

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Language and Cultural Identity in Moldavia

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Preface

“When I discover who I am, I’ll be free.”

Ralph Ellison

The current thesis embodies the completion of the master program *Master [60] in Modern Languages and Letters: General* at Université Catholique de Louvain and represents the author’s three-year research effort. The conducted research studies were challenging, but performing intensive investigation has allowed us to answer the questions we identified. We are firmly confident that our research will portray the Moldavian identity planetarium.

This thesis was motivated by the author’s desire to continue the controversial debate on so-called ‘Moldavian identity’ and she has adjusted her focus on contemporary perspectives without neglecting its diachronic developments. The impetus for choosing this topic arises from the author’s personal interest and her infinite passion in cultural identity construction, as well because she is originally from Moldavia and has personally experienced confusion over language and cultural identity.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my advisor **Philippe Hambye**, who guided me in this wonderful journey as well for his precious work. I hereby would like to thank my mentor and professor Olga Cosovan for developing my analytical skills, for inspiring me and enlarging my horizons to think out of the box. Furthermore, I am grateful to the professor and friend Sergiu Cogut for providing me precious books and journals from the Republic of Moldova which helped me fundamentally to elucidate some conceptual issues regarding history, linguistic makeup, and disclosing ‘truths’ of the many-sided Moldavian identity ‘machine’.

I would also like to express my thankfulness to all participants who took part in both research studies and shared their thoughts and experiences.

Olesea Cegodari

Key words: *language, cultural identity, cultural belongingness, social identity, collective identity, self-identification, social and ethnic boundaries, culture, linguistic controversy, identity questioning, conflict, ethnicity, dual identity, bicultural identity, language attitudes, etc.*

Abstract

This current master thesis is an investigation which was built on two-fold parts. The **first part** included the attempt to provide light on the fundamental question concerning nowadays controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia: ‘Do Moldavians shape distinct language(s) and cultural identity/identities?’ from a socio-linguistic perspective. More precisely, the first part applied a two-stage qualitative analysis dedicated to explore the language and cultural identity phenomena shaped in Moldavia by examining the experiences of two distinct representative groups. *Study 1* consisted in developing a notion of identity and answering the paramount question of our work (namely, ‘How do they ‘self-identify’ culturally?’) in a self-paced and open-ended *self-concept questionnaire* format, whereas *Study 2* consisted in answering ten questions regarding language and cultural identity in Moldavia in a *semi-structured interview* format.

The qualitative research also aimed to address two essential questions, the answers to which will provide a multi-perspective analysis of Moldavian identity formation by examining the ways that social actors perceive their own cultural identities:

- I. How do people from Moldavia self-identify linguistically and culturally?
- II. What factors have influenced the construction of Moldavian identity over time?

Three hypotheses were generated from the rationales of the participants in *Study 1*:

- Cultural identity is perceived by our focused group as a hereditary phenomenon.
- Language and cultural identity are tied to national identity.
- Cultural identity is correlated with ethnicity.

The **second part** of this thesis consisted of conducting a quantitative questionnaire on language attitudes and cultural identity in order to elicit attitudes and representations of language practices of a segment of Moldavian people. The *questionnaire method* was employed to answer the most essential research questions of *Study 3* (see below):

- I. What are the primary languages used and spoken in Moldavia and what attitudes people have towards them?
 - Are there any languages that are highly regarded than the others?
 - What are the factors (if any) that make some languages more regarded than the others?
 - Do many Moldavian people have positive or negative attitudes towards speaking foreign languages spoken in diasporic contexts?

II. How do the language attitudes influence cultural identity among the people in Moldavia and in diasporic contexts?

- Do people use the same language in all areas of their socialisation or do they use different languages in different contexts?
- Is it easy to identify people from a different culture/group based on the language they use/speak?

Furthermore, it provides a review of identity theories originating from different perspectives and language attitudes in general, analysed in the light of the current social and linguistic situation in Moldavia. Then, it outlines the most relevant findings on language attitudes of respondents, in particular.

It is important to detail that the research findings of *Study 1*, *Study 2* and *Study 3* were discussed separately. However, a pertinent comparative analysis between several questions of *Study 3* was performed in parallel in order to bring in new insights into understanding of language attitudes and identity fields.

1. Introduction

Languages are not solely symbolic means of communication; they are extensions of the way humankind thinks, interacts and, as such, they facilitate social life and provide evidence of individual identities and/or multiple cultural identities (Jandt, 2012). At each level from the individual to the cultural, identity constitutes the basic foundation for socialisation and communicative interchange between individuals (Joseph, 2004). Cultures, in part, provide a basis around which we can shape individual identities and our cultural belonging as Stuart Hall (1995) asserts.

Language and cultural identity lay at the centre of the present paper because identity both at the individual and collective level has always been a problem of humanity. Paradoxically, identity has become, as Lauren Leve (2011, p. 513) asserts, “a powerful organising presence in social life.” She adds that the ‘identity machine’ constructs beyond nations – “a transnational assemblage that is rapidly reorganizing ways of being and knowing oneself and others” (Leve, 2011, p. 514). Identity is, indeed, currently regarded as an elusive concept, a conundrum for identity scholars that is anchored in the contingency (Hall & du Gay, 1996). Along similar lines, Joseph (2004) claims that identity lies at the roots of language, but this conflation is not linguistically palpable – especially for sociolinguists.

In terms of the research methodology behind the identity phenomenon, linguists have recently begun emphasising the necessity of approaching identity construction through interdisciplinary thinking.

The pertinent image in associating the identity phenomenon could be in this particular context – *accordion* – (precisely: button accordion), starting from the awareness of our own form but not our own content (namely: *I* matched with the ‘contour line of myself’ and ‘my reflection’ in the mirror without knowing what is happening beyond that surface) and which, subsequently, opens up in the sounds produced by accordion bellows stretching, its ebb and flow, and, moreover, by pressing the buttons of the accordion (namely: opening up to alterity, revealing identity levels and raising awareness of internal and cultural differences, then adapting to an area of common existence). For then will *it* return to the original position, but enriched with thousands of musical notes (namely: opening to the world conceptualized in terms of self-awareness, self-discovery, and *self-understanding*).

In this context, the aim of this research is to describe the phenomena of language and cultural identity shaped in Moldavia. We will examine the experiences of Moldavian people as they relate to their self-reported cultural identities. We have chosen to focus on people's thoughts and opinions about cultural identity because identities are constructed from acts of communication, and the outcomes of their identity perception are based on interactive socialisation.

Much attention has been paid to language and cultural identity in Moldavia from a political perspective, whilst historical and social changes have not been taken into account. Moreover, whilst there is a growing body of work on identity, particularly within the contexts of the United States and Western Europe, to date, not much research has been conducted or published by local Moldavian (native) researchers on language and cultural identity from the perspective of contemporary Moldavia. We have also found that these articles reflect subjective authors' views based on their personal experiences, beliefs that marshal retrogressive arguments without conducting much empirical research or providing viable evidence or arguments¹. Likewise, the subjective approach, as directly experienced by the authors, builds tension in the country and develops contradictions and doubts among people in matters of identity. As a result of these, a controversy over linguistic and cultural identity has emerged in the country.

As a counterpoise to such publications, our current research work presents an alternative scenario by exploring different contemporary linguistic theories on identity and capturing insights of the linguistic situation in Moldavia in order to portray the actual debates over language and cultural identity issues in Moldavia. Moreover, the information we get from the employed studies will help to increase the understanding of identity 'planetarium' in Moldavia.

Instead, the existing research on cultural identity in Moldavia provides a static perspective, which is one reason why it is imperative for future research to embrace a more dynamic model. For our part, we will focus our research on the fluidity of identity as a core analytical construct, which will enable us to uncover the nexus between identity avowal and ascription as well as the points at which they intersect. As far as we are aware, not many studies exist that describe language and cultural identity in Moldavia from a dynamic perspective. Thus, our research represents a first step forward onto this previously uncharted path. In addition, the existing research studies primarily concentrate on the emergence of identity in Moldavia after the Soviet Union's collapse. However, one of the most important factors involved in considering the

¹ See for instance the articles of *Ana Gutu*.

evolution of a language over time is comprehending the ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary historical facts that fundamentally shaped the linguistic, cultural, and social values of a particular society.

The motivation for choosing this topic arises from the author's personal interest and passion for cultural identity construction, as well because this author is originally from Moldavia and has personally experienced doubts over language and cultural identity. The author's infinite and fascinating curiosity represents a great incentive to disseminate, via this master dissertation, research findings and share her views on how the Romanian and Russian cultures have impacted Moldavian society and their language(s) and cultural identity.

This research is a persistent attempt to address the polemics involved in language identity elucidation. Likewise, the impetus of this research derives from a desire to resolve conflict regarding identity in Moldavia, where a 'well-defined' sense of Moldavian cultural identity remains elusive. Indeed, this research materializes our intent to prepare a burial ground for the standard Moldavian stereotypes that took precedence in the post-Soviet state. The desire to self-identify has always been part and parcel of Moldavian culture. Thus, the enduring question once again arises: 'Do Moldavians shape distinct language and cultural identity/identities?'

This work includes the attempt to provide light on this particular question from a socio-linguistic perspective.

1.1. Research questions of *Study 1* and *Study 2*

The qualitative research aims to address two leading questions, the answers to which will provide a multi-perspective analysis of Moldavian identity formation by examining the ways that social actors perceive their own identities and how they describe them. The following questions are designed to facilitate the research:

1. How do people from Moldavia self-identify linguistically and culturally?
2. What factors have influenced the construction of Moldavian identity over time?

Several sub-questions were highlighted to distil the essence of the key elements identified in the current thesis:

- How does the Moldavian identity take shape?
- Is it separate from its sub-cultures (Romanian and Russian and other cultures)?

- Do they have a strong sense of identification with other sub-cultures (Romanian and Russian and other cultures)?

To illustrate the way language and cultural identity evolve and enlarge our research horizons in this multifaceted phenomenon, a few directional hypotheses will be explored:

- Cultural identity is perceived by our focused group as a hereditary phenomenon.
- Language and cultural identity are tied to national identity.
- Cultural identity is correlated with ethnicity.

The above-mentioned hypotheses were generated from the rationales of the participants in *Study 1*, and were not author-suggested. These directional hypotheses constitute the basis for the conception and development of questions of *Study 2*.

Unexpectedly, the double-effect findings from *Study 1* above-cited embrace, on the one hand, hypotheses (that provides an epistemological anchor for the second stage of the research); on the other hand – results which will further be examined in the *Results* chapter.

2. Methodology of qualitative research studies: *Study 1* and *Study 2*

2.1. Research design

Study 1 and Study 2 relies on the qualitative research approach in an effort to deliver relevant results. It includes a spectrum of interpretative methods and techniques for exploring identity and analysing the related data. This approach helps to clearly define the path of our research and the areas to be explored. We opted for this approach because it allows for a deep dive into the issues surrounding identity to excavate interesting and compelling facts from the conceptual palette related to language and cultural identity.

Moreover, the qualitative research approach generally relates to seeking to analyse the social aspects of life. It aims to explore sensitive topics and understand the experiences and attitudes of human beings. In this same vein, Flick (2006) pointed out that qualitative methods are more flexible in their deployment and represent a viable basis from which to examine social situations. Likewise, Mayring (as quoted in Scarneci, 2008) emphasised that qualitative research discloses the mechanisms at the centre of social processes as they evolve in a specific sociocultural context. For her part, in the book ‘Qualitative Research Methods Series’, Reissman argued that qualitative research gives importance to human actions and imagination so that researchers can interpret the real representations of subjects (as quoted in Scarneci, 2008).

Tavory & Timmermans point out that when the researchers carry out qualitative research, observing others, they capture people’s experiences and thoughts during their daily lives (Tavory & Timmermans, 2004, p. 21). For this reason, qualitative research fits well with studies regarding identity.

The qualitative research underlying this thesis relies on gathering data from two distinct groups of participants. The first study employs a self-concept questionnaire (see *Appendices 3* and *4*) through which data are collected from fourteen English philology graduate students’ rationales who were born and resided in Moldavia or still dwell therein. The constant comparative method is used to formulate a grounded theory of language and cultural identity that explores perceptions of language and cultural identity stereotypes related to the Moldavian people. The

respondents are engaged in conceptualising the ‘cultural identity’ term and identifying its underpinnings, whilst also describing their cultural self-identification (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The descriptive method is used to delineate and describe the conceptual framework of language and cultural identity and review identity theories originating from different perspectives.

Deliberately, the author of this work formulated the very opening question in Study 1 (somehow problematic and tricky): ‘How do you identify yourself culturally?’ to see whether people mainly think of language while facing a question on cultural self-identification or not; if they have the propensity to make a shift consciously from language to culture mode in their answers in order to identify the essential sources and mechanisms of cultural self-identification of our focused group.

In the second study, the *qualitative research interview method* (in the form of a semi-structured interview)² is deployed in order to describe data at factual and theoretical levels. In this line, the researcher is able to analyse information on a specific topic (McNamara, 1999).

2.2. Participants

STAGE 1. Self-concept Questionnaire

For the first stage of our research, the researcher considered a representative sample of English Philology graduate students. The volunteers were recruited from the “*Ion Creanga*” *Pedagogical State University of Moldova* campus during their final examinations. We believe this subset of high-educated and young individuals is a representative sample, as they are concerned about language identity issues because we are inclined to think that they have interest in the language and cultural identity topic, as well as they might represent important opinion makers in the Moldavian society, who, in turn, can influence the public utterance.

STAGE 2. Semi-structured Interview

First of all, we strived to select a representative sample of high-educated and relatively mobile individuals, fluent in English, in order to foster the validity of the research study and provide sufficiently rich data to address our major research questions. In this regard, participants’

² The author of this work is not liable for any type of English errors contained in the responses of participants.

selection criteria in Study 2 were based on three principles: fluency in English language, current enrolment at university, and being registered as students majoring in social or language-related studies (see *Figure 1*).

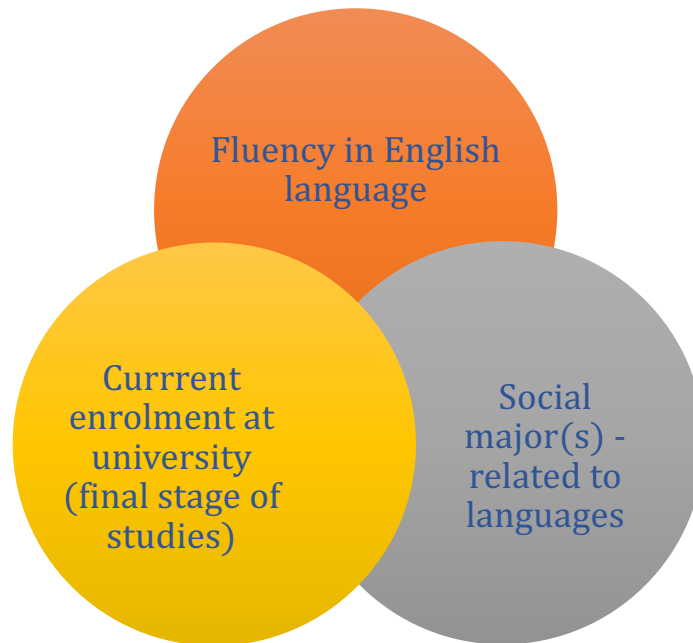


Figure 1. Participants' Eligibility Criteria of Study 2

Each interviewee followed a social major or a specialty which is related to language studies (for instance: Philology, Foreign Languages, Psychology, etc.). Moreover, each interviewee has completed his/her bachelor studies and some of them currently attend postgraduate courses. This particular subset of the population for whom data were being studied was preferred for a number of reasons, partly for showing how complex language and cultural identity are depicted in Moldavia but also for exposing how language and cultural identity of Moldavian young, high-educated and relatively mobile individuals can shape their social, linguistic and cultural perception. In view of the fact that the focused group was selected according to their educational background, from university environment, the aforementioned questions from the Self-concept questionnaire were conceived and written in English (see *Figure 1*). In addition, our empirical work was conducted in English for various reasons, firstly, to avoid translation gaps (in our case from Romanian into English), and secondly, to address a broader community of readers.

We presume that all the interviewees were born and lived in Moldavia, have basic knowledge about language and cultural identity and are relatively familiarized with identity issues and are interested in Moldavian political life.

All the respondents reported their age, mother tongue(s) and other necessary information related to the study in order to gather the required data. The current research tends to eschew gender bias, which is why the respondents were of the female and male gender. Thirteen persons were interviewed (face-to-face, via email and Skype) where 6 males and 7 females took part in the study. Correspondingly, the ratio of females to males is similar for the both performed studies.

2.3. Procedure

STAGE 1. Self-concept questionnaire

Participants were administered paper-based questionnaires that contain two questions/tasks. Then they read and ultimately answered both of these (see *Appendices 1, 2*). *Study 1* was self-paced and had an open-ended answer format. Study 1 lasted, in general, between 5 minutes to 15 minutes. ³

STAGE 2. Semi-structured Interviews

After reading the recruitment email sent by the researcher (see *Appendix 18*), participants expressed their willingness to participate and answered the necessary demographic questions. The researcher created a guideline that included 10 questions related to language and cultural identity, which she followed during the interview (see *Appendix 19*). In order to ensure a valid sampling, the researcher asked the interviewees the following demographic information (see *Appendix 20*):

- Age
- Gender
- Nationality
- Specialty
- Country of residence
- Mother tongue(s)

³ A **self-concept questionnaire** is a type of questionnaire that is designed for obtaining personal information on a specific topic from individuals. In this particular context, our tailored self-concept questionnaire provides a mental picture of how individuals self-identify culturally and define cultural identity.

Consider *Table 1*, which presents the profile information of thirteen interviewees:

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Nº	Name	Age	Gender	Level of education & institution	Specialty	Country of residence	Mother tongue(s)
1.	<i>Subject 1</i>	29	Female	<i>PHD</i> Ion Creanga Pedagogical State University	Philology	Romania	Romanian
2.	<i>Subject 2</i>	27	Female	<i>Bachelor</i> Moldova State University	Foreign Languages	India	Moldavian
3.	<i>Subject 3</i>	30	Male	<i>Master</i> Ion Creanga Pedagogical State University	Philology	Moldavia	Russian Romanian
4.	<i>Subject 4</i>	31	Female	<i>Bachelor</i> Ion Creanga Pedagogical State University	Philology	Moldavia	Moldavian
5.	<i>Subject 5</i>	29	Female	<i>PHD</i> Ion Creanga Pedagogical State University	Psychology	Romania	Moldavian
6.	<i>Subject 6</i>	28	Male	<i>Master</i> Alecú Russo State University of Balti	Faculty of Educational Sciences, and Psychology	Moldavia	Romanian
7.	<i>Subject 7</i>	34	Female	<i>Master after Master</i>	Psychology and	Belgium	Romanian

				Université catholique de Louvain	Educational Sciences		
8.	<i>Subject 8</i>	26	Male	<i>Master</i> Free International University of Moldova	Journalism	Russia	Russian
9.	<i>Subject 9</i>	23	Male	<i>Master</i> Moldova State University	Sociology	USA	Romanian
10.	<i>Subject 10</i>	28	Male	<i>Master</i> Free International University of Moldova	Foreign Languages	France	Romanian Russian
11.	<i>Subject 11</i>	25	Female	<i>Bachelor</i> Alecus Russo State University of Balti	Philology	Russia	Russian
12.	<i>Subject 12</i>	33	Female	<i>Bachelor</i> Moldova State University	Foreign Languages	Moldavia	Moldavian
13.	<i>Subject 13</i>	23	Male	<i>Bachelor</i> Alecus Russo State University of Balti	Psychology	Moldavia	Romanian

At that juncture, the researcher streamlined the interview's steps to each recruited participant. Furthermore, the researcher asked the interviewees' approval to record their conversation, to cite their reflections within the current master thesis and thus, they kindly consented. The researcher assured them that all the collected data will be treated with anonymity and confidentiality in such a manner as not to infringe upon their right to privacy. The researcher –

besides, secured the prospective participants that, in no circumstances, will disclose their identity nor disclose any information that could compromise their personal dignity.

