

Aim

- the existing claims in political discourse: translation and interpreting (T&I) hinder integration of recent immigrants
- a quantitative and qualitative research on different communication strategies used by a group of asylum seekers in Slovenia.



Why is T&I provision a problem?

- it represents a **financial burden** to the state by entailing in some contexts the necessity to cover the costs for T&I.
- **Belief** that multilingualism and multiculturalism that are promoted by T&I do not encourage, but **hinder** recent immigrants to learn and use the dominant language of the host country.



Media and Politics: the case of UK

- **Media:** costs (£100m – £140m); a Bangladeshi woman who had lived in London for 22 years but still could not speak English and who claimed that the language support had ruined her life: "When you are trying to help us, you are actually harming us." (2006, BBC, Mark Easton)
- **Politics:** the public debate strengthened the dominant ideology of monolingualism:
 - UK Communities Secretaries: Ruth Kelly (Labour) in 2007; Eric Pickles (2013, 2015), the conservative-liberal democrat coalition government.



Mr Pickles

- “translation services have an unintentional, **adverse impact on integration** by reducing the incentive for some migrant communities to learn English” (written statement to Parliament in 2013)
- “The guidance I've issued is crystal-clear – councils should stop wasting taxpayers' money by translating into foreign languages. **Translation holds people back from integrating into British society.**” (Beardmore, 2015; Beckford, Adams, 2015)
- Translation Studies has not provided any verifiable facts that could be used to refute or support these claims



Methodology

- Questionnaire and interviews with residents of Slovene Asylum Seeker Centres
- the only migrant group provided with
 - free courses in Slovene
 - paid interpreting support (all participated in interpreted communication)

