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Kuiken, F.; van der Linden, E.

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## Language policy and language education in the Netherlands and Romania<sup>1</sup>

Folkert Kuiken & Elisabeth van der Linden, University of Amsterdam

### 1. Introduction

Since the European Union Summit of Maastricht in 1991, and the ensuing Treaty of Maastricht (1992), cultural and linguistic diversity have been considered an important European cultural asset. As a consequence, the European Union (EU) has promoted multilingualism as well as second and third language acquisition. This means that the Union aims not only at stimulating all the languages spoken within its member states including the minority languages, but also promotes learning of second and third languages. The EU has 23 official languages and approximately 60 indigenous regional and minority languages. In 2004, the EU adopted in its language policy the ambition that each citizen of the Union should master his or her mother tongue plus two other languages. On the EU site it is stated that ‘EU language policies aim to protect linguistic diversity and promote knowledge of languages – for reasons of cultural identity and social integration, but also because multilingual citizens are better placed to take advantage of the educational, professional and economic opportunities created by an integrated Europe. The goal is a Europe where everyone can speak at least two other languages in addition to their own mother tongue’ (<http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-of-europe/>). A special Eurocommissioner has been installed to work at the realization of this ambition. The impact of this policy is limited, however, given that each member state controls the content of its educational system. Language policies and the promotion of multilingualism fall under the states’ jurisdiction.

In this chapter we show how this European ambition is realized in two of the member states, by comparing their linguistic policies and language educational system. It goes without saying that this comparison does not suffice to give a survey at the European level as in documents like *Europeans and their languages* (European Commission, 2012a), *Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe* (European Commission, 2012b) or *Language rich Europe* (Extra & Yağmur, 2012), but it is an illustration of the situation in two member states and it shows how linguistic policies can or cannot influence the realization of the European ambitions.

We will concentrate on the linguistic policies and language education in the Netherlands and Romania. These two member states are situated in opposite positions within the EU, geographically as well as historically: the Netherlands being one of the oldest EU states - one of its founders even – and Romania being one of the newest. On the other hand, these two member states share interesting characteristics. First, with between 23 and 25 million native speakers, Dutch and Romanian occupy an intermediate position between the smaller and the larger language groups. Both countries include communities of minority language speakers. In Romania, besides the official Romanian language, some twenty minority languages are spoken, of which some have been used for centuries. The Netherlands recognize two official languages (Dutch and Frisian) and two regional languages, whereas more than twenty minority languages are frequently used by recently arrived immigrants.

In each of the two parts of the chapter, we will first give a short historical sketch of the development of multilingualism in each country. We then move on to a

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<sup>1</sup> A preliminary version of this paper has been published in Kuiken and Van der Linden (2009).

description of the language policy pursued by the governments in both countries in general and in particular concerning the linguistic rights of the minority groups. Next we discuss the place of minority and foreign languages in the educational system. We conclude by comparing the linguistic situation in both countries and anticipate future developments.

## 2. *The Netherlands*

### 2.1. *Historical sketch*

The Dutch have been in contact with other cultures and languages for centuries. The Netherlands were successively invaded by the Romans, the Spanish, the French and the Germans and all these civilizations have left traces in the language. Since the sixteenth century the percentage of inhabitants with a migrant background has continuously shifted between 5 and 10% (Lucassen & Lucassen, 2011, Lucassen & Penninx, 1994). In the last fifty years, the arrival of large numbers of citizens coming from the former Dutch colonies, migrant workers from the Mediterranean area, and refugees from all over the world has radically altered Dutch society. The Netherlands now count about 16,7 million inhabitants of whom 21% have roots elsewhere. Throughout the world, about 23 million people speak Dutch: in the Netherlands, the Flemish part of Belgium, the Dutch Antilles, Aruba and in Surinam, a former colony of the Netherlands. There are also considerable communities of Dutch speakers in Germany, France and Indonesia.

Whenever two or more languages come into contact, they influence each other (Appel & Muysken, 1987) and the Netherlands are no exception. Many Latin, Spanish, French and German words were introduced into Dutch by the invaders of the Low Countries. Examples are given in (1).

- (1) muur ('wall' < Latin: murus)  
 casco ('body' < Spanish: casco)  
 politie ('police' < French: police)  
 vuistregel ('rule of thumb' < German: Faustregel)

During the second half of the twentieth century, new forms of migration took place: citizens from the former Dutch colonies (Indonesia and Surinam) arrived to the Netherlands and later, after the transfer of Indonesia in 1949, thousands of Moluccan soldiers and *Indische Nederlanders* ('Indonesian Dutchmen') migrated to the Netherlands. Among them were many Chinese who often opened Chinese-Indonesian restaurants, so that many words related to food and cooking were imported from Chinese and Bahasa Indonesia, like the examples mentioned in (2).

