

*LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION OF URDU SPEAKING
MIGRANTS IN FRANCE : INVISIBLE MEN'S ACCESS TO
THE CLANDESTINE LABOR MARKET*

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15-16 June 2023, Paris

Workshop

Revisiting the Intersection of Migration, Economy, and Language

Institut d'Etudes Avancées de Paris / The University of Chicago, Center in Paris

Research context

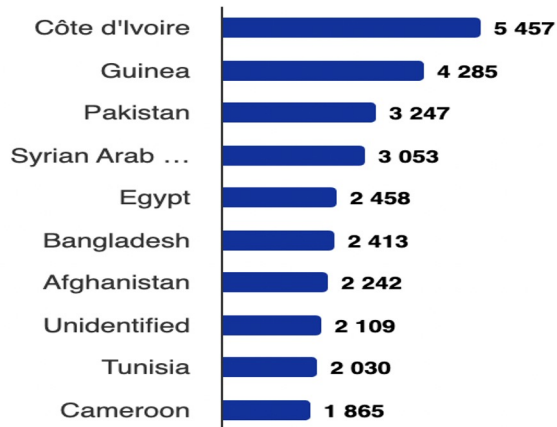
- ANR LIMINAL – French National Research Agency funded project on « Linguistic and Intercultural Mediations in a context of International Migrations »
- Migratory crisis
 - Migration peak in 2015
 - Numbers are low since 2016

Arrival of Migrants to EU (Recent data)

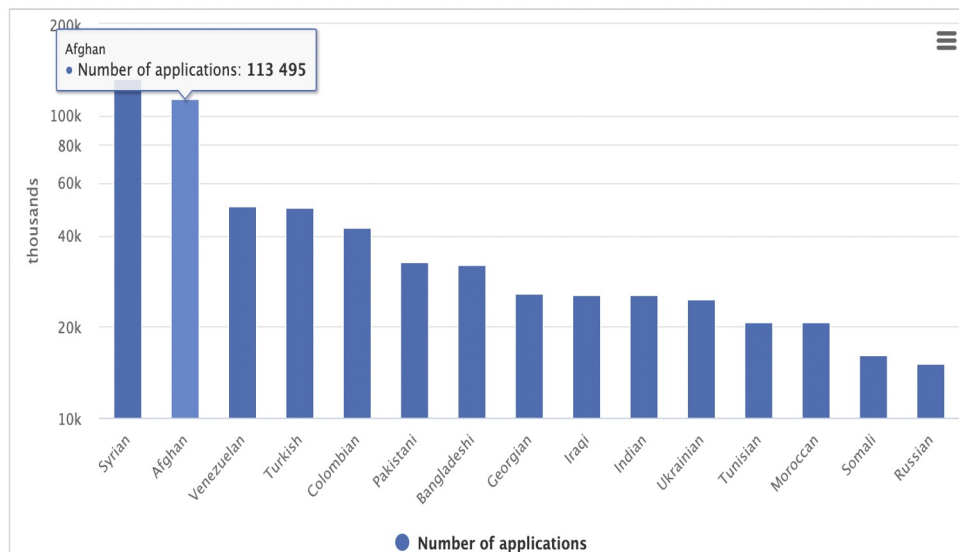
Source : European Commission

Top 10 nationalities of arrivals to Europe

2023



Top 15 nationalities of first time asylum applicants (2022)



Some numbers from France

- ❖ April 2018, the Home Minister Gérard Collomb estimated the number of illegal migrants to around 300/400.000 in France (Source: Le Journal du Dimanche)
- ❖ 2022 – 131 000 asylum applications
- ❖ Afghanistan tops the list of countries in terms of asylum-seekers from last consecutive five years

Afghanistan / Pakistan

Why Pakistan & Afghanistan ?

Arrival of migrants every month in France

Country Linguistic profile :

	Pakistan	Afghanistan
Language	Urdu, English, Punjabi, 120 +	Dari, Southern Pashto, 41+
Population	240 million	41 million
Religion	Muslim 96.4%	Muslim 99.7%
Literacy	57.9%	37.2%



Language crisis in Europe ?

