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# Adult Migrant Language Education in a Diversifying World

Sari Pöyhönen, Mirja Tarnanen & James Simpson

## INTRODUCTION

Global political and economic changes, major demographic and structural transitions, and increasing diversity: these are acknowledged realities of contemporary society. The resultant complexity has several implications for education: as Monica Heller and Marilyn Martin-Jones note in the introduction to their volume *Voices of Authority*, ‘one of the major challenges of our day is the provision of effective, democratic education under conditions of increasing sociolinguistic diversity and change’ (2001: iv). How far this challenge is currently met for adult migrants is the subject of this chapter.

The scale of contemporary migration has created conditions in the world’s urban centres and increasingly in its rural areas of social and linguistic diversity (or superdiversity) not previously experienced (Vertovec 2006; Blommaert & Rampton 2011). Host societies are becoming unpredictable across demographic dimensions, and a challenge for education is to prepare migrants – whose motives for mobility are likewise non-uniform – to engage with these ever-changing societies. Consequently, adult migrant language education (henceforth AMLE) can neither take place nor be understood in isolation from its social, cultural and political contexts. Language education for multilingual people adapting to a new home has of course taken place for many years. However, the increasing numbers on the move in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has impacted on migrant language education as never before, in terms of its needs, resources, methods and supplies (Hornberger 2009).

AMLE is normally understood to involve teaching and learning the dominant language of the new country (Simpson & Whiteside 2015), and is becoming an established feature of adult education worldwide. It is familiarly known in English-dominant countries as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) or ESL (English as a Second Language). AMLE can encompass different types of curricula and syllabi, and institutional arrangements, under an array of funding regimes (state, private and charity). In our understanding, AMLE is not simply synonymous with language pedagogy: the range of our interest also encompasses a concern with adult learning and pedagogical practices which enable (or do not enable) participants to progress along their educational, training and employment trajectories.

This chapter divides the topic of AMLE into three further sections. First, we present an overview of how national policies have responded to the demands and needs of recently arrived, multilingual migrants regarding their education. We examine the directions that language education policies for adult migrants have taken over recent years. After the discussion of its historical and conceptual background, we consider current core topics and new debates that impinge on the field. We critically examine how language education for adult migrants is currently understood in policy and in practice. We explain who the students are, and how they are positioned in policy on immigration and the management of diversity. We then ask what should be taught, what are thought to be appropriate curricula for AMLE, and whether a common view of this is shared by policy-makers and practitioners alike. A central argument in this section is that even as societies have become more diverse, the language policies which impinge upon adult migrants and their education are – with some exceptions – typically monolingual; that is, while multiculturalism might be promoted in policy and practice, the development of multilingualism is a far less prominent concern.

Hence an assertion that we are currently witnessing a multilingual turn (May 2014) may be premature, at least in AMLE.

We illustrate our section on new debates with three examples from a country in the global north, Finland. Finnish-Swedish state bilingualism and a large and fast-growing number of speakers of Russian characterise the linguistic make-up of Finland (Halonen, Saarinen & Ihalainen 2014); only in the past two decades has Finland experienced inward migration – and consequently ethnic and linguistic diversity – on a wider scale from elsewhere. As such it is an interesting place to observe the formation of policy from scratch and to compare it with other migration contexts. Our examples are of AMLE for vocational purposes, associated with the economy and work; language education for very new – often vulnerable – arrivals who are resident in asylum seeker reception centres; and family learning involving the creation of grass-roots curricula.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES**

National policy attention towards AMLE has taken different directions in response to, and sometimes as a reaction against, changing patterns of migration. Migration today differs in range and scale from earlier patterns of movement, at least in part due to processes of globalisation associated with late modernity (Appadurai 1996; Giddens 1999). Motives for migration typically include a wish for a better and more secure future politically, socially or economically: people move for work, to be with their families, or to escape war, civil unrest, poverty, natural catastrophes or fear of persecution. Beyond these broad commonalities the picture globally is of huge variation.

