



User Guide

To the Translation Process of
Multilingual Teaching Materials
Forum for Migrant Pupils in Europe



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INTRODUCTION

What is AVIOR?

Schools across Europe are seeing an increasing number of children who are either born in another country or whose parents are immigrants and who do not speak the school language at home. This presents a challenge as schools are expected to deliver quality education for all children, regardless of their ethnic background or linguistic abilities. AVIOR project seeks to respond to this challenge with a partnership of seven organizations from six different European countries who will work together to make bilingual literacy and numeracy materials available to schools and to share best practices among teacher trainers and school leaders on how to create inclusive multilingual classrooms.

Children who lack proficiency in their country's host language of instruction are unlikely to achieve academic success. Yet, mother tongue language support is crucial for the development of migrant children's self-esteem and plays an essential role in increasing parental involvement, which both enhance children's learning outcomes. The costs involved and a lack of awareness among policy makers about the benefits of mother tongue learning explain why few EU countries provide mother tongue support for migrant children.

By collaborating and sharing best practices at European level, we can reduce the costs of producing bilingual materials, improve teacher professional competence and enhance migrant parental involvement in the learning process of their children.

In order to achieve such goals, AVIOR employs a three-pronged approach:

- ▶ *Bilingual resources*: rather than creating new materials, the idea is to translate and adapt existing bilingual materials of high quality which are offered in both the host language and the mother tongue of migrant children;
- ▶ *Teacher competence*: teachers, parents and teacher trainers share best practices on multilingual and mother tongue education through study visits to schools and teacher training institutes in European countries; (3)
- ▶ *Teacher/parent collaborative networks*: parents and teachers are actively engaged in local case studies involving the newly translated bilingual resources in order to provide deeper insight into the barriers and opportunities of migrant parental involvement. This has the added benefit of creating informal local networks of parents, communities and schools, ensuring the continuity of the project's objectives.

