

Languages and Minorities on Roumanophone territory

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Abstract: This paper explores the position of the Romanian language spoken within several territories with a focus on the most important one: Romania. Throughout history, Romanian has acquired different statuses according to different territories: national or official language, vehicular or foreign language but also second or minority language. This study goes deeper into these notions, questioning the meaning of language, and exploring other linguistic divisions such as dialects, regional varieties, etc. The majority of the time, the interaction between languages and territories is dynamic, implying either harmonious or discordant relationships. In Romania, for centuries there has been difficult cohabitation. The relationship between the Romanian population and its minorities has not always been peaceful coexistence throughout the various regimes in its history. While some minorities have been privileged, others have been tolerated or have had a marginal status. Our study endeavors to discuss all of these issues.

Keywords: language; territory; ethnicity; minority; culture; regional variety; dialect; identity; second language; minority language; Romania

Résumé : Cet article porte sur la langue roumaine dont le statut varie, au cours de son histoire et en différents territoires, entre langue nationale ou officielle, langue véhiculaire ou étrangère voire entre langue seconde ou minoritaire. En mettant l'accent sur le territoire roumain, nous interrogeons, à travers cette étude, la notion de langue mais aussi d'autres notions telles le dialecte, la variété régionale, etc. L'interaction entre langues et territoires constitue la source d'un dynamisme qui sous-tend des relations pouvant avoir un caractère harmonieux ou discordant. En Roumanie, il y a eu, depuis des siècles, une cohabitation difficile entre la population roumaine et les minorités. Cette relation, qui n'a pas toujours été pacifique sous les différents régimes, a privilégié certaines, minorités et en a toléré ou marginalisé d'autres.

Mots-clés : langue ; territoire ; ethnicité ; minorité ; culture ; variété régionale ; dialecte ; identité ; langue seconde ; langue minoritaire ; Roumanie.

1. Introduction

The *Romanian Language* is a Romance langue that originates from Latin, whose phonology and grammar developed in rather different directions because of the its relative isolation from other Romance languages and its close contact with the Slavic languages.

Most of the time, the interaction between languages and territories is dynamic implying either harmonious or discordant relationships. In Romania, for centuries, there has been difficult cohabitation¹. The relationship between the Romanian population and its minorities has not always endured a peaceful coexistence and understanding, during the various regimes in its history². While some minorities have been privileged, others have been tolerated or have had a marginal status³. Our study endeavors to present and analyze part of these issues, with special focus on the different statuses Romanian has acquired according to different territories, on the Romanian dialects and the regional varieties as well as on the most important three minorities: Hungarian, German and Roma⁴.

The status of the Romanian language inside and outside Romania has been researched in numerous studies published over time in the Romanian space. However, the subject is not very well known to the Western researchers community due to a poor popularization of what has been published in the country, and to certain reluctance on the political and academic level in addressing the subject. At a political level, the desire of the Romanian government to maintain good relations with neighbouring countries has led to a lack of promotion of the studies on the Romanian minority in territories beyond its borders. Therefore, we are proposing to shed light on this subject. In our approach, we will start from the observation that

¹ Artyom A. Ulyanov, "Great Powers' Diplomacy towards National Minorities in South-Eastern Europe in 19th-20th Centuries: Some Disputable Contradictions", in Vasile Ciobanu, Flavius Solomon, and Sorin Radu (eds.), *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Kriterion, 2011, p. 177-188.

² Florin Abraham, "Minorities in the Theory of Totalitarianism. Case Study: Minority People during Romanian Communism", in Vasile Ciobanu, Flavius Solomon, and Sorin Radu (eds.), *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, Cluj Napoca, Editura Kriterion, 2011, p. 151-165.

³ Cristian Sandache, "«Our» Transylvania – «their» Transylvania. Romanian and Hungarian representations of a multicultural region", in Cristina Preutu, and George Enache (eds.), *Identități etno-confesionale și reprezentări ale celuilalt în spațiul est-european: între stereotip și voința de a cunoaște*, Iași, Editura Universității "Al. I. Cuza", 2018, p. 252-261.

⁴ *Enciclopedia României*, vol. I, București, 1938, p. 147-153.

one can demonstrate that language is, first of all, the “support” or the “vehicle” for culture and identity. Some forms of culture are explained by language, for example science or history¹.

2. Status of the Romanian language in the world

2.1. Romanian as an official language

The Romanian language is declared official in several States:

- a. In Romania, it is the only official language and is spoken by more than 90% of the population (according to database of Romanian National Institute of Statistics 2016 – 22,241,718 people²);
- b. In the Republic of Moldavia it is also declared the official language, being the mother tongue of about 80% of the population. By the Declaration of Independence of August 27, 1991, the new State of the Republic of Moldavia announced its aspirations as a political entity in its own right, devoting the official names to the Eastern part of the Prut: Romanian and Romanian people³. The process of construction and affirmation of the Republic of Moldavia has experienced a sinusoidal development since 1994, reaffirming the Moldovan current, which essentially supports the pseudo-existence of a *Moldavian nation* and *Moldavian language*. Although the common literary and linguistic thesaurus is accepted, the “Moldavian people” and the Romanian people use a common literary form “based on the living source of the Moldavian popular language⁴”. This political-ideological trend falsely claims that the Moldavian national language and Romanian language retain their glottonym as a significant identifier of each nation: Moldavian and Romanian. Despite these theories, historians and linguists on both sides of the Prut have demonstrated the unity of the language spoken in the two Romanian States⁵.

