Language Policies for Promoting Romanian in Europe

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ABSTRACT: Promoting Romanian language in the European area is a major objective of Romanian linguistic policies that embrace the EU directives. This can be achieved through activities that preserve the identity and also increase the visibility in Europe and internationalize Romanian language and culture. Any European project or activity extensively applied is based on linguistic diversity which is remarkable not only at a European level, but globally. This is because we are at a stage in which mobility and interaction define the individual and the contemporary social identity.

KEYWORDS: linguistic policies, Romanian language, European common area

This article captures the main aspects that occur in the policy of promoting Romanian language in the EU. Firstly, we need to refer to the responsible authorities within the EU for identifying and coordinating identity promoting projects in the context of a large multicultural community. Although the borders between the member states permit easy access, there are cultural, educational and linguistic barriers. As people migrated in the European common area, the circulation of goods and services increased. Subsequently, the mixing of different cultural and linguistic identities determined a new communication network dominated by this intercultural aspect (Simon 1995, 161-190).

The diversity aspect, caused by the input of different identities, caused the EU and the responsible organizations to launch a series of projects meant to build an *identity model* which promotes general values such as solidarity, tolerance (Rotaru 2019, 264-270), peace (Marin 2014, 209-213), economic and political stability (Marin and Botina 2013, 618-624), environmental awareness, people awareness through social policies. All these protect simultaneously the identity and diversity of European communities.

As a result, the Council of Europe and EU develop projects and actions with the purpose of overcoming language and cultural barriers, individually, as well as collectively. As early as 1992, the *European Convention* supported the appearance and development of communication competencies in a variety of regional and minority languages to protect the small communities that could be at risk of being crushed by the dominant languages, largely present and used worldwide (English, German, French, Spanish, etc). Maintaining the linguistic diversity was compared to the need of biodiversity, as it allows the European ecosystem to function naturally. In 1995, EU encouraged performance in three European languages, supporting European citizens to interact in a pluralinguistic Europe, also to recognize and accept each other's cultural identity. Any European project or activity extensively applied is based on linguistic diversity which is remarkable not only at a European level, but globally. This is because we are at a stage in which mobility and interaction define the individual and the contemporary social identity.

This social interaction dynamic is visible in all aspects of life, in any type of state or linguistic community. Undoubtedly, there is a constant element that generates and governs this social, economic and linguistic mobility and this is regulated by different documents, which ultimately follow the motto: "United in diversity". The respect for cultural and

linguistic diversity is mentioned in the beginning of the Treaty of European Union (OJ L 17, 6.10.1958, p. 385) (European Parliament 2021a).

The phrase *language policy* considers every aspect of all activities that begins with understanding language as fundamental to human communication. Legislative framework is the first and most important aspect for all types of activities at European level. This becomes accessible through translating the legislation and official documents in all European languages if they are relevant to each state. Otherwise, all documents are only available in English, French and German. The high cost of translating all documents justifies publishing these in a limited number of languages, often only in one language.

Another factor that influences translating documents or information on the European Commission's websites is the target-audience or the specialist fields where the information is needed for a limited time. Therefore, the general information is available in 24 European languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish, as noticed on the European Parliament website (European Parliament 2021b).

A second aspect to be considered when actively integrating in the linguistic community is education. The linguistic policies in the EU are continuously disseminated in public and private education establishments across European countries. Currently, Romania is a committed partner in education, also on the labour market in Europe. Romania promotes Romanian language across Europe as a mother tongue that preserves identity and national values, also as a foreign language that enables people to access labour market and education in the Romanian territory.

The most important objectives that the EU set regarding linguistic policies are: respect for linguistic diversity, teaching and learning of foreign languages and mobility helped by educational formative programmes, insisting on lifelong learning. These objectives lead towards creating an intercultural dialogue which facilitates integration on labour market and offers opportunities for increasing the success rate in education. In this regard, EU collaborates continuously with all member states to protect minorities and implicitly promote historical, regional and minority languages across Europe, starting with *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* adopted in 1992 by the Council of Europe.