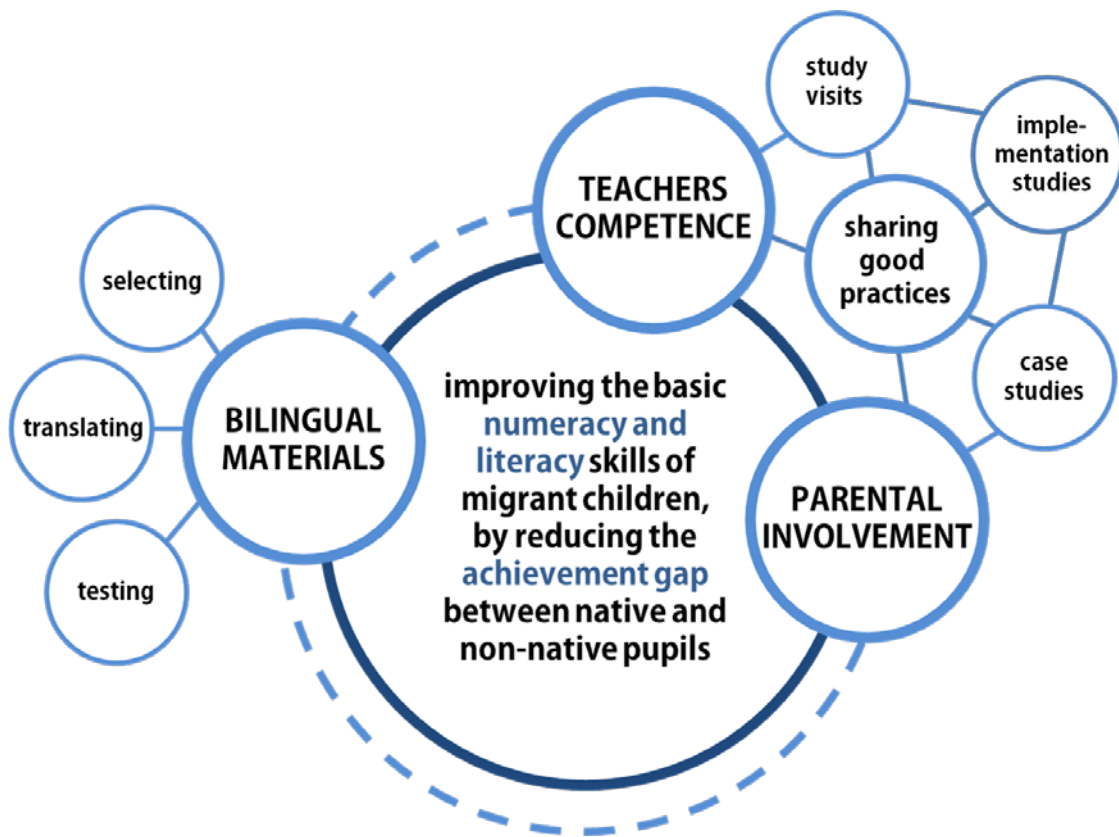


Figure 1. AVIOR project: tools and aims

The ultimate beneficiaries of this project are primary school children between 4-8 years with migrant backgrounds who speak a different language at home than the school language. The target groups are teachers, teacher trainers, school leaders, parents and migrant communities, schools, municipalities, Ministries of Education and EU policy makers.

What is this guide about?

Since one of the aims of AVIOR is to research the existing multilingual materials available in the partner countries, this guide will present the results of their selection and translation in order to make them available for their use in all the countries involved.

This guide is thus divided into three parts, each one representing one of the steps of the above process (*selection, translation, and adaptation*). It starts from the different perspectives of the partners involved in order to present not only a general summary of the findings, but also concrete examples and tips in case this process needs to be replicated:

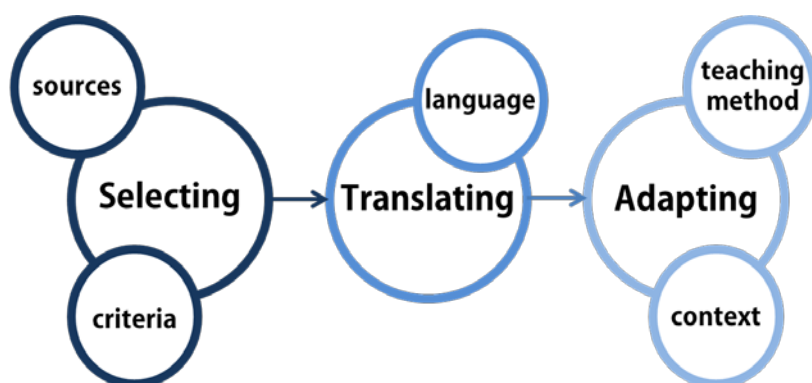


Figure 2. Steps followed to select and translate AVIOR materials

This guide has been built with the contribution of all the partners involved. After selecting the materials and discussing together which of them were to be definitely chosen to be translated in the target languages of the project, every partner has described his/her experience in the process through the following set of questions, the answers representing the starting point of the contents of this guide:

- ▶ How did you select the materials?
 - Can you describe a specific problem you encountered in the selection of the materials? How did you solve it?
- ▶ What are the main difficulties you encountered in translating the materials? Consider both the linguistic and the contextual (i.e. when the text asks the user to perform an action) elements.
 - Can you describe a specific problem you encountered in the translation? How did you solve it?
- ▶ Do you think that, while translating the text or once it is translated, your material needs some kind of adaptation to your culture/context? If so, why? Can you make a specific example of it?

SELECTING THE MATERIALS

Before selecting the bilingual materials, research on the existing possibilities must be carried out. This revealed to be a more complex task than it could appear on paper. Some of the partners involved (e.g. Germany) decided to start with a Google search by using very specific key-words such as “multilingual class books”, “multilingual text books”, “bilingual teaching resources/teaching material”¹, in order to have a general overview of such materials. Others (e.g. Estonia) directly contacted teachers who work with multilingual student groups and the officials from the Ministry of Education and Research in order to identify some relevant materials. In this process, some important elements must be taken into consideration:

- ▶ materials must be open source, and not protected by any copyright, in order to be redistributed and adapted freely in the other countries;
- ▶ materials must be updated;
- ▶ materials must be multilingual, to be used in a multilingual classroom. As a consequence we mustn't fall into the trap of using the material to teach a national language only. The materials provided are not meant to be used to only gain knowledge in the national language, but also provide information and extra learning tools to enhance the mother tongue of the children;
- ▶ materials can enable different types of tasks: not only reading and writing, but also motor skills development and audio activities;
- ▶ materials must be socially and culturally inclusive (in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability).