¹ Dan Cruceru, *Identitatea axiologică a culturii. Eseu despre realitatea și virtualitatea valorilor culturale*, București, Editura Economică, 2004, p. 77.

² După Domiciliu, *Populația românei pe localități la 1 ianuarie 2016*, Institutul național de statistică, <https://lc.cx/mDmc>, accesat la 27.09.2018.

³ Sergiu Musteață, “Dilemele Republicii Moldova”, *Archiva Moldaviae*, nr. IV, 2012, p. 109.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

- c. In the Moldavian Republic of Transnistria, Romanian is the third official language, alongside with Russian and Ukrainian, being spoken by 31.9 % of the population¹;
- d. In Serbia, 345,763 inhabitants declare themselves as belonging to the Romanian national minority, their language is called “of official use” in the localities of Vojvodina (where the Romanian-speaking population reaches 15%). The Romanian speaking community in Serbia, the 160,000 Romanian speaking community in Bulgaria and the two million Aromanians in Greece, who are not recognized as national minorities in those European or European-aspiring countries, have no rights to assert their identity through culture, language and religion.

At the local level, the Romanian language and script are officially used in 8 municipalities: Alibunar, Bela Crkva, Žitište, Zrenjanin, Kovačica, Kovin, Plandište and Sečanj. In the municipality of Vršac, Romanian is also official in the villages with ethnic Romanian majority: Vojvodinci, Markovac, Straža, Mali Žam, MaloSredište, Mesić, Jablanka, Sočica, Ritiševo, Orešac and Kuštilj.

Article 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia stipulates that in the Republic of Serbia the Serbo-Croatian language and the Cyrillic script shall be officially used, while the Latin script shall be officially used in the manner established by the law. Article 6 of the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina determines that, together with the Serbo-Croat language and the Cyrillic script, the Latin script, the Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian and Rusyn languages and their scripts, as well as languages and scripts of other nationalities, shall simultaneously be officially used in the work of the bodies of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. It is to a high extent used in religious education and service, arts, education and media.

2.2. Romanian as a minority language

The largest Romanian national minority is in Ukraine. The 500,000 Romanian speaking community in Ukraine are split between the Transcarpathia region, the Cernăuți (Cernivți) region and the Odessa region, who have long been persecuted before and after the Soviet era.

There are also important Romanian-speaking minorities in Bulgaria and Hungary, as well as in other States such as Russia, Serbia, Croatia and

¹ Octavian Țicu, “How to Make a «Nation»: Reflections on the Moldovan Nation-Building Policies during the Soviet Union (1948-1989)”, *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XVII, nr. 4, winter 2008, p. 130-153.

Slovenia, or Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, following the massive deportations of the 1940s.

As a result, statistically, the total number of speakers whose mother tongue is Romanian is estimated at about 24,000,000¹.

2.3 Romanian as a second language

The notion of second language is an important concept that has raised controversy even among specialists in the field, with different meanings in English and French literature. Anglo-Saxon sociolinguistics refer to second language only when it is been acquired chronologically after the first language². In situations of migration and languages in contact, as in France, L2 comes to assume the functions of the first language (as a language of communication, in schooling and daily social exchanges outside or within the family)³. A second type of definition proposes to distinguish it in the set of non-mother tongue for a usage that has a particular function or status. Rafoni⁴ explains that the second language can be a foreign language practiced in one way or another in the countries where it is learned. He even proposes a third type of definition that would situate the second language both as a language learned at school (which is not the case for the mother tongue) and a language of instruction (which is not the case of foreign languages). Cuq and Gruca⁵ define FSL (French as a second language) as French spoken abroad with a special status (the use of French in the former colonies); French is not the mother tongue and it becomes a second language by being used as a language of schooling from a certain level and by allowing the accession to a higher social level.

As far as the Romanian literature is concerned in relation to this notion, we emphasize the fact that Romanians know only two linguistic realities: Romanian as their mother tongue and other foreign languages taught as compulsory subjects in the school system (English, French, German, Italian or Spanish). “Second language” refers to the second foreign language learned in the school system. Therefore, Romanian as a second language is a structure unknown to the Romanians. The use of Romanian as a second language is

¹ Wikipedia, “Répartition géographique du roumain. Statut du roumain”, <https://bit.ly/2HjWUTi>, accessed March 1st, 2017.