The investigator created a guideline that includes 10 questions related to cultural identity which she followed during the interview (see *Appendix 19*). The ten-question questionnaire was created and tailored for the prospective volunteers according to their educational background. The conception of questions of *Study 2* was inspired in part by the outcomes of *Study 1*. The answers of the respondents of *Study 1* were deployed as a baseline for the researcher which helped her to lay the foundations for a logical structuring of ten elaborate questions on language and cultural identity. In this way, the questions were formulated and generated by ‘identity’ concrete manifestation, as “an identity exists by virtue of the assertions of it people make” (Joseph 2004, p. 20). In this regard, it allows both studies to connect since this current master thesis is sketched on two-fold inter-communicable parts.

2.4. Data collection

During the data collection process, the researcher gave the freedom to the interviewees to express their opinions, to reassess their ideas and add supplementary information. Since the respondents reside in multiple locations, the researcher conducted the interview in different modalities:

- Email interviews
- Personal interviews
- Skype interviews.

The integral semi-structured interviews via email are shown in the *Appendices* section and the personal interviews and the interviews conducted via Skype were recorded and subsequently transcribed. All the semi-structured interviews were held in a similar manner, and the data was stored and structured according to systematic sampling format.

The face-to-face and Skype interviews are ubiquitous methods of research (Dana et alia, 2013), which have more personal character since the researcher saw and interacted with the respondents, examined their gestures and facial expressions, felt their emotions and interpreted their wordless signs. At the interpretation and analysis stage, those kinds of interviews were more valuable as they increased clarity on the information stated by the participants because there was always time to elucidate numerous aspects.

The distance played a great role when conducting the emailed interviewees as most of them were shorter in size (see *Appendices 21-33*). Besides, there was a propensity for misunderstandings and inclination to things that were left unsaid which conducted as an important shortcoming in our investigation. Nevertheless, email interviewing had several compelling advantages: high-speed transmission, affordable costs, self-paced answering, computer storing of all the data, high-reliability for ensuring confidentiality, but above all, to surmount the distance, since many contributors of this study were recruited from different countries (Wellman, 1999).

2.5. Data analysis

In the data analysis process, we utilised a variety of techniques. After the data were collected, we took the raw data notes, scanned the rationales of the respondents, wrote a list of terms and key elements which would paint a global picture of our results and findings and, afterward, divided it into subcategories. Those notes helped us select the data that evoked interesting ideas, organise the material in order to gain a better understanding of the evidence, and subsequently, explore the data.

The techniques used in the exploratory data analysis process include *cluster analysis*, which enabled us to group similar and dissimilar elements into clusters, in order to map out essential ideas which are fundamental for our research.

The *Exploratory data analysis* approach was followed to generate possible hypotheses and address the underlying research questions. *Confirmatory data analysis* was used to seek clarification between the existing factors on the nature of language and cultural identity content and other underlying factors.

Axial coding, along with *selective coding*, were utilised. Axial coding was employed to determine the relationships and properties of the core components of our topic, and selective coding was used to establish the generative tools that drove the research forward (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). To this end, we concentrated on detecting patterns related to our major research questions and hypotheses.

3. What is Identity?

In this chapter, we present the most compelling identity theories relating to our major subject matter hereof and some key identity theories which are then contrasted with the author's own views in order to increase the understanding of phenomena of language and cultural identity shaped in Moldavia.

3.1. Defining identity

How is 'identity' conceptualized? What do identity researchers relate to when using the term of 'identity'? This sub-section provides a framework for conceptualizing identity and answer the fundamental questions raised above.

Sociolinguists have for long struggled to create a theoretical premise and ideological framework for identity but, above all, to theorise the multifaceted term of 'identity'. Several authors have attempted to define identity, as yet, there is still no fully accepted definition, as Brubaker & Cooper (2000, p. 2) assert: "identity is a deeply ambiguous term".

A variety of research paradigms have become dominant while defining identity such as Erikson terminology of "identity crisis" or "ego identity", constructivist approach, post-modernism; and more recently, post-colonialism, etc. Different theories from diverse angles have been proposed such as: social identity theory, self-categorization theory, identity status theory, etc. which have developed a set of dogmas about the term 'identity' in the academic literature.

Paradoxically, the term 'identity', in its most basic sense, encompasses both 'sameness' and 'uniqueness'. On the one hand, the word "identity" relates etymologically to Latin *idem*⁴ "same" which literally conveys the meaning of 'sameness' (Joseph, 2004): a Moldavian, for instance, comes into contact with other Moldavians and therefore, a social link is established because of their mutual sense of belonging to a particular social group (Moldavian) and of which a particular individual is a "prototypical member" (Joseph, 2004, p. 37). On the other

⁴ Definition of **identity** from Latin (*identitas pro idem*):

https://books.google.be/books?id=UJOwwwq8LU5C&pg=PA751&dq=%22du+cange%22+%22quaevis+actio+repetita%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ZEj8Uo2eJITYoATS_oH4CA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=%22du%20cange%22%20%22quaevis%20actio%20repetita%22&f=true

hand, identity is tied up with the idea of being unique or exclusive, possessing an ‘identity’ name and possessing a ‘self’ that is composed of numerous identities (Joseph, 2004, Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), but at the same time, being a unique *entity* “that escapes all categorisation beyond association with this particular person” (Joseph, 2004, p. 37). These oppositions intermingle, as people are engaged in an ongoing process of shaping a sense of who they are and who they are in relation to others. In this sense, the definition of Jenkins is very appropriate (2008, p. 6), who conceptualizes identity “as the human capacity – rooted in language – to know who is who [...]. This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, and us knowing who they think we are”.

Along the same lines, Melucci (1996, p. 45) states that the identity phenomenon is characterised by three essential features: the ability of individuals “to recognize and be recognized”, the ability of individuals to differentiate from others and, ultimately, their persistence over time and their adaptations to the ever-changing environment.

It is worthwhile to emphasise here that at the collective level, one may identify as the same as some people (sameness) but also as different from other people (uniqueness or difference). ‘Self’ and ‘other-identification’ are situation and context conditioned, as Brubaker & Cooper (2000) state. For instance, individuals define themselves Moldavians if there are other persons who are or self-identify in opposition to Moldavians, such as Russians, Romanians or Gagauzians, etc. The way one sees himself and the way one is identified by others diverge widely from context to context and by the *mode of identification* (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). As reported by Brubaker & Cooper (2000), two modes of identification are designated in this respect: relational and categorical. In the former, one identifies by his position in a relational network (i.e. Moldavians – in a web of friendship, for example). In the latter, one identifies by membership in a *class of persons* who share some common categories or attributes (for instance, the same persons – Moldavians – could be identified as Romanians – according to their reported language or citizenship⁵ (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Subsequently, the categorical identification mode is more salient in formal settings, whereas the relational mode of identification is salient in everyday practice (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

⁵ From 2002 until 2018, approximately 521.025 Moldavian citizens regained Romanian citizenship (confirmed by Romanian National Citizenship Authority from: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/only-51-moldovans-regained-the-romanian-citizenship-in-2016/>). As such, those Moldavians hold dual Moldavian and Romanian citizenship. Some ‘re-acquired’ Romanian citizenship from grandparents as a pragmatic tool to travel and work in the European Union.

But can we actually define ‘identity’? Evidently, there are numerous definitions of identity but many of them do not capture all the current identity mechanisms. Although, examining these definitions may be useful for us to distil interesting facts and will be helpful for the next chapters of the present master thesis. Wendt’s (1992, p. 397) definition of identity, for instance, is compelling, who subsumes “role-specific understandings and expectations about self” under the concept of identity.

Contrary to these definitions, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) believe that the infinite expansion of identity meanings and the growing array of its uses have ceased ‘identity’ to mean anything at all. According to them (2000), identity should acquire more specific and concrete terminology, as many fundamental identity issues are overlooked.

Following this argument, they (2000) propose ‘self-understanding’ as an alternative term to identity that designates one’s social location, his own sense of who he is and his manner or capacity to act. They (2000) approach the alternative term of ‘self-understanding’ through its practical uses – both ‘cognitive and emotional’ individuals have of themselves. But could Brubaker’s and Cooper’s privileged term of ‘self-understanding’ replace ‘identity’ concept (understood here in the sense of *self-expression*)? Indeed, there is an substantial overlap between them, but both of these involve similar and relatively distinctive aspects of identity.

Instead of providing an explicit definition of identity, Brubaker and Cooper (2000, p. 7) streamlined an inventory of key uses that circulate nowadays in the scientific literature:

1. Identity acknowledged as a ground for social and political action. In other words, it is used to emphasise the way in which individual and collective action could be determined by *pluralistic self-understandings* rather than *universal self-interest*.
2. Identity construed as an *collective* phenomenon. In this particular sense, identity expresses *sameness* across members of a group or a specific category.
3. Identity understood as an essential element of “selfhood” (manifested individually or collectively) or as the core of human being, which refers predominantly to something *deep* or *foundational*, which is to be recognized, valued and perpetuated.
4. Identity perceived as a *product* of political and social action. This use relates to the development of collective self-representation and *groupness* which can actually enact the group action. In this sense, identity represents both a *contingent* product and a process, which will lay the basis for further social action.

5. Identity used as an *evanescent product*, which denotes the contemporary associations for the *unstable, fragmented, fluctuating* and *multiple* nature of self.

These key uses intend to cover more or less the various definitions of identity which have evolved lately and, subsequently, create conventions concerning the term.

But what does contemporary concept of identity invoke? Following Brubaker and Cooper's inventory, we propose the additional 'organisational' use of identity, which will supplement the above conventional inventory. More recently, identity scholars often associate the term of 'identity' with the sense of *organisation*. Joseph (2004, p. 226) postulates that "one's self-representation of identity is the organizing and shaping centre of one's representations of the world". In the same vein, Leve (2011, p. 513) posits identity as a social fact – a strong "organising presence in social life today". Like Joseph and Leve, we construe identity as an organisational and re-organisational basis to develop a sense of who we are in relation to the world (Norton, 1997), as multidimensional term of identity entails multiple ways of representing 'self' and perceiving the world.

Drawing on different sources, we use the concept of *identity* in our current work to refer to how human beings self-identify and *cultural identity* to how they express their cultural belonging(s).

3.1.1. Does language constitute a marker of group identities?

Should we consider language as a factor that marks the boundaries of a social group? Languages are often considered significant identifiers in defining social groups (Norton, 1997). In sociolinguistic terms, there is a high tendency for *group identities* to correlate with shared linguistic features (Joseph, 2004). Moreover, there is also a tendency for linguistic boundaries to correlate with ethnic boundaries, as Joseph (2004) ascertains. In other words, group identities are expressed mostly by mutual linguistic features but still, they are not identical for all the members of this group (Joseph, 2004), that is why they are capable to understand other speakers outside this particular group. Instead, these shared linguistic features represent a matter of common interest that emphasises reciprocal intelligibility (Norton, 1997).

But does language represent an important marker of identity? From Jenkin's definition, we may assume that language represents a key factor in the process of identity construction, which functions as a marker and as a symbol of identity. In a similar way, Joseph (2004) argues that we perceive one's identity, on the basis of his *words*, through what he says and how he speaks.

Joseph's (2004, p. 39) conception of identity and language is important because it invokes that identity is the foundation of human interaction "upon which 'language' (...) is grafted". Along the same line, Bakhtin (Bakhtin, & Holquist, 1981, p. 356) conceptualizes 'identity' as a vital force that creates itself "within the boundaries of a language". Our languages (used in Joseph's terms) (2004, p. 48) as "vehicles of our thinking" are constituent parts of 'who we are' "culturally and mentally", but yet we may learn new languages and 'others' may learn our language/languages. Surprisingly, however, we share many things with people from other linguistic cultures (for example, Moldavians share similar written and spoken languages, or common history with Romanians and Russians), delimited by different ethnic boundaries throughout our lives, and at the same time we share and acknowledge an internal variation within our proprietary language (Moldavian-Romanian, in this particular sense) (Joseph, 2004).

3.2. Social identity

But how do people feel attached to a certain group? How do people define their sense of belongingness to a particular social group? The answer to these questions might be explained and properly constructed by approaching different identity theories.

Tajfel's and Turner's *social identity theory* (1986) puts forward the idea that individuals perceive their social belonging in terms of in-groups and outgroups. An in-group represents a social group wherein individuals define themselves as members, whereas an outgroup is a social group that individuals do not feel they belong to or do not feel psychologically members of it (Maltby, 2005).

Within social identity theory, individuals constantly categorize themselves as members of various groups: professional groups, groups of individuals with shared interests or preferences such as football group, rock fan group, etc. but also, they can classify themselves more largely by group identifiers such as race, gender, culture, language, etc. In the first instance, the individuals identify themselves as members of particular social categories and then use these social categories for defining, describing, examining and evaluating others (Stets & Burke, 2000).

The authors also suggest that individuals develop their sense of 'self' through social categorization, social identification, social comparison processes and repeated interaction (Stets

& Burke, 2000). Each individual is unique and, therefore, he selects and combines particular social categories which he/she identifies with. These social categories are built by a wide range of attributes and phenomena that reflect both similarities and differences among people belonging to a group, as well as, distinguish a particular group from the other groups (Trepte & Loy, 2017). It is worthwhile noting here that these categories are established in day-to-day practices. During the social categorization process, individuals evaluate in-groups and outgroups, classify themselves but also struggle for acceptance by other in-group members, and ultimately, they attempt to achieve in-group distinctiveness. Throughout this process, it is created a feeling of positive in-group ‘connectedness’ which leads each individual to feel “social meaning” and “self-worth” (Maltby, 2005, p. 38). Analogously, Wendt (1994, p. 394) expresses a similar view; he conceptualizes social identities as “sets of meaning” that an individual attribute to himself “while taking the perspective of others” and believes that social identities are schemas which enable an individual to define ‘who he is’ through mutual understandings.

In the remarkable article *The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour* (1986), Tajfel and Turner have stemmed out three key principles which underline a theoretical frame on *social identity*. Firstly, human beings struggle to create and tend to preserve a “positive social identity” within a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 284). Secondly, “positive social identity” is constructed on positive comparisons that are made between in-groups and some “relevant out-groups” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 284). The ‘positive’ perception of an in-group is created by the ‘*differentiation*’ from those “relevant out-groups” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 284). The third principle is based on the idea that “when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct group and/or to make their existing group more positively distinct” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 284).

It seems that there is a paradox surrounding social identity in terms of out-groups and in-groups behaviour. According to Steen-Olsen (2013) individuals may categorize, compare or identify with other individuals of the social group they belong to or think they belong to, but, at the same time, do not feel that they are sufficiently accepted. On another side of the coin, they may also have the feeling that they belong to that social group, that they are fully recognized and accepted by the members of that group without identifying fully with the members of that social group (Anthias, 2006, as quoted in Steen-Olsen, 2013). As we may observe, the social group boundaries are less delimited, more uncertain and “more porous” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000,

p. 27) than we assume or are inclined to think. None of the members of any social group are forced to have identical views, values, cultural practices or exactly the same interests in order to take part of the same social group. As a result, the sense of belongingness to a particular social group in democratic and liberal societies is created on shared bond and derives from the “freedom to belong to an identity”, freedom to act and the desire to affirm themselves as Melucci (1988, p. 257-258) has pointed out. Individuals can belong to more than one ethnic group or linguistic group, that is why there is a continuous dialogue between the members of in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Furthermore, in the current work we define ‘social groups’ referring to a set of people who are ‘bounded’ by ethnic background and speak or think they might speak a common language, such as *Moldavian social group*, who believe that they speak Moldavian idiom or Moldavian dialect separate from Romanian, *Russian social group* who speaks Russian and *Romanian social group* who speak and share the prestige or acrolectal language – Romanian. Though, we do not exclude the possibility of individuals to pertain to several ethnic groups and speak several languages above-mentioned. Our definition of social group highlights as well Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000) model for defining individuals’ mother tongue by *origin* – the first language spoken at home, by *function* – the language(s) individuals uses the most or by *competence* – the language seen as a skill, namely the language individuals master the best.

3.3. Personal identity

The most typical question which invokes the meaning of what is personal identity found in the scientific literature is ‘Who am I?’. But how can we actually answer this question? On which basis should we define a person: on the basis of nationality, culture, profession, religion and so on or different roles he/she accomplishes? Then, the author of this current master thesis will attempt to respond in the following way: “I am Moldovan, a student, a mother, a wife, an English teacher, a European, a writer,” etc. There are multiple ways to answer this question because many things might interfere and numerous aspects could be incorporated into the formulation of this answer. The issue of answering this question resides also in defining the social categories individuals refer to and their importance to each individual. Yet, the question ‘Who am I?’ is multivalent, as the sense of who one is and how one locates himself is constructed through social processes (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, p. 7). Brubaker and Cooper

(2000, p. 17) also further accentuate that in some contexts, individuals may perceive themselves “in terms of a grid of intersecting categories” and in other contexts they “understand themselves (...) as a network of differential proximity”.

Likewise, Joseph (2004, p. 17) claims that the idea of who someone is, – “one’s subjective self” – is located in his/her individual feelings. This statement denotes that our personal identity is a set of feelings about our ‘self’. Thus, in the contemporary usage, identity conveys, first and foremost, the meaning of ‘self-image’ and not the idea of how we feel about ourselves, because feelings are viewed as being too ‘fluid’. Thenceforth, based on a variety of research sources, we argue that personal identity is not a set of subjective feelings about our ‘self’ but rather a definition of our ‘self’. In this sense, what at first might be conceived of identity is that our concept of self-identity (personal identity) tends to reverse the meaning of the social identity because it is sometimes equated with it and it reflects notably into it. Subsequently, it is difficult for someone to dispel his/her beliefs about personal ‘identities’ of others or ascribe someone a ‘specific identity’.

But still what is the difference between personal and social identity? Many sociolinguists attempted to elucidate the difference between personal and social identity, but yet there is a growing concern about this, since this lacks empirical evidence in the scientific research. Turner’s *self-categorization theory* that was construed as a derivative of social identity theory explains, to some extent, the difference between personal and social identity. It suggests that personal identity is not highly determined by group memberships but rather by individuals’ own perceptions, whereas social identity theory posits that social identity is highly determined by the group behaviour (Trepte & Loy, 2017). Throughout the self-categorization process, it is created a so-called individualized ‘sense of identification’ equivalent to personal identity (Maltby, 2005).

Snow (2001) explains the difference between personal identity and social identity in a similar way. He (2001) underlined that personal identity is about attributing to oneself a sense of exclusivity, whereas social identity is about establishing and developing a sense of connectivity along with a sense of identity ascribed to other individuals. The meanings attributed to oneself may overlap with those of collective identities. There is a high interplay between these types of identities, wherein each of them interconnects.

