

Ausbau Events and the Linguist's Role in the Dynamics of Minorization in Northern Moldova

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This article discusses methodological aspects of the role of the researcher in sociolinguistic ethnographic studies with an interest in the linguistic repertoires of minorized speakers. Looking at linguistic repertoires as knowledge that is to a large extent routinized, restructuration of those repertoires is connected with communicative events that interrupt routines. In the context of such events, the speaker mobilizes remote parts of his or her repertoire and reflects on linguistic rules. Ethnographic research that involves intensive contact between the research subjects and the researcher is likely to cause these kinds of events, which I call *Ausbau* events.

This paper argues that ethnographic linguistic research influences language use and provokes metalinguistic reflection, both of which are seen as essential for language learning. Referring to evidence from observations in a Ukrainian school in a northern Moldovan village, the article discusses methodological aspects of this interference. *Ausbau* events are not regarded as unnatural but rather as revealing of practices that would otherwise be inaccessible to observation. On that account, including the role of the researcher into the analysis should be seen as a chance to understand dynamic processes.

MOLDOVA'S LINGUISTIC MARKET

Since Moldova's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, its 'linguistic market'¹ has been reorganized. 'Linguistic market' is a concept used by Bourdieu to analyze the relationship between nation-states and national languages. This perspective is interested in power relations and social stratification insofar as they are related to asserting only one variety of a language as legitimate. Different linguistic varieties and registers present different sorts of linguistic capital for the speakers. The linguistic 'product' that attains most profit, especially in formal situations, is the 'legitimate language'. The value of all other languages, varieties, and registers is measured against the 'legitimate language.' In Moldova, the beginning of the independence movement was marked by the language laws of 31 August 1989, which declared Romanian the only official language and changed the alphabet back from Cyrillic to Latin. The explicit target of this policy was to enhance the status of Romanian/Moldovan on the Moldovan linguistic market, and it implied a reduction in the legitimacy of Russian, which had been co-official in Soviet times and necessary for upward social mobility.

This attempt to reorganize the linguistic market produced a wide range of conflicts that remain active to this day. Discussions about the name of the language (is it *limba română* or *limba moldovenească*?) are present in the media, in academic

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce Que Parler Veut Dire. L'Economie des Echanges Linguistiques* (Paris: Fayard, 1982).

² Klaus Bochmann, 'Die Staatssprache – "Moldauisch" oder "Rumänisch"?', in *Die Republik Moldau. Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Klaus Bochmann (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2012), pp. 609-616.

circles, and in official and unofficial milieus.³ The status of separatist Transnistria remains unresolved, and the linguistic politics of autonomous Gagauzia causes heated debates. All these conflicts are related to the changing power relations and processes of minorization that have affected new allophones (that is 'linguistic minorities') in Moldova since 1989. However, describing these tensions as conflicts between linguistic (or even ethnic) groups is far too simplistic; linguistic relations and repertoires contain substantial complexity. No two linguistic repertoires are identical, and positions on the linguistic (sub)markets differ significantly for speakers who belong to the same group, ethnically speaking. This is why I avoid the generalizing term 'linguistic minority'. Instead, I speak about 'minorization processes', which better reflects the fact that minorization and domination are products of interaction shaped by power relations and not the result of certain individual characteristics such as first language. This becomes obvious in the case of Moldova, where for several decades the Russian-speaking minority was politically and economically dominant. However, the situation has changed significantly since 1989. The fact that Ukrainian speakers in Moldova are confronted with a situation of minorization is closely related to the fact that Romanian/Moldovan was chosen as the official language instead of Russian, which Ukrainians in Moldova tend to speak well. Ukrainian speakers in Moldova are, in general, much less fluent in Romanian.

Despite having only 3.5 million inhabitants, the Republic of Moldova is linguistically diverse. The majority of the population speaks Romanian/Moldovan, which is also the country's official language (*limba de stat* or *gosudarstvoenni iazik*). Russian has been accorded a subordinate yet privileged status as the 'language of interethnic communication' due to the fact that speakers of the many minorized languages, who have neither Romanian/Moldovan nor Russian as their first language, tend to speak Russian in formal situations.⁴ Indeed, Russian serves as the lingua franca in many interactions involving people of different linguistic backgrounds.⁵

Demographically, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Gagausian are the most important minorized languages.⁶ However, because the 2004 census refers to ethnic criteria – an inadequate reflection of the country's complex linguistic relations –

³ Unfortunately, because the situation in Moldova is difficult, so too is speaking about it. The name of the language is constantly a hot topic of discussion, and using only one term forces the speaker to take sides. In this text, I use the term 'Romanian' when speaking about the school subject, called *Limba Româna*, or when speaking about the whole family summarized under the term. When speaking about linguistic practice in Moldova, I use both terms at the same time.

⁴ Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union. The Mind Aflame* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 102; and Matthew Ciscel, 'Uneasy Compromise: Language and Education in Moldova', in *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 11 (2008), pp. 373-395.

⁵ Matthew Ciscel, *The language of the Moldovans. Romania, Russia, and Identity in an Ex-Soviet Republic* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), p. 29; Jürgen Erfurt, 'Sprachen und Sprachpolitik', in *Die Republik Moldau. Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Klaus Bochmann (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2012), pp. 617-627; and Elina Hornbacher, 'Der Stellenwert der russischen Sprache in der Republik Moldau. Ein Beispiel für die Spätfolgen sowjetischer Sprachpolitik', in *Osteuropa*, 52 (2002), pp. 38-51.

