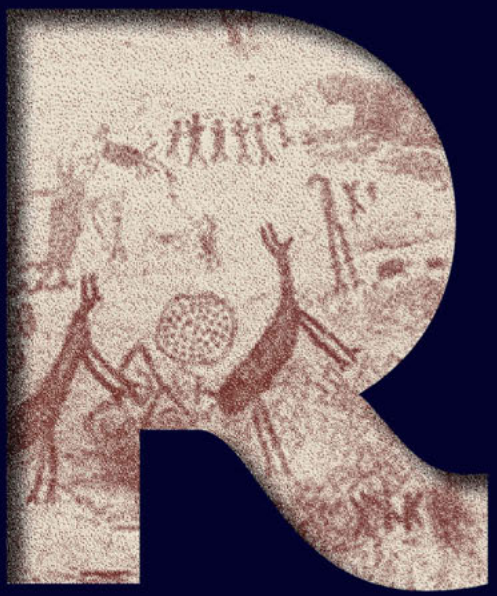


HRISTO KYUCHUKOV

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF ROMA EDUCATION

UNIWERSYTET ŚLĄSKI
WYDAWNICTWO

Socio-Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Roma Education

To all Roma children in Europe

Hristo Kyuchukov

Socio-Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Roma Education

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Reviewer
Andrzej Radziewicz-Winnicki

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The book could be of interest to anyone who is interested in Roma, education, and/or cultural studies. It could also serve as a course book for MA and Ph. D. students in the field of education or cultural studies.

Preface

The Roma in Europe are again in a state of peril. There is a long history of research by psychologists attempting to prove a genetic basis for purported racial differences in intelligence, namely IQ. It began over a century ago with psychologists newly armed with IQ measures, trying to differentiate those immigrants "fit" for immigration to the United States (Jackson and Weidman, 2004). After the horrors of the Third Reich and racial purification (Gound, 1981), such work fell into disrepute. Ironically, the Civil Rights movement in the United States re-awakened interest in racial differences. Once educational inequalities between Blacks and Whites were acknowledged and began to be redressed, attention turned very quickly to the "achievement gap" in education between the "races" (Jensen, 1973) as if four hundred years of inequality could be solved by desegregating some schools (Onwuegbuzie and Daley, 2001).

One of the leaders of the new interest in racial differences in IQ was Philippe Rushton (see https://psychology.uwo.ca/people/faculty/remembrance/rushton.html). When his work fell into disrepute in American circles, he moved his research base, often without the approval of IRB oversight, to two places where it was not so disfavored: racial differences in South Africa under apartheid, and the Roma in Eastern Europe. For Rushton, the Roma provided a natural experiment: a relatively pure South Asian group living in a European cultural setting.

As recently as Rushton (2007), the Roma were characterized as scoring lower on average than Whites not as a function of disparities in circumstances but because of their ethnicity. Research highlighting low intelligence was used in the past to justify special education, sometimes for even a majority of Roma children (Cvorovic, 2014). Papers within the last ten years (e.g. Bakefr, 2011) make broad generalizations about Roma: that they care little for education and tend to avoid confrontation by withdrawal. In an appalling piece, Bakalar (2004) character-

izes Roma as following a "strategy" of over-reproduction with little care given to children.

The research in these papers is badly flawed, assuming the "culture-fairness" of Western tests, relying on unsystematic interviews with inadequate control groups, and paying little attention both to the language children were tested in, and to the cultural match between the examiners and the children. Other studies that have taken into consideration the socioeconomic status of the parents, nutritional status, birth weight, and preschool experiences of the children, find the so-called racial gap in IQ between Roma children and others almost inconsequential (Kezdi & Kertesi, 2011).

The research in the current volume attempts to dispel some myths and to place the development and education of Roma children in their cultural and historical context. The research is conducted with more understanding of the language and cultural milieu in which Roma children grow up. Roma testers present the materials whenever possible, and Romani is used as the language of the test.

"Scientific" reports, especially if they suggest biological causes for population differences, can rapidly become fodder for political extremists, neo-Nazis and racists, whose attacks on Roma in the last decades have not abated (Cvorovic, 2014). There remains a huge gap in the educational experiences of Roma and mainstream children in Europe. Sustained attention and adequate funding is needed to bring justice to their circumstances. That attention must proceed in full acknowledgement of past systemic racist bias, and with a fuller understanding of the cultural and historical context of the Roma.

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PART ONE

History of Roma education

CHAPTER 1

Roma children and transformative education

Introduction

In Art. 3.1 of the United Nations' international Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, (E 793, 1948), it is written that "Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group" is linguistic genocide (in T. Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000): "Linguistic genocide as defined by the UN is practiced throughout the world. The use of indigenous or minority language can be prohibited overtly and directly, through laws, imprisonment, torture, killing and threats" (T. Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998).

All around the world the Roma are bilingual. In addition to Romani (a language related to Indian), which is their mother tongue, they also speak the official language of the country where they live and some of the languages of neighboring countries. At school, the bilingualism of Roma children is not taken as an advantage, but rather as a negative phenomenon, because the status of the Romani language is still exceptionally low all around the world.

From world history, it is known that during the Middle Ages Roma were oppressed by the Catholic Church because they were speakers of a language which no one knew – often Roma people were arrested, accused of heresy (violating church practice) and deported, and burned at the stake. Roma were also forbidden to use their own language and, in some places, if someone was caught speaking Romani, their tongue could be cut off. During this time, children would also be taken from their families and sent to homes or institutions where they would be kept from learning their language and about their culture.

Later, in the 16th through 18th centuries, most of the European Roma were persecuted. In Hungary, Queen Maria Teresa forced them to change their names and forbade the use of the Romani language. In Spain and Finland, if the Roma were caught using the Romani language, their tongues were cut off.

We also see this kind of evidence in 20th-century history. During the communist regime, the use of Romani was officially forbidden in some Eastern European countries, for example, in Bulgaria. Those who spoke Romani or any other minority language in public were punished. In public places (restaurants, buses), there were written signs that read, "The use of minority languages in public places is absolutely prohibited." In fact, the names of Muslims and Roma were changed, and the children at school were ashamed of being Roma or minority and ashamed of using their mother tongues. The schools did not help the children, but rather made their life more difficult and complicated by forbidding the use of Romani during classes and among themselves during recess.

The Status of Roma and Romani

After 1990, with the democratization of societies in Eastern Europe, the educational situation among Roma communities changed. The problems were not solved but rather increased. Many Roma children dropped out of school or never started school. The reasons are complex, and this chapter aims to explain them from a Roma perspective.

During the last decade, many Roma families became jobless. The economic situation of most Roma became worse and worse. Families could not afford to pay taxes for kindergartens, to buy books and clothes, or to provide their children with necessary financial support for a normal school life.

On the other hand, it is known that traditional Roma education is community education. Children learn to understand and read the verbal and non-verbal communication signals of adults in their community at a much earlier age than their non-Roma counterparts. They participate in the communities' day-to-day activities, and it is here where they learn by watching, listening, and observing the economic, social, linguistic, political, and moral codes of their society. Often in the community, the children will learn the very few first words in the official language of the country.

Starting school, the Roma child comes to a non-Roma world where knowledge about life and society is presented in a totally different way, unknown to him. Usually Roma children have difficulties with adapting to the classroom way of learning. The teachers expect Roma children to know how to cope with the rules of the school. Frequently, Roma children do not meet the expectations of

the teachers and then the 'conflict' situation is simply solved by putting the children's desks at the back of the classroom or sending them to schools for disabled children. Very often, the teachers and non-Roma students do not communicate with Roma children because they are 'dirty' and do not have textbooks or the necessary materials for classroom activities. From a Roma child's perspective, school life is boring and classroom activities are not interesting. Very often, the teachers do not realize that Roma children have much more knowledge about, and are more interested in, everyday life.

The process of education in general is not a one-sided process. There are complex factors which ensure the success of all students. With this in mind, educators have a very difficult task of attracting Roma children to the educational process by making it more interesting and productive for them.

Transformative Education

In his publications, Paulo Freire (1982a, 1982b) introduced the term "transformative education" to define the reconstruction of social reality through meaningful dialogue between teachers and students. Alma Flor Ada (1986) refers to "transformative education" as creative education:

> Through creative education, students learn to understand and appreciate themselves, to use that understanding as a means of valuing the diversity of others, to reflect critically upon their experiences so that can be a source of growth, and to respond creatively to the world around them. If bilingual students are to have an opportunity to validate their own language and culture acknowledging both the difficulties faced by their ethnic groups and the possibilities open to them effecting change and for making positive contributions to society - they must be participants in creative education. Only then will the students and teachers be able to reclaim bilingualism as an asset for both individuals and society. (p. 388)

After the 1990s, in many Eastern European countries Romani language and culture were introduced as part of the curriculum. In most cases, the Ministries of Education took initiative or, in some countries, mainly NGOs and human rights organizations took initiative to develop educational programs. For this purpose, textbooks in the Romani language were produced and teacher-training courses were organized. The reason for introducing Romani as a mother tongue in schools was to make the educational process interesting and attractive for Roma children. However, Romani language and culture were not introduced to

majority children; they were kept within segregated schools based in the ghettos. Still most of the majority children do not know anything about the Romani language, culture, or history. In the history textbooks, nothing is written about the Roma and their history. In the music textbooks, nothing is written about the Roma and their influence on world music and culture. In the literature textbooks, there is no information about Roma writers and their influence on the world literature. Roma diversity is still not celebrated in the mainstream schools, and there is no dialogue among the teachers and non-Roma students about the cultural and human values of Roma.

However, there was a political reason for introducing Romani to schools as well: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most of the Eastern European countries did sign the International Instruments of UN, Conical of Europe, European Commission. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to get an education in his own mother tongue and that the state has to provide the requisite assistance. Some of the countries did officially sign the international documents and gave the right for Roma language education during the first years, but, after a few years, they stopped it. The reasons were that "the children do not want to learn Romani language and culture." In fact, the lack of knowledge of how to organize the bilingual education for Roma children led to negative results. Instead of using the mother tongue as a point of departure for bilingual education, the Ministries of Education usually took the official language as a tool for instruction of the mother tongue. When the results from the children were negative, the Ministries of Education stopped the bilingual education for Roma children.

The third reason for introducing mother tongue education was the scientific reason. The researchers found that the better acquisition of the second language by bilingual children depends on the level of development of their mother tongue (J. Cummins, 1981). However, the scientific approach was not respected enough and was met with a negative reaction from the majority of non-Roma. In some countries (for example in Bulgaria), there were protests led by Bulgarians (including teachers) against the introduction of Romani in the school curriculum.

In most Eastern European countries, Roma children learn a second language with the same type of textbooks as the majority children. The expectations are that all children will have the same level of knowledge, the same achievement, and the same results. Most of the Ministries of Education are still very much against producing alternative textbooks for Roma children where the official language is introduced as a second language (as ESL). The methodology used for the education of Roma children is the same as the methodology for majority children. In fact, the Roma children cannot get the same level of knowledge as the majority children because of the methodology used. In bilingual Roma classrooms, the methods and approaches for education must differ from the methods and approaches used in monolingual non-Roma classrooms. S. Krashen (1996)

says that knowledge gained through the first language makes the second language (SL) input more comprehensible. Furthermore, literacy gained through the first language transfers to the SL. Different researchers in Central and Eastern Europe have been working on this problem as well, and, in fact, there have been positive results in the region (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia). It is proved that interactive methods used in combination with art, language games, music, and theater yield remarkably higher results among Roma children.

Dropouts in Eastern European countries are a new phenomenon. The educational systems in these countries do not have developed mechanisms for the education of children outside of school. Most of the dropouts in Eastern European countries are Roma children. The reasons for the high number of dropouts are presented in the following section.

The Economic Situation of Roma Families

The Educational System and its Lack of Flexibility

Many NGOs nowadays are developing educational projects for dropouts, however, there is no evaluation on the effectiveness of these projects, as there are no evaluations on any educational projects for Roma in Eastern Europe.

Another main problem in Eastern European countries is the training of the teachers working with Roma children. In most countries, the universities do not employ Roma bilingual teachers. There is just one university in Nitra, Slovakia, as well as the University of Bucharest - Romania, which have programs for Roma bilingual teachers. Usually there are no Roma teaching assistants in the classrooms, as is the case in other Western European countries and in the USA with minority children. The majority of teachers do not have enough knowledge or training to work with Roma children. Mainly the NGOs and foundations organize teacher-training seminars and introduce alternative methods for the education of Roma children.

How Should Roma Education be Organized?

The problems with Roma schooling may be summarized as follows:

1. Adaptation and integration of Roma children into mainstream schools and community involvement in the educational process must occur. For this to

happen, the 'special schools,' segregated schools, and separate classes have to be shut down.
2. Romani as a mother tongue and the official language as a second language for Roma students must be introduced through more interactive methods. Bilingual Roma teachers and Roma teaching assistants have to be introduced in the segregated and mainstream classes. The non-Roma teachers working with Roma children must receive anti-bias education in order to overcome existing prejudices and racism.
3. New approaches for the education of dropouts must be established. They must be more community-oriented and close to the cultural values of Roma.

The psychologists describe the process of adaptation of Roma children to school as a stressful one. The presence of parents and a Roma bilingual teacher or assistant teacher will make the process of adaptation much easier for the child. The families also play another role: they are a source of knowledge, which unfortunately is not appreciated in Central and Eastern Europe. Alma Flor Ada and Nancy Jean Smith (1998: 47) say, "Certain types of knowledge are systematically devalued by schools – especially that knowledge which arises from the experiences and the lives." Stories from the parents' childhood, when introduced in the classroom, could serve as an important resource in teaching the history of Roma, their cultural and traditional values.

Majority children and majority teachers should value the existing bilingualism among Roma, not only for Roma communities but for all of the society as well. When the majority starts to appreciate the Romani language and Romani bilingualism as a richness, then the transformation of the society will begin. In schools in the USA, immersion programs exist for majority students. An immersion program is a program where linguistic majority children with a high-status mother tongue voluntarily choose (among existing alternatives) to be instructed through the medium of a foreign (minority) language. With this, they assign equal value to the minority language and culture as the dominant one. In Eastern European perspectives, it means the majority children (Bulgarian, Romanian, Czech, Slovak, etc.) learn the Romani language and the majority teachers (Bulgarian, Romanian, Czech, Slovak, etc.) learn the Romani language. Through multiple perspectives – political, cultural, social – this changes the attitudes towards certain groups (in this case, Romani) who are perceived negatively. Teachers have to be trained and sensitized to the language and culture of Roma. The curriculum must represent the different cultures as having equal values.

The dropouts and street children in Eastern Europe are mainly Roma students, and they must have other chances for education in their lives. In Eastern European countries, the only education which has a value is the one students receive from the regular school system. There are no other ways for those who leave school at a young age to be educated. Alternative possibilities for dropouts and street children to get education do not exist. Community-oriented education

and community involvement can help them receive a valuable education, but, for this to occur, there must be a new type of education developed which allows the dropouts and street children to participate. Examples of well-developed educational programs for dropouts and street children exist in countries like India, Brazil, and Argentina, and they easily can be adapted for use in Eastern Europe.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I will say that to be able to change the status of Roma children and Romani language in schools, still a lot of work has to be done. There is a need for thorough research in all countries in which the Roma population is concentrated. There is a need for developing textbooks with Roma content for both Roma and non-Roma children. With this, the children will gain knowledge about Romani history, culture, and traditions, and they will start to value it. The Romani language as a mother tongue for Roma children and as a second language for non-Roma children and teachers should be introduced. In her earlier work, T. Skutnabb-Kangas (1979) showed the importance of mother tongue education for second language acquisition. In research with Finnish minority children in Swedish schools, Skutnabb-Kangass proved that Finnish children learning Swedish through their mother tongue were much more successful than Finnish children who only learned Swedish.

In order to provide transformative education for Roma children, there is a need for a transformation in attitudes toward Roma in the societies in all European countries. The changes in the societies will start when the attitudes towards Roma change and they are treated as human beings with equal human rights and historical, cultural, and linguistic value. The changes in schools will start when Roma children are appreciated for their bilingualism and non-Roma children and non-Roma teachers start to learn Romani as a language with value. This could transform the societies towards more humanistic and less oppressive societies, where everyone is respected and appreciated for his ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences.

CHAPTER 2

Good practices in Roma education in Bulgaria during the years of transition

Introduction

During the communist years in Bulgaria, schooling was compulsory for all children, including the Roma, and therefore the percentage of Roma with a high school-level education was higher. The communist regime had both positive and negative impacts on Roma students. One positive aspect was that most Roma students attended school, and one negative aspect was that bilingualism among Roma children was not perceived as an advantage but rather as a disadvantage. Romani language was not seen as a tool for language education, but instead as a means for acculturating and assimilating Roma children in schools. This was only one of the many assimilation measures that affected the entire Roma population in Bulgaria. Other practices included forcing Muslim Roma to change their names, forbidding the use of the Romani language in public places, etc.

After World War II, Roma were placed in ghetto types of settlements, which still exist not only in Bulgaria, but in other Eastern European countries as well. Usually, Roma children attended schools within Roma settlements, which were segregated from mainstream public schools. If Roma children did attend mainstream schools, segregated classes were created for them.

Only a small percentage of Roma continued their education at college or university level, since children educated in inner-city Roma schools did not receive a high-quality education. Often, teachers who taught in these schools were not qualified enough. This is evidenced by the fact that few had any knowledge of how to work with bilingual Roma students. Some Roma students were sent to so-called 'special schools' – schools for the mentally retarded – because they did not speak Bulgarian well enough. Bulgarian, which is a second language for Roma

children, was taught to Roma students using the same textbooks and methodology deemed appropriate for ethnically Bulgarian children who had Bulgarian as their mother tongue. Thus, no attention was paid to the bilingualism and biculturalism of Roma children. During the communist years, Roma students also did not have the right to study their own language. The curriculum and textbooks lacked information about Roma history and culture, nor was there any information about other minorities. Students' diversity and multiculturalism was not taken in consideration. It is important to point out that one will find both Muslim Roma and Orthodox Christian Roma in Bulgaria. In areas with a large (ethnically) Turkish population, including the parts of northeast and southern Bulgaria that border Turkey, one finds Muslim Roma who speak both Turkish and Romani. In western parts of the country and in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, the Roma are Orthodox Christian or Evangelics and speak mainly Romani and Bulgarian. Though there is considerable religious and cultural diversity, hardly any consideration was given to these differences (in both the school system and society at large).

During the past 25 years, the education of Roma children has become an important topic for educators in Bulgaria. The Ministry of Education has introduced Romani language education, and Roma students have the right to study their mother tongue four times a week in mainstream Bulgarian schools. Textbooks in the Romani language for students and for teachers have been published. Roma adults with a high school education have been trained to teach Romani using a bilingual approach, i.e., content area teaching in Bulgarian to improve literacy in Bulgarian as well. Recently, researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and Roma activists have become interested in the educational problems of Roma students, and the NGOs have initiated educational projects at different levels. International NGOs, such as the Open Society Institute (OSI) in Budapest and the World Bank, have established the 'Roma Educational Fund' with the aim of encouraging more Roma educational initiatives all over Europe. The main goal of the fund is to financially support new ideas that strive to improve Roma education in Eastern Europe.

Roma Children and Bilingualism

From a very early age, Roma children learn one or two other languages in addition to Romani and, very often, they will use multiple languages in everyday communication in the Roma community or in mainstream society. Only recently have educators begun to recognize Roma children's bilingualism and started to think about this issue from an educational perspective.

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language (Crystal, 1997) distinguishes 'societal bilingualism' from 'individual bilingualism,' and the term 'bilingualism' is used for people who acquire two or more languages simultaneously. Although authors have defined the notion of 'bilingualism' differently, the one given by Weinreich (1968) is the classical one. He states: "The process of successful use of two languages is called bilingualism, and the person using it is called a bilingual." The definition points to the main feature of the phenomenon, namely the functioning of two languages in the process of communication between speakers. The major problem which linguists face in studying bilingualism is in the question of how many systems the bilingual individual acquires – one or two? In answering this question, bilingualism should be treated as a continuum, the end points of which are 'mixed bilingualism' (when the two languages are merged into one single system) and 'coordinating bilingualism' (when the two systems are distinct). In the case of the Roma, one often encounters 'incomplete' bilingualism. Roma children aged six to seven are not fluent in the official language of their home country. Teaching Roma children in Bulgarian is not seen as teaching a second language, because the children are already in a Bulgarian language environment. Based on these facts, researchers have assumed that bilingualism refers to the knowledge of two languages to a degree which allows an individual to switch freely from one language to another, depending on the communicative situation. Depending on the interlocutors and the topic of the conversation, bilinguals decide which language to use. When the speaker changes from one language to another, he/she is practicing 'code-switching.' Bell (1980) describes the following rules of bilingual code-switching:

- Sociolinguistic rules, coordinating the choice of the language with the social factors on a micro-level (i.e., on the level of individual use) or on a macro-level (i.e., the choice of the national language).
- Psychological rules, predefining the choice of the language according to the psychological factors typical of verbal planning, which precedes production.

However, there are also cultural factors which must be taken into account, such as religious and cultural practices. For example, a Muslim Roma child will have difficulty understanding many of the idiosyncrasies of Christian culture. Very often, teachers do not realize this small, but very important fact, and do not understand why a child does not behave in the expected way. For example, when the Muslim religious holiday of Ramadan is celebrated, Roma Muslim children do not attend school, and the teachers fail to comprehend the reasons, because their misconception is that only ethnically Turkish children observe this holiday. Roma Muslim children will not eat a meal which contains pork and, if the school cafeteria does not have any other food available, these Roma children will refuse to eat. These kinds of seemingly minor cultural problems can influence the educational process and, when teachers are poorly trained, they will not know how to handle these situations.

The Preschool Education of Roma Children

The contemporary Bulgarian educational system contains four levels: preschool, kindergarten, basic school (primary school: grades one through four; secondary school: grades five through eight), high school (gymnasiums or technical schools: grades nine through twelve), and universities and colleges. Preschool education focuses, on the one hand, on the physical development of the child and the child's socialization, and, on the other hand, the child's preparation for schooling. During these years, the child gains the knowledge and skills that will become the basis for his/her social functioning and will determine the child's life trajectory.

Educational Projects for Roma

Successful projects with Roma children will be identified in this section. All of these have been implemented by different NGOs over the last 25 years, during the years of transition to a democratic society, and the projects mentioned below can be used as good educational models for other countries in Europe as well.

Initiated in Bulgaria in 1992, the Bulgarian National Committee of UNICEF was the first ever NGO educational project that concerned itself with mother tongue education in Romani. Based on experiences from other countries, the project focused its activities on working with children at the preschool and school-age levels, in order to contribute positively to the early socialization of Roma children. The first problem that Bulgarian educators encountered was trying to prepare Roma children for schooling – taking into account that the period of literacy development is decisive for the development of their cognitive abilities. Here, the NGOs and the Bulgarian educators needed to become familiar with international practices such as the development of coherent oral speech and motor skills, etc., using mainly language games as an approach. It has been found that the sociocultural environment of bilingual Roma children is of great importance for the development of their language and communication skills, as well as for the necessity of helping children become more proficient in Bulgarian as a second language. Experimental bilingual textbooks (Romani-Bulgarian) were published and introduced in experimental kindergartens, and the bilingual approach was introduced for language teaching and preparation for literacy in Bulgarian. Using the mother tongue of the children as a tool of instruction, and with the help of Roma community workers, the children were successfully prepared for Bulgarian literacy instruction.

The 'Diversity' Balkan Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education and Understanding is another NGO that, since its establishment in 1994, has developed educational projects which focus on the language education of Roma children and solve the educational problems of bilingual children in Bulgaria. Between 1997 and 2002, 'Diversity' BFCCEU published four children's books in the Romani language, which include fairy tales, songs, poems, and riddles. The use of the books in kindergarten classes by young, trained Roma teaching assistants has changed the attitude of teachers and Bulgarian children towards the Romani language, and enriched the language of Roma children.

Although the educational law does not allow Romani language education to take place in kindergarten classrooms, the experimental teaching of Romani had a positive impact on participating teachers' understanding regarding the importance of the mother language for the cognitive development of bilingual Roma children. The parents, on the other hand, came to better understand the importance of the written form of Romani and the use of children's books for the language development of their children.

Another important project with Roma preschool children, implemented again by the 'Diversity' Balkan Foundation, was the 'home literacy' project. During special training sessions for unemployed parents from two different Bulgarian towns, the participants were trained to work with their children in the home environment in order to better prepare them for schooling. An experimental bilingual (Bulgarian-Romani) textbook was also introduced in order to develop the children's language skills. Later on, after the children became students in the first grade, their achievements were followed and compared with a group of Roma children who were not involved in the 'home literacy' project. The Roma children involved in the project showed higher results and performed better on all tests. Gradually, parallel to the activities of the 'Diversity' Balkan Foundation, some other NGOs started to display more and more active interest in developing and implementing educational projects on Romani as a mother language. At the same time, training sessions for teachers and kindergarten educators were organized to move towards the new reality of the country: democratization and acceptance of multiculturalism for educational purposes. One of the most beneficial projects that existed until recently in the field of preschool education was implemented between the years 1999 and 2000 and financed by the Socrates Programme. The 'Intercultural Education in Kindergarten' project was implemented in seven towns and 15 different kindergarten classrooms, including half-day kindergartens, whole-day kindergartens, and combined kindergartens for children lacking parental protection.

The project's goal was to reinforce bilingual education in an intercultural environment within the kindergarten. The project consisted of five stages and involved 567 children, 220 parents, and 78 teachers. During the first stage, a diagnostic test was administered to children aged three to seven years. The project

also included assistant teachers (of Roma origin) working in the kindergartens. Care was taken to choose kindergartens that were already employing Roma assistant teachers, so that the project only had to qualify them as classroom personnel. The kindergartens involved in the project could be divided into two types: 'segregated' and 'integrated' kindergartens, and this classification was considered to be a demographic marker. The second marker in the study was the socioeconomic status of the parents. Some of the Roma communities in the study had higher socioeconomic status, although Roma communities with low socioeconomic status were involved as well.

The third marker used in the study was home language. In some towns, the Roma children were bilingual, but there were also towns in which the children's only language was Bulgarian. There were also communities where the language of communication was a Turkish dialect. The language marker was of tremendous importance in the study.

The fourth marker used in the research groups was religion – Muslim, Christian (Orthodox), or Protestant. Among the children involved in the study, all three religious groups were represented. In the first stage, two kinds of measurements were carried out – motivation for school achievement and ability for social orientation.

The second stage entailed the training of the teachers who work in bilingual settings and of the so-called 'teachers in the street' who worked with street children. They organized a project called 'Domestic Kindergartens.' 'Teachers in the street' took at-risk children (i.e., children who do not attend school or were otherwise deemed 'street children') and placed them with Roma families that where chosen based on a set of previously determined criteria. These 'domestic kindergartens' involved educators exactly like the 'teachers in the street,' and their main task was to work with children aged five to seven. The teachers had to prepare these at-risk children to enter the first grade of school. The second stage of the project involved professional pedagogical training sessions with the teachers as well. The goal was for teachers to be trained in the ideas and techniques for educating within a multicultural environment. The parents, street teachers, and 'domestic kindergarten' mothers were also involved in these training sessions. The third stage of the project consisted of developing technology for education in a multiethnic environment. During the fourth stage, this new technology was implemented, and teachers were trained on how to use it for multicultural education.

The fifth stage of the project was connected with the proliferation of the project's ideas. Teachers trained other teachers, and parents trained other parents.

During the sixth stage, methodology books, which focused on how to work in multicultural kindergartens, were published for teachers. The comparative study that followed illustrated the importance of both intercultural education

in the kindergarten and the parents' involvement in the 'domestic kindergarten classrooms.' Both promote child school readiness and literacy readiness and instill in bilingual children a good command of the second language needed for school.

There are two obstacles in the introduction of these good practices, which unfortunately do not differ much from those encountered in any innovative project in the sciences, arts, or economy in Bulgaria: the lack of money and financial support from the Ministry of Education for implementation of the projects in mainstream schools and kindergartens. Both the NGO that developed the project and the municipality that tried to sustain it have few financial resources.

The Primary and Secondary Education of Roma Children

An important project in primary and secondary schools has been the endeavor to desegregate Roma schools. Several Roma NGOs, using the 'bussing' model from the USA in the 1950s and 1960s, initiated a project in 2000. The desegregation education program focused on the inclusion of Roma children in the general social environment. Living in segregated communities, Roma children also study in segregated schools, and their exclusion from society often imparts negative consequences to their school achievement. The desegregation project also aimed to create a welcoming environment for Roma children in order to promote a quality educational process. In conjunction with this, activities focusing on desegregation took place in these communities, and several actions were taken to make the process more successful:

- moral support and cooperation from the municipality aimed at changing the general public's opinion about desegregation of Romani schools;
- support from the media aimed at popularizing the objectives, activities, and envisioned results of the project;
- attracting Bulgarian citizens and institutions to assist in accepting and teaching Roma children in Bulgarian schools.

Roma parents have played important roles in the process of desegregation. Many have established good connections with the schools to which their children are bussed. Lectures for parents have also been organized. In addition to transportation to school, the bussing programs also provided the students with free breakfast and textbooks. The key obstacle in the project concerned the teacher's lack of preparedness to work with bilingual Roma children and their limited practical experience in this field. Seminars were held for the teachers each month to help resolve this issue. Many issues were discussed during these seminars, including:

- Romani history and culture;
- specific characteristics of bilingual children;
- pedagogical work with Roma children;
- relationships between teachers and students and between Romani and Bulgarian children;
- the process of adaptation and the conditions for its acceleration and facilitation.

Each school had a Roma coordinator who served as the liaison between the schools and the families of the children. Diverse activities were organized in the schools, which involved both Bulgarian and Romani students. There were also special activities for the Bulgarian and Roma parents. School inspectors and school boards staged a competition for the most tolerant class of students. A set of criteria was provided to schools and the winners were selected and awarded.

The results of the projects were as follows:

- community cooperation in the process of desegregation of schools with Roma children;
- new opportunities for Roma children to receive a better education;
- promoting both cultures – Romani and Bulgarian – for all students and their parents (i.e., intercultural education);
- reducing the level of discrimination of the majority towards the minority;
- accelerating the process of Roma integration into society, recognizing their rights, and giving them the opportunities for equal participation in economic, political, and social spheres.

Adult Roma Literacy and Education

The 'Diversity' Balkan Foundation team launched a project for the education of children who dropped out of school. The project was financed by the Ministry of Education and Science and by the local authorities. A community group was established, consisting of representatives of local educational institutions, local authorities, municipal experts in ethnic issues, school principals, and the coordinator of educational projects of the Balkan Foundation. The mission of the community group was to receive appropriate training and to support and assist children from various ethnic groups in their efforts to successfully complete their education. Each village was required to identify all young people who did not have a school degree, were unemployed, and without any professional qualifications. Following this, a meeting took place between the community group and the young people. At this meeting, the objectives, activities, and results of the project were discussed. All those willing to enroll in the courses submitted

their documents (an application and a certificate of completion of grade school). School principals prepared the necessary documentation in compliance with the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science and the legislation. The following groups were formed: six groups covering grades one to four, four groups for grades five to eight, and four groups for grades nine to eleven. Each group consisted of 12-15 trainees, including men and women of different ages. Across all courses, a total of 187 trainees participated. The trainees were given lectures by qualified teachers on basic school subjects appropriate for their grade levels three times a week. They were administered exams which complied with the provisions and regulations of the Educational Law. Some of the boys and girls received training in the field of agriculture, including the operation of agricultural machinery and the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and other plants. The young people who enrolled in the training courses regularly attended classes and took exams and worked quite hard. Although the groups were co-educational, the boys and girls became friends and helped each other. Not a single conflict between trainees and teachers arose during the year. The teachers conscientiously fulfilled their duties. Experts in education and ethnic issues assisted in the project, and the mayors of the villages also supported the project.

As a result of the project, all trainees took their exams and enrolled in higher classes. Several people dropped out of the courses owing to external causes, such as family relocation or illness. Mayors of towns and villages and school principals from all settlements sent letters of thanks to the 'Diversity' Balkan Foundation and requested at least a two-year extension of the project. The 'Diversity' team regularly supervised the project implementation and provided scientific and methodological assistance and financial control over expenses. They periodically received information about the examination of results. The Balkan Foundation envisioned that the project would continue for another two years and that all trainees would receive a school degree. During the 2000-2001 academic year, the trainees attended training courses in food services, bartending, cooking, hairdressing, nail care, tailoring, driving, operating agricultural machines, bricklaying, etc. Thus, new employment opportunities were provided for these young people. Most Roma who are unemployed cannot find jobs because of the extremely low level of education they have completed. The aim has been to enable the trainees to continue their education, be it to an elementary or secondary level. Thus, the young Roma people were given the opportunity to find work, escape their poverty and isolation, exercise their rights, and integrate into society.

The training involved the following activities:

- forming groups of young Roma (according to their educational level) to be prepared by teachers to take their exams;
- providing the support of the Ministry of Education and Science and regional inspectorates and municipalities in order to encourage young people to study;

- offering young people training courses in the field of agriculture, economics, and crafts traditionally practiced by ethnic groups and the majority;
- involving Labour Offices, which will employ those trainees who have successfully completed the respective courses;
- providing support for establishing self-run small enterprises.

The 'Diversity' Balkan Foundation also sponsored a Summer School on Romani Language and Culture for Roma students studying various subjects at different Bulgarian universities. For three years, the summer school created a community of young Roma interested in studying Romani language, history and culture, and students who were practically assimilated. Many of these individuals were previously ashamed of their Roma identity and hid their ethnic background from their professors and colleagues at universities. Owing to the success of the summer schools, the University of Veliko Tarnovo opened a new program entitled Primary School Education and Romani Language, which prepared elementary school teachers in all subjects, and particularly to teach the Romani language. The program existed between 2003 and 2010 and consisted of 65 students from all over the country. This is perhaps the most successful Roma project in Bulgaria, because it helped to create a new generation of Roma intellectuals.