From the prototypical question concerning personal identity raised above, namely ‘Who am I?’, we may observe that it implies different answers as well (i.e. I am a teacher, I am a mother,

etc.) shaped by the roles people perform on the daily basis. Given the emphasis on role performing, *identity theory* proposed by Stryker in 1980 highlights the roles human beings identify with and act out (Stryker, 1987). As well *identity theory* underlines how these roles have impact on the individuals' self-conceptions. In other words, humans are actors and their performed roles are, to some extent, innate, inherent or chosen (Stets & Burke, 2000). At the same time, they are reactors, as the roles performed by others can affect our behaviour and our choices. Moreover, the spectrum of roles people perform can influence the relationships with other actors in a given context (Stets & Burke, 2000).

In this master thesis, we concentrate on people's experiences on cultural belonging(s) and our main focus is to examine the construction of cultural belonging(s) and cultural identity rather than on personal identity construction.

3.4. Collective identity

This section exposes significant collective identity theories related to our research that are discussed below. As well, we explain hereof crucial collective identity mechanisms through a Moldavian contextualized approach.

The most significant questions in an effort to investigate our central topic are 'How do collective identities exist?' and 'How are 'collectivities' composed?' In order to answer these questions, one might first investigate the integrative notion of collective identity.

There is a great debate about the implicit complexity of the term *collective identity* in the contemporary discourse. In the traditional sense, collective identity is defined as an individual's identification or connection with a broader community, a large group, category or institution or, simply, collective identity is the identity that a collectivity or a group has (Eder, 2009). Eder (2009, p. 4) gives us a comprehensive notion on collective identities, who state that they are "symbolic forms through which a world of social relations is mirrored". Another compelling definition is that of Hall & Du Gay (1996, p. 13) who conceives collective identity as a dual process which reflects "the relationships of the Other to oneself".

How are collective identities created? Generally speaking, once individuals are born in a given group, they are given a nationality, then they acquire a language or several languages of that group which might represent their mother tongue(s). In this way, they become authentic

inheritors of a specific (given or assumed) culture claimed by the group, they were born or belong to.

In the remarkable book *Social Conflict and Collective Identities*, Coy and Woehrle (2000) believe that all the members of the group must create themselves a “synthesis of commonalities” (2000, p. 3) in order to understand the *extent* they are similar to other members of a group and the *extent* they are dissimilar to other members of a group.

But how does a member of a group become legitimate? According to Coy & Woehrle (2000), powerful states manipulate the collective identities of members of a group emphasising the issue of national honour and national languages. They (2000) also underline that group construction is a process of negotiation, where each individual is evaluated and categorized in relation and opposition.

Similarly, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) claim that members of a particular group must be similar enough – not identical – to be positioned as legitimate. In the same vein, Melluci (1996, p. 48) strongly claims that the distinction of any *collective actor* should be continuously recognized by other collective actors. Correspondingly, he argues that *difference* often implies a certain degree of mutuality and vice versa. Thus, there must be a slight degree of reciprocity in social recognition between the members of a collectivity even though it is manifested in the form of “a denial, a challenge, or an *opposition*” (our italicization) (Melluci, 1996, p. 48).

Let us take the example of Moldavia, where several (major and minority) languages are spoken in the country and where several ethnic groups co-exist. Because of the ethnic and linguistic boundaries marked within the country, different conflicts and linguistic issues have emerged. As a result, some people experience *internal* conflict. In other words, they hesitate while defining and expressing their collective identity and cultural identity. Nevertheless, the majority of people strive somehow (or at least tend) to be included in the majority culture (Moldavian culture) or nation.

Evidently, linguistic ‘delimitation’ and ethnic boundaries in Moldavia have caused (external) conflicts concerning social categorization of individuals as well as (internal) conflicts – defining themselves culturally (Moldavians, Romanians, Russians, etc.), claiming an identity to himself that will be then recognized by others. For instance, individuals who ascribe Moldavian identity and claim Moldavian as their language struggle to be supported, accepted and recognized by other Moldavians who speak the same language, but also to feel self-worth

in that collectivity. As well, they thrive, at some degree, to be *differentiated* by Romanians or Russians as a distinct group, having the freedom to develop their own (Moldavian) identity.

3.4.1. Conflict as a crucial mechanism in collective identity formation

Conflict is a quintessential mechanism in the process of collective identity formation (Melucci, 1996). In George Simmel's opinion (2009) there is no homogeneous or harmonious group. Any collective group needs harmony along with disharmony, association along with dissociation but, above all – conflicts – without which there is no collective identity at all (Simmel, 2009). Therefore, he (2009, p. 490) speculates that conflict could be construed in today's accelerated world as “a form of socialisation”. Conflict in itself is a positive operative mechanism which provides a resolution for the tensions between people of a group (Simmel, 2009). Moreover, he does not regard conflict as the lack of social order or dialogue, but rather as a tool of unification because, as he ascertains, a group has no fixed form and no balanced organisation (Simmel, 2009).

Unlike Simmel, Melluci (1996, p. 48) advocates that collective identity per se embraces an “unresolvable tension” between definition and recognition as subjects in the collective action⁶. Furthermore, he believes that one's recognition and the ability to be recognized are crucial in the social and collective action as well as in the process of building a sense of collective identity. He (1996) argues that social actors engage primarily in a conflict when their identity has been rejected by their ‘opposers’. As a consequence of this, they fight to regain the ‘identity’ perceived by them as their own (Melluci, 1996).

In general, conflict worsens the relationships between ‘language opposers’ (as it is the case of the constant conflict of pro-Romanians and pro-Moldavians in Moldavia)⁷ and deteriorates the social interaction (as it is the case of the self-claimed Romanians and self-claimed Russians in Moldavia) (Melluci, 1996). As believed by Melluci (1996, p. 44), alongside a conflict, the “internal solidarity” and not the common interests of the group strengthen their collective identity and creates ties between the members of the group. In other words, the members of a particular group need these ties to *enact* and give meaning to their collective action (Melluci, 1996). He (1996) also postulates that plurality and tensions are binding constituents of any

⁶ See a pertinent explanation of the ‘collective action’ concept in the next sub-section.

⁷ *Pro-Romanian unionists* struggle for the unification of Moldavia with Romania.

Pro-Moldavians fight for the acceptance and recognition of the new Moldavian identity.

collective actor. As such, collective action is organised through contradictions and reciprocal tension as well as through “negotiation and renegotiation” (Melucci, 1996, p. 44).

3.4.2. Ethnicity as a fundamental mechanism of collective and cultural identities

Culture and ethnicity are concepts which are often utilised interchangeably, whereas culture is related to “transmitted symbols, beliefs, institutions, behaviours, customs and practices” (Jackson, 1999, p. 96) and ethnicity is linked to “language, nationality, religion or culinary practices” (Jackson, 1999, p. 96). Ronald Jackson (1999) underlined that the above-cited elements are perpetuated by individuals who share the same geographical location, rather than the same origin.

Contrarily, Fishman (1989, p. 5) described *ethnicity* as the “definitional dimension of culture” and nationalism as the “expansion of affiliative beliefs, attitude and behaviours” (Fishman, 1989, p. 110). In Fishman’s view, identity “in the furthest inner recesses of the soul” is deeply connected to ethnicity (Fishman, 1989, p. 36).

Surprisingly, if we look back in time, we may notice that ethnicity was conceptualized as a *heritage*, a given thing from the ancestors, which is fixed and non-contingent (Wsevolod, 1992). In the same line, Liebkind et al. (2015, p. 113) define ethnicity as a sense of belongingness to an “assumed ancestry and origin”.

Nowadays, ethnicity is conceptualized as a process which is highly related to culture. Barth, for instance, argues that culture is a point of departure when describing the many-sided concept of ethnicity (quoted in Epstein, 1978). According to him, ethnic group boundaries are perceived psychologically and an established ethnic community is a result of its interrelations (quoted in Epstein, 1978). Accordingly, an ethnic community settles its boundaries through members’ perceptions and not by the means of cultural distinctiveness (Epstein, 1978). In this line, Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985, p. 3) claim that an autonomous ethnicity is a group of individuals “who encounter one another” and fight for the same cultural rights.

On the contrary, Gans (1979) defines ethnicity as a symbol of the nation, highlighting the fact that it has recently lost its practical values and should be used only to identify people by their spiritual practices.

The contemporary approach regarding the concept of ethnicity contradicts the symbolic approach which relies on practical values but refers to daily practices instead. The adepts of this approach (Bourdieu, Bentley, Yelvington, etc.) believe that even ethnicity along with collective and cultural identity may be negotiated and reconstructed (quoted in Wsevolod, 1992). Thus, ethnicity should be conceptualized both: as something assumed or fixed or as a process which is always under construction, negotiation, and questioning.

3. 5. Alberto Melucci's collective identity model

Alberto Melucci (1996) who is considered one of the most important figures in the field of collective identity, defines 'collective identity' as "an interactive and shared definition" constructed by a set of individuals or groups "concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place" (Melucci, 1996, p. 44)

Furthermore, he (1996) introduces the concept of '*collective action*' in reference to collective identity to express the idea that social actors are participants of an action in which they define themselves through interaction and define their network of collective relationships with the surrounding environment. As well, the collective action is enacted by means of emotional investments of social actors involved in the 'collective action' process in a specific collective field. An essential point emphasised by Melucci (1996) is that collective action is not linear, it often depends on common goals members pursue together, that is why members and groups or sub-groups participate in the construction of "we" at the collective level.

However, his model does not limit the notion of collective action as a mere social and environmental interaction but as something that creates symbolic 'meanings' and produces a 'sense of belongingness' that social actors identify with and recognize (Melucci, 1996).

In his opinion (1996, p. 43-44), the contested concept of collective identity as a process is shaped by three fundamental elements of *collective action*: "cognitive definitions", "emotional investments" of the social actors of a particular collectivity, and "active collective relationships".

Cognitive definitions are, in fact, shared ideas or views established by common goals or ends, common language resources (shared by a segment of population, a certain group, or society) and collective action which are embedded in a set of cultural practices or "cultural artefacts" (Melucci 1996, p. 44).

Emotional investments refer to the affective recognition among people which help them to create membership or affiliation ties into a “common unity” (Melucci, 1996, p. 44). In his view, the feeling of “common unity” is central in defining a collective identity and “activating their relationships” so as to give sense to their “being together” (Melucci, 1996, p. 33). A spectrum of emotions such as love, hate, tension, pride, shame, trust, fear, etc. are all essential elements of collective action and social interaction, as Melucci (1996) postulates.

Active collective relationships between the social actors demonstrate that collective identity exists through daily and “active” interactions (Melucci, 1996). Moreover, the social actors of a given collective group interconnect, negotiate, “influence each other, and make decisions” (Melucci, 1996, p. 45). ‘Collective relationships’ also implies intercultural encounters and are not only reduced to a network of relationships established during collective action because it involves strong *oppositions*, *conflicts* and *tension* as well (Melucci, 1996).

3.6. The relational theory of collective identity

Another pertinent theory put forward to contribute to understanding the process of ‘collective identities’ construction is Eder’s *relational theory of collective identity* propounded in 2009. In this theory, he (2009) advocates that collective identity constructed in today’s complex societies cannot be reduced to the simple question ‘Who do we belong to?’, providing the argument that collective identities are manifested in “concrete interaction situations” where “the sense of proud and shame” represent a key mechanism of collective identities (Eder, 2009, p. 7).

‘Narrative networks’ lie at the heart of the *relational theory of collective identity* (Eder, 2009). In his theory, he (2009) approaches the emotional aspect of collective identities and defines *narratives* as carriers of cultural material objects, images, texts or stories which bear emotions. Moreover, he argues that human relationships and collective identities transcend the mere “sense of shared interests and reciprocal solidarity” (Eder, 2009, p. 5). In this line, he equals ‘narratives’ with reciprocal meanings that individuals or members of a group share “emphatically” which, in turn, create “narrative bonds” among people.

Correspondingly, collective identity is the overarching term or an analytical tool for the dynamic social relationships “embedded” and activated in a narrative network. Shared narratives, as he (2009) maintains, are central pylons in building strong collective identities

which help individuals to live in the contemporary sophisticated societies and establish social relations.

An assumption that can be drawn from this theory is that our conception of collective identity results from the reciprocal knowledge of ‘self’ and ‘others’. As well, collective identity signifies creating and giving ‘meaning’ to the social relations (Eder, 2009) that will be fortified and last in time.

3.7. Difference between personal and collective identity

What is the difference between personal and collective identity? Can we actually elucidate explicitly the difference between personal and collective identity?

Calhoun in his work *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, for instance, does not dichotomize personal and collective identity. In this sense, he discerns that individual and collective identity are pervasive throughout history and across cultures (quoted in Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). As well, he warns us that we should keep both of these together since: “no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we, and they are not made” (quoted in Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 9).

In a similar way, Joseph (2004) draws our special attention to the idea that our “deep personal identity” comprises partly “the various group identities which *we* stake a claim” (our italicization) (Joseph, 2004, p. 5). Relatedly, Leve evokes a clear mental picture of poker game compared to collective identity construction process: “like the cards in a poker game, what each of us holds is as much a function of others’ holdings as of any absolute we might imagine applies to ourselves alone” (Leve, 2011, p. 530).

To sum up, collective identity should be construed as an analytical construct, but also as a category of practice. The answer to the question ‘How are the collective groups created?’ often relies on empirical evidence derived from the direct reality lived by individuals (Eder, 2009).

3.8. Cultural identity and cultural belongingness

The current discourse on cultural identity often relates to the culture of a people, to its cultural heritage or cultural belongingness. Then several questions emerge from this clichéd

assumption: ‘What is culture?’⁸, ‘What is cultural belongingness?’ and ultimately ‘What is cultural identity?’. In this section, we will attempt to offer answers to the last two questions and define these concepts from different angles.

In general, ‘cultural identity’ aligned with ‘sense of belongingness’ have such a colossal impact on mankind that still resonate nowadays with most people throughout the world. One intriguing thing concerning cultural identity is about its current *position* and *status*. On one hand, sociolinguists take over the ‘essence’ of previous studies on cultural identity that predate twenty-first-century explosion in cultural identity interest and do not reinvent or discover anew, but still expounds the existing theories all over again (Leve, 2011). On the other hand, cultural identity and cultural belongingness are under-theorized, as scholars are inclined to write articles on both of these without even providing explicit notions of them.

How can we define the ‘cultural belongingness’ concept? Yuval-Davis (as quoted from Steen-Olsen, 2013) claims that, above all, one’s sense of belongingness should encompass safety, as she equals *belonging* with the feeling of constant comfort and with the sense of feeling “like at home” (as quoted from Steen-Olsen, 2013, p. 314). Steen-Olsen (2013, p. 314) claims that the notion of cultural belonging transcends the limits of “ethnicity” or “identification”, stating that it is more about “shared experiences”, “emotional attachment” and the “feeling of inclusion and exclusion”.

In our master thesis, we define *cultural belonging*, firstly, as people’s freedom (Melucci, 1989) to express and process their own views regarding it. Secondly, we conceptualize cultural identity as people’s internalization of the feeling that they pertain or adhere to a particular group of people (i.e. ethnic, namely Moldavian, Russian, Gagauz, etc.) who share, to some degree, a set of common cultural values, norms, cultural practices and symbolic/material bonds (Steen-Olsen, 2013) that are embedded into Moldavian contemporary society and perpetuated by them on daily basis; who share a common language or several languages (variety or even a shared dialect) without neglecting the historical perspective; and who are emotionally attached (Melucci, 1996) to this particular group. More specifically, as the topic of this thesis indicates, we focus on language as a foundational element that enacts a particular cultural belonging or endorses a specific cultural identity, perceived by our participants as “recognizable” identity (Gee, 2004, p. 21).

⁸ The term of **culture** will be defined later in the current master thesis (see sub-chapter 4.5.)

How can we define the multifaceted 'cultural identity' concept? Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (1996), for instance, believe that cultural identity itself is an intricate concept expressed by the reciprocal feeling of belongingness to a particular context, nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc. (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). They, therefore, pledged that people might share and use the same resources of language, national ancestry, national culture, cultural resources or might not; it is always a process of questioning (Hall & Du Gay, 1996).

How is cultural identity concept construed in the contemporary discourse? Social and cultural forces which produce identities are not firmly fixed, they always alter, adapt, and refine (Martin & Nakayama, 2010), that is why in the last three decennia a shift in terms of conceptualizing cultural identity from a static model to more a dynamic model has occurred.

In the contemporary context, cultural identity construction is construed as a 'lively' active process which transforms in the performance process, as a consequence not as a target (Epstein, 1978; Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Leve, 2011, etc.). Barth believes that people should treat identity as a conditional social category, whereas cultural *differentiation* is a key process in understanding the process of *cultural identity* construction and its development across time (as quoted in Jackson, 1999).

In the cutting-edge book *Il n'y a pas d'identité culturelle* written by François Julien (2016), the author strongly refutes the existence of cultural identity and provides arguments on the existence of cultural resources instead. In his book, Julien (2016) claims that a culture is unable to possess an identity and highlights the dynamic nature of cultural identity. Correspondingly, he puts into question the cultural identity salience.

In his book, Julien (2016) also ascertains the non-existence of cultural identity artefact. Contrary to Barth, Julien (2016, p. 43) reaches the conclusion that we should not adopt the 'difference' approach to envision the different kinds of cultural diversities. In such a way, we will definitely be directed to the concept 'identity', that, in turn, will direct us to a stalemate. He (2016, p. 45) also states that this approach is irrelevant or technically impossible "puisque le propre du culturel est de muter et de se transformer – cette raison est massive puisqu'elle tient à l'essence même de la culture".

Based on F. Julien's suggestions, we should not situate such as a contingent concept of cultural identity at the core of our life, since we belong to many cultures at once. What we see, perceive and interpret today of cultural identity is solely a reminiscent vestige or last 'layer' of something being constructed, changed, reconstructed and reinterpreted from different angles.

Similar to the rock-art, the ‘crystallization’ of cultural identity in Moldavia is a continuous process and the ‘lively’ picture we see today is a resultant product of hundreds or thousands of years, which is why it is noticeably defined by multivalence and such multivalence creates confusion. This confusion results when cultural identity is detached from its historical context (Dimitriadis, 2009). Therefore, in the chapter 5, we will provide important information on the historical aspects of Moldavia.

4. The Nexus of Language and Identity

In the present chapter we discuss the most appropriate theories on language and identity nexus relating to the fundamental research questions of *Study 3* stated in the sub-chapter 9.6. We will define the notion of language attitudes and further provide a brief constellation of concepts (more precisely: *stereotypes, ideology, culture, language shift, etc.*) which evolve around the linkage of language and identity.

More specifically, the sub-chapter 4.1. attempts to put forward the notion of language and its functions applied to the present research, as well as it discusses the extent to which languages individuals use, influence their own perception of (cultural) identity. In addition, this sub-chapter ends with some remarks on whether language and identity nexus is perceived by people consciously or unconsciously. The sub-chapter 4.2. is concerned with the complexity of language and identity linkage. Further, we discuss Coseriu's concept of *repeated discourse* applied to Moldavian context. The sub-chapter 4.3. mainly deals with the intertwining of linguistic identity and ideology, whereas the sub-chapter 4.4. mainly deals with the concepts of nationalism and post-nationalism. Conclusively, a part of this sub-section pertains to dimensions of stereotypes. The sub-chapter 4.5. discloses important aspects about the linkage between language and culture. The penultimate sub-chapter exposes the key definitions of language attitudes. The final sub-chapter 4.7. provides a glimpse into the theorisation of bilingualism, multilingualism, language shift, language attrition, etc.

