Good Practices around Languages, Culture and Media for Migrant Learners

Mercedes Rico, María José Naranjo, Gemma Delicado, J. Enrique Agudo, Eva Mª Domínguez, Noelia Fernández
Universidad de Extremadura (Spain)
mricogar@unex.es

Abstract

Migration has contributed to the richness in diversity of cultures in most countries. However, while losing touch with their own customs in many cases, the exclusion of non-national residents from many civil and citizenship rights is also leading to a lack of social integration into the host countries. Helping migrants acquire and develop cultural awareness and social inclusion is an arduous task: "Culture is embedded in language as an intangible, all-pervasive and highly variable force" [1]. For this reason, this project aims to support the migrant population to overcome social boundaries and bridge social gaps.

Based on these social concerns, the LiMe project, a Key Activity 2 Languages Multilateral initiative supported by the European Lifelong Learning Programme, which comprises six organizations from across five European countries (Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and UK) aims to minimize the impact of these social–cultural disadvantages by helping migrants develop language and cultural competences, in order to foster a sense of belonging and understanding leading to greater integration. To achieve the objectives, the project identifies strategies and good practices to help migrant learners and educators understand language as portrayed in various types of media – e.g. television, radio, films, newspapers, promotional material , ICT media, among others [2].

The project departs from a shared integrative understanding and culminates with the development of a virtual learning platform that hosts media-based learning materials from A2 to B2 (CEFR) and teacher training packages for integrating media into language teaching.

In short, the project contributes to breaking down possible language and cultural barriers in order to help migrants overcome problems presented by everyday communicative challenges. The possibility of migrants inclusion through media will also contribute to the development of good practices for teaching and learning a foreign language among this target group- "Media: inform, amuse, startle, anger, entertain, thrill, but very seldom leave anyone untouched"(Shirley Biagy, 1996) - and strengthen social bonds, especially in migrant education based on innovative methods applied through the development of a virtual learning platform.

Keywords: migrants, culture, language, inclusion, media

1- Introduction and Context

Considering migrant integration into society goes beyond the acquisition of the instructional language, new approaches on ICT based language teaching and learning are being studied to provide powerful sources of information for language learners. In this sense, understanding the socio-cultural aspects of the new language and the changes in mobility suffered during the last decades, moving from a homogeneous to a highly multicultural society is a key point. This basic principle of cooperation between the countries of origin and the receiving countries and the establishment of a climate favouring the integration of migrants into the host society is stated in the Resolution 1437 (2005), I.4 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:

"The concept of integration aims at ensuring social cohesion through accommodation of diversity understood as a two-way process. Immigrants have to accept the laws and basic values of European societies and, on the other hand, host societies have to respect immigrants' dignity and distinct identity and to take them into account when elaborating domestic policies."

Challenging the educational community and supporting the role of education in developing appropriate curricula, LiMe a new project based on good practices around languages and media for migrant learners will ensure migrant learners feel part of the community they live in and overcome socio-cultural barriers arising from different cultures and customs. As Sonia Livingstone has mentioned [3] the essential writing competence usually adquired by tradiotional methodologies "have been augmented by the also-significant 'skill' of reading audiovisual material from the mid-twentrieth century onwards."

Fig. 1. Medias and Migrant

Reading media and writing about it can help the social inclusion of migrant learners by helping them to discover and assimilate the cultural knowledge embedded in any foreign language.

2- LiMe´s Aims: languages and cultures through ICTs for migrant learners

LiMe, a Key Activity 2 Languages Multilateral Project based on the development of an interactive virtual learning platform for Language Learning (English, Polish, Italian, Spanish and German - the official languages of the project partners-), tackles teaching and learning of languages and cultures through media exploitation for migrant learners. Supported by the Lifelong Learning European Programme, and conducted by VHS Cham (Germany), the project partnership's aim is to help migrants develop language and cultural competences (from A2 to B2) into the host community by providing them and language trainers with interactive tools to decode language and culture as portrayed in various types of media. The specific aims are presented below:
- To analyse the existing plan of provision of language teaching for migrant learners.
- To identify socio-cultural elements that influence the language of media.
- To identify patterns of using media in language teaching in order to create a training package–teacher guide.
- To identify good practices via developing a virtual learning platform that will contain an array of exercises/tools from media (press, advertisement, radio, television, internet etc) as a central point of reference for both learners and educators.
- To test developed tools and training packages with respective target groups in order to achieve high quality final products.
- To disseminate and mainstream the main results and products regarding language teaching among various target groups: learners, teachers, educational institutions, stakeholders, other organisations responsible for integration and language acquisition.