In some countries, the concern is not principally with international immigration, but with emigration to other countries and internal and particularly poverty-induced rural to urban migration. Reasons for migration in developing countries include the jobs that cities can offer, public services that are not available in rural areas, and refuge from climate shocks (Young 2013). The consequences of migration-related population growth are felt keenly across the developing world, as ‘developing-country cities lack the resources and institutions to provide all the new arrivals with access to jobs, housing and basic services’ (Brueckner & Lall 2015: 1399). To this we can add that many countries in parts of the Middle East and Africa are hosts to very large numbers of refugees, who exist in a political limbo. The greater part of our discussion in this section, however, is on the situation in the developed North and West, destinations temporarily or permanently for people who have been on the move, and for whom language policies have developed, sometimes in their favour and quite often not.

Countries around the world hosting new arrivals have experienced differing patterns of migration, and, consequently, idiosyncratic and complex patterns in the development of language policies associated with migration. Migration patterns differ in part because of divergent historical, economic and political histories as well as geographical factors. The particular history of a country might affect migration patterns. Post-colonial Britain in the mid-twentieth century, for example, saw the arrival of migrants from the former colonies – particularly the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean – who had a right to settle in the country in response to the post-war demand for labour (Rosenberg 2007). In terms of geography, the sparsely populated US/Mexico border has long facilitated the movement of people from Latin America into the US (Massey & Espinosa 1997), and has hence affected migration. Canada, with its vast under-populated areas, has historically embraced inward migration (Walker 2008), though often with strings attached. Ideologies associated with race

and ethnicity informed Australia's exclusionary migration policies targeting non-Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (McNamara 2012). Migration from less wealthy countries to neighbouring ones with better economic prospects is also a common thread in Nordic countries. For example in the 1960s and 1970s thousands of Finns from mostly rural areas migrated to Sweden to work in the automobile industry. A defining and dividing characteristic of Swedish society was the existence of working-class first generation Finns with limited proficiency in Swedish and little schooled experience. Their separateness from the host society is an image which remains even today (Lainio 2014).

Varied histories lead to AMLE being understood and supported in very different ways, though typically national language policies will emphasise the importance of teaching and learning the new language for promoting participation in society, and for addressing the communicative needs of new arrivals. Moreover, language policies that are imposed top-down by centralised authorities can also be appropriated, subverted, and interpreted in new ways by practitioners and those on the ground. Indeed ethnographically-informed studies of language policy demonstrate that policies themselves can emerge in local contexts of practice: language policies can be regarded not as formations created at abstract scales but as processes (Ricento & Hornberger 1996) and as locally-situated sociocultural practice (McCarty 2011; Johnson 2013). National policies tend to have a common position, however, on the importance of one or a small number of national languages in maintaining the strength of the nation state.

### **A monolingual imperative**

Given the factors sketched out above, and the dynamic complexity of contemporary migration, it is not surprising that policies concerning language education for new arrivals in

most states are inconsistent, contentious and contradictory, even in countries with long histories of inward migration like the US and the UK. Some historically sending countries such as Ireland and Finland are legislating for language diversity for the first time (Sheridan, 2015; Pöyhönen and Tarnanen 2015), contributing to an overall picture of an uneven response to the diversity associated with migration. This is not to deny, though, that national governments expect that new arrivals should use the dominant language of their new country. Indeed, political and public rhetoric around the globe frequently makes reference to the obligation that migrants have to ‘speak our language’, often in the name of national unity and social cohesion.

