

Multi-level governance and immigrant integration in bilingual regions



REVITALISE

Language Revitalisation
and Social Transformation



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Goal of this presentation

Attempt to provide some elements for discussion around these questions

- 1. What type of language policy for the integration of migrants in officially bilingual regions?**
- 2. How different/similar are immigrant integration policies in monolingual and bilingual territories?**

Goal of this presentation

“International migration is an issue that will need to be taken into account as part of discussions concerning regional or minority languages in a series of key policy areas over the coming years”

REVITALISE REPORT

Current migration trends

- Migration movements have reached a scale and complexity that are unprecedented in most Western societies
- Consequence → new citizens into host societies leading to **social, economic and political transformation**

Current migration trends

- Number of immigrants and asylum seekers arriving in the EU has increased exponentially over the past years.

Eurostat:

- Spain,
- The United Kingdom
- Germany
- Italy

Countries recording the highest number of immigrants in Europe. Today, these four countries host more than two thirds (67%) of all immigrants residing in the EU.

Integration policies are also language policies

The integration policies of a territory are closely associated with its language policy.

Why are languages important for immigrant integration?

Beyond their symbolic and identifying character, languages are:

- Key factor for participation in society.
- Sense of belonging and being rooted in a society.
- Knowledge of the four language skills make immigrants independent by helping them to understand the reality of their situation and putting them on an equal linguistic playing field as everyone else.

Integration policies are also language policies II

- Many territories and states only have one official languages BUT...
- Many others are linguistically more heterogeneous: at least two (official) languages) co-exist → what we often referred to as minority-majority language
- Wales, Basque Country, Catalonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Finland, Corsica, Friuli, Friesland....

Some food for thought:

Spain: some 40% of the population live in a territory with an official language other than Spanish.

Integration policies are also language policies III

- How **similar or different are language policies** in (officially) monolingual or bilingual settings?
- Are the so-called “minority language” governments/authorities tackling the linguistic integration of migrants? Or are they just simply accepting that immigrants will only adopt the majority language?

Integration policies are also language policies IV

- It is evident that if a large number of migrants arrive in a territory where **two languages coexist** and where one is the **dominant one socially**, this can pose a **risk for the minority language**.
- Why? The newcomers may opt for the dominant language as a means of social integration.
- That situation can exacerbate the minority situation of the language even further.

Integration policies are also language policies V

- Immigrants can very well live in Wales without a single word of Welsh. Same could be applied to Basque in the Basque country, Catalan in Catalonia, Galician, Corsican, Breton, Ladin, Friulian, Irish, Frisian...
- **One could argue. If many locals live without knowing Welsh, why would I?**

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

- ABOVE ALL, for an immigrant to decide to also learn the minority language (and not only the majority one), there has to be a **need**.
- If I don't need the language for anything, if I don't find it useful, if i don't hear it anywhere...what is the point of learning it?

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

Societies with one official language the need to learn the host language is real → there is only one and there is c no choice

ALSO AND VERY IMPORTANT

Many states impose mandatory

- **Language tests before arrival**
- **Language tests to prove integration**
- **Language test to grant nationality**

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

- In officially bilingual societies, these compulsory language measures cannot be applied
- Regions have no competence in border control → no language tests before arrival (Except for Quebec)
- Regions have no competence in nationality granting

BUT...

- (Some) regions and municipalities are actually implementing integration measures, including language provision. → MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

The linguistic integration of migrants in bilingual settings **MUST ADOPT A DIFFERENT APPROACH**

To respond to our question:

Why would I need to learn a language that not everyone in the region speaks it?

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

1) It is about **ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE**:

Language policies in bilingual territories PROVIDE A RESPONSE TO MIGRANTS' LANGUAGE NEEDS FOR WORKING LIFE:

Newcomers that master both majority and minority and minority languages tend to have more job opportunities and faster access to the job market, usually with better jobs.

It is not about the **ABSOLUTE NEED** (you can survive without the minority language).

It is about the **added value** offered to the job market

2) It is about **SOCIAL COHESION**

The minority language provides a sense of belonging and cohesion to the region and to the territory.

It represents the **ADDED VALUE**.

I could very well move to Cardiff and not learn a single word of Welsh. But if I do and I address myself in Welsh, I am also saying “I want to be part of you. I want to get to know you”.

I am not only speaking just to communicate something. I am also conveying a much more powerful message: I don't have to but I want to because I want to be part of my new host society

3) It is about PARTICIPATION in public life:

If I only learn the majority language, there will be many opportunities that I will miss. I will only be partially integrated into society.

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

4) It is about **MOTIVATION**, about **INCENTIVES**

Our approach is not based on obligations, compulsory language tests or sanctions (like many States, aiming often at reducing number of migrants)

It should be about **REWARDING**, **ACKNOWLEDGING**

Attempt to force migrants to learn can result in less effective learning and negative attitudes towards the host society → hostility, rejection.

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

5) It is not only about encouraging newcomers to learn our “minority language”. It is also about valuing migrant languages and their plurilingual identities

- In sum → it is about giving a plurilingual approach to our language policy.
- In a plurilingual and intercultural approach to language provision it is important to show that **these languages are valued and encourage migrants to transmit them to their children** → an asset for the whole of society.

Charter for Multilevel Governance in Europe (Committee of the Regions)

- The Charter does not speak about minority languages (not even about languages). However it refers to all the elements that we need for a cohesive society:
- The need for promoting citizen participation
- Social cohesion
- Principles of subsidiarity and proportionality

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

Up until very recently, the politics on minority language protection had been developed within a framework of the minority-majority language dichotomy.

Today: societies are much more complex: permanent or circular mobility, migration, refugees, touristification
→ change of paradigm = change in how we design our language policy?

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

In light of these facts....

An advanced language policy would need to adopt a holistic approach:

Ensure the incorporation of the minority language in the integration of migrants along with the majority language) to avoid segregation, sense of belonging, inclusion and FULL participation)

Promote language policies aimed at maintaining immigrants' languages: keys to immigrants identity development but also professional.

Language policies in (officially) bilingual/multilingual Settings

IN sum

We need a dynamic and open vision of what a language policy of today is.

A language policy aimed at **raising awareness**, **empathy** and appreciation for the host society.

Results? A cohesive society that avoids the fragmentation and social tensions that result from a lack of linguistic integration.

**LANGUAGE POLICIES MUST BE ALWAYS
CONCEIVED AS SOCIAL POLICIES**

Thank you!

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