Book of abstracts - day 1

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Marilyn L. Abbott, University of Alberta, Canada; Kent K. Lee, University of Alberta, Canada

Shared Metacognition in a LESLLA Teacher Journal Club

We report on a study exploring how the use of a metacognitive tracking tool can help LESLLA teachers collaboratively integrate information from peer-reviewed journal articles with their professional experience to develop practical solutions to real-world educational challenges. Metacognition, often described as thinking about one's own thinking (Flavell, 1979), is a key process that supports continuing professional development (CPD) because it enables teachers to critically examine the reasons behind their pedagogical practices, evaluate the (in)effectiveness of their approaches, and identify solutions that help them adapt and grow professionally. Our research specifically focused on the use of an online collaborative productivity tool that we developed to enhance shared metacognition in a teacher-led journal club. Shared metacognition (SM) is an awareness of one's learning while constructing meaning and understanding in association with both self and others (Garrison, 2022); therefore, SM has the potential to foster the collaborative co-construction of innovative, evidence-informed solutions to professional challenges and is integral to the collaborative learning process in journal clubs. In the field of language teaching, the reading and discussion of peer-reviewed articles in journal clubs have been found to foster collaborative learning by drawing on the group's collective knowledge, skills, and experiences to address members' CPD needs and goals (Abbott & Lee, 2022; Lee & Abbott, 2021). To our knowledge, the ways in which SM can be supported in a teacher-led LESLLA journal club remain to be explored.

To investigate how members of a teacher-led LESLLA journal club develop and share metacognition over time, and how a metacognitive tracking tool supports the collaborative co-construction of innovative, evidence-informed solutions to professional challenges, we asked the members to record their monthly group discussions and use the tool to plan, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of innovative ideas gleaned from the journal articles and their journal club dialogue. Thirteen LESLLA instructors participated in 18 cycles of article reading, discussion, and tool use. To analyze the discussion and tracking tool data, we conducted a qualitative inquiry thread analysis (Zhang et al., 2007). An inquiry thread is a series of comments that share a distinct line of inquiry and map onto a particular concept or practical problem. Inquiry threads were identified by linking each entry in the tracking tool to all instances in the discussion transcripts and the journal articles. Then the threads were used as the units of analysis in a qualitative content analysis (Williamson et al., 2018) to examine how the LESLLA teachers used SM (i.e., planning, monitoring, and evaluating) to adapt the information from the articles and their group discussions to address their shared CPD needs. Results suggest that SM drives collaborative learning and knowledge development and can be enhanced by the tracking of content understanding and collaborative reflection to resolve practice-related issues such as how to promote self-regulation, fairness in assessment, and plurilingualism in the LESLLA classroom. Our findings have the potential to inform effective teacher CPD initiatives. We conclude with suggestions for future research on SM and the use of a shared metacognitive tracking tool.

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Lotta Aunio, Helsingin Yliopisto.

Language learning without literacy?

In the Western world, literacy is often regarded as a prerequisite for language learning. This is reflected, for example, in efforts to teach illiterate migrants to read in order to facilitate their language learning in a new environment. In addition, language teaching frequently assumes that spoken language corresponds closely to written language, resulting in classroom instruction that presents spoken language merely as an oral version of the written form (Dufva, Aro, Suni & Salo, 2011). However, in many contexts around the world, learners' needs center primarily on oral communication skills, and having to overcome the challenges of literacy and written language before being able to communicate can unnecessarily prolong the language learning process. At the university level, our main challenge in teaching nonEuropean languages has been students' limited opportunities to hear and speak these languages outside the classroom. As a result, their oral skills have often lagged behind, despite numerous attempts to both encourage and facilitate oral communication during lessons. Yet research in language learning shows that Willingness to Communicate is also one of the strongest affective predictors of overall success in language learning (MacIntyre, 2007). Since there is considerable evidence –for example from various regions in Africa – that both adults and children acquire new languages orally, and given that children in Western societies also learn their first languages through oral communication before entering school, a new approach to beginnerlevel language instruction has been developed at the University of Helsinki. This approach is based on the "strong form" of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): using the language in order to acquire it (Littlewood, 1981; Thornbury, 2016). Although CLT has been part of language pedagogy for decades, it is often applied in only its "weak form", where communicativeness is viewed solely as a goal of learning rather than as a means. In such cases, oral practice typically involves repeating set dialogues or participating in conversation tasks built around grammar points, with a strong emphasis on written language. A more radical –yet often overlooked – principle of communicativeness is that language can be learned through use, even without explicit grammar instruction. Accordingly, these courses focused exclusively on oral skills and on methods that support learning through listening and speaking alone. The aims of the courses – to identify ways of supporting the development of communicative language competence and to equip students for lifelong language learning – were achieved beyond expectations. Because the courses concentrated on oral language skills, students' threshold for speaking decreased after just a couple of lessons, and their Willingness to Communicate emerged naturally. When students focused on listening and repeating instead of reading, their pronunciation became much more natural than in more traditional courses, and the pursuit of correct grammatical forms did not impede interaction. Even in short courses, students began to develop an intuitive sense of the target language's grammar through use, reinforcing the communicative notion that literacy or grammatical mastery does not need to precede actual language use.

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Vincent Bédard, Université du Québec à Montréal.

