

Fanny Forsberg Lundell and Inge Bartning (eds.) *Cultural Migrants and Optimal Language Acquisition*. Bristol-Buffalo-Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78309-402-8. 230 pages.

The volume *Cultural Migrants and Optimal Language Acquisition* is a new contribution to Second Language Research. It is conceived in two parts: “Focus on Cultural Migrants” and “Culture as a Decisive Factor in L2 Attainment”.

The first part, which I find the most innovative, includes studies with focus on lexical richness, carried out on a special group of population defined by the authors as *cultural migrants*, “people who choose, out of their free will, to move permanently to another country and to learn the language” (2015: 2-4). This group of informants is interesting because it allows to take into account both age and social status, two important factors in SLA, usually examined separately. The informants are adults and they are socially and psychologically advantaged for the task of acquiring a second language, thus perfectly suited for exploring the positive effect of social and psychological factors on SLA. Gudmundson and Bardel’s informant group is constituted by six Swedish users of Italian, *cultural migrants* by definition, with a focus “case” on one of them. Their study analyzes lexical variation and lexical sophistication in oral production. Forsberg Lundell and Bartning study four informants at high-level of proficiency, all Swedes living in Paris. Edmonds and Guesle-Coquelet examine reported usage and perception of the *tu/vous* distinction by a group of 30 Anglophone *cultural migrants* in the South-west of France. Erman and Lewis’ study L2 English Vocabulary in long-residency Swedish migrants in London.

If it is possible for adults to reach nativelike attainment in L2, than *cultural migrants* should be the optimal group. Thus, do they reach native-likeness in their L2? Generally, the studies show that nativelikeness within the domain of lexical richness is attainable for adults. Gudmundson and Bardel’s study shows that an adult *cultural migrant* can develop a vocabulary as advanced as that of a schooled native speaker when it comes to lexical sophistication. However, it seems more difficult, but not impossible, to reach native speaker levels when it comes to lexical variation. Forsberg Lundell and Bartning’s study shows that the results from all four informants are high and fall within the native range, with nativeness within reach for one of the four long-residency users. Edmonds and Guesle-Coquelet’s study suggests that being a *cultural migrant* may be sufficient for the appropriate use of the studied aspect of sociolinguistic competence. Moreover, the feature *tu/vous* does not appear to pose problems for the cultural migrants who consider themselves highly integrated, but it does pose a problem for those who feel less integrated. In the Erman and Lewis’s multiword study, the London Swedes group was similar to the Native Speaker group in the role play, while they differed significantly in the retelling task. When it comes to lexical diversity, they do not reach native-likeness in any of the tasks.

The second part of the book includes three studies, which are not conducted exclusively on *cultural migrants* and one might question whether they are an

entirely justified addition to the book. Nevertheless, they all regard culture, here in the sense of ideas, customs and social behavior of a society, as a decisive factor in the language learning and use of L2. Diskin and Regan examine the acquisition of discourse-pragmatic features by Polish and Chinese migrants in Ireland. Their study shows the importance of taking the migratory experience into account when conducting an analysis of SLA among NNS migrants. They divided the migrants, for instance, not only by nationality, but also by type of migrant: cultural or economic. Hammer and Dewaele, on the other hand, are interested in the link between self-reported proficiency and acculturation, with Schumann's acculturation model as a starting point. The participants of their study are highly educated and professionally or academically active Polish-English bilinguals. Their study shows that the acculturation level is strongly and systematically linked to L2 proficiency self-ratings. In context of migration the L2 learner migrant acquires the target language to a degree proportional to their acculturation level. Acculturation turns out to have the strongest effect on high level of attainment in English L2. Granena also chooses Schumann's acculturation model as a theoretical starting point when she investigates the role of socio-psychological factors in a population of Chinese L1 Spanish L2 learners. She investigates whether four sociopsychological variables (self-assessment of perceived L2 learning success, identification with the L2 culture, satisfaction with one's own pronunciation and desire to pass as NS) are related to one another and to actual morphosyntactic attainment in early and late L2 learners. Granena affirms that these variables were not able to predict ultimate morphosyntactic attainment.

The studies included in this book, as pointed out by the editors, are not based on a common research program. They have not been designed together, but share a research topic area. The compilation of the studies could, thus, have made a very uneven ensemble, if the book were not neatly pulled together by its excellent introductory and concluding chapters. These two chapters act as a precious guide for the reader throughout the book. The concluding chapter, moreover, offers a development of the discussion of the studies and situates them within the current SLA State-of-the-Art. The volume questions "the exclusive focus on the Critical Period Hypothesis when discussing adult L2 attainment" (2015: 221), arguing that the motive behind migration has an important impact on adult's L2 attainment. A successful integration, for instance, seems to play an important role and can explain why many late L2 learners reach very high levels of L2 attainment and are highly functional in their L2 in their everyday lives, despite the Critical Period Hypothesis.

If we are looking for native-like levels among adults, perhaps we have been looking in the "wrong" areas. Communicative proficiency is very important when it comes to the ability to function in society as an adult. And, as the studies in this volume show, *cultural migrants* do attain native-like levels in areas that are highly significant for communicative proficiency, such as lexis and pragmatics.

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