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# Changing Routes, Changing Needs: Perspectives on Migration and Language Teaching in Europe

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## ABSTRACT

The paper explores the relations among language policies, immigration policies and language teaching as a broad frame for adult literacy and L2 learning in Europe. It discusses the place of languages in immigration policies, focusing on the policies promoted by the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (CoE) through legislative acts and guidelines. Two turning points are relevant: the laws on language requirements introduced by many European countries for either residence or citizenship, and the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, both of which have imposed new tasks on all stakeholders. European policies seem to be ambivalent: while access to the host country's language is recommended as a means of integration and is supported through funding, the position of migrant languages is still unclear in the social, cultural, educational and institutional space and in European public discourse on languages, which gives a key role to multilingualism.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the UNHCR, we are witnessing the greatest flows of displaced people since the Second World War, with 65.6 million forcibly displaced people and, among them, nearly 22.5 million refugees (UNHCR, 2017). Although the main countries in critical areas are outside Europe and North America, the management of these flows is at the top of the political agenda in Western countries. The European "refugee crisis" or "migrant crisis" in 2015, when about 1,000,000 people fled to Europe, was the turning point in both policies and Europeans' views on immigration. Europe's inability to receive adequately a sudden and massive influx of migrants and the rise of xenophobia and racism in

European populations led to a re-thinking of existing policies for migrant integration (European Commission, 2016).

In 2017, some 20.7 million residents were citizens of non-member states, called "third-country nationals," while 33.5 million inhabitants were born outside the European Union. About 16 million EU citizens live in a member state of the Union other than the one where they were born.[1] The data do not include irregular migrants, who live in a member state without residence and/or work permit and are the most probable victims of racism and the most vulnerable on the labour market, in housing and in education (FRA, 2017). An extensive provision of language courses is offered to the resident migrants. According to a Report of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 26 out of 28 EU Member States now provide some funding for language-learning programmes as part of either educational or integration programmes (FRA, 2017). Thus, it can be affirmed that adult migrants have acquired the possibility to learn the language (or languages) of their European host country in the last two decades, although language courses vary considerably in quality, target groups of learners, and providers (from state institutions to volunteers). Languages play a major role in the public debate on integration and the linguistic knowledge of migrants is increasingly subject to legal regulation.

The refugee crisis puts the already fragile reception framework on the line. Even if the number of people applying for asylum Europe has sharply decreased (to 178,500 in 2017) due to political factors, such as the EU-Turkey agreement, border regulations in Hungary, and the Italy-Libya agreement, the management, reception and possible integration of refugees remains a priority. 645,000 people asked for international protection in 2017, mostly in Germany (198,255), Italy (126,550), France (82,135), Greece (53,160), and the United Kingdom (30,545) (Eurostat, 2017).[2] The recent *Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals*, issued by the European Commission (2016) as a response to the social and political emergency, includes for the first time refugees and asylum seekers in migrant groups targeted by integration policies, previously limited to legally resident migrants and their families.

Language teaching to refugees is provided in many European countries by state and public institutions, NGOs and volunteers, according to the national laws and the financial resources allocated. An overview is not yet available, especially with regard to adult education programmes. Nevertheless, specificities of L2 teaching to asylum seekers and refugees settled in Europe are emerging from case studies, educational projects, and teacher experiences.

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[1] All citizens of the 28 EU member states (2017) are automatically EU citizens and have extra rights and responsibilities, such as the right to live and move within the EU without discrimination because of their nationality, and the right to participate in the political life of the Union. Citizens of non-member states are not EU citizens, and their statuses, rights and responsibilities are regulated by national and European laws and by international treaties. The number of inhabitants born outside the EU has mere statistical value, since they can be either EU or non-EU citizens.

[2] Since 2017, the trend has been towards a further decrease in the number of arrivals of asylum seekers.

"Refugees" have many possible legal statuses: irregular, applicant, asylum seeker, appealing against rejection, migrant under subsidiary protection, refugee, subject to an expulsion order. Some of them have reached the desired country. Others are trapped in the country where they landed, especially Italy and Greece, by the European agreement on refugees, which compels migrants to apply for international protection in the first entry country (Regulation (EU), 2013).

According to their statuses, adult migrants are hosted in different facilities, contact different figures, have different projects. They learn languages in very different contexts with volunteers or professionally qualified teachers. Their language needs vary accordingly.

