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LANGUAGE POLICY DIMENSIONS FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN MOLDOVA: THE CASE OF GAGAUZ AUTONOMY

Summary. The purpose of our research was to study the new pattern of minority-majority relationship in the post-Soviet political and social configuration from the perspective of the language policy implementation and its implications for the social cohesion, particularly focusing on the Gagauz minority. The study introduces the results of a wider research covering the use of languages in the Republic of Moldova and the effectiveness of the language education, focusing on the Gagauz minority. The authors made an effort to reach a better understanding of language use and language education in the Gagauz Autonomy as well as of the linguistic choices the speakers make and their perception of the interaction with the Moldovan majority. The major questions that the authors aim to analyse are as follows: has the language policy reinforced the ties between the ethnic majority and the Gagauz minority; has it contributed to social cohesion and the principle of unity through diversity? Through the research the authors attempted to answer these questions, examining the effectiveness of language policy application in line with the established objectives. The study has revealed the complexity of Moldovan sociolinguistic landscape where functional distributions and choices among Gagauzi, Russian and Moldovan/Romanian languages in Gagauz Autonomy still remain problematic.

Keywords: Gagauz Autonomy, language policy, linguistic conflict, social cohesion.

Introduction

In the early 1990s a new phase of interaction started between minorities and majority in the independent Republic of Moldova. The language planning activities, directed to selecting and standardizing the official language and developing the minority languages became a component of the democratisation process and had a strong influence on the further development of the public policies. The roles to be played by the languages came at the centre of the debates. The official status granted to the majority language was perceived as a possible impediment for social inclusion and upward social mobility for minorities that adopted Russian as a language of communication (Bulgarians, Gagauz, Russians and Ukrainians). Defending and maintaining the key role the Russian language played in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic or promoting the majority

language calling it either Moldovan or Romanian¹³ along with various identity projects and state organization models became so many cards to play for the elites in their pursuit of resources and advantages (Spinner, 2003; Gel'man, 2008; Fortin, 2008). It is highly likely that, after independence, the elites' approaches and actions were constantly splitting up the society between different ideologies and models of identity, language use and state organization. Scholars argue on a strong connection between language policy and social phenomena, (Cooper, 1989; Romaine, 1994; Beaugrande, 1999) revealing the motivation of the elites to secure or maintain interests through language planning. Language planning is subjected to pressure and redirection when established elites seek to extend their influence and resist the opposition; "counter-elites" (Cooper, 1989) seek to shift the status quo, and new elites seek to consolidate their power.

The declared aim of the state policy regarding the use of languages in the Republic of Moldova is what the experts call "social cohesion" through ensuring the respect of minority rights to use their languages and promote their culture as well as through ensuring the access to study the official language of the State. The term used in the Moldovan 1994 Constitution¹⁴ is "national unity" as stipulated in Article 10 "The Unity of the Nation and the Right to National Identity":

- (1) The national unity of the Republic of Moldova constitutes the foundation of the State. The Republic of Moldova is the common and indivisible motherland of all her citizens.
- (2) The State recognizes and guarantees all its citizens the right to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.

It is perceived as a kind of "unity through diversity"¹⁵ and would probably make more sense in a different context and configuration. In the post-Soviet Moldovan democracy in transition, building the national unity and reaching social cohesion through implementing the language planning activities seems to be an impossible mission. First of all, 'language planning' is often 'initiated' by people without credentials or expertise — without theory, but with power. Second, the diversity is often deployed to legitimise inequality and exclusion despite official theories of equality and inclusion (Cooper, 1989; Beaugrande, 1999).

Questions on Language Policy and Social Cohesion

In 1957 Karl Deutsch described the nature of social cohesion afforded by a united political community as the cultivation of mutual loyalties or "we-feeling", trust, successful prediction of behaviour and the ability of people to engage in cooperative actions. Vertovec (1999) stresses practically the same elements and mentions that social cohesion implies the presence of basic patterns of cooperative social interaction and core sets of collective values. The question that Vertovec (1999, p. 3) raises

13 According to the Constitution of the R. Moldova (1994), Moldovan is the official name of the Romanian language spoken in Moldova (art. 13). However, the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova (1991) specifies that the state language is Romanian. The schoolbooks call the official language Romanian. To avoid political issues, politicians and public servants use to call the official language 'limba de stat' ("the state language").

14 Retrieved on June 20, 2014 from <http://www.parlament.md/CadrulLegal/Constitution/tabid/151/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

15 Cf. Moldavie: un desir d'occident? *Politique Internationale* nr. 99 – Printemps 2003. Retrieved on March 15, 2008 from http://www.politiqueinternationale.com/revue/print_article.php?id=200&id_revue=14&content=texte.

is “what such interactions and values consist of, and how they are cultivated and maintained”? In the post-Soviet Moldova, where a part of the society is still connected to the values of the past, while another part is making efforts to carve out new identities, the notions of “cooperative actions” or “cooperative social interaction” (ibidem) appear in a specific frame. Analysing the ‘quality’ of the civil society on the path to democracy in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, Lutsevych (2013) mentions two factors that slow the dynamics. The first is related to the collective power of citizens expressed during the electoral “revolutions”, which is fading in the day-to-day political life and is unable to make public institutions accountable. The second refers to the fact that democracy is still fragile despite the efforts and investments directed to strengthen civil society organisations and there is no sufficient counter-pressure from the civil society in case of backsliding.

