
AVIOR CASE STUDY REPORT

– GERMANY

Multilingual Teaching Materials Forum for Migrant Pupils in Europe – AVIOR,
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Introduction

The case studies were conducted in three schools: in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Hassfurt, and in one Kindergarten in Hassfurt. The case studies in Cologne and in Düsseldorf took place from November 2018 to January 2019. The case studies in the schools and Kindergarten in Hassfurt took place between May and June 2019.

At the Kindergarten and school in Hassfurt, five teachers and ten families were involved. Each of these families has at least three children. Hence, at least 30 children were impacted by the use of the material. At the school in Cologne, three teachers and six families were involved. At the school in Düsseldorf, two teachers and five families were involved.

The schools were chosen as a result of the following process:

As a first step, individual schools in the proximity of Bamberg – the location of the national partner (efms and after April 2019 Farafina Institute) – in Nuremberg, Erlangen, Würzburg and Bamberg that are located in districts with comparable high proportions of people with a migrant background, hence assuming multiple languages being represented in the schools, were contacted. However, due to a general work overload of all contacted schools and a particular high involvement of some schools in other projects, none of the schools was able to commit to participating in the case study.

As a next step, the Network of Teachers with a Migration History in North Rhine Westphalia – an organization that SIRIUS has cooperated with before for multiple occasions – was asked to support the identification of suitable schools. The network coordinators disseminated a call for participation among their network of teachers with and without a migration history in North Rhine Westphalia. This call for participation led to two teachers – one at a primary school in Cologne and one at a primary school in Düsseldorf – committing to participating in the case study. A Skype meeting was conducted among the efms staff and the two teachers in order to provide general information and clarify questions. Each teacher identified four parents who were interested in participating in the case study. Since a date for a meeting with all parents could not be found, the efms staff conducted an in-person meeting with the two teachers. The materials were introduced, research questions were discussed and the teachers chose the material that they want to test with parents. Subsequently, the material was produced by efms staff and sent to both teachers. The teachers conducted meetings with the respective parents, introduced the material and discussed research questions. Both teachers confirmed in March 2019 that the case studies had been concluded. In April 2019, a focus group discussion was conducted in the school in Cologne among Farafina Institute staff, the teacher and three parents. Two parents and one Turkish language teacher who took part in the case study were not able to participate. Multiple attempts were made to schedule a meeting/focus group with the teacher and parents in Düsseldorf, but due to time constraints of the teacher, a meeting could not be conducted. A questionnaire was then composed and sent to all parents and teachers in Cologne and Düsseldorf who did not participate in the focus group. Unfortunately, the questionnaire was not answered.

Following the lack of feedback from the Düsseldorf school, teacher colleges in Würzburg, Nuremberg and Bamberg were approached with the request to support the identification of additional case study schools. Calls and personal meetings were held with teams of the teacher colleges in the three cities

introducing them to the AVIOR project, its methodology and the multilingual materials. Afterwards, they reached out to the schools that they cooperate with in Würzburg, Nuremberg, Bamberg and the surrounding regions. The teacher colleges in Nuremberg and Würzburg did not succeed in gaining the commitment of any schools for the participation in the case study. Stated reasons included work overload of teachers, staff shortage and lack of space in the curriculum for any extra-curricular activities. The teacher college in Würzburg suggested to invite students to write papers on AVIOR-related topics. However, by the time of writing this report, no such papers were submitted.

Two schools that were contacted by the teacher college in Bamberg committed to participate in the case study – one school in Hassfurt and one school in Frensdorf. Personal meetings were held with teachers and headteachers of both schools. A misunderstanding between teachers and headteacher of the school in Frensdorf caused the school to cancel their participation in the case study. The school in Hassfurt remained committed with strong support by teachers and headteacher; the school also involved another school and Kindergarten in Hassfurt.

Several meetings were held with the teachers and headteachers in Hassfurt during the course of the case study. Additionally, a focus group was conducted that included three parents who had used the AVIOR material.

The coordinating teacher of the school in Hassfurt also joined the dissemination event and presented their experience and findings to the audience.

Background Schools

Hassfurt is a small town with about 13.500 inhabitants. It is located in the northern part of Bavaria. The primary school Hassfurt has three branches: one directly in Hassfurt and two in the suburbs of the town. The case study was coordinated by the main branch located in the town; both branches in the suburbs as well as a nearby Kindergarten were also involved. The main branch has about 230 students, the two branches in the suburbs jointly have about 280 students.

The gymnasium of the Hassfurt school was one of the emergency accommodations for refugees and asylum seekers during the months in 2015 and beginning 2016 when many people arrived in Germany. The teacher who coordinated the implementation study at the school used to be a social worker and language teacher for children accommodated in the school's gymnasium during that time. Many of the respective families were later allocated to more permanent housing in the surrounding area of the school. Hence, many migrant students at the school and their families are from countries of origin of asylum seekers. This includes primarily Syria, Afghanistan, Russia. Children whose families originate from other countries are also represented in the school, but in smaller numbers or as second and third generation migrants.