This paper focuses on relations among language policies, immigration policies and language teaching as a broad frame for adult literacy and L2 learning in Europe.

It poses three questions:

- How is learning of the language(s) framed in immigration and integration policies in Europe?
- What is the space of immigrants' languages in the language and educational policies of multilingual Europe?
- How do these policies affect language teaching, especially to the most vulnerable learners, that is, refugees, and non-literate and low-literate adults?

To answer these questions, I will focus on two turning points, that is, the introduction of language requirements for entry, residence and citizenship starting from the late 1990s, and the above-mentioned migrant crisis.

I will discuss language in European immigration policy, sketching its background (actors, legal language requirements for migrants), and how policies consider plurilingual speakers in multilingual Europe. In the second part, I will link existing policies to the reception and inclusion measures of refugees and consider the language needs of asylum seekers and refugees, discussing tasks and resources for language teaching.

## LANGUAGE(S) TEACHING IN EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICIES

### Actors and developments

Even if one considers only language policies, the expression "European policy on immigration" is misleading and each term requires clarification.

"Europe" refers to at least three different and non-overlapping entities: the geographical space, and two main supranational organisations, the European Union (EU), with 28 member states up to now (2017), and the Council of Europe (CoE), with 47 member states. The EU and the CoE have different powers.

The EU, as a political body to which member states have delegated part of their sovereignty, issues different types of legal acts, some of which are binding on member states and others not, and sets goals that all member states must achieve, through national laws. The balance of national policies of the member state and communitarian governance is complex. As for immigration, the EU

defines the conditions for entry and legal residence, while each member state decides the volumes of admission. Integration policies are the responsibility only of member states, while the Commission is responsible for defining common goals and taking actions for technical and financial support, with additional initiatives by local authorities and bodies (European Commission, 2106).

The CoE, which aims at "promoting democracy and protecting human rights and the rule of law in Europe" (Council of Europe, 2017a), plays a role of advocacy and moral suasion through initiatives, protocols, projects, recommendations, and monitoring activities. As for multilingualism and languages, the CoE has been committed to promoting linguistic diversity and language learning since the early '50s. One of the main results is the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language Teaching and Learning* (*Framework*) (Council of Europe, 2001), which has been translated into 40 languages and is the pivot tool in language teaching in Europe.

Due to the plurality of the decision makers, "policies" would better describe the actual situation. This paper focuses on Europe, primarily on EU immigration and integration policies.

The term "immigration" itself should be better defined, because in the EU it encompasses both intra-EU migration and migration by "third country-nationals." These two kinds of migration are now differently ruled as far as social and political rights, residence permit and freedom of circulation among countries are concerned. European integration policies address mainly non-EU citizens.

Integration policies at the European level date to about 2000. In Tampere (1999), the Council of the European Union[3] established the principle that the Union must ensure "fair treatment of third country nationals who reside legally on the territory of its Member States" and it "should aim at granting them rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens" (European Parliament, 1999). In 2004, the Council laid down the foundations for integration policy, agreeing to eleven "common basic principles for immigrant integration policy" (Council of the European Union, 2004), which in 2005 the European Commission adopted as common policy objectives in the first *Common Agenda for Integration* (Commission of the European Communities, 2005).

Immigration was recognized as "a permanent feature of European society": if "orderly and well-managed," member states could benefit (Council of the European Union, 2004, p. 15). Integration of immigrants and their descendants was indicated as critical in managing immigration. The "Common principles" define integration as "a dynamic bilateral process of mutual accommodation of all immigrants and residents" of the states. Furthermore, it implies respect for the fundamental values of the European Union (Common principles 1, 2).

The fourth principle states that "basic knowledge of the language, history, and institutions of the host society" is an "indispensable" factor (Council of the European Union, 2004). Thus, good introductory courses are recommended. Language courses should be targeted to the needs of migrants in the different

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[3] The Council of the European Union is formed of the ministers of the governments of Member states and is the main EU decision-making body, together with the European Parliament.

stages of their "integration processes" and with different backgrounds, easily accessible and, if needed, online, attentive to the specific needs of women, to promote their participation in the labour market, as well as of vulnerable groups. Illiterate are expressly mentioned (Niessen & Schibel, 2004).

As for language courses, documents propose as common goals laws and practices already existing at the national level and boost their development. In Italy, for example, language courses for migrants were introduced as a specific activity of public Adult Education centres in 1998, as a part of the general reform of the sector (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2000).