Despite the public discourse on fostering integrational motivation by promoting the official language as lingua franca and minority languages, the Moldovan society seems to be moving towards greater separation. These considerations lead us to raise the question of how collective versus individual concepts of democracy can meet and interact on the ground of language planning (O’Donnell, 2002) and how social cohesion can be achieved. The questions “how can we achieve social cohesion in a multicultural Europe?” (Vladychenko, 2006, p. 11) and what does social cohesion mean in a given society are fuelling the European political debate even more after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The ideological heritage of the Soviet past and the interest the elites are in pursuit of might interfere in applying the recommendations addressed to the Moldovan authorities for fostering social cohesion. The experts recommend focusing on an enhanced participatory citizenship: namely, the decision making factors, the NGOs, the mass-media and the general public shall be involved in promoting and contributing to the development of social cohesion. Moreover, the revised European Social Charter (Article 30) stipulates that there is a link between social cohesion and social inclusion (Proccaci, 2006) or, in other words, social cohesion is perceived as the effect of promoting social inclusion. At the same time the experts have revealed a series of aspects which may hinder the development of social cohesion. They include construction of social cohesion through opposition to “others”, or indeed through fear, control and double standards in rights, but also the reduction in the number of opportunities for peaceful negotiations of conflicts and differences and recognition of cultural diversities in implementing the concept of equality (Farrell and Oliveri, 2006).

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region¹⁶, which includes Moldova, mentions the need of better connections among people, especially through culture and tourism. It also refers to the territorial cohesion: i.e., an explicit EU objective that could be reached by creating better links between urban and rural areas, fair access to infrastructures and services, and comparable living conditions. These objectives are difficult to be reached without a strong commitment and involvement of the communities. At the same time, many of these, including Gagauz ones, are isolated by the poverty and undeveloped infrastructure. Thus, developing the economy is one of the most important factors in reducing the gap between communities, connecting people and engaging them in cooperative actions.

16 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. European Union Strategy for Danube Region. Brussels, 8.12.2010 COM(2010) 715 final.

In what concerns language planning, scholars generally argue that it is rather directed towards the attainment of non-linguistic ends, such as national integration, political control, the creation of new elites or the maintenance of the old ones, the participation of minority group and mass mobilization (Cooper, 1989; Beaugrande, 1999; Trudgill, 2000). Language planning in a multilingual state might have major implications for both development and acquisition of languages and social cohesion. It may also trigger or deepen latent conflicts. Linguistic factors might play an important role in separatist movements they might undertake, acting as an important symbol of group consciousness. Language can act as a focus of discontent for minorities wanting more power, independence, or annexation by a neighbouring state. The elites, who dominate the institutional space where language planning is undertaken, can be unsupportive, or even hostile to plans, which favour the interests of the total population but can undermine their own interests. Thus, language planning faces multiple dangers. The planning process might remain trapped inside theory and policy, whilst the practices of social change are moving in the opposite direction, and the gap between the elites and the population and among linguistic communities¹⁷ might get wider.

In the post-Soviet Moldova, the language change was the outcome of planning and went together with the process of independence and movement on the path of the transition to democracy. While the Russian language served as "lingua franca" for official communication, as well as for informal communication between persons who had a different native language, it had to be substituted by the majority language (Moldovan/Romanian) in the post-independence set up. At the same time, the linguistic legislation granted the statute of the language of "interethnic communication" to Russian. Instead of uniting the society around a "supreme symbol of the common destiny" (Cooper, 1989, p. 86) and strengthening the social cohesion, it divided the society in many isolated communities and mobilised "cooperative social interaction and core sets of collective values" inside them to promote the Russian language as official, or two official languages: standard Romanian, close to that spoken in Romania, as official language, or Moldovan, close to the variation spoken in Moldova, as official language. All those options became a tool of manipulation to help create the perception of a common destiny. Elites and counter-elites seized or created symbols to mobilise mass movements to develop national self-consciousness or to preserve the values of the past.

Cooper (1989, p. 58) emphasises the importance of frameworks "wherein behaviour may be poured to cool and harden for analysis" for the study of language planning. He considers language planning through the frameworks suggested by other disciplines: (1) diffusion of innovation, (2) instance of marketing, (3) politics as acquisition and maintenance of power and (4) decision making. Copper (1989, p. 87) refers also to Lasswell's (1936) famous short-hand description: "who gets what, when and how?" He argues that it provides useful notions as elite and mass, scarcity, value, power relations, authority and legitimacy and also reminds that nothing is valued in politics unless it is believed to be useful for keeping a stronger group in power or defeating opponents. Language is frequently found as a central symbol in modern national

¹⁷ Cf. Peter L. Patrick, *The Speech Community: Some Definitions*. Retrieved on April 12, 2014 from <http://orb.essex.ac.uk/Ig/Ig232/SpeechComDefs.html>.

movements, which in Moldova lasted too long in the transition to a new quality phase. Probably, one of the reasons for segmentation produced in the Moldovan society is the fact that language planning happened less as a diffusion of innovation and an instance of marketing in a positive economic dynamics. The language change and language substitution were rather promoted as tools for acquisition and maintenance of power and decision-making.

The considerations mentioned above lead us to raise the question regarding the implications of the language policy on social cohesion in the post-Soviet context of the Republic of Moldova, where people, traditionally overwhelmed with and guided by the State policies, have a very low involvement in their design. Moreover, the Soviet legacies in Moldova were conducive to conflict among linguistic communities and elites deliberately opted for them when it allowed gaining advantages (Spinner, 2003).

The purpose of the present study is to analyse the new pattern of minority-majority relationship in the post-Soviet political and social configuration in Gagauz Autonomy focusing on the issues of language policy, language planning, language education and social cohesion. The study entails quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative method was based on a survey and covered the period 23 October – 22 November 2012. A representative sample was calculated using the probability sampling method. A stratified multi-stage random sampling included 1415 people aged 15–64. The study covered 95 randomly selected localities; the households were selected based on sampling interval. The sample was representative with an error of $\pm 2.6\%$. The qualitative method was based on interviews with young, postgraduate Gagauz women who are currently studying in Chisinau and work in various regions of Moldova. The interviewer obtained oral informed consent from each participant to the quantitative and qualitative survey. No personal identification data was collected and the results cannot be linked to the interviewed people. The results of the research are used for the PhD thesis to develop curricula on language policy for Master students in applied linguistics.

