

Tilburg University

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Extra, G.

Published in:

Dialogue: The newsletter of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia

Publication date:

2000

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Extra, G. (2000). Migration and multilingualism in Europe and Australia. *Dialogue: The newsletter of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia*, 19(2), 55-62.

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Opinion

Migration and Multilingualism in Europe and Australia

Guus Extra



How 'they' hit the headlines Imagine a European citizen who has never been abroad and who travels to San Francisco for the first time in life, walks around downtown for a week, gets an impression of the Chinese community, is invited for dinner by a Chinese family, and asks the host at the dinner table: 'How many foreigners live in San Francisco?' in this way referring to the many Asian, Latin, and other non-Anglo Americans(s) seen during that week. Now, two things might happen: if the guest's English is poor, the Chinese host might leave this European reference to ethnocultural diversity unnoticed and go on with the conversation; if the guest's English is good, however, the Chinese host might interrupt the dinner and charge his guest with discrimination.

In the European public discourse on immigrant minority (henceforward IM) groups, two major characteristics emerge: IM groups are often referred to as *foreigners* (*étrangers*, *Ausländer*) and as being in need of *integration*. It is common practice to refer to IM groups in terms of non-national residents and to their languages in terms of *non-European*, *non-territorial* or *non-indigenous* languages. At the national level, IM groups in Great Britain are often referred to as *non-English speaking* residents and in the Netherlands even more curtly as *anderstaligen* ('those who speak other languages'). The conceptual exclusion rather than inclusion in the European public discourse derives from a restrictive interpretation of the notions of *citizenship* and *nationality*. From a historical point of view, such notions are commonly shaped by a constitutional *ius sanguinis* (law of the blood) in which nationality derives from parental origins, in contrast to *ius soli* (law of the ground) in which nationality derives from the country of birth. When European emigrants left their continent in the past and colonised countries abroad, they legitimised their claims to citizenship by

spelling out *ius soli* in the constitutions of the countries of settlement. Good examples of this strategy are evident in English-dominant immigration countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, and South Africa. In establishing the constitutions of these (sub)continents no consultation took place with native inhabitants, such as Indians, Eskimos, Aborigines, and Zulus respectively. At home, however, Europeans predominantly upheld *ius sanguinis* in their constitutions and/or perceptions of nationality and citizenship, in spite of the growing numbers of IM groups who strive for an equal status as citizens in a new multicultural European context.

A second major characteristic of the European public discourse on IM groups is the focus on *integration*. This notion is both vague and popular, and it may actually refer to a whole spectrum of underlying concepts that vary over space and time¹. The extremes of the spectrum range from assimilation to multiculturalism. The concept of assimilation is based on the premise that cultural differences should and will disappear over time in a society which is proclaimed to be culturally and linguistically homogeneous. On the other side of the spectrum, the concept of multiculturalism is based on the premise that such differences are an asset to a pluralist society which actually promotes cultural and linguistic diversity in terms of new resources and opportunities. While the concept of assimilation focuses on unilateral tasks of *newcomers*, the concept of multiculturalism focuses on multilateral tasks for all inhabitants in demographically changing societies. In practice, established majority groups often make strong demands on IM groups for integration in terms of assimilation and are commonly very reluctant to promote or even accept the notion of cultural diversity as a determining characteristic of an increasingly multicultural environment.

It is interesting to compare the underlying assumptions of *integration* in the European public discourse on IM groups at the national level with assumptions at the level of cross-national cooperation and legislation. In the latter context, European politicians are eager to stress the importance of a proper balance between the loss and maintenance of 'national' norms and values. A prime concern in the public debate on such norms and values is cultural and linguistic diversity. In this context, the national languages of EU countries are considered to be core values of cultural identity. It is a paradoxical phenomenon that in the same public discourse IM languages and cultures are commonly conceived as sources of problems and deficits and as obstacles to integration, while national languages and cultures in an expanding EU are regarded as sources of enrichment and as prerequisites for integration.

The public discourse on integration of IM groups in terms of assimilation vs multiculturalism can also be noticed in the domain of education. Due to a growing influx of IM pupils, schools are increasingly faced with the challenge of adapting their curricula to this trend. The pattern of modification may be inspired by a strong and unilateral emphasis on learning (in) the language of the majority of society, given its significance for success in school and on the

labour market, or by the awareness that the response to emerging multicultural school populations cannot be reduced to monolingual education programming. In the former case, the focus will be on learning (in) the national language as a second language only, in the latter case on offering more languages than the national language in the school curriculum.