### Legal linguistic requirements for immigrants

The stress on the central role of language learning in integration has led to extensive language course provision in Europe, as mentioned above.

Language, together with knowledge of the history and institutions of the host society, become the guarantee of integration as well as the sign of the migrant's willingness to participate in the host society. In other words, learning the language of the host country swings between two opposite poles: a right or a duty, an opportunity for inclusion or a tool for exclusion.

Since the turn of the century, an increasing number of European countries set legal linguistic requirements for adult migrants in the framework of their immigration policies. In 81% of CoE member states, including 26 EU members, adult migrants are required to certify their second language competence for one or more of the following administrative acts: entry into the host country, permanent residence permit, and citizenship. Mandatory language courses, certification of the acquired level of language competence and, more often, language tests have been introduced for migrants. Moreover, a Knowledge of Society test is compulsory in 18 CoE countries (Extramina, Pulinx, & Van Avermaet, 2014).

These language requirements concern only third-country nationals. EU citizens can access the courses for migrants but are not subject to any obligation.

Four trends are relevant in setting legal linguistic requirements for third-country nationals (ALTE LAMI, 2016):

- a constant increase in tests since the first survey in 2002;
- the preference given to tests rather than to compulsory courses;
- the use of the levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* to define the required thresholds;
- a convergence towards level A2 (the second out of six levels) for residence permit, even if there is a high diversity in required levels, ranging from A1.1 (less than A1) to B1 and exemplified in Table 1 for the cases of France, Germany and Italy.

Several critics have questioned the practice of testing for migration purposes, increasingly widespread in Western countries. They have discussed the underlying acritical correlation between language and citizenship, which refers to the ideological connection "one language one nation" (Extra, Spotti, & Van Avermaet, 2011), and the legitimacy itself of language testing for migrants,

insofar as discrimination based on language or education appears contrary to democratic laws and even to human rights (Shohamy, 2007). The criticisms are pertinent, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss them.

*Table 1*

Compulsory language tests: three cases

| Country (dates of introduction and revision) | Entry | Residence permit | Citizenship |
|---|---|---|---|
| France (2005, 2016) | 40-hour course | A1.1, A2 since 2018 | B1 speaking |
| Germany (2004) | A1 (family reunification) | B1 | B1 |
| Italy (2009) | A2 speaking | A2 | None |

Activists, scholars, professional organizations, political bodies have contested the validity, equity, and fairness of the tests as the only means for determining language proficiency and have pointed out the risk of discrimination that the tests entail. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, composed of representatives of the national parliaments, expressed its concern for the discriminatory effects of the tests in 2014 through a Recommendation:

> Statistics and evaluation studies show that language and integration tests have led to a decrease in the number of applicants for family reunification, permanent residence permits and naturalisation. These tests can also have a discriminatory impact, depending on the gender, age, educational background and nationality of the people concerned. (Parliamentary Assembly, 2014, Par.3)

The discriminatory effect resulted also from an impact study carried out for the Italian Ministry of the Interior one year after the introduction of the test for the permanent residence permit. The test had a dampening effect on permit requests (-4%), but the drop was greater for specific groups, e.g., Chinese (Ghio, 2011). In general, speakers of typologically distant languages and LESLLA learners are strongly disadvantaged because of their difficulty in reaching the required level in the required time. Language requirements were among the factors which prompted renewed attention to L2 teaching to non-literate and low-literate adults in Europe (Rocca, Minuz, & Borri 2018).

**Immigrants as plurilingual language learners**

Two additional problems concerning linguistic requirements for migrants deserve mention, that is, the misunderstanding of the multilingual nature of

modern societies and the simplification of the concept of competence, which laws on language requirements imply.

The German law that introduced the obligation for migrants to prove their language competence spoke about a "sufficient knowledge" (*ausreichende Kenntnissen*) of German language and society (Zuwanderungsgesetz, 2004, §43 Abs.3). One year later, the French law used the same expression (*connaissance suffisante*) (Code de l'entrée, 2005. Art. L 314-2). However, the German law established "sufficiency" at B1, the French at A1.1. The choices depended largely on the composition of the migrant population, immigration policies and goals of integration of the two countries (ALTE LAMI, 2016).

However, the following questions remain:
- What is the "sufficiency level" to live, work, participate in a host society?
- Do the linguistic behaviours of adult migrants correspond to levels?
- Are there levels at all?