- (2) loempia ('spring roll' < Indonesian)  
 babi pangang ('roasted pork' < Indonesian)  
 mihoen ('thin Chinese noodles' < Chinese)  
 tofoe ('tofu, bean curd' < Chinese)

When Surinam became independent in 1975, many Surinamese moved to the Netherlands. Most of them have a Creole background and speak Sranantongo, a Creole language based on English. The Indo-Surinamese community speaks Sarnami, a language close to Hindi, but with influences from Sranan, Dutch and English.

During the colonial period, Surinamese Dutch developed, a variety of Dutch which is now spoken by most Surinamese; Sranan and Sarnami are used as a means to express identity and mutual solidarity. The inhabitants from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba speak Papiamentu, a Creole language based on Portuguese. Examples of words borrowed from Sranan, Surinamese Dutch and Papiamentu are given in (3).

- (3) bakra ('white man/woman' < Sranantongo)
- hosselen ('to hustle' < Surinamese Dutch)
- carco ('edible sea slug' < Papiamentu).

In the fifties and sixties male workers migrated to the Netherlands from around the Mediterranean and were later joined by their family. They have also added words to the Dutch language, although it is sometimes hard to ascertain whether words travelled as a result of immigration from the home country, tourism of Dutch people to the Mediterranean, or both. Examples can be found in (4).

- (4) mozzarella ('type of cheese' < Italian)
- gazpacho ('cold vegetable soup' < Spanish)
- retsina ('type of white wine' < Greek)
- fatwa ('verdict' < Arabic)
- kebab ('roasted meat' < Turkish)

Although the exact number of languages used in the Netherlands does not appear on official statistical records, a study that was carried out in The Hague tells us which ethnic minority languages are most frequently used (Extra, Aarts, van der Avoird, Broeder & Yağmur, 2001). When students in primary and secondary school were asked which language(s) they spoke at home, 21 languages were mentioned by 97% of the pupils: Turkish, Sarnami, Berber, Arabic, English, Sranantongo, Papiamentu, Kurdish, Spanish, Urdu, French, Chinese, German, Somalian/Asharaaf, Javanese, Portuguese, Italian, Akan/Twi/Ghanese, Farsi, Moluccan/Malay, and Serbian/-Croatian/Bosnian. Those languages can be heard on the streets of the four largest towns in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht), or read on signs posted in shop windows, like in (5).

- (5) Coffee Company, My Com (English)
- Al Jaberi, Nasafi (Arabic)
- Dönerland, Anadolu Firini (Turkish)
- Toko Sentosa (Indonesian)

Lately many people from Eastern Europe have migrated to the Netherlands. Since its entry into the EU in 2004, Poland is the most important country of origin for newcomers in the Netherlands. In 2011 more than 19.000 Polish migrated to the Netherlands. In the last fifty years this number of migrants coming from one country during one year was only surmounted by the Surinamese in 1975 after the declaration of independence. Recently also the number of migrants from the southern EU countries is increasing. With 3.000 Spanish and 3.000 Italians migrants their number has redoubled in comparison with 2007 ([www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl)).

It is difficult to obtain precise data on the number of mother tongue speakers per language in the Netherlands. This is because the Netherlands, as one of the few countries in the EU, are not familiar with official language data collection

mechanisms (Extra & Yağmur, 2012). Therefore the numbers presented in Table 1 should be considered as an attempt and by all means as an estimation. This is also the reason why some languages for which no data could be retrieved have not been included in the table.

Language	Speakers	Language	Speakers
Turkish	200.000-400.000	Kurdish	40.000
Arabic	220.000-360.000	Mandarin Chinese	40.000
Bahasa Indonesia	300.000	Kabuverdianu	20.000
Sranantongo	250.000	Assyrian Neo-Aramaic	12.310
Tarifit	200.000	Vietnamese	16.000
Sarnami Hindustani	150.000	Basa Jawa	7.500
Tamazight	90.000	Hebrew	5.000
Papiamentu	80.000	Romani Sinte	1.200
Cantonese Chinese	70.000	Romani Vlax	1.000
Moluccan Malay	45.000	Yiddish	1.000

Table 1: Estimated number of immigrant language speakers in the Netherlands (Sources: Extra & De Ruyter, 2001; Extra, Aarts, Van der Avoird, Broeder & Yağmur, 2002; [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talen\\_in\\_Nederland](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talen_in_Nederland))

After this short historical sketch we will now turn to the language policy of the Netherlands and the use of minority and foreign languages in the educational system.

