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The Model of Language Policy In Macedonia By The Ohrid Framework Agreement And Its Impact

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ABSTRACT

Macedonia, as a country located in the central part of the Balkans – a place where identity and language issues and conflicts are very common, with its specific internal ethnic composed population, has developed a unique model of a language policy. Starting with the definition of the concept of language policy, this short paper aims to inform about the model of the language policy in Macedonia and its characteristics and at the same time to expose its impacts thus far. In briefly informing briefly about the languages and linguistic groups of Macedonia, the paper starts with a historical overview of development of the language policies in Macedonia from the mid 19th century, through the socialist period, and the process of independence until the constitutional changes according to the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001. In its central part, the paper comprehensively outlines and shows the characteristics of the current language policy of Macedonia developed and designed according to the amendments of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The model of language policy is described on a legal, institutional and practical level, namely by examples and data about the usage of the minority languages on certain levels and areas such as central government, local-self government, education system and public sphere of life as well as the supportive policies for the Macedonian language. In describing the situation, the paper concludes with an opinion about the impact and consequences of the model of the language policy of Macedonia.

Key words: Macedonia, use of languages, Ohrid Framework Agreement, constitutional changes, segregation.

INTRODUCTION

Macedonia has played a very significant role in the history of the European and world languages. Due to its central geographical position on the Balkan Peninsula, Macedonia has always been a very important geopolitical area, where many different tribes, peoples and empires have engaged each other, leaving indelible traces of their cultures, therefore enabling the presence and the co-existence of many different languages up to the present

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This short article starts with a description of the historical development of the models of language policy in Macedonia since the late 19th century, through the establishment of the Macedonian statehood after World War II and the independence in 1991, up until today. These periods were often characterized by political and inter-ethnic turmoil, of which language issues were an inevitable and very important part. The main focus of description of the language policy of Macedonia in this paper is on the institutional and legal model established according to the constitutional reforms and amendments by the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001. Besides the questions of political rights, the position and usage of the minority (ethnic communities) languages was also one of the most outstanding issues. In presenting the institutional and legal framework, supported by data and examples from the practice, this paper tries to describe and characterize the essence of the model of a language policy in Macedonia and thus to expose its impact and bearing upon the general political situation of the country. It is important to note that as a region where the Macedonian language genuinely exist and the political and revolutionary struggle for Macedonian statehood actually unravelled, the present paper in the historical description at first refers to the whole geographical region of Macedonia until the creation of a Macedonian state in 1944, while from that point onwards it refers only to the language policies of the socialist and independent Republic of Macedonia. This does not imply any political, nationalist, chauvinist or irredentist ideas. Using the descriptive and analytical methods in examining a great aggregate of facts and data from the literature, articles, case studies, academic and popular journals and internet websites, this brief article aims to inform the reader about the language policy in Macedonia, and its characteristics and impact. Hence, the main goal of this article is by presenting numerous facts to serve as a source and basis for further analytical research works.

1. DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE POLICY

Prior to the beginning of any research it is necessary to briefly define the concept of Language Policy in order to have a clear understanding of what it is and how it is considered and used in the further research. For the purposes of this paper, two definitions of language policy have been used, both of which can be found on the website called Language Policy. This website defines the following: 1) what government does officially – through legislation, court decisions, executive action, or other means – to: (a) determine how languages are used in public contexts, (b) cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities, or (c) establish the rights of individuals or groups to learn, use, and maintain languages; and 2) Government regulation of the use of its language, including the measures to facilitate clear communication, train and recruit personnel, guarantee due process, foster political participation, and provide access to public services, proceedings, and documents (Language Policy, 2000). Bernard Spolsky gives a much broader and comprehensive definition of the concept of language policy, distinguishing three components within it, namely: language practices, language beliefs or ideology and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management (Spolsky, 2004: 5). In this research the language policy is understood as an all-embracing combination of both
types of definitions. Both definitions will be used throughout the research. In some instances the first article will be used for the examination of the legal framework and governmental practices, while the second definition will be used to explain examples of the impact of language practice on public life and everyday use.

2. LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTIC GROUPS IN MACEDONIA

Throughout the history up to the present day the presence of several linguistic groups has been recorded within the broader historical, geographical and ethnographical region of Macedonia, in which is located the present-day modern state of the Republic of Macedonia. The following linguistic groups can be identified as being or having been present in geographic Macedonia: Slavic, Albanian, Romance, Turkic, Indic and Hellenic (Friedman, 2003: 260). The major, dominant and present throughout the whole territory of Macedonia is the Macedonian language (i.e. a Slavic group), while the others are more significantly represented in certain areas, as it is the case with Albanian, which is mostly concentrated in the western and north-western parts of Macedonia, or Hellenic, which is present in the southernmost areas of the geographic region of Macedonia that today is part of Greece. It is important to note that nowadays the aforementioned linguistic groups do not represent only one language and cannot thoroughly match with the all languages recognized by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. Hence, within the Slavic group in modern-day Republic of Macedonia there exist recognized languages, such as Macedonian, Serbian and Bosniac; the Vlach language belongs to the Romance linguistic group, Romani is a part of the Indic, and Turkish is a part of the Turkic linguistic group. According to the last official census, carried out in the Republic of Macedonia in 2002, the majority-spoken language, declared as a mother tongue, is Macedonian with 1,334,815 speakers or 66.49%; the second most widely spoken language is Albanian with 507,989 or 25.11%, third is Turkish 71,757 or 3.55% fourth is Romani with 38,528 speakers or 1.9%, followed by Serbian with 24,773 or 1.22%; Bosniac with 8560 or 0.43% and the last is Vlach with 6,884 or 0.34%, while 19,241 people declared other languages as their mother tongue (Book X, Census 2002: 198). These figures are not quite correctly correlated with the number and percentage of the population by ethnic affiliation and sometimes are subject to political turmoil and debates regarding the principles of the Ohrid Framework Agreement which provides for minority rights on the local and central level according to the percentage representation. However, these languages are listed and officially recognized by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and therefore they are subject of the language policy on legal, institutional and public level.

3. THE MODELS OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN MACEDONIA PRIOR TO THE OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Prior to the formation of Macedonian statehood after the Second World War, within the Yugoslav socialist federation, there were two basic models of language policy. In the 19th century the Ottoman Empire, which had a millet system, paid little attention to the languages spoken around it, leaving education and societal life to be conducted by churches within the recognized religious communities/groups. After the Balkans Wars and the
partitioning of Macedonia in 1912/1913, until the end of the Second World War, the new regimes of the kingdoms of Yugoslavia (Serbia), Bulgaria and Greece applied a very strong and strict language policy of imposing their official languages on the government, education, public and private life of the people, heavily suppressing the local languages by means of strict penalties jail sentences, forcible changes of the personal names and surnames, and through legal action to enforce an official change of toponyms (i.e. inhabited places, mountains, rivers), as it was the case with the Greek law from 1926 (Shea, 1997:109).

a. SOCIALIST MACEDONIA WITHIN YUGOSLAVIA

After the Second World War, at an Anti-fascist People’s Assembly in August 1944, the Macedonian language was for the first time officially recognized and adopted as the official language of Macedonia, which was at the same time proclaimed a People’s Republic. This event is very important for the political status and existence of the Macedonian language, as for all attempts for the creation of a distinct Macedonian standard language, which began in the 19th century (with the works of G. Pulevski, K. Misirkov and others) prior to 1944, it was not recognized by any of the post-Ottoman states (Freidman, 2004: 201). During the period of socialism, a tremendous development of the Macedonian language was achieved. This was crowned by the official codification and standardization of the language, conducted by a special commission in 1945, which established an institute for the Macedonian language and other institutions, such as the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Art, the Macedonian National Theater, alongside newspapers, a television, schools, and two universities. Also, the educational system on all three levels was established and pursued in the Macedonian language. During the socialist period, there was official recognition and usage of some of the minority languages in the public life. Newspapers in Albanian (“Flaka”) and Turkish (“Birlik”), as well as books, were published by the official state publishing company, and since 1950 the Theatre of the Nationalities had operated Albanian and Turkish drama sections (Mactheatre, 2004). Also there was tradition of education in minority languages, provisioned by the Constitution of 1974, which was conducted in Albanian and Turkish in the primary and secondary schools, and Serbian in the primary schools (Ilievski, 2008: 127). Since 1983, Romani has been used in schools for the first four grades (Spolsky, 2004: 155). However, while the number of Albanian pupils in primary education did not change, there was a significant drop in the number of Albanian-taught students at the secondary schools between 1981 and 1991 (from 9,754 to 2,535) due to the legal provision from 1985 which stipulated that education in the minority languages be provided only if the number of students in one class exceeds 30 (Ilievski, 2008: 128). This legal provision was amended shortly, as the number of the students steadily increased (Ilievski, 2008: 128).

