



1.1 Non-standardised ways of speaking and language-policy regimes

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The foundations of the educational language policies of our fieldwork sites in Hungary and in Slovakia were laid down in the Kingdom of Hungary (as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) in the 19th century, when public education was established in most parts of Europe. The Kingdom of Hungary was highly multilingual and education of the elites was fundamentally multilingual as well, often with different functions for different languages, such as French for culture, Latin for learning and administration, German for trade, and local languages (e.g. Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak) for dealings with the common people.

In the process of 19th century nation building, a single common language was formed through language reforms and standardization, which meant formal and official unification (Kamusella 2012). This idealised variety was conceptualized as the basis for the nation's existence and served as a justification for the desired independence of states. In this process, the language of "one's own" or "mother tongue" gradually became a distinguishing factor between people in the modern era, alongside origin, status, and religion. This idea was effectively spread among the masses in the context of censuses in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy (see Anderson 1991; Gal 2011: 42).

Towards the end of the 19th century, as language became more and more viewed as a distinguishing characteristic uniting as well as dividing the masses, monolingual ideologies of education became dominant in the parts of the Monarchy ruled by Hungary. Gal (2011: 33) describes the monolingual ideologies of the 19th century as intellectual views according to which: "monolingualism is the natural condition of ordinary people; learning a second language supposedly endangers the first one cognitively." Politically, multilingualism was seen as raising the dangerous "possibility that speakers had loyalties to more than one state." Such views arrived to the Kingdom of Hungary from Western Europe, where monolingualism was established as part of "civilization" and "modernization" (Gal 2011: 33), where linguistic minorities generally remained on the margins of public education, and at the same time, previous multilingual practices disappeared over time. A public and equal school system gradually spread in Europe in the 19th century at the same time as the notion of a national language became accepted as the unifying and distinguishing factor for people.

1.1.1 Language standardization, monolingualism and education in Europe

The concepts of majority and minority are linked to a critical interpretation of language policy, in which language policy refers to a language-based division of power and resources between different groups. The majority is roughly at the top of the hierarchy, the minorities at the bottom. In particular, the choice of language of instruction is at the heart of language education policy (see Tollefson 2013). As an important European example of a multilingual region, in the Hungarian Kingdom, the language of education was unified towards the 20th century with emphasis on Hungarian medium education and on basic education in the languages of the recognized nationalities (e.g. Romanians, Slovaks, Germans etc.), which included the teaching of "patriotic" subjects (e.g. History and Geography) in Hungarian (see e.g. Berecz 2013). In the peace treaty closing the First World War, Hungary lost two thirds of its territory and more than two million Hungarian speakers ended up as minority language speakers in the surrounding countries, which reciprocated the same language policies towards



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Hungarians. Post First World War Hungary still contained relatively large groups of minority language speakers including over half a million German speakers and numerous Romani speakers, however, as Szarka notably constitutes (2011: 85) “no official cognizance was taken of the [...] Gypsy languages” in 1920s Hungary.

Today, minority languages may be taught in minority language revitalization and maintenance projects, when so required by minority groups, but they rarely serve as the (official) language of instruction, which is most often associated with majority-only collective language education policy rights (see eg. Extra and Gorter 2008, 31–32). The ideologies of monolingualism still prevail in European language education policy. Those deviating from the norm represented by the imagined majority – white, middle-class European citizens, speakers of official and national languages – are in a weaker position in many ways. Piller (2016) cites such vulnerable areas as fundamental rights, education, security, and gender equality. In addition, mental well-being, employment status, social status and living standards are often endangered, especially in situations where linguistic difference is combined with, for example, a different skin color (Piller 2016).

