



# AVIOR Handbook

Bilingual Supportive Material for  
Migrant Children in Europe

By Nektaria Palaiologou & Laurinde

Koster (editors)



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**To all teachers, pupils and partners of this project who  
made this star shine**

AVIOR is the name of a star.

The support of its partners made this star emerge at the universe.

The enthusiasm of the teachers who used the AVIOR material in their classes made  
this star shine.

The trips of this star to the countries involved in this project made its own  
trajectory on the earth's sky

Thank you all for believing in this endeavor, for joining our efforts to give flesh to  
the AVIOR material!

# AVIOR Partners

## **Risbo B.V. (Managing Partner), Netherlands**

Drs. Tomislav Tudjman, manager of AVIOR

Drs. Afke Weltevrede, researcher

## **Rutu Foundation for Intercultural Multilingual Education (Initiative Leader), Netherlands**

Dr. Ellen-Rose Kambel, director

Laurinde Koster, researcher

## **Europaisches Forum fuer Migrationstudien & Farafina Institute, Germany**

Claudia Kohler, senior researcher

Kathrin Lotter, researcher

## **Network of Education Policy Centers, Croatia**

Svetlana Jurko, executive director

Petra Jurlina, project coordinator

## **Sihtasutus Poliitikauuringute Keskus Praxis, Estonia**

Eve Magi, Analyst

## **Terremondo societa cooperativa arl, Italy**

Paola Gargano, project manager

Antonio Fiandaca, coordinator

## **University of Western Macedonia, Greece**

Nektaria Palaiologou, Assistant Professor of Intercultural Education, Vice President of International Association for Intercultural Education

Konstantinos Dinas, Professor of Greek Language, Director of the Laboratory of Language and Language Programmes

# Introduction of the AVIOR Project

By Tomislav Tudjman

## The roots of the AVIOR project

From December 2016 to August 2019 the Erasmus+ project AVIOR took place, aimed at improving the basic numeracy and literacy skills of migrant children.

AVIOR is a Strategic Partnership and one of the spin-offs of the SIRIUS European Policy Network on Education of Migrant Children and builds on key policy recommendations from Sirius to reduce the achievement gap between native and non-native pupils in Europe.

The Partnership is named after a bright star, AVIOR. The star is invisible from the Northern hemisphere, referring to the multitude of language skills that migrant children bring to the classrooms, but which often remain hidden to their teachers. The partnership brings together seven organizations from six countries, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Estonia, Croatia and Greece. They are research and training centers, NGOs and network organizations.

The partners worked together to make bilingual literacy and numeracy materials for pupils aged 4-8 years available to primary schools and to share best practices among teacher trainers and school leaders on how to create inclusive multilingual classrooms.

### *Mother tongue education*

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. Especially with the recent arrival of thousands of refugee children, the situation has become acute. Children who lack proficiency in their country's host language of instruction are unlikely to achieve academic success.

What research (see Cummins, 2016),<sup>1</sup> shows is that:

- ▶ Children learn best in their mother tongue. Children's ability to learn a second (official) language does not suffer. In fact literacy in a mother tongue lays the cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning new languages.
- ▶ Learning in their mother tongue during primary and secondary school allows children to become literate in the official language quickly, emerging as fully bi/multilingual learners in secondary school. More importantly, their self-confidence grows, they

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of bilingual language policies with an intercultural lens, the reader may access the special issue entitled *Honouring the contributions of Jim Cummins to language and intercultural education internationally*, published at the Intercultural Education Journal, vol. 26, no6. Co-edited by Antoinette Gagné and Clea Schmidt. This special issue is based on the Celebrating Linguistic Diversity conference, organised by the Toronto District School Board and the Centre for Educational Research on Languages and Literacies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto from 30th April 2014 to 2nd May 2014.

remain interested in learning, and they stay in school longer, and stand a greater chance of fulfilling their educational potential, enabling them to make greater contributions to the society in which they live.

- ▶ Six to eight years of mother tongue education is required.
- ▶ Mother tongue language support plays an essential role in increasing parental involvement, which enhances children's learning outcomes.

So while research strongly suggests that the use of multiple languages supports second language learning and that children learn best in their mother tongue this is not at all common practice in schools around Europe. 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.

## Objectives and activities

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

A three-pronged approach was chosen:

- 1) Bilingual resources: rather than creating new materials, AVIOR translated and adapted existing bilingual materials of high quality which were offered in both the host language and the mother tongue of migrant children;
- 2) Teacher competence: teachers, parents and teacher trainers shared 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 were 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.

## Impact of the project

The 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.

Our bilingual materials in numeracy and literacy learning are available [online](#) as open educational resources.

We are on a mission! There is an urgent need to see students' cultural and linguistic diversity not as impediments to learning languages, but as cultural-capital resources that they bring from home to school. With our success in making bilingual materials online available for free, we want to continue and create and find more materials for sharing and we want to help school leaders

and teachers to be better prepared to meet the needs of diverse pupils groups with different languages, in particular regarding basic literacy and numeracy skills.

We want more pupils having greater opportunities to learn the instruction language through their mother tongues in regular school lessons and to acquire better and faster command of basic numeracy and literacy skills;

Furthermore, we hope more and more schools will be encouraged to use (more) bilingual educational material and thereby become more inclusive and we wish to see policy makers gaining deeper insight into obstacles and opportunities to use bilingual and mother tongue materials in classrooms.

In this Handbook you will find the results from the study visits where we learned from schools in Italy, Greece, Estonia and the Netherlands how bilingual (AVIOR) material are being used in classrooms and where we inspired teachers to use these materials during their lessons. Our comparative case study analysis on parental involvement provides insight in how AVIOR materials helped improve teacher-parent relationship and the learning dialogue between parent and child.

This handbook also includes a summary of the User Guide on the translation process of the AVIOR materials, illustrating how the selecting and translation process took place and how teachers can use the material in a multilingual classroom.

The Handbook starts with chapters providing theoretical background on multilingualism and language policies in education.

# PART 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

# Translanguaging as an opportunity for education in super-diverse Europe

By Orhan Agirdag

European cities are becoming more and more diverse in terms of language. Multilingualism is also increasingly evident in many schools and classrooms, as more and more pupils speak another language than the official language of the country (Agirdag & Vanlaar, 2018).

While linguistic diversity enriches society and our education systems, it also poses new challenges. On the one hand, multilingualism is promoted by the European Union (EU) as a crucial catalyst for citizenship, education and the economy. According to the EU, multilingualism is something fundamentally good that should be encouraged. Multilingualism is supposed to boost intercultural dialogue, stimulate citizens of the member states to cultivate EU citizenship, offer new possibilities to citizens to study and work abroad, and open up new markets for EU companies that want to do business outside of the EU. In other words, multilingualism is seen as a stimulus to the EU economy, to educational mobility and to civic education. For these reasons, the EU is trying to protect linguistic diversity and to encourage its citizens' knowledge of languages. The goal is for all Europeans to learn at least two other languages besides their mother tongue (1+2 policy).

However, to date, most European countries educational systems have been monolingual. This does not mean that no other languages are taught in these schools as a separate subject but rather that the instruction of regular subjects is typically given in one language. EU member states are nonetheless trying to introduce multilingual education as a result of the European directive of 1+2 languages (Agirdag, 2016).

But this policy is only partially incorporated at the national level. While languages such as English, and to a lesser extent French and German, are increasingly valued in education, *immigrant* languages are largely seen by national policies as the ultimate obstacle to integration. In fact, assimilation policies assumed that language maintenance in family and school contexts is a hindrance for the social and economic integration of minorities in broader society. Thus, there is not only a call for increased use of the dominant language, but also a call for decreased use of minority languages. In different studies, it is reported that immigrant children are forbidden to speak their mother tongue, and sometimes even punished for doing so. Moreover, a vast majority of teachers support the monolingual policies and agree that language minority pupils should not be allowed to speak their mother tongue at school (Dekeyser & Stevens, 2019; Pulinx, Van Avermaet, & Agirdag, 2017; Jaspers & Rosiers, 2019).

