

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i.Br.
Wissenschaftliche Arbeit
Englisches Seminar
Betreuer: Prof. Dr. Christian Mair
Freiburg, den 14.06.2007

Language Maintenance and Functional Expansion of Lesser-Used Languages: Case Studies on Aromanian and Irish

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I. Introduction

...in this age of increasing globalisation, and with the burgeoning spread of English as the current world language, the question of retaining cultural and linguistic distinctiveness is increasingly becoming an issue for national majority groups as well for minorities (May, 2001: 194).

The above statement gives an accurate presentation on the current world linguistic situation. Within the European context one may paraphrase it with the well-known principle 'unity in diversity' on which the European Union is founded. 'Unity in diversity' refers not only to cultures, customs and beliefs, but also to languages. Moreover, this principle applies both to the official languages and to the many regional or minority languages - frequently referred to as 'lesser-used' - spoken by sectors of the EU population. Whether this 'diversity' has high chances of survival, and the extent to which the authorities charged with its protection and promotion may succeed in their aims, remains to be seen given the current socio-political climate. Bearing this in mind, this paper aims to present the current situation of lesser-used languages, with a special focus on language policies whose role in language maintenance has proved essential.

Aromanian and Irish have been chosen as representing two different yet broadly analogous situations of lesser-used languages. It has often been argued that speakers of minority languages are rarely in similar positions, in spite of the fact that they seem to face similar issues. Recognition, or lack of it, has therefore important implications for the progress of such languages.

The aim of this comparative study is therefore to analyse various aspects of the evolution of the two languages, starting from an historical perspective, investigating several stages of socio-political influence and culminating with their current situations. This study acknowledges that Aromanian and Irish face differing degrees of threat, and investigates the relative resistance of Irish to disappearance compared to the less well protected Aromanian. To put it differently, the success or failure of various revival language programmes the Irish language has undergone may serve as a model for the future status of Aromanian.

Researching this topic has aroused many mixed feelings; optimism, despair, scepticism, hope, and belief. There can be no doubt that lesser-used languages occupy a precarious position in today's world, and scholars are almost unanimous about the poor chances of survival of many of them.

The almost obsessive question ‘Who needs languages that nobody has heard of anyway?’ has guided me in my research and has simultaneously given me strength to believe that indeed such languages have to be promoted and maintained, since “...the language we speak is crucial to our identity to the degree to which we define ourselves by it” (May cited in O’Reilly, 2003: 23). The future of a language is in this case closely related to the views of its speakers. The support given to lesser-used languages by authorities such as the Council of Europe has little effect if the speakers themselves ignore the fate of their language. It is in this context that the situation of such languages should be considered.

My interest in lesser-used languages is both personal and scientific. As a native speaker of Aromanian, born in Romania and studying in Germany, I have often experienced situations in which people ask me what kind of language I am speaking. This presents a dilemma: to take the easy way out, and say ‘Romanian’, so as to avoid further explanations (although my linguistic conscience has always prevented such a choice), or to take the complicated option of giving the abridged version of the history of the language, its speakers and geographical expansion (i.e. Eastern Romance language spoken in five different Balkan countries), its relation to Romanian, etc, etc.

Due to the fact that people normally tend to associate language with nation, it is difficult for many to understand how such a phenomenon is possible: to speak a stateless, contested language hardly anyone has ever heard of. Indeed, as many scholars have rightly argued, the situation of the Aromanian people and their language is not a typical one. The chapter dedicated to the historical background of Aromanian is in this sense a detailed explanation of why and how language and nation are not necessarily interdependent.

As far as my interest in Irish is concerned, despite my lacking any competence regarding the language, I have always been impressed by its turbulent history and the controversial attempts regarding its revitalisation. The somewhat ‘romantic’ picture I had created turned more realistic through the actual experience I had during my one semester stay in Galway, Ireland, where the Irish language is alive and visible, although to a limited extent. The Irish Government has succeeded by the means of special programmes in maintaining the language in a natural environment, despite the fact that English still remains dominant. The compromise reached through Irish-English, the particular language variant used by the Irish people, stands for a marker of their identity, distinct from the English, for instance. It is somewhat ironic that English has more power than Irish, the actual national and first official language in the Republic of

Ireland, and at the same time ironic that, despite the activist tone of this paper regarding the lesser-used languages, English again prevails. Especially in the historical context of language shift in Ireland, English would be the ‘killer language’¹, to quote a term used by Trudgill (cited in Tsunoda, 2005: 143). Nevertheless, taking into account the important function of English as an international language, the previous observation may as well be justified by the very topic of the paper. In other words, in order to reach a greater audience, English serves as the appropriate medium to send the message through. This does not mean, however, that its importance should be considered therefore greater than any of the two lesser-used languages in the study.

The choice in contrasting Aromanian and Irish comes thus as an attempt to analyse the distinct situations of two lesser-used languages: each have very different places on the same track between extinction, survival, and good health. The central research question can therefore be formulated as follows: ‘What can the Aromanians learn from the Irish experience?’ The methodology used in answering the question relies on various materials on language policies, dealing with language planning, and language rights in the context of the European Union. A greater degree of insight into the current language situation has been gained from works treating issues on minority languages, language endangerment and language maintenance.

In other words, this paper, created by a native speaker of a lesser-used language, is an analysis based on both theoretical and empirical research undertaken by scholars, and thus external sources rather than my own fieldwork. This paper might therefore be regarded as a first step in understanding the problematic issue of lesser-used languages, enabling the way for further research in the domain, which in my opinion, can be better acknowledged using the resources of fieldwork.

Structured in four chapters, the paper starts with a general overview of lesser-used languages. The first chapter summarises main definitions and controversies regarding the terminology of such languages. It also gives information on the legitimacy and value of linguistic diversity represented by the lesser-used languages, presenting the most important documents dealing with their status in the European context. Thus, subject to analysis are legal and political documents, as well as organisations such as the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* and the *European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages*.

¹ Prof. Mair has drawn my attention to the fact that this idea originated from Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2000) in *Linguistic Genocide in Education or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?*

Chapter 2 deals with the socio-political aspects of language maintenance and loss, aiming at offering a typology that would serve as a useful tool for describing the situation of lesser-used languages. According to John Edwards, the necessity of a comprehensive typology, may lead to “...complete conceptualisation of minor language situations and even permit predictions concerning shift/maintenance outcomes” (1992: 51). Several attempts by the EU to analyse the current states of lesser-used languages are mentioned here. The Euromosaic Report of 1996 is a relatively accurate example in this sense.

The comparative study on the histories of Aromanian and Irish is the main aim of Chapter 3. The social, political and economic aspects that have led to language endangerment and ultimately language shift are presented in relation to the historical contexts of both languages. In addition, an overview is given on the language policies undergone in Ireland over the last century. A critical approach towards these language policies paths the way to the last chapter, which may be regarded as the climax of the paper, as it gives the answer to the main research question, that is ‘What can the Aromanians learn from the Irish experience?’ Here several programmes aimed at language maintenance are being discussed. The question to what extent the Irish model could be applied to the Aromanian situation eventually finds an answer here.

1. Chapter 1. Lesser-used languages, regional or minority languages?: an overview.

Policy makers and scholars differentiate between majority or minority languages according to various criteria, ranging from officially recognised status to actual language use. If a distinct language is spoken at a much reduced degree than the official national language, the term would thus be ‘lesser-used’. Nevertheless, ‘minority’ or ‘regional languages’ are often equally used as synonyms for ‘lesser-used’, although being considered pejorative. Whereas ‘regional’ implies the connection between language and territory, ‘minority’ rather alludes to a numerically inferior population with its own distinct language. The association with a specific territory is not as clear-cut, ‘minority’ might yet pertain to “those languages with a small territory, limited development potential, whose survival appears to be threatened” (Tabouret-Keller 1991 cited in O’Reilly, 2001: 9).

According to Nic Craith (2006: 67) ‘minority’ refers to a group or community sharing a language. In this case the focus is on the speakers rather than the language itself. As such it seems

to display negative connotations, especially for the speakers themselves. As Ó Riagáin appropriately observes, “Minority is the most widely used term but it can raise emotive issues or touch on sensitivities in some instances” (2001: 28). With respect to Irish, such a classification has a pejorative overtone, since the language is defined by the Constitution of Ireland as “the national language and the first official language” despite the fact that its actual use by the population is undeniably in a minority position (Ó Riagáin, 2001: 28).

Nic Craith argues that the distinction between majority and minority languages in the Western world is usually made by relative numerical size, although “...it is more appropriate to think of it in terms of access to power in a specific political context” (2006: 58). Official recognition therefore plays a major role in lesser-used language maintenance although not the most essential. O’Reilly claims that “...the policy of the state in which a minority group is located is an obvious and clearly significant factor for the vitality and long-term survival of the language, but not necessarily the most important one” (2001: 10). There are other factors that contribute to language maintenance, such as speakers’ interest in the language itself or demographic distribution of a language group, to mention just a few.

Nation states have always stressed the importance of one national majority language perceived as a unifying element of distinct ethnic minorities sharing a common territory. Even nowadays, with the establishment of the European Union and the emphasis on trans-nationality², lesser-used languages still lack state language planning, their status being inferior to that of the majority language (Nic Craith 2006: 58). This is especially true for Aromanian, the status of which is extremely precarious despite the fact that its very promotion would enrich the linguistic diversity fostered by the EU principles. Spoken in scattered fragments over the Balkans - northern Greece, southern Albania, the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, southwestern Bulgaria and southeastern Romania - Aromanian is officially recognised only in the FYROM. Despite the fact that the language is attested in several official documents of the EU, its chances for survival still rely very much on the state support of its host countries.

Given the importance which nation states have traditionally attached to national language, lesser-used languages have experienced severe blows. In Europe, throughout the 19th century in particular, the classification of some languages as non-national had a severe impact on many speech communities. Speakers of lesser-used languages frequently became active themselves in

² For many minority language groups, the EU offers a trans-national context, where the relevance of nation state is diminished (Nic Craith, 2006: 74).

the process of rejecting and abandoning their traditional language. For example, in Ireland, although Irish was spoken by the majority of the population at the time, it became associated with backwardness, whereas English represented modernisation and economic progress. Moreover, “English was, practically, the sole language of administration, law, literacy and commerce. It was almost universally the language needed by the urban immigrant and the emigrant overseas. Conversely Gaelic has become associated with ignorance, struggle and distress” (MacDonagh 1983 cited in Nic Craith, 2006: 62). The ultimate effect was therefore the decline of the language (all of the above from Nic Craith, 2006: 62).

This seems to be also the case of Aromanian, especially in Greece, where movements from rural communities to urban settlements throughout the centuries gradually fostered assimilation with the Greek culture, with the result of language shift and ultimately language loss. The current situation of Aromanian in Greece may be depicted as follows:

The negative attitudes may be so entrenched that even when the authorities get around to doing something about it - introducing community projects, protective measures, or official language policies - the indigenous community may greet their effort with unenthusiasm, scepticism, or outright hostility (Crystal 2000 cited in Nic Craith 2006: 62).

There are almost no community projects in Greece concerned with maintenance of the Aromanian language. Even the official documents issued by the Council of Europe, such as *Recommendation 1333* of 1997 or the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, which appeal to state governments to take steps in promoting and sustaining linguistic heritage through various actions, have had no positive results. Aromanian speakers from various cultural associations in Greece even expressed their contempt towards the content of the aforementioned documents. Commenting upon the statement by Crystal, such a reaction becomes comprehensible only by resorting to the historical background. Due to political influence, the past of the Aromanians in Greece is charged with many negative experiences which makes it almost impossible to display a positive attitude towards their language or culture in the present.

Referring to the term ‘lesser-used’ languages, Ó Riagáin claims that:

...it is by no means perfect, not least grammatically, but it has a number of advantages. It conveys the concept that the language in question is “lesser-used” in the context of the sovereign state in question and side-steps thorny issues as to whether or not the language is somehow less

important or less worthy than the majority language of the state or whether or not the territory on which it is spoken should be regarded as a region of the sovereign state or rather the national territory of the people who use the language (2001: 28-9).

In this sense the term ‘lesser-used languages’ has priority in this paper. Nevertheless, while referring to official documents issued by the EU, the term ‘regional or minority languages’ is equally used, irrespective of the controversial connotations discussed above.

1.1. The European Union and lesser-used languages: legitimacy and language rights.

The overemphasis within nation states on linguistic uniformity has traditionally prevented lesser-used languages from receiving much support. However, the emergence of the European Union has brought new perspectives for the fortunes of lesser-used languages. Yet despite the adoption of several documents crucial to the recognition and protection of lesser-used languages together with the establishment of legal institutions charged with the promotion of such languages, the EU cannot single-handedly confer legitimacy upon languages. It is left to member states to decide whether to confer formal recognition upon those languages lacking any state support. Legitimacy - granted formally through the constitution or legislation - represents in this sense the first step towards more secure language maintenance.

As reflected in the precedent section, despite its official status Irish is still a ‘lesser-used’ language in the Republic of Ireland, since it is spoken only by a reduced population. Legitimacy in the Irish case does not necessarily guarantee active language use. Or as Ó Riagáin argues: “...no language can be legislated into life and use” (2002: 195).

Conversely, Aromanian does not benefit from any official recognition in most of the states where it is still spoken, yet it survives in restricted areas but its tenacity does not guarantee its development. Surveys have shown that Aromanian is gradually disappearing and will eventually die out unless some radical measures in language planning are soon taken. Endangerment thus threatens both Aromanian and Irish, although for different reasons. Legitimacy appears therefore arbitrary for the maintenance of lesser-used languages, yet it “...can create the necessary conditions to enable them to live and develop” (Ó Riagáin, 2002: 195).

An interesting view on legitimacy is given by Nic Craith (2006: 113), who argues that there are two levels speakers at which of lesser-used languages can claim legitimacy for their mother

tongues. At a horizontal level, legitimacy is a “subject centred conception” (Theiler 1999 cited in Nic Craith: 113) conferred at a local, non-governmental level, whereas vertically official institutions can bring support and recognition. In other words, power rests with the speakers of lesser-used languages to use, maintain and consider their speech forms as languages. The horizontal level is therefore a prerequisite for the protection and maintenance of lesser-used languages, especially as far as the current status of Aromanian is concerned. Nevertheless, the acquisition of language status, and the assurance of language maintenance ultimately depend upon policies conferred at the vertical level.

In the EU context, the emergence of legal institutions such as the *European Bureau for Lesser-used Languages*³ and the signature and ratification of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*⁴, have had a significant effect upon the recognition and maintenance of lesser-used languages. Recognition of language communities can now be received at a higher level than that of the nation state, yet this has proved rather arbitrary. As May argues, “...in relation to the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages...individual European nation-states retain considerable discretion over the level of recognition they provide ... the specific provisions for language remain sufficiently qualified for most states to avoid them if they so choose” (2002: 4).

The following section deals with this arbitrary process, underlining the impact of ECRML and EBLUL in the case of Aromanian and Irish.

1.2. The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages.

The significance of the ECRML and EBLUL for the recognition and support of lesser-used languages has been analysed by several language activists including Ó Riagáin, O’Reilly, and Nic Craith. Their works have provided invaluable information for this section which focuses on the importance of the charter and the role of EBLUL in lesser-used languages in general and in Aromanian and Irish in particular.

³ EBLUL in its abbreviated form

⁴ ECRML

Established in 1982 on the initiative of European Commission officials and representatives of most of the lesser-used language communities, EBLUL is a democratically run Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) promoting languages and linguistic diversity. It is based on a network of Member State Committees (MSCs) in all the EU member states.

The Bureau works under Irish law and has contacts with other European institutions, such as the Council of Europe, especially on matters related to the ECRML. Its function is to implement an annual work programme that is approved and co-financed by the European Commission. The main strategies applied by the Bureau have been accurately summarized by Ó Riagáin:

[The Bureau] provides a European forum for those working for the conservation and advancement of lesser-used languages; it seeks political and legal support for them; it facilitates an exchange of information and experiences among language activists; it seeks funding and other resources for lesser-used languages projects; it supports the establishment of ancillary support structures, and it provides a back-up advice and support service for many small linguistic communities (Ó Riagáin, 2001: 30).

The Bureau is thus dedicated to conferring legitimacy on regional or minority languages. Nevertheless, the legitimacy given to a lesser-used language is not entirely dependent on the authority of the Bureau. National institutions still have a major influence on the status of a particular speech form, but the support given by EBLUL represents one factor in the language maintenance process. As Nic Craith argues, if EBLUL fails in relation to national institutions, in the case of Northern Ireland, for instance, the legitimacy it confers to a certain speech form "...is not internalised and remains disputed" (2006: 122). Legitimacy for Aromanian in Greece depends mainly on the state but also on the attitudes of speakers themselves towards their language. The work of the Bureau has met with serious opposition from several Aromanian associations.

Nonetheless, the relevance of the Bureau at an international level cannot be contested, its authority as a conferring body having already received international approval. This has been especially influenced by the Bureau's success in getting more and more countries to sign the ECRML.

Following political developments marked by the adoption of successive resolutions, the ECRML was accorded the legal status of a convention by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1992. It formally entered into force on 1 March 1998. The charter represents one of the most precise and detailed instruments for the preservation and promotion of

Europe's indigenous, minority languages. The charter's definition of regional and minority languages is reasonably precise: "[languages that are] traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population" [...] and "different from the official language(s) of the state" (ECRML, 1992: 2). The charter does not refer to dialects of the official state languages nor does it include languages of migrants.

Despite its apparently obvious definition of 'minority languages', the terminology has been subject to criticism. Ó Riagáin (2001: 46) argues that those who drafted the charter were completely aware that such terms like 'regional or minority' were not perfect; nevertheless, at the time they were generally accepted. He is also of the opinion that the terminology is not appropriate for either the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland. Interestingly enough this seems to be the reason why the Republic has not signed the charter. Nevertheless, in Part I of the charter, which contains definitions and practical arrangements, there is a reference to "... official language which is less widely used on the whole or part of its territory" (ECRML, 1992: 3). This is applicable to the status of Irish in the Republic.

The charter is unique because it is directed at conferring rights to languages rather than to ethnic or linguistic communities (Ó Riagáin, 2001: 44). The categorisation of languages as 'regional or minority languages' is thus made according to their level of usage. Moreover, the wording emphasises on precise commitments that states should make in order to develop and protect the respective languages. The charter takes as a starting principle basic human rights, such as non-discrimination and the right of the individuals to express themselves using their own language, and focuses on the measures that need to be implemented in order that these rights may be exercised (Grin, 2000: 17).