The notion that a particular language should be used in the public (and even private) sphere by migrants to a country links to well-established language ideologies, i.e. ‘beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states’ (Kroskrity 2001: 1). Debates about national identity, for example the ideal that the nation state should be as homogeneous as possible, are informed in some quarters by the idea that homogeneity is enhanced through monolingualism. Today multilingualism is frequently presented as a problem and more recently a threat to security and social cohesion (Blommaert et al 2012). This is mirrored in public life more broadly, where incidents of linguistic xenophobia are on the rise. This brand of symbolic violence involves abuse and hostility directed to others who are speaking another language, or speaking with a ‘foreign’ accent (Fortier 2016; Lippi-Green 2012). Moreover, what is most privileged in many areas of activity (including that in educational contexts) is a standard variety of that one language (Snell 2013). Given that language use is indexical of social identity, social class and status become implicated in such debates. This pertains even in multilingual countries; as Heller (1999: 5) puts it: ‘...what is

valued is a multilingualism as a set of parallel monolingualisms, not a hybrid system. What is valued also is a mastery of a standard language, shared across boundaries, and a marker of social status' (see also Piller 2016).

Language distribution does not of course follow national boundaries. Even the notion of languages themselves as stable and bounded entities runs counter to the lived language experience of many. Daily language use in migration contexts inevitably involves individuals drawing upon their multilingual repertoire according to the exigencies of a situation (García and Li Wei 2014). But although multilingualism and translingual practices are the norm on the ground, the ideology of monolingualism is hegemonic in many places: that is, it is accepted as an unquestioned common sense 'given' by the majority of people that one language stands above others as having particular status as the national language of the country. Monolingualist policies appeal to and resonate with everyday understandings of the importance of a standard language as a unifying 'glue' for a nation.

The hegemony of the national language is evident in policy development in migration contexts around the world. Adami (2015) describes the centralising tradition in France, where, since revolutionary times, French has been promoted as a tool for nation-building in the name of republican universalism. Nicholas (2015) explains how in Australia, where an understanding of cultural pluralism has only recently developed, the learning of English has historically been considered part and parcel of the process of assimilation into an Anglo-Australian culture. Spruck Wrigley (2015) outlines AMLE and immigration policy in the US, which, though confused, is underpinned by a largely unquestioning acceptance of English as the *de facto* national language. State-driven discourses of homogeneity in immigration policy are, as we have noted, somewhat paradoxically also prominent in countries which have



official status as bi- or multilingual. In those which are engaged in a process of nation building, for example Singapore (Bokhorst-Heng 1999), and in those which have strong regionalist nationalist movements, for example Quebec (Bouffard 2015) and Catalonia (Branchadell 2015), such discourses have been strongly evident for many years.

In sum, in a contradictory era where the development of globalisation is accompanied by the cultivation of the nation state, it is not surprising that monolingual policies towards AMLE created by national governments have historically dominated and continue to do so.

## **CORE ISSUES AND TOPICS**

We begin this section by examining monolingual *versus* multilingual policies in AMLE before going on to consider how students themselves are positioned in such policies. We then ask what might be appropriate curricula for AMLE, suggesting that there is a place for a language education that enables students to critically examine the circumstances of the social inequalities to which they are frequently subject.

### **Multilingualism and monolingualism in AMLE**

In contexts of practice as well as in policy, attitudes towards multilingualism in adult migrant education, including language education, appear to line up along a continuum. At one end there is monolingualism, with no reference at all to other languages or to linguistic diversity, unless such diversity is interpreted as a problem. Further along the continuum, there are other contexts where multilingualism is seen as a resource, and the inclusion of languages other than the dominant one in education is viewed as productive (see for example Mathis 2015 on plurilingual literacy practices in French universities). Notions such as *multicultural education* (e.g. Banks & McGee 2001), *multilingual education* (e.g. Hornberger 2009), *culturally*

*responsive teaching* (e.g. Gay 2010) and *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Howard 2003) have much in common: they all refer to the use – and recognition of the value – of more than one language in teaching and learning, to an awareness of the different lived experiences and cultural worldviews of students, and to the importance of drawing upon prior knowledge of students with various linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds (see also Cummins 2000). Multilingual education has also received attention from supranational bodies. For example, UNESCO (2003) stresses the importance of mother tongue instruction, and encourages UN member states to view it as a strategy for promoting quality in education. At the far end of the continuum multilingualism is not only understood as beneficial to learning, but a pedagogy of translanguaging is advocated to expand multilingual repertoires for the benefit of education generally (Creese & Blackledge 2011; Canagarajah 2013; García & Hesson 2015; see also Madiba, this volume).