## 2.2. Language policy and education

Due to the relatively large number of ethnic minority residents in the Netherlands, information from the local authorities about housing, public transport and health care is often posted in various languages. Nowadays, this policy is under review and some voices claim that such services discourage the acquisition of Dutch, considered to be one of the crucial factors of a good integration process. Since the introduction of the ‘Wet Inburgering’ (Citizenship Law) in 2007, migrants have to pass a test of spoken Dutch before entering the country. After being admitted to the Netherlands, they must take a citizenship exam which includes a language test designed to verify that they can speak and understand Dutch at level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe 2001). The Dutch government thus encourages migrants to integrate into Dutch society and to improve their level of proficiency in Dutch.

Besides the languages spoken in the Netherlands that have come from abroad, within the domain of Dutch there are several regional varieties that differ considerably from standard Dutch. And in the northern part of the Netherlands, in the province of Friesland, a different language – Frisian – is spoken. There are about 450.000 speakers of Frisian, who are all able to speak Dutch as well (<http://taal.phileon.nl/fries.php>). The Dutch government recognizes both Dutch and Frisian as official languages that may be used in court, in official documents and in education. Two varieties of Dutch have received the status of a regional language: Low Saxon and Limburgish. Low Saxon is spoken by an estimated number of 1.798.000 speakers in the (north) eastern part of the Netherlands (<http://taal.phileon.nl/nedersaksisch.php>), Limburgish by an estimated 825.000 speakers in the far south east of the country ([http://taal.phileon.nl/lim\\_situatie.php](http://taal.phileon.nl/lim_situatie.php)), in

the province of Limburg (see Figure 1). The use of these regional languages is encouraged and financially supported by the government, but they cannot be used in official documents, in court or as language of instruction at school.

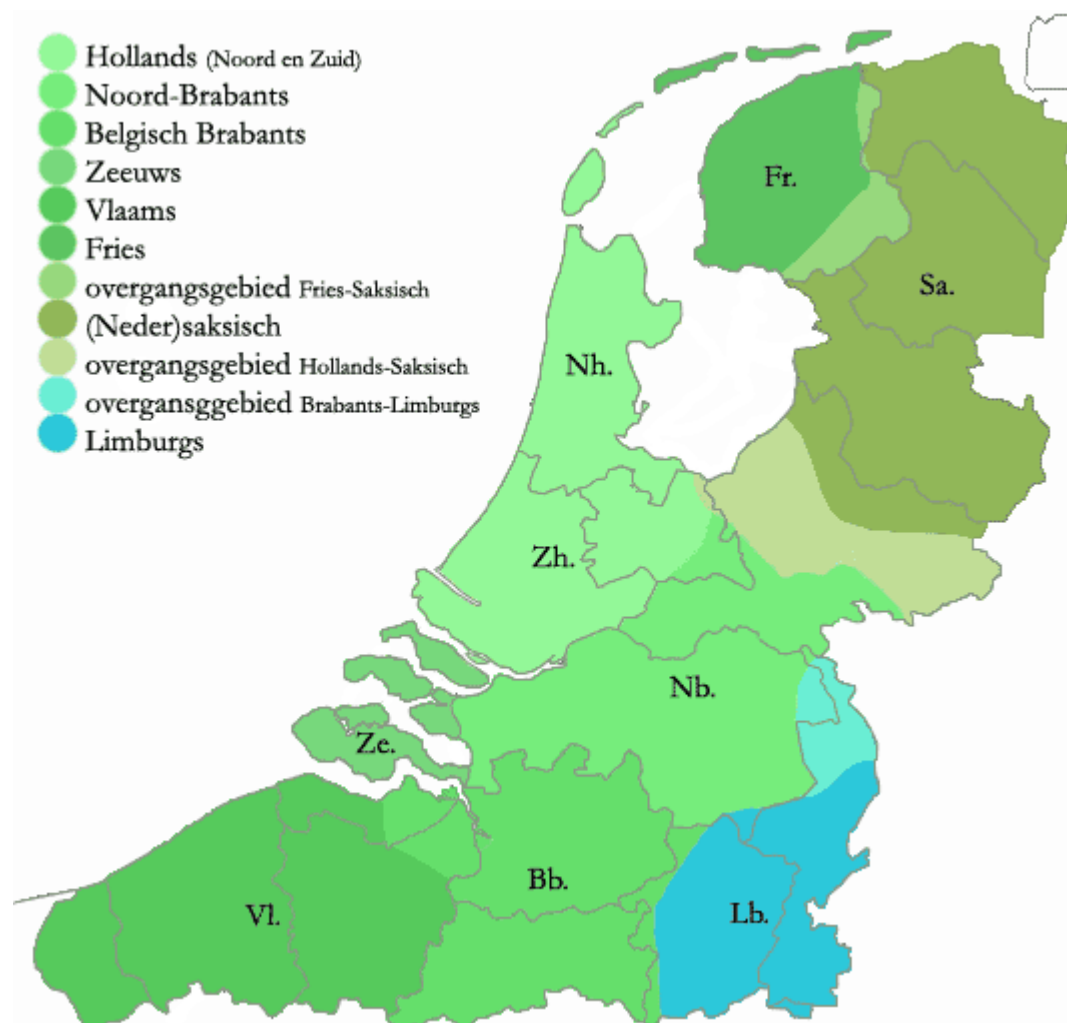


Figure 1: Regional languages in the Netherlands (Source: [www.streektaal.net](http://www.streektaal.net))