Problematically, most of the websites that provide Open Educational Resources (OER) just have target-language teaching material. Moreover, because they are published under copyright, they cannot be shared. Finally, even when open-source materials are available, they often have layout problems, to be taken into account in anticipation of translating them. For instance, if the material contains some images, the format of the page must be editable in order to change just the words and not the pictures, but that is not always possible. These are the reason why, many partners decided to follow different strategies:

- ▶ asking organizations that work with school educators to create multilingual materials for the project from scratch (Croatia and Holland²);

¹ “mehrsprachige Bildungsangebote”, “mehrsprachige Lehrbücher”, “bilinguale Unterrichtsmaterialien/Lehrmaterialien” in German.

² “We wanted to have materials that used different learning styles and numeracy and literacy aspects. We wanted a focus on variation in materials (i.e. literacy and numeracy), but also easy adaptability. This is why we ended up using our own materials, because we could not find any existing materials that were up to standard” (Holland’s answer to the preliminary questions to this guide)

- ▶ describing successful strategies in order to *produce* material in a collaborative way together with the learners, by using free apps (Italy)

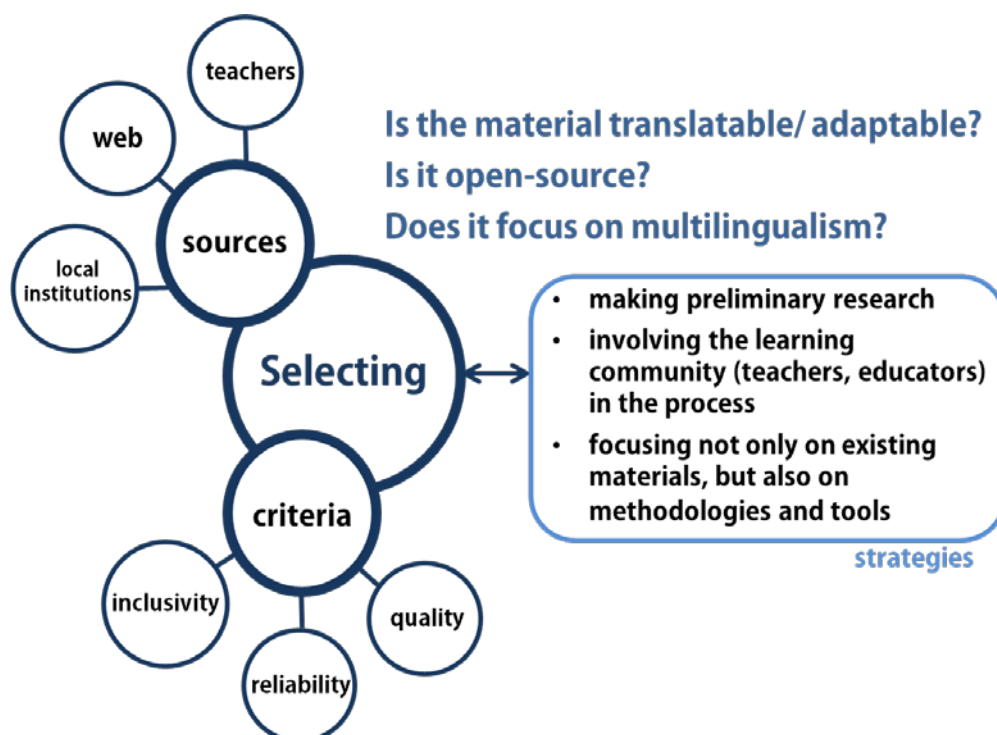


Figure 3. The process of selection: problems and strategies

CASE 1: the right story

All the selected materials should respect AVIOR's goal. Thus, when it comes to selecting stories, they should not be chosen because they can be the starting point of a moral discussion, but because they can express the issue of multilingualism in a metaphoric way and be read both in the learning and mother language of the children (i.e. both at school and at home).