In November 2017, during Gothenburg Summit, the Commission launched the vision to create a *European education area* by 2025. This proposal continues the "Creative Europe" idea from Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes with activities on European language day and awarding distinctions such as *European Linguistic Certificate* and *Juvenes Translatores* which encourage learning and using foreign languages at the level of performance.

In 2019, Council of Europe introduced a recommendation for educational platforms, such as School Education gateway and eTwinning for efficiently teaching and learning foreign languages and adapted to the needs of a virtual learning space accessed by young people from Europe. In the context of a global pandemic, these platforms proved to be productive ensuring easy teaching, learning and assessing, without extra costs and time, with the positive impact of better management of personal resources by learners.

EU supported the research in the linguistic field. One of the priorities was observing the evolution of linguistic competencies of speakers in the European area. In 2005, Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) [COM(2005)0356] offered a necessary tool for creating different materials for teaching, learning and assessing a foreign language.

Another priority of the linguistic policies was establishing linguistic research centres: *European Centre for Modern languages of the council of Europe (ECML)* and *The Mercator European Research Centre for Multilingualism and Language Learning.*

The centres have different priorities. ECML aims to elaborate a strategy meant to stimulate the linguistic acquisition through encouraging the intercultural dialogue, good practice exchange and various research projects. Mercator promotes cultural elements of regional and minority languages across Europe and making them accessible to every European Citizen.

European Masters in Translation (EMT) is another relevant network that includes 34 masters programmes across Europe. This "quality mark" can be gained through a masters programme in translation whose purpose is to qualify highly skilled translators.

In Romania the linguistic policies are promoted by the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Romanian Language Institute, the Romanian Cultural Institute, the Institute of Romanian as a European Language, Eudoxiu Hurmuzachi Institute for the Diaspora and through universities. Each of these follows the EU directives and guidelines for education and research and collaborates to promote Romanian language in many countries in Europe, USA, Asia and Africa. The results are visible through fifty Romanian language, culture and civilization university departments across the world, also through Romanian language, culture and civilization courses at secondary schools and colleges for Romanian students studying in other European countries (Belgium, Italy, France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and UK). Additionally, Romanian is promoted in the cultural institutions in Europe governed by ICR, which organize translation seminars, publish bilingual books and organize cinema, theatre performances and art exhibitions. Finally, yet importantly, the Minister of External Affairs offers foreign citizens the possibility to study in Romania with scholarships through the embassy and consulate network. These institutions are involved in maintaining and consolidating the economic, political, cultural and linguistic connections with the diaspora.

Romanian universities that became multicultural, promote Romanian as a European language and the cultural values that define the Romanian territory. The three weeks summer courses of Romanian language, culture and civilization are very popular every year in many universities in Romania. They attract students, young researchers from across the world and offer a diversity of information in an environment that has a high professional European standard in which cooperation and interpersonal good practice and dialogue is endorsed. Each university has an Erasmus+ Charter that offers language support to the students and organize Romanian language courses according to Gothenburg Summit 2017. The support is online before and during the mobility projects.

Another component of the Romanian linguistic policy is teaching and learning Romanian as a foreign language in the study programme: Preparatory year in Romanian language for EU and international students. Once they complete the course, the students have the linguistic competencies necessary for studying in universities for Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate or full-time researchers. There are Romanian culture and civilisation courses available, but also specialist language courses in medicine, engineering, social studies and philology.

In the context of online education, the students can access electronic resources that they use for more successful learning of languages. These interactive learning programmes transform the classical educational environment into an active and attractive one using visuals, games, group work and accessing search engines. All these elements transform what could be a passive learning environment into an active one. The border between work and play disappears.

Using IT (Rotaru 2016, 326-334), digital manuals, internet translation tools and much more requires a reconfiguration of the strategies and methods for teaching and learning now and in the future.

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