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Learning for work:
hidden challenges for LESLLA learners

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We consider the challenges LESLLA learners face when confronted with literacy-based decontextualized tasks inside and outside of school that demand ways of thinking intrinsic to Western-style formal education, work, and modern life. We frame our work in the context of preparing LESLLA learners in Germany for the trades in adult education programs. Specifically, we focus on how ways of learning, familiarity with literacy-based decontextualized tasks and academic ways of thinking impact the ability of LESLLA learners to access content and succeed on assessments in adult education programs. Our work has applications beyond Germany: the assumptions underlying school tasks and ways of thinking form the "invisible challenge" of school and vocational training for LESLLA learners.

Keywords: low-educated, low-literacy, migrants, refugees, vocational training.

1. Introduction

In 2018, an estimated 68.5 million people were forced from their homes, of whom more than twenty-five million were classified as refugees (UNHCR 2018). Receiving countries face numerous challenges in accommodating and serving so many migrants and refugees, especially in providing employment opportunities for adults. Many of these have training and skills that, once they develop at least some proficiency in the language of the host country, can transfer to their new countries or will lead to employment with minimal training. However, among them is also a large subset of LESLLA learners: those who have not had age-appropriate Western-style formal education or job training, have low or no literacy, and therefore face limited work opportunities beyond the most menial.

In preparing these LESLLA learners, adult education programs in the receiving countries face multiple challenges. They must teach LESLLA learners basic literacy skills in a new language, deliver content and workplace knowledge and skills, and help them develop

new ways of thinking. Western-style formal education develops specific cognitive pathways (Cole 2005; Gauvain et al. 2011; Säljö 2009), which we refer to as "academic ways of thinking" (DeCapua and Marshall 2011). Since LESLLA learners had no or little prior educational opportunities, these types of thinking are unfamiliar to them and yet are essential in school, work, training, and everyday life in a modern society (Duran and Şendağ 2012; Hein et al. 2015). Crucially, they are not accustomed to engaging in logical modes of thinking based on scientific principles and conventions (Flynn 2007) and formal syllogistic reasoning (Olson and Torrence 1996). Yet these challenges are invisible to educators because these ways of thinking are assumed to be universal. For example, we take it for granted that books are categorized by genre and subgenres. Classifying concepts by identifiable shared characteristics in this way is taken for granted by educators but be unfamiliar to LESLLA learners.

2. Ways of learning

2.1. Informal ways of learning

LESLLA learners may come from backgrounds where informal ways of learning are the norm. This is learning that takes place within the sociocultural context of daily life in which survival and providing for oneself and one's family are central (Rogoff 2003, 2014). Learning takes place in the community, the home, the workplace. Learning follows the mentor or apprenticeship model of observation, imitation, and feedback that is largely non-verbal and centered around demonstration (Mejía-Arauz et al. 2012). Learning is pragmatic, concrete, immediately relevant, and focused on the here and now.

Learning and knowledge do not come from print; literacy is not an essential nor necessary part of the learning process. Knowledge and skills are grounded in real-world experience. As one LESLLA learner once said while making a fist, "moon is no big, because even when full, not as big as my hand." From their perspective of standing on earth, this LESLLA learner is not wrong. But from the perspective of science, the size of the moon is empirically measured.

2.2. Western-style formal education

Western-style formal education consists of highly systematized learning that emphasizes rational thought and empirical observation (Ngaka et al. 2012). Education takes place in formal institutional settings and structured curricula, and knowledge is divided into subject areas, such as math, science, and language. Intuition and real-world practices are generally discounted in favor of knowledge based on logical and systematic ways of understanding and interpreting the world (Ardila et al. 2010; Santos 2007). Tasks for learning and demonstrating mastery are decontextualized, literacy-based and demand academic ways of thinking derived from scientific principles. Formal education is learning how to learn, developing academic ways of thinking, and future-focused (Bruner 1961; Green 1990).