⁶ Gagausian is a Turkic language that is spoken only in Gagausia and Bugeac (and of course in other places where Gagausians migrated). It has official status in the autonomous region Gagauz Yeri (in Southern Moldova) but is restricted to oral use in practice. Wolfgang Schulze, 'Gagausisch', in *Lexikon der Sprachen des europäischen Ostens*, ed. by Miloš Okuka (Klagenfurt: Wieser, 2002), pp. 781-786.

reliable statistical data on the relative number of speakers of each language is lacking. According to estimates, Ukrainians are the largest 'ethnic' minority in Moldova, accounting for approximately 8.5% of the population, followed by Russians (6%), Gagausians (4.5%), and Bulgarians (2%).⁷ Most Ukrainians live in the cities, but a considerable number also live in the countryside (both in 'mixed' and in predominantly Ukrainian villages)⁸, especially in the north of the country close to the Ukrainian border, but also in the south and in the east.⁹

THEORETICAL PREMISES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Moldo-German sociolinguistic research project 'Linguistic Dynamics in a Multiethnic National State: a Case Study on the Republic of Moldova'¹⁰ is interested in the changing linguistic relations in the Republic of Moldova, with a special focus on the situation of the linguistically minorized population. The project considers which processes of inclusion and exclusion take place and which strategies speakers develop when responding to those circumstances. As researchers on the project, we oriented the choice of case studies toward social groups and institutions. By looking at the linguistic repertoires of the people active in these institutions, we conducted ethnographic participant observation from the point of view of the individual speakers. Their linguistic repertoires are seen as the product of the glottopolitical and sociolinguistic situations relevant to each speaker's life, their biographical trajectories, and their coping strategies for dealing with processes of inclusion and exclusion. Because of this, Blommaert and Backus call linguistic repertoires 'indexical biographies'.¹¹ This approach allows us to conceive of the importance and relevance of language and ethnicity for 'individuation'¹² and for minorization processes, as well as for the role of individual practice in these processes. It permits

⁷ Biroul Național de Statistică, *Recenzământul Populației. Populația după naționalitățile de bază, limba maternă și limba în care vorbește de obicei* (2004),

<<http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=ro&idc=295&id=2234>> [accessed 15 February 2012].

⁸ Ala Sainenco and Tatiana Poptîng, 'Comunitățile multietnice: interferențe culturale, interferențe lingviale', in *Omagiu lui Ion Dumbrăveanu la 70 de ani*, ed. by A. Roșca (Chișinău: CEP, 2009), pp. 402-09.

⁹ This has historical reasons. The Ukrainians living in the countryside are mainly descendants of the colonizers that moved to Moldova in the nineteenth century following the invitation of the Tsar.

Ukrainians who moved to Moldova during the Soviet period almost exclusively settled down in the industrialised agglomerations. Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), p. 166.

¹⁰ The project was initialized by Prof. Dr. Jürgen Erfurt from the Institute of Romance Languages and Literatures, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. It is financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and carried out in collaboration with the Moldovan State University (Faculty of History and Philosophy as well as the Faculty of Foreign Languages). From July 2010 until June 2013 three Moldovan and German scholars and five students will collect data for the analysis of several case studies on changing linguistic repertoires within different institutional contexts.

¹¹ Jan Blommaert and Ad Backus, 'Repertoires Revisited: 'Knowing language' in Superdiversity', in *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies* 67 (2011), <<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/groups/ldc/publications/workingpapers/67.pdf>> [accessed 9 June 2012].

¹² *Sprachliche Individuation in mehrsprachigen Regionen Osteuropas*, ed. by Klaus Bochmann and Vasile Dumbrava (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007).

social stratification to be identified insofar as it relates to language without presupposing linguistic or ethnic groups.¹³

By presenting evidence from one of my case studies based on the school (a so called *liceu teoretic*) in a Ukrainian village in northern Moldova, I will discuss some methodological aspects related to the fact that I, as a researcher, am part of the linguistic dynamics in the community. I will argue that these dynamics do not present a disturbance, but rather help to highlight practices and relations that would otherwise remain hidden to researchers. Linguistic analyses often ignore effective problems, which are ethical or political in nature. Including the researcher's role in the interpretation can limit these methodological doubts about data validity.

SPRACHAUSBAU AND LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES

The linguistic term *Ausbau* is little known or used outside of German-speaking contexts. As such there is no established English equivalent, and I will refrain from proposing one. Heinz Kloss first developed the concept as a complement to the term *Ausbausprache*, a perspective that considers practice to be central for standardization processes and linguistic change, including the codification of a written language. For his English speaking audience, he paraphrased the term as 'language by virtue of its having been reshaped' (or, alternatively, 'remoulded', 'elaborated'¹⁴) by means of 'deliberate language planning'.¹⁵ To the extent that the status of a language is enhanced instead of adopting an already existing standard language, this necessitates the elaboration of the linguistic material, since new functions demand respective means of expression.

Utz Maas¹⁶ has expanded the concept by additionally taking into consideration individual processes such as changing linguistic repertoires. The theory of *Sprachausbau* in this sense is interested in plurilingual linguistic repertoires, including the registers of written language. *Sprachausbau* on the individual level relates to strategies through which speakers enlarge their capacities to act in new social spheres, learning new registers as well as rules for their social application.

Construction grammar has claimed that the structure of a language can be exclusively described as the inventory of conventionalized signs ('form-meaning pairs') including their conditions of use. These conditions depend to a large extent on interaction, such that the grammatical knowledge of speakers – their linguistic

¹³ Louis-Jean Calvet, *La Sociolinguistique* (Paris : Puf, 1993), p. 84.

¹⁴ Following Koch's and Oesterreicher's translation to French, Tatjana Leichsering chooses the alternative 'elaboration' in English. Leichsering and I apply the term for individual processes of language elaboration, whereas Koch and Oesterreicher use it to refer to elaboration of a linguistic system as a whole. Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher, 'Gesprochene Sprache und geschriebene Sprache', in *Lexikon der romanistischen Linguistik (LRL) I: 2*, ed. by G. Holtus (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 584-627; and Tatjana Leichsering, 'Rethinking Urban Schools – A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Multilingualism in Frankfurt/M, Germany. Ascription, Categorisation, Discourse and Language Proficiency', in *Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Contexts: Sociolinguistic and Educational Perspectives*, ed. by Agnieszka Otwinowska and Gessica De Angelis (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, in press).