Like in many other countries, the Netherlands underline the importance of early language learning in preschool education. Compared to other European countries, the Netherlands spend the most time to this type of education (Extra & Yağmur, 2012). In schools, the language of instruction is Dutch, although in Friesland, Frisian may be used instead of Dutch, especially in preschool education and in primary schools. In primary schools all pupils aged ten to twelve also follow English courses for a total of 80 to 100 hours. This means that – again in comparison with other European countries – the teaching of foreign languages starts relatively late in the Netherlands. However, a few schools start teaching English from the age of four years on, but the number of institutions offering this option is small, although rising: 100 schools in 2007 and about 250 schools in 2013 (out of a total of 6913 schools). Fully bilingual education is still a controversial issue because results have shown that the level of proficiency of Dutch in primary schools is not optimal. In Friesland 44 schools offer trilingual (Frisian-Dutch-English) education (Riemersma & De Vries, 2011).

In secondary education, the dominant language of instruction is Dutch, although the number of schools that offer bilingual education (Dutch-English) is

rapidly increasing: 26 schools in 2000 and almost 150 in 2013 (out of a total number of 532 schools). In lower secondary education the acquisition of two foreign languages is compulsory; in upper secondary education this holds for one. All students learn English, followed by German and French. However, the interest in learning German and French is decreasing. Whereas in 2005 86,2% of the students in upper secondary education chose German and 69,5% opted for French, these percentages had decreased to respectively 43,5% and 33,3% in 2010.

([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/images/9/9c/Foreign\\_language\\_earning\\_statistics\\_YB2013.xls](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/images/9/9c/Foreign_language_earning_statistics_YB2013.xls)). Spanish, Italian, Russian, Frisian and recently Chinese are offered as optional foreign languages. The immigrant languages Arabic and Turkish have a firm status as examination subjects (Extra & Yağmur, 2012).

In higher education, Dutch also predominates, although the use of English is increasing. After the 2003 implementation of the bachelor/master system in Dutch universities, Dutch remains the main teaching language at BA level, but the use of English is encouraged at the level of Master's courses. The *Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie voor Wetenschappen* (KNAW, 'Dutch Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences') supports this development. The committee who analyzed the use of Dutch in scientific disciplines concludes that "[T]he rise of one worldwide lingua franca has enormous advantages, especially in science. That holds not only for the beta sciences, but also for the humanities and the social sciences. Therefore the use of English needs to be stimulated without resentment and with enthusiasm." (Commissie Nederlands als wetenschapstaal, 2003; translation by the authors).

Lately, the level of language proficiency in Dutch in all forms and at all levels of education has come under fire. In the late seventies, teachers found it challenging to provide an adequate education to children from minority groups. Because their vocabulary range and reading proficiency were insufficient, they had problems in history, physics, biology and maths, as they were unfamiliar with academic words such as 'assumption', 'to involve', 'to address', 'to refer to' or 'resources' that frequently occur in text books. As a consequence, in high school children from ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the less prestigious tracks of secondary education and underrepresented in the higher tracks. And in the more prestigious tracks, more and more schools for higher vocational education and universities require that first-year students take a language test in order to assess their proficiency of Dutch. It must be remarked, however, that students from ethnic minority groups are not the only ones struggling with Dutch. Results from the PIRLS- and PISA-surveys have shown that children of native speakers of Dutch experience difficulties as well, especially when they belong to a lower socio-economic group (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012; OECD, 2010)).

The development of a progressive curriculum with smooth transitions from pre-school activities to primary school and from then on to secondary school and higher education has been advocated to address these issues (Expertgroep Doorlopende Leerlijnen Taal en Rekenen, 2008). For preschoolers, programs have been introduced to try and help young children develop knowledge in various areas including language. At the same time, plans have been launched for both primary schools (*Scholen voor morgen*, 'Schools for tomorrow') and secondary education (*Onderwijs met ambitie*, 'An Ambitious Education') in order to address the declining level of language proficiency.