3. The German context

In 2015 and 2016 Germany experienced an unprecedented wave of immigration as a result of Chancellor Merkel's policy of welcome towards refugees, particularly those from Syria and other regions of the Middle East. Between 2015 and 2016 there were over one million asylum applications (BAMF 2016, 2017). Though fewer in number, refugees and migrants continue to enter Germany, including many adults seeking employment. The majority of refugees (51.8%) are adults older than 18 (Statista 2018). In November 2018, government employment data indicated that there were 459,336 refugee job seekers (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2018a). Over 172,00 of these had no secondary school certificate of completion, i.e., no school certificate qualifying them for employment. An additional 99,201 did not provide any information about their education status (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2018b), suggesting that many, if not all, are LESLLA learners.

3.1. Adult education for migrants and refugees

Since the 2015-2016 influx of migrants and refugees, the German

educational system has been partially reconceptualized and restructured to accommodate and support the influx of migrants and refugees of all ages from widely diverse educational backgrounds. This process has acknowledged that the adult learners have skills, needs, and goals that must be incorporated into vocational language education and training in new and different ways.

The goal of adult education for migrants and refugees in Germany is twofold: first, help them learn German; and second, offer education and/or training to develop workplace skills. The *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* – BAMF (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) provides the most widely-offered "integration" courses for adults. These courses consist of (1) language; and (2) orientation to German culture and society. Learners must initially complete 600 teaching units of language of 45 minutes each, ranging from A1 level – basic user – to B1 level – independent user (cf. Common European Framework of References for Languages, https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-%20languages). The language instruction covers everyday topics, such as housing, shopping, and work. Upon completion, learners then attend a 100-hour orientation. The orientation introduces learners to the German legal system, rights and obligations in Germany, and core aspects and values of German culture and society.

Other programs specifically designed for newly arrived migrant and refugee adult job seekers are also offered. The ESF-BAMF *Berufsbezogene Sprachföderung* ('Vocational language training', i.e., German for work) is geared towards job seekers not of school age who have already completed an integration course. The ESF-BAMF courses combine German language learning, workplace skills, and options for learning more about a trade through job placements (BAMF 2017b).

Although these courses are intended for those who have completed K-12 education, LESLLA learners can often be found in these courses. *Perspektiven für Flüchtlinge – PerF* ('Perspectives for refugees') is another vocational training program for refugees under the age of 25. The program lasts between four and six months and provides instruction in vocational German, fundamentals of a healthy lifestyle, practical workplace experience, and support in preparing job applications (Bundesamt für Arbeit 2017). In addition, there is the

trade initiative, *Perspektiven für junge Flüchtlinge im Handwerk –* PerjuF-H ('Perspectives for young refugees in trades'), which provides young refugees orientation to at least three different trades, as well as German language training. Lasting four to six months, it takes place in a trade enterprise (KOFA n.d.).

New textbooks emphasizing workplace German have been published to support migrant and refugee integration. Most cover topics applicable to a wide range of jobs, such as introducing oneself at work, applying for a job, travelling professionally, and resolving conflict. Despite the stated emphasis on workplace German, the primary focus remains generic everyday German (cf. e.g. Angioni et al. 2017), although more textbooks specifically intended for particular fields, such as gastronomy or cleaning, are being published.

What all these course offerings and textbooks share is the expectation that learners are literate, will have had age-appropriate formal education and/or vocational training, and be familiar with common classroom learning activities. This means that LESLLA learners must adapt to ways of instruction and learning that German educators often take for granted. There are few, if any, provisions or accommodations for LESLLA learners.

4.   The invisible challenges

The increasing number of teaching materials for workplace German is critical for supporting teachers working in the programs outlined in 3.1. However, we argue here that these materials are unsuitable for LESLLA learners because they are based on Western-style educational assumptions about learners and learning. Central to these assumptions is that learners are ready and able to engage in literacy-based decontextualized classroom tasks that draw on academic ways of thinking. This does not hold for LESLLA learners (DeCapua 2016; DeCapua and Marshall 2011). Their most obvious challenge is literacy. LESLLA learners have low or no literacy skills in any language; are still learning to make sense of letters, words, and sentences; and have never or rarely had the experience of learning from a book.