3- Methodology and Phases

Taking into account that Media´s role has influence on migratory movements and policies in many countries [4], we cannot overlook the input and features of Media in education. In this sense, the project contributes to the enhancement of teaching and learning a foreign language and what is more strengthening social inclusion in education, especially among migrants, through the development of innovative methods and procedures, and a virtual learning platform to learn the language of the hosting country.

The project activities are divided into seven work packages, having each package its own working plan, deliverables and quality control assurance activities. The major milestones of the project which are foreseen are:

- Contextualization and good practice research. The final deliverable is a report focusing on the social cultural aspects of the language country specific and a final report sharing all countries experiences and achivements.
- Development of the virtual learning platform for both learners and educators.
- The platform will be divided for two main groups: (a) language teachers (templates, tips, example activities, successful models and other advices and guidelines) and (b) migrant learners (interactive exercises, tips for language learning, collaborative tasks, etc..). The authentic resources will provide opportunities for learners to gain insights into the target culture and participate in the community and will enable teachers to exploit current and emerging media to provide authentic language examples that typically reflect socio-cultural attitudes, practices and customs, all essential to the successful integration of migrants.
- Mainstreaming of the results: this will be used to challenge the educational community, influence usage and policy change at national and European level.

4- Dissemination

The dissemination work plan pays special attention on raising public awareness and external knowledge from the first month of the project and to mainstream the results once they are available. The important parts of the dissemination agreement includes continuous dissemination country specific and European collaboration to maximize the impact of the project.

The most outstanding dissemination events for LiMe Project have been divided into three blocks: **online dissemination** including the development of the website (http://www.languages-in-media.eu/), the virtual learning platform and dissemination of the project through social networks (https://twitter.com/LIME_Project); **print and electronic dissemination material** (also available online) such as flyers, newsletters and press releases (http://www.languages-in-media.eu/sites/default/files/LiMe%20Press%20Release_UK.pdf) and finally **events** carried out at local, regional, national or international level. Speeches, meetings, seminars, conferences, among others are included in this sector. Additionally the partnership agreed to associate other members such as institutions, companies, organisations whose collaboration includes: participation in the dissemination of the project information, online and/or face to face interviews, piloting material /resources testing, contribution to exploitation and sustainability of the project results.

5- Results

In this first year of the project lifetime we have had two European meetings to organize work and to monitor the progress. From this period we have reached one of the tangible expected deliveries, a research and contextualisation report including findings on: (a) the current state of

language teaching for migrants and national policies with focus on the social cultural aspects of the language which prevent to full integration of migrant with society; (b) the current implementation of models in partner countries; (c) already existing good practices on the use of the media in developing a knowledge and understanding of the language. More results are

expected in the following years: a virtual platform that will focus on the use of various media and their relevance to language learning (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV movies, internet, books, social media etc.) and a training package in all partner languages that will provide support for language teachers and trainers in teaching languages with use of media.

Regarding associated partners we are pleased to show we have contacted with many relevant associations and organisations such as ONGs, language provider institutions, non-profit organisations etc. and they show great interest in participating with the LiMe consortium (http://www.languages-in-media.eu/node/4)

