lexical elements can then be inserted and tried out in the sentence patterns with a variable slot. For example, in the slide show about "Health", Samira has a sore throat, which she describes to the doctor. But, with the help of the picture-based learning units for vocabulary related to health & body, the pattern "I have a sore throat." can apply to any acute and chronic ailment: "I have high blood pressure.", "I have a fever."



Figure 2: Detail Slide Show Chapter Health



Figure 3: Vocabulary Presentation and Semantization Exercise



Figure 4: Exercise with Audio Recording Function (Chapter Health)

3. EXERCISE TYPES AND FUNCTIONALITIES

Central to memorising the chunks is not only listening to the German texts but also verbally repeating exactly these patterns and routines. The app has many exercises in which single words, entire formulations, and phrases are repeated and recorded using the audio recording function and can then be compared to the original by the learner. Sequences can be reinforced using a smartphone before they are tried out in everyday life. It is up to the learner to assess the appropriateness of what he has produced - this is something that is not supported by this software. Learners are certainly capable of performing this task, and it encourages learner autonomy, even if individual phonetic variations are not recognised: Not even the best software is capable of this. On the contrary, a software-based evaluation of words or expressions spoken by the learner as "objectively correct" would be detrimental. Instructing the learner to record and evaluate his own production appears to be a viable way to learn a language without professional support.

Other types of exercises in the app are: *multiple choice* (with questions about the slide show, shown in Figure 5), *matching* (pictures and terms or singular and plural forms are matched to one other, shown in Figure 6), and *hotspots* (two variants: audio is triggered by touching elements on a picture, or the learner is prompted to identify and touch a certain part of a picture after the audio is played).

In addition, games support the learning activities in the app. To memorise and repeat the vocabulary, fun exercises are offered for every topic in which learners, for example, memorise an increasing number of terms in a certain order or identify terms (under time pressure) in a jumble of letters.

The app also has a vocabulary collection and a phrase book that can be used within or across topics. These lists of expressions and words are complemented by a vocabulary trainer. With the help of the vocabulary trainer, the learner repeats phrases and individual words and then saves them as "know" and "unknown". Depending on how they are saved, the vocabulary is provided for repetition earlier or later.



Figure 5: Multiple Choice Exercise

Figure 5: Multiple Choice Exercise



Figure 6: Matching Exercise

4. A METHOD FOR LESLLA LEARNERS?!

The "Einstieg Deutsch" app is explicitly geared toward learners with no previous knowledge of German who want a basic tool for using the language and learning basic expressions with the program. Based on the chunks offered, learners can carry out important, relevant, and useful communicative acts and thus be able to communicate quickly about the most important everyday issues.

The target group of refugees and their communication needs determined which topics were selected, how they were structured, and which day-to-day situations were used as examples. Paramount in enabling learners to find their bearings in their immediate environment is the development of speaking and listening skills in the context of an action-based approach to learning.

Action-based means that learners perform tasks that are linked to their everyday lives. These tasks prepare them to communicate outside of the classroom. Chunk learning is the ideal starting point, because it integrates training of vocabulary, structures, and pronunciation or prosody. Moreover, these sequences inherently contain extensive culture-specific knowledge that is learned "in passing" (Who says what, when, to whom, and how?).

The use of chunks means that practically oriented, immediately applicable expressions are taught instead of abstract knowledge. For many immigrants, the acquisition of language skills for coping with everyday situations in the second language often occurs unconsciously and implicitly through pure "language immersion". Many refugees, however, (also due to mass accommodation in old army barracks, centrally distributed food / everyday necessities, etc.) initially have limited social contact with speakers of German, the local context, and the German language. They thereby lack important opportunities to hear the linguistic expressions in the frequency required to bring about successful communication, let alone to quickly use these expressions correctly and appropriate to the situation.

The acquisition of chunks - also with an app to help understand and practise language in everyday situations - can, therefore, facilitate initial contact with people in the target society, ensure that everyday communication is successful, and foster mutual understanding. The use of chunks encourages participation in society (Aguado 2002, 2016: 33). At the same time, successful first contact with speakers of the target language and mainstream society is a prerequisite for continued learning.

Although the focus of the "Einstieg Deutsch" app is the target group of refugees and beginners with no previous knowledge of the language, the method of chunk learning used in the app is generally suitable for everyone, for non-refugees and even advanced learners, especially when ability to speak in the second language is the focus. To develop long-term, good language skills, it is necessary for the learner to internalise his linguistic skills and form a system of rules on this basis. This is done *not* by learning declarative rules, but through "good" input, authentic tasks, and intensive learner activation at a high rate of repetition and with many automated applications.

The method does not cut across the structured and explicit teaching of the rules and structures of a language. At the same time, traditional grammar teaching is only useful if learners want it (because this is what they are used to as a result of their learning tradition or language learning biography) and have a strong cognitive approach to language learning and problem-solving strategies. Knowledge of explicit rules is not necessary to develop fluent language skills.

The method of chunk learning is particularly well-suited and intuitive for LESLLA learners who have often already learned one or more languages in part with no supervision and without explicit knowledge of grammar through "language immersion". When learning with chunks, vocabulary and grammar are not artificially separated as they often are in supervised acquisition. If learners can be successfully sensitised to chunks - also using digital learning media - and their awareness of these linguistic sequences sharpened and thus their level of attentiveness increased, they are empowered to continue learning independently without prepared input.

Chunk learning is an excellent way for learners to not only make rapid progress in oral proficiency at the A1 level but also to obtain a sense of control and confidence in mastering the L2 (Aguado 2012: 8). Based on these skills, the learners' awareness can be focused on L2 structures to achieve a deeper understanding of phenomena and transferability. Oral proficiency in a given L2 is, moreover, fundamental to any L2 literacy teaching, as literacy can be achieved only on the basis of verbally understandable material (Mempel, Ochs, & Schramm 2013: 50).

Oral proficiency is central to the social integration of migrants and refugees for nearly all everyday activities and is even more important in the case of students whose reading and writing skills need more time to develop. Non- and semi-literate people require verbal strategies to compensate for their deficiencies and to seek assistance when confronted with written information or tasks they cannot master.

On the basis of these considerations, it is highly desirable to advance the approach and material on a broader scale, including other target groups and focusing on the interaction of oral proficiency training through chunk learning and literacy training.

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TEACHING SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO IMMIGRANTS IN
CONTINUING EDUCATION IN GRANADA

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ABSTRACT: State Continuing Education Centers strive to provide adults with the opportunity to re-enter the educative system by offering lifelong learning programs. Immigrants can be initially enrolled in the program "Spanish as a Foreign Language", as an intermediate step towards other courses that lead them to obtain other credentials. Teachers and students have online and free access to instructional units, which are adapted to the students' goals and interests. They don't get an official certificate of their level at the end of this program, but they are offered the opportunity to take a test at an Official Language School to obtain such a certificate.

KEYWORDS: Continuing Education Centers, Spanish as a Foreign Language, Immigrants, State Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Continuing Education for adults in Andalusia, a region in south Spain, has been changing deeply in recent decades. During the 1970s and 1980s there was a high rate of low educated adults in the region, which made the educational policies focus both their attention and policies on literacy development. Therefore, literacy of the Spanish population was the main purpose of Adult Education Centers at this time, as they were called.

In the 1990s, however, this situation changed and the educational demands of adult population have shifted towards other interests, alongside with European tendencies. New educational policies have been implemented to respond to those demands, which

have led to a root change in the Adult Education Centers, currently called Continuing Education Centers. This new name is only a small reflection of more a deep structural, conceptual and functional conception of the nature of education as it is offered to people over eighteen years old in the state education system in Spain.

2. EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT GUARANTEED BY AN INCLUSIVE SOCIAL SYSTEM

It is generally accepted that education is a basic human right. Nobody should be denied the possibility of getting access to a quality education system, regardless their age, sex, origin, culture or religion, during their lifetime.

However, it has been demonstrated that this policy is not always followed in different European countries. The education and training policies are different across the countries and the students' success and learning outcomes depend in many cases on social class, socio-economic status, geographical origin, and even gender or age.

The Survey of Adult Skills, published by OECD and the European Commission, also known as the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC), assessed the literacy, numeracy and problem-solving as well as their skills with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) of adults aged 16-65 in 17 European countries. It underlines the above-mentioned inequalities as well as the alarming figures that 20% of the working population has low literacy and numeracy skills, and 25% lack the minimum ICT abilities needed to access the job market, with striking differences among the countries participating in the survey. These rates are even higher among the unemployed.

European Union policy makers are working to change this reality by means of encouraging the different European countries to implement education and training policies that guarantee more inclusiveness. These policies have set a target for adult learning that states that by 2020, 15% of the population aged 25-64 should be taking part in Continuing Education. In 2012 only five countries had reached the target and in Andalusia we were at 5%, so the challenge continues.

Supportive lifelong learning policies will help people get the new skills they need to gain access to the labor market, which is more and more demanding everyday. Therefore, it will both keep the population active and subsequently help overcome the economic crisis when new job demands appear in the market.

3. THE ROLE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTERS

It is in this context that Continuing Education Centers have modified their nature in recent decades. Their priority is to meet the needs of the population with no exception in the continuously changing and challenging socio-economic reality. First of all, equality and inclusion must be a reality, not simply an idea.

The Centers' role includes a number of different objectives:

- Set the foundation for equal opportunities for everyone and guarantee an answer to their needs.

- Accept, respect, and work with all kinds of diversity: gender, culture, and levels of literacy and language development.
- Prevent racism and xenophobia through specific programmes designed to actively work toward social and educational equity and make inclusion one of the main principles in their teaching methodology.
- Offer meaningful and practical learning opportunities. Students do not apply just to learn academic content, but to achieve the broader objective of working and living in better conditions. Thus, they must be able to transfer the knowledge and skills they acquire at school to their own realities.

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS OFFERED IN CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTERS

In Granada there are 44 Continuing Education Centers that offer three types of programs:

4.1. COURSES THAT LEAD TO A CERTIFICATE

These courses focus on obtaining the certificate of Secondary Education for Adults – this is similar to a high school credential in other areas of the world– or Official Certificates of Foreign Languages, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In both cases the methodology and evaluation systems employed is blended learning: students work online and have an online teacher who belongs to a Secondary School or Official Language School, and who is also the person responsible for their evaluation. Apart from that, students also have the support of face-to-face classes with a teacher at their Continuing Education Center.

4.2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EXTERNAL EXAMS

At Continuing Education Centers students can train for different external exams that will give them access to other stages in the educative system when they do not have the required qualifications for each of those stages: University or Vocational studies. For example, if students do not have a certificate of Secondary Education, which is needed to access superior Vocational Studies, there is this parallel pathway of an alternative exam, only with academic value. This means that students can only access other stages in the educational system, but it does not have any value in the job market.

Other available exams give them the opportunity to obtain a Secondary Education certificate or an Official Language School certificate without enrolling an official course.

4.3. OTHER COMPLEMENTARY COURSES THAT RESPOND TO SPECIFIC SOCIAL DEMANDS

- ICT Courses: they include training on digital skills needed to effectively use ICT in real life. They will be able to face many procedures in everyday life in which they need some management of the computer, the Internet, the mobile phone, the e-mail, etc.

- Basic Skills in Foreign Languages (usually English): these courses train students to be able to face everyday situations in which they will need a foreign language. Such a course is also considered as an introduction or a pre-requisite step for those students who want to obtain a certificate at an Official Language School, but who lack the basic knowledge or even self-confidence to face the courses in that institution yet.
- Healthy Life Habits, Illness and Risk Prevention: this course offers a program intended to highlight the importance of the prevention in our society in every aspect life: health and diet, exercise, working conditions, hygiene, etc.
- Andalusian Culture and Heritage: this program is aimed at making people aware of the value of the places where they now live and understand their history as a first step in the process of looking after and keeping their cultural and ethnic heritage.
- Introduction to Entrepreneurial and Business Activities: this program is a vehicle of personal development in which people can acquire or improve their creativity, self-esteem, initiative, collaborative work, responsibility and risk-taking. There are three different lines of work: Entrepreneurial Potential in Europe, Programs for solidary People and Setting up a Business.
- Spanish as a Foreign Language for Immigrants: Intercultural education and Spanish as a Foreign Language are two basic aspects and even two previous steps in the integration of immigrants in our society. They contribute to a faster and more efficient integration not only in the job market but also in every aspect of their everyday life.

5. SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTERS

Immigrants are offered the possibility of learning the Spanish language and culture and to prepare for their Spanish citizenship test. Furthermore, there is a third and very determining objective implicit in this program: Continuing Education Centers have as a primary goal to help people obtain new certificates and to give them access to other stages in the educative system. In this regard, this specific program is understood as an early training step in the learning process of those who would like to obtain the certificate in Secondary Education, Vocational Studies or Official Language Schools, but they lack the basic skills to be able to face those programs straightaway, mainly because they don't know the language sufficiently yet or they need to improve some basic study skills to be successful in those next courses and programs. Thus, this program is also a kind of footbridge, a pathway towards other studies. Ultimately, the main goal is always to help learners become acculturated to Spanish society while avoiding and preventing any kind of inequality or discrimination.