² Jean-Charles Rafoni, *Apprendre à lire en français langue seconde*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2007, p. 16-17.

³ Georges Lüdi and Bernard Py, *Être bilingue*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 44.

⁴ Jean-Charles Rafoni, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵ Jean-Pierre Cuq, and Isabelle Gruca, *Cours de didactique du français langue étrangère et seconde*, Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2002, p. 93.

found only among the ethnic minorities in Romania and the Republic of Moldova (there are about 4,000,000 speakers for whom Romanian is the second language, according to the 2011 population census).

2.4. Romanian as a foreign language

Romanian is taught as a foreign language in the neighboring countries but also in many other schools in nearly forty countries (Spain, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, Mexico, Sweden, England, etc.)¹.

3. Languages

Romanian is the only official language nationwide and all the other languages spoken on the Romanian territory are either minority languages (such Hungarian, German, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Romani, Ukrainian etc.) or foreign languages (English, French, German, Spanish etc.). Our focus will not be on the foreign languages but on the minority languages as well as on the other subdivisions of the language: dialects and regional varieties.

In the Romanian tradition, the dialects are “the largest territorial linguistic varieties subordinated to language²”. It is worth making the distinction of the use of the term “dialect” in different academic traditions. The dialect/dialecte “pair” definitions diverge considerably between Anglo-Saxon and Romance linguistics. Since the primary dialects of the Anglo-Saxon world have practically disappeared, dialect of English currently designates what Romance linguistics calls a regional variety of a common language (regional French, regional Italian). The French term (also used in other European countries) refers to a linguistic variety generated by the diatopic (or territorial) variation of the language, whereas the Anglo-American dialect rather indicates a variety resulting from the diastratic (or social) valorisation of the language (although some geographic and even diphasic markers are present). In such cases, the confrontation of the different definitions can really help novice students who may be insecure by these apparent contradictions in their reading; we have found that even in French, some uninformed researchers begin to use “dialect” with the Anglo-Saxon meaning, instead of reserving its use for the primary dialects of the Latin world.

¹ Wikipedia, “Répartition géographique du roumain. Statut du roumain”, *op. cit.*, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9partition_g%C3%A9ographique_du_roumain accessed March 1st, 2017.

² Mioara Avram, “Dialecte”, in Marius Sala (ed.), *Enciclopedia limbii române*, București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2001, p. 175-176.

3.1. Romanian Dialects

There are four Romanian dialects even if they are not all on the Romanian territory: Dacoromanian, Istroromanian, Aromanian and Meglenoromanian.

Dacoromanian is the most important one and it is located in Romania, Moldavia and in the bordering areas of Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Ukraine. This dialect is generally broken down into several varieties. There are also three different accents. The speakers of the Dacoromanian understand each other, but they immediately recognize the origin area of their interlocutor.

Istroromanian has been spoken over the last decade by a thousand speakers in the region of Učka Gora (Slovenia). In 2002, a Linguistics Atlas published in Pula states that there are still at least one hundred speakers, some even very young¹.

Aromanian is a language related to Romanian, but it is only intelligible to 20%, at most, for a Romanian (Daco-Romanian) speaker and vice versa. This language is spoken by about 250,000 speakers in northern Greece, southern Albania, eastern Serbia, Bulgaria and in the Republic of Macedonia. Aromanian is known as “Macedo-Romanian” in Romania, but it is neither official nor recognized by scientists.

Meglenoromanian is spoken by a Muslim community of about 15,000 speakers located north-east of Salonika (Greece) and south of Bulgaria².

3.2. Regional varieties

Dacoromanian, the only dialect spoken on the Romanian territory, is divided into several regional varieties which are presented briefly below.

3.2.1. *Regional variety of Muntenia*

This variety is spoken in the south of the country (excepting the southwestern part), Muntenia, Dobrogea, Oltenia, southeast of Transylvania. At the linguistic level, there are several phonetic, morpho-syntactic and lexical particularities which individualize this variety in relation to the others: tendency for oxytone accentuation (*bolnáv, duşmán, fíráv, gíngáş* etc.); preservation of the diphthong -ai- in the words *câine, pâine, mâine*, etc.; preservation of diphthongs: -ea-, -ia- (*seară, zeamă, curea, băiat* etc.); non-

¹ Robert Blagoni, “About some aspects of the Linguistic Atlas within the framework of linguistic science”, *Annales. Series historia et sociologia*, nr 16, 1999, Koper, p. 29-44.

² Virgil Coman, *Aromanii si meglenoromanii din Banat. Demografie, societate, izvoare*, Constanta, Editura Etnologica, 2016, *passim*.

altered preservation of dental t and d followed by palatal vowels e și i (*dinte, frunte*); preservation of fricatives *ț* and *g* in words such *ascinci, deget, plânge, cruce*, etc.¹

It has a strong conservative character, preserving language characteristics which, in the rest of the Daco-Romanian dialect, have evolved towards other stages of development². The lexicon is characterized by a number of factors that come either from the old lexical fund of the Romanian language (native, Latin, Slavic), or following contact with neighboring spoken languages (Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish, Modern Greek, etc.): *braniște*<bg. *branište*, *ciușcă*<bg. *Čuška* *glugă*<bg. *Gugla*. It is one of the most individualized linguistic areas of the Dacoromanian dialect³.