A sample of spoken language of a plurilingual speaker, part of an interview collected in 2015 (Minuz, Rocca, & Borri 2016), helps to better focus these questions (Table 2, translated in standard English). The interviewee's speech presents the persistence of linguistic phenomena that are typical of the basic stage of language acquisition and are mainly concentrated in the noun and verbal syntagmata and non-standard phrases, typical of a post-basic stage in language acquisition (underlined). Simultaneously, some phrases show the speaker's command of complex sentence structure and pragmatic devices such as phatic expressions (*lo sai che*) and modulators (*per forza*) (bold) (Giacaloni Ramat, 2003).

The communication sounds efficient, where efficacy lies mostly at the rhetorical level. The speaker engages the interlocutrix with jokes about stereotypes of Italians who do not speak foreign languages and ironizes, using appropriate lexical means, on the bureaucratic belief that "with papers in your hand" (an idiomatic Italian expression meaning "with a certificate") you speak perfectly.

*Table 2*

Linguistic interview

| | |
|---|---|
| I: allora io volevo sapere. il bengalese è la tua lingua madre | I: so, I wanted to know. Bengali is your mother tongue |
| H: sì | H: yes |
| I: l'inglese l'hai studiato a scuola | I: you studied English at school |
| H: sì | H: yes |
| I: quanto tempo l'hai studiato? | I: how long did you study it? |
| H: **fino che** <u>superiore studiato inglese</u> | H: I studied English up to high school |
| I: e il russo l'hai come l'hai imparato? | I: and how did you learn Russian? |
| H: il russo | H: Russian |
| I: un corso | I: a course |

| | |
|---|---|
| H: un corso ho fatto | H: I took a course |
| I: appena sei arrivato? | I: as soon as you arrived? |
| H: **appena** <u>sei arrivato</u> ho fatto <u>due mesi corso.</u> Adesso <u>molto parole che</u> dimenticato **perché lo sai che** quando <u>arrivato Italia</u> non funziona ingles<u>i</u> non funziona de russo <u>io non capisce</u> italiano per <u>questa</u> **quando** <u>ero imparato</u> italiano io non <u>è andato</u> in scuola <u>solo ascoltare parlare basta vede tv</u> | H: **as soon as** you arrived I took a two month course. now there are a lot of words **that** I forgot **because you know** that **when** I arrived in Italy English did not work Russian did not work I do not understand Italian so **when** I was learning Italian I did not go to school, I just listened, talked, that's all, watched tv |
| I: ah guardi spesso la tivù | I: ah you often watch tv |
| H: sì <u>solo ascoltare</u> de no… | H: yes just listen to no ... |
| I: ah | I: ah |
| H: tivù **perché** <u>non è andato in</u> scuola | H: tv **because** I did not go to school |
| I: e adesso invece vuoi fare il corso | I: and now you want to take the course |
| H: sì fare il corso | H: yes take the course |
| I: devi farlo | I: you have to do it |
| H: certo **per forza perché leggi** <u>dici</u> (*ride*) **se** <u>io parla</u> bene italiano non <u>è</u> <u>funziona</u> bisogna perfettamente <u>uno corso</u> **con un foglio con mano** <u>io capisce</u> italiano | H: **for sure** because the **law says** (*laughs*) if I speak good Italian, it does not work. I need perfectly a **course. With a piece a paper, I** understand **Italian** |
| I: mh | I: mh |
| H: è per questo | H: that's why |

A single defined level of the *Framework* cannot describe the interviewee's language competence, as the tests for migrants require. Experts from the Council of Europe have pointed out the misunderstanding and even the abuse of the notion of levels. Since many people have different levels of competence in different skills, it would be preferable to speak about "profiles" instead of "levels", especially when referring to migrants, who have very complex multilingual communication according to situations, interlocutors and topics (Krumm, 2007). Levels are meant as reference in teaching planning and credit recognition, not as standards to be reached. A certain level is much less "indicative of the degree of integration. It is only a measure of linguistic ability" (Parliamentary Assembly, 2014).

The question of a linguistic threshold for active participation in the host society hides the actual migrant linguistic behaviours as plurilingual subjects. What they can do in their languages, including the language(s) of the host society, should come in the foreground.