There are very clear data of how Continuing Education Centers are contributing to the development of a more inclusive society by offering the programs that people from every sector of society need to more fully participate in their communities. In the academic year 2015-2016 there were 823 students who finished their studies in Spanish as a Foreign Language and Culture in the different Continuing Education Centers throughout Granada. We must add 135 students more who enrolled the Of-

ficial Language School to learn Spanish and obtained an official certificate. 35 of them studied A1 level, there were 25 students in A2, 31 in B1, 23 in B1+ and 21 in B2. That makes a total of 958 immigrants – almost a thousand – studying Spanish only in one province in Andalusia.

There are absolutely no access requirements. Students do not even need to have Spanish citizenship. Official Language Schools do establish an age limit, however, they must be over 18 to be able to apply.

6. STUDENTS' PROFILE AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

We must never forget the real context of Continuing Education Centers, most of them located in small villages that offer their courses to all people living in the community. In this context, it would be completely unrealistic to expect homogeneous profiles in any group of students, especially in those of immigrants in this specific program. Quite to the contrary, what is found is diversity at every level:

It seems obvious that students will have different backgrounds and therefore different cultures and different mother tongues. If we think about the pedagogical implications, this diversity presents a challenge to individualize the teaching and learning processes, not to mention to develop a sense of belonging in the group. Teachers can take months to achieve that basic goal.

We also need to add that students' proficiency level in Spanish will also vary greatly, which creates the need to adapt the language used during instruction continuously so that it is not too basic for those proficient learners nor too difficult for those who have not acquired basic language skills yet.

The different backgrounds of learners also come with varying socio-economic levels, which also relates to their cultural competency. Teachers must model and nurture tolerance in order to ensure equal treatment among the group members.

In these groups of students, as in any others, we also find different learning styles and rhythms, as well as multiple intelligences, all of which result in different study habits and learning strategies. Teachers must adapt to each of them, effectively differentiate teaching, and help students develop learning strategies that they individually need to achieve their objectives successfully and be able to success other stages in the educational system.

The interests and motivations to join the group are also varied among students. The fulfillment of their expectations will define their attitude in class and teachers must be aware of that. They are adult learners, and instruction must be immediately relevant to keep them engaged.

Apart from those contrasts, in many cases deeper differences can be found regarding special education needs. Some immigrants need deeper adaptations in the teaching and learning program as they present some learning of physical or psychological disability that does not allow them to achieve the established objectives in typical fashion.

Designing and establishing an effective initial intake and assessment system to identify all those differences becomes essential in order to obtain a clear picture of the group and its individuals. Each teacher then needs to adapt their instruction to every specific learner profile.

7. TEACHERS' PROFILE

Regarding the teachers' backgrounds, it is necessary to make a distinction between teachers in Continuing Education Centers and in Official Language Schools.

There is not any specific qualification in Spain for teaching adults in Continuing Education Centers. Any primary school teacher or pre-school teacher can apply for those positions. Therefore, the responsible teachers for the programs of Spanish Language and Culture for Immigrants are primary school teachers or pre-school teachers. They must pass a state exam to get their position in any school, either Primary or Continuing Education Centers, but are not asked for any further specialization in adult literacy or in how adults learn.

However, teachers in Official Language Schools must be qualified teachers of Spanish Language and Culture, with the same credential as a teacher of Spanish Language and Literature in a Secondary School.

Currently there are 40 teachers in Granada working in Continuing Education Centers and two teachers working at the only Official Language School in the province.

8. TEACHING METHODOLOGY: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The methodology used in these programs is based on the communicative approach from a functional perspective, but it is not our intention to describe now the principles of this approach, as it is not the purpose of this article. We would like to describe some other general considerations affecting methodology that can be deduced from the main goal and nature of this program as specified above.

The main pedagogical principle is inclusion. Given the diversity found in the classrooms in all its perspectives, it is especially important in these groups to create a sense of belonging and guarantee inclusion both inside the group and projected towards the whole school and the community. This principle must be worked first inside the classroom but it must also be a basic principle of the educational project of the school.

Inclusion must be understood not only as a methodological principle, but also as a democratic principle, as it is a way to guarantee all the students have the same rights and are treated equally inside and outside the classroom, regardless their possible physical or psychological disabilities. Children or adults who present these types of disabilities are never separated from the main group or segregated.

A second methodological principle is interaction. Communication cannot occur if there is no interaction between at least two persons, so every teaching and learning activity is built around interaction. It is also the most efficient means of taking everyday situations into the classroom and making learning functional and meaningful. Very related to this, we must consider dialogue-based learning. It has been demonstrated that one of the best and most efficient ways to learn is by means of creating situations in which interactions between students occur, letting them discuss some questions that the teacher or themselves propose and leading them in the process of reaching some conclusions.

Finally, it is worth mentioning centers of interest. The teaching and learning process is designed to respond to the students' different interests and motivations, both to create meaningful learning and to get them involved more actively in their own learning processes.

Apart from those general considerations, there are specific actions that Continuing Education Centers are taking to help immigrants develop a sense of community and belonging. Some examples are the celebration of extra-curricular activities, such as welcome activities at school and outdoor activities to promote their integration in the educational community and at the same time create opportunities for the rest of students to know other cultures and develop their sense of acceptance and tolerance.

Other specific actions, which may seem small, but make a significant difference in the immigrants' feeling of acceptance is to place school signs in their mother tongue (toilet, exit, room 3, library, etc.), and provide leaflets or other informative material also in their mother tongue. When designing teaching materials, as possible, teachers try to integrate the students' cultural references.

Academic and workplace guidance is also offered in Continuing Education Centers, both in this specific program and as a school policy which is part of their educational project.

9. MATERIALS

The Andalusian Education Policy has established that there must be free online access¹ to materials that support not only this programme, but also all the other programmes offered in Continuing Education Centers. However, as can be deduced from the above considerations, this material must be adapted to the specific features of each group.

The material is structured around eight topics of interest, which form the foundation for eight didactic units starting from the individual (myself), going through immediate and close contexts (at school, at home, my family) and reaching more social environments (shopping, out and about, health and work):

1. Mis primeros días (My first days)
2. En la escuela (At school)
3. Mi casa (At home)
4. Mi familia (My family)
5. Las compras (Shopping)
6. Por la calle (Out on the street)
7. La salud (Health)
8. El trabajo (Work)

Each unit of study contains different resources: teacher's guide, student material, a Picture dictionary, audio files, video files and an interactive unit to work independently online. At the same time, all communicative skills are treated throughout the different sections in the unit, which are the following: listening, speaking, reading, writing, talking to your partner, playing, watching a video and talking about your country.

¹ <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/permanente/materiales/index.php?espanol#space>

10. TESTS OF SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Some immigrant students who are evaluated positively and their teacher considers that they could face an official test to certify their level, are advised to take the official exam of Spanish as a Foreign Language at an Official Language School.

This official exam is composed of four tests, and all four of them must be passed independently to obtain the certificate. The four tests evaluate the four skills in the different levels: reading, listening, speaking (both individual presentation and interaction) and writing (both production and interaction).

11. CONCLUSION

Continuing Education Centers try to offer an answer to the social needs of population in Spain today. This answer is not designed only by local education policies but is mostly linked to a pressing need that has been identified and described by the European Commission. We must not forget the minorities of immigrants who need to be accepted and integrated in a society with increasing diversity. The first step in this integration is helping newcomers acquire the necessary communication skills that will allow them to succeed in everyday life. At the same time, we must not forget the acculturation needs, which are also present in the programs designed for this specific student profile.

A group of 42 teachers distributed throughout the province is responding to the needs of almost a thousand immigrants. Each student has a different background, learning style, motivation and level of proficiency in Spanish, but they come to Continuing Education Centers in seek of real help in this completely new and challenging situation in their lives.

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LITERACY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF L2 ENGLISH MORPHOSYNTAX

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ABSTRACT: The course of second language (L2) morpho-syntactic development is said to be uniform, regardless of learners' L1, type of exposure or education. We argue that this conclusion is premature and explore these variables with new cross-sectional data from an on-going study of Arabic-, Somali- and Urdu-speaking English learners with varying amounts of home-language and English literacy whose exposure to English was only after post-puberty immigration. While seminal studies of adult immigrants' naturalistic L2 acquisition have included low-educated adults, instruction not literacy was a variable. There is emerging evidence of different rates and developmental sub-patterns for L2 immigrant adults but it is unclear whether the influence is exposure type or literacy. The structure building approach predicts grammatical elements are acquired in their order in the target syntactic tree, and in English crucial are word order, negation, tense and agreement. Given the standard syntactic structure of English, the predicted order of acquisition (1) word order of the VP projection; (2) sentential negation (NegP); (3) regular past tense marking (TP); (4) subject-verb agreement, including 3rd person singular (AgrP). Data come from speakers' oral production in response to a set of tasks. Results support the predicted order of development for L2 English learners regardless of their L1. Results also reveal subtle individual differences in over-production of suffixes such as *-ing* and *-s* which can only partly be traced to learners' level of home language and L2 English literacy.

KEYWORDS: morphosyntax, tense, L2 English, functional projections, over-production.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2001, Roger Hawkins summarized four decades of second language (L2) acquisition research, since the 1970s, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of the second language acquisition of inflectional morphology, and syntax, in particular word order, have converged on the conclusion that there are common stages of development which are largely independent of (1) the learner's native/first language (L1); (2) the learner's age at initial exposure to the target language; (3) the type of exposure (naturalistic/uninstructed vs. classroom; see e.g. Krashen 1985; Schwartz 1993); and (4) the learner's educational background. These conclusions come in part from the major L2 acquisition studies of uninstructed 'naturalistic' adult immigrants since the 1970s, as the rightmost column in Table 1 shows.

Study	L1 and L2	Description	Ideas introduced
Bailey et al. 1970s	Spanish and 11 other languages L2 English	cross-sectional: 73 learners	L2 learners' development follows a 'natural' order independent of their L1 (Krashen 1985) - like children.
ZISA 1980s	Spanish, Portuguese and Italian immigrants L2 German	cross-sectional: 45; 2-year longitudinal: 12 learners	L2 development moves in stages; there is debate on whether adults use the same linguistic mechanisms as children.
ESF 1990s	Immigrants learning 5 European L2s	2 ½ yrs: 40 learners	L2 learners start with a 'Basic Variety'; some don't go further.
LEXLERN 1990s	Korean and Turkish immigrants L2 German	cross-sectional: 17 learners	L2 learners follow a natural order that is indeed largely independent of their L1 except for at the very start.
VYSA 1990s-2000s	L1 English exchange students L2 German	1 year longitudinal: 3 learners	Educated exchange students not instructed in the L2 follow the same stages as less educated immigrants.

Table 1: Influential Studies of Naturalistic Adult Learners' Acquisition of L2 Morphosyntax.

The usefulness of having an awareness of learners' developmental trajectories should not be under-estimated. This awareness means that the teacher or tutor will have well-founded expectations regarding what a learner is able to do at any given point in time and where the learner is likely to make errors. This enhanced sensitivity to a learner's natural trajectories leads to confidence in placement and assessment of the learner. There are other possible benefits. Since the 1970s, there has been ongoing discussion of how to design or provide materials for a stage of development that is not only suited to the learner's current stage of development but slightly more advanced (Krashen 1985). While that is likely to be far too demanding for those who work in multi-level classrooms, understanding learners' linguistic trajectories can contribute to tasks and materials selection whereby these are not only tailored to learners' communicative needs but also to their current linguistic abilities.

Despite the findings of these studies and Hawkins' conclusions, there is on-going exploration of and debate surrounding claims (1), (2) and (3). However, there has been much less attention paid to the claim in (4). This is because those who work within the generative paradigm of second language acquisition assume modularity of mind. That is, they hold that the acquisition of linguistic competence proceeds separately from the development of general cognition and that the result of language acquisition is encapsulated knowledge which is separate from other types of knowledge. Any skills which might fall under general cognition such as literacy lie outside knowledge of language (i.e. linguistic competence) though of course there are interfaces with different types of knowledge. Indeed all normally developing children around the world effortlessly attain adult-like syntax several years before they begin to be taught to read. There is a wealth of research (including the studies in Table 1 but considerably beyond these) which points to the conclusion that L2 learners past the age of puberty have access to the same innate mechanisms that guide children. That is, after the purported critical period for the acquisition of language ends, there is lifelong availability of the linguistic mechanisms that constrain human syntax and its acquisition known as Universal Grammar (Chomsky 1981; see White 1989 on L2 acquisition). The logic here is that if UG operates similarly for adults, educational background – e.g. literacy – should not be relevant for the acquisition of encapsulated syntax. Tarone et al. (2009) contest this position and claim that alphabetic literacy has an undeniable effect on the acquisition of L2 syntax. In this paper, we explore whether the presence or absence of home language literacy results in differences in learners' acquisition trajectories by looking at a sample of L2 English learners with and without home language literacy/formal schooling prior to immigration.

