

## **MOBILITY PARADIGM IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS STUDIES: LANGUAGE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION**

**Natalia Udina**

Assoc. Prof. RUDN University, Moscow, RUSSIA, [udinann@gmail.com](mailto:udinann@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Mobility paradigm is a new paradigm shift in social sciences, which theoretical development brought about new perspectives for sociolinguistics analysis of various discourses. The study of socially important phenomenon such as international migration and its particular segment – labour migration and legislation regulating these processes reveal the importance of their specific language. Sociolinguistics being an applied and interdisciplinary branch of linguistics focuses on current problems of society and the way language develops and functions in various discourses, contributing to understanding and resolving social problems through linguistic analysis.

Mobility principle focuses on dynamic context and changes and provides analysis of factors influencing discourse and communication. Being a multifaceted phenomenon labour migration encompasses a great variety of contexts: social, linguistic, legal, academic, professional, cross-cultural, interpersonal and others. The complexity of multilateral communication necessitates new approaches which mobility paradigm provides considering language of migration at a macro-linguistics level: its development, meaning and functions in a new environment and at a micro-linguistics level which concerns the use of particular language structures and terminology.

The language of international labor migration is of particular importance for translators and interpreters. The studies are focused on new developments in labour migration language and translation problems with the view of contributing to translation studies in this field.

This paper was prepared with the support of the RUDN University program 5-100

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics models, mobility paradigm, language of labor migration, language and social interaction, translation.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Sociolinguistics studies place an emphasis on relationship between language and society with the aim of understanding the effect of social contexts on language use. Language not only carries social, cultural and other various context meanings, but performs various functions in social interaction. Within this area of studies two subfields could be outlined: macrosociolinguistics which examines the language as a factor in demographic and social organization, focusing on effects of multilingualism, language planning and macrosociolinguistics, which examines the effect of social factors on language and communication.

Various approaches have been introduced to examine factors which influence language use and relations between dependent (linguistic) and independent (extralinguistic) variables. Though the development of sociolinguistics is directed more towards ethnolinguistic studies, the new mobility turn in social sciences sets new objectives to resolve. In this context the language of labour migration requires special consideration both for sociological, practical and educational purposes. Accounts for variability of language are of particular importance for translators/interpreters.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LANGUAGE OF LABOUR MIGRATION STUDIES**

There are a variety of approaches developed in sociolinguistics, the choice of methods and data collection are crucial and depend on the aim of research. Sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary science which developed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though the early use of the word *sociolinguistics* dates to 1939 when it appeared in the title of the article 'Sociolinguistics in India' by T.C. Hodson, the term sociolinguistics as the name of science came in use in the 1950s.

Many linguists considered social features of language as an important language attribute. The important contributions to the development of sociolinguistics were made by American and European linguists such as W. Labov, B. Bernstein, D. Hymes, J. Gumperz, Ch. Ferguson, J. Fishman, W. Bright, A. Grimshaw, U. Weinreich and other scientists (Spolsky, 2011).

The foundations of social aspects of language studies in Russia were laid by famous linguists I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay, E.D. Polivanov, L.P. Yakubinsky, V.V. Vinogradov and others. They promoted ideas of social differentiation of national language, claimed that language development depends on the society development, the necessity of social dialectology and jargon studies, etc.

The further stage in the development of sociolinguistics was concerned with experimental, statistical and qualitative studies, correlation of linguistic and social data, etc.

The recent developments of sociolinguistics has been influenced greatly by the fundamental works of William Labov (1992, 2001, 2010) who introduced modern methodologies for data collecting and analyzing, and established a new theoretical model of research known as variationism. Variationist sociolinguistics, considered as a subfield of sociolinguistics, has been also influenced by quantitative approach to linguistic studies. Variationists use descriptive and analytic tools common for linguistics, but they focus on speakers as social actors, social facts, develop different approaches to variability. Sociolinguistics studies proceed from locating area of particular language use and target community and linguistic samples (Milroy, Gordon, 2003).