The quantitative research had some limitations related to the age of participants. People aged 18–44, mostly men, were underrepresented due to work migration phenomena, which does not necessarily appear in the official statistics. The qualitative research covered only women aged 20–21, who graduated from Chisinau universities, which compensated the age limitations in the quantitative part but did not remediate the slight gender misbalance. Presumably, women are more represented among the Gagauz studying in the Moldovan capital. For a more detailed qualitative research it would be interesting to cover other categories of Gagauz including men aged 18–44 and living in Chisinau or suburbs.

The quantitative research was confronted with ethical parameters related to the name of the official language. Certain respondents considered unacceptable to find the term “Moldovan language” in the questionnaire, while others were not pleased with the term “Romanian language”. A public servant interviewed in the framework of the qualitative research mentioned that it is not a scientific approach to introduce the term “Moldovan language” in the questionnaire. It would be of interest to analyse in a separate study the socio-demographic profile of the respondents according to the term they preferred for the official language.

Between Legacy and Choice, Conflict and Cohesion

The Law on the Status of the State Language¹⁸ adopted in 1989 by the Moldovan leadership and the strong reaction of the Gagauz and Transnistrian leaders against it was viewed as the decisive factor to trigger the conflict, along with the rumours of the reunification with Romania in 1989 (King, 2000; Spinner, 2003). As a result, in 1990 the Gagauz and Transnistrian regions declared secession from the Republic of Moldova, expressing the will to remain within the Soviet Union. Two separate internationally unrecognized entities were established: the "Soviet Republic of Gagauzia" and the "Soviet Moldovan Republic of Transnistria". In 1994 the Moldovan Parliament voted for the new Constitution which defined Moldova as the common home of all its citizens, guaranteeing them the preservation, development, and expression of their ethnic and linguistic identity. The Constitution protects parents' rights to choose the language of instruction for their children. Most notably, it guarantees the autonomy of the Transnistrian and the Gagauz regions (RFE/RL 7/29/94)¹⁹. The legal basis for the autonomy is provided by Article 111 of the Moldovan Constitution²⁰. However, there is an organic law that lay down the rights and structures of the autonomy. The law can be changed only by a majority of three-fifths of the elected deputies but without the consent of the Gagauz People's Assembly, which, next to the Governor and the Executive Council of Gagauzia, represents the subject of the autonomy rights. The inclusion of the Bashkan (Governor) and local heads of departments into the structures of the central government integrates the autonomy, at least theoretically, into the state structure.

The Autonomy Statute defines Gagauz-Yeri – the Gagauz Land – in Article 1 as an autonomous territorial unit, with a special status as a form of self-determination of the Gagauz, which constitutes an integral part of the Republic of Moldova. Gagauzia is entitled to resolve within the limits of its competence questions of political, economic and cultural development. In case of a change in the status of the Republic of Moldova as an independent state, the people of Gagauzia, as Neukirch (2002) emphasised, are even granted the right of external self-determination. This provision is considered one of the most controversial, however, central and hardly negotiable for the Gagauz. It was a response to the right-wing Moldovan parties that promoted the project to unite Moldova with Romania. The autonomous region was granted the right to use three official languages: Gagauz, Russian, and Moldovan/Romanian.

Scholars and experts (Neukirch, 2002; Spinner, 2008; Rubicek, 2010; Wöber, 2013) generally considered that by creating the Gagauz Autonomy Moldova provided a model of peaceful settlement for a post-Soviet conflict. Nevertheless, a panel empowered by the Political Commission of the Council of Europe (RFE/RL 7/7/94)²¹ expressed criticism towards the provisions which, according to them, establish an inner border between the Gagauz region and the rest of Moldova and which would delegate to the regional

18 Law of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic on the Status of the State Language of the Moldavian SSR, further on, the Language Law. Retrieved on January 01, 2013 from <http://www.usefoundation.org/view/435>.

19 Retrieved on February 25, 14 from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38be5.html>.

20 Retrieved on June 20, 2014 from <http://www.parlament.md/CadruLegal/Constitution/tabid/151/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

21 Retrieved on February 25, 2014 from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38be5.html>.

authorities functions which rather belong to the central government. This autonomy formula could not be applied to the second conflict region, Transnistria²², where it was not accepted as a possible solution. The functionality of the legal autonomy arrangements could only be tested in peaceful resolution of disputes when political dialogue exists and trust has been established on both sides. In reality, as Neukirch (2002, p. 116) concludes:

...the relationship between Comrat and Chisinau after 1995 might at best be characterized as mixed and complex. Both sides have interpreted the division of competencies quite differently in some regards and have also undertaken certain unilateral actions which are not in conformity with the spirit and the letter of the Autonomy Statute.

The existing legal framework, the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and the Autonomy Statute, do not provide clear answers to every practical question arising during the implementation process. Adopting laws in a fragile democracy is not the same as applying them, taking into consideration the complex settings of external and internal social and political factors. Consequently, the liberal approach in designing the language policy was not sufficient to balance collective and individual concepts of democracy and reduce the linguistic conflicts²³, the process being long and difficult for the new post-Soviet state. The most recent analyses summarize the factors that condition but not determine "the outcome of conflicts during the process of regime change" (Gel'man, 2008, p.161) in the Post-Soviet states into "a set of interrelated exogenous factors, such as the political opportunity structure in general and the legacy of the past in particular, and endogenous factors, such as the elite structure, the distribution of resources among and between actors, the effects of institutions, and the relative costs of strategies of coercion and cooperation" (ibidem).

The post-independence dynamics in the Republic of Moldova validates the idea that several predictions and prescriptions addressed to post-Soviet democracies after "the Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe" (Huntington, 1993, p. 31) need re-evaluation. The concepts like consensus democracy and majoritarian democracy (Lijphart, 1999) do not have the same meanings and application in the "new democracies" as they have in the "mature democracies" (Fortin, 2008, pp. 206–213). In the post-communist democracies the "consensual political culture" has not been sufficiently developed in order to balance the choice of matching political arrangements directing it to societal priorities (Bogaards, 2000, p. 396). We may conclude that in policy application, the Republic of Moldova followed a pattern defined by the "uncertainty of both outcome and institutions" (Gel'man, 2008, p. 160).

