

Danuta GABRYŚ-BARKER (Ed.). *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages*.
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A few preliminary considerations should be made before analysing the anthology *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages*, edited by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, and published by Multilingual Matters Publishing House in December 2017.

Over the past few years, *Multilingual Matters* has published two books focused on the teaching/learning of languages in older adults. The first, from 2016, by Danya Ramírez Gómez, is called *Language Teaching and the Older Adult. The Significance of Experience* (Ramírez Gómez 2016); the second one, from 2018 and edited by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, is called *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages*. A prior critical review of Danya Ramírez Gómez's work was published in 2017 in Volume 8 of the *Linguarum Arena* journal (Pinto 2017). This anthology organised by Danuta Gabryś-Barker has elicited the critical review that is included in the current volume of *Linguarum Arena*, a journal suited to the issues discussed in the two works mentioned above, since its subtitle is *Journal of Studies in Language Teaching of the University of Porto*.

The interest expressed by *Multilingual Matters* in the publication of these two works on the teaching/learning of languages in older adults – in their third age – is in line with the importance of responding to the social and cultural challenges posed by population ageing in this century. Given that the population should age with dignity and with the rights they are due, it should be expected that, among the range of offers available, there are educational programmes that contribute to achieving, to the greatest extent possible, the much heralded lifelong learning. Access to such programmes, therefore, should be a life choice for those who believe they represent a path towards higher quality ageing and a more active participation in the society to which they belong.

The publication of these two books shows a clear dual commitment on the part of *Multilingual Matters*. On the one hand, it raises awareness among both the senior population to the interest of pursuing lifelong education and the professionals whose activity may be targeted at the elderly; on the other hand, it presents what researchers in the fields of education and language, the latter seen under multiple disciplinary interpretations, can offer to those who are curious

about a matter whose complexity drives the search for further insight and deeper knowledge.

The perspective adopted in these books helps those who are willing to create educational programmes for the senior population, or those who, in one way or another, want to create workshops on different topics especially for them, raising their awareness to the fact that they are creating offers made for a very unique age group. This public requires an approach that meets their diverse characteristics, their accumulated competences and their life paths, aspects that can only be combined in a teaching/learning model grounded in gerontology.

In this context, the term “gerontology” has been used over any other expression originating in gerontology or geragogy. The choice fell on the term gerontology because its meaning is closer to the general spirit that permeates the eleven contributions of the anthology *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages*, edited by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, which we are analysing here.

What does gerontology bring as added value in comparison, for example, to educational gerontology or geragogy (even if critical) in the field of foreign languages?

Gerontology is etymologically closer to geriatrics, and, therefore, it is possible to glimpse within it some connotations with which the education for older adults would rather not be associated (Lemieux 1999), because of the age range and the diversity of profiles that this age group comprises. In turn, educational gerontology places too much emphasis on ageing (Sáez Carreras 2005). On the other hand, as Sáez Carreras (2005) argues, if the emphasis is more on education and less on the biological-social orientation inherent to educational gerontology, it thus becomes more of a gerontological view. As the author further notes, this last perspective claims that the focus should be on the subject of the education, on the person who wants to learn and who, therefore, assumes an active role in the learning process.

Contrary to (educational) gerontology, and most probably also to geragogy applied to foreign languages, the object of study of gerontology is teaching/learning, and not specifically the age of those involved in the learning process (Lemieux & Sánchez Martínez 2000). These authors also add that gerontology studies the educational practice of people who want to learn as a means to finding personal and social fulfilment. Therefore, the focus is not merely on an educational practice integrated in the ageing process.

Sáez Carreras (2005) further points out that, in gerontology, education is not the adjective, it is the name. For this author, only this way of looking at education can give it a “transformative” reading, as a process that generates physical, psychological, social and cultural repercussions in Mankind.

Gerontology should, therefore, be considered as a practice rather than as a discipline and, in turn, the gerontologist will have to be seen more as a (social) intervenor rather than as a researcher or theoretician (Sánchez Martínez 2003).

According to Lemieux and Sánchez Martínez (2000), the educational model that best fits the teaching/learning process is the competency model (or “competential” model), since it becomes the paradigm for those who attend programmes, signalling that they are acquiring a competence in order to increase their physical, psychological and social well-being. The authors also state that this model is based on what they call “self-actualisation”, i.e., the reactualisation of knowledge by seniors with the purpose of better managing their personal and social lives (Lemieux & Sánchez Martínez 2000: 487).