In the rest of this paper, we look at data from an on-going study of the acquisition of verbal inflections and word order (morphosyntax) by speakers of Arabic- and Urdu and related languages who were at various stages in their acquisition of English. We start by describing the theory of Organic Grammar used to track learners' development trajectories. We next introduce the learners and their background and the study's methodology. Then follows the results and a discussion of their interpretation.

2. ORGANIC GRAMMAR

Organic Grammar has its origins in the 1990s LexLern study (see Table 1) and ideas emerging from the study of Korean- and Turkish-speaking adult immigrants in Germany whose acquisition was largely naturalistic. The proposal is that learners' initial morphosyntax is based on their native language word order, but that learners do not project any functional syntax despite opportunities for transferring these from their native language. That is, their interlanguage grammars are 'minimal trees' somewhat akin to young children's early multiword utterances, around their two-word stage. When L2 learners get ample input in the target language (note that immigrants do not always get sufficient input), they 'build structure' using the linguistic mechanisms still available to them (Universal Grammar). In the 1990s, Vainikka & Young-Scholten proposed and tested these ideas on Korean and Turkish as well as on English, Italian and Spanish speakers learning German naturalistically. Organic Grammar encompasses the idea of minimal trees, the learner's starting point, and structure building, the process in which the learner then engages to acquire functional projections. (See Vainikka & Young-Scholten

1994; 1996; 2005; 2013 and on the application of Organic Grammar to assessment, see Young-Scholten & Ijuin 2006.)

Turning to English, these projections or phrases are the negation phrase (NegP), the tense phrase (TP), the agreement phrase (AgrP) and the complementizer phrase (CP). A fundamental feature of Organic Grammar is that projections differ across languages; for example, Chinese does not mark tense or agreement but does mark aspect and hence does not have a TP or an AgrP, but does have an AspP. Universal Grammar provides the language learner with the tools to figure out from the input of a given language what the relevant projections are.

Stage	word order	Verb types	agreement/tense	pronouns	syntax
VP	L1 order, then L2 order	thematic (main) verbs	none	subject, object pronouns absent	None
NegP	resembles the L1 apart from complex syntax	thematic verbs; copula 'is'	none	pronouns forms begin to emerge	Negation; single clauses; formulaic or intonation-based Qs.
TP	resembles the L2 apart from complex syntax	thematic verbs, modals; copula forms beyond 'is'	no agreement; some tense, some aspect, but not productive	more pronoun forms, but they can still be missing	Conjoined clauses. Formulaic wh-Qs; yes/no Qs w/o inversion.
AgrP	resembles the L2 apart from complex syntax	thematic verbs, modals, copula forms beyond 'is'; auxiliaries in all forms and tenses	productive tense, aspect; some agreement, esp. forms of 'be'	pronouns obligatory, 'there' and existential 'it'	Simple subordination; wh-Qs but all Qs may lack inversion
CP	always resembles the L2	complex tense, aspect forms; passives; range of thematic verb, modal, auxiliary forms	forms usually correct, apart from newly attempted ones	use of 'there' and 'it' beyond stock phrases	Complex subordination. All Qs with inversion.

Table 2: Organic Grammar Stages for L2 English.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The participants recruited in this study were eight native speakers of Arabic and six Urdu as well as related Dari, Punjabi and Pahari speakers who were living in the UK at the time of testing. All participants were post-puberty learners of L2 English; that is, they had not been exposed to English at all prior to immigration. Their literacy and their formal education in their native language varied as did their length of residence in the UK. At the time of testing, they were either enrolled in English as a second language classes or had been enrolled in such classes. In the UK these were either 'pre-entry' classes - the lowest level of proficiency (below 'Basic User' in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and Entry 1 (working towards CEFR A1).

3.2. TASKS

The data come from speakers' oral production in response to tasks with pictures designed to elicit evidence of acquisition of these projections. Each learner did the tasks individually with a research assistant or the fourth author who spoke their native language and was able to explain the requirements of each task. The tasks included sentence completion for VP word order, comparison of slightly differing pictures for NegP, story retelling for TP, pictures and a card-game with habitual and on-going actions for AgrP, a 20 questions game with Wh-words and sentence completion for CP.

3.3. PREDICTIONS

We focus in the present paper on the Arabic and Urdu etc. speakers and on their acquisition of VP, NegP, TP and AgrP; analysis of data from the Somali speakers, mentioned in the abstract, and of the acquisition of CP is still underway. Regarding word order in declaratives, Arabic has the possibility of either subject-verb-object (SVO) or verb-subject-object (VSO), while Urdu has relatively free word order language with the most common being SOV. That is, Arabic has a head-initial VP, like English, while Urdu has a head-final VP, unlike English. Tense and agreement are marked in both languages and there is a copula verb. As far as negation is concerned, in Arabic this involves two particles which precede the verb sentence-initially: *ma* which negates the verb in the past tense and *la* which negates the verb in the present tense. In Urdu, the negator *nahin* precedes the verb. These facts lead to the following predictions:

1. Arabic learners of English will transfer their head-initial Arabic VP and produce VO patterns rather than OV patterns while Urdu speakers will do the reverse.
2. None of the learners will struggle with tense or agreement marking or copula 'be'
3. Negation will precede the verb

3.4. Data Analysis

Researchers vary in how they count learners' acquisition by looking at their suppli-
ance of forms or constructions expected in a particular context. For the purposes of our
research, if a learner uses a form (or construction) this indicates they have acquired
it. The present study follows Scarborough's (1990) measure of productivity where this
is indicated by learners' production of multiple variants of a morpheme with different
verbs and in conjunction with the relevant syntax.

4. Results

4.1. The VP

Table 3 indicates that the speakers transferred their native language declarative word
order. While Arabic speakers never produce OV word order, the Urdu (and related-
language) speakers sometimes produce OV. They also produce VO which, of course,
indicates that they have acquired this characteristic of English.

Learner; L1	Program level	L1 literacy ¹	L2 literacy	OV	VO
Afra; Arabic	Entry 1	ok	Good	0/10	10/10
Amro; Arabic	Pre-entry	0	Lowest	0/8	8/8
Awad; Arabic	Pre-entry	ok	Lowest	0/10	10/10
Rawdha; Arabic	Entry 1	ok	Some	0/10	10/10
Moh; Arabic	Pre-entry	ok	Some	0/10	10/10
Moh S; Arabic	Pre-entry	0	Lowest	0/7	7/7
Sabry; Arabic	Pre-entry	ok	Some	0/10	10/10
Moh M; Arabic	Pre-entry	0	Lowest	0/9	9/9
Sultani; Dari	Pre-entry	ok	Lowest	1/8	7/8
Tazeem; Urdu	Entry 1	ok	Some	0/4	4/4
Imtiaz; Urdu	Entry 1	0	Lowest	1/10	9/10
Naz; Urdu	Entry 1	ok	Good	0/10	10/10
Shafida; Pahari	Pre-entry	0	Lowest	3/10	7/10
Zabila; Punjabi	Pre-entry	0	Lowest	4/8	5/8

Table 3: Word Order in the VP.

1. Lowest: (for reading) = the learner can recognize some of the common sight words which
they have been taught. Decoding is a very low 'glance and guess' stage. For L1 literacy 'Good'
and 'Some' L2 reading are categorized under 'ok' which indicates they can decode while reading
in their native language.

4.2. ACQUISITION OF FUNCTIONAL SYNTAX AND PROJECTION OF NEG P, TP, AGR P AND CP

Evidence for NegP comes from the sets of pictures indicating absence of specific
actions (with singular and plural subjects), as noted above. Learners were expected to
produce utterances such as

- 1) The boy doesn't eat. The girls aren't washing the dog.

For tense and projection of TP, a story retelling task was used and learners were
expected to produce *-ed* on main verbs or irregular past forms as in

- 2) The people watched the boat. The boat sank.

For agreement (AgrP), learners saw pictures depicting habitual action and what was
expected were sentences with third person singular on main verbs and when the pictures
showed on-going action, then expected were sentences with forms of auxiliary *be* + a
main verb with *-ing*.

Copula 'be' was tested with a card game played by the participant and the researcher
where the players had to say whether the professions shown on the cards matched or
did not:

- 3a) I am a nurse; you are a teacher.
b) We are teachers.

When a learner is placed at a particular stage, this means the learner is in the process
of projecting that phrase. That is, they are actively working on a given phrase, trying
to figure out how English negation or tense or agreement is marked morphologically
and represented syntactically. Working on stages turns out to be highly relevant for the
learners in our sample.

In Table 4, learners are arranged by lowest projection/lowest stage, VP, to the high-
est projection/stage, CP. The TP column gives additional examples of past tense forms
learners produced, but not in the context of the task they were completing. The copula
'be' and auxiliary 'be' columns show a thumbs up icon when the figures represent a
variety of forms produced by the learner.

Learner Stage	Level	Neg P			TP (-ed)	AgrP		
		no(t) V	is no(t) V	do forms		cop be	aux be	3 rd sg -s
Zabila VP	Pre-E	10/10	0	0	1/10	5/10	0	5/9
Amro NegP	Pre-E	6/10	4/10	0	0	0	1/10	0
Imtiaz NegP	Entry 1	7/7	0	0	1/10 + 2 other exs	5/10	0	1/10
Shafida NegP	Pre-E	10/10	0	0	1/10	n/a	0	1/10

Learner Stage	Level	Neg P			TP (-ed)	AgrP		
		no(t) V	is no(t) V	do forms		cop be	aux be	3 rd sg -s
Tazeem NegP	Entry 1	10/10	0	0	0	5/10	5/10	0
MohM TP	Pre-E	2/10	0	8/10	0 + 2 other exs	0	0	0
Sultani TP	Pre-E	1/10	4/10	5/10	0 + 2 other exs	10/10	0	0
MohS TP	Pre-E	10/10	0	0	0	5/10	1/10	0
Sabry TP	Pre-E	10/10	0	0	0	5/10	0	0
Rawdha TP	Entry 1	1/10	9/10	0	0	10/10	0/10	0
Naz AgrP	Entry 1	7/10	1/10	2/10	2/10 + 2 other exs	10/10	5/10	0
Awad AgrP	Pre-E	9/10	1/10	0	0	10/10	6/10	0
Moh CP	Pre-E	0	10/10	0	1/10 + 2 other exs	9/10	0	1/10
Afra CP	Entry 1	0	0	10/10	0	7/10	4/10	0

Table 4: Learners' Functional Projection Stages.

Zabila, as a speaker of two related languages, Urdu and Punjabi, is at the very low stage. Regarding her negation, she uses a rudimentary form of negation and she simply produces no/not without any auxiliaries before a main verb. She has little tense marking (1 out of 10), varied use of copula 'be' (in 5 out of the 10 sentences in which they were required) and she does not produce any instances of auxiliary 'be'. The table suggests, however, that she is in the process of projecting AgrP as she supplies third person singular -s in 5 out of 9 utterances in which it is required in that task. The data are misleading; Zabila's use of 3rd person singular -s is accurate because she has adopted the strategy of attaching it to verbs regardless of whether the subjects are third person singular and, in fact, whether the word is a verb. Her data show over-generalization of -s to various content words

The next four learners are at the NegP stage, Amro (an Arabic speaker), Imtiaz, Shafida and Tazeem (Pahari and Urdu speakers). They are starting to produce various function words – copula 'be', auxiliary verbs, third person singular -s, and tense more frequently when they are required. For the participants at the TP stage MohM, MohS, Sabry, Rawdha (all Arabic speakers) and Sultani (a Dari speaker), we notice comparably more progress with inflected forms as well as copula and auxiliary forms. Learners at the AgrP and CP stage use even more inflected forms as well as more advanced syntax for example target-like questions and multiple clause utterances. The little 'thumbs up' sign for Naz, Awad, Moh and Afra indicate that they have four different forms of 'be' whether as copula or auxiliary and are using them correctly.

4.3. Learners' overgeneralization

Table 4 hides the fact that learners also use a variety of forms in the utterances they produced which are not target-like. Researchers have long observed overgeneralization by children when they are in the process of acquiring rules which do not apply to irregular forms, e.g. the common use of the regular past tense suffix to irregular verbs to result in 'goed' or 'wented' (Berko 1958). In addition to what we have noted above for Zabila's overuse of -s, examples are

- 4) Amro: *I am* in all responses for auxiliary *be*
- 5) Awad: five examples of auxiliary *is* with plural subjects
- 6) MohM: in the negation task only *I don't* + subject-verb X or subject-verb X + *I don't*
- 7) Sultani: in the negation task, use of *is don't* – verb and *don't* verb

These overgeneralizations are unsurprising; learners are in the process of figuring out which forms mark singular and which mark plural and how auxiliary 'do' vs. auxiliary 'be' function. Many years ago, Wagner-Gough (1978) reported on young Homer's overuse of -ing in English. However, the additional examples shown in Table 5 suggest something more interesting, perhaps along the lines of the second language learners' use of holistic or unanalyzed chunks (see Myles 2004). What is of note in our data is that even when these strings belong to a different category than expected, they are nonetheless closed class elements. Their recruitment of these words and sequences is not random; learners do not simply use content words which are frequent in the input such as 'table', 'book' or 'bus'. There is compelling evidence that they subconsciously know and use closed class elements, i.e. function words, after identifying them in the L2 input they are receiving. We refer to these as place holders.