But an equally crucial challenge is the types of tasks and associated ways of thinking demanded in school and formal training settings. LESLLA learners are not familiar with or accustomed to decontextualized school tasks based on academic ways of thinking (DeCapua and Marshall 2011; Marshall and DeCapua 2013). We propose that fostering familiarity with academic ways of thinking among LESLLA learners is as essential as developing their literacy skills and content knowledge. Even when LESLLA learners enter the workforce without plans for further studies, decontextualized tasks and academic ways of thinking pervade contemporary life and are, to some degree or other, essential for movement into and upward beyond the most basic entry-level and menial jobs. To compound the problem, the structure of the German educational system and program offerings slot LESLLA learners in courses and levels that are inappropriate for their needs.

We illustrate the invisible challenges of decontextualized school based-tasks and academic ways of thinking in the context of analyzing a typical task from a general vocational language training textbook. This textbook is for Level A2 learners and designed to develop business German oral and writing skills (Sander et al. 2015). Reaching level A2, as defined by the Common European Framework, means that students

[c] understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need." (Council of Europe 2001: 24)

4.1. Sample task: my dream job

This task occurs after students have completed a series of learning activities, including listening and reading comprehension exercises. It is intended to assess whether they can apply the previously presented and practiced material to a different, but related, context.

German original	English translation
Mein Traumberuf	**My Dream Job**
Schreiben Sie einen Steckbrief für Ihren Beruf oder Ihren Traumberuf und stellen Sie ihn im Kurs vor. Beschreiben Sie auch Ihren Arbeitsort, die Arbeitszeiten und Ihre Kollegen.	Write a description of your profession or your dream job and present it to the class. Describe your place of work, working hours and colleagues.

Table 1. Level A2 sample task: *Mein Traumbrief* ('My dream job')
(Sander et al. 2015: 29).

4.1.2. Analysis

On the surface, *My dream job* appears to be a straightforward writing and oral presentation task. However, the task is quite complex. For one, the written part assumes and demands literacy skills at a much higher level than LESLLA learners will generally have. The task is focused on language skill mastery, i.e., writing and speaking in German, not teaching learners basic literacy. Even if they are placed in an A2 course, LESLLA learners are still developing literacy and view reading, writing, and language differently than do those who are literate (Kurvers et al. 2008). Being literate entails engaging in reading and writing as constructive processes for acquiring, creating and exchanging meaning, as well as being facile in moving between the real world and the imaginary and conjectural world of print (Ardila et al. 2000; Dooley 2009). To be able to engage in decontextualized school tasks like *My dream job*, learners need to be at the stage where they can conceptualize of print as conveying and transmitting information and knowledge removed from lived experience (Abadzi 2004).

LESLLA learners are not at that stage. It has been our experience in both teaching and classroom observations that when confronted with a task such as *My dream job*, LESLLA learners pose questions such as: Why does a textbook, this collection of sheets of paper, ask me questions? How can a book demand I do something? Why is it important to do this? Why should I write by myself something I'm

going to share with others? (See also Altherr Flores 2017). These kinds of questions illustrate how *My dream job* is a task that has no meaning for LESLLA learners. The task is not relevant to their lives nor reflects familiar learning processes. They have previously learned what they needed in real-world contexts when they needed it. Writing about an imaginary job description has, from their perspective, no context and no discernable purpose.

However, from the perspective of an educator in Western-style formal education, this task is relevant and contextualized because it practices writing skills that will most likely be useful in the future. And the topic itself is "relevant" because the learners are hoping to start careers. But from the perspective of LESLLA learners, because the task is disconnected from their experiences and lives it is not relevant. They have not had careers. If they worked previously, they had jobs. Although "job" is sometimes used to refer to "career," the opposite does not hold true. A job is what people do to earn money or goods to live on a day-to-day basis. A career requires study and/or advanced training and is goal-oriented toward further training, greater responsibilities, and possibilities for advancement. Even when LESLLA learners do picture an imaginary career, they generally have no concept of what that career entails. They will often say that they want to be a doctor or journalist, but not know what doctors or journalists do, the hours they work, or with whom they work with beyond "helping sick people" or "telling news on TV."