Conclusions

The education of Roma students in Bulgaria is a new issue which became important during the years of transition when Bulgaria changed from a communist to a democratic society. The challenges of Roma education are rooted in the changes necessary in societal attitudes towards the bilingualism of Roma children and the respect for their cultural differences. In kindergarten and primary school, mother-tongue education plays an important role in education. However, this area remains underdeveloped. As a result, scholars, teachers, Roma activists, and Roma parents have expressed negative attitudes towards Romani language education. The Bulgarian society does not believe that Romani language is a tool for the cognitive development of Roma children, particularly in the early years. The bussing project to accomplish desegregation is a positive model, but there are still many things to be done in a society with both Roma and Bulgarian parents before the process is successful. Roma NGOs in particular must change their strategies and look at the desegregation process not only as a human rights issue, but also as an educational concern. The projects targeting adult education and literacy must be more community based and society supported. It is not enough to be hopeful that individuals will receive a higher education; it must be

a community action. This community involvement needs to have the support of the society as a whole – from the schools to the municipality and the social affair offices. Only in this way can the project be sustained.

All the projects described above are positive models of successful action in different Roma communities involving Roma children from diverse educational levels, but, to date, they remain difficult to sustain owing to the fact that most have not been adopted at the institutional level and have remained initiatives by individuals and Roma NGOs.

CHAPTER 3

Romani language education in Bulgaria: an overview

Historical Background

Officially the total number of Roma in Bulgaria is approximately 370,000. However, everyone in the country knows that this number is not correct. According to Roma NGOs, the number of Roma in Bulgaria is between 800,000 and one million. The difference between the official data and the information from NGOs stems from the fact that a very large part of Muslim Roma who also speak Turkish identify as Turks. At the same time, the Orthodox Christian Roma identify as Bulgarians. However, in the society they are accepted neither as Turks nor as Bulgarians by the other ethnic groups. They are known as Roma and the attitudes of the representatives of other ethnic groups towards them are as they are towards Roma – discriminatory and full of ignorance. Actually, these are the two main religious groups among Roma communities in Bulgaria, although nowadays there are also Roma who have converted to Pentecostal Christianity, and a small number of Roma who are Catholic Christians (H. Kyuchukov, 2007).

The Muslim Roma are mainly spread out in the regions which are also populated with a Turkish minority – mainly in the northeast and southeast parts of the country, which are close to the border with Turkey. They have different names, but mainly call themselves 'Millet' (from the Turkish "millet-nation"). The Christian Roma are spread all over the country. They are speakers of Romani and Bulgarian. The Muslim Roma often do not know Romani and

they are speakers of Turkish and Bulgarian. All the Roma groups in Bulgaria are divided into two main groups: 'Vlax' and 'non-Vlax.' The Vlax groups have been in contact with Romania and they have Romanian loanwords in their dialects, while the non-Vlax groups have never been in contact with Romanian and they do not use Romanian borrowings or loanwords. In the past, the Vlax groups had a nomadic life, while the non-Vlax groups have been always settled (H. Kyuchukov, 2003).

After 1945, the communist government took special measures towards Roma. In the 1950s, all the Roma groups had to be settled and nomadic life was officially forbidden. This forced some of the Roma groups to give up their traditional professions and to start working in the newly established, Russian types of *kolkhoz* (farms) (H. Kyuchukov, E. Marushiakova and V. Popov, 2004). Regarding the education of Roma in the 1950s and 1960s, the government organized literacy courses for adults. This was the period when the government started to build up schools in the Roma settlements, without realizing that these schools segregated Roma children from mainstream schools and mainstream society. In the 1970s, a basic level of education became obligatory and Roma children were obliged to attend basic school. During that period, the Bulgarian educational system was very much influenced by the Russian educational system and, similarly as in Russia, kinds of camps were organized for Roma children in the summer, where they were taught different skills according to the pedagogical style of Makarenko. In the 1980s, many Roma children attended not only the basic level of classes, but also obtained a secondary/gymnasium level education, getting jobs and becoming part of the working class 'proletariat.' The educational system did not recognize Roma students as different; there were no special methods for teaching Bulgarian as a second language and no lessons in the Romani language, nor, even worse, in Roma history. In the mid 1980s, Muslim Roma and other Muslims in Bulgaria were forced to change their names and to choose Bulgarian/Christian names. Romani language, Roma traditions, and Romani music were officially forbidden in public places. Those who broke the rules were punished and even sent to prison.

The democratic changes in 1989 in the country also brought about changes in the lives of Roma. There were new developments in the society and in the school system as well. The discrimination against Roma increased, and many Roma became jobless in the early 1990s. This influenced the school attendance of Roma children. Each year, the number of Roma children not attending school increased. The parents were not sending their children to kindergartens and to schools because they could not afford to buy clothes, shoes, and textbooks. Because of the economic difficulties of the Roma families during that period, nowadays in Bulgaria there is a generation of young people who never attended school and are totally illiterate. In the early 1990s, the government also introduced lessons in four minority languages as mother tongues, i.e., Arme-

nian, Jewish, Romani, and Turkish, to be taught at school. However, this did not change the school attendance of Roma children.

In the early 2000s, the situation started to change slightly – the NGOs started to financially help secondary schools and university-level Roma students finish their studies. During this period, the number of university students in the country increased. Nowadays, there are approximately 3,000 Roma university students studying different subjects in different Bulgarian and European universities.

Desegregation vs. Integration

The Bulgarian Roma mainly live in ghetto-like settlements often outside of the towns and villages. The living conditions in these ghettos are extremely bad; very often there are no roads, no running water, no real houses, poor conditions, unemployment, a high rate of illiteracy, and a high rate of child mortality. Very often all kinds of diseases are spread in these ghettos. In most cases during the communist regime, primary or basic schools were built for Roma children and they attended school there. They did not have very much contact with the outside world.

In the 2000s, six Roma organizations, with the help of the Soros Foundation, started a new project of desegregating Roma schools. The model was very similar to the American one, where black children from segregated schools were bussed into mainstream schools with white children. The same thing was done in Bulgaria; the Roma children from the segregated schools in Roma settlements were bussed into mainstream schools with Bulgarian children (H. Kyuchukov, 2006).

The project was not well received because the Roma parents were not prepared for it, and they were afraid that their children would be beaten and discriminated against by Bulgarian children and teachers. The receiving teachers were not prepared either. They did not know how to work in mixed classes of 20 Bulgarian children and five or six Roma children. There were no preparatory courses for the teachers; there was no information about which kinds of approaches or methods should be used in ethnically mixed classes, even when the Roma children had problems with speaking and understanding the Bulgarian language. From the other side, the Bulgarian parents were not prepared. Most of the Bulgarian parents did not agree with having their children in the same class as Roma children because they thought that the quality of education in classes with Roma children was low. So, together with the process of desegregation, also a process of 'white flight' began and, after a few years, the schools which

received Roma children turned out to be a new type of segregated school, where the percentage of the Roma children was between 80-90%.

Actually, the goal of the desegregation project was to show a working new model, which could be adapted and implemented in the whole country by the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, this did not happen until now. The total number of segregated Roma schools is more than 400 in the territory of the country. Although the Ministry of Education officially supports the process of desegregation, they did not take any action to make it a national educational strategy.

Why did the desegregation project in Bulgaria not work? The reasons are complex and interconnected. Firstly, the project did not have scientific pedagogical supervision. It was not clear what the expected outcome from Roma children who were enrolled in classes with Bulgarian children should be. In most of the cases, the Roma children were put in desks in the back of the classroom and the teachers did not have time for them, and the Bulgarian children did not communicate or play with them. They were, in a way, isolated, and very often after a year they would go back to the Roma segregated school.

Also, there was no research or investigation into the reasons why the Roma children preferred to study in the segregated Roma schools in the settlement instead of studying in a mainstream school, nor any investigations into the reasons why the Bulgarian children moved to other schools populated with Bulgarian children only.

There was no clear concept of how to train the teachers. Different Roma organizations provided some training, but with no clear idea of what and how. Each Roma organization facilitated some training according to their own knowledge and experiences.

Most of the Roma NGOs did not have experience with working with educational projects and they were not clear on their own role and place in the process. Roma activists often visited classes and created problems with the teachers about the teaching methods used in the class.

There was no real scientific monitoring of the results of the students from segregated and integrated schools. All the monitoring was done on a primitive level by Roma NGOs without using any scientific methodology. The focus of their monitoring was mainly on human rights, rather than on the educational side or the results of the children.

Finally, there was no element of interculturalism involved in the desegregated classes. The Roma children were not learning their own language, history, culture, and traditions, and the Bulgarian children were not receiving any information about who the Roma are or about their history and culture.

All the above-mentioned reasons, in a way, made the process unsuccessful, because, until now, the Bulgarian government did not invest even a single euro in the process of desegregation, and the process was done only with the money

of private donors. At the moment when the financial support from the private donors was stopped, all Roma children from mixed classes had to go back to the segregated schools in the Roma settlements.

Another important criterion in the lack of success of the desegregation process is the fact that most Roma children who finish basic level education (eight years) do not continue their studies to the gymnasium level or go to university. Usually they stay in the Roma settlement, jobless, and still are not accepted into Bulgarian society. Very few of the children from mixed classes continue to gymnasium or to university. There is no follow up on what the destiny of these children is or on what happens to them in the Roma settlement.

Romani Language Education as a Mother Tongue (MT)

Until some years ago, the Roma children who did not understand and did not speak Bulgarian were very often placed in special schools for mentally retarded children. There were commissions doing the testing in Bulgarian, and, in the commissions, there were no Roma representatives as members to test the children in Romani. In order to fight the process of misplacement in special schools, the Ministry of Education recommended having Roma persons as members of the testing committee, who would speak and ask questions in the Romani language as well. In the last seven to eight years, the special schools have been closed down and now all the children attend mainstream classes.

Romani as a MT was introduced in the educational system in Bulgaria some 20 years ago. First, Romani was introduced experimentally just in two schools – in the town of Rakitovo and in the town of Kyustendil – and in the next school year in 1993/1994, in all schools in the country. The Ministry of Education hired an expert in the Romani language, who worked there between 1992 and 1996.

In 1994, the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria published Decree № 183/05.09.1994 for education in minority languages in the municipal schools. In the decree, it was written that the students with a MT other than Bulgarian have the right to study their mother tongue with four lessons per week during their spare time. The newest curriculum for teaching Romani as a MT in 2004 provides the following goals for teaching the Romani language:

– to get to know the specificity, the style of living, and the culture of the Roma community;
– to help Roma students become literate in the Bulgarian language, using Romani as a language of instruction.

The Ministry of Education demands the lessons of Romani to be bilingual – Romani-Bulgarian. This way, the children who do not know the Bulgarian lan-

guage well can compare the language phenomenon from Romani and Bulgarian, and they will learn both languages better. In the cases when there are not enough students from the same class, groups can be formed with students from different classes. The curriculum is structured in such a way that it allows Romani to be learned by students in different age groups.

The process of introducing Romani into public schools did not go smoothly. There were a lot of reactions from the whole society – the teachers protested by not allowing the Romani language teachers to enter the schools, and the scientists reacted by saying that Romani is not a real language. Actually, there were no reactions towards the Armenian and Jewish minority languages. The reactions were mainly towards Turkish and Romani and their introduction into school curriculum. However, this did not stop the democratic government during that period from insisting that the minority languages be taught at schools. In 1995, the communists took over in the government and there was a new minister of the Ministry of Education – Prof. Ilcho Dimitrov – a historian known in Bulgaria as a nationalist, who is against minorities and mainly against Roma and Turks. Therefore, in 1996, the function of the expert of the Romani language changed, and Dimitrov became an expert in Bulgarian as a second language. Interestingly enough, the status of the other experts in minority languages did not change, and the education of the other three minority languages continued.

For the purposes of teaching Romani as a mother tongue, a bilingual textbook was published (Kyuchukov et al., 1993), and the problems with publishing the textbook and the introduction of Romani were of different backgrounds.

Romani is not a standardized language and the textbook used dialects in writing the texts – there were two dialects used and everything was translated into Bulgarian as well. The discussions in the Roma community and among the scientists concerned the problem which Roma dialects to be used. On the other hand, the Bulgarian society did not want to recognize the existence of Romani as a language. There were demonstrations and reactions against the introduction of Romani.

There were no teachers who were prepared in the Romani language. The Ministry of Education allowed every Roma person who had a secondary-level education (11 years of education during that period of time), and who could speak at least one Romani dialect, to become a teacher of Romani. Their special preparatory courses were organized by the Ministry of Education. However, the Romani language teachers were not well received by the teachers and directors of schools. Many school directors did not allow the Romani language teachers to meet the students and to explain the goal of Romani language learning, as was instructed by the Ministry of Education. In the schools where the Romani language teachers were allowed to teach Romani, the Bulgarian teachers blackmailed the Roma children and did not allow them to study their mother tongue. There were even cases when the Bulgarian teachers scared the children

who wished to learn Romani, saying it would create problems when learning Bulgarian.

In the universities in Bulgaria, there were no faculties or departments which offered courses that prepared Romani language teachers. There were some attempts at Sofia University and Shumen University (between 1993 and 1996), but they were not successful at all. All the letters written to the universities, and the meetings and conversations with the representatives of the two universities, did not yield any positive results. The Ministry of Education was the one organization which continued to prepare the teachers in the Romani language with one-week courses, which really did not guarantee a good preparation of the pedagogical staff for Romani language teaching at all.

The difficulties with Romani language education were well dealt with, though; there were three textbooks published in Romani for students from grade one to grade eight, and, for the teachers, a number of methodological books were published. The total number of teachers working in the schools until the 1995/1996 school year was 50 and the number of Roma children learning Romani was approximately 5,000.

In 1996, the Romani language expert left the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, and between July 1996 and February 2002, the Ministry of Education did not employ an expert in Romani. During the period of 2002 to 2010, there was just one course organized for Romani language teachers and there were no textbooks for students, nor any methodological books published for teachers. Even worse, the expert in the Romani language – Lilyana Kovacheva, a Bulgarian Roma activist – did not do anything to improve the status of the Romani language and was against organizing any research or testing with Roma children in Romani. The results from the studies could have helped to improve the process of Romani language teaching.

Good Practices in Romani Language Teaching

In the first curriculum (Kyuchukov, 1992) and later in the second curriculum for teaching Romani, it is recommended that Romani language teaching be bilingual and that, in grade one, the children have just an oral communicative course. In grade two, the children should begin with the literacy process in Romani in which the letters from the Romani and Bulgarian alphabets should be compared. For the purpose of Romani language teaching, textbooks in Romani were created and these were the first bilingual Romani language textbooks in Europe. The Romani textbooks published in Bulgaria later on were used as models for creating Romani language textbooks in other European countries as well. Below

I will offer an overview of the content of the Bulgarian textbooks in Romani.

The first textbook "Romano ABC lil - Ромски буквар" (Kyuchukov et al., 1993) has an encyclopedic character and presents to the students the knowledge of the world in a complex way. The textbook is for children in grades three and four. The information in the book takes into account the level of knowledge of the children. Depending on the level of the students, the teacher can change the content of the book. The textbook gives information about Roma history, Roma traditions, Roma music, and the language of Roma people. Two Roma dialects are used for presenting the information in the textbook – the Erlija dialect from Sofia and the Laxo dialect, which is spoken all over the country. Everything written in Romani was translated into Bulgarian.

The second textbook "Romani alfabeta - Ромска азбука" was published in 1995 (Kyuchukov et al., 1995). Its aim was to introduce the Roma alphabet to children in grade two, who will start learning how to read and write in Romani. In the textbook, some small texts in Romani are given for reading exercises and analysis. At the end of the textbook, some basic mathematical information is also introduced.

The third textbook "O Romano Drom - Ромският път" (Kyuchukov and Yanakev, 1997) is a reader in the Romani language. It is for students from grades five to eight. It contains different types of text in the Romani language. Some poems and short stories from Bulgarian and world authors about Roma are introduced to the students. The textbook also includes some songs and musical patterns from world-known composers who created music with elements from Roma music or folk songs. The textbook is structured in such a way as to increase the interest of the students toward learning the Romani language and toward the educational process in general.

For the methodological preparation of the teachers, the Ministry of Education published two books (in 1992 and in 1993). In the instructions for the teachers, published in the book in 1992, there are ideas of how they can work with the textbook "Romano ABC lil." It is written that, "All the activities in the class should motivate the interest of the Roma child towards the school and towards the educational process; to get to know the Bulgarian culture through learning his own Romani culture and through integrations of the two cultures" (Kyuchukov et al., 1992: 5). In the second instructions from 1993 (Kyuchukov et al., 1993), the teachers are given methodological ideas for organizing the educational process using speech situations, micro-dialog, pedagogical jokes, language games, etc., for the purpose of Romani language learning.

In 1996, new instructions were published for the teachers: "Instructions of the Ministry of Education for organizing the Romani language educational process as a mother tongue learning" (Kyuchukov, 1996a). In the instructions are ideas on how to organize the educational process, the control and evaluation of the knowledge of the students, the requirements of the teachers, etc. More

methodological books were published for the teachers: "Беседи за българските роми" [Stories about Bulgarian Roma] (Marushiakova, Popov, and Kyuchukov, 1992), "Сборник текстове за диктовки и преразказ по ромски език" [Collection of Texts for Dictation and Retelling in the Romani Language] (Kyuchukov, Kovacheva, Nunev, 1996), and "Книга за учителя към христоматията "O Romano Drom - Ромският път" [Book for Teachers for Work with the Reader "O Romano Drom - Ромският път"] (Kyuchukov, 1997). Although the published methodological books for teachers are different in their character, they are made only with the wish to help Romani language teachers become more knowledgable and gain a better understanding of the educational process.

As a first attempt, the textbooks for students and the methodological books for teachers were a good achievement in the area of creating textbooks. This was also the very first attempt in Europe to create a complex approach to the teaching process of the Romani language. The idea of the textbooks published in the mid 1990s was that there should be textbooks created for grades one through twelve – something which did not exist in Europe during that time. Very late, in the 2000s, the Romanian and Slovak Ministries of Education started to create textbooks for students in grades one through twelve. In most European countries, there are still no textbooks for secondary or gymnasium level.

Critical Analysis of Romani Language Education in Bulgaria and the Contribution of NGOs

In the period between 1996 and 2002, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education did not do anything about Romani language education – there were no teacher trainings, there were no textbooks published. In this period, only the non-governmental organizations were publishing books in Romani. A number of children's books with fairytales, songs, poems, proverbs, and riddles were published.

Before Romani was to be introduced to mainstream schools in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian National Committee of UNICEF started a project in 1991 "The Children and the Families of the Roma in Bulgaria." The project continued until 1993. For the project's purposes, the first experimental textbooks in Romani were published: "Romani čhib - Ромски език" (Kyuchukov, 1993a), "Romani kultura - Ромска култура" (Kyuchukov, 1993b), "Учебен българо-ромски речник" [Bulgarian-Romani Dictionary] (Kyuchukov, 1993c), and "Програма за изучаване на билингвизма на децата роми" [A Program for Studying Bilingualism in Roma Children] (Kyuchukov, 1993d). These textbooks were used in kindergartens and primary schools and they had the aim to develop the

children's bilingualism. The experimental textbooks were bilingual and culturally appropriate within the Romani culture and traditions.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the "Diversity" Balkan Foundation for cross-cultural education and understanding in Sofia developed a project with the aim to publish books for the kindergarten level in Romani. In the books, poems, fairytales, songs, riddles, and proverbs were published (Kjučukov, 1997, 2000, 2001a, 2001b). The books were used in kindergartens with predominantly Roma children and they had the aim to help Roma children learn Romani better, and also to bring it to a new stage so that the children would not be ashamed to be Roma. However, the dramatic changes in the governments in Bulgaria (as in all other East European countries) did not support the use of Romani for a long period of time. Then, the Foundation changed its focus: it started to conduct more scientifically-oriented studies and research with Roma children and students. Between the periods of 2000 and 2010, a number of research studies were done, and the Balkan Foundation was the only organization in Bulgaria which had an interest in researching the knowledge of children and students in Romani. There were no other governmental institutions or NGOs doing these types of studies. In order to carry out all of the research and studies, the Foundation created a network of scientists from different universities and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. With their help and consultancy, the first big linguistic and psycholinguistic research was done. However, the Ministry of Education was unfortunately not helpful in conducting the studies. The Roma organizations in Bulgaria were not supportive either and were not interested at all in doing research on the language issues of Roma children, because, in Bulgaria, there was the very wrong understanding that learning the Romani language at school worked against desegregation and strengthened the process of segregation. This misunderstanding was created and spread all over the country by some Roma activists who, at that time, had positions at OSI-Budapest. The Roma organizations, which were financially supported by OSI-Budapest for the 'desegregation' project, were against any studies and research regarding Romani language education.

Studies Regarding Romani Language Education

Aside from the problems with the Ministry of Education and with the Roma NGOs, there is a good number of publications in Bulgaria dealing with the problems of Romani language learning. Actually, these are the only publications and studies in Europe regarding Romani as MT education. In a series of publications, Kyuchukov (2009, 2008, 2005, 2001) described the problems of Roma children

learning Romani. B. Alekov defended the first dissertation in Europe, which dealt with learning the Romani verb system in primary classes (B. Alekov, 2010).

From the other side, the Council of Europe, in several meetings during the last five to six years, brought the issue of Romani as MT to the attention of the Ministries of Education. There were curriculums developed for teaching Romani at a kindergarten, primary, secondary, and gymnasium level. However, this is still not implemented by most of the member states, because in most of the European Ministries, there are no experts responsible for Romani language education, or, if there are experts, often they do not do anything to strengthen the process of teaching Romani.

Unfortunately, in Bulgaria there are no websites providing information about Romani language education. There are no NGOs or other state institutions interested in this issue. At the moment, there is not even an expert at the Ministry of Education responsible for teaching Romani as mother tongue, although there are experts responsible for teaching Armenian, Jewish, and Turkish as MT.

The only two links I was able to find that deal with the education of Roma children in general are the following: http://www.osf.bg/downloads/File/RomaGuideFinal.pdf and http://romastudents.org/bg-18632.php. However, the information there is not so rich.

Conclusions

Romani language teaching as a MT in Bulgaria started some 20 years ago. After the democratic changes, Bulgaria was one of the very first European countries to introduce the Romani language into schools and to start training Romani language teachers. For that time, the number of published textbooks for students and methodological books for teachers was impressive and very useful. But, with the changes in the governments, the policies towards Romani language education changed dramatically. For the time being, there are no new curriculums to meet the requirements of the Council of Europe for Romani language teaching; there are no published textbooks, there are no students to study Romani as MT, even though there are some 60 qualified Romani language teachers in the country with a university degree. In the 2003-2004 academic year, the University of Veliko Tarnovo in Bulgaria began a new program "Primary School Education and Romani Language." The program existed between 2003 and 2010 and was then shut down first due to the racist reactions of some of the university professors, who were against the acceptance of Roma to the university and against teaching the Romani language at the university, and also because of the racist qualifications about Roma and the Romani language by the National Agency

of Accreditation of the University Programs. According to the National Agency for Accreditation, "There is no such thing as Romani language," and this is why such a program should not exist.

From another angle, the Roma NGOs and Roma activists do not think that teaching the Romani language at different levels is of value. Their understanding is that teaching the Romani language strengthens the process of segregation. Actually, these NGOs are mainly financially supported for the process of school desegregation, and, in the process of Romani language teaching, they see rather a kind of competition with their own projects.

Nevertheless, the difficulties facing organized Romani language education, the number of studies and research dealing with the level of knowledge, and the problems of learning and acquiring Romani in Bulgaria increased during the last decade. This gives me the courage to think that, maybe one day, Romani language teaching in Bulgaria will be a normal process, as it is in other European countries.

CHAPTER 4

Roma school mediators

Introduction

In the last decades, the issue of education of Roma children in Europe became a priority for many non-governmental, governmental, and international bodies. Many international conferences, round tables, and seminars took place in different parts of Europe with the idea to help Roma children gain access to quality education. In 2009, a recommendation by the Council of Europe was developed (Recommendation (2009)4). UNESCO organized a number of conferences which focused on the education of Roma children and particularly on the quality of education during the last six to seven years.

In order to help Roma children gain access to education, many countries employed Roma as school mediators or assistant teachers. In different countries the name is different, but in the most recent activity of the Council of Europe, which includes the training of Roma in 15 countries, the term 'mediators' is used: school mediators, health mediators, and employment mediators.

In Germany, the term 'mediator' has been used for the last seven to eight years in many cities; it was mainly the NGOs that introduced the Roma mediators in schools. They are people of Roma origin who, after getting some training in the field of education, work in different types of schools as a 'bridge' between families and the school, and between institutions and families. In most of the cases, the Roma school mediators act as activists within the community, defending the interests of the parents and community. In these cases, the mediators are employed by a Roma NGO. In other cases, the mediator is employed by an institution – usually a school – and their role is to defend the interest of the school. Almost impossible to find is the role of the mediator as facilitator of the communication between the school and Roma families.

The main goal of this report is to find out what kind of role the Roma school mediators have in Berlin. For the last seven years, Roma school mediators, after being trained, have worked in different types of schools, and their presence in the schools seems to be of great help, both for the schools and community. However, until now, there has been no outside evaluation of the work of the mediators.

The Situation of Roma in Berlin

Berlin is one of the European capitals to which the Roma migrate. In the last approximately 30-40 years, there have been different groups and different waves of Roma migrating to Berlin. Here I am not going to write about the German Sinti, who have been integrated in the German society for the last 600 years, but rather my focus will be on the Roma from Eastern European countries who came and stayed in Berlin during the last 30-40 years.

The first were the Roma from ex-Yugoslavia who came here as workers (*Gastarbeiter*) in the late 1960s and 1970s. After the democratic changes and especially after the war in ex-Yugoslavia, the people immigrating to different European countries, including to Germany, increased. The democratic changes in Europe and especially the membership of some Eastern European countries in the EU brought the freedom to travel and to remain in West European countries based on the regulations of the EU for free movement in member states.

Recently, together with Roma from Serbia and many Roma from Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia in the last three to four years, mainly Roma from Bulgaria and Romania have moved to Germany particularly to Berlin. Some parts of Berlin (Wedding and Neukölln) are known to be predominantly populated with Roma from Romania and Bulgaria. The newcomers also bring some problems to the German society such as housing, employment, and schooling. Most of the Roma children coming to Germany are not prepared – they do not speak any German. Before they start schooling, they need some time – months or even years to prepare for school. There are also many Roma children who are in Berlin and never attend any school because of different reasons. My focus in this report is on those Roma families whose children attend schools. I will try to find out which role the Roma school mediators play for Roma parents and Roma children, as well as for teachers at schools.

The Research

The aim of the research is to find out what the teachers, parents, children, and mediators think about the effectiveness of the work of the school mediators.

The objectives of the research are:

1. To carry out a survey with the teachers, children, parents, and school mediators about their opinion on the effectiveness of the work of school mediators (see the Appendix for the questionnaires).
2. To give some recommendations to improve the quality of the work of the mediators in Berlin.

Indicators

From the indicators, the questions will be conducted for the different target groups and formulated in the questionnaires, using the approach of the Council of Europe (2011, unpublished manuscript for training school mediators):

– "The Trojan Horse" (the mediator is an instrument of the institution, with the mission to reach out to the community with the aim of changing its attitudes and behaviors);
– The community activist (is more a representative of the community, who fights against the institution for the rights of the Roma);
– The real mediator (is impartial, with a good knowledge of the 'cultural codes' of the community and of the institution, focused on improving communication and cooperation and stimulating both parties to take responsibility, and to be actively involved in changing the process).

The understanding of the Trojan Horse is that a person who works in one environment has the goal to follow the tasks and instructions given to him from the place from which he comes. The expectations of the teachers would be that the school mediator is a person who helps the teachers in their work with Roma children and who thinks that Roma families should change. The expectation of the children would be that the school mediator will help them in solving their problems at school and with institutions. The parents also expect the school mediator to help them in solving their problems with schools and with different institutions.

The Roma activists are the people who act like advocates of Roma communities and fight for their rights. The school mediators think that the school has to change. School mediators often act as activists and they are seen as activists by other parties. The expectations of Roma parents and Roma children would be that the mediators act as activists – fighting with schools, teachers, and institutions for the rights of Roma. The teachers' presumption of the position of the

mediator who is acting as an activist would be someone who is not so much willing to cooperate with schools and teachers, but rather who fights for the rights of the children and the community.

The real mediator is the one who mediates between two parties. The real mediator helps both sides and expects that both change. The teachers perceive him/her as a person who helps them to understand the Roma culture and the behaviors of the parents and students. The parents and the children perceive him/her as a person who helps them communicate easily with teachers and institutions. The real mediator's role is to build a bridge between the families and the school institution, helping both sides communicate better.

The Interviews

The questionnaire for parents contains 26 questions organized in three parts: socio-demographic data, value system of the family, and information regarding the problems with the education of the children.

The questionnaire for children contains 30 questions also organized in three parts: socio-demographic data, value system of the family, and attitudes.

The questionnaire for the teachers has 23 questions organized again in three parts: socio-demographic data, educational problems specifically faced by children from Roma families, and motivation of Roma students to get a higher education.

The questionnaire for school mediators has 24 questions organized in three parts: socio-demographic data, information regarding the problems with the education of the children, and professional development of the mediators.

Procedure

The questionnaires were developed after a consultation with the staff of RAA about what the expectations from the study are. At the first stage of the study, a pretesting was done with the target groups, and this gave an idea of some new questions to introduce to the questionnaires. After the pretesting of the questionnaires, the interviews were conducted. With most of the subjects, the interviews were done by the author of the report. For some of the interviews with parents and children, the help of mediators and of Roma persons was used. The questionnaires for parents and children were also translated into Romani.

The language used for the interviews was German, but sometimes the interviews with children and parents were done in Romani or Serbia, as well.

Participants in the Study

Interviews with the following groups from Berlin-Mitte were carried out:

10 Roma parents living in Wedding and Alt-Moabit, Berlin;

15 children from elementary and secondary schools in the same parts of Berlin;

22 teachers and 6 mediators.

In total, 53 interviews were carried out.

The Findings

In all schools, Roma children study in classes with ethnically mixed children: German, Arabs, and Turks. The school mediators have different roles: they help the newcomers get adapted to schools, they help them in all class and out-of-class activities, they visit families and solve problems between the families and the schools or any other institutions, and they also help translate from German to Romani/Serbian, or the other way around. Generally, the school mediators and the school staff have good relationships; they help one another in the educational process, and they also try to help the families understand the importance of education for the future of their children. Sometimes the mediators are the bridges for understanding the cultural problems or cultural differences between Roma and non-Roma. However, how is the work of the school mediators perceived? To answer this question, I will look at the interviews and see how each group understands the work of the mediators from one side, and how the mediators see their roles in the whole process.

I. Interviews with Parents

The parents' questionnaire contains 26 question. Most of the parents who were interviewed are female (70%) and only 30% of them are male. Most of them are between 25-35 years old (70%), 20% are under 25 years old, and 10% are between 35-45. Moreover, 70% of the parents are single and 30% are married. As for education, 40% of them are illiterate, 30% are at a primary school level, 10% have eight years of schooling, and 20% have a gymnasium-level education. The data show that these are young people, but, unfortunately, they are without good education. 50% of them come from Bosnia and the other 50% are from Serbia. We could not have interviews with Roma families from Bulgaria because they refuse to acknowledge their Roma background; they prefer to identify with

Turks, being Muslim and speaking Turkish. The Romanian parents also refuse to be interviewed because of cultural reasons (a strange Roma male – the researcher – cannot talk to Roma women without the presence of their husbands), but also they are, in a way, afraid, as they think they will be reported to the police.

All the families have children between two and six years old, and the average number of children per family is between three and four. In all of the families, there are some children attending school, and in 50% of the families, there are three children attending school. This is an extremely high number of students per family, and it requires a lot of family support and good conditions to be successful in school.

It is interesting that 50% of the Roma families use the Romani language for communication at home and, at the same time, 70% of the families speak mixed Serbian and Romani. 30% of the families use mixed German-Romani. It is known that the home-language environment of children is very important for their success in school. Often, children who speak a mix of languages are not proficient in any of them, and this creates problems with language proficiency in school. As is shown by the interviews, the children do not use German as a tool of communication at home.

Let us see what the values of the families are. Here, 60% of the parents think that all the given possible answers are important to them in Question 10: What is important for you in life? "To have a lot of money"; "good education for my children"; "to keep the traditions alive"; "good materialistic life for my children"; "family obligations." From this answer, one cannot judge what is important for the life of the children. As for the rest of the parents, 40% had different opinions and also gave multiple answers, but they did not use all of the answers: 30% say that they want a good education for their children, 20% answered that, for them, family obligations are important, and 10% wanted to keep the family traditions. So, even if only 30% of the parents say that a good education for their children is important, that means that some of the parents already understand the value of education.

The answer to Question 11 is shown on Figure 4.1: What do you want your children to achieve and how do you support them in getting there?

As is shown in the graph, most of the parents (70%) want a good education for their children and only 30% of them want their children to finish school. Here are some of the explanations from the parents, as well*: I would like my son to get a good education, but I am illiterate and I cannot help him. I need the help of the school mediator; I want my child to finish school. I speak with him about this; I wish for my child to finish school and I send him regularly to school*. Keeping in mind that 40% of the parents are illiterate and 30% have only a primary school education, if 70% of the parents wish their children to have not just an education, but a good education, it shows changes in the Roma communities.

