Folk Linguistics and Politicized Language:

the Introduction of Minority Language Education for the Vlachs in Serbia

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Submitted to
Central European University
Nationalism Studies Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis utilizes the framework of folk linguistics, which seeks to examine the beliefs of nonlinguists about language. Qualitative research methods are used to investigate the beliefs of teachers and parents involved in a pilot program to begin minority language education for the Vlach national minority in Serbia. The Vlachs have never had minority language education previously, and the classification of their language with relation to Romanian is a source of political controversy within the minority. Given a context in which language is highly politicized, this thesis attempts to identify some of the underlying beliefs that inform statements about the functions of language within the speech community, language shift, and the process of defining language boundaries. The interviews conducted with teachers and parents indicate that in some ways their beliefs are incongruent with that of linguists and reflect nationalist undertones about the desired purity and internal homogeneity of languages as sharply bounded units. Their beliefs about language function, decline, and revival show that their primary concern is with augmenting children's knowledge rather than usage of the Vlach language. These findings have potential implications for the design of minority language education policies in multilingual settings.

ACKNOWLEGMENTS

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1. Introduction

"Romanian and Vlach language are not the same. Indeed, maybe there are similar words, but no one can equate that Vlachs and Romanians are the same." Five minutes after uttering these words, the teacher I was interviewing answered a phone call and carried on a conversation for several minutes with a friend in a Romance language. After hanging up, she told me about the friend with whom she had been speaking: "She is from Romania. She is Romanian." I asked her if she understood Romanian and she answered affirmatively, saying that she understood them. But she asserted that she herself did not speak Romanian.

While it may seem like an apparent contradiction to insist upon the difference between two languages and shortly thereafter conduct an entire conversation in which the two participants are each communicating through one of these distinct languages, this interview excerpt actually points to a much more interesting phenomenon than simple hypocrisy. What beliefs about how languages are distinguished from one another underlie overt statements such as the one in the anecdote above? This thesis will attempt to answer this and other questions. The field of folk linguistics seeks to understand nonlinguists' beliefs about language. Beliefs about language can encompass a broad range of topics, but this thesis will focus specifically on beliefs that are relevant to a bilingual community in which minority language education is just beginning to be implemented and in which language is highly politicized.

In the second chapter of the thesis, I will discuss some of the major works in the study of social identity construction and everyday ethnicity, language and nationalism, sociolinguistics, and minority rights. These areas of inquiry will form the theoretical basis of the research conducted for this thesis. The literature on social identity construction, particularly those texts that focus on everyday ethnicity and nationhood, provides a conceptual framework for

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examining how ordinary people reproduce, challenge, subvert, and construct ethnic identity through their everyday choices. My thesis relates this field by analyzing how some nonspecialists articulate their beliefs about minority language education. The scholarly literature on language and nationalism provides insight on the role of language in the processes of boundary creation and maintenance that are embedded in identity construction. Research on minority rights elucidates the legal and institutional context in which everyday beliefs are articulated. Folk linguistics, the study of nonlinguists' beliefs about language, will provide the primary theoretical lens for the analysis in this thesis. This theory seeks to understand the underlying structures that inform claims made about language.

The third chapter and its subchapters will discuss the background of the specific case studied in this thesis. First, I will explain the laws and international treaties that are relevant generally for minority rights in Serbia and specifically in the case of the Vlachs. The Vlachs are a minority group that lives primarily in East-central Serbia. According to the 2002 Serbian census, there are 40,054 Vlachs in Serbia; 39, 953 live in central Serbia.[1] Most are concentrated in the counties of Bor and Zaječar in the area near the borders with Romania and Bulgaria. The Vlachs speak an Eastern romance language that is structurally similar to the Banat dialect of Daco-Romanian.[2] Until this year, Vlach language was not used in any municipal governments in Serbia and had never previously been taught in local primary or secondary schools.[3]

The issue of the identity of the Vlachs is highly politicized and saturates every discussion of the minority rights of the Vlachs. Different stakeholders take different stances. Some claim that Vlachs do not exist; they are simply Romanians living outside the borders of Romania. Others claim that the Vlachs and Romanians are completely different. Other state that Vlachs

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[1] "Final results of the 2002 census."
[2] *Ethnic Minorities in Serbia*. 25.
[3] *Ethnic Minorities in Serbia*. 25.

and Romanians are different ethnic groups who are linguistically similar, that Vlachs are Romanized Serbs, or Romanians who have become assimilated. The third chapter of this thesis will attempt to situate these claims in context; it will examine who says what about the identity of the Vlachs and what the possible motivations of the claims are. I will also discuss the implications of a particular claim made by specific actors.

The third chapter will also contain the role of minority elites in the identity debates. The role of minority elites is important for analyzing how, if at all, ordinary people reproduce claims of identity and language that are formulated and articulated by elected Vlach officials or public figures. It also complicates myth of a homogenous or monolithic minority, as a reminder that minority groups must not be taken as a given, real entity. This shifts the focus back to the stances, attitudes, and beliefs of particular individuals or organizations, rather than reducing a multitude of perspectives to one stance.

The minority language program initiated this year stems from one such perspective about the uniqueness of Vlach language and the need for its preservation and promotion. The NGO "Gergina" was formed in 2009 in Negotin for the preservation of traditions, language, culture, customs, and identity of the Vlachs. In 2013, the group received funding from Open Society Serbia for their project "Affirmation of multiculturalism in Serbia through inclusive education of the Vlach national minority." As of November, nearly 500 first-graders in several towns and villages have registered for the class "Vlach language with elements of national culture" as an elective class in primary school. The classes began in a pilot project form in the spring of 2014 in 10 schools throughout the territory in which Vlach is spoken and are expected to continue as a regular elective class next autumn.

The fourth chapter will briefly explain and justify the methodology used in this thesis. I utilized qualitative methods for gathering the data analyzed in this research project. This included participant observation, problem-focused semi-structured interviews with teachers, and one focus group interview with parents of the students enrolled in the Vlach language classes. The data collection and analysis will be explained in further detail in the methodology chapter, along with some of the limitations of the research.

This thesis contributes to the existing theories of folk linguistics. It is a particularly unusual case due to the controversial identity of the minority, but it is still relevant in providing an opportunity to examine the potential ways in which nonlinguists speak about language. It will provide insight into the underlying beliefs that inform citizens' claims about language, which may contribute to scholarship on language revival, minority language education and the potential gap between design and implementation.

One caveat to note before proceeding is that it is impossible to discuss the Vlachs in Serbia without taking a stance on the controversy that permeates any discussion of this group. Even choosing to refer to them as Vlachs is a decision that aligns the researcher with one of the sides of the debate. However, it is my goal in this thesis to present faithfully how some Vlachs identify themselves and choose to frame their decisions. I will attempt to present neutrally the claims of many different actors in the matrix, represented through formal government documents, media reports, public officials, and everyday people. Although it is difficult to remove all bias from discussions of the Vlachs, it is my opinion that this topic is of such importance that it must be researched from an academic perspective, despite the challenges that it presents.

2. Theoretical Framework

This thesis will add to the current scholarship on folk linguistics, a branch of linguistics concerned with the beliefs of nonlinguists about language. It will also draw upon existing theories of nationalism studies, including everyday ethnicity, a bottom-up approach that developed out of the broader literature on social identity construction. While conducting bottom-up micro-level research in nationalism studies, one must still situate the particular case within a broader context that incorporates legal, historical, and political perspectives. The most relevant academic literature for this thesis may thus be grouped into several broad thematic clusters: social identity construction and everyday ethnicity, language and nationalism, and minority rights protection. This chapter will discuss previous scholarship on these topics and how this thesis builds on the theoretical frameworks proposed in the works discussed.

2.1 Identity

i. Social construction of identity

Recent scholarship in sociology has called for clarification and deconstruction of key concepts related to identity and ethnicity. In "Beyond Identity," Rogers Brubaker proposes a clarification of the term "identity" as an analytical construct.[4] He suggests several clearer terms for the multitude of meanings often signaled by identity. The most relevant of these terms for this thesis are identification and categorization (both self and external), which emphasize the process of situation and invite investigation into the agent of the act. Rather than taking identity as a static quality that one possesses, this thesis aims to analyze the means through which people identify themselves.

Rethinking identity also calls for the rethinking of ethnic identity as an analytical construct. In *Ethnicity without Groups,* Brubaker warns against "groupism," the assumption that

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[4] Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity.'"

groups are real, discrete, bounded units that are substantive entities that may have agency or interests.[5] He argues that using groups, particularly ethnic groups, as units of analysis in social research may reinforce the reification of groups that ethnic entrepreneurs undertake. He proposes instead considering ethnicity in processual, dynamic, and disaggregated terms, specifically by using "groupness" as a context-specific variable. This approach is useful for studying the Vlachs because different actors with different aims may perform groupness differently, and avoiding reifying the group "Vlachs" allows for a more nuanced inquiry into the controversies surrounding Vlach ethnicity.

With static notions of identity and ethnicity challenged as such, scholars have sought to theorize the mechanisms through which these concepts are constructed. Frederik Barth's text on ethnicity provides an analytical framework for the study of the construction of social groups.[6] Barth argues that the critical focus should be "the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses." Boundaries must be actively constructed and maintained through social processes and interactions. Barth's understanding of the selective attention to specific cultural content (such as language) as a means of differentiation and categorization will be relevant for this project. Language as a means of defining boundaries is central to the contested claims of different actors with regard to the identity of the Vlachs. This thesis does not aim to address the issue of how dissimilar or similar the Vlach and Romanian languages are, but rather to analyze claims about the boundaries between languages.

