THE OPEN DOOR

Finbarre Fitzpatrick

The Open Door (The Bradford Bilingual Project) is a commentary on theMother Tongue and English Teaching Project (MOTET), which was a collaborative enterprise between the University of Bradford, Bradford College and Bradford Local Education Authority. MOTET was concerned to investigate some of the effects of the first year of a bilingual programme for young South Asian children entering two schools in the Bradford Metropolitan District.

This discussion of the findings is intended for a wide audience and for that reason the results are presented in the context of key ideas in the current literature.


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Immigrant Children's Swedish — A New Variety?

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Abstract. As a consequence of the great immigration in Sweden during recent decades, about one tenth of the children in Swedish schools have an immigrant background of different kinds. Many of them use a Swedish that differs more or less from native Swedish and that has been characterized as 'poor' and as the result of incomplete learning. In this paper two hypotheses are discussed: (1) Swedish as used by immigrant children may show certain features, related to a creolization process; and (2) the Swedish language may in future show signs of influence from the varieties used by persons with immigrant background.

Introduction

In the following translated composition, written in Swedish by a Turkish girl living in Sweden, a situation is described that is not unique in Sweden today:

My classmate

Our class is an unusual class. There are only three Swedes in the class. We speak Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Finnish, Kurdish and Swedish. We get along well although we come from different countries and have different religions.

I am a Turkish citizen. I am thirteen years old and came here when I was seven, but some of my friends were only a few months old when they arrived. Songul, for example, was two months old when she came from Turkey. Deniz was even born here, but her parents are Turkish. Her cousin Kürsat was only two months old when he arrived. Jacklin came here from Lebanon because of the war. Tsz Kai came here from Hong Kong. Patrik's parents are from Finland but he was born here. Kati is from Poland. Sandra is from Yugoslavia like Dragon. Caroline is from Lebanon but speaks Armenian. Magnus's mother

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IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S SWEDISH — A NEW VARIETY?

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Abstract. As a consequence of the great immigration in Sweden during recent decades, about one tenth of the children in Swedish schools have an immigrant background of different kinds. Many of them use a Swedish that differs more or less from native Swedish and that has been characterised as 'poor' and as the result of incomplete learning. In this paper two hypotheses are discussed: (1) Swedish as used by immigrant children may show certain features, related to a creolisation process; and (2) the Swedish language may in future show signs of influence from the varieties used by persons with immigrant background.

Introduction

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is from the West Indies, but his father is from Sweden. Ann-Marie is from Skåne. Caroline is from Chile like Patu and Alejandro. Mike and Roland are Swedes. Rahime comes from a village in Turkey where they speak only Turkish. This is class 7D in the Flemingsberg School.

Aynin, 14

The Situation

In many suburban areas of the big cities in Sweden today there are a great number of immigrants, most of them having arrived during the last 20 years. Contrary to what is usual in many other European countries, the immigrants do not live separated from each other in ethnic groups. In one of the suburbs of Stockholm, Rinkeby, for example, about 100 languages are spoken and more than 30 languages are taught at school. In many classrooms and kindergartens in these areas children representing first or second generation immigrants are in an overwhelming majority. It is not unusual that in a class of 30 children only two or three have a ‘pure’ Swedish background and that 10–15 different languages are spoken in the homes of the rest of the class. Some of these children have arrived in Sweden relatively recently and have not yet mastered the Swedish language very well. Others were born in Sweden, but use mainly one (or more) of the total of about 150 foreign languages spoken in Sweden today. In some cases the immigrant children use their mother tongue in school, i.e. if they attend a so-called ‘home-language class’, and those who attend a ‘Swedish’ class are entitled to at least two sessions a week of ‘home language’, if they wish. As for Swedish, newly arrived children are given preparatory courses, and those who have spent a long time in Sweden but still have problems with the language are given supportive courses. Most immigrant children, thus, can be claimed to be bilingual, at least to some extent.

Children in those areas where many languages are spoken seem to use mainly Swedish as a lingua franca in contact with peers (Boyd, 1985), irrespective of what language is used at home. In the Swedish debate, however, their mastery of Swedish sometimes has been characterised as ‘poor’, and the children have been claimed to be ‘semi-lingual’, i.e. ‘not fully competent in any language’. It is also sometimes reported by teachers, social workers and others that these children, even those who have lived in Sweden since their early childhood, speak ‘oddly’ and that their Swedish is at times hard for a native Swede to understand, especially when they are speaking informally within the group, even though the children themselves seem to understand each other perfectly well.