Literacy is more than decoding, copying, and memorization. It is being able to engage in specific types of academic ways of thinking such as abstraction disconnected from lived experiences (Abadzi 2004; Luria 1976). My Dream Job highlights how academic ways of thinking underlie decontextualized classroom tasks. To write about one's dream job requires being able to analyze past, present and future together; to consciously formulate hypotheses for an imaginary future; to abstract from the present situation and construct a hypothetical world. Not only does the task require learners be able to imagine the situation, but they must also create a particular type of written product, namely a job description, a text genre that serves a particular function, and that follows a relatively conventional written format (Casanave 2013).

The creation of the written job description is not the end product of the task. There are two steps, first the written, followed by the oral. Those who have formal education know what they need to do because they will have encountered this type of decontextualized school task in their schooling. Writing about something and then presenting it orally (or vice versa) is a common classroom procedure. For them, the task is about learning to write in and speak German. They do not need to have explicitly pointed out to them that this is an oral presentation based on a written component, which must be completed first in order to serve as the basis for the second, oral part. They also understand (more or less capably) how for both parts of the task, the information must be presented in a certain "logical" order to be "coherent" and "clear," and must address all the points indicated in the task instructions.

LESLLA learners, even when they have the language skills, are often unable to grasp the requirements or follow the procedures for completing such tasks because they do not understand the purpose or the conventions. This results in the common conclusion on the part of educators that LESLLA learners fail because they lack literacy, language, and background knowledge (Lukes 2014). While we do not disagree with these factors, our position is that the largely invisible challenges of academic ways of thinking and literacy-based decontextualized tasks pose equally great hurdles that are rarely, if at all, taught to adult learners. We propose that educators must teach LESLLA learners explicitly how to engage in these tasks and ways of thinking that are typical of formal education and work and life in Germany and in other modern societies. The question is how to foster simultaneously the development of literacy, language, and academic ways of thinking, and the ability to engage in classroom tasks.

We hold that the best way to do so is to transition LESLLA learners to the demands and expectations of formal education through the implementation of the *Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm* (MALP). This instructional model is mutually adaptive in that both learners and teachers adapt. MALP incorporates key priorities of LESLLA learners and places these priorities into a framework that integrates key elements of Western-style formal education. In the MALP model, learning is seen as consisting of three major components: conditions, processes, and activities. Conditions

learning refers to what must be present in the classroom for learners to feel confident and ready to engage. Processes for learning is how people prefer to exchange and build knowledge and information. Activities for learning encompass the tasks in which learners engage to build and demonstrate mastery. MALP is a mutually adaptive instructional model, meaning that educators accept conditions for learning important to LESLLA learners; combine the processes for learning key for both LESLLA learners and in formal education; and focus on academic ways of thinking and associated activities new to LESLLA learners (DeCapua and Marshall 2011; Marshall and DeCapua 2013).

To understand what MALP is and how it is implemented, we turn now to Mr. Maahs' class (Section 5), followed by an analysis of the lesson through the lens of MALP (Section 5.2). Mr. Maahs, based on one of the authors and the observations of the other author, teaches a vocational German course in Berlin. The required textbook is DaF im Unternehmen, in which the task My Dream Job appears. The class is an A2 level class with mix of migrant LESLLA and non-LESLLA learners.

5. Classroom scenario: Mr. Maahs

Mr. Maahs' starting point is not the textbook itself per se. Instead, he engages the learners in a series of activities intended to introduce and practice the vocabulary, concepts, and grammar in this chapter before having the learners work with the text.

Mr. Maahs begins by asking the learners to bring in photos of jobs they, friends, or family members have done. He also has a collection of photos of jobs that learners can choose from if they don't have access to photos. Mr. Maahs has also brought a photo of himself in the classroom. In small groups, the learners talk about their photos in any language they wish, e.g., What job is this? What is the person doing?

