Adult Literacy (ies) for the Immediate Future (symposium)

Abstract - This paper explores the diversity of literacies needed for migrant adults to integrate in complex societies. Its main goal is to present diverse perspectives, from a theoretical journey to experiences such as those based on music or combating stereotypes. Our main conclusion is that research on multilingualism and multiliteracies needs further development.

KEYWORDS: Language education, adult, migrant, multiliteracy, multilingualism.

1. INTRODUCTION

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Literacy has traditionally been considered as the capacity to read and write and even mathematical abilities are included. Migration, globalization and technologies have profoundly changed the concept of literacy and this affects, without any doubt, the needs of adults when facing language education. Nowadays, adults' oral communication abilities for face-to-face or virtual interactions cannot be forgotten but many other types of literacies seem to be of interest as well. In fact, research on literacies and additional languages claims for new approaches to literacy problems and recommends a pedagogy of multiliteracies as an inclusive pedagogical practice (Florian, 2015). Migration and globalization imply multicultural and multilingual development with spaces for translingual literacy practices and with different modes for hybrid and heterogeneous spaces.

The New London Group (NLG) connected the new literacy pedagogy with multimedia technologies (NLG, 2000), an updated concept as multimodality and digital culture surrounds us. For instance, the use of digital technologies has become even wider during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, multimodal elements such as visual, audio, gestural and linguistic ones affect meaning-processing and have an impact on literacy development (Cope and Kalantzis, 2013) as they indicate the need of visual literacy and critical thinking. But adults of the 21st century could be facing some other relevant needs as literacies in an additional language constitute a survival kit for people who want to find a new life in another country. For instance, these adults also need to develop their socio-emotional literacy to regulate their emotions as a new community and a new language and culture affects their identity and sense of belonging.

Psychologists, - mainly in an approach derived from Vygotsky - have considered literacy as a mediation tool for internalizing the higher psychological processes. Considering this point of view, it can be said that literacies are a guarantee for the development of persons as individuals and as members of a community. For this reason, literacies need to be understood as a human right, but literacies can also be considered as a tool for transformation. According to Popular Education (Lucio-Villegas, 2022) - Freire among other authors - reading and understanding the surrounding reality drives people to undertake societal transformation at the same time. However, literacy can be used for other purposes as well, for example, exploitation. History shows us how it has been used to eliminate autonomy and creativity allowing the reproduction of standardized, productive, educational and social processes. In this direction, the school has played, for some authors – not only the ones belonging to the deschooling theory as Illich (1971), for instance -, the role to control literacy. In fact, it can be said that the history of literacy is different from the history of the school (Viñao, 1989). For these reasons, future teachers need to be aware of these new literacies and of 21st century-adult language learners' needs.

Finally, literacy is based on the context, history and situation of a community. Literacies and language learning are at the heart of education for social development. By considering them, we will provide significant answers to diverse personal and social situations. Therefore, and because we acknowledge this diversity, in this symposium we analyze literacies in plural and not only literacy.

To summarize, in order to better understand adult language learners' contemporary and global reality, this symposium addresses the multiple literacies approach as a possible tool to better comprehend adult learners' needs and to prepare future teachers to work with this type of multilingual and multicultural learners in face-to-face, hybrid or online contexts.

Four different presentations cooperate to achieve our goal.

Firstly, contribution 1 analyses what multilingualism and the multiliteracy approach means in adult education, while contribution 2 explores how pre-service language students identify the multi-literacy challenges of the adult migrant population. The third presentation reflects on the visual and critical thinking literacies needed to consume multimodal artefacts. Finally, contribution 4 presents a study where adult learners' socio-emotional and multimodal literacies are analyzed.

These four contributions seek to explore the typology of literacies needed for adults to integrate in distinct societies and live a responsible and peaceful citizenship.

2. MULTILITERACY AND MULTILINGUALISM IN ADULT MIGRANT EDUCATION

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2.1. Introduction

Communication paradigm has been restructured by globalization and digitalization, affecting the way we learn and adjusting language and literacy education. As adult migrants in urban contexts become socialized in learning environments of higher cultural complexity, a dynamic and flexible multiliterate and multilingual learning environment capable of accommodating diverse needs is required in host countries. Particularly interesting for the implementation of multimodal literacies is the consideration of the latest advances in multilingualism proposed by the London Group's mandate, in which multilingualism and literacy are merged. The aim of this study was to empirically explore the interrelationship of multiliteracy and multilingualism by conducting a systematic review. It followed PRISMA protocol to answer three research questions: RQ1: Has previous research incorporated multilingualism / plurilingualism into multiliteracy models for studies with adult migrants? RQ2: What research methods have been used for studies with adult migrants? RQ3: What is the quality of the research methods?

