

Abstract

Isabella Chiari

This contribution aims at providing some key elements in identifying migrants needs in Italian and Mediterranean context. More specially, our focus on the identification of linguistic needs in the relation to the concept of linguistic identity. There is an ethnic identity, an objective component that is acquired and such cannot be changed.

There is a linguistic identity as a component of ethnicity, especially in an immigration situation. Language can be experienced as an identity marker even if it is not spoken. The mother tongue plays a significant role in the definition of one's identity. This role generally consists of different generations, typically also touching the case of second-generation migrants. This is what makes me as I am and not different in my existence regarding my two countries (Half French and half Lebanese), my two or three languages and regarding the several popular traditions.

Identity is not divided into water-tight compartments. It is not divided into halves or thirds. I don't have many identities. I only have one, made up of all the elements that have shaped it, according to a popular adage that is never the same from one person to another.

The centrality of the concept of linguistic identity is particularly evident in multilingual contexts and especially in the context of migration. So, it is a key to a diverse Europe to take into consideration that the enhancement of maintenance of mother tongue have two factors necessary for the construction of the identity of the child and to provide him with a reference code of effective social behaviour.

For first and second-generation migrant, the construction of the identity is a new context and needs to merge with a positive approach both the language of the country of migration and the language of the country of origin since it will late and influence the capacity of the person and the family to develop on it. There would be a higher risk of intergenerational pressure and further distancing and lack of integration and in some cases the rise of extremism.

These key components need to be considered into the framework of changing Europe. Without migration, European population would have shrunk by a half a million in 2019. Even though 4.2 million children were born, 4.7 million people died in the EU in 2020. According to a provisional data, EU population shrunk by about 300 000 people from 447.3 million in 1st of January 2020 to 447 million in January 2021 due to a combination of less births, more deaths and less net migration. Present day Europe and future Europe have always been characterized by a significant migration influx. The vast majority of mother tongue languages represented are not already included among the international diversity of EU official languages.

If you look at first-time asylum applications by country of origin in 2020, we observe that the areas of origin in 67% of cases, speak languages other than EU official languages. This can also be observed looking at the top 50 nationalities of Southern applicants except Venezuelan and Colombian nationalities. All of these identity languages that are not EU languages, and in most cases are not even in the European languages, represent a greater linguistic distance from EU languages. Diversity and inclusion are key words for Europe. And this diversity aims at building a European identity that does not discriminate from a linguistic point of view. Thus, this priority of preservation of the language of origin can be viewed as a sort of linguistic human rights issue, also applied in all EU languages equally.

Among EU priorities:

- a) The awareness of the diversity of languages spoken in Europe. This diversity, includes languages that are not official to the EU member states, but have an impact in EU.
- b) Encouraging people of all ages to learn more than one language. It makes it easier to connect with people, to find a job and to help entering the job market.

EU is a knowledge of a country of residence and two additional languages not necessarily EU official languages. Those who are multilingual tend to be better at multitasking and develop better cognitive skills such as attention and memory and are more accurate into their language use.

As previously stated, the recognition of linguistic plural identities contributes to the protection of individual freedoms. They promote and acknowledge the connection between languages and societies and communities that are originally, nationally and locally diverse and are deeply characterized by different kinds of degrees of multilingualism.

To emphasize, the centrality of learning the language of the country of migration is thus giving voice, only to half of the needs of migrants towards conformity and the progress of the instrumentality of language which is a pressure view of this issue. The instrumental view of languages is the one that correctly views the extent which linguistic competence is directly connected to the effectiveness in developing the possibility of achieving one's life, chances and objectives in the society where he or she lives.

The right to use, spread and pass around one's mother tongue through generations, is a key to achieving a social, cultural objective in the development of complex individual identities whose price has been highly paid by the migration experience that affects all aspects of life, but especially the effective and social aspect.

Institutionally not ignoring mother tongues, promoting them, and then ensure cultural and identity aspects is a key to the better protection of individual rights and granting of autonomy and self-esteem. That is the first step of a life plan that curves beyond immediate needs and gives back cultural richness to the whole of Europe and enriches the values.