A concrete example of such an issue was discussed by AVIOR group when analyzing two of the materials selected by Greece. Both of them were stories: one of them mainly focused on disability³ by dealing with the lucky encounter between a girl on a wheelchair and a dog with a leg problem; the other one dealt with identity and difference through the metaphor of chick different from the rest⁴. In the end, the group decided to select only the second story because it is more connected with the ideals and aspiration of the whole project, i.e. considering identity and (linguistic) differences not as an obstacle but as an added value in the learning process⁵.

³ *A love with wheels*, Greek materials.

⁴ *A different chicken*, Greek materials.

⁵ The chicken story was also selected because it was also easily translatable and understandable for the target group. As a matter of fact, the dog story presented very specific lexis, with very difficult equivalents in some of the languages of the project, e.g. "the disease that the dog has in the Greek story, is an almost untranslatable word to Dutch" (Dutch answer to the questionnaire)

TRANSLATING THE MATERIALS

The materials found can be divided into two main categories:

- ▶ materials aimed at developing the learners' lexical skills, employing a very specific lexis (e.g. numeracy materials, or material on the body parts). In this case, the translation should be as literal as possible, almost word-by-word.
- ▶ materials aimed at starting a discussion about a specific topic, which can be used also by the learner's families (e.g. bilingual stories), or at inviting the learner to perform a specific action (e.g. TPR⁶ methodology). These texts have to 'sound' as natural as possible both in the source and the target language. In this case, in order to be fully operational, a context translation should be adopted, more focused on the semantic and pragmatic level of language than on its literal meaning.

This is not a clear-cut division, since most of the materials partly require word-by-word translation and partly a context translation. As a consequence, we need to balance the two approaches, according to the text we are considering and, if we decide to outsource the translation, we should carefully inform the translator about what kind of translation we require from him/her.

Moreover, since the materials should be user-friendly and that can be assured through experimentation, it would be better to choose, when possible, a translator who also has experience as a teacher⁷. Teachers can also be useful in order to check the effectiveness of the translated text, by verifying that it conforms to teaching regularities, especially when it comes at presenting the learner specific grammar issues⁸.

If the text presents some images, they should be kept if their use is functional for the learners. For instance, images can be useful in expanding the learner's culture by presenting source context-related objects, animals and situations, different from those

⁶ *Total Physical Response*, a language teaching method, where an instructor commands to students in the target language with body movements asking them to respond with a whole-body action. This methodology is exploited in the selected Estonian materials.

⁷ This aspect can create further problems in the specific case of minority languages as Croatia pointed out: "The problem with the target language in Croatia is that there are no teachers who can use the language in class with the native speakers (who on the other hand don't use this language as a written language at home, so for the first time are acquainted with it through the materials presented, as Romanian Bayash is not a language that is written down usually). So teachers sometimes have to learn the words and phrases together with students, but bearing in mind the level of each exercise it should not be an obstacle"

⁸ "Should the translation just include the male version or should it also include the female form? As the material is used for teaching, this should be adapted in accordance to the general teaching regularities" (German answer to the questionnaire).

of the target language⁹. However, if they are too different, they can also represent an obstacle in the learning process, by presenting an added difficulty to the learner. Again, it is a matter of finding a balance between the two positions (valuing differences and learning), by carefully considering the specific aim of the material under consideration.

In that, the children’s families should be directly involved: it is a strategy to ‘customize’ the materials and it can also represent a first step in parental involvement in their children’s learning process. Parents can also be involved in checking the proposed translation of the materials, in order to feel more involved in the whole process and be an active part in its creation.

