Plurilingualism and Learning. Neighbouring, Regional or Minority Languages in Serbia. Romanian as a Case study

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1. Introduction

Plurilingualism is present everywhere in the world, and it is often seen in society as a result of phenomena such as globalization, digital communication, increased mobility of people in today's world, and in relation with preserving linguistic and cultural diversity. However, it was present in earlier periods in history as well, especially before the invention of nationalism and nation-states (May 2014). Although most of European countries represent themselves as monolingual nation states, they are multilingual. Likewise, in their formal education systems, theoretically, any language could be taught, based on the common principle that all languages have equal value. However, the practice suggests that national languages spoken in smaller areas, regional or minority languages often lose in competition with great world languages, which are perceived as economically and aesthetically more attractive. The field which deals with the place of languages in education (acquisition planning), and which represents a deliberate official action in this domain, is language education policy, which also involves interventions in the language structure (form, corpus planning) and social functions of languages (usage, status planning) (Beacco 2007: 17, Tollefson & Pérez-Milans 2018: 3). The criteria for designing language policies are related to principles which inspired them and which are perceived as language ideologies, which can both create and reflect systems of beliefs about languages and their role, as well as attitudes toward their learning (Fairclough 1989, Beacco 2007: 16). More precisely, linguistic ideologies may restrict the formulation of policies, on the one hand, or facilitate the acceptance of their legitimacy in society (by educational institutions, teachers, parents, children and their peers, labour market etc.) and their implementation, on the other (Viennet & Pont 2017: 6).

Having in mind the importance of the topic of languages and education reforms aiming to provide high-quality education for European citizens in the 21st century, the goal of this paper is to examine which is the place of neighbouring, regional or minority languages in the language education policy of Serbia. Drawing on critical sociolinguistics, the paper starts from the analysis of documents and

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reference studies regarding linguistic education policies and ideologies upon which they are based in Europe, and then continues to the analysis of their implementation in Serbia's education system. The focus is on a case study based on the Romanian language, since Serbia and Romania are bordering countries whose population, society, history, culture, politics, economics, etc. have been intertwined for centuries. The Romanian language is a national language of a neighbouring country, and it is also a community language in Serbia which has the status of a regional or minority language. Therefore, the basic questions that are addressed in the paper are the following: How is the linguistic ideology of plurilingualism interpreted and implemented in the language education policy of Serbia in relation to the languages of neighbouring countries, and to regional or minority languages in Serbia? Does the adopted language policy of plurilingualism lead to the expected results of linguistic and cultural diversity, tolerance and mutual understanding? What are the benefits and challenges of current language policy? How could the benefits of plurilingualism be promoted by learning community / regional or minority languages in the formal education system in Serbia, in order to provide quality education that incorporates the principles of plurilingualism and pluri- / interculturalism?

2. Language ideology of plurilingualism in Europe

The promotion and protection of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe is particularly highlighted in relation with the aim of creating a more tolerant society based on solidarity, mutual understanding and respect among citizens of Europe, whose cohesion is interpreted in various ways, from economic, political, social, to cultural and anthropological one (Beacco 2007: 31, 36). This has resulted in numerous common principles and values, formulated in the Council of Europe's series of documents on languages which offer guidelines for development of common language education policies in Europe "as a way of living together" (Beacco 2007: 18).[1]

At the core of these documents are linguistic ideologies based on the concepts of multilingualism, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, as well as interculturality. These concepts are often defined in different ways. In the Council of Europe's documents, multilingualism refers to the existence of more separate languages in states, provinces, regions or other geographical areas. It does not mean that the citizens of these multilingual territories speak more languages, they can use only one.[2] The plurilingual competence, which is always complemented by pluriculturalism, refers to the ability to use plural linguistic and cultural resources from the language repertoire, in order "to meet communication needs and interact with people from other backgrounds and contexts, and enrich that repertoire while

[1] See also: ELP (2001); CEFR (2001, 2018); Beacco (2007); Beacco et al. (2016), etc.

[2] It has been noted that the terms *plurilingualism* and *multilingualism* have often been used interchangeably in scholar articles, and that their choice is related to language traditions: while the term *multilingualism* is predominantly used in English-speaking literature, the term *plurilingualism* has started to spread from literature written in French, to other scientific contexts in Europe and all over the world (Galante 2016). In order to avoid confusion, I have defined the use of both concepts in this paper in Section 2.

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doing so". Pluriculturalism is defined as the ability to participate in different cultures by learning several languages, while interculturality refers to ability "to experience otherness and diversity, analyse that experience and derive benefit from it" (Beacco et al. 2016: 20; CEFR 2018: 28). As defined in the Council of Europe's documents, plurilingualism has many different goals and aspects, and further in the text I will underline those which are the most relevant for this paper.

