

Multilingualism and Identity in the Margins



Post-communist Nation-building and Language Standardization in Macedonia And Moldova

Matthew H. Cisel

Central CT State University

ciscelm@ccsu.edu

Marginality and Language Standardization



- Multilingualism and language standardization as crucial issues in post-imperial nation-building (LePage 1964, Haugen 1966, Fishman 1973)
- The role of language ideologies and social identities in the standardization process (Milroy 2001, a.o.)
- Borderland regions (the ideological and geographic “margins”) as particularly multilingual and problematic to “center” linguistic standards (Belgium, Catalunya, etc)
- Goal: to contrast the impact of Communist-era and post-Communist ideologies and practices on language standardization and multilingualism in two nations emerging from the margins in Eastern Europe

State Communism and Multilingualism



- Ideologies of ethnicity, language, and cultural progress founded on purist ideals (one nation/ethnicity = one standard, literary language)
- Centrifugal tendencies: rapid standardization and institutionalization of languages for select groups (korenizatsija or indigenization)
- Centripetal tendencies: trends and policies imposing a Fishmanian diglossia between the center standard (H) and the new standards (L) (russification or serbification)
- Russian in the USSR and Serbo-Croatian in Yugoslavia as the leading languages among equals (big brother)
- Official multilingualism, but de facto a practical necessity and stigmatizing marker of the non-center nations only

Two Nations Emerging from the Margins

Republic of Moldova



FY Republic of Macedonia



Stage 1: Selection



Moldovan

- Choices: regional dialects shared with Moldovan region of Romania (margin)
- 19th C: Tsarist Russia period, isolated from new Romanian
- 1920-30s: Bessarabia in Romania (standard); failed attempt at dialect standard in Soviet Transnistria
- After WWII: variety very close to standard Romanian selected, but in Cyrillic script

Macedonian

- Choices: regional dialects along a continuum between standard Bulgarian and Serbian (middle)
- Pre-20th C: Ottoman period, isolated from new standards
- 1912-3: Balkan wars end in partition of historic Macedonian region among Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia (Kingdom of Yugoslavia)
- After WWII: variety in Western Macedonia selected, most distinct from B and S

Stage 2: Codification



Moldovan

- Standard Romanian (from 19th C) in Bessarabian Moldova between WWI and WWII (education)
- New standard Moldovan in Soviet Transnistria had 3 forms (codes) in the same period (2nd=Romanian)
- After WWII, Soviet Moldova encodes a form identical to standard Romanian except Cyrillic script
- 31.08.1989 Language Laws (Latin script, Mold=Rom, sole state lang)
- 1994 Constitution reverts to Moldovan label only; society and politicians still split over label and national identity

Macedonian

- Marginal literary support for local variety as standard Bulgarian and Serbian emerge in 19th & early 20th C
- 1944-5 Commission for Language and Orthography performs first codification
- Ongoing minor issues and adjustments until 1988 when greater freedom sparks a flurry of issues and adjustments
- 1991 Macedonian independence makes Macedonian the sole official language
- External disputes after 1991:
 - Greece objects to the use of the term Macedonian, because of the implied irredentism to its Macedonian region and the Macedonian dialect of Greek
 - Bulgaria objected to the idea of a Macedonian standard separate from Bulgarian in the 1990s

Stage 3: Elaboration (Domains of Use)



Moldovan

- Pre-1989: Primary and secondary education, some higher education, diglossic
Low in media, politics, economics, state institutions
- Post-1989: increased role in all levels of education (required subject), and some in media, politics, state institutions; little increase in economic domain

Macedonian

- Pre-1989: Primary and secondary education, some higher education, diglossic
Low+ in media, politics, economics, state institutions
- Post-1989: substantially increased role in all domains (required subject in educational institutions)

Stage 4: Acceptance (after 1989)



Moldovan

- Rejected by reformers, intellectuals, urbanites
- Accepted by political leaders (especially the 2001-2009 ruling Communist Party), minorities, rural population
- Often used interchangeably with Romanian or avoided (limba de stat, limba noastra)
- West rejects; Russia accepts

Macedonian

- Broadly accepted internally by majority and minority, but Albanian minority resists its status/dominance
- Also broadly accepted externally, by the West, Russia, Serbia, and more recently Bulgaria. Greece still rejects the use of the label “Macedonian”

Similar Impact on Multilingualism



- Two-thirds majority native language, one-third minorities
- Relatively and increasingly strong protections for linguistic minorities (regional and/or institutional autonomy)
- One official language (Moldovan and Macedonian)
- Minorities continue to prefer the Communist-era lingua franca (Russian and Serbian) over the official language, with some gradual shift toward the official language
- Minority groups have taken up arms to defend perceived threats to their language/territory (Russian speakers in Transnistria 1992, Albanian speakers in NW Macedonia 2001)
- English and other foreign languages as preferred over local languages in bilingual education programs and practices (the role of aspiration for EU integration and globalization)

Contrasting Impact on Multilingualism



Republic of Moldova

- Soviet era: stronger diglossic domination of Russian
- 1991: Urban and regional beached Russian minority
- Russian as lingua franca partially maintained
- Identity crisis in the majority group (Moldovan or Romanian) reinforces old patterns
- De facto separatism for pro-Russian Transnistria destabilizes entire country and any potential multilingual compromise

FY Republic of Macedonia

- Yugoslav era: weaker diglossic domination of Serbo-Croatian
- 1991: Negligible beached Serbian minority
- Serbian as lingua franca subsides
- Clear national/linguistic identity (Macedonian) supports new patterns of bilingualism
- Negotiated integration of Albanian minority could stabilize multilingualism

Conclusions



- Marginality and State Communism led to disputed Abstand and incomplete Ausbau for both new standards
- Abstand was more disputed and Ausbau less complete for Moldovan than for Macedonian
- Economic, political, and national uncertainties continue to undermine these standards, especially in Moldova
- Stability in multilingual policy and practice seems unlikely without a stable national standard for the majority group
- EU and global integration appear to be positioned to play a crucial role in both stabilization and adopted modes of bilingualism (increasing roles for international English)
- But, a focus on English could reduce “local” bilingualism

ciscelm@ccsu.edu



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