4.1. Language and identity

Does the language(s) people speak determine their identity?

The intricate relationship between language and identity represents a problematic endeavour for sociolinguists and language practitioners. Moreover, this incongruous nexus reshaped and accelerated a new “space” in the global discourse on identity. But in order to understand the relationship between the two and avoid an arbitrary approach, one must first understand the term of language used in this quantitative research. Language is a term that is used intermittently to define the medium of communication used by people to negotiate a *sense of self* in various contexts (Norton, 2010). *Study 3* focuses on symbolic and instrumental functions of language. In its symbolic view, Edwards (2009, p. 55) indicates that language acts “as an emblem of

groupness, a symbol, a psychological rallying point”, which means that language apparently can be the ethnic or cultural representation of varying groupings. The instrumental function of language refers to its practical aspect, since each language performs a certain role in society (Edwards, 2009).

Tabouret-Keller (1998, s.p.) argues that the link between language and identity is paradoxical as it “appears as one of the strongest social links, but also as one of the weakest, especially when the social future is as uncertain as it is at the end of the twentieth century.” He (1998) strongly believes that the relationship between language and identity is so deep that a single feature of language use is often enough to establish someone’s membership in a certain group.

In similar vein, Joseph (2014, p. 224) argues language and identity are inextricable, asserting that the concept of identity lies at the centre of what language is all about:

“But any study of language needs to take consideration of identity if it is to be full and rich and meaningful, because identity is itself at the very heart of what language is about, how it operates, why and how it came into existence and evolved as it did, how it is learned and how it is used, every day, by every user, every time it is used. It is because speakers and writers inherently know that both the form and content of linguistic production are shaped, and frequently driven, by the imperatives of identity.”

Likewise, Ostiguy et al. (2017) in a recent study indicates that language and identity are intertwined and indivisible. Further, he suggests that language and identity are social and cultural processes that are achieved through *discursive* practices.

Does the way people speak and the language they use influence their own perception of (cultural) identity?

Chamber (1995, as cited by Joseph, 2004) contended that human beings *unconsciously* express/project their identity through the way they dress, the way they behave but, above all, through the way they *speak*. Moreover, he suggested that speech is unmanageable and hard to control consciously.

Analogously, Charaudeau (2001) conceptualizes *speaking* as a double process: as a testimony of one’s identity and as a testimony of construction of the other’s identity. Moreover, this interplay made him conclude that through listening to the other we attempt to discover behind his/her speech (more specifically, the way he/she speaks) the landscape of his/her own *culture*. Additionally, Garret (2010) asserts that our attitude toward someone is highly influenced by the way he/she speaks his/her ‘socially loaded’ language because, in his view, an individual

speaking a “fractured language” has a low likelihood of being perceived as a well-educated person.

In contrast, Joseph (2011) brings into light an opposite postulate, arguing that the ‘international language’ like English language creates an ‘international’ identity because this does not often coalign with a particular culture(s) or ethnic boundary(-ies). Moreover, nowadays, there is a new tendency to think that “identity is increasingly shaped not only by one’s own nation but also by foreign nations” (Coe & Neumann, 2011, p. 141). Drawing from this argument, we may presume that languages we speak are not always the fundamental pillars of who we are (mentally and culturally). Other integral components (extralinguistic factors) must be examined in the light of this research.

Is the language and identity nexus perceived by people consciously or unconsciously?

William James at the end of the 19th century argued that there is an interplay of *identity*, *self-concepts* and *mental representation* which is highly associated to *conscience* (as cited in Sollberger, 2013). In similar vein, in Kantian philosophy identity represents solely a part of the *consciousness ego*, and it’s not highly linked to language we use (as cited in Sollberger, 2013). Similarly, Goffman defines identity as “an internal, reflexive perspective of the subject” (as cited in Sollberger, 2013).

Conversely, Joseph (2004, p. 13) argues that language and identity are “independently of any considerations of ‘*consciousness*’” (our italicization). Furthermore, he suggests that our perspicacious reflection on the nexus of language and identity foster the process of understanding of who we are and increases the understanding of human (interpersonal) socialisation (Joseph, 2004). This idea echoes the postulate that language and speech are substantially more revealing of our identity than other elements. Therefore, from the above-cited theorization, we may presume that each person can be the expression of his/her identity, or each person is capable to depict a version of their identity or ultimately highlight specific aspects of his/her identity which will be decoded by others *through the means of language* and social interaction. As such, the language(s), variety(-ies) and dialect(s) he/she uses may influence the process of decoding of the identity which is displayed by the speakers and vice versa.

Based on these theoretical explanations, the picture becomes clearer why people are inclined to think that language resides at the epicentre of identity construction. But is the nexus of language and identity too overstressed? Do human beings have exaggerated feeling of language

importance into the construction of their identity? Do researchers overstate the prominence of this convoluted relationship? The scrutiny of data will enable us to examine this inquiry through a Moldavian contextualized approach.

4.2. The complexity of identity and language linkage in Moldavia: the concept of *repeated discourse*

Charaudeau (2001) asserts that the nexus of identity and language is quite more complex than we think, because it does not reside only in language but also in its *usage*. He believes that it is extremely necessary to dissociate language and culture, and associate discourse(s) and culture(s). His inquiry is illustrated by two transversal questions: How else to explain that French, Québécois, Belgian, Swiss, even African and Maghreb cultures (at one time) are not identical despite the use of the same French language? How can we also explain that the Brazilian and Portuguese cultures on the one hand, Latin American and Spanish on the other hand are so different and unique at the same time? (our translation).

In a similar vein, Heller (2011) notes that the language and identity is a complex nexus because individuals are often faced with contradictory questionings. She noted that in this conceptualisation of language, it is important to pay attention to how people *use* language, what they say about it, what they think about its nature and the way it manifests itself (Heller, 2011).

In this view, it is noteworthy to mention that one of the most influential linguists of the 20th century born in the Republic of Moldova, Eugeniu Coșeriu, conceived the concept of *repeated discourse*, which applies to Moldavian discursive space to illustrate the so-called Moldavian language ‘phenomenon’.

He coined the term of *repeated discourse* which includes everything that is repeated in the speech of a particular community in a more or less identical form, through the speech already made of a more or less fixed combinations/patterns, something which has already been said recurrently (Coșeriu, 2017). According to Coșeriu (2017), the identity of Moldavian people cannot be expressed through negation and rejection of the vernacular Romanian language. In his iconic discourse, he declares that naming Romanian language as Moldavian represents a genocide of the national, historical and cultural identity of the “Moldavian” people. He (2017) stresses that, from a political point of view, the promotion of a “Moldavian” language distinct from the Romanian language, with all the consequences it implies, is therefore an ethnocultural

crime, even if it does not involve physical elimination of the speakers, but only erasing their identity and historical memory.

Drawing from Coșeriu's theorisation, one may ask: is the so-called Moldavian language phenomenon solely a repeated discourse, a standard language, minority language, an idealized form of a language, a dialect or something else?

4.3. The intertwining of linguistic identity and ideology: name of language as a tool that protect its identity

Does the name of a language serve as a basis of (cultural) identification? Does the name of language "fulfil the symbolic function of representation of a language"? (Tabouret-Keller, 1998, s.p.). In order to answer these controversial questions, one must look at the evolution of language and identity interpretation from psycholinguistic point of view.

The complex binds between language and identity, as explained by Tabouret-Keller (1998), resides deeply in human psychology and in the linkage of law and language legitimacy. First, the processes of identification (of continuous change) encompasses an array of phases from the birth, 'merging' identification with mother, nursing, feeding, imitating adults consciously or unconsciously, to adopting a characteristic or a set of features of another's behaviour. In this regard, language use provides the widest variety of features for identification processes both to the speakers and to their observers, who capture these linguistic resources in order to identify the language behind their culture. The complexity of this confluent process of identification with the another and its inner connection incorporates mutual constructed representations, stereotypes, ideologies, narratives, etc.

Secondly, Tabouret-Keller (1998) believes that the identification of language and identity is linked to constitution and legitimacy. Giving legitimacy to a specific language or imposing a language over a people or a country has a tremendous impact on the status of that language. As such, sometimes an imposed language gains power among people because they are usually 'transferred' with some aspects of the dominant culture, which was the case of Russian in Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (see *Chapter 6*).

In this respect, Le Page (as cited by Tabouret-Keller, 1998) highlighted two noteworthy phenomena when naming a language, giving legitimacy or simply giving an iconic status to a particular language through reification and totemization. *Reification* refers, in general, to

language doctrine (lexicon, grammar, literature, etc.) and *totemization* signifies adopting a language as an emblem of the social definition of a group. He strongly believes that members of a certain group “who feel their cultural and political identity threatened are likely to make particularly assertive claims about the social importance of maintaining or resurrecting their language” (Tabouret-Keller, 1998, s.p.) (i.e. Quebec, Flanders, Moldavia and countless communities across the world).

Tabouret-Keller (1998) suggested an intriguing postulate about identification as a psychological process. He thinks identification is enacted by the symbolic power representation of a language at social and individual levels, which represents besides membership, attachment to a group but also acquiescence for a specific leader, political party, religion, and political ideology (Tabouret-Keller, 1998). Moreover, Tabouret-Keller (1998) underlines the importance of naming and labelling a language as a tool to protect its identity. Furthermore, when language becomes the label of power, it also converts into the main mechanism for expressing and implementing this power (Tabouret-Keller, 1998).

Hence, the name of the language “serves as a label covering any kind of intuitive knowledge of what the ‘object’ that it refers to may be – common use, a common standard, an idealized form of the language, etc.” (Tabouret-Keller, 1998, s.p.). As such, the name of a language and language itself, perceived as shared element serves as the primary foundation for identification, as Tabouret-Keller (1998) asserts. In such circumstances, “identification with a partner is mediated, first of all, by the common label and, secondarily, but not necessarily, by direct behavioural identification with other participants in the same community, social group, faith, belief, ideology, etc. Other behavioural features may support the identification, for instance, dress, a flag (or any other symbol), shared by people one has never met before and will never meet afterwards.” (Tabouret-Keller, 1998, s.p.). Other significant mutual elements like attire, flag can enhance the process of identification (Tabouret-Keller, 1998).

In his seminal work, Tabouret-Keller (1998) postulates that identification process is not realized through a dual relationship between A (individuals) and B (groups) but through a tripartite relationship A (individuals), B (groups), C (language). Language in its symbolic function represents the substance of the human condition, whereas a dual relationship (A, B) could suffice only for other living species (Tabouret-Keller, 1998). According to his theory, identification processes is realized through language and individuals often adopt complex speech features through acts of communication (Tabouret-Keller, 1998).

Megoran (2007) postulates that the contradictory term ‘identity’ gains meaning and shape exclusively in concrete contexts and in a specific *linguistic* space. Similarly, Smuts (as cited in Joseph, 2004) pointed out that language gives rise to identity as follows: firstly, language processes the world and human experience through words, then language brings us closer to the current experience that enables us to construct the conception of *self* rather than merely *being* ourselves. Contrarily, Jean Piaget believed that intellectual growth and the developing of identity is independent of language (as cited in Joseph, 2004).

Yet, there are many linguists who question the fact that language is connected to identity, as they hypothesize that linguistic mind is autonomous and, subsequently, language should be conceived strictly as a system of communication (as cited in Joseph, 2004). Joseph (2004) further refutes this postulate by asserting that “comprehension and interpretation too are shaped and frequently driven by the perception of identity” (Joseph 2004, p. 224).

Tabouret-Keller, for instance, (1988) (as cited by Heller, 2011) stresses the idea that the narratives and stereotypes about language affect children’s cognitive and moral development from the earliest years of life until old age.

Are stereotypes constructing language ideologies?

In its contemporary usage, ideology refers to a collection of beliefs, concepts and principles that define a particular type of governance, or philosophy on the best way to organise the state in order to satisfy the desires and expectations of citizens. Stangor (1995, p. 631-632) defines stereotypes as “default form of social judgement”. Generally, the role of stereotypes is to contribute to the establishment of group ideologies which explains various social actions and reactions of out-group members (Tajfel, 1981). Moreover, stereotypes constitutes valuable sources for the maintenance and perpetuation of ideologies of a particular group.

Still, language stereotypes have a substantial impact on the process of interethnic communication. The historical identification of languages may play a huge role in the creation of new perceptions about identity and language nexus, as well as in the creation of perception of people about their mother tongues and/or additional languages they speak. There are languages (i.e. Chinese, English, Russian, Quechua) that have always been tied to national, ethnic and religious identities throughout history (Joseph, 2011).

Accordingly, conducting the qualitative *Study 1* and qualitative *Study 2* helped us draw an assumption that the language policy such as officialization (December 2013) and implementation of Romanian language predominantly in schools across the Moldavian country may somehow explain the effect of Pro-Romanian dominance nowadays. The superfluous stereotype: “our language is Romanian” emerged and spread across the country, especially in educational settings. Thenceforth, this stereotype, on one hand, serves as a basis in constructing ideologies regarding Romanian dominance. On another hand, nation-building policy which attempts to restore Moldavian symbolic power through naming Romanian (vernacular language) and Moldavian by political actors come into contradiction with language/educational policies.

Language taught at school and its indoctrination have a great effect on the way pupils perceive their own identity. For instance, many Catalonian studies reveal that students who had much time exposure to teaching in Catalan are more attached to Catalan culture and feel more Catalan than Spanish (Clots-Figueras & Masella, 2013).

In taking this position, we can view Moldavia as a ‘discursive space’ or as a linguistic space, a term coined by the linguistic anthropologist Heller (2011). She defines this new concept as follows: “*discursive spaces* or *key sites of production of discourse* (our italicization) are assemblages of interconnected sites, some more easily observable than others, (...) traversed by the trajectories of participants and of resources regulated there” (Heller, 2011, p. 11).

4.4. Transition from nationalism to post-nationalism via education

Education has always been considered as a key tool in nation building and consolidating state power (Clots-Figueras & Masella, 2013). Some instances may be found in history: i.e. in his revolutionary work *Addresses to the German Nation* Fichte (1807), clearly emphasised the necessity of state-controlled mass education in Germany and enhancing the cohesive national spirit required to reinstate the Prussia government (Clots-Figueras & Masella, 2013).

Likewise, François Guizot enacted a law in 1833, which stipulated the imposing of French as the language of instruction to each school. In consequence, this was a determining factor of the nationalism process “to make French people French” (Clots-Figueras & Masella, 2013). The national language implementation across the entire Soviet Union was proposed as a solution for nation building in ethnically divided societies. Hypothetically, states that have been formed

by unifying several ethnic groups needed a neutral and/or a new-formed language to express their common Moldavian identity for state administration efficiency while maintaining the Russian language as the ‘supreme code.’ These deliberate language planning efforts had the mission to diminish the role and function of Romanian language for a long period of time. Though, after a few decades, Romanian language became the official and the most dominant code in the Moldavian country lately.

Many scholars have demonstrated the significance of the creation of standardized languages coterminous with state boundaries and bound to uniformized cultures as “distinctive property of nations” (Hellers, 2011, p. 7). Though, many social investigators have demonstrated that imposing a language of the dominant ethnic group to a particular state constitutes a threat to that state’s existence or long-term stability (Clots-Figueras & Masella, 2013). Heller (2011, p. 8) believes that this can be explained by the fact that political authorities are not capable to manage “the fuzziness both of the boundaries among them and of the diversity within.”

Moreover, Heller conceptualises nationalism as the most important ‘messenger’ of “commodified” elements (Heller, 2011) such as language, culture, identity, nation, state and the new economy. Furthermore, communication has become the quintessential tool in the new commodified economy and multilingualism performs as work process and becomes (work product) a “natural outcome” (as defined by Heller) of modern (i.e. Moldavian) society, which manages the mobility of people, ideas and their values. We believe the commodified nationalism in Moldavia is guided by hegemonic forces (political, economic, social, etc.) which, in turn, have disrupted the new paths to post-nationalism in Moldavia.

No wonder, the linguistic anthropologist Monica Heller postulates that sociolinguistics is not merely a discipline of “expert knowledge” but also an “informed and situated social practice” (Heller, 2011, p. 6). Therefore, she demonstrates that the conflicts of the contemporary society produce people’s (opposing) visions of social organisation, competing sources for imagining and re-imagining who we are. She stresses the importance of the term of nationalism when speaking about Canadian linguistic sites. Canada, like many other countries, has traversed a long and complex path from a traditionalist nationalism to post-nationalism. Let us look back in time and analyse the concept of traditional ‘nationalism’ spread in the world and especially in Canada which was prevalent from Romanticism through the middle of the 20th century. This type of traditionalist nationalism embraces the legitimizing ideology of religion, language and race (Heller, 2011). Later, the officialization of English in 1968 as the secondary language

facilitated the bilingualism in the country and changed the ‘linguistic’ picture of the whole country (Heller, 2011). Correspondingly, we believe the post-nationalism is installed in Moldavian after the implementation of Romanian language as official language of Moldavian state (see sub-chapter 5.3.6.).

4.5. Language and culture

The intricate relation between language and culture has always been a source of concern for the social, anthropological and language theorists. Many scholars argue that culture takes the role of a ‘content’ whereas language performs the role of a ‘container’ (Zriba, 2020).

But how do we define the concept of culture? The term “culture”⁹ relates etymologically to Latin *cultura*, which meant “worship.” Only by 1867 the word culture has gained its figurative meaning of collective beliefs, assumptions, social norms that we adopt and pass on to future generations. In the modern sense, the word refers to the outcome of human contact in its widest definition.

In this regard, Coşeriu’s (1994, p. 173-174) definition of culture is compelling who stated that “culture is the historical objectification of spirit into forms which last, into forms which become *traditions*.” Inspired by Aristotle’s concept ‘*energeia*,’ cultural spirit in Coşeriu’s view, represents an infinite creativity itself that is constituted of language, religion, art, myth, philosophy but also science. He (1994) believed that language is, on the one hand, the basis of culture, and, on the other hand, it is a form of culture. Moreover, only language has the likelihood of being *langage* (understood as a function of expression of thought and communication between humans, implemented by speech or writing) and reality at the same time (our translation).

Though in the post-modern era, culture does not have a universally agreed definition as people define it using varying aspects. Generally, culture is regarded nowadays as a multi-faceted description of how a given society within a given area performs its practices. Furthermore, culture involves how people dress, religion, their beliefs, the languages they speak, practices,

⁹ The etymological definition of **culture** can be accessed using the following website: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/culture>

ceremonies and food to mention but a few. In other words, identity can also mean how people associate themselves with a given culture (Norton, 2010).

As a corollary, language is the key to cultural expressions, hence language planning always refer to some degree or another to cultural planning that inherently operates some social and political goals (Zriba, 2020). As such, linguistic differences are frequently regarded as indicators of another culture (Zriba, 2020). Earlier in the 90', Fishman (as cited by Zriba, 2020, p. 17) underlined the binary relationship between language and ethno-culture that "is vital in expressing the worldviews of that culture." This emanates from the idea that individuals' ethnic identity is conceivable "within a certain linguistic and cultural system of a given ethnic community", as asserted by Fishman (as cited by Zriba, 2020, p. 17).

Ostiguy (2017) argued that "culture is a defining feature of a person's identity, contributing to how they see themselves and the groups with which they identify." According to Dragjevic (2017) among those cultural aspects that seem to promote identity is language, which is sometimes affected by attitudes developed amongst people.

Based on this argument then, it is evident that the capacity of an individual to employ a specific language in an explicit context impacts the advance of cultural identity. Notably, it is crucial to investigate whether the attitudes of Moldavian people develop towards given languages impact their cultural identity.