Learner	L1 lit	L2 lit	Place holder	Task	Responses
Zabila VP	0	Lowest	n/a	All tasks	Overgeneralization of -s to nearly all verbs
Amro NegP	0	Lowest	You need I am/I'm	Habitual action in 3 rd singular	you need is smoking; I am read; I'm cook; I am is clean; this girl I'm go; this man I'm go
			I'm + V-ing	Progressive in 3 rd sg and pl	two guys I'm reading; three guys I'm washing
Tazeem NegP	ok	Some	is go is go to	Negation	(boy) is go to don't drink; is go to no wash; is go to no play; go to no painting; go to no play
			go to is go to	Habitual action in 3 rd singular	Is go to read; is go to wash; is go to food cooking
			is go; like go to	Progressive in 3 rd sg and pl	(singular) Is go to eat; (plural) every three like go to cleaning
MohS TP	0	Lowest	in the	Habitual action in 3 rd singular	in the drink; in the writing; in the coming

Learner	L1 lit	L2 lit	Place holder	Task	Responses
Sultani TP	ok	Lowest	in in the	Progressive in 3 rd sg and plural	in writing; in the eat; all plural: in the cooking; in the no cooking; in writing; in the wash
			don't don't like	Negation	is don't open door; don't like; is don't like painting; don't like drive
			for	Habitual action in 3 rd singular	think for cornflakes; is reading for a book
MohM TP	0	Lowest	for in	Progressive in 3 rd sg and plural	(sg) eat for; (sg) laugh for; (sg) is like for; (sg) is laugh for; (pl) is in cooking for; (pl) is wash for
			I don't	Negation	I don't + subject-verb (object/IO/ object) subject + I don't + object I don't + subject-auxiliary-verb
			the	Habitual action in 3 rd singular	the smoking; the have
Naz AgrP	ok	Good	the	Progressive in 3 rd sg and pl	(sg) the play; (pl) the write; (pl) the walk
			dislike	Negation	dislike washing; dislike driving; dislike to open

Table 5: Placeholders in Acquisition of TP and AgrP.

4.4. OVERGENERALIZED FORMS AS PLACEHOLDERS

These single words or sequences learners produce seem to mark a syntactic function. We propose that learners are working on the projections TP and AgrP and they know –from their continued access to Universal Grammar– that every project requires a head (T for TP and Agr for ArgP). UG leads them to fill the head, but because they are uncertain exactly what fills that head, they recruit functional elements other than the target elements.

There is individual variation in learners' use of placeholders at the time data were collected. First, there are some differences in the words and sequences they recruit. We can attribute this to projections that learners are also in the process of acquiring (e.g for MohH, Dp (determiner phrase), in his use of the + verb) or functional elements which have been the focus of classroom instruction. Exposure to instruction varies with learners' exposure to different teachers and with their attendance. Second, placeholders are not used by all learners. Those who used placeholders (1) are beyond the VP and NegP stages and not yet at the CP stage and/or (2) have no native language literacy. The non-literates in our sample are more likely to use placeholders not directly related to the actual verbal head such as 'the' and 'in'. This may be due to greater reliance on auditory as compared to visual memory.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Both L1-literate and L1-non-literate second language learners follow the path of development for English predicted by Organic Grammar. While both literate and non-literate learners recruit placeholders while they are working on the functional projections TP and AgrP, non-literates are more likely to recruit placeholders which are not verbs, yet which involve functional elements. These placeholders are rather different from children's over-generalizations and may also differ from the sort of unanalysed holistic chunks to which Myles (2004) refers. Whether they reflect what learners have been working on in the classroom requires further investigation. Nevertheless, they clearly demonstrate that adults are fully capable of working on their own on projection of verbal syntax in English.

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IN SCHOOL, BUT NOT IN EDUCATION – LESLLA(A) LEARNERS
OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) IN THE CONTEXT
OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE UK

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ABSTRACT: In the past few years there has been an influx of newly-arrived children in the UK entering the education sector with little prior schooling and poor literacy skills in L1. Current research on EAL development, informing policy and guiding practice in the UK, suggests that all newly-arrived children should be provided with swift access to the national curriculum on a par with native speakers, with natural acquisition mechanisms expected to be sufficient enough to narrow the attainment gap. Given that policy is predominantly symbolic, following the officially recommended model of EAL support results in a range of 'sink or float' types of EAL provision across schools and in many instances excludes learners with EAL instead of including them. This article explores the context of EAL provision in the UK, its current issues, presents an example of good practice and calls for academic research into the framework of support that the most vulnerable members of the school community receive at present.

KEYWORDS: EAL, secondary school, policy and practice, example of good practice

1. INTRODUCTION

This article outlines the context of English as an Additional Language that many LESLLA adolescent learners find themselves in, with all its pitfalls and gaps in provision that inevitably affect life choices made by these learners. Furthermore, it presents a case of a secondary school in the UK that adopted a different stance in its understanding of EAL needs. Having recognised that inclusion is just a label for the process of submersion, the school designed a special provision model to meet the needs of EAL learners contrary to the prescribed model of immediate mainstreaming, positioned as a

swift access to the UK national curriculum.¹ Finally, this article calls for more research into this area of language-specific provision, as not only can it be illuminating in terms of the second language acquisition processes during the developmental stage of adolescence, but may facilitate change in the policy that guides practice across the country and has dire implications for many young people who are effectively excluded from the mainstream curriculum under the guise of inclusive practice and are conditioned to assume functional social roles in adulthood as a result of poor opportunities during their formative years.

In 2004 the EU welcomed eight new member states. From that moment on, *Destination UK* quickly became a motto for a large number of families from every corner of the new EU countries in search of employment opportunities and better life prospects. Although the UK government predicted that the influx of immigrants into the country would not exceed 15,000 people a year, by July 2006, over 427,000 people travelled to the UK with the purpose of settlement, bringing almost 36,000 dependants along with them, of which 27,000 were children of school age.² Nevertheless, given the fact that a large number of newly-settled residents were families with young children arriving from Poland, schools did not initially feel the effects of such a massive movement of people. The majority of children who arrived into the country were of the age that allowed them to quickly integrate into school life with little differentiation needed, since natural acquisition mechanisms are at their strongest at that age. Therefore, despite a much higher than expected flow of immigration, it was not until much later that the concept of EAL, as a distinct field, fully emerged from the womb of the Ethnic Minority Achievement funding stream and became separated from Special Education Needs (further SEN) entitlements, with the needs of newly-arrived children finally being recognised as language specific and developmental, rather than as special education needs.³

It was not until 2007, however (when two more member states joined the Union generating yet another wave of immigration), that EAL strengthened its status as a specialist field. The change in the make-up of the EU marked a new beginning in education policy and practice across the UK. With a large number of children for whom English was an additional language entering mainstream schools, came the realisation that while entitled to education, they struggled to access the national curriculum and go through the standard assessment protocols on a par with children born and raised in the UK. Despite claims that in later years the achievement gap between EAL and non-EAL students narrows down, there is a growing body of evidence of long-term underperformance, especially demon-

1. The national curriculum sets out the programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects at all 4 key stages. (For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>)

2. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5273356.stm

3. Until 2011, local authorities received an Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) and were required to use this to support the learning of EAL and bilingual pupils and the achievement of ethnic minority learners. The bulk of this grant was devolved to schools based on a locally agreed formula, although many local authorities retained some of the money to provide a central EAL service. In April 2011, this grant was mainstreamed into general school funding and there was no requirement for it to be spent on supporting EAL and bilingual learners. (For more information, see https://www.naldic.org.uk/eal-teaching-and-learning/faqs/doschoolsget_extra_moneyto_support_eal_learners/)

strated by students who arrived in the UK in later school years, that cannot be ignored. (For further discussion see Cameron, 2003; Leung, 2005; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000).

Another factor that influenced the move of EAL away from SEN was a dramatic change in the learner profile in the past seven years. To understand this, we have to consider the totally different cultural and social background of people who have made up a significant proportion of new arrivals since 2007. Previously, there was a great number of professional people coming to the UK with their families from less advantaged parts of the EU, bringing not only their labour, but a somewhat strong academic capacity in their children that allowed them to integrate with relevant ease. This meant that initially the education sector in the UK was almost unaffected. Children who arrived into the country as dependants of semi-skilled immigrants were either of primary school age and/or demonstrated strong cognitive skills, strong literacy skills in home languages and in many cases a thorough understanding of the national curriculum content (predominantly as a result of curriculum differences, where whatever was being taught in British schools may have been covered earlier in home countries). This strong academic predisposition and the small numbers of newly-arrived children in secondary schools allowed children entering later key stages not only to access the content of the national curriculum, but to acquire language skills naturally and with minimum specialist provision.

On the other hand, the calibre of students that schools began to receive after 2007, and even more so after 2014, was something that nobody was prepared for. In fact, 2007 and later 2014 marked new beginnings in the field of EAL, where the acronyms LESLLA(A) and in many cases NESLLA(A) became particularly relevant to the teaching and learning context of EAL in the secondary schools sector in the UK. Many families entering the country with a view to settlement in the past three to five years came from disadvantaged regions of Romania, where early marriages coupled with strong religious affiliation result in a large number of children many families. This means that newly-arrived residents had many more dependants of school age than previously. Furthermore, there has been a great number of Roma Gypsy arrivals from this part of Eastern Europe, many of whom tend to lead a traveller life style, affecting the level of schooling that their children receive. Ultimately, this meant that almost for the first time since the concept of EAL was established, a large number of newly-arrived children who may not have even been exposed to formal schooling prior to their arrival were admitted to schools in the UK. The most dramatic thing of all is that a large number of new arrivals were not young children of primary school age or the first two key stages of secondary school, whom the school sector was used to and ready for.⁴ A large number of newly-arrived children were young adults who may have never been to school before, were not familiar with the most basic tenets of formal education and had non-existent or only emerging literacy and numeracy skills in any language – something schools were not prepared for at all. This meant that much of what we thought we knew about EAL, or rather, much of what we assumed EAL was, based on what we had previously had to deal with, was incorrect when it came to ensuring adequate provision for the new breed of newly-arrived students.

4. The national curriculum in the UK is organised into blocks of years called 'key stages' – years 1 and 2 (key stage 1), years 3 – 6 (key stage 2), year 7-9 (key stage 3) and years 10-11 (key stage 4). For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>

2. THE POLITICAL, HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF EAL – PAST AND PRESENT

It is common knowledge that the UK has ‘long experience of societal multiculturalism within its borders and hence a linguistic diversity’ (Leung, 2005:97). Therefore, EAL needs were originally seen as linguistic and cultural, rather than developmental. In fact, the approach to EAL initially fed from the body of knowledge in the field of EFL. Newly-arrived students used to be taught separately for up to 18 months in specialist language centres before being “released” into the world of the national curriculum (a standards-based framework with detailed content specifications and levels of attainment in all key subjects) that after a period of induction, would be applied to EAL and non-EAL students equally. However, the mid 80s and early 90s saw endorsement of mainstreaming as the prevalent EAL policy, encompassing all the politically-correct regalia of inclusion and integration. The landmark Swann report of 1985 and yet another similar publication produced a year later by the Commission for Racial Equality found such practice tantamount to racially discriminating in terms of outcome, despite only exploring such practice in one local educational authority, and led to almost a blanket closure of language centres and withdrawal of EAL specialisation in teacher training.⁵

This is when the conceptualisation of Language Across the Curriculum⁶ tenets and the humanistic person-oriented perspective on language learning and acquisition became the main drive behind the shift in the official interpretation of meeting the needs of EAL learners. From that moment on, rather than being recognised as just a variety of ESOL provision at a different developmental stage and in a different context, EAL was seen as “an inherent part of the wider communication and participatory processes in the classroom” (Leung, 2005), with EALness of this process being encapsulated in making classroom activities accessible through the model of *Partnership Teaching* delivered by mainstream teachers and EAL staff, whether attempting to implement some aspects of ESL pedagogy by adjusting the content to ensure that EAL students can comprehend as much as at all possible, or by following the mediation support model or use of L1 in the L2 classroom, sometimes referred to as bilingual education, which may seem like an ideal example of access to the curriculum, if it was not for summative assessment, which is inevitably in English.