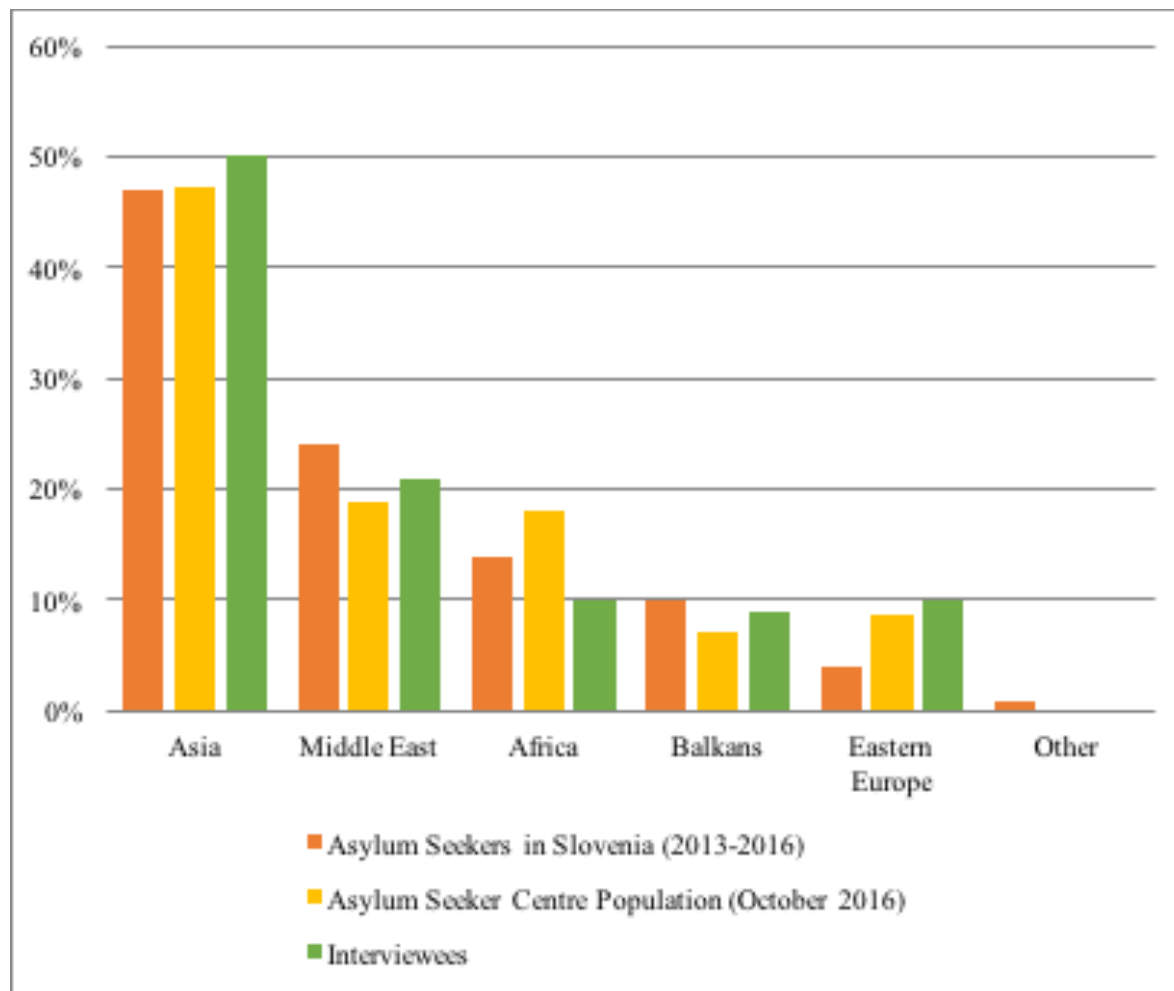


Sampling

- statistics of the Slovene Ministry of the Interior – all (i.e. 1585) asylum seekers in Slovenia by nationality, 2013–2016
- Questionnaires (21 questions) sent to all residents of the Slovene asylum seeker centres, 10 October 2016 (3 centres, 243 residents)
 - 107 replies (46%);
 - L1 (Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Russian, Ibo, English, Albanian)



Regional origin: populations compared



Interviews (2014–2016)

- **38 asylum seekers** from the **5 most salient regions**, covering the most frequent languages in the sampling frame (Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Russian):
 - Iran (8), Iraq (6), Afghanistan (5), Syria (7), Ukraine (4), Nigeria (2), Kosovo (2), Egypt, Bosnia, Cameroon and Algeria (1 each)
- **Two groups** (19 interviews each group)
 - The boundary – at 7 months, i.e. at the average/median value of the interviewees' stay in Slovenia.



The structure of interviews

- 48 questions – introductory 21 questions & 27 open-ended questions
- consent form; anonymised transcriptions
- data analysis software NVivo™



Attitude towards language of the host country

- Is knowing the language of the host country important?
 - 37 out of 38 interviewees = Yes (except Algeria M23 ENG – from March to Dec 2016, 60% of the asylum seekers left Slovenia voluntarily)
- Have you taken a course in Slovene?
 - 24 out of 35 interviewees = Yes (also Algeria M23 ENG)



Group 1

Why is Slovene important?

Iraq M27

- Every time I go out, people look at me like this.
- *What does that mean, like this?*
- As a stranger, a foreigner. **If you speak Slovene, it's better.** People think that you're from here, and they think about you ... I don't know ... I can't explain it.

Ukraine F26

- Why... Because it is important. Because... It is more comfortable for me.
- *In what way?*
- **You become more... independent.** Self-reliant.



Group 2

- of 19 interviewees, 16 answered – **all of them** took the course or tutorials (provided by the state and NGOs) + 5 interviewees conducted the interview **in Slovene** (not just empty words).
- the importance of organised learning of the host country language:
 - “But without the book, without the official teacher and without the program, people don't learn.” [Iran M33 ENG]



Group 2

If you had the opportunity to use an interpreter in all your official dealings in Slovenia, would you still want to learn Slovene? If yes, why?

Independence

Ukraine F42 SLO: "I don't want to be **dependent**."

Afghanistan M22 SLO: "Because it **opens a door for you** and enables you to progress or **integrate faster** in the society in which you live."

Mistrust, unqualified service

Afghanistan M22 SLO: "It's either they aren't able to understand or aren't capable, I don't know... [...] And that way, **information gets lost** on its way to the third person."

Iran M33 ENG: "Some of them, **they didn't study, most of them**, they didn't study in this field, so they just... Because they just know the language, they come to work. [...]"



Conclusions

- 1) asylum seekers with experience of interpreting services **are aware of the importance of learning the dominant language** of the host country.
 - 2) migrants **do not perceive T&I as a preferred communication** strategy:
 - The issue of trust
 - The issue of independence
 - 3) They are aware that T&I play an important role in **high-risk situations** in the initial stages of living in the host country:
 - "I needed them mostly [...] **at the hospital** when speaking to a doctor, **I always needed someone who could explain what I wanted to say.**" (Afgh M22 SLO)
- **T&I do not hinder the acquisition of the dominant language of the host country** – they are complementary steps to independence and successful inclusion of immigrants into the linguistic and economic mainstream of the host country.



Recommendations

- designing specific translation policies for recent immigration:
 1. free translation and interpreting services by qualified language professionals in **high-risk situations** (i.e. in legal, police and healthcare settings)
 - quality T&I support decreases **healthcare costs** (Lindholm, M. et al., 2012)
 2. subsidise **quality training** for translators and interpreters for the languages in need
 3. provide continuous and **free language courses** of the host country language





Thank you for your
attention



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