3.2.2. Regional variety of Moldavia

This variety covers Moldova and Bucovina and some regions bordering the two regions: the northeast of Transylvania, the northwest of Muntenia and the north of Dobrogea. It is also present in the east of Prut, in the Republic of Moldavia, in the territory of Ukraine, in Herza or in the south-west. From a phonetical point of view, there are several characteristics: the accent is more pronounced (preference for paroxytone accent of certain nouns, adjectives etc): *bólnav, firav, gîngaș, mîros* etc.; general tendency of the closure of the anterior vowel (ample vowels> less ample vowels: closure of the final not accentuated *e* in *i*: *carne*>*carni*, *frate*>*frati*, *cruce*>*cruci*; *ă* final becomes *â* [î]: *casă*>*casâ*, *mamă*>*mamâ*, *soră*>*sorâ*; the diphthong *-ea-* becomes *-a-*: *seară*>*sară*, *zeamă*>*zamă*, *stearpă*>*starpă* etc.; the consonants *ț* and *g* become *ș* and *ž*⁴. Eliminating the occlusive element, the Moldavia regional variety “avoids the hardness of sound⁵”: *ținți* >*șinși*, *cruțe* >*crușe*, *sânge* > *sânze*, *gîme* >*žeme*, etc.

3.2.3. Regional variety of Banat

Located in the south-west of the Dacoromanian territory, and been spoken beyond the Danube in the Serbian Banat, this variety is one of the most

¹ Florin-Teodor Olariu, *Variație și varietăți în limba română. Studii de dialectologie și sociolingvistică*, Iași, Institutul European, 2017, p. 18.

² Matilda Caragiu Marioțeanu et al., *Dialectologie română*, București, Editura didactică și pedagogică, 1977, p. 166.

³ Florin-Teodor Olariu, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18

⁵ Valeriu Rusu, *Tratat de dialectologie românească*, Craiova, Editura Scrisul românesc, 1984, *passim*.

conservative. It preserves some archaic linguistic features (the area in question was one of the most romanized, the connections with the Roman Empire being until the end of the 6th century); on the other hand, the archaic character comes from its specificity of lateral area compared to the other part of the territory (from this point of view one can see common elements with the Istoromanian dialect¹. From a phonetic point of view, two archaic phenomena are to be observed: the sounded affricate ȡ, (present in the dialects of Moldavia): *buȡă, prânȡ, brânȡă*, and the primary palatal *ń*, in words of Latin origin: *cuń* (<lat. Cuneus), *călcăń* (<lat. Calcaneum)², etc.

3.2.4. Regional variety of Crişana

This variety is spoken in the northwest region of the Dacoromanian territory, between the Mureş River in the south and the Gutâiului Mountains in the north. It was the first to emerge as a new configuration of the Romanian-speaking dialectal unit. Among its characteristics, are the following: -*ĝ* becomes *j* (*jer, fuje*); introduction of the occlusive *c* into the *sl* groups (*sclab, sclugă*); presence of some terms such as *a piȡiga* ('a pişca'), *cotătoar* ('oglinďă'), *cuştul(u)esc* ('gust')³, etc.

3.2.5. Regional variety of Maramureş

This variety is the last diatopic unit found in the northern extremity of the Dacoromanian territory and in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine. Although opinions are still divergent as to the validity of this new distinction in the Dacoromanian continuum, there are several elements of identification of the area⁴:

- a. The hard pronunciation of the affricates *ĉ>č* et *ĝ>ğ* and the passage of the vowels following these affricates of the previous series (*e, i*) in the central series (*ă, î*): *čărb, činc, fuğă, trağă*; Verbal forms with apocope, Maramureş are being considered innovative in this sense⁵;
- b. The level of intonation is characterized by a slower rhythm of speech, a greater intensity of accent and a prolongation of accented vowels,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 273-276.

² *Ibid.*, p. 273-276.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 390-398.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁵ Adrian Turculeţ, *Dialectologie română*, Iaşi, Editura Universităţii Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2002, *passim*.

with a greater frequency of hard consonants, leading to a general impression of “a harsh and vigorous voice”¹.

- c. The ethnographic conservative character, recognized as such throughout the Dacoromanian region, is attributed either to external factors (geographic isolation up to the modern era) or to internal factors (the existence of a social psychology built on the socio-political organization, specified for this area)².