2.2. Multiliteracy and Multilingualism

Mobility is altering the linguistic landscape in the world, bringing about an increase of multicultural classrooms that has turned linguistic diversity into the norm in urban school systems across the western world. There is in fact no exception to this new panorama, every language is exposed to the wealth of languages that migration brings about, we increasingly find a landscape of an official language or languages in a superstratum position, though they are permeable to several substratum languages, and all of them are to be found in the continuum of English as a lingua franca. This new configuration of the linguistic panorama dramatically alters the traditional notion of literacy, as students and communities

get involved in multiple forms of literacy (Cazden et al., 1996; Gee, 2008). As a result, some linguists have addressed the need to tackle this conformation (Cummins, 2000; Lotherington, 2012; Naqvi et al., 2012).

Prevailing pedagogical practices may jeopardize the linguistic competence of the migrants. On the one side, they may find serious problems getting the proper literacy levels in the host country (Collier-Stewart, 2018; Cummins, 2017, 2021; Hakuta, 2009), with the aggravating circumstance that they may be at risk of losing their home languages (Bialystok, 2007; Grant & Wong, 2003; Oller, 2016; Wong & Grant, 2007). This sits oddly with the main goal of education, that aims to increase rather than play havoc with students' potential. Unfortunately, languages are not social equivalents, power is reflected in the way society privileges them, threatening language diversity and endangering minority and heritage languages (Bromham et al., 2022). Science and learning will need to work together to promote linguistic variety as a cultural and knowledge asset.

2.3. Systematic Review

Our study adapted a systematic review protocol from PRISMA-P: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses for Protocols 2015 (Moher et al., 2015). Primary search was performed using the search engines Web of Science and Scopus and Eric (ProQuest) in two different universities (University of Cordoba and University of Huelva), in order to strengthen representativeness and reliability of data. The complementary search included Google Scholar and searching other resources, such as hand searching of relevant websites and associations, literature snowballing and contacting experts. Three screening levels were conducted to complete the selection process, and data was collected by two independent reviewers. From a total of 420 registers, 12 studies were finally drawn. From this selected sample of studies data and information were coded on variables related to: (a) title; (b) author; (c) year; (d) source; (e) type of publication; (f) data (research question 2: qualitative/quantitative); (g) design (ethnographic, case study, grounded study, etc.); (h) theoretical paradigm; (i) focus of the paper; (j) target language; (k) sample number; (l) context (i.e. host country of the migrants); (m) educational level (university, non-formal, adult education, workplace program, etc.); (n) results; (o) database (Scopus, WoS, ERIC, Google Scholar…); (p) research question 1 (yes/no); (q) research question 3 (1 low; 2 medium; 3 high); (r) researchers notes (for any type of observation).

Our findings reveal that multilingualism is embedded in the different models of multiliteracy, however, the epistemological tradition in the field of multilingualism does not seem to have had a significant impact on the implementation of new educational programs that meet the needs of adult migrants. We also found that quantitative research has been rarely used, and that there is a need to increase the research quality standards in this sub-discipline by reducing bias in the processes of designing, implementing, and reporting research.

3. A LEARNING BY DESIGN EXPERIENCE TO MAKE STUDENT TEACHERS AWARE OF ADULT MIGRANTS' LEARNING NEEDS

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3.1. Introduction

The term multi-literacies, coined by the New London Group (1996), later developed in a theory of learning based on elements such as multimodalities, stresses the inclusion of technologies and the importance of learners' transformation to foster a deep learning process. In this vein, the present study follows a Learning by Design approach which places learners at the center of the learning process, immersing them in a multimodal environment. Learning by Design (Kalantzis et al.,

2016) implies the use and modification of existing resources to create and communicate new meanings situated in relevant real contexts. In this framework, integrating multimodality - the use of oral, written, visual or spatial modes - promotes an experiential learning process that facilitates the anchoring of abstract ideas in concrete forms (Holloway, 2020) and engages participants in in-depth reflections of their own learning.

In this study we present the experience of university students enrolled in an applied linguistics course about language learning and teaching where they were asked to analyze and design materials to help adult migrants to develop their multi-literacy skills. During the learning experience participants were required to collaborate in order to identify the multi-literacy challenges of the adult migrant population. As a result, they had to create teaching materials adapted to the needs identified.

3.2. Method

The study followed the knowledge processes of the learning by design framework: experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing and applying (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). Some key issues targeted in the study were: (1) students reflect about the social change in today's society and classrooms; (2) literacy learning is more than read and write, it is a social and cultural practice that depends on the context where it takes place; (3) new technologies facilitate the creation of multimodal materials that can be easily adapted to digital practices and integrate socio-cultural diversity. All this fosters learners' awareness of current multiliteracies approaches.