The standardization of languages has been seen as a prerequisite for the emergence of larger, “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991). Unification has meant reducing intra-linguistic variation. The elimination of variation can be linked to the ideology of enlightenment and modernization, which emphasizes the practicality of a common language: advanced ideas and technological developments can be rapidly disseminated among big crowds living in large areas. The purity of language, in turn, is related to the national idea: clear “boundaries” between languages also draw boundaries between groups of speakers. Separating and valuing languages is always ultimately about valuing speakers. In Europe’s multilingual and intra-linguistically diverse reality, language ideological processes have separated people, while linguistic standardization processes have favored certain groups of speakers.

The place for linguistic unification and the cherishing of separation and purity has been primarily the school. Recently, however, alternative developments have been seen, with a particular emphasis on pedagogies based on interlingualism and heteroglossia, such as translanguaging, where the lowering or eliminating of language boundaries is considered natural (see Blackledge and Creese 2014). On the other hand, the idea of the “mixed use” of languages as an avoidable phenomenon still lives on in European education at large. Spolsky (2021: 200), summarizes the state of the art as containing, on the one hand a “recent growing sentiment for allowing diversity in the classroom, celebrated by the new term translanguaging”, and, on the other hand, a mainstream tendency, where “policy makers ... and teachers generally prefer certainty, holding a belief that there is a correct and desirable version of named languages.”

1.1.2 Multilingual speakers and non-territorial, non-standard languages in education

In Europe, people tend to talk about ethnic and linguistic belonging in terms of separable groups. This way of thinking, determined by ideologies rising parallel to the emergence of European nation states in past centuries, is labelled by Brubaker as Groupism (2002, 2004). Under this approach, most people speak for example Hungarian in Hungary and Slovak in Slovakia. At the same time, there are also ethnic minority groups who speak, alongside the national language, a language „of their own”, mostly standardised languages, spoken as official languages elsewhere: for example, in Hungary a part of the population is ethnic Slovak, Romanian, and German, at the same time, ethnic Hungarians live in Slovakia in large numbers. Members of these ethnic and linguistic minorities are mostly regarded as

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bilingual, but we can find relatively easily monolingual speakers of a minority language (for example Hungarians in Slovakia with no or little knowledge of Slovak).

Members of these groups often perceive language(s) as well-defined, homogenous entities, clearly separable from each other, having a pure and idealistic realisation (a standard variety), which is an important part of their identity, to be guarded and cherished in its “clean” or “pure” form, “sheltered” from the influence of other languages. This way of perceiving linguistic practices has a long and strong historical tradition; people consider language mixing or any kind of influence of another language on their own language as dangerous and harmful (Li 2018: 14). Under these circumstances, bilingualism is often assumed as the side by side coexistence of two languages in speakers’ mind and social life. This kind of bilingualism is called double monolingualism, parallel monolingualism (Heller 2006 [1999]: 34) or separate bilingualism (Creese and Blackledge 2010), expressing the idea that people have two monolingual selves and social lives. This is a general concept about bilingualism in European thinking, influential also in 20th century linguistic approaches.

In today’s Europe, “official state languages” (Extra and Gorter 2008; on the use of terms see Spolsky 2021) have the highest recognition, and the most financial resources allocated to them as official languages of European countries, the European Union and other international organizations. Extra and Gorter in their typology of “regional minority languages” in Europe, mention five categories of languages. The final, fifth group of languages they mention, is “non-territorial languages”; this group includes “Romani and Yiddish” as “most prominent” languages (Extra & Gorter 2008: 28). This group gets little mention later in Extra and Gorter’s otherwise detailed description of language status and educational policies in Europe. The label “non-territorial language” indicates that the Roma are on the margins of European language-based national movements (see e.g. May 2012), which are underpinned by the same ideological commitments as the creation of contemporary nation states in Europe, and which create an ideological link between territory and language. Language rights (in education) are usually granted to minority groups which identify with, and are recognised speakers of, “territorial languages with a historical base” (Piller 2016: 35) such as the Sámi in the Arctic or the Basque in the Basque country, an autonomous region in Spain. Especially the latter indicates that language rights are often coupled with political representation and power in the given regions. Therefore, Romani is not only a blind spot for European education (in which sign languages are an even less recognized category) because of its standard-based, monolingual traditions, but it is at odds even with the more recent approach which seek to promote plurilingualism. The political approach of plurilingualism promoted by the Council of Europe (1992) is, thus, unable to accommodate Romani within its framework, and to provide (linguistic) rights for Romani speakers (cf. Vallejo and Dooly 2020).