4. Minorities

According to the Dictionary of Sociolinguistic Terminology³, the minority language is the language that differs from the official language(s) of (the) State and used traditionally in a given territory of a State by the nationals of that state who form a smaller group compared to the general population of the same State. This definition does not include dialects of the official languages of the State or migrants’ languages (according to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages). It is the language whose value is not recognized internationally by speakers of the sociolinguistically dominant language (official, written, vehicular, school, normed language). Its speakers comply with practical usages and interaction rules produced by their interlocutors⁴.

In Romania there are 10 minority languages that benefit from general protection (Albanian, Armenian, Greek, Italian, Yiddish, Macedonian, Polish, Romanian, Ruthenian, Tatar) and 10 other languages that benefit from increased protection (Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Turkish, Ukrainian)⁵.

In modern Romania, the relations between the Romanian State and the Romanian majority with the national minorities have fundamentally determined the destiny of the latter. Although they have generally been on a line of normality, there has been no lack of tensions in the history, due to international crises or changes in the political regime.

¹ Valeriu Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

² *Ibid.*, p. 357.

³ Cristina Ungureanu, *Dicționar de terminologie sociolingvistică*, Iași, Institutul European, 2017, p. 148.

⁴ Jean-Michel Kasbarian, “Langue minorée et langue minoritaire”, in Marie-Louise Moreau (ed.), *Sociolinguistique : les concepts de base*, Bruxelles, Mardaga, 1997, p. 185-188.

⁵ Nicolae Saramandu, and Manuela Nevaci, *Multilingvism și limbi minoritare în România*, Cluj-Napoca, Qual Media, 2009, p. 30-41.

Maintaining a minority language may be hindered by certain factors. Among the major factors leading to language change, one may highlight¹ the economic status (when the speakers of these languages have a relatively low economic status); the economic changes (modernization, industrialization and urbanization); the social status (when a majority language is considered a prestigious language); the socio-historical status (when speakers are inspired to fight for common interests as members of ethno-linguistic group); the language status (using international communication language); the demographic factors and the media.

As far as the education is concerned, there are three types of pre-university education in Romania for minority children:

- i. educational structures with mother tongue teaching for minorities: Hungarian, Czech, Croatian, German, Serbian, Slovak, Ukrainian;
- ii. educational structures with partial tuition in the mother tongue, a form of study characteristic of minorities: Croatian, Turkish, Tatar, for which a number of vocational subjects are delivered in the mother tongue;
- iii. educational structures in Romanian language in which the native language is studied, organized for minorities: Hungarian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Italian, Polish, Rromani, Russian, Czech, Croatian, German, Serbian, Slovak, Turkish, Ukrainian².

According to the last census, the percentage of the minority population in Romania is about 12%. We will address, in what follows, only the first three important minorities of Romania: the Hungarian, the Roma and the German.

4.1. Hungarian Minority

The presence of the Magyars in the Carpathian Basin dates back to the year 895. At the time, there were tribes and large families. From the 11th to the 12th century, the presence of the Siculi was evident in the western part of the current county of Bihor, then in the central departments of Cluj, Alba and Hunedoara, and, in the 13th century, in the eastern part of Transylvania.

In the middle of the 20th century, the Hungarian minority accounted for about 7.5% of Romania's population (around 1.5 million members)³,

¹ René Apple, and Pieter Muysken, *Language contact and bilingualism*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2005, p. 33-37.

² Laszlo Murvai, *Timpul prezent în învățământul minorităților naționale din România: realizări ale anului școlar 2001-2002 și perspective*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Studium, 2002.

³ Sabin Manuilă, *Studiu etnografic asupra populației României*, București, Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1940, p. 97.

constituting a community characterized by deep-rooted traditions in the history of Transylvania. During the period between the two world wars, the Hungarian minority managed to retain a good part of its positions within the Romanian State, both in terms of economic, cultural and educational or associative aspect, as well as in terms of internal political organization. As for the demographic situation, the border changes and the movements of the population during the Second World War brought about great changes in the geographical position and the social structure of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Between 1940 and 1944, approximately 100,000 Hungarians left South Transylvania, out of which only 50% settled in Northern Transylvania. The deportation of 125,000 Jews of Hungarian identity by the Hungarian authorities obedient to Nazi orders and the large number of refugees from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, clerks, or aristocracy in Northern Transylvania severely diminished the social structure and ethno-demographic position of the Hungarians in Romania.

During the communist period, especially after 1970, the leader of the PCR (Romanian Communist Party), Nicolae Ceausescu, openly pursued through a forced assimilation policy the creation of a homogeneous State from an ethnic point of view, on the one hand, and the facilitation of emigration in Hungary in cases of “family reunification” by a tacit agreement, on the other hand. The gradual abolition of what was left of the Hungarian-language teaching network, the blockage or limitation of the access of Hungarians to certain professions, the ethnic homogenization of the Hungarian-specific cities in Transylvania, the systematization plan of the localities were important elements of this program. In the party, the army and the Securitate, the percentage of Hungarian minorities has drastically reduced, being limited to some of Ceausescu's trustworthy cadres. Members of the Hungarian community reacted with the organization of dissent and mass emigration in clandestine or legal forms in Hungary or the West. The Revolution of December 1989, which led to the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu, started in Timisoara, precisely because of a protest from the Hungarian minority¹.

