Language Issues within Forced Migration at Borders and Temporary Settlements: An Integrated Content Analysis

Anastasia Atabekova [1], Tatyana Shoustikova [2]

Abstract:

The article tries to explore language issues within multifaceted phenomenon of forced migration. The study stood on qualitative research paradigm, followed the critical instance case study and inductive approach as the topic under study has no comprehensive structured knowledge. Integrated techniques (grounded theory, content analysis, thematic analysis) were applied to make sense of the random sampling data and produce qualitative interpretations.

The research goal is to identify audiences and actors for whom language issues can be relevant within complex phenomenon of refugee flows and how the above audiences and actors address the language issues within their experiences and roles related to the phenomenon thereof.

Research materials included empirical data from a variety of sources, experience of the actors, analysis of reports and documents, etc., that are available for the public in open access mode.

The research findings led to the conclusion that the agenda on durable solutions to forced migration from South to North should consistently incorporate language issues and requires structural vision thereof. Concrete recommendations and pathways were offered to fulfil the above.

Keywords: Language, language policy, communication, mediation, interpretation and translation, human rights, language rights, forced migration, refugees, forced displacement.

JEL code: Z13, Z18.

[1]Peoples' Friendship University of Russia – RUDN University, Moscow,
aaatabekova@gmail.com
[2]Peoples' Friendship University of Russia – RUDN University, Moscow,
shoustikova@yandex.ru

1. Introduction

Refugees' flows have become global challenge and got the label of refugee crisis in Europe in 2015. The phenomenon is rooted in reginal wars and armed conflicts, natural disasters, international trafficking and smuggling, etc. The above landscape gave birth to various angles of studies and use of divers' concepts (Smallman-Raynor and Cliff, 2018).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) office underlines the status of the term "refugee" as internationally accepted in international conventions (UNHCR, 2016). However, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) considers irregular migration, forced migration, internationally displaced persons (IOM …, 2011). The EU official conclusions use such term as "irregular /illegal migration" to consider persons who fled their countries to reach Europe (European Council Meetings…, 2014-2018).

Bearing in mind the above the present research uses such concepts as forced migrants and refugees regarding persons who fled their home countries due to local tensions and conflicts, human trafficking, etc. Refugees' language rights are a crucial issue that is specified in Universal declaration of human rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1998), and in other international documents.

The attempts to tackle language challenges that refugees face are tried at international, national, local levels. Thus, Council of Europe has launched a toolkit "Language support for adult refugees" (A Council of Europe Toolkit, 2017). However, there is strong evidence that refugees and migrants face troubles in the interaction with host countries official bodies and community. This is revealed through several case-based studies conducted by UK-based non-profit organization Translators without borders (TWB site).

The analysis confirms shortage of interpreters, lack of language data, limited language support and information, refugees' rejection to communicate, quick changes in information data and no time for its translation. Forced migration has become focus of multidisciplinary studies. These include history of migration, forced displacement; political, social, and economic effects of migration for receiving and sending countries crime, etc. (Rosenblum and Tichenor, 2018).

The above shows that there is common understanding that refugees and forced migrants' human rights provision is subject to the diverse stakeholders though the language issue regarding this population support has not been consistently mapped yet within the above interdisciplinary landscape. The research statement argues that the agenda on durable solutions to forced migration should consistently incorporate language issues and requires structural vision thereof. The research question is two-fold:

- *What are those audiences and actors for whom language issues can be relevant within complex phenomenon of refugee flows?*
- *How do the above audiences and actors address the language issues within their experiences and roles related to the phenomenon of refugee flows?*

The research goal is to map key points and audiences for including language issues in the agenda for tackling uncontrolled migration of those who flee from zones of violence and conflicts.

2. Research Methodology

The research focused on empirical studies of target audiences' experiences and actions. The analysis rested mostly on qualitative paradigm as it laid grounds to focus on individuals or social groups' experiences regarding particular social contexts. The analysis followed the critical instance case study approach as it assumes examination of diverse sources (cases) because the topic under study has no comprehensive structured knowledge. Integrated tools were used to identify clusters and their distinctive features: grounded theory, content and thematic analysis were applied to make sense of the random sampling data and produce qualitative interpretations**.**

The research materials consisted of target audience representatives' personal comments, officials' interviews for the public, official documents of national/international institutions and organizations. Geographically, the materials included sources that focused on migration to EU countries. The materials selection resulted from random sampling of open access on-line sources through on-line search for topic "refugees and language in the EU 2015-2018". The search produced about 98 500 results in 0,44 seconds. The fist-step was based on Automated search for key words double ranking (Wang *et al.,* 2016) that was used to identify major audiences who mention the topic under study and key words that show their attitude to the topic under study. Further text analyzer soft was applied to select sources for further study.