- 27 EU members with 24 official languages
- Most of the countries are monolingual
- English bilingualism is becoming a norm and rapidly increasing in Europe
- Language profile of migrants
 - Little or no language study has been conducted
 - Multilingualism is the norm in the country of origin
 - Good basic knowledge of English
 - Competency in English increases over time
 - Migratory routes expose migrants with new linguistic environments



Language usage in different organisms related to migrants

Organisms	Migrants	Language	Translation demand
EMMAÜS	Asylum Seekers	French	Yes Little bit English <i>lingua franca</i>
OFPRA	Asylum Seekers	French	Yes Urdu & Punjabi
CNDA	Asylum Seekers	French	Yes Urdu & Punjabi
CADA	Asylum seekers	French	Yes Urdu & Punjabi

Methodology in the Fieldwork

- Participant observation
- Narratives of Migrant (De Fina 2003)
- Story-telling by Migrants

Fieldwork 1 – Porte de la Chapelle

The Balloon (La Bulle)– opened in October 2016, closed in April 2018



Image : Google



Image : Shahzaman Haque

Fieldwork 2 : Camping in the North



Image : Shahzaman Haque

Fieldwork 3 – CHUM Ivry-sur-Seine



Image : Shahzaman Haque



Image : Shahzaman Haque

Immigrants from Pakistan/Afghanistan

Asylum-seekers
(Google Image)



Case study of AZI – Case n° 1

Profile

- 20 years old Asylum-seeker from Afghanistan
- Year of arrival in France 2018 with his three brothers
- All three brothers were enrolled in school

- Mother tongue –Pashto. Speaks also Urdu & basic English. Failed attempt to learn French

Work scenario

- Mounting pressure to find a work and earn money
- No use of French was needed / Urdu was the common language
- Found work easily in the Pakistani network with skills in Urdu
- Later on, learnt some basic words and sentences in French (salutations etc.)

Case study of N – Case n° 2

Profile

- Year of arrival in France 2020 with wife & two children
- Year when he left Pakistan – Not known
- Mother tongue : Urdu & probably Punjabi.

Work scenario

No work found at the time of interview

ہم منہ سے کام نہیں کرتے، بلکہ ہاتھ سے کام کرتے ہیں، فرنچ کی کیا ضرورت ہے؟

‘We do not work with our mouth but with our hands, what is the need of learning French’ ?

(Translation from Urdu)

Interviewed on 13 July 2020, Ivry-sur-Seine

Case study of WAZ – Case n° 3

Profile

- 20 years old Asylum-seeker from Pakistan
- Year of arrival in France 2019
- Year when he left Pakistan 2017
- Crossed many borders – Iran, Turkey, Greece, Bosnia, Serbia, Italy

- Mother tongue – Punjabi. Speaks also Urdu, Greek and Serbian.

Work scenario

- Found work after one month of arrival in France
- Painter in the construction site
- Punjabi is the main language of workplace

Case study of S – Case n° 4

Profile

- 30 years old Asylum-seeker from Afghanistan
- Year of arrival in France 2018 with his wife
- Mother tongue –Pashto. Speaks also Urdu & English.

Work scenario

- Finding work in English-speaking environment

انکی ایک خامی ہے، انہیں انگریزی نہیں آتی، افغانستان میں تو ایک جاہل بھی انیے اچھی انگریزی بول لیتا ہے۔

They have a defect, they do not speak English. In Afghanistan, even an illiterate can speak better English than them.

Interview on 20 February, 2019

Case study of I – Case n° 5

Profile

- 52 years old Asylum-seeker from Afghanistan
- Year of arrival in France 2017 with his wife and six children
- All children were enrolled in the local school of camp

- Mother tongue –Pashto. Speaks also Urdu & basic English.