Beyond deficit lens: making visible LESLLA learners' second language use practices

In Quebec, Canada's French-speaking province, a growing dichotomy appears to be emerging between migration policies and governmental discourse. On the one hand, immigration is framed as a key solution to the province's labour shortage (ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, 2025). On the other hand, it is portrayed as problematic or even threatening: for example, Jean Boulet, former Quebec Minister of Immigration, stated that "80% of immigrants […] do not work, do not speak French, or do not adhere to the values of Quebec society." (Plourde, 2024, translated from French). Although Mr. Boulet was not explicitly referring to the LESLLA context, such claims reflect a broader deficit perspective that persists not only in public discourse but also in LESLLA research and practice. This viewpoint frames learners in terms of what they don't know or don't do (Browder et al., 2022), potentially obscuring how they learn and use a second language (L2) (DeCapua and Marshall, 2015). In response, a growing number of scholars, including ourselves, seeks to foreground LESLLA learners' existing capacities, practices, and knowledge. One promising avenue for moving beyond deficit perspective is to better understand learners' everyday lived experiences in order to design instruction grounded in their realities (e.g., Kidwell, 2022; Piccinin and Dal Maso, 2021). Guided by this objective, we conducted a descriptive ethnographic case study with one LESLLA learner (N = 1) to document the diverse (and sometimes invisible) ways this individual engages with French as a L2 in his everyday life outside the classroom. To this end, we developed the concept of second language use practices that we drew from the New Literacy Studies' literacy practices (see, e.g., Street, 2003) by adapting it to explore L2 use (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2019) rather than literacy itself. The aim of our presentation is therefore twofold: first, outline our new concept of second language use practices; and second, present the results derived from it. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and observations. Findings indicate that, contrary to Mr. Boulet's assumptions, the participant use French as a L2 in a wide range of life domains including employment, health, personal life, social and school. Pedagogical implications will be discussed to envision ways of adapting and enriching L2 instruction in closer alignment with LESLLA learners' everyday realities in this L2.

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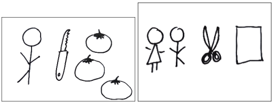
Marie Fontaine, Assist Community Services Centre, Edmonton, Alberta

Finding Meaning Through Drawing: Art-Based Task Assessment for Literacy and Plurilingual Learners

This presentation explores how drawing can be used as a practical, art-based assessment tool to support comprehension in literacy and new language learning contexts. Inspired by the global rise of emojis and visual icons, I ask learners to use drawing to show what they understand. Drawing reduces the pressure of language production, supports vocabulary and concept development, strengthens memory, and gives students a unique pathway to express meaning. By engaging visual, motor, and language systems together, drawing provides a powerful way for learners to demonstrate comprehension.

Over a two-year period , I explored drawing as an assessment method. With pencils in hand, I witnessed, as both an artist and educator, the enormous potential art has to reduce the stress and cognitive load of literacy learners. Expressing themselves by showing understanding beyond words was revelatory to me. With the rise of digital technologies, and the shift to online classes after COVID, this approach became especially relevant, as literacy learners increasingly encounter meaning through images and icons. Some students found drawing intimidating at first, but they quickly gained confidence, supported each other, and learned to enjoy the process. Their early drawings sometimes had arrows pointing the wrong way or were too small to interpret. There was also a lot of laughter. Drawing strengthens decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, visual reasoning, and culturally shaped ways of organizing information. I began with digital literacy icons and expanded to cooking and school modules, where students illustrated simple SVO sentence structures like He cuts three tomatoes., or They cut paper. (see Figures 1 and 2). This experience showed me that creativity is not just a buzzword. Drawing is an invaluable tool for expressing understanding while giving teachers a practical and effective way to assess learning.



Figures 1 and 2. Examples of drawing-based comprehension tasks connecting text to visual symbols. *Source: Author’s illustrations.*

Grounded in multimodality research, this approach aligns with the Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA) community’s emphasis on flexible assessment and recognition of diverse linguistic resources. Studies by Martha Bigelow and Elaine Tarone show that adult learners often rely on visual knowledge, life experience, and non-print literacy practices to create meaning. Heide Spruck Wrigley emphasizes the importance of visual supports and assessment practices that allow multiple ways of demonstrating understanding. Gunther Kress’s multimodality framework highlights that meaning is constructed through images, gestures, and text. Together, this research supports drawing as a tool for integrating visual, motor, and language knowledge simultaneously.

In the task demonstrated in this presentation (see Figure 3), learners read short, functional sentences connected to everyday digital experiences (e.g. She sends two photos.) and respond by drawing key symbols. Teachers provide shared visual supports and explicitly teach the symbols beforehand, allowing learners to focus on meaning rather than spelling or grammar.

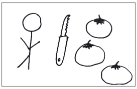


Figure 3 Example of a drawing-based comprehension task connecting text to visual symbols. *Source: Author’s illustration.*

This approach helps learners translate words into drawings, linking text to familiar pictograms and icons they encounter daily—like a stick figure woman for “she” or a paper airplane for “send.” As students read a sentence, their brains match each word to a learned symbol, processing meaning visually, reinforcing memory, and showing comprehension. Bigelow’s research with Somali adolescent and adult learners shows that drawings, diagrams, and other visual forms serve as highly valuable meaning-making tools. As Youki Terada explains: “When we draw, we encode the memory in a very rich way, layering together the visual memory of the image, the kinesthetic memory of our hand drawing the image, and the semantic memory that is invoked when we engage in meaning-making.”

The presentation will demonstrate the task, discuss how it supports plurilingual meaning making, and invite participants to explore questions such as:

- How can teachers assess comprehension when learners cannot yet express understanding through writing or speech?
- Can drawing be considered a legitimate literacy response in assessment contexts?
- What role should visual literacy play in early second language and literacy development?
- How might drawing reveal aspects of comprehension that traditional assessments overlook?
- In what ways do art-based tasks support plurilingual meaning-making?
- How might drawing-based assessments transfer to other real-world literacy tasks?

By framing drawing within established research on multimodality and adult literacy, this presentation offers a classroom-ready approach that validates learners’ plurilingual repertoires and provides meaningful, creative ways to assess comprehension while engaging learners as producers of art and meaning.