In the light of these facts I shall discuss two hypotheses regarding what might happen to Swedish as used by immigrant children and to Swedish as a whole: (1) Swedish, as used by immigrant children, may show certain features, related to a creolisation process, and (2) the Swedish language may in the future show signs of influence from the varieties of Swedish used by persons with immigrant background.

The term ‘immigrant children’ will in the following refer to children and teenagers living permanently in Sweden in the type of areas described above, whose parents have immigrated before the birth of the child or who, themselves, have immigrated at an early age, i.e. pre-school age.

Immigrant Children’s Swedish

In spite of the fact that, during the last two decades, immigrant children in rather large numbers have been growing up in Sweden, few linguistic studies have been made on what kind of Swedish they in fact use. As far as we know, any one of the following three descriptions might be valid:

1. The Swedish used by immigrant children does not in any important way differ from Swedish as used by Swedish children of the same age and social class, raised in a monolingual Swedish environment.

2. As a consequence of incomplete learning, especially at the lexical level, immigrant children’s Swedish is ‘poor’, i.e. it has deficiencies, that make it unfit to express the speaker’s elementary linguistic needs.

3. Immigrant children’s Swedish fulfils vital linguistic needs, but it deviates in some instances from native Swedish and therefore it is conceived by native Swedes as ‘odd’, ‘different’, ‘difficult to understand’, etc.

In fact, it seems quite possible that immigrant children’s Swedish may be described in all three ways. Some individuals may use an idiomatic Swedish, perhaps sometimes even hypercorrect due to the fact that many of them have learnt Swedish at school as a second language. Other children might well in certain respects have a ‘poor’ command of Swedish, which especially is handicapping to them at school, while again other individuals might use a variety that does not impair communication but still contains some deviant, and from a Swedish point of view, ‘strange’ elements.

It might also, however, be possible that the Swedish of one and the same individual could be characterised in all three ways, different in different situational contexts. If so, his language in certain informal situations might seem quite ‘Swedish’ and typical for his age, while in other situations, for example at school, it might be considered ‘poor’ and insufficient. Finally, the same individual may, in a context consisting of those immigrant children from different ethnic groups, with which he normally interacts, have developed a certain variety of Swedish, which could have deviant features. This variety might serve as a group dialect with the purpose of identifying the members of the group as ‘foreigners’, a word that need not have any negative connotations to the children themselves. This special immigrant sociolect might, if it exists (at least locally), serve as a group ethnic variety
The 'odd' deviations reported might be interpreted either as consequences of incomplete learning, resulting in incorrect inflection morphology, incorrect word order, a limited vocabulary etc., or as the result of interference, i.e. the speaker transfers grammatical rules and semantic features from his mother tongue when speaking Swedish. On the other hand, errors resulting from incomplete learning do not normally obstruct communication to any large extent, unless they appear in a great number, especially not if the listener (teachers, social workers and so on) has a long experience of talking to immigrants. This kind of language is usually commented on as having 'plenty of errors' rather than as being 'odd'. We also know that transfer is not as important in language learning as we thought earlier. Therefore it seems possible that those features which seem odd and sometimes even unintelligible may have other explanations.

Consequently, it seems worthwhile to investigate immigrant children's language, not only from the perspectives of 'incomplete learning' and interference but also from a point of departure, connected to our knowledge of what usually happens at instances of language contact, creolisation and language change, at the same time taking into consideration sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects of language use.

Immigrant Children's Swedish and Creolisation

Pidginisation and creolisation

In those areas of the world where pidgins have originated, it has often been the case that people with different mother tongues have lived together (sugar plantations in Hawaii, recently developed big cities in Africa and so on). The rising generations in such areas usually learn one or two languages at home, for example the mother's and/or the father's mother tongue, and also the pidgin used as a lingua franca by the adults in the neighbourhood (Spencer, 1971). This pidgin is normally the language used by the children for communication with peers in the playground and so on. In some cases the pidgin has developed into a more fully fledged language, a creole, that differs considerably from the base language, from which the pidgin once developed. Such a creolisation process may take place very fast, sometimes within a few generations (Bickerton, 1981).

