Migration et pratiques plurilingues écrites: la communication électronique des immigrant-e-s moldaves à Montréal

Dr. Anna-Christine Weirich

Institut National de la recherche scientifique, Centre Urbanisation, Culture et Société, Québec/Montréal & Goethe-Universität Frankfurt (Germany), Institut für Romanische Sprachen und Literaturen

Anna-Christine.Weirich@ucs.inrs.ca

funded by Volkswagen Stiftung (Germany) within the framework of the program
"Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities at Universities and Research Institutes in the U.S. and Canada"

Plurilingualism and electronic writing – Premises & Hypotheses

Premises:

1. The majority of theories and models in research on multilingualism are based on oral data, although writing affords different linguistic structures. This fact has only recently been taken into consideration by research on multilingual literacies and therefore has not yet been fully investigated (Androutsopoulos 2007).
2. In most cases, multilingual individuals do not write in all the languages they practice orally.
3. Learning how to write in a language, especially in formal registers, is much more difficult than learning to communicate orally in informal registers (Maas 2008).
4. The linguistic structures occuring in some media of electronic communication have been analyzed as being close to forms of oral communication (Barton/Lee 2013:4-7).
5. Alarmist discourses regarding the quality of the language contribute to creating barriers to literacy.

Hypotheses:

1. Informal writing in electronic media provokes less linguistic insecurity than writing in traditional media.
2. Therefore multilingual speakers mobilize a bigger part of their linguistic repertoire when writing in electronic media.
3. Informal writing in electronic media can contribute to overcoming barriers to literacy.

? Questions ?

1. How do multilingual Moldovan immigrants in Québec use their heterogeneous linguistic resources in writing in different social contexts?
2. Which norms and rules influence language choices while writing in electronic media?
3. Do multilinguals write in languages they usually do not write, when communicating in electronic media?
4. Which forms of electronic communication favor plurilingual literacy?
5. Which obstacles to the use of communication technologies do persons of different background encounter?

Literature

- Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2007): bilingualism in the mass media and on the internet. In: Monica Heller (ed.): Bilingualism. A social approach. Basingstoke u.a.: Palgrave Macmillan, 207–230.
- Barton, David; Lee, Carmen (2013): Language online. Investigating digital texts and practices. London u.a.: Routledge.
- Jones, Kathryn; Martin-Jones, Marilyn; Bhatt, Arvind (2000): Chapter 16. Constructing a critical, dialogic approach to research on multilingual literacies. Participant diaries and diary interviews. In: Marilyn Martin-Jones, Kathryn Jones, Brian V. Street, Eve Gregory, Ann Williams, Adrian Blackledge et al. (ed.): Multilingual literacies. Reading and writing different worlds. Philadelphia u.a.: Benjamins (Studies in written language and literacy, 10), 319–351.
- Latzo-Toth, Gauillaume; Pastinelli, Madelaine; Gallant, Nicole (2017): Usages des médias sociaux et pratiques informationnelles des jeunes Québécois : le cas de Facebook pendant la grève étudiante de 2012. In: *Recherches sociographiques* 58 (1), 43–64.
- Maas, Utz (2008b): Sprache und Sprachen in der Migrationsgesellschaft. Göttingen: V&R Unipress.

Methodology: steps of the data collection (december 2019 – june 2020)

1. Online Survey

- **Participants:** Romanian and Russian speakers (age 18+), living in Montreal
- **Questions:** 30 items grouped under 4 headlines (1. Migration trajectory, citizenship and residence, 2. Language learning, language knowledge and practice, 3. use of electronic media for communication, 4. education and work)
- **Program:** EvaSys (via the server of Goethe-University)

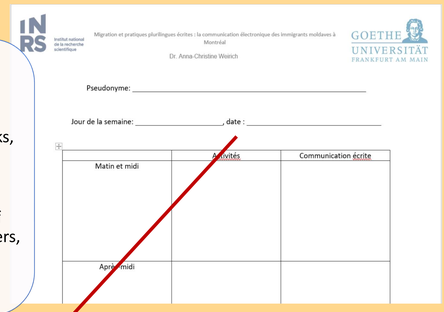
recruiting of 20 participants

2. Semi-structured interview (1)

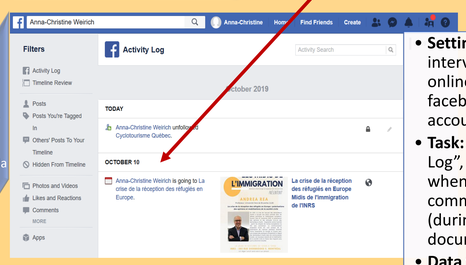
- **Participants:** 20 Moldovan immigrants living in Montréal
- **Questions:** detailed linguistic biography, language knowledge and practice, use of electronic media for communication, technobiography
- **data treatment:** voice recording, literal transcription, anonymization, coding