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Kathrin Drews, Ina-Maria Maahs, Mercator-Institut für Mehrsprachigkeit und sprachliche Bildung, Universität zu Köln.

From needs analysis to module design: digital teacher training for the literacy of multilingual learners with limited and/or interrupted schooling

Literacy in the context of German as a second language is becoming increasingly important in secondary schools in Germany, particularly in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) – especially in the schooling of multilingual immigrant adolescents and young students with limited and/or interrupted formal education. This particularly affects vocational schools (Maurice & Will 2021) and second-chance education (cf. Kinner 2018). However, as the topic of literacy has so far been dealt with primarily in the context of primary education and special education in teacher training, various teacher training courses on the subject are currently being developed. The 'XXX' project in XX is one such example. The project is designing digital professional development modules for teachers that can be completed independently, regardless of time and location. The potential of digital technology is to be used to meet the needs of the target group, which has very limited time resources, and to enable flexible acquisition of practice-oriented content (cf. SWK 2022). The programme is also to be available free of charge to all interested parties, providing a low-threshold introduction to the topic and helpful tips for further programmes and materials. In order to tailor the content of such a self-learning programme to the specific needs of teachers in instructional practice, an online survey was conducted in advance with teachers from all types of schools in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia who teach learners with literacy needs in German as a second language in some form. This was a random sample of interested teachers (n depending on the question = 192 to 332) who were willing to participate. The online questionnaire covered six different topics: (i) Sociodemographic data, (ii) Current teaching activities, (iii) Teaching experience in the field of German as a second language, (iv) Language diagnostic procedures in practice, (v) Lesson planning in the context of Latin alphabet literacy, (vi) Professionalisation for literacy education in the context of German as a second language. All data was collected anonymously. Based on the results of the study and building on existing theory and the current state of research, six different topics were identified, which are currently being implemented in the project as modules with various digital self-learning units. One module is dedicated to the literacy of older students with limited or/and interrupted formal education (SLIFE). It is aimed in particular at teachers in secondary (vocational) schools and adult education (second chance education; cf. Bellenberg, im Brahm, Demski, Koch & Weegen 2019) who want to learn more about the specific needs, potential and support options of the target group. In addition, the digital professional development programme includes a theoretical introduction to literacy in the context of German as a second language, as well as modules on language diagnostics, methodology and didactics. Multilingualism and digital potential in the context of second language literacy are also taken into account. The presentation will briefly introduce the project and its objectives, before addressing specific findings from the needs assessment that are particularly relevant to the target group of multilingual adolescents and young adults with limited and/or interrupted education. The module design will then be presented with a focus on the module for students with limited and/or interrupted education. Theoretical considerations of didactic planning will be explained and insights into the concrete implementation of media didactics will be provided. Finally, the potential and limitations of corresponding professionalisation offers for this target group will be discussed, which allow for a great deal of flexibility but little interaction.

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Matilde Grünhage-Monetti, Silva Miglio, Language for Work, European Centre of Modern Languages, Council of Europe; Olessia Götzinger, Bildungszentrum Oberjosbach.

Empowering L2 practitioners and labor market actors to support work-related language and literacy development by adult migrants

The issue of linguistic capital for sustainable employability and equitable economic inclusion is of growing importance in the context of migration in Europe. Communication is a key employability skill in today's work world. For adult migrants this means competence in the language(s) of the host country (L2). For many, this implies learning a new language. But the primary goal of the majority is finding work and not learning a language. Many find occupations requiring limited L2 skills and remain then stuck in the low-skilled-, low-paid-job trap with negative consequences for them, their families, the host country's economy and society. A way out of this trap is supporting L2 development at work. There is evidence that L2 offers tailored to the requirements of the workplace and the company as well as to the language and learning needs of the learners are effective both for employees and employers. However, migrants need more than functional L2 skills to stand up against racism and exert democratic rights like participation and co-determination for sustainable work and active citizenship (not only) in the vital context of work. Such L2 offers put high and often new demands on providers and teachers. These must cooperate with new partners such as labor market actors. They also need competences such as carrying out demand and need analysis of the language requirements and needs of a specific group of learners in a specific company or branch. They have to develop then customized trainings accordingly. This contribution presents MITSPRACHE (Language for Co-decision) consisting of a training scheme for L2 providers and teachers as well as awareness raising events for employers, trade unions and workers' representatives. It aims to provide pedagogical staff with strategic and didactic tools and to stimulate critical reflection on effective cooperation with labour market actors.

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Melissa Hauber-Özer, Kelly Leavitt University of Missouri, Columbia.

Digital storytelling as critical multiliteracies pedagogy

Rapidly shifting policies and increased polarization around immigration in many historic refugee (re)settlement contexts underscore the need for classroom practices that foster inclusion and resilience, enabling LESLLA learners to navigate complex sociopolitical landscapes in a new language. This presentation, resulting from an ongoing university-community partnership between a faculty member with a background in adult literacy and ESL and a non-profit organization providing post-resettlement services in the midwestern United States, examines how digital storytelling pedagogy can support LESLLA learners' language and literacy development. The partnership employs community-based participatory research, which is rooted in Freire's (1972) critical pedagogy and goes beyond documenting a problem to work toward a solution in partnership with those most impacted (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). To address the priorities of the local refugee community, the team established a community-based adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in 2023 which incorporates participatory, arts-infused, and storytelling pedagogies centering learners' lives as curriculum (Bryers et al., 2014). In 2025, the team implemented a digital storytelling workshop designed to foster multiple forms of literacy (Cacicio et al., 2023; New London Group, 1996) through a scaffolded process of knowledge creation. Nine adult learner participants began with a 4-week photovoice workshop (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) in which they paired a single still image with descriptive text. A six-week digital storytelling workshop followed, adding complexity through a series of images depicting a narrative with accompanying text and audio narration (Lambert & Hessler, 2020; Linville & Vinogradova, 2024). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of facilitator field notes, instructional materials, and participant-created media revealed that digital storytelling pedagogy enabled learners to develop their print and digital literacies, critical consciousness, and self-efficacy. These findings, which include an example of a LESLLA learner's completed digital story, demonstrate how participatory and arts-based pedagogies can strengthen refugee adults' agency, engagement, and wellbeing amidst anti-immigrant policy and rhetoric.