Translanguaging pedagogy goes some way towards addressing the fundamental question of the extent to which language education classes can actually do the job they are meant to do. That is, how can they support migrants as they attempt to integrate into work and society, when in many parts of the world workplaces and everyday life are increasingly multilingual? Recent and not so recent work in sociolinguistics suggests that in the superdiverse globalised world, one where language practices and events in culturally diverse contexts are typically multilingual, it is more appropriate to consider language in use in terms of individuals' multilingual communicative repertoires, rather than languages understood as discrete entities (Gumperz 1982; Makoni & Pennycook 2007, Blommaert & Backus 2011). However, multilingual education is rarely a strategic national policy when concerning adult migrants. Where multilingual education and its affordances are recognised and appreciated, it tends to be when the focus is on children's education (Conteh & Meier 2014). Indeed, in public and

policy debates at a national scale, where both multilingualism and multiculturalism have been heavily critiqued, models of migrant language education typically take monolingualism as a starting point, without reference to other languages.

A further consequence of a monolingual ideology is that as they progress along an educational path migrants often face barriers and hindrances that are created and defined by the norms of the receiving society; that is, they are positioned as deficit in certain ways. Thus if they speak only languages or varieties that are not valued in the new country they are understood as lacking adequate language skills. There are similarities here with deficit views evident in other areas of education and employment. For example, when migrants' education and occupational credentials and qualifications are not recognised in the host country they are represented as lacking professional competence (Duchêne, Moyer & Roberts 2013). If they have migrated in adolescence or early adulthood and are struggling to orient themselves towards higher education, they are defined as lacking learning skills and academic literacies (Holm & Laursen 2011; Simpson & Cooke 2009). Denial of the multilingual competence of adult migrants can create, maintain and strengthen mental images of migrants as voiceless newcomers without agency, dependent on political and social goodwill (Blackledge 2006).

Where the focus of AMLE is on mother tongue maintenance, this exists only in pockets of practice such as small-scale project-based work happening outside the educational mainstream, often outside of educational institutions. Mother tongue education is generally seen as too expensive and too impractical and typically does not attract central government funding. Moreover, tuition in the mother tongue is usually viewed as a pathway to the dominant language. For example, a mother tongue literacy programme is devised as a means or a stepping stone to the target language, on the understanding that the development of L1

literacy will equip students with the skills and abilities to transfer to L2 literacy acquisition (Tarone, Bigelow & Hansen 2009). There are exceptions: in some European countries the basics of integration are sometimes taught in languages such as Somali or Arabic, for example. The motive for this is not however to develop multilingual repertoires, but to get across supposedly important messages to newcomers who are thought to be culturally incompetent (see e.g. Vázquez et al. 2011).

### **Citizenship and employability**

In general, however, multilingual education for adult migrants is viewed by mainstream politicians as a waste of time and money. The hegemonic view of AMLE is that it should focus on developing the dominant language for integration purposes and employment (Sandwall 2010). Immigration policies are tightly intertwined with labour market mechanisms and language requirements: high-skilled migrants with demonstrated competence in the dominant language tend to be welcomed, while those without accredited skills or certified language capability tend not to be (Extra, Spotti & van Avermaet 2009). Once adult migrants have arrived, their education is considered in social policy to be an effective tool to assure their better integration into their host countries. In many places however, such education is narrowly defined as language instruction, and basic vocational education; this is despite migrants already often having an academic background, being multilingual, and possessing extensive work experience (for a critical discussion of these issues in Denmark, see Holm & Pöyhönen 2012). A pattern internationally is that the capabilities migrants possess are not recognised in the new country and that they are assumed to need to acquire further skills – above all language skills – once they arrive (Extra et al 2009).