Structured into five parts, the charter gives general provisions for signatory states, definitions of terms and practical arrangements and measures for the promotion and functional expansion of regional or minority languages. In signing it, the member states are obliged to accept the principles set out in the initial sections. According to Nic Craith (2006: 76) there are two levels of adherence to the charter. These entail signature and ratification. Nevertheless, states signing the charter "... are not obliged to immediately extend its terms of reference to all languages within their boundaries" (Nic Craith, 2006: 76). In this way, member states are given freedom of choice, in that they are to identify and decide to which languages the charter will be first applied. The criteria for these choices are nevertheless not stated. In other words, once having chosen the

languages to which the charter should be applied, the "...states are free to extend the number of nominated languages at a later stage" (Nic Craith, 2006: 76).

Significant for the functional expansion of lesser-used languages is the application of Part III of the charter. This comprises 65 options proposing measures for the promotion of regional or minority languages in various public spheres such as education, justice and administration. It also contains arrangements relating to the media, cultural activities, and the legal status of languages in economic and social domains within and between nation states. Out of these 65 options, member states are obliged to apply a minimum of 35, of which at least one must relate to judicial authorities (all of the above from Nic Craith, 2006: 76). Regarding Irish in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom both signed and ratified the charter; on 2 March 2000, and 27 March 2001 respectively. The charter came into force there on 1 July 2001.

One may say that theory does not translate into practice in a straightforward manner. This is the case in Northern Ireland, where the effectiveness of the charter's application has been rather debatable. The Council of Europe signalled in its latest report that the UK government has been rather 'half-hearted' in its implementation of the ECRML in Northern Ireland. There are still significant measures the government has to take, such as "...developing a comprehensive Irish language policy and adopting arrangements to meet the increasing demand for Irish medium education" (EBLUL press release, 23 March 2007).

Despite the clear terminology regarding regional or minority languages and the conscious decision not to refer to linguistic or national minorities, the charter has also encountered difficulties in gaining signatures and implementation in those states where Aromanian is still spoken today. This is the case of Greece, for instance. To acknowledge the existence of distinct languages spoken by a part of the population would imply the recognition of distinct ethnic minorities, which could be seen as a political threat by the Greek government. As Ó Riagáin rightly points out, "...to suggest that Aromanians ...differ in ethnic identity from other Greek citizens can be construed as spreading misinformation and undermining the security of the state - offences punishable by imprisonment" (2001: 45). The other states that signed the charter but which have not ratified it are Romania⁵ (17 July 1995) and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (25 July 1996).

⁵ Romania has been a member state of the EU since 1 January 2007. FYROM is not an EU member state, but this is not a prerequisite for signing the charter.

With the recent accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU, there are various conditions with which they have to comply. Among these, several pertain to the signing and ratification of the ECRML. The future of Aromanian in these new member states therefore depends on the decisions the official institutions take in order to clarify the status of the language. In addition, there are several processes Aromanian speakers and language activists will have to follow in order that the institutions in charge of recognition and maintenance of their language take necessary action. One of these is accurately presenting the current status of Aromanian within national contexts. Modelling the typology of the language could serve as a starting point in evaluating the current situation of Aromanian and its speakers. The following section gives an overview of attempts already undertaken by the EU to determine the exact strengths and weaknesses of lesser-used languages. Aromanian and Irish occupy distinct places in this typology.

2. Chapter 2: Socio-political aspects of language maintenance and loss. Typology of lesser-used languages

According to Edwards, socio-political aspects of language maintenance pertain to "...the status, policies, planning, attitudes and intentions of both the state and the minority language community" (1992: 37). These variables might take the form of a typology which could serve to elucidate contexts of maintenance and shift and "... even serve as an indicator of what is desirable, what is possible, and what is likely" in order to prevent lesser-used languages from loss (Edwards: 38). The creation of a typology thus becomes a prerequisite for delineating accurate situations of lesser-used situations. Edwards argues that "...a comprehensive, multidisciplinary analysis [may serve as a useful guide for description and comparison] ...leading to more complete conceptualisation of minority language situations, and perhaps permitting predictions to be made concerning shift/maintenance outcomes" (1992: 51).

2.1. The EU classification of lesser-used languages; the Euromosaic Report

In order to create strategies for language revitalisation the EU has launched various projects aimed at determining the precise strengths and weaknesses of such lesser-used languages. The most recent of these has been the Euromosaic Report of 1996, the object of which was to determine the current status of various languages, with reference to two key concepts, production and reproduction. Reproduction pertains to "...the intergenerational transmission of the language" whereas production represents "...the learning of a language by those whose parents did not speak the language" (Euromosaic in O'Reilly, 2001: 17).

The structure of the report is based on a typology of case studies analysed according to *the graded intergenerational disruption scale* (GIDS), introduced by Fishman in 1991 and based on

the dependence of lesser-used languages on intergenerational transfer. His publication *Reversing Language Shift* identifies eight different stages of endangerment, ranging from the strongest to the weakest position which a lesser-used language can occupy. Reversing language shift implies a move from the lowest stage to the uppermost; from stage 8, (least secure) to stage 1, (most secure) (May, 2001: 2).

Inspired by Fishman's typology, the Euromosaic Report categorises the lesser-used languages of Europe into five clusters according to their level of endangerment. Each language has been assessed according to seven variables affecting language production and reproduction. As in the case with GIDS, the higher rating implies a healthier position. The seven variables may be summarised as follows:

1. family and the degree to which the language was transmitted from one generation to the next
2. community: the extent to which the language is used in informal social community relations
3. culture: the focus on cultural activities (programmes, radio stations, TV channels, published press)
4. education: the extent to which the language is either taught as a subject or used as a medium of instruction
5. prestige: the significance attached to the language use for the purpose of socio-economic advancement
6. legitimacy: the formal recognition accorded to the language by the nation state (official status); a vital variable which includes bodies established for the development and promotion of the language community
7. institutionalisation: the process by which the language comes to be accepted, or 'taken for granted' in a wide range of social, cultural and linguistic domains or contexts, both formal and informal (May, 2001: 6; Nic Craith, 2006: 72).

In *Sustaining Language Diversity in Europe - Evidence from the Euromosaic Project*, Williams (2005) analyses the table containing the five clusters and notes that Irish in the Republic of Ireland is classified in the second cluster, which means that it has a high level of state support and high legitimacy scores. In contrast, Irish in Northern Ireland is classified in the fourth cluster, where language use focuses upon civil society, having little evidence of either prestige or

legitimacy. Aromanian, in its turn, is in the last cluster, representing the weakest possible language situation (all of the above from Williams, 2005:193).

The report reaches the conclusion that many lesser-used languages are facing serious decline and extremely doubtful future prospects. Taking into account the fact that the report was realised more than a decade ago, it is clear that the situation of some of these languages has changed in the intervening period. Nevertheless, Euromosaic set precedents for the accurate analysis of lesser-used language situations and a valuable starting point for further research. The report identifies important reference points useful to the presentation of the respective situations of Aromanian and Irish, which will be referred to in more detail in the following chapters.

3. Chapter 3: Aromanian and Irish: comparative historical overview

This chapter gives an insight into the histories of Aromanian and Irish. The main aim is to underline the turning points that have led to language endangerment and ultimately language shift in both cases. Whereas the history of Irish is more clear-cut, the history of Aromanian has been subject to various controversies, and therefore merits closer examination in order to understand the current situation of the language. To begin with, one complicating factor in understanding Aromanian history is the very terminology under which Aromanians appear in historical records. It suffices to mention just a few names - *Aromanians*, *Aroumanians*, *Aromunians*, *Cincars*, *Kutsovlachs*, *Macedo-Romanians* or *Vlachs* - in order to acknowledge the realm of confusion surrounding the topic.

3.1. Ethnonymic terminology

In order to disperse these incipient shadows of confusion, one should distinguish between the terms various Balkan people used in the past to refer to their Aromanian neighbours and those used by the Aromanians themselves. The first written historical documents date back to the 10th century, when *Vlah* was used to refer to a distinct ethnic group not known prior to that time. Etymologically the term comes from a Celtic tribal name, *Volcae*, which was later transferred to Gothic via Latin. It originally referred to the Celts in general; later on, after Gallia was Romanised, it pertained to the Gallo-Romans, and was finally used to include all Romanised populations in the Balkans (Poghirc 1996: 13). Long after the original referents had disappeared, *Vlah* took the meaning 'foreigner' or 'those folks over there' or 'Romance speaker' and later also 'transhumant shepherd' and other meanings (Friedman, 2001: 1). The phenomenon of this Celtic tribal name leaving its traces through later sociolinguistic processes explains the association of the term with Italians in Poland (*Włochy* 'Italy') and French-speakers in Switzerland (*Welsch*). The use of *Vlahos* in Greece with the meaning of 'shepherd' is a transfer based on a profession associated with an ethnic group (Friedman, 2001: 1)

There is considerable confusion with regard to the reference of *Vlah* in the Balkans resulting from the use of the term to refer to both people from historical *Wallachia* (Romania south of the Carpathians, and, by extension, Romania as a whole) - and to Romance-speakers south of the Balkan range (Friedman, 2001: 1-2). In order to mark the distinction between the two main branches of Eastern Balkan Latinity, the Romanians to the north of the Danube and the Aromanians to the south of the Danube, the Germans used the term *Wlach* to distinguish the

latter from the former, whom they named *Wallach*. Nowadays this terminology is obsolete, terms like *Aromunen* or *Mazedo-Rumänen* and *Rumänen* being used instead.

The term *Aromunen* was coined by the German linguist Gustav Weigand in 1894, having been influenced by the forms native Aromanians in Greece used in reference to themselves; *Arămănu*, *Armănu*, *Arumănu*, forms that go back to *Romanus* (Kramer 1986: 217). Weigand's suggestion to use *Arămăni* or *Armăni* in Standard Romanian was not successful. Instead, the term *Aromăni*, coined by one of Weigand's students, Sextil Pușcariu, gained acceptance. According to Kramer, Pușcariu was well-known as an 'ardent nationalist', which would explain his choice for the new term, thus establishing a close connection to *Romăni* (Romanians). Many European languages subsequently adopted this model *a-* + common noun for 'Romanians' (Kramer 1986: 217).

As far as the other term *Mazedo-Rumänen* is concerned, Kramer (1986: 217) claims that it has been gradually displaced by the new one, largely due to the confusion arising from the fact that Aromanians are to be found not only in the Macedonian region, but also more widely across the Balkans.

Of the numerous terms used to describe Aromanians in historical or linguistic documents, the above is only a short list, although probably the best-known⁶. It is outside the scope of this paper to list all variations of these terms, since this might lead to deeper confusion. Nevertheless I considered a brief overview to be sufficient in acquainting the reader with these somewhat inconspicuous people, whose history has been (and still is) in itself misleading enough for many historians.

3.2. Balkan Latinity: Historical Overview.

There is no *one* truth about the origins of the Aromanians. Due to lack of evidence their early history has been reconstructed, largely speculative with arguments based on analogy and probability, leaving considerable space for reinterpretation. As a result, the opinions of historians and linguists diverge so far that one is left with no definite answer at the end of lengthy research into the topic. The aim of this section is therefore to give a concise presentation of the main divergent opinions, taking impartiality as a main tool.

If one looks for Aromanians today they are to be found in the same places they have been for centuries that is in scattered pockets throughout southern Albania, northern Greece, the Former

⁶ The same applies to *Aromanian*, whose variants in English are *Arumanian*, *Aroumanian*, *Aromune*. For clarity reasons I have chosen to use *Aromanian* throughout.

Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and southwestern Bulgaria.⁷ The quest is nevertheless not an easy one since they are not distinguished from the nationalities they share their respective countries with. Therefore when it comes to their national identity they are Greek, Albanian, Macedonian⁸, Bulgarian or Romanian⁹.

The origins of the Aromanians are unclear due to lack of certainty surrounding the Romanisation of the Balkans. The two main theories are that either Aromanians are truly autochthonous in those places where they are to be found today or that they migrated from north of the Danube (home of the present-day Romanians). Since it is attested that the wave of Aromanians migrating to Romania took place between the World Wars, one would therefore feel tempted to say that their traditional heartland has not changed so much throughout the history. Not all historians and linguists are in agreement on this.

As Friedman points out “...the origin of the Aromanians is implicated in various claims to legitimacy and entitlement, despite the fact that the concrete historical facts are not determinable with certainty and they may never be determined unless new sources come to light” (2001: 3).

At issue are two questions: “1) Did Eastern Balkan Romance¹⁰ form north or south of the Danube (or both) and 2) What is the origin of Romance spoken south of the Jireček line?”¹¹ (Friedman 2001: 4).

Balkan Latinity started with the Romanisation of the Balkans in the 3rd century BC. According to Poghirc (1996: 41) most historians support the idea that Aromanians are the descendants of Latinised Illyrian peoples and Roman legionaries who had settled in the Balkans following the conquest of Macedonia in 148 BC. Or as Winnifrith argues:

⁷ There is also a significant Aromanian population in Romania (Dobruđja, especially Constanța and Tulcea). These are colonies that emigrated from the southern Balkans after World War One. See maps 1 and 2.

⁸ The exception is the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, the only country where they are recognized as a distinct national minority.

⁹ There has recently been an attempt by some Aromanians from Romania to gain recognition as a national minority. A conclusion has not been reached yet.

¹⁰ According to Friedman (2001: 4) Eastern Balkan Romance is the ancestor of Daco-, Istro-, Megleno-Romanian and Aromanian. The debate concerning the language versus dialect issue reveals various opinions according to which, instead of a common Balkan Romance only ‘common Romanian’ existed, from which all of the other dialects have diverged. This theory has mainly been supported by Romanian linguists, although according to more recent studies the opinions tend to support the autonomy of both Romanian and Aromanian as distinct languages due to their long separation and different evolution.

¹¹ Winnifrith claims that the cradle of Balkan Latinity should be looked for in the area demarcated by the famous Balkan historian Jireček (therefore the name, Jireček line). “The Jireček line is a boundary that runs north of the Via Egnatia across southern Albania, southern Macedonia, and then turns north to leave only northern Bulgaria and the Danube frontier in the Latin sphere of influence” (Winnifrith 1995: 31). See map 3. Based on the evidence of inscriptions, the line represents the boundary between Latin and Greek as the dominant languages of literacy in the Balkans, although Latin inscriptions occur as far south as the line (Friedman 2001: 4).

Ethnologically the composition of this Latin-speaking area must have been a strange hotchpotch with the military element taken from all over the Empire and the civilian element and old mixture of Thracian, Illyrian and even Celtic tribes mixed up with the military element and the new invaders (1995: 33).

The solid Roman nucleus was thus created, and lasted from the 2nd century BC until the 6th century AD. According to this theory, Balkan Latinity started south of the Danube and continued to the north with the Romanisation of Dacia in 107 AD. The controversy regarding the common origin of both Romanians and Aromanians stems from the uncertainty regarding the formation of Balkan Latinity. Without disputing the solid argument of an earlier Romanisation in the south, it appears that the Aromanians preceded the Romanians in Balkan history. It still remains to be explained when the two languages came into contact, since structurally they are quite similar. According to Poghirc the common features of the two languages were created before the 7th century AD. This would therefore imply a common territory that both Romance peoples shared until the Slavic invasion (in the 6th century AD) which, according to Peyfuss (1994: 17), included both Dacia Traiana and Dacia Aureliana and the two Moesiae¹².

The Romanian linguist Matilda Caragiu-Marioțeanu¹³ (1972: 105) refers to Eastern Balkan Latinity as “common Romanian” which descended from the Latin spoken in the Danube provinces of the Roman Empire and established itself as a Romance language between the 6th and 8th centuries AD. She makes no reference to the first period of Romanisation in the Balkan Peninsula, thus ignoring the presumed existence of Aromanians prior to this process. Nevertheless, in her “Dodecalog”¹⁴ (1996: 170) she claims that the Aromanians are the “...continuators of the southeastern European Romanised populations (Macedonians/Greeks/Thracians/Illyrians)” which would therefore imply the opposite of her earlier statements. This idea is supported by Wace and Thompson who, analysing two theories regarding the origins of Aromanians, conclude that “...the Balkan Vlachs (Aromanians) are for the most part the Romanised tribes of the Balkan peninsula reinforced perhaps at times by tribes

¹² See map 4.

¹³ Of Aromanian origin

¹⁴ The full title reads “Un Dodecalog al Aromânilor sau 12 adevăruri incontestabile, istorice și actuale asupra aromânilor și limbii lor”, (“A Dodecalog of the Aromanians or 12 indisputable historical and current truths on Aromanians and their language”, my translation) published for the first time in “România literară”, XXVI, 33, 1-7 sept. 1993. The text used in the current paper was republished and followed by a note in *Aromânii: Istorie. Limbă. Destin*, 1996 (*The Aromanians: History, Language, Destiny*, my translation).

from over the Danube” (1972: 272). The same presupposition is adopted by Peyfuss when referring to the division of the ‘Romance community’ and the migration of one part of the population towards the south. He argues that “...it is not out of the question (nor satisfactorily proven) that the ancestors of the Aromanians, emigrating southwards and reaching Macedonia, Albania, Epirus and Thessaly, may have come across an indigenous Romanised population, with which they merged” (1994: 17).

All these suppositions lead towards evidence of autochthonous Aromanians south of the Danube, without precluding the possibility of close contact with the Romanised population north of the Danube; contact which was subsequently interrupted by Slavic invasions.

As far as “common Romanian” is concerned, Matilda Caragiu-Marioțeanu (1972: 105) argues that southeastern European Latinity was divided by the Slavic invasions into two main ethno-linguistic groups, which have evolved and are still evolving to the present day. These are the Macedo-Romanians (or Aromanians) and the Daco-Romanians (the current Romanians). Whereas she delineates the period prior to the Slavic invasions as “common Romanian” (or proto-Romanian), Friedman (2001: 5) labels this stage as “...East Balkan Romance unity, both north and south of the Danube, which was broken up sometime before the Slavic invasion and the first textual references to Aromanians (Vlahs) in Byzantine sources during the 11th century”.