After the fall of communism in December 1989, the Hungarian minority re-established its rights, enjoying freedom of expression and promotion of Hungarian language and traditions.

¹ George Schöpflin, *A magyarok helyzete Romániában [Situația maghiarilor în România]*, Minority Rights Group, Report no. 37, London, 1977.

According to the latest census, which dates back to 2011, the Magyars are the largest minority in the country. With a population of 1,227,600, this minority represents 6.5% of the country's population, which was 20,120,000 people on October 20, 2011, according to data provided by the National Statistical Institute. The Magyar population represents the majority in the counties of Harghita (with 84.6%) and Covasna (73.8%), while in the county of Mureș it is 39.3%, 35.2% in Satu Mare, 25.9% in Bihor County and 23.1% in the neighbouring district of Sălaj.

The Magyar community benefits from numerous education institutions in mother tongue at all levels, including university education, as well as numerous programs on public radio and television channels. Hungarians in Romania have a vivid culture with a high degree of vitality provided by schools, theaters and magazines. The large number of cultural institutions in Hungarian, including the Cluj Magyar Opera, the State Magyar Theaters in Cluj and Timișoara, other theaters in Sfântu Gheorghe and Odorheiu Secuiesc, to name but a few, are noticeable. There are several museums, and museum houses, that pay tribute to personalities of this ethnic group. This ethnic group also has representation by a larger political party in Parliament and has several other unparliamentary divisions.

Since the 1950s, there has been concerns about facilitating the acquisition of Romanian language by pupils belonging to national minorities, with particular reference to pupils belonging to the Hungarian minority - the minority with the highest school population according to the data provided by the Ministry of Education and Youth¹.

4.2. Rroma Minority

The Rroma in Romania constitute the second largest ethnic group after the Hungarian minority. According to the census in 2002, they numbered 535,140 people or 2.5% of the total population. In 2012, records indicate they represented 2.6%.

Other observers have different unofficial estimates. In 1993, the Institute of Life Quality Research estimated about one million people living in Romania "according to the Rroma specific way of life"², accounting for about 4%

¹ Mariana Norel, "Studiul limbii române ca limba nematernă: Implicații asupra politicilor educaționale și a dialogului multicultural" in Istvan Horsvath and Erika Todor (eds.), *O evaluare a politicilor de producere a bilingvismului*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Limes, 2008, p. 60-73.

² Elena Zamfir and Cătălin Zamfir, *Țigani între ignorare și îngrijorare*, București, Editura Alternative, 1993, *passim*.

of the total population. In 1998, the ICCV study estimated there was about one and a half million Roma, out of which about 65% were self-identified¹. In a research paper, Vasile Ghețău² estimates the Roma population at 1.5 to 2 million³. In 2005, Dumitru Sandu's study advances the estimation of the Roma population with a high probability of self-identification, ranging from 730,000 to 970,000 people⁴.

If we refer to the average estimates made by Romanians, Roma and non-Roma alike, they are almost ten times higher than official estimates, above the advanced numbers launched by experts. As an average, both Roma and non-Roma in Romania consider that around 25% of the country's citizens are Roma⁵.

There are two theories about the origin of the Roma people: the Egyptian origin, but linguists, anthropologists, historians and sociologists are of the opinion that this theory is false, and the Indian origin, which benefits from more convincing arguments.

Documents bear witness to their presence in the present territory of Romania as early as 1385 in Wallachia. They are mentioned for the first time in Moldavia in 1414, and in Transylvania, in 1422.

It is only during the interwar period that a coagulation of the identity of this ethnicity took place, in 1933, laying the foundations of their first organization, the "General Gypsy Association of Romania", which aimed at culturalizing, educating, as well as integrating Roma people (free medical and legal assistance, sedentarisation of nomads by land ownership, etc.). During the same period, and for the first time in the consciousness of contemporaries, the notion of *Rroma* people instead of *Gypsy*⁶ was used.

The establishment in Romania of authoritarian regimes and the adoption of racist legislation since March 1938 have brought profound changes to

¹ Cătălin Zamfir and Marian Preda, *Romii în România*, București, Editura Expert, 2002, p. 28.

² Professor Doctor, Director of the Demographic Research Center of the Romanian Academy.

³ Vasile Ghețău, "O proiectare condițională a populației României pe principalele naționalități (1992 – 2025)", *Revista de Cercetări Sociale*, No. 1, 1996, p. 85-88.

⁴ Sandu Dumitru, *O hartă socială a comunităților de rromi*, București, Banca Mondială, 2005, *passim*.

⁵ Gabriel Bădescu *et al.*, *Roma Inclusion Barometer*, Bucharest, Open Society Foundation, 2007, *passim*.