However, since EAL has never been recognised as a subject area of the curriculum, unlike ESOL in Post-16 Education, after the removal of specialist support across the schools and the transfer of EAL into the field of SEN as well as its emerging fusion with the postulates of

5. In 1986 a Commission for Racial Equality report into provision in Calderdale local education authority found this practice to be discriminatory and this led to the closure of language units. Funding for language support was subsequently used to provide additional specialist staff to work in the context of mainstream classrooms. For more information, see <https://eal.britishcouncil.org/eal-sector/different-models-eal-provision>

6. Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) as a concept acknowledges the fact that language education does not only take place in specific subjects explicitly defined and reserved for it, such as mother tongue education, foreign language education, second language education etc.). Language learning and education also take place in each and every subject in school, in each and every academic/mental activity, across the whole curriculum. For more information, see <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/>

Context and Language Integrated Learning methodology (further CLIL⁷) in the mainstream classroom, children between the ages of 12 – 16 arriving into the country with little English were, and in many schools still are, being left to their own devices. The support they receive in reality depends on sheer luck, with the majority of EAL students having to rely on translation support provided by either EAL TAs or classmates. This kind of support can hardly be classed as bilingual education, neither is it ESL-oriented - a teaching assistant who happens to speak a child’s mother tongue, only has the capacity to support this child for a fraction of the time spent in school. Furthermore, in many cases, EAL teaching assistants do not have the right skillset and/or understanding of the intricacies of SLA processes to provide the child with adequate help and guidance. Moreover, the level of pay enjoyed by EAL professionals does not attract the right kind of specialists in the field, which means that schools are left to simply employ available candidates.⁸ Such an arrangement often results in EAL learners being submerged rather than included in mainstream education.

As observed in many schools across the country, to survive in school, EAL students quickly assume an invisible position in class and learn how “to do school” without being spotted as EAL. In many secondary school contexts, EAL becomes a stigma that a lot of children choose to avoid if they can successfully hide their needs. This leads to all sorts of behavioural problems, as having developed a range of coping strategies, in particular, the ability to come across as much more proficient speakers than they actually are, they find themselves misunderstood, and in many instances are put through the wheels of the system with a range of agencies involved, coming out at the other end with various labels attached, none of which is reflective of their real issue - a language barrier that made learning impossible.

3. THE METHODOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF EAL

As outlined earlier, EAL is a specific teaching and learning context, which is usually brushed under the carpet as a shady area, with its issues considered a result of developmental, if not special education, rather than language-specific concerns. EAL methodology, in many instances, is equated with context and language integrated learning at best, which may indeed be an effective and rather elegant as well as inexpensive solution (since positioned in this way every teacher has to be a teacher of EAL) to facilitate the acquisition of language chunks in newly-arrived students. It does help the development of their lexical repertoire and listening comprehension skills naturally; however, it is a different story when it comes to one’s cognitive academic language proficiency, productive skills beyond the most basic range of common encounters, as well as the development and subsequent deployment of language learning strategies (Chesterfield and Chesterfield, 1985).

7. CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning and refers to teaching subjects such as science, history and geography to students through a foreign language. For more information see www.onestopenish.com/clil/what-is-clil/

8. Given that EAL staff are not classed as or expected to be qualified teachers, and are employed on term time only pro-rata contracts, the majority of staff working with EAL students only receive Grade 3 salary of the support staff pay scale, which amounts to less than £18 000 a year. Those who are employed through various agencies, are on a daily rate of £50 - £60.

Exposed to an abundance of language patterns aimed at native speakers, EAL students struggle to communicate effectively and develop their proficiency due to segmented instruction provided by EAL teachers, and fragmented, almost snap-shot, instruction provided in the mainstream classroom, none of which is aligned with their immediate environment or provides adequate learning opportunities, in line with the findings by Jacob et al. (1996). At the same time, continuous exposure to target language in its authentic settings does allow for a much more effective natural processing and acquisition of the linguistic features of the target language and hence should be perceived as a resource, not a hindrance. On the other hand, while vocabulary can easily be picked up through exposure alone and its incidental use can lead to a strengthening of the receptive and productive skillsets, grammar is usually the biggest source of confusion with many students struggling to transfer its rules from a language classroom into their immediate mainstream environment. This, in turn, affects their relationship with the target language per se by significantly diminishing the accuracy of its use and making writing in the target language a battle that many students lose.

One thing we cannot ignore, however, is that to be successful in a mainstream setting, a student is expected to demonstrate the outcomes of his or her learning in writing. To do this, not only do students need to be able to process large volumes of authentic text in the target language, but re-produce this input in writing with elements of analysis and personal reflection. Undoubtedly, there is a wide range of EAP courses with their own methodology addressing this issue successfully. The problem with the context of EAL is that students hardly ever reach a stage of proficiency that would not only grant them access to the content of EAP courses, but would allow them to participate effectively and benefit from such provision. Having developed their conversational language skills to a level seemingly sufficient for participation in various social settings and even entering the labour market, mainly its manual and unskilled sector, EAL graduates of secondary schools stagnate at that level for a very long time and subsequently miss out on the vital opportunities that further education can offer.

Another thing we have to take into account when considering EAL pedagogy and effective methods is the diversity of pupil profiles in this context. For many newly-arrived students, learning EAL is a double burden – not only are they learning a new language, but in many cases acquiring literacy for the first time in their life, as a great number of newly-arrived children come from underprivileged backgrounds with very little prior schooling received in home countries. These students, in particular, are the most vulnerable ones and their needs do not get addressed in the mainstream classroom environment. In order not to be left behind, they need a thoroughly structured model of EAL provision in school, with methods used in the EAL classroom taking into account their backgrounds, levels and needs, in line with the model of combined instruction proposed by Saunders & Goldenberg (1999) and Montecel & Cortez (2002).

Finally, the transitional nature of such programmes should inform not only policy guiding extraction schedules, but also in-class practice. Ultimately, it is access to the national curriculums of host countries that students should be provided with, enabling them to swiftly function within a variety of curricular areas on a par with non-EAL students. This means that while the wealth of expertise in the realm of EFL has to be delved into for professional guidance, we should not dismiss the mainstream practice of teaching literacy. Finally, it is crucial to understand that EAL methodology does not belong to any of the two fields exclusively and is on the overlap of EFL and

mainstream principles. We need a model of instruction which is in between the two and while sensitive to EAL as a language-specific issue, presents language not only in a highly accessible and student-friendly manner, but in a way that will provide a smooth transition to mainstream building on the foundation received in EAL and continuing to develop their language and literacy naturally, on a par with non-EAL speakers of English.

4. NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR EAL PROVISION IN UK SCHOOLS

When it comes to the policy that guides EAL support across schools in the UK, the choice of provision is left to the interpretation of the governing body of individual schools, provided it ensures access to the core elements of the national curriculum (Maths, English and Science) and enables children to develop their language, literacy and citizenship skills in line with the nationally expected level of attainment. This, though, makes the policy rather symbolic, as it only represents an official declaration of preferences with very low levels of material and legislative resources attached. It rests on the assumption that all teachers are teachers of EAL and all students should be provided with access to the curriculum as soon as it can be made possible.

As outlined in the Department for Education (DfE): Teachers' Standards Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies July 2011 (introduction updated June 2013), teachers should

...have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.

Furthermore, according to the DfE (September 2013): The national curriculum in England Framework document: for teaching 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015,

4.5 Teachers must also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Monitoring of progress should take account of the pupil's age, length of time in this country, previous educational experience and ability in other languages.

4.6 The ability of pupils for whom English is an additional language to take part in the national curriculum may be in advance of their communication skills in English. Teachers should plan teaching opportunities to help pupils develop their English and should aim to provide the support pupils need to take part in all subjects.

In addition, various agencies that provide support to teachers working with EAL students (NALDIC, NASSEA, and others)⁹ only give vague recommendations on

⁹ NALDIC - the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum, is the national subject association for English as an Additional Language. It represents all staff working with bilingual learners.

meeting the needs of students with EAL, with the support base largely aimed at more proficient speakers and users of English. Rarely are the needs of LESLLA learners of EAL taken into account, with support provided being limited to a list of potential strategies one may want to use to differentiate for students who are acquiring language and becoming literate for the first time.

EAL pedagogy rests on the mechanisms of natural acquisition with a common misconception of its use embedded into the core of our understanding of EAL needs. We seem to overestimate the power of natural acquisition and of the Language Across the Curriculum approach, forgetting that context and language-integrated learning is only effective once a certain threshold of language proficiency and literacy skills has been achieved. And even once it has been achieved, we have to keep in mind that CLIL is a multifaceted approach that requires a degree of precision in the methodology of its use and is not just a label for a handful of differentiation strategies employed in a mainstream classroom in order to tick the box that EAL needs are taken into account.

Finally, there is no national assessment system of EAL needs and the only document published (Language in Common, QCA) has a rather generic framework of can-do descriptors, is not linked to old National Curriculum Levels, has not been in use since 2014, and was developed for information purposes only. This means that whatever guidance there may be is still a matter of personal interpretation. Furthermore, any progress tracking systems and procedures informing provision of support are still highly subjective and not standardised in any shape or form, which further contributes to the very confusing nature of EAL as a specialist or mainstream-integrated field.

5. AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Luckily for EAL students in some schools in the UK, the story of EAL is a story of a blessing in disguise. One such school seems to have won the battle for adequate EAL support provided to students of EAL both with and without LESLLA-type traits - Moseley School in Birmingham. Because of the difficulties of applying the prescribed approach of immediate mainstream provision, which is so reliant on natural acquisition, the school decided to make a complete U-turn and deem such provision ineffective for EAL students working below A2 CEFR level and especially for those who are not only new to English, but who struggle with basic literacy and numeracy in any language they learn or use.

The status of EAL provision as support in meeting individual needs, rather than as a nationally assigned curricular provision model, was exactly what allowed the school to fight its corner and address the needs of newly-arrived students in a radically different fashion. Since EAL is officially recognised as a developmental issue, it is the needs and abilities of each and every student that should inform provision, not their chronological age with an array of national standards that a student is expected to meet. Therefore, to

NASSEA - the Northern Association for Support Services for Equality and Achievement, is a group of local authority services including EAL teams who provide strategic support to schools and authorities as well as accredited training and conference and regular hub meetings. For more information see <https://eal.britishcouncil.org/eal-sector/who-who-eal-uk>

be able to meet the needs of students with EAL, the school developed a fully-fledged EAL Department, allowing EAL support sessions to be timetabled on a par with other curricular subjects. Furthermore, Moseley School made EAL its focus not only in specialist classes but in mainstream subject areas as well. EAL has become an integral part of the school life and, while not overtly at the fore of the whole-school provision, it is perceived as something that everyone has to consider at every stage of planning, delivery and assessment, having made provision truly inclusive.

On entry, students go through a process of rigorous diagnostic assessment, with particular attention paid not only to their academic needs, but those of a social and emotional character. Data collected on assessment is used to inform placement in specialist classes designed to address a variety of language and literacy needs, as well as to develop a tailored programme of individual support to ensure that the effect of the continuous enrolment policy is minimised and every student is provided with an opportunity to achieve their maximum potential whatever the point of entry. Access to the core areas is provided in small groups in a CLIL-specific manner of delivery to students with LESLLA and NESLLA-type traits and in mainstream classes to students who work above A2 level in EAL and/or had a high level of attainment in these curricular areas prior to their entry to Moseley School that can be demonstrated either by transfer of their prior achievement or in the course of a subject-specific provision, via assessment administered at Moseley.

Progress is closely monitored and data is collected on a regular basis. Since there is no nationally or internationally approved system of alignment of CEFR with the standards of the national curriculum, data on reading and spelling ages is used alongside CEFR-aligned levels of language proficiency. A range of highly objective and standardised assessment tools is used to identify progress in EAL, with the Progress 8 score used to track progress and identify achievement in curricular areas. EAL provision is effectively extraction-based, with students receiving up to 18 hours of specialist classes a week before being gradually released into various curricular areas. On average, a newly arrived student with LESLLA-type characteristics spends up to 18 months attending EAL lessons and being taught subject-specific content in EAL classes by highly trained coaches who deliver a range of CLIL-based courses of study designed for EAL students. In the course of the extraction from mainstream classes that otherwise would be inaccessible and as a result highly detrimental for the academic, linguistic and emotional development of the student, they are fully integrated into the school life and the community at large by attending all of the disciplines which are of a more practical nature (PE, Technology, Art, etc.) or which use a different code (Maths) and are gradually granted access to further subjects delivered in mainstream classes, before being released into all curricular areas on a full-time basis, where the support they receive is integrated into the model of teaching in class.

As a result of such provision, not only do students feel integrated and included, but most EAL students skip the silent phase altogether and rapidly develop language and literacy skills (the average gradient of improvement in reading is 3.6 and 5.4 in spelling). Furthermore, they outperform non-EAL students on progress made in the course of their study at Moseley - average Progress 8 Score (GCSE results in 2015-2016) was 0.58 in English and 1.19 in Maths for students who were identified as having EAL needs on entry and who received intensive EAL support, as opposed to -0.64 in English and -0.11 in Maths for students who speak English as their mother tongue.