By language proficiency we refer here to the proficiency level in Dutch, since the proficiency level of children of ethnic minorities in their home language is not part of the plans. Yet, the teaching of minority languages deserves a special mention

here. Since primary schools were confronted with the arrival of large groups of children from ethnic minority origin, an animated discussion has taken place about whether their home language should be taught in school or not (Turkenburg, 2001). Detractors argue that the time spent on minority language teaching cannot be devoted to the teaching of the second language which, most of the time, is not yet sufficiently mastered. Moreover, individual issues have to be solved, such as the question of which language should be taught to a Moroccan child whose native tongue is not Moroccan Arabic but a Berber language, especially because it is often hard to find good language materials and qualified teachers. For these and other mainly political and financial reasons, the facilitation of minority language teaching was put to an end in 2004. We suggest, however, that from a linguistic point of view, there was no reason to stop financing these programs, as research has shown that the teaching of minority languages stimulates the emotional well-being of the child and that a good basis in the home language facilitates the acquisition of a second language (a.o. Appel, 1984). The decision also flies in the face of European directives to promote a multilingual society where European citizens master two other languages besides their native tongue.

To sum up, it may be stated that Dutch society is open to other languages and that foreign language learning is integrated into the educational system. At the same time, however, the school system offers few possibilities for the teaching of ethnic minority languages. We will now turn to Romania and analyse what the linguistic situation in this country looks like. We will start by sketching how multilingualism has developed in Romania historically.

### 3. *Romania*

#### 3.1. *Historical sketch*

Romania has been a multilingual country for many centuries. Populations with different mother tongues have been living in the country in parallel since at least the tenth century. Nowadays, the only official language in Romania is Romanian, a language that has descended from Latin and is still very close to its Romance sisters French, Spanish and especially Italian. Romanian is spoken in Romania, in a large part of the Republic of Moldavia as well as in the border territories of Serbia and Hungary. Dialectal varieties of Romanian are also spoken by small communities in Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece. Romanian, like Dutch, has undergone the influence of other languages. In the course of the last millennium, it was heavily influenced by languages such as Hungarian, Turkish, French, Italian and the Slavic languages and to a lesser extent by Greek and German. Traditionally, the three main languages spoken in Romania are Hungarian, German and Romanian. In the eastern and southern parts of the country, Romanian is by far the dominant language and the majority of the inhabitants are virtually monolingual; in the western regions of Transylvania and the Banat, Hungarian and German occupy a prominent place next to Romanian. Many inhabitants of these regions are bilingual or trilingual. These three languages in contact borrowed many words from each other. Less than 20% of the words used in contemporary Romanian are thought to come directly from Latin, while the large majority of the lexicon consists of words that are borrowed from other languages. Some examples of these borrowings are found in (6).

- (6) duşman ('enemy' < Turkish: duşman)



duh ('spirit' < Slavonic: duh)  
 oraş ('town' < Hungarian: varos)  
 influență ('influence' < French: influence)  
 folos ('use' < Greek: folos)  
 macaroane ('macaroni' < Italian: macaroni)  
 crenvurșt ('frankfurter' < German: Krenwurst)

Only a few traces of German subsist in the Romanian lexicon, despite the fact that a large German-speaking minority has been living in Transylvania since the twelfth century. In recent years, like in many other languages, lots of English words have entered Romanian, as shown in (7).

- (7) blugi ('jeans' < English: (blue) jeans)  
 stres ('stress' < English: stress)  
 bișnițar ('person who does suspect kinds of business' < English: business)  
 meci ('match' < English: match)  
 maus ('computer mouse' < English: mouse)

Latin, the source language of Romanian, was brought to Romania by the Romans, who Romanised Dacia during a 170-year occupation period (106-275 a.d.). In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Hungarians came from Asia and invaded these regions. They settled in the Pannonian basin (nowadays Transylvania and Hungary) and took over political power. In order to assert their authority, they installed groups of S kler<sup>2</sup> and German-speaking immigrants on the eastern borders of their reign in the Carpathians. The German-speaking groups came from the Rhineland and Luxemburg and some of them from Flanders. They settled in Transylvania in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and built a series of - still existing - fortified towns, hence the German name of Transylvania: Siebenb rger (meaning seven strongholds). Figure 2 shows a map of the traditional regions of Romania.



Figure 2: Romania's traditional provinces

<sup>2</sup> The S kler came into Transylvania either with or before the Magyars. Their organization was of the Turkic type, and they are probably of Turkic stock. By the eleventh century, however, they had adopted Magyar speech. With their own military and civil organization, they enjoyed autonomy under the Hungarian crown.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the ratio between Hungarians, Romanians and Germans (improperly called Saxons) in Transylvania was respectively 60%, 25% and 14%; by the second half of the eighteenth century, these numbers were respectively 56%, 30% and 10% (Kocsis, 1990 in Jordan, 1998). After the end of the sixteenth century, each group had their own religion (the Saxons were Lutherans, the Romanians Greek-orthodox and the Hungarians Calvinists) and professional occupations (the Germans were mainly traders, the Romanians peasants; the Hungarian elite lived in the towns and Hungarian farmers lived in the countryside). The churches were responsible for the educational system. This made it simple to preserve each language and culture and it explains why in Transylvania all three language groups maintained their language, culture and traditional clothing during eight hundred years, from the twelfth to the twentieth century. This even holds true for the German-speaking groups, although they never exceeded 15% of the population.

