

Translation of educational material for migrants

Abstract

Having access to a classroom where the education is being offered in their mother tongues is a non-negotiable right of the migrants. The growing number of migrants all over the world, with speedier continuum in developed countries, highlights the need for having sufficient and proper educational materials in migrants' originating languages in host countries. To address this need, strategic planning for developing and disseminating educational material is of urgent priority. That the translation plays an undeniable role in such plan is truly undeniable, but the point to be emphasized here is that the strategists, education policy-makers of the host countries, and the translators should identify and incorporate into translation projects the most pressing educational needs of students. The emphasis would better be placed on developing materials as part of a strategic initiative to publicize education in their native languages, and reach an educational system that, while being easily integrated to hosting society aim-wise, is in full consistency with the migrant community social and cultural-wise.

A comprehensive approach for selection of educational material for translation should take into account the societal, economic, religious and organizational factors that define the environment in which the translated educational material are to be provided to students. Material development would ideally be in the context of a plan that considers the significant cultural barriers that a migrant student usually encounters in the hosting society.

It is one thing to say the world has a moral responsibility to protect migrant languages; it is another thing to act upon it.

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Introduction

During last decades, the migrant population has dramatically increased in most European countries by a higher rate in the southern countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece) with people coming from Africa as well as Asia. The rapid increase in the foreign population with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, most of whom having children who have never had previous contact with the language and culture of the host country, poses many challenges out of which communicational and educational problems are at the core. Researchers, trainers and professionals in translation and interpretation realms agree that, while being a fundamental issue, little attention has been paid for providing education to migrant students by seeking help from the so-called 'bridge-makers' or 'translators' who have the potential to reconcile the two different cultures (source and target) by embedding source language cultural codes in balance with target language cultural codes at core of the educational material translated by them while trying to stimulate integration amongst the migrant students with emphasis on preservation of their 'heritage languages and cultures'.

For purpose of the present paper, the migrant children are defined as either those born in another country (within or outside Europe) or children whose parents were born in another country. Thus the term 'migrant children' provided in present paper covers various situations, which could well be referred to in other contexts as 'children of migrant background' or 'newly arrived children'. Such children may be born to families with different legal status in the host country – families holding full residence permits, asylum seeking families, and/or families with no any kind of residence permit and right.

Endangered migrant languages

It is a non-negotiable reality that language policies with a language-as-source orientation can and do definitely have undeniable impact on attempts exercised in promoting the vitality and revitalization of

'endangered' languages of the migrants. It is of course in no way at all claimed that protecting and promoting the languages of the migrants is solely a matter of declaring a language policy which embeds translation activities in its core to that effect. There, rather, are ample evidence to the contrary.¹

In a language ideology formed on the idea of the promotion of transesthnification, instrumentalism, and nationalism, US language ideologies as an instance, it is difficult to find a due place for state-supported programs of language education that would ultimately lead to promotion and full use or development of two or more languages in school, and that would result in appearance of a kind of bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate versatility encapsulated in the migrants double plea to learn the new and maintain the old. The first principle for providing educational material for such migrant through translation is that the more the contexts of their learning allow to-be bilinguals to draw on all points of the continua of bilitracy, the greater would be the chances for their total biliterate development. That is, the translated material have to portray and make available a kind of context where the learning process allows migrant students to draw on oral-to-literate, monolingual-to-bilingual, and micro-to-micro phenomena; to utilize both L1 and L2 productive and receptive skills; and ultimately to receive both simultaneous and successive exposures, with attention to both similar and dissimilar aspects of language structure, and to convergent and divergent aspects of language scripts.