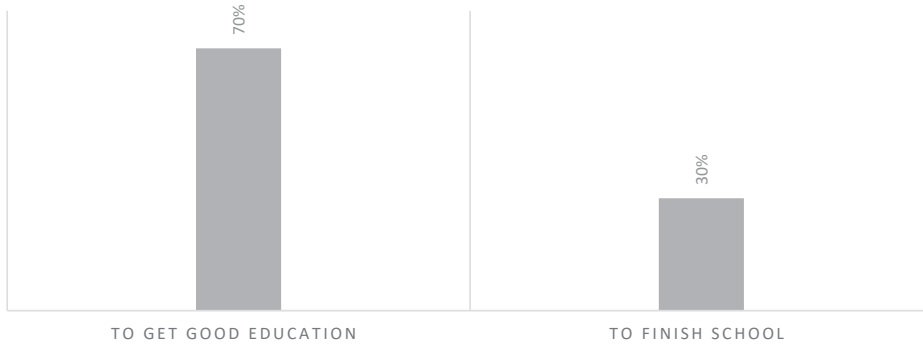


Figure 4.1. What do you want your children to achieve?

Most of the parents (60%) think that a good education is important because their children will have a good job, but 40% of them also say that a good education is important because of a good future.

Question 13 in the questionnaire for parents is: What do you think about the school education of your children? 80% of the parents think that an education is important for their children and that with a good education, they will get a good job. Only 20% have some doubts that a good education is important for them but that, even with a good education, they will not get a good job.

The third part of the questionnaire asks for information regarding the problems with the education of children. Question 14: Do your children every day attend the school? The answers are shown in figure 4.2.:



Figure 4.2. Do the children every day attend the school?

As one can see, according to the parents' answers, 80% of the children attend school every day, and only 20% do not regularly attend school. This result shows that parents and children take the responsibility of school seriously.

All parents declare that their children like going to school. But what they like in the school is shown in Figure 4.3:

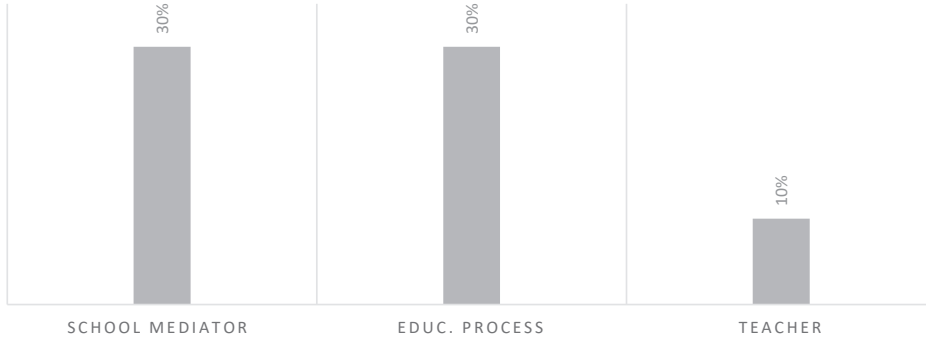


Figure 4.3. What do the children like in the school?

As one can see, the answers of the parents are the following: 30% of the respondents like the school mediator, 30% like the educational process – learning, writing, and 10% like the teacher of the class. There is a group of parents (30%) who did not answer this question.

Another question showing the interest of the parents in the school and the educational process of their children is Question 18: How often do you attend the parent's meetings at school? The parents' answers are shown in Figure 4.4:

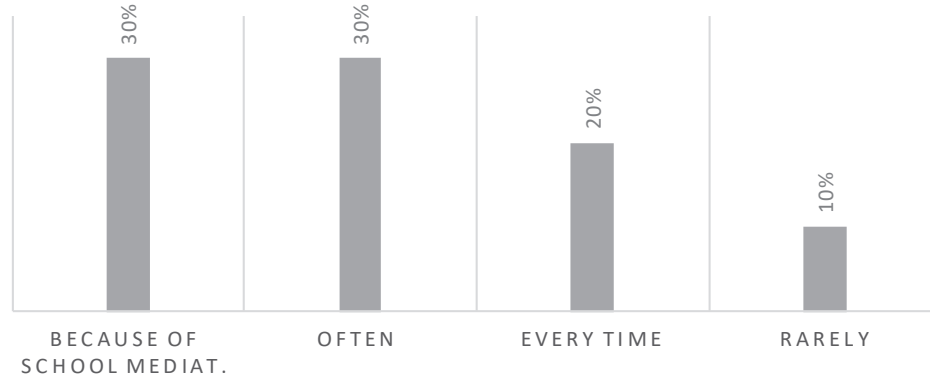


Figure 4.4. How often do you attend the parent's meetings at school?

Looking at the answers of the parents, one can see from the graph that the parents generally attend the parents meetings at school (20% every time and 30% often). Only 10% declare that they attend the meetings rarely. However, among the parents there is a group that attends the meetings because of the school mediator, and this is a relatively high percent – 30%. It seems that the presence of

the school mediator gives them the confidence to attend the meetings at school. Only one parent did not answer this question and I assume that he/she also does not attend the school meetings often.

Do the children have problems at school and what kind of problems? 50% of the parents declare that their children do not have any problems at school. However, 30% say their children have problems and they are of various kinds, such as: learning problems and needing help, problems with other children, and one father said that the other children call his son 'Zigeuner.' 20% of the parents did not answer these questions. Question 21: How do the Roma school mediators help solve the problems? The following are the possible answers: "Helping to facilitate good communication with the teachers"; "speaking with and advising the children"; "visiting the houses and speaking with the parents"; "solving family problems with the institutions." As for the responses, 70% of the parents think that all the answers are applicable to this question; 10% think that the school mediators do not help with good communication, and another 10% think that the school mediator does not solve family problems with the institutions. 10% of the parents did not answer this question. It seems that most of the parents perceive the school mediator as a person who helps in any possible way and solves all kinds of problems.

All the parents who answered Question 22 – What is the relationship between you and the school mediator? – gave very positive answers. All of them have very good relationships with the school mediator.

The next question, Question 23: "What differences would you say are due to the work of the school mediator?", received different answers. Here, 20% of the respondents answered with all the possibilities given for this question: "your child/children attends more regularly the school than before"; "has better marks in school than in the past"; "attends the after-school activities more than before"; "has a better relationship with other children than before." 20% of the parents agreed with all the other answers, but not with the one that the child attends the after-school activities more often than before. Another 20% answered that, thanks to the work of the school mediator, their children attend school more regularly. 10% of the parents answered that the child attends school more regularly than before, and that the child has a better relationship with other children than before. 30% of the parents did not answer this question because, maybe, they are not familiar with the work of the school mediators. However, the remaining 70% acknowledged in one way or another the positive influence of the school mediator on the school attendance of their children.

"Do you think that there is a need for mediators?" – the answers to this important question are given in Figure 4.5:

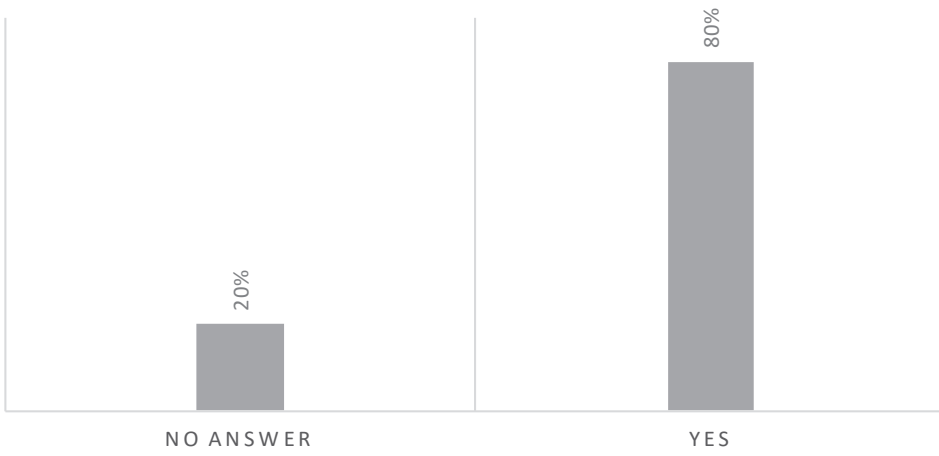


Figure 4.5. Do you think there is a need for mediators?

As for the answers, 80% of the respondents are absolutely sure that there is a need for Roma school mediators, and 20% did not answer this question. It is interesting to look at the motivations of the parents to have a school mediator. This can be seen in the parents' answers to Question 26: "She always helps us when I need help"; "she helps our children and she solves our problems"; "our children need someone to trust"; "to make the school a better place." These are only a few answers from the parents, and it seems that their thinking about the work of the school mediators is, in a way, mixed. In their understanding, the school mediators should mainly help the families solve their problems with institutions and schools, but, at the same time, it is obviously the understanding that the school mediator has to help their children. Additionally, very often the parents see the school mediator as someone they trust, and this is why the children attend school more regularly, as declared by the parents.

II. Interviews with Roma School Mediators

Six school mediators were interviewed. The questionnaire for the school mediators contains 24 questions. 83% of the school mediators are female and 27% are male. 67% of them are between 30 and 40 years old and 33% are between 50 and 60 years old. All of them are from Serbia. They have a gymnasium-level education from Serbia, but all of them got further education through seminars and trainings for school mediators provided by RAA Berlin. A portion of them are now involved in a training program organized by the Council of Europe, where they can become familiar with the ideas of mediation promoted by the Council of Europe. All of them work with Roma children. In some of the schools, one

school mediator is responsible for 80-100 Roma children. All of them have a good command of German, but, in their work with parents and children, they also use Serbian and Romani as a tool of communication. All the mediators also work with the families, and, in some cases, they work and stay in contact with 50-60 families and know all the problems of each family.

67% of the mediators declare that the children do not regularly attend school. The remaining 33% say that the children attend school when the school mediators are there. It seems that the school mediators motivate the children to attend school regularly. Actually, this was the general opinion of the parents as well: children visit the school regularly when a school mediator is present. 83% of the school mediators think that the Roma children do not like the school. The rest, 27%, say, "Yes, they come to school with pleasure if we are there, play with them, and make them gain trust in the school."

According to 67% of the mediators, the Roma children have problems at school, and the remaining 33% say they do not. The problems identified by the school mediators are as follows: problems with the German language, problems with learning, difficult communication with other children in the class, and also health problems. An interesting question is Question 13: How do you help the children solve the problems? The possible answers are: "Speaking with and advising the children"; "visiting the houses and speaking with the parents"; "solving the family problems with the institutions"; "consulting the teachers." 83% of the school mediators chose all the possible answers as their response because they are doing all of these kinds of work, and 27% of them said that they are not involved in solving problems between the families and the institutions.

However, the mediators also help the families of the Roma children, and how they do it is asked in Question 14: "How do you help the families of Roma children?" In their free answers, the mediators say that they translate for the families when a translation is needed in any institution, they advise them, give them information about the school activities or inform them about some of the rules and laws in Germany regarding early marriages, which still exist among some Roma groups.

Question 15 is "Do the children have problems with teachers?" All 100% of the mediators think that the Roma children have problems with the teachers because the children do not speak good German, and this is an obstacle for good communication in their opinion. The mediators solve these problems in most cases by helping the children with explanations/translations of the tasks in the Romani language. If there are any other problems, the school mediators try to help both sides, but they try to stay neutral.

The answers to Question 17: "With whom do the teachers have problems?" are represented in Figure 4.6:

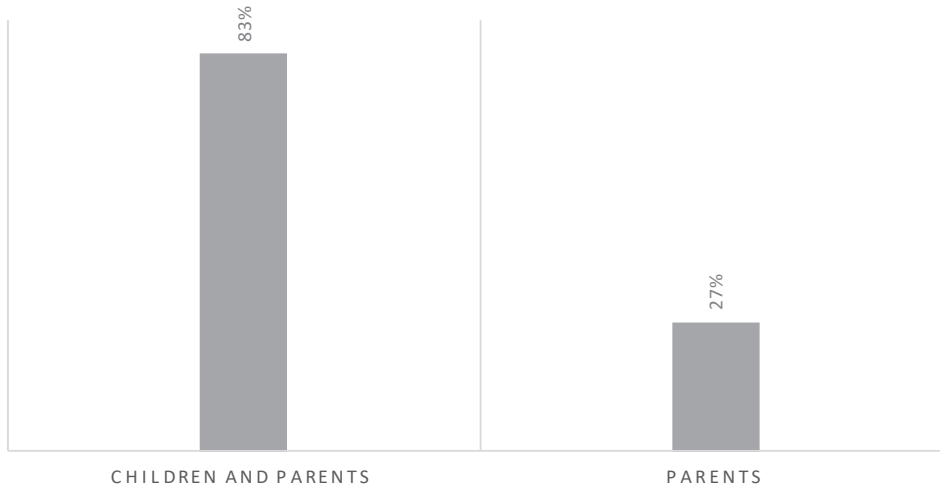


Figure 4.6. Do the teachers have problems with…?

Most of the mediators (83%) think that the teachers have problems with children and parents, but 27% think that the teachers have problems with the parents. The mediators help solve these problems. When a problem between a teacher and Roma children arises, the mediator speaks to the Roma children using Serbian or Romani in order to make him/her understand the problem. When a problem/conflict between a teacher and parents arises, the mediator plays the role of facilitator but remains neutral. This was declared by all interviewed mediators. In most of the cases, the problems between the parents and the teachers occur because the parents do not know German. In order to solve the problems, the mediators often visit the houses of the parents, but the most important thing is that the mediators do not take sides in the conflicts.

The last part of the interview contains questions regarding the professional development of the mediators. Question 21 is "What motivated you to become a mediator?". The mediators give free answers: "I am Roma myself and I know the Romani language and culture"; "I have a good contact with Roma families and I would like to help"; "it is very important for a Roma woman to be in school as a school mediator"; "I help both sides – Roma and Gadže with my presence."

The answer to Question 22: "What kind of trainings/courses have you done in order to do a better job as a mediator?" shows that the mediators are well educated and trained. Most of them attended German language courses and some are still learning German. They attended seminars in mediation and supervision. A portion of them are still attending the seminars for mediators organized by the Council of Europe.

The mediators have a supervisor, and they meet regularly with him/her to discuss all the problems. The mediators also keep in touch and have good rela-

tionships. When someone has a problem, they can always call and ask another mediator for advice. However, most of them think that, in order to be more useful and better at their jobs, they need to attend German language courses and to gain more knowledge in school law.

It seems that the school mediators are very motivated to do their jobs, and generally they understand the process of mediation – to help but to remain neutral – but it seems they still need further qualifications.

III. Interviews with Teachers

The total number of teachers interviewed is 23, and the number of questions in the questionnaire is 22.

The gender differentiation of the interviewed teachers is 14% male and 86% female. 32% of the teachers are primary school teachers, 14% are teachers of children with special needs (*Sonderpädagogen*), and 54% are secondary school teachers. They are specialists in all subjects: mathematics, German language, English, religion, art, etc. The diversity of the teachers is important because, this way, we can get the whole picture of the school from the perspective of different specialists. The teachers have worked as teachers for different lengths of time, from six months to 40 years. All of them have Roma children in their classes or they give lessons in classes with Roma children. They have a different amount of experience working with Roma children, ranging form one month to 20 years. Most of the teachers have experience working with school mediators (78%), but 22% do not have any experience working with them.

The second part of the interview contains questions regarding the educational problems which Roma children specifically face. Question 9 pertains to the function and duties of the school mediator. The school mediator: "Helps with the class activities"; "helps with the after-school activities"; "is a connection between the school and the family"; "helps with everything – in the classroom and outside of the classroom." 32% of the teachers have the opinion that all of the above mentioned descriptions are obligations of the school mediator. However, 27% think that mediators are the connection between the school and the family; 14% have the opinion that they help with everything – in the classroom and outside of the classroom. The remaining 27% think that the school mediator helps with the class activities, is the connection between the school and the family, and helps with everything – in the classroom and outside of the classroom. As one can see, the teachers' understanding of the role of the school mediators is diverse. Different groups of teachers have different ideas about what the duties of the school mediator are.

Question 10 is "Can you say that, due to the work of the school mediators, Roma children are better than before in the field of 'Humanitarian subjects';

'mathematical subjects'; 'art subjects'?" A possibility for free expression prompted the following answers: 14% of the teachers think that the help of the school mediators benefits students in all fields, 9% think that they help only in the field of humanitarian subjects. The primary school teachers (27%) think that the school mediators help with all subjects in the primary school. There is a group of 18% of the teachers who think that mediators help in the social life of the Roma children – their behavior and attitude. 9% of the teachers think that the children have better results in art lessons. 4% of the teachers do not agree that the work of the school mediator can better the school results of the children. There is a group of teachers (31%) who did not answer this question. These could be the teachers who teach a particular subject and do not have a class with Roma children. Most of the teachers (65%) see the utility of the work of the school mediators and their help in different subjects or fields. There are teachers who also observed that the Roma children improved their German language skills, and they definitely think that this is due to the work of the school mediator.

Question 11 called for the finishing of the following sentence: "Thanks to the work of the school mediator… ." The following possible answers were provided: "dropouts among Roma children decreased"; "Roma children attend regularly"; "Roma children show interest"; "they pay attention and are concentrated"; "they are the same as before"; "they are not interested at all in the educational process." The teachers answered in the following way: 68% think that the Roma children attend regularly and show interest in school; 32% of the 64% also have the opinion that the children pay attention and are concentrated. The rest of the teachers chose some of the possible answers. 14% definitely think that the dropouts decreased. However, 22% of the teachers have different opinions: 9% think that the children are the same as before, and even had some negative comments to add, blaming the parents. The remaining 13% of the teachers answered differently, using one of the answers mentioned above, but showing a positive attitude towards the work of the school mediators. Thanks to the work of the school mediator, the Roma children are happy to come to school, writes one teacher.

Question 12 is as follows "Roma children are successful in the school because…: …they attend regularly; …they have high marks; …they are active in after-school activities; …they have good relationships with classmates; …they have a good relationship with the Roma school mediator." Let us see what the teachers' answers are. They are shown in the following graph, Figure 4.7:

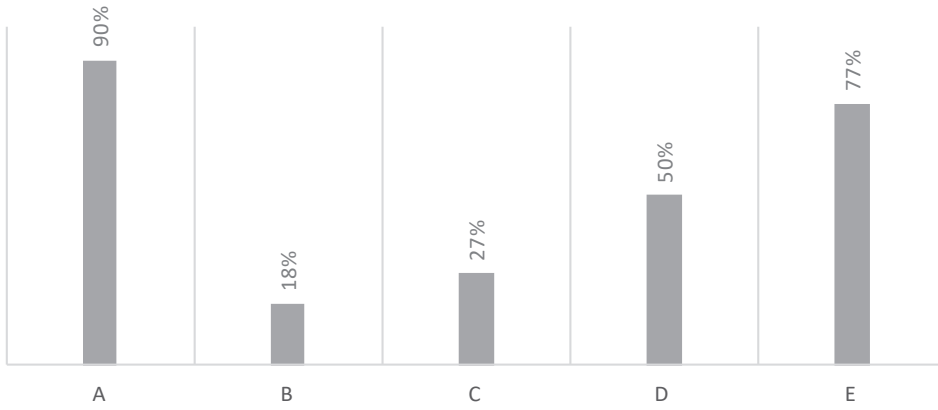


Figure 4.7. The Roma children are successful in school, because …?

The teachers chose multiple answers, and, as can be seen in the graph, 90% of them claim that the children attend regularly, while 77% say that the children have a good relationship with the Roma school mediator. 50% of the teachers think that the Roma children are successful because they have good relationships with their classmates. Fewer teachers chose answers b and c (respectively 18% and 27%); they think that the reason for the success of the Roma children is that they have high marks and they are active in after-school activities.

Question 13 deals with the dropout rate: "Roma children drop out less often than before…: …because the school is interesting for them; …there are interesting activities in school; …they have good relationships with their classmates; … they have a good relationship with the school mediator." The teachers have the same possibility for multiple choices again. The results are shown in Figure 4.8:

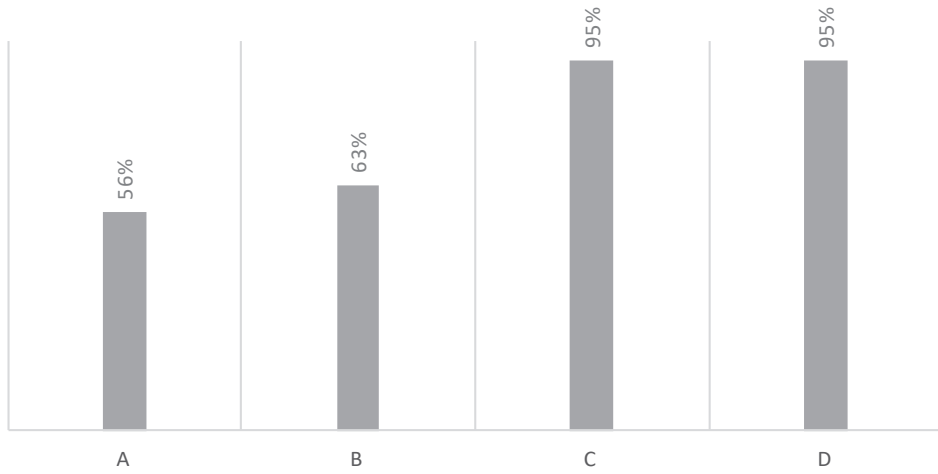


Figure 4.8. The Roma children dropout more rarely from school than before…?

The teachers point out two reasons as the most important for the lower dropout rate of Roma children. These are a good relationship with the classmates and a good relationship with the school mediator (95%). As another important reason, 63% of the teachers think it is because of the activities in the school. Diverse and good school activities are really a good reason for children to stay in school. Similar to this answer is the answer that the school is interesting for them, and 59% of the teachers think that this also helps the children stay in school. However, there is a group of teachers (32%) who did not answer anything to this question. Most probably these are primary school teachers, because one of the primary school teachers wrote that in the primary school they do not have dropouts.

Question 14 is "Many Roma students have problems because…" This question aims to locate the opinion of the teachers regarding the problems of the students. The possible answers are as follows: "They do not speak good German"; "there are differences in the cultures"; "the school is not adapted to their culture"; "they cannot adapt themselves to the school"; "they do not like the school." 45% of the teachers chose the lack of German language knowledge as a reason for their problems, but 73% thought that the problems are due to the differences in cultures. 54% of the answers suggested that the school was not adapted to their culture, and 36% of the answers were that the students cannot adapt themselves to the school. Only 18% chose the last possible reason: they do not like the school. As can be seen, most of the teachers think that the Roma children's problems are due to differences in cultures, and that the school is not adapted to the culture of Roma children. It is true that in the schools where Roma children study, there are no lessons on intercultural education which focus on Roma culture; the Roma children are not given the possibility to show the richness of Roma culture to children from other cultures, and the teachers who are sensitive to this issue very correctly observed it.

An important question is the next one, Question 15: "How do the mediators help them get out of the situation?" The possible answers are: "Decrease the number of the dropouts"; "regular visits to the school"; "better marks at school"; "they do not help at all." 40% of the teachers think that regular visits to the school and better marks at school are some of the possible ways to get out of the situation. But the other 60% chose all possible answers, and they also gave a lot of comments: to improve the communication between the parents and the teachers; to give information to the teachers and parents about each other; to help the children in the class; to motivate the children to continue to study after the sixth class; to support the teachers during a conflict because the mediator knows the language; to be a facilitator between the children from different ethnic backgrounds when a conflict arises; etc.

The next question is about the problems with parents and children: "Do you have problems with… Roma children and/or Roma parents?" The answers are shown in Figure 4.9.

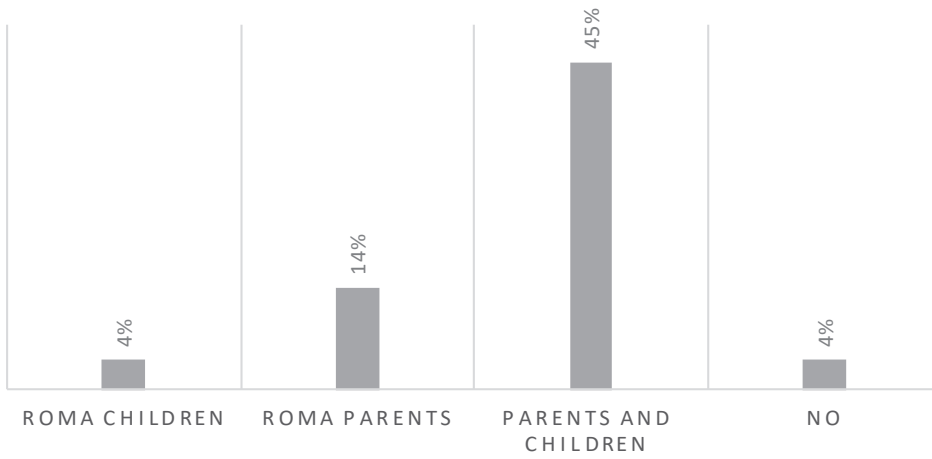


Figure 4.9. Do you have problems with…?

The graph shows that most of the teachers (45%) chose both parents and children, declaring that they have problems with both groups. 14% of the teachers said they had problems with the parents and 9% said they had problems with the children. However, 9% said they did not have any problems with the children or parents, thanks to the work of the mediator. 28% of the teachers did not answer this question, and I assume they did not have problems, and this is why they did not write anything.

Question 17 is "How does the school mediator help to solve the problems…: …between you and the children and …between you and the parents?" 9% of the teachers did not answer this question. Another 9% answered only the question regarding the problem with the parents, and 14% only the question regarding the problem with the children. The other 68% answered both questions. The answers vary, but mainly the mentioned approaches were meetings, conversations, good communication, establishing contacts, clarifications of a problem, helping the other ethnic children to accept Roma children, etc. The interesting thing here is that 28% of the teachers did not answer the previous question regarding the problems with parents and children, but, with this question, all the teachers expressed their opinions on how to solve the problems with children and parents.

The third part of the interview contains questions regarding the motivation of Roma students to go onto higher education. Question 18 deals with the reasons why Roma children do not attend the higher classes. The possible answers are: "The parents do not have the possibility to send them to schools for higher education"; "the parents have a negative attitude towards education"; "they have big families and the students have to take care of the younger brothers and sisters"; "there is one parent in the family and he/she cannot motivate the child to go further in their studies"; "early marriages"; "they have to work"; and a possibility to offer a free explanation. The teachers had the possibility to select more

than one answer, and 45% of them think that the parents have negative attitudes towards education. 31% of the respondents chose the answer that they have big families and the students have to take care of younger brothers and sisters. 23% think that the reason why Roma children do not attend the higher classes is the fact that there is one parent in the family and he/she cannot motivate the child to go further in their studies, and another 23% think this is due to early marriages. 9% answered that they cannot decide what the reason could be. Interesting is the fact that the highest percentage of the teachers believe it is because the parents have negative attitudes.

Question 19 is the following: "In order to make the school a more attractive place for Roma children, there should be changes in…: …textbooks; … methodology of teaching; …qualification of the teachers; …the conditions of the school"; and a possibility for a free answer. Most of the teachers (32%) think that the conditions in the school have to be changed in order to make the school an attractive place for Roma children. However, the next highest percentage (27%) was of teachers who chose the qualifications of the teachers as a reason. 13% chose the methodology of teaching as their answer. Here, there is also a high number of teachers (28%) who did not answer this question. In the free answers, most of the teachers wrote that the attitudes of the Roma parents towards the German language and culture should be changed.

The next question, Question 20 is: "In order to attend higher education, the Roma children should be placed…" The respondents could select from two options: "In classes with Roma children only" or "in mixed classes." Only 9% did not answer this question. The remaining 91% chose mixed classes as their answer. The teachers have this right – only in mixed classes can the Roma children become integrated into society.

Question 21 proposes that the role of school mediators is as motivators for Roma students to attend school regularly. Most of the teachers see the role of the mediators as a social worker helping the families (81%), and just one teacher (4%) says that there is no need for school mediators. 72% of the teachers also chose the possibility that the school mediator be involved in the class activities. It is more than obvious that the teachers see the role of the school mediators as social workers, as well as helpers in the class.

Question 22 is "What is your relationship with the Roma school mediator?" 50% of the teachers said that they are colleagues, but 14% of the teachers said they are friends and share the problems of the children. Only one teacher (4%) said he/she does not communicate so much with the school mediator. At the same time, the teachers made free comments about their relationship with the school mediator and how he/she helps them in their work, or about the professionalism of the school mediators.

To the last question: "Is there a need for Roma school mediators?" all of the teachers answered positively: 36% said absolutely "yes," 18% said "by all means,"

and the rest made positive comments, including words that suggest the school mediator is a great help in their work.

IV. Interviews with Children

15 children participated in the interview: 40% girls and 53% boys. Only one child (7%) did not answer the question about gender. Almost all of the respondents (93%) were born in Germany. Only one girl (7%) was born in Serbia. 47% of them are up to 12 years old and 53% up to 16 years old. The majority are between class four and class eight (93%). One girl is in class ten (7%). All of the children are multilingual. They speak Serbian/Bosnian and Romani at home with their parents and other members of their extended family. They speak mainly Romani with the school mediator, and German with their teachers and other classmates. 66% of the children in the study are from families where only the mother and the brothers/sisters live together; 14% are from extended families where the mother, father, and grandparents live together; 20% are from families where only the parents and the children live together. The fact that most of the Roma children grow up in families without the presence of a father may, in some way, influence the success of the children in school.

In the section about the value system of the family, 86% of the children said that they attend school every day, and 14% said that they go to school often, but not every day. However, let us see how important the school is for them. The answer to this question is given in Figure 4.10.

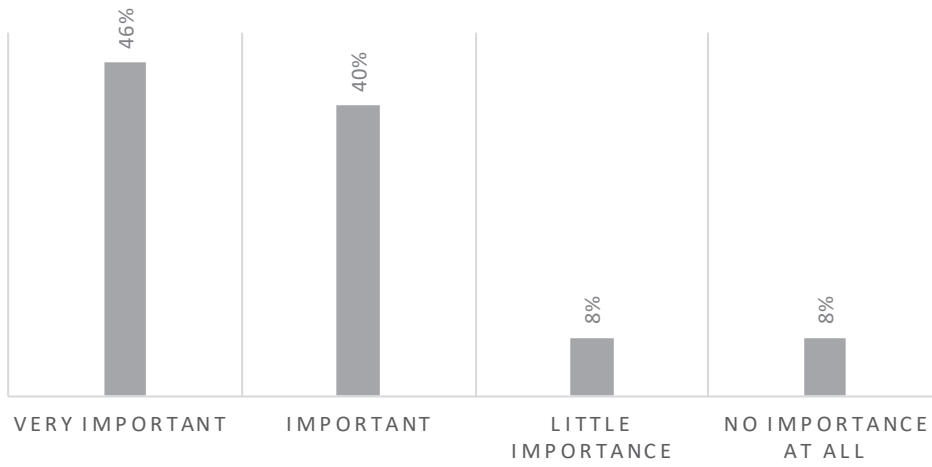


Figure 4.10. Attending the school is…?

As is shown in the graph, for 46% of the children, school is very important, and for 40%, it is important, thus 86% of the children have a very positive attitude toward school.

53% of the children like the school very much, and 33% like the school. Only one child (7%) said that he/she does not like the school, and another child (7%) said he/she hates the school. In general, 86% of the Roma children in the study like the school, and this is a very important fact, because, based on this information, measures could be taken to improve the school situation.

86% of the children prefer to study in ethnically mixed classes, while 14% like to be in classes with Roma children only.

60% of the children have favorite subjects, favorite teachers, and like their class. 33% have a favorite subject, no favorite teacher, and they like their class. Only 7% answered that they have a favorite subject, but they do not have a favorite teacher and do not like their class. 86% of the children reported they do not have problems at school. Only 7% answered positively, and the other 7% answered "sometimes." 93% of the children also answered negatively to the question about problems with institutions. Only 7% of the children reported that they have problems with institutions. These questions are very important because they break the stereotypes that the Roma children are the problematic ones at school. As the data show, they are not more problematic than the other ethnic children at school.

Question 25 is an interesting one: "What kind of relation do you have with the school mediators?" The possible answers are: "He is very nice and we are close friends"; "he is nice but stays at a distance"; "he is not nice"; and the last possibility is for a free answer. 100% of the answers were "he is very nice and we are close friends."

Question 26 – "How do the mediators help Roma students overcome the situation?" – had the following possible answers: "I remained at school"; "I went to school more regularly"; "I got better marks at school"; and the possibility for the children to answer more freely. It seems that the school mediator was the one advising the children in all their problems, helping them with their studies; he/she is always there when the children need help.

All of the children (100%) answered positively to Question 27: "Can you say that you come more regularly to school than before because you have a school mediator in your school?" This was the same for Question 28: "Can you say that, due to the work of the school mediator, you are getting better marks at school?" It seems that the school mediator is not just helping and advising the children, but that he/she gives the children more motivation to regularly attend school and to get better marks. It is obvious that because the school mediator is a Roma person, he/she also serves as a role model for Roma children at school. Similarly, all of the children (100%) answered "yes" to Question 29: "Do you think that there is a need for mediators?"

Conclusions and Recommendations

According to Roma parents, their children attend school every day, and 30% of the parents want a good education for their children. Similarly, 30% of the parents report that their children like the presence of the school mediators. The majority (70%) of the parents declared that the school mediators help to solve problems using different approaches of mediation. Also, 80% of the parents think that there is a need for mediators.

According to the school mediators, most of the children have problems at school and the problems usually come from the fact that the children do not have a good command of German. The school mediators declare that they help in every possible way: with advice to children and parents, with information to the teachers, with translation for children and parents, with visits to the houses of the children when needed. As many as 83% of the school mediators declare that the teachers have problems with parents and children and, thanks to their work, those problems are solved.

