

Growing old in an L2 environment

The case of Turkish migrants in the Netherlands

Context

Older migrants who age in a second language (L2) environment, may encounter hurdles on the route to healthy aging.

26% Older adults in NL in 2040

8,5% Non-western older adults in NL in 2030

61% Of Turkish older adults have depressive symptoms

60% Of Turkish older adults lack proficiency in Dutch



Question

Does L2 proficiency influence Turkish older female migrants' process of healthy aging?

Approach



37 Turkish female older adults (55+), distributed across the Netherlands



Recorded interviews about language history, proficiency, attitude, health, healthcare and quality of life

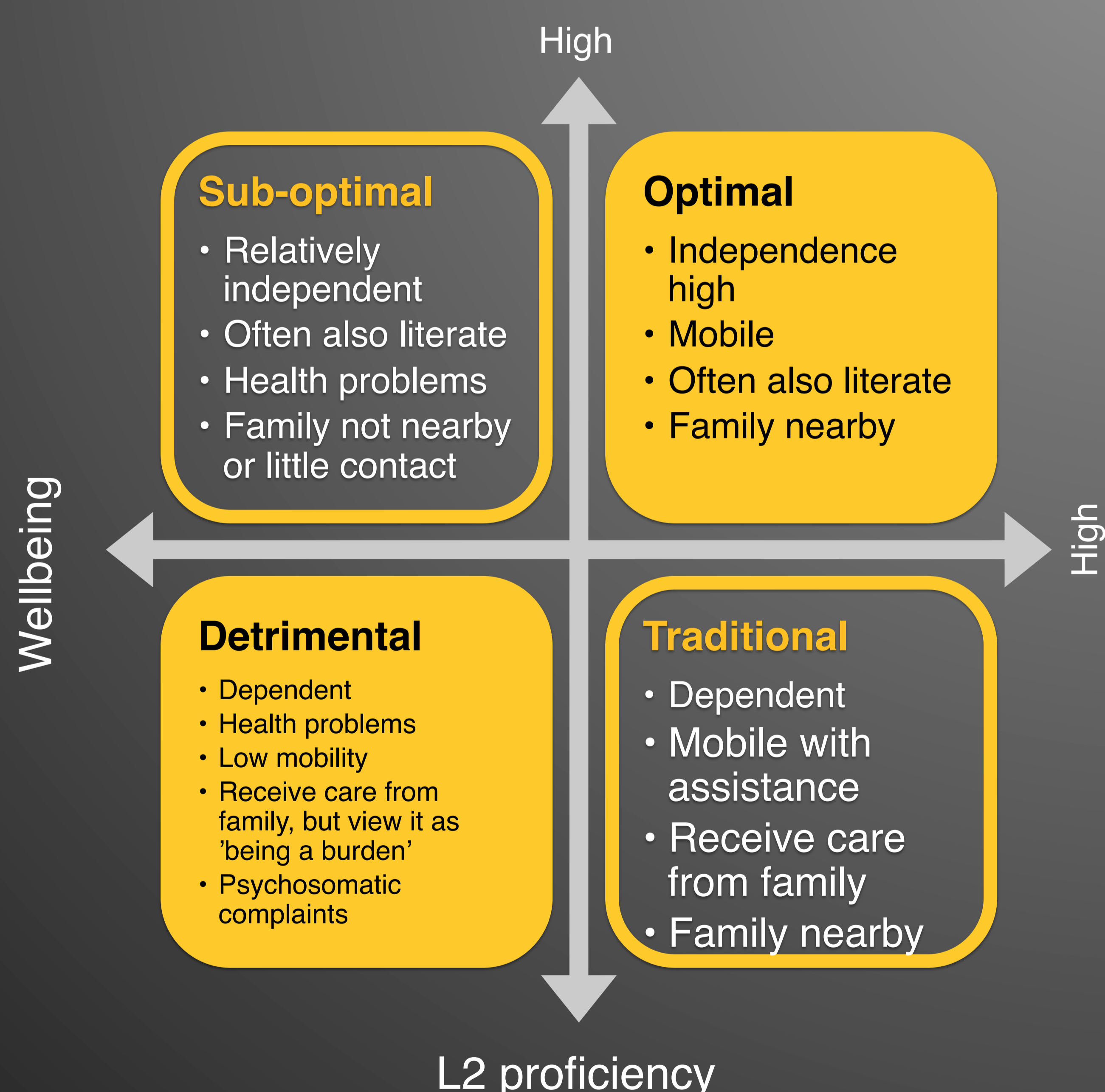


Literacy task, picture-description task (L2) and Corsi Blocks working memory task



Aging is a dynamically interacting process, in which changes in one dimension, e.g. stiff joints, hold consequences for other dimensions, e.g. reduced mobility and less social interaction.

Results



4 Profiles of aging migrants, based on L2 level and degree of wellbeing. Not all characteristics of a profile are equally applicable to individuals.

Factors related to high wellbeing:

- Relative good physical health
- Family in vicinity
- Independence, or;
- Dependence: family care as traditionally expected

Factors related to high L2 proficiency:

- Contact with Dutch neighbours
- Level of education & literacy
- Work and motivation

Conclusion

Limited L2 proficiency induces dependence. Dependence may lead to less or more stress, restricted mobility and reduced social interaction. Lack of L2 proficiency and literacy creates a barrier to access healthcare services and information, and restricts mobility.

Low L2 proficiency can be compensated for by family care when it is perceived as an asset. When family care is absent or felt as burdensome, psychosomatic complaints ensue and social isolation is looming.

Contact



university of
 groningen

faculty of arts

Anna Pot, MA

a.pot@rug.nl