Irrespective of the terminology used when referring to Balkan Latinity, it is this very stage of separation mentioned above, that raises the old language versus dialect debate. Due to the common unity prior to the 6th century AD, many Romanian linguists support the thesis that Aromanian is a dialect of proto-Romanian (despite the differences between them and the fact that they have been separated for more than a thousand years), thus disagreeing with the other group of linguists arguing for the recognition of Aromanian as a separate Balkan Romance language, descended from Latin.

The view of Caragiu-Marioțeanu on the debate is not explicit, since she does not draw a definite conclusion on the status of Aromanian. In an article prior to her “Dodecalog” she states that due to the Slavic invasion:

...a significant part of the ancient Romanian population withdrew in the north, west and south, which resulted in the formation of four Romanian groups speaking four variants¹⁵ (or dialects of common Romanian): Daco-Romanians (in the north, the inhabitants of Dacia), the Aromanians

¹⁵ Map 5.

(or Macedovlahs, found in northern Greece, southern Albania and southwestern Bulgaria), the Megleno-Romanians (Meglen Plain, north of Thessaloniki) and the Istro-Romanians (on the Istria Peninsula)” (1996: 172).

Later, in her “Dodecalog” she states that “[her former arguments are not to be interpreted] under a *definitio nominis* but under a *definitio rei*” (1996: 172). In other words she acknowledges the pointlessness of the language versus dialect debate, arguing that “common Romanian” is “an historical language” which split into four “historical dialects”, whereas each of the current variants of this historical language is to be interpreted as a “functional language”¹⁶ (1996: 173).

According to this definition, Aromanian is a distinct language, solving thus the old language versus dialect debate. The issue would be too simple if it stopped here. Caragiu-Marioțeanu further complicated matters two years after the publication of her “Dodecalog” when she issued a postscript expressing her dismay at several misinterpretations of her former arguments. She was understood by some to hold the view that “Aromanian is not Romanian”; others understood that she was arguing that “Aromanian is Romanian”. In her view both of these interpretations are flawed; the first constituting an “historical error”, the second a “geographical” one (the Aromanians are autochthonous south of the Danube and not in the north, like the Romanians). She reemphasises the importance of the “common Romanian” stage and its division into the four “historical variants”, underlining that Aromanian is “...a historical dialect of an ancient phase in the history of the Romanian language” (1996: 181). Nevertheless she claims the “individuality of Aromanian” which should be maintained and supported. She uses the term “mother tongue” several times to refer to the Aromanian language as a means of communication used by Aromanians in various Balkan countries.

Unfortunately Caragiu-Marioțeanu’s study encourages misinterpretation through its equivocal presentation of her arguments, and her grievances about misinterpretation are unjustified. Her own terms and definitions are not well clarified, and the conclusion she reaches does not help in eliminating ambiguity.

The debate continues today and except for several scholarly arguments sustaining the theory that Aromanian is indeed a distinct Balkan Romance language, the association with Romanian is displayed in many linguistic articles. Take for instance the definition from the *Encyclopedia of the Languages of Europe* where Aromanian appears as:

¹⁶ Caragiu-Mariotenu mentions that the distinction “langue historique – langue fonctionnelle” is taken from the Romanian linguist Eugenio Coseriu in “Au-delà du structuralisme”.

...a dialect of Romanian but sometimes considered as a distinct language, spoken by scattered communities in Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and parts of the former Yugoslavia, and by émigré communities in North and South America and Australia (2000: 18).

The inaccuracy of such a definition, not least the fact that no mention is made of Aromanian communities living in Romania delineates how Aromanian is actually perceived. The grudging acceptance of its status implied by the phrase "...sometimes considered as a distinct language..." merits qualification; in fact, the only country where Aromanian is being used and codified as a distinct language is the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. There the Aromanians represent the smallest constitutionally recognised national and linguistic minority.

An important landmark for the fortunes of Aromanian came in 1997, when the Council of Europe adopted the 'famous' *Recommendation 1333*¹⁷ for the protection of Aromanian. Despite the importance of such a document in the acknowledgement and maintenance of Aromanian, the current situation remains rather precarious. In other words, external intervention had little impact on the status of the language, since at an internal level, among various Aromanian groups themselves, unanimity of opinions and common aims are lacking. Their division into several factions in the past continues to have repercussions on the current situation. In order to explain how such a division occurred, an understanding of the historical background is necessary; at the heart of current antagonistic attitudes among Aromanians lie causes that have been deeply rooted for centuries. It is imperative that these should be recognised if any language maintenance programme is to learn from past mistakes and look optimistically for constructive solutions in the future¹⁸.

3.3. The ethnic and linguistic awareness of Aromanians

¹⁷The Recommendation is not so well-known among Aromanians, which might explain their lack of initiatives towards language maintenance, since they consider this to be a lost cause. More information on this important document and its consequences for the Aromanian language and culture will be given in a further chapter dealing with the current situation of Aromanian in the Balkan countries.

¹⁸ The greatest impediment to this process is the discomfort to most Aromanians of delving into a past they consider glorious yet rather unjust. There is no room left for rationality then, history is veiled in emotions and concrete solutions remain elusive.

Almost all academic texts on Aromanian language make reference to its connection with Romanian¹⁹. It is therefore not so surprising that the discourse of many Romanian linguists (either of Aromanian origin or not) concerning the language versus dialect debate is not as definite as one might expect, being prone to flexible interpretation. To quote the German Romanist Rainer Schlösser, "...the distinction between language and dialect depends not so much on linguistic criteria as on extra-linguistic, often political and cultural criteria"²⁰ (2001: 116). Bearing this in mind, this section addresses the following questions: What was the political situation in the Balkans at the time when Aromanians showed the first signs of ethnic and linguistic awareness, and how did it influence the status and development of the language?

3.3.1. Steps towards the development of an Aromanian self-awareness

Before passing to the actual emergence of Aromanian self-awareness early in the 19th century, prior events should briefly be presented. During the 18th century the socio-cultural life of Aromanians benefited from the ideas of the European Enlightenment. As a result of close contacts with other European economic and cultural centres, rendered possible by their professional trading background, the Aromanians started developing new attitudes towards their language, and the beginnings of a linguistic awareness are therefore rooted in the Enlightenment period. A well-known Aromanian economic and cultural centre that flourished at the beginning of the 18th century was Moscopolis in Albania. The link with revolutionary ideas of other European centres was made possible by Aromanians of Moscopolis trading in cities such as Venice or Vienna. Unfortunately the city's prosperity was short-lived. Moscopolis (along with other cities in southern Albania) was completely destroyed by several Turkish invasions, which led to massive migrations towards northeastern regions: the Pindus Mountains in Greece, the south of what is today FYROM, and also to Europe; Romania, Austria. The latter group of emigrants came to be completely assimilated by their host countries. To use a metaphorical image, the first 'seeds' of what was to become the Aromanian disruption had already been 'sown'.

¹⁹ There is, of course, among Greek scholars (of Aromanian origin) the other extreme thesis according to which Aromanians are Romanised Greeks, which would therefore imply that their language is a Latinised variant of Greek (The main representatives are A. Lazaru, 1970, Th. Katsougiannes, 1964-1966).

²⁰ My translation.

The prestigious status of the Greek language within the Ottoman Empire and the tendency of the Greek culture to subjugate local cultures easily explain the demise of Aromanian. Since Greek was the major language of communication in most of southeast Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, Aromanian-speaking communities felt bound to it. Religion also played a significant role, in that Greek had considerable prestige among the Orthodox Christian population as the language of the church and of ecclesiastical administration. Thus the cultural and economic activities of Aromanians, especially urbanised populations, were dependent on the Greek church. The Aromanians have long been active as representatives of the Greek language and distributors of Greek culture. Many Aromanians were won over to Hellenic culture under the influence of Greek education and the church, because at the time the only nationality in European Turkey²¹ entitled to maintain national schools, churches and cultural institutions were the Greeks²². The first documents in Aromanian were thus written in the Greek alphabet and were not intended to teach Aromanian but to spread the Greek language (the dictionaries of Theodoros Kavalliotis²³, 1770 and Daniil Moschopolitis²⁴, 1802). Despite this agenda, a reverse phenomenon emerged, namely the development of an Aromanian self-awareness, which was particularly supported by the Aromanian diaspora²⁵. This complex process saw several stages of development, ranging from distinct language awareness to an ultimate identification with the Romanians, whom most Aromanians in the diaspora considered as their close ‘relatives’ (Peyfuss, 1994: 29). Thus some Aromanian grammars and booklets document a clear awareness of the Latin base of Aromanian (e.g. the works of Konstantinos Ukutas²⁶, 1797, of George C. Rosa²⁷, 1808 and of Mihail Bojadschi²⁸, 1813) (all of the above from Kahl, 2002: 147).

²¹ Turkey, here, means the Ottoman Empire across Eastern Europe which lasted from the 15th century till the beginning of the 20th century.

²² It was only in 1878 that Aromanians were recognised as an ethnic group for the first time by a decree of the Ottoman Empire (Peyfuss, 1994: 50). The decree promoted the Aromanian national cultural movement giving them the right to be taught in their own language, and afforded assistance and protection to their teachers.

²³ The dictionary provides information on the Aromanian language, containing a register of 1170 Greek, Aromanian and Albanian words (Djuvara, 1996: 120)

²⁴ The work of Moschopolitis contained an index of words in four languages, Greek, Aromanian, Bulgarian and Albanian and was intended to convert these four peoples into adepts of Hellenism, which in the author’s view was culturally superior (Peyfuss, 1994: 24).

²⁵ Especially by the groups that had migrated to Romania.

²⁶ He is the author of the first Aromanian primer.

²⁷ Rosa signed under the pen name “Valachus Moschopolitanus“. His work was published in German “Untersuchungen über die Romanier oder sogenannten Wlachen, welche jenseits der Donau wohnen” and was the first attempt to contrast Aromanian with Daco-Romanian (Djuvara, 1996: 120).

²⁸ Bojadschi was the first to write a grammar of Aromanian using the Latin alphabet.

The beginnings of an Aromanian national movement are thus closely linked to Romania's interest in their cause. As a consequence, in the 1860s, after the Romanian state was established, Aromanian activities were influenced by the Romanian national movement and its educational policies in Macedonia, Thessaly and Epirus. This had a strong impact on Aromanian activities, since they felt bound to Romania. There was an awareness of a Latin-based language, spread in the Daco-Romanian population which also influenced the Aromanian world.

Any attempt to establish independent Aromanian churches or schools was rejected by the Greek patriarchate. Romanian church books were nevertheless allowed to be used by Aromanians in 1879, but Aromanian was not accepted as a church language (Kahl, 2002: 147).

With the help of a Macedo-Romanian committee established in Bucharest in 1860, Romania began to train teachers for Macedonia. The first Romanian school established in Macedonia (in the village of Trnovo) was in 1864. At the beginning of the 20th century there were 100 Romanian churches, 106 Romanian schools (with more than 4,000 pupils and 300 teachers) in Macedonia and Epirus. The foundation of such schools had rather a negative influence on the development of the Aromanian language, since most lessons were given in Romanian, except for some basic instruction given in Aromanian. The attendance was therefore moderate. There was a Macedo-Romanian school in Bucharest founded in 1865, and in 1887 the first books in Aromanian were used (all of the above from Kahl, 2002: 148).

Due to the Romanian influence, developing Aromanian self-awareness took rather the form of what Kahl (2002: 148) calls an "Aromanian-Romanian movement". The same idea is supported by Peyfuss (1996), who questions himself as to possible ulterior political motives of the Aromanian national movement. Thus he expresses his doubts whether the Romanian influence shared the same ideals with the Aromanian movement, whose main aim was language maintenance both in schools and church. It seemed that the Romanian government's actions concealed a "...powerful desire to Romanise the Aromanians" (Peyfuss, 1996: 148). Winnifrith (1993: 291) also argues that the Romanian schools in Greece were even partly rejected by villagers and eventually did not apparently help the Aromanian cause.

Interestingly enough, Winnifrith offers a different perspective as far as the role of the involved governments with respect to Aromanians is concerned. His rather objective study seems to reach the conclusion that the effect the governments had on the Aromanian cause was of no consequence whatsoever. Moreover, if reading between the lines, one might put forward the hypothesis that the destiny of Aromanians was not necessarily as much in the governments'

hands as it was in their own. Aromanians did not really acknowledge themselves as being different from the others, probably because "...their identity, culture and way of life have never been in conflict with the culture of the majority" (Kahl, 2002: 150). Due to the fact that Aromanian was fairly low down the social hierarchy, its speakers were likely to know the languages above it - these being Greek or even Turkish or Albanian if they lived in Western Macedonia (Friedman, 1997: 14). Even if the language was spoken in the family, in limited amounts at Romanian schools, or to some extent published (though in the Greek alphabet), there was no urge for recognition from the state they lived in. Moreover it lacked any sort of organised political prestige. There is no evidence of Aromanian speakers making any expressed demand for their language to be acknowledged and protected. They definitely did not see any danger in the decline of their language, or more likely they did not even think of it.

Under these circumstances, with the Romanian influence on the one hand and the Greek on the other, it was almost impossible for the Aromanian cause to remain impartial to the political situation thus created. The chance to establish an Aromanian free nation state was far from being put into practice, and even if they were granted several rights under the Ottoman Empire, they did not eventually succeed in engineering the circumstances under which their language and identity could have been recognised and accordingly protected. To put it differently, the lack of agreement among Aromanians, already taking root at the time, advanced the precarious situation of the language, ultimately contributing to its current fragile status.

Another significant event that had crucial consequences on the future of Aromanians was their recognition as *Ullah millet*²⁹ by a decree issued under the Ottoman Empire and mainly supported by the Great Powers (especially Austria-Hungary). This decree, also called *irade*, was signed on 22 May 1905; despite the fact that it encouraged Aromanian identity in the Ottoman Empire³⁰, it did not succeed in creating a national Aromanian consciousness. This was mainly due pro-Greek Aromanian and Greek dissent, which led not only to escalating violence between Aromanians and Greek nationalists but also to a destructive conflict between pro-Romanian and pro-Greek factions within the Aromanian community itself³¹. In addition to this, Greek-Romanian relations were weakened, and eventually deteriorated into serious conflict.

²⁹ Or *Vlach millet*, often interpreted as "Aromanian nation" (Kahl, 2002: 148).

³⁰ The *millet* system led to the creation of an independent Aromanian church in 1905 (Kahl, 2002: 148).

³¹ Peyfuss gives a detailed description of the events in his work *Chestiunea Aromânească (The Aromanian Question)* (1994: 92-98).

Given the circumstances, Aromanians found themselves torn between the propaganda activities fostered by the Greek and Romanian governments, no longer able to find a solution that might have offered better perspectives with regard to issue of their identity. The final straw was the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1913, which caused further division among the Aromanian minority, this time due to the redrawing of borders. Whereas previously Aromanians had lived as a compact group in the wider region of Macedonia; Ottoman Turkish territory, they now found themselves dispersed across four different states, namely Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania, with a non-defined status. The role of the Romanian government in the issue was somewhat ambiguous. The text of the treaty made no reference to the Aromanians, instead its appendix contained an agreement between Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, according to which the latter three Balkan states undertook to grant autonomy to Aromanian schools and churches in their new host states, while the Romanian government was to subsidise these institutions (Peyfuss, 1994: 116). Apparently the Aromanians' stance towards these events was one of hostility towards the Romanian government for taking too little action in assuring them the promised rights (Peyfuss: 116). There was even the proposition formulated by the Aromanians to incorporate their main groups - in the Pindus mountains and the regions between Gramos and Bitoli - into the future state of Albania in the form of an autonomous province. Nevertheless, their proposition had no results. To quote Winnifrith "Any nationalist movement in favour of the Vlachs³² was bound to be a fairly artificial one" (1993: 281). Greece proposed to attach the Pindus region into their own territory, agreeing to preserve its inhabitants' specific identity - a proposal which was accepted but did not settle the Aromanian question. As de Puig (1997) claims: "The fact that the Aromanians were not recognised as a minority at the time prepared the ground for future problems and conflicts".

After 1918 both the Greek and the Yugoslavian governments refused to do anything about the recommendations of the peace treaties regarding the protection of linguistic minorities' rights (Winnifrith, 1993: 282). As a consequence, Aromanian schools started to close: in Greece during the 1920s, in Albania in 1938. Finally, the last remaining Aromanian schools in Greece were shut down between 1945 and 1948 (de Puig, 1997).

³² Winnifrith uses the term *Vlach* instead of *Aromanian*. The title of his study reads "The Vlachs of the Balkans: A Rural Minority Which Never Achieved Ethnic Identity".

Between the two world wars many Aromanians migrated to southeast Romania³³. According to Winnifrith (1993: 282) the Romanian government rather used the Aromanians as “bargaining counters” in order to gain concessions in Dobrudja and Transylvania. Although he claims that normally “...many minorities in one country are helped by the presence of a sympathetic majority of the same race in another adjacent country [he remarks that] ...the Romanians were not particularly sympathetic or adjacent, and only arguably of the same race” (1993: 282). The reinforcement of the Romanian element in a region formerly inhabited mostly by Bulgarians was the main reason for the massive migrations of a Romance-speaking group like the Aromanians³⁴ (Cuşa 2004: 171).

What has been called the ‘Aromanian question’, that is the beginning of an ethnic and linguistic awareness, culminated in a significant emigration of Aromanians to Romania. Many of the factors which had contributed to the rise of this movement became to fade, and a new chapter opened in the history of Aromanians which was to be heavily influenced by the changes Eastern Europe was to undergo in the second half of the 20th century. A revival of the issue, which might be rightly called the ‘(re)-awakening of Aromanian identity’ has taken place over the last two decades and is still going on in the Balkan countries where Aromanians live. Nevertheless, the current situation of the Aromanian language is still under severe threat. More information on the present-day reality of the Aromanian status will be given in the section following the historical overview on Irish.

3.4. Irish: historical overview

From the elaborate presentation on the history of Aromanian two aspects stand out as most striking: the absence of a nation-state and the multitude of languages Aromanian has been confronted with over the last two centuries. This has had a somewhat paradoxical effect: on the one hand, Aromanian speakers continued to produce the language in restricted domains, such as the family - thus assuring language maintenance; on the other hand, due to lack of any official support, the language functions have been weakened. As a result, the speakers’ attitudes towards

³³ According to Kahl 30,000 Aromanians emigrated from southern Balkans between 1923 and 1940 (2002: 161).