According to Sánchez Martínez (2003), the gerontagogue, by assuming the role of catalyst of contexts and educational processes, must understand and enhance the seniors’ communicative skills with the purpose of obtaining the best development of these processes. In this way, according to the author, the gerontagogue must keep in mind that his/her task consists of: 1) knowing and discovering the seniors; 2) leading them to attain better control over their lives, on a personal and social level; 3) encouraging them to be autonomous and able to make decisions; 4) contributing to incorporate their knowledge in the educational processes and create conditions to foster the exchange of knowledge.

For Sáez Carreras (2005), education has its own times, which are, after all, the times of the subjects themselves. These times vary from individual to individual and are not, therefore, dependent on age. According to the same author, education should provide a mental activity that allows for an autonomous, confident and self-managed life in all ages (see also Escarbajal de Haro 2003). Thus, the gerontagogic perspective is reinforced, according to which education is prioritised in relation to ageing or elderly subjects. It is important that the subject, regardless of age, wants to educate him/herself, accepts the challenge of new learnings and seeks to broaden his/her knowledge. As a person ages, it is understandable that they try to increase their knowledge because they find it relevant both to question what they already know and to clarify the doubts that have been created by their (in)formal learning.

The older adult may embrace this way of life, but such behaviour is not exclusive to the adults of that age, which leads to the problem of the “age” variable. In this case, they adopt this attitude because they have already reached, among other aspects, a level of thought that is aware of its limitations, in a reflexive, integrative attitude of relativising, in several situations, of questioning and accepting contradictory points of view, which shows their meta-cognitive abilities, wisdom and line of reasoning (Pinto 2005).

These comments that precede the review of the anthology *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages*, edited by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, are justified because they can offer clues to a cross-disciplinary theme that is very rarely researched, according to the authors of the contributions which are part of this anthology. If the adults concerned continue to require, because of their heterogeneity, both thorough and comprehensive research for their adequate understanding, the way

they learn languages, a topic that only recently has been given special attention, still needs to be further researched. The following passage by Singleton, present in the second chapter of the anthology, summarises this observation:

Throughout this whole discussion the leitmotiv has been that we are in need of more research on third age learning in general and more research which specifically focuses on older adults' capacity for and benefits from additional language learning. (p. 27).

In fact, this same idea is already emphasised by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, precisely in the last paragraph of the book's "Introduction: The background":

This volume will hopefully direct more attention to the need for research in this area and that it will become a source of interest and inspiration for other researchers to pursue this path of investigation both for the good of the field in itself but also, importantly, for its practical consequences in applying the proposals and solutions offered by the contributors to this volume in real FL third-age classrooms. (p. xxvi).

And it is taken up throughout the anthology by several authors and, again, by the volume's editor in "Concluding comments and a way forward":

scarcity of research on third-age learners, and not only in the context of FL development, makes it a must to think more thoroughly about this area of research [language learning in adulthood] from a multidisciplinary perspective and in a longitudinal fashion. (p. 207).

Another point to keep in mind concerns what is meant by older adults, who may also be older learners when they are in a learning situation, which is precisely the focus of this anthology. Older adults correspond to an age group which generally includes persons aged 65 years and over. It is, therefore, a group which covers a wide range of ages and which, as Grotek says in chapter 8 (p. 128) of this anthology, can be divided into two groups: the third agers, consisting of active and independent persons, and that of the persons in the fourth age, composed of persons already dependent on third parties. In the first chapter of this anthology, Oxford associates the third-age group with "healthy, motivated individuals who are retired, i.e., no longer working full-time." (p.3). This wide age variation, which can range up to the centenarians, naturally refers to a diversity of profiles which, as Grotek recalls, translates the effects of an "interplay of numerous factors concerning the general functioning level of an individual in the following domains: physical health [...]; cognition [...]; socio-cultural issues." (p.128). The heterogeneity observed in older adults, in seniors, as a result of the factors just described, is a good explanation for Pot, Keijzer and Bot's comments, in chapter 11 of Danuta Gabryś-Barker's

anthology, concerning a group of older migrants with a low level of literacy living in the Netherlands. They write:

The older migrants in this study (roughly between 50-70 years of age) have indeed reached their third age – when the responsibilities of a working life are a concern of the past and they can enjoy their retirement.

