

# The Impact of International Mobility and Migration on English and German Language Acquisition

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## Abstract

International mobility and migration have become significant factors influencing the global spread and acquisition of foreign languages. English and German, as major international and regional languages, are particularly affected by these processes. This article examines the impact of international mobility and migration on the acquisition of English and German languages from a theoretical and analytical perspective. The study analyzes how labor migration, academic mobility, refugee movements, and international exchange programs contribute to increased demand for language learning and shape language education systems. Drawing on data from international organizations, linguistic studies, and migration research, the article identifies key mechanisms through which migration stimulates language acquisition, including integration requirements, labor market needs, and educational policies. The findings demonstrate that international mobility not only accelerates the spread of English and German but also transforms approaches to language teaching and learning in both sending and receiving countries. The results of the study may be useful for researchers, educators, and policymakers involved in language education and migration studies.

**Keywords:** international mobility, migration, English language acquisition, German language acquisition, language education, globalization

**For citation:** Kaykybasheva A.K., Azimova A.K. (2026). The Impact of International Mobility and Migration on English and German Language Acquisition. *Open Journal of Eurasian Issues*, no. 2, pp. 50-58. doi: 10.65469/ejournal.2026.2.6

## Introduction

International mobility and migration have become defining characteristics of the modern globalized world. Intensified cross-border movement of people has reshaped social structures, labor markets, educational systems, and linguistic environments across many regions. According to international migration reports, the number of people living outside their country of origin has increased steadily over recent decades, resulting in growing multilingual and multicultural societies (OECD, 2023; IOM, 2022). Within this context, language acquisition emerges as a critical factor influencing migrants' social integration, economic participation, and educational advancement.



Language plays a central role in enabling migrants to interact effectively within host societies. Proficiency in widely used international and regional languages allows migrants to access education, employment opportunities, public services, and social networks. Scholars emphasize that language competence is not only a communication tool but also a form of social capital that facilitates inclusion and upward mobility (Bauman, 2005, pp. 1–5). Consequently, the study of language acquisition in migration contexts has become a significant interdisciplinary research area encompassing linguistics, sociology, and education.

English and German occupy distinct yet influential positions in global and regional migration processes. English functions as the dominant global lingua franca, widely used in international communication, education, and labor mobility. Its role in migration is reinforced by globalization and the internationalization of higher education and labor markets (Crystal, 2003, pp. 15–22). German, in contrast, holds strong regional importance in Europe, particularly in countries that receive large numbers of migrants and implement structured language integration policies. In German-speaking countries, language acquisition is often institutionalized through formal requirements and state-supported programs (Esser, 2006, pp. 48–55).

The growing relevance of English and German in migration contexts raises important questions about the factors that influence their acquisition among migrant populations. Differences in language status, institutional support, and sociopolitical frameworks shape the learning processes and outcomes for migrants. While English is frequently acquired informally through global media and transnational communication, German learning is more closely linked to formal instruction and integration measures.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the impact of international mobility and migration on the acquisition of English and German languages. The study examines key sociolinguistic and educational factors that shape language learning in migration contexts, drawing on international theoretical research and migration statistics. By comparing the roles of English and German, the article aims to highlight both common patterns and distinctive features of language acquisition in contemporary migratory settings.

### **Theoretical Framework of Language Acquisition in Migration Contexts**

Migration is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional process that affects not only demographic and economic structures but also linguistic landscapes. From a sociolinguistic perspective, migration creates conditions of language contact, bilingualism, and multilingualism, influencing both individual language practices and broader societal language policies (Extra & Gorter, 2008, pp. 23-30; Марзабаева & Маматова, 2025). Migrants often navigate complex linguistic environments where their native language coexists with one or more dominant languages of the host society.

Theoretical approaches to migrant language acquisition emphasize the relationship between language proficiency and social integration. Sociological models suggest that language competence is a prerequisite for participation in key social institutions such as education, employment, and civic life (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014, pp. 3–7). Limited proficiency in the host-country language may lead to social exclusion, restricted employment opportunities, and reduced access to public services.