b. AFTER MACEDONIAN INDEPENDENCE OF MACEDONIA IN 1991

The period after the declaration of Macedonia’s independence in 1991 and in the wake of the democratization process could be characterized by two overriding processes regarding the language issues: 1) adopting a more open and liberal language policy model which enhanced the position of the languages and 2) frequent political turmoil and the demand for
broader recognition and usage of the Albanian language, which has accompanied the struggle of the Albanian-minority political parties and paramilitary insurgent groups in 2001. The decade of Macedonian independence and the ensuing privatization have resulted in a significant increase for all languages (Friedman, 2004). Besides the Albanian and Turkish, which had been already present on public TV since 1991, programmes in the Vlach and Romani languages were launched (Friedman, 2004: 199). Private TV and radio stations became common occurrence: by 1998, 57 private local TV licenses were granted, of which 13 were broadcasters using Albanian, 5 were Turkish, 2 were Romani and 1 was Serbian, while out of 80 private radio licenses 14 were stations broadcasting in Albanian, 5 in Turkish, 3 in Romani, 2 in Serbian and 2 with Vlach language programme slots (Friedman, 2004: 200). Primary and secondary education in the languages of the minorities was provisioned by the Constitution, but there was no possibility for the higher education, which fact resulted in strong political demand for higher education opportunities in Albanian among the Albanian minority. After the closure of the University of Prishtina by the Milošević regime, the local municipal councils in Tetovo, Gostivar and Debar, with financial help from the Albanian immigration, illegally established a university in December 1994 (Ilievski, 2008: 129). This act, which was regarded as a breach of applicable laws on higher education, provoked police action and led to clashes and protests by ethnic Albanians (BBC, 2001). Later on, in 1997, the government’s decision to establish studies in Albanian at the pedagogical academy provoked mass protests by Macedonian students. Meanwhile, ethnic Albanian parties and figures demanded that the Albanian language be officially used in the sessions and documents of the Parliament. The language dispute grew so acute that at the end of June 2001, with the fighting in Macedonia between government security forces and armed Albanian groups continuing, the Council of Europe urged Macedonian government to grant ethnic Albanians “the use of the Albanian language in Macedonian courts, schools and administration” (Spolsky, 2004: 1-2).

4. THE MODEL OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT OF 2001

After a small-scale armed conflict occurred in 2001, settlement came in the form of the Framework Agreement of Ohrid, which led to constitutional changes, giving broader rights to the national minorities, which were now called ethnic communities, and therefore relating and affecting the model of language policy. The most important change regarding the political status and position of the languages was made by Amendment V to Article 7. Previously, Article 7 of the Constitution stated that the official language in the Republic of Macedonia is the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script; in municipalities where the majority of population come from the nationalities, their language and alphabet shall be in official use, in addition to the Macedonian language and the Cyrillic alphabet, in a manner determined by law and that in the local government units where there lives a considerable number of members of the minorities, in official use, in addition to the Macedonian language and Cyrillic alphabet, the the language and alphabet be of the nationalities, under the conditions and in the manner determined by law (Constitution 1991, art. 7). With
Amendment V, the Article 7 was changed in that: On the whole territory of Macedonia and in its international relations the official language shall be Macedonian and another language that is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens is also official with its script (Constitution, art. 7, am. V). This provision was differently interpreted by the Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political elites, and despite the promulgation of the Law on languages in 2008, the opposition ethnic Albanian political parties continue to complain of an unequal status, seeking equality on the whole territory of Macedonia and in all institutions including international relations, the army and the police. Furthermore, under the provision of Amendment V that personal document (i.e. ID cards, passports, birth certificates etc.) of citizens speaking an official language other than Macedonian shall be issued in the Macedonian language and its script, and that the language and its script be in accordance with law (Constitution, art. 7, am. V). The possibility of having one’s personal documents issued to one is open for all languages is sanctioned by the constitution. Other changes regarding the language policy provisioned by the Ohrid Framework Agreement and Amendment V are related with the use of languages in official communication with the government, within the work in the government institutions, the units of local-self government (municipalities), education, in court proceedings, and they will be explained further below in the next parts of the article.