Sociolinguistics makes use of methods common both to linguistic and sociological researches such as interviewing, questionnaire, correlational analysis, which is based on establishing interrelation between linguistic and social factors as variables, etc. Language variation is often associated with social categories if they are meaningful to social actors, such as cultural differences, class, status, political structure etc. The labour migration involves broad groups of people to whom all of these factors are meaningful

Mobility paradigm, a recent shift in social studies, brought about new perspectives for variationist sociolinguistics (Blommaert, 2016). Looking at language through the lens of mobility, provides new patterns of human interaction in various national, international, professional and other spheres, allows sociolinguistics to investigate linguistic variation and social meaning to account for variability in language.

**The hypothesis** has been developed that mobility turn in social studies is instrumental in sociolinguistics, with the main concern of language of labour migration which has close ties with various social aspects of migration such as communication, integration into new communities, legislation and translation.

## **3. THE LANGUAGE OF LABOUR MIGRATION: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mobility in society creates linguistically and socially distinct groups which are involved into diverse interaction in which language performs important functions. Considering migration groups the following language issues are of particular social importance. The issue which requires special consideration is the knowledge of language of a receiving country. The importance of this issue is obvious, as language is helpful in integrating into receiving society, getting job, improving financial position and thus changing the social status of migrants. Many countries try to introduce special language courses and programmes for migrants and the challenges which all involved parties face are numerous. In this area sociolinguistics studies are necessary to investigate the most pressing problems of second and foreign language learning, testing and assessment, language and socialization, cultural aspects and specifics of language communities (Hornberger, 2008).

Language proximity is often claimed to be important factor determining the country of destination. So called linguistic enclaves or large communities sharing the same linguistic background are also attractive to migrants (Adsera, Putikova, 2015). Sociolinguistics studies in these enclaves could provide important data revealing the main challenges of social interaction within labour migrant communities.

Mobility in labour migration area necessitates organization, control, providing and protecting migrants' rights and other related activities which have to proceed within legal framework. Labour migration legislation develops its specific language on international and national level. The language of international labour migration embraces concepts which are common to most countries; the main area of labour migration regulated by law is labour migrants' rights. The International legislation in the sphere of labour migration relies on international legislative practice and law practice of various countries.

Language of international labour migration could be considered as constituting the macrolevel of sociolinguistics studies. The main concepts outlined in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Convention, 1999) are those related to protection of human rights and represented in the terminology which interpreters and translators have to be acquainted with. These specific terms make the core of international conventions and recommendations including such terms as 'migration for employment', 'equality of opportunity', 'State of origin / State of employment / State of transit', 'authorization to reside and to engage in employment', 'remunerated activities', 'documented/non-documented migration', 'cultural identity', 'medical care', 'repatriation and reintegration' and others. Convention deals with the following categorization of migrant workers and provide definitions to the following terms: 'migrant worker', 'frontier worker', 'seasonal worker', 'seafarer', 'worker on offshore installation', 'itinerant worker', 'project-tied worker', 'specified-employment worker', 'self-employed worker'. The following notions designate specifics of labour migration processes which are of particular concern in many states. The terms cover complicated aspects of social and law spheres: 'forced or compulsory labour', 'abolition of forced labour', 'irregular migration', 'clandestine movements and trafficking in migrant workers', 'torture or inhuman or degrading treatment', 'slavery or servitude', 'national, racial or religious hatred', 'unlawful interference, physical injury, threats and intimidation', 'expulsion / collective expulsion', 'protection against violence' etc.

Though the Convention on labour migration has been translated into many national languages and globalization process made information on labour migration accessible to various groups of people, translation in this area could be challenging depending on various social contexts.

The process of moving from large scale social categories to local social practices concern microlevel of sociolinguistic studies. Considering various countries, the national, geographic, cultural and other factors affect the use of language and choice of specific terms. Thus in the European Union we came across such terms as 'EU nationals', 'third-country nationals', 'EEA nationals' (European Economic Area), 'The Maghreb countries', 'guest-worker', 'non-national', 'foreign nationals'. In the UK the political changes brought about such terms as 'post-Brexit immigration', 'post-Brexit rules for migrants', in Germany 'Blue card' has been introduced in analogy to the USA 'Green Card'. In the USA the connotation of the term 'immigrant' differs from its connotation in other countries, designating a person who gets permanent residency and eligible for USA citizenship.

