

Barriers in Learning Romanian Language in Multilingual Communities - Case Study for the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, Republic of Moldova

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Abstract

Multilingual communities are a constant challenge for both non-native language teachers, be it L2 or L3, and students belonging to allolingual communities as well. The particular element regarding the minority communities in the Republic of Moldova is that we are witnessing a phenomenon that is as rare as it is interesting, namely that the status of the mother tongue, respectively Gagauz, is taken over by the Russian language, a language that was granted with the status of lingua franca as long as the Republic of Moldova was an integral part of the Soviet Union, but continued with the same status for a long time even after the Romanian language regained its status as the official language of the Republic of Moldova, together with the state independence in 1990. The major problems that students encounter and that teachers have to overcome in order to keep students motivated in learning non-native languages are closely related to this ambiguity regarding the status of Russian among the other languages they have to learn along their academic pursue. Our research is following review on the status of the languages spoken by the Gagauz minority in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (ATUG), in the attempt to identify the most suitable approach in favor of Gagauz students that need to acquire language skills in at least four languages, i.e. Russian, Gagauz, Romanian, and English/French/German/Spanish. It is worth mentioning the fact that the conclusions and recommendations presented here are the result of several educational projects carried out since 2011 by the "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania, in partnership with the General Education Directorate of ATUG.

Keywords: code switch, ethnic language, official language, multilingualism