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Editorial Note - LESLLA Symposium Proceedings 2023

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Introduction

Since its foundation in 2005, the LESLLA community has experienced a gradual but consistent expansion, thereby making significant and valuable contributions to the domain of language education and second language learning for adults (=LESLLA) worldwide. The LESLLA community has also prioritized the advancement of knowledge in both research and practice, as well as the establishment of connections between the two domains. In alignment with this trajectory, the 19th Annual Symposium has been meticulously curated around the theme "Bridging the gap between research and practice with LESLLA learners: Challenges and Opportunities". The selection of Barcelona, Spain, as the venue was particularly fitting due to the city's large immigrant population and its unique linguistic landscape, where Spanish and Catalan are recognized as the two official languages. Barcelona's rich tapestry of experiences in practice, research and policy enabled the symposium participants to gain a nuanced understanding of how multilingualism can be effectively taught to adult learners, how a supportive political and social environment can be created, and how challenges can be addressed.

More than 40 workshops and oral and poster presentations brought together researchers and practitioners from around the world to explore the latest developments in the field of LESLLA. A particular emphasis was placed on the concept of translanguaging, which represents a fundamental competence within the LESLLA community. In alignment with LESLLA's objective

to valorize all languages, speakers were encouraged to submit articles in one of the three official conference languages: English, Spanish and Catalan. While English remains the primary language of publication, one contributor accepted our invitation and submitted a manuscript in Spanish (see Raspollini in this volume). The editors of the LESLLA Symposium Proceedings are delighted with this response and hope that it will further stimulate interest and add to the rich knowledge of the LESLLA community.

Furthermore, over the past 19 years, the LESLLA Symposium Proceedings have adopted a variety of formats, with numerous papers presenting research findings and others summarizing the key points emerging from the plenary presentations. To encourage different types of contributions, we have proposed four distinct formats for the submission of papers. The first genre, designated as a ‘state-of-the-art review,’ offers a comprehensive overview of previous LESLLA-related work, facilitating the mapping of developments in the LESLLA field, the identification of gaps in research and practice, and the formulation of recommendations for future research, practice and policy. In this Symposium Proceedings, **Marte Nordanger, Cecilie Carlsen and Edit Bugge** presented their very insightful review, in which they analyzed the trends in the research papers published in the LESLLA Symposium Proceedings from 2005 to 2019 through the lens of the framework developed by the Douglas Fir Group. The authors conclude by underscoring the dearth of attention to the ideological and political conditions of language learning in research on LESLLA learners. It is our hope that future LESLLA Symposium Proceedings will address these crucial aspects.

The second genre encompasses ‘original research’, which aims to zoom in on crucial research questions and new research projects, providing a rationale, explaining the methods used, showcasing the findings and, most significantly, how the findings can inspire pedagogical practices and policy development. A total of four studies have been submitted to the LESLLA Symposium Proceedings, showcasing the extensive array of research questions that can be addressed by LESLLA, the diverse methodological approaches employed, and the key findings that have the potential to influence research and practice on a global scale. **Hannelore Hooft’s** very insightful ethnographic study explored how LESLLA learners use multiple learning environments and resources for language and literacy development across their learning trajectories. By closely listening to and analyzing the participants’ lived experiences and practices, Hooft unravelled how learning opportunities can occur both within and outside the traditional educational settings, how learners value these learning opportunities, and what strategies they employ to expand their literacy and language skills. She makes a strong case for why and how practitioners can embrace the lived experiences and practices of their learners to initiate and draw attention to the various learning opportunities. **Abdulelah Alsulami’s** study sheds light on the significance of organic grammar in the context of second language acquisition, with a particular emphasis on the overgeneralization of functional morphemes. Organic grammar posits that learning the grammatical properties of a language entails the acquisition of its functional projections with the mental representation of the syntactic structure developing incrementally.