However, for the majority of this group, their daily lives more closely resemble the ‘fourth age’. They do not have the physical strength or social/financial means to live as a third ager and have generally, perhaps already when they would still be categorised as second agers, reached a stage of great physical deterioration and are largely dependent. (p. 178).

Therefore, it is not surprising that Pot, Keijser and Bot, following Grotek, find it useful that, in an objective definition of age, ageing be considered “an individual process of biological/physical, psychological and social factors that interact and foster change over time” (p. 178).

Lastly, it is this tapestry of interwoven factors that this anthology offers the reader when it introduces, through various disciplines, the older adult as a foreign language learner.

Since the contributions of this anthology revolve around the learning of foreign languages by the most diverse older adults and offer a plural view of these adults, based on different areas of knowledge, the option taken initially of advocating a gerontagogical educational approach is totally justified.

The volume *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages*, organised by Gabryś-Barker, a Professor of English at the University of Silesia, in Katowice, Poland, where she lectures applied linguistics and psycholinguistics with a special focus on second language acquisition and multilingualism, aims to, as we can read on the back cover, “offer the reader ideas for future research in this under-studied area and provide some practical advice for applying the proposals and solutions offered in real foreign language third-age classrooms.”

In the “Introduction. The background” (pp. xiii-xxvii), Danuta Gabryś-Barker, based on different authors, namely Danya Ramírez Gómez, begins by outlining a scenario related to learning in the third age, and then narrows it to the learning of foreign languages. She then presents the contents of the 11 chapters of this work, which are again taken up, through very complete synopses, in “Concluding comments and the way forward” (pp. 201-208), a section that in its final part bears the well-known mark of academic works, pointing as a rule to what is expected in the future.

In the introduction, it would perhaps have been relevant to take a closer look at the contributions from the latest developments in the different disciplines, some of which are even the specialisation of the volume’s editor, for a deeper argumentation of what is meant by the learning of different subjects and,

in particular, of foreign languages by older adults. In chapter 10, by Anna Niżegorodcew, there is a reference to the importance of psycholinguistic studies in foreign language teaching of senior students and to how the mentioned chapter can contribute to a theory of applied linguistics in this field. However, it is not easy to follow the way these disciplines contribute to a deeper understanding of the anthology's subject matter and to the training of the teachers who will teach foreign languages to senior adults. It would have been convenient to dissect the discourse to some degree and point out more concretely the practical contributions of psycholinguistics and linguistics applied to the teaching of languages. They are both, after all, applied disciplines in their essence. One may question whether some of the studies in the various chapters of this anthology, and even in some of their theoretical approaches, could be examined in light of (applied) psycholinguistics, functioning as an invaluable support for linguistics applied to language teaching (Slama-Cazacu 1979) in seniors as well.

It would perhaps be appropriate to leave an opening for work with language groups in older people, as Girolami-Boulinier did back in the 1980s, in France (Girolami-Boulinier 1989, 1993). In fact, not all people feel or have felt the need, or have had the opportunity, to learn additional languages. There are indeed people born in countries where the use/learning of more than one language has never been a widespread practice; however, they still need to practice the language with which they were born because it also suffers from decline (Kemper *et al.* 2001) and needs to be exercised in situations created for this purpose. This decline derives from a discourse that is limited to automatisms, as well as from the silence that might occur due to the isolation in which they often find themselves. Dedicating some time to moments of intervention filled with verbalisations based on voluntary acts is an aspect that must also be included in the agenda of those who are interested in the quality of life of seniors as agents of lifelong learning. It should be remembered that such an intervention requires both greater cognitive effort and the engagement of less-used brain areas, in addition to providing more active social participation. The first language is also learned, and should not be neglected in the populations of historically more monolingual countries who were not fortunate enough to belong to the elites that learned foreign languages. Factors such as need and motivation, not to mention time, highlighted by Grosjean (1992) as critical with regard to language learning in children, may also be pertinent in the case of language learning in older adults. The fact is that a large number of today's older learners, who are living in certain geographical contexts and did not have access to schooling that included the learning of foreign languages, are far from resembling the generation that is suffering from the effect of "hysteria instruction that is currently sweeping the globe, which has led to an escalation of English language education", as Kliesch *et al.* observe in Chapter 4 (p. 49) of this volume. This point about the group of older adults mentioned here emphasises and underlines the heterogeneity that characterises the elderly population,

an attribute that is always present in those who talk about them, and which is recurrently highlighted in this anthology.

Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages is divided into two parts: Part 1: “Foreign language learning in the third age” (pp. 3-124) consisting of 7 chapters, and Part 2: “Foreign language pedagogy in the third age” (pp. 125-200) consisting of 4 chapters. The interest of this anthology resides in the way it presents, in Part 1, the argumentation on many notions related to older learners, the dismantling of some myths about this matter and the attempt, through the results obtained in various studies, to remove prejudices that circulate without any foundation. Part 2, in turn, gives the reader not only a glimpse of what older learners expect from the educational offerings for their age, but also the thoughts of some teaching professionals when they have senior students. Do these professionals feel that they have received training that allows them to fully respond to the demands of a learner of that age? Individual differences exist in all age groups, but they are more pronounced in this one and may be responsible for a resistance to the application of “ready-to-serve” programmes. On the other hand, they may also pose gratifying learning challenges to the professionals who work with this population.

As for Part 1, Rebecca L. Oxford is the author of Chapter 1, called “A developmental perspective on third-age learning” (pp. 3-18). It introduces the notion of third age, lists the physical, cognitive, emotional and cultural changes that can occur in this stage, presents approaches and techniques that can improve learning in this age group, and, finally, speaks of herself. She is seventy years old and one of her goals is to go back to learning German, a language she stopped studying when she was 22. To conclude, Rebecca Oxford relies on several authors to show how learning languages is also basic to life and how this process should be maintained throughout life. Based on Mary Oliver’s concept of life according to which “life involves reaching out, stretching, growing, and exploring” (p.15), Rebecca Oxford extrapolates to older learners and concludes the chapter with a seminal phrase that may serve as an incentive to the continuous learning of languages: “Language learning deserves recognition as the prime arena for constantly reaching out and exploring” (p. 15).

Chapter 2 is written by David Singleton, called “Really late learners: Some research contexts and some practical hints” (pp. 19-30). The author analyses the well-known Critical Period Hypothesis and the notion of cerebral plasticity. He refers to aspects that may have an influence on the learning of additional languages in older learners and highlights, as other contributors do in this anthology, how senior adults can benefit from learning other languages. Although the author acknowledges that further research is still required, he does not shy away from writing: “It can, though, be said that we have plenty of suggestive clues indicating that second language learning experiences may benefit older individuals from a cognitive perspective” (p. 24). The heterogeneity of this age group even leads Singleton to reiterate the need to collect more data and do more research because

certain studies have yielded intriguing results. Thus, in the section of this chapter, “Teaching older learners”, the author refers to results presented by other scholars that indicate that older adults deal better with second language morphosyntax than younger adults “from exposure without full-blooded explicit explanation” (p.25). All this leads the author to conclude the chapter by recalling the need to invest more in research on learning in general, in that of the elderly, in particular, and in their ability to learn additional languages, so as to better understand this ability and the benefits that can derive from it.

Chapter 3, by David W. Green, “The interactional challenge: L2 learning and use in the third age” (pp. 31-47), is based on a neuro-linguistic approach. Studies, accompanied by neuro-imaging, are presented which contribute to discover, as far as these tests allow, what happens in certain brain areas concerning language processing in older adults. The expression “individual differences”, considered here also from the neurological point of view, appears in this chapter to point out the heterogeneity that has been mentioned on other occasions. Echoing what is also said by other contributors of this anthology, we can read on page 41: “Whilst long-term active use of two languages seems neuroprotective [...] we lack studies of the potential neuroprotective effects of the learning and use of an L2 later in life.”

Chapter 4 (pp. 48-75), by Maria Kliesch, Nathalie Giroud, Simone E. Pfenninger and Martin Meyer, called “Research on second language acquisition in old adulthood: What we have and what we need”, begins by questioning the way the age factor effect has been emphasised, as a predictor of the results that can be obtained in the learning of a L2, while underrating others such as:

the nature of input provision, the quality of teacher education, the type of curriculum, support from the social network, commitment of time and energy, individual differences, learner needs, the importance of maintaining motivation levels and integrating the L1, allocation of resources, and generally ensuring appropriate conditions of learning (p. 48).