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Brian Hibbs, Dalton State College.

Advancing pre-service ESOL teachers' beliefs concerning social justice through translanguaging

Translanguaging encompasses "a wide variety of instructional approaches that encourage students to fluidly utilize their full collection of linguistic resources in ways that reflect how [they] naturally use language" (Cole, 2019, p. 244). Scholars have more recently dedicated increasing attention to the exploration of the implications of translanguaging for the purposes of inclusion and social justice (Veliz, 2021). Hurst & Mona (2017) affirm that "a socially just approach involves critical questioning and resistance, analysis of systems of oppression and positioning, and encouraging social action and practising democracy" (p. 132). Translanguaging thus provides opportunities for multilingual learners to access educational opportunities in order to ultimately create a more equitable and just society. In contrast to the traditional perspective that emotions are largely internal and personal in nature, scholars have increasingly contended that emotions are also connected to larger discourse and ideologies (De Costa et al., 2018; Dovchin et al., 2025). One may therefore contend that "emotions are intertwined with teachers' belief systems… that in turn guide their teaching action" (Sah, 2023, pp. 608-609). Consequently, educators' affective states can often become "entangled" (Barad, 2007) with institutional and societal philosophies that may conflict with their own feelings and convictions. This is particularly the case in English language teaching (ELT), which still largely subscribes to a monolingual/monoglossic ideology to this day (Donley, 2023). The purpose of this study was thus to explore the relationships between these concepts by supporting pre-service ESOL teachers to adopt an inclusive and socially-just stance to their instruction via tranlanguaging by embracing the cultural and linguistic assets of this student population. A multimodule unit concerning the theory and practice of translanguaging was integrated into a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) methodology course offered at a postsecondary institution located in the southeastern United States. The unit consisted of a series of class activities, readings, and discussions related to the theory and practice of translanguaging for the purposes of not only acquainting these future educators with the fundamental tenets of the approach but also familiarizing them with a variety of strategies and techniques for capitalizing on these students' linguistic backgrounds in their instruction. Twenty-three elementary education teacher candidates enrolled in a Methods of Teaching ESOL in the spring semester of 2026 agreed to participate and were consented to participate in the study. Data for the study were collected via a pre- and post-course questionnaire which included statements about their beliefs on bilingualism (Garrity et al., 2016); participants' responses on the questionnaires were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics. A preliminary analysis of findings suggest that the unit contributed substantially to their understandings of translanguaging along with their awareness of the importance of creating an inclusive classroom environment. More specifically, results from the study demonstrate that the pre-service teachers were substantially more inclined to not only view these students' multilingualism as an asset/strength but also to adopt a heteroglossic stance towards these learners' culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and view monolingualism as a form of linguistic discrimination.

Erika Husby, University of Massachusetts Boston and the Rohingya Culture Center.

U.S. citizenship: the gap between policy and lived reality

My research examines the U.S. naturalization test, particularly the process that immigrants especially from a background of low formal education with low literacy and language levels go through as they prepare for naturalization. This research builds upon existing scholarship on citizenship that has focused on analysis of the U.S. naturalization test, study materials, naturalization ceremonies, and comparisons of policy between various Western nations. What this study contributes is an update to the discussion of USCIS policies as well as a documentation of the experiences of citizenship teachers and students navigating the test preparation process. Following guidance from Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2019) on teacher inquiry, this study examines the context of my own practice to explore how de facto and de jure policy compares with the lived realities of my students and colleagues. This project offers a grounded ethnographic study of the perceptions of and discourse around naturalization. I examine United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) published materials including the test materials, study materials, and public communications. From the fall of 2024 to the fall of 2025, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 citizenship teachers, tutors, and relevant experts, and observed 5 citizenship classes. I also kept a reflective journal on my own experiences teaching citizenship class. Major takeaways from my research include:

- The role of testing in legitimizing state authority over academic knowledge
- The challenge of teaching to the test while building a critical awareness of a high-stakes test itself and the socio-political context of the test
- The importance of ongoing teacher education that allows teachers to share their knowledge and materials with each other

This paper presentation will summarize the research I conducted and discuss its relevance to international practice and policy concerned with LESLLA learners.

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Victoria Lyasota, ASSIST Community Services.

Integrating multicultural art into a literacy classroom

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are part of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada program curriculum guidelines. I would like to share how I have integrated art projects into my literacy classroom during cultural celebrations, namely dying Ukrainian Easter eggs (pysanky) and painting with acrylic paints on canvas boards for Ramadan. Literacy instruction relies heavily on hands-on activities to support language learning. Such projects allow students to demonstrate their listening and reading skills when following instructions, which is part of the competency-based Canadian Language Benchmarks guiding principles. The language focus of these activities can be adapted for learners of varying levels by adjusting instruction complexity, however all participants can build self-confidence by successfully completing an art project. In the process, students gain an opportunity to share and discuss their own cultural practices in English, express themselves through art, and learn about other cultures in Canada.

Friederike Lüpke, Helsingin Yliopisto.