Fischer (1986) indicates that language in the post-modernism has been used to defining people and their cultures, as some languages are only used and common among certain cultures. However, there are international languages that are used in a myriad of international contexts, and they are vital in promoting international identity such as English language. Heller views language not merely as a "transparent window into social processes" (Heller, 2011, p. 49) but as an immanent component of them, because they inherently produce spaces for social practices which in turn build up social realities. Language and culture usually serve as a zone to legitimise the ways in which social difference is incorporated in, or rather mobilized for inequitable relationships (Heller, 2011). Why does this happen? This happens because "naturalizing ideologies of language and culture help naturalise relations of power" (Heller, 2011, p. 49) and afterwards normalise power interactions.

4.6. The concept of language attitudes

It is impossible to explore the nexus between language and identity without reference to attitudes of individuals towards languages they speak, use and switch. Previous research has demonstrated that positive language attitudes play a crucial role in language vitality, and evaluation of its prestige and status.

The concept of *attitude* is often theorised as an expression of a positive or negative appraisal of a person, action, behaviour, characteristic, event, place, thing, etc. Ajzen (1991) defines attitude as the extent to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of a behaviour in question. Based on the definition of attitudes in general discussed above, the term of language attitudes is used here as evaluative reactions towards various languages/varieties and their speakers (Edwards, 2009). A growing number of studies suggests an existing relationship between cultural identity and language attitudes. Moreover, a number of research studies have looked into the impact of language attitudes on their cultural self-identification in different countries but fewer in Moldavia. Given the research gap on the impact of language attitudes on people's cultural self-identification in Moldavia, understanding what drives them to have some or other language attitudes in Moldavian context and diasporic settings is substantial.

It is important to note that people have different opinions and attitudes concerning different languages. Dragojevic (2017), believes that language attitudes reflect in at least two main sequential cognitive processes, including social categories and stereotyping. Erwin (2014) argues that when attitudes develop, they tend to affect how an individual perceives and acts towards certain languages. For instance, when an individual has a positive mentality about a certain language, they tend to use them more and might opt to learn the second language in such an instance in contrast to when an individual has negative attitude towards a specific language (Erwin, 2014). Therefore, language attitudes seem to play several roles in the society. As a matter of fact, languages affect how people perceive themselves and others, which proves that culture impacts cultural identity and language attitudes influence the individual identity, as human beings struggle for social approval and recognition of their 'beloved' languages.

4.7. Theories of bilingualism, multilingualism, polyglossia and language shift

This sub-chapter focuses on literature appropriate and relevant to the study.¹⁰ There is a large variety of concepts that are applicable to the current study that is why this constellation of notions presented below are beneficial for the interpretation of findings in the context of the linguistic situation in Moldavia.

Concerning the theory of bilingualism, Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) stated that a bilingual speaker is one who is capable to communicate in two or more languages, both in monolingual or bilingual communities, at the same levels as native speakers. Accordingly, the use of both languages is an alternative and the choice of one or the other depends on the environment or situation in which the communication takes place, on the sociocultural demands, on the cognitive and social abilities and on individual himself. Besides, the most common characteristic of a bilingual is his ability to express favourable attitudes towards both language groups and cultures or parts of them (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). Based on this definition, many other definitions and theories have arisen.

At the level of a society, bilingualism refers to the concept of two co-existing languages. Bilingualism represents an essential part of human behaviour from the individual, community to societal levels (Hamers and Blanc, 2000). In this regard, Hamers and Blanc (2000) defined three forms of bilingualism, among which include territorial bilingualism, use of language as a *lingua franca*, and diglossia. In this case, *territorial bilingualism* is a concept in which each unilingual group exists on its own separate physical space. This means each unilingual maintains only one language. The second concept of language as a *lingua franca* amongst groups means use of a particular language among people with different first languages. The third concept is diglossia, in which two languages are used in complementary way. That means that two languages have their secure, widely executed function and legitimacy. In addition, diglossia encompasses the vision that there is a hierarchy between the languages of a given society: High Standard and Low spoken vernacular language. Conversely, Anghelescu (1974, p. 86) stresses that “diglossia implies sufficiently similar languages for the speakers to feel that it is the same language (yet remote enough), so that the acquisition of the literary language implies long-term efforts and cannot be fully achieved.”

¹⁰ The necessity of writing this sub-chapter arose while analysing the data from the *Study 3*.

Diglossia seems to apply to the current study in a larger context, considering that Moldavia is a country where two languages are dominant, namely, Romanian and Moldavian, as reported by the respondents. Another fourth concept that applies to the theory of bilingualism, is that highlighted by Platt (1977): the polyglossia. He defines this as a co-existence of many languages or language varieties in a given societal context. As such, this concept is pertinent because it illustrates the language situation in the country at hand, as not two but more than two languages seem to co-exist in the regions.

According to Leung et al. (2014), recent past has seen an increase in the study of the minority groups in the world. Kandler et al. (2010) indicates that the contact of people from various regions lead to language shift, language attrition or significantly contributes to bilingualism or polyglossia. In this context, *language shift* means that one language spoken by a given society is gradually replaced by another language over time (Kandler et al., 2010) which is promoted by certain changes in the economic, political and social factors. Language shift in its current usage is also defined as a process when a speech community consisting of bilingual or multilingual speakers progressively decrease their interest in one particular language (be it minority language or not). Hammers and Blanc (2000) suggest that this shift occurs when parents of one generation stop transmitting their own language to their children. Consequently, the newformed generations are no longer driven to develop active proficiency in that language. When people come into the new place (for instance Moldavians from rural areas coming to urban areas), they come with their own language and beliefs, and as they communicate with the local people, one language may end shifting or living in together as two languages. The casual factors of language shift evoke micro and macro social dimensions, because a huge amount of research articles has demonstrated that language shift affect the structure of the language itself. *Language attrition* is an inner shift of a native language in favour to another which occurs within one individual. Language attrition is a dynamic process of accommodation which is produced when bilingual speaker uses the second language considerably more often than their native or first language (Hammers and Blanc, 2000).

Although in this study we will not offer an exhaustive account of factors (social or linguistic) because we lack understanding of how language shift and language attrition impacted the linguistic representations of participants. Though, we attempt to emphasise what are the most salient triggering factors of the above-cited phenomena.

5. Language, Culture, and Identity in the Moldavian History

5.1. Moldavian country

Moldavia is a democratic, landlocked republic situated between the Ukraine and Romania, lying east of the Carpathian Mountains between the Prut and Dniester rivers. Moldavia and Romania are politically divided but share the same language – Romanian or Moldavian variety. In this sense, the Romanian language might be conceived as a *norm-providing*¹¹ language for the Moldavian language variety, as it is based on Romanian language grammars issued in the Romanian country and Romanian linguistic standards and traditions. Thus, we strongly believe that Romanian serves as a prestige language and has a foundational role in shaping Moldavian variety due to their shared historical past. In this chapter, we will present historical evidence which will support this assumption.

Although there are differences in pronunciation between the two countries and in spite of the fact that Moldavian language has relatively distinct and some unique morphological, lexical and syntactical peculiarities, there is a high degree of mutual intelligibility between the people from both countries. Moldavia has several territorial delimitations and administrative units: *Moldavia* itself (where the Moldavian and Romanian communities are predominant), *Transnistria* unrecognized state (where the Russian community is prevalent) autonomous territorial unit of *Gagauzia* (where the Gagauz-Turk community is predominant), Ukrainian community (where the Ukrainian community is prevalent) and other minorities.

According to the 2004 census regarding linguistic characteristics conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, the national composition of the population of the Republic of Moldova recorded in the 2004 census reveals that Moldovans represent 75.8% of the total population. Besides Moldovans, Ukrainians account for 8.4%, Russians represent 5.9%, Gagauz – 4.4%, Romanians – 2.2%, Bulgarians – 1.9% and 1.0% – other nationalities of the country's total population. For 0.4% of the population, the official nationality was not registered (our translation, National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2004

¹¹ The term of **norm-providing** language used in the paragraph above is inspired from Kachru's *Three Circle Model* (1985).

Census regarding Linguistic Characteristics, see the official website in the footnote N°9 and in the *Reference List*)¹².

According to the same census, among the population of *Moldavian ethnicity* who hold Moldavian nationality – 78,4% declared Moldavian language as their mother tongue, 18,8% declared Romanian as their mother tongue, 2,5% claimed Russian language as their mother tongue and 0,3% declared other languages as their mother tongue. Among the *population of Ukrainian ethnicity*, 64,1% claimed Ukrainian language as their mother tongue and 31,8% declared Russian as their mother tongue. Among the *population of Russian ethnicity*, 97,2% declared the Russian language as their mother tongue and 3,8% other languages as their mother tongue. Among the *population of Gagauz ethnicity*, 92,3% declared Gagauz-Turk language as their mother tongue and 5,8% declared the Russian language as their mother tongue (our translation, National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2004 Census regarding Linguistic Characteristics, see the official website in the footnote N°9 and in the *Reference list*).

5.2. Origins of Romanian-Moldavian identity

The substrate of the Romanian-Moldavian ethnogenesis has Thracian origins, where people started speaking dialects of Thracian language (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). During the first century B.C., king Burebista united Dacians and Gatae and subsequently created the Dacian-Gatae kingdom¹³, which later became a constituent part of the Roman Empire (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). Through the gradual Romanization and Christianization processes by the Roman Empire, Romanians and Moldovans converted their writing system to the Roman script (Baar & Jakubek, 2017), from which Romanian¹⁴ appellation has its roots.

According to Joseph (2004), during the Middle Ages, the romance dialects (Latin-based, obviously) began to have idiosyncratic features and distinguishing forms – the same happened to the rise of Romanian language, as there are evidence provided in this regard.

Many historians argue that the construction and development of the Romanian people, Romanian language and the strong sense of Romanian identity were concluded by the end of

¹² National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2004 Census regarding Linguistic Characteristics. Available from internet: <http://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=2358>.

¹³ The **Dacian-Gatae kingdom**¹³ term included both Romanian and Moldavian ascendants.

¹⁴ Romanian (**român**) etymologically stems from Latin *Romanus*, which literally means “citizen of Rome” from the New explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian language, 2002, available online: <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/rom%C3%A2n>

the eighth or ninth century (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). The admixed population of Romans and Dacians spoke a variety of Latin, namely *Balkan Latin* which gradually developed into Romanian language (Baar & Jakubek, 2017).

The ‘Romanian’ designation is first discovered in 1489 from a letter signed by Stephen the Great, who was actually the Moldavian Prince and the national hero of Moldavia, ruling from 1457 to 1504 (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). The first *direct* clash of the Romanian and Moldovan territories in history was attested in 1470 when Stephen the Great captured the (Romanian) territory of Braila and Târgul de Floci (Boldur, 1992). The scholars emphasise that it is there that the first language contact occurred and where the two linguistic and cultural traditions met together (Boldur, 1992, Preda, 1999).

As such, according to Baar & Jakubek (2017), the existing split of two Romanian-Moldavian states and identities originate from historical turning points they traversed together and from the present opposite political ideologies they hold¹⁵. But what do Moldavian chronicles actually say about the origin and separation of both of these? The ‘Moldavian’ designation is attested in the first chronicles signed by Moldavian chroniclers such as Ureche, Cantemir, and Costin (Baar & Jakubek, 2017).

For instance, the very first known Moldavian historical chronicles reveal that Romania and Moldavia are the continuity of the Dacian culture: “*The territory of Moldova is a Dacian land as Ardeal and Maramures are...*” (Costin, 1914, p. 26, our translation). Grigore Ureche, the first Moldavian chronicler suggested that “*Romanians, since they are residents of Ardeal and Maramureş lived together with Moldavians*” (Ureche, 1998, p. 116, our translation).

Later, Dimitrie Cantemir, another important chronicler and ruler of Moldavia mentioned the contribution of the Dacians to the formation of the Romanian people including the Moldovan people. However, he does not accept the preceding theory that these peoples were formed exclusively on Dacian substratum without their own contribution. Furthermore, in his work *Cronicul Romano-Moldo-Vlahilor*, he underlines the idea that Moldovans themselves have (Latinised) Romanian background and their language is Romanian and not Moldovan (Cantemir, 1998, our translation). In this regard, Ghimpu, (2002) the contemporary historical analyst of chronicles signed by the chronicler Dimitrie Cantemir adds that Moldavian people contributed significantly to the Romanian cultural heritage and Romanian language.

¹⁵ Here we do not include the shared ideology of adepts who pledge for Moldavia-Romanian reunification.

5.3. *Romanianism versus Moldovanism*

The Moldavian country¹⁶ has not had internal stability as it has been under a long period of continual change in terms of language and cultural identity (i.e. alphabet change, language *script* change, constitution amendments involving language changes, the spectrum of country denominations, different cultural experiences, etc.). But how do these changes have effected Moldavian people's perception of language and their sense of cultural belongingness? In order to answer this question, one must go back in time and investigate the key turning points in Moldavian history.

Historians and other researchers highlight *1812, 1918, 1940* and *1991* as key dates in Moldavian and Romanian history that might unveil the Moldavian-Romanian antagonism (in terms of language and identity as well) (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). These key dates will be examined in the following sub-sections with the reference with the fundamental research questions addressed in the current work.

Caľus (2015) advocates that Romania is the most significant reference point about Moldavian identity. Moldavian proximity to Romania, Romanian cultural heritage and their shared history are milestones in understanding the complexity of the two countries' relations, but also in the shaping of Moldavian-Romanian antagonism (Caľus, 2015). According to Baar & Jakubek (2017), Moldavian-Romanian antagonism originated and eventually developed through a variety of historical *perspectives* and *narrations*. In addition, by having past and present relationships with different countries/nations such as Russia, for instance, these dates expose divergent viewpoints regarding the origins of Moldavian people, their identity and even history, as these key historical dates differentiate in terms of narration methods (Baar & Jakubek, 2017).

Furthermore, According to Caľus (2015), the issue of identity is central to both countries, and the ongoing debate over the question: 'Do people from contemporary Moldavia shape distinct cultural identity?' still resounds nowadays with Moldavian and Romanian people.

A multitude of research studies, historical books, and contemporary authors strongly advocate that there are two major contrasting views of Moldavian history and national identity, which provide distinct interpretations of the same key events: *Moldovanism* and *Romanianism* (Caľus, 2015, Baar & Jakubek, 2017).

¹⁶ **Moldavian country** – is referred to denominate various geonyms: *Principality of Moldavia, Bessarabia, MASSR, MSSR, Republic of Moldova*.

The „*Romanianism*” started from the premise of the Union of Moldavians with Romanians, in 1859, and later in 1918 (Cioroianu, 2009). It is clear that the *Romanianism* perspective represents the manifestation of the continuity of Romanian identity and culture, highlighting the idea of Romanian-Moldavian *brotherhood*. Baar & Jakubek (2017, p. 82) argue that „Romanianists question these differences and regard them as regional variations of a common Romanian history and pan-Romanian culture. They believe that Moldovans are Romanian, stating as proof their linguistic identity and their history of being part of the three main Romanian medieval principalities and of Greater Romania from 1918 to 1940”.

Moreover, the adepts of Romanianism perceive Moldavian and Romanian identities as being correlative that complete each other, whereas the adepts of Moldovanism perceive Romanian and Moldavian identity as opposed and inharmonious (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). Likewise, Romanianists wish to insert Moldavian culture at the centre of Romanian national identity, whereas Moldovanists struggle for Moldavian statehood (Baar & Jakubek, 2017).

Conversely, the „*Moldovanism*” (also found as *Moldovenism*) perspective/theory is more complex, it has Soviet allure which has had the purpose of creating its own cultural and (Moldavian) political identity. The distinct language (Moldavian), Moldavian culture and divergent interpretations of history are often used as the main argument of Moldovanist theory since all these are claimed to be highly distinctive from Romanian (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). Moreover, Moldavian specific culture and language are considered by Baar & Jakubek (2017, p. 82) as “essential unifying features to Moldovanists”.

The central idea around which these historians have built the basis of *Moldovanism theory* was that Moldovans were formed by mutual interbreeding of the eastern Slavs and Romanized volochs. In other words, the role of the Slavs in the process of ethnogenesis of Moldovans would have been decisive. Consequently, the influence of Slavs would have led to the creation in the 9th century of a “new ethnic community – Volochs” which led, in the 14th century, to the emergence of Moldovans different from Volochs (Romanians) (Piotrowski, 1997). The annexation of Bessarabia to Tsarist Empire between 1812 and 1918 has served to demonstrate the creation of two modern ‘independent’ nations: the Moldovan nation in Bessarabia and the Romanian nation on the other side of the Prut River (Piotrowski, 1997). Yet, the development of the ‘Moldovan language’ distinct from Romanian did not mean anything but creating a surrogate language (see 5.3.3. sub-section). N. Derjavin, academician of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, specialist of Slavic ethnogenesis, in his study *Despre originea poporului*

moldovenesc [*The Origin of Moldavian people*] argue that „Moldavians”] are direct descendants of the ancient Slav population and the Moldavian language stems from Slavic origin. A. D. Udalcov and other Moldavianist (Pro-Moldavianist) linguists concluded that the Moldavian language ‘was formed as a result of “crossing” Latin Western elements with Eastern Slavic elements (as quoted from Lazarev, 1951).

Furthermore, for the adepts of Moldovanism, *Romanianism* is viewed as a danger to Moldovan independence and Moldavian ‘already formed’ identity. A potential reunification with Romania is regarded by Moldovanists as a tremendous threat to Moldavian population and disrespect towards their unique identity and history, as they insist that they differ enormously from Romanians. Though, both all Moldovanist and Romanist scholars agreed on one point – that *Moldavianism theory* is not a perfect one because even Russian authorities (Imperial, Tsarist and Russian Federation) have designated frequently the language spoken in the territory between Dniester and Prut rivers as ‘Romanian’ and sometimes as ‘Moldavian’ throughout different historical phases.

Moldovanist advocates ascertain that Moldovan language was developed earlier than Romanian language and that Moldavian cultural heritage serves as a fundamental pillar for the emergence of Romanian language (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). This biased assumption is widely spread among Moldavian ideologists which can be found in different historical manuals.

The contemporary adepts of *Moldovanism* continue to promote an anti-Romanian ideology, having the absolute goal to oblige Moldavian population to share similar view and further perpetuate their theory and defend instead the Moldavian identity – sharply separated from the Romanian one. Moreover, *Moldovanism* is perceived currently as a political instrument to promote Moldavian language, customs and traditions, specific culture, symbols, but above all, it aims to highlight the (local) Moldavian identity or at a larger level – the national Moldavian identity and the Moldavian statehood. Moldovanism’s promoters also construe Moldovanism as a significant civic component, advocating the acceptance of the Russian language as lingua franca in Moldavian society and are inclined to support the rights of ethnic minorities, whereas Romanianists are completely against promoting the Russian language in the contemporary Moldavian society. Moldovanists also encourage bilingualism/ multilingualism in the country (namely, Russian and other minor languages), whereas Romanianists fight for unifying or incorporating the Moldavian variety or language into the *national Romanian language*.

As such, drawing from different historical sources, we may reach the conclusion that Romanianist and Moldovanist viewpoints are historically rooted and these antagonistic ‘narratives’ have noticeably impacted the way people self-identify culturally. In this line, it is worthwhile to make connections with Eder’s *relational theory of collective identity* who holds the view that the ‘narratives’ shared “emphatically” (2009, p. 5) by the members of a particular collective group (in our case, Moldovanists and Romanianists) create, in turn, narrative ties among those people (Eder, 2009).

