

Jeanne Kurvers:

Triple L for LESLLA learners: Lessons from research

Abstract:

Second language teachers who work with adult LESLLA learners often ask why these students progress so slowly and what might help in teaching them. For quite some time, mainstream SLA research overlooked the specific challenges faced by these learners. Happily, more research is gradually becoming available.

In my presentation, I aim to answer the teachers' questions and explain what we know about the specific challenges LESLLA learners face: learning to read and write for the first time in their lives while simultaneously learning a new, and sometimes distant, language, and becoming acquainted with a new type of school-based learning. And as if that's not enough, they are also learning all these things in an unfamiliar and sometimes frightening social and cultural context.

The presentation will first focus on some examples of the unique characteristics of LESLLA learners and the challenges they face in the initial phases of learning to read and write in a second language. It will conclude with findings from studies on what works for LESLLA learners.

Jeanne Kurvers was an Associate Professor at the School of Humanities, Tilburg University (Netherlands). Her main field of research was literacy acquisition in a second language and the impact of literacy on (metalinguistic) knowledge and information processing. She was one of the founders of the international LESLLA association, which aimed to stimulate research on L2 and literacy acquisition by low-literate migrants, and to foster cooperation between research and educational practice. In recent years, she has been involved in the development of LASLLIAM, the European Reference Guide for second language and literacy acquisition of low-literate migrants and in developing teaching materials.