2.1. Language rights, protection and promotion of linguistic diversity

One of the aims of plurilingualism in the EU is to preserve linguistic and cultural diversity. It is derived from political principles of human rights and promoted as essential component of democracy. As such, it can refer to legal protection of minority groups and preservation of Europe's linguistic heritage, since all countries are essentially multilingual and multicultural. As Beacco sums up, the Treaty of Versailles and the agreements concluded after the World War II enabled the preservation of languages and cultures in Europe during the development of modern nations. They have, thus, encompassed different origins and statuses of regional and minority communities whose identity is significantly marked by language, from historically indigenous to newly settled groups due to recent migrations.[3] Minority groups are marked by multiple belongings: to the new national and supranational frameworks, but also to groups of origin with which they share language and culture. The (non-)recognition and different status of minorities and their languages are conditioned by different factors, such as demographics, economic power, history, the status of their variety and the "degree" in which the majority population accepts or rejects them as too exotic, archaic, small, etc. In this way, the language of the minority or regional community can become official throughout the country or, in some institutions, offer education in L1, or an elective L2 course to ensure transmission across generations (2007: 18-23). In this case, the purpose of plurilingual and intercultural education is to protect and promote linguistic diversity in Europe, as specified in documents related to teaching foreign languages, languages of schooling, curriculum scenarios for the first and second L2 at primary and secondary level, as well as to scenarios for teaching regional languages, or bilingual education, etc. (Beacco et al. 2016).

2.2. Plurilingual competence as a functional necessity

The Council of Europe defines plurilingualism as the fundamental principle of language education policies, understood as "the intrinsic capacity of all speakers to use and learn, alone or through teaching, more than one language", to varying degrees and for distinct purposes, which is accomplished through development of plurilingual competence (Beacco 2007: 17). One of the important documents that emphasized the role of language education policy was *White Paper on Education and Training*. It stipulated as its objective promotion of "proficiency in three Community languages", representing the idea that everyone should develop skills "to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother

[3] In this paper, the term 'regional or minority languages' is used as defined in The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML).

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tongue" (1995: 47). This aim of language education has been further modified in the sense that "it is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model" (CEFR 2018: 157). Instead, the aim is to develop "a *single*, inter-related, repertoire" (CEFR 2018: 28, italics in original) which combines "all linguistic and cultural resources available to the speaker": national languages, foreign, classical, minority and regional languages, migrant and sign languages (Beacco et al. 2016: 21).

The development of such repertoire depends on the specific socio-linguistic situation in each state and the life path of each individual. It evolves from different sources, in different contexts and ways, being acquired informally or formally (family, out-of-school, school), and the person does not (aim to) speak different languages in the same, mostly native speaker level. On the contrary, he/she is able to communicate in multiple languages at different levels, depending on the needs, affinities and context of use, which can be very diverse. Throughout life, the repertoire of plurilingual persons has a dynamic character and changes non-linearly: they can add a new language, change the level of knowledge and activity (reading, listening, writing and speaking, mediating) of the languages they know, reaching a higher level, stagnating or decreasing their prior knowledge (Beacco et al. 2016: 21, CEFR 2018: 28).

2.3. Educational and social value of plurilingualism

Education is perceived as key to creating the culture of democracy. Considering this, language education policies in European countries should contribute not only to development of plurilingual competences, but also to the common goal which is the creation of the future European citizens' identity who are open, tolerant, emphatic, respectful, responsible, active, skilful, self-efficient, etc. (RFCDC 2018).

For this reason, the social value and purpose of plurilingualism is to develop linguistic tolerance. This implies that citizens are aware of the nature of their own linguistic and cultural repertoire, that they value, develop and improve all languages and varieties they know. Further, it suggests that European citizens should understand the roles of different languages and varieties they use to communicate in private, professional, official or other groups they belong to in society. Additionally, they can become aware that one variety can be used in many different social contexts, and that plurilingual individuals' language use strategies often imply more linguistic varieties in one discourse or one sentence. In that case, this awareness may contribute to better understanding of other peoples' linguistic and cultural repertoires, their roles in social interaction within different groups they belong to, and their strategies of language use (Beacco 2007: 39).

Moreover, language and culture teaching have an essential role in shaping values and positive attitudes towards all languages, cultures and communities, in a way in which they are perceived as linguistic and cultural capital. With regards to this, learning community / regional or minority languages, not only by native speakers but by non-native speakers / learners too, helps form positive attitudes and reactions toward languages, cultures and communities in the region. It facilitates

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development of skills, knowledge and critical understanding of one's own and other's world views, perceptions, beliefs, behaviours and interactions (Baecco et al. 2016: 109-110, RFCDC 2018).