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

While there are undoubtedly many research contexts with LESLLA-type subjects whose findings have an impact on outcomes for this type of learners, the EAL context of LESLLA(A) is one that is not just overlooked (since its subjects do not automatically fall into the category that LESLLA research is concerned with), but is almost ignored in many countries, especially the UK. EAL learners, swept under the carpet of mainstream provision, are effectively hidden from the public eye leaving it to every individual school, if not every individual teacher, to find ways to meet their needs. As outlined earlier, this leads to inadequate provision and has dire consequences for newly-arrived children, conditioning them from the start of their journey in a new social environment to assume less instrumental and more functional roles in society.

I believe that a lot more research is needed into various aspects of LESLLA(A) EAL. Not only should we review what we assume is already known about the process of SLA, but we should consider how it differs for LESLLA(A) learners in the context of secondary schools. When developing policy and guidelines on access to the national curriculum, more research is needed on the ability of LESLLA(A) students to access curricular areas and subsequently on ways to support teachers in differentiating for such specific needs. Finally, gate-keeping cannot be ignored any longer and there is a strong need for a review of assessment requirements or assessment tools giving access to further education. Through adequate EAL provision, schools should play a vital role in supporting LESLLA students in their transition to further study, instead of being child-care facilities while students are waiting until they are old enough to be able to access the ESOL pathway, which although, unlike EAL is unified, standardised, well-structured and supported, still in many cases leads to unequal distribution of potential, as students who have missed out on timely language support upon arrival tend to make choices they see as realistic, rather than go after what really interests them. We need more research into all aspects of EAL provision for LESLLA(A) learners, as I believe they are very vulnerable subjects in any society, struggling to find their niche and deserving of the kind of support that would enable them to be in education and not just in school.

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EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, LENGTH OF RESIDENCY, AND JAPANESE
LANGUAGE USE OF SPANISH-SPEAKING UNSKILLED WORKERS IN JAPAN

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ABSTRACT: Since 1990, a number of Spanish-speaking migrants arrived in Japan to work on manufacturing jobs without any official support for improving their Japanese language abilities and social adjustment to Japanese society. This paper reports the initial results of a questionnaire to Spanish-speaking adults living in Japan, which focused on their Japanese language abilities and their use of Japanese in the private and social domains, in relation to their educational levels in their home countries. After more than twenty-five years living in Japan, this is a marginalized minority with a precarious, lack of social integration and unstable employment status, along with limited Japanese language ability in all social domains.

KEYWORDS: Spanish speakers, Japanese language, migrants, adults, Japan

1. INTRODUCTION

For the migrant, using the language of the host society gives the opportunity to access invaluable information and improve employment, health, and other areas of life, resulting in a general sense of well-being and higher level of integration into the new society. One of the factors that often correlates with a positive outcome with the acquisition of a second language is the level of education (Chiswick & Miller, 2007). However, is having attended school in their Spanish-speaking home countries for a greater number of years one of the keys to success with Japanese language acquisition and use? This study examines Spanish-speaking unskilled workers' level of education in relation to their acquisition and use of Japanese language in private and social domains.

2. SPANISH SPEAKERS AND THEIR SOCIAL SITUATION IN JAPAN

Officially, Japan is not a country of immigration as the government policies remain opposed to recruitment of foreign labor, but the revision of the Immigration Law in 1990 aiming to satisfy the demand for a low-wage manufacturing sector led to a large influx of descendants of Japanese emigrants up to the third generation and their relatives, from Latin America, mainly from Brazil and Peru. Difficult economic and political situations in their home countries and comparatively higher earnings in the Japanese market force favored Latin Americans to live and work in Japan. Compared with other foreigners, Latin Americans are a minority. According to the Ministry of Justice, there are approximately 60,000 Spanish speakers living in Japan, and they are mostly from Peru, followed by Bolivia, Argentina, and Colombia (Ministry of Justice, 2015).

These Spanish-speaking workers from Latin America are characterized by whether they are Japanese descendants or not. Most of them do not possess Japanese language abilities or understand Japanese culture (Japanese International Cooperation Agency, 1992; Hamamatsu, 2007; Mita et al., 2009; Tamaki et al., 2014). They are overwhelmingly unskilled workers in the manufacturing industry, in which it is not necessary to be competent in Japanese (Takaya, et al., 2015). These blue-collar workers fill the so-called three-K jobs (*'kitsui, kitanai, kiken'* - 'difficult, dirty and dangerous') and they are usually the "last hired, first fired" in the job market. Initially they were guest workers, who intended to return home in a few years, but most of them are settling in with their families. Compared with Brazilians, Peruvians more often change their nationality and residency to Japanese. Their residency is mainly in industrial areas, but they also live in dispersed areas (Yanagida, 2011). Their level of education in their home country is relatively high, with more than 75% having achieved higher than a middle-school level (Mita, et al., 2009 p. 5; Hamamatsu, 2007; Japanese International Cooperation Agency, 1992). This is a well-educated group that may come from wealthy families, but more often are from the middle class and are more likely to have had job experiences in their home countries.

With the arrival of the "newcomers" in the mid-eighties -, such as Filipinos, South Koreans, Brazilians, to name the biggest - the Japanese government did not initially support them in any way to adjust to the host society, with regard to the Japanese language and sociocultural courses as integration measures. The acceptance of these new Japanese-descendant migrants was based on the assumption that being descendants was enough to have the socio-cultural and linguistic skills to successfully adapt to the land of their ancestors. As a result, this new social need for linguistic skills was fulfilled by volunteer organizations who offer very cheap Japanese classes delivered by unqualified, though well-intentioned, volunteers who lack the skills and preparation to teach adult migrants (Gottlieb, 2012). It was not until the financial crisis in 2008 that the government for the first time assisted the unemployed ones with retraining programs to improve their skills, including Japanese language classes, as a way to improve migrants' linguistic abilities and their chances of finding better jobs (Higuchi, 2014).

3. MIGRANTS AND THE ACQUISITION OF THE HOST SOCIETY LANGUAGE

The major challenge for migrants to new countries is their adjustment to the new social and cultural environment. It is known that migrants who have higher

probability of finding employment and higher earnings are more proficient in the host society language (Adamuti-Trache, 2012; García Delgado et al., 2012). As the best predictors of a new language acquisition, research has focused mainly on three concepts: Exposure, Efficiency, and Economic incentives. Among them, age of migration, level of education, and length of migration are included (Chiswick & Miller, 1995; 2007). Related to the level of education, more highly educated people have a good basis for learning additional languages, as they have already developed a set of skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge that can be applied to learning a second language (Baker, 2014).

The success of the acquisition of the host language is also related to factors outside of the classroom, such as the extent to which newcomers interact on a daily basis with members of the host society. The more interactions on a daily basis to which a foreign adult is exposed, the more chances there are of relevant communicative exchanges with native speakers to assist improvement of their language skills and their understanding of the new society. Furthermore, the ability to communicate in the host society language also leads to higher levels of societal participation. In addition, the use of the second language in the private sphere at home has been argued as having positive outcomes in the acquisition of the new language (Coby van Niejenhuis, et al., 2015).

Another factor to take into account is the linguistic distance between one's mother tongue and the language of the host society in terms of differences in the grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, word order, writing etc. (Kajita, 1994). Due to this, it is more difficult for Spanish speakers to acquire Japanese than it is for them to acquire another romance language. This affects acquisition due not only to the complexities of the new language itself, but also the difficulty of transferring knowledge from one's own language to the new one (Cummins, 2000).

4. THE STUDY

Past studies of Spanish speakers in Japan have focused primarily on demographic data (Hamamatsu, 2007; Japanese International Cooperation Agency, 1992) or on their participation in the job market (Inaba & Higuchi, 2010; Watanabe, 2012). This study sets out to fill the gap in the research by examining the sociolinguistic integration of Spanish-speaking migrants into Japanese society, and how it correlates with their educational background, Japanese language study background, type of employment, and their patterns of Japanese use in private and social domains. The concept of social domains belongs to Fishman, who proposes to use them as analytic parameters for social behavior in terms of language use, telling us the occasions in which language is used to whom, where and when (Fishman, 1972). Furthermore, this information shows us the level of Japanese that they have acquired after 25 years in Japan, and the manner in which Spanish speakers have come to participate in the Japanese community.

Therefore, this study examines the relationship between the subjects' higher level of education achieved in Latin American countries and their job-market opportunities, experiences learning Japanese, self-assessment of Japanese language abilities, and daily use of Japanese language in different social domains.

4.1. METHODOLOGY

Primary data was obtained through a survey given to Spanish-speaking Latin Americans resident in Japan. The eligibility criteria were that the subjects were adults at the time of arrival in Japan, who were not eligible to attend Japanese school, and came to Japan to work on manual jobs. The study excluded Spanish speakers who had come to Japan as overseas students and spouses of Japanese nationals, for example. The snowball technique was used to recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances because of the difficulties for the researcher in accessing them. Due to the fact that the Spanish speakers are scattered over a wide geographical area, those captured first in the sample were encountered in locations of religious services, gatherings, ethnic festivals and in businesses which the subjects owned. The questionnaire covers basic information about the respondents, and their experiences of learning Japanese language. It also asks questions about their Japanese use with their family, in the workplace, with friends, while doing hobbies or while participating in religious activities. The respondents could choose to do the questionnaire on paper (32%) or online survey (68%) (SurveyMonkey), and the data was processed by an SPSS software program. Details of the responses on the survey are shown in Table 1.

Background variables	Number of persons	Percent
Gender		
Female	39	59.0
Male	27	41.0
Years in Japan		
0 to 9 years	4	6.0
10 to 19 years	26	39.0
20 or more years	36	55.0
Actual age		
Up to 29 years old	4	2.0
30 to 44 years old	24	36.0
45 or more years old	41	62.0
Country of birth		
Peru	51	77.0
Argentina	5	4.0
Colombia	4	4.0
Others	6	15
Employment		
Yes	54	83.0
No	11	17.0
Type of employment		
Manual work	34	76.0
Eldercare	7	13.0
Entrepreneur	3	6.0
Others	10	5.0
Level of education		
Up to Middle School	10	15.0
Up to High School	24	36.0
College or more	32	49.0

Table 1: Background of the Sample (n=66).

5. LENGTH OF RESIDENCY, TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT AND EXPERIENCE WITH JAPANESE LANGUAGE STUDY

Table 2 shows years of living in Japan by the highest educational level achieved. The majority of the respondents have been living in Japan, regardless of their years of schooling, for more than twenty years.

	0 to 9 years	10 to 19 years	20+ years	%
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	0%	50%	50%	100
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	4%	42%	54%	100
College or higher 49% (N=32)	9%	35%	56%	100

Table 2: Years of Residency in Japan by the Highest Level of Education Achieved.

	Unskilled/ manual jobs	Eldercare	Entrepreneurs	Others	%
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	67%	22%	0%	11%	100
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	67%	22%	0%	11%	100
College or higher 49% (N=32)	63%	0%	11%	7%	100

Table 3: Type of Employment by the Highest Level of Education Achieved.

As shown in Table 3, the Spanish speakers who have achieved as high as a middle-school level of education do not appear to have different types of employment from migrants who achieved higher levels of education. In all the cases, employment in unskilled jobs consists of daily routines which do not require higher Japanese language skills since they are repetitive work duties involving simple tasks unrelated to the workers' educational backgrounds in their home countries.

	Studied Japanese before coming to Japan	Studied Japanese only after coming to Japan
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	10%	50%
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	8%	38%
College or higher 49% (N=32)	23%	74%

Table 4: Studied Japanese Before v. Only After Coming to Japan by the Highest Level of Education Achieved.

In accordance with other studies about Latin Americans in Japan, few of the subjects in this study came to Japan having any knowledge of the language. For some of the Japanese descendants from Peru and Argentina, studying Japanese before coming to Japan meant attending weekend Japanese lessons intended for the community of Japanese emigrants in their home countries. Among the ones who attend Japanese classes in Japan, the group with college or higher-level educational backgrounds shows more interest in mastering the language, followed by the group with only a middle-school level of education. The respondents described their difficulties in studying and/or continuing their Japanese studies as follows: a lack of time to study because they cannot attend classes after work; their schedules do not match those of the Japanese classes offered; they feel that they can live with the Japanese that they mastered. However, the ones with experience with Japanese classes mention their disappointment with the content of their Japanese classes, as they found them unsuitable for their personal needs in their daily life.

5.1. USE OF JAPANESE IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC DOMAINS

In the following tables, one can see what is called “Language background measurement” (Baker and Jones, 1998). First, Table 5 below shows how much Japanese is used in the private domain by the two following questions: ‘If you are living with another adult, in what language do you speak to that person?’ (We just included the data for responses of “in Japanese most of the time” and “always in Japanese”, excluding the responses for Spanish use). ‘In what language does that person speak to you? (The responses of “in Japanese most of the time” and “always in Japanese” are added, excluding the results for Spanish).