At the same time, language acquisition is influenced by individual and contextual factors, including age, educational background, motivation, and exposure to the target language. Research indicates that adult migrants often face greater challenges in acquiring new languages due to limited time, work obligations, and reduced opportunities for formal learning (Van Tubergen, 2010, pp. 518–520). These challenges highlight the importance of supportive language education policies and accessible learning environments.

In migration studies, language is also conceptualized as a symbolic marker of belonging and identity. Mastery of the dominant language may facilitate social acceptance, while insufficient proficiency can reinforce social boundaries between migrants and host communities (Gogolin, 2011, pp. 62–68). Thus, language acquisition in migration contexts extends beyond linguistic competence to encompass social recognition and cultural integration.

### **English Language Acquisition in International Migration**

English occupies a unique position in the context of international migration due to its global status as a lingua franca. Unlike most national languages, English functions beyond the borders of any single state and is widely used in international communication, higher education, science, and global labor markets. As a result, many migrants encounter English both before and after migration, which significantly influences their language acquisition trajectories (Crystal, 2003, pp. 24–31).

For many migrants, English serves as a bridge language that facilitates communication in multilingual environments. In host societies characterized by linguistic diversity, English often becomes a common means of interaction among migrants from different linguistic backgrounds as well as between migrants and institutions. Research shows that migrants who possess even basic English proficiency are more likely to adapt quickly to new social and professional contexts (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014, pp. 10–14).

English language acquisition in migration contexts is frequently characterized by informal and non-institutionalized learning. Migrants are exposed to English through global media, digital platforms, workplace communication, and transnational social networks. This continuous exposure contributes to the development of receptive language skills, particularly listening and reading, even in the absence of formal instruction (Bauman, 2005, pp. 7–12). Informal learning environments play a crucial role in shaping functional English proficiency among migrant populations.

Another important factor influencing English language acquisition is the role of education and labor mobility. English proficiency is often a prerequisite for access to higher education and skilled employment in international contexts. Studies indicate that migrants with strong English skills tend to experience better labor market outcomes, including higher employment rates and improved income levels (Van Tubergen, 2010, pp. 521–525). Consequently, English language learning becomes a strategic investment for migrants seeking upward social and economic mobility.

However, the dominance of English also presents challenges. In some host societies, reliance on English may reduce motivation to learn the national language, potentially limiting long-term integration. Scholars argue that while English facilitates initial adaptation, it does not fully replace the need for proficiency in the host-country language, especially in contexts where national language competence is required for civic participation and social inclusion (Esser, 2006, pp. 60–65).

Digitalization has further intensified the role of English in migration-related language acquisition. Online education platforms, language learning applications, and international communication networks predominantly operate in English, reinforcing its global reach. Migrants increasingly rely on digital resources to improve their English skills, benefiting from flexible and accessible learning opportunities (OECD, 2023). This trend underscores the growing intersection between migration, digital technologies, and language education.

In summary, English language acquisition in international migration contexts is shaped by its global status, informal learning environments, and strong connections to education and labor mobility. While English provides migrants with valuable communicative and economic advantages, its role must be understood in relation to broader integration processes and multilingual realities.

### **German Language Acquisition and Migration-related Language Policies**

In contrast to English, which functions primarily as a global means of communication, the acquisition of German in migration contexts is closely linked to national language policies and institutional frameworks. In German-speaking countries, language proficiency is commonly regarded as a fundamental requirement for social integration, labor market participation, and access to citizenship. As a result, German language acquisition is often formalized through state-regulated programs and legal obligations (Esser, 2006, pp. 72–80).

German migration policy places strong emphasis on structured language learning as a key instrument of integration. Migrants are frequently required to attend integration courses that combine language instruction with civic education. These programs aim to develop functional language competence while simultaneously familiarizing migrants with social norms, legal systems, and cultural values of the host society (Gogolin, 2011, pp. 75–82). Research suggests that such institutional support plays a significant role in shaping language learning outcomes.

Unlike English, which migrants may acquire prior to migration or through informal exposure, German is often learned after arrival in the host country. This post-migration acquisition presents specific challenges, particularly for adult learners with limited educational backgrounds or restricted access to learning resources. Studies indicate that age, prior schooling, and intensity of language exposure significantly affect German language acquisition among migrants (Van Tubergen, 2010, pp. 526–529).