A situation that in many respects is similar to this 'classic' situation for the occurrence of a creole is at hand in Sweden today. As we have seen, the linguistic situation in certain suburban areas is diversified. In addition to all the languages spoken by first generation immigrants, such as Greek, Turkish, Spanish, Chinese and so forth, 'broken' Swedish is used as a means of communication between adults with different mother tongues. The Swedish, as heard by the children from staff in shops and cafeterias, in the homes of their mates, and even at the kindergarten, where the members of the staff may originate from different countries, is more or less influenced by foreign substrata and sometimes rather simplified. In the increasingly common mixed marriages between two immigrants with different mother tongues, Swedish is mostly used as the language of the family, but also here the variety may be quite different from native Swedish. For many children, school is the only place where they hear Swedish spoken by natives. On the other hand, the Swedish pupils may be a small minority in the class, as described in the composition above, and the teacher, having children with many different mother tongues with different mastery of Swedish, may have to use a simplified variety of Swedish, best characterised as a combination of Teacher talk and Foreigner talk.

It seems clear that the linguistic input, received by the children in areas like these, is quite different from the one received by children in areas with few immigrants. One may therefore reason to expect a different linguistic outcome from children raised in districts where many immigrants live than from 'ordinary' Swedish children.

Is there a Swedish pidgin?

In a number of earlier studies (Kotsinas, 1981, 1982, 1984a,b, 1988a and others), I have dealt with the interlanguage used by six adult immigrants in Sweden, five Greeks and a Polish woman. The six informants were unskilled workers, most of them had limited education and none had attended any courses in Swedish, but had learned some Swedish during their 3-15 years in the country.

The language that appears in these studies shows apparent similarities at all linguistic levels to the interlanguage used by immigrants with other mother tongues (Finnish, Arabic, Turkish, etc.), and also to the interlanguage described in German studies of Spanish, Italian or Turkish 'guest workers'. Even more interesting, however, are the similarities between the six informants' interlanguage and pidgin languages in different parts of the world, for example Hawaii, the Seychelles, and New Guinea (Tok Pisin) (see Kotsinas, 1985, 1987, 1988a).

Like most pidgins, the immigrant Swedish variety is characterised by a very limited vocabulary, omission of certain function words, a reduction of the number of prepositions, almost complete absence of inflectional endings, few or no subordinate clauses, deviations regarding word order, and a considerable variation among the speakers' varieties.

On the other hand, there are strategies to compensate both for the shortcomings in vocabulary and for the lack of grammatical morphemes, such as semantic over-extensions, repetitions, circumlocutions and paraphrases. As for grammar, there also seems to be the same tendency in Swedish...
interlanguage as in pidgins to prefer analytic, i.e. lexical, expressions in cases where the target or base language uses synthetic, i.e. morphological, means of expression (cf. Traugott, 1973; Kay and Sankoff, 1974). In cases where the target language uses synonymous expressions, one analytic (for example more fine) and one synthetic (for example finer), the learner or pidgin-speaker seems to prefer the analytic one (Kotsinas 1985: 112), probably because an analytic expression is easier to apprehend at the initial stages of learning.

Grammatical markers are also, as in pidgins, to some extent replaced by certain lexical material. Tense is for example marked by time adverbs (i går (yesterday), i dag (today), i morgon (tomorrow) instead of by inflectional endings, and plurality by numerals (ett flicka (two girls)). Imperative and modality are often marked by words meaning 'please' and 'maybe' and there are tendencies to mark aspect, which in Swedish, as in most languages, is a difficult category for learners, by using words meaning 'come', 'go', 'stay' and 'stop' (Kotsinas, 1988a).

Is there a Swedish pidgin, then? To answer this question we would have to know whether a restricted language of the type described above is generally used as a means of communication in a certain area. This we do not know, since no sociolinguistic studies of this sort have been carried out. All we know is that some of the prerequisites seem to be at hand, i.e. that at least some adult learners of Swedish use an interlanguage that has many features in common with pidgin languages in different parts of the world.