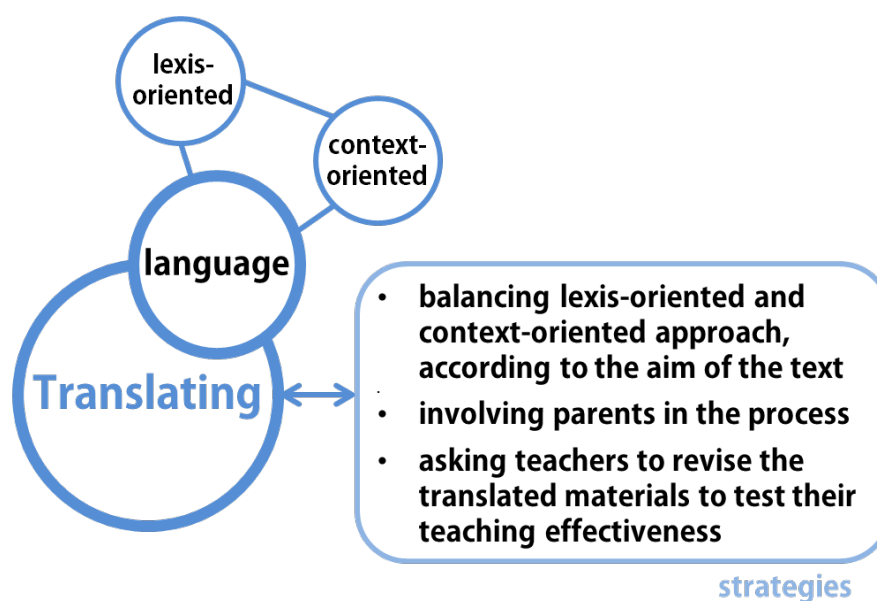


Figure 4. The process of translation: problems and strategies

CASE 2: make it sound natural!

The translated text must be usable in a classroom and thus understandable to the final users. That is the reason why, when translating the materials, childhood language must be remembered, so that the result is both suitable to children’s vocabulary and sounds natural to them

Two examples of such a problem emerged in AVIOR working group. On the one hand, the translation of maths materials required a specific technical terminology, connected to the target teaching technique, which needed to be taken carefully into consideration when translating from one language to another. On the other hand, some narrative text, if translated word-by-word, included very difficult vocabulary for children aged 4-8 and thus needed alternative ways of translation (e.g. simpler paraphrases or synonyms¹⁰)

⁹ Illustrated counting activities in maths book are a good example of it: the learners are asked to count things and animals they are supposed to know well and thus they can vary across the different cultures.

¹⁰ on this aspect, see also note 5

ADAPTING THE MATERIALS

All good translation involves adaptation and what we always have to bear in mind is: who is going to use a specific material, who is a targeted audience for each language and what is their specific context? Thus, after translating the materials, it is necessary also to provide some suggestions for the teachers on how to use it. Some of the selected materials can be used in many different ways; the suggestions can be a useful way to ensure that they are use in a way that fits AVIOR's goal.

First of all, the methodology to which the materials appeal must be specified, so that it can be checked in the target community. As a matter of fact, a specific teaching/learning methodology well-known in a specific country may need to be explained and understood in another context in order to be fully exploited and achieve the same aims. For instance, if the materials include a physical component (i.e. the teachers and/or children have to *do* something in order to use them), it must also be translated. It is thus advisable to produce either some step-by-step tutorials (especially in the case of the apps¹¹) or videos showing how a proposed activity with a specific material can be carried out in a classroom, and what results can be achieved. Like this, also the issue of solving (technical) problems can be dealt with.

Moreover, in the specific case of multilingual materials we should also consider the fact that, despite being fully qualified and trained in teaching, some teachers might not be as experienced in teaching multilingual materials specifically. It is a different mind-set to teach multilingual because the teachers need to rely on students' language skills, have background knowledge in language learning and know how to navigate their teachings in a classroom with multiple languages present at once. Therefore, we would argue to use a little how-to guide for teachers to refer back to, to help and to nurture teaching multilingualism.

¹¹ see Italian materials.