¹⁵ Heinz Kloss, 'Abstand Languages' and 'Ausbau Languages', in *Anthropological Linguistics* 9:7, (1967), pp. 29-41.

¹⁶ Utz Maas, *Sprache und Sprachen in der Migrationsgesellschaft. Die schriftkulturelle Dimension* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2008).

repertoires – includes pragmatic knowledge.¹⁷ As our research project aims to contribute to a larger theory of linguistic dynamics informed by construction grammar, it is important to keep in mind the importance of usage (that is, experience) for language learning and *Ausbau*.

Similarly, naming a speaker's linguistic resources 'linguistic repertoires' comes from a certain theoretical perspective on linguistic practice. For the development of the argument in this article, three aspects should be underlined. First, the term reflects the idea that every speaker can be considered plurilingual, having access to resources corresponding to different registers, variables, and codes. Second, speakers' linguistic resources can be very different, even for people with the same mother tongue, because their repertoires are 'a direct reflection of that person's linguistic-communicative experience'.¹⁸ No one can know all the constructions ('form-meaning pairs') used in one language.

Speakers might be able to fulfil certain, but not all, communicative needs in different linguistic codes (that is, to switch, when necessary). This is related to the fact that language learning is usage based – in most cases, speakers learn language in and for practical use. The example of Tanja,¹⁹ whose linguistic repertoire provides the data discussed below, can be used to illustrate this point. As a Ukrainian-speaking woman from a Ukrainian village in Moldova, she already has access to resources in standard Russian, most of which she learned at school. Tanja went to university in Chişinău to study *bibliotekar i bibliografer* ('librarian and bibliographer' studies) in Russian, and is a competent speaker of Russian when it comes to her specialist subject. However she is not able to communicate in Russian about repairing cars, nor, for that matter, in any other language, since she has never studied auto repair. She can communicate competently about the household in her Ukrainian dialect, but she may have difficulties expressing the same ideas in Russian because she grew up with a family that spoke Ukrainian almost exclusively.

Finally, when we speak about linguistic repertoires, we imply that 'languages' (in the sense of English, German, Ukrainian, or Romanian) are not symbolic systems separable from each other, at least not in practice. Plurilingual speakers (and as stated above, from this perspective nearly everyone would be considered plurilingual) dispose of an:

indefinite and open set of grammatical and syntactic (and of course mimogestual) microsystems, partially stabilised and available to the speaker as well as the interlocutor. These microsystems can stem from different varieties of a language from various languages, as well as from diverse discourse experiences.²⁰

¹⁷ Kerstin Fischer, 'Konstruktionsgrammatik und situationales Wissen', in *Konstruktionen in der Interaktion*, ed. by Susanne Günthner and Wolfgang Immo (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2006), pp. 343-363.

¹⁸ Jan Blommaert and Ad Backus, 'Repertoires revisited', and Daniel Coste and others, 'Hymes et le Palimpseste de la Compétence de Communication Tours, Détours et Retours en Didactique des Langues', in *Langage et société* 139 (2012), pp. 103-123.

¹⁹ Original name changed for reasons of anonymity.

²⁰ Georges Lüdi and Bernard Py, 'To be or not to be... a plurilingual speaker', in *International Journal of Multilingualism* 6: 2 (2009), pp. 154-167.

In real communication, speakers can and do use various resources that are considered to belong to different systems in order to express themselves. This becomes more visible in contexts where a majority of speakers shares similar repertoires and can put them to creative use to communicate. Conversations that take place in mostly one code can therefore be regarded as actively restricted in the sense that other linguistic resources are deliberately excluded as inadequate in the given context.

AUSBAU EVENTS AND THE RESTRUCTURATION OF LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES

Because no person can ever know all the means of expression in one code, humans are constantly learning new constructions that can be considered microsteps in the larger process of *Sprachausbau*. The term 'learning' is therefore more appropriate than 'language acquisition' because it encompasses dynamics, while 'acquisition' assumes that a competence is acquired and then possessed (the end of the process).

Learning language as a linguistic and a sociolinguistic system is not a cumulative process; it is rather a process of growth, of sequential learning of certain registers, styles, genres and linguistic varieties while shedding or altering previously existing ones. Consequently, there is no point in life in which anyone can claim to know all the resources of a language. In fact, our emphasis on resources limits the theoretical usefulness of the construct 'language'.²¹

The term *Ausbau* additionally reflects the fact that learning new constructions always builds on existing knowledge. But there is also a problematic connotation of the term *Ausbau*: it seems to imply constant progress. As speakers and learners of languages, we not only fail to advance at a steady pace, but at times we may even lose capacities which we have already acquired. I therefore speak about 'restructuration of linguistic repertoires' to express how, reacting to practical needs, we extend our linguistic repertoire and re-prioritize our linguistic resources. In this way, I underline that a speaker's linguistic repertoire is not only dependent on usage, but also that usage is crucial for accessing additional linguistic resources. This can change considerably over different periods in a person's life, and it can even be dependent on the very speech situation.²² Strategies of elaboration can be considered as individual ways of dealing with sociolinguistic contexts that can be more or less successful or efficient.

While much everyday linguistic practice consists of repetition,²³ we are all regularly confronted with situations in which we cannot automatically apply our routinized knowledge and must find creative new ways of expressing thoughts and circumstances. This is especially true if we come into contact with new linguistic markets. I would like to call these situations *Ausbauereignisse* or *Ausbau* events ('elaboration events'). This term describes situations that are crucial moments for the elaboration of linguistic repertoires because they push the speaker to the limits of his or her communicative resources and demand the formation of new linguistic constructions. I assign the term *Ausbau* events to situations in which the speaker

²¹ Jan Blommaert and Ad Backus, 'Repertoires Revisited', p. 9.

²² Paul Hopper, 'Emergent Grammar', in *The New Psychology of Language*, ed. by Michael Tomasello (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1998), pp. 155-175.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

consciously reflects on how to express something new or previously forgotten. In this vein, they stand out in the speaker's memory in comparison to the general elaboration process. However, these events are not only of importance to the speaker and his or her metalinguistic knowledge; they are also of great value to linguists, and they make linguistic repertoires and individual linguistic strategies apparent.