Lead language writing as an adaptive infrastructure for multilingual literacy development

Lead language writing (Lüpke 2018) is a globally common but marginalised type of grassroots writing (Blommaert 2006). The term designates the use of the sound-grapheme associations of focal languages of literacy for writing entire repertoires. This type of writing occurs in multilingual contexts where one language-based literacy and its orthographic conventions dominate the education system. Multilingual writers use these writing conventions to write parts of their repertoires in which they do not receive formal literacy education, not through reproducing linguistic standards but transcribing oral language forms in their full variability. Lead language writing is very common in postcolonial contexts where languages of colonial provenance continue to be used in formal education. For instance, West African writers may use French orthography as a model for the writing of Wolof and other national languages in Senegal or Bambara in Mali (Lüpke 2020, 2021). So-called Ajami writing, the writing of languages other than Arabic in the Arabic script, and using the spelling conventions of Arabic, is also a form of lead language writing that emerged in the context of Qur'anic instruction and has a long tradition and continuing uses ((Lüpke 2004; Lüpke and Bao-Diop 2014). Lead language writing is a robust language-independent infrastructure that minimises learning efforts in environments characterised by high individual and societal multilingualism and variation, since only one system of sound-grapheme correspondences needs to be learned and can be transferred without limits and without recurrence to on-existing standard languages, and conventions emerge through shared practice rather than being enforced. This talk explores the utility of lead language writing in literacy learning for adults in the LILIEMA programme (Weidl et al. 2022; Lüpke et al. 2021) and its potential for training future teachers of national languages in multilingual environments. LILIEMA is not based on the conventions of French, the official language of Senegal, where it was created, but the spelling conventions for national languages of Senegal. These are largely based on the orthography for Wolof, the country's lingua franca, and thus constitute a type of lead language writing themselves, since they share not only the bulk of graphemes, but also their sound values, as is also the case for many newly developed orthographies of West Africa (Pasch 2008). In this talk, I discuss ongoing applied linguistic research to extend the LILIEMA method for the training of future teachers and teacher trainers in national languages teaching and for literacy development in mother-tongue based multilingual education in the Gambia. This West African country is moving away from an English-only education system and is implementing national languages in primary education. However, neither teachers nor teacher trainers or linguists have received training or formal education in national languages themselves, and the training offered so far takes place exclusively in English, due to the hegemony of English in formal education and the involvement of international experts without knowledge of national languages. I report on a pilot based on LILIEMA teaching of and in national languages to teacher trainers as concrete transformative practice.

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Catherine Maynard, Véronique Fortier, Valérie Amireault, Université du Québec à Montréal; Suzie Beaulieu, Université Laval.

LESLLA teachers' relationship to reading and writing in adult French L2 literacy classrooms

Instructional practices used to support the literacy development of LESLLA learners across educational contexts often have a limited scope (Reder, 2015). These practices tend to focus on the code, particularly on the study of grapheme–phoneme correspondences and the development of technical skills (Ollerhead, 2012), a pattern also observed in the French-speaking Canadian province of Québec (Maynard et al., 2024). Yet, a more balanced approach to literacy instruction is recommended (Vinogradov, 2013), one that combines code-focused activities with meaning-based practices, such as reading for pleasure, writing for authentic purposes, and engaging with texts connected to learners' lived experiences. To understand the reasons underlying teachers' preference for code-oriented practices, we drew on the construct of relationship to reading and writing, developed in French first-language education (Barré-de Miniac, 2015; Chartrand & Blaser, 2008) and more recently adopted in additional-language pedagogy (Delebarre, 2022). This construct probes teachers' conceptions of written language and its learning, the value they assign to it, their affective relationship to reading and writing, as well as the print literacy practices they privilege, thus offering a lens through which to explain pedagogical choices. Our presentation therefore addresses the following question: What relationship to reading and writing do LESLLA teachers in Québec hold? To answer this question, we collected data from six LESLLA teachers working in two adult education centres in Québec. We conducted individual interviews with each participant to document their relationship to reading and writing using an adapted version of the protocol developed by Maynard and Armand (2016). Through thematic analysis, we linked participants' conceptions with their reported practices. The analysis revealed two teacher profiles in which beliefs and instructional practices were aligned: one associated with a restrictive relationship to reading and writing and the other with an emancipatory relationship to reading and writing.

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Anna Mendoza, Elif Varlik, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Eda Yildirimer, The University of Arizona.

Akogare (English learning as leisure and desire) in adult community English classes in the US Midwest

This paper presentation introduces the construct of akogare (Kubota, 2011) to examine the English learning of women from Afghanistan taught by MA TESOL practicum students and volunteers in a small Midwestern US city. The women's oral English proficiency ranged from A1 to A2, and phonemic awareness such as blending letters and recognizing sight words was still emergent for most of the class. In Japan, akogare illustrated how learners, particularly women, took conversational EFL classes for leisure and to enjoy socializing with White, often male, native speaker teachers, who represented a romantic fantasy removed from daily life. In this study that draws on teacher reflections and analyzes audio-recorded, transcribed classroom talk, we ask the research question: "How can akogare also be demonstrated to exist in a second language setting where access to target language speakers, career development, and spatial mobility are restricted by gendered cultural norms (Pavlenko & Piller, 2001)?" The study found that 1) teachers as objects of desire are not necessarily stereotypical "White native speakers" but can have any intersectional identity representing learners' desires (Motha & Lin, 2014), for example, "educated, English-fluent female friends", and that 2) good attendance, teacher-student rapport, and affective engagement do not necessarily lead to self-study or target language use outside of class. When language learning is defined by leisure and desire, we ask how learners and teachers can regain criticality (Crookes, 2021; Morgan, 2002) by re-centering both language acquisition (teaching phonics according to a systematic, comprehensive curriculum and guiding learners to amass a critical amount of vocabulary) and the Freirean problem-posing necessary to address the linguistic and structural barriers that hinder learners' functional independence, social integration, and economic mobility.