In addition to having a territorial base, a language often needs standardisation in order to be recognised and granted a status in society and education. Tamburelli and Tosco (2021:7) observe that the existence of a prescriptive, literary variety is too often interpreted as “the only viable dimension along which “languages” can be defined.”. Standardization of a language has been an important part of constructing imagined communities (Anderson 1991) in Europe which are the basis of most current nation states, which then typically invest further in the standardization process of official state languages (national languages). Such standardization enjoys the resources of European states and international organizations including the institutions of the European Union (see Extra & Gorter 2008: 13-14). It is a typical idea, that for a language to be used in school it has to have a widely accepted standardized variety, which will then constitute the language of school (target language or



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language of instruction). In most cases, according to Spolsky (2021: 41), the school mandates “[the] use of the standard language even though students (and often teachers) normally speak a stigmatised vernacular variety”.

In this manner, following the European ideology of spreading (Gal 2011), cherishing and developing the national standard languages through schooling, in most education systems there is a normative language of education, a variety or register, which is different from the home language or local variety. Through such language education, the (standardized) unity of the nation is achieved, which is deemed economically advantageous as well (Spolsky 2021).

Romani speakers are multilingual all over Europe. Due to its monolingual habitus (Gogolin 1997), European education serves multilingual populations poorly (see e.g. Piller 2016; Gorter and Cenoz 2017). Elite multilingualism, consisting of speaking several white European languages (Rosa and Flores 2017) is often celebrated, whereas “the other” linguistic diversity “is associated with a range of social ills, and is seen as something to be contained, possibly even something to be fearful of” (Piller 2016: 2). Research in applied linguistics has not been successful in addressing the challenge of multilingualism and growing language diversity in education either. For instance, the main focus of second language acquisition (SLA) studies has been the acquisition of English (Cenoz & Gorter 2019: 130). This has been aggravated by the fact that, for most European countries, language education has been limited to English as the language taught, with little consideration of other languages known by the learners.

In summary, the challenge of linguistic inequality Romani speakers face lies in the intersection of unfavourable and exclusive language-education policy trends regarding language diversity, in the conceptual frameworks and ideas about language in education, and in European mainstream pedagogies which are based on monolingual norms of communication (Pennycook 2018; Ortega 2019; Cenoz and Gorter 2019; Piller 2016). Despite all this, according to May (2012: 44) “Roma across Europe continue to reproduce their ethnicity [including language] even when it reduces their chances of attaining prosperity and political power”. Accordingly, our responsibility as sociolinguists, applied linguists and educationalists consists of seeking alternatives to better inclusion of Romani speakers in education.

1.1.3 Speaking Romani in Europe? Ideologies and practices in Finland

One third of the Roma live in the same area as Hungarians today (Szuhay 2011: 620). According to Gal (2012: 34), “the diversity of language” in areas such as the Hungarian majority regions in Slovakia, has been viewed as “a sign of chaotic and backward political economy” in Eastern Europe by people in the West, where monolingualism is deemed as the only “advanced” and “modern” linguistic practice for individuals and countries alike. There is a tradition of seeing the persistence of historical linguistic diversity as an anomaly in Eastern Europe, coupled with political underdevelopment of the peripheries as viewed from the Global North. It is important to note, however, that similar situations exist in the West, too, for instance in superdiverse urban settings. Furthermore, there almost no practicable solutions addressing the lack of language rights in Western Europe. In this subsection, we discuss the challenges of Romani in education in Western Europe, using our survey results from a Nordic country, Finland. Finland was chosen partly due to the participation of the University of Jyväskylä in the project, and partly because Finland's reputation as model bilingual country, or as Kamusella remarked, Finland is among the European countries perhaps the only one, which is not a “‘true’ ethnolinguistic nation-state” (2012: 57).