"Ethnicity as cognition" responds to Barth and others who re-conceptualized the study of ethnicity.[7] Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov reference social-psychological theories of categorization and emphasize the need to consider race, ethnicity, nationalism, and other

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[5] Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*.
[6] Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*.
[7] Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition."

concepts not as entities that exist in the world, but rather as processes of social organization. They identify two clusters of research that are informed by this cognitive turn: "historical, political, and institutional studies of official, codified, formalized categorization practices employed by powerful and authoritative institutions-above all the state…[and] ethnographic and micro-interactionist studies of the unofficial, informal, "everyday" classification and categorization practices employed by everyday people."[8] This thesis contributes to this latter cluster of research, but the former will inform background discussions of the stances of Serbia and Romania.

Henri Tajfel's classic work *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* is one of the first of many psychological texts on the theory of social identity and self-categorization. Tajfel develops an overview of a theoretical framework of social identity as a process of categorization.[9] He describes different forms of minority-majority relations and the strategies available to minorities in coping with their disadvantaged status. This chapter on minority psychology explains how social conditions, such as the perceived stability of the social order or the perceived permeability of social boundaries, influence the psychological strategies available to minorities. Other psychologists have elaborated on the theory of social identity and intergroup relations.[10] This academic literature on the constructed nature of social identity provides a foundation of academic work to justify the deconstruction of social identity as an analytical construct in order to understand the processes through which social identities are created and maintained.

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[8] Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition." 33.
[9] Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*.
[10] Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, *Social Identity*.

ii. Everyday ethnicity

Theories of everyday ethnicity build on the broader theories of social identity construction. If identity and ethnicity are constructed through processes of categorization and boundary construction, how do normal people engage in these processes? A number of sociologists have attempted to answer this question by shifting the focus of studies of nationalism and ethnicity from elites to ordinary people. This thesis will also use such a bottom-up approach that focuses on the agency of everyday actors in constructing national and ethnic identity. Michael Billig's *Banal Nationalism* explores the way the nation is flagged in everyday life and how one's own nationalism is forgotten and viewed as patriotism.[11] Billig also discusses how languages came into being alongside the nation-state; he contends that people always spoke, but it is only with the rise of the nation-state that people began to speak languages. He also illustrates the arbitrary nature of distinguishing between languages:

> A world of different languages requires the constitution of categorical distinctions. A problem confronts anyone who attempts to make distinctions between one language and another. Not all the speakers of a language speak in the same way. Thus, some differences of speaking have to be classified as instances of being different languages and some will be classified as differences within the same language.[12]

The decisions about how to classify differences within and between languages may offer insight into the underlying language ideologies of claims made about language.

Continuing this bottom-up approach to nationalism studies is *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* by Rogers Brubaker, an example of empirical micro-social research conducted to examine how national identity does or does not permeate everyday life of ordinary people.[13] It discusses how institutions may frame choices in national terms, and elaborates on bilinguals code-switching between two languages based on the context

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[11] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.
[12] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. 31.
[13] Brubaker, Rogers. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town.

and the interlocutor. One interesting finding from this work is the asymmetry of ethnic affiliation in Cluj; the minorities, Hungarians, mostly speak both Hungarian and Romanian while the majority of Romanians are monolingual. Such linguistic asymmetry is a widespread finding that has been observed in many cases.[14] This is analogous to the situation of the Vlachs and Serbs in Serbia. The concept of everyday (asymmetrical) linguistic manifestations will be fundamental for my project.

Jon E. Fox, one of the researchers who worked with Brubaker on the Cluj project, elaborates on empirical approaches to studying everyday ethnicity in "Everyday Nationhood" with co-author Cynthia Miller Idriss.[15] The authors discuss micro-social approaches to studying nations and ethnicity. They identify four categories of practice through which ordinary people produce the nation: talking the nation, choosing the nation, performing the nation, and consuming the nation. For this research, choosing the nation (by opting into minority language education) and talking the nation are key concepts that will inform the analysis of how nonspecialists speak about language every day.

2.2 Language

i. Language and nationalism

Despite the micro-level approach of this thesis, it may still be situated within a broader framework of political science. Literature on the role of language in nationalist movements and the instrumentalization of language for political aims helps to locate this case within a broader phenomenon. Such literature reveals that although language may be framed as Barth's "cultural stuff," in reality it is often used as a boundary-creating tool. "Language as an Instrument of Nationalism in Central Europe" offers a nice historical overview of the functions of language

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[14] Auer, *Code-Switching in Conversation*.
[15] Fox and Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood."

during the birth of nationalism in the 19th century.[16] It specifies which language features were commonly used as tools for differentiating one language from another (such as script or orthography), and presents a theoretical framework that links language standardization and nation-building projects. This text shows specifically some of the functions that language may serve in nationalist projects. As Kedourie observed, "Language is the external and visible badge of those differences which distinguish one nation from another; it is the most important criterion by which a nation is recognized to exist, and to have the right to form a state on its own."[17] Although others may dispute whether language is always the most important criterion in nationalist claims, it certainly may be an important factor in certain contexts.

Other works that examine language and politics further discuss the specific agents involved in the instrumentalization of language. "Language Strategists: Redefining Political Boundaries on the Basis of Linguistic Choices" discusses the role of elites in elevating language to a symbolic, rather than simply communicative, level.[18] Weinstein discusses the processes of writing, standardizing, and modernizing a low-status language. This article is relevant for the background of my thesis, particularly in terms of how minority ethnic entrepreneurs may try to raise the status of their language variety.

Language may also become politicized when census results on linguistic data are linked to political projects or claims. In *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses,* the authors identify some of the problems or ambiguities of language questions on censuses.[19] The text distinguishes between different framing of language questions on censuses (mother tongue, language most-commonly spoken, proficiency in official

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[16] Kamusella, "Language as an Instrument of Nationalism in Central Europe."
[17] Kedourie, Elie. *Nationalism*. 58.
[18] Weinstein, "Language Strategists."
[19] Kerzer and Arel, *Census and Identity*.

language) and elaborates some of the ways that specific framing of language questions can be used to support demographic claims. It also identifies the linguistic rights that are tied to census data, including minority language usage in official interactions with state authorities and minority language education. Although this thesis will not seek to analyze the politicization of language and nationalism directly, this literature informs the background and contextualization of nonlinguists' beliefs about language because in the case of the Vlachs the language is the source of political claims made by minority elites and the state.

ii. Sociolinguistics

The field of sociolinguistics is quite broad, so the present discussion will be limited to only those theories and concepts that are most relevant for the particular context that will be analyzed in this thesis. One of the first, most fundamental concepts of relevance is that of the "speech community." Gumperz, in his article titled "The Speech Community," defines a speech community as "any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage."[20] Lest he be accused of reifying groups, he later characterizes the speech community "as a field of action where the distribution of linguistic variants is a reflection of social facts."[21] He thus advocates for the treatment of communication as a process in which there are mutually recognized social norms that the interlocutors adhere to and that these norms are not universal but limited to a given speech community.

Ferguson builds upon the concept of a speech community by describing the phenomena of diglossia, which refers to when "in…speech communities two or more varieties of the same language are used by some speakers under different conditions," and "two varieties of a language

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[20] Gumperz, "The Speech Community." 219
[21] Ferguson, CA. "Diglossia." 225

exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play."[22]

Although Ferguson speaks of two varieties of the same language, rather than two languages such as Vlach and Serbia, diglossia may also be a useful concept in such speech communities. He refers to the two varieties as H and L (for high and low, respectively) and argues that, "one of the most important features of diglossia is the specialization of function for H and L. In one set of situations only H is appropriate and in another only L, with the two sets overlapping only very slightly."[23] This thesis will examine how, in the particular context of the Vlachs, this stratification in which different languages are used for different purposes is understood and articulated by nonlinguists.

Expanding on the concept of different functions of language, Edwards proposes the concepts of "symbolic space" and "communicative space".[24] He writes the following:

> The essence of the distinction between the communicative and symbolic functions lies in a differentiation between language in its ordinarily understood sense as an instrumental tool, and language as emblem of groupness, a symbol, a psychosocial rallying-point...The complicated interweaving of language and culture that rests upon a fusion of pragmatic linguistic skills and the more intangible associations carried by language is not always immediately apparent to native speakers within a majority-speech community…it is at once the language of grocery shopping and the language of myth, poetry, and literature. However, the two aspects *are* separable- the communicative from the symbolic- and it is possible for the latter to remain important in the absence of the former.[25]

This distinction, as Edwards points out, has the possibility of being very sharp for minority speakers. Language may have specific value in its function as a means of communication and a different value as a symbol of identity and culture. The separation of these two functions allows this research to investigate nonlinguists' beliefs about their own language within these two potentially separate realms.

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[22] Ferguson, CA. "Diglossia." 232
[23] Ferguson, CA. "Diglossia." 235-236
[24] Edwards, John. *Language and Identity: An Introduction*.
[25] Edwards, John. *Language and Identity: An Introduction*. 55-56

Edwards also discusses the value accorded to different language varieties, noting the social nature of such value judgments:

> Evaluations of different language varieties are not based upon intrinsic qualities but rest, rather, upon social conventions and preferences. These, in turn, are most obviously related to the prestige and power possessed by speakers of certain 'standard' varieties.[26]

Prestige and its counterpart, stigma, are concepts within sociolinguistics that describe the positive or negative evaluations of language varieties. These evaluations do not occur in a linguistic vacuum, but rather may be understood as "attitudes towards the members of language communities and…are often allied with powerful protective sentiments for one's own group."[27] This thesis will analyze perceptions of nonlinguists about the stigma or prestige afforded to different language varieties within their own speech community.