If there are conflicts between Comrat²⁴ and Chisinau, it is not because we are Gagauz and they are Moldovans. It is because of political interests in a way... and not only political, but financial as well. All these are interconnected. Here [in Chisinau] the administration thinks that our state will be better with the West. Our [Gagauz] administration thinks that if we

22 Transnistria is locally called by its Russian name: Pridnestrovie; and in English: Trans Dniester or Transdnistria. For the purposes of this article, we shall use the name Transnistria or Transnistrian region, as stated in the Moldovan legal documents.

23 The term "linguistic conflict" was used for the first time by the Valencian sociolinguists Lluís Aracil and Rafael Ninyoles, at the Congress de Cultura Catalana. Resolució de l'àmbit de la llengua, Barcelona 1977, p. 3.

24 Comrat is the capital of the Gagauz Autonomy.

stay with Russia, like it was in the Soviet Union, it will be better. I think nowhere will be better. [...] The best is to remain independent. (Marina, 22, chemistry teacher, Master's student, interviewed on February 21, 2014).

In other words, in most of the cases, it was difficult to reach the declared aims in policy application like building social cohesion through language planning. The contradiction with the external factors such as the Soviet legacy and the political opportunity and with internal factors such as the elite structure, resource distribution and inefficient state institutions make policy aims unreachable if they are not in line with the interest of the established elites.

The Eastern and Western Options

In 2012, the Moldovan Parliament adopted the law that banned the use of communist symbols²⁵, followed by the initiative to prohibit the use of the Soviet terminology for the names of places, organizations, services and products. In the Gagauz Autonomy, where the Soviet symbols and terminology are still used, this initiative caused dissension. The Governor of the region argued that the local authorities should decide on this matter²⁶.

Through the prism of Eastern or Western orientation, we can attest that the Moldovan ethnic majority is also confronted with reconciling the aspirations for modernity with their traditional values and legacy, without reaching a large consensus. As the 2012 EU Neighbourhood Barometer²⁷ points out, "most Moldovans²⁸ feel that the European Union is an important partner, bringing peace and stability in the region". More than half of those asked (55%) saw the EU in a positive light. Indeed, the poll found that 61% of Moldovans trusted the EU more than other international institutions and significantly more than they trusted their own Government (41%), Parliament (35%) or political parties (21%).

At the same time, the Barometer of Public Opinion²⁹ released in Moldova in 2013 indicates that the political crisis has reduced the trust of Moldovan citizens in their government, which generally means that the population will look abroad for policies that are more attractive in their perception. Compared with the survey conducted in autumn 2012, the number of respondents who share this opinion increased. The survey finds that 50% of respondents would vote for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union, which is less if compared with 2012 (54.7%) and 30% would vote against it. At the same time, 54% of people would vote for joining the Customs Union (Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan). The official language acquisition

25 Moldovan Parliament Bans Communist Symbols. Retrieved March 09, 2013 from <http://www.rferl.org/content/moldova-bans-communist-symbols/24643461.html>.

26 Gagauz Wish to Keep Soviet Streets. Retrieved on February 02, 2013 from http://adevarul.ro/moldova/actualitate/gagauzii-vor-ramana-strazile-sovietice-1_50ae819e7c42d5a6639d62cb/index.html.

27 Retrieved on April 24, 2013 from http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=32843&lang_id=450&utm_source=Oempro&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=Subscriber%23119&utm_campaign=Most%20Moldovans%20believe%20EU%20brings%20peace%20and%20stability.

28 The term means Moldovan citizens and not the Moldovan ethnic majority.

29 Retrieved on April 25, 2013 from <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=156&id=655>.

issues reappear periodically creating resistance to planned activities and deepening the East – West separation among the population in the Gagauz region.

When we ask some of our younger colleagues from Gagauzia who are to graduate from the high school what they will do afterwards, some of them say they will continue their studies in Bender or Tiraspol³⁰. Why there? Because there is no Moldovan language. They are all afraid of... We for example, we were in the same conditions, we switched to the Romanian language, we studied the Romanian language and there is nothing to fear. Why are they afraid of? I can't understand. ... It is a kind of a new trend... Previously [3–4 years ago] the trend was to go to a university in Chisinau. (Marina, 22, chemistry teacher, Master's student, interviewed on February 21, 2014).

We tried to make a connection between this education exodus and other events that took place 3–4 years ago. Indeed, in 2011 about 10% of the graduating students in the Gagauz Autonomous Region failed their final exams in the Romanian language and literature after the Ministry of Education decided to pay more attention to the way the exams were organised. As a result, parents issued an open letter accusing the “nationalists” (central authorities in Chisinau) of restricting the future options of Gagauz children³¹. The head of the region's administration asked the Ministry of Education to allow the students to take the examination for the second time, but it was declined. However, it was agreed to grant them graduation diplomas denoting their failure to pass the Romanian portion of the exam. The Gagauz media reported that most of those students were admitted to higher education institutions in Russia or Turkey.

I might assume this trend is growing. The final high school exams became more complicated in Moldova, the Romanian language exams became more demanding, and they [the Ministry of Education] introduced video surveillance during the exams and, therefore, more young people from Gagauzia opt for Bender and Tiraspol where they have an easier access to the specialized and higher education. (Nadia, 22, Master's student, interviewed on February 21, 2014).

According to the interviewees, the universities in the Transnistrian region are a common option for the students rejected by the Moldovan education system. The unresolved tensions in language planning between the Gagauz Autonomy and the central authorities periodically ignite conflicts in communication and deepen the separation. At the same time, the language planning theories (Hornberger, 1998) consider the role of policy and education in language rights and revitalization efforts. Hornberger cites Ruiz (1984, p. 27) and argues that a “language as resource” perspective is fundamental to the vision of language policy, language education, and language rights. These notions should be approached not as a static or conflict-free vision but a negotiative and transformative one. Otherwise, the communication and negotiation of solutions that might be favourable for both parties could reduce the separation on the language planning area. At the same time, the democracy level is not meeting yet the criteria of consensual political culture required for effective and efficient negotiation.