The authors further emphasise that “the ‘earlier=better’ view has been rejected by extensive research” (p. 49), and age is seen now as a very complex factor, a ‘macro variable’. Therefore, in their opinion, learning additional languages can be considered a strategy used by older people to maintain and improve healthy ageing. Unlike previous chapters, this one contains a longitudinal study conducted over three weeks based on English as foreign language training for older adults with the objective of examining the success of language learning in the elderly. The focus of the study was to explore which factors explain the individual differences of these learners. Regarding the methodology used to cognitively evaluate the participants of this study, it is noteworthy that the authors of this chapter were sensitive to how certain means of evaluation can be difficult for the elderly. It is

very encouraging that the classic *Reading Span Test* has been replaced by a less complex test. In addition, it should also be emphasised how these authors evaluate the neurophysiological methods and alert those more attentive to the evaluation procedures of the participants of such studies to the following: “the EEG approach is much more suitable for older adults, as it does not confront them with detrimental aspects of brain scanning [fMRI], such as exorbitant noise and having to lie still in the scanner in a supine position for a considerably long period” (p. 67). The use of fMRI is also mentioned by Steve Masson (2012) as an extremely unfriendly medium that imposes limitations of application, when compared to a much younger population. These observations are important because they contribute to an awareness of the conditions to which the participants of certain studies are subjected and to how some results are obtained. The authors also consider that cognitive fitness and the ability to learn a L2 in older adults are two sides of the same coin. They observe that interdisciplinary approaches, complemented by a neurophysiological perspective, may also be relevant for studies in the areas of FL geragogy, brain ageing and neuroplasticity. The authors conclude the chapter recommending the use of the event-related brain potentials (ERP) approach in studies on L2 learning in older adults, as they provide both behavioural responses and information on online language processing.

Chapter 5 (pp. 76-90), by Mirosław Pawlak, Marck Derenowski and Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak, called “The use of indirect language learning strategies by third age learners: Insights from a questionnaire study”, is a call for more research on the teaching/learning of foreign languages in the senior population. Since it will be important to train teachers for this audience, it is important that these teachers have a more in-depth knowledge of them. This chapter, like the previous one, also contains an empirical part; however, the means used to analyse the data gathered on language learning strategies are more accessible and user friendly, which might appease those who wish to do research in this area. A questionnaire was applied to Polish senior students who were attending a course of English as a foreign language. The authors’ results underline the peculiarities of older learners, who simply cannot be equated with adult learners. The results obtained also show that it is not enough to be qualified to teach this age group. It is also necessary to be aware of the needs of this population when it comes to teaching, in this specific case, additional languages. The authors willingly share with the reader that:

even the data obtained from the limited sample with the help of a questionnaire strongly indicate that senior language learners are not very strategic when it comes to planning, monitoring and self-evaluating their learning, many of them find it difficult to cope with anxiety and other affective states, and they often fail to successfully cooperate with their peers or take full advantage of the presence of the teacher. (p. 88).

In view of the answers obtained, it is not surprising that the chapter ends by drawing attention to the need for teacher training, which should also include an option that covers the teaching of the elderly.

Chapter 6 (pp. 91-107), by Monika Grotek and Agnieszka Ślezka-Świat, “Balance and coordination vs reading comprehension in L2 in late adulthood”, discusses motion sickness, a disease affecting one-third of the population and which corresponds to vestibular proprioceptive (balance and coordination) disorders. It is not surprising the authors are interested in this disease since it affects more often the older population and might affect the verbal skill perceived as easier for those who study foreign languages, i.e., reading comprehension. Therefore, the authors conducted a pilot study with the objective of comparing, in reading tasks, U3A students with and without vestibular proprioceptive disorder. The results found point to the importance of implementing a planned balance training program in both groups because, according to the authors, it “has a potential to improve the elderly students’ confidence as far as physical and mental control is concerned” (p.105). In fact, it can improve not only L2 reading on a sensory and focusing level, but also provide a better quality of life to those suffering from this disease. A study based on the technique of “eye tracking” seems to be necessary for a deeper understanding of this deficiency, since some compensation strategies, possibly developed throughout the course of life, have been confirmed in reading tasks. Although it is a more focused and more technical chapter, it is important to highlight the relevance of its inclusion in this anthology and, once again, the need to proceed with research in this area so that action can be taken to reduce the unpleasant effects of this disorder.