3. Language education policy in Serbia

A small number of European countries have formally confirmed their linguistic wealth, and Serbia is one of them. Serbian is L1 of the majority of the population and the official language in the Republic of Serbia (CS 2006, *Art.* 10). In traditionally multilingual and multicultural regions of Serbia, 10 regional or minority languages have special legal protection too: Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Hungarian, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Ukrainian (part II and III of the ECRML); while German, Czech and Macedonian language, as well as the Bunjevac and Vlach variety, have general legal protection (Part II of the ECRML).[4]

The Republic of Serbia is the legal successor of the states that preceded it. Therefore, due to the specificity of the minority status, the linguistic rights of Serbian citizens are regulated by the Constitution of Serbia and its ensuing laws, as well as by a number of international conventions, charters and recommendations, which refer to the use of national minority languages in education, culture, judicial processes, media, etc.[5] The model of language relations, on which language policy and planning are based in Europe and Serbia, is a highly interactive ideological model, argues Bugarski, by which he means "the interaction, that is, the cooperation of speakers of different languages on a principally equal basis that would ensure membership of the European family under a common roof" (Bugarski 2005: 96). The foundations of today's language education policy in minority languages in Serbia were set after the World War I, and further improved after the World War II in Yugoslavia, when they were influenced by the ideology of socialism, based on principles of equality, fraternity and unity of all nations. Since the country has been characterized by a large number of different ethno-linguistic communities, the discourse which the language policies of Yugoslavia can be linked to is the politics of pluralism, the key value of which was tolerance and peaceful coexistence of different languages and communities.[6]

Nowadays, in the Serbian education system, languages of neighbouring countries have a dual dimension: a) they appear as L1 subject, and as a vehicle for

[4] For presentation of the regional or minority language situation in Serbia, according to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, see: Report 2009, p. 5-7.

[5] The implementation of constitutional and legal provisions in Serbia is overseen by numerous institutions: a) at the level of Republic (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, National Councils of National Minorities, National Education Council, Institute for the Improvement of Education, Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, etc.), b) at the level of the AP Vojvodina (Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and National Communities, Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina, National Councils of National Minorities, etc.), c) at international level (Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Secretariat of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, etc.).

[6] For more details on language education policy in Yugoslavia, see: Tollefson (2002), for critical review of language education policies in Serbia, see: Filipović & Vučo & Đurić (2007).

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other subjects, when all levels of education are offered in L1 of a national minority;[7] b) and as L2 subject, which is available only at university level.

3.1. Romanian language as L1 in education system in Serbia

3.1.1. Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (AP Vojvodina) is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural territory in the northern part of Serbia. In addition to the majority Serb population, a large number of residents belong to other national and ethno-linguistic minorities. Therefore, the Statute of the AP Vojvodina stipulates: "in addition to Serbian language and Cyrillic script, Hungarian, Slovak, Croatian, Romanian and Ruthenian languages and their scripts shall be in official use in authorities of the AP Vojvodina, in conformity with the law" (SAPV 2014, *Art.* 24). There are several others that are used as well, although they do not have the status of official minority languages (Montenegrin, Ukrainian, Czech, Roma, etc.).

Romanians in AP Vojvodina are an indigenous minority in Serbia. In 18th and 19th century, they began to move to Serbian part of the Banat region, where they still live today. They came from different regions of present-day Romania (Banat, Oltenia and Wallachia), mostly in an organized manner, due to the creation of Banat Military Frontier of the Habsburg Monarchy (Măran 2009). After the World War I, the Banat region was divided into three parts, and Romanians who remained in the Serbian part of the Banat region acquired the status of an indigenous minority, which they still have today. According to the 2011 Census, there are 25.410 Romanians in Vojvodina, and 29.332 in Serbia (Census 2011: 21).

The linguistic identity of Romanians in Vojvodina is complex, and the concept of "internal and external plurilingualism" given by Wandruszka is very useful for its description. By "internal plurlingualism" the author implies that this phenomenon is innate to all individuals already within different varieties of their L1 (Wandruszka 1979 in Neuner 2004: 14). Considering this, in the private domain, Romanians in Vojvodina learn at home and use local Banat varieties of Romanian as L1, which have only oral forms and traditions, while in formal education they learn the standard variety of Romanian.[8] The latter is used in official contexts: education, administration, court system, culture, etc. This repertoire becomes more complex if we add the specialized jargon and the colloquial variety of standard Romanian. In addition, Romanians in Serbia learn and use the official Serbian language as L2, both of its graphological systems (Cyrillic and Latin), very often together with colloquial, specialized, and others types of Serbian. To this repertoire, foreign languages are added as L3, L4, etc., which are learned in formal and / or non-formal education throughout life, and which constitute "external plurilingualism".

When it comes to the relation between language policy of plurality and

[7] According to the Ministry of Education's Report for 2016/2017, the education in Serbian as L1 was organized in 1240 primary schools in Serbia, as well as in L1 of eight national minorities (Albanian, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian, Croatian), and in combination of Serbian and a language of a national minority. Around 10% of students in Serbia attended school in the language of a national minority as L1 (Report 2016/2017).

[8] For more information on pluricentricity of Romanian in Serbia, see: Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković (2018a).