My ethnographic observation covered a relatively short time period. In Tanja's Ukrainian village, I conducted research for two weeks in April-May 2012, and I spent another three days there in August 2012. Whereas the interpretation of biographical narratives can reveal diachronic aspects of the repertoire's restructuration, discourse analytic and linguistic approaches to the same data (in combination with short term ethnographic observation) help understand the synchrony of the linguistic repertoire at a given time.

U VAS ZNACHIT NAOBOROT – TANJA AND THE CONTRASTING LINGUISTIC MARKETS OF TWO NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES

U. is a predominantly Ukrainian-speaking village in the north-western part of Moldova. Although Ukrainian-speaking people in this part of Moldova are relatively widespread, U. in a certain sense is a linguistic island because the surrounding villages are mainly Romanian/Moldovan-speaking. Daily communication in most of the families and among the village population takes place in a Ukrainian dialect, which differs significantly from standard Ukrainian.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the local use of Ukrainian has expanded in U., while the use of Russian has decreased. The new state language has hardly gained any foothold within prevailing spheres of communication. This, consequently, presents an obstacle for those who want or need to learn Romanian/Moldovan, as occasions for practicing in the village itself are very rare. The local Ukrainian school (a *liceu theoretic*) also operates in Russian while Romanian and Ukrainian are taught as subjects from the first grade (and already before that in kindergarten). A *liceu* (the article in Romanian being agglutinated, *liceu* is the undefined form of the word, while *liceul* is defined) consists of twelve classes, and graduation (obtaining the baccalaureate or 'bac') is a condition for admittance to university. The alternative school form is the nine-year *gimnaziu*. Due to lack of pupils, the *liceul* in U. is constantly under threat of being reduced to the level of *gimnaziu*, which would leave children without the possibility of obtaining their 'bac' in a Russian-speaking school since surrounding localities are Romanian-speaking.

TANJA'S LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE

Tanja, my host and assistant in the village, was born in 1971 and grew up in U. She went to the local school that later turned into the *liceul theoretic* that it is now. Tanja is single and does not have children. Apart from her work in the school, she has a few hectares of land where she plants fruit and vegetables for her own subsistence. In 2011-2012 she taught an 8th grade class in 'Ukrainian history and traditions' for the first time.

Tanja's first language is the local Ukrainian dialect, but she also has a certain command of standard Ukrainian. Russian is the most developed language within Tanja's linguistic repertoire, as it was her language of instruction in kindergarten, at school, and at the university. When it comes to Romanian/Moldovan, her resources are mainly receptive. During my visit, Tanja claimed to understand when being spoken to in Romanian/Moldovan, but she responded in Russian.

For reasons of cooperativity, I spoke Romanian/Moldovan to people I believed would prefer to do so even when Tanja was around. *Ausbau* events in Tanja's linguistic repertoire were therefore not only related to Russian, but also, and especially, to Romanian. As mentioned above, U. is a linguistic island where the legitimate language is the local variety of Ukrainian that Tanja speaks. Tanja rarely leaves U., so she does not usually face situations in which she is minorized as a speaker. Accompanying me almost everywhere I went, she visited several Romanian/Moldovan-speaking places that she otherwise would only very rarely frequent. When we left U. she was exposed to linguistic markets in which she had not mastered the legitimate language.

One of these examples appeared on our trip to a neighbouring Romanian/Moldovan-speaking village where three of the four Romanian teachers of U.'s *liceul* lived. I insisted on conducting the interview in their village (R.). For practical reasons we did not conduct the interview individually but in a group. The recorded conversation mainly took place in Romanian/Moldovan, something that had been negotiated right after the beginning of the interview. At first the conversation almost automatically began in Russian, so I redirected it to Romanian/Moldovan. Tanja insisted we should speak in Romanian/Moldovan, implying (even if not explicitly saying) that she was the main reason we spoke in Russian. She argued that she would be able to understand our conversation in Romanian/Moldovan, too. As the other three people were my interviewees, Tanja mostly listened, but on several occasions, she also added something to the discussion.

ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW EXTRACT

I have selected two situations during the interview and analysed the dialogue with the following questions in mind:

1. What does the extract tell us about the linguistic relationship between the speakers?
2. What do we learn about Tanja's linguistic repertoire, including her metalinguistic knowledge?

The three teachers (C, D, E) spoke about 'interferences'²⁴ that take place in their Romanian classes because pupils translate word-for-word from Russian to

²⁴ Uriel Weinreich introduced the concept of 'interference' in 1953 in order to distinguish differences between monolingual and bilingual speakers, regarding the latter as deficient. For this reason the term should be avoided in linguistic analysis. Nevertheless it can be appropriate as a description of the teachers' (or other peoples') attitude towards certain linguistic products. In the present case, the teachers did not use the word 'interference' themselves, but they clearly judge the phenomena under

Romanian and confuse the usual Romanian, noun-adjective word order. They gave the examples ‘beautiful girl’ and ‘my brother’. After discussing such syntactical problems, one of the teachers (C) cited a second example of literal translation that caused confusion on the level of semantics. The Russian expression for ‘I have’ (*u menja*) has several meanings that have to be translated differently into Romanian. Whereas ‘I have’ is expressed by (*eu*) *am* in Romanian, the second meaning refers to space or the context of belonging and must be translated as *la mine* (‘at me’) in Romanian (this would mean ‘at my place’ in English).²⁵ At this point, Tanja (B) intervened in order to find out how to correctly say ‘I have a brother’, and proposed a combination of the two constructions: *la mine am fratele* (‘at me/at my place I have a brother’).

