Faculti Summary

The speaker conducted research on language learning and identity among women participating in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), where they were teachers for nearly nine years. The AMEP, a federally funded program, offers English classes to new migrants with beginner to intermediate English proficiency. The study explored how learning English affected these women's sense of self, aspirations, and family relationships, also considering how societal constructs impact their identities.

The speaker noted a shift in the program's focus, as there was increased pressure from the government to align language education with economic goals, making English proficiency a commodity essential for employment rather than a tool for personal growth or cultural integration. This video video framing resulted in migrants being perceived as deficient in language skills, which led to self-blame when they faced barriers to employment, despite possessing functional levels of English. The research utilized qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, to understand the women's experiences over a 22-month period.

Findings highlighted the differences in experiences and feelings of inclusion among migrant women based on race, with European women expressing optimism about their future in Australia, while Asian women reported experiences of everyday racism and exclusion. The study emphasized that societal attitudes towards race and language proficiency significantly impact migrant success and highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach to language learning in settlement programs. It suggests recognizing migrants as emerging bilinguals rather than deficient English speakers and advocating for recognition of their full language capabilities in the labor market.

The speaker's findings will be included in a forthcoming book that combines data from multiple ethnographic studies, aiming to provide broader insights into language learning and social inclusion among migrants.