Figure 1 roughly presents the interviewee's uses of his languages. He is a Bengali man, 36 years old at the time of the interview, who had lived in Italy for 17 years and has a Russian technical degree. He has a rich language repertoire (Bengali, English, Arabic, Italian, Russian, Urdu, Hindi) on which he relies in a

dense system of social networks in Italy, in Bangladesh and in other countries. As for the theme of citizenship, it is worth mentioning his participation in public and political spheres both in Italy and in Bangladesh. He is a typical example of a transnational citizen, active in multiple "national" public spheres. There is no longer any overlapping of one nation, language and citizenship.
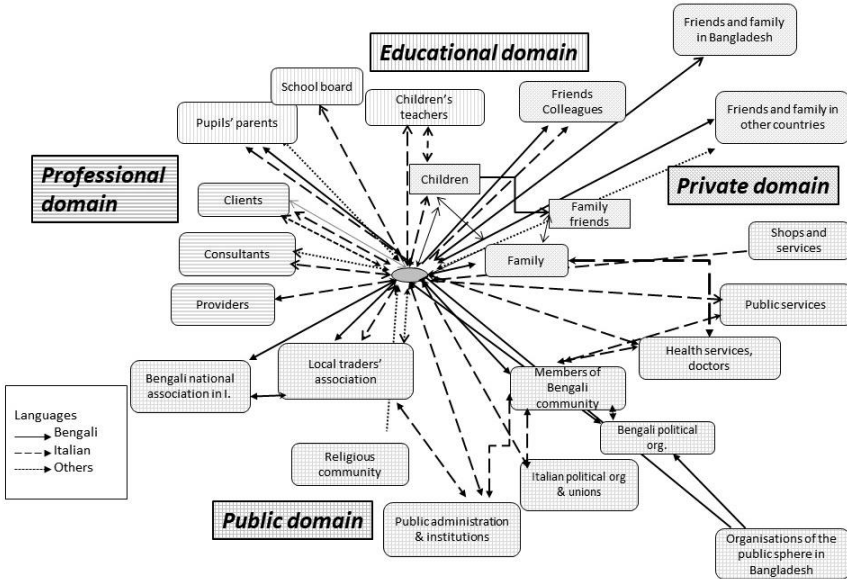


*Figure 1:* Interviewee's networks

Plurilingualism and multilingualism are key notions in educational as well as political discourses in Europe. The monolingual bias, which is reflected by legal language requirements for migrants, contrasts with this strong commitment.

On the educational level, the *Framework* views learners as plurilingual subjects. This assumption modifies the aim of language education itself. Plurilingual individuals build up a communicative competence in which languages interrelate and interact. They rely on all their linguistic resources as well as on paralinguistic means to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor in a given situation. Thus, language education should aim to develop a linguistic repertoire in which all linguistic abilities have a place (Council of Europe, 2001).

Plurilingualism as a teaching approach has been applied mostly in education programmes for children and young adults, while it is still a relatively unexplored field in Adult Education. However, considerations of adults' multilingualism have led to the identification of some assumptions, although to no specific educational projects as yet. Drawing from a variety of sources, the following short list of suggestions can be proposed (Gogolin, 2002; Peyton, 2012; Beacco, Little, & Hedges 2014; Minuz et al., 2016).

- Keep in mind the linguistic varieties with which adult migrants are in contact and which can be acquired.

- Avoid marginalization and raise the status of varieties in the immigrant repertoire, supporting the legitimacy of the languages of origin in the host society.
- Stimulate migrants' awareness of both their linguistic behaviour as plurilingual speakers and the similarities / differences among languages.
- Pay due attention to strategic skills in evaluating linguistic-communicative competence.
- Root teaching practices in the language (and reading) practices of the learner.

Learner self-awareness tools, diagnostic tools and teaching materials are becoming available (Lazenby Simpson, 2012; Council of Europe, 2017b; Borri, Caon, Minuz, &Tonioli, 2016-17).

**The space of migrant languages in multilingual Europe**
Multilingualism also plays an essential role in the political and ideological construction of the European Union, where 24 official languages, about 60 acknowledged minority languages, and a number of immigrant languages are spoken. European multilingualism is regulated by treaties and legislative acts aimed at preserving cultural and linguistic diversity (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2000, Art. 22; European Commission, 2005; Treaty on European Union, 2008, Art.3).