After learners have had a chance to discuss, Mr. Maahs and the class create a list of jobs, such as *der Metzger / die Metzgerin* ('the butcher'), *der Koch / die Köchin* ('the cook'), *der Mechaniker / die*

Mechanikerin ('the mechanic')[1]. Mr. Maahs, using oral contributions from the learners, adds a few keywords, e.g., *kochen* ('cook'), *die Küche* ('the kitchen'), *der Topf* ('the pot'). The learners chorally and individually practice reading the jobs and associated keywords.

Mr. Maahs then distributes cards with a job and short description. In small groups, the learners decide which of the cards match the job in their photos and attach them to the photos. Next, the learners must sort the photos with the attached job descriptions into categories Mr. Maahs has designated, e.g., a job is done indoors or outdoors, with family members or outsiders, traditionally done by adults or children or both, requires special tools, and so on.

Subsequently, Mr. Maahs shows his photo to the class and talks about his job, "Ich bin Lehrer. Ich arbeite in der Schule. Ich habe studiert und dann bin ich Lehrer geworden. Frau Wu ist meine Chefin. Sie ist sehr kompetent. Ich habe drei Kolleginnen. Sie sind sehr net" ('I am a teacher. I studied to be a teacher. I work in the school. I studied to be a teacher. Mrs. Wu is my boss. She is very capable. I have three (female) colleagues. They are very nice').

Mr. Maahs shares the written version of this talk with the class. Once the class has practiced reading it, the learners orally describe either a current job or one they did previously to a partner, similar to what Mr. Maahs did. To encourage greater discussion, Mr. Maahs allows them to include words and sentences from other languages they know. The learners then produce their own written job descriptions in German, using Mr. Maahs' written description as a model. They share their descriptions with the rest of the class.

Once the learners have read and/or listened to the job descriptions of their classmates, Mr. Maahs asks them to choose one job described by a classmate that they themselves have not done but would like to do. He also chooses one for himself and models, "Ich bin Lehrer. Ich arbeite in der Schule. Ich möchte Geschäftsführer sein. Ich möchte im Büro arbeiten" ('I am a teacher. I work in the school. I would like to be a manager. I would like to work in an office'). He writes his

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[1] In German, jobs must indicate gender, i.e., male butcher (*der Metzger*) or a female butcher (*die Metzgerin*). All nouns have gender and the definite article must match the gender of the noun, e.g., *Topf* ('pot') is masculine and must take *der* ('the') while *Küche* ('kitchen') is feminine and must take *die* ('the'). Language learners must learn the gender and article of each new vocabulary word.

sentences on the board, has the class read them aloud while pointing out how he changed the verbs since this is a job that he doesn't do. When he is sure the learners have the idea of the hypothetical, Mr. Maahs has them discuss their dream job in the same way he did. To help them, he provides sentence frames and, as he and the class review them, reminds the learners that they are now talking about a job they are not doing or have not done, but would like to do[2].

Ich bin **Lehrer**. Ich arbeite in **der Schule.**	Ich möchte Geschäftsführer sein. Ich möchte **im Büro** arbeiten.
(I am a **teacher**. I work in a school.)	(I would like to be a **manager**. I would like to work in **an office**.)
Ich bin_____. Ich arbeite_____ .	*Ich möchte_____sein. Ich möchte_____ arbeiten.*
(I am a teacher. I work in a school.)	(I would like to be_____. I would like to work_____.)

Table 2. Sample sentence frames (with translations).

After practicing orally, the learners write their new sentences, exchange them with another classmate when they have finished, and practiced reading each other's sentences aloud.

For the next lesson, Mr. Maahs returns to the categorization activity and works with the learners on using information from here about their own job and to explain why they would like the job they chose, first orally and then written. For example, Said came up with "Ich bin Hirte. Ich kann hier arbeiten nicht. Ich möchte Lehrer sein. Herr Maahs ist mein Lehrer. Herr Maahs arbeitet in der Schule. Ich auch möchte in der Schule arbeiten" ('I am a shepard. I no can work here. I would like to be a teacher. Mr. Maahs is my teacher. Mr. Maahs works in the school. I also would like to work in the school').