| Original ²⁶ | Translation to English |
|---|---|
| E: fiindcă ei așa-s sunt învățați să (.) lupt foarte mult că (.) vor vreau că ei să înțeleagă că să nu traducă cuvînt în cuvînt din rusă în romîna pentru că (.) le lămuresc în romîna merge întîi substantivul pe urmă merg deci adjectivul și (.) în limba rusă e красивая де [sic!] девушка например (.) în limba romîna e fata frumoasă (.) [...] | E: I fight a lot – I want them to understand that they cannot translate literally from Russian to Romanian – I explain that in Romanian you put the noun first and then the adjective – in Russian it is <i>krasivaia de devushka</i> (beautiful girl) for example (.) in Romanian it is <i>fata frumoasă</i> |
| D: e cel mai interesant traduc de exemplu fratele мой брат meu fratele [...] | D: most interestingly they translate for example <i>moï brat – meu fratele</i> |
| E: сперва существительное | E: first the noun |
| C: у меня la mine | C: <i>u menia – la mine</i> |
| D: traduc (.) este traducerea aceasta exact înțelegeți [...] | D: they translate (.) it's a literal translation you see |
| B: dar la mine am fratele или как | B: but <i>la mine am fratele</i> (at me I have a brother) or how? |
| D: eu am | D: <i>eu am!</i> (I have!) |
| B: eu am | B: <i>eu am</i> |
| A: (смеётся) | |
| D: (смеётся) | A+D: (laughing) |

question as mistakes that are produced by cross-linguistic influence. Uriel Weinrich, *Languages in Contact. Findings and Problems* (New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953).

²⁵ Donald Dyer, *The Romanian Dialect of Moldova* (Lewiston and Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), p. 100.

²⁶ Rules for the transcription:

(.) short break (less than one minute)

[...] something was left out

(text) explanations, non-verbal communication, translations

[text] two or more people speaking in parallel

[sic!] no typographical mistake

Then the discussion continued with further examples and complaints about the pupils' lack of receptivity. Suddenly, Tanja interrupted the discussion again in order to make sure she understood correctly that in Romanian the adjective follows the noun. After the teachers confirmed this and gave a few more examples, Tanja tried to explain why she was interested, but she could not finish her sentence. Instead the teachers repeated – this time in Russian – that the pupils' problem was that they translate *mot à mot*. Tanja gave up her initial intention to explain her interest and instead delivered an explanation for the pupils' 'interference' (that in Russian the adjective comes first) which had already been mentioned.

| original | translation |
|--|---|
| В: значит вопрос в румынском языке сначала говорится существительное например а потом далее | B: this means... question! - in Romanian you say the substantive first and then further... |
| Е: [да да (.) а потом] | E: yes yes (.) and then |
| В: [а потом <i>fratele meu</i>] | B: and then <i>fratele meu</i> (my brother) |
| Е: [<i>sora mea</i>] | E: <i>sora mea</i> (my sister) |
| В: [<i>sora mea</i> ага] | B: <i>sora mea</i> all right |
| Е: [даже в любом предложении] | E: even in any proposition |
| Д: [<i>floare frumoasă</i>] | D: <i>floare frumoasă</i> (beautiful flower) |
| Е: da m-am întâlnit astăzi cu bunica (-) Irinei sau nu știu cum ee deci întâi (-) не (-) ирининой бабушкой | E: yes I today met the grandmother (-) of Irina or I don't know how ee so first (-) not (-) <i>Irininoi babushkoï</i> (Irina's grandmother) |
| [...] | |
| В: ээ но вот это я должна знать [потому что иногда если] | B: I should know this [because sometimes when] |
| Е: [понимаешь] часто вот переводят дословно (.) слово в слово | E: [you see] very often they literally translate (.) word for word |
| В: ну потому что у нас в русском языке идёт там мой брат | B: because we in Russian it goes <i>moï brat</i> not <i>brat moï</i> and for you it is the other way round |
| Е: да | E: yes |
| В: не брат мой | B: not brother my |
| Е: да | E: yes |
| В: а у вас значит наоборот | B: and so you do it the other way round |
| Е: а у нас наоборот | E: and we do it the other way round |

WHAT DOES THE ANALYSIS OF THESE PASSAGES TELL US ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SPEAKERS?

Tanja was the only non-Romanian/Moldovan speaker in this situation, and was thus minorized. This circumstance differed dramatically from her usual interaction with the Romanian teachers. Although she has frequent contact with them at the school, she had never before been to R. At the *liceul*, they interact in Russian or even in Ukrainian, which the teachers learned over the twenty years that they worked there.

Tanja tried to start her first intervention in Romanian (which seemed to be the legitimate language in the context) and to be part of the group. The term intervention is appropriate here in a double sense – she felt she was not asked to speak because she was not officially part of the interview, and additionally her remark presented an intervention into the consensus of speaking Romanian/Moldovan because she changed the code.

When addressing her with the intention to include her or to explain something, the Romanian teachers switched to Russian. This can be interpreted in terms of habit and cooperation. However, it is also an expression of the fact that they did not take her seriously as the speaker or learner of Romanian that she attempted to present herself as. Their complaints about the pupils' lack of receptivity affected Tanja because she also did not know how to correctly say those phrases that were judged basic by the teachers. The latter either did not care about this effect, or, more likely, did not even consider that Tanja might be concerned. When she tried to explain why she was personally interested in these questions, the teachers ignored her and lead the discussion back to their pupils' mistakes. They did this in Russian to re-establish a level of equality with Tanja; they considered her a suitable audience for speaking about their pupils' mistakes instead of treating her as a 'Ukrainian villager', ignorant of Romanian (the pupils could be representative of this group). At the same time, however, they ignored the fact that she herself has a relationship to the Romanian language. Revealingly, speaking about the difficulties that the Romanian-speaking teachers from R. had with teaching Romanian at the *liceul* in the presence of someone belonging to the dominant group in U. was unusual for both sides.