Table 5 shows that around a quarter or less of respondents communicate in Japanese at home, and the highest percentage is among the Spanish speakers with the lowest level of education. For the group as a whole, contact with Japanese and use of Japanese in their private lives is remarkably low.

	Respondent's use of Japanese with another adult in the house	Use of Japanese by another adult in the respondent's house
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	25%	25%
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	13%	13%
College or higher 49% (N=32)	7%	14%

Table 5: Use of Japanese at Home by the Highest Level of Education Achieved

Secondly, the next table shows the use of Japanese in the context of relationships that might be developed in the mother language, in Spanish or in Japanese. The three domains covered were the friendship domain, the work domain and the neighbor domain. The latter two are probably the most common public spheres in which the subjects can interact with the members of the majority group. We asked the following questions: a)

In what language do you communicate with your friends? (Multiple choice question): b) For the workplace: In your workplace, what language do you use? c) Do you speak to your neighbors? (The answer options were: “yes, we often speak and or visit each other” and “yes we sometimes speak to each other”).

	With friends a-in Spanish b-in Japanese	Use Japanese in the workplace	Use Japanese with neighbors
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	a. 100% b. 40%	67%	10%
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	a. 100% b. 42%	78%	46%
College or higher 49% (N=32)	a. 100% b. 66%	48%	45%

Table 6: Use of Japanese with Friends, in the Workplace, with Neighbors and in One's Social Life by the Highest Level of Education Achieved

Two more domains of hobbies and religious worship take place in a public space in Spanish or Japanese. The hobbies included here refer only to the ones done in person, in direct contact with other people; Japanese classes and activities using internet, for example, are excluded. Table 6 shows that with friends, the use of Spanish is overwhelming, and the numbers of friends with whom they talk in Japanese is relatively high, too. In the workplace, the cases of a lower use of “Japanese only” might be explained by the presence of other Spanish-speaking co-workers who might know Japanese. The use of Japanese with neighbors should be considered high among the ones with a higher level of education, although the more general trend of avoiding contact with the neighbors nowadays should be taken into consideration, which is independent of language, race, or ethnicity.

	Use of Japanese for doing hobbies	Use of Japanese in religious activities
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	50% (2 of 4)	50% (2 of 4)
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	31% (4 of 13)	14% (2 of 14)
College or higher 49% (N=32)	40% (10 of 25)	18% (5 of 28)

Table 7: Use of Japanese in One's Social Life According to Level of Education

From the results of Table 7, we can see that few respondents in each educational level group are doing hobbies or religious activities at all, but when they do, the use of the Japanese language is relatively high for the lower education group.

As a whole, Japanese language use is inevitably higher in the workplace, while it is lower with leisure activities. The results show that the respondents have a lower sociolinguistic integration into Japanese society, while having a separate social life in other languages than Japanese.

5.2. SELF-ASSESSMENT OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE SKILLS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

As a measure of their Japanese abilities, each subject was asked to assess their Japanese language abilities in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

	Highest	Middle	Lowest	%
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	50%	40%	10%	100
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	29%	33%	37%	100
College or higher 49% (N=32)	32%	52%	6%	100

Table 8: Self-assessment of Listening Skills by the Highest Level of Education Achieved.

	Highest	Middle	Lowest	%
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	60%	30%	10%	100
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	46%	38%	16%	100
College or higher 49% (N=32)	42%	42%	16%	100

Table 9: Self-assessment of Speaking Skills by the Highest Level of Education Achieved.

	Highest	Middle	Lowest	%
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	0%	20%	80%	100
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	8%	21%	71%	100
College or higher 49% (N=32)	0%	55%	46%	100

Table 10: Self-assessment of Reading Skills by the Highest Level of Education Achieved.

	Highest	Middle	Lowest	%
Up to middle school 15% (N=10)	0%	20%	80%	100
Up to high school 36% (N=24)	8%	21%	71%	100
College or higher 49% (N=32)	3%	45%	52%	100

Table 11: Self-assessment of Writing Skills by the Highest Level of Education Achieved.

The tables 8 to 11 are organized by their level of difficulty of Japanese language by the four basic skills. The results related to speaking and listening skills show that Spanish speakers with a lower-level education declared having higher language abili-

ties in listening and speaking, compared with the group with a higher-level education. However, with the Japanese abilities related to reading and writing skills, self-assessment is remarkably low or nonexistent in most of the groups. Nonetheless, it is the group with the higher-level education who declare having slightly higher abilities in reading and writing.

Considering these results, level of education of the respondents does not seem to follow the common understanding that the more schooling a person has, the higher their level of proficiency will be in a second language. Moreover, taking into account that half of these respondents have been living in Japan for 20 years or more, length of residency in the country does not appear to help in gaining a certain proficiency in the Japanese language. These findings are similar to those in Mita's study (Mita et al., 2009).

6. CONCLUSION

This study contributes to our understanding of the sociolinguistic integration into Japanese society of Spanish speakers who are long-term residents in Japan. The findings in this study may have a number of potential shortcomings; it does not represent a random sample due to the small number of respondents, and because of the difficulties in reaching Spanish-speaking adults, only represents the ones who wanted to participate in the study. However, the general trends of the sample correspond to the official statistics and other studies on the foreign population in Japan, as was quoted before (Japanese International Cooperation Agency, 1992; Hamamatsu, 2007; Mita, et al., 2009; Inaba & Higuchi, 2010; Tamaki, 2014).

The variables used to analyze the sample - the level of education, with the length of residency, type of employment - do not seem to clearly explain the influence of the acquisition and use of a second language. It highlights some conditions for Spanish speakers, who are probably distinct because of their different background in socio-cultural and linguistic terms, compared to those with more social and linguistic advantages such as Chinese, for instance.

Moreover, in another example, in Canada migrants' income is on average lower than Canadians' when they are new arrivals, and the migrants' income improves as they gain more experience and socio-cultural immersion. This is the same for Spanish speakers in Japan, where the economic reward or return is lower for migration. As in the case of migrants in Canada, their level of education and past job experiences are discounted (Alboim, et al., 2005). However, foreigners who have the opportunity to get a Canadian degree, training or qualification eventually have similar earnings as the Canadians. However, for Spanish speakers in Japan, such opportunities to improve their skills are nonexistent and represent one of the biggest obstacles to a relative improvement of their living conditions and wellbeing over time (Higuchi, 2014).

The economic incentives in the job market are one of the predictors of language acquisition (Chiswick & Miller, 1978). However, in the case of Spanish speakers in Japan, those incentives are scarce, and as a result, might also discourage further language improvement. Their Japanese language acquisition has been left in their own hands, and therefore, their insufficient language proficiency has led to segregated migrants becoming marginalized-minority foreigners. The length of their stay in Japan also does not help to improve their linguistic abilities and employment conditions since they still

belong to the same unstable and precarious job markets as they did upon arrival. The adjustment to Japanese society for these Spanish speakers is intertwined with their social class, cultural and symbolic capital, as well as their identities, as demonstrated in the studies of Bonny Norton (2013) and David Block (2007, 2014). To the same extent, their lack of proficiency in the dominant language does not operate in isolation from other forms of disadvantage and constitutes but one of many facets of multiple vulnerabilities (Piller, 2016:96).

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THEORY AND PRACTICE IN TEACHING IMMIGRANT ADULTS WITH
LIMITED EDUCATION AND LITERACY

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ABSTRACT: Skilled and knowledgeable teachers are the key to student success. For practitioners working with adult immigrants with limited education and literacy in their home language, who are developing oral and literacy skills in the language of their new country, there is limited access to specialized training and professional development. The EU-Speak project is addressing this need. Here we report on the project, starting with the results of two international surveys of teachers and program managers that aimed to determine existing and desired knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The survey results and consultations with experts informed the content of six online modules in five languages for practitioners around the world. The modules focus on the educational needs of the learner population, bilingualism and multilingualism, language and literacy in their social contexts and from a psycholinguistic perspective, vocabulary learning, and acquisition of morphosyntax.

KEYWORDS: LESLLA learners; teacher knowledge, skills, and attitudes; teacher training and professional development needs; online modules; curriculum framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

International efforts in developing countries have led to a decrease in the number of adults with limited education and little or no literacy (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). However, immigration of non- and low-literate adults to post-industrialized countries continues. Education efforts in these countries often focus on children, and many of these adults are well past the age of compulsory schooling. Therefore, they often enter adult education programs.

Full- and part-time paid teachers, volunteers, and program managers who work with this learner population in adult education programs need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to be effective. Although they may have experience teaching languages to adults or teaching reading to young children, they often have limited or no training or professional development that focuses specifically on the backgrounds, needs, and potential of these adult learners. In fact, in most countries, no specific training exists. In many instances around the world, there is considerable reliance on part-time teachers and volunteers. They have even more limited opportunities or resources for any training or professional development that exists or for collaboration with other educators.

The need for such specialized training and professional development is underscored by three factors: 1) the difficulties that these adult learners (LESLLA learners in this article) have in education programs around the world to move beyond basic language and literacy in the language of their new host country (e.g., from below the lowest level, A1, to the intermediate level, B1, of the six-level *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, Council of Europe, 2001; see discussion in Kurvers & van de Craats, 2008); 2) the desire of these teachers to be able to work successfully with these learners (Young-Scholten et al., 2015); and 3) the progress that these learners make when they are taught by qualified teachers (Condelli et al., 2010).

This article describes the motivation for, development and delivery of, and participant evaluations of free online modules that the EU-Speak-3 project is designing to address the challenges described above. The content of the modules, each of which lasts six weeks, is informed by two international surveys of teachers needs and wishes and by consultation with experts (EU-Speak-2 project, 2014- 2015). The modules are designed to be cross-national (involving English-speaking teachers from various countries) and multilingual (with versions also in Finnish, German, Spanish, and Turkish, supported by mentors who speak the language and a multilingual discussion forum). The EU-Speak project partners, all of them actively working with LESLLA learners in various capacities, are committed to the idea that the best instructional practices are connected to relevant research findings. Research is rarely conveyed to practitioners in an accessible form, and the project is committed to doing so through these modules.

2. PROJECT MOTIVATION: THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTITUDES THAT TEACHERS WANT AND NEED

The goal of EU-Speak is to improve the instructional support that adult learners with limited education and literacy in their native or home language (LESLLA learners) receive, so that they will be successful in their new country. The overall effort consists of three projects:¹

- *EU-Speak 1* (2010-2012): A partnership exchange with workshops to share ideas on and experience with all components of working with this learner population: goals, policies, instructional approaches, materials, learner assessment, and professional development.
- *EU-Speak 2* (2014-2015): Teacher surveys and expert consultation; a draft curriculum; and pilot testing of a module informed by survey results.
- *EU-Speak 3* (2015-2018): Development of six online modules, each delivered twice in English, Finnish, German, Spanish, and Turkish.

The first EU-Speak 2 survey focused on the knowledge and skills that those who work with LESLLA learners, along with program managers, believe they have, need, and would like to gain in their training and professional development. The starting point for the survey was a similar survey by the Nordic Adult Literacy Network, with which EU-Speak's Finnish partner was involved (Franker & Christensen, 2013). There were over 300 responses from those in the partner countries: Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK, and the United States, as well as from Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Germany, Italy, Ireland, New Zealand, and Thailand.

The results were used to compile a list of knowledge, skills, and attitudes specific to working with LESLLA learners. Experts in the field of LESLLA education (managers, trainers, activists, and researchers) in the same countries as those of the survey respondents were then asked to respond to the list and make further suggestions. A second survey was then conducted to ascertain whether respondents agreed with the highest scoring items on the first survey and to find out what opportunities are available to develop the relevant knowledge and skills.

An interesting outcome of the first survey was that responses indicated more focus on the need for instructional skills than for background knowledge. Although none of the responses demonstrated significant differences across questions, the following skills received the highest scores. The ability to, with this population of learners ...

- Use teaching methods that facilitate their active participation in class
- Use authentic conversational situations and materials in teaching that reflect their daily experiences and meet their needs
- Use instructional approaches to support their development of oral language skills
- Guide them in the process of developing reading and writing strategies that they can use independently in their daily lives

1. 2010-2012: Grundtvig 2010-1-GB2-GRU06-03528
 2014-2015: Grundtvig 539478-LLP- 1-2013-1-UK-GRUNDTVIG-GMP
 2015-2018: Erasmus+ 2015-1-UK01-KA204-013485

Areas of understanding and knowledge that received the highest scores are closely related to these skills. The items with the highest scores were related to ...

- Learners' backgrounds, situations, and learning potential to guide course planning and teaching
- Current teaching materials suitable for use with them
- The effects of their first language(s) when learning the second/additional language
- The kinds of written information that learners encounter in their daily lives

In the responses to the second survey, we found that respondents receive limited relevant training or development, that what they receive which is relevant focuses primarily on developing oral language skills rather than on literacy, and (again) that respondents prefer training and professional development that focuses on instructional strategies over background knowledge (theories and research findings).