Functions of language within a speech community, along the evaluations of language varieties, are not static but may shift over time. The term language shift may encompass a broad range of phenomena, including language decline, language death, and reverse language shift or language revival.[28] Edwards describes the conditions characterizing language decline: "it is no longer passed on to children; it comes to be the preserve of middle-aged or elderly people who no longer see any point in transmitting it."[29] Eventually, when it declines to when it is no longer spoken at all, the language has died. Language revival, then, refers to any effort to reverse language decline and prevent language death. According to Edwards, this can "refer to reawakening and renewal, to the restoration of vigour and activity, to a return to consciousness

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[26] Edwards, John. *Language and Identity: An Introduction*. 68.

[27] Edwards, John. *Multilingualism*. 89-90.

[28] Edwards, John. *Language and Identity: An Introduction*.

[29] Edwards, John. *Multilingualism*. 106.

and to the arresting of decline or discontinuity."[30] The school may play a particular role in

language revival movements:

> Just as the school exists as an arm of the state, so it is often singled out by language communities as the linchpin of the continuing cultural and linguistic identity. Wherever social heterogeneity exists, schools may be asked to play a part- perhaps the central part - in maintaining and encouraging identities thought to be at risk. Schools and teachers have increasingly, in fact, played the role of agents of social change and have correspondingly experienced difficulties since this does not always mesh with their more traditional task of transmitting core or basic skills.[31]

In the present research, the teachers interviewed fit well with this understanding of agents of

language revival. Their statements about the minority language education program demonstrate

the occasional tension between the imagined role of schools in language revival movements and

the actual tasks that the schools must carry out.

2.3 Minority rights

This thesis may also be situated within the broader literature on minority rights. The issue

of minority rights has been approached from different academic disciplines such as legal studies

and political theory. For this thesis, the most relevant literature on minority rights is related to the

politicization of such rights, and how political aims may influence the implementation of

minority rights. Rogers Brubaker, in "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External

National Homelands in the New Europe," proposes a triadic nexus of actors in kin-state

politics.[32] National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands may all take

different stances in relation to one another. This framework is useful for analyzing the

relationship between Serbia, Romania, and the Vlach community as actors with different

nationalist projects and stances. In this particular case, it is an even more complex nexus than

that which Brubaker discusses since some members of the national minority (the Vlachs) may

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[30] Edwards, John. *Multilingualism*. 119.
[31] Edwards, John. *Multilingualism*. 11.
[32] Brubaker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe."

not consider the external homeland (Romania) to actually be their homeland but rather as an additional nationalizing state.

Other texts on minority rights also focus on the existence of an external kin state when examining the relationship between minorities and the state. Jenne proposes the concept of ethnic bargaining, in which minorities weigh their relative power to strategically make demands of the state.[33] A minority's relative power may be increased by outside actors, such as international organizations or external homelands.

One may extend basic texts on the relationship between political actors to analyze minority linguistic rights specifically. "The protection of linguistic minorities in Europe and human rights: possible solutions to ethnic conflict" outlines some of the tensions between democratic majority rule and minority rights protection.[34] It delineates some of the factors that influence this tension, such as the size or geographic concentration of the minority group or the financial and professional resources of the state. It explains different forms of minority language education and the "sliding-scale" approach to linguistic rights that is used in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. "The Slovak State Language Law and the Accommodation of Minority Rights: The Impact of International Organizations on the Resolution of Language Disputes" offers a good analysis of the role of international organizations in influencing national legislation and language policy.[35] Győry discusses the differences between Slovak policy before and after EU accession. These articles on minority language protection are essential for contextualizing the legal framework in Serbia within a matrix of political claims while focusing on the language claims of teachers and parents.

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[33] Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining*.
[34] de Varennes, "Protection of Linguistic Minorities in Europe and Human Rights."
[35] Győry, "The Slovak State Language Law and the Accommodation of Minority Rights."

2.4 Folk Linguistics

The field of folk linguistics seeks to examine the beliefs of nonlinguists about language. Niedzielski and Preston, some of the foremost scholars in the field explain this field of inquiry, "in the world outside of linguistics, people who are not professional students of language nevertheless talk about it. Such overt knowledge of and comment about language by nonlinguists is the subject of *folk linguistics*. It is language about language, and it is just as much a metalanguage as the linguist's."[36] The authors distinguish "*Metalanguage 1*," "overt comment about language," from "*Metalanguage 2*," "the underlying folk theory (or theories) of language."[37] Folk linguistics seeks, then, to uncover Metalanguage 2 through Metalanguage 1. In his own works on the subject, Preston has examined folk linguistics primarily in a North American setting.[38] However, this theoretical framework can be applied to other contexts as well, including that of the Vlachs in Serbia.

Other scholarly works in the field of folk linguistics bring the concerns more directly towards those of nationalism studies and minority languages. Meadows argues that the beliefs underlying overt language complaints may be informed by nationalist ideas.[39] He analyzes statements made by those living in the borderlands of the United States and Mexico to theorize how nationalist ideologies of nationalized language boundaries are one of the conceptualizations that generate folk theories of language in such a multilingual context. By complaining about certain language practices, he argues that, "nonlinguists appear to be reacting negatively to a

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[36] Niedzielski, Nancy A., and Dennis Richard Preston. *Folk Linguistics*. 302

[37] Niedzielski, Nancy A., and Dennis Richard Preston. *Folk Linguistics*. 302, 309.

[38] See, for example: Preston, Dennis R. "Language with an Attitude." "The uses of folk linguistics."

[39] Meadows, Bryan. "Examining the role of nationalism in folk theories of language: The case of language complaints in multilingual settings."

disruption in the expected coherence of nation, physical space, and linguistic practice."[40] This

thesis draws heavily on his research when discussing potential underlying beliefs of language

boundaries and linguistic purity in the Vlach context.

In "Don't Speak Hungarian in Public," Miklos Kontra looks at sociolinguistic attitudes

that ordinary people have regarding language usage.[41] It includes empirical research on

Hungarians living outside of Hungary regarding when, by whom, and for which reasons people

have told them not to speak Hungarian. This is of relevance for this project because it touches

upon themes of diglossia. Additionally, Kontra's work examines statements reportedly made by

the minority itself, which this thesis will examine as well. This thesis will contribute to the field

of folk linguistics by examining folk theories and beliefs about language in a context in which

language revival is being attempted through the implementation of minority language education.

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[40] Meadows, Bryan. "Examining the role of nationalism in folk theories of language: The case of   language complaints in multilingual settings." 5.
[41] Kontra, "Don't Speak Hungarian in public!'–A Documentation and Analysis of Folk Linguistic Rights."

3. Background

3.1 Minority rights in Serbia

i. International framework

One relevant international document for the protection of minority rights in Serbia is the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM). The FCPNM is an important international agreement from 1995. This treaty "is the first legally binding multilateral instrument devoted to the protection of national minorities in general. Its aim is to specify the legal principles which States undertake to respect in order to ensure the protection of national minorities."[42] The FCPNM does not define a national minority, but it lays out the rights and freedoms to be granted to national minorities by the state. In addition to negative duties like not interfering with the rights of national minorities, states that ratified the FCPNM have positive duties to "promote the continued existence and development of national minorities."[43] These duties include providing support for the development and preservation of minority culture along with establishing measures to promote economic and social equality in addition to legal equality of members of the majority and minority.[44] The FCPNM was ratified by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1998. When the Republic of Serbia succeeded the FR Yugoslavia, it was considered a successor member of the Council of Europe and took on the previous obligations of the FR Yugoslavia's ratification of the FCPNM.[45]

The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) is an additional international document of relevance to the situation of the national minorities in Serbia. The ECRML is a treaty created in 1992 that established the protection of linguistic rights for

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[42] "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities."
[43] Musgrave, *Self-Determination and National Minorities*. 145.
[44] Musgrave, *Self-Determination and National Minorities*. 145.
[45] "Second Opinion on Serbia". 4

minorities. The ECRML identifies both main objectives for states to apply to all minority languages in their territory and concrete measures for states to undertake to promote the use of minority languages in public.[46] Its goal is to protect minority languages as an element of Europe's cultural heritage. Serbia's ratification of ECRML specifies the minority languages within Serbia. In 2006 Serbia ratified the ECRML and listed Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Hungarian, Romani, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian, and Ukrainian as languages protected under Part 2 and Part 3 of the charter.[47] Part 2 of the charter contains less specific provisions for language rights protection, including the recognition of minority languages as an "expression of cultural wealth" and the promotion of "mutual understanding."[48] Part 3 of the charter delineates more specific obligations of the state, delineating measures related to education, judicial authorities, public services, media, cultural activities, and other fields.[49] It is worth noting for the present discussion of minority rights that the obligations on Serbia certainly constitute positive duties, but that these positive duties are only applied to the minority groups who speak languages specified in the ECRML as protected under both Part 2 and Part 3 of the charter. Vlach language is not protected under Part 3 of the Charter.

ii. Domestic legislation

Minority rights are also institutionalized in Serbian laws. According to the Serbian constitution, the state is based partially on "human and minority rights and freedoms" and "the provisions on human and minority rights are to be interpreted to the benefit of promoting values of a democratic society, pursuant to applicable international standards of human and minority rights, as well as the practice of international institutions which supervise their

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[46] "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages"
[47] "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages"
[48] "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages"
[49] "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages"

implementation."[50] Moreover, the status of international treaties regarding minority rights is specified: "Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Constitution sets forth that human and minority rights guaranteed by, inter alia, ratified international treaties are guaranteed by the Constitution and are directly implementable as such."[51] This statement places international minority rights treaties on the same level as the constitution itself.

