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Competing Native Languages in the Republic of Moldova – Politics versus Policy Making in Education

Assoc. Prof. Gina Aurora Necula

Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania

Abstract

The situation in the Republic of Moldova is not unique in the world, especially as most of the former Soviet Union Countries have gone through the same politically motivated language reforms. The main reform experienced by all the member states of the Soviet Union was to accept the Russian language, with the status of lingua franca at first, and then to have it assumed by the speakers as their native language, despite the fact that their ethnic roots does not support this. This is why, with many citizens of the Republic of Moldova, we have to distinguish between the heritage language, which is, in most cases, Romanian, Gagauz, Bulgarian or Ukrainian, and the language declared as native – the Russian language – on the premises of the fact that it has become to be better known and more frequently used. This is how, in most of the cases, the link with the inherited language has been erased from the collective mind and the borrowed language has gained priority. It is paradoxical that the privileged status of the Russian language has been preserved over time, maintaining competition with the heritage languages, but especially with the Romanian language, which also has the status of an official language in the Republic of Moldova. Accordingly, the state of affairs described here is all the more interesting as a sociolinguistic phenomenon due to the fact that the socio-economic evolution should have created the premises the return to the ethnic and cultural linguistic motivated practices. The present article presents the conclusions of an analysis carried out over 10 years, together with the students mastering in "Romanian language - identity and cultural openness" carried out in cross-border partnership between the "Dunarea de Jos" University in Galați, Romania and the State University from Comrat, Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Unit, from the Republic of Moldova. Consequently, our study analytically reflects the implications and repercussions of language policies dictated by politics, as well as the barriers created in public and private communication.

Keywords: native language, heritage language, lingua franca, linguistic policies