According to the teachers, thanks to the work of the school mediators, the Roma children regularly attend and show interest in school, they pay attention and are concentrated, and the number of dropouts from school has decreased. The majority of the teachers (68%) also declare that the school mediators help them solve the problems with the children and with the parents. Many teachers (81%) also see the role of the mediator as a social worker, helping the families to solve their problems. All the teachers are positive that the schools should have Roma school mediators. All of them believe in the utility of their work.

The children interviewed declare that they have very good relationships with the school mediator, and that most of them come to school because of the school mediator. All of them are positive that the schools need Roma mediators.

Although the study is done with a limited number of respondents, still the findings provide a possibility to make some recommendations:

1. It is obvious that the Roma school mediators are needed. These are the opinions of the parents, teachers, and children. However, the number of school mediators per school should be increased. It seems that one school mediator working with 60-70 Roma children, and, in some cases, even with 100 or more children, is absolutely not effective. The school mediators help the families of the children and solve the problems between the families and institutions. In some cases, the mediators work with 50-60 families and this is a very high number of students and families. Even if the mediator is well trained, he/she cannot do a good job mediating such a high number of students and parents.
2. It seems that the school mediators know how to do mediation. They know that they have to help both sides, but should not take either side. It seems

that they have enough knowledge on the issue of mediation and they perform their duties very well.

3. The school mediators motivate the children to attend the schools regularly and to get better marks in school. However, they should also motivate the children to continue onto higher education and to attend university.
4. The school mediators serve as role models for the Roma community and they should have the chance to develop their education and to study more, not only in the field of mediation, but also in the field of education. The school mediators should be motivated to become teachers. This would be the best solution for the schools – to have Roma teachers. However, the school mediators need to take more German language courses. The Roma school mediators should also do work in the field of intercultural education, presenting the Roma culture, history, and traditions at school to all children. This will help the schools overcome their prejudices and stereotypes towards Roma. Some more training on Roma history and culture and intercultural education should be given to the school mediators.

PART TWO

Romani psycholinguistics

CHAPTER 5

The role of oral traditions in the language development of Roma children

Language Development in Roma Children Through Oral Traditions

The Roma oral culture is rich and spans a range of different folkloric genres. In traditional families, from an early age Roma children grow up with music and dance. It is quite normal for everyone in the extended family, which sometimes entails three generations living together, to sing to the child, to play different games with the child, or simply to dance with him/her. In such a way, the Roma children become socialized and learn to comprehend and produce their mother tongue – Romani.

In Western culture, language development is considered a serious process, during which the child should be shown pictures and have a lot of toys to play with. Children from an early age, of course depending in part on their family's socio-economic status and background, are exposed to all kinds of teaching materials which prepare them for the acquisition of literacy later in school. Children often learn the normative orthography and numbers, how to write their names, or how to perform simple mathematical tasks. Everything that the children learn at an early age is learned in a somewhat formal way. The Roma child is also prepared for literacy acquisition as a process, but the parents may use different methods and approaches. For the Roma parents, the most important thing is the joy associated with the learning – that the child feels happy doing different activities. Sometimes, in playing singing and dancing with the children, the parents introduce them to very high-level cognitive tasks.

For someone who is not familiar with Roma culture, this could perhaps sound unserious. Roma parents are often criticized because the activities with

their children are not considered a learning process by the outside world. Very often the role of other traditions and cultural peculiarities of the Roma are not understood and not considered as something serious, but, in the traditional families, these activities are important.

The Socialization of Roma Children Through Roma Oral Traditions

The examples presented here were partly collected throughout the years in different parts of the world and partly are a result of a longitudinal observation of a Roma boy from Bulgaria who grew up in a traditional Roma family. The child was observed from his birth through the first six months of his life, and the adults-child interactions were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for the purpose of this study.

As was already mentioned, Roma children go through all the stages of language development as any normally developing child. They have their child register, which is typical for the first year of life, in which the cow is *mu*, the horse is *de,* and the dog is *bau-bau*.

In the following example, a Roma mother from Sofia uses baby-talk to ask her daughter (1;2) if she wants to drink water:

Mother: *Manges li brum mi čhaj?*
"Would you like water, my daughter?"

Actually *water* in Sofia Romani dialect is *pani.* The mother does not use *pani* but *brum* instead, because she knows that her daughter still does not have the word *water* in her vocabulary.

A Roma boy (1;6), whose family emigrated from ex-Yugoslavia to Amsterdam, is asked by his uncle:

Adult: *Kaj si o papu?*
"Where is the grandfather?"
Child: *Paš mi papin.*
"He is by my **grandmother**."

The word *papin* is a word created by the child. In Romani, such a word does exist but it means *guise* and here the child does not know that meaning; he creates a new word for *grandmother* by adding the feminine ending, *-in,* to the word for *grandfather, papu*. Actually, the child followed the normal process of creating a new feminine noun from an existing masculine one with a specific ending.

The children also acquire mental state verbs in Romani at a very early age. These are the verbs which show different mental conditions, such as happiness, anger, desire, hunger, sleepiness, etc. A boy (1;2), who grew up in a village in northwest Bulgaria, understands when an adult uses a mental state verb in a command to him:

Adult: *De tut xoli*
"Make yourself angry!"
The child makes a face expression of angriness.

The same child understands all kinds of questions. He just got his first teeth, and his uncle checks if the child knows where his teeth are.

Adult: *Danda, kaj te danda?*
"Teeth, where are your teeth?"

Another boy, just eight months old, is approached by the grandfather with the request to greet the guests who arrive to the house.

Adult: *Ker lenge "zdravey"!*
"Say 'Hallo' to them" (the word *hallo* is used by the adult in Bulgarian, and the greeting is provided by the movement of the hand associated with greeting).

E. Ochs (1983) reported that, in some traditional communities, after the age of three, the older siblings actually take care of the children and the communication between the mother and the child goes through the older sibling. For example, when the child wants a water from the mother, the mother addresses the older child.

Mother: *De les pani mi čhaj!*
"Give him a water my daughter!",

Another important issue in Romani adult-child communication is that the children are exposed to very complex language from a very early age. For example, the grandmother tries to stop the five-month-old Kotse (longitudinally observed child from Sofia) from injuring himself when he puts an object in his mouth by using the words:

Adult: *Ma, ka pharaves te žlebinja be močho!*
"Do not, you will destroy your wreaths, my son!"

The child hears the negation and the verb in future tense. This is not a simplified language; because the child is young, he will not understand the meaning of the sentence. The Roma adults very often use these kinds of language structures, or even more complex ones, when speaking to their children.

All the given examples show that Roma children go through the same stages as normally developing children. Here, one cannot see the influence of Roma culture and tradition on the language socialization of the children so much. The next part of the present study is focused on the aspects of communication within Roma communities where Roma oral folklore exists in adult-child communication as a strategy for language development and socialization.

Lullabies

One of the forms of oral tradition in Roma culture is the lullaby. Very often Roma mothers and grandmothers improvise as they sing in the Romani language. Improvisation of lullabies is another strategy used in Roma communities worldwide. Studies show that the infants prefer infant-directed over non-infant-directed lullabies (Trainer, 1996) and their own mothers' voice over that of another female voice (DeCasper and Fifer, 1980). Reger (n.d.) states:

> We hardly know anything about what happens to Gypsy children until they get to institutions – kindergartens, schools. Every aspect of family socialization lacks reliable information and specializing knowledge. Earlier educational research relying mostly on guesswork and partly on casual observation, characterized the education and family socialization of children in traditional Gypsy communities as a negative process from all possible points of view: all children's failures at school were attributed to their suppose severe educational and linguistic deprivation. The lack of adequate linguistic input and conversation with the child is particularly stressed in these studies (p. 114)

What is typical of lullabies in Romani? In most cases, they have a narrative form. Vekerdi (1967), while investigating folk songs among the Roma in Hungary, reported that the Roma do not have epic songs in their language with melody and written lyrics, and this is why they narrate the songs, i.e., they tell the story without a melody or with a melody which is made up in the moment.

For example, as an illustrative case, in Greece, the father of a two-month-old infant must join the army and leave his son. The grandmother, who looks after the baby, is sad and she improvises a lullaby. The grandmother creates the narra-

tive and, at the same time, she speaks to the child – she asks questions and she answers them, taking on the role of the child.

The grandmother says:

> *-Džal o papu gave te lel lenge thudoro, nmandro, te xan.*
> "The grandfather goes in the village to buy milk for them, bread to eat."
> *-So ka anel tuke o papu adive? Ka anel tuke thud! Ka anel tuke!*
> "What he will bring you today? He will bring you milk! He will bring you it!"
> She sings with an improvised melody:
> *Lesko dad paydaris. Ela Sokrat te les les! Sokrat, le, ale le les! Nani te kerel mo čhavo!*
> "His father is a soldier. Come Sokrat and take him! Sokrat, take. Here, take him! Sleep my son!" (Author's archive)

Another Muslim Roma grandmother from Bulgaria also improvises a song to the baby grandson. Grandmother sings with improvised melody:

> *Alim mi te penav, Mehmedim mi te penav, angi dabirinize te tabav. Xajas man javrum, pijas man javrum gene da kadija čužbinake droma. Mukhan mange to cikno čhavoro.*
> "Shall I call Ali, shall I call Mehmed, to which one should I cry? They have eaten me up, they have drunken me up the roads of abroad. You left me your small boy." (Author's archive)

Typical for these kinds of lullabies is that they are created in the moment and that they usually tell a story. The young child is taken as a participant in the narrative. Frequently, the child is asked a question by the mother or grandmother, and the questions are answered by the adult taking the role of the baby.

However, Vekerdi (1967) is wrong in stating that the Roma do not have "epic songs with melody." The Roma create lyrics and poetry and use them as lullabies. Here is one of them:

Salla da yavrum te menori,	shake, my baby, your neck
me roel tuke mi dayori	to cry for you, my mother
me grasteske ahira	my horse's stables
me yavruske kahira	my baby's sadness

(Author's archive)

These types of oral tradition exist in many communities, and, from an early age, the children are accustomed to hearing a rich metaphoric language with rhythm and melody, which helps them to develop their familiarity with and knowledge

of language. There are lullabies in Romani which use folk poems with melody and rhythm set to the text. The following example of a lullaby is based on a poem from the 19th century from Serbia. Later, the poem spread further and came to be known by many Roma communities in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

The song is about a mother who sings to a child in order to lull him/her to sleep by way of telling him/her what his/her father will buy for him/her. Its structure is marked by individual phrases and sentences that are repeated periodically. It is done with a special purpose in mind: a baby listening to a lullaby may remember certain phrases and sentences and can include them later in his or her speech.

Sov, sov mo čhavo,	Sleep, sleep my son
sov te barjos tu,	sleep and grow,
an te suneste	in your dreams you will see
lulugja, kham te dikhes.	the sun and the flowers.
Ma rov mo čhavo,	Don't cry, my little son,
ma rov mo somnal,	don't cry, my light,
giljabav tuke	I am singing for you,
tu mo kham jakha phandes.	close the eyes, my sun.
Nani-nani,	Nani-nani,
nani mo čho,	nani, my little one,
to dad ka anel	the father will bring you
cikne grastes.	a small horse.
Sov, sov mo čhavo,	Sleep, sleep my son
sov te barjos tu,	sleep and grow,
an te suneste	in your dreams you will see
lulugja, kham te dikhes.	the sun and the flowers.
Ma rov mo čhavo,	Don't cry my little son
ma rov mo somnal,	don't cry my light
giljabav tuke	I am singing for you
tu mo kham jakha phandes.	close your eyes, my sun.
Nani-nani,	Nani-nani
nani mo čho,	nani, my little one
to dad ka anel	the father will bring you
cikne grastes.	a small horse.
Sov, som mo čhavo,	Sleep, sleep, my son
sov te barjos tu,	sleep and grow.
an te suneste	in your dreams you will see
lulugja, kham te dikhes.	the sun and the flowers.
Nani-nani,	Nani-nani,
nani mo čho,	nani, my little one
to dad ka anel	father will bring you

cikne grastes.	a small horse.
Nani-nani,	Nani-nani
nani mo čho,	nani, my little one
ka anel grastes	a small horse
do phakenca.	with two wings.

(Author's archive)

If the lyrics of the afore-discussed song reflect a Roma family in an idyllic atmosphere, the text of the lullaby quoted below has a very different nature. The song is about a child who was left by his mother in a cradle hanging on a plum tree. This lullaby is a part of another song known as "The Song of Pavli" in Romani song folklore, and is a song about the immured bride in Bulgarian tradition.

"The Song of Pavli" tells the story of seven or nine brothers building a bridge which constantly collapsed. One of the brothers said that someone should be walled up alive in it, and only after that would the bridge not collapse but be stable. The brothers swore they wouldn't tell their wives, and the next day, the one who first brought dinner to her husband would be walled up, immured in the bridge. All the brothers told their wives about it except the youngest one who kept the oath, and his wife brought him food. She was in a hurry with bringing dinner to her husband and wanted to return home quickly. That is why she left a young child in a cradle under a plum tree in the yard. When the youngest brother saw his wife, he cried. She asked him why he was crying. He explained that he had dropped a gold ring in the river, and no one could get it. His wife rushed to the river and jumped in to find the ring, and the elder brothers began to build a bridge on top of her. She begged to be released because she had left the young child in a cradle under a plum tree, and no one would feed him and rock the cradle. They said that goats and sheep passing by would feed him, the wind would blow and rock the cradle, and the rain would bathe him. Such is the text of the lullaby:

Talaj phruna,	Under the plum tree
ande kuna	there is a cradle.
o bakrja brej,	Sheep are bleating,
o čhavo rovel,	a baby is crying,
pe dajake ov phučel.	grieving for his mother.
Buzni nakel čuči del les,	A goat is coming to feed him,
alval phurdel sovljarel les,	the wind is blowing and singing lullabies.
Devla, Devla o čhavo barvalo,	Goodness me! the child is rich.
bakrja naken čuči den les,	Sheep are coming and feeding him,
bryšind del najarel les.	the rain will bathe him.
Ah mo čhavo o barvalo!	Oh, my rich child

Talaj phruna,	under the plum tree
ande kuna,	in a cradle.
si man čhavo Devlester,	he child from the Lord,
o Devel les mange bičaldja.	given to me by the Lord.
Bakre nakhen čuči den les,	Sheep are coming and feeding him,
balval phurdel sovljarel les,	the wind is blowing and singing lullabies.
Devla, Devla mo čhavo barvalo.	Goodness me! The child is rich.
Buzni nakhel čuči del les,	A goat is coming and feeding him,
bryšind del najarel les,	the rain will bathe him.
ah mo čhavo o barvalo,	Oh, my rich little one,
ah mo čhavo o barvalo!	oh, my rich little one.

(Author's archive)

It can be seen from the lyrics that repetition is a characteristic feature of the songs aimed toward young children. The same phrases and word combinations appear in different forms so as to be better remembered by the child. Children living in a traditional Roma community assimilate and use certain features of the oral culture. It is an improvised performance of a composition of texts in a dialogue and an adaptation of speech patterns corresponding to the context of oral communication where it is necessary.

Reger and Berko Gleason (1991) reported that the Child-Directed Speech (CDS) among Roma communities takes on a different form than in Western cultures. The authors report that the songs and the fairytales play an important role in language development, because, in the traditional communities, it is quite normal to stop the song or the story and to ask for clarification or some test questions about the story and what happened to the protagonists. According to the authors, the test questions in Romani CDS reflect the linguistic practice in the larger culture. Roma parents who ask test questions prepare the children for different adult speech genres.

Teasing

Reger (1999) reported on a discourse strategy among Roma families which is not well-known in other cultures, namely teasing the children. In the process of teasing, the participants play together. Usually, the adult opens with a teasing question and the child defends him/herself. Another person can help the child

with the defense, suggesting certain phrases or sentences. The teasing starts immediately after the child's birth, even during the pre-linguistic period. An example I have observed is as follows:

The mother of a boy (0;3) feeds him with milk from a bottle, but the child does not drink the milk from the bottle. Then the mother starts the following conversation with him:

Mother: *Soske ni pijes mo čho?*	Why you do not drink, my son?
Piljan vodka, akaleske ni pies	Did you drink vodka, is that why you don't
i thud, a?	drink milk?
Kaj piljan vodka?	Where did you drink vodka?
Geljan ki diskoteka?	Did you go to a disco bar?
So kerdan kote mo čho?	What did you do there, my son?
Keldan e čhajensa?	Did you dance with the girls?
Arakljan tuke romni, močho?	Did you find yourself a wife?

(Author's archive)

The mother knows that the child is too young and that he does not speak yet. Nonetheless, she still speaks to him almost as if he were an adult, with a nice voice and intonation. In response, the boy smiles from time to time, although he does not understand what the mother says; he reacts to the melody and a nice, sweet tone of her voice.

Language Games

On one of my study trips in 1997 to the town of Çatalca in Turkey, not far from Istanbul, after an interview with a Roma man aged 64, I came to understand that, in this Roma community, the elder men, who are also grandfathers, 'have the task' to create children's poems in Romani while they play with the children. Here is one such example:

Andi len jekh parno baroro,	In a river a white stone
po koda baroro kondu jekh čirikloro,	on that stone alighted a bird
akaring sallady po kujruki,	hither it swung its tail
okoring sallai po kujruki,	thither it swung its tail
uštilo, našlo, gelo o čirikloro.	Escape, run away, the bird.

Bayram Çuha
(64 years old, illiterate)

Jekh, duj – putar o muj	One, two – open the mouth
Trin, štar – xa i čar	three, four – eat the grass
Panč, šov – xa o džov	five, six – eat the wheat
Efta, oxto – le o moxto	seven, eight – take the box
Enja, deš – xa čereš	nine, ten – eat the cherries

Rajko Djurič

Role Play

Children take topics from everyday life and make up games. They divide the roles between themselves and improvise to make a kind of dramatic play. This is done between older children who speak the language better. Z. Reger and J. Berko Gleason (1991) reported on a metalinguistic game which is played among the Lovara children in Hungary. The topic is always of a religious nature, for example, in *So si po Sunto Del?* the children stand in a row and everyone says a sentence, and then they produce a kind of text. However, the children need a good knowledge of grammar for such an activity.

Learning Metaphoric Language

According to David Crystal (1992: 249), a metaphor is "a semantic mapping from one conceptual domain to another, often using anomalous or deviant language." Bowdle (1998) says that metaphors create new word meanings when "lexical extensions are due to stable projections of conceptual structures and corresponding vocabulary items from one typically concrete domain of experience to another typically abstract domain of experience" (p. 301). Metaphorical structures have coherence with the fundamental values in a culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). And, as we know, cultural values differ from society to society, which means that the same metaphor can have different meanings in different cultures.

Children begin to understand and produce similar metaphors shortly after they begin to speak, and these abilities improve with age: "Two to three-year-old children can produce simple perceptual metaphors in spontaneous speech to compare objects that look alike or are functionally like one another" (Ozcaliskan, 2014: 374).

Below are some examples of metaphors which are very popular and come from songs, fairytales, oral poems, riddles, and proverbs from the author's archive:

I čhaj sasparni sar papin "The girl was as beautiful as a swan." (from a fairytale)

Šuk isi la čerhenjate "She is as beautiful as a star." (from a song)

Romani čhaj kalori sar phabaj si gudlori "A black Roma girl is as sweet as an apple." (from a song)

I lačhi godi si maj šukar katar o galbeno "Good advice is worth more than gold." (proverb)

Lake jakha sar duj kale draka "Her eyes are black like two black grapes." (from a song)

Ov si sar sap "He is like a snake." (from a fairytale)

Sijan sar her "You are like a donkey." (from a riddle)

A. Symbolic play metaphors (pretend action transformations):
1.) Mother: *Ake kavka si o mikrofoni. Hayde te giljabas!*
["Here is the microphone. Let us sing!"]
(The mother gives the child a spoon to use as a microphone and sing the song they have learned together.)
Child (2:4): *Mikofoni*
["Microphone?"]
2.) Father: *Tu sijan o ru* ["You are the wolf"]
me sijom o lovec ["I am the hunter"]
(Role play between the father and the son from the fairytale "Red Riding Hood")
Child (2;6): *Me sijom o rv*
["I am the wolf"]
B. Sensory metaphors which arose out of a perceived physical similarity:
3.) Adult: *Sani sar rovi* ["Thin as a stick"]
Maškar i čhar si kovi ["between the grass goes oily stick"]
manušes te dandavea ["when she bites the man"]
sigo ov mera ["soon he is dead"]
So si avk? ["What is that?"]
Child (2;10) *i sp* ["A snake"]
4.) Adult: *Drakh drakhatar dikea* ["The grape seeds from a grape"]
oj da barjoa ["and it grows up"]
Child (2;8) *barjoa* ["Grows up"]

Conclusion

The community is particularly important in the life of Roma children – from a very early age, they acquire very complex syntactic structures from within their community. The way that the lullabies, jokes, and teasing are handled with the children is similar to how they would be handled with adults. From a psycholinguistic point of view, this is extremely important because the children begin to hear complex language at an early age. However, this does not mean that among Roma mothers there is no 'baby-talk'. On the contrary, they use this approach as well, however, in Roma culture, the children are treated as equals from a very early age, and the language used in addressing them is like the language that is used in addressing adults. Additionally, everything is done in a beautiful way – embellished with very rich metaphors (Kyuchukov, 2017)

Roma oral culture plays an important role in the process of language socialization and language development of Roma children. This is contrary to Western culture, where the care of the child is the responsibility of the nuclear family (mother and father). In traditional Roma culture, everyone in the extended family is responsible for caring for the chid – grandparents, close relatives, neighbors – and everyone is free to speak to and play with the children. The Roma culture uses different strategies in the development of the mother tongue. A range of different genres of Roma folklore are likewise used as strategies for the cognitive development of the Roma child.

CHAPTER 6

The role of mental state verbs in the development of theory of mind in bilingual Roma children

Introduction

Romani has its own grammatical system (Matras, 2002; Kyuchukov, 2003). The Roma migrated to Europe from India some 10 centuries ago. Romani was formed outside of India during their extended period of migration to Europe. It belongs to the family of new Indian languages that have been influenced by other European languages, such as Armenian, Greek, Slavic languages and Romanian. Romani has its own phonological system. Some of the Indian consonants are still preserved (aspirated consonants such as *kh, th, ph, čh*), the morphology and the lexicon are still very much Indian. Up to 70-80 % of the vocabulary in Romani is Indian in origin (from Hindi or languages stemming from the north western parts of India, states such as Punjab and Rajasthan). However, the syntax has been influenced by European languages. Romani has a relatively free word order, while in new Indian languages the place of the verb is always fixed - at the end of the sentence.

Romani dialects are mainly divided into two main groups: *Vlax* or *non-Vlax* dialects, depending on the contacts with the Romanian language. The dialects which were in contact with Romanian were also impacted in their vocabulary and syntax. They are called *Vlax* dialects. The other dialects which did not have any contacts with Romanian have been influenced by Greek and the Slavic languages. They are called *non-Vlax* dialects. In Bulgaria, the Roma are also divided into *Vlax* and *non-Vlax* groups. In Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, the largest group is a *non-Vlax* group and their dialect is called *Erlija* dialect (from the Turkish *erli/yerli*, 'settled'). This group of Roma were settled in the period when Bulgaria

was part of the Ottoman Empire and they did not have a nomadic life. This is an important fact because their dialect to some extent retained influences from Greek and Turkish, and it was never in contact with the Romanian language and its speakers.

The Roma children grow up in extended families. The children communicate with family and community members of a range of ages and obtain access to a spectrum of different registers from a very early age. The children are treated as equals: the parents, the older family members, and their siblings speak to them using full syntactical forms, not simplified structures. Two different types of strategies are used with the children in order to introduce them to the language:

a) When the children are very young, between birth and 2;0 years old, the parents use the so-called test questions: the mother/the adult will say something to the child and then will ask the child a question about the thing said or shown. For example: *Dikh, so si kakva? Saliskeri majmunka. Penta, so sine kavka?* [Look, what is this? The monkey of Saly. Say it, what is this?]
b) After the age of 2, the language is introduced more through the medium of Roma oral culture -songs, fairy tales, jokes, teasing and the like. Here the parents change their strategy toward the child as a learner. They no longer show or name the objects around the child. They name an object but let the child attempt to find it alone and to discover its functions. For example, the mother might ask the child to bring her a big spoon, but she will not show it to the child. The child must find it alone among other objects and bring it to the mother. Every time the child brings an object which the mother did not ask for, she sends the child back with the same request until the child finds the right object and satisfies the mother's request.

In such an intense and rich environment, the Roma children also acquire mental state verbs, which are used very often in everyday communication among Roma to show and express different desires, emotions and mental states.

Mental State Verbs and Theory of Mind

Mental state verbs are verbs which show different mental conditions and mental states of a person. At what age do the children start to understand and produce those kinds of verbs? And why are those verbs so important for the cognitive development of the children? According to Perner et al. (2002), mental state verbs are predictors of the early understanding of the theory of mind. The theory of mind is the ability of the children to understand the desires, intentions and wishes of others.

Grazzani and Ornaghi (2012) investigate the relationship between mental-state language and theory of mind in Italian primary school children. The participants were 110 primary school students. Linguistic, metacognitive, and cognitive measures were used to assess the following competencies: verbal ability, use of mental-state terms, understanding of metacognitive language, understanding of second-order false beliefs, and emotion comprehension. Correlations between children's use of mental-state language and their performance on theory-of-mind tasks were moderate, whereas correlations between children's comprehension of such language and theory of mind abilities were high. In addition, regression analyses showed that comprehension of metacognitive language was the variable which best explained children's performance on both false belief tasks and an emotion comprehension test when verbal ability and age were controlled for.

Pascual et al. (2008) studied the development of mental state language and various indicators of language development in 25 Spanish-speaking children. The authors found that the mental state language in Spanish children developed with a similar timeline and patterns as described in English-speaking children. However, several findings were novel for studies of mental state language. The general indexes of syntactic development did not correlate with the production of mental terms. The Index of Lexical Diversity was associated with the frequency of references to verbs of desire. The results of regression analyses suggest that not just the development of subordinate sentences with complement is associated with genuine mental references to desires and beliefs, but the development of lexical skills as well.

Tardif and Wellman (2000) found out that the Chinese children's theory of mind appears to develop from a focus on desire to a focus on belief. However, it is not clear (a) whether this pattern is universal and (b) whether it could also be explained by linguistic and sociocultural factors. The authors examined mental state language in Mandarin-speaking (21–27 months) and Cantonese-speaking (18–44 months) toddlers. The results suggest a pattern of theory-of-mind development similar to that in English, with early use of desire terms followed by other mental state references. However, the Chinese-speaking children used desire terms much earlier, and the use of terms for thinking was very infrequent, even for Mandarin-speaking adults. This finding suggests a consistency in the overall sequence, but variation in the timing of beginning and end points, in children's theory-of-mind development across cultures.

Taumoepeau and Ruffman (2006), in a study with mothers of 15 to 24-month-old English speaking infants, assessed the relation between the mother's mental state language and the child's language of desire and emotion understanding. The mothers described pictures to their infants and mother talk was coded for mental and non-mental state language. Children were administered two emotion understanding tasks and their mental and non-mental state vocabulary levels were obtained via parental report. The results demonstrated that the mother's

use of desire language with 15-month-old children uniquely predicted a child's later mental state language and emotional task performance, even after accounting for potentially confounding variables. In addition, the mother's tendency to refer to the child's desires over desires of others was the more consistent correlate of mental state language and emotion understanding. They classified the verbs used in six categories:

1. **Mental state** -- *want, hope, wish, care about, afraid that, like, love, dream, prefer, keen on; think, know, believe, expect, wonder;*
2. **Physical state** -- *cry, smile, laugh, giggle, hurt, in pain, ill;*
3. **Emotion** -- *annoyed, hurtful, bored, unhappy, feel bad, sad, upset, fed up, miserable, cross, grumpy, angry, mad, scared, shy, surprised, pleased, happy, enjoy, excited, fun, interested, frustrated, missed, disgusted, ok [feel ok], good [feel good], better;*
4. **The senses** -- *look, listen, cold [the body feeling cold], hot [the body feeling hot];*
5. **Cognitive** -- *hard [difficult], remember, guess, dream, forget, mean [I mean that], real;*
6. **Modulations of assertion** -- *might, bet, curious, expect, sure, definitely, possibly, may be, wonder, suppose, certain, certainly, could be, perhaps, reckon, figure, guess, must, probably.*

In one of the earlier studies by Shatz, Wellman and Silber (1983) on mental state verbs, the authors analysed in naturally occurring speech the young child's ability to contemplate and communicate about his/her mental state. In the first study, the authors showed the frequency and function of verbs of mental reference such as *think* and *know* in the speech of one child from age 2;4 to 4;0. In the second study, they examined shorter samples of speech collected from 30 two-year-olds over a six-month period. The results from both studies suggest that the earliest uses of mental verbs are for conversational functions rather than for mental reference. The authors concluded that the first attempts at mental reference begin to appear in some children's speech in the second half of the third year of age. Since most of the children under investigation exhibited the linguistic knowledge necessary to make reference to mental states, the authors concluded that the absence of such reference earlier suggests that younger children lack an awareness of such states, or at the very least, an understanding of their appropriateness as topics of conversation.

The relationship between mental state verbs and sentential complements (S-comps) was investigated by Nixon (2005) in language samples of 40 four-year-old children. Mental state verbs are coded by the author by function (cognitive, sensory, or pragmatic), complement (simple, simple+, or S-comp) and expression of certainty. Children produce a total of 14, but only five different mental state verbs. Approximately equal numbers of mental state verbs had cognitive and pragmatic functions. The mental state verbs referring to cognitive states were more likely to occur with sentential complements than mental state verbs used

as pragmatic markers. Sentential complements were more likely to occur with uncertain rather than certain mental state verbs. Utterances containing mental state verbs were longer than utterances with other matrix verbs, but mental state verbs and sentential complements were strongly correlated after adjusting for utterance length. The sentential complements occurred more often with mental state verbs than with other matrix verbs.

In another study, Howard, Mayeux and Naigles (2008) examined how the mothers use mental verbs in conversations with three- and four-year-old children and link these usages to the children's developing understanding of mental verbs and a theory of mind. Sixty three- and four-year-olds, either attending or non-attending pre-school, were given tasks assessing mental verb distinctions and false beliefs. Their mothers' mental verb use was coded for frequency, type of utterance, type of subordinate clause, the person of the subject of the verb, and the certainty of the verb *think*. Among the three-year-olds, the children who did not attend pre-school performed significantly better on the mental verb comprehension task. Comparing the mothers whose children attended pre-school with mothers whose children did not, the latter were found to use fewer statements and more questions, fewer first person utterances and more second-person utterances, and the verb *think* in its 'very certain' form was used less often. In regression analyses, the authors found that the children's mental verb and false belief performance were positively predicted by maternal mental verb questions, and single clause utterances. These findings indicated how maternal input has the potential to promote or hinder children's understanding of the mind.

Booth, Hall, Robison, and Kim (1997) found out that the children's use of the mental state verb *know* was correlated positively with the number of different cognitive words which are related to semantic processes, and the parental use of the same cognitive words. This suggests that parental linguistic input may be an important mechanism in cognitive word acquisition. Young children tended to use *know* more to refer to themselves than to refer to others, whereas their parents tended to use *know* equally to refer to self and others. The importance of cognitive words in a theory of language acquisition is discussed in this study.

The studies mentioned here show the importance of input by mothers/adults and their use of verbs showing different mental satets. All the studies were done with English-speaking children and mothers and all the findings are typical for English-speaking societies. These studies show the importance of the language for development of the theory of mind in young children. However, as de Villiers (2007) notes, more experimental linguistic work is needed with other populations. This could result in new knowledge and allow for a more precise delineation of how language and theory of mind interrelate at the interface.

The previous research has shown that children using mental state verbs in early childhood reach and comprehend aspects of the theory of mind earlier, around the age of four. The more developed the child's mentalistic vocabulary

is, the more successful they are in performing theory of mind tests (Astington, 1998; Ruffman, 2014).

From the previous studies it is known that the verbs for desire and emotions are acquired before the verbs for cognitive state; the verbs for perception and the verbs for physical state precede the verbs for mental state (de Villiers, 2007). Here are some examples of the syntax order with different mental state verbs.
The use of the verb *want*: the syntax of the early mental state verbs is simpler:
1. V + NP: John wants an apple.
2. V + CP (complementizer phrase): John wants to buy an apple.
3. V + CP (with explicit subject): John wants Bill to buy an apple.

The use of the verb *think:*
4. V + PP: John thinks about an apple.
5. V + CP: John thinks that he will buy an apple.
6. V + CP: John thinks that Sally bought an apple (but she did not).

The use of the verb *remember:*
7. V + NP: John remembers his bag.
8. V + CP: John remembers to pick up his bag.
9. V + CP: John remembers that he left his bag.

The Study

In this study, I seek to observe the spontaneous use of mental state verbs by children. Two Roma children (a boy Kiril and a girl - Sonya), speakers of Erlija Romani dialect of Sofia, Bulgaria were longitudinally audio recorded (between the ages of 1;0 - 3;0) in their natural home environment. The children were recorded twice a month by a trained Roma woman, a member of the community. The data consist of 136 hours of audio recordings. All the recordings were transcribed and analysed. I attempt to answer the following research questions:

- Is the emergence of the mental state verb the same in a very different language and cultural context such as Romani?
- Are the mental state verbs richer in Romani than in Bulgarian as a L2?
- Could this explain the discrepancy in acquiring the theory of mind in L1 vs. L2?

The working hypotheses are the following:

- H1: Roma children growing up bilingually will naturally learn the mental state verbs in their L2 as well.
- H2: The use of mental state verbs from a very early age helps the bilingual children to understand the theory of mind earlier in their L2.

Results

Previous findings

In our previous study with Roma children between 3;0 - 4;6 years old we found that the theory of mind scores in Romani as L1 are higher than the scores in Bulgarian as L2. With increase of age, the knowledge of the children improves (Kyuchukov, 2010). This is shown in Figure 6.1.