It is also very interesting to see the strong linguistic line that Tanja drew between herself and the Romanian teachers. Referring to speakers of Romanian, she says *u vas*, which is the second-person plural form of *u menia* (introduced above in the context of 'I have a brother'). Here it means something akin to 'in your group', implying closeness and common identity. Even more interestingly she used *u nas* when speaking about her own group and referring to Russian speakers (*u nas v russkom*). So in this constellation, she represented herself as a speaker of Russian more than a speaker of Ukrainian, which is her vernacular in daily life. Although Russian is the language of inter-ethnic communication (as well as a school language) and a remnant of Soviet language relations, this situation of individuation illustrates clearly that, in contrast to the official ideology, equality could not be created on the basis of a common knowledge of Russian. Due to greater similarity in language structure between Ukrainian and Russian than between Russian and Romanian, and due to her biographical trajectory, Russian is more dominant and accessible in Tanja's repertoire than in those of the Romanian teachers.

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT TANJA'S LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE?

Even when Tanja tried to speak Romanian, she articulated expressions that are supposed to carry emphasis in Russian, the clearest example being *dar la mine am fratele ili kak* ('but at me I have a brother or what'). She chose to start her intervention with the Romanian *dar*, which can be classified as a discourse marker with the status here of a particle introducing a question rather than an adversative conjunction. The

strongly idiomatic tag question *ili kak?* ('or what?') follows in Russian, having the function of an appeal.²⁷ It emphasizes the question and to some extent rejects the supposition that what has been claimed before is common sense. We cannot deduce from this data whether a synonymous construction in Romanian would have been accessible to Tanja, but we can conclude that, even if she possessed this lexical knowledge, she lacked the pragmatic knowledge to give the intended 'contextualization cues'.²⁸ That is, in this context, the intention to express that she felt affected by what had been said, maybe even slightly unnerved by it, emphasizing that she wanted to know the right way to say 'I have a brother' in Romanian, which the teachers assume is common knowledge. Her next intervention begins in Russian with the discourse markers *znachit* and *vopros*. *Znachit* has a similar discursive function to *dar*. In spite of its most obvious function as a conjunction to resume something that has been said before (such as 'this means (that)'), in this case its discursive function is that of a question particle. Still, *znachit* alone does not seem to mark her intention to ask a question well enough, especially since her question did not refer to what had just been said (or she was unsure because she did not understand it). That is why she added *vopros* (question), which presents an elliptical though explicit way of articulating the desire to ask a question. But why did she start with *dar* in the first case and with *znachit* in the second case? It could be that Tanja not only considered Romanian the more legitimate code for the discussion, but also her use of *dar* could signal that she speaks some Romanian, allowing her to claim a place in the discussion.

On a purely lexical level we can conclude that some basic words in Romanian are accessible to Tanja, including conjunctions such as *dar* (being used here as a discourse marker) and nouns such as *sora* and *frate*. We have to acknowledge, however, that she introduced none of these words into the discourse, except for *dar*. In fact, the teachers had already articulated (and translated) these words. In contrast, she knows that possession is expressed in Romanian by use of *a avea* ('to have'), which she conjugated correctly for the first person singular. But she was unsure about the norms and adopted *la mine*. It is obvious that she does not trust her pragmatic knowledge in relation to these constructions. This is telling not only when it comes to Tanja's linguistic repertoire but also, slightly irritatingly, when looking at the teachers' attitudes, since this use of *la mine* is relatively common in Romanian/Moldovan. Dyer mentions this phenomenon as a loan translation (or 'morphological calquing'), explaining it as a result of fifty years of language contact and bilingualism in Moldova. It is therefore interesting to note that the teachers understand this as an 'interference' happening to Russian-speaking learners of Romanian instead of recognising it as a feature of Moldovan Romanian.²⁹

When it comes to receptive competences, the data indicates that Tanja had difficulty following the conversation, even though she kept emphasizing that she understood Romanian. Throughout the whole interview she was attentive, and her (few) contributions proved that she was at least aware of the topics being discussed. It seems that she understood this from certain key terms or isolated constructions

²⁷ Kerstin Fischer, 'Konstruktionsgrammatik und situationales Wissen', p. 350.

²⁸ John Gumperz, *Discourse strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 153.

²⁹ Donald Dyer, *The Romanian Dialect of Moldova*, p.100.

that she is familiar with. In the example cited above, those constructions are probably even the Russian ones that were mentioned along with the pupils' translation to Romanian, whereas she obviously does not understand the construction *cuvînt în cuvînt* ('word for word'). When she explained that pupils commit those 'mistakes' because the word order in Russian is inverted, she apparently believed that she was adding something new to the conversation, but this had already been mentioned several times before.

DYNAMICS, SCALE, AND THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER IN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Analysing situations like this in detail, we assume that they are not isolated or exceptional events but rather part of larger sociolinguistic dynamics. The *Ausbau* theory of language is not only useful in order to describe processes of individual language learning but also to study linguistic dynamics more generally. Along with linguistic repertoires and biographies, linguistic relationships and language change become part of linguistic dynamics. The formulation of a coherent theory of linguistic dynamics applied to socio-linguistic relations is still a work in progress. In linguistics the term 'dynamics' has been used to explain the changing of languages that are regarded as complex systems.³⁰ In contrast, our project applies the term to (socio)linguistic relations. We are trying to observe the changing relations between speakers with different linguistic repertoires who belong to different social groups. The term dynamics underlines the fact that those groups dispose of unequal power resources to defend and institutionalize their interests within society. Various forces at play across different scales, therefore, determine linguistic relations (or the linguistic market). It is the interplay of those forces that we call dynamics.

THE RESEARCHER AS PART OF LINGUISTIC DYNAMICS

Studying the dynamics of changing linguistic repertoires means, first of all, bringing to light the causes and reasons for their restructuration. These can exist at the level of personal biographies and relationships, which is why linguistic repertoires have been called indexical biographies.³¹ In Tanja's case, one of those causes could be that a visiting German researcher triggered her interest in learning Romanian. But studying dynamics also means connecting the speaker's experiences to the larger social and political context such as the restructuration of the linguistic market in Moldova since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. For Tanja, Romanian is not only a language that colleagues and a researcher from abroad speak. It is the legitimate language of the national market to which she does not have access, and her colleagues, and even a foreigner, profit linguistically from it. This constellation stands in sharp contrast to linguistic relationships on the Moldovan language market in Soviet times. Back then Tanja was a more 'legitimate speaker' than the other three because of her ability to speak Russian well.