3. Log book of linguistic practice

- **Task 1:** Respondents document their activities during a period of two weeks, noting instances of written communication;
- **Task 2:** Collection of texts written during the period of communication (notes, letters, whatsapp, facebook…)



4. "Visite commentée" (Latzo-Toth/Pastinelli/Gallant 2017)



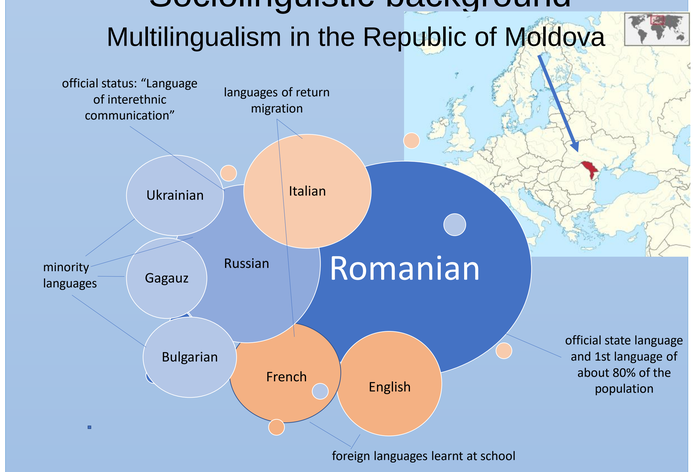
- **Setting:** semi-structured interview → respondents go online and log into their facebook/odnoklassniki/twitter account
- **Task:** starting from the "Activity Log", participants explain, when, how and why they have communicated on the site (during the 2-weeks documentation period)
- **Data treatment:** Screen capture with voice-recording, literal transcription of the audio, anonymization, coding

5. Retroactive Interview (2) (Jones/Martin-Jones/Bhatt 2000)

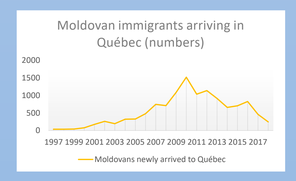
- **Task:** Participants explain their log book (activities during the documented period, literacy practice, text written)
- **Data treatment:** voice recording, literal transcription, anonymization, coding

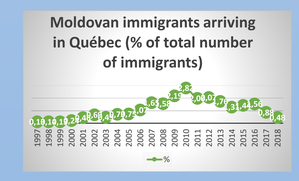
Sociolinguistic background

Multilingualism in the Republic of Moldova



Moldovan Immigration to Québec





Source: Gouvernement du Québec, Direction de la recherche et de la statistique du ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion

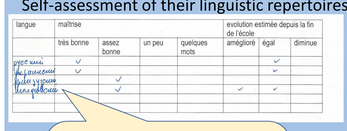
About 91% of Russian and Romanian speaking immigrants (inlcuding Moldovans) in Québec live in (census metropolitan area) **Montréal.**
In 2011, Moldova was ranked 39th among the birth countries of immigrants in Québec.

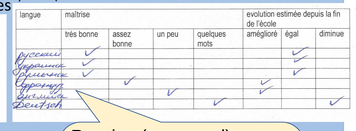
Illustration: Elena & Oleg

A Moldovan couple living in Montreal since 2013,
3 children (2 born in Moldova, 1 in Montréal)

Elena*1982 Oleg *1981

Self-assessment of their linguistic repertoires





Russian (very good)
Ukrainian (very good)
French (good)
Moldovan (good)

Russian (very good)
Ukrainian (very good)
Romanian (very good)
French (good)
English (a bit)
German (some words)

In which of these languages do they write?

Russian on Odnoklassniki,
Russian and French on Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp;
Only French in official communication/letters

Russian on Odnoklassniki,
Russian, Romanian and French on Facebook;
Only French in official communication/letters

And how does this look like in pratice??

Poster presented at Pathways to Prosperity 2019 National Conference,
October 31 – November 1, 2019, Toronto