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education in Romanian in Vojvodina, it has a long tradition, rooted in the reforms undertaken by the Habsburg authorities in the 18th century (Măran, Đurić Milovanović 2014). In the twentieth century, the most significant agreements were reached after the World War I, when the Treaty of Versailles decided that the state would guarantee education in the mother tongue for indigenous minorities. Consequently, the Romanian national minority was guaranteed education in primary and secondary schools in Romanian (Spăriosu 1997). In the period of socialist Yugoslavia, these agreements continued to be respected and promoted, additionally providing education in Romanian in higher education. Even more, during the 1970s and early 1980s, the majority population was provided with the opportunity to learn Romanian as community language in the formal education system in Serbia.

Hence, in accordance with the Constitution of Serbia (CS 2006, *Art*. 75), the Statute of Vojvodina (SAPV 2014, *Art.* 27, *Line* 9), as well as with the Law on Education System Foundations, Art. 5, Line *The Use of Language* stipulates:[9] "For members of a national minority, education is carried out in the language, that is, the variety and script of the national minority. For members of a national minority, education may be organized bilingually in the language and script of the national minority and in the Serbian language, in accordance with special legislation. Education may be organized in a foreign language, that is, bilingually in a foreign language and in the Serbian language, or bilingually in a foreign language and in the language and script of a national minority, in accordance with this and special legislation". In this regard, education for children of Romanian national minority in Vojvodina is organized as follows:

a) in Romanian as L1 with Serbian as L2: preschool education, primary education (either first cycle: 1-4th grade, or both cycles: 1-8th grade); and secondary education (vocational high-school and gymnasium); certain colleges and faculties in Vojvodina offer curriculum, or at least a part of it, in Romanian;[10]

b) in Serbian: all levels of education. When a primary or secondary school is attended in Serbian, classes of the elective course *Romanian language with elements of national culture* are organized for students belonging to the Romanian national minority in order to gain / maintain knowledge and use of their mother tongue and culture.

The positive consequence of such a language policy is the achievement of the goals stipulated in the legislation to provide all levels of education in L1 to members of the Romanian national minority. This fact is considered to be crucial for adequate cognitive and affective development of children and success in life, as well as for maintaining the specific identity of Romanians in Vojvodina, and linguistic diversity in Serbia, and Europe. However, some negative consequences are also evident. To begin with, the number of students, classes and schools in Romanian as L1 is

[9] The Law on Education System Foundations, Official Gazzette, no. 88/2017, 27/2018, 10/2019.

[10] For example, the Report of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Republic of Serbia for the year 2016/2017, *Obrazovne politike za unapređivanje prava nacionalnih manjina,* states that education in Romanian is taking place in 4 primary schools, while 12 primary schools organize education in Serbian and Romanian, and 1 primary school education in 3 languages (in Romanian, Serbian and Hungarian). In addition, education in Romanian is organized in 2 high-schools in AP Vojvodina (Report 2016/2017: 7).

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declining,[11] as well as the number of students who continue their high-school and college in Romanian, after completing elementary school in Romanian. That being the case, there is an increase in the number of student members of Romanian national minority who choose primary and secondary education in Serbian, with the aim of providing themselves with wider opportunities for further education and employment. Filipović, Vučo and Đurić draw attention to the fact that a small number of classes in Serbian as L2 (2 or 3 hours per week) contribute to such a situation for children who attend classes in minority languages, which leads to dropping out of classes in their mother tongue, in favour of achieving a higher level of proficiency in Serbian (2007).

Bilingual education, which is also provided by the legislation as one of three options, is not organized in the combination of Romanian and Serbian language in Serbia, except in pre-school education.[12] Referring to recent efforts to introduce plurilingual education in the education system in Serbia, Vučo and Begović state that this type of education is not organized in a minority and Serbian language, despite the support of the decision makers. Among the main reasons they enlist fear of some minority members that their rights may be endangered by this type of education, and that it might adversely affect their relationship to the native minority language, culture, identity, teaching system, teachers' employment, financing of minority communities at all levels, etc. (2017: 227-234). Similarly, Filipović has rightly pointed out that the first step of successful introduction of bilingual / plurilingual education, which includes minority languages, should involve raising awareness among education policy-makers regarding the importance of inclusion of minority languages in this type of mainstream education. The second step should involve empowerment of minority community members to take an active role in shaping language education policy that would match their needs in different aspects. The next two steps would refer to changes within a broader social and academic community (2017: 387).

3.1.2. Eastern Serbia

Members of another community, who call themselves Vlachs, Serbs or Romanians – depending on the context, live in Eastern Serbia. Similarly, they consider their L1 to be Vlach, Serbian or Romanian respectively, while the match between ethnic and linguistic identity is not always present (Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2015: 202). This community began to move spontaneously from the Romanian provinces of Wallachia and Banat since the 18th century, and especially in the 19th century, into the territory of today's Eastern Serbia, where they still live today (Weigand 1900 in Constante & Golopenția 2008). According to the latest Census, there are 35.330 Vlachs in Serbia (Census 2011). Huțanu and Sorescu-Marinković argue that adult population is mostly bilingual: they know and use the archaic local variety of the Romanian in the family context, as well as Serbian as the official state language (2018b: 2.). If we apply Wandruszka's (1979) mentioned

[11] According to the Report on education activities in 2006/2007, around 50% of students in primary schools attended courses in Romanian language, and other 50% in Serbian (Report 2007: 88).