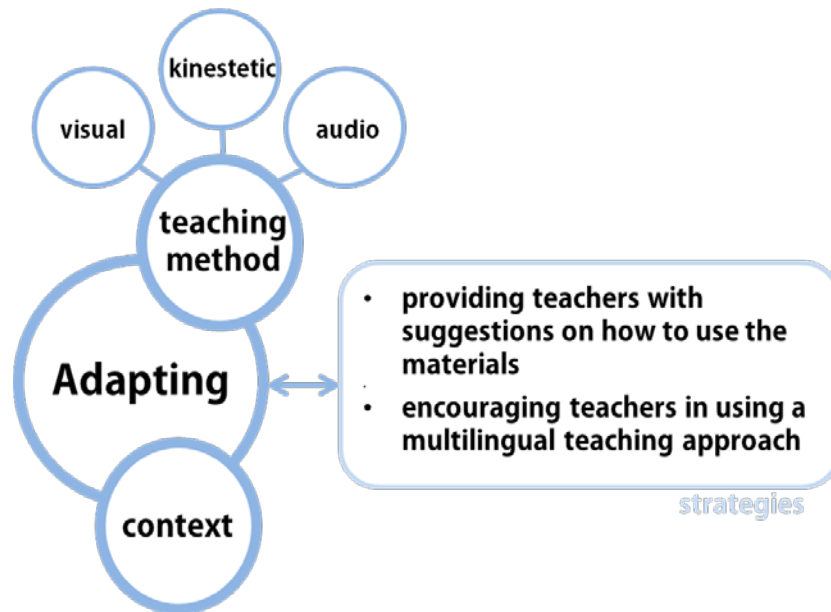


Figure 5. The process of adaptation: problems and strategies

CASE: be careful with stereotypes!

The country's context needs to be taken into account when translating. Thus, if the teachers should be helped in understanding the methodology employed in the material, also the students' cultural background must be taken into account, by avoiding presenting them stereotypes.

An example of that was one of the materials proposed by Greece: it asked the students to match images with word, all connected to hygiene actions (*wash your face, brush your teeth, etc.*), with the aim of learning both verbs and body parts. In discussing it with the other partners of the project, Croatia pointed out an interesting problem in the specific case of presenting such a material to Roma children. They could find it uncomfortable to do such an exercise because they may think that it is somehow confirming the stereotype that Roma people do not wash themselves and need to be 'taught' to do so. As a consequence, this may represent an obstacle rather than an encouragement in their learning process, which is against AVIOR's goals and aims.

APPENDIX

Using the materials

After translating them, the materials need to be used and tested in real contexts in order to verify their usability and effectiveness. In order to do so, AVIOR project carried out two different strategies, on different levels:

- ▶ *Study Cases*, during which the materials have been tested in order to verify whether and how they contribute to parents' involvement in the education of their children and in building a collaboration between them and the teachers;
- ▶ *Implementation Studies*, during which the actual use, the benefits and the limitation of these materials in classrooms have been analyzed.

In both cases, after a presentation of the materials¹², the teachers involved have been left free to choose the materials, according to their pupils' preferences, the curriculum and the expected learning outcomes. Some of them decided not only to take the materials as they were, but also to take inspiration from them, by producing new activities inspired by a multilingual approach towards language learning and teaching.

By testing the materials in actual teaching context, teachers also made some very specific observations on the materials, which can be summarized as follows:

- ▶ it would be easier to have materials in PDF, both as a whole and as separate exercises, to be 'ready-to-use' when needed;
- ▶ it would be useful to add an introduction to the materials explaining them the instructions they can use and how to pronounce specific words¹³;
- ▶ when proposing materials linked to a non-visual/reading teaching method, it is often difficult to have the necessary tools for the students to apply it¹⁴

The Erasmus+ AVIOR projects has ended on the 31st of August 2019. That does not mean that we stop. We continue to work on our mission and created a temporary website with all AVIOR publications and our materials. In 2020 we will start working on a professional website for sharing more and more bilingual materials with passionate teachers, school professionals, parents, pupils and all those interested in

¹² AVIOR partners have followed different strategies in presenting the translated materials. Some of them directly contacted potentially interested teachers, others had a first meeting with school directors to give an official status to the experimentations, others presented the materials during public conferences (e.g. Croatia decided to present them during the conference *REYN-C – Roma Early Years Network-Croatia*)

¹³ "Since in Bayash language there are some sounds/letters which do not exist in Croatian and there are specific letters for the sound in question, it would be good to add introduction how to pronounce these letters" (Croatian answer to the questionnaire).

¹⁴ For instance, the Italian teachers involved in the *Study Case* stressed the fact that, in order to use the apps of AVIOR set, they would need enough tablets for the students to work at least in small groups.

multilingualism. You can find all information and updates of future developments on the website: <http://avior.risbo.org>