30 The two biggest cities in the break away region of Transnistria.

31 Moldova's Gagauz Region Struggles To Find Common Language With Chisinau. Retrieved on March 03, 2014 from http://www.rferl.org/content/moldovas_gagauz_autonomous_region_struggles_to_find_a_common_language_with_chisinau/24285661.html.

The Language Policy and the New Pattern of Relationship

After the independence, the language policy constituted a subject of vigorous polemics, being constantly on the agenda of the discussions between the Gagauz Autonomy and the central authorities of the Republic of Moldova. Nevertheless, it was at the centre of only few international publications and did not become a topic of complex interdisciplinary research in Moldova (Piotrowski, 1973; King, 1992, 2002; Deletant, 1996; Heitmann, 1997, 1998; Bochmann, 1997, 2004; Erfurt, 2001, 2002; Dumbrava, 2004). The anonymity of the small landlocked East European state, the strong political and ideological connotations of the topic and the frequently changed trajectory of policy application reduced the interest of the researchers. The Moldovan researchers often faced the dilemma of avoiding research in this field, or adopting a certain ideological approach in order to be accepted by the local scientific community (Ciobanu, 1995; Dirul and Etcu, 1995; Caraus 2002).

Table 1

Language(s) spoken in family (Multiple options proposed by respondents)

Ethnicity	Languages					
	Moldovan	Romanian	Russian	Ukrainian	Gagauzi	Bulgarian
Moldovan	63.0%	29.2%	6.7%	0.4%		0.3%
Romanian	10.6%	86.4%	3.0%			0.0%
Russian	3.0%	6.1%	87.9%			1.5%
Ukrainian	7.8%	5.8%	64.0%	21.4%		
Bulgarian	10.0%	2.0%	20.0%			68.0%
Gagauz		4.6%	48.5%		43.9%	3.0%
Total nr. of speakers	47.9%	26.5%	17.4%	1.8%	2.0%	3.0%

The topic of language policy is still conflict triggering and emotionally approached by the society. The Law on the Status of the State Language constituted the first democratic experience for the Moldovans citizens, being at the same time the ground for dissensions among the majority as well as among the minorities. First of all, there was no unanimity concerning the name of the official language. As Tab.1 shows, 63.0% of the population, identifying themselves as Moldovans, opt for the term Moldovan language to name the official language, while 29.2% opt for the term Romanian language. After the independence the name of the language regularly emerged as a sensitive topic of political debates. The Declaration of Independence³² stated in 1991 that Romanian was reintroduced as an official language, but the Constitution of 1994 (art. 13) changed it back to "Moldovan", as it was provided for in the Law on the Status of the State Language.

32 Library of Congress / Federal Research Division / Country Studies / Area Handbook Series / Moldova / Appendix D. Retrieved on April 25, 2013 from http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/moldova/md_appnd.html.

The minorities also have divided opinions concerning the term to be used to name the official language of the state where they lived. Nevertheless, the survey shows that the Gagauz representatives generally opt for the term Romanian language. The interviewees explained that they are accustomed to use this term at school; otherwise, they have little contact with the majority language. In other cases, the socio-demographic profile of a person who prefers the term Romanian language is: a resident of urban area, educated, with a university degree, under 50 years old. As shown in Tab. 2, the number of people who indicates that they use the Moldovan language at work is considerably less significant than of the people who indicate that they use the Romanian language at work, compared with other tables when the number of people who speak or use the Moldovan language is higher. The explanation resides in the fact that among the people who opt for the term 'Moldovan language' one attests the highest rates of unemployment. Those people are mainly living in rural areas; most of them are over the age of 50 and with no higher education degrees.

Table 2

**Language(s) mostly used at work
(Multiple options proposed by respondents)**

Ethnicity	Languages					
	Moldovan	Romanian	Russian	Ukrainian	Gagauzi	Bulgarian
Moldovan	18.5%	14.5%	4.6%	0.2%		0.1%
Romanian	1.5%	45.5%	1.5%			
Russian	6.1%	7.6%	43.9%			1.5%
Ukrainian	8.7%	9.7%	26.2%	1.9%		
Bulgarian	10.0%	8.0%	16.0%			2.0%
Gagauz		3.0%	26.9%	1.5%	10.4%	
Total nr. of speakers	15.08%	14.31%	9.80%	0.35%	0.49%	0.21%

The representatives of the academic, cultural and educational environments opted mainly for the term Romanian language, willing to emphasise the link between the majority language (or rather, its standard/high variety) and the language spoken in Romania. A programme developed by the Government and supported by the international organisations at the beginning of the 2000s, aiming at teaching the official language to the minority representatives employed in the public office, was called "Language as an integration means". One of the aims of the project was to edit books using communicative methods for adult learning. The Government did not accept the term Romanian language on the cover page of the book, while the group of experts invited to develop the teaching methodology did not accept the term Moldovan language. The compromise was reached by calling the book "The language that unites us"³³.

33 Retrieved on February 25, 2013 from <http://www.cnt.md/romint/undp/manual1/01-02.pdf>.

In December 2013 the Constitutional Court ruled that the Declaration of Independence takes precedence over the Constitution. The debate was closed, but there is no certainty that this issue will not re-emerge in a particular political context. To use Cooper's (1998, p. 41) terms, the language planning phases do not represent systematic, rational, and theory-driven activities. More often they are messy, "ad hoc, haphazard, and emotionally driven". Still people hope for an ideal model, without being able to negotiate and reach understanding. A new pattern of relationship is complex and still under construction, the society being divided by the perspective and interests elites have in relation to the State organization, the use of languages and the geopolitical future of the Republic of Moldova.

Linguistic Heritage in Moldova and the Western Language Systems

Despite the existence of the secondary education and, starting with the '60s, of the higher education in the Moldovan language, this language was excluded from the public administration and professional use. Though, at the end of the 1980s, the specialized language and the standard language disappeared mainly from the general use, being replaced by Russian in those areas. Consequently, after being declared official, the majority language required corpus planning activities aiming at standardizing it. They consisted in reverting to the Latin alphabet, instead of Cyrillic, and adopting the same orthographic rules as in Romania and, on longer term, in the development of specialized terminology. The Romanian language in Moldova was subject to a similar process as the French language in Canada, or the Catalan and Galician in Spain in order to meet the requirements of an official language.