While this push towards monolingualism is mostly driven by noble motives, namely to stimulate intergroup contact and to protect students against underachievement, from a scholarly point of view, it is clear that the restriction of students' mother tongue is not beneficial. There are indeed very significant studies that point at the importance of multilingualism and the scientific evidence comes from different disciplines: from linguistics (Cummins, 1979), neurosciences (Bialystok, 1999), sociology (Portes & Hao, 2002), economy (Agirdag, 2014) and

educational sciences (Edele & Stanat, 2016). Moreover, the benefits of bilingualism are not only limited to native, white and wealthy children, but there are also benefits for the children of immigrants and low-income families (Sierens et al, 2019). Many studies that have also examined the effectiveness of bilingual or multilingual education. The results are summarised in various meta-analyses. Without exception they demonstrate that multilingual instruction has beneficial effects on the educational achievements of foreign-language-speaking students, although the magnitude of the effects is modest (Reljić, Ferring, & Martin, 2015).

Still, many immigrant language minority children face a great challenge to attain the same performance level as native-speaking majority students. One of the main reasons put forward for the observed achievement gap is that language minority pupils are confronted with a double challenge. Language minority pupils do not only need to only to acquire knowledge and skills related to the subjects they are taught, but at the same time they also have to master these skills in the language of instruction, while they are often still struggling to become proficient in this language (Goldenberg, 2008).

However, as suggested by Baker (2011), the present achievement gap is equally related to the neglect of the linguistic expertise pupils have already built up in their home language. As an alternative to current monolingual approaches, their home language can also be called upon to support their learning process. However, in the current superdiverse Europe, the classic bilingual education approaches are practically very difficult to implement (Van Laere, Agirdag, & van Braak, 2016). Indeed, it is a great challenge to include every student's home language as many classrooms are characterized by a moderate to large linguistic diversity, particularly in urban areas. Moreover, teachers do not always have the resources to attend to and support every student in his/her home language (Agirdag, Merry, & Van Houtte, 2016).

It is exactly regarding these challenges that are faced by policymakers and practitioners in linguistically super-diverse Europe, where the concept of translanguaging can offer new pathways to respond to this challenge. As will be broadly illustrated by the AVIOR project in this Handbook, the use of bilingual materials as part of translanguaging practices can be a very powerful means to foster students' acquisition of complex knowledge and skills.

# AVIOR stories: teaching migrant children fairy tales and stories

By Nektaria Palaiologou

## *Introduction about the language material: Fairy tales and stories*

The University of Western Macedonia (UoWM) as partner of the AVIOR project undertook to develop educational supportive language material with intercultural dimensions addressed to multicultural classes, for both native, immigrant and refugee children. In this line, the scientific team of UoWM, i.e. experts from the Laboratory of Teaching Language and Language Programmes, developed a collection of fairy tales and stories<sup>2</sup>. For AVIOR, one of the stories was used (the “Different Kind of Chick”).

This language supportive material is addressed to children, aged 4-10 years old. Specifically, the first six are fairy tales addressed to younger children (4-8 years old), while seventh and eighth stories are for older children (5-10 years old).

There is a gradual difficulty in the manuscripts mainly in relation to the vocabulary and activities, i.e. for the fairy tales, the language that is used is simpler. In addition, an important condition that has been taken into consideration for the development of this material is that it is addressed to children who do not speak Greek as a first language.

These stories are accompanied by supportive material-indicative activities that encourage and develop interaction and social skills amongst native, immigrant and refugee children. In general, fairy tales provide students with the opportunity to connect themselves emotionally and socially with ‘others’, to instill a sense of belongingness to a community, to reinforce an understanding of themselves as well of the ‘others’.

As main aims of the language AVIOR material were set the following three:

- ▶ To emerge and strengthen young children’s sensitivity towards diversity, i.e. to overcome stereotypes as well as any kind of prejudice.
- ▶ To emerge and strengthen children’s social skills and transfer such messages, i.e. to interact socially, to become not only citizens but also global citizens, to help them develop socio-cultural awareness skills.
- ▶ Especially for the immigrant and refugee children, to learn the Greek language as a foreign language, through fairy tales and stories.

In this way, though the teaching process the literacy emerges, in a joyful, communicative way, through playing. At the same time, through learning, cultural and social messages are

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<sup>2</sup>Note: UoWM holds the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for these stories together with RISBO. The Different Kind of Chick is – as all the other materials – offered as open source material.

transferred to all children from their early years. In this way, also the critical literacy takes place, interculturality values and human rights education are promoted.

### *Scenarios-Plots, heroes and messages*

Four animals, two males and two females, compose an 'action team', ready to support anyone in need. There are four types of different messages:

#### **A. First message: Please help!**

I'm embarrassed, I feel lonely, isolated, different...

The 'action team' suggests a few solutions.

Children listen to the fairy tales, discuss about those solutions and choose one of them.

Fairy tales that communicate such types of messages are the following:

Zoran and the goldfish (fairy tale number 4)

The basic goals of this story are:

- ▶ to familiarize students with the concepts of "refugee" and "immigrant", as well as with the feelings related to these groups (empathy)
- ▶ to make students identify ways of dealing with a difficult situation

Farak: A sparrow without wings (fairy tale number 1)

The basic goals of this story are:

- ▶ to develop children's positive attitude towards disability
- ▶ to accept diversity related to physical disability

#### **B. Second message: I want to share my experience!**

I am embarrassed, I feel alone, isolated, different...

I faced my problem to some extent and I want to share it, to help others who may suffer from the same problem or difficult situation.

Fairy tales that communicate this type of message are the following:

Bruno, a little bird with a great soul (fairy tale number 5)

Through this fairy tale it is intended to initiate discussion on issues such as:

- ▶ School bullying and its consequences
- ▶ The value of effort and courage
- ▶ Acceptance of diversity
- ▶ Solidarity and self-sacrifice
- ▶ The fight of colors (fairy tale number 3)

- ▶ Discussion on issues, such as the following:
- ▶ Equality and justice

The value of friendship and cooperation

Diversity as an opportunity for creative cooperation and communication, not as a barrier.

A love with wheels (fairy tale number 6)

Discussion on issues, such as the following:

- ▶ The loneliness of a person with a physical disability
- ▶ The difficulties faced by a person with physical disabilities
- ▶ The value of companionship

### **C. Third message: I want to help!**

I have noticed that someone has a problem, I want to help him, but I do not know how. For example, at my school a/some child/children are coming from another country, with no friends, (s) he does not speak the language, (s)he feels lonely. I do not know what to do in order to 'approach' this child.

The story that communicates this type of messages is:

A chicken different from the others (fairy tale number 1)

In this story an attempt is made to:

- ▶ Discuss about the issue of racism
- ▶ Make students feel like a person who is facing a racist attack (empathy)
- ▶ Make students understand the concepts of equality and social justice
- ▶ Make students think of how to encounter and react to a different situation.

### **D. Fourth message: I'm afraid...but I'll manage it!**

A homeland for Tim (story number 7)

Discussion on issues such as:

- ▶ The feelings of a person forced to leave his homeland (refugee)
- ▶ Fear and insecurity
- ▶ The value of friendship

Chasing the spring (story number 8)

Discussion on issues such as:

- ▶ The feelings of a person who decides to leave his/her homeland (immigrant)
- ▶ The value of solidarity

# Language Policies and Migrant Children

By George Androulakis

It is nowadays a common, evidence-based belief, in the field of applied linguistics, that language policies play a very important role within the general scientific fields of multilingualism and bilingual / plurilingual education, and in the societal process of linguistic and educational integration of migrant students.

## 1. Language Policies

Spolsky defines language policies as “regularities in choices among varieties of language” (Spolsky 2005). According to Beacco and Byram (2007), who stress an applied and educational dimension, language policy is “a conscious formal or militant action seeking to interfere with any form of language (national, regional, foreign, minority, etc.), respecting its form (for example, the written system), its social functions (such as the choice of a language as an official language) or even its place in education.”

Language policies are not always –as it is often assumed– explicitly laid out in official, publicly accessible documents such as national and international official texts, laws, language regulations or language standards, established by official bodies; in many cases, language policies derive from language practices that actually take place in various societal contexts. Shohamy (2006) also emphasizes that research on language policies should not be limited to the examination of declared and official statements. In her view a variety of so-called ‘mechanisms’ determine the formation of language policies. These mechanisms are, for instance, available language education policies, language teaching curricula and materials, language tests and linguistic landscaping. It is also important to mention that language policy is often perceived as being located on a national level, but it actually concerns all levels of decision making about languages and with regard to different types of entities, such as schools, companies, universities, but also families or even the individual. In European Union’s (EU) member-states, the impact of international policies is considerable; the influence of the Common European Framework of References for Languages of the Council of Europe (2001) is absolutely characteristic. And, finally, language policies exist in highly complex, interacting and dynamic systems; they are interconnected with political, cultural, religious, social, economic and bureaucratic factors (Spolsky 2005).