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Historically, the Roma have been present in Finland as the most peripheral group. During the Swedish imperial rule (until 1809), the Roma had no citizen rights and there was no punishment for killing Roma. In 1809, Finland became a Grand Duchy under Tsarist Russia, where the Roma were tolerated if they took the habits of the majority. (Finitiko romaseele 2004: 6.)

During the construction of Finnish nationalism in the late 19th century, the Roma were despised because of their racial difference and non-territorial nature. The canonical 1875 *Boken om vårt land/ Maamme kirja* ('Book of our land' originally in Swedish, first Finnish translation: 1876, critical digital edition, 2018) by Z. Topelius has served as a schoolbook description of Finland, its regions and people until 1950's (Hatavara et al. 2018). In this seminal book for constructing the Finnish national geography and stereotypes about different ethnicities in Finland, the Roma are mentioned alongside Jews as "homeless" and "dispersed" people.

Another foreign and scattered people has come here to Finland while wandering the world. These people are called Gypsies. There are a few hundred of them here, and they are characterized by brown skin and dark southern eyes [...] They speak their own foreign language among each other, but with others they speak the language of the country [...] they are poor refugees, just like Jews [...] With Jews and Gypsies we see how great a misfortune it is to be without a homeland [...] They live and die as foreigners on earth (Topelius [1876], 2018: 94/246, English translation by PL).

In this key source for constructing Finnish national imagery (see Hatavara et al. 2018) and separating Finns from other ('foreign') people, the Roma are demarcated from white, northern Europeans through their skin colour ('brown') and dark 'southern' eyes. The main emphasis, however, is on 'Gypsies' (Swedish: *Ziganer*; Finnish: *mustalaiset*), as well as Jews, not having their own territory and being condemned to the fate of living and dying on foreign soil. With regards to language, they are mentioned to use their own language among each other, but to speak the 'language of the country' with others. This passage indicates the status of the Roma in (Western/Northern) Europe well: the Roma are treated as second class, 'poor', racialized people without a home. The Roma could in principle integrate into the majority, by already speaking the language and possibly taking their habits of settling down in a domicile, but following this construction by Topelius, due to their racially distinct characteristics, the stigmatic traits of the Roma would most likely be permanent in Western/Northern Europe.

Similarly to most other Western countries, a violent racio-cultural assimilation policy of minorities culminated, among others, in the forceful replacement of many Roma children in the 1950's in Finland. In the 1970's first antidiscrimination laws were accepted and in the 1990's the Romani language received some recognition in Finnish legislation (Finitiko romaseele 2004: 21.) In present day Finland, attitudes towards the Roma and Romani could be described as tolerant but ignorant. Among others, the latest Experts report by the ERCML recommends Finland, to take immediate action "to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis Romani, both in education and in the media" (ERCML 2020: 9).

1.1.4 University students' perceptions on Romani as a minoritized language

The project "Translanguaging for Equal Opportunities: Speaking Romani at School" included activities and training events for university students in education. In spring 2020, an Project funded by the European Commission. The information in this publication does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union.



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online questionnaire survey was conducted in the University of Jyväskylä among students (N=19) studying in a Finnish-medium teacher education program (N=6), in the international Master's program 'Educational Sciences' (N=9) and international exchange students in Jyväskylä (N=4). The questionnaire asked about students' general perceptions and awareness of Roma culture and Romani language in educational contexts, and included questions on multilingual pedagogies as well.

The results show that most of the students (12 persons) had never encountered Roma people in education, including their own schooling years, internship or work experience. At the same time, when asked about social tension around Roma learners in Finnish education, most of the respondents assumed that severe social tensions exist.