³⁴ In 1925, after Dobrudja was incorporated into Romania, the Aromanians were given land and privileges to settle in this region, which represented for them a new possibility to preserve their cultural and linguistic identity (Cuşa: 171). In 1940 Bulgaria regained this southeastern region so the Aromanians found themselves in a critical position. Eventually they moved further north, to Constanţa and Tulcea.

the language have dramatically changed, so that language shift has been the most convenient choice.

Conversely, language contact in Ireland is closely related to political, social and economic interaction with only one external factor: English dominance. Irish is a Celtic language, closely related to Scottish and Manx Gaelic, and more distantly related to Welsh, Cornish and Breton. Historical linguists date the arrival of early Irish speakers in the territory, possibly from northern Spain, to around 200 BC. The first written sources of the language date from the early Christian period (between about 400 and 600 AD). The most flourishing period in the history of the Irish language, also known as the 'Golden Age' was between the 6th and 9th centuries³⁵. Ireland was at the time the centre of learning in Western Europe, so a considerable amount of literature was written, contributing to the language's prestige (Carnie, 1995: 2).

Irish first began to lose its dominance with the advent of the Norman invasions in the 12th century. The process of language shift however was not immediate. During the first stages of foreign invasion, Irish still maintained its primacy, so that the Anglo-Normans assimilated into the wider Irish language and culture and not vice versa. By the early 16th century, almost all of Ireland's population was Irish-speaking. Moreover, Irish remained the primary means of communication for almost every group class up until the 17th century (May, 2001: 136).

The fortunes of the language began to start changing in the 17th century. The political changes caused by the Tudor and Stuart conquests and plantations (1534-1610), the Cromwellian settlements (1654), had the increasing effect of eliminating the Irish-speaking ruling classes and destroying their cultural institutions. The status of Irish as a major language was finally and irreversibly undermined. English started to establish itself as the language of law, government and the social elite, whereas Irish continued to be spoken by most of the rural population or servant classes in towns.

As O'Reilly claims, through legislation and more often through "...social and economic pressure and oppression, the Irish language experienced a period of long, gradual decline" (2001: 78). By the beginning of 19th century social or economic positions in society could only be attained through the use of English. This linguistic shift was so strong that during the 19th century the majority of the population viewed English "...as the natural and essential medium of Irish society in all spheres of life" (O'Reilly, 2001: 78).

³⁵ During this period Irish was spoken as a common vernacular together with Latin not only in Ireland but also in the coastal areas of southern and northern Britain (May, 2001: 137).

Given the circumstances, a strong awareness of the Irish language in the form of the first Celtic revival thus took place in the late 18th to early 19th century. The first language movement was perceived as an important element of the Irish history and culture and was followed by a second in the 1830s and 1840s. Both revival movements were focused on scholarly research and “...formed the basis of a call for Irish unity and claims of cultural and national difference from Britain” (Crowley cited in O’Reilly, 2001: 79). O’Reilly emphasises the irony of this revival, stating that “...even as antiquarians and Celtic enthusiasts sang the praises of the Irish language and argued for its revival, many native speakers felt ashamed of their language and worked to acquire English to ensure their economic survival” (2001: 79).

According to a recent study by Corrigan, discourse regarding the language shift process in Ireland has been biased by “...subjective, social rather than objective, scientific reality” (2003: 201). As a consequence, professional accounts of language shift in Ireland formulated in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are often either incomplete or present distorted historical data. Her critical study offers a new insight into the language shift process, aiming at deconstructing the nationalistic ideology of many scholarly accounts. Corrigan (2003: 213) analyses two causes of language shift from an objective perspective, arguing that they “...have been mythologised”. These are: the establishment of the National School System (1831) and the Famine (1845-49). The consequences of the Great Famine upon the Irish speaking population have been analysed by various specialist commentators. The most common discourse pertains to the figures of mortality and internal/external migration. Crowley (2000: 135) argues that:

The greatest blow to Irish...was inflicted by that natural and man-made disaster, the Great famine. The failure of the potato crop in three out of four harvests between 1845 and 1849 had devastating consequences for the Catholic rural poor, particularly in those areas where, for many, Irish was still the language of everyday life. The death of up to a million, and the emigration of more, led to the decline in Ireland’s population of some 20 per cent...Those who could escape to cities in America or Britain needed English for survival, and this became another damaging factor for the language (Crowley 2000 cited in Corrigan, 2003: 217).

In commenting upon such received views, Corrigan doubts the accuracy of figures for mortality and migration, since they are difficult to confirm. The conclusion one may draw from her study is that discourse regarding language shift in Ireland should be treated with objectivity, given the

ideological bias particular to the Irish context “...which arose during the era when a new decolonized, national identity was emerging” (Corrigan, 2003: 221).

Similarly to the introduction of Romanian schools in the 19th century in the areas where Aromanians lived, the role of the establishment of the National School system in Ireland has been subject to controversy. Language shift in the Aromanian case took place due to several social, economic and political aspects, and the introduction of such schools was more a disturbing element in language maintenance than a supportive one. Critics have shown that attendance of the Romanian schools was somewhat limited among Aromanians, which would imply that this was not the most essential cause for language shift. The same process took place among the Irish, where “...low literacy levels in English among rural Irish-English bilinguals must reflect poor attendance and the subsequent ineffectiveness of the schools to transmit English” (Corrigan, 2003: 214). This shows that the assumed discourse according to which the National School system facilitated the spread of English at regional and national level is not as self-evident as has often been assumed. It also implies that the presence of English-medium schools does not necessarily correspond to the severity of language loss so often sustained by the nationalist discourse.

Besides this, the demand for English via education preceded the establishment of National School system. Apparently even the privately run ‘hedge schools’ which served the Catholics during the penal era³⁶ had as an objective teaching English (Corrigan, 2003: 216). In this context it became clear that there was a need for bilingual policies which were eventually accepted by the establishment of the Bilingual Programme in 1904. The bilingual policies were conceived so as to teach both Irish and English to the Irish-speaking people through the medium of their native language. Nevertheless from 1921, once the Irish Free State had been established, the bilingual policy was no longer organised along territorial lines but applied to the state as a whole (Ó Riagáin, P., 2001: 196). While the western areas held a significant population of Irish-speakers, the rest of the state was represented by an almost entirely English-speaking population. The bilingual policy was thus not designed “...to meet the needs of an already existing bilingual community, but rather it sought to create one” (Ó Riagáin, P., 2001: 196). As a consequence, the language policy had only limited success.

³⁶ The Penal Laws were passed between 1702 and 1719. One of the first of the Penal Laws specified that “no person of the popish religion shall publicly or in private houses teach school, or instruct youth in learning within this realm” http://irish-society.org/Hedgemaster%20Archives/hedge_schools.htm

Despite the differing circumstances behind the language shifts in Aromanian and Irish, a certain parallel may be observed. It becomes clear that the external influence - be it English in the Irish case, or Greek, Romanian in the Aromanian case - had a significant effect on speakers' attitudes towards their own language, with the ultimate result of language shift. Corrigan's attempts to deconstruct the nationalist discourse are justified to the extent that it was not only the dominant language that caused a change in attitudes among the speakers of Irish - and this can be applied to Aromanian as well - but rather the complex changes undergone by Irish society, influenced by the medium of English dominance. What her study seems to imply is that the strong shift to English was a natural process. What are indirectly criticised are the subsequent language policies undergone by the Irish government towards reversing the language shift. In other words, Irish would have had a more positive destiny if the initial language policies had been put into operation starting from realistic grounds. The Aromanian situation is different in that there have been no language policies that could have supported the language and fostered its maintenance, for reasons which have already been analysed in the previous chapter. In other words, the fortunes of Aromanian were threatened from the very beginning. Given its current endangered situation there are many aspects that need to be taken into account for an effective language maintenance process. These will be dealt with more elaborately in the section following the analysis of language policies undergone in Ireland and in the North subsequent to the partition in 1922.

3.4.1. Legal status and official language policies following the 1922 independence: The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

The foundation of the Irish Free State saw the recognition of Irish as the first 'national' language, with English as the second official language. Nonetheless, this conferral of legitimacy did not solve the actual problem represented by the lesser-used language status Irish had long reached. From the multitude of language planning initiatives analysed by scholars, Mac Giolla's study is one of the most accurate, in that it offers a non-biased critical perspective. By giving an overview of the major language policies in the Republic and Northern Ireland, this section paves the way to the next chapter, in which both the failures and successes of the Irish language policy serve as an example for what could be done for the Aromanian situation.

The first stage in Irish language planning covers the period from the 1920s to 1950s and was based on the revival movement of the 19th century. Given the complex reality of Irish society at the time, it was clear from the start that a language policy based on nationalist ideals was doomed to failure. Despite the sensible intentions and accurate aims proposed by the founders of the new state to sustain the Irish language, the means to achieve them were unrealistic. The main aims recommended at the time have basically remained the same until the present. What has changed - and this more effectively only in the last decade - is the methodology used. The language policy of 1922 was based on the following objectives:

1. to maintain the Irish language in areas where it was still the community language (the *Gaeltacht*³⁷)
2. to restore the Irish language as an everyday language in the rest of Ireland
3. to introduce the use of Irish into the public service
4. to standardise the language (Mac Giolla, 2005: 113; O'Reilly, 2001: 81).

One of the main problems in translating theory into practice was largely caused by policy makers' ignorance regarding speakers' own attitudes towards the Irish language. In other words, the state representing the people based its policy on a false assumption that did not correspond to the actual expectations of its speakers. Whereas policy makers started from premises based on nationalist ideology, Irish speakers themselves had long developed a negative attitude towards the language, which they perceived as "...the language of poverty, illiteracy and marginalisation" (Mac Giolla, 2005: 117). If there was someone who could have stopped the contraction of the language, then who else but the people actually speaking it? Fennel claims that:

[the Irish state]...made no serious attempt to persuade the people of the *Gaeltacht* to decide to end the erosion - it never asked a representative assembly of them whether they would try to end it - nor did it establish a representative institution which would have enabled them to take appropriate measures (Fennel 1990 cited in Antonini et al, 2002: 120).

Not knowing the real needs of the population, the Irish government did nothing but intensify the widespread resentment towards the language, which ultimately led to its decline. Mac Giolla

³⁷ The *Gaeltacht* covers extensive parts of counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry - all on the Western seaboard - and also parts of counties Cork, Meath and Waterford. See Map 6.

(2005: 117) claims that the state could have prevented this by ensuring services in Irish or by developing economic policies pertinent to the *Gaeltacht*, since these Irish-speaking areas were the most impoverished. Instead, the attention was concentrated upon the educational system, which was seen as *the* medium through which language maintenance was to be attained. This proved to be a significant weakness of the language policy, since one medium alone does not suffice to keep a language alive.

Irish was thus established as the medium of instruction in National schools, but the pedagogical and didactical methods used in teaching it were less than attractive to the speakers. Emphasis was laid on written use rather than on conversation skills. Irish was taught, not acquired in a natural manner, it became a 'subject' resented by many for its artificiality. The lack of functional expansion - comprising various domains of everyday life, not only the school - made the Irish language useless. This meant that although many people left school with a considerable knowledge of Irish this was not supported or maintained by later use. Even if Irish was compulsory for entry into the civil service, police and army until 1973, once the tests were passed, there was little or no opportunity for the language to be used in any of these professions (McCull Millar, 2005: 150).

As a result, without even realising it, the policy makers had succeeded in turning their ideals into the tools of the enemy. In other words, what English was to them - language of the oppressor - was now Irish to the Irish speakers.

Not only in the *Gaeltacht* was education ineffective, but also in the rest of Ireland, where English was predominant. In order to achieve the second objective, immersion programmes were introduced where all or part of the curriculum was taught through the medium of Irish. The hope was to produce an adult population with functional competence in Irish within a generation, yet the results were far from encouraging (May, 2001: 139). According to several reports in the 1940s, the compulsory instruction in Irish for children coming from an English-speaking home was "...detrimental to their education" (Mac Giolla, 2005: 118). Moreover, the manner in which the policy was being implemented in these areas was "...detrimental to the Irish language in general" (Mac Giolla, 2005: 118). Such reports made clear that the policy did not actually correspond to the reality initially assumed by the government.

As May argues (2001: 139) the approach on language maintenance in the Irish context was limited to education, which was not sufficient enough to restore communicative competence. The policy makers failed to realise that one domain alone limited the function of the language instead

of expanding it. The reports of the 1940s underlining these flaws of the education system played an important role. As a result, several Irish language groups had the initiative to hold a public debate on the matter. The outcome was the creation of new organisations seeking "...urban and modern technological contexts for the language" (Mac Giolla, 2005: 121). *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* or The Central Steering Council for Irish language voluntary organisations, was thus created in 1943. Its main aim has been to strengthen support for the Irish language and to promote its wider use.

In Northern Ireland, due to the political situation³⁸, the Irish language was perceived as "...a foreign language with no place in Northern Ireland" by Protestants and authorities (O'Reilly, 2001: 84). Owing to the division of society mainly on political grounds, there was no official support or any special policy aimed at promoting and supporting the language in any domain. The UK government fostered a policy of "neglect", based on the premises that Irish was perceived as an important element of the nationalist identity (Antonini et al, 2002: 121). The state was not prepared to recognise the linguistic rights and needs of the Irish-speaking population. Different than in the Republic of Ireland the speakers' attitudes towards the language were more positive, but unfortunately met with official attitudes of indifference and even antipathy. According to O'Reilly "...throughout the history of Northern Ireland, government policy has continued to oscillate between hostility and disregard" (2001: 84).

The second stage of language policy in the Republic covers the period from the 1950s to 1970s, referred to as the phase of "stagnation and retreat" (Ó Riagáin 1997 cited in O'Reilly, 2001: 81). The period was especially marked by a shift from state action towards sustainable public support. The fourth aim stated in the initial language policy of the 1920s found its materialisation in this period - a new spelling was thus adopted in 1945 and revised in 1947, whereas a new morphological form was determined in 1953 and revised in 1958. The publication in the same year of the *Irish Grammar and Orthography: Official Standard* constitutes the final development of the official standard version of the language (Mac Giolla, 2005: 122).

Other significant events are represented by the establishment in 1958 of the *An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge* or Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, which set as major aims to review the Irish language policy and make recommendations to the government. Acknowledging the fact that language policy depends on economic situation, the government

³⁸ Irish was associated with Catholicism or republicanism, the Protestant part of the Northern Irish population being hostile to it.

created an agency responsible for promoting economic development in the *Gaeltacht, Gaeltarra Éireann*, in 1963 (Mac Giolla, 2005: 123). Nevertheless, the agency received severe criticism for contributing to the Anglicisation of the *Gaeltacht*, as its members "...did not possess a language policy nor did they consider themselves to be engaged in language planning" (Mac Giolla, 2005: 125).

An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge published its report with 288 recommendations in 1963, mainly concerned with a reinforcement of the Gaelicisation of the *Gaeltacht*. Yet, the report seemed rather weak in presenting the problems and there were no indications how to achieve the recommendations. This resulted in a somewhat confused attitude of the government which accepted most of the recommendations but was not convinced of the effectiveness of many (Mac Giolla, 2005: 125). The impact on the Irish language was therefore rather negative. Government policy was reversed, and Irish language was withdrawn as a compulsory subject for the Leaving Certificate in 1973, and for the civil service entrance examinations in 1974. It has been argued that the compulsory dimensions associated with Irish in these public sectors engendered hostility towards the language, so the new policy was intended to undermine this hostility and foster a more positive attitude to the language (May, 2001: 140).

In addition, the domains initially considered as most significant for the revival of the language by the founders of the new state - education, legal and constitutional status, and public administration - saw the reduction of the position of the Irish language. Thus, if during the 1950s over half of state primary schools offered full or partial immersive programmes, throughout the 1960s and 1970s numbers declined, mainly because the Irish-medium schools initiative proved unpopular with parents (O'Reilly, 2001: 82). The language was to be restored now as 'a general medium of communication', which implied a free choice. The national aim became 'bilingualism not linguistic change', which meant that Irish remained the national language but ceded the official status to English (Mac Giolla, 2005: 127).

The state involvement in language policy was reduced. Instead, there was an intense emphasis on more realistic approaches regarding language maintenance. In this sense important initiatives were taken, such as the creation of the Committee on Irish Language Attitude Research (CILAR) in 1970. The committee was charged with the commissioning of a national survey on the Irish language. Related to this was the establishment of *Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann* or The Linguistics Institute of Ireland in 1972.

A more scientific approach to Irish policy and planning was rendered possible by the various initiatives undergone in this second stage. It was therefore significant to acknowledge the place Irish occupied in society by identifying the speakers' attitudes. The lack of efficiency showed by the initial initiatives was mainly caused by the absence of a focus on public attitudes. The policy makers became aware of the flaws of previous programmes and tried to find new ways of coping with the situation.

The third stage is essential in this sense, in that it mainly focuses on language maintenance, the policies aimed at language revival being placed on a second level. This stage covers the period from 1970s to the present and it is also known as the phase of "benign neglect" (O'Reilly, 2001:81). In relation to the *Gaeltacht* the initiatives of language planning took the form of a "bottom-up approach" (Mac Giolla, 2005: 129). This resulted in the creation of local initiatives aimed at combining economic development with language maintenance. Thus, several local business enterprises were established. They mainly aimed at developing agriculture and industry (including tourism promotion) and also at facilitating summer colleges for residential students of the Irish language. Yet, such projects seem to have undermined the Irish-speaking communities instead of reinforcing them, since most of the imported skilled and supervisory staff had no knowledge of Irish. Moreover, even the Irish speakers who returned to the *Gaeltacht* had acquired in the meanwhile non-Irish-speaking partners, increasing the number of non-Irish-speaking households in the area. As a consequence the Irish-speaking-communities continued to decline (May, 2001:140).

With respect to the reduction of Irish in the area of education, local communities responded by founding Irish-medium pre-schools or *naíonraí* both within and outside the *Gaeltacht*, which were initially outside of the regular school system (May, 2001: 139). The first Irish-medium pre-school was founded in 1968, reaching a total of 185 in 1988. Outside the *Gaeltacht* such schools had a positive impact so that by 1994 there were 80 Irish-medium schools (Mac Giolla, 2005: 129).