a. OFFICIAL USE OF THE LANGUAGES WITHIN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

According to Amendment V, any citizen in the municipalities where at least 20% of the population speaks a language different from the Macedonian, citizens in communication with the ministries or their local branches can use their own language, and the ministries are obliged to reply in Macedonian and the language of the citizen concerned. The said Amendment also stipulates that in the organs of the state government official language different then the Macedonian may be used in accordance with the law. Since no community besides the Albanians constitutes more than 20 percent of the population, only the Albanian language becomes an official language on the national level. Thus, it can be used in communication with the central government, in Parliament (with a simultaneous interpretation into Macedonian) and laws are to be published in both Macedonian and in Albanian (Usefondation, 2003). The Macedonian parliament in 2002 adopted nine laws in order to grant the Albanian language an official status in the country (Testorides, 2002). These new amendments covered the use of Albanian in legislative sessions as well as during elections, with voting instructions to be written in Macedonian and in the languages as specified in the Preamble to the Constitution (Usefondation, 2002). The number of bilingual and multilingual documents in the decisions or public campaigns of the government is also constantly increasing. Recently, government ministries have been instructed to use bilingual Macedonian-Albanian signs and to conduct public addresses in both Macedonian and Albanian.

b. OFFICIAL USE OF THE LANGUAGES IN THE UNITS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT
Another area of the use of languages provisioned by the Ohrid Framework Agreement is the local self-government. The use of minority languages in the units of local self-government was for the first time sanctioned by law in 1995. According to amendment V from 2001, in the units of local self-government where another language and script is used by 20% of the population, it is also official in addition to the Macedonian language. More important is the provision that for the use of the languages that are spoken by a population smaller than 20% the organs of the municipalities have the right of decision. This legal opportunity has been realized so far with the decisions of the municipal councils in 3 municipalities: Krushevo, where in 2006 the Vlach language was recognized as official (Scala, 2003:14, also: Omniglot, 2013), although it is spoken by less than 10% of the population; Kumanovo, where since 2010 the Serbian (8%) and Romani (4%) languages have been in official use, and Gostivar, where since 2009 Turkish, spoken by 9% of the population, has been in official use (Bliznakovski, 2011: 58-60). This approach is very liberal and democratic and includes the organs of the local self-government, giving them a chance to influence the creation of language policy on the local level. Another very important provision derived from the Ohrid Framework, which has considerable influence on the position of the languages, was one on behalf of administrative territorial organization and a change of the borders of the municipalities in 2004. Despite fierce political debates, strong political opposition and a referendum with a majority of votes against it, according to the new territorial organization with the change of the municipal boundaries the capital city Skopje became officially bilingual (Sekulovski, 2008) and Albanian became an official language in municipalities in the central part of Macedonia (Chashka, Dolneni), where it previously did not enjoy this status. Recently it has been evident the practice, driven mostly by nationalistic policies, in some municipalities with an Albanian majority (e.g. Chair, Tetovo) the road and street signs and information billboards and tables, as well as official websites, are firstly written in Albanian, which is against to the law; however this is tolerated by the central government.

c. USE OF THE LANGUAGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In 2000, the Macedonian government permitted higher education to be provided in languages other than the official Macedonian in private universities (Usefondation, 2003). According to the plan of Dutch politician Max Van der Stoel, the University of South East Europe was established in Tetovo, providing education in Macedonian, Albanian and English. However, Albanian political parties continue to seek a state recognition and official status for the previously established university of Tetovo, which was finally recognized as a State University of Tetovo by a bill law passed by Parliament on January 21st, 2004 (Usefondation, 2004). It is also important to note that learning the smaller minority languages, such as Vlach, is possible as an optional subject in primary schools. Recently, the language policy regarding education has been the subject of political turmoil, with the ethnic Albanians heavily opposed to and protesting against a government decision from 2009, which stipulated that the Macedonian language should be taught as a compulsory subject from the first grade of primary school (Mitoski, 2009; also Papraniku, 2010). Considering that several abortive attempts later, there is no integrated education (or even mixed bilingual schools) in
Macedonia (Koneska, 2012: 45), these tendencies and the actual model of language policy show the signs of ethnic and linguistic segregation which in the long run could have adverse impact on the functioning of the state in its present form and provoke future ethnic conflicts.