In this respect, we may make the significant claim that positioning as Moldovanist or Romanist depend ‘to some extent’ on the ‘narrated stereotypes’ or narrated viewpoints shared in different social frameworks (be it influenced by *family* or be it influenced by different *educational institutions*) people from Moldavia were exposed to.

5.3.1. 1812: Annexation of Bessarabia to the Imperial Russia

1812 is considered the crucial defining moment in Moldovan history (Baar & Jakubek, 2017), as Bessarabia (being an Ottoman vassal state¹⁷) has been at long last freed from the Ottoman Empire and afterward incorporated into Russian Empire after the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish war (1806 – 1812) (Baar & Jakubek, 2017).

Anțupov and other scholars claim that the Gagauz people from Moldavia are ancestors of the Ottoman people who settled down after the end of the Russo-Turkish war and who currently live in the southern part of Moldavia (Anțupov et alia, 1972). Principality of Moldavia has shaped some Ottoman linguistic and cultural influences, which are still felt today (e.g. Gagauz language, food, dance, some cultural aspects, etc.) (Anțupov et alia, 1972). That period was of great importance in developing the *Gagauz language* for the established Gagauz people living in the present-day Moldavian country, representing 4,4% of the total population.

What language(s) did Moldavian people (living in the territory between Prut and Dniester Rivers) speak before and after the Ottoman liberation? According to Baar & Jakubek, (2017, p. 68) up to the historical point of Russian occupation (1812), Moldavians developed a specific “Moldavian culture” rather than Romanian. After Moldavian annexation to the Russian Empire,

¹⁷ **Ottoman vassal state** – During the 18th century, Principality of Moldavia was a vassal state which had the commitment to the predominant Ottoman Empire to provide military support and pay tribute in exchange for a set of advantages.

the territory acquired the name of *Bessarabia* and Russian was claimed as the main language and Moldavian dialect as the second (Grenoble, 2003).

By the 1870s, the use of Romanian language was prohibited in all spheres of society. As well, Russian Empire adopted a national policy which involved primarily “cultural isolation of Romania” (Baar & Jakubek, 2017, p. 69).

In 1873 Bessarabia became a *Russian gubernia*, an integral part of Tsarist Russia. The individual identity was conceptualized as a “collective identity”, and Russification was the dominant policy in this respect. Scholars believe that during that time Moldavians spoke predominantly Russian, while ‘Moldavian’ language was also preserved. Grenoble (2003) asserts that at the time, bilingualism was increased in the country, mostly in the urban areas.

5.3.2. Two states – one nation formula: Moldavia as a part of the *Greater Romania* (1918)

1918 is considered so far one of the most significant points in Moldavian and Romanian history (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). In December 1917, Bessarabia self-proclaimed independent from Imperial Russia and united the following year with Romania (precisely, on March 27, 1918) (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). This was an important factor for standardization of Romanian grammar and language spoken in both countries. The Great Union of Bessarabia with Romania (under the name of *Greater Romania*) led to the democratization of social relations and renaissance of the Romanian nation and (common Romanian-Moldavian) national identity, which in turn enhanced the stability in the Romanian kingdom and Bessarabia¹⁸ (Moraru, 1995). During that time the Romanian language was the *single national language (...)* *symbolizing the unity of a nation* (Holmes, 2008, p. 104).

During 1918 until 1924 Romanian language got supreme status in Moldavia, while the Russian language was viewed as a ‘national danger’. Despite this fact, the rural people from Moldavia (at the time – Bessarabia) claimed that they spoke the Moldavian language (Romanian-based obviously), rather than Romanian, whereas people from urban regions fought for the officialization of Romanian language and Romanian national identity recognition and

¹⁸ **Bessarabia** is a historical and geographical term given by Russian Empire in 1812 to the territory between Prut and Dniester rivers. Please note that Ottoman Empire ceded this territory to Russian Empire after signing the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812.

acceptance (Moraru, 1995). In fact, this internal conflict between rural and urban oppositions regarding the spoken language precipitated a new change in terms of language formula (see *the next sub-section* below). In other words, a new formula of Moldavian language has been created – consisting in the code-mixing of an influx of Russian words, calques plus Romanian vocabulary transcribed into Cyrillic script (see *Image 1*).

5.3.3. 1924: Code-mixing of Romanian and Russian languages born a *New Moldavian language formula*

The Soviets did not recognize the Romanian and Bessarabia Union, which is why after Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) was created in 1924, an “alternative *Moldavian national identity*” different to the Romanian identity was developed *again* under the auspices of Moscow (Całus, 2015 p. 11). This mechanism was widely used as ‘Moldovenism’ (see above) which implied the process to create a distinct nation from the Romanian nation by creating the *Moldavian language* (Całus, 2015).

After Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) was created in 1924, multiple orthographic reforms were introduced. Firstly, the Latin alphabet was replaced with the *Cyrillic script*. Secondly, the grammar of an ‘artificial’ Moldovan language was created by a group of *Moldavianist* “linguists”. The (short-term) Soviet linguistic policy consisted in “the change from Latin to Cyrillic alphabets, meaning that Moldovans would need to learn a new alphabet to read Romanian, but not learn Russian” (Grenoble, 2003, p. 66). The (long-term) Soviet linguistic policy consisted in expanding the Russian language and Russian cult as leading across the world and Russian cult (Grenoble, 2003).

The grammar of the Moldovan language was compiled with archaisms, words partially inspired from Russian and calques (root-for-root translations, loanwords from Russian) but using mostly the content of Romanian language vocabulary (at phonetic level). The Romanian language was changed/readapted literally into Moldavian and the majority of Romanian-based words (content and meaning) were written in Cyrillic script (see *Image 1* below¹⁹). As a result, the ‘constructed’ language led to tremendous chaos and multiple tensions in all spheres of society. Nevertheless, all books, newspapers, scientific journals and manuals were published in Cyrillic *Moldavian*

¹⁹ Source of the **image 1**: <https://cartimoldovasovietica.wordpress.com/tag/limbamoldoveneasca/>

language and Moldovan was declared as the language of instruction in all the educational institutions.

That period is considered the climax of Romanian language decline in Moldavian history. The Moldavian language construct was a tool of manipulation used by Russian authorities to create an artificial *ethnic* identity for MASSR population still an ethnic identity imperatively “close to Russian identity” (Grenoble, 2003, p. 90). As well, language planning efforts were put in order to isolate and reduce Romanian language from the linguistic area and to distance Moldavians from Romanians culturally. Besides, the main political goal was to proximate Moldavian language “visually to Russian” (Grenoble, 2003, p. 90).



Image 1. (Cyrillic) Moldavian language

Consequently, the Russian language increased its prestige. The political status of Russian reached a high point, being considered the most progressive language in the world at the time.

This language formula lasted until 1933 because Latin script along with previous orthographic reforms were reintroduced. According to Grenoble (2003, p. 90) the Latinization movement and the temporary return to Romanian grammar “makes the Romanian-Moldovan links clear”. He (2003) also asserts that during that period ‘Moldovan’ language augmented considerably the number of Romanian-based neologisms.

5.3.4. *1940-* Provisional adoption of the Russian language as the official language of MSSR

On August 2, 1940, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) adopted a law on the formation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). MSSR was the political instrument used to spread the Soviet domination over Romanian-speaking provinces. The Soviet regime held an ideological campaign against non-Russian languages in MSSR, which intended to remove them totally from the linguistic space (Boldur, 1992). The language policy was designed to encourage the differences between spoken language and literary language; therefore, several dialects and bilingualism were developed as a reaction to people's indignation. The new Constitution of MSSR was adopted in 1978 and introduced Russian as the principal language of MSSR (Moraru, 1995). The symbols of MSSR conveyed the ritual of Soviet language ideology. That ideology distorted the political and educational system in MSSR. Moreover, all kind of study programs/curricula reflected excessive politicization and were issued exclusively in the Russian language. Moldavian literature reflected different aspects of political, economic life (e.g. heroism of Soviet soldiers during the interwar years, Joseph Stalin's cult of personality, collectivization, reforming the communist spirit of citizens and so on and so forth) (Moraru, 1995). Russia became omnipresent in Moldavia. Russian culture became predominate in Moldavian literature and to some extent, the developed Moldavian culture was suppressed through Russian language and writing. One may observe that gradually some people lost their interest in the Romanian language, but it quickly returned. Nonetheless, the journey to recovery has been so long that some remnants of communism are still felt in the Moldavian language (or a variety of spoken Romanian language) today.

5.3.5. *1991:* The 'definitive' return to the Latin alphabet and Moldavian language

Moldova has detached itself from the USSR after the USSR's collapse in 1991 and declared Moldavian language as the unique and official language of the country, whereas Russian was preserved only for interethnic communication purposes.

In the early nineties, the Pro-Romanian Moldovan artists, writers, some politicians, and journalists fought for "Romanian national and cultural revival of the indigenous people of

Moldova” (Cafus 2015, p. 16) but also for purifying the spoken Romanian language from the influx of Russian loanwords.

After regaining independence, ‘Moldavian’ language readopted the Latin alphabet and the majority of the population from the Moldavian/Romanian community recognized Romanian linguistic identity (Baar & Jakubek, 2017). Gagauz and Russian ethnic minorities were afraid of the loss of Russian language official status and marginalization but mostly they were threatened by an eventual reunification with Romania.

The Pro-Russians separatists supported by the Russian government, triggered the Transnistrian war in March 1992, headed by the Transnistrian army. This conflict escalated into a frozen unsolved issue. The so-called separatist phenomenon was unleashed by the de facto establishment of Transnistrian autonomy and retaining Russian as their official language.

Is language issue the root cause of Transnistrian unresolved conflict? Many historical annalists from Moldavia such as Anatol Petrencu, Vladislav Kulminski strongly believe that language remains the principal cause, as people from Transnistria do not accept and recognize other languages but Russian. Moreover, the majority of the Transnistrian population self-proclaim as Russian and ascribe to Russian cultural identity.

5.3.6. **2013:** Officialization of Romanian language

In December 2013, *Romanian* was declared by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova as the official language of the country, under the influence of ‘Romanian nationalism’²⁰, as well the principal language spoken in Moldavia must be in compliance with the orthographic rules and grammar of Romanian language (see below). Therefore, this defining historical moment marked considerably the Moldavian and Romanian history. The arguments and reasoning behind this critical decision are the following:

“The President of the Republic of Moldova considers that the issue regarding the name of the official language of the state, determined by the problem of the linguistic identity of the titular nation, has caused a deep split in the society. The Republic of Moldova must solve its linguistic

²⁰ **Source:** The integral text of the *Declaration of Independence concerning language change in the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova* (dated December 05, 2013), available online from: <http://constcourt.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=7&id=512&t=/Overview/Press-Service/News/The-text-of-the-Declaration-of-Independence-prevails-over-the-text-of-the-Constitution>

problems immediately, the official name of the state's language must be determined only in terms of scientific truth, with no political interference.

According to the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, the official language of the Republic of Moldova is Romanian and the phrase "Moldovan language, based on Latin alphabet" of the Article 13 paragraph (1) of the Constitution can be equalized semantically with the Romanian language. At the same time, the Academy has mentioned that the official language of the Republic of Moldova shall operate on the basis of orthographic rules of the Romanian language" (idem, see the source in the footnote below).

As a consequence, a shift in terms of cultural identification and linguistic identification has occurred. As a consequence of this, until today, more than 521.025 Moldavian citizens (confirmed by *Romanian National Citizenship Authority*, idem) regained Romanian citizenship for pragmatic or nationalist reasons. Likewise, they hold dual citizenship and switch between both of these when needed.

6. Results of qualitative research *Study 1* and *Study 2*

In this chapter, the results of both qualitative research studies are exposed and discussed with the reference with the main goals and research questions of the current master thesis. The main aim of the first part of this thesis was to investigate the phenomena of language and cultural identity shaped in Moldavia by examining the experiences of two distinct focused groups. More specifically, our qualitative research was built on two-fold stages. The first stage consisted in developing a notion of identity and answering the most essential question of our investigation work (namely, ‘How do they ‘self-identify’ culturally?’) in a self-paced and open-ended self-concept questionnaire format. The second stage consisted in answering ten questions regarding language and cultural identity in Moldavia in a *semi-structured interview* format.

6. 1. Interpretation of the Findings of Study 1

6.1.1. Defining cultural identity by the focus group

Exploring and examining *cultural identity* term in Study 1, which is nowadays gaining a global resonance, was pivotal. Such exploration reflects, in fact, how people grasp the overall concept of cultural identity, how they perceive this and how they reconstruct their self-identity experience. It appears that there is an inherent tendency for people to make external attributions (which refers to ideas based on situational contexts, circumstances and their experiences from outside) (Pennington, 2000) and internal attributions about their own cultural identity (which refers to individual’s inner beliefs based on their behaviour, personality, emotional state, personal experiences build from within, etc.)²¹ (Pennington, 2000) which, in turn, involved and produced captivating outcomes for our research. Furthermore, the participants formulated remarkable notions of cultural identity, based on their own experiences, internal values, principles or style as well as they provided information connected with their understanding of the nation, culture, society based on situational experiences. Even though this does not represent a powerful tendency within our study, this finding could open new prospects for further research on cultural identity. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents have different views concerning the notion of cultural identity, as its formation and development are very unique

²¹ In our research, we did not focus much on the psychological approach of identity because it is outside the scope of this master thesis and we focus on sociolinguistic aspects instead.

and intimate processes for each individual. As exposed and justified by participants' responses, the perception of cultural identity as a unique phenomenon matches our state of the art (see *Chapter 2*). This result ties well with the recent sociolinguistic conception which claims that individuals hold a personal understanding of identity as a unique 'essence' or a separate entity, apart from the sense of sameness or affiliation.

When asked to define the concept of cultural identity, participants ascribed different 'identity' derivatives, embracing a wide array of social categories and identity mechanisms. Among responses on defining cultural identity, they include beliefs, ethnicity, national history, language, religion, (with the occurrence rate of 3 citations); principles, self-concept, set of (moral) values, nation, customs and traditions, national identity, human essence and country, (with the occurrence rate of 2 citations); nation, group of people, nationality, sense of belonging, education, social and educational conduit/behaviour, culture, role on the planet, national celebration and self-perception (with the occurrence rate of 1 citation) (see *Appendices 3-16*). As highlighted in *Table 2* presented below, our findings revealed relatively distinct patterns for developing the notion of 'cultural identity'.

Table 2. Cultural Identity Patterns

<i>Cultural Identity Patterns</i>	
Cultural identity patterns	Word frequency
Beliefs	3
Principles	2
Self-concept	2
Ethnicity/ Ethnic membership	3
National history/ history	3
Language	3
Set of values/ Moral values	2
Nation	1
Group of people	1

Religion	3
Traditions/ Customs	2
Nationality	1
National identity	2
Sense of belonging	1
Human essence	2
Country	2
Education	1
Social and educational conduit/behaviour	1
Culture	1
Role on the planet	1
National celebration	1
Self-perception (spiritually)	1

The findings of our current study at least hints that the focused group has the inclination for thinking of *language* while conceptualizing the notion of cultural identity, as speculated in the methodological section since language was mentioned three times in the data. Though, other cultural identity' derivatives with an equal rate of occurrence to *language* (with a word frequency of 3 usages) resulted to be significant as well. Three participants linked the concept of cultural identity with *ethnicity* or *ethnic membership*, whereas three respondents related it to *national history*. Furthermore, three respondents correlated the term of cultural identity with *religion* and three respondents reported a correlation between cultural identity and *beliefs*.

Principles, self-concept, set of (moral) values, traditions/customs, national identity, human essence and *country* rank second in our data, as these elements were mentioned only two times in the respondents' rationales.

Other elements such as *self-perception, national celebration, role on the planet, culture, social and educational conduit, education, nationality, sense of belonging* and *culture* resulted to be less significant (taken separately), as they occur only once in the respondents' rationales.

At this stage of understanding, cultural identity (as seen by our respondents) is a complex concept which refers to the way people perceive themselves, to humans' core or essence, self-concept, ethnicity, language, religion, beliefs, national identity, national history, a set of values,

principles, traditions and customs (as these elements were reported as relatively important mechanisms of cultural identity):

1. “Cultural identity is the way we perceive ourselves (our correction) spiritually. Each person has his own perception of his cultural identity and it may alter according to their beliefs and principles” (see *Appendix 3*).
2. “Cultural identity is something related to our self-concept, language and our ethnicity” (see *Appendix 4*).
3. “Cultural identity is a complex concept. It integrates the national history and language” (see *Appendix 5*).
4. “It is important to know what your cultural identity is, because it is the essence of human being” Cultural identity is a hereditary element” (see *Appendix 6*).
5. “Cultural identity may be defined a set of values of a person” (see *Appendix 7*).
6. “The most important pillar of our cultural identity is language, history and traditions. Cultural identity is something we take from our parents and our ancestors” (see *Appendix 8*).
7. “Cultural identity is our self-concept of pertaining to a nation, group of people, to a particular society. In general, cultural identity is expressed by the same religion and ethnicity” (see *Appendix 9*).
8. “Our identity is the keystone of our culture. Cultural identity is a part of our national identity. In general people from a nation should have the same sense of belonging” (see *Appendix 10*).
9. Cultural identity represents the way of being of a nation. It differentiates from nation to nation. It may crystalize just in time (see *Appendix 11*).
10. “It is something related to nationality but also to human essence, to people’s beliefs and his role on the planet” (see *Appendix 12*).
11. “Cultural identity may contain a multitude of things for examples customs, national celebration, beliefs and so on. In my opinion, cultural identity has moral character along with customs and religious/moral things of a person and the country of a person” (see *Appendix 13*).
12. “Cultural identity is the ability of human beings to identify themselves as a part of a bigger group, which shares the same background, religion and education” (see *Appendix 14*).
13. “I think that cultural identity is a constellation of principles, which represents people, cultural, behavioural (*missing word*), is related (our correction) with educational and social conduit” (see *Appendix 15*).
14. “I believe that cultural identity is the ramification of national identity, which is definitely linked deeply to the country, to the nation and ethnic pertaining (our correction) and membership” (see *Appendix 16*).

6.1.2. Cultural identity conceptualized as *a set values, beliefs and principles* by the purposeful group

As can be noted below, six definitions developed by the participants of Study 1 (almost 50% of the respondents) show the tendency to associate cultural identity term with as a system of beliefs, values, principles and religious convictions of people, having a moral and spiritual character. More specifically, the following pertinent examples serve as arguments in this regard:

1. “cultural identity is a constellation of **principles**” (...) “is related to **educational and social conduit**” (see *Appendix 15*).
2. (...) “which shares the same background, **religion and education**” (see *Appendix 14*).
3. (...) “Cultural identity may contain a multitude of things for examples **customs**, national celebration, **beliefs** and so on”, (...) “cultural identity has **moral character** along with customs and **religious/moral things** of a person and the country of a person” (see *Appendix 13*).
4. “It is something related to **human essence**, to people’s **beliefs** and his **role on the planet**” (see *Appendix 12*).
5. (...) “cultural identity is expressed by the same **religion**” (see *Appendix 9*).
6. “Cultural identity may be defined **a set of values** of a person” (see *Appendix 7*).

This compelling usage of cultural identity concept²² invokes affinity with the second meaning (entry) for *identity* term in the Oxford English Dictionary which states: “the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others”. Likewise, this conception of cultural identity is analogous to the third key use of identity stipulated by Brubaker and Cooper ‘s (2000, p. 7): “understood as a *core* aspect of (individual or collective) “*selfhood*” or as a fundamental condition of social being, “identity” is invoked to point to something allegedly deep, basic, abiding, or foundational”.