In the mass media domain the establishment of *Raidió na Gaeltachta* in 1972 represents a further development, in that it has contributed positively to the language prestige. The foundation of *Bord na Gaeilge* or Irish Language Board in 1978 came also as a response to the state policy and practices. Following the results of CILAR survey published in 1975, which showed positive attitudes towards language across Irish society in general, *Bord na Gaeilge* was thus charged with

statutory responsibility for the promotion of the Irish language and in particular in “extending its use by the public as a living language” (Mac Giolla, 2005: 131).

The board adopted a very limited conception of bilingualism having as main goal the survival of Irish as a language of choice in particular contexts. According to the board, “...the success of this strategy depended upon Irish society as a whole being broadly supportive of the Irish language and the state as a guarantor of the availability of services to Irish-speakers” (Mac Giolla, 2005: 132). The board acknowledged the passive support of Irish society for the Irish language, which made it more difficult to find efficient strategies for active language support.

In Northern Ireland this period is characterised by a growing interest in the Irish language despite official attitudes of indifference and antipathy. The language movement in the North has always been characterised as “...fundamentally revivalist in nature and largely based on the voluntary efforts of the revivalists and Irish speakers” (Antonini et al, 2002: 121). Probably the most remarkable initiative of the people involved in the Irish language revival movement was the creation of a small Irish-speaking community in Belfast by a group of parents (for whom Irish was the second language) who decided to raise and educate their children in Irish. The first all-Irish primary school, *Bunscoil Phobal Feirste*, was thus established in Belfast, in 1971 (Antonini et al, 2002: 121).

Since then, five other primary schools have opened in Belfast alone, and another six in other parts of the North. An aspect which needs to be emphasised here is that none of the Irish-medium schools has been financed by the government. Parents’ donations or local funding made the foundation of such institutions possible. *Bunscoil an Droichead*, an Irish-medium school which opened in 1996, in Belfast was the first to start up with European funding. A number of secondary schools have been established alongside with numerous Irish-medium nursery schools preparing large numbers of children for entry into the primary schools (all of the above from O’Reilly, 2001: 85).

When comparing the Irish language question in the south and north it has often been argued that whereas in Northern Ireland support for Irish has been associated with nationalism, in the Republic it might be better understood in the context of ‘post-nationalism’. As such, support for Irish in the south can be seen as a way of resisting globalisation, whereby “language becomes a

symbol of ethnic identity” (O’Rourke, 2005: 280). Yet ideological support is not a guarantor of active language use, as it has been confirmed by a number of research³⁹.

3.4.2. Functional expansion in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland: Current situation

The current language policy in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is mainly based on the initiatives conducted by *Foras na Gaeilge*⁴⁰ - the new agency for the promotion of Irish language. The body was established in 1999, following the Good Friday Agreement in which the British Government undertook to promote the Irish language for the first time in Northern Ireland. The role of *Foras na Gaeilge* is essential in increasing contact between Northern and Southern Irish speakers, which has been limited in the past, mostly due to the political situation in the north. The functions of *Foras na Gaeilge* are as follow:

- facilitating and encouraging the use of Irish in speech and writing in public and private life in the South and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where is appropriate demand
- advising both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors
- undertaking supportive projects, and grant-aiding bodies and groups as considered necessary
- undertaking research, promotional campaigns, and public and media relations
- developing terminology and dictionaries
- supporting Irish-medium education and the teaching of Irish (*Foras na Gaeilge* official homepage)

The language policy fostered by the organisation encompasses a wider range of domains in which Irish is promoted, having acknowledged that education alone cannot ensure an effective functionality of the language. A significant aspect that needs to be emphasised here is the fact that of all European lesser-used languages Irish is unique in that “...the majority of those who

³⁹ O’Rourke completed a study on language attitudes among the younger generation, claiming that their views can provide significant “insights into future sociolinguistic trends in the Irish context” (2005: 275). Her study concluded that young speakers of Irish can contribute to converting ideological support for the language into actual use provided that they display an explicit attachment to the language combined with confidence in their ability to speak the language (282).

⁴⁰ The state body for the promotion of Irish, and a successor institution to the *Board na Gaeilge*.

know the language to a greater or lesser degree have acquired it as their second language and are not mother-tongue speakers” (Ó Riagáin, 2002: 184). This means that the educational system has played an important role in maintaining the language. Yet, in the current Irish society, English still has primacy over Irish. This clearly shows that the very goal of the government in creating an effectively bilingual society has failed, despite the numerous positive developments undergone in the last decade. It has been argued that only those people who have attended Irish-medium schools are likely to use the language to a greater extent than those who had Irish as a subject only. It should be mentioned that Irish is taught as a subject in all primary and secondary level schools in the Republic, a feature of language policy that has proved rather ineffective in achieving competent active users of Irish.

Lately there have been significant changes in the Irish language policy regarding the support and maintenance of the language. Probably the most efficient strategy has been the direct promotion of the utility of the language, a campaign explicitly targeted at people’s language attitudes. This means that instead of fostering a policy based on ‘moral admonitions’, direct language promotion aims to show that using Irish can actually bring in benefits, irrespective of whether one likes the language or not (Grin & Vaillancourt, 1999: 77).

To this end, the *Gaillimh le Gaeilge* project (“Galway with Irish”), officially launched in 1988, has aimed at improving the image of Irish, stressing its relevance in modern life. *Gaillimh le Gaeilge* is registered as a limited company with charitable status and therefore not-for-profit. Its main goal has been:

...to further the position of Galway as the prime bilingual city in Ireland, to develop the Irish face of the city, with a view to reinforcing its attractiveness to visitors from other parts of the country as well as from abroad, particularly individuals with an interest in lesser-used languages and cultures (Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997: 78).

The project started out from the observation that what happens in Galway has a significant influence on what happens in the Connemara *Gaeltacht*, where Irish still has a safe status as the everyday language of the community, despite the increasing English influence. The concept of the project was thus to try and develop an urban centre in the *Gaeltacht*, in the hope that it would serve Irish-speakers in Irish. Acknowledging the fact that such a shopping or services centre could not possibly escape Anglicisation, the logical alternative was to reintroduce Irish in Galway

by increasing its visibility in the business sector (Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997: 78). In order to achieve this, translation services, bilingual signage, letterheads, menus, etc. were instated.

A committee responsible for making Irish visible in the environment was also established; *An Coiste Logainmneacha* or The Place Names Committee works together with Galway City Council and provides Irish names for new housing estates in the city. The criteria according to which names are provided pertain to the context of the local area, features of the landscape and local history, relying on the vast tradition of Irish place names (*Gaillimh le Gaeilge* Strategic Plan 2006-2008: 24).

By creating a natural environment for language use, the project seems to have had a powerful effect on altering people's perception of Irish. Over half of the population of Galway city and county⁴¹ claim an ability to speak Irish, with 14.7% in the city and 29.4% in the county speaking Irish regularly (Background, *Gaillimh le Gaeilge* official website).

According to critics the *Gaillimh le Gaeilge* project is a successful example of language planning which could be also applied in the rest of the Republic. It has proved that Irish is relevant for economic gain, thus raising the prestige of the language. The chances are therefore high that individuals will be motivated to promote the language in fields such as education, public services, and mass-media. Proficiency in Irish is required in agencies dealing directly with Irish language policy in the *Gaeltacht*, schools and media. The new legislation on Irish, The Official Languages Act, passed in 2003 is supportive in this sense. Giving Irish equal status with English, the document represents the first national language policy guaranteeing the rights of Irish-speakers to use Irish in dealings with the state and with other bodies. The act ensures that most publications made by a governmental body must be published in both Irish and English. The economic value of the language has thus been strengthened, new staff being acquired for the translations of texts alongside new personnel for public services offered in Irish. Another significant achievement for the Irish language market is the creation of several computer software products that have the option of an Irish-language interface.

To what extent these initiatives will prove effective remains to be seen in the future. Appropriate arrangements still need to be made in order to fulfil the objectives set by the government in the last five years. There is a general belief among the Irish population that the Irish language has relatively good chances for survival, if the objectives proposed by the

⁴¹ According to the 2002 census Galway urban population is 63,503, its county population 137,064 (*Gaillimh le Gaeilge* official website, <http://www.gleg.ie/menu.asp?menu=132> (last accessed 3.06.07))

government are indeed put into practice and sufficient local support provided by the Irish-speaking communities.

Most of the reports over the last couple of years have presented a rather disappointing image of a government policy which has been critically referred to as 'hypocritical'. The *Gaeltacht* Commission, for instance, established in 2000, published its latest report on the situation of the Irish language in 2002, remarking upon the general lack of enthusiasm within the Irish-speaking communities regarding government activities. The complaints mainly pertain to the following domains: public service, education and local administration.

According to the report the government failed to deliver services effectively in Irish. In education there was little or no support from the government in providing adequate teaching resources or qualified teachers in Irish-medium schools.

As far as local administration is concerned, there is a general belief that local authorities have been encouraging policies in the *Gaeltacht* regions which are biased against approval of planning permission for local people on their own land. This is considered detrimental to the preservation and strengthening of the Irish language, since people moving into the areas with no Irish are allowed to live in the *Gaeltacht*, whereas native speakers are forced to leave their own areas and move to larger towns. External influence is thus encouraged with the consequence that the Irish language is being eroded. According to the same report even the strongest *Gaeltacht* areas are yielding to the primacy of English, despite the implementation of state policies and the measures taken by voluntary groups. Locals have proposed a new community-based language reinforcement strategy, relying upon the community itself. This means that it is left to the communities to decide whether they wish to take action to increase the use of Irish in various domains, such as the home, the workplace, childcare services, education, voluntary community organizations, churches, the tourism sector, sporting and recreational organizations. In other words, the communities acknowledge that the future of the Irish language in these areas lies within their own field of influence⁴².

The same view is expressed by Mac Giolla (2005: 203) who claims that the very diffuse geography of the Irish language suggests that local community-based language planning activities would be more effective than a regional macro scale approach to intervention in the field. This would require local Irish-speaking communities to establish necessary agencies that

⁴² All of the above from the *Report of the Gaeltacht Commission*, 2002.

would implement language policies at a local level. “[Such initiatives will be]...effective if they come from within the local communities rather than as a result of external agencies” (Mac Giolla, 2005: 203).

According to the last census data of 2002, 42 % of the entire population claim the ability to speak Irish, whereas only 3 % use the language on an everyday basis in the community and household (within the *Gaeltacht*). Mac Giolla argues that in the official *Gaeltacht* areas language planning initiatives are likely to function effectively if community support is taken into account as described above.

The main domains supporting the use of Irish are the education system, the legislative framework, and the media and various voluntary organizations campaigning for Irish language usage. The latter have probably been the most supportive; established as a result of Irish language speakers’ concern for their language. *Gaelscoileanna* is thus representative, standing out as the voluntary national organisation providing assistance and support for Irish-medium schools. Established in 1973, the organisation provides information, help and advice to parents who wish to establish Irish-medium schools or to develop a school as an Irish-medium school. Fennell (1981: 39) observes that:

[...] the attempt by the Irish state to save the dwindling Irish-speaking minority, and the failure of this attempt, offer valuable experience and lessons to all who would embark on such an enterprise. The Irish example serves to clarify certain things which were not clear beforehand. [...] The basic prerequisite is that they [the members of the linguistic minority] acquire the will to stop their disappearance as a linguistic community [...]. Having acquired the will to save themselves, they will almost inevitably— human nature being what it is— acquire the institutional and financial means to take the appropriate measures, unless they are forcibly prevented from doing so (Fennell cited in Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997: 76).

The establishment of voluntary organisations such as *Gaelscoileanna* shows the strong determination of speakers to prevent their language from disappearing. At present there are 163 Irish-medium primary schools and 38 Irish medium post-primary schools throughout the Republic and in the north. An additional 5 primary schools and post-primary schools are planned for September 2007 (*Gaelscoileanna* official webpage).

As the Euromosaic Report showed, the position of Irish among other lesser-used languages is fairly secure. Out of the seven variables upon which the research was based, Irish in the Republic

seems to occupy a safe position. Initiatives undertaken over the last decade, such as the establishment of an Irish-medium television programme (TG4, 1996) or the cross-border nature of *Foras na Gaeilge* have made an effective contribution. It has been argued that TG4 has played an important role in changing the way people perceive Irish. According to the information provided by the official homepage of *Foras na Gaeilge*, the TG4 has a 'vibrant and cool image', which makes it popular among the younger generation. Other important contributions to the promotion of Irish have been made by *Raidió na Gaeltachta* (which has been broadcasting since October 2001), and various newspapers (the first Irish language daily newspaper *Lá* launched in April 2003; the weekly *Foinse*, plus various articles published in *The Irish Times*, *The Irish News*, and *Daily Ireland*).

The internet is also an invaluable source for language support. There is a wide range of websites promoting Irish, among which

- Gaelport (www.gaelport.com); available only in Irish
- Gaeilge ar an Ghréasán (www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaeilge/gaeilge.html) provides over 700 link pages in and about Irish
- Oideas Gael (www.oideas-gael.com) offers information on adult language courses at all learning stages
- Beo! (www.beo.ie); the Irish internet magazine issued monthly by Oideas Gael with support from Foras na Gaeilge comprises articles in Irish with a glossary of difficult words and phrases translated into English
- Litriocht.com (www.litriocht.com); website mainly purchasing books, CDs, and DVDs in Irish

Moreover, at an international level, Irish has had official and working language status in the EU from 1 January 2007. This raises the prestige of the language and is highly likely to have a positive impact on its maintenance in the long run.

Conversely, in Northern Ireland, Irish only recently received recognition from the British Government, which has committed itself to take the necessary measures to promote the language. According to the BBC news of December 2006, the government is consulting people in the north about whether or not Irish should be recognized as an official language. The consultation ended in March 2007, and due to post devolution, the chances are fairly high that the new elected assembly would provide legislation for the Irish language in the near future. This will imply better provision in the public sphere, paving the way to institutionalisation, a crucial step in

language maintenance. Institutionalisation means that the language comes to be “...accepted or ‘taken for granted’ in a wide range of social, cultural and linguistic domains or contexts, both formal and informal” (May, 2001: 151).

With the expansion of the EU in recent years, there are more languages to be heard in modern Ireland due to the large-scale influx of immigrants from countries such as Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Romania, posing new challenges for effective language policies. From my experience in Galway there was quite a significant number of foreign students interested in learning the language, some of whom had already acquired it over the last few years and seemed eager to do further research in the domain. There was nevertheless also a wide range of immigrant workers who barely had any knowledge of English, let alone Irish. In such cases, it is clear that English will have priority in communication, if the respective job requires any language skills at all.

According to the information from *Foras na Gaeilge* homepage⁴³, many foreigners who have settled in Ireland in recent years have taken an interest in Irish. A group of immigrants even formed an organisation in 2005 called *iMeasc* (meaning ‘among’ in Irish). The organisation has the role of promoting Irish as part of the culture of Ireland among people going to live there. Given the circumstances, it is likely that there will be an increase in the number of people from other nations who can speak the language over the coming years. Such initiatives are surely beneficial for language maintenance. Nevertheless, the extent to which the language can be further maintained and reproduced remains to be seen in the following years.

It cannot be doubted that the future of Irish will depend very much on the Irish-speakers themselves, provided that the government supports any initiatives taken in this direction. Surely, if immigrants decide to live in Ireland and adopt Irish as a second (or rather third language) this will have a positive impact on language maintenance. Moreover, if these immigrants decide to send their children to Irish-medium schools this will mean further strengthening of the Irish language for future generations. Given these facts or premises Irish indeed has high chances of survival.

It is nevertheless debatable (and even hard to imagine) that at a given time in the future the government’s goal to promote a bilingual society “where as many people as possible use both Irish and English with equal ease”⁴⁴ will be fully achieved. According to the government’s

⁴³ <http://www.bnag.ie/language/default.asp?catid=6> (last accessed 11.03.2007)

⁴⁴ Government statement 2006.

statement in December 2006, the main initiatives to this end include the development of Irish language broadcast services and aid for parents who wish to educate their children through Irish. Time will show if such objectives will be met.

3.4.3. The current situation of Aromanian

Given the complexity of language policies in Ireland one tends to foresee a rather bleak future for Aromanian. It is indeed hard to believe that despite the wide range of initiatives and state support received by Irish, the language is still lesser-used. Opinions concerning the future of the language range from scepticism to optimism, and this in a context in which many positive changes have taken place in recent years. The initial aim of this paper was to take the Irish situation as an example for what the Aromanians could do in order to revitalise their language.

May (2001: 141) points to the fact that critics have actually gone so far as to describe the Irish example as “...an archetypal failure ... a cause célèbre invoked by sceptics and opponents of minority language rights”. As such, one may contend that there are no positive prospects for Aromanian. Yet, the Irish example with its flaws and recent achievements has prepared the necessary ground from where Aromanian language activists could start. They could learn from the Irish language planning mistakes and focus on the effective initiatives the Irish model provides. It becomes clear that Aromanians are far behind the Irish experience and this is due to several factors that have already been mentioned in previous chapters.

At present, the major problem resides not only in the lack of a nation state but also in a lack of unanimity regarding the opinions and attitudes of speakers towards their mother tongue. Distinguishing between language and dialect has therefore been a matter concerning both the host states where Aromanians live as well as the Aromanians themselves. Lack of support for the language has thus involved both the states and the speakers. Whereas this was the case with Irish in the first stage of language planning, although there was significant support from the state, the Aromanians have always lacked a sense of distinct nationhood, irrespective of their distinct language use. Adaptation has led to assimilation with the ultimate effect of language shift.

In recent years a second revival concerning the Aromanian culture and identity has been fostered by many Aromanians in Balkan countries. This movement has had the impact of gaining certain recognition from the host states, not regarding language maintenance but rather an acknowledgement of a distinct culture within the context of the respective nation states.

In the European context the Aromanian language issue reached its climax in 1997, when the Council of Europe adopted *Recommendation 1333*, recognising the distinctiveness of the Aromanian language and culture. This document continues to encourage the Balkan countries with Aromanian populations to support the language in various domains, such as education, religion, and mass media. The Euromosaic Report showed that Aromanian receives no support from the Greek state in any of these domains. With the recent accession of Romania to the EU there are still chances that the status of Aromanian language will change for the better in the future. The policy of the recently elected Romanian commissioner for multilingualism in the European Parliament seems positive in this sense⁴⁵. Although there is no direct address to the Aromanian language, the policy of multilingualism would implicitly include a lesser-used language like Aromanian, whose particularity is undoubtedly valuable for the linguistic diversity which Europe encompasses. It remains to be seen what necessary actions the Aromanian-speakers themselves will take in order to support this diversity. The current situation in most of the Balkan countries appears rather negative, as may be seen in the following section.