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[2] Because German has three genders as well as four cases, Mr. Maahs posts other key information to help learners. We have chosen not to include examples here because they do not add to the discussion and can lead to unnecessary confusion on the part of readers not familiar with German.

6. Mr. Maahs and MALP

To make *My dream job* accessible to all learners and a genuine learning experience, Mr. Maahs introduces and practices the lesson material in the section prior to this task through the MALP model. He carefully differentiates his instructions and expectations for the other non-LESLLA learners so that they too are learning according their abilities, which, however, will not be discussed here since our focus is on the LESLLA learners.

As we see here, Mr. Maahs has accepted conditions for learning (Section 6.1), combined processes for learning (Section 6.2.), and focused on activities for learning (Section 6.3) using familiar language and content.

6.1. Accept conditions for learning

Conditions for learning are those elements necessary to create an optimal learning environment. In the case of LESLLA learners, two highly essential elements are immediate relevance and interconnectedness. Immediate relevance is essential since their prior learning experiences have been rooted in real world experiences. They don't go to school to learn the essentials of food preparation, food handling, or food storage. They learn to cook what they have in order to prepare meals for their families (Rogoff 2014). In the classroom when tasks and materials mean something personal to LESLLA learners, they become more confident and motivated to engage in learning (Nuwenhoud 2014). As we saw in Section 4.1.2, decontextualized school tasks are meaningless to LESLLA learners because they do not see the connection between the task and their lives.

To transition LESLLA learners to being able to distance themselves from school-based tasks and personal experiences, teachers must begin by incorporating material immediately relevant to the learners. Immediate relevance to learners' own lives is an important condition that teachers can easily incorporate into learning, but that entails a shift in perspective. Teachers do not begin with material from a text or curriculum, even if they think it is relevant.

Instead, teachers have a strong sense of who their LESLLA learners are and what prior experiences and strengths they bring to the classroom; relevance is learner-generated rather than teacher imposed. Since Mr. Maahs was teaching a vocational German course, he knew that jobs and employment were immediately relevant to his learners. However, rather than starting with jobs in general or from the photos and descriptions in the textbook, Mr. Maahs had the learners bring in photos of their own jobs, those of family members, and of friends. Thus, the learners talked, wrote about, and engaged in activities using job content immediately relevant to them personally.

The second essential element is interconnectedness, that is, a sense of relationship and belonging. Teachers build interconnectedness among LESLLA learners and themselves by going beyond their traditional role of delivering instruction to one where they connect closely with learners on a personal level (Borrero et al. 2013; Suárez- Orozco 2009). When interconnectedness has been fostered among the learners and their teachers, teachers are also better able to ensure that they are incorporating material immediately relevant to the learners' lives, not what the teacher thinks will be relevant. Mr. Maahs promoted interconnectedness by having the learners share about their jobs and the jobs they would like to have. Regardless of whether or not the jobs they had previously before coming to Germany would lead to employment there, all jobs were acknowledged and respected. To make himself an integral part of the group, Mr. Maahs talked about his job and one that he would like to do. Everyone, the learners and Mr. Maahs, learned more about each other.

6.2. Combine processes for learning

Process for learning refers to how people prefer to exchange and develop knowledge and skills. For LESLLA learners, their preference is to do so orally and together through mutual support. In Western-style formal education, this is done primarily through print, and learners are expected to learn and perform individually. To honor and capitalize on the preferences of LESLLA learners while yet transitioning them to those demanded in formal classrooms, teachers

combine those processes preferred by LESLLA learners with the required processes of formal education.