Creolisation

When a pidgin creolises it is no longer a more or less occasional contact language, used in a limited number of situations (trade, conversations with superiors and so on). Instead, it is used more continually by a certain group of speakers, for example new generations. In those situations it is faced with the demand of fulfilling all the functions that languages usually have in communication. The many analytic means of expression in the pidgin variety, the frequent repetitions and semantic over-extensions and the lack of morphological means seem tiresome and uneconomic, and as a consequence the pidgin may develop in one of two possible directions. Either the speakers choose to learn the target/base language with all its irregularities and opaque means of expression, or to create a 'new' grammar by developing certain lexical items, which in the pidgin variety have replaced grammatical markers, into pure function words or affixes. Words meaning, for example, 'stay' may be used to create copulas, and words like suppose may, as in New Guinea Pidgin, be grammaticalised to serve as subordinations (Kotsinas, 1984c, 1987, 1988a; cf. also Sankoff and Brown, 1976). Which alternative the speakers 'choose' is rarely conscious, but related to factors like degree of distance from and attitudes towards the society of base/target language speakers.

Most people who learn a language without formal instruction use pidgin-like varieties at the initial stages of the learning. Just like pidgins, such a variety may develop in two directions. Either the immigrant learns to use all the essential parts of the target language system, or he develops his variety along paths that are typical for early stages of creolisation. In the latter case the speaker replaces grammatical means by lexical material, relies on certain compensatory strategies and so on, as described above. Among the six speakers in my material one can distinguish two groups. Three of the speakers can be characterised as 'learners' and the other three as 'pidgin speakers' (Kotsinas, 1985), and in studies of German Gastarbeiterdeutsch similar groups have been distinguished (Meisel et al., 1981).

As for the second generation immigrants, the children born and raised in Sweden, similar paths may be possible. Either they will learn idiomatic Swedish, or they will develop their own varieties of Swedish, based on the pidgin-like varieties that have formed so much of their linguistic input.

A Swedish creole?

Is it possible then, that a creole will emerge in Sweden? The emergence of a creole presupposes a distance, socially, psychologically and/or geographically, to speakers of the base language. To a certain extent these kinds of barriers exist between native Swedes and immigrants, at least in the type of areas described above. On the other hand, there are counteracting factors, like school education, migration within the country (immigrants moving to areas with few immigrants), radio, television and so on. Therefore, it seems unlikely that a new language in the form of a creole will develop.

This, however, does not mean that all immigrant children, not even those born in Sweden, should be expected to use a completely native-like variety. It might well be that their language bears traces of the pidgin-like input as well as of constant influence from the interlanguage of more recently arrived peers.

If so, one would expect a variety with lexical, i.e. analytic, expressions where Swedish children prefer morphological means, simplifications within the opaque, i.e. difficult, parts of the grammar, a certain number of repetitions and paraphrases, and perhaps also, as in creoles, additions to the vocabulary; for example, by loans and translations of lexical items from the languages spoken in the area, all used without hesitation, just like an 'ordinary' language. Such a variety might also be very fluent.

New dialects?

As a matter of fact there are signs indicating that varieties of the type described are already on their way (Kotsinas, 1988b). In the above-mentioned suburb, Rinkeby, the teenagers themselves are very well aware of the fact that they speak differently from children in other parts of the Stockholm area. They even have names for the variety, Rinkebysvenska 'Rinkeby-
Swedish’ or \textit{Rinkebyiska} ‘Rinkebyish’. Asked about the characteristics of this variety, they answer that it is ‘different’ and ‘more tougher’ and that it is ‘filled with slang’ and not used in the presence of adults. Some even mention that it is ‘secret’.

The variety seems to contain simplifying features, mostly grammatical, but also elaborating ones, mostly lexical.

Most striking at first glance is the pronunciation. Both vowel quality and quantity seem to deviate from standard Swedish, and the distinction ‘long-short syllable’ seems to be diminished or erased. On the other hand, certain phonemes are more distinctly pronounced than normal. The prosody contains both ‘Swedish’ and deviant features. Remarkably, it is almost impossible for a native Swede to guess the speaker’s mother tongue, i.e. the accents seem to have converged into one, signalling ‘Swede with an immigrant background’.