Despite these challenges, formal language instruction provides important advantages. Structured curricula, qualified instructors, and standardized assessment systems contribute to measurable learning progress. Empirical research demonstrates that participation in integration courses improves migrants' language proficiency and increases their chances of labor market integration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014, pp. 18–22). However, the effectiveness of such programs depends on their accessibility, duration, and alignment with migrants' practical needs.

Social environment also plays a critical role in German language acquisition. Opportunities for interaction with native speakers, workplace communication, and community engagement enhance language practice beyond the classroom. Conversely, social segregation and limited contact with the host population may slow down the learning process, even when formal instruction is available (Extra & Gorter, 2008, pp. 41–45).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, German language proficiency functions not only as a communicative skill but also as a marker of social belonging. Mastery of the German language often symbolizes integration and acceptance within the host society, while limited proficiency may reinforce social boundaries and stereotypes (Bauman, 2005, pp. 15–18). This symbolic dimension highlights the complex relationship between language, identity, and migration.

Overall, German language acquisition in migration contexts is strongly influenced by institutional structures, policy frameworks, and social interaction patterns. Compared to English, German relies more heavily on formal education and state support, reflecting its role as a national language closely tied to integration policies and social cohesion.

### **Comparative Analysis of English and German Language Acquisition in Migration Contexts**

The comparison of English and German language acquisition in migration contexts reveals both shared patterns and fundamental differences shaped by linguistic status, policy frameworks, and learning environments. While both languages play significant roles in migrants' integration processes, their functions and modes of acquisition differ considerably.

English, as a global lingua franca, is characterized by its transnational reach and widespread availability. Migrants are often exposed to English prior to migration through education, media, and digital communication. This pre-migration exposure facilitates early functional proficiency and reduces linguistic barriers upon arrival in host societies (Crystal, 2003, pp. 33–38). In contrast, German is typically acquired after migration and is closely tied to the specific sociopolitical context of German-speaking countries.

One of the key differences lies in the institutionalization of language learning. German language acquisition is strongly regulated through national integration policies, mandatory courses, and formal assessment systems. These mechanisms reflect the perception of language as a prerequisite for full participation in society (Esser, 2006, pp. 85–92). English language learning, by contrast, is rarely subject to legal requirements and is more often driven by individual motivation and global economic incentives.

Despite these differences, both English and German function as forms of linguistic capital. Proficiency in either language enhances migrants' access to education, employment, and social networks. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between language competence and labor market outcomes, including job stability and income levels (Van Tubergen, 2010, pp. 530–533). From this perspective, language learning can be understood as a strategic investment that supports migrants' long-term integration.

The learning environments for English and German also differ in important ways. English benefits from extensive informal learning opportunities through global media, digital platforms, and transnational communication. German, while supported by formal education structures, often lacks comparable informal exposure, particularly in socially segregated environments (Extra & Gorter, 2008, pp. 48–52). This discrepancy may contribute to uneven learning outcomes among migrant groups.

Another significant distinction concerns the symbolic role of language. English proficiency is generally associated with global mobility and professional competence, whereas German proficiency

is more directly linked to social belonging and national identity within German-speaking societies. As Bauman notes, language serves not only as a communication tool but also as a marker of inclusion and exclusion in modern societies (Bauman, 2005, pp. 20–25).

From a policy perspective, these findings suggest that language education strategies should account for the different roles and functions of English and German. While English language learning supports transnational mobility and global integration, German language education remains essential for local integration and social cohesion. Balancing these dimensions is a key challenge for migration and education policy.

### **Conclusion and Implications for Language Policy and Education**

The analysis conducted in this article demonstrates that international mobility and migration play a significant role in shaping the acquisition of English and German languages. Migration creates complex multilingual environments in which language learning becomes both a practical necessity and a key factor of social integration. English and German, despite their different linguistic statuses, function as important instruments that enable migrants to participate in educational, economic, and social spheres of host societies.