There is also accumulating consensus, in both research and practice, that enrichment models of bilingual education which in case of one of them has translated material at its core offer much potential for both majority and minority learners' academic success. French immersion programs of Canada are of such models; two-way bilingual education is another. In fact, any model which aims at providing bilingual education aided by translational activities should have a basic principle that 'the program structure recognizes that the minority language is not only a due right of the migrants

in educational programs, but also a potential resource for majority language speakers'.²

Humanitarian standards

Multilingual and multicultural education based on the migrants mother-tongue has emerged as a practical necessity in today's globalized world claiming to value 'humanitarian' to its best degree. There is a need, but of course very less motives, for a broader understanding of intercultural and multilingual education as a continuum of education based on mother tongue aided by translated educational materials.

Looking at the issue from a humanitarian perspective, the authorities and language policy-makers have to note the many conventions which emphasize education in mother tongue of the minority communities. Following is one of them: Part 'C' of the first section of the 5th Article of the 'Convention against Discrimination in Education' states that the States Parties to this Convention agree that it is essential to recognize the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools and, depending on the educational policy of each State, the use or the teaching of their own language, provided however:

- i. That this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole and from participating in its - activities, or which prejudices national sovereignty;
- ii. That the standard of education is not lower than the general standard laid down or approved by the competent authorities;
- iii. That attendance at such schools is optional.

Collective linguistic rights and the role of translation in facilitating access to such a right

Collective linguistics rights denote "the rights of a linguistic group to ensure the survival of its language and to transmit the language to future generations". In countries where there are clear-cut legal provisions for safeguarding languages of minority groups against assimilation, translation comes in vogue as the policy-makers understand that any linguistic community assign different roles to their language; the role which could define their present and future life perspectives necessitating precise attention when the translated texts are intended for pedagogical objectives. In a country like Turkey where Kurdish speakers are deprived of manifesting any kind of attachment to their linguistic roots, there is a kind of 'assimilation oriented' policy which imposes 'prohibition' when it comes the turn for 'minority community' to maintain their linguistic rights. On the contrary, 'Basque Nominalization Law' allows promotion of the Basque language, and the kind of 'maintenance-oriented' linguistic policy followed assigns particular roles to 'translators and translated materials'. As a matter of fact, if a kind of balance or a neutral point between assimilation-orientation and maintenance-orientation in policy-making process is to be reached at, the role of intermediaries who are a part of and/or a native (or even native-like) of both linguistic communities must not be neglected. This assumes much more sensitivity when the job is to render educational material for the minority groups, especially migrants who are introduced to host (mainly developed) countries continuously.³⁻⁵

Why Europe?

Despite the growing integration and interconnection among wide disparate regions of Europe and expanding spheres over which the European Union has regulatory power, mother-tongue based education issue of the migrants has not typically been identified as a significant

aspect of EU education policymaking, and has rarely been accorded much priority. Though, to some extent, language use has been regulated within European Union institutions in the form of fiercely defended principle of equality for all national language in education, in other areas, particularly those related to the many autochthonous non-state languages for education in Europe, it seems that a lack of planning has been the norm rather than the exception.⁶

The extent to which the European Union has, could, or even should get involved in language matters like translation in general, and migrants' mother-tongue education in particular, is a matter of ongoing debate.

Due to massive immigration and introduction of several migrant languages in the EU, policy-makers are confronted with the urgent need for a strategic approach for their translational and multilingual communication policies. Indeed, translation policies play a key role in minorities' language rights and integration.⁷

In the EU, there are two major types of policy with respect to mother tongue tuition for immigrant students. The first approach includes providing tuition under bilateral agreements reached at between the host country and the originating countries of the migrants. In Liechtenstein, for example, such classes are financed by embassies, consuls, or cultural associations of the originating countries of the migrant students. For the purpose of this approach, the role that translation could play is of utmost significance for there might not be well-observed balance in providing access to both the host and the originating language specificities. It becomes even more important when the 'education phenomenon' is at stake for an all-encompassing issue like education demands broader-level organization, policymaking, curricula designing, and implementation. Nevertheless there is no umbrella bilateral agreement for these initiatives.

Based on this approach, the resources to be provided and the decisions to be made are shared between the two countries party to the agreement. The teachers are ordinarily employed by the originating countries letting them have considerable pedagogical autonomy, and the facilities and infrastructures are provided by the host country. The education provided under bilateral agreements in EU is by definition designed for pupils from certain countries in particular, the number of which varies from one country to another (Figure 1).