There is considerable critical discussion of the concepts of *non-nationals* and *integration* in the public discourse on IM groups². These studies show that the emergence of multicultural societies in Europe has implications for all citizens, not just for 'newcomers'.

Demographic trends and criteria As a consequence of socio-economically or politically determined processes of migration, the traditional patterns of language variation across Western Europe have changed considerably over the past several decades³. The first pattern of migration started in the sixties and early seventies, and it was mainly economically motivated. In the case of Mediterranean groups, migration initially involved contract workers who stayed for a limited period of time. As their stay lengthened, this pattern of economic migration was followed by a second, of social migration, as their families joined them. Subsequently, a second generation was born in the immigrant countries, while their parents often remained ambivalent about whether to stay or return to the country of origin. These demographic shifts over time have also been accompanied by shifts of designation for the groups under consideration – 'migrant workers', 'immigrant families', and 'ethnic minorities', respectively.

As a result, many industrialised Western European countries have a growing number of IM populations which differ widely, both culturally and linguistically, from the mainstream indigenous population. In spite of more stringent IM policies in most EU countries, the prognosis is that IM populations will continue to grow as a consequence of the increasing number of political refugees, the opening of the internal European borders, and political and economic developments in Central and Eastern Europe and in other regions of the world. It has been estimated that in the year 2000, at least one third of the population under the age of 35 in urbanised Western Europe has an immigration background.

There are large differences among EU countries as regards the size and composition of IM groups. Owing to labour market mechanisms, such groups are found mainly in the northern industrialised EU countries, whereas their presence in Mediterranean countries like Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain is rather limited (although increasing). Mediterranean groups immigrate mainly to France or Germany. Portuguese, Spanish, and Maghreb residents concentrate in France, whereas Italian, Greek, former Yugoslavian, and Turkish residents concentrate in Germany. The largest IM groups in EU countries are Turkish and Maghreb residents; the latter originate from Morocco, Algeria, or Tunisia. For various reasons, however, reliable demographic information on IM groups in EU countries is difficult to obtain. For some groups or countries, updated information

is not available or such data have never been collected at all. Moreover, official statistics only reflect IM groups with legal resident status. Another source of disparity is the different data collection systems being used, ranging from nationwide census data to more or less representative surveys. Most important, however, the most widely used criteria for IM status - nationality and/or country of birth - have become less valid over time because of an increasing trend towards naturalisation and births within the countries of residence. In addition, most residents from former colonies already have the nationality of their countries of immigration; and based on the conservative nationality criterion, in 1993 the largest Turkish and Maghreb communities could be found in Germany (almost two million) and France (almost 1.4 million), respectively. Within the EU, the Netherlands is in second place as the country of immigration for Turkish and Moroccan residents.⁴

Given the decreasing significance of nationality and birth-country criteria, collecting reliable information about the composition of IM groups in EU countries is one of the most challenging tasks facing demographers. Complementary or alternative criteria have been suggested in various countries with a longer immigration history, and, for this reason, a history of collecting census data on multicultural population groups. In English-dominant immigration countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, census questions have been phrased in terms of self-categorisation and home language use. There is no single royal road to a solution of the identification problem. Different criteria may complement and strengthen each other. The combined criterion of self-categorisation and home language use is a potentially promising long-term alternative.

The problems of identifying multicultural population groups become even more striking in European statistics on IM groups in education. Most of these statistics are based on the nationality criterion. To take the Netherlands as a case in point: according to statistics of the Ministry of Education dating from 1994, about 7.8 per cent of the pupils in primary schools have non-Dutch citizenship⁵. On the basis of the same criterion, it appears that in the 1992/1993 school year, on the national level, 69 per cent of Dutch primary schools were attended by IM children. In most of these schools (51 per cent), the proportion of IM children were less than 10 per cent, and in only 4 per cent of the schools it was 50 per cent or higher. In the four largest Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht), however, these figures were strikingly different: the percentage of schools attended by IM children was 96 per cent or higher and the proportion of schools in these cities where more than 50 per cent of the children were of non-Dutch nationality were 44 per cent, 37 per cent, 28 per cent, and 33 per cent, respectively. At present, over 50 per cent of the first-year intake into primary education in these cities consists of IM children. A periodical collection of home language data at schools would offer

indispensable cornerstones for educational policy on both first and second language instruction for IM children⁶.

Language policies in the European Union As yet, language policies in the EU are strongly developed within the national boundaries of the different EU member states. Proposals for a common EU language policy are laboriously achieved and noncommittal in character⁷. The most important declarations, recommendations, or directives on language policy, each of which concepts carry a different charge in the EU jargon, concern the recognition of the status of (in the order mentioned):

- national EU languages;
- indigenous or regional minority languages;
- immigrant or 'non-territorial' minority languages.