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Katharina Obens, Ioanna Liakou, David Zimmermann, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

A participatory design-based research approach to the professionalisation of inclusive language education for adult refugees with learning difficulties

Linguistic participation is a key prerequisite for social inclusion in contemporary multilingual societies. Adult refugees, however, frequently experience persistent learning difficulties that cannot be explained solely by health conditions or formally diagnosed disabilities. Rather, these difficulties arise from an interplay of disrupted educational trajectories, forced migration experiences, trauma-related stress, and limited access to formal education. Reported estimates of disability prevalence among refugees reach up to 23% (e.g., Tofani et al., 2025), while a meta-analysis identifies PTSD prevalence rates of 29–37% (Henkelmann et al., 2020). Empirical research demonstrates a relationship between trauma-related experiences and impeded second language acquisition (Baier-Klenkert, 2021; Wilson, 2023), underscoring the relevance of educational institutions as potential sites of either mitigation or reinforcement of traumatization (Zimmermann, 2016). Czinglar et al. (2025) argue that Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) based curricula and high-stakes testing regimes insufficiently reflect LESLLA learners' trajectories and advocate for literacy-sensitive, socially situated approaches grounded in frameworks such as LASLLIAM. Against this background, the present Design-Based Research (DBR) study examines how inclusive and trauma-informed adult second language education for refugees with learning difficulties can be professionalised through participatory processes. The guiding research question is: How, and with what outcomes, can professionalisation concepts for adult refugees with learning difficulties be co-designed within a DBR process using the LASLLIAM framework? The study is theoretically grounded in the concept of sequential traumatization, which understands trauma as a cumulative process unfolding before, during, and after forced migration and shaped by institutional environments (Keilson, 2005). It builds on research on adult non-literacy and LESLLA-oriented pedagogies, including the LASLLIAM framework, conceptualising literacy as a social, affective, and relational practice, with a focus on literacy-sensitive diagnostics, learner agency, and educational participation (Schramm, 2021; Dos Santos, 2024; Feldmeier García, 2021; Feick, 2018; Strube, 2013). Methodologically, the study follows a participatory DBR approach conducted in cooperation with two adult education institutions offering inclusive language courses. Teachers, learners and a research advisory board including experts with lived experience are involved as co-researchers throughout the research process. Iterative design cycles comprise problem analysis, co-design, implementation, evaluation, and redesign, focusing on (1) barrier-reduced, literacy-sensitive diagnostics, (2) individualised instructional approaches, and (3) inclusive classroom practices responsive to trauma and disability. A mixed-methods design is embedded within this DBR framework. Quantitative data derive from analyses of learning progression and course participation of approximately 145 adult learners across three cohorts (2025–2027). The qualitative component includes classroom observations and audiographic analyses, as well as interviews and photovoice workshops with learners and educators. Psychoanalytically informed reflection is used to analyse professional uncertainty and affective processes within co-design and classroom contexts. Preliminary findings suggest that the LASLLIAM reference framework has proven helpful for the development of formative language assessment procedures and for estimating learner progression in inclusive adult second language education, and that it is well accepted by teachers. At the same time, the findings point to the need for educational approaches that address psychosocial vulnerability beyond narrowly defined disability categories. This contribution aims to advance debates on inclusion and trauma-informed professionalisation in adult language education.

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Manuela Pinto, Darin Nshiwi, Ali Işik, Birgen Işik, Universiteit Utrecht

A Dream too far: dutch learning needs of asylum seekers and current dutch learning policy and practices at the asylum seeker center

The study investigates the needs, expectations, and desires of asylum seekers residing in asylum seeker centers in the Netherlands regarding learning Dutch. It also aims to highlight the Dutch learning opportunities available to asylum seekers and to what extent these opportunities meet their needs. To answer the research questions, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and ethnographic research. The data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2021). This involved coding and categorizing the data elicited from participants. Data were obtained from 10 Turkish speakers and 10 Arabic speakers. The findings suggest that both groups of learners are highly motivated to learn Dutch in order to integrate into Dutch society and culture and to meet their everyday communicative needs. However, the opportunities offered to them to learn the language are limited, while the teaching methods and materials are often of poor quality and lack a coherent pedagogical design. More importantly, however, the conversations with participants allowed us to move beyond merely confirming the insufficient practical conditions for learning Dutch as a second language. They revealed that language deprivation within the asylum system affects people's ability to sustain or reconstruct a coherent social identity. Our participants are not simply "motivated learners"; they are individuals whose social identities and life trajectories have been profoundly disrupted and who perceive Dutch as a gateway to recognition, participation, autonomy, and self-esteem. They seek to "invest" in the acquisition of Dutch as an L2 because Dutch represents access to society, dignity, parenthood, employment, and self-esteem (Norton, 2016, 2019). Yet, the asylum system structurally obstructs this investment. The paper therefore examines the effects of limited language access, temporal suspension, and social invisibility on processes of identity reconstruction among asylum seekers residing in asylum seeker centers in the Netherlands.

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Bart Siekman, Sybren Spit, Josje Verhagen, Sible Andringa, Universiteit van Amsterdam.