First, the development of literacy skills is consistently supported by oral interaction and connections are regularly made from print to spoken language and the reverse. This requires that teachers employ different strategies than those typically used in language teaching (Bigelow and Vinogradov 2011; Vinogradov 2010). Mr. Maahs carefully combined the oral and the written. He intentionally began with the oral allowing the LESLLA learners to start from a position of strength before turning to the written. In working on the written, Mr. Maahs incorporated early literacy strategies, such as choral reading and repetition. He also had the learners read to each other what they had written so they could assist each other in a low-stakes environment.

LESLLA learners have been accustomed to learning with others. In formal education, learners are expected to learn and work on their own, and are assessed on their individual performance, even in situations of group collaboration or mentoring. In MALP, teachers provide activities that allow for group responsibility where LESLLA learners can work together, but yet at the same time they must produce something on their own. Mr. Maahs provided many opportunities for the learners to work together and rely on each for help and support. Together, they described job photos, matched job descriptions to photos, sorted the jobs, and talked both about their jobs and one they would like to do. Nevertheless, learners were each individually responsible for presenting their work orally and producing their own written piece.

6.3. Focus on activities for learning using familiar language and content

As we have stressed, decontextualized school-based tasks and associated underlying academic ways of thinking represent hidden challenges for LESLLA learners. They are used to doing pragmatic tasks that take place in the here and now with concrete, tangible results (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). To make the hidden challenges transparent, teachers must explicitly teach classroom tasks and ways

of thinking by using familiar language and content (DeCapua and Marshall 2011; Marshall and DeCapua 2013). Leveraging language and content LESLLA learners already know allows them to concentrate fully on what is new for them – the decontextualized task and the academic way(s) of thinking on which the task is dependent.

Mr. Maahs, for instance, asked the learners to sort the jobs into categories he knew would be recognizable to them, even though they had most likely never thought about jobs in this way. By the time the learners engaged in this activity, the language and the content were familiar so that they were able to focus on the categorization activity without being distracted by new language and material. Later, Mr. Maahs had the learners match cards with job descriptions to the corresponding photos. Matching is another example of a decontextualized school-based task commonly found in textbooks and worksheets. Having practiced both the language and content previously, these were now familiar to them when they did this matching task. Such scaffolding prepares LESLLA learners for decontextualized matching tasks such as those in the same textbook in which *My dream job* appears requiring learners to match photos in the book with the printed descriptions (c.f. Sander et al 2015: 30). This type of practice also helps learners engage in print-only matching exercises, another common activity both in classrooms and on assessments.

After the learners engaged in activities related to the here and now, Mr. Maahs introduced hypothetical thinking by having them make connections between themselves, the photos, the jobs, and their dream – or at least desired – jobs. The content and most of the language were now very familiar to the learners. That which was new, the conditional, Mr. Maahs carefully scaffolded so that the learners were not overwhelmed and could concentrate on the new way of thinking, envisioning the hypothetical.

7. Conclusion

When migrants and refugees with formal education and/or training come to Germany or similar receiving countries, tasks such as My Dream Job pose primarily a linguistic challenge. For LESLLA

learners, on the other hand, the linguistic challenge is only one of several, including the primacy of print and decontextualized tasks based on academic ways of thinking. For these challenges, they require significant focused support. To this end, we introduced the MALP instructional model and examined the implementation of this model by Mr. Maahs in his vocational German class. As exemplified by Mr. Maahs, MALP moves educators away from a deficit approach, i.e., what LESLLA learners can't do to a difference view, i.e., they come with vastly different prior learning and literacy experiences. Because MALP is mutually adaptable, it honors and respects who LESLLA learners are and what they know while transitioning them to the expectations and demands of formal classrooms, the workplace, and life in modern society. The MALP model is not tied to any specific curriculum and can be infused into any curriculum, in any class, or program.

We realize that in all too many cases LESLLA learners are not identified and separated into their own classes but placed together with other low-proficiency non-LESLLA learners. We believe, however, that all learners, with appropriate differentiation practices, can benefit from MALP. For LESLLA learners, in contrast, not implementing MALP is likely to leave them feeling frustrated and alienated by classroom practices and impeding their success.

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