The Treaty of Rome (1958) confers equal status on all national languages of the EU member states (with the exception of Irish and Luxembourgian) as working languages. On numerous occasions, the EU ministers of education have declared that the EU citizens' knowledge of languages should be promoted⁸. Each EU member state should promote pupils' proficiency in at least two 'foreign' languages, and at least one of these languages should be the national standard language of one of the EU states.

Promoting knowledge of regional and IM languages has been left out of consideration in these ministerial statements. The European Parliament accepted various resolutions in 1981, 1987 and 1994, in which the protection and promotion of regional minority languages were recommended. The first resolution led to the foundation of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages in 1982. Meanwhile, the Bureau has member state committees in 13 EU countries and it has recently acquired the status of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) at the levels of the European Council and the United Nations. Another result of the European Parliament resolutions is the foundation of the European MERCATOR Network, aimed at promoting research on the status and use of regional minority languages. In March 1998, the European Charter of Regional Minority Languages came into operation. This Charter was framed by the Council of Europe in 1992 and it has meanwhile been ratified by seven member states. The Charter is aimed at the protection and the promotion of regional minority languages, and it functions as an international instrument for the comparison of legal measures and other facilities of the EU member states in this policy domain.

As yet, no such initiatives have been taken in the policy domain of IM languages. It is remarkable that the teaching of indigenous or regional minority languages is generally advocated for reasons of cultural diversity as a matter of course, whereas this is rarely a major argument in favour of teaching IM languages. In various EU countries, the 1977 guideline of the Council of European Communities on education for IM children⁹ has promoted the legitimisation of IMLI and occasionally also its legislation¹⁰. In Sweden, this guideline has never had any effect, as Sweden has only recently joined the EU. Meanwhile, the guideline needs to be

reformulated and extended to pupils from non-EU countries, and it needs to be given greater binding force in the EU member states. The increasing internationalisation of pupil populations in European schools, finally, requires a language policy for *all* pupils in which the traditional dichotomy between foreign language instruction for indigenous majority pupils and home language instruction for IM pupils is put aside.

Comparative perspectives on language policies in Australia and Europe As a consequence of processes of migration and minorisation, both Australia and Western Europe have become multicultural and multilingual societies. Although these processes started to have a growing impact on the receiving societies at different points in time (in Australia after the second World War, in Europe only since the late sixties), the initial public discourse on these developments showed many similarities. The focus was most commonly on integration as a unilateral task for newcomers. Derived from this perspective, learning the national language of the country of immigration was seen as a prerequisite, whereas the maintenance and intergenerational transmission of IM languages was often seen as an obstacle to integration. Major differences in the two geopolitical contexts, however, relate to the citizenship of most IM groups. Derived from *ius soli*, IM groups in Australia are commonly referred to as eg, British Australians, Chinese Australians or Cambodian Australians; derived from *ius sanguinis* in Europe, they are commonly referred to as foreigners. As a consequence of such status differences in citizenship, political rhetoric on multiculturalism has as yet been reluctant in Europe in order to please the old electorate and has become favourite in Australia in order to please the new electorate.

Apart from these cross-continental differences in public and political attitudes, there are also remarkable differences in the actual knowledge and awareness of multilingualism, due to the (non-)availability of statewide census data on the use of languages other than English in Australia (commonly referred to as LOTE) *versus* the use of non-national languages in Europe¹¹. In Australia such data are regularly collected, made available, studied and discussed in public¹². In EU countries, such data are almost completely lacking, apart from Scandinavian countries, where nationwide home language statistics of school children are collected yearly and used for the implementation of majority and minority language policies in education.

Also the actual constellation of languages in Australia and in EU countries shows interesting similarities and differences. In both contexts, as anywhere, implicit or explicit hierarchies exist in the public status of different language varieties. English has the highest prestige as the *lingua franca* for intercultural communication at the expense of all other languages, although this status has been and still is disputed in Romanic Southern Europe where French had this status in the past. As a consequence of globalisation processes and the enlargement of the EU, the outcome in Europe will no doubt be

in favour of English as *lingua franca*. To the LOTE spectrum in Australia belongs a wide range of both indigenous minority languages and IM languages. To LOTE in the European context belong national languages like German, French or Dutch, indigenous minority languages like Welsh, Basque, or Frisian, and IM languages like Turkish or Arabic. Meanwhile, there are millions of speakers of the last-mentioned languages in EU countries. Whereas in Australia indigenous and IM languages are often referred to as 'community languages', such reference in the EU would be hindered by occupied territory: 'community languages' are commonly understood as the national languages of the EU.