> It is this diversity that makes the European Union what it is: not a 'melting pot' in which differences are rendered down, but a common home in which diversity is celebrated, and where our many mother tongues are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding. (European Commission, 2005, p.2)

As the quotation shows, multiple values are attributed to the preservation of a multilingual Europe: diversity is a factor of economic development, social cohesion and political unification. It is also a founding value of European identity, what "makes the European Union what it is."

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the many contradictions on multilingualism in the public discourse and administrative practice, and the underlying idea of languages as strong, well-identified entities. With regard to immigration, multilingualism refers mostly to national and indigenous minority languages, although EU policy documents (scarcely) quote migrant languages. They are marginalised *de facto* in the process of identity construction to which multilingualism should contribute. From this perspective, the practice of language testing for immigrants can be considered both a tool and a sign of marginalisation. The opposing forces of adherence to democratic and humanitarian values and the *Realpolitik* of immigration control strain European policies on multilingualism, as they do in immigration and integration policies.

**Teaching L2 to refugees: challenges and perspectives**

The legal status of displaced people who enter Europe defines the language teaching that the receiving countries provide and influences their linguistic needs, as mentioned above. The endeavour of refugees to achieve L2 can be described as "learning in limbo." Limbo means "uncertainty," which, for a long period, is the condition of migrants entering Europe.

Attitudes, motivations, educational needs as well as language programmes offered are related to the steps in the long path from first arrival to the approval or final rejection of one's application for international protection. Although the reform towards a common European asylum procedure is underway, and national procedures are still different, in all countries it takes from months to 3-4 years to be completed (ECRE, 2016).

Let us consider the case of Italy (Figure 2). In the first step, the focus is on material and legal needs (first support). In terms of language needs, interpreters and mediators play a major role. Uncertainty dominates the second period, from the application to the granting of refugee status, the granting of subsidiary protection or the appeal against the commission's decision. Language courses, aimed at supporting refugees in the asylum procedure and in their first contacts with the new society, are regularly offered in reception centres, even if language provision is widely different in quality across the country. Integration programmes in the true meaning of the term are possible only for migrants with legal refugee status, but consistent and organised language provision at the national level is lacking.
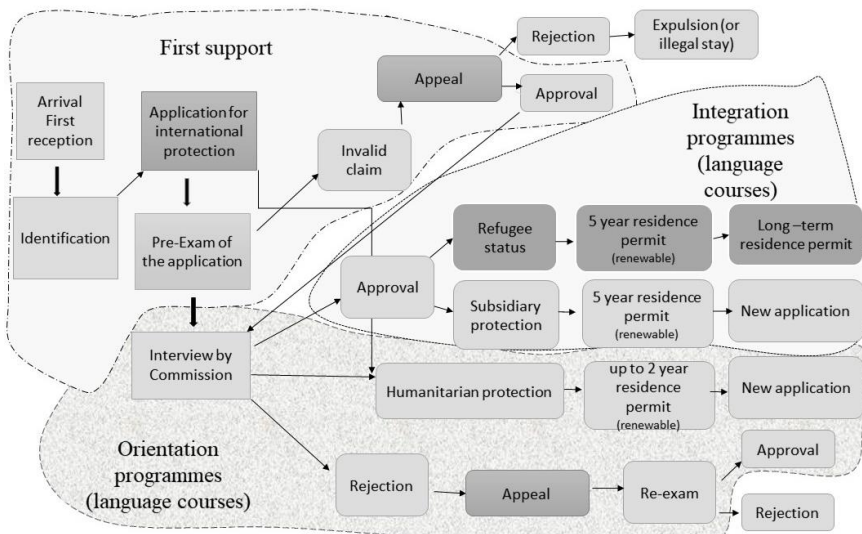


*Figure 2:* Language learning during the asylum procedure in Italy

Uncertainty and a sense of isolation are shared sentiments of asylum seekers and refugees across Europe. Refugees who are members of a Swedish association, an example of refugee self-organisation (www.supportgroup.se),

complain of long waits, exclusion from society, inability to live a normal life, and loss of hope, ambition and control over their own lives (lecture by Michel Lefranc). On the other hand, teachers contacted in Italy complain of difficulty in identifying asylum seekers' language needs due, once again, to their isolation, inability to plan their future, and lack of autonomy, which in many cases affect motivation (Minuz & Borri 2017).