As such, people are inclined to think of their *role*, their *essence*, as something primordial for human beings and profound when conceptualizing the term of cultural identity. This tendency is revelatory and should involve interesting implications for further research in cultural identity

²² The second entry of the term **identity** in OED: “*the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others*”. Source: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/identity?q=identity>.

field. Interestingly enough, from the above-cited definitions we may draw a conceptual map of cultural identity construed as a quintessential element or as a centrepiece of human beings.

6.1.3. How does the focus group self-identify culturally?

Surprisingly, a further novel finding is that several people possess a ‘well-defined’ idea of what cultural identity seems to be or is. Among respondents asked how they identify themselves culturally, 3 of them ‘defined’ themselves as Romanian, 6 participants self-identified as Moldovans and 2 of them as Russian. Moreover, the majority of the participants reported a high degree of attachment to a singular cultural identity, whereas one respondent indicated his desire to retain a double cultural identity (Romanian and Russian). Only one participant experienced doubts while answering the question ‘How do you identify yourself culturally?’. Besides, this yields the speculation that younger generations are likely to develop a dual identity or more complex patterns of cultural identities since our representative sample is formed of young and high-educated individuals.

Therefore, this finding substantiates the existence of Moldavian identity perception. Although Moldavian figured as the foremost ‘cultural identification’ by the respondents, we cannot disregard the two sub-cultures Romanian and Russian.

An additional consideration is that there is a tendency to link ‘cultural identity’ with pride or personal sense of honour: “I **love being** Romanian and I am **proud** of being so” (see *Appendix 4*). In other words, the respondents are inclined to think of self-worth as several answers embody implicitly a sense of pride when answering the question about cultural self-identification.

6.1.4. Cultural identity perceived by young and highly-educated Moldovans as a hereditary phenomenon

Three respondents declared intuitively that cultural identity is strongly related to their ancestry and view cultural identity as inherited patrimony, something controlled by their genes and convey this strong assumption through their attitudes:

1. “(...) Cultural identity is a **hereditary element**” (see *Appendix 6*).
2. “(...) Cultural identity is **something we take from our parents and our ancestors**” (see *Appendix 8*).

This suggests the tendency that anchored stereotypes about the so-called ‘inherited’ cultural identity still persist nowadays among (young) participants of our focused group.

Another important finding in this section is that regardless of their current country of residence, the participants who emphasised that they are Moldovan or Russian strongly identify with the culture or ethnicity of their parents:

1. “**I define myself culturally Moldavian**, but my language – Romanian (...) (see *Appendix 5*).
2. “I am **Russian person**. Even if I was born in the Republic of Moldova, I adhere to (our correction) **Russian culture**, because **my parents are Russians**” (see *Appendix 7*).

6.1.5. Language and cultural identity are tied to national identity

Two respondents of Study 1 think that cultural identity is expressed and processed by national values. From this standpoint, cultural identity is viewed as a national label which strongly relates to nationality. Three rationales of our participants definitely reflect cultural identity’s linkage to national identity:

1. “Cultural identity is our self-concept of pertaining to a **nation**, group of people, to a particular society (see *Appendix 9*).
2. “I believe that cultural identity is the ramification of **national identity**. People can create an identity which is definitely linked deeply to the country, **nation** (...)” (see *Appendix 16*).

It must be pointed out that scrutiny of the above examples demonstrate that two participants are influenced by the complex concept of nationalism while they self-identify and have the predisposition to describe cultural identity as a “ramification of national identity”. As emphasised by these respondents, identity cannot be constructed in isolation, it is often built upon a country or nation (see *Appendix 16*).

It seems that *birth country* plays a determinant role in the cultural self-identification process and sense of belongingness construction of one particular participant. Regardless the distinct parental origin or distinct ‘parental’ homeland (Iran) of one participant of Study 1, he/she self-identifies culturally in accordance with his birth country:

1. I define myself culturally as **Moldavian**. **My parents are from Iran, but I was born here, I talk in Romanian/Moldavian** dialects with my friends (see *Appendix 13*).

6.1.6. The linkage between cultural identity and ethnicity

Three respondents of Study 1 believe that cultural identity is correlated with ethnicity. The following three examples are clear evidence which support this finding:

1. In general, cultural identity is expressed by the same religion and **ethnicity**” (see *Appendix 9*).
2. People can create an identity which is definitely linked deeply to the country, nation and **ethnic (...) membership**” (see *Appendix 16*).
3. “Cultural identity is something related to our self-concept and **our ethnicity**” (see *Appendix 4*).

This finding is in accordance with Fishman’s definition of identity who advocates that identity is strongly associated with ethnicity (Fishman, 1989).

Contrary to this finding, one respondent is influenced by the two stereotypical sub-cultures, namely Russian and Romanian, when identifying himself culturally, yet accepts the existence of the so-called ‘Moldavian culture’:

1. “I consider myself **Russian** and **Romanian** because our **Moldavian culture** is a set of cultural **Romanian** and **Russian** influences. We altered our collective identity to national identity after Soviet Union collapsed” (see *Appendix 9*).

6.1.7. The shaping of Moldavian identity

Moldavian cultural identity, as confessed by six respondents, emerges from national sentiment and is processed in terms of national values, where their country represents a precondition of this attachment. When the participants were asked to provide their cultural identities, ascription construct mirrored their cultural self-identification, wherein national commitments were expressed. In general, our interviewees tend to assign to a ‘clear-cut’ cultural identification intertwined with the political identity (Moldavian), the birth country itself (or Moldavian ethnonym) even if Moldavia is not regarded as a homogeneous country. The below confessions serve as an example:

1. “Culturally, I am **Moldovan**” (see *Appendix 3*).
2. “I define myself culturally **Moldavian** (...)” (see *Appendix 5*).
3. “I am **Moldovan**” (see *Appendix 6*).
4. “I believe I am **Moldavian** because **I was born in Republic of Moldova** and our nation has specific particularities which distinguishes from other nations” (see *Appendix 11*).
5. “I identify myself culturally – **citizen of Moldova**” (see *Appendix 12*).
6. “I define myself culturally as **Moldavian**. My parents are from Iran, but I was born here, I talk in **Romanian/Moldavian dialects** with my friends” (see *Appendix 13*).

As such, we may suggest tentatively that Moldavian cultural identity exists and was gradually shaped throughout history.

But does the Moldavian country manipulates, at some level, the identity conception of their citizens by virtue of unifying the Moldavian nation? For example, one participant who lives currently in Romania declares Moldavian as his mother tongue, but still explains that she “learned a healthy Romanian from school and university”:

1. “My mother tongue is **Moldavian**. I declared that **Moldavian** is my mother tongue because it is the dialect which my parents spoke to me. **Moldavian language** differs acoustically from **Romanian**. **Gradually I learned a healthy Romanian language from school and university** because I was always passionate about languages and linguistic issues in Moldavia.” (see *Appendix 25*).

To some extent, respondents who self-proclaimed as Moldavians and other Pro-Moldavian activists struggle for their own national identity and independence; and consequently, they remain reluctant to assimilate fully into Romanian dominant culture or other cultures. Martin and Nakayama (2010, p.173) describe this step as the internalization of the values and norms of the dominant group, as we noted earlier, cultural identity is a shelter of being, acting and socializing (Chen & Collier, 2012). Romanian cultural identity enactment involves acting similarly and maintaining specific rules which would facilitate the cross-national unity but also the intrinsic adaptation to Romanian space. As a matter of fact, the emergence of a local Moldavian identity did not facilitate the internalization of Romanian values and norms, but instead enacted the *differentiation* and highlighted the *individualization* of the Moldavian state and Moldavian identity. This differentiation has been widely criticized by linguists, and political actors from both states and led to controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia which will be discussed in the sub-section 5.2.4.

6.1.8. Identity ‘confusion’ or building a *dual* identity?

As the findings suggest, two participants actually hesitate in defining themselves culturally, as for them the concepts of language and culture commingle. Consequently, interviewees question and negotiate their language and cultural identity (see *What is Identity?* chapter). As underlined in the introductory part and confirmed by conducting our self-concept questionnaire, the language and cultural identity confusion phenomenon exists and may be depicted in the examples below:

1. “I identify myself with Romanian cultural identity, **but sometimes I don’t know who I really am** (see *Appendix 8*).
2. “**Sometimes I do not know who I really am.** I speak both dominant languages of Moldova – Romanian and Russian. It is difficult to say that I am Moldovan because I speak two distinct languages. Moldovan language does not exist and Moldovan ethnicity doesn’t exist (see *Appendix 16*).

From responses derived from the self-concept questionnaire, we may notice that two respondents in our focused group experience confusion and doubts while providing their cultural self-identification because of Romanian and Russian influences (see the above examples). What lies at the centre of their confusion? The fact that can be drawn from these findings is that there are individuals who possess a weak or strong sense of identification to the Romanian and Russian sub-cultures. As long as we question or negotiate our cultural identity or cultural belongings, as long as we personally experience confusion, participate in sharing their cultural practices, we admit, to some extent, the tremendous influence of these sub-cultures, as “cultural practices are learned (...) through participation and conversion” (Rommetveit, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978; as quoted in Steen-Olsen, 2013, p. 315). Nonetheless, we believe that it is well justified to state that Romanian and Russian sub-cultures are omnipresent in Moldavia and will presumably continue to have a great impact on people’s cultural identity construction.

Unpredictably, results demonstrate that a few participants might be “landed” between two distinct cultures²³ or languages (Kallifatides, 1993, p.113) and as such, their perception of cultural identity is being constructed on the basis of two distinct sources – Romanian and Russian:

²³ This assumption is inspired from Dubois’s *theory of double consciousness*.

1. “I consider myself **Russian** and **Romanian** because our *Moldavian* culture is a set of cultural Romanian and Russian influences. We altered our collective identity to national identity after Soviet Union collapsed” (see *Appendix 9*).

61.9. Sources of cultural self-identification of the participants of Study 1

Is *language* at the core of cultural identity of the participants of Study 1? As distinct patterns of associations revealed, language constitutes an important marker of cultural identity coaligned with other important identity mechanisms (see sub-chapter 3.1.1.). That is why the present sub-section’s goal is to analyse cautiously each response and identify what lies at the core of cultural identity expression of each participant.

1. “Culturally, I am Moldovan” (see *Appendix 3*).

In the above-cited example (1), the participant self-identifies culturally as Moldovan. Though, in this instance, we cannot assume that the respondent refers to Moldavian culture, language or nation, etc. because the response does not contain any arguments which would specify the clear core components of his cultural identity.

2. “I perceive myself as Romanian even my parents are Russian ascendants. I speak Russian at home but I identify with Romanian culture, because I have studied in this language. I communicate with my friends. I love being Romanian and I am proud of being so” (see *Appendix 4*).

In the second instance (2), the participant refers to the *language* of instruction *in* educational settings (school, university – since he was recruited directly from the “*Ion Creanga*” *Pedagogical State University of Moldova* campus during their final examinations, see *Methodology* section) while he self-identifies culturally: “because I have studied in this language.” However, he extends his strong sense of cultural identification *out* of educational settings as well (more precisely – in a *web of friendship*, please see sub-section 3.1. *Defining Identity*): “I communicate with my friends” and again refers to preferred Romanian as the language of communication. Unquestionably, he does not ‘identify himself culturally’ by his ‘parental’ *mother tongue* or *origin* (the first language spoken at home) (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), but rather he defines his cultural identity complying with the function Romanian language accomplishes – *functional language* (the language he uses the most in his life) (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

3. “I define myself culturally as Moldavian, but my language Romanian (our correction). Romanians share the same culture (our correction), history and customs” (see *Appendix 5*).

In the example (3) given above, the participant self-identifies culturally as “Moldavian” but defines his language as “Romanian”. Correspondingly, he makes reference to Romanian-Moldavian cultural ties in his response: “Romanians share the same culture (our correction), history and customs”. We acknowledge that this might be due to the *prestige* status it holds within the major Romanian linguistic group in Moldavia, which influences his regard concerning this categorical split: “I define myself culturally as Moldavian, but my language Romanian”.

Repeatedly, he is inclined to point out directly the *language* he speaks and tends to shift between culture and language while self-expressing his cultural identity: “I define myself culturally as Moldavian, but my language Romanian”.

4. “I am Moldovan” (see *Appendix 6*).

From the example above (4), we could speculate that the respondent alludes to political identity or Moldavian nation, as this concise rationale does not contain any other facts or strong arguments in this regard.

5. “I am Russia person. Even I was born in Republic of Moldova, I (our correction) adhere (our correction of the misspelled verb and preposition) to Russian culture, because my parents are Russians. I speak better English than Moldovan” (see *Appendix 7*).

From the rationale mentioned above (5), it is noticeable that the participant has strong sense of Russian cultural belonging because of his parents’ recognizable sense of belonging to Russian ethnic or Russian social group, regardless his birth country, which is Moldavia: “Even I was born in Republic of Moldova, I adhere to Russian culture”. Additionally, the participant has the predisposition to shift from language and culture mode similar to other participants.

In addition, the language of *origin or ‘ancestral’ mother tongue* (the first language spoken at home, which is Russian) (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) plays a crucial role in his cultural self-defining, as he ascertains that he speaks “better English than Moldovan”. The final sentence conveys the codified meaning of language, even if he addresses ‘culture’ in the first place. This example indicates a straight link to the Russian language group existing in Moldavia, which was edified by ethnic Russian ancestors. As well, the participant is likely to make a shift from language and culture and vice versa in his answer. This example confirms the association

between language and culture speculated by the author of the current work in the *Introduction* section. Even if the participant does not mention the word ‘language’ *per se*, his rationale embodies a strong link between language and cultural identity.

6. “I identify myself with Romanian cultural identity, but sometimes I don’t know who I really am (see *Appendix 8*).

This example (6) highlights the existence of the confusion phenomenon in Moldavia. Even the participant “identifies himself with Romanian cultural identity”, he does not have a strong sense of ‘Romanian’ cultural self-identification. A significant implication from this finding emerges, namely individuals may experience confusion regarding their cultural identity, while retaining a ‘well-defined’ cultural identity.

From this instance we could speculate that the respondent does not comprehend if what he says is ‘correct’, legitimate or not, due to the controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia. In this respect, we could name this experience as a *misperception of cultural self-identification*²⁴.

7. “I consider myself Russian and Romanian because our Moldavian culture is a set of cultural Romanian and Russian influences. We altered our collective identity to national identity after Soviet Union collapsed” (see *Appendix 9*).

In the example above-mentioned (7), the participant self-identified himself “Russian and Romanian” but still admits the existence of the so-called Moldavian culture. Further, he views “Moldavian culture as a set of cultural Romanian and Russian influences” and relates foremost to history or more specifically to Soviet frame of reference. Moreover, the participant associates cultural identity with national identity after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when Moldavia gained independence. Indisputably, this was a defining moment for Moldavia, in terms of identity. As a former Soviet country, Moldavia along with other countries, has been affected by numerous changes it went through but mostly by the transition from collective to national identity, as it is can be inferred (please see sub-section 4.3.4.)

8. “I consider myself Romanian because our history is unique for the two states, Moldavia and Romania. Russian culture has also a great role in our educational background” (see *Appendix 10*).

²⁴ **Misperception of cultural self-identification** –is a term which signifies the interperceptual (meaning “occurring between periods of perceiving”, from *Collins English Dictionary*: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/interperceptual>) process of cultural self-identification when an individual has the ability to express his cultural belonging but yet experiences confusion if what he is declaring is relevant, legitimate, or not, due to the problematic situation in Moldavia in terms of Moldavian-Romanian denomination of language, but also due to the existing controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia.

Contrary to our expectations, the respondent from the example (N° 8) does not allude to language while self-identifying culturally, but rather relates to common Moldavian-Romanian history and the impact of the Russian culture has had into the educational background of Moldavian people until 1991. Furthermore, the respondent's historical argument corroborates the assumption mentioned in the theoretical and historical chapters.

9. "I believe I am Moldavian because I was born in Republic of Moldova and our nation has specific particularities which distinguishes from other nations" (see *Appendix 11*).

The participant (9) associates his cultural identity with Moldavian nation. It is surprising to note that this rationale does not put emphasis directly on language in the cultural identity expression. More precisely, in this example, the respondent does not relate primarily to language, but rather speaks of his birth country and Moldavian nation, stressing the idiosyncratic peculiarities of Moldavian nation that distinguishes from other nations.

10. "I identify myself culturally – a citizen of Moldova" (see *Appendix 12*).

The above-cited instance (10) illustrates an interesting association, namely that of cultural identity connected with citizenship. Unexpectedly, the participant is particularly prone to conflate the concept of citizenship or the conception of being "a citizen of Moldova" with his notion of cultural self-identification: "I identify myself culturally – a citizen of Moldova". In this context, it could also be inferred that he associates his cultural identity with the Moldavian country he 'obtained' the so-called "Moldovan" citizenship be it from birth or be it later.

11. "I define myself culturally as Moldavian. My parents are from Iran, but I was born here, I talk in Romanian/Moldovan dialects with my friends" (see *Appendix 13*).

The example N°11 clearly shows an interrelationship between birth country (Moldavia: "I was born here") and expressing cultural identity ("I define myself culturally as Moldavian") by one participant who has a foreign ancestral background ("My parents are from Iran."). The feeling of belongingness to Moldavian culture is constructed on the basis of the current residence country of his parents (Moldavia) rather than the parents' country of origin (Iran). Still, the participant explicates that he "talks in Romanian/Moldovan dialects with his friends", which reflects the existence of Romanian/Moldavian opposition within the country. This claim accords with *Romanianism* versus *Moldovanism* narratives described in *Language, Culture, and Identity in the Moldavian History* chapter.

12. "Culturally speaking, I am Russian. I was born in Republic of Moldova and I adhere to Russian culture, because I have interest in developing this culture,

because my native language spoken at home is Russian. I pertain to Russian culture” (see *Appendix 14*).

In the case in point (12), the participant who declares “he was born in the Republic of Moldova” is not likely to adhere to the Moldavian culture but to the “Russian culture”, even if he majored in English Philology, where the *Romanian* language is the first-language instruction along with English. More precisely, the volunteers were recruited from the “Ion Creanga” Pedagogical State University of Moldova campus during their final examinations (see *Methodology* chapter). Even though the official name of the specialty is *English Philology*, this also includes a *specialization of English/Romanian Philology* and is certainly taught in both Romanian and English languages. It can be confirmed by the author of the present master thesis because she followed the same specialty, majored in the same specialization *English/Romanian Philology* and graduated from the same university. The motivation for choosing that representative sample recruited from this particular university originated also from this reason.

Therefore, contrary to the example N° 11, language of instruction does not necessarily lie at the foundation of his cultural identity expression but rather “his native language spoken at home” which has had a huge impact.

Thus, Russian language represents the key factor in building a strong sense of Russian cultural identity. Compared to other participants, this respondent again involves ‘culture’ and ‘language’ dimensions in the expression of his cultural identity or belonging. Accordingly, his personal motivation for “developing Russian culture” draws from perpetuating the culture of his parents which is Russian: “because I have interest in developing this culture because my native language spoken at home is Russian. I pertain to Russian culture”.

13. “My culture is Moldova. Our country is the door to understand our culture, and of course our cultural identity. Romanian language is our national language (see *Appendix 15*).