A very useful framework in order to understand the different aspects and factors within language policies has been introduced by Bernard Spolsky (2004). He identifies three components: beliefs, practices and management. Language beliefs refer to ideologies about language that lie behind each policy. Language practices refer to the ecology of language and focus on the kind of linguistic practices that actually take place in institutions and communities. Language management refers to specific acts that take place to manage and manipulate language behavior in a given entity (Spolsky 2007; Shohamy 2006). Certainly, the educational context is one of the most important and influential domains with respect to manipulating (or consolidating) the given language situation within a society. As Shohamy puts it, “language education policy is considered as a powerful tool as it can create and impose language behavior

in a system which is compulsory for all children to participate in. It can further determine criteria for language correctness, oblige people to adopt certain ways of speaking and writing, create definitions about language and especially determine the priority of certain languages in society and how these languages should be used, taught and learned.” (Shohamy 2006). As it has already been mentioned, language practices must be seen in direct connection with language policies and management.

In the educational context, language-education policy choices are made at various levels of responsibility and formulated in various ways. At all events, school education brings into play only some of the languages present in educational communities. A selection and decision are necessary as to:

- a) Which languages in the repertoires are to be accorded the status of languages of school education (national, regional, minority, foreign languages);
- b) How the languages selected are treated and, in effect, ranked (how long they are learnt, in which order, what teaching time they are given, what functions they perform in school, etc.).

Though the actual arrangements for teaching, learning or using it in the educational context may differ according to circumstances, the main language of schooling is likely to be the one that is least subject to fluctuation of the principles and norms governing it.

## 2. European Language Policy

The general spirit of European language policy is that speakers should learn at least two languages in addition to their first language (mother tongue) at the earliest possible age, and this is seen as an alternative way of uniting and integrating citizens of EU Member States. Károly notes that the European Union recognizes that culture, language, identity and ideology are closely related concepts. With this rationale, a language policy has been developed that respects linguistic diversity and superdiversity, promotes multilingualism, and protects communities whose language is in danger of extinction. According to Labrie (1999, in Károly 2008), linguistic pluralism means that some languages and linguistic variations are in contact, which often results in linguistic conflicts. Language policy is about to resolve these conflicts and to reach a compromise by exercising direct, explicit and conscious social control, stemming from political decisions that reflect power relations. He adds, however, that linguistic policy cannot be separated from the broad social context, since behind linguistic policy there is a tacit ideological framework linked to broader political and social ideologies (Károly 2008).

Taking into consideration the role of the social context, too, Kiliari (2005) argues that linguistic policymaking should not be fixed and stable but consists of a constant redefinition of proposals and decisions, given the emergence of new elements and changes in society and therefore in education.

In such a changing context, languages face attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, preferences and choices; languages obtain their status either institutionally, or through 'codified desires of socially dominant groups' (Kiliari *ibid*). Finally, views about languages are often associated with 'national interests' according to the ruling social group. This naturally results in language

competition, sustainability threat, or extinction, depending on their speakers' preferences related to the dominant language.

In addition, Phillipson (2008) proposes the concept of continual updating of language policy, arguing that language policy is beginning to gain importance in an era of intense political and cultural change in Europe. According to him, one of the key issues of modern language education policy in modern Europe is to ensure the vitality of national languages, minority language rights and the diversification of foreign language learning. At the same time, for Christiansen (2006), a world where every linguistic group lives in isolation is unthinkable. Language is a strong link with each ethnic group for each person, while serving as a bridge with other ethnicities. On the other side, language can act as a clear indication of group delineation, or even as the main obstacle to interaction between ethnic groups (Haarmann 1996).

As a Communiqué of the European Commission puts in the clearest manner, “The harmonious coexistence of many languages in Europe is a strong symbol of the European Union's ambition to be united in diversity, and a cornerstone of the European policy. Languages define personal identities and are part of a common heritage. They are bridges to other peoples, and they open up to new countries and cultures” (European Commission 2008). This statement reflects the European Union's official position on the extremely complex European language issue. Christiansen (2006), however, argues that the importance of having an appropriate language policy is demonstrated by comparing the status of dominant and minority or migrant languages. These linguistic minorities could be described as the most multilingual and multicultural “member” of the European Union (and demographically among the largest ones). Such an approach emphasizes, on the one hand, the linguistic resources of these minorities and, on the other, their potential contribution to instructing the European Union about multilingualism.

### 3. Languages in school education and plurilingual competence

All the languages used in school, either as part of the curriculum or because of the composition of the school, are potentially or actually languages that form part of students' socialization, in that they all contribute in various ways to cognitive, emotional, social and cultural development, in other words to constructing an identity for each individual admitted to this school.

Of these languages, those that are part of the curriculum or recognized in other ways by the school are languages of education, in that they are incorporated in the conceptual training and instruction program and thus contribute to the educational aims pursued. The main language of schooling plays a major role in this respect.

#### 3.1 The language of schooling

Main languages of school education are not only taught as subjects but are vehicles for teaching other subjects and are thus central to the school's overall aims. Most education systems have only one main language of schooling, and this has the official status of national language or language of the state. However, there are other situations in Europe, where the main language of schooling is a regional or minority language, or where two official languages may both serve

more or less equally as vehicles for subject teaching, resulting in bilingual education. Thus, in a school where children of foreign origin use a first language in the playground or in class that is not part of the school curriculum nor understood by anybody else in the school, this usage is part of their socialization process but also influences, however slightly, that of other students – if only in terms of their respect for, rejection of or indifference to this “foreign” manifestation. These same non-curricular languages may also receive a certain official recognition from the class teacher (“how do you say that in your language?”) and thus find a place, occasionally or much more systematically, depending on the educational approach adopted, among the languages of schooling. Of course, students’ first languages and the main languages of schooling are not always the same, not only because of the existence of regional and ethnic minority languages but also on account of migration for economic or other work-related reasons or linked to refugee and asylum status. And, as mentioned earlier, even when students’ first language and the main language of schooling are “the same”, there are always and by necessity discrepancies between students’ repertoires and the varieties which school requires, organizes and introduces.

Internal variation in languages should also come into play. Situations vary, in that a regional language may be recognized as a national language –regionally or nationally– within a particular country. The term “language of the state” is not always very meaningful since certain European countries are officially bilingual or multilingual and recognize several national/official languages. Foreign languages may be used, in different ways and to varying extents, as one element of bilingual education. Where such bilingual education occurs, the foreign language becomes, at least to some extent, the second language of schooling.

Whether the main language of schooling is national, regional or minority, it appears in the curriculum in three possible ways:

- a) As a distinct school subject in its own right, with its own syllabus. This syllabus itself generally comprises three elements, each of which varies according to educational traditions and culture or reforms under way: (i) measurable requirements or expectations concerning linguistic knowledge and communication skills at both written and oral levels; (ii) metalinguistic and metadiscursive knowledge of the language; (iii) a cultural element, focusing on a body of literature, whether or not this is confined to a “canon” of recognized works, leading to the study of types of text, devices, styles and so on;
- b) As a vehicle for teaching other subjects, or a language across the curriculum;
- c) As the main linguistic medium for the formal or informal transmission of the norms of society and the national, regional or minority community concerned. As such, it is the main language of socialisation and education in the school context, while always bearing in mind that: a. other institutions and networks are also part of the socialisation process, and b. as noted earlier, all the languages in a school make at least some contribution to socialising all the students concerned.

Two particular features characterize the language of schooling:

- a) For most students, it is the medium for their formal introduction to written language (apart from any initial literacy they may have encountered in a family context or other environments). Learning the written forms, writing and reading are a major focus of early schooling and primary

education has become almost identified with this access to this second mode of linguistic symbolism. Concentrating on the written medium strengthens the key role of the main language in the education system. This monopoly of written forms also offers majority languages a privileged and often unique role in establishing knowledge of subjects in a school context.

b) Coupled with the formal rules and standards associated with the written form, the majority language is presented not only as the common language, that of the school community in its everyday life, but also as a single and unified whole, whatever its variations in practice, including its varied uses within school. This combination of features leads to a vision of the common language of schooling, reinforced by certain standard normative practices. A role that is further strengthened by the dominant view that the parallel introduction of written forms of other languages – foreign, minority and regional, whether of origin or as part of the child’s heritage – is likely to disturb children’s learning process or even their cognitive development, particularly when those languages employ graphic systems other than that of the majority language. These patterns may constitute forms of linguistic insecurity, particularly among students from disadvantaged or migrant backgrounds.