From 1541 to 1688, Transylvania and the Banat (the south-western part of Romania, close to the borders of contemporary Serbia and Hungary) fell under Ottoman suzerainty. This development did not strongly influence their cultural and linguistic situation, because the Turks respected each group's religion, culture and language. The Habsburg authorities, who followed the Turks, more or less adopted the same attitude (Rindler-Schjerve, 2003). In the eighteenth century, large numbers of German-speaking Swabs were brought by the Austrian imperial authorities to colonize the Banat region, along with smaller groups of Slovaks, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Czechs. All these ethno-linguistic groups founded their own communities, thus contributing to the still existing mosaic-like ethnolinguistic structure of the Banat.

The two eastern principalities of Romania, Walachia and Moldavia, were under Ottoman suzerainty for a much longer period of time (from the second half of the fifteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth century). There again, the Turks did not impose their language, religion or culture. Building mosques was even forbidden, so that the two principalities remained orthodox and Romanian. On the other hand, the Greek rulers who were appointed by the Sublime Porte and who administered the provinces in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, influenced the urban culture and many Greek words were introduced into Romanian, but this influence gradually disappeared after the end of Greek supremacy in 1821.

The only part of Romania where Turkish and Islam played (and plays) a role, is the Dobruja, on the Black Sea coast. This area was at first a part of the Byzantine, then of the Bulgarian Empire and was under Turkish rule from 1420 until 1878. Nowadays, a small part of the Dobruja population is still Muslim and speaks Turkish.

Finally, the presence of Roma and Jews in Romania has been attested from the thirteenth and the fourteenth century respectively. It is hard to evaluate the size of the Roma population but it probably amounts to between one and two million. The number of Jews is very small. The 2002 census mentions 6.000 Yiddish speakers.

The fall of the communist regime in 1989 led to the massive exodus of the German speaking population of Romania. They returned to Germany after centuries, encouraged by the generous politics of Germany with regard to these 'Spätaussiedler'. As a consequence, the German-speaking population, which amounted to 400.000 in the 1956 census, fell to 120.000 in 1992 and to 27.000 in 2012. Between 1992 and 2012 the whole population of Rumania decreased from 22.5 million to 19.5 million.

As we said before, Romania's official language is Romanian, but a number of minority groups and languages are present on its territory, as shown in the censuses, which are held approximately every ten years. The last census in Romania dates from 2012. People in these screenings are asked to identify not only the 'etnie' (ethnic group) to which they belong, but also their mother tongue. The data of the 2012 census are given in Table 2.

Language	Speakers	Language	Speakers
Romanian	17.000.000	Lipovenian Russian*	19.000
Hungarian	250.000	Turkish	26.000
Rromani	50.000	Tatar	18.500
Ukrainian	27.000	Other (Czech, Slovak, Serbian, Greek, Polish, Bulgarian, Armenian, Yiddish)	73.000
German	27.000		

Table 2: Number of mother tongue speakers per language in Romania according to the 2012 census (numbers rounded off to thousands).

\*Lipovenian Russian is a special variety of Russian spoken in the Danube Delta (Source: <http://www.insse.ro>).

Romanian is clearly the native tongue of the vast majority of the population. Nevertheless, a whole series of traditional minority languages is spoken by more or less large groups of speakers. As mentioned before, Hungarian speaking populations are found mainly in Transylvania. German speaking groups are found in Transylvania, the Banat and Bucovina. Turks and Tatars are found in the Dobrudja, Ukrainians at the borders with the Ukraine, Serbians in the Banat, Czech and Slovak populations in Transylvania and the Banat.

Most of Moldavia and Muntenia is monolingual, with the exception of the capital city of Bucharest, where several minority groups are represented, including a relatively large number of Hungarian speakers. The number of Hungarians in Bucharest is however decreasing: in 1930 they were 24.000, in 2002 there were only 6.000 left. Another exception concerns the large Roma population who is spread over the whole country. It is hard to tell how many of them keep up their language. In the next paragraph we discuss the rights of all these minority groups to learn and speak their language in the public domain.

### *3.2. Language policy and education*

The Romanian law guarantees a set of rights to minority language speakers. The Romanian Constitution stipulates (Article 6) that the state guarantees recognized minorities the right to maintain, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity without any form of discrimination. It also states (Article 32) that the members of minority groups have a right to learn their mother tongue and to be instructed in that language. Article 62 states that minority groups which are too small to be elected and represented in parliament will have a right to elect one delegate to represent them in parliament. It is also stipulated that in municipalities where a minority group exceeds 20% of the population, the members of this minority have a right to address and be addressed by the authorities in their native tongue. Public television provides programs in the German and Hungarian language and covers cultural events of these minority groups. Papers appear in these languages as well.