One of the most important domestic laws related to minority rights in Serbia is the 2002 Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (LPRFNM). The law seeks to:

> [R]egulate protection of national minorities from any form of discrimination in exercising their rights and freedoms, and instruments shall be established to ensure and protect particular rights of national minorities in respect of self-government, language, information and culture, and institutions shall be established to facilitate participation of minorities in government and public administration.[52]

The law is divided into basic principles, including freedom of expression and prohibition of discrimination; the right of preservation of identity, including use of personal names and mother tongue; and effective participation in decision-making on issues related to national minorities, including national councils and equal employment opportunities in the public sector.[53] Within each subsection there are numerous specific articles that delineate the positive and negative duties of the state toward the minority.

The 2002 LPRFNM provides a definition of a national minority but also includes a clause protecting the free affiliation of individuals with a given minority. In Article 2 it defines a national minority as:

> Any group of citizens…numerically sufficiently representative and, although representing a minority in the territory…belonging to a group of residents having a long

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[50] "Second Periodic Report Submitted to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe" 21.
[51] "Second Periodic Report Submitted to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe" 21.
[52] *The Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities*.
[53] *The Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities*.

term and firm bond with the territory…and possessing characteristics such as language, culture, national or ethnic affiliation, origin or confession, differentiating them from the majority of the population and whose members are distinguished by care to collectively nurture their common identity, including their culture, tradition, language or religion.[54]

This definition provides several criteria for which characteristics define a national minority (without specifying how many or which of these characteristics a group must possess to be considered a national minority) and distinguishes national minorities from other minority groups such as immigrants. Later in the text of the law, it is stated that no members of a national minority may be forced against their will to declare their national affiliation.[55]

Another one of the primary relevant pieces of domestic legislation related to minority rights is the Law on National Councils of National Minorities.[56] This law "governs the competences of the national minority councils…with regard to culture, education, information, official use of language and script, electoral procedures for the national councils and their funding, as well as other issues concerning the national councils."[57] The National Minority Council of the Vlach National Minority (NCVNM) was formed in 2006 according to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities.[58] By law, the population of the minority determines the number of council members, and in the case of the Vlachs there are 23 council members (since the population falls in the range of 20,000-50,000).[59]

The election procedure through which members of the NCVNM are elected to four-year terms is specified by the law: anyone who is a eligible voter in the Republic of Serbia may sign up to a special electoral list for the minority council elections (but they may only sign up for one such list). If the number of people who register on the special electoral list reaches a set threshold

[54] *The Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities.*
[55] *The Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities.*
[56] *The Law on National Councils of National Minorities*
[57] *The Law on National Councils of National Minorities*
[58] *The Law on National Councils of National Minorities*
[59] *The Law on National Councils of National Minorities*

based on the population of the minority, then the election may proceed. Candidates must be

nominated on an electoral list (that must have a minimum of five candidates and a maximum that

corresponds to the total seats available). Electoral lists may be nominated by organizations,

associations of citizens, and political organizations "of a national minority concerned."[60] The law

clarifies that an organization may be considered as "of a national minority" if it has a "prefix of a

national minority concerned in its name or if it had been established as an organization,

association or political association gathering or acting in the interest of persons belonging to a

national minority concerned by its statute."[61] The electoral list must have support in signatures of

1% of voters and at least 50 voters registered on the special electoral list of the minority. During

the elections, voters cast their vote for an electoral list. This procedure in itself provides

opportunities for actors with diverse stances to be elected. First, because voter registration on the

special electoral list is based on free self-identification, voters themselves need only to declare as

Vlachs in order to vote. Because the lists of candidates are based on nominations by

organizations that declare themselves through name or statute to be affiliated with the Vlach

minority, there is ample space for a diverse group of organizations and political parties to

participate in the election process.

3.2 The Vlachs in Serbia

i. Contested identity: the stances of Serbia and Romania

Ongoing political debates about the status and identity of the Vlachs characterize the

situation. The Council of Europe (COE) summarizes the perspectives:

> Four viewpoints have emerged concerning Vlach identity: that the Vlach and Romanian
> are linguistic synonyms; that the two are really only one nation, with one root and one
> language; that only Romanians live in eastern Serbia, and Vlachs do not exist; that the
> Vlachs are a separate nation; and that the Vlachs are Romanized Serbs. The predominant

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[60] *The Law on National Councils of National Minorities*
[61] *The Law on National Councils of National Minorities*

view is that the majority of the population which identifies itself as Vlach is descended from groups originating from Banat, parts of Transylvania and Oltenia in the 18th and 19th centuries. [62]

The identity of the Vlachs is clearly contested. These contradictory perspectives are endorsed by a variety of different actors with stakes in the situation. Discussions about the identity of the Vlachs are closely tied to political claims by different groups.

The Serbian government takes the stance that the Vlachs are a distinct minority group. In its response to COE reports, the Serbian government resisted the conflation of Vlachs and Romanians. It argues that to refer to Vlachs and Romanians together violates the right of the Vlachs under the FCPNM to freely identify as members of a national minority.[63] Their response to the COE states:

> The authorities of the Republic of Serbia, proceeding from the freedom of national affiliation and freedom of self-identification of each individual pursuant to Article 3 of the Framework Convention, wish to reiterate they would not allow any imposing of identity to any person concerned and stress that, according to the population census, there are no concordance and sameness between the Romanian and the Vlach languages and their speakers.[64]

Because the Vlachs declared themselves to be Vlachs and not Romanians on the census, the Serbian government recognizes the groups to be unmistakably distinct.

The Romanian government claims that the Vlachs are Romanians and admonishes Serbia for failing to provide adequate protection of their rights. In 2011 Romanian president Traian Basescu publicly stated, "we ask (Serbian authorities) to grant them the right to tuition in Romanian, to have an Orthodox church, to have a newspaper in their language, to have the right to tune into Romanian television or have a broadcast in Romanian."[65] The Romanian government threatened in 2012 to block Serbia's accession to the European Union on the basis of the denial

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[62] *Ethnic Minorities in Serbia*. 25.
[63] "Comments of the Government of Serbia on the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee." 9.
[64] "Comments of the Government of Serbia on the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee." 9.
[65] "Romania threatens Serb hopes for EU status."

of rights to the group.[66] A declaration put forth before the COE Parliamentary Assembly and cosigned by several Romanians (along with members from other countries) argued that "the main problem remains the artificial distinction made between the group recognised as "Romanians" and the other called "Vlachs", although they both speak Romanian."[67] The stance of Romanian officials is clear; the Vlachs are Romanians living in Serbia.

ii. Competing stances of minority elites

In the midst of ongoing disputes between the Romanian and Serbian states regarding the Vlach minority, there are also debates among the Vlach minority itself. When Vlach minority leaders make statements with a strong pro- or anti-Romanian slant it prompts swift backlash from other members of the community. In response to Basescu's threat to block Serbia's EU accession in February 2012, the President of the National Council of the Vlach National Minority (NCVNM) Radiša Dragojević stated:

> Nobody has the right to ask Vlachs to declare themselves as Romanians…Regardless of all similarities, those are two autochthonous national minorities. Romanians consider Romania their motherland. Vlachs consider Serbia their motherland. We have no objections, nor any basis to turn to Romania, nor does Romania have any basis to make any demands on our behalf.[68]

The NCVMN from 2010-2014 may be classified as predominantly anti-Romanian. Of the current 23 members, according to Dragojević, there are only four representatives who take a pro-Romanian stance.[69] However, this stance differs from previous years, as the COE observes:

> [T]he election of the National Council of the Vlach Minority in 2010 (a direct election where all persons belonging to the Vlach minority could participate) led to a change in the composition of the national council. While the previous national council considered Vlach to be a variety of Romanian, the new national council aims at a standardisation of Vlach, which it expects to take several years.[70]

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[66] "Romania threatens Serb hopes for EU status."
[67] *The situation of the Romanian minority in Serbia*.
[68] "National Council head: Vlachs are not Romanians"
[69] "Dragojević: Vlasi nisu Rumuni**."**
[70] "Comments of the Government of Serbia on the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee." 6

The NCVNM is thus not only undivided on its stance toward the identity of the Vlachs, but it's overall tendency varies as new politicians cycle in and out of power.

One political party that takes an anti-Romanian stance is the Vlach Democratic Party (VDS). The president of the VDS and a member of the NCVNM, Siniša Celojević, published a response to Basescu's 2012 comments on the party's website. In the very first sentence of this statement, he asserts, "The Vlachs of Serbia are not, and will never be, members of the Romanian national minority."[71] He argues that Romania claims the Vlachs and other groups outside Romania's borders to be Romanians as way of establishing their own historical continuity and strengthening their national identity. He continues:

> The Vlachs of Serbia are an ethnic community that for centuries lived in good relations with the Serbs, that since the beginning of the formation of the first Serbian state until today was and is an essential constituent people. Throughout its history, we shared the good and the bad with the Serbs. We consider Serbia our mother country, our homeland, on whose territory we originated and survived until today.[72]

He later describes Romania as having used the situation of the Vlachs in Serbia (specifically, their lack of cultural rights) to infiltrate with the intent of assimilating the Vlachs and linking them to Romanians. He states that the law on Romanians from everywhere negates the existence of Vlachs in the Balkans and claims that the Vlachs of Serbia will never agree with this attitude of Romania.[73] This response to Basescu's statement demonstrates an overt and impassioned anti-Romanian stance.