[12] For example, in 2005/2006, bilingual preschool education in Serbian and Romanian was frequented by 69 children in the AP Vojvodina (Report 2007: 116).

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definition of "internal and external plurilingualism" (Section 3.1.1), we could define Vlach linguistic identity as generally plurilingual too, especially when we take into account L3 learned at school (as well as L4 since 2004) by younger generations.

The Vlach variety enjoys universal protection in Serbia, in accordance with the Part II of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages. As national and international surveys report, different activities have been undertaken in order to eliminate differences, exclusions or restrictions regarding the use of Vlach, to maintain links between groups which use it in the state, to connect Vlach community with other language groups, and to actively promote the variety, to recognize it as an expression of cultural wealth, to facilitate its use in speech and writing, in public (including education) and in private life, to promote research on Vlach in academic institutions. Conversely, adequate resources remain to be provided for the teaching of Vlach at all stages of learning by both native and non-native speakers/learners, including adults, and in particular for the promotion of tolerance of Vlach variety through the media and education (Report 2018: 106-108).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the tendency to standardize local Vlach variety has appeared, with the aim of providing it with more complex functions in different domains of language use. As education is one of several essential areas for further intergenerational transmission, the students from this community, who attend education in the Serbian language, since 2014/15 can choose the elective course *Mother tongue / variety with elements of national culture* in primary schools, after having been taught it as a pilot project during the previous school year.[13] Since there is an ongoing debate within the community about its identity, language and script,[14] students have the choice of two elective courses: (Standard) *Romanian with elements of national culture* or *Vlach variety with elements of national culture*. These electives were introduced on the basis of the needs expressed by the community in order to preserve the ethnic identities of minority communities in the territory of Serbia.

The revitalization of local varieties we encounter here can, firstly, be linked to global phenomenon of interest in the relation between ethnicity and language in the 21st century, which is connected to the process of globalization and localization, that is, to the processes of cultural homogenization and heterogeneity (Apaduraj 2011). Unlike the process that took place during the 19th century, which laid the foundations for the ideology of monolingualism and the idea of one nation, state and language, the contemporary process we have witnessed in recent years is seen as an example of locality production, which aims to preserve certain particularly valued aspects of local linguistic, ethnic or national identities. Apaduraj (2011: 269, 271) argues that small societies do not see locality as a given, but as something that requires hard work and should be maintained regularly, based on a sense of purpose of locality, a feeling that local knowledge and its production are an important part of social life.

Secondly, such an approach is also reflected in the language education policy

[13] For more details on language varieties of Vlach community in education in Serbia, see: Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković (2015).

[14] For more details on writing systems and linguistic identity of the Vlach community of Eastern Serbia, see: Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković (2018b).

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perceived as language management, initiated by an individual or a group, to modify the language practices or beliefs of a group of speakers that are considered inadequate or undesirable. This practice may also include the introduction of a new language / variety that is considered to be an essential part of the plurilingualism of educated citizens of a given country. According to Spolsky (2009: 181, 253), it is realized as an interaction of: a) macro-planning on: 1) international level – visible in the support of Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 2) national level – in this case, visible in existing mechanism offered by Serbian legislation framework and language policy, b) micro-planning that comes from local level – families and parents at home, neighbourhood, teachers at school, workplace and lower level institutions. One such example of language management and willingness to try to use home languages as subjects and languages of instruction in the education system in Serbia is visible in what Huțanu and Sorescu-Marinković describe as activism of certain members of the Vlach community. As a result of their efforts, the first official spelling, grammar, textbook of Vlach were prepared, which was a prerequisite for the introduction of this variety into the school system by decision-makers (2015: 205).

3.2. Romanian language as L2 in education in Serbia

3.2.1. Primary and secondary schools

When considering L2 education, the recommendations of European education policy and values of plurilingual and intercultural education have been accepted by Serbian policy-makers and implemented through the latest reform of language education policy (2001-2004). During the process, it was decided that foreign language learning in compulsory education in Serbia implies learning of two foreign languages. These aims and values have their roots in the early 1980's and 1990's language education. Since that time, pupils in primary schools in Serbia learned one L2 as compulsory subject since the fifth grade, and another one as an optional subject since the third grade[15] (Đurić 2018: 59). During the 1980's and 1990's, the offer of foreign languages in primary and secondary schools in Serbia comprised: English, German, French and Russian, to which Italian and Spanish were added during the reform of 2001-2004.