Cooke & Simpson (2009) draw attention to ‘challenging agendas’ in AMLE. They write about the UK context, but their points have relevance across the developed north and west. They first draw connections between AMLE and immigration policy. In many places residence, naturalisation and citizenship in the new country are dependent upon reaching a certain level of proficiency in the dominant language, typically measured by a standardised language exam or a *de facto* language and literacy assessment in the shape of a citizenship test. Students preparing to take language tests for naturalisation are acutely aware of their own position at the sharp end of immigration policy and fears over national security. Far from fostering a sense of integration and inclusive citizenship, for many, the result of language tests for citizenship and naturalisation has been to promote a feeling of exclusion and a message that some migrants belong more than others (cf. Bassell et al 2015).

The second ‘challenging agenda’ relates AMLE to adult basic skills and employability. Basic skills, including language skills, are deemed necessary to become employable, and adult migrants are often viewed in terms of how they can become more economically productive. Under the pretext of fiscal rectitude, funds are not made available for free classes for all who need them, there is growing private sector involvement in AMLE provision in many places, and language education providers have to offer work-related courses and cooperate closely with employers. Because of the lack of alternative funding, language educators find themselves with little choice but to follow a shift towards employer-led provision, and towards teaching ‘language for work’ courses whose contents are stipulated by governments. Yet while many newcomers do need to improve their language skills for employment purposes, it is not at all clear that the way to do this is to concentrate in class on generic employment-related concerns. It is also unclear exactly which students would benefit from a generic ‘language for work’ course. Professionals such as doctors and nurses are not likely to

encounter the language and literacy practices they need on such courses. Students who are already workers need a complex set of competencies, including the specific institutional and occupational discourses of their jobs, typically not found on language for work courses (for alternatives see Roberts, Cooke, Campbell & Stenhouse 2007, Roberts et al 1992). In addition, as the work of the UK Government-funded Industrial Language Training Unit (1974-1989) showed, workers need the interactional competence to form relationships with their colleagues and negotiate their rights; yet courses focusing upon employment and employability tend to be oriented towards employer rather than employee needs.

### **Critical approaches**

Merriam (2004) notes that in the global north and west, where learning tends to be synonymous with schooling, the activity of learning is often framed in rationalist, cognitive terms without reference to emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions. However, the essential role of emotion and affect and how these can promote or impede learning has long been recognised (Dirkx 2001). Mainstream as well as more marginal practice does of course include pedagogical approaches that emphasise the affective dimension, along with learner-centered ideas such as the importance of activating students' prior knowledge and authenticity in activities and materials. Beyond this, curricula for AMLE have also been proposed and implemented which involve the development of criticality amongst students. Critical perspectives contribute to adult learning theory by asking how aspects of the learning context, such as race and gender, power and oppression, shape that context as a whole.

Critical approaches to AMLE sometimes involve Freirean-inspired participatory methods and techniques. Cooke and colleagues (2015) describe participatory ESOL pedagogy in England where a pre-designed syllabus was not used, and where the participants set their own agenda,

devised their learning materials and self-evaluated their progress (see also Moon & Sunderland 2008). Their example, the *Whose Integration?* project, addressed a contemporary concern of which – as Cooke et al. (2015: 223) put it – ‘ESOL students are often the referents, but about which they are rarely asked their opinions’. As a result of the project, the classroom came to be regarded as a discourse community in its own right rather than a place for rehearsal for out-of-school practice. Moreover, students on the project were able to use more complex language compared to those who had participated in a traditional classroom.

## **NEW DEBATES**

In this section on new debates we use examples from Finland to illustrate the continuum from a monolingual norm to multilingual approaches in AMLE, and show how competing language ideologies coexist in practices in one national context. Our first example, from vocational education, demonstrates that a focus on the dominant language alone is inadequate if adult migrants are to move further along their educational trajectory. The second example illustrates language education in a Finnish-Swedish bilingual setting where multilingual repertoires are recognised, but where the teaching focuses on the nationally-dominant language, Finnish, thus missing an opportunity to enable participants to gain full membership in their Swedish-dominant local community. The third example showcases how the multilingual repertoires of all participants in the pedagogic activities, teachers as well as students, are usefully employed as both a resource and a target of learning.

