

Book Review of Monsen, Marte and Steien, Guri Bordal (eds.) 2022. *Language Learning and Forced Migration*. Bristol, Jackson: Multilingual Matters. 222 pp.



BOOK REVIEW

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The book *Language Learning and Forced Migration* introduces the longitudinal research project *Language across Time and Space: Following UN Refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to Norway (KongNor)*, conducted by 10 scholars, all affiliated with the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. Following 12 refugees from the DRC resettled in Norway, the researchers focus on diverse aspects of forced migrants' language learning, including sociological, pedagogical, and linguistic aspects, to name only a few: the influence of gender representations in the host society on refugees' motivation to learn a new language, the role of the informal communicative space in language learning, and cross-linguistic influences in refugees' language repertoires. The overarching aim of the book has been to develop a particular research agenda in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) concerning forced migration. This aim was successfully achieved through the exploration of various issues and the in-depth depiction of language learning practices, perspectives, conditions, and contexts of a group of learners who have rarely been in focus of earlier SLA research.

The volume is divided into two parts. The first part explores learners' perspectives on and experiences with language learning in relation to various contexts and conditions. In Chapter 2, Monsen and Steien examine how male refugees' perception of gender relations in Norway influences their investment (Darvin & Norton 2023) in learning the Norwegian language. In Chapter 3, Steien draws attention to the role of social spaces, that is, the space of informal communication (e.g., street, market), in refugees' learning of Norwegian. The next three chapters focus on language learning and integration practices under the introduction program, specifically designed for newly arrived refugees to Norway and aiming at providing participants with the knowledge about the Norwegian working life and labor market. In addition, the program includes mandatory Norwegian language training (IMDI 2019; Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion 2021). Pájaro (Chapter 4) investigates how the production of bureaucratic information during formal interviews under the introduction program can disempower refugees and silence their voices when forming individual plans for labor-market integration. Monsen and Eek (Chapter 5) identify and explore different approaches

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to language teaching (translingual approach, immersion, and pragmatic strategy) implemented in three language centers. In the last chapter of this part (Chapter 6), Monsen discusses how the recognition of refugees' literacy resources developed in earlier contexts outside Norway and how offering subjectivity in the language learning process can influence motivation to invest in learning Norwegian.

The second part addresses the issues of language use and practices and the development of refugees' linguistic repertoires. The first two chapters explore linguistic varieties and cross-influences between languages by focusing on the participants' English, which was mainly learned through daily usage in Uganda. Examining the syllable structure of Congolese refugees' English, Syvertsen finds and illustrates the influence of the Ugandan language ecology on refugees' English (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8, Rørvik shifts attention to word order and presents evidence of left-dislocation in refugees' English, thus, confirming Syvertsen's conclusion about the influence of Ugandan on refugees' English. Both chapters make important predictions about potential variations of Congolese refugees' Norwegian and thus suggest practical contributions to the field of language learning and teaching. Further, Randen explores how refugee learners draw on their metalinguistic and cross-linguistic awareness to support the learning of a new language, Norwegian (Chapter 9). Following participants' progress in Norwegian throughout their first year in Norway, Jensen examines the development of syntactic complexity in refugees' oral communication and written texts (Chapter 10). Nordanger works on a similar topic and indicates individual differences in participants' syntactic development (Chapter 11). Using conversation analysis as a research method, Horbowicz explores how refugees develop their interaction competence in Norwegian as an additional language and underscores the importance of using formulas and lexically specific patterns in the development of more advanced language structures (Chapter 12).

The volume suggests several contributions to the field. One is the focus on a specific group of migrants whose language learning experiences and practices have rarely been the focus of previous research. Most studies in SLA explore issues related to work migration or students' foreign language learning abroad (May 2019), where learners deliberately choose to leave their home countries and study a new language mainly due to economic and professional reasons. Reasons for migration, as well as the migration experiences of forced migrants, considerably differ from the experiences of the earlier mentioned groups and, thus, create specific conditions. By exploring the language learning of this specific group, the volume provides new insights into SLA research and contributes to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the variety of migrant experiences.

In addition, each chapter of the volume provides a better understanding of the resettlement process and the introduction program in Norway. Refugees' resettlement is a complex process that involves not only those who migrate but also the host society and its institutions. The contributors explore Norwegian migration and integration policies through the lens of refugees' and social workers' personal experiences, which makes the volume especially valuable for the readership not familiar with the Norwegian context. For instance, when discussing male refugees' investment in language learning, Monsen and Steien (Chapter 2) illuminate gender roles in Norwegian society and their institutional construction in introduction program classes. Pájaro (Chapter 4) sheds light on bureaucratic processes that take place within the introduction program and how they form (and even restrict) participants' interactions.

Last but not least, by showing how specific living conditions and life trajectories of resettled refugees create particular settings for language learning, the authors successfully demonstrate that research at the intersection between language learning and forced migration studies requires the development of its own research agenda. Besides providing new insights, the volume suggests various directions for further research at the intersection of both fields, which may include but are not limited to the use of refugees' multilingualism as a resource in language learning and integration, refugees' investment in language learning and its dependence on the presentation of the host society in introduction classes and other societal factors, cross-linguistic influences in refugee learners' linguistic repertoires, and so on.

Aside from numerous advantages, the volume has certain limitations that suggest new directions for further research rather than undermine the value of the present issue. First, despite the book title *Language Learning and Forced Migration* the contributors explore only one type of forced migration, that is, resettlement refugees, and study the experiences of a particular group, that is, Congolese refugees who were resettled to Norway from Uganda. Admitting this limitation of the project, the contributors underline the necessity of examining other types of forced migration (e.g., asylum seekers, victims of trafficking) and groups resettled in other political contexts (see Chapter 13). The second limitation is related to the selection of participants: most of them (75%) are male refugees. This gender imbalance evidently impacts the overall focus and findings of the project making male voices more pronounced and leaving female experiences and opinions underrepresented. For instance, when examining how the availability of social informal spaces, in which language learning occurs as an outcome of other activities (e.g., purchasing goods in the market), may influence refugees' language learning (Chapter 3), Steien focuses rather on the perspective of male refugees. The issue of whether such spaces are equally important for women's language learning remains unexplored. However, such gaps create new opportunities and suggest new interesting topics for further research.

Overall, the volume *Language Learning and Forced Migration* is an important contribution to both migration studies and SLA research and will be of great value to scholars and practitioners who are interested in issues at the intersection of both fields.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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