Work scenario

- Several short stints in construction sites with Pakistanis
- No use of French was needed / Urdu was the common language
- Often not paid

Case study of IFTI – Case n° 6

Profile

- 31 years old Asylum-seeker from Pakistan
- Year of arrival in France 2018
- Asylum application rejected in 2020
- Crossed several borders in Europe before arriving to France

- Mother tongue –Punjabi. Speaks Urdu. Basic notions in English & French

Work scenario

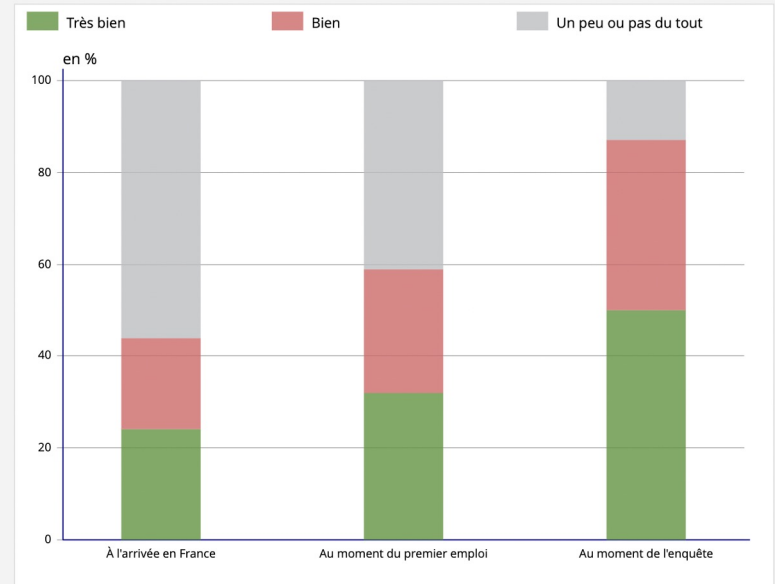
- Working regularly in a construction site run by Punjabis
- Language of workplace : Punjabi
- Steady work without French & without working permit

- **2023 updates**
- Working with Moldovan national in a construction site
- Speaks little bit of French with boss and Urdu with co-workers
- Got papers in Portugal since six months / working without 'work permit'

Skill in French for migrants - General scenario (INSEE)

- ★ 41% of immigrants report not speaking little or any French at the time of first job (2014)
- ★ First job is not linked with proficiency in French language
- ★ Men who didn't speak French at all have less rapid access to job than those who speak little, well or very well.
- ★ Need to work quickly - overqualified

Figure 3 - Niveau en français à l'arrivée en France, au premier emploi et dans l'emploi occupé au moment de l'enquête



Lecture : lors du premier emploi, 41 % des immigrants parlaient peu ou pas du tout le français.

Champ : immigrants de 15 à 64 ans arrivés à l'âge de 15 ans ou plus et ayant déjà travaillé en France. France métropolitaine.

Source : Insee, module complémentaire à l'enquête Emploi sur la mobilité, les compétences et l'insertion professionnelle (2014).

« Prafekchar », « ejent », « waraq » : les mots des demandeurs d'asile racontent leur histoire

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Une femme somalienne réfugiée sous une tente dans un camp sur le bassin de la Villette à Paris le 27 mai 2020. Christophe ARCHAMBAULT / AFP

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Déclaration d'intérêts

Shahzaman Haque est membre du projet Liminal (<https://liminal.hypotheses.org/> *) 2017-2021 (Médiation linguistique et culturelle entre acteurs en situation de crise migratoire, programme ANR porté par l'INALCO-Langues'O) qui se renseigne sur les questions des pratiques langagières des migrants.

Partenaires



Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (Inalco)
apporte un financement en tant que membre adhérent de
The Conversation FR.

[Voir les partenaires](#) de The Conversation France



Conclusion

General socialization

- The linguistic environment and landscape introduce the residents to the language regimes they will be subjected to in France
- The endorsement of English as the global lingua franca
- The reliance of 'multilingual' volunteers as interpreters
- Truncated competency allows to have a minimum functional contact
- Urdu emerged as a link language among the South Asian Asylum seekers

Workplace

- Communitarian Capital (Gago 2011)
- Invisible men's access to the clandestine market
- Invisible languages are helpful to access to labor market undeclared
- Linguistic market theory fails in this context
- Little or no cost to State on migrants (Mouvement Utopia, 2019).

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