### **Adult migrant language education for vocational purposes**

Education is often seen in national policies as a key factor for successful integration into the labour market and society in general. Finland is no exception in this respect. Regarding young and adult migrants, vocational education plays a crucial role in promoting the national

agenda. Prioritising vocational education is usually justified by the demographic trend of the country towards an ageing population and the decline in the size of the workforce, especially in the service sector and in health care (Pöyhönen & Tarnanen 2015). Vocational education would in the best scenario be an effective, direct channel to employment (Kilpi-Jakonen 2011). Formal vocational education, which in Finland takes up to three years to complete, is sometimes viewed as necessary even when the adult migrants concerned already hold vocational qualifications, an academic degree and/or relevant work experience from another country. This also demonstrates Finnish employers' and authorities' unfamiliarity with non-Finnish qualifications and assessment systems. Host country requirements and migrants' qualifications and aspirations do not seem to match, which in the worst cases results in high unemployment rates amongst migrants, a decline of well-being and social exclusion.

The role of education is to implement national policies, which in turn are embedded in a deep-seated belief in education as the solution to both high migrant unemployment and a shortage of labour. However, there is debate among educators and other gatekeepers about the relevance of migrants' proficiency in the language of schooling and academic skills for study in vocational education. To enhance the transferable skills felt to be necessary for study in vocational education, new arrivals who do not reach a minimum criterial level are provided with a pre-vocational preparatory education that lasts between six and 12 months. This comprises training in the Finnish language and in academic reading and writing. In this type of education, however, there is only a very weak integration of language and vocational content and the assumption is that students can be fully prepared to study in vocational fields with few references to vocational education itself. Hence we find the production and maintenance of a language education and a vocational education which are isolated from one another, and the repression of voices demanding reform of vocational education to be able to respond to the needs of students with linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.



In a national policy context which stresses the importance in schools of multilingualism, multiliteracy, language awareness across the curriculum and multiculturalism (see for example a national curriculum for basic education, FNBE 2014), the need to develop a multilingually-oriented vocational education that supports recently arrived migrants is not taken seriously. On the contrary, it may even hinder possibilities to complete a vocational degree or make educational trajectories to tertiary education even more difficult. A national report on learners with migrant background within the Finnish education system from the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (Kuukka et al. 2015) notes that the significance of studying or support in one's own language is not yet recognised at secondary level. The same report also stresses the importance of supporting the development of the language in which new arrivals received their foundational schooling. Such support can of course only be addressed through deploying financial and pedagogical resources (Kuukka et al. 2015).

### **Language education for refugees seeking asylum**

The year 2015 saw a wake-up call for Europe regarding asylum seekers and refugees from countries like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Media discourses from then were dominated by talk of a chaotic refugee crisis. Political debates about the placement of refugees and about national security brought issues of language education to the fore in receiving countries. Typically, national programmes of integration and adult language education in Europe at least do not take into account refugees seeking asylum, who – in a liminal position without a full official status – are largely invisible to wider society. This is also the case in Finland. Language education for refugees and asylum seekers is often under resourced and relies heavily on volunteers in reception centres and non-governmental organisations. Yet a refugee

seeking asylum may need to wait several months or even years for a decision to be made about their claim, and for a green light to carry on with daily life in a new country.

In Finland, asylum seekers are required to take part in either educational activities or work. Education usually means three hours per week of language education in Finnish or – in the Swedish-dominant areas of Finland – in Swedish or Finnish. Language education can be organised by an initial reception centre with trained teachers or volunteers, as in our example below, or by another educational institution, mandated by a reception centre. The methods, materials, training background of teachers and overall quality of provision vary greatly across reception centres, even though there have been attempts to develop a common core for teaching. Timescale is also relevant: three hours' tuition a week is not a great deal, especially when it is very structure-oriented (see figure 1), when everyday life is located in a reception centre with minimal interaction with the outside environment or with local users of the dominant language.