The organization "Association of the Vlachs of Serbia" (ZVS) takes a deliberate pro-Romanian stance in its online materials. In the "About us" section of its website, the organization states "the Vlachs of northeastern Serbia are in a geographic sense attached to their motherland-

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[71] Vlaška Demokratska Stranka. *O Nama*.
[72] Vlaška Demokratska Stranka. *O Nama*.
[73] Vlaška Demokratska Stranka. *O Nama*.

the Republic of Romania."[74] On another page on the organization's website devoted to

addressing prejudices against Vlachs, it is stated "Vlach language is not a distinct language. By

its characteristics and structure it is Romanian language, belonging to the so-called Daco-

romanian dialect of Romanian language."[75] In other sections, it refers to the group as Vlach-

Romanians and claims that Serbs wish to assimilate Vlachs by referring to them as such in the

hope that they will have no link to the overall Romanian race.[76] The ZVS thus establishes itself

as a pro-Romanian organization by emphasizing Romania as the homeland of the Vlachs, Vlach

language as a dialect of Romanian, and by referring to Serbian attempts to assimilate the Vlachs

and eliminate their ties to Romania.

One Vlach political party with a pro-Romanian stance is the Vlach National Party (VNS),

formerly the Vlach Democratic Party of Serbia. The president of this party is Predrag Balašević

published an "About us" section on the party's website in which it is possible to discern the

party's pro-Romanian position. He states that Vlachs are not considered equal citizens of Serbia:

> They [Serbia] on the one hand dispute the [Vlach] identity, denying their historical links
> with other communities, while they, on the other hand, impose a historical cultural
> construct… that although some Vlachs would agree with, is usually with the aim of
> political control of the Vlach electorate…They also perform the scandalous manipulation
> of their language, culture, customs and history.[77]

The party's program "insists on equal rights for this nation of dual names on both sides of the

Danube." [78] The VNS thus conflates the Vlach minority in Serbia and the Romanian nation in

Romania and argues, similar to the ZVS, that Serbia has denied this identity through political

manipulation. Clear similarities in narratives have emerged in the pro-Romanian stance.

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[74] Zajednica Vlaha Srbija. *O Nama*.
[75] Zajednica Vlaha Srbija. *Predrasude o Vlasima*.
[76] Zajednica Vlaha Srbija. *Vlasi Srbije i Srbi iz Rumunije. Bolno poređenje*
[77] Vlaška Narodna Stranka. *O Nama*.
[78] Vlaška Narodna Stranka. *Program*.

One more pro-Romanian organization that merits discussion is the web media outlet Timoc Press. Timoc Press is financed by the Romanian state's Department for Romanians Abroad and describes itself as a news agency that operates from the regions where Romanians live and publishes articles in Romanian, Serbian, and English.[79] In an article titled "Vlachs are nothing other than Romanians," a representative from a Vlach cultural organization "Ariadnae Filum" is interviewed. In the article, both the terms Vlach-Romanian and Romanian are used to refer to the group. The article states that despite not having the Romanian language and their national history taught in schools, the "local Romanians clenched their fists and never stopped believing that, at a given moment their mother country will look to them."[80] The representative from Ariadnae Filum states that the group is under "aggressive assimilation, through which they say that we are not Romanian, that Romanians and Romania are our neighboring people and country and nothing more."[81] The website also published a report on "the Vlach respective Romanian national minority in northeastern Serbia" in which they state in the first sentence that "Vlach and Romanian are linguistic synonyms, they are one nation, with one root and one language."[82] The article continues, referring to the group as Vlach-Romanians, and discussing problems in the implementation of minority rights. It is cosigned by a number of cultural preservation and human rights organizations. Timoc Press, in its reporting, takes a pro-Romanian stance by using the terms Romanian or Vlach-Romanian to refer to the minority group, by referring to Romania as the mother country of the Vlachs, and by referring to attempted assimilation by the Serbian state.

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[79] Dumitras, Rares Alin. *Imagining the Nation: Mythical Structures in Representations of National Identity of the Romanian Communities in Serbia and Ukraine*. 44
[80] "Vlasi nisu ništa drugo do Rumuni."
[81] "Vlasi nisu ništa drugo do Rumuni."
[82] "Izveštaj o položaju vlaške odnosno rumunske nacionalne manjine u severoistočnoj Srbiji."

The major competing stances among the Vlach minority may thus be broadly classified into two groups: pro-Romanian and anti-Romanian factions. Although they frame the relationship between the Vlach minority and the Serbian state differently, both groups share some similarities in their stance toward Serbia; they call for more implementation of minority rights protection, particularly in the field of minority language education. Both factions also frequently dispute the census figures regarding the Vlach community. However, there are two diametrically opposed stances toward the relationship of the Vlach identity and Vlach language with respect to Romanian. The first of these stances that may be observed is the anti-Romanian position. The anti-Romanian position frequently refers to Serbia as the homeland of the Vlachs and claims that Vlachs have no connection to the Romanian state. The pro-Romanian stance is often articulated through linguistic arguments over the similarities between the language spoken by Vlachs and Romanian language (even to the point of referring to them as the same) and often refers to Romania as the homeland of the Vlachs.

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4. Methodology
4.1 Theoretical background and justification of methods

Drawing upon the theories of folk linguistics discussed in Chapter One, qualitative

methods were used for this thesis. Within the "symbolic interactionism" approach to qualitative

research, "the empirical starting point is the subjective meaning individuals attribute to their

activities and environment."[83] This approach is well suited to the research questions of this

thesis: What are the beliefs about language held by nonlinguists? In this thesis, the beliefs about

language specifically refers to beliefs about minority language; its usefulness, its ecology, its

communicative and symbolic value, and, fundamentally, the implications of the implementation

of minority language education. Thus in this case, a qualitative methodology based on symbolic

interactionism, which seeks to "reconstruct the subject's viewpoint," is used to uncover the

subjective meanings Vlachs attribute to phenomena surrounding language.[84]

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) was used as the framework for structuring the process

of data analysis. QCA may be divided into phases of preparing the data (transformation from

audio recordings to text through transcription), developing a coding scheme, coding the text, and

drawing conclusions from the coded data.[85] I used a combination of inductive and deductive

coding in my data analysis, generating codes from the text itself and from existing theories of

sociolinguistics. My coding scheme will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

4.2 Data collection and analysis

I used several different methods of data collection over the course of fieldwork in eastern

Serbia. All of the fieldwork was conducted in the Serbian language. I consulted native speakers

during the field research design and data analysis phases to verify that my translations were

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[83] Flick, Uwe. *An introduction to qualitative research*. 66.

[84] Flick, Uwe. *An introduction to qualitative research*. 67.

[85] Zhang, Yan, and Barbara M. Wildemuth. "Qualitative analysis of content."

accurate. In November 2013, I attended the second seminar for educational workers of Vlach language. This was a two-day workshop organized by the NGO Gergina in Negotin which culminated in the participating elementary school teachers receiving a certificate to teach Vlach language with elements of national culture as part of the project "Affirmation of multiculturalism in Serbia through inclusive education of the Vlach national minority." They also provided me with several relevant textual materials; these were educational materials to be used in classes such as a dictionary, phrasebook, textbook, and children's coloring book in Vlach. Throughout the weekend, I spoke informally with three employees of the NGO Gergina about the project. I utilized participant observation during the seminar itself. I sat in on the presentations, recorded the sessions, took notes, and occasionally participated in some of the activities, such as a simulation on lesson planning. In the breaks between sessions and during meals I spoke with many of the participating teachers. This research trip was useful for preliminary observations that helped me to formulate my plans for a longer research trip in the spring of 2014.

In April 2014, I visited two towns (Zajecar and Negotin) and two villages (Grljan and Kobišnica) in eastern Serbia to conduct additional field research. I attended a cultural event- an annual Vlach folk music festival in which a member of the National Council of the Vlach National Minority gave a speech and many musicians traveled from other parts of eastern Serbia to perform traditional music. I arranged a focus group interview in Kobišnica, a village near Negotin, in which ten people participated. Of the participants, two were men and eight were women. Eight identified themselves as Vlach by ethnicity, and two as Serb. All but one of the participants had at least one child who was taking the Vlach language classes through the pilot project. One of the participants was the grandmother of a child in the class. During the focus group interview, I asked the participants the following questions:

- How did you find out about this project of Vlach language classes?
- What did you think the consequences of these classes would be for your child?
- Complete the following sentences:
    One advantage of Vlach language classes is…
    One drawback of Vlach language classes is…
- If these classes did not exist, what would be the effect (on your child and on the language)?
- Why did you choose to enroll your child in Vlach language classes?

In between the final two questions, I projected the controversial quote about the nature of the relationship between Vlachs and Romania made by Radiša Dragojević (see previous chapter). This was intended to act as a stimulus to introduce the issue of the contested identity of the Vlachs into the discussion.

My initial research plan was to conduct multiple focus group interviews to serve as the primary source of data for analysis. However, upon my arrival to the region it became clear that it would be impossible to gather enough participants during the very limited time available. Regardless of this limitation, during the one focus group interview I was able to conduct, enough insights were gathered that I felt it worthy of inclusion in the thesis. One important caveat, of course, is that this data is not generalizable in any way and its analysis will rather be used as a supplement to the rest of the analysis.

In addition to this focus group, I also conducted interviews in person with teachers. I chose to add individual interviews with the Vlach language teachers because they were easier to arrange than additional focus groups and could still provide fruitful data for analysis. In Grljan, a village near Zajecar, I visited one elementary school and conducted a problem-focused interview with the teacher there that taught the pilot classes of Vlach language. In Kobišnica, a village near Negotin, I conducted a problem-focused interview with the Vlach language teacher in her home. Both teachers identified themselves as being of Vlach ethnicity, and the teacher in Kobišnica was in a mixed marriage with an ethnic Serb. These interviews were slightly more open-ended than

the focus group interview, and as a result I asked a variety of questions based upon the direction that the individual teacher's commentary took. Many of the questions were the same or similar to those asked of the parents in the focus group, modified to say "the children" rather than "your child." I also asked the teachers about the other choices available to the children (since Vlach language is currently an elective subject). I asked them also to describe their appraisal of the children and parents' attitudes toward the classes. Other questions arose directly from statements that the teachers gave during the interviews and varied from interview to interview.