### 3.2. Plurilingual competence and educational aims

Bearing in mind that all the languages not only of but also in the school are languages of socialization and, for some, of education, the question then arises of what, given these assumptions, is the specific role of the majority language or languages of schooling, particularly in view of their importance and multiple functions in education systems. In the past, a multiplicity of languages or language varieties has often been seen as likely to restrict schools’ ability to attain their objectives, particularly in the first years of schooling.

Now, however, the situation is more complex, as a result of several powerful trends: a) awareness of students’ varied origins; b) recognition of the linguistic rights of speakers of regional, minority or immigrant languages; c) encouragement of individual plurilingualism and recognition of plurilingual and multi/intercultural education’s potential for preparing students for the world-wide circulation of information, persons and goods, both material and cultural, and for its key contribution to the proper functioning and development of increasingly multilingual societies. The result is a new approach, as exemplified in the Council of Europe’s language policy instruments and in particular its Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe (Beacco & Byram 2007) that emphasizes school objectives and linguistic education that are more consistent with a plurality of languages.

On the basis of a realistic definition of plurilingual competence (Coste, Moore & Zarate 2009) it is argued that:

- a) By using several languages, the process of accessing information and accumulating knowledge becomes more complex, more reliable and even more creative;
- b) Integration in the social, cultural and economic world can be greatly facilitated by plurilingual and pluricultural competences;

- c) Social cohesion calls for greater awareness and appreciation of language diversity in the community;
- d) Current levels of individual and collective mobility mean that the exercise of citizenship in multicultural societies can only benefit from the plurilingualism of those active in the community;
- e) Individual and collective identities become and remain established through recognition of others and interaction with them. Modern identities are multifaceted and are defined in terms of their relationships to others, hence once more the importance of plurilingualism.

The plurilingualism sought is not that of an exceptional polyglot but rather of ordinary individuals with a varied linguistic capital in which partial competences have their place. What is expected is not maximum proficiency but a range of language skills and receptiveness to cultural diversity. In addition, however, to those areas where, more and more, agreement might occur, there is a widely held conviction regarding the first goal, i.e. everyone's right to success at school (and thus the duty of every education system to create the most favorable conditions for such success). The conviction is that, in order to reach this goal, what is most important is a good functional, and reflexive, command of the main language of schooling, particularly in the case of children from disadvantaged or immigrant backgrounds. Such a belief is shared by the great majority of teachers and most of the parents concerned. It is hardly surprising therefore that it is their inadequate command of the language of schooling that is blamed when children and young people drop out of school or are forced to repeat.

Clearly, plurilingualism and plurilingual competence should not be viewed in the school context as a goal separate from or secondary to the various values attached to the main language of schooling, which, in terms of individual development (and especially knowledge acquisition), occupies this decisive and central position in the education process – not only by virtue of its role as the main medium of communication but also because it is the language in relation to which students discover the inherent features of language generally and are led to think about how language is structured and operates, an enquiry that is part of all plurilingual education. In this respect the main language of schooling, as a major component of plurilingual repertoires, is rather different from other items of this same repertoire. For school and the school's educational project it functions, as it were, as a center of gravity. Equally, to look at the matter from the learner's point of view, the school's language goals include the guiding of interplay between the students' developing plurilingual and pluridiscursive repertoires and the languages and language practices which the curriculum explicitly adopts or de facto imposes or favors, and this obviously includes more than the language of schooling.

All language-education policy with plurilingual education as its goal must of course accommodate this basic fact, particularly at a time of great debate in many quarters about the languages' identity building functions and about identities themselves. These tensions and controversies cannot be readily characterized in terms of a confrontation between old and new, between conservatives and progressives. Such situations are the product of fundamental and complex issues. A possible line of conduct might be traced as follows:

a) In so far as it plays a key part in school achievement and the social environment, command of the language of schooling makes a major and decisive contribution to any school's objectives. As such, not only it cannot be ignored but its role is central in any educational project;

b) Equally clearly, modern schools have to acknowledge, accept and promote a plurality of languages and cultures, not only for practical operational reasons but moreover in response to general aims relating to the future of societies and of their members;

c) If these two requirements are to be taken into account, this must not be on the basis of a compromise or some form of territory division. The challenge is to ensure that languages present in school other than and alongside the language of schooling benefit the latter while at the same time the way the latter is used and developed also contributes to acceptance and development of pluralism. In other words, an integrative approach, but one where each subject and component of the school curriculum retains its specific identifying features.

A common general principle applies: all languages, including the languages of schooling, are multiple in form and there is no single homogeneous language. Or, more provocatively: it is possible to be plurilingual within and on the basis of just one language.

### 3.3. Daniel Coste's dynamic model

Daniel Coste (2014) argues that "paradoxically, in order to strike a balance between excessively homogeneous and excessively fragmented approaches to the language of schooling when drawing up a frame of reference, a more complex analysis may be required". Once again, the starting point is cross-curriculum language. Curriculum development that seeks to establish a relationship between the language of schooling and the language of other subjects raises questions of contact and cross circulation.

But nor is this a simple binary relationship. Three other areas of language practice must be taken into account:

a) The first concerns students' language repertoires. These multiple, and possibly plurilingual, discursive repertoires will come into contact with varieties of the language of schooling throughout students' school careers and will – one hopes at least – draw on them and expand, restructure and become more complex as a result.

b) The second area is that of social genres, discursive practices and forms of textual presentation in the social environment, such as the media and civil society, for whose active and responsible use schools offer preparation through the language of schooling and its associated subjects' competences and cultures.

c) The third area concerns the foreign language or languages taught by schools, which may also –and increasingly– be present and accessible in the environment. This part of the curriculum is not the main focus of this paper but it is worth noting that it is for these languages that transversal instruments and general models such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio have been drawn up, and foreign languages have been the focus and starting point for investigations of didactic convergence, between these languages and the language of schooling as a subject (CLIL: Content and Language

Integrated Learning), or between neighboring languages (intercomprehension) or between languages and other subjects (bi/plurilingual teaching).

Especially in the francophone literature on language learning and language education policies, the *didactique du plurilinguisme* (didactics of plurilingualism) and *les approches plurielles* (pluralistic approaches) insist on contact between languages in the curriculum and in the classroom (Candelier 2007, Candelier & Castellotti 2013). The empirical research on Language awareness has paved the way for these trends: concerned at first with foreign and migrant languages, it soon included a reflection on the language of schooling (Candelier 2003a, 2003b).

#### 4. Migrant languages and European language policy

An issue that is directly related to the presence of linguistic diversity in Europe is migration. Indeed, in the 21st century (but, of course, in earlier times, too) the influx of immigrants is a phenomenon that contributes to the complexity of the European mosaic of languages. The European Commission also supports its Member States in integrating immigrants, through the relevant Action Plan (COM (2016/377) developed for the integration of third-country nationals, through which education is the most powerful process leading to integration. Actions should therefore be planned with the aim of removing obstacles for the participation of children with an immigrant background in education, both formal and non-formal; and one of the most important obstacles is their linguistic competence (OECD 2015, European Commission 2017).

However, according to Caviedes (2003), the European Union seems committed to multilingualism but focuses on national languages, and therefore promotes monolingualism in the Member States. In practice, according to Christiansen (2006), minority (and migrant) groups receive little institutional support, both in terms of the legal framework for minorities and in terms of educational support. Christiansen goes on to argue that the Member States of the Union thus neglect a huge linguistic and human resource. Moreover, EU enlargement underlines the urgent need for an alternative approach to managing multilingualism in the Union.