Chapter 7 (pp. 108-124), the last of Part 1, by Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel and Magdalena Szyszka, called “Compensatory strategies in senior foreign language students”, emphasises the learning of languages in the third age as one of the aspects of successful ageing. As we can see from the title, the study proposes to examine the types of compensatory strategies chosen or rejected by older learners, according to the view presented by the successful ageing model. The study in this chapter, and of whose limitations the authors are very aware, had four senior Polish participants (three female and one male) and the instruments used, designed and implemented in the participants’ first language, were a biodata questionnaire and an interview. The interview, consisting of twelve open-ended statements, aimed to explore the compensatory strategies used by participants as they spoke. Following the procedure adopted in this study, the authors give examples of the participants’ responses and consider that the results obtained leave room for some optimism. The authors go as far as to affirm that the results of the study “optimistically appear to imply that learners at that specific age heavily rely on such strategies, which confirms the important role of compensation in all walks of life of the elderly, language learning among others.” (p. 120). The authors’ final message points to the identification of language learning as an experience that induces high levels of

satisfaction, control and fulfilment in those who are able to take advantage of their past learning and language experiences of any kind to deal with new experiences such as those related to new technologies.

Part 2 of this anthology, called “Foreign language pedagogy in the third age”, could be divided into two sub-parts: the first consisting of chapters 8, 9 and 10, and the second of chapter 11, the content of which differs from those of the previous chapters, as the focus is put on an elderly migrant population living in the Netherlands who are genuinely struggling with language problems in their real life.

Chapter 8, by Monika Grotek, is called “Student needs and expectations concerning foreign language teachers in universities of third age” (pp. 127-144). Chapter 9, by Marek Derenowski, is called “Identifying the characteristics of foreign language teachers who work with senior learners” (pp. 145-160), and Chapter 10 (pp. 161-175), by Anna Nizęgorodcew, is called “Teaching English to senior students in the eyes of teacher trainees”.

Monika Grotek, intending to investigate the needs and expectations of senior students regarding foreign language teachers, conducted a study at the University of the Third Age in Katowice, Poland, which involved analysing personal narratives written by senior students on the topic “Advice for a foreign language teacher intending to work at U3A” (p.132). The narratives naturally pointed in several directions, according to the diversity of interests and needs of the elderly population, which is heterogeneous by nature. In the chapter’s conclusion, the author shares one of the lessons she drew from the narratives analysed, which is thus summarised:

as each group of learners in late adulthood is characterised by a high learner individuality profile, the most important thing is to start each course with a needs analysis including questions about the students’ expectations of the teacher style and approach including the features resulting from the teacher’s professional training, knowledge and abilities (linguistic, methodological, geragogical and sociological), as well as the personal traits emergent in the classroom and having the potential of shaping the community of learners (p. 143).

Marek Derenowski also expresses her interest in characterising the profiles of those who teach foreign languages to seniors. After outlining some considerations about ageing as a complex and heterogeneous process with inevitable implications for those who have to work with learning elders, the author presents the study conducted with 15 participants attending English as a foreign language course at the University of Applied Sciences in Konin, Poland. The study, although small-scale aimed to identify through interviews the characteristics of foreign-language teachers working with senior learners, since, as she says, “[a]ccording to research done by Socrates Grundvig Education and Culture Center, there is no specified

methodology for learners who are 50+” (p.153). From the conclusions to be drawn from this study, we can start by saying that teaching senior adults is not comparable to teaching adults. Senior adults do not react with the same emotional indifference in the classroom, nor do they have the same reasons for attending language courses. Since we should not generalise from this study alone that senior learners constitute a distinct group, the reader of this chapter is again faced with the observation already made by other contributors of this anthology and with what scholars in this area usually say: “there is a strong incentive for further research” (p.159), in this case concerning the characteristics of the teachers of senior adults. In fact, it is not enough to be experienced and qualified, the teachers of senior adults must know this age group well and know how to correspond to their specificities and limitations. Marek Derenowski’s warning, to close the chapter, is the following: “educational concerns related to senior learners should be included in teacher training of pre-service teachers as well as in-service teachers” (p.159).

Anna Niżegorodcew focuses once more on the proliferation of the demand for language courses by seniors in Poland and expresses the need to prepare the teachers who have to teach this age group. The study presented by the author, an action research study, emphasises how teacher trainees view the teaching of English as a foreign language to senior students. As the author observes, this action research study shows that teacher trainees are already capable of going to the field, although some feel insecure if they do not have more theoretical and practical guidelines. Anna Niżegorodcew returns to the idea, which she had already conveyed, that educational programmes for senior adults related to language teaching require a great deal of research in psycholinguistics and education. In addition, she hopes that the study presented may contribute to the development of a theory of applied linguistics concerning senior foreign language students. This theory would change the way we look at the concept of success when it comes to studying additional languages. At the end of the chapter, the author writes:

Instead of measuring progress in foreign language learning in terms of the number of acquired structures and vocabulary items, it should focus on the senior students’ sense of developing purposeful intellectual activity and agreeable social contacts (pp. 174/175).