<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>

Figure 1: Finnish class in a reception centre located in a Swedish-dominant region.

This example is based on team linguistic ethnography (2015–2016) in a reception centre, established in 1991, and located in a rural municipality in a Swedish-dominant region. The reception centre has chosen to provide language education in Finnish, despite its location and the prevalence of Swedish in daily life and in the linguistic landscape. This is because Finnish is felt to enhance the possibility of social inclusion: many people who leave the centre subsequently settle in Finnish-dominant regions in Southern Finland (e.g. the Helsinki metropolitan area) in hope of better life for them and their children. However, during the

waiting period in the centre, isolation and a lack of belonging pertains. Residents cannot draw on Finnish, the language they are learning, with others who live in the area. Most local residents have usually only studied Finnish as a school subject, and do not necessarily use it regularly. Thus, residents and locals live parallel monolingual lives: the type of corner-shop cosmopolitanism described by Wessendorf (2010) is far from the residents' everyday experience.

<INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE>

Figure 2: Finnish learning material at a course for asylum seekers.

Gaining membership of society is complicated without a shared language; unsurprisingly when they leave the centre most residents – who have been learning only Finnish – actively try to find a new home in Finnish regions. This contrasts with the situation for UNHCR quota refugees. These people are not classed as asylum seekers, though they might share similar backgrounds. They have been housed in the same municipality as the refugees seeking asylum but are destined to remain there, and usually start learning Swedish when they arrive, adding Finnish later on only if they wish. Thus differing migrant statuses in this particular rural area puts new arrivals in different positions and can lead to increased inequalities.

Finland has introduced new policy initiatives in order to make adult migrant language education more effective (Pöyhönen & Tarnanen 2015), but education for asylum seekers is rarely a high priority, and when it is, the discourses around AMLE are focused on issues of internal security and social cohesion. Language education for asylum seekers has also been interpreted as a waste of resources by the state, since figures from 2016 show that only about a third of asylum seekers will receive a decision which will allow them to remain in Finland.

Refugees seeking asylum sit in the waiting room of the state, and with such a stance towards their language education, they do so without recourse to learning opportunities that might better equip them should they receive a positive decision on an asylum claim.

### **Family learning**

So far we have mainly discussed AMLE from an individual point of view, but in our final example we turn our attention to family learning. The national curriculum for integration education for adult migrants in Finland focuses on individuals and the ways in which full-time language education facilitates transition to the labour market. In tendered integration education programmes, which have to follow the national curriculum, finding a job is a shared strategic aim for national and local authorities as well as teachers working for public and private providers of education (Pöyhönen & Tarnanen 2015).

Family language learning is completely different. It mainly takes place in non-governmental organisations or as part of a programme of activities provided by municipalities. Participants in family language learning are usually stay-at-home parents with very young children, and thus fall outside the labour market, at least temporarily. Family language learning can best be described as a curriculum from below: teachers are usually volunteers or just partly salaried, and the aims, needs and practices are negotiated among teachers and participants.

Our third example is based on ethnographic research conducted by Minna Intke-Hernández (2015; see also Intke-Hernández & Holm 2015). In the *Capable Parent* project in the City of Vantaa (2011–2013), a Finnish language course was organised for migrant stay-at-home mothers with very young children at home and who could not therefore participate in regular integration training. Teaching and learning was intertwined with everyday life in the

surrounding residential area and society. The place where the course took place was not a typical educational institution, but a residents' park located in the participants' own neighborhoods.

Unlike in full-time language courses the participants were not divided into different groups according to their language proficiency or level of education and were not tested beforehand. In contrast to regular courses heterogeneity here was understood as a resource, as were other differences between the participants. The group started with about ten mothers with their children, but grew along the way. Everything was organised in a child-oriented manner (see figure 3). For example, the content of the activities – arts and crafts, songs, games – aimed to engage the children attending, meaning that they could stay and learn together with their parents. Likewise the lack of a tightly-defined advance plan for the sessions was compatible with the needs of mothers with very young children, who were unable to make use of more formal language learning opportunities.

<INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE>

Figure 3: Child-centered learning in the *Capable Parent* project (photo: Minna Intke-Hernández).

Besides learning Finnish, the course was highly important for socialising with others sharing a similar life situation. Learning took place in the residents' living room, around the kitchen table, and quite often on the floor, settings that have little in common with those of more mainstream language courses. The course was originally meant for recently arrived migrant mothers, but some long-term resident mothers began to be interested in the activities and joined in. This enabled new friendships to form, and learning from one another to take place,

using a range of language and semiotic resources. In that sense, the course went beyond AMLE, taking a more holistic view of learning than regular courses.

<INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE>

Figure 4: Participants learning Finnish and other languages from each other in the *Capable Parent* project (photo: Minna Intke-Hernández).

But even this course started traditionally with a curriculum written by a professional Finnish teacher – that is, until the mothers exercised their agency in the learning process, and started to dictate the pace and even the subject areas that comprised the content of the course.

Because of this, the teachers were able to draw upon the funds of knowledge (Moll et al 1992) of the mothers. Funds of knowledge are ‘the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being’ (Moll et al 1992: 133). When teacher and learner roles are subverted, students can use their rich resources of historically accumulated and culturally developed funds of knowledge and skills, which can be deployed in learning events to provide culturally responsive and meaningful lessons. The instigators of the *Capable Parent* project initially found it difficult to change established practices. When this did happen, however, the results were better than anyone could have anticipated. Teachers and parents found that real dialogue emerged when the parents were given a forum for sharing the knowledge that they possessed. However, dependent as it was on piecemeal project funding, it eventually needed to reduce its activities because of a lack of resources.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter we have offered historical perspectives, discussed core issues and topics, and illustrated new debates using case studies about tensions and conflicting agendas regarding adult migrant language education. We argue that even though there are attempts to promote multilingual education in AMLE, it is too early to claim that we are experiencing a multilingual turn in adult migrant language education. Mainstream pedagogical arrangements firmly support national policies, which in turn prioritise the learning of the dominant language of the host society. Challenges to established practice do occur, but typically from non-governmental organisations and from practitioners working at the grass roots, not in a position to affect top-down policy formation. Mainstream adult migrant language education is also, in many cases, a political tool that is used to manage multilingualism and diversity, and to create new categories of social selection and disadvantage. Through our examples from Finland we have argued that a monolingual norm in AMLE does not promote routes into other areas of education, training and employment and that curricula from below are only recently emerging.

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(A broad overview of ESOL and how it is taught and learnt in English-dominant countries.)

Duchêne, A., Moyer, M. G. & Roberts, C. (eds.) (2013) Language, Migration and Social Inequalities. A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work, Bristol: Multilingual Matters. (A collection of articles focusing on migrant workers in various institutions and workplaces, and the interaction between language and social structures in the neoliberal era.)

Holm, L. & Pöyhönen, S. (2012) “Localising supranational concepts of literacy in adult second language teaching,” In A. Pitkänen-Huhta & L. Holm (eds.) Literacy practices in transition: Perspectives from the Nordic countries, Bristol: Multilingual Matters. (A study based on multisite ethnography of how literacy in adult migrant language education in two Nordic countries, Denmark and Finland, is increasingly used as a demarcation line for inclusion and exclusion.)

Simpson, J. & Whiteside, A. (eds.) (2015) Adult Language Education and Migration. Challenging Agendas in Policy and Practice, London: Routledge. (A critical collection dealing with national migration and integration policies, AMLE programs and challenging views and innovative pedagogical practices in nine countries of the developed West and North.)

## **RELATED TOPICS**

Multilingual education policy, superdiversity and educational equity

Translanguaging as pedagogy

The multilingual university

Linguistic diversity in online and mobile learning

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