The Name Game: measuring metalinguistic awareness in LESLLA learners

This study investigates metalinguistic awareness (MLA) in LESLLA (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults) learners. LESLLA learners are adult L2 learners who are emergent readers in their L1 and/or in their L2. Previous research LESLLA learners has shown that emergent literacy levels coincide with low levels of MLA (Kolinsky & Morais, 2018; Kurvers, 2002; Kurvers et al., 2006). MLA refers to the ability to reflect on the formal properties of language, such as phonemes, words and grammatical structures (Gombert, 1992; Homer, 2009). However, Siekman et al (2025) showed that participants' literacy skills have been measured predominantly in the L1 and that MLA tasks have primarily focused on phonological and lexical awareness. In addition, many designs make use of question answer formats that rely heavily on metalinguistic terminology such as word, suffix, or sentence. Such formats can be disadvantageous for participants who have less experience with testing and the use of metalinguistic terminology (Hamnes Carlsen, 2017). This study makes use of a research design that addresses these methodological shortcomings by measuring both L1 and L2 literacy skills and using a concrete naming task, the Name Game, for measuring MLA. The rationale behind the name game is to apply the concept of metatalk, a form of thinking out aloud. The major advantage of metatalk is that instructions need not be technical and are suitable for prompting understanding of language forms (Gonzalves, 2021; Swain, 2006). The central research question of this study therefore is: What is the relation between LESLLA learners' L1 literacy skills, L2 literacy skills, and metalinguistic awareness prompted in a metatalk conversation? The name game measures the ability to reflect on phonological word length and morphological word forms. Participants see physical pairs of novel objects and hear two novel labels. Subsequently, they are asked to map the labels to the objects. The novel objects are based on the Novel Object and Unusual Names Database (Horst & Hout, 2016). In a first series of items, the two objects are identical apart from their size (see example below in figure 1). The labels consist of a long and short word form (e.g. laas and laasaapaa). In a second series, participants see two sets of similar objects differing only in number (one object versus multiple objects). The novel words involve labels such as ziemie and ziemiepoe. In each series, the final three items are used to ask questions. For instance, when laas is mapped to the large object, the experimenter asks: "how do you know that laas goes to this one?" This question does not rely on metalinguistic terminology and invites participants to reflect on their choice. We will present the data of 77 LESLLA participants that are currently being analyzed. We will also reflect on the use of a novel, artificial language for investigating metalinguistic awareness in LESLLA participants.

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Sybren Spit, Sible Andringa, Judith Rispens, Judith Rispens, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Word learning in emergent readers: to what extent does written input help?

Being literate likely has consequences for learning a second language, but surprisingly little research has been devoted to how emergent literacy affects second language acquisition processes. Using a word learning experiment, we aimed to tease apart two possible ways through which literacy could impact second language acquisition: through literacy-induced restructuring, and through using written input in addition to spoken input (see, for a comparable distinction, for example, Demoulin & Kolinsky, 2016). 166 (L1 Arabic and L2 Dutch) participants of varying literacy levels (emergent readers and more experienced readers) had to acquire eight words. These words were presented as names of people and pet animals, of which some only varied in one phoneme (a phonological contrast). Half of the participants received only auditory input to learn these names, the other half also received written input. Bayesian mixed effects models indicate that experienced readers are better able to acquire words and the phonological contrast than emergent readers, pointing towards a benefit from literacy-induced restructured linguistic representations. We also obtained anecdotal evidence that, although experienced readers seemingly benefit more from written input than emergent readers, the latter group still could use written input to a small extent. Possibly, written input might be beneficial, even though it cannot be properly decoded yet - at the very least it does not harm providing such input. Apart from these results, we also learned some valuable lessons in how experimental procedures can be adapted to be more inclusive, even though this was not the main study objective. We did this in three ways: 1) our experimenters joined as co-teacher, which allowed them to build a trust relationship with participants and made them at ease to participate in this study; 2) we gave the L1 of the participants a central role in the experimental procedure, for example by providing instructions and consent procedures in Arabic; 3) our word learning experiment was set up in such a way that it was a realistic scenario to learn new 'words'. In this presentation, I will discuss our experimental study, which aimed to get a first grip of the effect of learning to read and write on acquiring a novel language, and its results, but I will also touch upon the practical lessons that we learned while doing so (see, Spit et al., 2025 for the full study).

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Martha Young-Scholten, Newcastle University and University of Washington.

Ineke van de Craats and Heide Wrigley and the studies that created LESLLA

In 2025 we bid farewell to two women without whom LESLLA likely wouldn't exist: Ineke van de Craats in the Netherlands and Heide Spruck Wrigley in the USA. Two years before the very first LESLLA symposium in 2005, Larry Condelli along with Heide and several others had published the results of a longitudinal study of 496 students in the USA from Mexico, Central and South American countries, South East Asian countries and East and West African countries. They looked at both internal (literacy; oral language; age; native language) and external variables (instruction; program) pertaining to the 15 to 82 year-old learners of English in the study. A key finding was that adults with limited or no home language literacy progress the slowest. In complementary studies by Ineke van de Craats' and main collaborators Jeanne Kurvers and Roeland van Hout worked with large numbers of study participants mostly from Morocco and Turkey to include external variables but to focus more on internal factors such as metalinguistic awareness. These studies, too, paint similarly slow progress for LESLLA learners. The research they were involved in feeds into LESLLA's current Vision Statement, namely "a world where LESLLA learners access high-quality, research-based, second language and literacy education that empowers them to pursue their own life goals." The findings from these studies, including responses to audience members at LESLLA symposia where they were presented, have over the last 20+ years given rise to the need to consider at a microscopic level what internal factors involve, and to step back to take a wider perspective for the role played by a range of external factors some of which practitioners can control. As I provide an overview of the studies in which Heide and Ineke were involved, I will ask the audience to make a list of two or three pedagogical implications/applications emerging from these studies. I'll then share a list of research questions and issues which the findings from these studies have allowed us to ask and to pursue over the last 20+ years. I will wrap up by asking the audience what implications/applications they have listed, that is how Ineke and Heide have changed what we do in the classroom.