It is a fact that in European countries the efforts to integrate migrant children have intensified in these early years of the 21st century, to a certain extent through the principles of multilingualism and multiculturalism, mainly promoted by the Council of Europe, the European Union, and other international organizations. According to Extra & Gorter (2007), minority and immigrant languages have much more in common than one can imagine. Such common characteristics include their proliferation, sustainability and vitality, their resilience to the shift to dominant languages, and their status in the education systems. For minority languages, in particular, Extra & Gorter (ibid.) point out that the greatest risk is the lack of transmission of the language from generation to generation, making education an important factor in maintaining and promoting a minority language. Some minority languages have in recent years been protected both by legal status and through educational policies and programs at both national and European level. Therefore, in the context of the Union's intention to promote and support multilingualism and multiculturalism, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union was ratified (Official Journal of the European Union, 16.12.2004), which was adopted in 2000 and became legally binding by the Treaty of Lisbon. Specifically, Article 21 prohibits all discrimination on the basis of language, while Article 22 obliges the Union to respect linguistic

diversity as an integral part of the European identity (Tsigou 2009). However, the European Union has been strongly criticized for not giving enough importance to language rights issues, especially for regional, minority and migrant language speakers.

As far as the languages of migrants are concerned, Extra & Gorter in their previous work (2001) report that although migrant languages, unlike minority languages, are considered and transmitted as fundamental values, they are less protected. Of course, eighteen years later, according to the most recent report by the Eurydice European Information Network (Eurydice 2019), just almost half of the European Union's Member States apply top-level regulations on the teaching of migrant languages at school, and this is by no means a satisfactory score. The same report identifies that the monolingual model that prevailed in most European public schools constitutes, according to Busch (2001), the legacy of the national building process. Two years ago, Eurydice Network (Eurydice 2017) was indicating that, although the majority of European states formally recognize legally and administratively the regional or minority languages within their borders, just one language enjoys the status of official in the territory of most member states. Within this framework, education systems have had and still have a key role to play in promoting the use of a common language throughout the country. The monolingual model, however, recognizes the pressure of linguistic and cultural diversity that now characterizes the Member States' societies, due to globalization and the constant influx of migrants in recent years.

According to Phillipson (2008), several European languages have been established as the dominant national languages over the last two centuries. As far as foreign language learning was concerned, it was aimed at both external communication, but also at acquaintance with the cultural heritage associated with the dominant languages. Since 1945, and even more strongly in recent years, there has been a gradual shift to English, which is by far the most widely taught language in both Western and Eastern Europe, replacing other widespread languages, such as French, German and Russian. Initially, learning English was a matter for the elites and for those who were professionally involved in commerce and travel; today, however, the orientation of the curriculum towards English applies to everyone. The advancement of English in a range of key social sectors, such as commerce, the economy, research and higher education, the media and popular cultural traditions, means that English in the modern world does not fit into the traditional shapes of a foreign language (Coulmas 1991).

The priority given to the learning of foreign languages in the European Union can, however, foster citizens' acquaintance with the different cultures that make up it, and may also endanger the integrity of multilingualism. In particular, according to a special survey by European Commission Eurobarometer 386 (2012), the most spoken languages, as native or non-native languages, in the European Union are English (51%), German (27%) and French. (26%). This means that learning two of these languages as foreign languages can, if it takes precedence over the other official languages of the Union, endanger its ideal of "unity in diversity" and, on the other hand, represent a threat for the equality of the status of the official languages of the Union.

## 5. Inclusive language policies for migrants

The need for inclusive language and educational policies, with regard to migrant children, has become obvious and pressing since the mid-1990s, when educational underachievement of immigrant children and adolescents has increased in significance for policymakers in many countries because of the demonstrated relationship between education and social/economic factors. OECD's programme PISA (Programme for International Student Achievement) underlined the extent of immigrant students' underachievement in many countries, but also the considerable variability across countries in the extent to which these students succeed academically.

Jim Cummins (2014) states that, worldwide, there exists a considerable gap between policies and research evidence. Specifically, there has been little consideration given to the role of societal power relations and their manifestation in patterns of teacher-student identity negotiation. Policymakers have also largely ignored research related to the role of immigrant students' first language as both a cognitive tool and a reflection of student identity.

Underachievement among immigrant and other minority group students is by no means a recent phenomenon. Students from groups that have experienced persistent discrimination in the wider society over several generations are particularly vulnerable to educational failure.

In Europe, Roma communities as well as more recent immigrant communities have experienced widespread discrimination, which is reflected in students' educational performance. Schools tend to reflect the values of the societies and thus it is not surprising that societal discrimination is frequently also reflected within the educational system. This discrimination expresses itself both in the structures of schooling (e.g. curriculum and assessment practices) and in patterns of teacher-student interaction. Efforts to reverse underachievement among low-income and minority group students were initiated in several countries during the 1960s, motivated primarily by renewed commitment to equity and social justice. These efforts have met with limited success.

Thus, if the prevalent sentiment in a society is one of hostility to immigrants and diversity, then it is likely that a significant number of educators, who belong to that wider society, will also reflect the dominant discourse in their attitudes and practice. It is probably no coincidence that second-generation students tend to perform very poorly in countries that have been characterized by highly negative attitudes towards immigrants (e.g. Belgium, Denmark, Germany) and relatively well in countries such as Australia and Canada that have explicitly endorsed multicultural philosophies at the national level and which expedite integration into the society (e.g. in Canada immigrants become eligible for citizenship after three years residence). Thus, a deeper analysis of the causes of immigrant and minority group underachievement is necessary if we are to understand the kinds of school-based changes and reforms that are required to promote equity of educational provision and outcomes.

The legitimization of immigrant languages in the classroom is a key factor for the integration of migrant students and for their school success. A high level of engagement of teachers and researchers is needed towards this direction. Nathalie Auger's concluding remarks after several years of research in French schools are noteworthy: "The researcher's engagement is also visible in the creation of documents and collaboration with the field. Using the 'Let's compare our

languages' activities to explore the use of migrant pupils' language is a first step. A further step would involve allowing migrant pupils to use their home languages in classroom discussion if necessary and extending the activities to all subject classes, rather than limiting them to French classes or classes for migrant pupils. The experience we have accumulated to date could be used in any multilingual class in any other country in Europe and beyond – some interest has lately been shown in North Africa and Canada.” (Auger 2014).

The discourse of equality and social justice initiated in many countries during the 1960s, together with legal inscription of equality rights and non-discrimination, has desensitized many policymakers and educators to the more subtle forms of exclusion and discrimination that continue to operate in societal institutions, including schools.

# PART 2: AVIOR IN PRACTICE

## AVIOR Study Visits

The project included study visits to teacher training institutes and schools in order to observe how bilingual and mother tongue materials are used. The partner organizations each participated in two study visits that were held in partner countries with experience in using multilingual teaching material. These were Greece, the Netherlands, Estonia and Italy. A representative from Risbo and/or from the Rutu Foundation attended each visit to ensure continuity. Eight people participated in each study visit (including the hosts). The idea behind the study visit was that although the use of bilingual or mother tongue materials may not be part of the official policy of the country, good practices can be found at schools or teacher training institutes. By observing these practices first-hand, teachers, trainers and parents obtain ideas and get inspired to develop good practices themselves, thus creating a multiplier effect.

- ▶ Each study visit included a workshop by (local) experts to explain the country's educational context and the practice in question.

Based on this introduction and before travel, participants formulated questions that they reflected on at the end of the visit. A questionnaire was created with interview questions for the people we spoke to during the study visit. Each study visit resulted in a short 5-minute video. You can view the videos [here](#). The goal is to show teachers, school leaders, teacher training institutes, and parents across Europe what the use of bilingual and mother tongue education material actually looks like, how teachers are integrating language and content learning and how migrant children, teachers, and parents respond to the practice.

### Study Visit Report Turin: Risbo Team (Netherlands)

*By Laurinde Koster*

The teachers and organisations that we met during this first study visit were very inspirational, motivated to help and they clearly possessed the knowledge to help. It has been nice to hear about the developed methodology and materials from the teachers and makers themselves. The teachers that we have talked to have tremendous experience in the work field and encourage collaborative learning environments. Consequently, the adults and children seemed to be safe. We have spoken and seen the work of two different age groups: illiterate adults and primary school children. Each age group has its own difficulties and linguistic challenges. Adults need practical language use to be able to go to work but children need more linguistic attention to be able to go through the schooling system. Nonetheless, the study visit conclusions will only focus on AVIOR's target age group: 4-8 year olds.