There is no information on the ethnic/linguistic background of teachers. An indication are the names (first and last names) of teachers. On this basis, it can be assumed that nearly all teachers have a German background.

From Hassfurt, the highest class of Kindergarten and grades one and two of the primary school were involved.

Cologne is located in North Rhine Westphalia. With 1 Mio. Inhabitants, it is one of the largest cities in Germany and the largest city in North Rhine Westphalia. About 30% of children and young people have a migrant background. However, in some districts of the city, almost 90% of the population have a migrant background. The school is located in the district Raderberg. 18% of the population of the district have a non-German citizenship. No information on the proportion of people with a migrant background is available. The school is located in a diverse neighbourhood. Families originate from a large number of different countries, including countries that people have been migrating to Germany from for a rather long time, such as Turkey, Italy, Portugal, Greece, as well as rather recent countries of origin, such as Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Iran, Iraq. About 300 children attend the school.

There is no information on the ethnic/linguistic background of teachers. Judging by first and last names, nearly all class teachers have German origins but many subject teachers and social pedagogues have migrant backgrounds.

From Cologne, the first two grades of primary school were involved.

Duesseldorf is the capital city of North Rhine Westphalia. It has about 620.000 inhabitants. 34% of the population have a migration background. No details about the school that implemented the case study are available.

The Materials

Six different materials (posters, multilingual stories, word puzzle/domino, math cards, bingo, multilingual instruction cards) were proposed to all involved schools. The schools in Cologne and Duesseldorf chose the 'Chocolate Cake of Hawaii' story, the multilingual instructions, word puzzles/domino and Bingo. All parents in Hassfurt chose to use the story 'Chocolate cake of Hawaii'. Additional to that, parents in Hassfurt also used short (2 min.) multilingual listening stories, called 'Betthupferl' from the Radio Channel 'Bayrischer Rundfunk'.

The teachers of all schools introduced the materials to the parents during a meeting in the school and in Hassfurt also in the Kindergarten and discussed the goals of using the materials. Parents used the materials at home.

The languages the schools in Cologne and Duesseldorf chose to use in combination with German included: Arabic, Russian, Albanian, Turkish, Greek, Polish, Italian, and Portuguese. In Hassfurt, Arabic, Russian, Spanish and other languages that are available for download on the bilingual-picturebooks website were used. Arab and Russian are the languages that were used by most involved families.

Some of the materials were also used by teachers, including mother-tongue teachers of Turkish and Arabic.

The coordinating teachers followed up with parents informally in the process of the implementation and had follow-up calls and meetings with the efms and later Farafina staff. A final meeting was conducted with parents and teachers and Farafina staff at the schools in Cologne and Hassfurt.

The story was read by almost all parents with their children. They read it with their children in different ways: Some parents read only their own language, afterwards some children read the German version. Other parents read section by section and switched languages. Most families did not directly compare the two languages while using the materials. Parents who are learning German reported that it helped them improve their language skills when they were able to read what particular sentences in their language meant in German and vice versa. In some families, only one parent speaks another language than German and the other parent is German. Those families read the story each in their language.

All parents provided the feedback that their children liked the book, they appreciated the colorful pictures and also liked the story. However, some children did not find the story very exciting or funny and did not like the section of the story that is often repeated. It became obvious to many children that the story is teaching a moral lesson, hence some of them became hesitant because they felt it was a school-related material. It confused some children that the name of the main character is the Italian name 'Francesco'. They wondered how this relates to their own language or to German.

Some parents also used the word puzzles/domino. They reported that children liked playing with them a lot and used them frequently. However, since they did not come in colors, children slowly lost interest after playing several times. Children often came across words that they do not know in the language of their parents. Hence parents explained these words. It was concluded that the word puzzle/domino is a good activity to play once in a while with young children (first grade). It would be preferable if they came in colors. For older children (second grade or higher), the activity is rather not suitable.

All parents and children like the listening stories and used them frequently.

Parents also explained that their children sometimes feel hesitant using their parents' mother tongue because they feel insecure whether speaking another language is a shortcoming or a benefit. The materials helped some children realise that it is an advantage that they understand two or more languages.

Teacher/Parent relationships

In all involved classes there are some parents with whom teachers can work easily, who are engaged and remain in contact with the teachers. Other parents are hard to reach and hardly involve themselves in school-related activities. Some of the involved teachers decided in the first place to not reach out to the 'hard-to-reach' parents with the presumption that they would not participate in the study anyway. Other teachers made efforts to involve the 'hard-to-reach' parents of their class. Some of these parents did not respond, others agreed to participate but never provided any feedback. In one case, an Arabic-speaking mother who had never participated in a school-related activity before came to the Hassfurt school and read the story in Arabic to the class. The teacher considered this as a big success and observed an increased self-confidence of the mother as well as her child after the mother had been to the school.