Elif Varlik. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Building Critical Multilingual Awareness through Collaborative Online Study Sessions: A Multiple Case Study of LESLLA Teachers

LESLLA is a specialized field that addresses the complex needs of adult learners who are developing foundational literacy while simultaneously acquiring a second language. Given learners’ limited L1 textual literacy and metalinguistic awareness (van de Craats et al., 2006), LESLLA teachers require sustained professional development (PD) that goes beyond foundational reading instruction. Although existing PD initiatives (Kiramba & Trainin, 2025; Tammelin-Laine et al., 2021) often emphasize phonics and whole-part-whole approaches, they frequently overlook structured opportunities for reflective engagement with critical multilingual awareness. Research suggests that contextualized, collaborative inquiry, particularly in teacher-led study groups, can promote deeper professional learning (Farrelly, 2017; Maynard et al., 2024; Vinogradov & Liden, 2009). Drawing on the tradition of teacher study circles (Egan & Echelberger, 2023; Vinogradov, 2012; Young, 2009), this study conceptualized PD as sustained virtual study sessions.

This qualitative multiple case study (Merriam, 1998) explored how participation in six weeks of synchronous online study sessions influenced the perceptions and preparedness of three in-service veteran LESLLA teachers in North America. Framed by critical multilingual language awareness (García, 2017) and guided by Liu’s (2013) critical reflection framework, the sessions addressed translanguaging, identity texts, trauma-informed pedagogy, pleasure reading, technology integration, and gender issues. Each session combined accessible research readings with structured dialogue and opportunities for participants to connect theoretical concepts to their own classroom contexts. Teachers were encouraged to reflect on their instructional assumptions, share classroom dilemmas, and consider practical adaptations for multilingual adult learners with limited formal education. Data from pre- and post-questionnaires, session discussions, and semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically using an open–focused–selective coding process adapted from Charmaz’s (2014) constructivist grounded theory. Multiple cycles of analysis allowed for the identification of shifts in pedagogical awareness, areas of sustained uncertainty, and the perceived affordances of sustained virtual professional dialogue (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2013).

Findings indicate that the study sessions enhanced teachers’ awareness of multilingual pedagogies and deepened their understanding of the linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical complexities shaping LESLLA classrooms. Participants described becoming more intentional in validating learners’ full linguistic repertoires and more reflective about how English-dominant norms can unintentionally marginalize adult emergent readers. Several teachers reported adapting materials and approaches shared during the sessions, such as incorporating translanguaging, identity texts, and using digital tools to support adult learners. The virtual format fostered a collaborative community of practice that reduced professional isolation and supported dialogue across diverse teaching contexts. Teachers emphasized the value of having dedicated time to discuss classroom dilemmas specific to their teaching context, an opportunity often absent in traditional PD.

While participants demonstrated strong expertise in translanguaging, identity texts, and technology integration, they expressed greater uncertainty regarding including trauma-informed pedagogy, gender-related participation barriers, and the implementation of pleasure reading in low-literacy settings. These findings highlight the importance of reflective, dialogue-based professional development models that move beyond technical literacy instruction and intentionally address critical multilingual awareness within LESLLA practice.

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Eda Yildirimer, The University of Arizona.

MA TESOL student teachers' preparation, challenges, and growth in community-based teaching with Afghan refugee women

TESOL/SLA research has rarely studied learners without textual literacy skills in their L1, known as LESLLA learners (Vinogradov, 2012). Often from refugee backgrounds with limited access to formal education (Flores et al., 2019), these learners face challenges in acquiring L2 literacy due to limited print awareness, unfamiliarity with formal schooling practices, and interrupted educational histories, compounded by a lack of teacher training focused on their needs (Young-Scholten et al., 2015). Although service learning is a solution widely used in TESOL practica to cope with this issue (Ferrari & Chapman, 2014), a gap remains in understanding how it supports teacher development for LESLLA contexts, particularly in preparing teachers to address the linguistic, social, and affective needs of this population. To address this gap, this longitudinal multiple case study investigated the impact of a TESOL practicum course in which MATESOL students engaged in service learning by teaching Afghan refugee women. The three focal participants came from diverse transnational backgrounds, with one participant from Brazil, another from Nigeria, and another from South Korea, allowing the study to consider prior educational and cultural experiences. Guided by the CAELA Network's (2010) Framework for Quality Professional Development, the study situated teacher candidates in an authentic LESLLA context to examine how the course prepared, or in some cases did not fully prepare, MATESOL candidates to teach this unique group of learners, as well as the challenges they encountered in the classroom and how these experiences shaped their teacher identities. Data collection lasted one academic semester and included three semi structured interviews with the course instructor, a pre semester questionnaire, two written reflections, three individual interviews with each MATESOL candidate, and two focus group interviews. The data are currently being analyzed thematically using Saldaña's (2013) two cycle coding method, moving from descriptive coding to pattern coding to identify emerging themes. Preliminary findings indicate that participants experienced tensions related to both the content and context dimensions of professional development. Many reported insufficient preparation regarding LESLLA learner profiles and literacy development for adults without prior schooling, which left them feeling underprepared to design instruction. Structurally, while the team teaching model fostered collaboration and peer support, limitations within the practicum and limited scaffolding contributed to uncertainty, frustration, and burnout. Participants navigated linguistic barriers, cultural differences, and emotionally demanding classroom dynamics, at times feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of teaching a highly vulnerable population. At the same time, they described significant professional growth, increased pedagogical awareness, and a strong sense of emotional reward. Based on the findings, it is evident that teacher development is heavily impacted by context informed pedagogical preparation and teachers' critical awareness of their own identities alongside their learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Such awareness fosters intercultural and linguistic sensitivity and supports more responsive and ethical teaching practices. These insights highlight the need to rethink TESOL practica by strengthening preparation through coursework in adult emergent literacy and trauma informed pedagogy, as better alignment with the realities of LESLLA contexts is essential for fostering teacher growth and equipping educators to effectively serve linguistically and culturally diverse learners.

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