Because the pilot project for Vlach classes has only been implemented in ten elementary schools primarily located in villages spread over the entirety of eastern Serbia, it was impossible to travel to all of the villages and conduct interviews in person with teachers. For this reason, I had to conduct two additional interviews with teachers over the phone from Budapest. I interviewed one teacher from the village Zlot near Bor and another teacher from the village Boljevac near Podgorac. I asked the same questions during the telephone interviews as the face-to-face teacher interviews, but the phone interviews were generally of a shorter duration because the teachers gave briefer answers. All of the teachers interviewed, both in person and on the phone, were women. Although it was not ideal to conduct some of the interviews over the phone, it was important to the project to incorporate interviews with teachers who are spread around the region. Because the organization that is coordinating the classes and teacher training is located in Negotin, it was important to examine whether there were differences in the teachers' responses based on their proximity to this epicenter of this particular language revival effort.

After gathering the data, I translated and transcribed the interviews before beginning analysis. Some of the codes were selected based on themes that appeared across interviews generated some of the codes. Other codes I assigned based on the sociolinguistics theoretical

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framework discussed previously. These codes were drawn on concepts elaborated in linguistic theory. Because folk linguistics seeks to examine nonlinguists' beliefs about language, contrasting the framework used by linguists to speak about language with that of the participants interviewed provided a useful analytical scheme. I ultimately used ten codes to categorize the data: diglossia, communicative value, symbolic value, stigma, language decline, language revival, children in the speech community, language and politics, language boundaries, and linguistic purification. Although occasionally some of the data could have been classified as more than one of the codes, for the majority of the data the codes were mutually exclusive. The results of my data analysis will form the rest of this thesis.

5. Language functions and attitudes[86]

5.1 Diglossia

Diglossia, as discussed previously, refers to when multiple language varieties that coexist in a different environment are used for different purposes that do not overlap. Many of those I spoke to commented on the different settings that call for either Vlach or Serbian. One teacher, before I even had a chance to begin asking questions, started describing the functions for which Vlach is used:

> This language is mainly served for home needs and people speak it in the family, between parents and children, but it was never used in the street or the school. This means, you can't go to the city hall and have someone understand, you can't go to the marketplace or such to speak this language. It is spoken exclusively in the family. And we, in the schools, I am 44 years old, when I went to school when I was 6 years old, I didn't dare to speak this language…but I spoke it at home.

The statement that the language is "mainly served for home needs" indicates a belief that the uses of the language are limited to a specific domain. The inclusion of the marketplace as a location in which one does not speak Vlach is also telling. This indicates that the distinction is not simply one of formal vs. informal (e.g. with a public official as opposed to with family), but that the differentiation would be better described as public vs. private. Any public domain, even one as casual as the marketplace, is inappropriate for using Vlach. It is only used in private settings.

The differentiation between appropriate places to use Serbian frequently returned to the contexts of home and other locations. The parents in the focus group echoed this distinction between speaking in the family at home and elsewhere. One stated that Vlach language wasn't "needed for the city." They stated that they had spoken Vlach at home with their families, but

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[86] All quotations in Chapters Five through Seven, unless otherwise attributed, are taken from interviews conducted by the researcher in April and May 2014.

that they had learned Serbian when they went to school. One teacher further described this

process upon entering school, stating:

> So we began to learn to speak Serbian language…we then had to work, to read and read more, so that we would learn Serbian language. At the time that I was in secondary school, we spoke among ourselves and with friends, again with parents, but in the streets it was a shame to speak this language.

Besides reiterating the theme of shame, this passage highlights the process of acquiring a second

language for Vlachs and how this process originates in a forum in which the usage of Vlach was,

until recently, socially proscribed. This is to say that Vlach language was never used in schools

until this year. As a result of this situation of diglossia, Vlachs acquired Serbian at a very young

age.

5.2 Communicative value

If the situation of diglossia, as described by the interview participants, is such that Vlach

usage was previously limited to the home, then it is worth investigating what, if any,

communicative value they associate with the language. As seen in Chapter One, when speaking

of the communicative function of language, it refers to the role of language as an instrument. The

interview subjects' statements on the instrumental value assigned to Vlach language frequently

referenced other languages. The parents in the focus group spoke of the communicative value of

studying Vlach for the purposes of using other Romance languages:

- I for example, with Vlach language, can understand more where I was somewhere in the world, in Spanish, Italian, a little French, to better understand some things because that [Vlach] is a Romance language, unlike Serbian.
- An advantage is that through Vlach they can better get along with a little more Italian, Romanian, and what's to say, Spanish.
- It would be better then if they could go to study in Romania; it will be easier to recognize the language.

When speaking, then, of the communicative value of studying Vlach in schools, the parents

focused on Vlach as an instrument to learn other languages. One possible implication underlying

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these claims is that the parents view these other Romance languages, such as Spanish, Italian, or Romanian, as possessing more communicative value than Vlach itself. Learning Vlach provides easier access to *other* languages as instruments; its instrumental value lies not in using it to communicate with others, but rather it is a useful tool for acquiring more valuable languages.

One interesting interpretation of the parents' comments on the instrumental value of learning Vlach is that it offers no indication that they believe that it will somehow alter the form of diglossia in the community. That is, they do not make claims about their children using Vlach for communicative purposes in future jobs, official interactions, or any public forum. At no point did the teachers or the parents indicate that instituting Vlach language in schools would increase the communicative value of Vlach itself. They described an array of positive outcomes from studying Vlach, and espoused the benefits of studying languages in a vague sense (through statements such as "with each additional language one speaks, another door opens in life" and "the more languages one knows, the better"), but they did not state that learning Vlach specifically would have communicative value on its own besides providing a gateway to learning and understanding other Romance languages more easily.

5.3 Symbolic value

Aside from the communicative functions, language also provides symbolic value as an "emblem of groupness, a symbol, a psychosocial rallying-point," according to Edwards.[87] Thus, language may not only be an instrument through which messages are sent and received, but also a symbol of "intangible associations."[88] What is the symbolic value attached to Vlach language? Many of the interview subjects discussed the positive emotional response that the language classes provoked. One teacher said:

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[87] Edwards, John. *Language and Identity: An Introduction*. 55.
[88] Edwards, John. *Language and Identity: An Introduction*. 55.

I am enthusiastic sometimes when I hear a word that I have really forgotten and I haven't needed for who knows how many years…when they show me that they know it. It is really beautiful for me. It makes me happy that they remember some words.

Later the same teacher spoke about when the children in her class use a particular Vlach word to say goodbye, saying, "do you know how much that means to me? It means so much to me. It's one word that I hadn't heard even from my great grandmother but it sounds so nice. Very home-feeling." These positive emotional responses signify that there is a positive emotional attachment on the part of the speakers towards Vlach language that emerges as a result of the language classes.

Interview participants also emphasized the links between language and culture. Both parents and teachers brought up music, folklore, history, and traditions when discussing the Vlach language despite not being directly asked about it. One parent said that if there were no Vlach language classes, young people would not understand their authentic songs and folklore. One of the teachers spoke about discussing folk traditions in class, such as Easter celebrations, traditional costumes, dolls, and folk songs. The interview subjects often mentioned culture in the same breath as language, saying "our language, our culture" as a phrase. The connection between cultural practices, such as holiday traditions or folk music, and language is clearly explicit in the case of these participants. One could state that the symbolic value of Vlach, in contrast to its communicative value, is very high.

Aside from the link between culture and language articulated by the interview subjects, one teacher spoke about the link between Vlach identity and language. Though her comment is lengthy, it merits reading in its entirety:

I am married to a Serb. And I live in Serbia and I consider myself a Serbian woman because this is the country that I know. However, just because of this language, it differentiates me from others…I am differentiated from others. Just due to language. I say, if God wanted it that way, if God wanted me to know Serbian, I would have been

born in some Serbian village or I would have been born somewhere else in Serbia…I was born in Negotin, in the city, but…after those days, I came to my childhood home here and that is by my birth I was born to a Vlach village and to speak Vlach language. And that language, I realize, as my mother tongue, I consider that my mother tongue because it is the language I learned from my mother. Serbian language is the language that was imposed on me and that I learned in school. And so just that language [Vlach] was determined for me in that way as skin and height…Such is my language, so am I. You cannot change yourself. I can go to Switzerland, but I know that I'm not a Swiss woman. I have to return to my roots. As far as that's concerned, I don't know anything different.

In a short passage, she explains several key beliefs about language. One is that language is tied to a specific territory. When she says that if she had been born elsewhere in Serbia, she would not be Vlach, she is precluding the possibility of being born to Vlach parents (perhaps who migrated) who would raise her to speak Vlach in a non-Vlach area. This indicates that although the language is only spoken in the home, there must be some aspect of the broader speech community with which the language is associated. This may also be witnessed in her use of the phrase "Vlach village." Another important observation about this quotation is that she states that it is language that is the only thing that differentiates her from others (ethnic Serbs). This may be seen as an indication of the high overlap between the cultural heritage of both Vlachs and Serbs (both are Orthodox Christians, there are similar folk music melodies and instruments, etc.).[89] Lastly, it is worth noting that she emphasizes the immutability of language as a marker of identity. One can learn other languages, as she has, or move to a foreign country, but one is defined by mother tongue. This indicates the strong belief that language and identity (in this case, ethnic affiliation) are inextricably linked. This imbues the Vlach language with symbolic value despite its limited usage outside the home.