However, a closer look at the L2 offer reveals that the linguistic ideology of plurilingualism is interpreted solely in terms of diversification of the foreign language offer in formal education. Moreover, as diversification involves only languages of dominant political and economic forces in the world, it links the interpretation of plurilingualism to the language ideology of economy. It overlooks social and educational dimension of plurilingualism, and consequently does not introduce languages of neighbouring countries, regional and minority languages of Serbia, or languages from other regions in the world, as L2s in the basic offer of languages in primary and secondary education.

In addition, according to the official discourse of state decision-makers, the legislation appears to have fulfilled the right of citizens to learn "other" languages in

[15] More than 70% of the pupils have chosen to learn one more L2 from the group of optional subjects during the 1990's, according to Janovski (2000: 22 in Đurić 2018: 59).

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different ways. It is considered that minority language learning is also possible for those who are non-native speakers, by enabling them to choose the course *Mother tongue with elements of national culture* in primary and secondary schools. In *The First Report on the Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages in Serbia*, it is stated that more than 50% of the pupils who attended the course *Romanian language with elements of national culture* in primary schools in Vojvodina in 2006/2007 were not Romanians (261 out of 469 students). The reasons why they chose to learn the language, based on the answers given in a survey conducted in schools in AP Vojvodina, include: mixed marriage (110 students), community language (140 students) or other reasons (11 students). The situation is similar in the case of other minority languages as well as in the case of secondary schools (Report 2007: 90, 92). The report on minority language education of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for 2016/17, states that students who are interested in learning languages and cultures of national minorities can do so "through various forms of extracurricular activities, i.e. optional classes during winter and summer schools, camps, workshops ... or other forms of work, in order to foster interculturality, tolerance, desegregation" (Report 2016/2017: 14). It is necessary to mention, however, that the course *Mother tongue with elements of national culture* has never been accredited in two curricula: a) for native speakers who have previous knowledge of the language, b) for *ab initio* heritage and non-native speakers. Such solution would provide the basis for more adequate realization of the lessons, which is now hampered by a number of factors, such as: difficulties with teaching materials, methods and learning strategies, because children are often at different levels of knowledge (from complete beginners to those who are proficient users) and at different age, the fact that students who attend the course are in many cases from different classes, schools and cities, from which they travel or are brought in by their parents; difficulties associated with the schedule because some children go to school in the morning and some in the afternoon, etc. Moreover, the number of classes per week should be increased from two to four, because one subject covers both language skills and culture.

However, providing all members of the community, both native and non-native, with the opportunity to attend the course *Mother tongue with elements of national culture*, as well as upgrading its status to an elective course, can be perceived as progress in raising awareness of regional or minority languages and cultures through studying these languages. The fact that there are students who are interested in attending *Romanian language with elements of national culture*, or any other community language out of diversity of reasons, encourages and justifies the need for language policy-makers to introduce languages of neighbouring countries, regional or minority languages into the L2 offer in the education system in Serbia.

3.2.2. The university level

Regarding language learning at university level, the language ideology of economy is also dominant. Only several Faculties offer languages other than English as L2s, and these are generally languages taught at previous stages of education, i.e. the languages of world communication. At the University of Belgrade, for example, only the Faculty of Philosophy and The College of Tourism offer a community

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language as L2, namely, Modern Greek (Stojičić 2016: 93). This not only questions the interpretation of plurilingualism at university level in Serbia, but it also hampers the access to and exchange of scientific information from different sources and from different perspectives. The fact that students do not speak any languages other than English, at a sufficiently high level, limits their opportunities for mobility, exchange, application for further study or advanced training at any non-English speaking universities. In addition, University of Belgrade does not offer curricula that combine subjects from different faculties. As a result, students from other disciplines do not have the opportunity to expand their repertoire, if they wish, by learning different languages, which would be useful to them in future academic, private and business contexts.

A minimal remedy for such situation, however, is provided by the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, the oldest institution of this kind in Serbia, which offers a wide range of national, foreign and classical languages, although, again, only to students who decide to study philology. More precisely: the study of 36 languages and their corresponding literatures and cultures is organized within 4 modules at B.A. level, 6 modules at M.A. level, and one at Ph.D. level.

Having in mind that the choice of language to be studied at university level is linked to future chosen careers of the students in question, the enrolment data indicate that students of philology in Belgrade are oriented towards choosing the languages of economically prosperous countries, since the most popular languages are: Scandinavian, Dutch and Japanese. Next, the preferred languages of study are the languages of worldwide communication: English, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, German, French, Russian, most of which are also languages taught at previous levels of education. Occasionally, short-term trends put particular languages in focus, as was the case with Turkish a few years ago. Initially, community languages, the languages of SE Europe, do not prove attractive to students at the time of enrolment. Their places, thus, often remain unfilled, or only partially filled, although the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Serbia offers full scholarships during their studies. Traditionally, students find Modern Greek and Czech as the most appealing among them. In the past few years, they are followed by other Slavic languages (Ukrainian, Polish, Slovak), and then by Hungarian, Albanian and Romanian.