The terminology concerning migrant worker qualification include such terms as 'low-skilled, semi-skilled, highly-skilled jobs/workers'. These concepts are not treated similarly in various countries as well as 'seasonal workers' (Eisel, 2014). The meaning of these terms may depend on social contexts.

In the Russian language the terminology related to labour migration has its specifics due to social, cultural and linguistic reasons. Most labour migrants are coming from former soviet republics, so they have fewer problems with the Russian language, the main notions specific to labour migration are familiar to them which make integration into new social communities easier. But some notions could be embarrassing both for migrant workers and translators as there is no analog in other cultures and languages. Thus one of the required documents for all working people is 'labour book' (trudovaya knizhka) or 'work record book' or 'employment book' which has to be issued to every migrant. In case a migrant worker possesses this soviet document he/she could make use of it. Many formalities include general notions designated by terms which have equivalents in other languages, such as 'the invitation/offer of employment', 'work permit', 'employment contract', 'length of service/seniority', 'insurance period' etc. (Labour migration in Russia, 2018).

Integration policy developed in many countries among various measures includes language and cultural programmes and instructions. It was reported that the language programme often lacks the training of job related language skills. New initiatives to incorporate language education into work training have been

undertaken in Germany (Burkert, Haas, 2014).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Sociolinguistics studies are concerned with various language-related contexts of social interactions. Globalization and mobility impact on societies is manifested in language; most affected sphere has been labour migration. The sphere of labour migration has been heterogeneous and is developing intensively. As it encompasses various working communities and people, belonging to different classes, having various status and cultures, sociolinguistics studies have to proceed to obtain further insight into language and social interaction. Sociolinguistics researches are crucial for developing effective language programs for migrant workers integration into new communities and for interpreters/translators training.

#### REFERENCE LIST

- Adsera, A. Pytikova, M. (2015) International migration: The Impact of linguistic proximity on preferred destinations. Accessed, December 2018 Vox <https://voxeu.org/article/language-and-migration>
- Blommaert, J. (2016). From mobility to complexity in sociolinguistic theory and method. In N. Coupland (Ed.), *Sociolinguistics: Theoretical Debates* (pp. 242-260). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burkert, C., Haas, A. (2014). Investing into the Future: Labour Market Integration Policies for New Immigrants in Germany. Research Project EU. Accessed December, 2018. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/investing-future-labor-market-integration-policies-new-immigrants-germany>
- Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1999). UN General Assembly.
- Eisel, K. (2014). The US Labour Immigration Scheme – All about Being Attractive? EU Perception and Stakeholders' Perspectives Reviewed. Center for European Policy Studies. Brussels, Belgium. Accessed November, 2018. [http://aei.pitt.edu/54154/1/No\\_67\\_Eisele\\_US\\_Labour\\_Immigration.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/54154/1/No_67_Eisele_US_Labour_Immigration.pdf)
- Hernandez-Campoy, J.M. (2014). Research Methods in Sociolinguistics. in Manchon M.R. (Ed.) *Research Methods and Approaches in Applied Linguistics: Looking back and moving forward*. AILA Review 27. John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Hornberger, N.H. (Ed.) (2008). *Encyclopedia of language and education*. (2-nd ed.) New York: Springer.
- Immigration: White Paper sets out post-Brexit rules for migrants. Accessed December, 2018. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-46613900>
- Labour migration in Russia (2019). (Trudovaya migratsiya v Rossii). On-line publication. Accessed January, 2019. <https://delatdelo.com/organizaciya-biznesa/trudovaya-migratsiya-v-rossii.html>
- Labov, W. (1992). *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Labov, W. (2001). *Principles of Linguistic Change: Social Factors*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Labov, W. (2010). *Principles of Linguistic Change: Cultural and Cognitive factors*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Milroy, L., Gordon, M. (2003) *Sociolinguistics: Methods and Interpretation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Spolsky, B. (2011). History of Sociolinguistics. In Wodak, R., Johnstone, B., Kerswill, P.E. (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. London: Sage Publications.