6- Conclusions

The interest of this project focuses on the development of an interactive platform which fits the needs and preferences of migrant learners and trainers, especially by setting new instruction and learning grounds for an effective fusion of language acquisition, cultural understanding and ICTs in a context of global crisis. The outcomes of the project will be an encouraging learning platform based on the exploitation of current and emergent media examples to provide authentic language examples that typically reflect socio-cultural attitudes, practices and customs, all essential to the successful integration of migrants. Nevertheless, we cannot provide final conclusions at this stage as we will continue working on the development of the interactive learning platform and material of the project to ensure the creation of a network platform relevant to each migrant learner's needs. Up to know, we believe that controlled and structured media exposure influences and facilities the teaching learning of migrants. In a global context of crisis it is significant to exploit real material from Media to reduce the cost of creating teaching resources but being able to offer an innovative and motivating quality product. In the same context it is crucial to create tools and means to support the migrant population to overcome social boundaries, help the acculturation process and get integrated earlier in the host culture in a time where public and private institutions offer not as much of assistance to this sector of society.
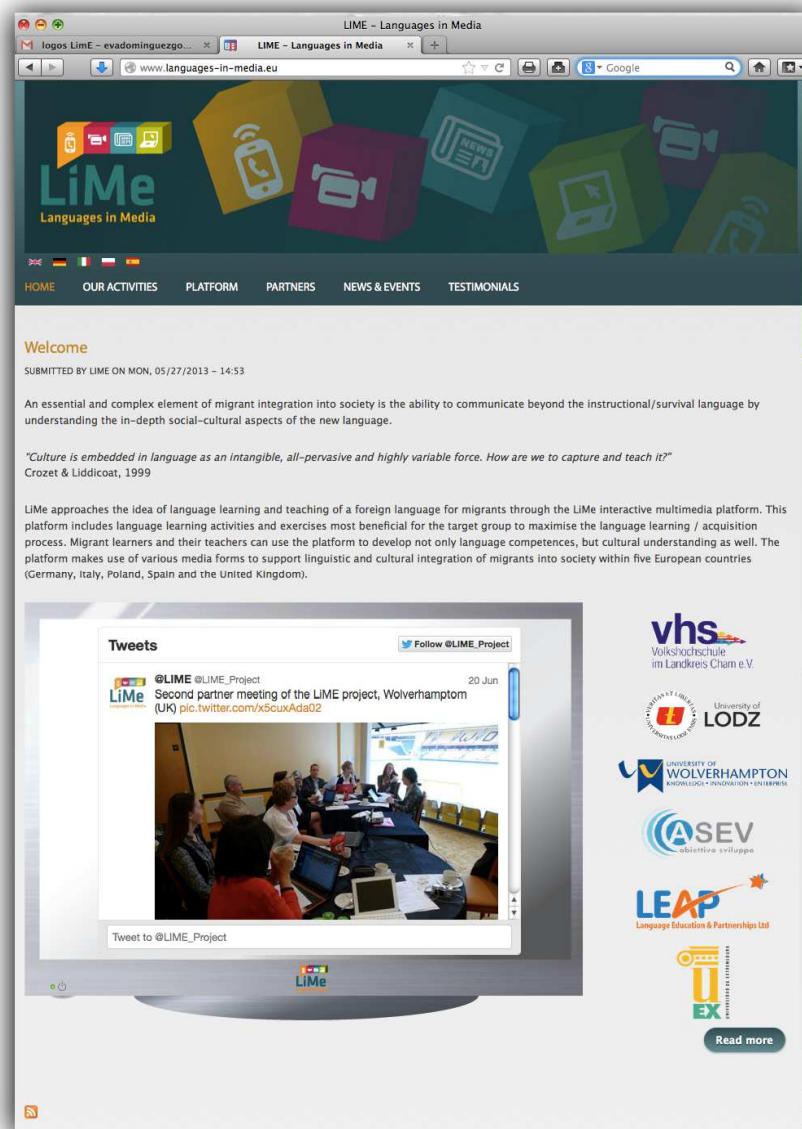

Fig. 2. LIME project. Official Web Site: www.languages-in-media.eu

7- Acknowledgements

8- References

[1] Crozet, C., & Liddicoat, A.J. (1999) The challenge of intercultural language teaching: Engaging with culture in the classroom. J. Lo Bianco, A.J. Liddicoat & C. Crozet (eds), Striving for the Third Place: Intercultural competence through language education (pp. 113-126). Canberra: Language Australia.

[2] Seelye, H. N. and Day, J. L. (1971), Penetrating the Mass Media: A Unit to Develop Skill in Reading Spanish Newspaper Headlines. Foreign Language Annals, 5: 69–81. doi: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.1971.tb00669.x

[3] Livingstone, Sonia (2004). Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies. The Communication Review, Volume 7, Issue 1. Pp. 2.

[4] Ureta, Ivan. (2011) Media, migration and public opinion: myths, prejudices and the challenge of attaining mutual understanding between Europe and North Africa / Ivan Ureta (ed.). Bern; New York: Peter Lang.

9- Bibliography

- Crozet, C., & Liddicoat, A.J. (1999) The challenge of intercultural language teaching: Engaging with culture in the classroom.
- J. Lo Bianco, A.J. Liddicoat & C. Crozet (eds), Striving for the Third Place: Intercultural competence through language education (pp. 113-126). Canberra: Language Australia
- Madianou, Mirca. (2012). Migration and new media: transnational families and polymedia. New York: Routledge.
- Seelye, H. N. and Day, J. L. (1971), Penetrating the Mass Media: A Unit to Develop Skill in Reading Spanish Newspaper Headlines. Foreign Language Annals, 5: 69–81. doi: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.1971.tb00669.x
- http://www.languages-in-media.eu/sites/default/files/LIME_newsletter_n0pdf.pdf
- http://www.languages-in-media.eu/sites/default/files/LiMe%20Press%20Release_UK.pdf
- https://twitter.com/LIME_Project
- http://www.languages-in-media.eu/
- http://www.languages-in-media.eu/node/4