Significant differences between Australia and EU countries exist in the domain of education. More than 20 languages other than English are taught in primary and secondary schools of some Australian states. These languages are open to anyone to study, regardless of whether these languages are first, second or foreign languages. By offering such opportunities, some states (in particular Victoria and South Australia) choose a rather balanced perspective on ESL and LOTE provisions. Such a perspective has earlier been outlined in the National Policy on Languages¹³, which established complementary principles in terms of access to competence in English and LOTE. Victoria is meanwhile working towards making an optional LOTE compulsory for at least 11 years of schooling. The acknowledgment of multilingualism in Australia is also evident in other public domains, such as interpreting and translating services, audiovisual media and the written press, public libraries and information/internet services, and occupational requirements. Most EU countries come nowhere near such multilingual policies, and they focus more unilaterally on the learning and teaching of their national languages.

To most youngsters who grow up in urban areas of Australia or Europe, multiculturalism is a fact of daily life, and monocultural styles of living together are unimaginable¹⁴. Australia has gradually accepted and acknowledged multilingualism as a source of knowledge and enrichment rather than a source of deficits and problems. Due to ongoing processes of migration and minorisation, and due to widening notions of citizenship, Europe will take a similar route, although at a later stage. As yet, it is a paradox that there is so much long-term expertise in Europe (in particular in the Netherlands) on the learning and teaching of neighbouring languages which is hardly put to use in the learning and teaching of languages that originate from farther away.

¹ See Kruyt, A & J Niessen (1997), 'Integration', in H Vermeulen (ed), *Immigration policy for a multicultural society. A comparative study of integration, language and religious policy in five Western European countries*. Brussels: Migration Policy Group, for a comparative study of the notion of integration in five European Union (EU) countries since the early seventies.

² Refer to Cohn-Bendit, D & Th Schmid (1992), *Heimat Babylon. Das Wagnis der multikulturellen Demokratie*, Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, who focus on Germany in a changing multicultural European context. Gogolin, I (1994), *Der*

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- monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule*. Münster/New York: Waxmann addresses the monolingual *habitus* of multilingual schools in Germany. Elderling, L (1996), 'Multiculturalism and multicultural education in an international perspective', *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 27, 3: 315-330; Broeder, P & G Extra (1998a), 'Migration and multilingualism in Western Europe: the Netherlands as case study' in G Extra & J Maartens (eds), *Multilingualism in a multicultural context. Case studies on South Africa and Western Europe*. Tilburg: Tilburg University Press; and Extra, G & T Vallen (1998), 'Dutch as a second language in the Netherlands and Flanders' in G Extra & J Maartens (eds), *ibid* focus on the consequences of multiculturalism for education in the Netherlands
- ³ Extra, G & L Verhoeven (eds) (1998), *Bilingualism and Migration*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- ⁴ EuroStat (1997). Migration statistics 1996. Statistical document 3A. Luxembourg: EuroStat. See also EuroStat (1996), *Statistics in focus. Population and social conditions 2*. Luxembourg: EuroStat.
- ⁵ CBS (1995). *Allochtonen in Nederland*. Voorburg/Heerlen: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- ⁶ See also Broeder, P & G Extra (1998b), Language, ethnicity and education. Case studies of immigrant minority groups and immigrant minority languages. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- ⁷ See Coulmas, F (1991), A language policy for the European Community. Prospects and quandaries. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- ⁸ See Baetens Beardsmore, H (1993), *European models of bilingual education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- ⁹ Directive 77/486 (1977), Directive of the Council of the European Communities on the schooling of children of migrant workers. Brussels: CEC (dated 25 July).
- ¹⁰ See Reid, E & H Reich (1992), *Breaking the boundaries. Migrant workers' children in the EC*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; Fase, W (1994). *Ethnic divisions in Western European education*. Münster/New York: Waxmann.
- ¹¹ See also Broeder & Extra (1998b), *op cit*.
- ¹² See eg, Clyne, M (1991), *Community languages: the Australian experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ¹³ Lo Bianco, J (1987), *National policy on languages*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- ¹⁴ Clyne, M (1995), 'Education for multiculturalism in multicultural Australia' in D Cunningham & M Candelier (eds), *Linguapax V*, Melbourne, Australia: 85-89.

Professor Guus Extra is Director of Babylon, Center for Studies of Multilingualism in the Multicultural Society, Tilburg University, the Netherlands. He visited Australia under the Australia-The Netherlands Exchange Program and was hosted by Professor Michael Clyne. E-mail: A.J.A.G.Extra@kub.nl. This paper has been slightly edited for reasons of space.