These sources (totally 863) included stories about language experience of refugees from different countries (128), statements of national governments and politicians (132), international and national (EU member States) legal and administrative regulations, declarations on migration and refugees (119), sources of NGOs that deal with refugees (105). The above sources became subject to case study and further were grouped into clusters to identify their critical features for the topic under study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Key audiences and actors regarding language issues within refugee crisis 2015-2018

The content analysis of the data available through the official international and national institutions data presented on their sites and available through relevant media sources revealed the following necessary areas of the analysis and discussion of the topic under study:

- Local level – settings where refugee problems emerge at the border crossing points, temporary camps or further during refugees´ interaction with hosting society.
- Inter-nation level – settings in which interstate policies are debated and discussed.
- The conceptual content analysis of the open access digital data has led to the identification of the major target groups and actors whose experiences, opinions and roles seem to be critical for the topic under study.
- Refugees as illegal migrants who were forced to leave their home countries due to war conflicts or being caught by organized crime networks (human smugglers or sex traffickers).
- Hosting state border agencies' representatives.
- National governments and politicians from refugees hosting countries.
- NGOs representatives engaged in solving refugee influx challenge.
- International organizations that represent countries facing refugees and illegal migration challenges.

Automated search for key words double ranking helped to map key audiences and actors who face and manage language issues within the forced migration issues.

Table 1. *Keywords density in the texts content*

Keywords	Themes and keywords double ranking results				
(percentage in the text content)	Refugees who crossed border of transit/host countries	State border agencies' representatives	National leaders, government Reps, politicians	NGOs	International (EU) documents
Language	2.1	0.7	0. 4	1.1	0.3
Language problems	1.3	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.1training. classes. rights
Language skills	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.9	0. 3
Language training	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.8	0.3
Language classes	1.3	-	0.4	0.8	0.3

Language education	0.1	-	0.1	-	0.1
Language rights	0.4	-	0.2	0.6	0.3
Language mediator	-	0.4	-	0.4	0.2
Interpreter	-	1	0.1	1	0.2
Interpretation	0.4	0.8	-	0.8	0.1
Translator	-		0.1	0.5	0.2
Translation	0.	0.6	-	0.9	0.1

The above table reveals that different audiences treat the language issues within different contexts. Those most concerned include refugees themselves and NGOs. Among the topics the most used words focus on the following aspects:

- Language problems, language classes;
- Language problems, interpreter;
- Language skills and training;
- Language problems, skills, training, classes, interpretation and translation;
- Language skills, training, classes, rights;
- The sources providing information on the above groups´ experiences, positions, and actions have been further grouped into several integrated clusters.

3.2 Clusters of actors, their experiences and actions

The analysis made it possible to specify social clusters that are relevant for the issues under study. This section offers examples of most typical contents and authors' qualitative interpretations of the data with reference to already available findings.

Cluster 1: Refugees' Experiences

The following subsections expose examples of cases regarding different actors. The official media open sources provide a great number of refugees' stories. Their content and thematic analysis allow researchers to specify key challenges that the respective population faces (Latza-Nadeau, 2018, Jorio, 2015).

The following key verbalized topics of concern were identified as distinctive features of this cluster:

- poor infrastructure;
- organized crime business on illegal migration (recruitment of camp inhabitants for prostitution, forced or low-paid labour);
- religious and ethnic tensions;

- long period of documents processing;
- lack of control over refugees stay in the camp;
- lack of information about possible sex exploitation;
- low opportunities or integration in local labour market;
- no opportunities for minors' education.

The journalists who verbalized refugees' stories did not mention any language problems regarding their own communication with the refugees. The narratives confirm that specific problems for refugees consist not in their language use but in the fact that language is not used by local border or national government authorities as a tool to provide comprehensive information for people illegally arriving in other countries. Language issues are mentioned only at the stage of final accommodation. What really matters is the fact that the refugees understand the importance of the language as a tool to integrate to a hosting community.

Particular focus in refugees' stories is laid on language and education in host/transit country, including Turkey (Cupolo, 2018), Lebanon (Sewell, 2017), Balkan countries (Blocked in the Balkans, 2017), Greece (Baboulias, 2017).

Summarizing the refugees' attitude to language issues it is possible to map the following features of the cluster:

- No direct care about language problems when leaving home countries;
- Refugees realize that a receiving country language is a tool that opens access to necessary information related to the future social stability and safety;
- Refugees keep loyalty to their mother tongue.

Respondents acknowledged difficulties related to language itself, instruction during second shifts, social tensions with local teens, etc. Although those questioned highly appreciated the education opportunities for their children, the school teens themselves view education as a way out to the future employment and social inclusion.