The questionnaire also thematized Romani language and surveyed students' general knowledge about Romani speakers. Students had various ideas concerning the number of Romani speakers in Finland. In an open question some students expressed their lack of knowledge ("no idea"), others providing numbers from 3000 to 100,000. According to the estimate of the Finnish Ministry of Justice (<https://oikeusministerio.fi/muut-kielet>), 10,000 to 12,000 people speak Romani in Finland, however, all of these are most likely second language speakers (Hedman 2009). Very few inhabitants of Finland register Romani as their "mother tongue"; in 2015 their number was 23 (ERCML 2017: 13). According to Finnish officials (*Ibid.*) "the Roma are fearful of ethnic registration based on language". No official data on the number of Roma people in Finland exists, since in Finland it is forbidden to register ethnic belongings (see Granqvist 2006:1).

Since most students do not seem to have first-hand experience with Romani speaking learners, it is perhaps their overall awareness of the status of minoritized languages in education that made 14 of them answer that a special pedagogical approach is necessary when teaching Roma background learners. Students justified their answers to open questions in various ways. Those supporting a special pedagogical approach used arguments ranging from human rights perspectives (e.g. "that they are not excluded and have the same opportunities") to the protection of cultural distinctiveness (e.g. "different habits and manners, values"; "cultural background, language use, blended family", "protect roma culture"). In some of the more detailed answers, these viewpoints are merged into a rather complex vision of education:

To understand that they might have a little different culture from "regular" Finnish culture. But first of all, to understand that Roma people have been discriminated in Finland during the history and the attitudes towards them have not always been fair and friendly. It is important the teacher understands that Roma learners (and their families) may have faced prejudices in the surrounding society and these experiences may affect learners' self-confidence and friendships at school. These issues, again, may have an impact on learning.

Thematizing the issue of representation in education in general and teacher education in particular, a student asked: "How many teachers in Finland are from a Roma background? How can people feel they have a place in education if not represented and considered?". These questions raise timely concerns about structural issues of education systems which have marginalized Roma background and Romani speaking learners in Western European countries in general.



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Complementing the range of approaches, 4 students argued that there is no need for any special pedagogical approach for Roma learners because, as they wrote, “children are the same everywhere” and “they deserve equal treatment as everyone else”. That is, one should not distinguish between various minoritized groups, but rather provide equal support for all.

In the questionnaire, we also asked students whether they thought it would be possible to use the Romani language in school. Most students answered that they did not know (8 persons), the rest of them marking yes (6 persons) or no (4 persons). These answers, similarly to those concerning the number of speakers in general, show a low level of awareness of possibilities to use Romani in education in Finland.

In Finland, the medium of instruction is either Finnish or Swedish by default, while it is also possible to use Sámi, Romani or Finnish Sign Language as medium of instruction (Act on Basic Education 628/1998 10§ (1)); so in the Finnish context, the theoretical or legal “right” answer to our question was ‘yes’. It is perhaps due to the marginalized status of Romani people that only one student from the Finnish medium program answered the question correctly. In practice, there is no teaching in Romani beyond kindergarten projects and as the Finnish officials state “The fact that a large share of Roma children at basic education age does not receive teaching of the Roma language continues to be a major problem” (ERCML 2017: 60). As a compensatory activity, Finnish authorities should finalize a Romani language revitalization project plan by 2021 (ERCML 2020: 8). A Finnish student commented on this issue at the end of the questionnaire as follows:

I am a Finn. Even though I have gone to school in Finland and I have been working as a substitute teacher in primary school in Finland, I did not know much about the formal position of Romani. This may be because I have gone to school and taught in a little rural town with not many Roma students. But maybe this also demonstrates the fact that Roma/Romani issues are not highlighted in Finland/Finnish school.

What this comment demonstrates is that there is very little knowledge about Romani speakers or Roma in education in Finland among the student teachers, who would be curious about knowing more about the uses of Romani in education. This survey also indicates that awareness about the Roma is generally low in Western European societies, where information is often restricted to governmental reports and few journal articles.

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