#### **Overall conclusions**

- ▶ Innovative teaching methods were shown on how to acquire literacy and numeracy skills.
- ▶ From what we have seen, the teaching of literacy takes the students' mother tongue into account.

- ▶ It seems like the implementation of materials in the classroom is only abled by experienced teachers. Furthermore, one must keep in mind the importance of the training of the teachers, most teachers' needs to be trained to deal with multilingual materials.
- ▶ The development of the materials is nicely integrated with the class curriculum.
- ▶ Numerous obstacles found in the system: literacy background, socio-economic background, poverty, time constraints that all contribute to a difficult educational setting. However, the efforts that we have seen in this study will surely diminish any conflict and making the migrant people feel as integrated as possible.
- ▶ We have seen the importance of teachers and how their own experiences relate to the way that they teach. We have also seen the importance of collaboration between teachers themselves.
- ▶ We need talk more on parental involvement and with parents specifically.
- ▶ The apps are very visual and work really well with children and the world around them. The apps also allow student's collaboration. However, how can the materials be used more multi-linguistically? Taking the students' home languages into account and not only aiming to learn Italian.

## Study Visit Report Thessaloniki: NEPC Team (Croatia)

*by Petra Jurlina*

The games the AVIOR team witnessed during Study trip to Thessaloniki were more about social skills, emotions (feeling of being left out, cooperation, team work, what moves us to act like a member of a team), than about bilingual skills. Moreover, the continual transfer of people is a problem specific to Greece. Assessment for most MRS is non-formative or descriptive, without grades at the point of the AVIOR study visit. The central question for everybody in every educational system is whether we want a child-centred school system or EU-country centred school system?

### **Special good practices that were mentioned:**

In the 64th Preschool, many children are second-language speakers, many of them from low SES as well. The teacher created a learning environment that was bilingual by learning herself some phrases and sentences from her students' languages and encouraging their use in class and class environment. Also, to acquire other language skills (other than their mother tongue), she uses games that repeat phrases which enable children to engage and master the said language, through a lot of routines, which is an appropriate way of learning languages for early and pre-school children. Theoretical basis behind this is that each child must have a stable and complete knowledge of a linguistic system (structures, grammar, and vocabulary) in order to learn any other language, something that cognitive development expert's support.

In the Eleptherio Kordelio School, the already existing school paper/ newsletter, sent out to all other city schools regularly, could be used to promote ways of support of native language skills in all Thessaloniki schools (our recommendation).

Regarding the categorization of students in Greece, still in the 3rd generation people are considered different in terms of ethnic origin (i.e. it takes to be fourth generation to not be counted as repatriated Greek by the census, etc.). However, the system has somewhat liberalised so since 2010 children born in Greece are considered native Greeks, if they fulfil certain criteria according to the relevant law for the acquisition of the Greek citizenship to third countries nationals.

After observing the efforts of the MRS in the Morning class to keep notes in their native language during class, our recommendation is that this need for a better native (Arabic, Farsi, etc.) - to-Greek/English language support should stand as a common point for the possible collaboration between non-profit groups, translators, parents and teachers/ schools.

Overall, there are real obstacles when it comes to use of multilingual material in class, and teachers are handling communication challenges according to their own imagination and means. Any materials such as AVIOR supported ones are welcome.

## Study Visit Report in Tartu: UoWM Team (Greece)

*by Tom Tadjman and Myrto Dina*

Education is the most important means of guaranteeing the development and status of the language. The role of education is to provide general literacy and professional competence. Compulsory education is of fundamental importance because of its impact on language use. The requirement of the Estonian language environment deriving from the Estonian Constitution implies the task of providing proficiency in Estonian language in the framework of compulsory education. However, several challenges are confronted in the implementation of this task.

- ▶ The challenges here are the large number of non-Estonian pupils and their isolation from Estonian-speakers.
- ▶ It seems that most non-Estonian pupils have an insufficient knowledge of Standard Estonian. The main reasons for this are as follows:
  - Most subjects are taught in Russian;
  - The scope of teaching Estonian and the methods used do not guarantee the acquisition of Estonian;
  - The knowledge of Estonian among teachers (including teachers of the Estonian language) fails to meet the standards.

Creating a more inclusive educational society where mother-tongue languages are used in learning Estonian on a standard high level would be very beneficial for Estonia and for the generation to come. In classrooms, AVIOR materials would help to make a good start with the youngest ones.

## Study Visit Report Amsterdam: Rutu Foundation (Netherlands)

*by Ellen Rose Kambel*

The teachers from Italy and Estonia who participated in the study visit in Amsterdam worked at very different schools, which made for interesting reflections and exchanges. In Estonia, the teachers work at an international school with mostly children from expat families who may be there only for a few years or even a few months. As a result, they never have a real start of the school year, the whole year the groups are forming. A real challenge for the teachers. In Italy, the teachers work at two different schools, both also with children from parents who come from all over the world, including as refugees. These are regular primary schools, but just like in the Estonian international school, children arrive during the whole year. In the Estonian international school, the working language is English and a big difference between the Estonian school and the Italian and Dutch schools we visited, is that most parents speak English and are highly educated. The teachers could therefore communicate more easily with the parents. Communicating with parents some of whom cannot read or write and do not have a language in common with the teacher, is clearly a big challenge. The visit to the Dutch schools was an 'eye opener' for one of the Estonian teachers who was clearly up for the challenge and wanted to learn more.

### ► Changing the mindset

What is important is the mindset that learning does not have to take place in one particular language (such as Dutch or English). Children can learn in and through many different languages. The problem starts when a) parents are uncertain about which language to use with their children; b) teachers do not know how to communicate with parents and c) teachers do not have the knowledge or skills to use the multilingual talents of their students as a tool for learning.

### ► The school curriculum as a bridge between parents and schools

One of the conclusions that was drawn from our discussion about the AVIOR bilingual materials was that parents need a reason to work together: with the teachers and with each other. Developing the bilingual materials and using them provided this reason. At the St. Janschool the AVIOR materials led to the creation of a new community, with parents interacting more with each other and with the school.

### ► Boosting parents' confidence

As an additional benefit, the cooperation between parents and teachers involving home languages (with parents assuming the role of translators, providing additional support at home or at school) can make parents feel more confident: they know their languages, they are the experts now.

### ► Facilitating parent-child interaction in the mother tongue by (pre)school

Because very young children are not doing homework yet, parents can discover what their children are capable of by playing or reading to them in their own language. (Pre) schools could

facilitate opportunities for parents to come to school for a while and play or work with the children.

- ▶ Illiterate parents

There can be differences between parents who received more formal education in their country of origin and are familiar with the information and skills taught at school, and those who received only a few years of education. The bilingual materials help non-formally educated parents participate and learn as well, making them more confident.

# AVIOR Case Studies on Parental Involvement

By Ellen-Rose Kambel

Between October 2018 and March 2019, 12 kindergarten and primary schools in ten European cities, towns and villages, participated in an experiment that brought parents and teachers together around a variety of bilingual materials. In some places, parents would come into the classroom and read stories in their home languages to the entire class, while the teacher would repeat the story in the school language. In other schools, teachers discussed with parents which materials would be taken home to practice with their children. One week, this might be a word game to match pictures with words in both the home language and the language used at school. During another week, the kids would be doing addition and subtraction in their home languages with their parents. Afterwards, parents and teachers discussed the results with each other. Some parents were asked or volunteered themselves to correct the materials when the translations were not finished or when the materials were provided in a different language variety than what was spoken at home. The experiment was initiated by project partners of AVIOR, a three year Erasmus+ funded project.

Case studies were carried out in all six countries as part of one of AVIOR's objectives: to enhance migrant parents' involvement in the learning process of their children by actively engaging teachers and parents to work with the newly translated bilingual resources and create teacher/parent collaborative networks.

## *Migrant students' parental involvement*

There is a large body of research showing that parents' involvement in the education of their children has a positive effect on the cognitive development and performance of their children (Santos et al 2016; Van Driel, Darmody & Kerzil, 2016; Wilder 2014; Hill & Taylor 2004). A recent study on the integration of migrant students in schools in Europe reported that almost all European education systems acknowledge that the collaboration with students' parents or families is considered essential in ensuring the successful integration of migrant students (Eurydice 2019). Yet, according to the same study, school heads in Europe report that parents who speak another language than the school language, are less involved in the school of their children.

