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Blended language learning for LESLLA-learners: achieving added values by overcoming thresholds in a targeted way

Blended language learning offers potentially important benefits for adult L2-learners, such as to expand the learning opportunities outside of class and to personalize the learning to specific language learning needs. Question is whether these benefits also apply to LESLLA-learners who often experience difficulties with regard to digital access and skills, which are a prerequisite to effective blended learning.

By means of a systematic literature review, insights on blended language learning for LESLLA-learners were compared with insights for adult L2-learners in general. These insights were complemented by a needs analysis (12 focus groups), which mapped out the needs and requirements of low-literate L2-learners in Flanders, their teachers and centers.

As a result of both studies, we gained a better understanding of the added values and thresholds that blended language education brings to low-literate L2-learners, when compared to adult second language learners in general. Blended language education for the group of LESLLA-learners seems to consist of a complex interplay of factors, in which a number of apparent contradictions occur. What is an added value for some learners - e.g. more opportunities to learn time and place independently - may be a challenge to others. And although blended education sometimes presents obstacles for learners - related to their digital, reading and self-regulation skills, among others - by overcoming these obstacles, blended education can provide more learning opportunities in everyday life.

In this paper we present the similarities and differences we found between adult L2- learners and LESLLA-learners. In addition, we zoom in on the methodology we used to survey LESLLA-learners in their familiar (classroom) environment, using talking boards with gender- and culturally-neutral visualisations that allowed both researchers and participants to distil abstract content from concrete situations and by which we addressed important ethical issues when conducting research with LESLLA-learners.

Abstract for symposium program

(How) can blended language learning be effective for LESLLA-learners? By means of a literature review and a needs analysis, we gained a better understanding of the added values and thresholds that blended language education brings to LESLLA-learners, when compared to adult second language learners in general.

Bio (50 words)

Mariet Schiepers is director of the Centre for Language and Education, a research centre affiliated with the Faculty of Arts of the KU Leuven. She supervises a broad portfolio of research projects at the intersection of language, education and society, with a specific focus on (technology-mediated) language learning for LESLLA-learners.

Annelies Jehoul is a researcher at the Centre for Language and Education, a research center affiliated with the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) in Belgium. She is currently involved in research and development projects concerning blended and online learning by adult newcomers (in second language acquisition as well as other courses).

Helena Van Nuffel is a researcher at the Centre for Language and Education, a research center affiliated with the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) in Belgium. Her work focuses on (computer-

assisted) TBLT and equal learning opportunities for L2 and LESLLA learners. She was/is involved in several projects on online and blended learning.