The ethnic majority generally perceived the emancipation of the Moldovan language as an opening. For young Moldovans born in rural areas, whose insufficient knowledge of Russian had been an impediment to professional progress in urban areas, it paved

Table 3

The language you prefer in communication (One answer to be selected from proposed options)

Ethnicity	Languages					
	Moldovan	Romanian	Russian	Ukrainian	Gagauzi	Bulgarian
Moldovan	64.8%	27.6%	7.0%	0.3%		
Romanian	3.0%	92.4%	4.5%			
Russian	3.0%	4.5%	90.9%			1.5%
Ukrainian	7.8%	1.9%	82.5%	7.8%		
Bulgarian	5.9%	5.9%	31.4%		2.0%	54.9%
Gagauz			65.2%		30.3%	4.5%
Total nr. of speakers	48.8%	25.4%	20.28%	0.8%	1.48%	2.54%

the path to new career opportunities. Contrary to them, the representatives of minorities perceived with apprehension the amendments to the language policy, since they used Russian as the language of social interaction and social mobility. Moreover, many minority families adopted Russian as the language of the first socialisation for their children. As Tab. 3 indicates, Russian is mentioned among the first languages the Gagauz prefer to use for communication. The Gagauz language is in the second place, followed by the language of the closest neighbouring minority, Bulgarian. The official language does not appear among the preferences.

Under such circumstances, the initiatives were ignited, aiming at keeping the official status of the Russian language along with the Moldovan language. In fact, even if euphemistically declared by the law as 'language of interethnic communication', the Russian language still has a wide presence at all levels of social communication.

Russian is in school... we are accustomed to it... Russian is a kind of neutral language, if we do not find a word in Romanian language, or in Gagauz we usually find it in Russian. (Nina, 22, Master's student, interviewed on February 21, 2014).

Indeed, we [the Gagauz] speak mainly Russian, which is probably bad because if we do not communicate, we can lose the language, lose our culture. Probably it happens also because a lot of people are abroad, in Turkey, in Russia ... in Ukraine, elsewhere.... And it's obvious that these people are, I don't know [laughing] ... not lost, but they cannot be part of all this, be part of the statistics. Too many of them are abroad. Who remained? Mainly old people... Children, they are oriented to what is European... In school all is in Russian. In our villages people speak more often Gagauz, but in the cities... [...] people do not know Gagauz. Children are accustomed since early childhood to speak Russian in their families. They can be Gagauz by their nationality, but they do not communicate [in Gagauz]. So, the language is spoken mainly in the villages. (Marina, 22, chemistry teacher, Master's student, interviewed on February 21, 2014).

The Gagauz continue to be the minority, which uses mostly Russian at home, as well as for professional purposes. Though, in their case, the language planning activities were not efficient either for the official language, or for the minority language acquisition.

Compared with the "strongest" Western language systems like the highly decentralized Belgium (O'Donnell, 2002), in Moldova, the linguistic communities and the use of languages do not have well defined geographic borders, except for the Gagauz community. Russian is mostly present in cities and towns along with Romanian. Ukrainian and Bulgarian speakers are distributed in both rural and urban areas. "Individual" bilingualism Romanian – Russian was generally a norm among the Romanian speaking community and it is currently slowly developing among the linguistic minorities, except for the Gagauz minority. Russian is by far considered the easiest to speak by the Gagauz respondents, as Tab. 4 shows. Answering the survey question "In what language do you express yourself easier?" 65.7% of Gagauz mentioned the Russian language, along with their native languages. In the communication with the State, the personality principle (Mackey, 1976, p. 82) is recognized, as it is in Canada. According to this, the person may choose the language of communication with the state among the languages used within the borders of

the State and the one that is officially recognized. In fact, given the discrepancies between the legal provisions and their implementation, it does not mean that the State will be able to provide this service when needed.

Table 4

**The language(s) you find easier to speak
(Multiple options proposed by respondents)**

Ethnicity	Languages					
	Moldovan	Romanian	Russian	Ukrainian	Gagauzi	Bulgarian
Moldovan	55.5%	29.5%	12.8%	0.5%		0.4%
Romanian	10.6%	84.8%	1.5%			
Russian	7.5%	9.0%	73.1%			
Ukrainian	9.5%	12.4%	55.2%	21.9%		
Bulgarian	10.0%	6.0%	34.0%		2.0%	48.0%
Gagauz		6.0%	65.7%		25.4%	3.0%
Total nr. of speakers	42.91%	27.39%	21.91%	1.97%	1.26%	2.25%

Compared with the officially French speaking Quebec, Moldova was also confronted with conflicts over the questions of commercial signage (which must be in the official language or bilingual in Romanian and Russian), education, certain social services and business in the official language. Before initializing activities in language planning, Romanian speakers in Moldova were mainly residing in the rural areas like in the case of French speakers in Quebec (Bochmann 2004, O'Donnell, 2002).

Bochmann (2004, p. 209) compares the language policy in Moldova to Galicia, the region in Spain, which obtained the autonomy a few years before Moldova became independent. In both states the elites promoted the local language spoken by the majority. In both states the will to emancipate the majority language was a source for linguistic conflicts and the re-evaluation of the relationship with both, the "dominant" language (Russian and Spanish, respectively) and the "genetically" closest language (Romanian and Portuguese, respectively). The actions to be undertaken in order to modify the "subordinated" status of the language and the conflicts involving the political and intellectual elites without involving the general population are two other commonalities defining the linguistic situation in these states.

The "subordinated" status of the official language and the complex language planning activities required for its emancipation triggered the conflictual communication between the Gagauz authorities and the central authorities. The Russian language is still perceived by the Gagauz elites as the "dominant", giving a stronger social position and allowing direct negotiations with Russian authorities when dissensions appear in the communication with the Moldovan authorities.

