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LESLLA aims to support adults who are learning to read and write for the first time in their lives in a new language. We promote, on a worldwide, multidisciplinary basis, the sharing of research findings, effective pedagogical practices, and information on policy.

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

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

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

1. Heritage languages in bi-multilingual communities

1.1. Bi-multilingualism

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

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

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

1.2. Migrant communities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3. Heritage language maintenance

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

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

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

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

1.4. EU-SPEAK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.1. Structure of the *Heritage Language Hub*

2.1.1. Users

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

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

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

2.1.2. Resources

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

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

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

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

2.1.3. Languages

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Conclusion

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

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

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

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