In this sense, except for the case of the mother in Hassfurt, the study primarily fostered the already positive relationship between engaged parents and teachers. However, it benefited the relationship between teachers and 'hard-to-reach' parents indirectly in two ways:

- 1) Teachers developed a better understanding for the languages and the background of the families who they know little about after having in-depth discussions with the classes about the different languages represented in the class, the meaning and benefits of language competences, and the meaning and value of languages for each individual student (e.g. in the context of insecure residence permits of some families and the possible need to return to their countries of origin at some point in the future) facilitated on the basis of the AVIOR materials. Teachers feel they are now better equipped to reach out to some of the families who they found difficult to reach before. They also expect that these discussions encouraged students to use multiple languages and to possibly encourage their parents to not be afraid of connecting with the school even though they do not speak German well.
- 2) Teachers and parents who participated in the study discussed several ways of how the materials could be used in the future and how more connections between their use at home and in the classroom could be created (see conclusions). They also discussed strategies how 'hard-to-reach' parents could be involved through the AVIOR materials in the future. Some parents committed to working together with teachers in the future to improve the connections between the use of the materials at home and in the classroom as well as in involving 'hard-to-reach' parents.

As part of an initiative of 'intercultural weeks', multiple copies of the AVIOR materials will be placed in libraries in Hassfurt and surrounding areas starting in September 2019. They will be used for projects that facilitate migrants reading books in their mother tongues. They will remain available in the libraries after the initiative. It is hoped that this will contribute to fostering parents' awareness and self-confidence in using different languages, using multilingual materials with their children and becoming more involved in education matters of their children.

Obstacles encountered

The major challenge for the team was to gain the commitment of schools and teachers to participate in the case study. As described in the introduction, schools and teachers are generally overloaded with work and do not find time for any extracurricular activities. Some schools are already involved in numerous projects and initiatives and do not want to commit to any additional activity. Even after the involvement of teacher colleges and teacher networks as facilitators for connecting with schools, this remained a challenge. Work-overload was also the reason why the school in Düsseldorf was not able to provide feedback after conducting the case study.

For parents it was difficult to find the time to come for meetings to be introduced to the materials and to provide feedback. Most parents who used the materials are working and have only little spare time to spend with their children. Hence, some of them only were able to use the materials quite a long time after taking them home. Some difficulties were encountered with the Albanian translation. A parent reported that the Albanian used in the translation is the Kosovar Albanian, therefore her son who speaks Albanian was not able to understand some of the words.

For teachers, the major challenge was to gain the commitment of parents who usually do not involve themselves in school-related activities. Due to parents' busy schedules, it was also difficult for teachers to schedule meetings with them to discuss the materials. In class, teachers observed that many children are not very confident in using their parents' language in front of others. This made it complicated sometimes to encourage them to read out words in their languages, e.g. from the multilingual instruction cards. Therefore, teachers found them not so practical because after children were not able to or felt too shy to read the instructions, they felt unable to read them themselves because they did not know how to pronounce them in languages that they do not know.

Conclusions

The materials helped in the following ways:

- ▶ Raising awareness of the benefits and potentials of knowing multiple languages,
- ▶ Raising children's self-confidence in using other languages than German,
- ▶ Fostering mutual respect for speakers of different languages,
- ▶ Giving rise to discussions about the significance of multiple languages,
- ▶ Improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of parents' languages and backgrounds,
- ▶ Equipping families with multilingual materials that they can continue to use with their children,
- ▶ Fostering the relationship between teachers and parents who are generally more engaged and some parents who are usually not engaged,
- ▶ Giving rise to teachers and parents jointly developing strategies how the AVIOR materials could be used more effectively in the future. These strategies include:
 - Teachers and parents describe that it would be beneficial, if in the future the materials could be used more for comparing languages and identifying similarities in different languages. This can be prepared at home by parents through intensively working with the materials in their languages. It would then be continued in school by comparing different languages. This would help children to realise that most languages are connected in some ways and that knowing more languages makes it easier to understand parts of other languages.
 - It is easier to compare languages in the form of a game. A memory game could be made out of the story book. The story could be read and prepared by families at home and could later be played as a memory with different languages in class. Another possibility is to allocate words in different languages to the pictures of the book. In a similar way, the domino could be played in class after children becoming familiar with it at home.
 - Posters should be used in class in the future to compare words of different languages.
 - More efforts should be made to involve 'hard-to-reach' migrant parents. It is assumed that lacking German competences are a major barrier. Their self-confidence should be built up by inviting them to read to the class in their language.
 - Migrant parents who have been in Germany for a longer time should act as facilitators between teachers and newly arrived parents.

It is expected that the materials will continue to be used by the involved parents and teachers and that the developed strategies will be implemented and lead to improved relationships between teachers and parents. Furthermore, schools have reported that more teachers have since taken interest in the materials and will use them in the next term. Hence, the scope of the impact will go beyond those who were directly involved in the case study.