The same mixture of ‘Swedish’ and ‘foreign’ characterises vocabulary, where slang words and other items, typical for teenagers, occur together with words, used as slang, from languages spoken in the area, such as \textit{Romani} \textit{chorowels} (thief) and \textit{ayde len}, a Greek and a Turkish word meaning together ‘get lost’.

Certain Swedish words and idioms sometimes have another semantic content than normal, especially words meaning ‘go’, ‘come’ and so forth, which also in interlanguage undergo semantic extension.

From a Swedish point of view there are frequent grammatical errors, especially as regards rules for gender, agreement, word order and the use of prepositions. Certain deviations seem so fixed that even some Swedish children and, occasionally, even teachers and youth centre staff use them. So, for example, a boy, corrected by his teacher in a matter of grammar, once answered: ‘What you say is not correct in Rinkebyish’. A feature, common to almost all deviations, is that they show a direction towards less marked structures, compared to the more marked Swedish ones, and, irrespective of the mother tongue of the speaker, these deviations tend to be very similar.

So far this dialect in the making shows individual variations and is used by young people only, and in more pregnant form by some individuals, mostly immigrant boys, than others. Quite in accordance with the speakers’ own statements, it seems to be used more frequently in certain contexts, for example at the youth centre, than in others, for example in classrooms. Whether it is going to stabilise and develop or die out depends on a lot of different factors, such as education, migration and social mobility, and is impossible to predict.

\section*{Language, Learning and Language Change}

In a further perspective, however, there is still another interesting question to ponder upon, namely whether the development of the Swedish language will be affected by the immigration. In other words, is it possible that, when in a few years a third of all children in Sweden will be of immigrant descent, this will not leave any traces in the language? To discuss this question one has to consider both linguistic and sociological aspects.

\subsection*{Linguistic aspects}

It is a well-known phenomenon that languages may undergo certain changes in a situation where two or more languages are in contact.

It seems to be a prevalent assumption that, in cases of language contact, lexicon is easily affected by borrowings, while grammar is hardly affected at all, with the exception of a few known cases of ‘borrowings’ of grammatical morphemes. Weinreich (1970: 113), however, remarks that changes may affect grammar as well and refers to the Balkan peninsula as a ‘linguistic whirlpool’. Gumplowicz and Wilson (1971) have described deep-going grammatical changes as a result of long-term contact between four languages in an Indian village. The languages are lexically distinct in almost every respect, but reductions and adaptations in the direction of unmarked linguistic structures, regarding, for example, gender, copula constructions and subordination, have resulted in word-for-word translatable, creole-like varieties.

The cause of these changes is said to be that the constant code-switching in daily life has to be done with a minimum of effort and additional learning. Others have stressed input as important for language change. As for first language learners, Trudgill (1977) has pointed out that input may lead to language change, in cases where it is incomplete. Like second language learners, first language learners perceive lexical (analytic) expressions for grammatical categories more readily than morphological (synthetic) ones (cf. Slobin, 1975). If a certain grammatical category, as a consequence of phonological changes, has become reduced and opaque, the child tends to replace it with more salient, analytic ones. This may explain why the subjunctive form of the verb in Swedish, as in English, after having coincided almost completely with the indicative, has been replaced by adverbs and auxiliaries which express modality. Janson (1979) is of the opinion that Latin, in spite of its culturally dominating position, underwent certain phonological, morphological and syntactic changes, when the number of first generation speakers increased substantially during the first century A.D. as a consequence of political expansion. According to Janson these children had difficulties in perceiving fine phonetic details and unstressed grammatical morphemes, which in turn resulted in a change-over to lexical markers.

In a situation like the one at hand, both input and the fact that the immigrant children in Sweden live in multilingual societies with frequent code-shifts might contribute to the development of analytic and less marked expressions. It is generally considered, however, that a language change in a contact situation cannot occur unless the native speakers accept it, and also that such a change has to affect vulnerable parts of the language already on the way to change.
Which parts of Swedish are so vulnerable, then, that a latent change may be accelerated? As we have seen, the most obvious changes in Rikssvensk (Swedish) concern gender, agreement, prepositions, word order and the vowel system. These subsystems are typologically very marked. The gender system, for example, is quite unpredictable, the prepositions are exceedingly many and difficult even for native Swedes, and the vowel system can be said to contain 18 vowels. We know that marked systems are difficult for language learners, irrespective of the fact that the learner may have a similar construction in his own language (Hyltenstam, 1984), and it seems plausible that such systems are vulnerable also in cases of language contact.