⁶ For Gypsies in the interwar period, see Viorel Achim, *Țigani în istoria României*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1998, p. 120-127; Lucian Nastasă and Andreea Varga (eds.), *Minorități etniculturale. Mărturii documentare. Țigani din România (1919-1944)*, Cluj, CRDE, 2001.

the situation of the Gypsies, especially since 1942, when they were subjected to a forced deportation regime: in the following period, 11,441 nomadic Gypsies together with 13,176 sedentary Gypsies were expelled from the country (these figures were recorded in a summary of the deportations of October 9th, 1942). During this period, the “Gypsy issue” does not appear to be a strictly racial one, reinforced by laws and discriminatory provisions based on ethnicity, but primarily a matter of defense of public order and moral recovery, by imposing the “cult of labor”. Even the head of State (Marshal Ion Antonescu) appreciated that Gypsies who proved to be hardworking and diligent, carrying out socially necessary activities, must be left alone. And his subaltern and collaborator, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mihai Antonescu, saw the problem of the Gypsies solved both by removing them from large urban centers and by involving criminals in lucrative activities. On the other hand, it was impossible to establish the ethnic Gypsy character of a person, because of assimilation or blending with other nations or because of the refusal of some to be categorized as such. Categorizing a person as a “Gypsy” was often an arbitrary matter.

The Communist regime passed, since 1948, to a forced politics of sedentarisation of nomadic Gypsies. The action almost “revolutionized” the Gypsy community, most of them having only one given name, often with vulgar, pornographic, antisocial connotations. Sedentarization also brought major benefits by imposing compulsory schooling through qualifications in various trades. From this perspective, the Roma people were perceived as allogeneic elements that had to be Romanianized, because their identity was associated to a culture of poverty and underdevelopment.

The ethnic Gypsy group has known a special demographic evolution and still does. The official censuses during the communist regime showed, in 1956, 0.6% Gypsies, in 1966, 0.4%, and in 1977, 1.1%.

The Roma people have set up numerous non-governmental organizations. The most representative one, the Pro Europe Roma Party in Bucharest, has obtained the right to parliamentary representation of the ethnic group and has a seat as deputy¹.

Although they are present in most of the world’s countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, the Roma have managed to keep their language and lifestyle, even in the absence of a State of their own. Their language is eminently

¹ Academia Română, “Multilingvism și limbi minoritare în România,” Bucharest, 2009, <https://bit.ly/1Om6QIz>, accessed May 1st, 2017.

oral and has more denominations depending on the country or the majority community with whom they came into contact.

Because of the semi-nomad lifestyle they lead, most Roma are at least bilingual, if not multilingual. In Romania, they speak, along with the Rromani language, the Romanian language and, on a case-by-case basis, Hungarian or other languages, depending on the linguistic community in which they live. If the dominant majority (Romanian, Hungarian) only borrows sporadically Rromani words, the Roma minority takes much more from the majority cohabitants: from lexical, morphological, syntactic phenomena to baptismal names.

In mixed communities, bilingualism is not reciprocal, since cohabiting populations refuse to speak Rromani and to take on habits or specific traditions.

In Romania, Sweden or Serbia, efforts have been made to standardize Rromani. In Romania, standardization efforts are primarily the result of Gheorghe Sarau's work, who produced a purified version of Rromani language.

In 1949-1951 the first Rromani language school was established in the western part of the country. In 1991, the Ministry of Education recognized the international Rromani language alphabet, which was formally introduced in schools where Rromani language and literature were studied. A simple statistical comparison shows that the number of Roma with assumed Roma identity, who attended the school in 1990, was about 109,325, doubling in 2008, reaching 263,409; in the 2011 census according to the NIS official table, 621,573 Roma citizens declared themselves living in Romania¹. Consequently, the Rromani language is now used in education at all levels (primary schools, secondary schools, high school and universities).

4.3. German Minority

Saxons or Transylvanian Saxons (in German Siebenbürger Sachsen, colloquially Saxen, Saxen in the Saxon dialect) are a German ethnic population that settled in the south and north-east of Transylvania since the mid-12th century. Although they were mostly originally French speaking, this Germanic population was named Saxons in *Saxones* documents, and colonized parts

¹ Cristina Ungureanu, "Minoritate și minorizare lingvistică. Elemente sociolingvistice ale comunității rome din România", in Mircea-Cristian Ghenghea and Iulian Pruteanu-Isăcescu (eds.), *Minorități și identități naționale în spațiul central și est-european*, Iași: Timpul, 2016, p. 145-157.

of Sibiu, Bistrița and Brașov¹. The Germans in Romania (in German, Rumänien-deutsche) represent a segment of the population of Romania, who in the 1930 census numbered 745,421 citizens.