There are about 300,000 Aromanians living today in Greece, out of which 100,000 claim to be fluent speakers⁴⁶. This number is nevertheless debatable. Since there has never been a national census focused on a comprehensive linguistic survey, the data provided by Kahl's study is just an estimate based on socio-geographical and ethnological methods rather than on pure linguistic ones. It is therefore difficult to provide an accurate judgment of actual language use, since this requires a detailed questionnaire that would closely define 'fluency'. Nevertheless, one aspect comes out from the data, the fact that language acquisition was not provided by the education system but by the home domain. This implies oral transmission from one generation to the next

⁴⁵ In his speech to the Culture Committee of the European Parliament at the end of February 2007, the Commissioner for Multilingualism, Leonard Orban stated that "multilingualism [is] part of the genetic code of the EU". He opened with a Czech saying "You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you only live once", continuing that "Language is about diversity, cultural heritage, communication and therefore cooperation, all of these being values of the European Union" (EBLUL press release, 5 March 2007).

⁴⁴ It is hard to estimate the exact number of Aromanians, since the last national census which differentiated between the orthodox ethnic groups was in 1951. The data provided in my paper is taken from Kahl's study "The Ethnicity of Aromanians after 1990" based on his doctoral thesis "Ethnicity and distribution of the Aromanians in Southeast Europe". His numbers are nevertheless also based on estimates, mainly due to missing or old data and differing census methods (Kahl, 2002: 153).

⁴⁵ According to the Euromosaic Report Aromanian enters the category of "high incidence of language group endogamy and low incidence of family language use", yet the rate of language group endogamy has rapidly declined to below 50% in the last fifty years, which means that the language communities have been undergoing a very rapid process of intergenerational rejection of the language (Williams, 2005: 100).

with no performance in written skills. Intergenerational language transmission⁴⁷ has nonetheless strongly declined in recent years, which means that whereas older speakers can claim a certain extent of fluency this does not apply to the younger generations, who might understand the language but display no actual language use.

According to Kahl's study the general attitude among Aromanians in Greece towards language maintenance is rather passive. There have been no concrete initiatives towards achieving this aim, despite the expressed views that they would accept its use in the family or as optional language education in schools.

There are more than 200 cultural associations active in Greece but none of them displays special interests in language maintenance. The fact that Aromanian was labeled a 'minority language' by the Council of Europe in its Recommendation 1333 triggered negative attitudes especially expressed by the largest Aromanian organisation in Greece ("Pan-Hellenic Union of Cultural Associations of Vlachs"). Moreover, a protest resolution was signed against the US State Department's annual report on the human rights situation in Greece. They complained

...against the direct or indirect characterization of the Vlach⁴⁸-speaking Greeks as an ethnic, linguistic or other minority, stating that the Vlach-speaking Greeks never requested to be recognized by the Greek state as a minority, stressing that historically and culturally they were and still are an internal part of Hellenism, that they were bilingual and Aromanian was secondary (Kahl, 2002: 154).

The problem here seems to be with the term 'minority' which has a negative connotation in Greece. The refusal of the majority of Aromanians to be recognised as a distinct minority prevents other Aromanians from exercising their rights to identify themselves as a minority population and "...to express their identity freely and to maintain their culture" (Kahl, 2005: 154).

As far as the media domain is concerned, there are only a few reviews and periodicals published by a handful of associations, nonetheless with a limited amount of Aromanian texts. Most of the articles are published in Greek, even though they deal with Aromanian topics.

⁴⁸ As already mentioned in the chapter on Aromanian historical background, the term *Vlach* is common in Greece when referring to Aromanians.

In the other Balkan countries the situation is slightly different although only to a certain extent. In Albania, for instance, Aromanians are identified as a separate linguistic and cultural minority. Nevertheless, this status gives them no particular rights. Their number has been estimated at 60,000, although they do not appear in any census data as a separate group. As in Greece, the focus among the existing associations is mainly on cultural rather than linguistic activities. There is no official education in Aromanian, although apparently some primary schools provide optional courses⁴⁹. There are no radio or television programmes in Aromanian and the only newspapers in Aromanian (two in number) appear irregularly (all of the above from Kahl, 2002: 157).

Due to the precarious economic situation in Albania many Aromanians have either declared themselves as 'Helleno-Vlachs' in order to benefit from better work opportunities in Greece, or have shown special affinity with Romania, since a large number of scholarships can be offered by the Romanian government to Albanians on the basis of a verified Aromanian identity. This exchange has nevertheless proved ineffective towards language maintenance, since those students coming to Romania receive classes only in Romanian, not in Aromanian, and once they finish their stay there they return to the first dominant language, Albanian.

In other words, despite the strict requirement from the Romanian consulate - granting scholarships only to students who can prove Aromanian language competence - the results have shown no particular support either for their mother-tongue or for the host country's language. The Aromanian identity of Albanian students plays a secondary role once they are among fellow students in Romania. Most of them have little or no knowledge of Aromanian, and there is no expressed wish to learn the language either. This shows lack of effective language planning with no real linguistic advantages on either side. According to Schwandner-Sievers the flexibility Albanian Aromanians display in changing identities associated with more powerful states (Romania and Greece) enables them "...to create access to scarce social, economic, political and cultural resources ... an efficient and profitable strategy of adjustment to different circumstances" (1999: 19).

In this climate, one no longer wonders why there is no real interest for language maintenance. It has been argued that "...politics of social structures and positions negotiate prestige" (Schwander-Sievers, 1999: 19). In the case of Albanian Aromanians prestige may be perceived as

⁴⁹ Information provided from personal correspondence with the Aromanian association in Albania (7.05.07). In 2005 an Aromanian kindergarten was established in Divjaka, where also Aromanian classes are taught in primary school.

a reward for changing their own identity and opting for a socially, economically and politically better one. The language issue does not fit into this scenario and no one can really blame them for their choice.

In the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) the situation of the Aromanian language is different from all other Balkan states, in that it received recognition as the language of a distinct ethnic group in the 1991 constitution. It was even used in official documents such as the forms for the 1994 census (Fishman, 1997: 14). A population of 25,000 Aromanians has been estimated, which includes those people who understand the language but do not speak it. The presence of the language in the public domain is nevertheless scarce. The media domain is somewhat better represented, in that there are both radio and television programmes broadcasting a limited number of hours weekly. This has nevertheless proved positive for the prestige of the language. There are also many school books, poetry books, song books and newspapers published in Aromanian. The only problem is that they circulate in informal ways, so that they seem to be absent from the public arena and the majority of the population are not really aware of their existence (all of the above from Kahl, 2001: 158-9).

As far as the education system is concerned, Aromanian started to be taught as an optional subject in some elementary schools in Bitoli, Krusevo, Stip and Skopje in 1995. There is a collaboration of most Aromanian associations with the Romanian government, which offers educational stays in Romania to Aromanian children. As is the case with Albanian Aromanians the criteria are Aromanian descent and a good knowledge of the language (Kahl, 2002: 158-9). There are no accounts of the impact of this collaboration, since there is no data regarding the actual use of Aromanian either in FYROM or in Romania.

FYROM signed the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in 1996 but has not ratified it since. As a result, there is no information on whether the state implemented a special language policy regarding its lesser-used languages or whether there are any future plans in this sense.

Bulgaria is the fourth Balkan state in which an estimated number of 3,000 Aromanians live. They have no official status, in that they are not recognised as either a cultural or a linguistic minority. There is no data on language use, so that out of the estimated number there is no information on whether all or only some display some knowledge of Aromanian. There is an Aromanian association in Sofia, established after the political changes of 1989. Apparently the strongest supporters of the association are Aromanians who went to school with Romanians at the

Romanian school in Sofia. They are concerned with the preservation of Aromanian culture and language, although their initiatives seem somewhat modest. The publication of a newspaper *The Aromanian* alone (in 1998) cannot really support language maintenance, despite the goodwill of its creators (all of the above from Kahl, 2001: 160).

Aromanian is not at all represented in the domains of education, public services, and official institutions. In fact there is no data available on language use in the family domain, which has always proved the strongest means of language transmission in most other Balkan countries.

Confronted with such a weak language situation one might predict a rather negative future for Aromanian in Bulgaria. But since there has been no real attempt to research the actual language situation in Bulgaria there might still be some hope. The very existence of cultural organisations concerned with the preservation of the distinct Aromanian identity is a sign of positive attitude and motivation. Moreover, Bulgaria's recent accession to the EU involves among other aspects the recognition of basic human rights, of which the desire of the community to keep their mother tongue is one. Nevertheless these rights have to be sought by the Aromanians themselves if they indeed wish to receive support for their language. The *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* is one of the official documents from which they could start. Moreover, it is important that they establish contact with other Aromanian associations from other Balkan states in order to exchange information and come up with initiatives for language maintenance. Strategies can only be developed if there is efficient collaboration. Intercommunication is necessary to establish common aims and work for common solutions. This is valid for all Aromanian communities, including the estimated 30,000 Aromanians in Romania.

The main difference between the Aromanians from Romania and those from the above mentioned Balkan states is that their status here is atypical. They are not autochthonous but emigrated from the southern Balkans to Romania⁵⁰ between 1923 and 1940, receiving Romanian nationality only some years after their arrival. My grandparents, at the time still of an early age, were among the first settlers to share this destiny. My parents were then born in Romania and acquired Aromanian at home. One of the elements that strongly defined the individuality of these Eastern-Romance-speaking people was their language, which was produced from one generation to the next. My parents were thus raised bilingually, speaking Aromanian at home and Romanian at school or in the other domains outside the home. This is also the case for most of the

⁵⁰ At the time the region belonging to Romania, called 'Cadrilater'. In 1940 this region was restituted to Bulgaria, forcing the Aromanians further north, across the new border, to cities such as Constanta and Tulcea.

Aromanians who migrated to Romania during the period between the two world wars, which shows that the language has been living and maintained for generations despite the external influence of the dominant language. In my case, the dominant language is Romanian, although Aromanian has always been present at home in one form or another (parents communicating with each other and relatives in Aromanian).

The current debate over acknowledgement as a distinct national minority has aroused various opinions among Aromanians themselves and Romanians. On the one hand, the Romanian state does not guarantee any support for the preservation of the Aromanian language since they do not have the status of a national minority. On the other hand, those Aromanians opting for such recognition claim that their language can only be maintained and receive state support if they are acknowledged as a distinct national minority. The opinions are split among Aromanians, causing an internal conflict which is not productive for any of the factions. There is nevertheless the general view that Aromanian should be supported but there have been no real initiatives from any of the conflicting groups.

The Romanian government has been quite liberal towards Aromanian associations, giving them the freedom to express themselves in various domains and cultural activities. There is a wide range of newspapers, radio and television programmes on local station, some exclusively in Aromanian. Since 1999 and 2001 there is also optional language instruction at primary schools in Constanta and Bucharest (Kahl, 2001: 163).

From the above information it becomes evident that the situation of the Aromanian language is fairly critical. Except for the somewhat moderate cultural activities there are almost no real initiatives towards language support. In the few countries where Aromanian is part of the school curriculum (as yet only an optional subject) there is no reliable data on teaching methods and the extent to which this actually helps the language to be used in other domains than the home. The problem is in this case that the language function has been weakened and in those cases where Aromanian is still used as the everyday language in the family, there is a strong influence from the host nation language. This results in language shift whenever there is need for new words which have no equivalent in the mother tongue, so the outcome is a mixture of the respective dominant language and Aromanian. In Romania, for instance, due to the close relationship to the dominant language, most Aromanians tend to replace even those terms that exist in their mother tongue with Romanian ones. The consequence is that Aromanian is gradually being replaced by Romanian, so that speakers no longer acknowledge when the process of language shift actually

takes place. Even if they display a particular ethnic identity this is not necessarily acknowledged at the language level. It is more by the means of their different cultural and historical backgrounds that they distinguish themselves (or are perceived by others) from the majority, language being secondary in importance.

Apart from the several activities undertaken by Aromanian associations in the five Balkan countries previously mentioned, special attention should be extended to the Aromanian communities in France, North America, Australia and Germany. These played a significant role in the second revival of the Aromanian movement, in that they initiated many activities which enabled exchange of information on the contemporary situation of Aromanian in the Balkan states and attempted to find ways for an effective collaboration regarding language status and official recognition. Several international congresses on the Aromanian language and culture were organised to this aim⁵¹. At the top of the agenda were issues such as the recognition of Aromanian as a distinct neo-Latin language in the Balkan states hosting Aromanians, its presence in the educational domain, religious service and mass media. It was especially through these congresses that the way to *Recommendation 1333* was paved⁵².

Another problem is the lack of a standard orthography, despite numerous attempts over the last few years to create a unique form that Aromanians in all five different countries would agree upon. At the moment there are two 'official' variants, one adopted from standard Romanian - using diacritic signs, whereas the second makes use of only a limited number of diacritics (adopted during the second international congress in Freiburg). Despite the adoption of standardised orthographies various associations publishing newspapers or books in Aromanian still use their own 'standard', which causes confusion among readers not familiar with these new forms⁵³. There have been several attempts to found an organisation responsible for such matters, but they have not yet been put into practice. The main opposition comes from Romanian linguists who consider that a new writing system using only some diacritic signs would be artificial, since most of the core books published in Aromanian at the beginning of the language revival had been written using Romanian diacritics. The debate has gone so far that those opting for a new standard form have been accused of 'separatism' by both Romanian and Aromanian scholars - a

⁵¹ The first congress was held in Mannheim in 1985 followed by four others in Freiburg held in 1988, 1993, 1996 and 1999 respectively.

⁵² The merit for this achievement has been nevertheless attributed to Professor Barba, founder of the association "Union for Aromanian Language and Culture", in Freiburg, Germany.

⁵³ Whereas most of the associations use the Latin alphabet, there are some internet sites which still use the Greek alphabet (see <http://aromaniacatholica.blogspot.com/> and <http://scriare.blogspot.com/>)

view which seems more ridiculous than academic. In fact, the reform was aimed at enabling all Aromanian associations publishing books or newspapers in Aromanian to use a system that was compatible with their computer programmes and printing systems. The decision taken during the second international congress was thus based on pragmatic grounds, entailing simplification. The new standard preferred phonetic to diacritic transcription. The debate has been going on since the first propositions were made at the international congresses (including the one in Bitoli, FYROM, in 1997, where a semi-official standard form was adopted, now also used by many Romanian Aromanian associations from publishing their newspapers in this new standard).

Under these circumstances it becomes evident that there is an urgent need to establishing an official organisation responsible for language planning issues, such as standardisation, teaching materials and efficient teacher training programmes. Without general agreement on such important matters there is little chance that the foundations essential for language maintenance will be created. Many supportive projects could be initiated if Aromanians take the Irish experience as a starting point in their language revival strategies.

4. Chapter 4: What can the Aromanians learn from the Irish experience?

The recurrent emphasis on language maintenance in the Aromanian discourse has been linked to their distinct identity as an Eastern-Romance-speaking people, separated throughout history due to various socio-political influences, but still displaying an undeniable common culture and tradition. These assets are nevertheless subject to endangerment, a fact more and more acknowledged by the majority of Aromanians involved in cultural movements. Despite the relatively un-political discourse regarding cultural preservation, there have been almost no concrete initiatives to protect the language. Whereas intergenerational language transmission was considered a natural process until the second half of the last century, this is no longer the case in the present society, in which the younger generations display almost no interest towards what used to be the ‘mother tongue’. According to the information provided by personal correspondence⁵⁴ with Aromanian representatives from FYROM, the language attitude of parents is rather negative towards optional classes in school, since these consider other modern

⁵⁴ From 7.05.07

languages, like English, for instance, to be more valuable for their children's education. This means that fewer and fewer children attend such classes, the image of Aromanian being linked with backwardness, low prestige and no real future perspectives.

The same process has been noted among younger generations of Irish learners, although this image seems to have been improved recently. Thus, in Ireland it has become more of a trend for parents to send their children to pre-school institutions or primary schools in which Irish is the medium of instruction. This can be noticed at a local level, where various voluntary organisations have been fostering a positive linguistic policy, but also at the national level, by the governmental support provided in the last few years.

As has already been mentioned in the previous sections, the diffuse geography of the *Gaeltacht* made local organisations a prerequisite for better language planning. The same could be done in the Balkan countries, since the regions with a concentrated Aromanian population are fairly scattered and government support is rather scarce or nonexistent. It is not sufficient to suggest that Aromanian-speakers should establish more and stronger supporting language institutions, for this is not necessarily a practical operational suggestion. As Fishman (2001: 14) argues, in the case of threatened languages a range of priorities should be established first. In other words, Aromanian associations should first identify "...a priority of functions [for their language and then establish]...a priority of linkages between these functions in order to derive the maximal benefit from their relatively weak resource base" (Fishman, 2001: 14).

What could be the priority of functions for Aromanian? First its image should be improved. Second, a uniform orthography should be accepted by Aromanians in all countries, and most importantly there should be an increased ability for compromise and cooperation among all Aromanians in the Balkans. The question is whether these goals would be agreed upon by the Aromanians themselves. Indeed, one important step that should be taken is to formulate the aims that all Aromanians have in common. Nothing can be done by external forces if the Aromanians themselves do not know who they are and what they want.

The Aromanian associations from all Balkan countries mentioned should thus establish contacts that will enable them to share information and opinions. First they should agree upon common strategies that would aim to analyse and evaluate the current attitudes of the speakers towards their mother tongue. This should take the form of a survey where the language issue pertains to the connection with cultural identity. In other words, provided that Aromanians acknowledge their distinct cultural and linguistic identity as an asset that should be protected, the prerequisite

for language maintenance would thus be reached. The associations already in existence could start from here and launch initiatives in order to achieve the speakers' wishes. Without the speakers' expressed consent any initiative regarding language maintenance would be doomed, the Irish example being instructive in this sense.