³⁰ Diane Larsen-Freeman and Lynne Cameron, *Complex Systems and Applied Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³¹ Jan Blommaert and Ad Backus, 'Repertoires Revisited'.

Additionally, across various scales, different market laws are at work. The term ‘scale’ has been employed in order to consider space as socially constructed, hierarchically structured, and contributing to inequalities,³² something that is obvious in the context of minorized speakers. Linguistic input and practice as well as value judgements are different in the Ukrainian village U. in comparison to the national scale where Romanian/Moldovan is absolutely necessary for upward social mobility. At first glance, this might seem to be of lesser importance within the daily life of the village. However, as soon as people have to make contact on the regional or national scale, they face different demands. Another important scale for the value and extension of linguistic resources in this region is migration. As in all other parts of Moldova, some members of each family in this village have experience emigrating abroad (mainly to Moscow or Paris), so the transnational scale is also an important factor in linguistic repertoires.

Along with events and forces of larger political and sociolinguistic reach, local events and forces significantly shape linguistic relations. The village U. stands out because of its relative linguistic and infrastructural isolation. Although many of the inhabitants move across different scales (to neighbouring villages and towns, to Ukraine, to Russia, to Paris), there are people such as Tanja who have few activities outside the village. In such cases, a two-week visit from a young researcher from Germany can influence (micro)dynamics considerably, producing *Ausbau* events. On a precise level of communication, this has to do with different linguistic repertoires that need to be calibrated. On the level of the evaluation of linguistic products, my presence restructured the power relationships between different linguistic markets at least for a certain period. Although my linguistic repertoire lacks the legitimate language of the village U., my knowledge of languages generated symbolic profit. Knowing Romanian (and Russian), I confined myself to the rules of the translocal or regional and national market. Additionally I speak languages viewed as prestigious in a transnational perspective (English, French, German, and, again, Russian). The village U., like any space, has its own rules and dynamics, but it is obviously connected to the other scales as a submarket. As my position and linguistic repertoire were associated with the higher scales, my presence reactualized the dominance of the larger scales on the local market of the village U.

Viewing these relationships on the more practical level of communication, our diverging linguistic repertoires allowed for creative adaptation processes. Inhabitants in this Ukrainian village in Moldova speak much differently to me than they do among each other in their daily lives because my linguistic repertoire differs significantly from theirs. Although routinized constructions remain important even in such an exceptional situation, they can cover far fewer practical needs because there are fewer shared routines. This means that speakers have to adapt their utterances to me as a listener much more than to their usual audience.³³ I understand some Ukrainian but not enough to fully follow a conversation, and I do not speak it at all. I can lead a conversation in Russian, but I lack much vocabulary, and although almost everyone in the village knows Russian, people do not necessarily use it daily and might themselves have difficulties expressing certain ideas. Vocabulary and the

³² Andrew Herod, *Scale* (London: Routledge, 2011).

³³ Paul Hopper, 'Emergent Grammar', p. 161.

constructions at our disposal differ considerably. However, I have some proficiency in Romanian/Moldovan while most of U.'s inhabitants have only receptive competences in the language. Still, these resources can serve for the creation of new constructions in the context of *Ausbau* events.

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Understanding dynamics is difficult because it requires ethnographic methods covering long periods and demanding the constant presence of the researcher. As mentioned earlier, the ethnographic approach of our research project aims to begin with a study of individual linguistic repertoires that are themselves considered dynamic because they are constantly changing according to the sociolinguistic relations in which the speaker is involved.³⁴

The methods employed are narrative interviews focusing on linguistic biographies, observation, and a collection of written data. Sociolinguistics has been studying linguistic biographies of people who have experienced different linguistic markets, usually in connection to migration, examining language learning processes, reasons for language learning, and the function of different linguistic resources in repertoires.³⁵ Usually, significant changes are supposed to take place in connection with major changes in the lives of interviewees. Still, plurilingualism is also a reality for relatively immobile speakers.

However, interpretation of linguistic biographical narratives only partly allows access to linguistic repertoires. A full analysis of a linguistic repertoire would imply drawing a complete picture of any construction available to the speaker at any possible moment. Looking at restructurations would additionally mean making all the earlier stages of the repertoire visible. We would then have to ask which linguistic practices are routinized and which tasks afford creative use of linguistic resources. Such an analysis would not only focus on spoken language but also on written products. This kind of completeness is, of course, impossible to achieve and unnecessary for drawing relevant conclusions about the linguistic repertoires of an individual. Objectivity has long since been unmasked as ideological and illusory, and more than striving to achieve it, as a researcher I have the duty to include in the analysis the partiality of my knowledge that results from the selectivity of the collection and interpretation of the data, as well as from my social position and the social relations between me and the interviewees.³⁶

Ausbau events like the one analysed in this article play a crucial role in biographical interviews because they tell us a lot about the linguistic repertoires and the learning strategies of the speakers. It would be a mistake to think of those events as too exceptional for our purpose for learning about daily practices. Just as construction grammar has been interested in linguistic phenomena that have been

³⁴ Jürgen Erfurt and Anna-Christine Weirich, 'Sprachliche Dynamik in der Republik Moldova', in *Sprachkontakt, Sprachvariation, Migration: Methodenfragen und Prozessanalysen* ed. by Thomas Stehl (Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, in press).

³⁵ *Leben mit mehreren Sprachen, Vivre avec plusieurs langues. Sprachbiographien, Biographies langagières*, ed. by Rita Franceschini and Johanna Miecznikowski (Bern: Lang, 2004).