In 1940, the entire German population in Romania was valued at around 790,000 inhabitants. According to the Census of January 25th, 1948, 344,522 persons declared themselves to be of German nationality, out of which 89,572 lived in urban areas and 254,950 in rural areas. To these, one must add almost 40,000 Germans returning to the country from their deportation to the USSR after 1948.

In the years between the two world wars, the population of German origin enjoyed all democratic rights and liberties, having unlimited access to education and multiple possibilities of creation and cultural expression. The beginning of the Second World War led to a first wave of massive departures to Germany (about 150,000 ethnic Germans), and after the war there were other massive deportations, the deportation to the USSR of about 100,000 ethnic Germans in Romania. Departures continued in the communist period, in the 1970-1980 decade, reaching departures of about 10 to 15,000 per year. Immediately after the revolution in December 1989, the last wave of departure, of about 150,000 ethnic Germans, took place.

As in the case of the Hungarian minority, the process of homogenization of society, as stated by Nicolae Ceausescu at the National Conference of the PCR of July 19th, 1972, was to be transformed for national minorities into a process with obvious assimilation tendencies². In 1971, it was forbidden to use the German names of the localities officially, “Hermannstädter Zeitung” had to change its name to “Die Woche”, the repertoire of performances had to contain first 20, and later over 50% of the songs in Romanian and composed by Romanian authors³.

In the 2002 population census, more than 60,000 inhabitants of Romania (0.3% of the total population) declared themselves to be of German origin, most of them being native German speakers⁴. In 2011, a total of 27,019

¹ Toader Nicoară, *Istoria și tradițiile minorităților din România*, București, Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, 2005, *passim*.

² Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Raport la Conferința Națională a Partidului Comunist Român, 19-21 iulie 1972*, București, Editura Politică, 1972, p. 91-98.

³ Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport final*, București, 2006, p. 543.

⁴ Nicolae Saramandu and Manuela Nevaci, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

people declared themselves as having German as their mother tongue¹. Even though the community of Germans in Romania experienced a revival after the fall of communism, German historians and analysts in Romania estimate the end of a historic cycle, because their number in Romania is diminishing through emigration and natural demographic decline².

Germans in Romania are not a unitary ethnic group, so to understand their language, culture and history, they must be seen as a series of distinct groups: Saxons – the most well-known group, often identified with the Germans in Romania; the Satu Mare Swabians and most of the Banat and Danubian Swabian groups in Romania; Austrian Protestants, deported in the 18th century, called “Landler”; Marshururs – the Germans from Maramureş; the Bukovina Germans, once massively present in Gura Humorului (the majority of the population in 1930), Suceava, Rădăuţi, Vatra Dornei etc.; the Dobrogea Germans, colonized in three stages between 1840 and 1891³. German is the third foreign language in Romania, being taught in all language faculties in the country.

5. Conclusion

“Language is, in a way, the outer manifestation of the spirit of peoples, language is their spirit, and their spirit is their language. No matter how much we want, we can never think of them as sufficiently identical”, comments the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt⁴. In considering this very close connection between the spirit and the national language, between the latter and the national culture, our intention was to emphasize a certain reality, valid not only in the Romanian case. Culture and national spirit do not only live in the space strictly described by its own language or only within the borders of the national State, they are always in contact with other national cultures. This contact has sparked many controversies in the academic environment as to the preservation of national specificity, an issue posing a real challenge to the intellectual or political environment.

A possible answer to this quest is offered by the Romanian linguist Eugen Coşeriu: “The more we will not find the national specificity, the more we will find it, the more we will express it, because since taking care of the

¹ Germanii din România, <https://bit.ly/2VZWY3V>, accessed 4 April 2017

² Toader Nicoară, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³ Nicolae Saramandu and Manuela Nevaci, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁴ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Despre diversitatea structurală a limbilor și influența ei asupra dezvoltării spirituale a umanității*, Bucureşti, Editura Humanitas, 2008, p. 80.

universal and of our possibilities, with our traditions, we will present a voice, no doubt, a human voice, but at the same time a human voice that will be recognized as a Romanian voice as a Romanian tone¹”.

The Romanian language is an example of a unitary language in terms of diatopic variation in comparison with other European languages, such as German or Italian, which are classic examples of this dichotomy: Coșeriu² considers that the unity of the Romanian language is superior in all the levels (dialect, common language, standard language) to the unity of other Romance languages and sometimes superior to all other Romance languages. If one considers a basic principle used in dialectology for the determination of the character of a dialectal variety or of independent language, namely the criterion of mutual understanding, one finds that the Dacoromanian territory has no specific problems from this point of view, for a southerner is able to understand a northern speaker.

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¹ Eugen Coșeriu, *Deontologia culturii*, în ”Prelegeri și conferințe”, supliment al ”Anuarului de lingvistică și istorie literară”, Iași, 1994, p. 176.

² Eugen Coșeriu, *Introducere în lingvistică*, trans. Elena Ardelean, and Eugenia Bojoga, Cluj: Editura Echinox, 1995.

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