Utilizing data from "Leslla learners with an Arabic background", Alsulami identifies distinctive features in the organic grammar of learners across varying stages of proficiency. A comprehensive understanding of organic grammar and its stages in learners has the potential to facilitate the development of more targeted learning programs. In their investigation, **Maj-Lis Lindholm, Signild Risenfors and Kerstin von Brömssen** examined the relevance of fiction reading for second language acquisition. In their qualitative study, they employed a range of different theoretical frameworks, including translanguaging-based pedagogy, learning through transformative fiction reading, literature and language-integrated didactics and literacy engagement to analyze Swedish language learners' experiences and the potential impact of fiction reading on their language development. Their study provides valuable insights into the potential and particularities of aspects to be considered when using a bilingual fiction reading approach. **Katia Raspollini's** contribution centers on a fourth focus of LESLLA research, namely the study of tests, their validity, and the specificities of testing for learners with emergent literacy from a linguistic-cognitive perspective. A questionnaire was administered to collect the opinions of the participating teachers on the various evaluation tools available. The results of this study indicate the criticisms and needs expressed by the participants in relation to the use of tests with LESLLA learners, showing distinctive characteristics.

The third format, entitled 'perspective from the field,' underscores the extensive experience and expertise of practitioners and/or researchers, offering insights into LESLLA classroom issues, proposed solutions and reflections on teaching practices. Three papers contributed to the dissemination of knowledge in this sense. In the first paper, **Andrea DeCapua, Marco Tiulzi and Ina-Maria Maahs** started by pointing out three main challenges that LESLLA learners may face when using learning materials that are not always adapted to their needs and features, potentially impeding their language learning progress. Building upon these findings, the researchers collaborated with language teachers to design a checklist to assist educators in evaluating the materials they utilize in their classrooms and enhancing awareness of their learners' challenges. In the subsequent paper, **Eva Malessa and Martha Young-Scholten** focus on teacher training through the EU-Speak online modules. Specifically, they analyzed the feedback and comments from practitioner participants on the discussion forum included in the modules, which provides an online space for interaction and co-reflection. Their analysis concluded that these shared spaces are relevant to the professional development of LESLLA teachers. The third 'perspective from the field' was offered by **Anne-Marie Morand and Alexis Feldmeier Garcia**, who demonstrated the importance of comparing vowel systems (in their case between German and Syrian-Arabic) to support language learners who have faced difficulties in mastering a vowel system different from their L1 system.

However, within these proposed formats, the actual discussions among the participants during the symposium and the atmosphere that pervaded the event were rarely captured in the symposium proceedings. Consequently, we felt it was imperative to allocate a segment of the

proceedings to documenting the convivial atmosphere that prevailed, an atmosphere that fostered substantial creativity and the translation of ideas into tangible forms, including educational projects (e.g. the EU Speak initiative) and collaborative research initiatives. In light of these observations, we have decided to introduce a fourth genre within the proceedings: 'Reflections on the Symposium.' This genre will enable the LESLLA community to capture the atmosphere, discussions, and ideas generated during the symposium. In this issue, we published a paper by **Mariek Vanbuel, Christine Czinglar, Bart Deygers and Heide Spruck Wrigley** that corresponds to this new format. In their paper, the authors reflect on the presentations and discussions during the symposium, which focused on the (conditions for) gains of LESLLA learners in L2 literacy courses and how to measure these gains accurately. They highlighted the discrepancy between mainstream SLA research and LESLLA-focused research and suggested strategies for bridging this gap. Additionally, they advocated for the necessity of inclusive research designs and the incorporation of LESLLA learners within the ambit of SLA studies.

Conclusion

This 19th volume of the LESLLA Symposium Proceedings features nine unique contributions, which collectively exemplify the depth and breadth of LESLLA's work. These contributions encompass reviews, original research, practice and reflections on the symposium. Furthermore, the LESLLA community's embrace of new genres signifies its commitment to continuous learning, adaptability to evolving needs and the establishment of novel standards in research, practice, and policy for LESLLA learners, who have historically been underserved. We genuinely believe that this collection of insightful contributions will be of significant benefit to the community, furthering the development of knowledge, theory and practice to help LESLLA learners learn better.

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