Cluster 2: Border Officers' Experiences

Across the materials processing border officers appeared as subject for specific analysis. Thus, there is a report regarding troubles refugee flows caused on the border between Finland and Russia during 2015-2016 (Skön, 2017). The data confirms that northern roots for refugee flow through Russia to Finland emerged on the map as part of organized crime activities. The problem was solved at the level of Prime Ministers and heads of the Interior Ministries.

The stories reveal the following key verbalized topics of concern regarding situation at the border crossing points:

- Organized crime business on illegal migration.
- Lack of bilateral cooperation between neighboring states.
- Lack of the host country border points financing.
- Lack of infrastructure facilities at the host country border points.
- No language issues are mentioned.

The above might be explained by the emergency focus on legal and infrastructure challenges that required first hand solutions. It should be mentioned that even before the 2015 crisis the Council of Europe conducted investigation on several EU countries land border points. This concluded that there were language barriers in border communication and they create obstacles (Kjaerum, 2014). Hereby we can assume that the same situation takes place in refugee communication with border officers in forced migration contexts. Although further studies are required as only few data on the topic under study are currently available within the period of the last three decades.

Cluster 3: National governments and politicians' actions

The content analysis reveals that with regard to previous experience in refugees and migrant flows to Europe current national leaders and governments aim to regulate the situation within the boreders and outside Europe on the grounds where fugee crisis took its roots. There are recently adopted documents and official statements including reference to langauge rights and support in France (Loi asile-immigration, 2018), Austria (Young-Powell, 2018), Spain (Borrell, 2018), Switzerland (Jorio, 2015).

The review of the national sources reveals the following points for further coding that were identified through the analysis of verbalized topics:

- National leaders´ stance to tough policies on migration and refugees.
- Language issues as a tool to the above.
- Geographical shift in national policies activities: from Europe to the grounds outside Europe.
- Support for outside Europe on-site education as a long-term tool to cut down migration towards Europe.

Cluster 4: EU Summits on migration

The European Council conclusions have been chosen for the analysis as the respective documents identify specific issues of concern for the EU and outline actions. The analysis (European Council Meetings: Conclusions (2014-2018)) reveals that respective texts consistently cover migration issues though the texts

focus on general issues and do not strive for explicit reference to the language issues within refugee's flow context.

Only one direct mention of interpreters is found in the text of EU summit Conclusions on 17-18 March 2016. The 22-23 of June 2017 summit briefing contains reference to earlier EU Action plan on third national's integration that includes pre-departure language and job-related training, on-line language assessment and learning, etc., (Action Plan, 2016). Some conclusions contain implicit reference to langauge support when issues of education, health, infrastructure, innovation, good governance and women's empowerment, increased exchanges and contacts amongst the peoples of both continents on all levels of civil society" are mentioned.

Cluster 5: NGOs activities

The analysis of practices regarding language support for refugees cannot pass by NGOs' activities. The research revealed several NGOs' activities related to the language support for refugees.

First, it is interpreters' direct engagement in the process of helping refugees at hot points and further activities. Here the role of major non-profit organizations should be mentioned. See, for instance, the activities of UK-based organization Translators without borders (TWB site, 2018).

Second, it is the activities of non-profit organizations that focus on host country language training and cultural and social information for refugees at different stages of their move. Here Goethe-Institute practices in refugees' camps can be mentioned (Lehmann, 2015). Third, NGO Refugee Rights Turkey actions (Refugee Rights Turkey, 2018) seem to be relevant. The organization focuses on administrative-legal service provision in six languages (Turkish, English, Arabic, Farsi, French and Somali).

The thematic analysis of above clusters features confirms that new social contexts move debate over language rights (May 2005) forward. The world faces new challenges related to integrating diverse audiences into the agenda on language rights support for forced migrants at borders and temporary settlements. The actions to solve the matter should start on the ground as the research reveals that there are many actors who do not care about language issues. This situation coincides with earlier studies on stakeholders' no interest in language issues (Belenkova *et al.,* 2018).

The earlier framework for language policy (Franks and Gessner 2013) requires a broader vision and conceptual enhancement in terms of mapping actors, audiences and communicative contexts of forced migration. Moreover, the identified clusters features contribute to a more detailed understanding of the earlier concept of

linguistic diversity within the social justice (Piller, 2016). The analysis of language issues within forced migration leads to identification of new actors and audiences within new situational contexts, analysis of legal, administrative, financial causes and consequences associated with social alienation due to lack of integrated language support at various levels and stages.

There are limitations to the present research. Larger data is required for further quantitative analysis. More detailed analysis can produce new facts regarding language aspects within such variables as gender, age, social background, country of transit, stay in transit/final destination country, etc.