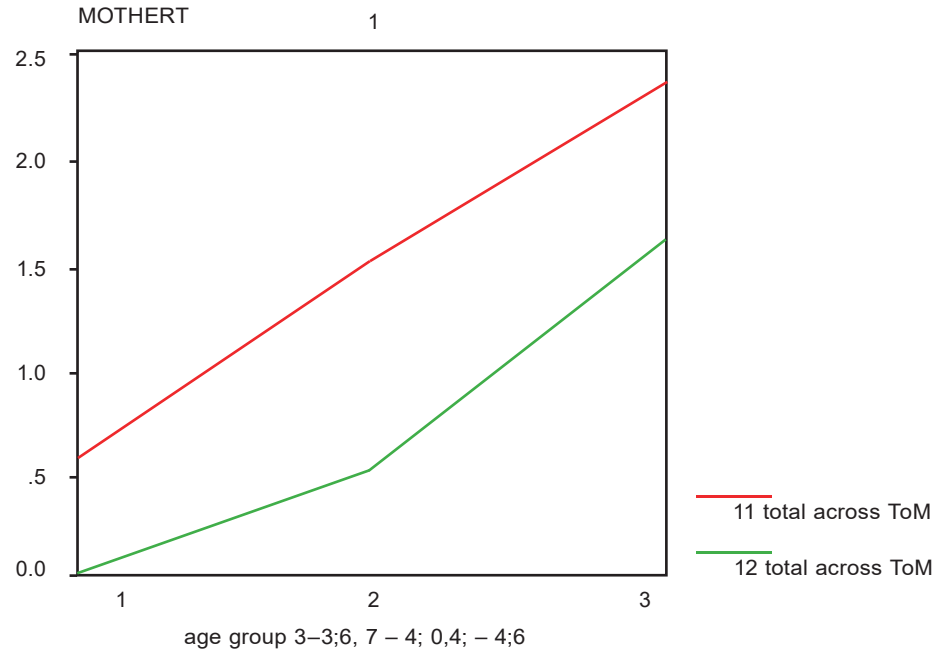


Figure 6.1. Theory of Mind scores of Roma children in L1 Romani and L2 Bulgarian.

The current study

In this study I attempt to analyze the data solely of two children: the boy Kiril and the girl Sonya. Both children were recorded in their everyday activities. Comparing the production of the children, one can see that Kiril is more talkative then Sonya. He has a higher number of produced utterances. This is shown in Table 6.1.

Child	Number of utterances
Kiril	2088
Sonya	1313

Table 6.1. Total number of utterances

We can observe how the children use the mental state verbs and whether they also have verbs in Bulgarian or only in Romani as their mother tongue. This is shown in Table 6.2.

Child	Romani (L1)	Bulgarian (L2)
Kiril	178	–
Sonya	66	15

Table 6.2. The use of mental state verbs

As one can see from Table 6.2, Kiril is growing up monolingually and he uses only Romani mental state verbs. Sonya, by contrast, is growing up bilingually and she has acquired 15 mental state verbs in Bulgarian as well. The parents of Sonya speak Bulgarian at home more often and Sonya easily picks up some Bulgarian vocabulary as well as her L2.

However, if we compare the acquired mental state verbs, one can see that Kiril has 8,4% and Sonya has 6,1% mental state verbs as based on the total number of the utterances. Although both children are the same age, Kiril is more talkative and has a higher number of utterances, thus respectively a higher percent of acquired mental state verbs than Sonya. This can be seen in Figure 6.2.

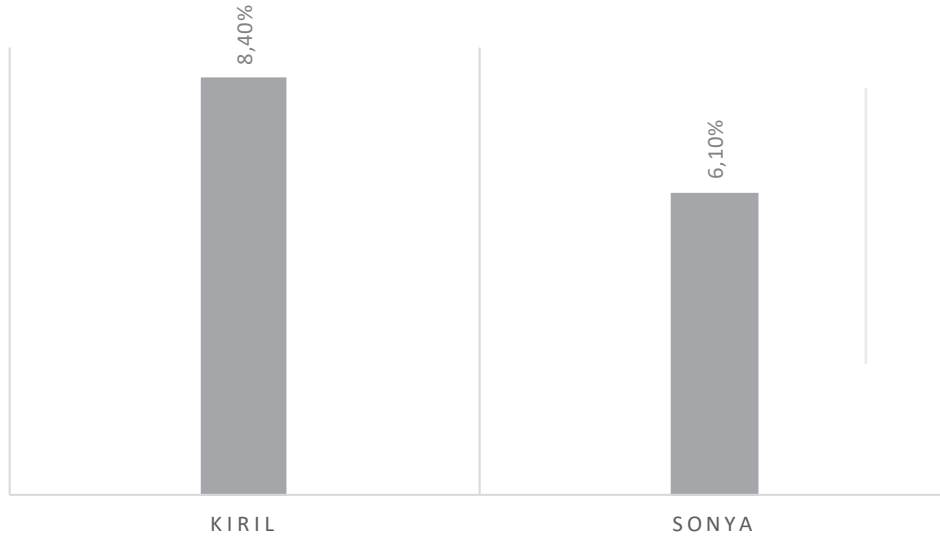


Figure 6.2. Mental state verbs in % out of total number of utterances

Comparing the mental state verbs produced in Romani as L1 and in Bulgarian as L2 by Kiril and Sonya, one can see that Kiril uses only Romani mental state verbs (100%) and Sonya has 81% of verbs uttered in Romani (L1) and 19% of verbs uttered in Bulgarian. Sonya has learned some mental state verbs in Bulgarian. This is shown in Figure 6.3.

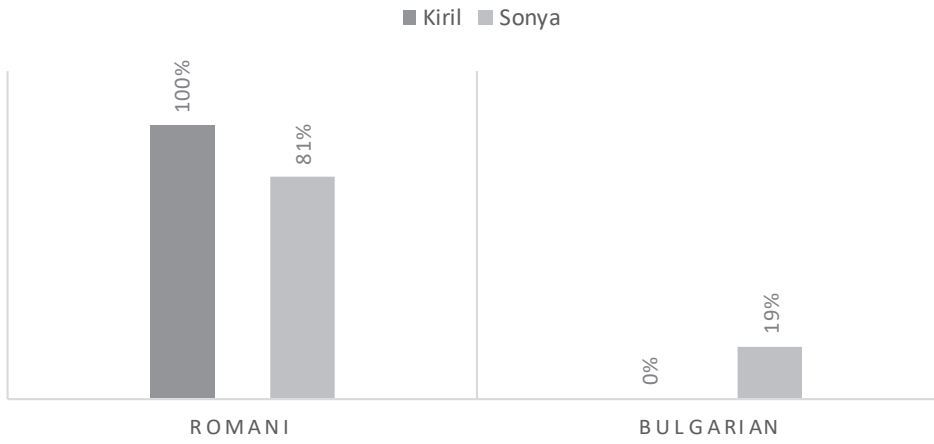


Figure 6.3. Produced mental state verbs in L1 and L2

It is interesting to see which mental state verbs are first learned. Table 6.3 displays the verbs acquired by Kiril. The table shows that Kiril has a very high number of verbs related to (1) mental states**,** e.g.: *mangav* (want), *dehav* (love), *arakhav* (care about), *džanav* (know); (2) emotions**:** *xavxoli* (angry), *khanile* (feeling bad); (3) physical state**,** e.g.: *dukhal* (hurt), *rovav* (cry); (4) *sense*, such as: *dikh* (look).

Mental state	Emotions	Physical state	Sense
mangav (want) 65	*xavxoli* (angry) 13	*dukhal* (hurt) 20	*Dikh* (look) 65
dehav (love) 16	*Khanile* (feel bad) 12	*rovav* (cry) 11	–
arakhav (care about) 11	–	–	–
džanav (know) 11	–	–	–

Table 6.3. Mental state verbs used by Kiril

The mental state verbs used by Sonya are more diverse. The child has grown up with both languages, Romani and Bulgarian, and she has learned some Bulgarian mental state verbs together with the Romani ones. In Sonya's case, the highest learned verbs are also those showing mental state from Romani: *mangav* (want), *džanav* (know), *darav* (be afraid) and from Bulgarian: *obicham* (love),

znam (know), *iskam* (want). The other verbs from the field of emotions, physical state and sense are from Romani. This can be seen in Table 6.4.

Here are some examples of mental state verbs first used:

1) **Adult**: *Celodijes* *naxas, štom* *avav* *me* *togavaxas.*
whole day no eat, when come-1sg. I than eat-2sg.

Mental state	Emotions	Physical state	Sense
mangav (want) 20	*denilo* (mad) 4	*rovav* (cry) 5	*dikh* (look) 14
Džanav (know) 11	–	–	–
darav (be afraid) 12	–	–	–
obicham (love) 4	–	–	–
znam (know) 3	–	–	–
iskam (want) 8	–	–	–

Table 6.4. Mental state verbs used by Sonya

"You do not eat the whole day and when I come then you start to eat."

Kiril (1;5) *Čuka* *mangav!*
like that want-1sg.
"I want it like that."

2) **Adult** *Ajde* opa *pištine e Aliske.*
get up call-3sg the Ali-to
"Get up and call Ali."

Sonya (1;4) *Na mangav*
not want-1sg.
"I do not want."

The Romani language, being an oral language and using a different folklore genre drawn from Romani culture and folklore, making use of jokes and teasing in the communication process with the children is rich in mental state verbs. From a very early age the Roma children hear diverse types of mental state verbs. Most of them are used in the folklore genre of songs and fairytales, such as *love*, *hate*, *afraid*, *want*, *know*, etc. The following example is a conversation between an adult and Kiril, and there is a great deal of teasing in the conversation, but one can readily see the number of the repeatedly used mental state verbs.
Example:

Conversation in Romani	Translation
Kiril (2;3) *E gelote kinel baloni*	He went to buy balloon.
Adult: *Ama ov* **na dehel** *tut, ov man* **dehel**. *Man* dehel, *tut* **na dehel**.	But he does not **love** you, he **loves** me. He **loves** me, he does not **love** you.

Child: Na **dehel** *tut.*	He does not **love** you.
Adult: *Abe* **dehel** *man.*	He **loves** me.
Child: *Tut nana* **dehel** *tut.*	He does not **love** you.
Adult: *E pa tut nana* **dehel**.	And he does not **love** you.
Child: **Dikh** *so kerel.*	**Look** what it is doing.
Adult: *Tu sinjangrozno, dalkeske* **na dehel** *tut Načkos.* *K.,* šunes *li man?*	You are ugly, this is why Nachko does not **love** you. K., are you **listening** to me?
Child: *Ake mo vast,* **dikh**.	Here my hand, it **hurts.**
Adult: *Tu grozno, me šukar, dalkeske* **dehel** *man o Načkos.*	You - ugly, me - beautiful, this is why he loves me - Nachko.
Child: *Me ka* **rovav**.	I will **cry**.
Adult: *E rov, man* **dehel** *thaj me čhes e Stefčos.* *Tut nana* **dehel.**	Cry, he loves me and my son Stefcho. He does not love you.
Child: **Dikh**, *mo vast,* **dukhal** *man.*	Look, my **hand**, it hurts.
Adult: *Ajde ko lekari te ingelav tut.*	Let's bring you to a doctor.
Child: *Mo vast.*	My hand.
Adult: *Ajde ko lekari.* **Manges** *li te žas ko lekari?* *Ela, avri iv del. So del avri, baba?*	Let's go to a doctor. Do you **want** to go to a doctor? Come, outside it's snowing. What is happening outside, my son?
Child: *De te* **dikhav**. **Mangav** *te* **dikhav**.	Let me **look**. I **want** to **look.**

Discussion and conclusion

Mental state verbs in a combination with a noun phrase in a simple sentence are acquired around the age of 1;6. Structures such as:

1. V + NP: Mangav *shokoladi*.
   "I want chocolate."

can be easily learned even when the child does not have enough lexical knowledge.

Structures such as:

2. V + CP: Mangav *te dikhav avri*
   "I want to look outside."

are acquired around the age of 2;6. It seems that the structures such as V+CP (with an explicit subject) in Romani are acquired much later.

It would appear clear that in different cultures the mental state verbs play a different role in the cognitive development of the children. In Romani, due to the cultural special features in the upbringing of children, the children have access to a rich variety of mental state verbs from very early age.

The data are limited, and it cannot be stated that the mental state verbs in Romani are richer than in Bulgarian. To our knowledge, to date there has been no research on the acquisition of mental state verbs in Bulgarian and thus we cannot generalize. But what can be said is that the Roma children learn the mental state verbs in Romani first and some Bulgarian mental state verbs are also acquired, because the children grow up in families where the parents also speak Bulgarian at home.

Returning to Figure 6.1 from Kyuchukov (2010), where it is shown that the children are better at performing the theory of mind tasks in their mother tongue than in Bulgarian, the lack of sufficient knowledge of mental state verbs in Bulgarian could be one of the reasons for the poorer level of performance of the theory of mind tasks in Bulgarian.

Sonya's data showed that Roma children growing up bilingually will learn naturally the mental state verbs in their L2 as well. This was the first hypothesis. The rich and diverse use of the mental state verbs in their L2 from a very early age can help them understand the theory of mind earlier in their L2.

In spite of the last 20 years of research on acquisition of Romani (Kyuchukov 2014, 2016, 2017), there is still a need to perform a deeper study of the simultaneous Romani-Bulgarian bilingualism. It is very important because it will help the educators to understand how the Roma children learn the two languages in contacts.

Unfortunately, in contemporary Europe the knowledge of the Romani language among Roma children is not valued as an asset. In many countries, the children are still being placed in special schools based on psychological tests administered in the official language of the country where the children live. If the Roma children cannot perform the tests correctly, they are classified as 'mentally retarded' and placed in special schools. The contemporary school system in Europe does not have a tool to measure the Roma children's knowledge pertaining to complex grammatical categories that are shown in this study and are acquired in the family from an early age.

CHAPTER 7

Acquisition of Romani in a bilingual context

Introduction

As a point of departure, I take the ideas of Babska and Shugar (1986), who see the child as a learner of a language through activities and believe that the child develops language skills during the activities. This concept is very important for the language development of Roma children as well, because they learn the language mainly by being involved in community activities planned by the parents and other adults, in accordance with the cultural specificities of Roma.

Fidanka is a young Roma girl from Bulgaria. She is two years and 10 months old (hereafter 210) and lives in one of the big Roma ghettos in Sofia, where she is raised by her extended family. Her parents (both with a university degree) live together with her father's parents and with his older brother's family. All three families (the parents, the grandparents, and the uncle's family) take care of Fidanka. All the members of the extended family talk to Fidanka in Romani and in Bulgarian. There are activities where they use Bulgarian, but most of the time they speak Romani to her.

As a result of the surrounding languages, she knows which language to use in different situations when speaking to her family members. Fidanka started speaking Bulgarian at the age of two years and four months.

Now speaking Bulgarian and Romani, she produces sentences which are mixed. For example:

(1) Чакай малко (B) akana (R) да видиш (B)
wait a bit (B) now (R) to see (B)
"Wait a bit you will see it now."

In this sentence, the matrix language is Bulgarian. Speaking Bulgarian, the child embeds a Bulgarian word.

(2) Dikh o čho so (R) удари ме (B)
look the boy what (R) hit – 3sgPT me (B)
"Look the boy that hits me."

The matrix language of the second sentence is Romani, but the child embeds Bulgarian words in the Romani sentence as well.

Thousands of Roma children in Europe grow up in such bilingual or multilingual environments. However, the studies on Roma children's bilingualism and multilingualism are limited in scientific literature. The first publications on Roma children's language development appeared in the 1990s, and even then, there were but a small number of articles published in linguistic and psycholinguistic literature (Reger and Berko-Gleason, 1991; Berko-Gleason, 1992; Reger, 1999).

My own studies deal with the issues of acquisition of Romani in bilingual and trilingual situations (Kyuchukov, 2014, 2011, 2010, 2007, 2005, 1999a, b; Kyuchukov and de Villiers, 2009, 2014). Some 15 years ago, I started a longitudinal study with four Roma children (two boys and two girls) at the ages of one, between one and two, and eight, living in one of the biggest Roma settlements in Sofia, Bulgaria. The children were audio recorded every two weeks by a Roma woman, a member of the same Roma community. I observed the strategies used by the adults in introducing the Romani language. Later, I made a study trip to New Delhi, India, and I observed the strategies used by the parents in introducing a variety of Rajasthani language to a girl (2;2 years old) in a 'Gypsy' family of smiths who live in the surroundings of New Delhi. The communication between the parents and the child was video recorded. From the comparison between the two groups of parents (Roma and Indian), I found exactly the same strategies in the Child Directed Speech, which had not been described in the Western scientific literature.

In her study with Kaluli children, B. Schiefellin (1985) describes a strategy which is called "say after me." Among Roma parents, there is a similar strategy: the adult asks for an object and the child has to find it among other objects, without any explanation from the side of the adult. The Indian mother cooking a meal asks her two-year-old daughter to give her a spoon or a knife, without pointing to it or naming it. The strategies used by the Indian mothers and in the Roma families are very similar.

Other strategies include learning the language through fairytales, songs, riddles, teasing, and jokes. The language environment of Roma children is extremely rich. Usually they grow up in an extended family where everyone, the whole community in effect, takes care of the child. The Roma men play an important role in the language development of the children. In their communication with the children, the Roma mothers use 'baby talk,' but not the Roma fathers. They are the ones who introduce the full range of grammar. In the literature, this is known as "a bridge theory" (Berko-Gleason, 1975). The fathers and the other

members of the Roma family, by speaking to the child as to an adult from a very early age, actually introduce the whole grammar of the language. On the other hand, the use of different strategies like learning songs together, telling fairy tales, and teasing also introduce the grammar of Romani.

The Study

The aim of the present section is to demonstrate how Roma children acquire Romani grammatical categories from a very early age in a bilingual context. The research questions in this study are:

1. Do the Roma children actually learn the grammar of the Romani language or is this rather a mixture between two or three languages, which does not have any grammatical rules?
2. Which grammatical categories are learned earlier and why, i.e., sequencing?

Three studies were conducted for the purpose of this paper:

Study 1 presents an investigation among young children and their knowledge of mental state verbs;

Study 2 presents a study with Roma parents on the knowledge of Roma children of different grammatical categories (verbs and wh-words), using Bates-Macarthur Communicative Development Inventories (CDI);

Study 3 is focused on the communicative competence of Roma children between the ages of three and eleven years old in the Romani language.

Findings

Study 1. Bates-Macarthur Communicative Development Inventories (CDI) in Romani

In a pilot study, 40 Roma parents who have children between 8-16 months and 16-30 months were interviewed with CDI-1 and CDI-2. The CDIs were translated and adapted into the Romani spoken in Sofia. 20 parents with children 8-16 months old and 20 parents with children 16-30 months old were the subjects of the study. The results show that Roma children have a typical language development in learning different parts of Romani grammar. Figure 7.1. shows the results of the verbs used by the two groups of children according to the parents' report.

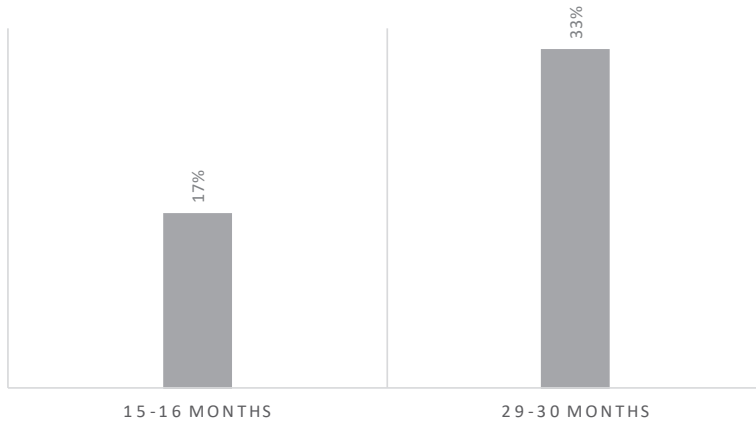


Figure 7.1. Verbs in Romani in %

The graph clearly shows that, with the increase in the age of the children, there is greater use of verbs in Romani. The differences between the two groups are statistically significant: t-compute = 2.64 (df = 48), t-critical = 2.60 ($p < 0.01$). Older children are better at the use of Romani verbs.

What are the wh-words in the Romani language? The results are presented in Figure 7.2.

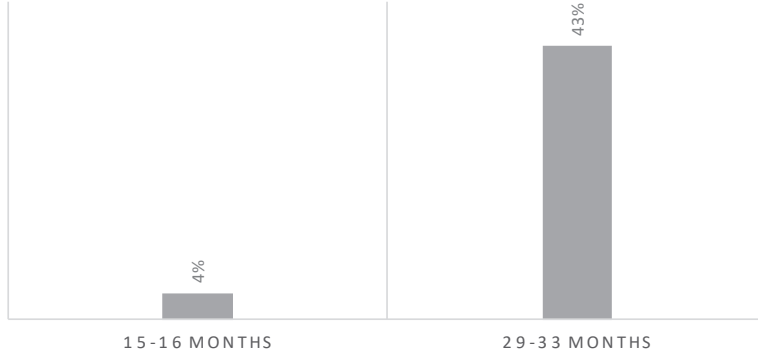


Figure 7.2. Use of Wh-Words in Romani

It is obvious that the younger children are not as good as the older children. The younger children (15-16 months old) use just 4% of wh-words in Romani. The older children (29-30 months old) use 43% of the wh-words. The differences between the two groups in the use of the wh-words are very significant: t-compute = 7.28 (df = 45), t-critical = 3.34 ($p < 0.001$).

The study shows that, by the age of 30 months, in their language, the Roma children use pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs, together with nouns, verbs, and wh-words. This shows that Roma children follow the development of any typically developing child learning any language as a mother tongue.

Study 2. Communicative Competence

130 children (120 in kindergarten and 10 in primary school) were involved in the study. The children from the kindergarten were divided into three age groups (Group 1: 4-5 years old, Group 2: 5-6 years old, and Group 3: 6-7 years old), in addition to one group of 10 children from grade four (10-11 years old), and were evaluated with different tests measuring comprehension and production in Romani.

The children were given five verbal tests which were not standardized for the Romani language. The tests were translated and adapted from English:

One-word receptive test

One-word expressive test

DELV-Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation (Seymour, Roeper and de Villirs, 2005)

Subtest for verbs

Subtest for wh-questions

Communicative role taking

The children's results are presented below:

One-Word Receptive Test

The children are shown four pictures per page and the researcher says a word. The child's task is to find out which picture matches the word said by the researcher. The results are given in Figure 7.3:

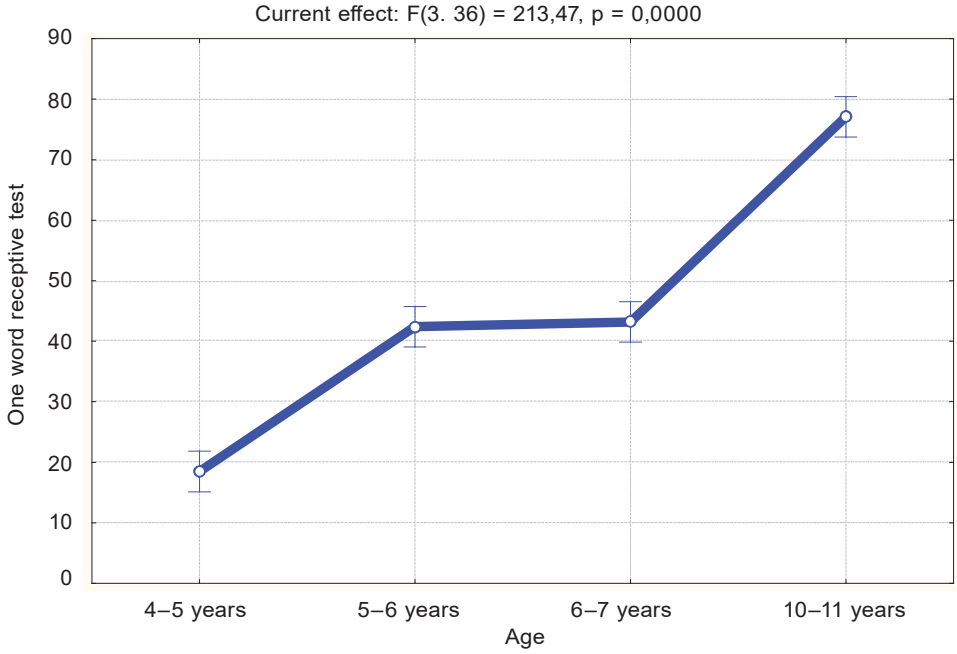


Figure 7.3. Results from One-Word Receptive Test

As one can see, there are differences in comprehension of words between the four groups. The older children understand the words better than the younger children, and there are no differences in the results between children five-six years old and six-seven years old. The differences between the groups are statistically significant: F (3.36) = 213.47, p < .0000.

One-Word Expressive Test

The children are shown pictures of different objects and they must name them. The results are shown in Figure 7.4.

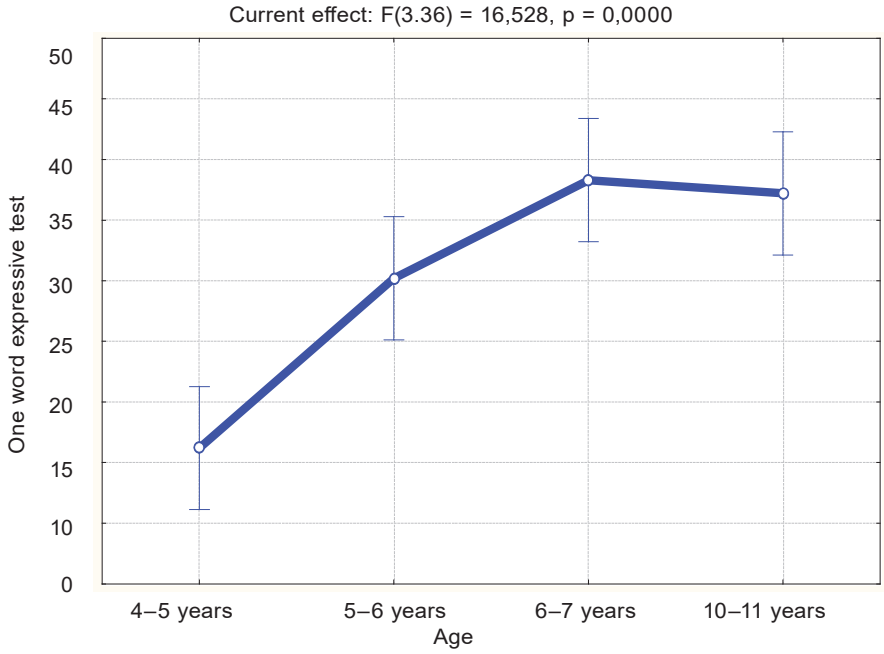


Figure 7.4. Results from the One-Word Expressive Test

Figure 2 shows the results of the children's performance in the test, and one can see that there are significant differences between the groups: F (3.36)=16.53, p < .0000. The results of the children four to five years old are the lowest, and the results of the older children are higher. In this test, the children aged ten to eleven years old show results similar to those aged six to seven. It is obvious that the ten- to eleven-year-old children's knowledge of the Romani lexicon did not increase. They have the same level of knowledge of the Romani lexicon as the children six to seven years old.

Three subtests from DELV (Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation) were used for testing the same groups of children. The tests are on the knowledge of verbs and include asking questions and communicative role taking.

The Verb

The children are shown pictures and are given a preposition with the picture. However, the prepositions are not finished. At the end of the preposition, there is a place where the child has to use a verb. A second sentence with the same picture has to be used, but the verb which has to be added must be different (the opposite). The results from this subtest are shown in Figure 7.5.

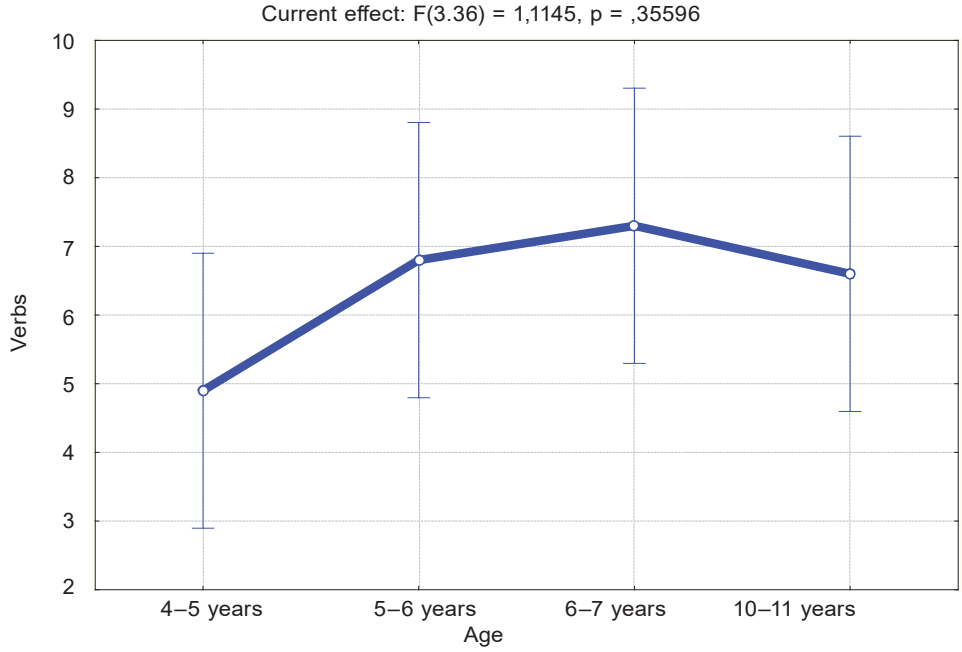


Figure 7.5. Knowledge of Verbs

Figure 7.5 shows that the results between the four age groups are not statistically significant: $F(3.36) = 1.11$; $p < 0.01$. The biggest differentiations are between the groups of children four-five and five-six years old, and the ten to eleven-year-olds show, again, very low results, similar to the results of the children six to seven years old.

Asking Questions

The children are given pictures, in which it is not shown what the person is doing. The child is then required to ask what the person in the picture is doing. The next page shows what the person is really doing. The results from this subtest are shown in Figure 7.6.

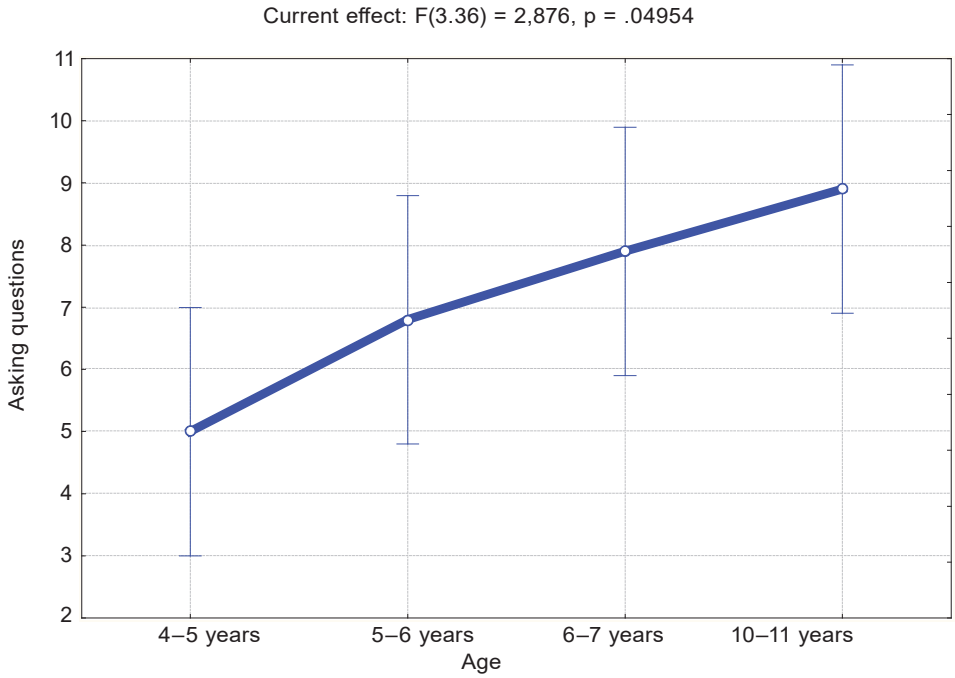


Figure 7.6. Asking Questions

As shown in Figure 7.6, the ability of the children to ask questions increases from age group one up to age group four. The differences between the groups are statistically significant: $F(3.36) = 2.87$; $p < 0.05$.

Communicative Role-Taking

In this subtest, the children are shown pictures and are required to tell a short story about what is happening. The child has the task to take the role of the character from the pictures and to tell the story from his/her point of view. The results from this subtest are shown in Figure 7.7.

Figure 7.7 shows that there are significant statistical differences between the groups: $F\ (3.36) = 4.51$; $p < .0087$; $p < 0.01$. The results of the children increase from the youngest group to the oldest one. The older children are much better than the younger children at taking on roles.