In the present study 33 university students (21 females and 12 males) enrolled in a language learning and teaching course participated. Their age range was from 20 to 40, except for one male who was 68. The study was carried out for 6 weeks. Students first learnt about key concepts related to multimodality and multiliteracies. Then, they were asked to select multimodal materials for language learning. Secondly, their knowledge and beliefs about migrants' reality in the host country were explored. Students also analyzed migrants' needs in order to be linguistically and socially integrated in the host country. And the multimodal materials they had selected were revised to check whether they were appropriate for the migrant population. Finally, participants were required to design multimodal materials to attend to migrants' language learning needs. Written texts, images, videos, realia were used in the classroom on the part of the educators and the students. So, different modes of meaning were used to facilitate comprehension, to show previous ideas or to illustrate concepts and beliefs. At the end of the project participants answered some reflection questions about the experience. Besides, participants' awareness of contemporary racism was measured before and after the project.

3.3. Results and Conclusions

Regarding quantitative data related to awareness of contemporary racism, there is a strong correlation ($r = .85$) before and after the project. This implies that the six-week program did not alter participants' thoughts about racism or how it affects migrants' opportunities. A moderate correlation ($r = .47$) was also observed between awareness of racism and sex, showing females slightly higher levels of awareness after the project. As for age, there is a moderate negative correlation ($r = -.44$) due to the older student, who was 68. The answers to the reflection questions point to an uneven awareness process influenced by different variables: previous experiences and knowledge, individuals' views, or team members. While some students are conscious of how their knowledge and beliefs have changed ('before this I was not so aware of the difficulty migrants have because of not knowing the language of the country'), others mainly focused on their own learning difficulties during the project. However, most of them acknowledged to be motivated by working on something that can be useful for real life and for their future jobs. They also felt proud about the effort made and the product they had created.

Learning by Design and multimodal approaches allowed participants to get immersed in an intense and motivating learning process. Even though data about racism awareness did not change (most of them were already conscious of that), in a short period of time, their awareness about migrants' situation and needs (mainly related to language learning) increased, as they recognized. In some cases, even empathy was awakened ('I felt really affected by the inequalities that these people had to suffer'). However, consciousness of migrant learners' needs does not entail being able to design proper teaching materials for them. Thus, although groups were able to identify appropriate topics to be dealt with (moving around in a city, going shopping, or applying for a job), less than 50% of them managed to design activities adapted to migrant learners' discussed profiles. The use of multimodal elements was successful in most of the cases; but the level of the activities seems to be a problem because participants consider them 'too simple', which somehow contradicts their own experiences as language learners. Individuals' differences should also be considered, though. Our data seem to indicate that females tend to be more aware of migrant learners' situation and needs. Age could also be relevant, being older participants less aware of racism, which involves denying a real situation. On the other hand, results highlight the need for long lasting projects where participants discuss and contrast their positions. When it comes to creating learning materials, further difficulties arise. Student teachers not only need to be exposed to and analyse sample materials, but they also need to be monitored and to get formative feedback so that they can identify aspects to be improved. Besides, as some participants affirm, having the possibility to use the materials created would be beneficial to reinforce their learning process. These are considerations we regard as essential in the design of preservice/service teacher development courses aimed at working with the migrant population.

4. CONSUMPTION OF PRESENT-DAY MUSIC VIDEOS: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

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4.1. The study

Music and images share the power to bring our emotions to the surface and transport us to dreamlike places at any time and location. Meanwhile, the media articulate messages and colonize our subconscious. Reflecting on what we see and hear could help us foster our visual literacy, but it also could underscore the need for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue in the present day.

Current consumption of audio-visual media is extremely high, as is the power of the media to replicate and disseminate stereotypes. Hence, reflection appears to be a rare element in the current constantly changing world of technology and screens. Consequently, there is a need for critical skills for filtering information, as well as the abilities to decode messages received from both audio and visual channels. Accordingly, it is important to introduce audio-visual literacy to attempt to understand this content by using critical reflection. Furthermore, the societies in which we will live in the near future appear to be extremely complex.

However, do we know what types of representations and values are present in mainstream music videos? In other words, what messages do we perceive from music videos? Audio-visual media, due to their ubiquity, represent a valid source for gaining access to cultures within the context of adults' language education, so these media are used in both formal and informal learning. This contribution's primary purpose is to present the recurrent topics on music videos focusing on the portrayal of women. The qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti was used in examining a corpus composed of the forty-seven most viewed music videos in Spanish in the summer of 2019, disseminated over large digital platforms. To analyze the content, the principles of multimodality and audio-visual narrative were considered.