Host country	Country of origin
French Community of Belgium	Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal and Turkey
Flemish Community of Belgium	Greece, Italy, Morocco, Spain and Turkey
Germany	Croatia, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Turkey
Spain	Morocco and Portugal
France	Algeria, Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey
Luxembourg	Portugal
Slovenia	Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Montenegro, Russia and Serbia

Figure 1 Party countries to bilateral agreements on mother tongue education of migrant students.

Source: Eurydice.

The second approach, which is more common, is to follow the very humanitarian right that all migrant students have the right to mother tongue education, albeit ordinarily subject to a minimum demand threshold being met and the needed resources being available. This approach is the executable one country-wide. The educational system based on this approach places translational activities at its core. Systemic and systematic efforts to provide educational translated material are observed in this approach. Socio-cultural codes of both communities (host and receiver) are highly observed and the instructors are well-familiarized with both.^{8,9}

The various regulations and recommendations on providing mother-tongue education based on translational activities for migrant

students cover both primary and secondary education. In some cases like the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium as well as in Spain, translational activities covering language and culture of origin are organized from the pre-primary level under bilateral agreements. In Sweden, the curriculum for this education level emphasizes the significance of providing the migrant students with opportunities to develop their knowledge of mother tongue based skills and abilities. Norway has adopted the plan issued by the Ministry of Education and Research on the content and aims of Pre-Primary education which consolidates that schools must support immigrant children whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction, while simultaneously fostering their command of Norwegian.

Estonia, France, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom (England and Wales) have taken measures to include the originating languages of the migrant students in their educational curricula. In the UK, schools have usually been able to offer languages spoken by their pupils within their modern foreign languages curriculum. However, the need to include at least one official EU language in their offer was lifted only from 2008, and schools have the option now to offer a world language instead. These measures along with translation services are intended to facilitate offering diversity-based education for the local migrant communities.

Indeed, a number of EU states have recently established strategic planning related to the phenomenon of migration in their educational systems that regard the linguistic diversity linked to the mother tongue of migrants as an advantage rather than a drawback, and have started cultivation of such diversity.¹⁰

In Germany, a 2007 statement entitled 'Integration as a chance-together for more equality' issued jointly by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and organizations for people of migrant backgrounds emphasized in particular the significance of inclusion of the migrants' originating languages in everyday school life.

Some countries have chosen a fusion of approaches: education in mother tongue under bilateral agreements along with education organized by the national education system (Slovenia).

In most of the EU countries where there are large introductions of migrants, national strategic policies that value linguistic and cultural diversity in the education system do exist. Overall, a vast majority of the countries has adopted measures to introduce, support, and strengthen mother tongue education for migrant students, but many opine that the implementation of such measures could be hindered by their dependence on the human resources available.

Among the human resources, the role that translators could play is pivotal. The translated materials are in fact the backbone for any kind of education provided in host countries in migrants' mother tongues for both the integration and independence of the migrants are duly respected. The translations in such countries are done mainly by two main bodies: a) the government administration and public institutions, b) the NGOs, immigration associations and trade unions. The findings show an increasing number of translated texts accompanied by a growing awareness about the migration phenomenon and the urgency to build a multicultural society. This has become more apparent noting the rising number of conferences, seminars, decrees and regional migration plans.

So in Europe:

1. Education policy includes language policy, which in turn includes translation policy (implied or explicit); and because the linguistic

rights debate is highly theoretical, it generally fails to consider the rights of the migrants who speak a language other than that of the host territory and, thus, the role of translation still remains a blind spot;

2. A concern is if translation policies are implemented to facilitate the participation of all migrant students, regardless of the language they speak, as is expected in the public arena;
3. Because policy is hard to define or measure, looking at enactments into law is a tangible means to explore policy.