The Acquisition Planning and its Usefulness for the Target Population

In addition to redefining the roles to be played by the Moldovan and Russian languages and standardising the majority language, the language planning activities were also aiming at encouraging the development and growth of minority languages. The use of the most represented minority languages in terms of speakers (Bulgarian, Gagauz and Ukrainian) was reduced to colloquial communication before the independence. So the language planning activities intended to introduce the teaching of minority languages and in minority languages, Russian being exclusively used as a medium of instruction in pre-school, secondary and higher education for minorities. About 60% of the public education was carried out in the majority language and 40% in the Russian language. At the same time, the extracurricular activities were in Russian. After the independence, this correlation is about 80% for the majority language and 20% for the Russian language.

While the Ukrainian and Bulgarian languages were used in their standardised forms in their home states and it was possible to set up the education for the minorities in those languages, the Gagauz language was in a very insecure position, confronted with the lack of teaching and reading materials. About 198000 Gagauz³⁴ in total reside in Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Russia. The 2004 census estimated that 172 500 representatives of this ethnic group live in Moldova, representing 4.4% of the Moldovan population, along with 8.4% of Ukrainians, 5.9% of Russians and 2% of Bulgarians. Located in the South of the Republic of Moldova, the Gagauz represent 78.7% of the Gagauz Yeri³⁵ population, alongside 5.5% of Bulgarians, 5.4% of Moldovans, 5% of Russians, 4% of Ukrainians and 1.3% of Romani people³⁶. Being Christians of Turk origin, their culture and language are unique and particularly interesting. The teaching of the Gagauz language is obviously advantageous for the children, encouraging the development and boost of the culture with the effect to recognize the social and cultural identity.

Within the acquisition planning activities aiming at promoting the learning of a language, Cooper (1989) mentions three overt language acquisition goals:

- a) As a second language. In Moldova this is the case of the official language acquisition by minorities and the acquisition of Russian by the majority.
- b) Reacquisition by a group, which lost it. This is applicable to the Gagauz who kept their native language for colloquial use and lost the standard written language. It is also partly the case of Bulgarian and Ukrainian minorities who did not use the standard written language before independence.
- c) Acquisition of a language so it won't lose ground in competition with others. This is the case of the official language, mainly its standardised variety, acquired by the native speakers in order to switch from Russian to Romanian in the professional communication. The means employed to teach the languages used on given territory, in the framework of acquisition planning activities may affect 1) the opportunity to learn; 2) the incentive to learn; 3) both. In the case of Gagauz, learning of the official language is reduced to the classroom, which

34 Retrieved on January 19, 2013 from <http://www-01.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=gag>; <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/GAG>.

35 The name of the autonomous region, which means the Land of the Gagauz.

36 Retrieved on November 25, 2008 from <http://www.country-studies.com/moldova/ethnic-composition.html>.

does not stimulate the interest of students. Beyond the classroom they do not have either learning activities, or the opportunity to use the learned language.

In Gagauzia, Romanian is the hardest language to learn. There are various reasons, among which lack of communication, lack of incentives to study it, and the socio-cultural issues. I suggest the following could have an impact – promotion of the Romanian language, organization of various cultural/social events: visits, workshops, exhibitions, contests, meetings, summer camps, participation in language contests, students' exchange. (Larisa, 26, former Romanian language teacher in Gagauzia, currently Master's student in Chisinau, interviewed on February 21, 2014).

The complex context, combining exogenous and endogenous factors mentioned above, makes the interaction between language planning and social cohesion difficult to characterise. It is complicated to predict the further dynamics. In fact, the "diglossia" (Fergusson, 1959) of the official language (Moldovan/Romanian) could follow the consensual model (Matthey and De Pietro, 1997) of the German cantons in Switzerland where two varieties of the German language are spoken: the standard German, or the "high variety", (equivalent to Romanian in Moldova) in official situations and the "low variety" (equivalent to Moldovan spoken in rural area or in non-official situations) for colloquial use. Or it could follow the French-speaking cantons model (Baylon, 1996) where the standard French replaced the colloquial French.

For the Gagauz Autonomy, the development of the consensual model (Matthey and De Pietro, 1997) of cohabitation of three languages (Gagauz, Romanian and Russian) that will be chosen according to the social communication context is probably the most possible one. These languages will then hold unequal status and functionality. The most "dominated" language – Gagauz – will hold the weakest social position. As Cooper (1989) argues, acquisition planning is unlikely to be effective if the language in question serves no useful function for the target population. And there is no real political, nor societal will to boost the development of the Gagauz language in the region:

The first year of my primary school in my village I studied the Gagauz, Romanian, and Russian languages. The language of instruction was Russian. When I was in the second form, I switched to another school in the neighbouring village, which was not part of Gagauzia, so there was not Gagauz anymore, but I started to study English as a foreign language and still I had Russian and Romanian. My parents decided I should attend that school, which was better. In our village we had only the primary school and we spoke the Gagauz [language] at home and it was enough. (Irina, 22, teacher, interviewed on February 21, 2014).

As Tab. 5 shows, the Gagauz minority predominantly opts for the Russian language as the language of instruction. The instruction in the Gagauz language is still impossible because of the lack of teaching material and low motivation for its emancipation.

The instruction in the official language has limited possibilities since the central authorities were not able to change the attitude towards the official language and motivate to learn it instead of obliging to learn it. The position of the official language in an autonomy essential for the "upward social mobility" (Trudgill, 2000, p. 126) will depend on the means employed by the central authorities to teach and promote it. The individual's issues related to their multilingual situation can be overcome, as

Table 5

The language of instruction at school

Ethnicity	Languages					
	Moldovan	Romanian	Russian	Ukrainian	Gagauzi	Bulgarian
Moldovan	56.3%	34.1%	8.5%	0.1%		
Romanian	16.9%	78.5%	3.1%			
Russian	1.5%	4.6%	93.8%			
Ukrainian	4.9%	7.8%	82.5%	4.9%		
Bulgarian	8.2%	2.0%	87.8%	2.0%		
Gagauz		3.0%	93.9%		3.0%	
Total nr. of speakers	43.2%	29.75%	24.8%	0.49%	0.14%	0.85%

Trudgill (2000, p. 128) argues, or minimized "either through political independence or semi-independence, or, less drastically, through adequate educational programmes and policies".