Second, putting forward the hypothesis that speakers display positive language attitudes, realistic measures should be taken to connect these attitudes with actual language use. As repeated surveys have shown, Irish speakers have shown a positive language attitude, yet until recently this has been only passively transformed to actual language use. The sense of pride connected to Irish identity seems to be become more and more connected with language competence. Due to the multitude of identities the Aromanians are confronted with, it is difficult to unite them or persuade them that the Aromanian identity is worth preserving. Language is indeed a unifying element, yet there is no data showing that the Aromanians themselves would consider language an essential asset to be transmitted to further generations. There is a common sense of pride associated with their culture and tradition, yet this has not been expressed in connection with their language.

Scholars have interpreted the recent Aromanian movement in Romania as an expression of an 'identity crisis'. This label would also pertain to the current situation of Aromanians in the remaining four Balkan countries. The 'identity crisis' is rather complex, ranging from blurred national feelings justified by the lack of a nation state, to the difficulty in finding a common definition of what it means to be Aromanian. Such notions as 'distinct ethnic group' have been subject to controversy in Romania, where most of the Aromanians do not necessarily consider themselves different from the Romanian people. This leads then to a lost cause as far as the language is concerned, since being one with the Romanian people directly involves the use of a single, common language. This process is exceedingly unlikely to reverse without speakers' first regaining their feeling of cultural self-worth and linguistic confidence, and the improvement of the image of Aromanian.

The discourse pertaining to Aromanians as a distinctive ethnic group with a distinct language has only recently been developed. Thus, in 2005, the Aromanian Community of Romania (ACR) addressed the Romanian government and the Council of Europe on the endangered status of Aromanian. A report⁵⁵ was sent to the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, in

⁵⁵ Written by Bara, Mariana (2005) *Report on the Aromanian Language in Romania*
<http://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2005-December/006559.html> (last accessed 12.05.07)

which the current situation of Aromanian was outlined. ACR also pointed to the difficulties in reaching a productive dialogue with the Romanian government over the Aromanian question. This was mainly due to the biased discourse concerning the old dialect versus language debate. Aromanian is still perceived as a dialect of Romanian, which prevents it from receiving any support from the state.

The *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages* was not applied in the Aromanian case, despite the fact that the Romanian government elaborated a legal draft in 2005 in order to ratify the charter. According to the Romanian government, Aromanian does not have the status of a 'regional or minority language', which justifies the decision not to grant any official support. Such a justification appears to be based on rather subjective criteria, since *Recommendation 1333* labels Aromanian as a distinct 'minority language under threat', not as a dialect. According to the ECRML, Aromanian would fit into the category of a lesser-used language which needs official support for its maintenance. As already mentioned in the chapter dedicated to the ECRML and EBLUL, the authority of EU institutions is arbitrary when it comes to the recognition of lesser-used languages, since ultimately it is the state which has a significant role in conferring legitimacy to a certain speech form. The Romanian state has already taken its decision which does not favour the maintenance of Aromanian, although its precarious situation is recorded in EU legal documents and in the UNESCO Red Book of endangered languages. The demands of ACR are still open, it remains to be seen whether the state decides to take measures regarding the maintenance of Aromanian in the near future.

Despite controversial opinions among Aromanian-speakers themselves regarding their recognition as a distinct national minority, the recent initiatives undertaken by ACR seem to represent a first concrete step in promoting the language. The very fact that Aromanian-speakers made themselves heard in the media, expressing the endangered situation of their mother tongue is of significant importance, even if such an event could (should) have taken place even earlier than 2005. What matters is that ultimately they did take some action, which shows a positive language attitude of the speakers towards their mother tongue and a strong will to maintain it.

Given the current situation, it becomes clear that any effective solutions pertaining to language maintenance are difficult to put into practice. After thorough research into Irish language planning I have come to a point where I find it hard to consider that the Irish model could be

effectively applied to the Aromanian language situation. Initially taking objectivity as a main tool, I have realised throughout my study that I have nevertheless run the risk of perceiving things from a subjective perspective. As such, I reached the point where I could see myself in the position of the advocate for Aromanian language maintenance, searching for the right solutions and trying to give answers to a matter which is almost impossible to achieve realistically.

My intention was to offer the Irish model as *the* solution to the maintenance of Aromanian. Since my research is based only on written documents, lacking any fieldwork, I have come to the conclusion that any feasible solutions can only be considered from a hypothetical point of view, their actual effectiveness remaining to be proved in the long run. As such, the comparative study is not to be seen as the ultimate model for language revival, since there are still many aspects that need to be taken into account if one were indeed to apply it.

Irish and Aromanian display two different language situations, yet, if Aromanians decided to conduct a language revival movement it would be more efficient to start from the Irish model, which serves as an invaluable case study. Thus, Aromanian language activists need not repeat the same mistakes by neglecting essential aspects such as speakers' language attitude combined with utility of the language - a factor ignored by policy makers in Ireland in their initial language revival movement.

The recent changes in language policy in Ireland have acknowledged the importance of language in an economic context, where language is seen as a 'product' on the labour market. Language prestige has been acquired through economic factors. New Irish language employment possibilities have increased the speakers' demand and willingness to learn the language. It is difficult for the Aromanians to reach such a level from the very beginning, since the most important element for such an achievement is the granting of language legislation by the state. However, in the Irish case, this took a long time. This means that prior to this achievement various initiatives were undertaken by language activists, an instructive example the Aromanians could learn from.

Probably the most admirable initiatives in the language revival movement have derived from voluntary organisations, both in the Republic and Northern Ireland. The strong determination of parents to create the necessary environment for their children to learn the language has resulted in the establishment of Irish-medium pre-schools or *naíonraí* and primary schools. Financial support was initially independent of the state, based on parents' funds along with grants provided by local communities. Even today, the *naíonraí* are all in the private sector, meaning that parents

have to pay a fee. The *naíonraí* are under the aegis of the voluntary organisation *An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta*, which is funded by *Foras na Gaeilge*. According to Hickey (1997: 69) 43% of the *naíonraí* receive some form of subsidy. Since 1980, *naíonraí* located in the *Gaeltachtaí*⁵⁶ receive a per-capita grant from the *Udaras na Gaeltachta*, a body fostering social, economic and cultural activity in the *Gaeltacht*. Conversely, the *naíonraí* in the rest of Ireland do not receive such a grant (Grin & Moring, 2002: 113).

Surveys have shown that Irish-medium pre-schools have proved effective in language maintenance, increasing proficiency, and in particular competence among children from English-speaking families. This example could be followed by Aromanian communities if they displayed a strong commitment and determination in assuring language maintenance for future generations. Unfortunately, it is difficult to foresee Aromanians being ready to take such a risk, especially in a context where modern languages like English or French, for instance, would distinctly show primacy over their mother tongue. The question is therefore whether Aromanians could possibly imagine investing energy and money in founding such educational institutions, with no direct intervention from the state and no real guarantee for future social mobility.

Hypothetically speaking, one way to sound out the speakers' opinions on the establishment of Aromanian-medium pre-schools would be to conduct a survey, in which the respondents would be informed of both the advantages and disadvantages inherent in this form of language maintenance. Assuming that general agreement were reached among parents to secure the pre-school education of their children in Aromanian, it would still be necessary to take into account a number of factors before establishing such institutions. These pertain to efficient organisation in terms of provision of learning materials and teacher training. As such, in order to provide an accurate immersion education the preparatory staff should display proficient language and pedagogical skills. These could only be attained if special institutions were established beforehand to cater for such needs. It becomes clear that the foundation of Aromanian-medium pre-schools is a complex process which cannot rely on parents' determination alone. Specific linguistic, didactic and pedagogical skills are essential requirements in their creation.

Pre-school Aromanian-medium education would thus be a possible first step in assuring language production. Yet, in order to continue this process a second factor needs to be taken into account - primary education. If parents opt for an immersion education at this stage, the questions of financial support and teacher training arise. Were primary education voluntary, just like pre-

⁵⁶ Plural form of *Gaeltacht*

school education, limited to the private sector, this would imply that the cost burdens would fall on parents alone or on local funding. Again the question arises to what extent parents are really willing to take such a risk. Traditionally, language in education at primary level has rarely been seen as a means of sustaining diversity, but rather as a means of eliminating it. Societies have therefore been constructed as "...monolingual entities, and the associated educational practices have mirrored this conception" (Williams, 2005: 83). Under these circumstances it becomes problematic for parents to opt for a means of education that would not conform to the mainstream system. Taking this risk entails consequences which parents should foresee for the future of their children.

It has been argued that "...within the modern state, education has two goals; labour market integration and the ideological aspect of citizen production [...] Relating minority language and education implies accepting their relevance for reason and for the labour market" (Williams, 2005: 72). Up to the present, Aromanian has not been perceived as relevant for the labour market, probably a main reason why the states hosting Aromanian populations have not undertaken any measures in promoting or sustaining it by integrating it in the educational system. As such, it becomes questionable whether parents would consider Aromanian-medium education as necessary or relevant for the future of their children. Parents' determination in assuming such a risk needs to be really strong so as to overcome any possible obstacles created by official institutions.

If Aromanian were to display an economic value - such that acquisition of the language at school would be linked to future use in other domains - one could argue that Aromanians would be willing to take the risk of investing in immersion education. In other words, if Aromanian does not succeed in playing a role in the labour market, it is less likely that it will survive. If governments support local organisations in their initiatives, by giving them the power to organise themselves and take the necessary measures with respect to education policy, Aromanian would have the chance to develop efficiently. Education would be then relevant for both language production and reproduction.

All of the above suggestions are to be interpreted from a hypothetical point of view. As such, it is difficult to state that they can actually be put into practice in an effective way. Nevertheless, it is essential to take these aspects into account when discussing the maintenance of Aromanian. The relation of education and labour market appears a prerequisite for language policy. If Aromanian language activists fight for their language rights they should bear in mind the above

aspects and start applying them in a realistic manner. The Irish experience provides the necessary example in this sense. Language in education should be seen as a link to future language use and not only as a subject with no economic potential. The usefulness of the language in everyday life should thus be promoted. In making it relevant for use in a variety of contexts, such as public administration, legislative domain and the media, Aromanian would display higher chances of survival. This implies, however, that the language should receive official recognition at some stage, which would represent the base for future language development and maintenance. Were legislation for Aromanian available, there would also be an attempt to accommodate it within education, public services, media and culture. The absence of legislation, and language planning, make it unlikely that Aromanian will be accommodated in the state's educational provision (Williams, 2005: 75).

Education thus appears as a significant element in language maintenance, yet, in the Aromanian case it should function as a complementary source. Language policy makers for Aromanian should first of all attempt to reinforce the intergenerational transmission of the language by providing support to local initiatives. A distinct characteristic of Aromanian as opposed to Irish is that its transmission has been mainly realised in the family over generations. According to Fishman (1991) this stage of intergenerational family transmission of a language is the key to its continued survival. Without this stage, threatened languages would "...have nothing firm to build on" (Fishman, 1991: 94). As such, Aromanian language policy makers should support this existing foundation by promoting a positive image of Aromanian, in which parents should be encouraged to transmit the language to their children. In addition, they should aim at developing the language by creating dictionaries, various learning and teaching materials, or by recording oral literature from elderly native speakers.

The link between family and education with respect to threatened languages has been analysed by Fishman in *Can Threatened Languages Be Saved?: Reversing Language Shift, Revisited: A 21st century Perspective* (2001). He argues that if a threatened language is not acquired as "...[an] ethnic mother tongue at home, before children arrive at school [or if that language appears only as a school subject]...then the school has a much more difficult task on its hands" (Fishman, 2001: 14). As such the school itself becomes "...one link in an established intergenerational sequence of teaching the threatened language as a second language" (Fishman, 2001: 14). This has been the case with Irish language planning, which actually aimed at creating generations of speakers with Irish as a first language. As Fishman claims, the maintenance of threatened

languages implies a “linkage system” [that pertains to] those adult functions and institutions that are prior to and preparatory for schooling for children” (2001: 15). This system must involve a continuum to “...adolescent and adult functions after and following up on schooling for children”, where the threatened language is taught as a second language to adults of child-bearing age, enabling it to become the first language. After the threatened language becomes the first language it is then taught as such at school, followed by post-school adolescent and young adult activities in the threatened language as a first language. This linkage “...enables the threatened language to become a first language of a new generation, enabling the school to be more than a second language teaching institution” (Fishman, 2001: 15). This scenario links the importance of family language transmission with the school system. In other words, efforts for language maintenance should begin prior to the schooling stage and “...slightly before the stage of socialisation into intimacy⁵⁷ and informality for a new generation” (Fishman, 2001: 15).

Fishman’s theory of the “linkage system” would be relevant for the Aromanian language situation. This could work in two ways: in those cases where the language has been transmitted from one generation to another, the focus should be on encouraging language use in the family, accompanied by immersion education in schools. In those cases where the language is no longer actively used in the family, parents should be offered the opportunity to learn it as a second language in adult learning centres, so that they could transmit it to their children. From my own experience, there are also particular cases where Aromanian has been acquired only passively, meaning that the parents used the language at home on a more or less regular basis, the child being able to distinguish and understand it but not speak it until at a later stage. For such particular cases adult learning centres could play a role, providing courses for various language levels⁵⁸.

As has been mentioned before, the functions of Aromanian have been restricted to the family domain, such that evolution has largely been suspended. At the level of the vocabulary, however, Aromanian has even been eroded; due to the dominant language influence, Aromanians have resorted to words available in the languages of their host states (be they Greek, Romanian,

⁵⁷ Fishman’s theory on ‘reversing language shift’ or the revitalisation of lesser-used languages pertains to eight stages of endangerment that make up the ‘graded intergenerational disruption scale’ (GIDS). Stage 6 is where the intergenerational family transmission function reappears which, according to Fishman, is crucial for the ‘home-family-neighbourhood-community’ reinforcement (or socialisation into intimacy and informality). Stage 6 is the starting point for the “linkage system”, to which the other stages are interrelated.

⁵⁸ In Ireland this has been made possible by the organization *Oideas Gael*, founded in 1984, which offers language courses and cultural programmes for adults at all language levels.

Albanian, Slavic-Macedonian or Bulgarian). Typically, contemporary topics are expressed in the dominant language, either because there is no equivalent in the mother tongue or just because it is easier to use the everyday dominant language terms. Schools or adult learning centres should therefore be thought of as complementary institutions aiming at strengthening language development and maintenance.

A well-structured “linkage system” of language revitalisation should relate the family with educational, public and media domains. Mass media programmes in Aromanian could be deliberately and carefully linked to reinforcing home or school functions. Unfortunately the range of topics of the Aromanian media is rather minimal and repetitive, dealing mostly with the past; traditional music texts, literary works, and news from the Aromanian world fill most of the agenda, thus rendering a very archaic image of Aromanian which caters only for a limited audience and has little appeal for the younger generation. Television programmes in particular could use their limited broadcasting time to better effect, in order to attract as many viewers as possible with a wider range of topics. These should not be limited to Aromanian affairs but include world news, documentaries, films, etc. Despite the efforts to promote Aromanian through mass media - be it through newspapers, magazines or television and radio programmes - the efficiency of reaching a constant audience seems to be rather weak. Moreover, the costs for sending magazines to interested subscribers in various Balkan countries are far too high and there has been no real evaluation of their efficiency in increasing language use. In addition, the general contribution of the media needs improving; although a significant number of Aromanian magazines and books are published every year, the distribution strategies are ineffective: since there are no bookshops where they could be sold, they are mostly sent out for free.

The role of the media should not be underestimated, yet its quality needs to be improved and clear targets pertaining to language maintenance and functional expansion should be set. As with education, media strategies should be linked to what Fishman (2001: 14) calls the “home-family-neighbourhood-community” functions. Language planning should therefore include all of these domains, and not concentrate on the school system alone. It is not sufficient for a lesser-used language to be taught as a subject with no support outside education. In FYROM and Romania, Aromanian is taught as an optional subject, which means that the language has no support outside the school system. In addition, the teaching staff is confronted with a lack of materials or even quality training. The outcome of such language planning has been that parents are increasingly reluctant to persuade their children to opt for Aromanian, choosing instead foreign languages

with better social mobility prospects, like English, French, Spanish or German. It is therefore essential that policy makers provide a “linkage system”, where the language is seen as a vehicle for integration into society rather than as a disruptive element. Aromanian needs to acquire an economic value which would assure actual language use in various domains. Only under these conditions would speakers show interest in their mother tongue. Otherwise, Aromanian remains a subject with no value for the labour market, a ‘curiosity’ in which linguists and language activists might show an interest, but not the speakers themselves.