In fact any kind of curriculum organization, pedagogy, and social relations are shaped by a larger underlying identity plan. The policy-makers should note that any minority community is positioned in social and power hierarchies based on the language and literacy practices provided to them. When the issues like negotiative transformative processes of language revitalization, language maintenance, or indeed language shift are at stake, the role of the educational professionals beside translators and members of language minority communities assumes utmost significance because nowadays is an increasing recognition of the role of language education professionals as language policy makers, be it classroom practitioners, program developers, material and textbook writers, advisors, academics, or administrators. From the 'language as resource' perspective it could again be emphasized that key considerations for the education of immigrants are bicultural/biliterate/bilingual versatility, the continua of biliteracy, and enrichment-model bilingual education where the host society culture along with the minority culture are in such a harmony which establishes a kind of long-lasting balanced mutual understanding between the source and target communities.¹¹

Noting the constraints imposed by educational aims and reality of current policies in Europe in general and UK in particular, it is noticed that the language rights of the children rarely assumes priority equal to the content-based aims of secondary education. Indeed there is much more that can be done to celebrate rather than tolerate the diversity introduced by immigrants in Europe. A serious commitment to provision of the rights of the migrant children to be educated in their originating language requires a kind of systematic effort, which is partly based on translational activities, and that cannot necessarily be handled by an add-on programs or policy. In that sense, language rights form a 'language as resource' provision and are not a question of automatic 'concession on demand', but rather of control and choice among potential alternatives, in balanced considerations of other probabilities.

The point of emphasis here is that the migrants should be empowered in such a way which allows them to make choices about which languages and which literacies to promote for which purposes. The basic principles in doing so must be 'observance of balance' for mutual protection of both the source and target languages. Among the balances that must be struck across competing language rights are those between tolerance-oriented and promotion-oriented rights, between individual and communal freedoms, between freedom to use one's language and freedom from being discriminated against for doing so, and between "claims to something" and "claims against someone else". These very delicate and ethical choices must be made noting that the best qualified to do so are the migrants themselves. The core argument here is that there is consistent and compelling evidence that language and education policy of the host countries serve as vehicles for promoting vitality, versatility, and stability of the migrants' vanishing languages leading to deprivation of the migrant students of their right 'rights' to participate in the social activities of the host countries.¹²

Based on our discussions, the following should be considered while making translation policies in EU countries:

1. Existence of an understanding of the role of international law in shaping national and regional translation policies;
2. Existence of comprehensive insights into how educational material translation is implemented (or not) as a way to integrate migrants in the host community;
3. Existence of comprehensive insights into how to increase involvement of private/public institutions in research training in educational material translation by initiating joint research training, which could lead to sustainable cooperation;
4. Existence of an awareness of the scope and relevance of educational translation within academia.

So, any kind of policy towards education material translation for the migrant students and mother tongue based education should involve:

1. Valuing all migrant students equally;
2. Increasing participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula, and communities of local schools;
3. Structuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools in a way as to respond to the diversity of migrant students in the host community;
4. Looking at differences between students as resources for strengthening learning, rather than obstacles that need to be overcome;
5. Acknowledging the right of migrant students to an education in their originating languages;
6. Fostering mutually sustainable relationships between schools and migrant communities;
7. Increasing awareness on the part of policy makers of the need for EMT;
8. Providing for budget matters in any planning.

Conclusion

In the area of educational material translation there is still a long way to go, but the first steps have been taken. For example, a) the development of training courses including topics of terminology, ethics, or translation strategies (University of Vic, University of Jaume I, University of Alcalá, University of Granada), b) the intensive cooperative research of networks (COMUNICA, FITISPos, CRIT, GRETI), c) the exchanging of experiences in workshops, conferences

and specialized conferences could be good initiatives. To sum up, it could be stated that further cooperation between Academic Bodies, Administration, NGOs, Public Service as well as Private Business is needed to develop specific research and training programs in the area of 'Education Material Translation'.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that they have no direct or indirect conflicts.

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