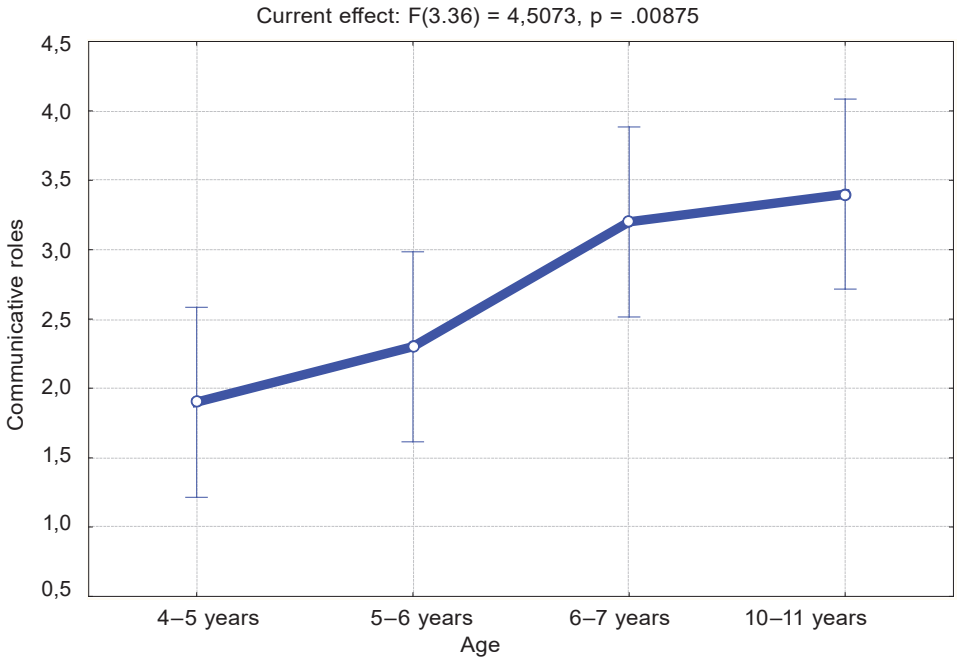


Figure 7.7. Communicative Role-Taking

Discussion and Conclusion

As one can see from the studies presented in the paper, Roma children growing up in bilingual conditions acquire the bases of the Romani language as their mother tongue first. At the same time, they start to learn a second language from a very early age – in this case, Bulgarian, which is the official language of Bulgaria, but, in some other cases, the Roma children also learn another minority language and they actually grow up trilingual.

The research questions which I asked at the beginning of the section actually show that Roma children learn the grammar of the Romani language; Romani has its own structure, although the language is not a standardized or codified language. All the grammatical categories are present in the grammar of the rich range of dialects of Romani, which is an Indo-European language from the family of new Indian languages related to Sanskrit and Hindi.

In the studies presented here, I focused mainly, but not only, on the issues of acquisition of verbs, and it is obvious, as was proven in the first study, second study, and partly in the third study, that verbs play an important role in understanding the social relations between people, particularly the mental state verbs.

Another important grammatical category is wh-questions, because Romani has the possibility to have double wh-words in a question, like *Kon so xal?* ("who eats what?"). From a very early age, the children know which wh-question to answer and, in Romani, it is usually the second wh-word that is answered.

The children's knowledge of correctly used verbs and correctly asked questions is used in different communicative roles. Life within the community and the extended family provides the children with a great opportunity to learn the complex grammatical structures from a very early age and to use this knowledge in their everyday life.

Although the three studies are not connected, they are somehow interrelated and show how the children develop different grammatical categories. It is clear that the children understand and produce nouns and adjectives, they have a knowledge of verbs, they can ask and answer questions, and they can take on roles in different communicative situations. In general, the Roma children follow the path of all normally developing children learning any language around the world. It seems that the language develops until the age of six to seven, but during the period from six to seven and from ten to eleven years, it seems the children do not develop their knowledge of Romani so much. It may be that entering the primary school somehow stops the further development of Romani, which is evidenced in some of the categories in which the children aged ten to eleven years showed the same results as the children in the age category six to seven. This is a sign that Romani should be introduced as a mother tongue in the school curriculum for primary classes; this would help the Roma children keep their mother tongue while learning a second language. With this, the children will avoid becoming semi-linguals with poor or stunted proficiency in their home language L1 and rather achieve a dual, functional knowledge as balanced bilinguals.

CHAPTER 8

Romani language assessment of Roma children

Introduction

In the last decade or so, the issue of language education for Roma children has become a priority. In Bulgaria, for example, some authors (H. Kyuchukov, 2008; M. Stefanova, 1999, 2001a, b) focus on the difficulties children have in learning the grammatical categories in Bulgarian, while others (M. Terzieva, 2009) suggest interesting and non-traditional methods for second language learning using the folkloric genre. At the same time, interest toward the natural acquisition of the Romani language is increasing. H. Kyuchukov and S. Samuilov (2011), in a study with 20 Roma parents from Bulgaria with an infant CDI (8-16 months) and 20 with a toddler CDI (16-30 months), found out that normally developing Roma children follow the path of children learning any other language. Other studies investigated the importance of the mother tongue in the cognitive development of Roma children and the acquisition of the theory of mind (H. Kyuchukov, 2013, 2010).

The present study has the goal to find out how much Roma children know about the grammatical categories in Romani and whether they are able to apply the known grammatical rules to words they have never heard. Another important question I attempt to answer is as follows: Are the children equipped with the ability to learn new grammatical rules in their mother tongue?

Actually, this study was inspired by the research of some American psycholinguists who recently developed tests for the language assessment of Afro-American English, Arabic, Chinese, and the Xhosa language (from South Africa). Using the methodology of Hirsh-Pasek, Kohankoff, Newcombe, and de Villiers (2005), a new test for the language assessment of the Romani language

was developed. The authors of the test for Romani are H. Kyuchukov and J. de Villiers. It was developed in 2013 and is not yet standardized. It is used to test Roma children from different European countries. This test is necessary, because there are no publications on the knowledge of Romani in children between three and six years old. There is no systematic, scientific information about Roma children's level of knowledge of different grammatical categories in Romani. So, the study here brings new scientific information about Romani as a mother tongue of Roma children.

Methodology

The study involved Roma children from the village of Rosen in southeast Bulgaria, near the city of Burgas. The children were between the age of three and six years old. Their number, age, and gender are given in Table 8.1.

	3–4 years old	4–5 years old	5–6 years old
Range	3;0–3;11	4;0–4;11	5;0–6;0
Mean age	3;6	4;8	5;5
Boys	3	4	4
Girls	7	6	6
Total	10	10	10

Table 8.1. Number, age, and gender of the children in the study

The test used in this study was specifically developed for evaluating the knowledge of Romani grammatical categories. The following subtests were developed, coming to a total of 80 items:

Test 1 – Wh-questions
Test 2 – Wh-complements
Test 3 – Passive verbs
Test 4 – Repetition of sentences
Test 5 – Possessiveness
Test 6 – Aspect
Test 7 – Tense
Test 8 – Fast noun mapping
Test 9 – Fast adjective mapping

Results

The children successfully performed eight of the tests. Only one test, Test 4 – Repetition, was not performed by the children. It seems the sentences for repetition were too complicated for them.

Test 1 concerns wh-questions. In Romani, the wh-sentences usually contain two or three wh-words at the beginning of the sentence. For example, the question that can be rendered in English as "Who eats what?" in Romani has the following syntactic structure: "WHO WHAT EATS?" (*Kon so xal?*). Out of the eight items, six have two wh-words and two have three wh-words, as in the following example: *Kon soske pala kaste nashel?* (WHO, WHY, AFTER WHOM RUNS?).

The results of the children are presented in the following graph, Figure 8.1.

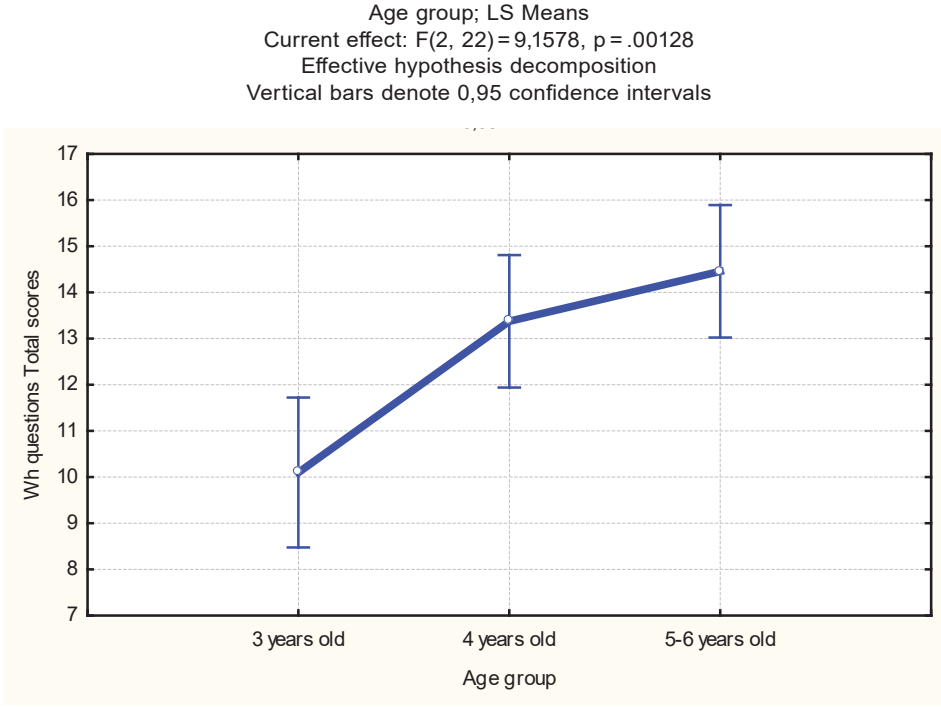


Figure 8.1. Results of Test 1 - Wh-questions

As one can see from Figure 8.1, there are statistically significant differences between the groups performing this test (F (2,22) = 9,1578; p =, 00128). The younger children, those between three and four years old, could answer the sentences which started with two wh-words, but they had difficulties answering those with three wh-words. The children older than four years old could answer these kind of questions, and after the age of five, they did not have any difficulties.

Test 2 contains long-form wh-questions with complement sentences. The following are example sentences asked to the children in Romani:

The mother said/told her son to get her a big pot, but he got her a big glass instead. What did the mother tell her son to get?

I daj akherdas pe čheske te anel lake bari tenžera, ama o antadas lake bari čaška.
So akherdas i daj pe čhaeske te antel lake?

The results of the children show that there are no statistically significant differences between the age groups of the children: 59% of the three to four year olds, 68% of the four to five year olds, and 77% of the five to six year olds successfully performed this test. It can easily be seen that with the increase in age, the percentages increase as well.

Test 3 is concerned with passive verbs in Romani and measures the degree to which the children understand sentences such as:

"The father was kissed by the girl."
O dad sines čhumindo o čhijatar.

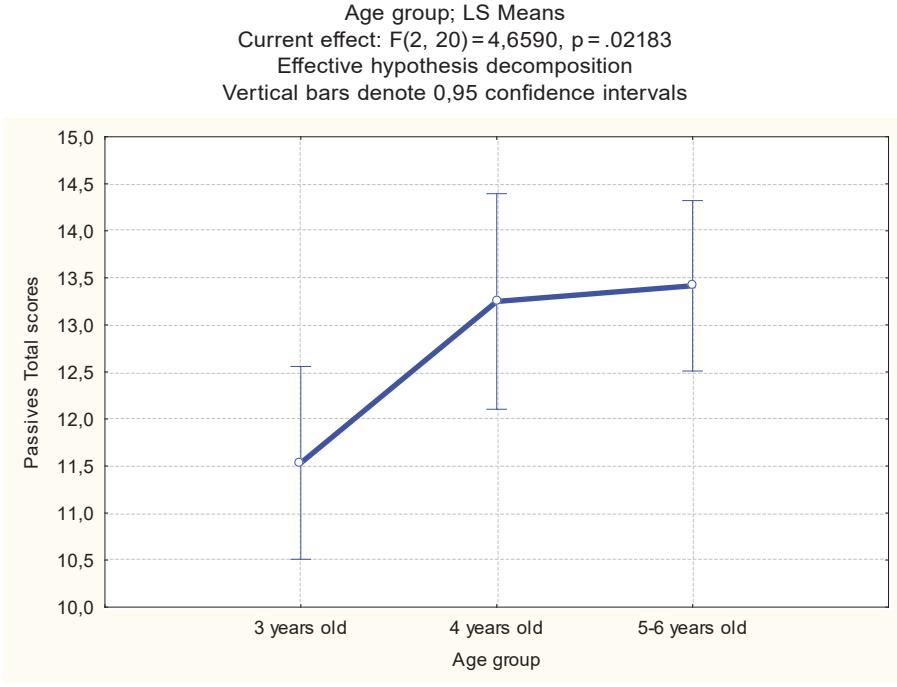


Figure 8.2. Results of Test 3 - Passive verbs

In this case, the children were presented with three different pictures in which the girl kisses the father, the father kisses the girl, and the father kisses a baby in the presence of the girl. The findings are shown in Figure 8.2.

The differences between the children's performance in the test are significant ($F(2.20) = 4.6590$, $p = .02183$). However, as can be seen, there are no differences between the four to five and five to six-year-old children's performance of this test. The children understand passive verbs perfectly well by the age of four.

As has already been said, the performance of Test 4 was not successful. However, I can say that the favorite test of the children was Test 5 - Possessiveness. There were no statistically significant differences in the performance of the groups, but 82% of the three to four year olds, 96% of the four to five year olds, and 98% of the five to six year olds were able to figure out and correctly use the morphemes which mark possessiveness in the Romani language, applying them to the new unknown subjects and objects of both genders:

> "Look, there are two horses. They have balloons. These balloons.....(are the horses balloons)"
> *Dikh kate si duj grasta. Len si baloya Kakala baloya.....(o grastenge baloya)*

The sentence below illustrates the same rules but with unknown words, subjects, and objects:

> "This is boho. He has a suki. This is.....(boho's suki)."
> *Kaka o bohos. Les si suki. Kaka.....(o bokoskori suki)*

In the next test, Test 6 - Aspect, there were also no statistically significant differences between the performance of the groups: 47% of the three to four and four to five-year-old children and 63% of the five to six-year-old children performed this test correctly. The difficulty with this test is that the children have to use the complete and incomplete action with totally new verbs which do not exist in Romani. For example, the child should know how to correctly say when the action is complete or incomplete by looking at the pictures, and to be able to figure out which morphemes to use in order to apply Romani aspectuality rules to totally unknown verbs. This is illustrated by the following sentence:

> "While the boy was sitting at the fire his brother x-ed/was x-ing the river."
> *Žikate o čho bešela paš i jag o phal kretindas / kretinelas opral lenatar.*

There are no statistically significant differences between the groups performing Test 7 – Tense, either: 64% of three to four year olds, 63% of four to five year

olds, and 77% of five to six year olds successfully performed the test. Similarly to the aspect test, here the children had to use the three tenses (present, future, and past) with unknown verbs. For example:

> "This man knows how to.....novel verb – Pres. T. Yesterday he did the same."
> "Yesterday he……(novel verb- Past T.)"
> *Kaka rom žanna sar te kreminel Ič o kerdas saštoto.*
> *Ič o.....(kremindas)*

Test 8 is a fast mapping noun test and, in the performance of the test, the children showed not only statistical differences between age groups, but also between gender. The next two figures, Figure 8.3 and Figure 8.4, show the children's performance of the test.

Graph 8.3 shows that the girls are much better than the boys at their performance of the test. The differences between the boys and the girls are statistically different: F (1,16) = 6, 1538, p = .02461.

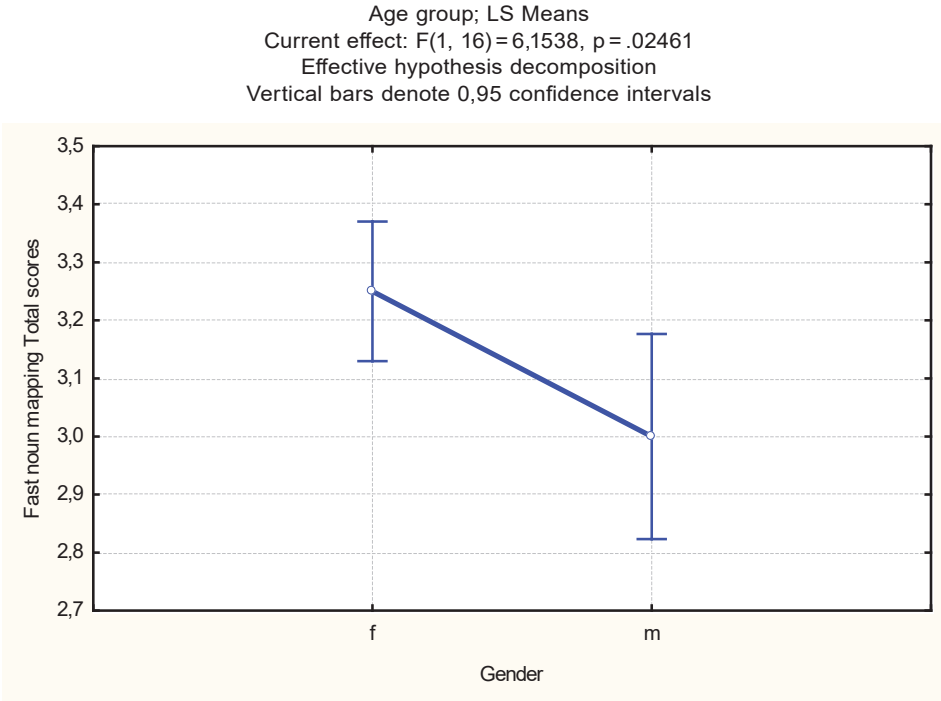


Figure 8.3. Gender differences in performing Test 8 – Fast noun mapping

The groups' performances of the test are shown in Graph 8.4. It is clear that with the increase in age, the level of knowledge of the children increases as well.

The children were able to easily figure out the new noun even though there was another noun with the same color.

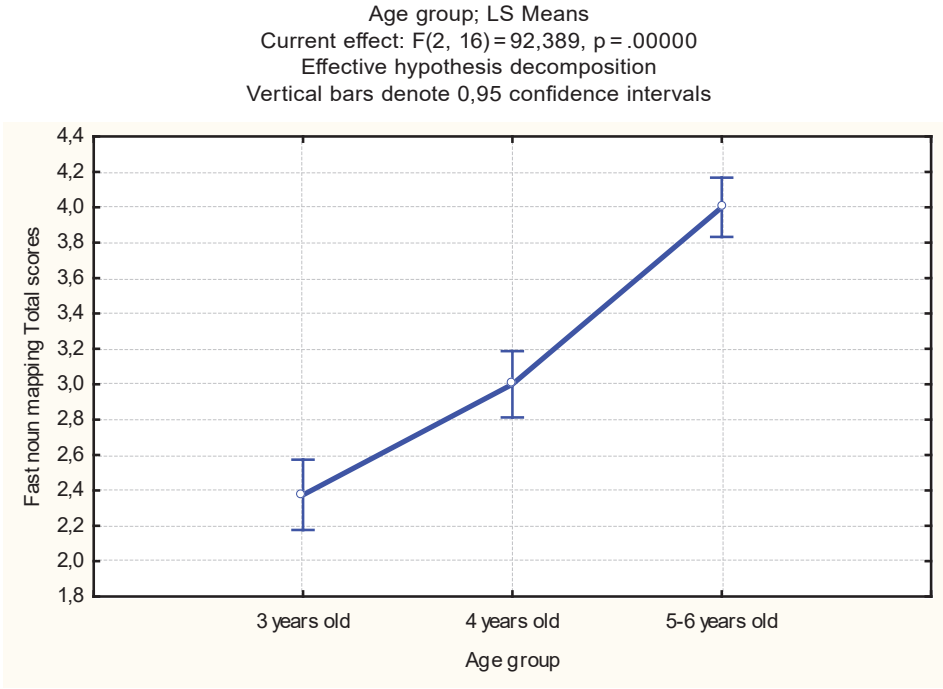


Figure 8.4. Results of Test 8 - Fast noun mapping

Example:

> "See here there is a white blepi. Show me the white blepi."
> *Blepi* is the new, unknown, not-existing word in Romani.

In two-way ANOVA analyses, it is shown that there is an interaction between the factors of age and gender: F (2,16) = 5,7345, p = .01325. There are differences in the performance of the test between three and four-year-old boys and girls, but by the age of four to five, the differences disappear. This is shown in Figure 8.5.

In the last test, Test 9 – Fast adjective mapping, the children also perform very well, and the results show statistically significant differences between the groups. Similarly to Test 8, in the performance of Test 9 again the girls score better than the boys, as shown in Figure 8.6. The differences between the two gender groups are statistically significant: F (1,18) = 4, 6693, p = .04443.

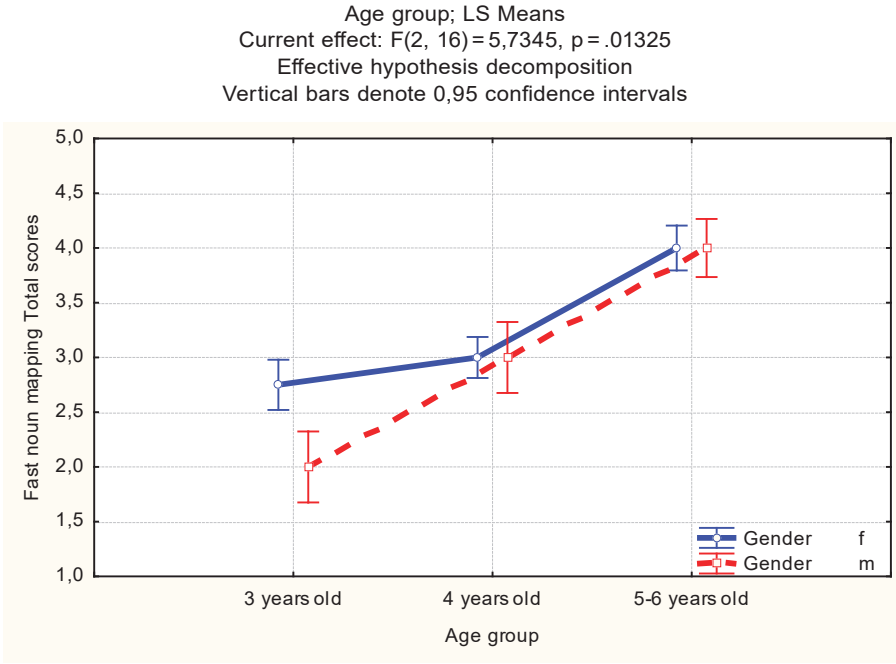


Figure 8.5. Two-way interaction between the factors of age and gender in Test 8 – Fast noun mapping

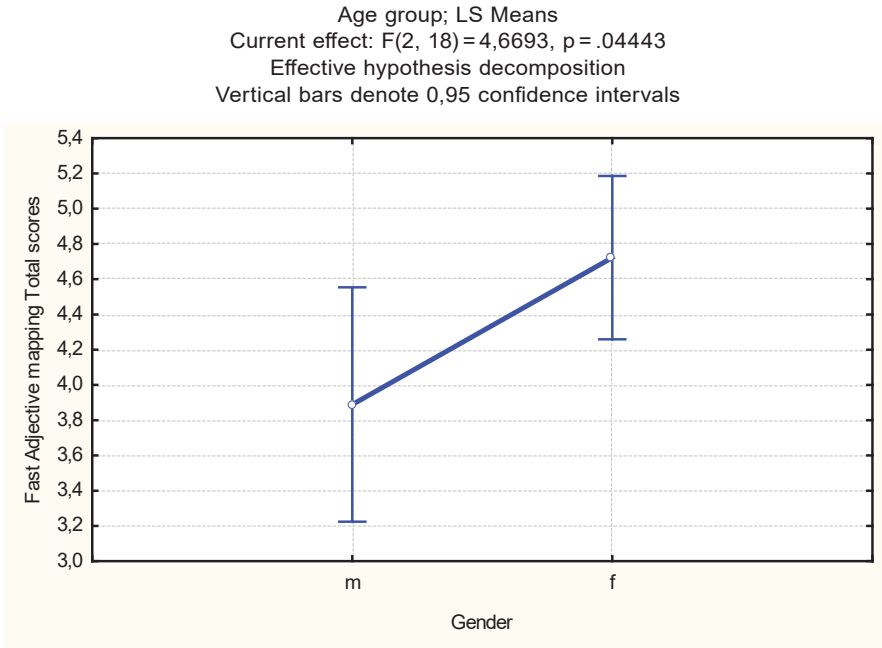


Figure 8.6. Gender differences in performing Test 9 – Fast adjective mapping

There are also statistical differences between the different age groups performing this test: F (2.18) = 4.5683, p = .02486. The results are presented in Figure 8.7.

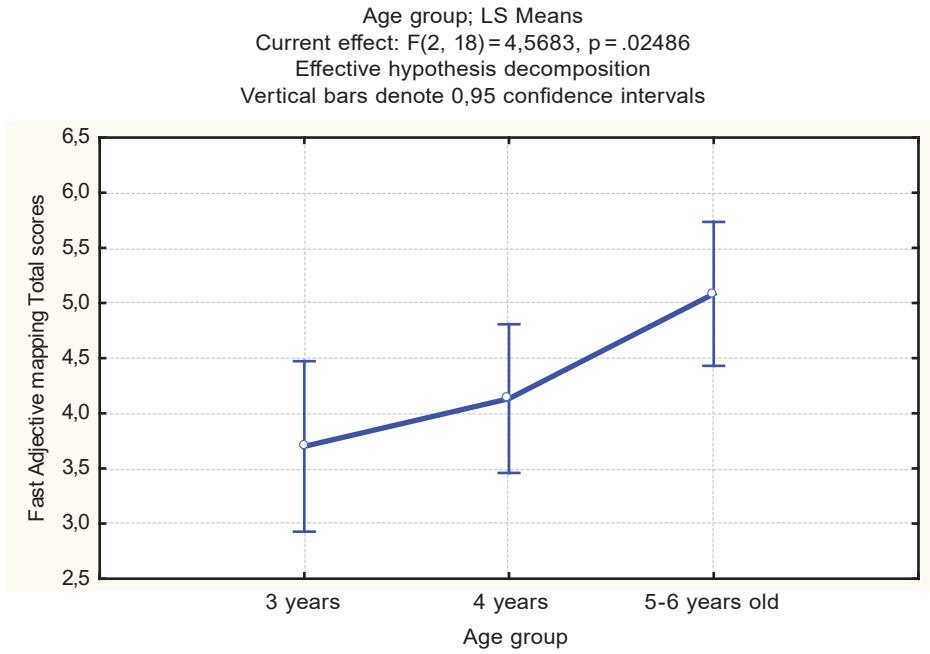


Figure 8.7. Results of Test 9 - Fast adjective mapping

Test 9 contains new adjectives which do not exist in Romani, and the children have the task to find the correct adjective. For example:

> "Look what we have here: a donkey, a cat, and a dog. This color is *patravali*.
> Where is *patravali*- m……(the dog)"

Knowing the gender of the objects, the child has the task to figure out with which noun the adjective collocates and to use it in a correct way. As can be seen from the graph above, the children also obtained high rates of success in this test.

Conclusion

In all the eight tests, Roma children show that they learn the grammatical categories in Romani between the age of three and four. What is more, they are also able to apply the rules of Romani grammar to words which they have never heard. This finding is extremely important, because it is an indicator that the children are able to learn new words and new grammatical rules in their mother tongue – Romani. Romani language assessment is an important process, because it shows that Roma children go through the same processes as any other normally developing children while learning their mother tongue, and this is something which has not been known until now. There are grammatical categories which are acquired and learned early, and there are other categories which are learned at a later stage, as is the case in other languages such as English, German, French, and Russian.

Unfortunately, in many East European countries with high concentrations of Roma, there is no instruction offered for Romani as mother tongue. Romani is not taken as an asset but as exactly the opposite; kindergartens and primary schools think that a better knowledge of Romani is an obstacle for learning the official language. Unfortunately, there are no mechanisms which show how to use the knowledge from L1 in the educational process of L2. There is a need for the educators to change the methodology of teaching the official language – the knowledge of Romani as mother tongue should be included in the educational process if we really would like Roma children to be successful in school.

CHAPTER 9

Cultural-ecological theory and the language education of Roma children

Introduction

After World War II, the Roma in all Eastern European countries were resettled by force in ghetto-type settlements and their nomadic life was forbidden. The settlements were usually located outside of the towns and/or villages or at the peripheries. In the 1960s and 1970s, the governments built schools and kindergartens for Roma children. The initiative behind these schools was very progressive at the beginning, however, later the schools became a place of segregation for Roma children, and they received low-quality education compared to non-Roma children educated in mainstream schools. In the early 2000s, Roma organizations and Roma activists in Europe began a struggle against the existence of these schools and tried to integrate the Roma children in mainstream schools where they could study together with majority children. However, the results of these efforts were not positive. In the 21st century, the segregated schools still exist in most Eastern European countries: the children do not have access to high-quality education nor to books and other facilities which could help make the educational process successful. The educational staff, in most cases, lack the specific training necessary to work in these types of schools, and the schools and kindergartens, as well as the ghettoized settlements, still exist in Eastern European countries.

Life in the ghetto settlements is very intense. The community life is well organized. The Roma develop all kinds of internal 'institutions.' The children acquire knowledge in the Romani language as a mother tongue from a very early age, and, thanks to the informal 'community education,' they learn about the value system of the community, exactly as it is in other ethnic communities

(Akande, 2007). The children participate in all forms of community life. In the Roma community, everyone is obliged to take care of the children, to play and joke with them, to teach them songs, dance with them, or to tell them fairytales. So, by the age of five, the Roma children, due to contact with different adults with different registers, have a good knowledge of the Romani language and the structure and function of the community. It is known that, in general, the type of family influences the children's academic success (Han, 2006; Kyuchukov, 2014). Han (2006) compares non-Hispanic white children and children from Latin-American regions who have lower reading and math scores with children of Asian regions who have higher reading and math scores. The migrant children may have either higher (e.g., children from East Asia) or lower scores (e.g., children from Mexico) by first grade. According to Han, the child and family characteristics play a key role in the differences in children's academic achievements. Home, school, and neighborhood environments may also matter, but to a lesser extent.

The Roma in Bulgaria arrived as migrants some eight to nine centuries ago, coming originally from India. However, only in the last 60-70 years have successive Bulgarian governments attempted to integrate Roma, using different methods. Despite educational measures, the Roma are still marginalized and excluded; they face difficulties with integration into Bulgarian society. The main reason for such a situation is the education the Roma children receive in the ghetto-type schools (Kyuchukov & New, 2016).

The research question which this study seeks to answer are as follows:

> What is the knowledge of first-grade Roma children concerning L1 and L2 vocabulary in ghetto-type schools in Bulgaria and how does their knowledge substantiate or invalidate Ogbu's cultural-ecological (CE) theory?

Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Theory

According to Ogbu (2014), the communities transmit to their children the cognitive skills through various techniques of socialization: "children are socialized to acquire the cognitive skills of pattern of intelligence that exist already in their culture because their culture requires it; it is functional in the culture" (p. 366). Ogbu writes that the minorities who are doing well are those who stay close to their ancestral cultural practice in socialization. He systematized his observations in a theory which he calls "cultural-ecological theory," which explains the minority children's failure in the educational system. In a number of publications, Ogbu (1978, 1982, 1990) describes the cultural-ecological theory. It is con-

nected with minority students' performance. He writes that two sets of factors influence minority school performance: how the society treats minority group children and how the children respond to how the school treats them. "The theory further posits that differences in school performance between immigrant and nonimmigrant minorities are partly due to differences in their community forces" (Ogbu, 1990, p.156).

His typology of autonomous, immigrant, and caste-like minorities, his concepts of primary and secondary cultural differences, as well as his views regarding the importance of a group's cultural frame of reference and community forces for educational outcomes will be examined here, specifically with regard to the Roma minority in Bulgaria.

The fact that there are minority groups that achieve less in terms of schooling in various societies gave him the basis to distinguish different types of minority groups. Autonomous minorities have a specific ethnic, linguistic, religious, or cultural identity (for example the Jews, Amish, and Mormons in the US). They might be victims of prejudice, but they are not "subordinated" in the social, economic, or political system. Immigrant minorities became part of a large society on a voluntary basis. They acculturate in an additive process (accommodation without assimilation) by overcoming language differences and differences between their cultural systems and that of the dominant host society. Over time, the primary cultural differences and even experiences of discrimination do not prevent their efforts to integrate into mainstream society.

Caste-like minorities (African Americans, Native Americans) were brought into US society involuntarily, through slavery or colonization.

> Suffering from prolonged discrimination by the dominant society, these groups have developed secondary cultural differences and an oppositional cultural frame of reference. Cultural and language differences between minority group members and the dominant society arose after groups became an involuntary minority. For many group members, these differences are regarded as markers of identity to be maintained. Certain forms of behavior, symbols, and meanings that are characteristics of the dominant group are seen as being inappropriate or undesirable. This tendency, which Ogbu calls "cultural inversion," compels minority members to choose between conforming to their own group's model of behavior or the model of the dominant group. While autonomous minorities and voluntary minorities (after a period of a transition in which they have to overcome language and cultural barriers), for the most part, achieve similar or even better academic results compared to the majority, involuntary minorities, in general, have little academic success (Luciak, 2004, p. 360).

Foster (2004) analyzes Ogbu's CE theory as a theory of minority student performance, stating that Ogbu also worked toward a global and cross-cultural theory of minority education. According to Foster,

> Ogbu felt that the impact of community forces upon minority responses to schooling was consistently understudied. […] Given Ogbu's idea that the community and system forces are both important for understanding minority responses to schooling, it is important to note that, even as he focused on maladapted cultural norms and values of involuntary minorities, he did not assume that there was no discrimination against minorities. Nor did he assume that discrimination did not have direct negative effect upon minority academic outcomes. (Foster, 2014, p. 371).

According to Ogbu (1985), the cultural and language differences between minority and majority groups led to learning difficulties. Speaking about language, he even takes into account the differences in dialect as cultural differences among the minority groups.

In Russian psychology, Vygotsky's work (1978) shows how children learn through active communication with adults. Human beings interact with their worlds through cultural artifacts, tools, and symbols, including language. Language from a cultural-historical perspective is considered the leading tool for learning and human development and is said to mediate individuals' activity in the valued practices of their communities across a lifetime (Cole, 1996).