## *Why are migrant students' parents less frequently involved in the education of their children?*

One of the problems is that expectations of parental involvement are often perceived and presented as universal, but in reality they are based on culturally specific norms, namely those of the school and the surrounding environment. They may therefore not always align with the type of parental involvement offered by parents with a different cultural background. For instance, for teachers it may be an indication of parental involvement when parents show up frequently at school and participate in school activities, and if this is not the case they may easily conclude that parents are not interested in the education of their children. They may not be

aware however, of the extent to which the parents are engaged in the school work within the family environment (Bower & Griffin 2018; Bezcioglu-Göktolga & Yagmur 2018).

Even when parental involvement activities do align, teachers may not perceive them as such, or do not recognize that it might actually be their own behaviour which prevents migrant parents from being involved in the way the teachers would prefer. This was demonstrated in a study comparing perceptions of Turkish parents and Dutch teachers in the Netherlands (Bezcioglu-Göktolga & Yagmur 2018). It was found that Dutch teachers were critical of Turkish parents, saying that the parents do not come to school to ask for help and do not participate in activities. But according to the Turkish parents, they had frequently followed the advice of the teachers, for example by hiring private tutors to improve their children's Dutch language skills. Teachers were unaware of this. Furthermore, the Turkish parents said that the teachers did not tolerate parents who cannot speak Dutch well, that teachers would not allow them to use Turkish among themselves, not even to translate what the teachers say. This kept some parents away from school.

When parents and teachers do not share the same language and cultural background, the communication clearly presents a challenge for both. This challenge becomes even greater when home languages are rejected by the school. Many teachers in Europe are unaware of the research showing the benefits of a multilingual education that includes home languages, for example by using translanguaging (Herzog-Punzenberger, Le Pichon-Vorstman & Siarova 2017). They believe that using the home language may be a hindrance to the students' learning and may confuse them. In fact, supporting the development of the full linguistic repertoire of students has been proven to result not only in better command of the school language but also in higher levels of students' emotional well-being (Collier & Thomas 2017). No matter how well intended by the teachers, parents may perceive the school language policy as a rejection of their linguistic and cultural identity, leading to a break down in the communication (Bezcioglu-Göktolga & Yagmur 2018).

By allowing teachers and migrant parents to work together and using bilingual learning resources, it was expected that teachers would discover what parents are doing at home, while parents would gain more insight into the learning process in the classroom, ultimately leading to greater communication and improved learning for children with a migrant/minority background.

#### *Objectives of the case studies*

The central question of the case studies was: How can AVIOR bilingual materials be used to support the involvement of parents of multilingual children with a migrant/minority background in the learning of their students, particularly literacy and math?

More concretely, the case studies aimed at:

- ▶ Creating informal parent/teacher collaborative networks in six countries around literacy and numeracy in early grade learning of migrant children;
- ▶ Increasing the involvement of parents with a migrant background in learning processes in schools, and increasing their awareness of their children's learning processes, as well as their own role in enhancing basic numeracy and literacy skills of their children.

- ▶ Creating a deeper insight among policy makers, school leaders and teachers about opportunities and obstacles for parental participation in learning processes of migrant children.
- ▶ Providing policy makers with greater insight into the obstacles and opportunities related to the use of bilingual and mother tongue materials in classrooms and becoming (more) open to policies that close the achievement gap between native and non-native children through mother language support and multilingual learning.

*Conclusions: What Have We Learned?*

The results indicate that our approach was successful: project partners in six countries reported that after three to five months of using the materials in the classroom and at home, there was more communication and a better relationship between both parents and teachers. The project also led to more engagement between parents and their children, improved the relationship between teachers and students and even among parents from different language groups. The project also indicated that it was possible for schools to reach 'hard to reach' parents from lower social economic backgrounds with very limited skills in the school language. They were seen coming into the school for the first time and actively participating in the activities, thereby boosting their self-confidence.

Lessons learned and some recommendations:

- ▶ The curriculum is what connects the school, parents and student.
- ▶ Academic activities which are respectful of the parent's cultural identity and heritage, such as bilingual activities, can enhance the mutual understanding and therefore the communication between parents and teachers.
- ▶ Parental involvement does not only mean being active or 'seen' at school; activities at home which do not require parents' presence at school can be equally valuable and enhance the relationship between parents and their children;
- ▶ The value of collaborative activities between teachers and parents may lie in the process, not just in the results. By asking parents to help with the translation or correction for instance, parents may feel acknowledged as experts which can contribute to their self-esteem and further improve the relationship with the teacher.
- ▶ The activities or materials do not have to be very costly or fancy; with simple games and stories much can be achieved.
- ▶ Training of teachers in the benefits of multilingual education and the role of home languages in migrant children's learning process is essential.
- ▶ Supporting overburdened teachers for example in the form of teaching assistants who share the languages and cultural backgrounds of the students, or through parental coordinators, is crucial. The role of NGO's and migrant organisations in supporting schools should also be acknowledged and supported.
- ▶ Bilingual teaching materials should be made available for free in all EU member states, both for teachers and parents and in as many languages as possible. This could also help the learning process of children who migrate through different education systems with their parents.

# AVIOR User Guide to the Translation Process

By Paola Gargano and Antonio Fiandaca

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.

## *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”<sup>3</sup>, 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 up-to-date;
- ▶ 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:

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<sup>3</sup>“mehrsprachige Bildungsangebote”,  
“mehrsprachige Lehrbücher”, “bilinguale Unterrichtsmaterialien/Lehrmaterialien” in German.

- ▶ asking organizations that work with school educators to create multilingual materials for the project from scratch (Croatia and Holland<sup>4</sup>);
- ▶ describing successful strategies in order to produce material in a collaborative way together with the learners, by using free apps (Italy)

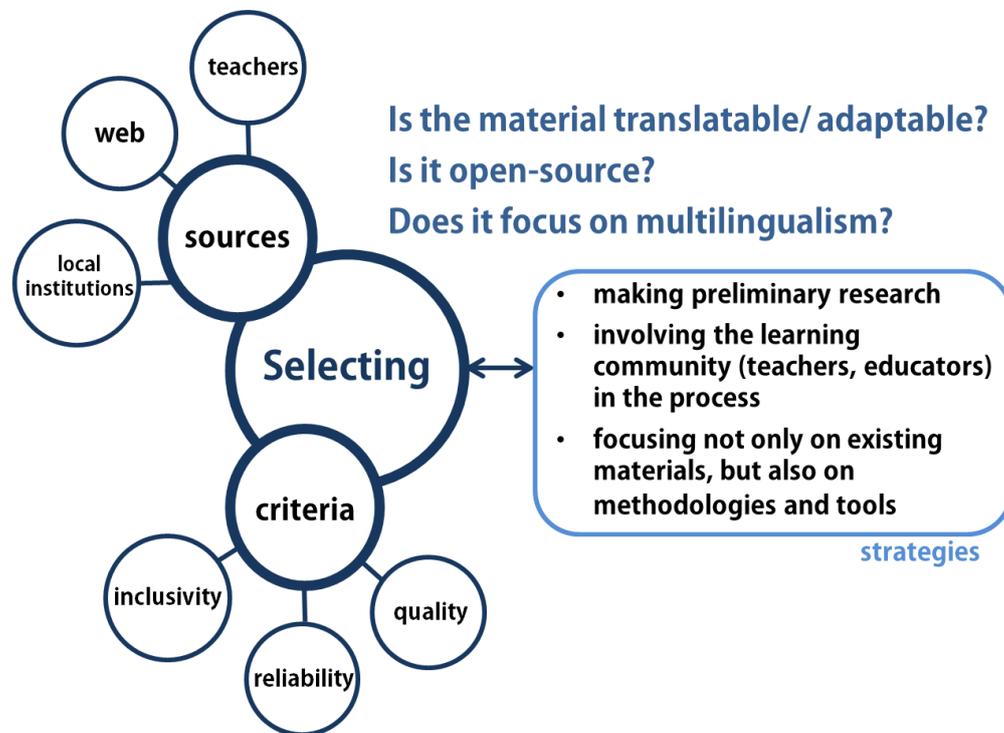


Figure 3. The process of selection: problems and strategies

*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 disability<sup>5</sup> 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 though the metaphor of chick different from the rest<sup>6</sup>. In the end, the group decided to select only the second story because it is more connected with the ideals

<sup>4</sup>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)

<sup>5</sup> *A love with wheels*, Greek materials.

