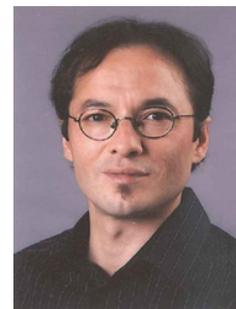


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Sprachförderung von Geflüchteten in Integrationskursen und beruflichen Qualifizierungsmaßnahmen - Linguistic development of refugees in integration courses and short-term vocational measures

One of the most pressing sociopolitical issues Germany faces these days is the integration of several hundred thousand refugees. According to numbers issued recently by the German government close to 900.000 people sought refuge in the country in 2015 alone. In order to document and analyze the current process of integration from its early onset, the Institute for the German Language (IDS, *Institut für Deutsche Sprache*) launched the project “German at Work: The Linguistic and Communicative Integration of Refugees”. This project houses two interconnected strands of research: first, focusing on the integration of individuals into professional teams, an ethnographic field study examines the acquisition of communicative competences required to successfully operate in different professional environments. Second, a two-step survey conducted in so-called “general integration courses” (*allgemeine Integrationskurse*) provides the basis for analyzing and comparing learners’ language biographies as well as speakers’ progress in acquiring German for certain professional contexts. The latter study is conducted with the Goethe Institute Mannheim and joins the perspectives of linguistic pragmatics with experience in second language acquisition studies.

Refugees in Germany

Figures pertaining to the total number of refugees that entered Germany in 2015 varied considerably during the past year. In January 2016 the German government spoke of 1.1 million refugees.¹ However, according to the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF, *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*) “only” 476649 asylum requests were filed

¹ Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015 (2016: 10). Online: https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Broschueren/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

during this time.² The discrepancy in these figures has several reasons: first, the number of 1.1 million refugees is a result of the so-called EASY-procedure, the *Erstverteilung der Asylbegehrenden*, an IT application that records the initial distribution of refugees to Germany's different federal districts. However, because this procedure omits all personal information and only captures general information such as people's country of origin and sex, errors and multiple registrations of the same person are bound to occur. Errors emerge, for instance, when refugees are only traveling through Germany in order to reach other EU member states. Multiple registrations can be the result of refugees leaving the district assigned by authorities and instead moving in with family or friends in a different district. The large number of refugees certainly also explains the discrepancy because the BAMF was short-staffed in 2015 and unable to process all asylum requests within the same year. A large proportion of refugees is most certainly found among the 723.027 asylum requests that the agency received until November of 2016.³ Indeed, the government revised the number downward in September 2016. Meanwhile, it is said that there were 890.000 refugees – which is still an all-time high.⁴

The federal government reacted to this “refugee crisis” by amending existing laws, once in October 2015 (Asylpaket I) and again in March 2016 (Asylpaket II). In summary, the amendments had three objectives:⁵

- 1.) The integration of refugees who had a strong prospect to stay (e.g. those from Syria or Iraq): refugees with a temporary permit of residency, the so-called *Aufenthaltsgestattung*, can now access integration courses; anyone within three-year vocational training receives secure residency status; adjusted employment laws allow professionals from abroad to start working after three months.
- 2.) The deportation of refugees with a weak prospect to stay in Germany (e.g. from Afghanistan or Kosovo): A number of countries were added to a list of “safe countries of origin” (*sichere Herkunftsländer*). Deportations are possible now without notification.
- 3.) Dissuading further refugees from coming to Germany by tightening the laws: Allowances in kind may replace monthly benefits for asylum seekers, and a two-year suspension of family reunifications was issued for all refugees with the status of “subsidiary protection” (*subsidiärer Schutz*).

² Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015 (2016: 11). Online: <https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Broschueren/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2015.pdf?blob=publicationFile>

³ BAMF: Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl/Ausgabe November 2016. Online: http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl-november-2016.pdf;jsessionid=F525EFC56F9259EDA69D2EBDFA45BC62.1_cid286?blob=publicationFile

⁴ <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-09/2015-kamen-890-000-asylsuchende-nach-deutschland>

⁵ Jahresbericht der Bundesregierung 2014/2015 (2016: 5-9). Online: https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/_Anlagen/2015/12/2015-12-22-Jahresbericht-2014-2015.pdf?blob=publicationFile&v=5

The IDS Project “German at Work: The Linguistic and Communicative Integration of Refugees”

Steven Vertovec director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity describes the migration events of 2015 as a “second turning point” for Germany.⁶ He predicts that the events will change the country in lasting ways. According to him the social transformations will be so profound that the formulation “since the refugee crisis” will become a phrase just as common as the German phrase “since the turning point” (“seit der Wende”) which refers to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the process of German reunification in 1989/90. In order to document and analyze the current process of integration from its early onset the Institute for the German Language (IDS, *Institut für Deutsche Sprache*) launched the project “German at Work: The Linguistic and Communicative Integration of Refugees.” The project consists of an ethnographic field study that investigates the acquisition process of the communicative competences required to successfully operate in a professional environment and of a two-step survey conducted with the Goethe Institute Mannheim. The survey is conducted in so-called “general integration courses” (*allgemeine Integrationskurse*) and it is intended to collect, analyze and compare language biographies as well as learners’ progress in the acquisition process.

The language survey

The language survey was conducted in seven German cities located in five of the country’s 16 federal states. The first survey wave was scheduled at the beginning of the general integration courses and went from September 2016 to November 2016. Overall, 607 people from 42 courses took part in the first survey. Half of them indicated that they were seeking refuge in Germany from threats such as war or persecution. The goal of our first survey was to collect social background data and language biographies of participants and to ask them about their linguistic contacts, in particular to the indigenous population in everyday life and in professional contexts. The second survey wave is being conducted in the same courses in spring and summer of 2017, and includes a performance test emulating an online job interview. The goal of this procedure is to get a better understanding of how well course participants can present themselves in a given professional context towards the end of the integration course.

Ethnography

Beyond the language survey, the project is concerned with ethnographic documentation and the analyses of interaction between participants in short-term vocational measures and in

⁶ Vertovec (2015). Online: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/steven-vertovec/germany%E2%80%99s-second-turning-point-long-term-effects-of-refugee-crisi>

professional contexts. The guiding question is how well the linguistic and social integration of refugees has succeeded in these situations and which factors and conditions it depends on. In particular, we would like to develop tools to classify linguistic and intercultural phenomena in interaction types such as instructions, team conversations and evaluations as examples of successful or unsuccessful practices of communicative integration. To this end our ethnographic field study documents and analyzes the longitudinal process of integration of individual refugees at a local business college as well as the developments in certain short-term qualification measures sponsored by the German government. This type of measures can be understood as an important institutionalization of Germany's new, self-proclaimed "culture of welcome" (*Willkommenskultur*).⁷ Because these measures open up the possibility of professional advertising campaigns in areas of low recruitment and likewise offer professional orientation and opportunities of exploration to immigrants, they bear chances for both the receiving and the arriving side. But there also are risks: if these measures fail for whatever reason (e.g. linguistic, communicative, cultural barriers etc.) and produce frustration on both sides, the consequences may be unemployment, long standby periods and political polarization. My talk will present initial results from our ethnographic work as well as the language survey.

⁷ Netzwerk Integration durch Qualifizierung IQ (2013): Willkommenskultur und (Anerkennungskultur): Hintergrund, Diskussion und Handlungsempfehlungen. PDF-Arbeitspapier 2/2013.