II. Conclusion

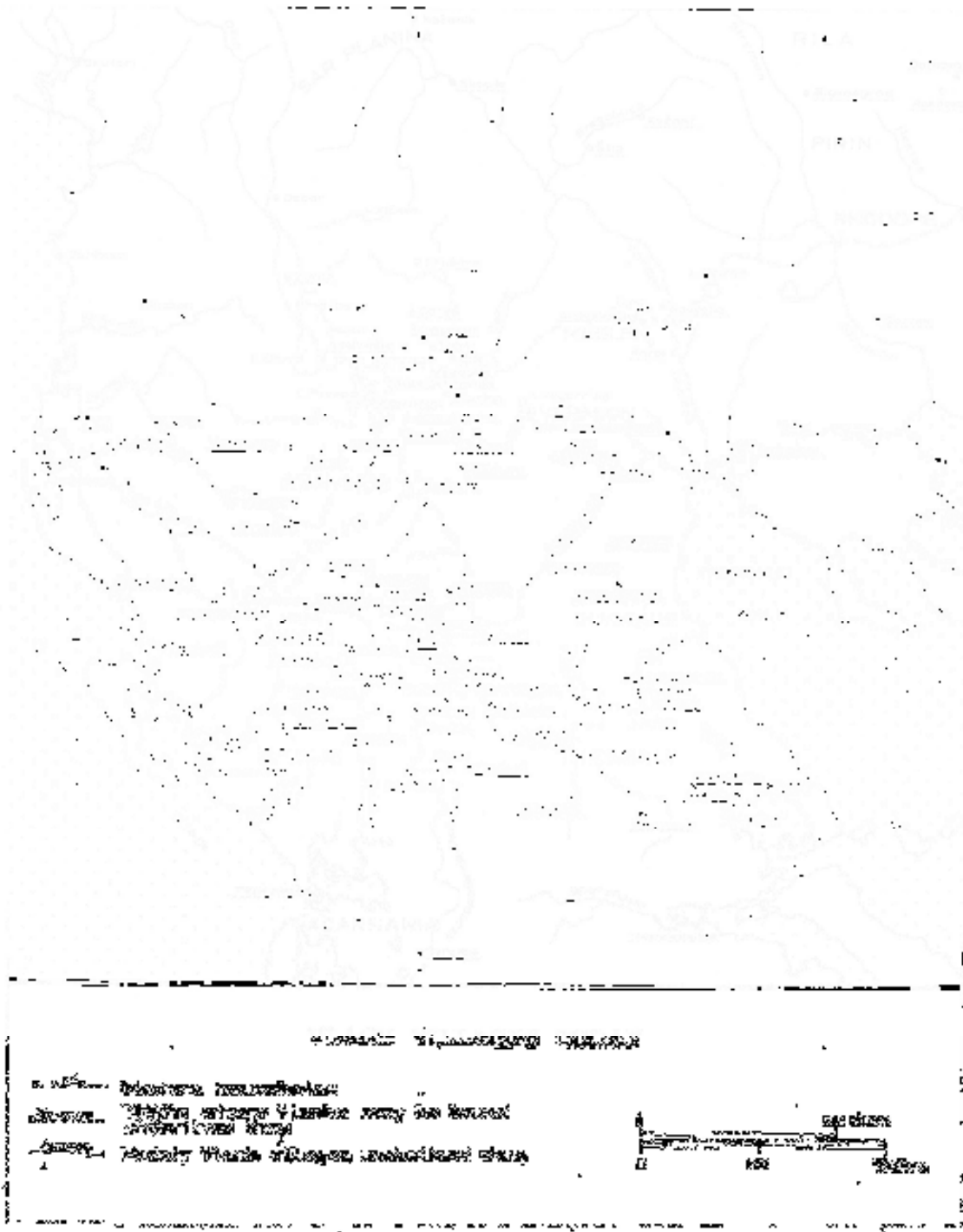
The main aim of this paper was to propose possible solutions for the precarious language situation of Aromanian by applying the Irish experience as a starting point in the Aromanian language revival movement. After thorough research into the language histories of Irish and Aromanian I have come to the conclusion that applying the Irish language planning model to the current Aromanian situation would be difficult if not almost impossible. Unlike the Irish language, which is associated with a nation state, Aromanian is widely distributed among small communities, lacking common nationality or identity; often referred to as 'scattered pockets' of Eastern Balkan Latinity. Any attempt to apply the Irish model to the protection of Aromanian would require this lack of unity to be overcome, and Aromanians collectively to take genuine pride in their language and culture. This was one of the main lessons to emerge from the Irish experience, that the complex process of language maintenance involves in the first instance strong determination on behalf of the speakers, without which any language planning would be a failure. In the Aromanian case accurate surveys need to be conducted in order to establish the actual situation of the language - the focus here mainly should be on speakers' attitudes towards their mother tongue.

Given the circumstances, Aromanian language activists should better organise themselves and learn how to cooperate, by establishing common aims and prioritising measures toward these aims, leaving any political dissent aside. Improving the public image of Aromanian should be at the top of their agenda - a measure that will entail an improvement of speakers' attitudes towards their language.

The fate of any lesser-used language basically depends on the speakers themselves rather than the external influence of official authorities. The Irish example has shown that local organisation and power devolution are key measures in language planning. In the same manner, Aromanians should not depend on state support, but rather start the initiatives themselves and provide a list of priorities for maintaining their language. The European Council has been a major source in granting recognition to the Aromanian language, yet the current situation of Aromanian shows that the speakers themselves have either not been informed of the influence of the EU or have taken too little action in persuading official authorities to implement the recommendations of the EU. If such recommendations are to have any impact upon the maintenance of Aromanian, then solutions can only come from within Aromanian communities. It is a pity that the survival of Eastern Balkan Latinity may be threatened by lack of determination from the speakers

themselves. Unless Aromanian speakers take action to safeguard their language, communication via their mother tongue will remain impossible, especially among the younger generations where communication is conducted via third party languages, especially English, instead of Aromanian. Language activists should therefore organise themselves in order to prevent such processes which will unfortunately lead to language loss in the long run.

The turbulent history of Aromanian should not be an impediment to language activists fighting for language rights in modern Europe. Legal institutions within the EU, such as EBLUL, demonstrate that lesser-used languages are part of the linguistic diversity fostered by the EU, a diversity that needs protection and promotion, but which is ultimately in the hands of the speakers of those languages. Only these people showing willingness towards language maintenance, and seeking external help from governmental organisations can ensure the preservation of this diversity. The Irish experience, different though it may be in many ways, could yet serve well in guiding any Aromanian activists keen to take action in maintaining their language.

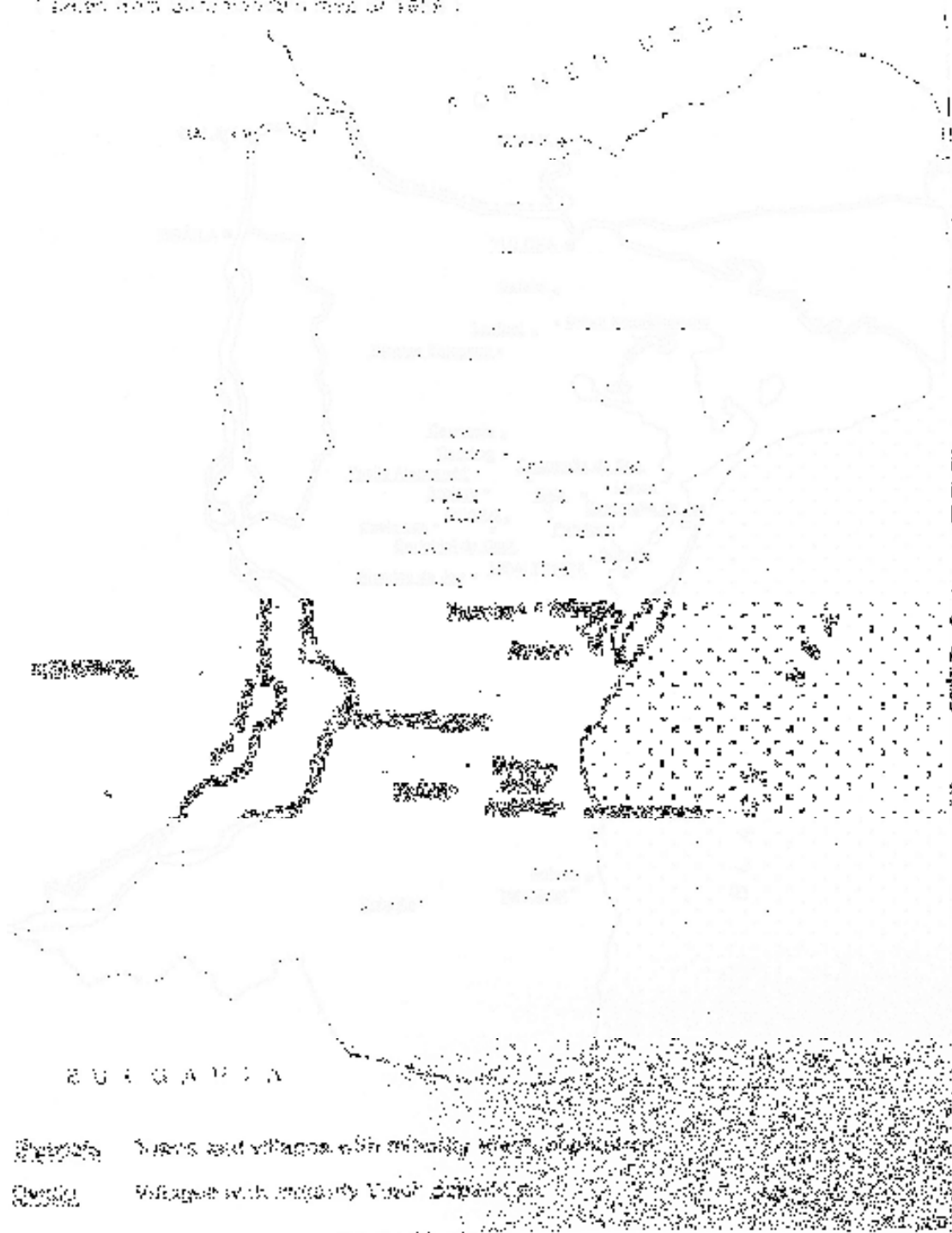


1. Aromanian villages today⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Maps 1 and 3 are taken from Winnifrith, T. J. (1987) *The Vlachs*.

THE PLACES OF ROMANIA

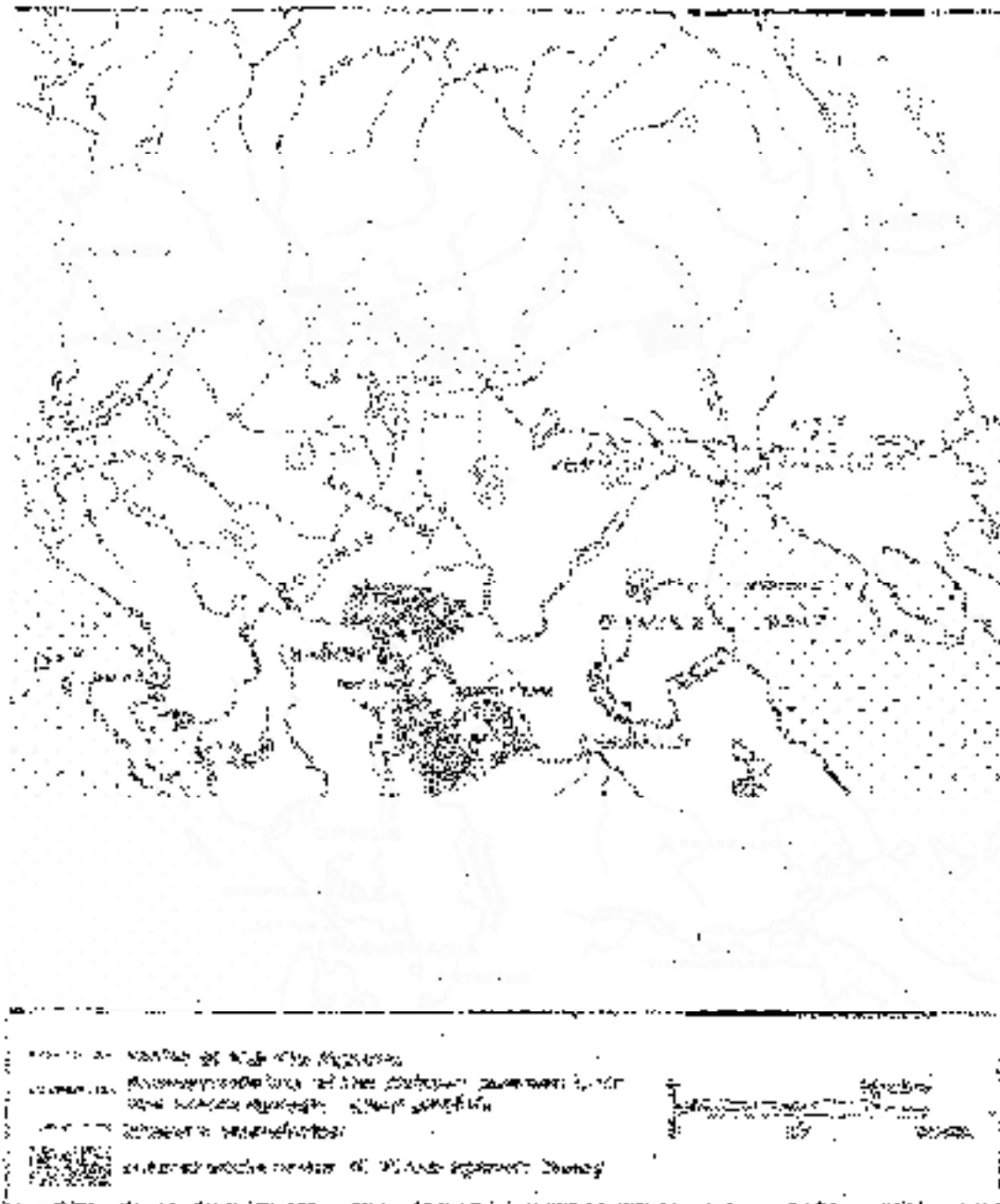
(Areas with substantial numbers of 1918)



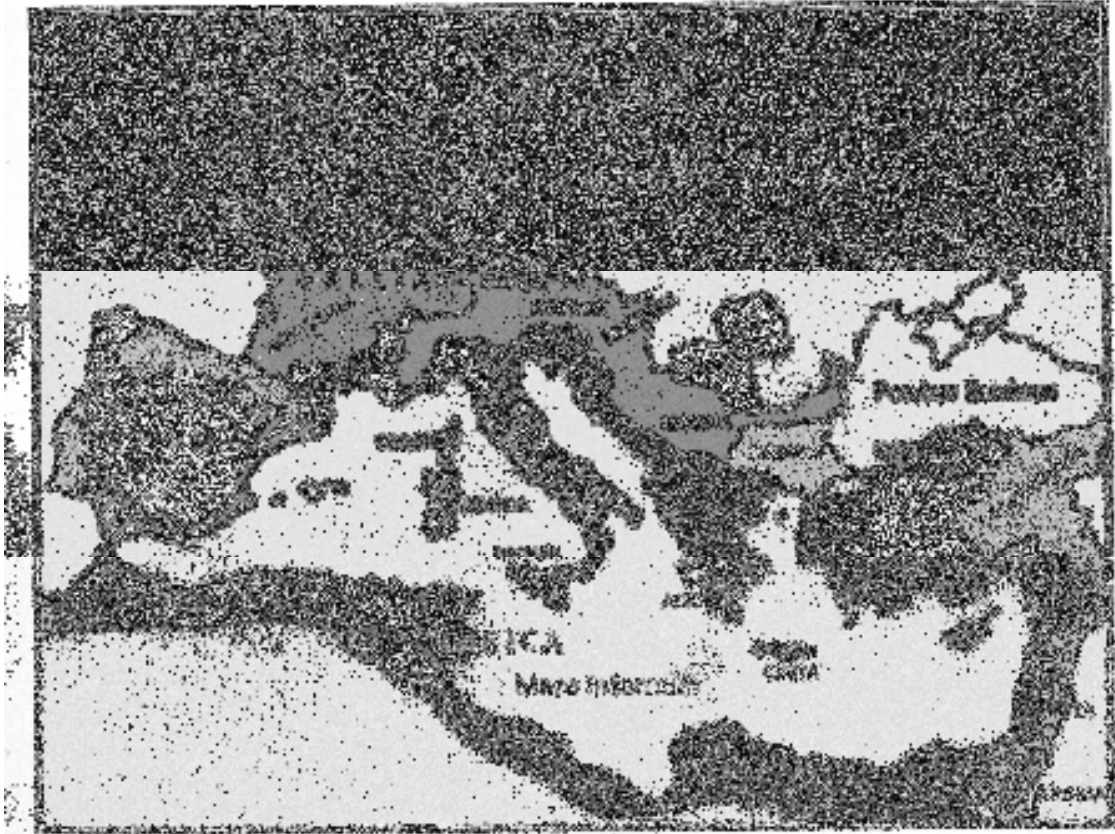
2. The Aromanians of Romania⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Source : Winnifrith, T. J. (1995), *Shattered Eagles: Balkan Fragments*.

THE DIVISION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

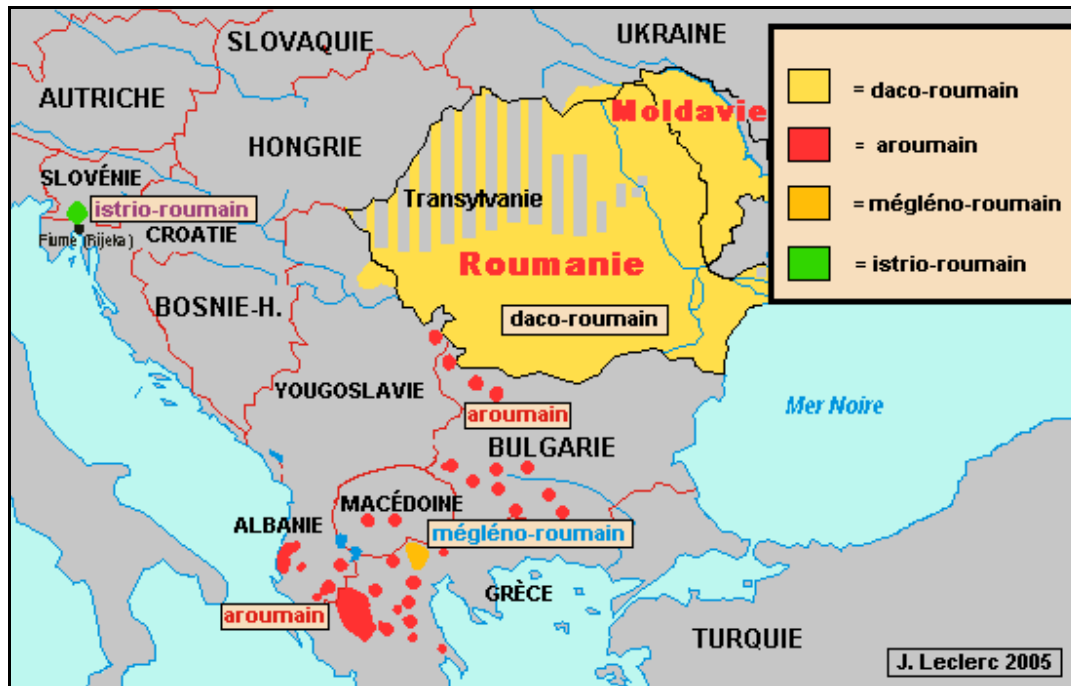


3. The Jireček line



4. The Roman Empire⁶¹

⁶¹ Source : Schwanitz, Dietrich (2002), *Bildung*, p. 81.



5. The four branches of Eastern Balkan Latinity⁶²

⁶² Source: <http://www.tlfg.ulaval.ca/AXL/europe/Aroumains.htm>



6. The Gaeltacht⁶³

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⁶³The grey areas represent the Irish-speaking communities. Map taken from *Gaillimh le Gaeilge Strategic Plan 2006-2008*, p.8.

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