4. Conclusions

Empirical case studies identified target audiences and actors in the field of forced migration. They do not view language issues as critical part of the overall phenomenon. Actors from all clusters mostly focus on accommodation, legalization, and healthcare, and further readmission procedure or asylum-based integration. The above activities implicitly assume the language training, provision of necessary information in the language that forced migrants and applicants speak, etc.

However, no audiences produced structural vision of the language status in the overall forced migration framework. Meanwhile, the agenda on durable solutions to refugee crisis requires language issues be explicitly mentioned and understood within and across all the dimensions of forced migration and regarding all actors involved and concerned.

Language should be used not only for information about accommodation, shelter and fist aid services for refugees but as a proactive tool to inform refugees about their duties to the country in which they stay. Further, language should be used to inform potential refugees about their need to learn a language of transit and host countries.

The staff engaged in law enforcement, primary care, social work and other aspects of collaboration with forced migrants at border crossing zones and temporary settlements requires tailored training. Another critical point is the need for constant update of the information in different languages. The above-mentioned points should be integrated explicitly in a structural and comprehensive way in national and international action plans to tackle forced migration.

Acknowledgements:

References:

A Council of Europe Toolkit. 2017. Language support for adult refugees: A Council of Europe toolkit. Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Action Plan. 2016. Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals.

Baboulias, Y. 2017. In Greece, Refugee Children Are Still Waiting for School to Start. https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/04/07/in-greece-refugee-children-are-still-waiting-for-school-to-start.

Belenkova, N., Kruse, I., Davtyan, V. Wydra, D. 2018. Language for students without interest in languages: Challenges of foreign language grammar. X Linguae, 11(1), 284-293.

Blocked in the Balkans: The refugees that Europe won't allow in 2017. 2017. The Gardian, Aug. 8 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/08/eu-refugees-serbia-afghanistan-taliban.

Borrell, J. 2018. Entrevista a Josep Borrell, ministro de Exteriores, in RTVes, http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20180705/josep-borrell-reprocha-ue-su-politica-del-avestruz-inmigracion/1760300.shtml.

Convention and Protocol relating to the status of refugees. 1951.

Cupolo, D. 2018. Money, culture, language: barriers to Turkey's bid to end refugee-only schools. IRIN Integrated Regional Information Networks. https://www.irinnews.org/feature/2018/04/05/money-culture-language-barriers-turkey-s-bid-end-refugee-only-schools.

European Council Meetings. 2018. Conclusions 2014-2018. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/register/en/content/out/.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. 1966.

IOM, Glossary on Migration. 2011. International Migration Law Series, 25.

Jorio, L. 2015. Helping Syria: give more aid or accept more refugees? https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/dilemma_helping-syria--give-more-aid-or-accept-more-refugees-/41249346.

Kjaerum, M. 2014. Fundamental rights at land borders: findings from selected European Union border crossing points. FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Luxembourg, EU Publications Office, 2014.

Latza-Nadeau, B. 2018. Migrants are more profitable than drugs: how the mafia infiltrated Italy's asylum system. In, The Gardian, 01.02.2018.

Lehmann, K.D. 2015. Refugee crisis – Language is the Key. Migration and Integration, Goethe-Institute Project. http://www.goethe.de/lhr/prj/daz/pfv/aar/en14902563.htm.

Loi asile-immigration 2018. Loi asile-immigration: l'Assemblée nationale adopte le texte en première lecture. https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2018/04/22/l.

Piller, I. 2016. Linguistic Diversity and Social Justice. Oxford University Press.

Refugee Rights Turkey. 2018. http://mhd.org.tr/en/activities.

Rosenblum, M.R., Tichenor, D.J. 2018. Oxford Handbook of the Politics of International Migration. Oxford University Press.

Sewell, A. 2017. Living in the Shadows, a Family Tries to Secure Its Children's Future. Refugees Deeply, 8 March 2017. https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/03/08/.

Smallman-Raynor, M., Cliff, A. 2018. Atlas of refugees, displaced populations, and epidemic diseases. Oxford University Press.

Skön, P. 2017. Asylsökande cyklade över gränsen, vad hände sen? Riding a bike in search of asylum, what is next? https://inosmi.ru/social/20170328/238978237.html.

TWB Site. 2018. https://translatorswithoutborders.org/.

The United Nations. 1948. Universal declaration of human rights.

The United Nations. 1998. Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights.

Young-Powell, A. 2018. Austria plans to cut benefits for non-German speaking immigrants. The Telegraph, 29 May 2018.

Wang S., Chen, Z., Liu, B., Emery, S. 2016. Identifying Search Keywords for Finding Relevant Social Media Posts. Proceedings of the Thirtieth AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI-16), 3052-3058.