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[89] From personal interviews and participant observation.

5.4 Prestige and stigma

Prestige and stigma, sociolinguistic terms discussed in Chapter 1, refer to the phenomena in which speakers evaluate certain languages more positively or negatively. Although linguists dismiss the argument that some language varieties are better or worse than others, "evaluations…are most obviously related to the prestige and power possessed by speakers of certain 'standard' varieties…when social stratification is associated with linguistic variation, arguments will be made for the grammatical, lexical, or phonological superiority of the variety used by those in power."[90]

During the course of my fieldwork, respondents frequently alluded to the stigma surrounding Vlach language without referring to it as such. The concept of shame came up several times during the interviews despite not being related directly to any of the questions. One teacher stated that one of her goals for the class was for the students to not feel ashamed to speak Vlach:

> And I want them to achieve to not be ashamed that they are Vlachs. Because when I look back, I went through it. I grew to not be ashamed that I'm Vlach. But I know that some of my friends were very ashamed, they had shame that they were Vlach, and they didn't show that they knew Vlach language. I want to inspire these children not be ashamed, to study, to speak, because we don't have a reason to be ashamed. And that's an advantage. To be proud that they are Vlach.

This comment indicates that the experience of feeling shame for being Vlach and speaking Vlach language is relatively common. That the teacher bolsters her own personal experience by referring to that of her friends is her way of showing that it is not an isolated, personal phenomena but one that is experienced by other Vlachs as well. This could be seen as an indication that shame or stigma associated with speaking the Vlach language is a social condition rather than an individual psychological one.

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[90] Edwards, John. *Multilingualism*. 96-97.

Another teacher also echoed this narrative of shame, saying that Vlach was "a language of nomads or herders, as it was called, and it really was a disgrace to speak it." She continued, stating:

> In the beginning, it [the project for Vlach language classes in school] wasn't that agreeable to me, to so declare that I know Vlach…simply that to me it was a disgrace because for years I had said that I didn't know Vlach and now at once, I am to teach this language and it was a little senseless.

These statements reveal a common theme of having to reconcile previous shame for knowing and speaking Vlach language with then having to publicly teach it. All of the teachers I spoke to, both informally during the teacher training seminar and in interviews, indicated that they had not volunteered to teach Vlach but had been approached by their school's principal at the onset of the project. The teachers therefore had to reconcile their own previous experience of the stigma associated with Vlach language with a new project that requires publicly speaking, and not hiding their knowledge of, the Vlach language.

In addition to indicating the tension between personal experiences of stigma and new language revival efforts, the teachers' comments on shame may be analyzed according to the underlying beliefs about language that may inform them. Whether or not the teachers actually believe Vlach to be an inferior language to Serbian, they certainly perceive that there is more prestige associated with speaking Serbian and more stigma associated with speaking Vlach. By hiding their knowledge of Vlach, they are able to avoid the perceived negative consequences (shame) of identifying as speakers of a stigmatized language variety. What is unclear from this research is whether for speakers of Vlach this shame is specifically associated with the language itself or with Vlach ethnicity. Does shame arise from being identified as a member of the Vlach minority, or from speaking Vlach language? This is a question that this research is unable to answer, but if it is the case that the stigma and shame are related specifically to Vlach language,

it could mean that speakers who report this understand Vlach language itself to be somehow

inferior to Serbian. If this were true, it would indicate that one of the underlying beliefs about

language that inform these overt statements is that some languages are inherently better or worse

than others.

6. Language Shift

6.1 Language Decline

The interview participants frequently spoke of the decline of Vlach language using generations as markers of change. Contrastive comments about the language knowledge of older individuals and young people or children illustrated the decline in the health of the language. One teacher described her own class, saying, "A small number of children know the language…Maybe out of 22 from the second to fourth grade who come, two or four know it. The others don't know." Later, the same teacher stated, "like I said, few children know it. They didn't learn it from grandma and grandpa in the family," and "At home they didn't learn it. These small children who come, 2nd and 3rd grade, say that few of them know it." The teacher then clarified that many children hear sometimes and understand some of the language when older family members speak it, but that they themselves don't know how to speak it. One of the parents in the focus group also indicated that they spoke Serbian with their child, even though their own native language was Vlach. Another teacher stated that two of the children in her class didn't know how to say anything and didn't understand at all when the classes began. The decreasing number of children who speak Vlach was later tied to the possibility of the death of the language.

The phenomena of language death and the possibility of Vlach language dying out was repeated many times by participants when they were asked to speculate about the future prospects of Vlach language. Speaking hypothetically, one teacher observed:

> Okay, it's like this: if they didn't study this language in schools, I am certain that this language would be lost in 20 years…because, as we were headed, I can honestly tell you: my children don't know how to speak Vlach because my husband is not a Vlach and thus we could say that my family would be closed off up until my existence…such in all the families. It means that in 10, 20, 30 years this language would be completely lost. We who are here would lose it, due to these mixed marriages; if the father and mother aren't Vlachs then they don't speak it anymore in that house…There would be that problem that this language would be forgotten, lost.

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Later, she repeated: "One of my motives is just so that we don't forget this language. So it is simple: my language would die." Speaking about the hypothetical possibility of language death in the future demonstrates two important pieces of information about the beliefs of interview subjects: that a decline in young speakers leads to language extinction and that studying Vlach language in schools could prevent this outcome from happening. The second of these points will be discussed further in the subchapter on language revival.

Related to the speculations about language death, participants spoke several times about the link between migration from the region and loss of speakers. One teacher described the effect of migration and language:

> In other places, the problem is that the children generally are abroad. And then the problems is that when they come home, they come for two or three weeks because 80% of families are in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, some in America, and so they don't speak Vlach there. Maybe some Serbian. In any way, they speak the language of the state where they live. And when they come home, the biggest problem is that they are with their ancestors, with their grandpa and grandma who are here, and they don't know how to speak Vlach.

Even if one disregards the statistical estimate given by the teacher regarding how many families live abroad, it is still a noteworthy statement. In addition to some families in the region not speaking Vlach at home anymore, the teacher claims that families who migrate to other states switch home languages either to Serbian or to the language of the state. That is to say, both in Serbia and abroad, Vlach language is declining in usage even in the home of those who identify as ethnically Vlach. The interview participants repeatedly and explicitly connected fewer young speakers of Vlach with language death. However, they tended to focus on children's lack of knowledge of Vlach rather than the lack of opportunities to use Vlach in most settings (due to the diglossia discussed above). This will be explored further in the subsequent subchapter.

6.2 Language revival

The teachers of Vlach indicated uncertainty about the future of the project of Vlach language classes since the program had just begun, but they also expressed a desire to see it continue. One teacher described the Vlach language revival movement, "in the last 5 or 6 years, the Vlachs declared themselves, that they now have their own alphabet, their own language, and even introduced the language in schools." She later continued:

> However, Vlach language is still like a pilot project introduced in our school since January, and we have the approval of the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Vlachs that this subject enter into our school. I was chosen as the one teacher for my school. So children love to come to this class and love to study, but we don't have grades still. I don't know how it will be for next year, whether it will be possible for Vlach language to be put in as a subject that all can choose. I don't know how it will be regulated by law next year.

Another teacher described the initial project, "these are the first textbooks, the first printed in the Vlach language are those that we use no. No texts written in the Vlach language existed…this is the first that this has been done. And the children are happy because of that." She later added, "I think that there will be more and more children who sign up and study. The project is well conceived, it is nice that they launched this, and I just hope that it will continue further." The teachers were enthusiastic, although uncertain about the future prospects of the program.

Some of the teachers did offer a contrast between the initial skepticism with which they and the parents considered the language revival effort and their later acceptance and embracing of the language classes. One teacher described the reaction of some parents to the classes, "What'll we do with Vlach? One more class, okay, a little more in school, but that, I can teach them at home." She said alter that now the parents, "they say nothing. They are happy, that their children come to school and in that class are well behaved, speak nicely, and the like." Another

teacher mentioned her own reluctance (discussed in the subchapter on stigma) to accept the role

of teaching the classes at first, but later expressed satisfaction with them.

While speculating about the future given the existence of the minority language classes in

Vlach, teachers and parents had positive outlooks regarding the ability of the classes to halt or

reverse some of the language decline discussed previously. One teacher claimed:

> Next year my students will say to their friends, "hey, it's nice in that class. Why not
> come?" And I say, in each class, that if each child learns just five words, with two classes
> each week that's ten words, 36 classes a year, this is how much? Around 2000 or 3000
> words. That means that we're not going to lose it. And I think that the language will be
> preserved.

The first parent in the focus group interview to respond to the direct question about the

motivation for enrolling their child in the classes stated, "So that they would speak Vlach better,

so the language doesn't die. So that it continues further. Passed from generation to generation."

So both the parents and the teachers interviewed stated that the preservation of the language and

the prevention of language death were likely outcomes of the classes (if they indeed continue).

This relates to the discussion in the previous section on language death that children are

presented as important to ensuring the future health of the language. However, the focus is on

language competence rather than usage. The outcome suggested by the teacher is improved

vocabulary knowledge, while the parents highlight a better ability to speak. Both of these are

concerned with the knowledge of the language itself and the *capability* to use it, rather than the

opportunity to use it. Put another way, the functional uses of the language, its communicative

value, are not considered by the parents as important for language revival. The interview subjects

do not contemplate whether or not the classes will affect the diglossia in the speech community.