Well-established approaches in language teaching of migrant adults appear to be in crisis. For example, the biographical approach, the basis of powerful adult education traditions, is to be avoided when biographical narratives are a source of pain, unless such narratives are guided by experts or trained teachers in safe spaces. Refugees and asylum seekers do not seem to share the interests and needs usually expressed by resident migrants, and language courses are difficult to organise when learners lack attention and concentration because of trauma, mourning or urgent problems. Teachers report a higher number of non-literate and low-literate learners than in usual migrant classes.

Some teacher competences (not necessarily new) are demanded. Teachers should be able to:

- plan short-term, modular "courses" for classes that may appear and disappear within weeks and in which attendance is occasional;
- manage multi-level and heterogeneous groups in which there may be learners who need primary literacy courses;
- offer language lessons which can motivate "here and now," when individual or social motivation is lacking;
- negotiate multilingual and multicultural relations;
- change plans together with the changing personal and legal conditions of learners;
- learn to deal with extreme personal conditions of learners (teachers themselves need help to face such conditions);
- be able to deal with heterogeneous groups.

Volunteers play a major role in offering language support to refugees. The Council of Europe (2017b) has provided *Language Support for Adult Refugees: A Council of Europe toolkit (Toolkit)* especially to volunteers who have no specific qualifications and offer language aid to asylum seekers and refugees. The intention is not to "professionalize" the volunteers but to provide them with information, including information on language learning and teaching, as well as suggestions and materials to be used in language support to refugees. The *Toolkit* facilitates their adaptation to the different conditions of the theoretical, methodological and operational equipment of Language teaching. Therefore, qualified teachers have appreciated the *Toolkit* as well.

If speaking of integration as the goal of L2 teaching becomes problematic because of the uncertain situations of many asylum seekers, the different purpose of "welcoming" and "receiving" them then becomes primary. Coherently, the Council of Europe's project focuses on helping migrants approach the country of arrival or transit, explore the new environment, and orient themselves culturally and linguistically. This exploration will be guided by the short-term,

medium-term and long-term needs of the asylum seekers and refugees, relying on each learner's linguistic and extra-linguistic competences and giving them value.

In general, the best language programmes follow the interaction between individuals, migrant families and groups and the multiple facets of host societies from first basic needs in camps or reception centres to job counselling centres, vocational centres, kindergartens and schools.

For refugees and asylum seekers, learning the language can be a way to rebuild a form of individual identity after their flight. Thus, from the very beginning, language should be taught along with literacy, digital competences, job orientation, information on the new environment, health care, and whatever else is needed. Pluricultural and plurilingual approaches are strongly recommended.

## CONCLUSIONS

Educational and language policies for adult migrants in the EU are contradictory in principles and effects. While access to the host country's language is strongly recommended as a means of integration, and is supported through programmes and funding, the setting of legal standards for language competence risks preventing instead of fostering integration. Moreover, it seems that the position of migrant languages is still unclear in the European social, cultural, educational and institutional space and in European public discourse on languages, which focuses on national and historical regional and minority languages. The political notion of multilingualism, which is presented as a key concept founding the European identity, struggles to accommodate the languages of immigrants. Since the notion of multilingualism is strongly connected with national identity claims, the relevance given to language risks turning languages from an integration factor into a barrier.

In this context, the influx of refugees has strained integration and reception systems, which have already proved ineffective. At the same time, the migrant crisis has brought to the attention of large sectors of the sympathetic public and policy makers the need for innovative ways to approach the problem.

The *Action Plan*, which was issued by the European Commission (2016) eleven years after the *Common Agenda* (Commission of the European Communities, 2005), takes stock of the past decades. The results are disappointing: "notwithstanding the efforts made, third-country nationals across the EU continue to fare worse than EU citizens in terms of employment, education, and social inclusion outcomes," while "discrimination, prejudice, racism and xenophobia are rising." This requires a new effort, even more so if we have to provide rapid answers to the changing needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

The process of building societies in which people from different backgrounds can live together and understand one another ultimately defines the purpose of language teaching in migration.

The interweaving of didactic, social and political dimensions is intrinsic to this teaching. Mother tongues and that/those of the host country are socially perceived as integration or exclusion tools, identity founders and signs for individuals and communities, means of self-representation, brands of citizenship. The laws that in almost all European countries link residence and citizenship to knowledge of the language are the most visible aspects of these themes. What we mean by integration, what it is in multilingual and multicultural societies and for adult migrants, reverberates on the conception and approaches of language teaching as well as on language representations.

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