The works of Vygotsky, Cole, and Ogbu have largely the same basis: the authors show the importance of communication with adults in the process of cognitive and language development. All of them use culturally specific symbols as a tool for development and learning. Ogbu's work is specifically focused on minority/migrant and refugee children who are somehow excluded from the society. Ogbu shows the importance of community support for the children's school success.

Romani culture is not a homogeneous culture; there are many groups with different status in the Roma societies around the world. The Romani language is not a standardized/codified language. It contains numerous different dialects. The dialects have different status among Roma groups. However, Roma are discriminated against in many societies without it being taken into account to which group of Roma they belong, to which socioeconomic class they belong, and which dialect they speak. For many in the majority society, the Roma are essentialized as being "lazy, dirty, and criminals." Within the vortex of such prejudices, they do not care about real individuals, and all Roma groups face all types of discrimination in the society and in various institutions, most particularly as children and teens within the educational systems available to them.

Although Roma have different status in different European countries, Roma children face discrimination, widely placed segregation, or are channeled into so-called "special schools" (schools for mentally retarded children), and in most countries they show very low school achievement results. This is illustrated in a number of publications by Kyuchukov (2011) on Bulgarian Roma children, by Kwadrans (2010) on Polish Roma children, by Balvin & Vavrekova (2013) and Samko & Kapalkova (2014) on Slovak Roma children, and by Kaleja & Zazulkova (2012) on the situation of Czech Roma children. There is only one publication that applies Ogbu's CE theory to Roma education (Bruggemann 2014), and it seeks to 'test' and non-substantiate certain aspects of Ogbu's theory. The author interviewed 10 Spanish Roma (Gitano) university students. Due to the historical development of the Roma, the Spanish Gitano are not a typical case of school success or its absence. Most of the Gitano in Spain no longer speak the language of Gitano (Caló - Spanish Romani dialect). They only speak Spanish. In school, they do not have any language or dialect differences from majority children, and this makes their education much easier and more successful. The Roma students are well integrated in the school. Although Bruggemann says that the students do not abandon their culture and identity, actually, they do not face such a degree of segregation or marginalization as the Roma children from other European countries, like Bulgaria or Slovakia. Interviews with 10 students cannot provide enough evidence to substantiate or disprove a theory or to criticize any ideas and make generalizations. The application of Ogbu's CE theory in the case of Spanish Roma is non-conclusive and hardly useful in analyzing the actual problems of Roma minority children at school or their later success in society in much of Eastern Europe.

The Study

The aim of the study described here was to examine the richness of vocabulary of Roma children in first grade in a Bulgarian segregated school based in the largest urban Roma ghetto in Bulgaria, Fakulteta, in Sofia. In the study, 70 first-grade students between the ages of six and seven were tested using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, which measures the richness of vocabulary in their mother tongue, Romani, and in their second language, Bulgarian. The knowledge of the children pertaining to singular and plural nouns and verbs was measured. The children were tested twice – at the beginning and end of the 2013–2014 school year. The statistical analyses were done with ANOVA.

Working together with the teacher in the class was also a Roma assistant teacher. The goal of the Roma assistant teacher is to do additional work with the children in after-school, extra-curricular activities, using both Romani and

Bulgarian as languages of instruction. The language of instruction in the school is Bulgarian, while at home and among themselves, the children speak Romani.

The school is based in the Fakulteta ghetto, and 100% of the children are of Roma origin. The total number of the students in grades 1–12 was 1,200 at the time of the study. In the mainstream Bulgarian schools, there are no Roma assistant teachers. Even if there are Roma children in the mainstream classes, the Roma assistant teacher is not there to supplement instruction.

The Results

The Nouns in Singular

During the first testing at the beginning of the school year, the children displayed a low level of knowledge of the nouns in both languages (only 37% of the lexemes). During the second testing, done at the end of the school year, the results were much better (45% of the words tested). The differences between the first and the second testing are statistically significant: $F\ (1.68) = 22.26$, $p < 0.0000$, as is shown in Figure 9.1.

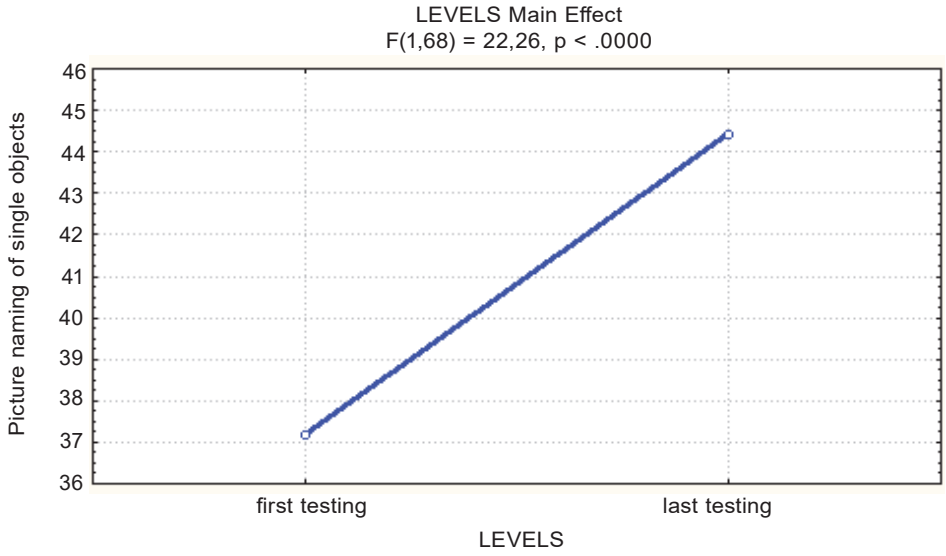


Figure 9.1. Level of Knowledge of Nouns in Singular

Performing a factorial analysis, we observed the influence of the factors 'language' and 'testing' on the results of the children. As is shown in figure 9.2, during the first testing, the children had better results in Romani than in Bulgarian. During

the second testing, the results in Bulgarian were better than those in Romani. The better results in knowledge of Bulgarian nouns (35% at the beginning vs. 46% at the end of the study) are due to the additional work of the Romani assistants during the after-school activities. However, there was no such notable increase in the results in their mother tongue, i.e., Romani nouns. Literacy in Romani language does not exist. The students do not learn to read and write in Romani, and they do not learn much about Romani grammar; they have no exposure books in Romani at home or in the community. The difference in the knowledge of the nouns between Romani and Bulgarian at the beginning of the study is statistically significant: $F(1.68) = 6.27$, $p < 0.0147$, but the differences are not statistically significant during the second testing. The children's knowledge regarding singular nouns in Romani and in Bulgarian during the second testing is almost the same (43% in Romani vs. 46% in Bulgarian).

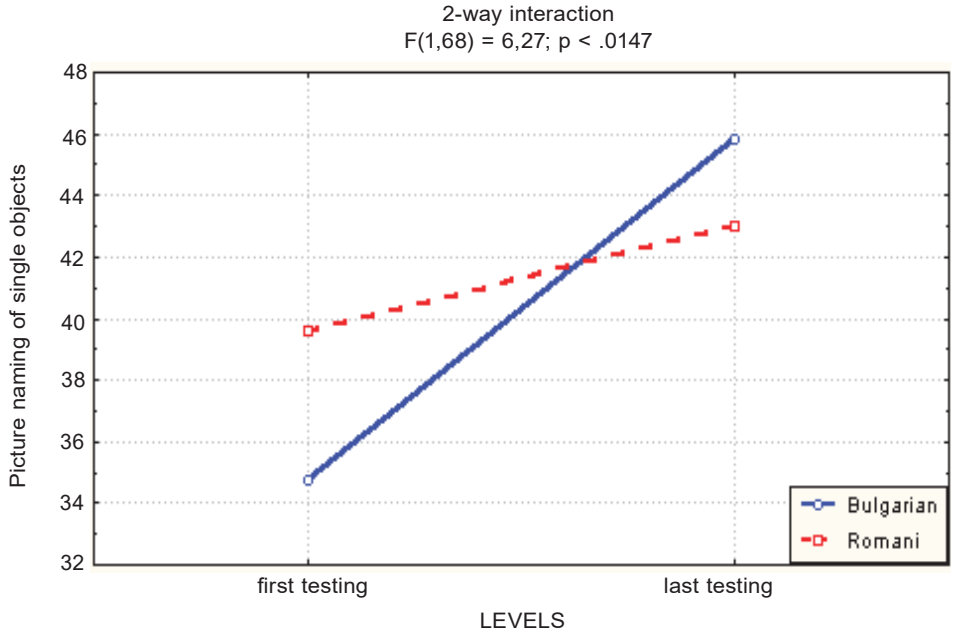


Figure 9.2. The Influence of the Factors 'Language' and 'Testing' on the Level of Knowledge of the Noun – Singular

The Nouns in Plural

Figure 9.3 shows the results of the testing of the nouns in plural. Similarly to the previous results of singular nouns, the children show worse results during the first testing. During the second testing, the results are much higher and the differences are statistically significant, $F(1.68) = 21.53$, $p < 0.0000$, between the first and second testing.

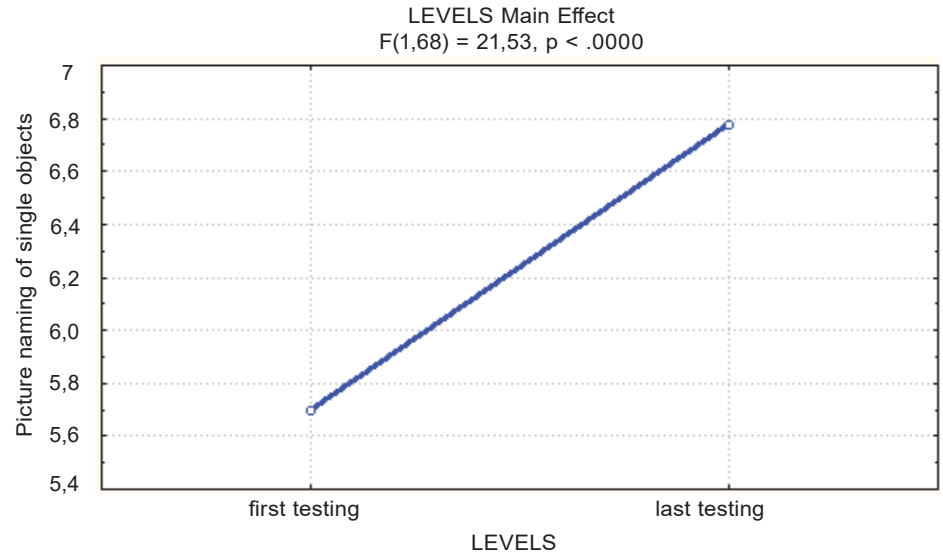


Figure 9.3. Level of Knowledge of Nouns in Plural

The factors 'language' and 'testing' have a significant influence on the results of the children when testing their knowledge regarding nouns in plural. Again, during the first testing, the children show better results in Romani in naming the plural nouns. The differences between the knowledge of Romani and Bulgarian nouns in plural during the first testing are statistically significant: F (1.68) = 4.09,

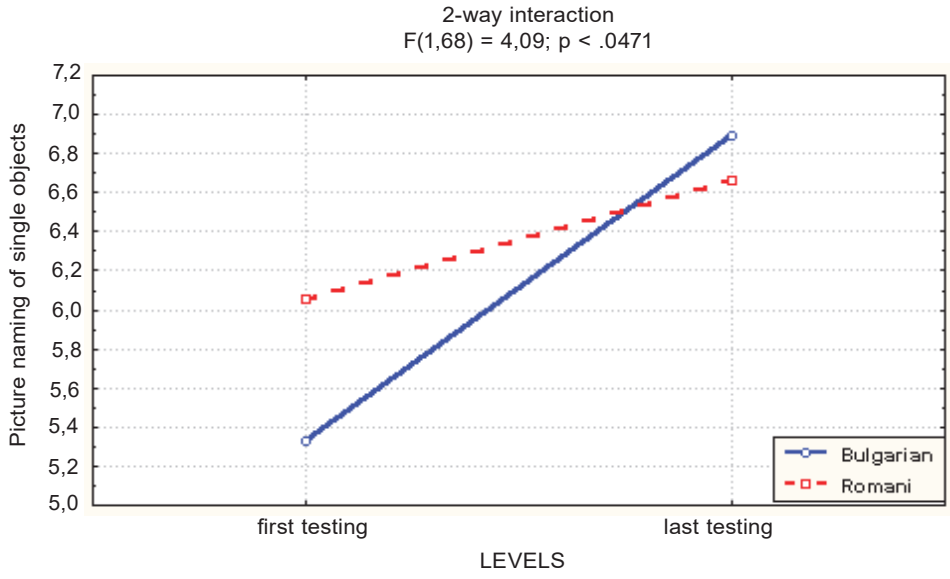


Figure 9.4. The Influence of the Factors 'Language' and 'Testing' on the Level of Knowledge of the Noun – Plural

$p < 0.047$. During the second testing, the children have better results in both languages and there is no statistical difference between the Romani (L1) and Bulgarian (L2) knowledge of plural nouns. These developments are shown in Figure 9.4.

The Verbs

In psycholinguistics, it is commonly recognized that verbs make up the next grammatical category acquired in language development. During the first testing, the children show better results in the Romani verbal system. The knowledge of Bulgarian verbs is weaker. The differences are significant ($F(1.68)=4.63$, $p<0.0349$). During the second testing, the results in Bulgarian are better than the results in Romani. It is interesting to see that children's knowledge of the Romani verb system does not increase. That shows most probably that, by the age of six to seven, the children already know most of the common, everyday verbs in their mother tongue. These findings are shown in Figure 9.5.

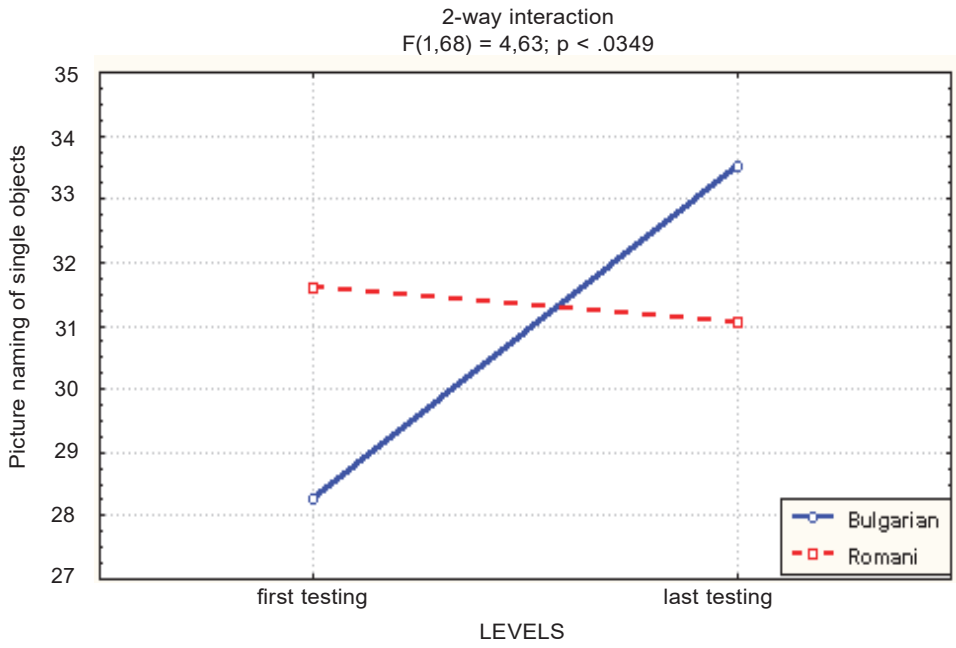


Figure 9.5. The Influence of the Factors 'Language' and 'Testing' on the Level of Knowledge of Verbs

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the study show that the children made progress in learning the nouns in singular and plural in both L1 and L2 between the two testings. They increased their knowledge of verbs between the first and second testing in their L2, Bulgarian, but their knowledge of the verbal system in their mother tongue, Romani, did not change. The differences in the results between the first and second testing and between the languages, Romani (L1) and Bulgarian (L2), are statistically significant. It seems that the presence of a Roma assistant teacher had a positive influence on the results of the children in their official language and, to some extent, helped the children develop their knowledge of their mother tongue.

Comparing the results of the Roma children from testing Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory with the cultural-historical model of Vygotsky, where communication and support from the family, community, and society play an important role in the success of the children in school, it is clear that the majority society does not care about the segregated schools and performance levels there. The community and the parents are the ones who really care and who wish for their children to have a good education. The local NGOs based in the ghetto settlement, through projects and community organization, endeavor to increase the quality of the educational process in the local school.

The initiative of Roma NGOs to bus the Roma children to mainstream schools populated predominantly with majority children did not yield the expected results, because the society at large retains very negative attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward Roma children in mixed schools. This serves to substantiate Ogbu's CE that postulates that the presence of an aggressive and discriminatory school environment, even if the minority family is supportive to their children, will negatively influence the school success of minority children. When a friendly and supportive school environment was available, where Roma assistant teachers were present, the children showed much better results.

In one of my visits to India, I visited the Muslim neighborhood in the city of Hyderabad. Approximately one million Urdu-speaking minority Muslims live in that district. I visited two schools located approximately 200 meters from one another, on the same street. The children in both schools had the same ethnic and socioeconomic status, the teachers were from the same community and shared a common language, culture, and religion. The first school was a state school and the second was a private school. The children from the state school showed low results in the state exams and the children from the private school always achieved better results on the state exams. The two schools were absolutely the same in regard to interior design and access to facilities. The only differences between the two schools were the methods used by teachers in teaching the

children. The state school used more traditional teaching methods, which took away some of the freedom of the children. The private school used more interactive and innovative methods of teaching, and, importantly, they had assistant teachers in the class, and the children enjoyed much more freedom during the educational process.

The method we used with Roma children in the ghetto-type school in Sofia, Bulgaria, was non-traditional, innovative, and interactive and used the children's language and culture as a motivating factor for learning. The presence of supportive additional staff in the classroom – importantly, from the same culture and religious background –also helped the children see the school as a friendly and supportive space for studying and learning. The study also shows that there is a need for a training program at the university level for 'assistant teachers' in Bulgaria. Some years ago such a program existed at the University of Veliko Tarnovo in Bulgaria, but, because of political reasons, the program was shut down. This, we would argue, is a structural guarantee for the educational success of Roma children. Additional research on such factors is necessary.

CHAPTER 10

Bulgarian and Slovak as a second language for Roma children

Introduction

Romani belongs to the group of Indo-European languages and particularly to the family of new Indian languages. It was formed as a language system outside of India. It has been in contact with different European languages for more than 800 years and many languages influenced its formation, such as Armenian, Greek, Romanian, and also some Slavic languages. The Slovak language belongs to the Slavic language family and is part of the group of West Slavic languages related to Polish and Czech. Romani and Slovak have been in contact for approximately 800 years and the languages have influenced each other greatly.

For the last several decades, Romani in Slovakia has been investigated by a number of authors: J. Lipa (1963, 1965, 1979), M. Hübschmannova (1979, 1984), M. Hübschmannova and J. Neustupny (1996), A. Racova (1999, 2007), A. Racova and J. Horecky (2000), St. Cina (2001), V. Elšik (2003), V. Bubenik (2006), E. Samko and St. Cina (2007), and M. Samko (2009). All of them present a variety of Romani in the territory of former Czechoslovakia, or they are particularly focused on the so-called Slovak Romani. Some of the publications are more complex, and others are focused on a particular grammatical category.

In this chapter, I am going to focus on the acquisition of tense system in Slovak Romani and in the official language – Slovak. Slovak Romani is the variety spoken by 'settled' Roma, whose dialect belongs to the group of non-Vlax varieties. Up until now, there has been no research done on the level of knowledge of Romani or Slovak tenses by children or by adults.

Methodology

Two groups of children – one from Bulgaria and another from Slovakia – were the subjects of this study. They were tested on their level of knowledge of the three verb tenses – present, future, and past tense – in their mother tongue, i. e., the dialect they use for everyday communication. The study involved 18 children from the village of Spišske Tomaševci, not far from the town of Spišska Nova Ves in Slovakia, who speak the Slovak Romani dialect – one of the main dialects in Slovakia. The children were tested on their comprehension and production of the three verb tenses. The age of the children was between five and six years old.

The second group consisted of 16 children from the village of Gradinarovo, not so far from the town of Provadia-Northeast and the Black Sea in Bulgaria, who were the speakers of the Xoraxano dialect – one of the major dialects in Bulgaria, which is also from the group of non-Vlax dialects. The age of the children was also between five and six years old.

All the children were investigated using the same test. The test was developed through a COST A33 project, in which the author was involved. The test has two parts: comprehension and production. Each part has nine batteries plus three batteries at the beginning of each part for the training of children.

The test contains short films (30 seconds each) which the children watch, and then a puppet asks questions. The answers from the children are written in a special form. The questions in both parts of the test are asked in the Romani language.

The comprehension and the production of the following six verbs are tested: *throwing*, *crying*, *dancing*, *sleeping*, *coughing*, and *sneezing*. The test was translated into the dialects of the children, and the comprehension and production questions asked by the puppet were in the local dialect.

Our hypothesis with the present study is that there are grammatical categories which are acquired much later by children in their first (L1) and second (L2) language and not necessarily by the age of five as is the understanding in psycholinguistics (Karmiloff-Smith, 1986).

The Results

Slovak Roma Children

In this section, we present the children's knowledge of the Slovak verb tenses in terms of their comprehension and production. The results of the Slovak children

will be compared with the results of the Bulgarian children. In Figure 10.1, the comprehension of the Slovak tenses is given.

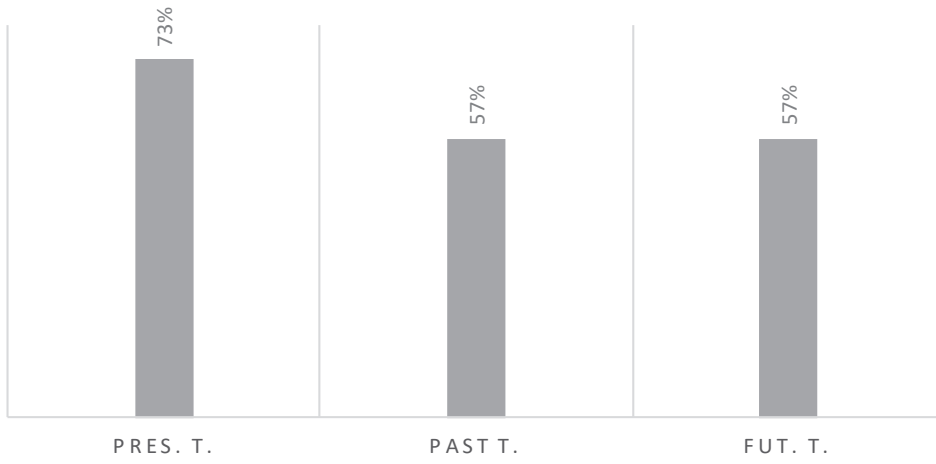


Figure 10.1. Comprehension of Slovak Tenses

The results from Figure 10.1 show that the children understand the present tense in the Slovak language much better than the future and past tenses. The present tense is understood 73% of the time, and the past and future tenses are understood 57% of the time. The differences between present tense and the past and future tenses are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

The results from the production test are given in Figure 10.2.

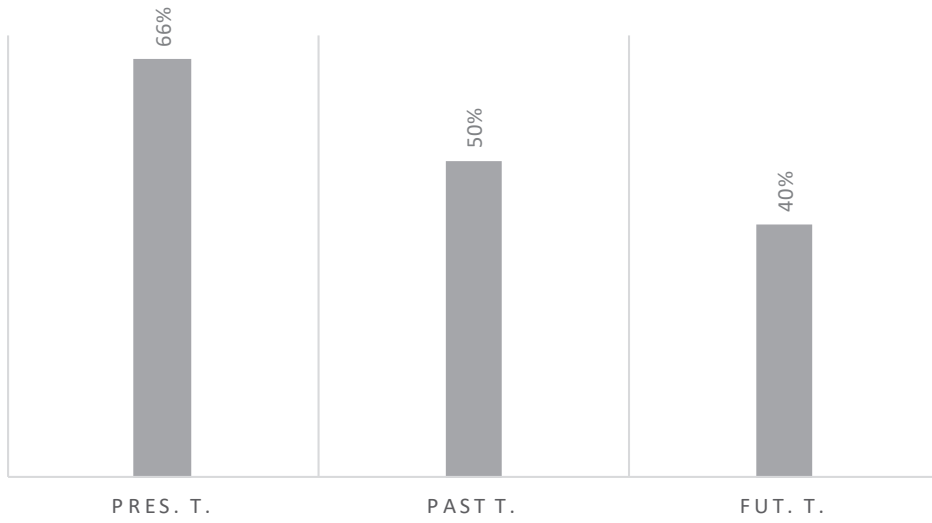


Figure 10.2. Production of Slovak Tenses

As is seen in Figure 10.2, the children have much better rates of production in present tense than in the other two tenses – past and future tenses. The children produce present tense correctly 66% of the time, past tense 50% of the time, and future tense 40% of the time. The differences between the three tenses are not significant, but the differences between the present and future tenses are significant ($p < 0.001$).

Why are the results of the children as such? One of the reasons could be due to the fact that most of the children do not know two of the verbs included in the test in Slovak: *sneezing* and *coughing*. They did not have any problems with the comprehension and production of the other verbs: *throwing*, *crying*, *dancing*, and *sleeping*. However, it could also be due to the tense system in the Romani variety spoken by the children. Let's look at the results in Romani language comprehension and production.

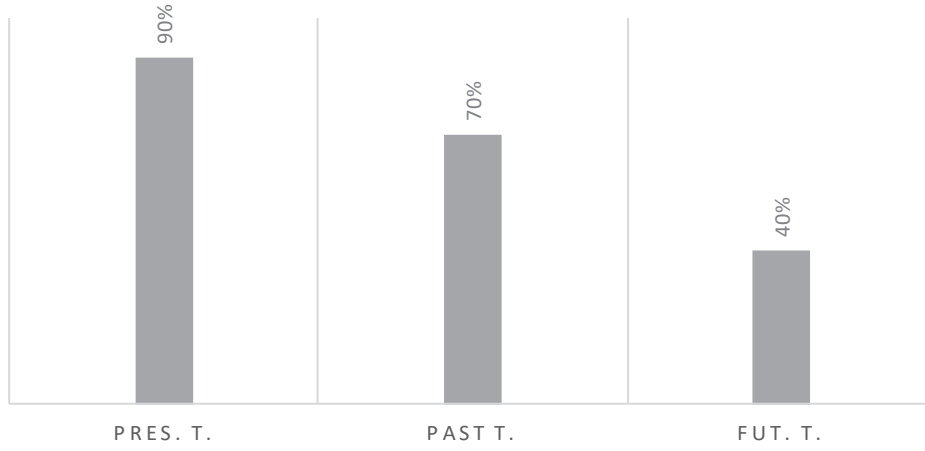


Figure 10.3. Comprehension of Slovak Romani Tenses

Figure 10.3 shows that the children also have problems with the comprehension of the Romani tenses. The children correctly comprehend 90% of the present tense, 70% of the past tense, and 40% of the future tense. The differences in the comprehension of the three tenses are significant ($p < 0.001$). Let's see what the results of the children in language production are. The results are shown in Figure 10.4.

The results show that the children correctly produce the verbs 82% of the time in the present tense, 73% in past tense, and 51% in future tense. There are significant differences between the production of the present and future tenses ($p<0.001$). The difference in the production of the present and past tenses is not significant.

Here again, the children had problems with the comprehension and production of the same two verbs: *sneezing* and *coughing*. It seems that the children aged five to six years old still do not know these two verbs in the Romani language.

They did not have problems with the comprehension and production of the other four verbs. Let us see, however, what the situation is with the comprehension and production of Bulgarian Roma children.

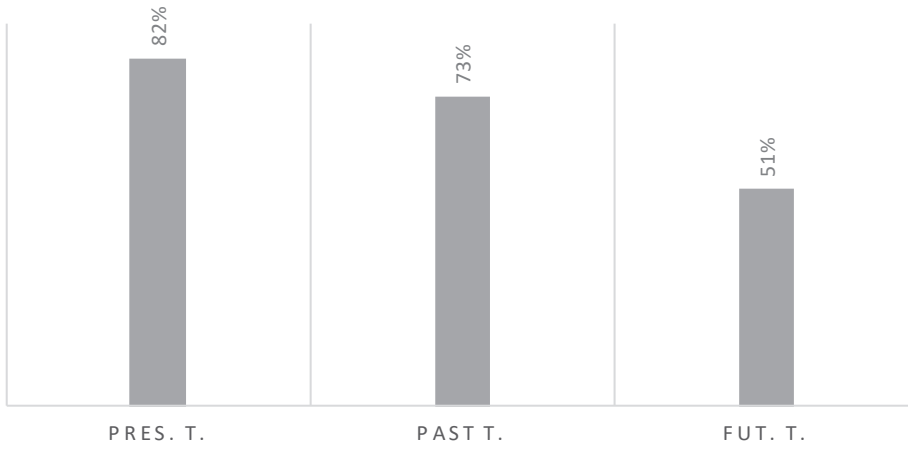


Figure 10.4. Production of Slovak Romani Tenses

Bulgarian Roma Children

Looking at the results of the comprehension of Bulgarian tenses, one can see that Bulgarian Roma children comprehend 100% of the verbs in present tense, 73% in past tense, and 90% in future tense. The differences are statistically significant between the present and past tenses ($p < 0.001$) and between the past and future tenses ($p < 0.01$). There are no statistical differences between the present and future tenses. The situation with the production of Bulgarian tenses is as follows: the children correctly produce present tense 100% of the time, past tense 53% of the time, and future tense 90% of the time. The differences are statistically significant between the three tenses ($p < 0.001$), but there are no differences between the present and future tenses.

The comprehension and production of Romani tenses are as follows: the children comprehend Romani verbs in present tense 100% of the time, 90% in past tense, and 100% in future tense. Looking at the production in Romani, the children correctly produce Roma verbs 100% of the time in present tense, 83% in past tense, and 100% in future tense. There are no statistical differences in the Romani language comprehension and production. It seems that there are equal dependences in the comprehension and production in Bulgarian and in Romani.

The Bulgarian Roma children had the same problems with the two verbs, *sneezing* and *coughing*, in both languages, but they knew the other four verbs well, just as the Slovak Romani children.

Discussion and Conclusion

The data show that the Roma children from Slovakia have problems with the acquisition of the tenses in the Slovak language (comprehension and production). It seems that the reason for this is the fact that they have problems with comprehension and production of the tenses in the Romani language as well. If we take a look at the Slovak Romani tenses, we will see that the present and the future tense are very similar; only the suffix, *-a*, in future tense differentiates it from present tense, for example, *kerav* – present tense ("I do") and *kerava* – future tense ("I will do"). It seems that, by the age of five to six years, the children still had not learned the differences well between the present and future tense in their mother tongue. Although in the Slovak language there is a particle which helps the formation of the future tense, very often the particle is not used with the verb itself; instead a different form of the verb is used, for example, *robim* – present tense ("I do") and *urobim* – future tense ("I will do").

The Bulgarian Romani dialect has a particle *kan,* which helps children differentiate present tense from future tense, for example, *kerav* – present tense ("I do") and *kan kerav* – future tense ("I will do"). Such a particle exists in the Bulgarian language as well – *ще* ("will"), for example, *правя* – present tense ("I do") and *ще правя* – future tense ("I will do"). It seems the particle in both languages helps the Bulgarian Roma children more easily learn the two tenses.

However, the children from both groups – Slovak and Bulgarian – show low results in comprehension and production of past tense in Romani and in the official languages of the countries. It seems that past tense is acquired later in their development.

In an earlier study, M. Hübschmannova (1979) reported that 41.1% of the children from Podskalka in East Slovakia make mistakes in the correct use of verb tenses in the Slovak language at the age of 10. In our study, the children are much younger, and this is why the number of errors they make is much higher.

A. Karmiloff-Smith (1986) argues that the existing understanding in psycholinguistics is that a child's cognitive development is completed by the age of five. "The fact that many fundamental cognitive changes have still to take place after the age of 5, up to age 14, led psycholinguistic interpreters of Piagetian theory to hypothesize that the child's linguistic competence must also reflect these changes beyond the age of 5" (Karmiloff-Smith, 1986, p. 456). The findings of this study were that, in acquiring the second language (L2) verb system, Roma children's language development is very much influenced by their first language system (L1). It seems that, by the age of five to six years old, Roma children still cannot comprehend and produce the verb tenses in L2 if they have not acquired them in L1.

The research done by M. Hubshmannova with 10-year-olds and the results of the present study prove the hypotheses of Karmiloff-Smith very well, which suggests that some grammatical categories are acquired after the age of five. It seems that in the language development of Roma children, some verbs, like *sneezing* and *coughing*, are acquired much later in Romani as a mother tongue (and it does not matter where the Roma children are from nor what kind of dialect they speak), and that these verbs are learned during a later stage in their second language (Slovak and Bulgarian). On the other hand, the Roma dialects facilitate the acquisition of verb tenses in the official language of the country where Roma live, if, in their language systems, they have grammatical phenomena similar to the grammatical phenomena of the official language. Some of the verb tenses in Romani and in Slovak/Bulgarian are learned later than at the ages of five and six.

CHAPTER 11

Reading comprehension of Roma and Bulgarian children

Introduction

The interest in second language acquisition, and more particularly the interest in the mechanism of reading, has increased during the last years. There are several factors contributing to this phenomenon. The first one is the socio-political interest of people who read in a language which is not their mother tongue. The official language of the country is not always the mother tongue of all students in primary and secondary schools in Bulgaria. However, these students are given written instructions in the official language and some of them very often do not understand the instructions.