This may show that the underlying belief about language revival is that the primary need is to

increase the number of competent young speakers, rather than to somehow alter the social

conditions in order to promote its usage.

7. Defining languages

7.1 Language and politics

The participants whom I interviewed spoke infrequently and in a detached way whenever the issue of politics arose. They sought to distance themselves from politics. One teacher said that initially only 2 children signed up for the project and that she spoke to the parents, telling them:

> When they came I said, hey, you know, and then I explained to them that we will study this, that, and that. That is to say, it doesn't have any political background. They were all afraid that it would come to division. Because it's a new language, new minority, new culture. And then we're going to divide and then it's going to be war. And that is the thinking of people. Why would we divide ourselves? I said, "really, I don't know anything about that; I know only about this language. I wasn't in the beginning going to accept, to do it, because I was afraid of these talks. Why would we now separate ourselves?

The same teacher stated "people now turned it to politics; they think it is politics. For a long time some thought that it is something about division, that the Vlachs want to separate from Serbians." In a later tangent about her son's upcoming graduation, she stated "It's ugly to talk about those politics, but here with us politics enters in everything, in all of life: politics determines your job and language and culture and everything, I think. That is very ugly here with us." In the focus group interview, parents distanced themselves from political discourse about the Vlachs and Romania. One stated, "in error some of the representatives think that he have some tension toward Romania…there are no tensions here, that we seek something from Romania." Thus both teachers and parents actively sought to separate themselves from the political claims related to the Vlach language (discussed in Chapter Three). This could be interpreted to mean that they believe that language and politics *can* be separated from one another. It demonstrates an ideology in which language is an object that can exist outside of politics, and that politics in

some cases, through active agents, become inserted into matters of language. This in turn implies the denial that language and politics are fundamentally intertwined.

7.2 Language boundaries

The question of the boundaries that separate one language from another came up frequently in discussions of Vlach and Romanian. Parents claimed that the conflation of Vlach and Romanian was an error of ignorance, not a willful political maneuver, stating, "it means that people make a mistake to say that we speak Romanian because it's not Romanian but Romance. That is, our language is a part of the Romance languages. It's not Romanian. Ours is Vlach." Another parent commented, "We were not Romanian and we will not be. They have their interests and we have our interests." One teacher, quoted in the introduction to this thesis, asserted that Romanian and Vlach language were not the same and could not be equated. Certainly some of the overt statements made by the interview subjects indicated their belief that in the difference between Romanian and Vlach.

However, in moments that seemed like apparent contradictions, the interview participants occasionally linked Romanian and Vlach in specific ways intentionally or unintentionally. The teacher who asserted the difference between Vlach and Romanian later took a phone call from a friend who spoke Romanian for the entirety of the conversation with no communication problems. She effectively illustrated the potential mutual intelligibility of Vlach and Romanian. Also, many of the parents declared that Vlach would be useful for anyone who wanted to study in Romania because it would make it easier for them to learn the language. The boundary between Vlach and Romanian seems to be so certain to them that they don't feel obliged to defend it as stringently as some of the politicians discussed in Chapter Three.

While similarities are overlooked between Vlach and Romanian, internal differences are not considered to be potential boundaries. In both the focus group and in one of the teacher interviews, the participants discussed dialects of the Vlach language in eastern Serbia, describing in which cities different dialects were used. The teacher even went as far to give the interviewer a mini-lesson on the phonological differences between two of the dialects. These differences were presented by the teachers and parents as simply giving additional information about the language situation, and were not at any point engaged with as possible boundary markers.

Even more interesting than the discussion of dialect differences within the group of Vlach speakers in eastern Serbia, participants also discussed encountering Vlachs from other countries. The groups referred to as Vlachs in other parts of the Balkans, primarily Macedonia, Albania, and Greece, actually speak Aromanian, a different branch of the East Romance language family.[91] However, this linguistic distinction was overlooked; one parent said, "I met a Greek person who was Vlach (in Greece there exist Vlachs) and I heard a little of the accent, how it goes. It's interesting that we think that we are unique Vlachs in this place but there exist Tsintsari [Serbian word for Vlachs who speak Aromanian] in Greece in Albania." One of the teachers also stated "There are Vlachs in Croatia, Macedonia, and Greece." I replied, "But isn't the language somewhat different?" She answered, "Yes, but it's similar. We can understand each other." So, in this instance, the criteria of similarity and mutual comprehension indicate a lack of a definitive boundary; they are all Vlachs. And yet, the same criteria, when applied to the Romanian language's relationship to Vlach, do not overcome the perceived boundary between the two languages.

Rather than dismiss this as hypocrisy or lack of critical thinking on the inconsistencies of their own arguments, it is worthwhile to consider the underlying implications about language

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[91] Ruzica, Miroslav. "The Balkan Vlachs/Aromanians Awakening, National Policies, Assimilation." 2.

beliefs in these examples. The blurring of internal differences and the heightening of external

ones may be understood as one of the processes of social identity formation and boundary

maintenance. This echoes Meadows' observations in his work on folk linguistics and

nationalism:

> Underneath this…are ideologies of nationalism because the discernment of one legitimate
> language from another is itself a process that depends on the categorical distinction
> between language and dialect provided in nationalism. That is, at a fundamental level, the
> identification of one language from another is one that is only possible if ideologies of
> nationalism are presupposed.[92]

So, one possible interpretation of the comments by the teachers and parents on Vlach, Romanian,

and Aromanian may be that it reflects an underlying, perhaps unarticulated, belief that languages

are discrete objects that exist in the world and are clearly bounded from one another but

internally stable.

7.3 Language purification

If the sharp boundaries between languages are believed to exist, it follows that linguistic

purity, or the lack of foreign loan words in a language, will be an important ideal.[93] This

corollary is reflected in the data from the interviews. The parents stated several times that Vlach

is not a "pure" language. One participant stated, "Vlach language still isn't defined. There isn't

grammar. It isn't written. There are Serbian words. Vlach isn't now purified. It is a language

mixed with Serbian," and later advocated "throwing out the Serbian phrases" as part of the

process of standardization. Another parent said, "it isn't pure, but we still want to maintain this."

The use of the word "still" here indicates the belief that a so-called impure language is somehow

worse or less worthy of preservation than a pure one. Another parent explained, "there are

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[92] Meadows, Bryan. "Examining the role of nationalism in folk theories of language: The case of language complaints in multilingual settings." 5.

[93] For a discussion of historical and contemporary linguistic purism, see Chapter 6 of *Multilingualism* by John Edwards.

enough, I think, groups of words of 26%, words in Vlach that are Serbian, maybe Bulgarian, inserted into the Vlach language. And Turkish. That means, it's not pure." Whether or not the given figure is accurate, the important implication of this and the other statements about foreign words in Vlach and purity indicate that one of the concerns of the parents with the language classes is related to the language itself. Linguistic purity is viewed as a goal that ought to be achieved by ridding the language of foreign loan words.

One of the teachers also spoke extensively of language purity. She began by saying that her initial misgivings about the project were related to the language itself, rather than social stigma discussed earlier:

> When this subject appeared, two or three years ago, in the beginning it was a little funny to me. Come on, now we are going to speak Vlach? Who needs that? I know that it's not a language of the future; that it's not going to be needed because the fund of words in Vlach stayed somewhere 100 years ago. That is, we don't have a word, we have to borrow it. They have it in Serbian, but we have to take them. We don't have a large fund of words. That is, when I did some translations…there is half the page that is in Serbian and I could reduce it to maybe a couple of sentences. To resemble it, to keep the essence…if I wanted to translate word by word, then every other word would be Serbian.

The presence of Serbian loan words in Vlach is again viewed as a negative feature of the language. These negative evaluations demonstrate that the participants believe that an ideal language has very impermeable boundaries; nothing from other languages on the other side of the boundary ought to be mixed in. This attitude may be problematic in areas of high multilingualism where code switching and language mixing may be readily observed.

8. Conclusions

The interviews conducted with teachers and parents indicate that in some ways their beliefs are incongruent with that of linguists because they reflect nationalist undertones about the desired purity and internal homogeneity of languages as sharply bounded units. Their beliefs about language function, decline, and revival show that their primary concern is with augmenting children's knowledge rather than usage of the Vlach language. Although it is important not to generalize the findings of this research beyond the very limited scope for which they are relevant, there are still interesting implications for the broader scholarship. Examination of the beliefs of nonlinguists about language can elucidate instances where these beliefs contradict the beliefs of linguists or politicians. In a context in which minority language programs are being designed and implemented, it is often the beliefs of linguists and politicians that play a central role in informing and formulating policy. Thus, such policy may be poorly suited for a given context if it fails to consider the folk linguistics dynamics of the particular multilingual setting. Research on nonlinguists' beliefs about language could result in the creation of more successful minority language education programs. In this case, since it is at the very outset of minority language education, it is premature to evaluate the success or failure of the language revival effort in reversing language decline.

Further research on this particular case would be well served, first and foremost, to expand the sample size and see if similar themes still emerge. It would also be worthwhile to conduct a longitudinal study to see not only the outcomes of the minority language program over time, but also to investigate whether any changes occur in the language beliefs of the teachers and parents involved. In other settings in which minority language rights have been poorly implemented, it could also be fruitful to investigate folk beliefs about language. Further research

in this field could attempt to further develop the relationship between folk language beliefs and minority language education to see whether and how the two may influence one another. This thesis, severely limited in its scope and conclusions, nevertheless points the way to potentially interesting new fields of inquiry that would bring folk linguistics closer to the approach of everyday ethnicity and the field of nationalism studies.

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