4.2. Results and Conclusions

The results of this study show that parts of the current music videos in Spanish, disseminated through global music-streaming services, reflect the content on democratic competences (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding). In addition to this content, other themes emerged. The first focused on the image of women. Most music videos continue to display a stereotyped portrayal of women, such as woman's objectification and her relationship to man, or praise of beauty and youth. The second most frequent topic concerned young people's portrayal, in which praising youth became a recurrent topic. The next subject related to the portrayal of social classes, where the upper-middle-class was the most prominent group, migrants were never included. But not only that, the music videos portrayed a clear delimitation of classes through different variables associated with leisure activities and the display of material goods. This difference also becomes more evident since connection between the classes was not illustrated. The last topics were eroticism and hedonism. Entertainment and the pursuit of pleasure as a lifestyle were covered extensively by showing young people linked to music, dance and the consumption of both alcohol and drugs. Hence, the hedonistic lifestyle remains aspirational in the present day, according to a part of the music videos analyzed. Finally, eroticism was explicitly and widely represented in the sample.

To conclude, this study highlights that parts of the music videos in Spanish currently disseminated through worldwide music-streaming services reflect some content on democratic competences. Most music videos display a stereotyped image of women, young people, hedonism, or eroticism. However, these music videos could be used in foreign language-learning situations to attempt to decode this content by using critical thinking. Thereby, educators can support learners in becoming independent thinkers and active citizens. Accordingly, music, audio-visual media, and critical visual thinking by working with the democratic competences from language learning in adults' education could become extremely useful as an approach to today's complex and culturally diverse societies (Sánchez-Vizcaíno, 2022; Sánchez-Vizcaíno & Fonseca-Mora, 2020).

5. COMBATING STEREOTYPES AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADULT LEARNERS AT RISK IN NEW YORK CITY

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5.1. Introduction

Hostos Community College, Bronx, NY, is a Hispanic Service Institution (HSI). The United States' federal government legally recognized such higher education institutions as degree-granting and accredited organizations that serve more than 25% Latinx/Hispanics. Hostos serves 60% economically deprived Latinx/Hispanic adult learners. Despite this, HSIs, community colleges and Latinx/Hispanics confront formidable challenges which impact student motivation and graduation rates (Wilds, 2000).

In the late 60s, Hostos pioneered by being the 1st higher learning institution in the US teaching a majority of courses in Spanish. Nowadays, only a handful of courses (other than Spanish language ones) are still taught in Spanish. Recently, as of April 2022, a renewed institutional push in Hostos' educational linguistic policies is seeking to expand Spanish speaking course offerings. Given the historical marginality of Latinx/Hispanics within the US, this push seeks to address such linguistic needs by asserting that culturally and linguistically proud students do academically better. This case study seeks to experimentally explore this assertion at Hostos, which a growing body of literature supports.

This work determines the relationship between motivation, a better self-esteem of being Latino and the use of a TV Show in Spanish in a Caribbean Society and Culture class taught remotely in English with students from Hostos Community College in The Bronx. The participants in this quasi-experimental study are 20 adult students from different sections of the same class divided into a control group and an experimental group. From the pool of students available in this class, both native Spanish speakers and heritage speakers were selected to populate the experimental and control group. To measure the degree of their linguistic and cultural self-esteem and the motivation to take the class, at the beginning of the Summer Session I 2022 a closed questionnaire was passed. The two groups were subjected to the same teaching methods and style in class, except for the experimental group, where the teacher used the last 25 minutes of each class a Hispanic TV show for adult learners to identify the linguistic strategies used by the main characters to build their own identity, working at the same time on socio-cultural contents such as stereotypes. At the end of the semester, the same closed questionnaire was given to analyze any changes. The main results of this study seem to point out that this socio-emotional and multi-modal approach (New London Group, 1996) mitigates negative effects of learners' attitude toward Hispanic culture and being a Latino in The Bronx.

5.2. Conclusions

This kaleidoscopic vision related to the needs of the 21st Century literacies on adult education evidences several relevant issues. Firstly, that the epistemological tradition in the field of multilingualism is still not sufficiently implemented in new educational programs to meet adult migrants´ needs. While digital literacy has been more explored, a need to increase the research quality standards when researching multilingualism and multiliteracies has also been found.

Secondly, that pre-service teachers are not frequently trained for adult language education but that they can feel motivated by working on something that they consider useful for real life and for their future jobs. A six-week training course does not seem to alter participants' thoughts about racism or how it affects migrants' opportunities but helps to raise awareness about the needs of this vulnerable population.

Thirdly, that adults (and adolescents) may consume media products that do not enhance democratic values but erotism, hedonism, classicism and sexism. So, visual literacy and critical thinking are very much needed for a more inclusive and responsible citizenship.

And finally, that adult migrants' socio-emotional literacy has to be addressed in the language classroom as well. Reflecting on stereotypes and linguistic strategies used by the main characters of TV shows to build learners' own identity can help to motivate adult learners to take their language classes.

To sum up, the immediate future of adult language education is still plenty of challenges. Many and of different nature are the literacies to be developed. The necessary and essential improvements to be incorporated in adult language education require a coordinated work between institutions, the implementation of education programs based on strong research results and the appropriate training of future adult language teachers.

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