Sociolinguistic aspects

From sociolinguistics we have learnt that linguistic changes often proceed from powerful groups to less powerful, and it may be said that immigrant groups in Sweden today are on the outskirts of society, and that they, on the whole, are socially and economically neglected and consequently would not be able to affect the development of the Swedish language. This, however, is a somewhat simplified view. First, because the immigrants constitute a numerically large group, and, second, because they are socially and economically active. Many smaller restaurants, shops and the like are run by first-generation immigrants, who work hard for the future of their children. The fact that many of them of their own free will have taken the step to leave their countries in order to build a better future for themselves and their families is a sign of enterprise and daring, and it does not seem unlikely that these qualities to some extent will be transferred to their children. It is, for example, a fact that immigrant children from certain language groups exhibit a very high inclination for advanced studies (Löfström, 1985). One might assume that at least some persons with an immigrant background will play important roles in the future, economically, politically, culturally. Another important aspect is that languages in fact do not change exclusively from ‘above’ (cf. Romaine, 1982).

Conclusions

Many children in certain areas of Sweden today get an input consisting partly of one or two ‘mother tongues’ other than Swedish and partly of a simplified variety of Swedish. It has been suggested that deviations from standard Swedish should not be looked upon only as ‘errors’ and the results of imperfect learning, but as features similar to those which appear in creoles. Therefore, at least some children with an immigrant background might, if one looks at it negatively, have difficulties in learning grammatical and stylistic nuances in Swedish. On the other hand, they might, if one looks at it positively, also have a greater capacity to create new expressions for their linguistic needs.

Hypothetically, it has been suggested that as a consequence of this, new dialects may emerge and that, in future, the Swedish language might be affected. Whether or not changes like these will take place obviously has to do with not only linguistic but also sociological and psychological facts.

Meanwhile, a situation like the one described in this paper certainly entails important problems for society and, not least, for schools. The difficult question of which deviations in the language of children are signs of language change and which deviations are just ‘errors’ is always present for the teacher, and even more so if the pupils are of more or less foreign descent and the situation is as dynamic as it is at the moment in certain areas of Sweden.

The linguistic results of the huge immigration in Sweden during the last decades may not be seen, or even imagined, by us who live in the middle of the process. Nevertheless, it seems important to investigate what goes on in front of our eyes. Doing so, we might be able to exhibit a better understanding of what is going on in the language of the children, and also, in a further perspective, provide an opportunity for posterity to watch new regional or social dialects emerge and to seize language history on the wing.

Notes

1. Southern part of Sweden.

References

Abstract. In most investigations of bilingualism as well as in the teaching of a second language, it is normally neglected that L1 and L2 each consist of a whole array of varieties with certain rules and functions depending on the situation of communication, the role of the participants, etc. The present paper claims that language varieties represent an important aspect of the development of bilingualism. This will be shown regarding the situation of migrant children in West Germany. Thus language varieties have also to be taken into account with regard to language teaching (here: German as a second language). Three kinds of competence will be expected of migrant children with respect to the different varieties: productive, reactive and receptive competence. It will be shown that most of the language varieties — especially situational ones — are connected with cultural developments. Therefore, they often show many sociocultural implications for language and behaviour rules. Migrant children who fail in the understanding and use of language varieties often lack the necessary sociocultural knowledge. Intercultural education turns out to be the method of instruction that could lead to better results.

Language Varieties and German as a Second Language

In language teaching we often neglect the fact that a language normally consists of a bundle of language varieties. In this paper it will be shown that language varieties (like dialects, languages for special purposes, youth languages, etc.) have to be taken into account when, for example, curricula for second language classes (such as GSL = German as a second language) are planned and learning difficulties of migrant children are discussed. My hypothesis is that such differences stem partly from sociocultural differences and can therefore be solved in the context of intercultural education.

As the paper refers to the situation of migrant children in West Germany, their school conditions have to be described briefly. Due to the Federal Constitution conditions differ amongst the 11 länder (cf. Röhr-Sendlmeyer, 1986). Though these differences concern many important questions, such as mother tongue teaching, compensatory GSL classes, etc., it can be stated