³⁶ Katharina Schramm, 'Weißsein als Forschungsgegenstand. Methodenreflexion und ‚neue Felder‘ in der Ethnologie', in *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte. Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland*, ed. by Maureen Maisha Eggers (Münster: Unrast, 2009), pp. 460-475.

excluded as too peripheral and exceptional by other theories of grammar, the same perspective applies to social interaction.³⁷ Moments of stumbling and of learning tell us the most because they reveal the limits of the linguistic repertoire and the resources that are not so easily accessible. They tell us what strategies interviewees use to linguistically and discursively deal with situations in which routinized constructions do not work. The very short interview extract above gives a revealing insight into Tanja's Romanian resources but also into her metalinguistic knowledge and her strategies for reclaiming her place in a context that minorizes her. But more than just being a witness of this event, I was the one who brought Tanja into this situation. By interacting with the others in Romanian, I actively took part in excluding Tanja from the conversation.

The communicative events of our discussion can be classified as *Ausbau* events because Tanja elaborated her linguistic knowledge and, at the same time, actively reflected on her own linguistic repertoire and the characteristics of constructions in Russian and Romanian. She realized that the limits of her linguistic repertoire were narrower than what she had imagined or at least claimed. She then mobilised the resources that she had in order to understand the topic of conversation and in order to correspond to the linguistic norms articulated by her interlocutors. She found exceptional ways of making her voice heard in a Romanian/Moldovan-speaking context (that permits Russian as an emergency solution), and she actively reflected on syntactic similarities and differences between Romanian and Russian. This combination of exceptional practices justifies speaking of the situation as an *Ausbau* event.

Seen from another point of view, such events are not only of methodological value in the manner in which I personally experience (and eventually record and transcribe) them. Due to their exceptional status, some will remain accessible in the memory of the speaker/learner and may eventually be brought up during a biographical interview. This is important insofar as sociolinguistics is constantly struggling to produce narrations of speech events in detail, avoiding generalities.³⁸ Seen from a third perspective and coming back to micro-dynamics provoked by the researcher, biographical interviews not only narrate *Ausbau* events but they also are likely to produce them. Reflection on one's own linguistic repertoire often produces new metalinguistic knowledge and initiates elaboration processes.

Such perspectives are valuable for this analysis. Therefore, I support more systematic inclusion of research-induced *Ausbau* events in the study of linguistic repertoires and linguistic dynamics informed by construction grammar. What is at stake is neither the validity of the data nor the interpretation, but rather their ethical and political acceptability. Conducting ethnographic research, I have to be conscious of the fact that I intervene into social relations. 'Ethnography thus reflects the circumstantial encounter of the voluntarily displaced anthropologist and the

³⁷ Kerstin Fischer and Anatol Stefanowitsch, 'Konstruktionsgrammatik: Ein Überblick', in *Konstruktionsgrammatik I. Von der Anwendung zur Theorie*, ed. by Kerstin Fischer and Anatol Stefanowitsch (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2007), pp. 3-17.

³⁸ Indeed, I conducted a one-to-one linguistic biographical interview with Tanja a few days afterwards in which she implicitly referred to the event.

involuntarily localized other'³⁹ is Appadurai's famous critical characterisation of this kind of research. In the context of my work, Tanja was not only involuntarily localised in U. but also (partly involuntarily, partly voluntarily) displaced to the village R. This was her active decision, and she seemed happy to cooperate with me. Still I initiated the subsequent dynamics, which implies responsibility.

CONCLUSION

The data presented are a salient example of how the 'accidental' ethnographic observation of an *Ausbau* event allows us to relate the interviewee's own account of her linguistic repertoire to her linguistic practice.

I triggered the dynamics presented above in two ways. On the one hand, my presence changed Tanja's daily routines, as she served as my temporary host and assistant, which exposed her to unusual contexts. This circumstance is typical of what I call *Ausbau* events, which demand unusual constructions on the side of the speaker. My research turned the usual relations of participation or exclusion upside down. The vernacular languages among friends and colleagues of different linguistic backgrounds in the *liceu* are Russian and Ukrainian. This allows the linguistically minorized teachers to participate because they have sufficient resources in these codes. Changing the environment and the usual rules of communication reveals that – contrary to previous assumptions – Romanian does not work as an inclusive code in this constellation. This exceptional situation also provokes explicit individuation; participants of the conversation position themselves as 'us' and 'them' along linguistic lines.

As both constructions and linguistic repertoires are contextual or situational, the exceptional demographic and linguistic minorization in the presence of the researcher provoked the activation of remote parts of Tanja's linguistic repertoire. In a consecutive chain, this first concerns the mobilisation of passive competence such as the recognition of constructions, for example *sora mea* ('my sister'), and active lexical and grammatical knowledge as in the case of *eu am* ('I have'). However, I have also shown that Tanja lacks the pragmatic knowledge necessary for successfully applying those constructions in context.

As the mobilization of those resources went hand in hand with a discussion about the forms and the rules of their application, this situation is likely to have the status of an *Ausbau* event for Tanja. Of course, at this point in a synchronic analysis, we cannot say what kind of dynamics this event either did or did not trigger. However, this can be determined by conducting follow-up interviews.

From an ethical point of view, researchers have to be very cautious and sensitive about what ethnographic research means for the subjects of interviews and observation. Once conditions are acceptable in this sense, from an epistemic point of view, it is not necessary to worry about the exceptionality of the data produced. On the contrary, as we have seen, *Ausbau* events produced by research deliver valuable data for the analysis of linguistic repertoires.

³⁹ Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Place and Voice in Anthropological Theory', in *Cultural Anthropology* 3.1 (1988), pp. 16-20.

One important aspect of *Ausbau* events remains to be mentioned; the person who experienced them most, and probably also restructured her linguistic repertoire to the largest extent of all the people involved, was of course the researcher herself. This presents a very significant opportunity, especially since all the recorded data and field notes contain significant information about my own linguistic repertoire, thus making an additional long-term comparison of my own linguistic repertoire possible. Reflections of the role of the researcher, not only as someone who influences the data collected from others, but who is herself strongly influenced by the research, remains a desirable outcome.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ George Devereux, *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967).