<sup>6</sup> *A different chicken*, Greek materials.

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 process<sup>7</sup>.

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. TPR 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 teacher<sup>8</sup>. 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 issues<sup>9</sup>.

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 of the target language<sup>10</sup>. 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.

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<sup>7</sup> 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)

<sup>8</sup> 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"

<sup>9</sup> "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).

<sup>10</sup> 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.

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.

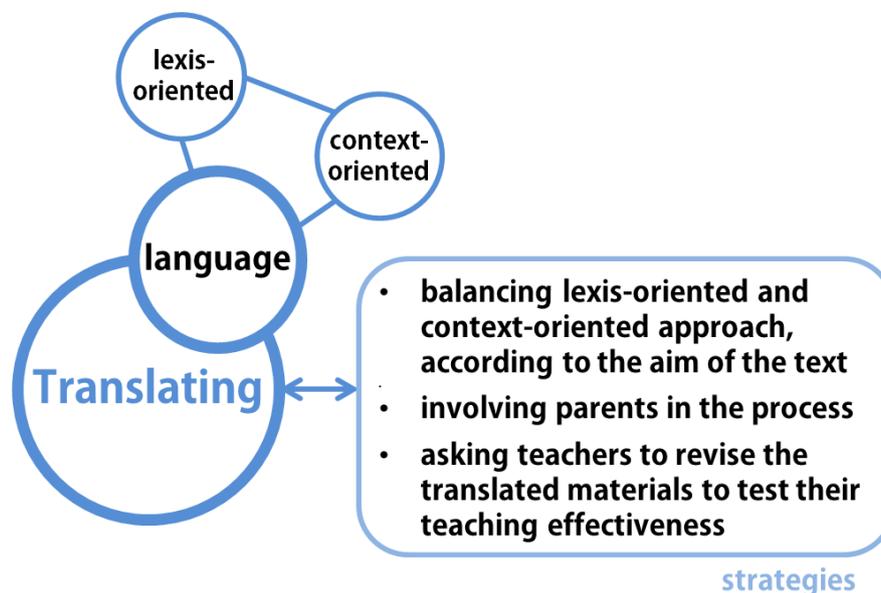


Figure 4. The process of translation: problems and strategies

*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 math’s 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 synonyms<sup>11</sup>)

### 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

<sup>11</sup>On this aspect, see also note 5

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 apps<sup>12</sup>) 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.

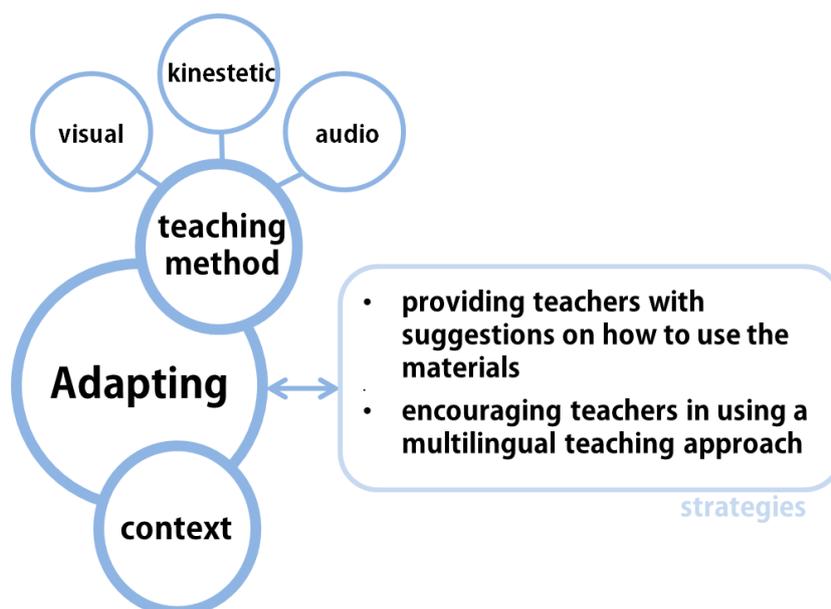


Figure 5. The process of adaptation: problems and strategies

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.*

<sup>12</sup> see Italian materials.

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.

## 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 so, AVIOR project carried out two different strategies, at 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 materials<sup>13</sup>, 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 words<sup>14</sup>;
- ▶ 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 it<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 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*)

<sup>14</sup> “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).

<sup>15</sup> 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.

# Epilogue: AVIOR to support translanguaging practices in the classroom

By: Laurinde Koster

“Multilingual learners and classes present new challenges for educational systems but also new opportunities because this way children can develop a better understanding of the rest of the world and prepare for life in a globalized 21st century” (Stan, 2017, p. 53).

Translanguaging is seen by many researchers as a welcome addition to the multilingual classroom. Whilst the practice of translanguaging has been critically discussed (for example Canagarajah, 2011; Martínez-Roldán, 2014), allowing children to use and explore their full language repertoires provides them with a safe learning environment ultimately benefiting their overall learning experience (García, 2009a, 2009b, Lewis et al. 2012, Creese and Blackledge, 2010, Baker, 2006, and Duarte, 2016). This is also acknowledged by the European Framework of Reference. In the 2018 reformed level indicators, multilingualism and pluricultural practices are presented as ways of achieving higher levels in language learning more quickly (CEFR, 2018).

What current classroom studies show is that “translanguaging is a naturally occurring phenomenon for multilingual students” (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 8). To facilitate the learning of this multilingual audience, we therefore have to keep learning from, studying, and working with multilingual didactical and pedagogical strategies in the classroom.

Researchers have discussed many strategies for using multilingualism in the classroom. For example, by setting classroom rules on when to use different languages; by providing set times to give students an opportunity to write down or read a text in their home language, or by making ‘home language groups’ where students can help each other understand the task at hand by making use of their home languages (Celic and Seltzer, 2011).

Multilingual materials can play an important role in implementing these multilingual classroom strategies. As the AVIOR pilot project has illustrated, bilingual materials are a practical tool that can help teachers and parents easily integrate multilingualism into the learning process of the student. For example, because students are able to read the words on the page themselves in both languages they can use their full language repertoire to make meaning. Using the AVIOR materials can also be a strategy to reach parents and involve them in the education of their children. Many studies have highlighted that parental involvement is key for the learning process of a child (Wilson, 2009; Castro et al, 2015; Benner et al, 2016). By providing parents with multilingual material, they are able to help their children and create a rich language environment at home, while gaining a greater understanding of what and how their child learns at school. This in turn helps the teacher to align her teaching to the needs of the child.

With the AVIOR materials, we hope to pave a way towards more inclusive classrooms in Europe where learners are able to integrate and actively employ their multiple languages as part of their learning process.

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# Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRE Study Visit

## **For educators / development of multilingual material / training centres**

What kind of educational materials do you develop/ have?

In what languages?

How is it being used in classrooms? And by teachers?

How do you train teachers for language diversity (and the use of these materials)?

## **For principles**

What is the context of the school looking at different languages and cultures? Population, country of origin, languages spoken, income level parents, what is the neighbourhood like?

Which multi-lingual materials does the school use?

What is the goal/ aim of using these materials?

How does it improve the language learning?

How do teacher react to using these materials?

How are they professionally developed to teach multilingual classes (and use materials alike)?

Are parents involved? And how? And what is their opinion?

## **For teachers**

What is the context of your classroom (4 – 8 years old)? Population, country of origin, languages spoken, income level parents, what is the neighbourhood like?

Which multi-lingual materials do you use?

What is the goal/ aim of using these materials?

How does it improve the language learning?

What are pro's and con's in using them? What does it ask of your pedagogical skills?

Tell us your experiences.

Does it make your classroom more *inclusive*?

Are you professionally being prepared for teaching with these materials (or to put it broader: for diversity)? In what way? Are they specifically bi-lingual taught?

Are parents involved? And how? And what is their opinion? And do they use the materials at home?

**For parents**

What language is spoken at home?

What is your opinion on school and the teacher?

Are you familiar with the use of multilingual material(s) in the classroom? What is your opinion about it?

Does it help your child in developing mother-tongue as well as instruction language? In what way?

Does it help your child to feel more at home? More confident? Perform better?

Does it help you in: a) helping your child, b) learning the instruction language for yourself c) be in contact with school: parental involvement?