Anna Pot, Merel Keijzer and Kees de Bot are the authors of chapter 11 the content of which presents an important and very contemporary practical side. The authors draw attention to the need for low literacy immigrants to learn foreign languages because, living in countries where the languages spoken are not their own, they will certainly need them to solve many of the problems they face daily. Based on this elderly population, they discuss: 1) the concepts of age, old age and bilingual advantage; 2) the necessary duration of the training, in the case of language learning, in order to have cognitive effects; 3) the social aspects of ageing;

4) language as an individual and dynamic system that changes with environmental interaction; 5) the importance of input; and 6) the benefits of learning more complex materials comparable to language learning. The terms “illiteracy” and “low-literate adults” are also present because not all the migrants who are studied in this chapter have the required qualifications (literacy and schooling) and motivation to successfully learn languages. Despite the need to learn additional languages, since they age in places where these languages are spoken, the authors consider that language learning success should be related to how that learning is perceived. Pot, Keijzer and Bot add that, in these cases, the objective should be the language as an instrument and not as a subject to be mastered with proficiency. According to the authors, the perception of the language as an instrument will have to be done “not only in the practical sense of better social-participation and communication, but also in enabling larger cognitive changes in an individual” (p.196). They further highlight the social effects, which occur earlier than the cognitive ones in the process of learning additional languages. It should also be noted what Pot, Keijzer and Bot consider as interesting, and which deserves to be particularly highlighted:

Especially for the group of dependent migrants with low educational experience and high levels of illiteracy, L2 training may be beneficial first and foremost in decreasing L2 anxiety and increasing self-esteem, through which independence and social wellbeing are boosted. (p. 196).

As far as the dependent migrants are concerned, the said passage did not overlook the important advantages that the learning of additional languages may bring to this population. This learning means, at the very least, that this group of people will be able to enjoy part of the freedom that any human being pursues. In these circumstances, the learning of foreign languages by older adults, particularly by older dependent migrants, assumes an unequivocally unique status.

This volume begins with “Contents” (pp. v and vi), followed by a list of “Contributors” (pp. vii-xi) and ends with an “Index” (pp. 209-213), which includes the keywords present in the anthology.

To conclude the analysis of the work edited by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages*, it is important to congratulate all the contributors of this anthology for the work accomplished, with the hope that the message they convey can be heard and that more research can be done in this area and in more countries, since heterogeneity is at the same time a characteristic of seniors adults and of their diverse countries of origin.

The present review is no more than a reading of the work by someone who has specific training and to whom certain matters speak undeniably louder than others. To work the language with older adults should be a mandatory point on

the agenda of the practices to be applied to this population. Those older adults who have never learned a foreign language, and who do not feel the need or the motivation to do so, still have the opportunity to work on their first languages. They may thus not be limited to the mere exercise of routine verbal performances or to a silence which will lead them to isolation, reproachable on every level. In order to activate a L1 practice, similar to that advocated for foreign languages, it will also be necessary to prepare trainers who will then teach, preferably following a gerontagogical perspective. This type of educational approach is recommended because it responds better to the typical heterogeneity of seniors and places more emphasis on the learning process than on age, a variable which is difficult to identify in the population concerned.

Echoing the voices of those who collaborated in this valuable contribution to a better understanding of seniors and the benefits they may derive from learning additional languages, regardless of whether these are indispensable or not to their daily lives, we too call for more research to be done in this area and that those who create courses may also be more open to providing training to the professionals who wish to work in the field of education with this age group.

Finally, with the intention of highly recommending this book, this deliberately long review ends with a quote by its author, written to publicise the work *Third Age Learners of Foreign Languages* and which is part of one of the two cover quotes that appear on the back cover:

This is an excellent contribution to challenge the quality of foreign language (FL) learning/teaching approaches offered in a broad spectrum of educational programmes for senior citizens. Its rich, extremely useful and multidisciplinary content provides important insights into older learners' profiles, shows the added value of FL learning and highlights the need for trained instructors. It is a mandatory book for senior FL education and a perfect guidebook to improve self-awareness of those experiencing ageing processes.

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