The radical model mentioned by Boyer (1991, 1997) and Loyer (2002), which has its origins in the Catalan sociolinguistics (Aracil, 1982), is less optimistic about the possible coexistence of two or more languages. It is considered that each language, in order to be revived and preserved as a communication tool, has to benefit from legitimate autonomous space and avoid contacts with a "dominant" language. The respect of these conditions will allow ensuring the presence of the language at all levels of social communication; which is a guaranty of the social utility of the language. This approach seems less likely to be applied in the Gagauz Autonomy, if we refer to the comparison mentioned above between the Republic of Moldova and Galicia in Spain.

The official language acquisition planning is still slow, inefficient and confronted with ideological and political issues in the Gagauz Autonomy. As for the Gagauz language, it serves no useful function outside the family use. The fact of teaching it at school as a subject does not bring the language closer to other spheres of social communication. The development of the Gagauz language and its use in the professional communication and administration is considered a difficult and practically an impossible mission without the involvement of the target population.

Conclusions

The authors attempted to approach the new pattern of minority-majority relationship in the post-Soviet political and social configuration from the perspective of the language policy implementation and its implications for the social cohesion, particularly focusing on the Gagauz minority. The new pattern of relationship is complex and still a work in progress, the society being divided by the perspective and interests the elites have in

relation to the State organization, the use of languages and the geopolitical future of the Republic of Moldova.

It is important to consider that the existing legal framework does not provide clear answers to every practical question arising in the policy implementation process. These documents only provide a broad framework and presumably some questions have been left open on purpose in order to reach an agreement when adopted. In addition to other areas, it especially affects the delimitation of powers and duties between local and central authorities.

The preservation and development of the Gagauz culture and identity does not represent a conflict topic as such between Comrat and Chisinau. In this regard, dissensions are deeper among the Gagauz themselves; even ethno-political aspects are not an issue for the Gagauz in relation with other ethnic groups. The most important dividing topic from the perspective of language planning is the use of Russian and Moldovan in official communication and in the education sector. From the perspective of the autonomy effectiveness, the main concern is the control over local resources and their distribution among actors. These issues are strongly related to the socio-economic situation in Moldova in general and in Gagauzia in particular.

It is important to mobilize cooperative actions for better connections among people, especially through culture, tourism and common activities. Therefore, it is a priority to create good links between urban and rural areas and assure fair access to infrastructures and services, and comparable living conditions. Developing appropriate language policy and planning in a favourable socio-economic and political context might have a substantial impact on the development of minority languages and social cohesion through inclusive practices, since "fortunately, a language is by nature inclusive" (Beaugrande, 1999). However, the ideological heritage and the elites' interest might hinder the development of social cohesion, through opposition to "others", or also by diminishing the number of opportunities for peaceful negotiations of conflicts, differences and recognition of cultural diversities. Under such circumstances, the current discourse related to cohesion and inclusion, through language planning activities, is actually unrealistic and characterized by "uncertainty of both outcome and institutions" (Gel'man, 2008). The Gagauz minority remains culturally and politically isolated, though inclusive practices should be prioritized. This statement makes even more sense if we consider that the aspects mentioned above are very much bridged to the exogenous factors and geopolitical developments.

The path to democracy and the effective economic and social development remain poorly paved and the cooperative actions are still fragile. Further dynamics mostly depends on (geo)political choices. Two options are generally considered by the Moldovan elites:

building further and slowly on the same heritage, prioritizing only the interests of the elites, or

speeding up the movement towards a "consensual political culture" (Bogaards, 2000) from a negotiative and transformative perspective of the "language as resource" (Ruiz, 1984).

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**KALBŲ POLITIKOS DIMENSIJOS SIEKIANT SOCIALINĖS SANGLAUDOS
MOLDOVOJE: GAGAŪZIJOS AUTONOMIJOS ATVEJIS**

Santrauka. Mūsų tyrimo tikslas – išanalizuoti postsovietinės politinės ir socialinės konfigūracijos sąlygotą naująjį mažumos ir daugumos santykių modelį kalbų politikos įgyvendinimo kontekste, panaudojant Gagaūzijos mažumos atvejo analizę. Taip pat siekiama išnagrinėti kalbų politikos įtaką socialinei sanglaudai šiame Moldovos autonominiame regione. Tyrime pateikti platesnės su Gagaūzijos mažuma susijusios studijos, apimančios kalbų vartojimo bei kalbinio ugdymo efektyvumo Moldovos Respublikoje analizę, rezultatai. Straipsnio autorės siekia, kad visuomenė daugiau sužinotų apie kalbų vartojimo bei kalbinio ugdymo situaciją Gagaūzijos autonomijoje, geriau suprastų Gagaūzijos gyventojų kalbinį pasirinkimą bei jų santykių su Moldovos dauguma sampratą. Pagrindiniai straipsnyje analizuojami klausimai: ar kalbų politika sustiprino ryšį tarp Moldovos etninės daugumos ir Gagaūzijos etninės mažumos, ar kalbų politika padarė teigiamą įtaką, siekiant socialinės sanglaudos ir vienijančios įvairovės principo? Tyrime badoma pateikti atsakymus į iškeltus klausimus: nagrinėjamas kalbų politikos taikymo efektyvumas, atsižvelgiant į suformuluotus tikslus. Tyrimas atskleidė Moldovos Respublikos sociolingvistinio poveikslo kompleksiskumą, parodė, jog Gagaūzijos autonominiame regione vartojamų gagaūzų, rusų bei moldavų / rumunų kalbų funkcinio pasiskirstymo bei kalbinio pasirinkimo klausimai vis dar išlieka probleminiai.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: Gagaūzijos autonomija, kalbų politika, kalbinis konfliktas, socialinė sanglauda.