The second factor can be defined as pedagogical. Students can lose interest in the educational process if they do not fully understand the meaning and cannot achieve a particular level of proficiency in reading. Reading comprehension is an important aspect of second language acquisition. Even nowadays when children show more interest in radio and television than in reading, reading comprehension remains the most effective means of language improvement.

The third factor stimulating the interest in the mechanisms of reading is the cognitive aspect of second language acquisition. Studying two code systems is extremely interesting. The question as to whether the processes of first and second language acquisition are parallel is very exciting. This issue attracts the attention of various scientists.

Conceiving of the cognitive aspect of reading comprehension means considering the reading process as a task of solving problems related to brain processes. Researches connected with reading comprehension are usually focused on the mechanism of brain processes.

J.R. Hayes (1989) determines the problem as a gap. According to him, when there is a gap between the place where you are and the place where you want to be, and you do not know how to jump over the gap, you have a problem. By presenting the problem as a gap, Hayes implies that, for the problem to be solved, its nature should be understood. In the cognitive process, the reader is concerned with conceptualizing the problem (that is, the material which should be understood) and solving it (that is, the process of comprehension).

Most models demonstrating reading comprehension are cognitive. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) propose a model illustrating how printed information is acquired by the reader and transmitted to different parts of the brain. Their model is based on the written text and focuses mainly on text characteristics but does not pay any attention to 'meaning.'

Another model is suggested by Just and Carpenter (1980). According to their theory, comprehension is the most important characteristics of the reading process. It should be noted that their concept of the text is more accurate than that of LaBerge and Samuels (1974). LaBerge and Samuels define the text as a set of words; Just and Carpenter argue that the text has concepts and cohesion. The model of Just and Carpenter is closer to our conception. In this model, perceiving a text is regarded as a process of understanding the meaning.

Our task, in a set of experimental psycholinguistic research into the language development of Roma children studying in bilingual conditions, was to determine to what extent they have acquired one of the most important aspects of the reading technique – text comprehension. Roma and Bulgarian students from grade one to grade four took part in the first series of experiments. The results show that the level of comprehension significantly increases from second to fourth grade. The performance of students living in the capital was the most successful. The next most successful students were from smaller cities. Students from towns obtained the lowest reading comprehension score. Children whose mother tongue is Romani obtained lower results in reading comprehension tests in comparison with students whose mother tongue is Bulgarian (Gerganov, 1997). These results point to the conclusion that students whose mother tongue is Romani should have more reading comprehension classes and that special exercises should be offered to help develop their reading skills. Methodological seminars with teachers of Roma children were held with the aim to provide them with better training. Theoretical problems in reading comprehension related to text parameters were tackled, as well as methodological strategies to be used to successfully improve reading skills and text comprehension. It is envisaged that the specialized training of teachers and their motivation to spend more time on reading comprehension exercises will contribute to an improvement of Roma students' reading skills.

The task of the described experimental research was to define the degree to which Roma students from secondary schools understand reading materials

and to determine the influence of some psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and demographic factors on their reading skills. The research measuring the reading comprehension skills of Roma students from grade five to grade eight was completed with a new series of experiments.

Preparation for the Reading Comprehension Test

We decided to include ten texts in the cloze test, which was used to evaluate the reading comprehension skills of students from grade five to eight. The texts were selected from 20 texts prepared in advance. According to experts, these texts were appropriate for students at that school age. In compliance with the devised scheme, particular words were deleted from the texts and replaced with blank spaces. During the preparation of the cloze test, one usually applies the following procedures:

- deleting every fifth, seventh, or ninth word;
- deleting a number of arbitrary words;
- deleting different parts of speech, etc.

We chose to delete words using different schemas, so that we could construct several subtests evaluating the influence of various text parameters on reading comprehension:

- subtest of nouns, measuring the role of nouns in reading comprehension;
- subtest of adjectives;
- subtest of verbs;
- subtest of connectors, defining the role of sentence connectors in reading comprehension (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *without*, *because*, etc.)
- subtest of pronouns, measuring the influence of pronouns on reading comprehension (deleted pronouns – *she*, *he*, *it*, *they*, *her*, *his*, *its*, *their*, etc.)

The main purpose of the test is to measure students' reading comprehension of a text in different experimental groups. That is why we will present only the results of the whole reading comprehension test. In comparison with the reading comprehension test devised for students from grade two to grade four, the new test is completely different and conforms to the students' level of language development in secondary schools.

Structure of the Sample

The research involved 774 students in grade five to grade eight, with different mother tongues (Bulgarian and Romani) and from various schools and residential areas. After the test had been conducted, the initial data were examined. Some students submitted their tests with several of the blanks filled in, and others had omitted whole texts. Some students filled in less than half of the blanks in different texts. Although these tests were collected by the teachers and given to research teams, they could not be included in the analysis of data. Also, a group of 80 students, while answering the questions about their name, school grade, and mother tongue, selected Turkish as their mother tongue. We decided to include their tests in the sample because they were Muslim Roma and they communicated in Turkish in their everyday life. Thus, the factor of mother tongue was determined as follows: Bulgarian, Romani, and Turkish. After specifying the details, we included the tests of 686 students in the further analysis. These students formed our representative sample. The number of male and female students was approximately equal. The number of students in grade five, six, seven, and eight slightly varied. The sample can be considered as well balanced in relation to the factors of gender and grade.

Conducting the Research

The test was administered by Bulgarian language teachers in the respective schools and grades. The teachers were instructed to distribute test booklets to the students and tell them to read the ten texts carefully and fill each blank with a suitable word. The teacher had to monitor the students, making sure they followed the instructions given at the beginning of the test and that they answered the questions about their name, school, grade, town (or village), age, and mother tongue.

The tested students understood the task correctly and did not have any problems. As was already noted, the tests of students who gave up or filled only a small number of blanks were considered invalid and were not included in the research.

Results and Discussion

The test booklets of 686 students, not including the invalid tests of the students who had omitted texts, were given to experts for assessment. For each blank filled, the student could be assigned one point for the correct response or zero points for an incorrect word or a lack of any answer. Two criteria are usually used in the assessment of a correct response in a cloze test: strict criterion, in which points are awarded only if the reader has provided the original word, and comprehension criterion, in which points are awarded if the student has chosen the original word, or if she/he has replaced it with a synonym on the condition that the meaning of the text is preserved.

We decided to apply the second criterion to our research. The maximum score of the ten texts was 209 points and the minimum was zero points; so, the scale for measuring reading comprehension ranged from zero to 209 points.

The data were processed by the computer program MICROCAT. This program enabled us to calculate the raw score and make a psychometric analysis of test items (the 209 missing words in this case). The analysis of the psychometric test parameters will not be discussed at length. We will only note that the results of the analysis are satisfactory. The degree of test reliability is very high. Most of the test items have acceptable values within the parameters of difficulty and discriminability. The dependent variable in our research will be the scale values in reading comprehension test obtained by each student.

In order to achieve our aims, we have to establish whether the independent variables significantly influence reading comprehension. We also have to draw some conclusions about Bulgarian language education from grade five to eight and the language acquisition of students whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian. To perform these tasks, we organized experimental data in factorial designs and applied ANOVA to test hypotheses concerning the influence of independent factors on reading comprehension test scores.

The structure of our sample was planned so that the influence of independent factors, such as mother tongue, school grade, gender, and type of residential area, on reading comprehension test scores could be evaluated. Unfortunately, it was impossible to include the independent factors, type of residential area and mother tongue, in a complete factorial design, because the framework of our analysis was violated. That is why we organized the data in several factorial designs in order to employ most of the framework of the data in the analysis.

Organizing experimental data in a three-way factorial design, it was possible to analyze the influence of independent factors, mother tongue, gender, and school grade, on reading comprehension.

In this design, the *mother tongue factor* is determined as follows: Bulgarian, Romani, and Turkish. The *school grade factor* is fixed at four levels: grades five,

six, seven, and eight, and the *gender factor* is defined as male and female. Three-way ANOVA indicates that factors *mother tongue* ($F = 14.8$; $p < 0.0001$) and *school grade* ($F = 7.5$; $p < 0.0001$) have significant influence on reading comprehension, whereas the impact of the *gender* factor ($F = 2$; $p < 0.1$) is insignificant.

The influence of the mother tongue factor on the total score of reading comprehension test is presented in Figure 11.1. Students whose mother tongue is Bulgarian had the highest average score (143.8), while students whose mother tongue is Turkish had the lowest average score (124.5). The average test score of Romani students (143.3) is practically equal to that of Bulgarian students. The application of the Duncan test, which measures the significance of the difference between two average levels, shows that the difference between the average scores of Bulgarian and Turkish students ($p < 0.0001$) and between the average scores of Roma and Turkish students ($p < 0.0001$) is significant. The fact that Roma and Bulgarian students yielded the same proficiency in reading comprehension can be attributed to the training courses provided on the problems of mastering students' reading comprehension skills, which are attended by the teachers who educate Roma children in fourth grade. On the other hand, this phenomenon could derive from an increase in the motivation of Roma students who have gained experience in reading comprehension tests in previous school years. An additional analysis can shed light on this issue.

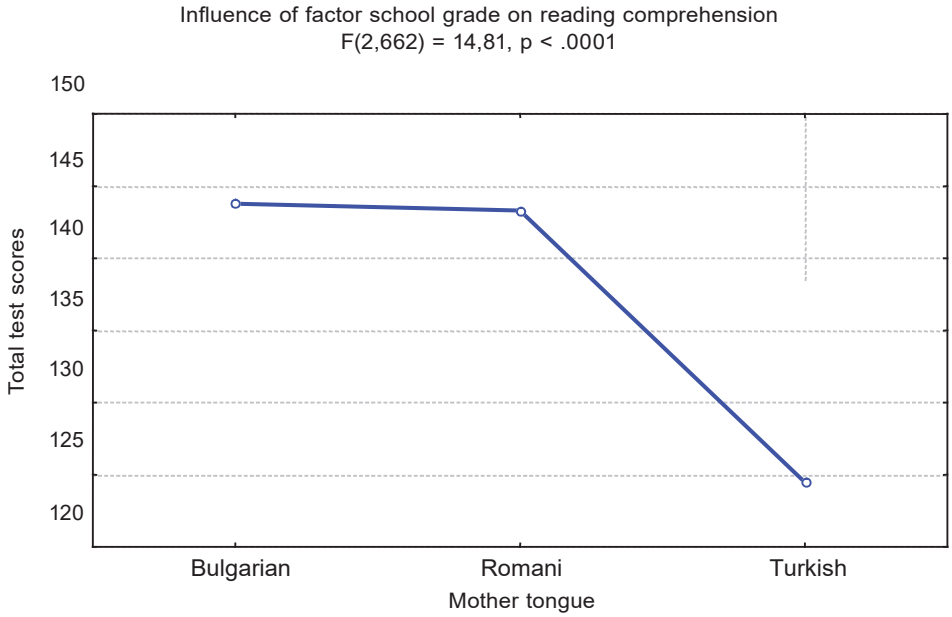


Figure 11.1. The influence of the factor *mother tongue*

The influence of the *school grade* factor is exemplified in Figure 11.2. If we exclude the students in grade five, whose mean score is extremely high, we can observe a steady increase in the average scores of students in grades six, seven, and eight. This improvement can be ascribed to the intensification of Bulgarian language teaching, as well as the teaching of other subjects in higher school grades, which in turn leads to the development of students' reading comprehension skills. There is a significant difference between the average scores of grades six through seven and six through eight ($p < 0.0001$ in both cases). The difference between the mean scores of grades seven through eight is not significant ($p < 0.05$). The mean of grade five (140.8) is equal to the mean of grade seven (140.1) and grade eight (142.8). The average score of grade five is significantly higher than the mean of grade six (125.0) ($p < 0.0001$).

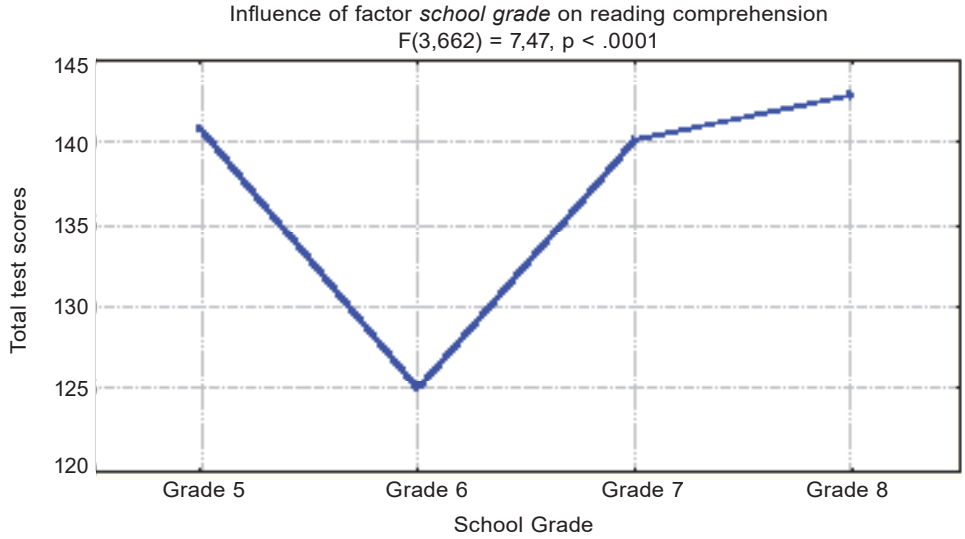


Figure 11.2. Influence of the factor *school grade*

The higher average score of students in grade five can be attributed to an improvement in the educational process as a result of the above-mentioned seminars, which provide training for teachers. Last year, most of these students were given a similar reading comprehension test. It is possible that teachers have paid more attention to reading comprehension in the process of teaching the Bulgarian language. Only additional research can prove whether students in grade five in our sample are better prepared in the Bulgarian language and have improved their reading skills.

Figure 11.3 demonstrates the influence of the gender factor on reading comprehension. Females obtain a higher average score (139.1) in comparison to

males (135.4). However, the difference is statistically insignificant (F = 2; p = 0.1); that is, we cannot claim that females understand texts better than males.

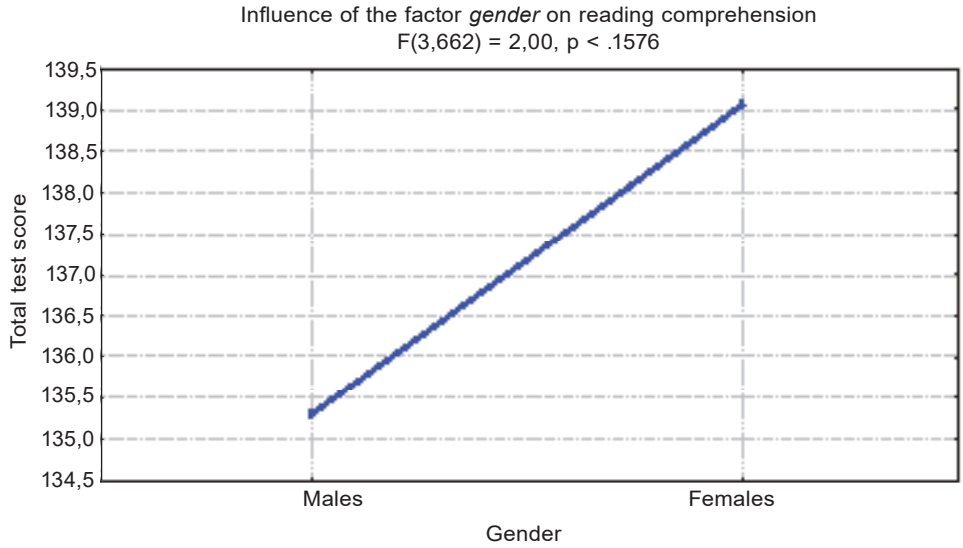


Figure 11.3. Influence of the *factor gender*

The only statistically significant interaction in this factorial design is between mother tongue and school grade (F = 12.27; p < 0.0001). The parameters of this interaction are illustrated in Figure 11.4, where axis X represents the mother tongue factor, axis Y indicates the average test scores, and the profiles correspond to the four grades.

The figure shows that there is a decrease in the average test scores of grades six and eight in the following order: Bulgarian (with highest scores), Roma and Turkish students (with lower scores). There is no difference in the mean of students' reading scores with different mother tongues who study in grade seven (the profile of grade seven is parallel to the axis X). The profile of grade five indicates that Roma and Turkish students in that grade obtain higher scores than Bulgarians, but only the higher mean of Roma students (154.1) is statistically significant (p < 0.0001) compared to the lower average score of Bulgarian students (130.7). The results contradict our expectation that Roma students in grade five would obtain lower scores in comparison to Roma and Bulgarian students studying in grades six, seven, and eight.

Figure 11.4 illustrates that only students in grade eight have higher average scores than Roma students in grade five. In all other cases, Roma students in grade five show better performance in reading comprehension skills. This phenomenon can be explained with the above-mentioned increased interest of Roma students in grade five in reading comprehension, resulting from the ad-

ministration of a similar test in grade four for the purpose of previous research. Students in all other grades have never been given a reading comprehension test. They have never participated in such research either.

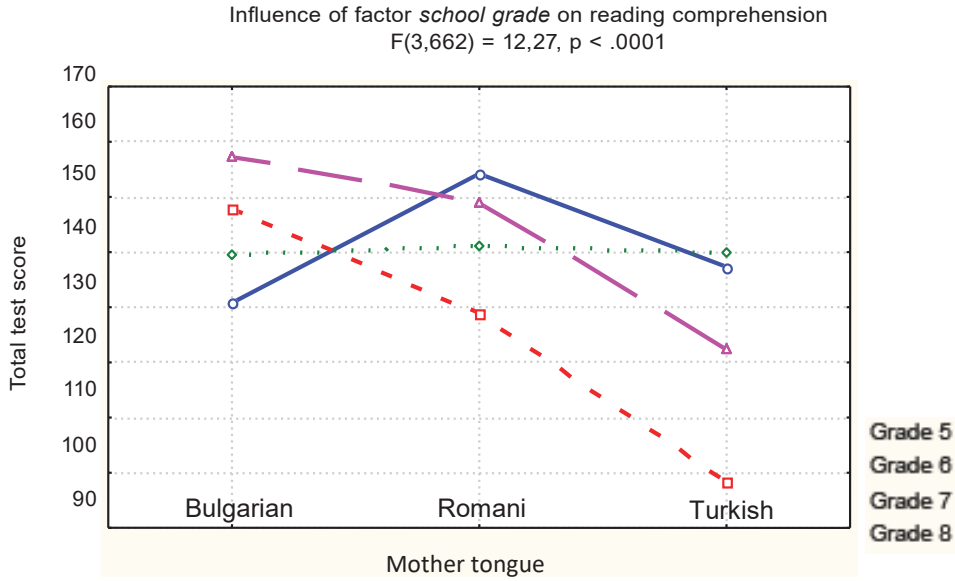


Figure 11.4. Interaction of the factors *mother tongue* and *school grade*

Organizing Experimental Data in a Three-Factor Model in Order to Analyze the Influence of Independent Factors: *School grade, Mother tongue,* and *Type of Residential Area* on Reading Comprehension

As was previously explained, the structure of the sample was violated, and we did not have the opportunity to include all available data concerning the type of residential area factor in this factorial design. This factor could be taken into consideration only if some levels of the factors of mother tongue and type of residential area are excluded, namely, Turkish language as an element of the mother tongue factor and towns and villages as levels of the type of residential area factor. The influence of the independent factors, such as *school grade*, *mother tongue*, and *type of residential area*, as well as the impact of their interactions on reading comprehension were analyzed with respect to the above set limitations. The results obtained through ANOVA indicate that the *school grade* factor has a statistically significant influence on the average score of reading comprehen-

sion test ($F = 11.1$; $p < 0.0001$). The nature of this influence is exemplified in Figure 11.5. Students in grade five obtain higher average scores than students in grade six. However, the difference is not statistically significant. The statistically significant difference is between the following school grades: five and eight ($p < 0.0001$); six and seven ($p<0.005$); six and eight ($p<0.0001$) and seven and eight ($p < 0.0001$). As is expected, the average scores increase in higher grades. The only exception is the average score of grade five.

The analysis of results in this design should be considered carefully, because, as we have already pointed out, *the type of residential area* factor can be examined only at two levels – capital and city, since not all types of residential areas in the sample were presented by Bulgarian Roma and Turkish students. In other words, there are students with Bulgarian and Romani languages as mother tongues who represent only the capital and city. Therefore, just the data satisfying these two criteria are included in the design.

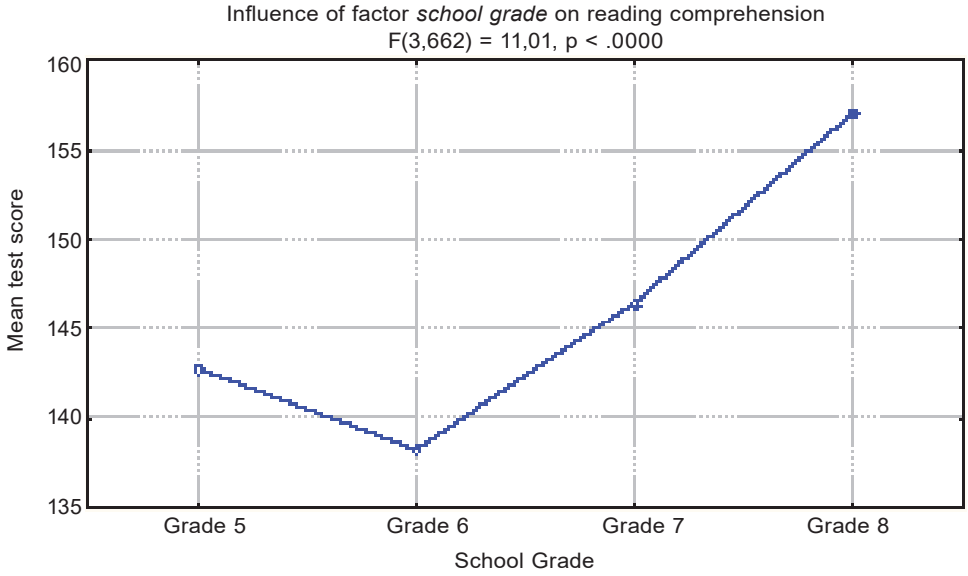


Figure 11.5. Influence of the factor *school grade*

The influence of *the type of residential area* factor, only at its two levels – capital and city, and only with the inclusion of Bulgarian and Roma students, is statistically significant ($F = 29.6$; $p < 0.0001$). Figure 11.6 illustrates the nature of this influence. Students living in the capital have significantly higher average scores (152.8) than students from the city (139.5) ($p < 0.0001$).

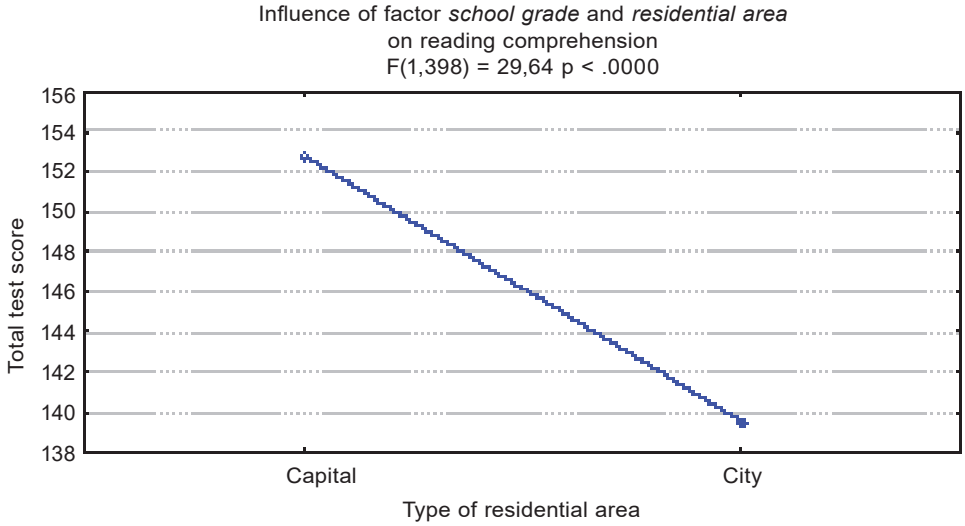


Figure 11.6. Influence of the factor type of *residential area*

The only interaction which exercises statistically significant influence is the interaction between the factors *school grade* and *type of residential area* ($F = 6.35$; $p < 0.0005$). This influence is presented by the profiles in Figure 11.7. The profiles of grades six, seven, and eight show deterioration in reading comprehension skills of students living in the city, while the curve of grade five is parallel to the axis X. This means that there is no difference between students in grade five living in the capital and city with respect to their comprehension skills. Another interaction is demonstrated by the profiles of grades seven and eight, which are extremely distant in the section representing the capital and coincide in the section representing the city. The only possible explanation of this interaction and its influence is the lower motivation for achievement of students in grade eight living in the city. The Duncan test shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the average scores of students in grades eight and seven living in the capital and the mean scores of students in all other grades and from all other types of residential areas. Moreover, the average score of students in grade eight living in the capital is the highest and is followed by the mean of students in grade seven in the capital. The mean of students in grade six living in the city is, with a statistically significant difference, the lowest of all average scores. There is not a significant difference between the average scores of students in grades five, seven, and eight living in the city and between the mean scores of students in grades five and six from the capital.

The established influence of the basic factors and the impact of their interactions in the respective design should be considered more carefully. More strict control on the parameters of such factor models should be exercised in further

research, in order to determine the influence of the factors *type of residential area* and *school grade* on the indexes reflecting the efficiency of Bulgarian language teaching of students with different mother tongues.

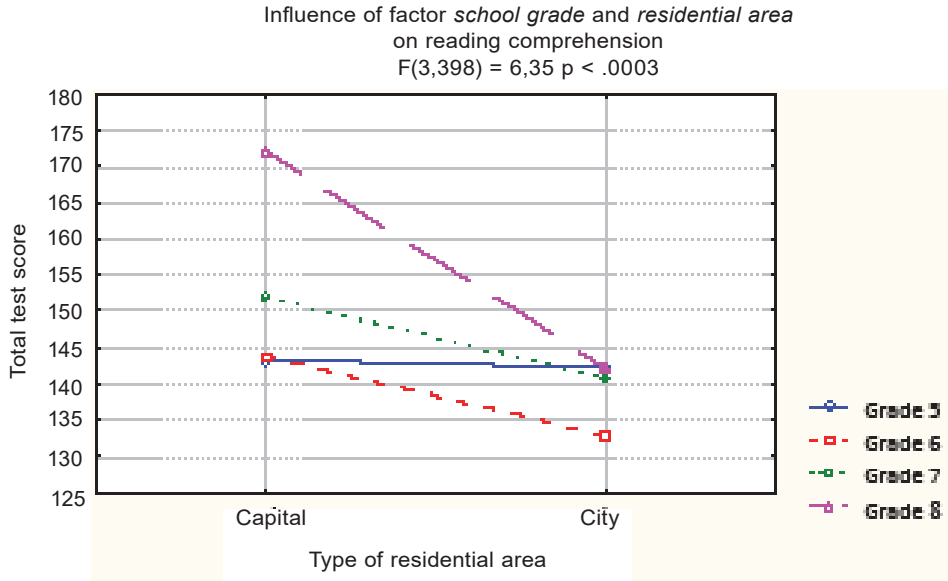


Figure 11.7. Influence of the factors *school grade* and *type of residential area*

Conclusion

Comprehension is one of the most important aspects of the reading technique. The main objective of reading a text is understanding its meaning. The above-presented psycholinguistic research illustrates how the factors *school grade*, *mother tongue* and *type of residential area* influence global understanding of a text. One of the most important results, which requires further research, is the extremely high average score of students in grade five in all designs compared to the performance of students in all other grades. One possible explanation of this phenomenon is the intensive preparation for reading comprehension in the previous grade provided by Bulgarian language teachers, who received special training in various psycholinguistic aspects related to the reading mechanisms and the process of eliciting the meaning of a text. Another probable interpretation is the higher motivation and sensitivity to reading comprehension tests demonstrated by students in grade five who have already acquired experience in

such exercises from research conducted in previous years, whereas students in other grades have never taken part in similar experimental research.

The fact that students in grade five whose mother tongue is Romani perform more successfully on the reading comprehension test than their classmates whose mother tongue is Bulgarian has not been clarified yet.

Further research on the problems of reading comprehension in different school grades should be focused on the conceptual and semantic aspects of a text and their influence on understanding with regard to the latest achievements of psycholinguistics and cognitive science.

Conclusions
Looking Ahead: Moving on

In sum and to conclude, I must stress that in contemporary Europe, the stereotypes about Roma children being "lazy" and "not interested in education", or even being "mentally retarded", are still strong and endemic, they persistently abound. The linguistic knowledge of their mother tongue, the knowledge about community life which the Roma children get in the family from an early age is not considered to be an asset, but exactly the opposite – it is perceived institutionally as an obstacle for "integration" into the educational system.

Through my voluntary work as a family consultant and social worker with Roma families from Bulgaria, Greece, Poland and Romania who are living in Berlin, I have had the valuable and instructive opportunity to meet many Roma children and with some of them even to do therapy work regarding their efforts for adaptation to the German school system.

Representative is the life story of Armando – a boy now aged 12, who stems from the group of Romanian Kaldersh Roma. Armando was born in Rome, Italy, and he spent the first years of his childhood in the Italian language environment. After a few years, the family returned to Romania, where Armando learned Romanian. Then the family migrated to Spain where he learned Spanish. After few years in Spain the family migrated to Germany. Armando did not have possibility to attend a school in any of these countries. The migration of the family, due to the poverty in Romania and lack of any possibilities to survive there, compelled the family to migrate to Western Europe and look for some source of employment abroad. In Romania, the family could not find a job, basically because of their ethnic background. During their moving and wanderings from one country to another, the father left his wife and children, and his mother had to take care alone of Armando and his sister Alexandra (who was born in Berlin).

Now in Berlin, Armando has the responsibility to help his mother, who is illiterate. Armando is likewise illiterate in terms of reading and writing skills,

but he is fluent in Romani (his mother tongue), Romanian, Italian and Spanish. Armando now has started to learn German, via his cellphone, and he is learning to read the names of the streets also to help his mother, taking pictures of the street signs, in order to guide her when they have to go to different institutions to appear for an appointment. Soon Armando will start a German "*Willkommensklasse*", which are classes created for the children of migrants and refugees in order to become functional in the German language (see https://www.berlin.de/familie/de/informationen/willkommensklassen-in-berlin-270) .

Thousands of Roma children are in Armando's situation. Their knowledge of their mother tongue, the knowledge of other languages, simply *do not count* if the Roma child is not proficient in the official language of the country where (s)he is located. And even worse: in some Eastern European countries (Czech Republic and Slovakia), the Roma children are tested by means of language and psychology tests in the official national language of the country prior to entry into primary school class. And if the children do not have sufficient knowledge in the official language or have a 'weak' performance on the psychology tests, they are sent to "special schools" for children with disabilities and are categorized as having a "moderate level of mental retardation". They are mistakenly and disastrously classified as "retarded" due to their lack of local language proficiency!

The aim of the book was to show concretely how the Roma children grow up and become socialized in an environment culturally and linguistically different from the majority cultures. How they naturally acquire and learn languages, pick up and deepen knowledge about the world and how they develop. As Sir Ken Robinson has reminded us: "Learning is natural for children…. They learn to speak because they want to and they can. As they go through life, they'll pick up all sorts of other skills and knowledge, just for the love of learning: because they want to and they can" (Robinson & Aronica, 2018, p. 8). But in most European countries, Roma children face formidable and entrenched barriers of racism and discrimination on a daily basis and they must deal with it from a very early age, in itself a core existential 'learning experience'. The book also aims to describe just what kind of difficulties the bilingual/multilingual Roma children face and must grapple with and how their preparation for school is done, grounded in the family and community environment. As I have earlier pointed out (Kyuchukov, 2013), in order for Roma children to be successful in their second and third language, they need to study their mother tongue from the age of entering kindergarten systematically and in an organized way, developing solid formal literacy in their home language. To achieve that requires sturdy and flexible educational scaffolding: Romani teachers and school mediators are needed, not only in Eastern European school systems but also in Western Europe where many Roma families have migrated during the last decade, seeking like migrants everywhere a better life for their families and children.

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The book is the first attempt in Europe within the last 20 years to bring knowledge about the Roma educational issues of preschool and primary school children. It is structured in three parts: History of Roma education, Romani psycholinguistics and Roma Holocaust education.

The first part of the book deals with the educational issues of Roma and its development during the last 20 years in Europe. Here the author presents some insight views and understandings of Roma education, development of the Roma school mediators and a review of the introduction of Romani language education in Bulgaria. The second part discusses mainly the issues of language education of Roma children — the acquisition of Romani and the issues of second language learning by Roma children. The third part presents the issues of Roma holocaust education as a part of the history education of Roma children. The socio-cultural and linguistic issues are important for Roma children education and with the new ideas the book can be very helpful for students in the field of intercultural education, educational psychology and social work.

Prof. Dr. Hristo Kyuchukov is an internationally known expert on Romani linguistics and intercultural education, and for the last 30 years he has been teaching in Europe, USA, India and Russia. His main interests are minority children bilingualism (Roma and Turkish), child language, Romani and Turkish linguistics, intercultural education of minorities, migrants and refugees, as well as educational and linguistic rights of Roma. He has more than 800 publications in the field of linguistics, education, history and culture of Roma. Kyuchukov is a well-known children's books author. His book "My name was Hussein" received many prizes, among them the "Best children's intercultural book" for 2004. For his work in the field of Romani linguistics and education he was awarded by the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture (1998, 1999), by the President of Italy and Ministry of Culture of Italy (2001), by the Ministry of Culture and the Instituto de la Cultura Gitana, Spain (2015), and by Amaro Foro, e.V. – Berlin, Germany (2018).

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