d. USE OF THE LANGUAGES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE
The use of languages in the public sphere can be most notably seen in the media and in arts and culture. A multiethnic TV channel, broadcasting in the minority languages, was launched by the Macedonian national TV service on August 20th, 2002 (Usefondation, 2003). Previously, the Second channel (MTV 2) had programming in on minority languages (Friedman, 2004: 199) for 5 hours per day, and with its transformation in 2002 it started to broadcast 12 hours of minority programs, 9 hours of which were in Albanian (Usefondation, 2003). The number of mostly privately-owned dailies and weeklies in minority languages has been steadily increasing. Albanian and Turkish theatres have become independent institutions, and in 2012 the Macedonian government started to erect a new building for a Turkish theatre as a 13-million-euro investment (Cumhuriyet, 2012). In 2006 a Serbian stage (section) officially opened at the Macedonian National Theatre (Mactheatre, 2006). Recently it has become even more evident that more public campaigns in the civil society are provided and conducted in the all languages spoken in Macedonia.

e. SUPPORTIVE POLICIES FOR THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE
Whereas Macedonia is the only country where Macedonian is an official language, and despite many supportive policies being geared towards the minority languages, the Macedonian government has implemented several projects in support of the effort. In the 2000s, a TV programme, “Govorete Makedonski” (Speak Macedonian) was broadcast on the first channel of national TV with the aim to refine the vocabulary of the Macedonian language vocabulary (Friedman, 2004: 203). Also, the government officially declared 2008 as a year of the Macedonian language, sponsoring a public campaign in support of Macedonia’s Cyrillic script, publishing and promoting 137 volumes of Macedonian literature and books, movies and many other public manifestations in the country, as well as abroad.

CONCLUSION
In light of the facts presented in this short article, a few conclusions could be drawn about the model of language policy in Macedonia and its impact thus far. Like most societies around the globe, Macedonia is multiethnic and multilingual, with many languages being present and spoken among its citizens. Historically, since the establishment of its modern statehood Macedonia has always has a positive, liberal and democratic model of language policy, very supportive of the Macedonian and the minority languages. Over the time the model of language policy in Macedonia has been progressively developing into a more open, liberal and supportive prospect for the minority languages, due to frequent political turmoil inspired by language issues. Nevertheless, considerable, even tremendous changes and progress of the model of the language policy were undertaken in the wake of the Ohrid
Framework Agreement. Previously existing recognition and supportive language policy of the languages, especially in comparison with the neighboring countries, has been broadened and deepened. Constitutional changes enhanced the status, position and use of the languages in several areas, such as central government, local-self government, education, public life, culture, and the highest level. The languages officially recognized by the Constitution can be used in daily conduct and government work; they can be officially used at the municipal level as the municipal councils are entitled to decide about the official use of languages spoken by less than 20% of the population. With the new territorial organization and a change of municipal borders in 2004, the status and position of the languages was further improved also in other parts of the country. Documents on the languages of ethnic minorities are being issued and education is provided at all levels. Moreover, a tendency towards a stronger use of the languages in public and everyday life has become apparent. This goes to show that the model of language policy established by the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 is amply conducive not only to the survival and preservation of these languages, but also their further development and expansion. Concerning the effects and impact of the actual model of language policy, established by the Ohrid Framework Agreement and addressing the woes of the Macedonians and the dissatisfaction of the Albanians, it is quite possible that the model of language policy in Macedonia will become the subject of political pressure for further changes in the future. Finally it can be said that despite all the positive aspects of this type of model of language policy in the actual situation in Macedonia without integrated educational system, the complete separation and usage of the two main languages without making a point of contact, leads to the further erosion of an already weak level of cohesion which could in turn lead to a further political and ethnic crisis, resulting in the emergence of parallel societies and institutions, and in segregation and violence.

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