

Roots and Routes: A Book Review of “Language Learning of Adult Migrants in Europe”

Glenn S. Levine & David Mallows (2021). *Language Learning of Adult Migrants in Europe. Theoretical, Empirical, and Pedagogical Issues*. Springer, Cham. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-3-030-79236-7.

"Language Learning of Adult Migrants in Europe: Theoretical, Empirical, and Pedagogical Issues," edited by Glenn S. Levine and David Mallows, offers an in-depth examination of language acquisition among adult migrants in Europe. Published by Springer in 2021, this book is part of the Educational Linguistics series and addresses the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that migrants face in learning a new language. The volume integrates theoretical frameworks, empirical research, and practical pedagogical strategies, making it a significant contribution to the field.

This book opens with an introductory chapter by the editors, which contextualises the research within the broader socio-political landscape of Europe, particularly in light of the refugee crisis of 2015-16. The editors emphasise the crucial role of language learning in the integration process of migrants, discussing the diverse educational backgrounds and literacy levels of this population. This chapter lays the foundation for the book by highlighting key issues such as the socio-political context, the heterogeneity of migrant experiences, and the importance of tailored language programmes (Levine & Mallows, 2021, pp. 1-17). As Levine and Mallows note, “Language learning is not just about communication; it is a critical component of integration, social inclusion, and personal development” (p. 3).

In "Migrant Mothers' Stories of Language Learning in Everyday Life," Minna Intke-Hernández explores the personal narratives of migrant mothers. These stories illustrate how everyday interactions become opportunities for language learning, intertwining with their roles as parents and community members. Intke-Hernández captures the complex journey of language acquisition, emphasising the influence of daily social interactions. She states, “Migrant

mothers navigate their linguistic landscapes by engaging in everyday practices that simultaneously foster language learning and social integration" (Intke-Hernández, 2021, p. 42).

Nafisah Graham-Brown, in "Belonging: A Study of the Relationship Between Migrant Women's Social Interactions and Their Perception of Their Own Integration," examines the social dimensions of language learning. Graham-Brown argues that social interactions are crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and integration, making language acquisition not just a linguistic endeavour but a social one as well. She highlights that "the feeling of belonging is inextricably linked to the ability to communicate and participate in social interactions" (Graham-Brown, 2021, p. 67).

This book then transitions to language learning in classroom settings. Jana Wienberg, Gregor Dutz, and Anke Grotlüschen, in their chapter "Language Learning of Migrants: Empirical Evidence from the German Integration Course System with a Focus on Literacy Courses," provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of structured language courses. They highlight the challenges faced by learners and educators in these settings, particularly in literacy courses tailored for migrants with limited formal education. The authors claim, "Despite the structured environment of integration courses, learners often face significant hurdles, including varied educational backgrounds and levels of literacy" (Wienberg, Dutz, and Grotlüschen, 2021, p. 116).

Anna Tissot and colleagues, in "Factors Affecting Language Acquisition in the German Integration Course System," emphasise the importance of individualised instruction and supportive learning environments. Their findings suggest that successful language acquisition is influenced by a combination of individual learner characteristics, instructional quality, and the broader social context. Tissot et al. assert that "personalized approaches in language instruction are essential to address the diverse needs of adult migrant learners" (Tissot et al., 2021, p. 146).

Amina Al-Dhaif, Graham Hall, and Rola Naeb explore the interplay between identity and language learning in "Religion, Identity and Investment in Adult Migrants' English Language Learning in the UK." They argue that learners' identities and their investment in language learning are shaped by their religious and cultural backgrounds. This chapter underscores the necessity of creating inclusive learning environments that respect and accommodate diverse identities. Al-Dhaif et al. write, "The interplay of religion, identity, and

language learning is crucial for understanding the investment and engagement of migrant learners” (Al-Dhaif, Hall, & Naeb, 2021, p. 168).

Annika Norlund Shaswar, in "Digital Literacy Practices in Everyday Life and in the Adult L2 Classroom: The Case of Basic Literacy Education in Swedish," discusses the increasing importance of digital literacy for migrants. Shaswar highlights how digital tools can enhance language learning by providing flexible and accessible resources, although they also require learners to develop new skills and competencies. She notes, “Digital literacy is becoming an essential component of language learning, offering new avenues for engagement and practice” (Shaswar, 2021, p. 194).

Sarah Cox, in "Supporting Refugee Families in Scotland Through an Ecological, Multilingual Approach to Language Learning," presents a case study of a language learning programme in Scotland. Cox emphasises the benefits of a holistic and multilingual approach that considers the broader social and familial context of learners. This approach supports the overall well-being and integration of migrants. Cox states, “An ecological, multilingual approach not only enhances language learning but also promotes overall family well-being and integration” (Cox, 2021, p. 215).

The final chapter by Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer and Mara Thölkes, "Wie soll ich das Kind bewerten? Between Standardization and Differentiation in the Assessment of Plurilingual Refugee Students in Foreign-Language Classes in Germany," addresses the complexities of assessing plurilingual learners. The authors discuss the tensions between standardised testing and the need for differentiated assessment practices that recognise the linguistic diversity of refugee students. They argue, “Assessment practices must balance standardization with the need for differentiation to fairly evaluate the diverse competencies of plurilingual students” (Melo-Pfeifer & Thölkes, 2021, p. 241).

One of the book's significant strengths is its interdisciplinary approach, combining insights from linguistics, education, sociology, and psychology. This multidisciplinary perspective enriches the analysis and provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in language learning for migrants. The empirical rigour of this book is another notable strength. Each chapter is grounded in robust empirical research, including qualitative and quantitative studies, case studies, and mixed-methods approaches. This empirical foundation enhances the credibility and relevance of the findings and recommendations presented.

The practical orientation of the book is particularly valuable. The authors not only discuss theoretical and empirical issues but also provide concrete suggestions for educators and policymakers. This practical focus makes the book a useful resource for those involved in designing and implementing language learning programmes for migrants. While the book provides a comprehensive and insightful analysis, there are areas where it could be further strengthened. One limitation is the geographic focus on Europe. Including comparative perspectives from other regions with significant migration flows could offer a more global understanding of the issues and highlight different approaches to language learning and integration. Furthermore, while the book addresses the experiences of adult migrants, it could benefit from a more explicit discussion of the differences and similarities between adult and adolescent learners. Adolescents often face unique challenges in language learning, and a more detailed exploration of these dynamics would enhance the book's comprehensiveness.

"Language Learning of Adult Migrants in Europe: Theoretical, Empirical, and Pedagogical Issues" is a timely and useful contribution to the field of language acquisition and migration studies. The editors, Glenn S. Levine and David Mallows have curated a collection of chapters that provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with language learning for adult migrants. The book's interdisciplinary approach, empirical rigour, and practical orientation make it an essential resource for educators, researchers, and policymakers. Despite some areas for further exploration, the book offers a solid foundation for understanding and addressing the complex dynamics of language learning and integration in the context of migration.

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Jacqueline Żammit

University of Malta

jacqueline.zammit@um.edu.mt