When it comes to languages and multilingualism in the educational system, two issues are relevant. On the one hand, there is the position of minority languages in the educational system, on the other there is the place of foreign language teaching within this system. In principle, all recognized minority groups have the right to learn and speak their mother tongue. A recognized minority in Romania has more than 1.000 members, which is not to say that all minorities have the right to be taught in the native tongue during the whole school curriculum. The number of teaching hours depends on the number of speakers of the minority in question. In 2002 the numbers of minority children enrolled in programs where teaching took place entirely in their native tongue are displayed in Table 3.

	<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>Primary (class 1-4)</b>	<b>Secondary (class 5-8)</b>	<b>Secondary (class 9-12)</b>
Hungarian	41.207	50.192	48.581	31.013
German	5.542	5.425	4.491	4.112
Ukrainian	224	95	129	204
Serbian	329	194	103	154
Slovak	237	355	327	185
Czech	36	52	-	-
Croatian	32	56	-	-
Bulgarian	22	-	-	-
<i>Total</i>	47.629	56.369	53.631	35.668

Table 3: Number of children enrolled in minority language programs  
(Source: [http://www.old.edu.ro/download/statistici\\_mino\\_05.doc](http://www.old.edu.ro/download/statistici_mino_05.doc))

At university level, it is only the Hungarian minority that has the opportunity to follow courses in their native tongue in the Hungarian speaking sections of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj/Kolozsvár.

Table 3 shows that there is a considerable number of minority children that get schooling in their mother tongue. However, the number of minority children exceeds the number of children schooled in a minority language. This suggests that not every child with a minority background attends a school where the curriculum is taught in their minority language. Parents apparently choose to educate their children in Romanian, the majority language. This finding is confirmed in a recent sociolinguistic study in Timișoara by Vaartjes (2009). In this study, pupils from three schools were interviewed in classes where courses were entirely taught in Romanian, Serbian and Hungarian respectively. Many children of the minority schools said to consider Romanian as their favourite language, instead of their mother tongue. Surprisingly, several pupils claimed that their favourite language is not their mother tongue or Romanian, but rather English, a prestigious foreign language.

The children accounted for in Table 3 receive their schooling exclusively in their mother tongue and are taught Romanian as a compulsory second language. Others attend primary schools where the curriculum is taught in Romanian, but where minority children are taught their native tongue for a number of hours every week. This represents 1.031 schools and 41.468 children, all languages included. Article 32, which stipulates that the members of minority groups have the right to acquire their native tongue and to be instructed in that language, is thus respected. Most of these children are of Hungarian speaking background, but all the small minority languages, such as Turkish, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Polish, Russian, are represented.

The Romani-language falls into this category as well but although the Rom are a significant minority, no school provides a whole curriculum in their language. Schooling is generally problematic for this group. According to the 2002 census about 25% of the Rom population is illiterate.

Let us now turn to foreign language teaching in Romania. A considerable number of schools introduce foreign language teaching very early. In kindergartens, immersion programmes are offered in French, German, Italian, or Chinese. But there is no guarantee that these programmes are continued in primary school. At primary level, the teaching of a foreign language starts in the third grade. From the fifth grade on, a second foreign language is added. At secondary school level, all pupils study two foreign languages (mostly French, English, Spanish, and German) and a few schools have immersion programmes in those languages. Minority languages (Hungarian or Turkish, for example) are not offered as a foreign language.

To sum up, Romanian is the only official language, but Romania guarantees considerable rights to speakers of minority languages: ethnic minority languages are taught proportionally to the number of minority language speakers in a specific county. Many inhabitants of Romania grow up to be multilingual. Furthermore, language learners and users have many opportunities to learn foreign languages. Foreign language learning is largely biased versus English.

#### *4. A comparison between the situation in the Netherlands and in Romania*

When we compare the linguistic situation of the Netherlands with that in Romania, significant differences come to mind. While Romania has a longstanding multilingual tradition, the Netherlands – despite a long history of inhabitants with a migrant background – have been a mainly monolingual country, with the exception of the bilingual province of Friesland. Around 10% of Romania's population does not consist of native speakers of Romanian, whereas the Frisians only constitute 3% of the population in the Netherlands. At this moment 21% of the population in the Netherlands has roots outside of the country and often speak a native tongue other than Dutch.

Historically speaking, Romania has had very liberal linguistic policies: under Ottoman rule as well as under the Habsburgs, all minority languages were accepted. For example, German kept being spoken for more than eight centuries in some parts of Romania. In the Netherlands, the situation has never been comparable. Nowadays, however, both countries are confronted with the same problems and dilemmas when it comes to multilingualism with regards to language policies, especially in the educational system.