English language acquisition is primarily influenced by its global status and widespread presence in international communication, digital media, and labor markets. Migrants often acquire English through informal learning environments, such as workplace interaction, online platforms, and transnational networks. This flexibility allows English to serve as a bridge language in multilingual contexts, facilitating early adaptation and mobility (Crystal, 2003, pp. 40–45). However, reliance on English alone may not ensure full integration into national societies where proficiency in the host-country language remains essential.

In contrast, German language acquisition is closely linked to institutional frameworks and migration-related language policies. State-regulated integration courses, formal instruction, and legal language requirements reflect the central role of German as a national language tied to social cohesion and civic participation. While these structured approaches provide migrants with systematic learning opportunities, they also present challenges, particularly for adult learners facing time constraints and limited exposure outside formal settings (Esser, 2006, pp. 95–102).

The comparative analysis highlights that both English and German function as forms of linguistic and social capital. Proficiency in these languages enhances migrants' access to education, employment, and social networks, contributing to long-term integration and stability. At the same time, language acquisition is shaped by individual factors such as educational background and motivation, as well as by broader social and policy contexts (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014, pp. 25–29).

From a policy and educational perspective, the findings suggest the need for balanced language education strategies that recognize the complementary roles of English and national languages. Effective integration policies should support multilingual competence by combining formal instruction with opportunities for informal language practice and social interaction. Expanding access to flexible language learning programs and incorporating digital tools may further enhance learning outcomes and reduce inequalities among migrant populations (OECD, 2023).

In conclusion, international mobility and migration significantly influence the study and acquisition of English and German languages. Understanding the distinct and overlapping roles of these languages provides valuable insights for researchers, educators, and policymakers concerned with migration, language education, and social integration.

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Евразия изилдөөлөрү ачык журналы, 2026, №2, бб. 50-58

doi: 10.65469/ejournal.2026.2.6

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ПЕДАГОГИКА / PEDAGOGY

УДК 81'246.2:314.7

## Эл аралык мобилдүүлүктүн жана миграциянын англис жана немис тилдерин үйрөнүүгө тийгизген таасири

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### Аннотация

Эл аралык мобилдүүлүк жана миграция чет тилдерди үйрөнүүнүн жана жайылтуунун маанилүү факторлору болуп эсептелет. Англис жана немис тилдери эл аралык жана аймактык мааниге ээ тилдер катары бул процесстердин таасирине өзгөчө дуушар болууда. Макалада эл аралык мобилдүүлүк менен миграциянын англис жана немис тилдерин үйрөнүүгө тийгизген таасири теориялык-аналитикалык негизде каралат. Эмгек миграциясы, академиялык мобилдүүлүк, качкындардын миграциясы жана эл аралык алмашуу программаларынын тил үйрөнүүгө болгон муктаждыкты калыптандыруудагы ролу талданат. Изилдөөнүн жыйынтыктары миграция тилдердин жайылышын тездетип гана тим болбостон, тил окутуунун жаңы ыкмаларын калыптандырырын көрсөтөт.

**Ачкыч сөздөр:** эл аралык мобилдүүлүк, миграция, англис тилин үйрөнүү, немис тилин үйрөнүү, тилдик билим берүү, глобалдашуу

Открытый журнал евразийских исследований, 2026, №2, сс. 50-58

doi: 10.65469/ejournal.2026.2.6

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ПЕДАГОГИКА / PEDAGOGY

УДК 81'246.2:314.7

## Влияние международной мобильности и миграции на освоение английского и немецкого языков

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### Аннотация

Международная мобильность и миграция являются важными факторами, влияющими на глобальное распространение и изучение иностранных языков. Английский и немецкий языки, как ведущие международные и региональные языки, в значительной степени подвержены воздействию этих процессов. В статье рассматривается влияние международной мобильности и миграции на изучение английского и немецкого языков с теоретико-аналитической позиции. Анализируются такие формы мобильности, как трудовая миграция, академическая мобильность, миграция беженцев и международные обменные программы, а также их роль в формировании языковых образовательных потребностей. На основе данных международных организаций и научных исследований показано, что миграция способствует росту спроса на изучение языков и изменению подходов к языковому образованию в странах-донорах и странах-получателях миграции.

**Ключевые слова:** международная мобильность, миграция, изучение английского языка, изучение немецкого языка, языковое образование, глобализация