One of the recurring themes in survey responses was the need to provide materials and information to teachers in their native languages, because English is not always appropriate as a language for training and professional development with educators who are teaching the language and literacy of the country they work in. (See Young-Scholten et al., 2015; Young-Scholten, Sosiński, & Martín-Rubio, 2015, for detailed discussion of the surveys, profiles of the respondents, and how the surveys and expert consultation informed development of the six online modules).

3. THE PROCESS: DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF ONLINE MODULES

3.1. ASSUMPTIONS GUIDING MODULE DEVELOPMENT

In addition to what is discussed above, development of the six online modules was guided by the research that has been done on education of adults with limited schooling and literacy and the observation that module participants would be unfamiliar with certain bodies of research. This process resulted in three assumptions about the learners:

1. Adult immigrants can, despite lack of schooling and literacy, and even without specific instruction in the second or additional language, reach high levels of oral proficiency in the L2 (Hawkins, 2001; Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 2011).
2. Even at older ages, individuals can learn to read for the first time in an L2. Researchers have observed important similarities to the ways that children learn (Kurvers, Stockmann, & van de Craats, 2010; Young-Scholten & Naeb, 2010; Young-Scholten & Strom, 2006).
3. However, many adults with little or no formal education and home language literacy fail to move beyond CEFR A1, and some don't reach this level (Condelli et al., 2003; Kurvers et al., 2010; Schellekens, 2011; Tarone, Bigelow, & Hansen, 2009).

And three observations relevant to teaching:

1. When taught by well-qualified teachers, learners progress faster (e.g. Condelli, et al., 2010; Paget & Stevenson, 2014; Schellekens, 2011).

2. In most countries, teachers have little or no access to training and professional development specific to teaching this learner population.
3. Teachers', volunteers', administrators/managers' knowledge of the learning process and learning trajectories of learners, and their expectations of their abilities and growth, grow out of their previous teaching experience and are not always aligned with this learner population (Gil, Marsden, & Whong, 2013; Lightbown, 1984).

In this context, where professional development is clearly needed, we find the following trend: Basic skills education for adult immigrants is evolving as an international-level concern. Practitioners who work with this adult learner population have much in common, given the lack of rigid institutional structure in adult immigrant basic skills education in most countries and the common origins of LESLLA learners. Thus, training and professional development can be offered internationally.

3.2. PILOT TESTING OF A MODULE AND DEVELOPMENT OF A CURRICULUM

Before the development and delivery of the first of the modules began, in February-March 2015, the EU-Speak-2 team piloted online delivery of an international "study circle" on *Vocabulary Learning*. This was a 15-hour module, delivered over 5 weeks, offered on a Moodle platform. A sixth week was later added to allow participants time to complete assigned activities and apply their new knowledge and skills in their classes. Much of the module content was developed by Professor Andreas Rohde, the Cologne partner, and included ideas about vocabulary learning that participants would not have come across. Because there is still very little research on LESLLA learners' vocabulary development, part of the module involved extrapolating findings from the wealth of research on children's vocabulary learning. Participants then reflected on similarities to LESLLA learners, who, unlike highly educated learners, less often use the conscious, metalinguistic word learning strategies that educated adults use. This module will be refined, based on participant evaluations, and offered two more times (in the spring 2017 and again in 2018). A target of 50 participants was set, and 51 participated. Participants were from Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, the UK and the United States. Knowing about others' experiences with offering online professional development, we expected attrition, and while there was some, about 75 percent of the participants completed all of the activities.

Delivery of this module informed the focus and implementation of the other five modules and allowed the project team to address issues including platform selection, effective ways to make materials available, successful means of promoting participant involvement, and languages for participant mentoring, materials, publications, and other resources. After reviewing lessons learned from the pilot test, the following procedure was followed for developing and delivering the suite of six-week modules. A master curriculum was developed that outlines the topics for and components of each module.

1. Decide on six module topics
2. Schedule when each module (first delivery) would go live
3. Decide on a platform for delivery (Moodle has been used, supported by other interactive technology)

4. Create a syllabus for each module
5. Write the content and readings for each module
6. Create activities to link theory and practice
7. Collect supporting resources for each module
8. Translate the module into the partner languages
9. Upload the module onto the platform
10. Have an independent reviewer evaluate the module
11. Recruit and select participants
12. Run the module and use mentors to facilitate participant involvement
13. Evaluate its success

3.3. ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULES

The modules developed respond to what teachers have said is critical to their practice. While each six-week module is self-standing, they are being offered in succession (and will be offered a second time in succession). After the project ends, the modules will be available through another provider (e.g., the LESLLA organization). (The Appendix lists the purpose of, objectives for, and topics covered in each module, with a sample of the activities that participants engage in.)

Module 1: Working with LESLLA Learners

Designed by Virginia Commonwealth University, launched February 2016; April 2017

Module 2: Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Designed by University of Jyväskylä, launched October 2016; May 2017

Module 3: Language and Literacy in their Social Contexts

Designed by Boğaziçi University, launched May 2016; October 2017

Module 4: Reading Development from a Psycholinguistic Perspective

Designed by University of Granada, launched February 2017; November 2017

Module 5: Vocabulary Acquisition

Designed by University of Cologne, launched May 2017; February 2018

Module 6: Acquisition and Assessment of Morphosyntax

Designed by Newcastle University and Northumbria University, launched October 2017; April 2018

There is a strong focus in each module on building community among the participants and creating local communities of practice. In 2014-2015, we used the term “study circle,” but because it is not widely understood, we adopted the term “module” and identified where interaction would take place: in a discussion forum supported by local facilitators, who live and work in the partner countries. Country-specific interactions take place, in the language of the country, and participants also have opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences with those from other countries. In the pilot module and Modules 1 and 2, cross-country interactions were usually in English, and there was little interaction across languages. With Module 3, we ran a single, multilingual discussion forum, allowing posting in any language. Reactions have been highly positive, and details will be shared in the next LESLLA proceedings.

4. REFLECTION AND LEARNING: PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS OF MODULES

An important component of a module is participant evaluation of its success and whether it helped them in their work. Evaluations are informing development and facilitation of the remaining modules and their second delivery. But since not all of the modules have been delivered, we report here results of evaluations of Modules 1 and 2. In addition to what is noted above regarding cross-cultural and cross-linguistic interaction:

Participants were enthusiastic about having the opportunity to share experiences with those from other regions and countries and to learn new ideas from them.

Publications that support the content of modules are overwhelmingly in English; there are far fewer in other languages.

Participants completed most of the discussion forum questions, commenting that they allow them to gain new knowledge from their fellow participants. (“It was most helpful to suggest an idea and then for another participant to suggest ways to improve the idea.”)

At the same time, many did not contribute to the forums for a number of weeks. They mentioned that they “never got notifications if someone commented on [their] posts,” didn’t receive enough “feedback from experts in the field,” and said they preferred face-to-face interaction with mentors and peers.

Participants reported a high level of engagement in completing activities that fostered interaction between them and the learners in their classes (e.g., completing a study of the languages used in learners’ homes and communities). They were less engaged in activities focused purely on background information but not instruction (e.g., developing a “world map of languages” that the students in their classes speak, primarily because it was difficult to complete it with learners with limited proficiency in the language taught; completing a “Why is prosody important?” activity, because it was difficult and not as relevant as it might be to their teaching).

Organization	Knowledge & Skills Gained	Participant Engagement
93% said it was well organized	86% said the publications provided deepened their knowledge	89% enjoyed the international interaction
93% agreed that six weeks was a good length	79% said the content covered deepened their knowledge	85% liked the online mode of learning
86% noted clear module objectives	79% said that participation in the module helped their teaching	64% logged on at least three times a week

Table 1: Participant Reactions to Two Modules Delivered.

5. NEXT STEPS

As can be seen in the list of modules in Section 3.3, not all of the modules have been offered. Interested individuals or groups can still participate in them. In addition, after

all of the modules have run, individuals or groups can offer these modules in face-to-face teaching. If you would like to offer a module, contact us at Info.EU-Speak@ncl.ac.uk or visit www.EU-Speak.com. In addition, we plan that LESLLA as a formalized organization will host the modules after 2018.

6. CONCLUSION

Practitioners working in the field of adult education need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work effectively with a population of adult learners who have very different profiles from the learners that they have worked with in the past. Two surveys of practitioners and consultations with experts in the field provided valuable guidance for developing six online modules to provide the training and professional development needed, in the areas that practitioners need to know about, in ways they can easily access, and in cross-national, multilingual contexts. It is hoped that these modules will take us a long way in providing what is needed and will spark development of additional modules.

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EU-SPEAK Partners

Europe: Universities of Amsterdam, Cologne, Granada, Jyväskylä, and Newcastle
United States: American Institutes for Research, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Project Web Pages

EU-SPEAK 2 project: www.EU-Speak.com (17-5-2017)
Surveys 1 and 2: <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/eu-speak/eu-speak20102018/surveysandresults> (17-5-2017)
Responses to Survey 2: <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/media/sites/researchwebsites/EU-Speak2/EU-Speak%20%20Knowledge,%20Skills,%20Understanding,%20Attitudes.pdf> (17-5-2017)

APPENDIX: THE MODULES

Module 1: Working With LESLLA Learners

Purpose: Develop understanding of adult learners who have limited education and literacy and how to work with them

Objectives: Participants will...

- Understand and be able to describe the characteristics of adult literacy learners
- Select materials and resources appropriate for the assessed needs of these learners
- Help learners develop print awareness and recognize sound/symbol correspondence
- Analyse techniques and strategies for incorporating literacy skills into a thematic lesson
- Design and implement an activity for literacy learners

Module 2: Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Purpose: Expand and deepen participants' knowledge of the fundamentals of speaking and reading in more than one language. Because the majority of LESLLA learners are parents or grandparents, the module focuses on bilingualism and multilingualism of learners' families and communities. This is intended to inspire participants to develop new and innovative ideas for connecting with learners' communities.

Objectives: Participants will ...

- Become aware of the bilingualism and multilingualism of their students
- Gain knowledge about their students' languages and their writing systems
- Understand various factors relevant to bilingualism and multilingualism
- Be aware of the linguistic, metalinguistic, literacy, and cognitive aspects of bilingualism and multilingualism
- Identify the influence of learners' native languages on the acquisition of additional language(s)
- Identify the interaction of learners' languages, writing systems, and orthographies during reading
- Reflect on how these factors have an impact on their children's education and learning

Module 3: Language and Literacy in Their Social Contexts

Purpose: Participants will gain knowledge about the various contexts in which language and literacy use and development occur and their impact on learners' language and literacy development

Objectives: Participants will understand that ...

- Language development is a social process and is not divorced from social contexts
- Language learning is rarely a purely individual process, and other people often have a role in it: shared vs. purely individual processes
- Language learners have different goals for learning, which include being able to participate in family and societal life. These have an impact on and are influenced by learners' sense of personal empowerment and agency.
- Basic literacy skills alone are not sufficient for full participation in society and work.
- Interactional skills, in addition to literacy knowledge, are needed to facilitate learning to read and write.
- Literacy takes specific forms and roles in Western societies (e.g., Northern and Southern Europe, United States), influenced by different values placed on being literate and different literacy practices. This includes amount of writing done and amount and types of texts processed; increase in technology-rich environments for literacy

Module 4: Reading Development from a Psycholinguistic Perspective

Purpose: Participants will learn the skills and knowledge that are associated with reading and how they are represented readers' minds and learn ways to develop these skills with the learners in their classes.

Objectives: Participants will ...

- Learn about the lower-level and higher-level processes involved in reading
- Learn about the relationships between oral language proficiency and reading
- Share how they measure students' reading skills and learn about other ways to do so

- Have access to new materials for word decoding (from the DigLin project)
- Have the opportunity create new materials for developing reading comprehension (including materials for pleasure reading)

Module 5: Vocabulary Acquisition

Purpose: Participants will learn ways to promote learning of vocabulary by their learners.

Objectives: Participants will ...

- Learn ways that children and adults learn new words, including implicit and implicit learning
- Learn one specific way to promote vocabulary learning, "fast mapping"
- Develop and implement pre-, during-, and post- reading activities for their classes

Module 6: Acquisition and Assessment of Morphosyntax

Purpose: Expand and deepen participants' knowledge about the fundamentals of the acquisition of morphosyntax in an additional language, with reference to the rich tradition of research on adult immigrants across a range of countries; demonstrate how this knowledge can be used in learner placement and assessment

Objectives: Participants will ...

- Find out about cutting-edge ideas in the field of language acquisition
- Gain knowledge of stages of morphosyntactic development in the language they are teaching
- Be able to measure their students' progress against a common framework of language development, which will lead to greater confidence about the ability to place learners effectively
- Become more sensitive to learners' mental trajectories with respect to morphosyntax
- Apply this knowledge to planning of tasks and selection of materials for individual learner needs

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