In the Netherlands, the official attitude towards the traditional minority language Frisian is positive: Frisian is supported and taught compulsory at Frisian primary schools, and within the province of Friesland, people are entitled to interact with the authorities in Frisian. On the other hand, no effort is made to maintain knowledge of immigrant languages and cultures among their native speakers: instruction in minority languages in public schools has been discontinued in 2004. Moreover, leaflets from the authorities are more and more in Dutch only. Finally, we see that the monolingual majority does not have much sympathy for the language and culture of the minority groups. A few years ago one minister even proposed to speak only Dutch in the streets.

In Romania the official attitude towards the traditional minority languages is mainly positive. Efforts are made to preserve minority languages and culture among

their native speakers. Schools take care of ethnic minority children from the larger minorities and some instruction for ethnic minority children of the smaller minorities is provided. But like in the Netherlands, the monolingual majority is not very welcoming to the language and culture of minority groups. Moreover, young minority speakers increasingly identify with the majority, especially in the case of children from mixed marriages. In both countries, the trend is towards a strengthening of the majority language.

The study of language acquisition in school also reveals both differences and comparable problems and tendencies. Education in the traditional minority languages is offered to minority children in both countries. In Romania, this is even true of university level, at least for the largest minority, the Hungarians. This is different from the Netherlands, where Frisian plays a role in education almost exclusively at the primary level, whereas the more recently introduced minority languages do not have a place in the educational system at all. In both countries, foreign language teaching plays an important role in secondary education and to a lesser extent in primary education. The teaching of foreign languages strongly privileges English: in upper secondary education 100% of the pupils in the Netherlands and 98,7% of the pupils in Romania learn English at school. In Romania for French and German these numbers are 86,3% and 11,8% respectively. In the Netherlands pupils have become less interested in learning French and German. In 2005 69,5% of the pupils took French and 86,2% German, but five years later these numbers had decreased to 33,2% and 43,5% respectively. In both countries an interest in bilingual education is developing, with schools offering two languages of instruction, one native tongue and another, foreign language. In that area too, a strong bias towards English as the second language is noticeable, although in Romania German and French are also present in bilingual education.

These findings correspond more or less to the results of the most recent *Eurobarometer*, which ascertained a broad consensus among Europeans in general on the following issues: 1) languages other than the mother tongue are useful for personal development (88%), 2) foreign languages are useful for children to learn for their future (98%), and 3) everyone in the EU should be able to speak at least one foreign language (84%). English is perceived to be the most useful language in this regard, with two thirds of Europeans (67%) thinking this. More than three-quarters (77%) of the respondents answered that improving language skills should be a policy priority. Although these results show that European citizens generally support the Commission's multilingualism policies, only 54% of the Europeans are able to speak a language other than their mother tongue and 25% master the long-term EU objective that every citizen has practical skills in at least two foreign languages. The Netherlands do quite well in this respect: 94% of the Dutch are able to speak at least one foreign language and 77% at least two. For the Romanians these percentages are 48% and 22% respectively (European Commission 2012a).

In summary, a comparison between the language situations in these two apparently distant countries reveals next to a number of differences also some striking similarities. Despite efforts to maintain knowledge of the traditional minority languages and regardless of the language policy in these two countries in the past centuries, in both countries there is a tendency towards a monopoly position of the majority language. The majority language (Romanian in Romania, Dutch in the Netherlands) has undoubtedly the strongest economic power and offers most opportunities for its speakers. The minority languages are under pressure: speakers of minority languages see the profits of speaking the majority language and do not

estimate enough perhaps the important cultural contribution to their lives of the minority language or the advantages of a bilingual education (see van der Linden and Kuiken, 2012). In the second place, in both countries, English plays a comparable role: the vast majority of students learn English at school and more and more bilingual education is offered with English as the second language next to the native tongue. The language attitude towards English is very positive in both countries, even to the point that, at least in the Romanian context, some pupils claimed to prefer English to any other language including their mother tongue. Considering the role of English from a wider perspective, we see that at a supranational level, English plays the role that the majority language plays within the country. It is the language that offers most economical benefits to its speakers. This finding confirms Abram de Swaan's (2001) thesis that English has become the 'super-central' language in our part of the world. De Swaan concludes that, ironically enough, the European Union's policy of adopting all of its 23 languages as official languages, leads to the use of more and more English. This holds not only for the use of English in official European meetings, but also for its growing use in everyday contacts in the EU member states. And, as we have shown, the educational system seems to strengthen this effect, at least in the two countries we studied here, the Netherlands and Romania, which at first sight are so different from each other in many respects. Further investigations will have to find out what this means for the survival of minority and majority languages in the European context.

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