Chapter 34
Using Materials in Refugee and Immigrant Adults' Heritage Languages in Instruction:
Challenges and Guidance for Teachers and Tutors

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ABSTRACT

There has been a shift in receiving countries and their education programs for adult immigrants around the world. A complete focus on immigrants' cultural integration and learning of the language of the country has shifted to an understanding that supporting heritage language maintenance benefits adults with little or no formal schooling in that language, including a more nuanced sense of identity, stronger second language (L2) and literacy learning, and confidence in supporting the schooling of the younger members of their communities. Teachers and tutors need, but lack, professional development focused on implementing instructional approaches that incorporate this new focus and on using reading materials in learners' languages. This chapter describes a new Online Heritage Language Resource Hub, which gives teachers, tutors, adult learners, and younger members of the community access to materials in hundreds of immigrants' languages. It also provides teachers ways to use the reading materials in the Hub in their classes with adult learners.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the benefits–to individuals, families, and communities–of adults maintaining, and younger members of the community developing, full proficiency in their heritage languages at the same time as an additional language or languages (typically the majority or dominant language of a country) are being acquired. It then describes the challenges that this approach can present for teachers, tutors, and program administrators as they seek to integrate this understanding and associated approaches into their programs and instruction, particularly when working with adults with little or no formal schooling or literacy in their home or heritage language. Next, the chapter presents a new online Heritage Language Hub of links to reading resources, in hundreds of languages, that is available and easily accessible to educators and adult learners in their programs. The chapter also details specific **instructional strategies** that teachers and tutors working with adult learners can use. The goal of the chapter is for educators working with this learner population to understand the importance of valuing, sustaining, and developing learners' heritage languages, and to be able to use the resources described (see also Durgunoglu & Nimer in this volume).

Focus on Immigrants Learning the Language and Culture of the New Country

A considerable number of adults with limited formal education and literacy migrate to new countries where a language they do not know is spoken. UN global trends tracking showed that in 2018, 70.8 million people were displaced worldwide (UN Refugee Agency, 2019). In Europe, in 2017, 4.4 million refugees migrated to one of the 28 European Union Member States (Eurostat, 2019). That same year, 110,000 refugees were admitted to the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2019). Political restrictions in the United States have since led to much smaller numbers. In fiscal year 2019 (ending September 30, 2019), a cap of 30,000 was set, under a new refugee admissions ceiling. There are plans to admit a maximum of 18,000 refugees in 2020 (Pew Research Center, 2019).

In the United States, eight of the top ten countries of origin of refugees and asylees are countries with low rates of literacy (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Myanmar, and Somalia), whose inhabitants are included in the roughly 758 million non-literate 15- to 65-year-olds worldwide (Migration Policy Institute, 2019b). A high proportion of this population is female. Immigrants with limited experience with formal education and little or no literacy move to highly literate societies for a range of reasons, which can include forced displacement due to economic or political instability, marriage, and opportunities to work (Drinkwater, Eade, & Garapich, 2009; Palmer, 2016).

Instructional programs in countries receiving adult immigrants who do not speak the language of the receiving country and have limited education and literacy in their heritage language usually focus on learners' linguistic, social, and cultural integration. The purpose is to help them participate effectively in the social, educational, and economic life of the country in which they have resettled (Bigelow, 2009; Cummins, 2000a, b, 2005; Duff, 2001; Mallows, 2014; Simpson & Whiteside, 2015). The term "immigrant" is used in this chapter for migrants, refugees, and asylees. The term "heritage language" is used for adult immigrants' home, native, first language (L1) and language of origin.

Program staff often give scant attention to the heritage language(s) spoken by immigrants, especially to the languages spoken by those who have limited or no education and little social capital to maintain the languages that they speak (Aberdeen, 2016; Peyton, 2012, 2013). Integration usually entails discouraging immigrants from maintaining their heritage language, focusing entirely on learning the majority

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