The Romanian language has been part of the Faculty curricula since 1963, as a second language (minor course) in the beginning, which in time grew into major field of study and a full degree diploma department. Today, the Romanian studies curriculum is carefully designed to take into account the educational and language needs of all students, whether they are beginners or proficient speakers. The latest modification of the existing Romanian language, literature and culture curriculum was undertaken between 2006 and 2009, as a response to the Bologna process requirements for comparability and quality education in Europe. It has been designed in terms of competences and six proficiency levels on the basis of the proposals in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). The aim of the module and its curricula is to offer quality education by covering: acquisition of competences, knowledge, skills and attitudes, diversity of learning experiences and construction of plurilingual and pluricultural individual and collective identities.

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Enrolment in Romanian Studies is organized each year, and the number of students who would enrol in the Romanian module was quite steady for quite a long period, around 12 students each year. A declining trend, though, is visible in the last few years in all languages, including Romanian. Most often, there are around 90% of *ab initio* learners with Serbian as L1, and around 10% of students with Romanian background, both proficient speakers, and those who have had some (if any) home teaching of Romanian. The dropout rate is insignificant, and students who start studying Romanian usually graduate within expected time frame, achieving B2 or C1 level of proficiency in 4 years of study. Moreover, many of them are highly motivated to continue Romanian studies at M.A. level, and some even at Ph.D. level.

3.2.2.1. From lack of initial motivation to positive attitudes toward community languages

Paradoxically, although students of Romanian are highly motivated *during* their studies, it is necessary to underline that almost 90% of them (all students with L1 in Serbian) lacked *initial* motivation to enrol Romanian. They wanted to study some other discipline or language, but have enrolled for Romanian instead. The most often reasons range from access to full scholarship during entire studies, their interest in Romanian as a Romance language, to the fact that it is a less studied language, to mention just a few. However, once they do enrol for Romanian, the motivation and desire to learn it appears quite quickly and helps them maintain their focus during the studies. Further research is necessary to sustain the suggestion I forward that this change takes place due to adequate curriculum, methods of teaching, mobility grants in Romania, as well as teachers' efforts to provide students with necessary information on personal and professional benefits of learning a language of a neighbouring country, which is also a regional and minority language in Serbia, who thus manage to change negative or disinterested attitudes toward the Romanian language and its varieties, community and culture, into positive ones.

This insight leads to the conclusion that it is not enough to just add neighbouring, regional or minority languages as options within the education system. Lack of initial motivation is influenced by complex and numerous factors, some of which are relevant for the entire university – a smaller number of future students due to low birth rate at the end of 1990's and at the beginning of the new millennium, as well as massive emigration of young people from Serbia nowadays. Others refer to the field of humanities in general, starting with the crisis of philology as a study discipline, or to certain languages, to which I will refer to in more detail further in the text.

Firstly, scholars who study the link between motivation and language learning indicate that language is a specific subject, associated not only with the development of linguistic competences useful for future careers, but also with the construction of the individual and collective identity of students. Therefore, wishing to learn a particular language is related to the issue of how others see us and how we want to be seen (Dörnyei 1998). As a result, in order to remedy the lack of initial motivation, it is important to take into account the social perceptions of plurilingualism, as well as individual experience about learning and using different languages. Coste argues that these representations can point to a linguistic repertoire that is socially recognized or ignored. Furthermore, it can underline the individual experience

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according to which the proficiency in certain languages is claimed, hidden or shameful experience, or we can speak of assured or insecure plurilingualism, from a formal / statutory / identity point of view (2010).[16] In this respect, discussions of elite and folk plurilingualism provide an important insight into the lack of initial interest in studies of community languages, according to which there is a qualitative difference between individual plurilingualism involving high-prestige dominant languages, and the one involving non-dominant, low-prestige languages. Galante has remarked that a particular language repertoire will not be considered a valuable social and cultural capital if it consists of several regional or minority languages and their varieties (Galante 2016: 14-15).

Secondly, partial responsibility for the beliefs that only languages of economically strong states are worthy learning can be found in the language education policy. Skutnabb-Kangas argues that if non-dominant languages (community / regional and minority ones) are excluded from the formal school system, as a result, the resources of certain dominant groups, including their languages and cultures, are idealized and promoted as more suited for "contemporary" needs. In contrast, many (non-)dominant majority national languages, as well as regional and minority languages, including their cultures, are socially constructed and marked as useless, peripheral, traditional, backward and inferior, rather than as a means of prosperity (2000). The same author emphasizes that learning diverse languages makes it easier to establish networks of contacts, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Skutnabb-Kangas has also pointed out the economic advantages and benefits of learning larger range of languages, such as cognitive flexibility, creativity, innovation, productivity, higher cost effectiveness. The author links the mentioned characteristics with the possibility of exchanging ideas and different information that are the main "'commodities'" in the information society, which is saturated with the supply of English spoken by a large number of individuals. Consequently, the author estimates that demand for English would decrease, while plurilingual persons would be at an advantage (2002), which should be taken into account when promoting the option to learn languages of neighbouring countries.

Thirdly, the long-standing tradition of the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, which has been moulding top experts in one Major Language and its accompanying literature and culture, leaves much room for necessary discussion about offering students the curriculum with two or three Major Languages. In addition to being more competitive on the labour market, students would be given greater opportunity to become experts whose plurilingual identity could also include neighbouring, regionally relevant and minority languages in combinations with, for example: Serbian language and / or literature, Serbian as a non-native language, languages from the same language group, languages from different language groups, several community languages, or in a combination with librarianship, general linguistics or general literature etc. Furthermore, examples of good practice in the region and the world point out that open university curriculum, and interdisciplinary area studies,

[16] More on language ideologies behind personal experiences and social representations that Romanian intellectuals in Vojvodina have about standard and local varieties of Romanian language, see: Ćorković 2017a, 2017b.

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could lead to fruitful dialogue between languages, literatures, cultures, on the one hand, and different fields, from international relations, political science, political economy, history, cultural studies, theology, military and security studies, to geography and other disciplines, on the other hand, thus creating a broad approach to formation of future educated citizens of the 21st century Europe.

4. Next steps toward a model of *enrichment plurilingualism*

Results analysis and discussion of this paper indicate that the language education policy of Serbia, which continued Yugoslavia's practice in the field of minority education, has done much when it comes to the implementation of linguistic rights in the education system by providing education in minority languages as L1, or in Serbian, complemented with the teaching of the elective course *Mother tongue with elements of national culture*. A critical review shows that, in the 21st century, this segment could be further improved by introducing plurilingual education for minority members, for which there is currently no consensus among different stakeholders, although it is firmly supported by the relevant Ministry. On the other hand, L2 offer in the education system in Serbia is strongly influenced by the linguistic ideology of economy, although the aim of language education policy in Europe is not only the development of linguistic and communicative activities for the business context.

Therefore, the new phase of implementation of plurilingualism and interculturality should take into account the educational and social value of L2 learning, by including languages of neighbouring countries, regional and minority languages in the offer in Serbia's education system. As a result, language education policy in Serbia would no longer affirm asymmetrical power relations between languages, nor would it diminish the importance of languages other than those of the global political and economic superpowers. On the contrary, it would allow new, non-native speakers of regionally relevant languages, who live in multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural environments in Serbia, to gain awareness on all levels of education of the languages spoken in their community, as well as of the linguistic and cultural wealth of Serbia and of the Central and South-Eastern Europe. By becoming open to different languages of neighbouring countries they would be more able to recognize, understand, interpret and accept different ways of speaking, thinking, and behaving, which may be guided by different values and attitudes than those inherent in their communities and cultures. Additionally, the fact that new speakers could learn regional and minority languages would influence positive attitudes and reactions of native and heritage speakers regarding the status of their own languages and cultures. It would further the intergenerational transmission of regional and minority languages and help maintain their specific ethno-linguistic identity and heritage. Consequently, both groups of students could perceive the process of learning neighbouring languages as enrichment plurilingualism.

Finally, in order for society, as a whole, to accept a wider offer of foreign languages at all levels of education in Serbia, which would include neighbouring, regional and minority languages, it is necessary that the decision makers, minority representatives, as well as the entire educational system, society and the media – actively contribute to changing attitudes and promotion of community languages as

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worthy of learning, not only for the existing minority communities in Serbia, but also for the majority population. The individual, educational and cultural needs of the various citizens of Serbia would be met by taking into account not only the historical, but also contemporary linguistic, cultural, political, economic, etc. relations that Serbia has with neighbouring countries within the region of Central and SE Europe, and with different communities within the country. And lastly, the goals of democratic education defined by Serbia in its legislation would be implemented more easily by fostering interculturality, tolerance, better knowing and respecting varying communities in peaceful co-existence, among others.

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the implementation of plurilingualism in language education policy in Serbia, based on Romanian as a case study. The aim is to clarify the place of neighbouring, regional or minority languages in education in L1, and L2 learning, in the multilingual and multicultural context of Serbia which borders Romania. Initially, the paper draws upon interdisciplinary studies on critical sociolinguistics and language education policy in EU, which are marked by language ideologies of linguistic and cultural diversity. Afterwards, the implementation of plurilingualism in Serbia is analysed, the results indicating several interpretations and underlying principles: from ideology of equality and plurality, to ideology of neoliberal economy. It is argued that the first one protects and promotes linguistic and cultural diversity in Serbia through education in minority languages as L1, while the latter one restricts the offer of L2s, in which these appear only at university level. The conclusion advocates for different stakeholders to take into account the missing educational and social value of learning community, regional or minority languages as L2s on all levels of education, and to promote it as beneficial for both minority and majority students, and society as a whole.

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