In the example aforementioned (N° 13), the participant gives prominence to ‘Moldavian culture’ and commingles the concept of culture with the country: “My culture is Moldova”. Though, he makes a clear-cut separation between the role of the country in understanding the Moldavian culture and the constitutional and national language in Moldavia: “Romanian language is our national language”. This implication validates anew that ‘language’ jointly with the country are important factors in developing a sense of cultural identity.

14. “Sometimes I do not know who I really am. I speak both dominant languages of Moldova – Romanian and Russian. It is difficult to say that I am Moldovan because

I speak two distinct languages. Moldovan language does not exist and Moldovan ethnicity doesn't exist" (see *Appendix 16*).

In the instance N° 14, the respondent acknowledges that he speaks "both dominant languages of Moldova – Romanian and Russian". Yet, he remains dubitative when defining his cultural belonging: "Sometimes I do not know who I really am". Besides, this respondent invokes languages at the heart of cultural identification.

In conclusion, seven participants of Study 1 involve language per se (be it native language, mother tongue, language of instruction in educational settings, functional language (language spoken or used the most by the respondents), national language or the dominant languages of the Moldavian country which have impacted their sense of cultural belongingness) at the core of their cultural self-identification, whereas seven respondents spoke of different identity mechanisms such as ethnicity, nation, history, country, birthplace, citizenship, national identity as well as Romanian and Russian cultures per se. Please note that some significant correlations were more accurately discussed in the sub-sections above.

6.2. Interpretation of the Findings of Study 2

6.2.1. What 'mother tongue' is prevalent across all respondents of Study 2?

Language questioning has become a focal issue in Moldavia. Asking the arguable question 'What is your mother tongue?' was imperative. In general, the participants have a clear understanding of the concept of 'mother tongue', despite the fact that the mother tongue is quite an ambiguous term. When asked about their mother tongue, 5 respondents answered without hesitation that Romanian is their mother tongue and 4 respondents reported Moldavian language as their mother tongue. Two respondents stated categorically Russian language as their mother tongue. One respondent expressed Russian-Romanian bilingualism: "my mother tongue is Russian jointly with Romanian" (see *Appendix 23*).

Similarly, as analysed in Study 1, one participant expressed dilemma while stating his/her mother tongue: "I hesitate to tell you my mother tongue. I have a dilemma between saying Romanian or Moldavian" (see *Appendix 30*). As we may see, this participant self-reflexively question his mother tongue. But what does reside at the centre of his/her self-doubt? This question is per se challenging, since reporting one's 'mother tongue' remains problematic. In

fact, we do not actually know whether respondents refer to the predominant language they speak at home, educational institutions or societal settings or whether it is the native language²⁵ of their parents.

As above examples illustrate: a tendency persists, the Study 2 confirms that the first-ranking language: ‘*Romanian*’ language, which was self-reported by 5 respondents is prevalent across all respondents of Study 2. *Moldavian* language (which is considered separate from Romanian), reported by 4 respondents among thirteen interviewees, is also a dominant one among the respondents.

6.2.2. Diaspora identity construction

Interview subjects whose current country of residence is not Moldavia see the things in a different light. Among 13 interviewees, 8 live currently in another country (see *Table 1*).

For instance, one participant who resides currently in Romania has a particular sense of Romanian belonging, which means that her outside personal experience helped her to strengthen the sense of Romanian cultural belonging, because of the nowadays exorbitant promotion of European Union’s values:

1. “The idea “I am Moldovan and I speak Moldovan” is common among the rural people. In Chisinau city the idea “**I am Romanian and I speak Romanian**” is a shared feeling. The feeling of being **Romanian and the idea of speaking Romanian are principal among educated people**. It seems that there is a connection between the level of education and attitudes of perceiving one’s cultural identity. Personally, I think that Romanian language is the language we speak and rural people do not understand that because they create the differences between Romanian and Moldovan by inserting Russian expressions” (see *Appendix 21*).

As such, we have noted that the participant living currently in Romania is more eager to consider Moldovan identity as a part of Romanian identity arguing that Romanian language is the language of highly-educated people: “The feeling of being Romanian and the idea of speaking Romanian are principal among educated people. It seems that there is a connection between the level of education and attitudes of perceiving one’s cultural identity (see *Appendix 21*).

²⁵ The concept of **native language** is used in this particular context as the language ‘given’ from the ascendants or the language mostly spoken by the parents of our participants.

Two participants who live currently in Russia expressed strong identification with Russian culture and the Russian language. It is plainly evident that there is a relationship between one's avowed cultural identity and the living country of the subjects. In this particular case, the ascription process determines and influences the avowal process.

The respondent 8 (see *Appendix 28*) who reported Russian as his mother tongue believes that Moldovans struggle for Moldavian identity and try to impose this powerful belief, ignoring other minority identities (including Russian):

1. (...) Moldovans try to impose the idea of a specific Moldovan cultural identity that's why **other minority identities tend to be vanished**" (see *Appendix 28*).
2. "We can admit that **Russian is more used in mass-media from Moldova**, Moldovan language is promulgated in educational institutions like schools, colleges, universities" (see *Appendix 28*).

In the same vein, the respondent 11 (see *Appendix 31*) who resides in Russia and who declared Russian as his mother tongue acknowledges the communication function of Russian language in mass media and linguistic landscape of Moldavia:

1. "Russian is one of the most spoken language after Romanian and has an important position in Republic of Moldova. It can be seen everywhere: **press, street, library, television and so on**" (see *Appendix 31*).

But are the participants who live abroad influenced by the preconception of *Moldovenism* or *Romanianism*? For instance, the participant who resides currently in India declared Moldavian her mother tongue and believes that the educational institutions propagate "Romanianism" and unconsciously impose a "romanized" vision of Moldavian identity:

2. "**The attitudes toward Romanian identifier are built at kindergartens, schools, universities that propagate "romanianism" every single day.** I remember my experience as well, when Romanian teachers argued during our lessons that Romanian is our language and we live on Romanian land. The controversy is deeper than we think. People must understand that we have another identity, another thinking in comparison with Romanians. Even **foreigners** say that and perceive our culture separately" (see *Appendix 22*).

Due to their higher geographic mobility, some individuals gradually lose their deep connection with the community and family and subsequently start to culturally assimilate into the new country (or dominant culture of their country of residence) with which they share common views, language, history and numerous cultural practices, as it is the case of Romania and Russia. Constantly, their homeland social commitments become significantly less powerful and

as a result their identity(-ies) become more fluid and questionable, as several respondents of Study 2 stated that they often ask themselves questions concerning their identity.

6.2.3. Moldavian identity perceived as Romanian Perpetual Continuation

The most important result of our research is that Moldavian identity is regarded by the focused group of the Study 2 as a continuation of Romanian identity and culture.

Seven interview subjects out of thirteen declared or suggested that Moldavian identity is a continuation of Romanian cultural identity. This premise consists of the assumption that a high percentage of cultural content comes from Romanian culture or at least from their former cultural assimilation, shared history and language traditions as well:

1. “For me it is clear that Moldavian identity is an imagined idea, because Moldovan identity is a fragment of Romanian identity” (see *Appendix 21*).
2. “The attitudes toward Romanian identifier are built at kindergartens, schools, universities that propagate “romanianism” every single day. I remember my experience as well, when Romanian teachers argued during our lessons that Romanian is our language and we live on Romanian land” (see *Appendix 22*).
3. “Moldavian history is just a constituent in Romanian history, as we can notice in Romanian history books” (see *Appendix 25*).
4. “(...) I don’t believe in existence of Moldavian society or Moldavian identity. We speak Romanian language in Moldavia, hence the identity is also Romanian” (see *Appendix 26*).
5. “(...) because Moldavia has been perceived as a country “in between”, namely, between Romania and Russia (see *Appendix 26*).
6. “Moldavian identity is a political manipulation. Moldovans do not have to create a new identity, because history showed that there is Romanian blood in all Moldavians” (see *Appendix 26*).
7. “Moldavia is a part of Romanian cultural space and all people of Moldavia have Romanian national identity” (see *Appendix 26*).
8. “(...) that Romanian language has the most influential status in our country. Whether it’s called Romanian or Moldovan it is the most spoken language in our state” (see *Appendix 27*).
9. “In Romanian community, Moldavian language is considered a mistake because people plead for national Romanian language. Moldavian nationalists fight for officialising Moldavian language” (see *Appendix 30*).
10. “Our local language or local identity is a form of Romanian, I would call it – a continuation of Romanian identity and culture” (see *Appendix 33*).

According to many identity scholars, our identities are formed over a period of time and, as mentioned in the theoretical background, through interaction with other individuals. The way a group identity detaches from another and develops itself depends mostly on the status, level of dominance and its relative position (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). It is crucial for a group to have a positive attitude to develop their sense of identity towards the dominant culture. Moldavian culture and identity absorbed numerous aspects of Romanian culture, as such, a few interview subjects assimilate Moldavian culture with Romanian culture (see from the above *examples 1, 4, 6, 7*).

6.2.4. Controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia highly correlated to history

Absolutely all the interviewees reported the existence of a controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia. A large number of respondents expressed the view that history has impacted the beliefs of Moldavian people concerning their linguistic and cultural identity (see *Appendices 23-33*). Moreover, they believe that the historical periods when Moldavia was under Romanian and Russian rule (Soviet Empire), for example, marked substantially their linguistic and cultural identity but also unleashed the actual controversy.

At the question 10 of the *Study 2*, ‘Do you think that history and political situation within the country plays a great role in the identity construction process?’ nine subjects out of thirteen responded positively, shedding light on important historical stages that determined the sense of ‘who they are’. Only three respondents were opposed or remained hesitant, arguing that history is not the most essential factor defining linguistic and cultural identity. Two subjects indicated that communist/soviet period represents the most striking period in the process of cultural identity construction of Moldavian people:

1. “Let us take the example of Soviet period, when Russian was an instrument to control people’s desires and thoughts. Everybody had to speak this language; other language was inadmissible” (see *Appendix 26*).

As such, the linguistic and ethnic issue whether Moldavians are separate from Romanians or whether Moldavian language is separate from Romanian is determined by historical changes Moldavia went through and is, as our facts imply, rooted in their shared history. In this sense, it is useful to point out that our respondents do not believe in the existence of a so-called ‘pure’ Moldavian history but rather it is inherent in the Romanian and Russian history: “Moldavian

history is just a constituent in Romanian history, as we can notice in Romanian history books” (see *Appendix 25*). Then, it would be fair to assume the fact that our interviewees are predisposed to think over linguistic and cultural identity controversy through the prism of language and history. While answering a general question on the role of history and political situation in the identity construction process, respondents are inclined to refer to their own history and identity phases which their country or nation traversed.

6.2.5. Factors influencing the construction of identity

Remarkably, when asked to state the main factors which influence the process of identity construction, interviewees reported highly divergent patterns: radical career changes, gender identity transformation, family, environment, national changes, language, history, society, life principles, education/school, contact with other people from the same culture or a different culture, mass media, religion, culture, political system, customs and traditions, economy of the country and genes (see *Table 3* below).

Table 3. Factors influencing the process of identity construction

<i>Factors influencing the process of identity construction</i>	
Cited factors from participants’ rationales	Word frequency
Radical career changes	1
Gender identity transformation	1
Family	2
Environment	1
National changes	1
Language	4
History	3
Society	3
Life principles	1
Education/school	5
Contact with other people	1

Mass media	1
Religion	1
Culture	1
Political system	1
Customs and traditions	2
Economy of the country	1
Genes	1

There seems to be a tendency to correlate the process of identity construction with *education*, which was reported five times in the responses of Study 2. Four interviewees out of fourteen were of the opinion that *language* is one of the most influential determinants in the process of identity construction, as it was mentioned four times in the data. It is worthy to note here that this important result follows again Eder's claim (see sub-chapter 3.6.) on narratives and Moldovanism and Romanianism perspectives developed by people in the educational settings. Additionally, the results also suggest that 'history' and 'society' are important factors in the process of identity construction, as they were reflected three times in the data. Our data also reveals that customs and traditions are considered less significant factors that might shape one's identity in the view of our participants, as both of these were cited two times in the interviewees' rationales. Other factors such as economy of the life principles, country, religion, mass media, genes, etc. result to be clearly insignificant.

7. Discussion of *Study 1* and *Study 2*

The primary goal of this research was to analyse the phenomena of language and cultural identity(-ies) shaped in Moldavia. The main objective of these research studies was to collect data with the purpose of evaluating how two distinct sets of young, highly-educated (familiarized with identity issues) and relatively mobile Moldavians define, perceive their own cultural identity and describe it.

Our first part (qualitative research) applied a two-stage analysis of rationales' of two distinct representative groups. The first purposeful group consisted of high-educated students majoring in English Philology. First stage involved providing a definition of the concept of cultural identity and answering one of the central questions of the current work (precisely, 'How they 'self-identify' culturally?'), where participants avowed their 'cultural belongings' or ascribed to a specific culture(s) in a self-concept questionnaire format.

The second purposeful group consisted of high-educated and relatively mobile individuals, fluent in English and majoring in social or language-related studies. The second stage involved answering ten questions in a semi-structured interview format. Their answers helped the researcher to explain how the Romanian and Russian cultures have impacted Moldavian society, their language(s) perception and cultural identity(-ies) throughout the current work.

Furthermore, the first part of the master thesis included the attempt to provide light on the fundamental question concerning nowadays controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia: 'Do Moldavians shape distinct language(s) and cultural identity/identities?' from a socio-linguistic perspective. As discussed in the *Results of qualitative Study 1 and Study 2* section, this does not denote a yes/no question, but rather represents an integrative question that offered a variety of answers where participants invoked different identity mechanisms and phenomena.

Rather than perceiving cultural identity as a *linear* process (see *Collective identity* sub-section) participants did not have the tendency to invoke only 'language' and 'culture' dimensions but have related it to a spectrum of relatively different phenomena: education, beliefs, principles, self-concept, ethnicity, national history, language, set of values, nation, customs and traditions, social conduit, etc.

As well, as an extremely important consideration – participants are not tended to express their cultural identity as *fluid* (constantly changing and evolving, in accordance with the

contemporary research), but rather have the propensity to hold a *fixed* though '*permeable*' idea or perception of cultural identity. Moreover, a few participants view cultural identity phenomenon as a *given product* from their ancestors rather than as an ever-changing process.

Although, respondents expressed the idea that there is an emphasis on dominant culture (namely Moldavian) and influential sub-cultures (namely Romanian and Russian) as well. Very specifically, our respondents were inclined, to some extent, to commingle language and cultural identity concepts. This assumption is pertinent, as we noticed various illustrations in the data where both of these appeared as interrelated phenomena, having an implicit nature.

Surprisingly, participants are inclined to have a 'precise' idea or perception of their cultural self-identification. According to our predictions, an individual may hesitate or question his/her own cultural identity(-ies) because each individual experiences socio-cultural changes throughout his/her entire life. Moreover, our research showed that experiencing confusion or retaining a dual 'cultural belonging' is a normal practice among young Moldavians. For instance, positioning themselves as Moldavians, participants are influenced by national values and the sentiment of nationalism, at a more large level, where they feel 'free' (Melucci, 1988) to possess and develop their own (cultural) identity. Based on the results of this research, we could speculate that Moldavian cultural identity emerges as a part of national identity. In this sense, the interviewed subjects tend to avow a 'clear-cut' cultural identification interlaced with the political identity (Moldavian), the birth country itself (or Moldavian ethnonym).

Positioning themselves as Romanians, participants justify the influence of this sub-culture and show how shared history and language have shaped their beliefs in the expression of cultural belongingness and in defining their mother tongue.

Participants who moved abroad (namely to Romania and Russia) process their cultural identity and define their mother tongue through the diasporic perspective. Therefore, there is a tendency for participants who live outside their 'parental' homelands to ascribe to Romanian culture (for one participant who stated Romanian language as their mother tongue and cultural self-identification) and respectively, Russian culture (for those 2 participants who avowed and expressed a strong identification with Russian culture and defined their mother tongue as Russian) rather than taking into consideration firstly their homeland, or national identity.

Taken together, the findings suggest that language and cultural identity in Moldavia is seen whether as a continuation of Romanian culture, whether as a 'new-built' avowed identity – *Moldavian identity* inflicted by the ethnonational construct *Moldovenism* (see Chapter 4), as a

questioned identity, 'diasporic identity' or 'dilemma identity'. During data analysis, we have noticed that Romanian and Russian sub-cultures interfered considerably in the construction of the Moldavian identity 'perception'. In addition, history and education constitute fundamental pylons in Moldavian cultural identity building (see *Results* section).

Nevertheless, religion which is thought to be one of the most crucial elements in defining and expressing one's cultural identity did not play the paramount role for the participants of our study. Even if the respondents mentioned several times the religion as a factor which may influence cultural identity development, they did not make connections with concrete examples and did not support any arguments to it. They did not illustrate the modality of how cultural identity may be constructed or inflected by religion. This lack of correlation can be attributed to the idea that religion does not represent an important point for new generations because it is an inherent process which shape people's views, world and self-perceptions without their assent.

8. Limitations of qualitative *Study 1* and *Study 2*

Limited empirical data of both stages of our qualitative research is our major limitation. The corpus of the first study was of 14 respondents and the corpus of the second study was limited to 13 interview subjects. Due to limited number of participants, their diverse subjective responses, and very particular sample of our research studies, it was extremely difficult to generalize the findings and label them to that of the Moldavian population.

Even though our qualitative research offers a general picture of how Moldavian identity and other cultural identities are seen and processed, it was difficult to make comparisons and draw connections among data because of the plethora of manifold responses of university sample.

The changes, inquires in opinions regarding one's cultural identity can be seen as a limitation of this research as well. That is why we think that it is necessary to create a follow-up questionnaire to further investigate the post-hoc responses of the same interviewees in regard with their undergoing language and cultural identity changes.

An important limitation could be related to the multi-dimensional potential of language and cultural identity duality per se. As a result, such investigation could not be generalizable across a particular focus group, society or people.

Another limitation of our qualitative research is related to the modality of conducting our investigation. The spoken answers of respondents were larger in size compared to those of written answers via email, and, as such, we postulate that they express more trustworthiness. The researcher was like a motivator to participants during the interactive dialogues. We postulate that the motivational state of participants during the interview process is an important factor as well. We have noticed that the participants who did not have direct contact with the researcher did not fully express their thoughts. Further work is required involving face-to-face interviews which would indicate inner emotions of participants, because, in general, identity originate from internal emotions but has also strong ties with external attributions.

After conducting qualitative the research, we have observed that some participants might have biased outlooks due to their educational or cultural background(s) and have tendency to promote certain stereotypes or misperceptions related to cultural identity of Moldavian people originating from different agents of socialisation: educational institutions, home, peers, mass-media etc. (more precisely, pro-Romanians, pro-Russians, pro-Moldavians, etc.) It could represent a major shortcoming of our work since the investigator of the current master thesis

could speculate but not identify and examine in-depth the sources of socialisation, because not every participant's rationale contains the detailed explanations of it. This shortcoming arising from the anchored stereotypes can affect to some degree the validity of the present investigation. Accordingly, the researcher of the current work will conduct a complementary quantitative research study in order to assure valid results and compare with the previous findings.

During conducting Study 2 and data analysis, we noticed that it would be more relevant to change the ninth (general) question, namely 'What factors may influence the identity construction?' into a more specific one: 'What factors have influenced the Moldavian identity construction?' in order to obtain more precise answers about the main determinant factors which have shaped cultural identities of *Moldavian* people.

8.1. Future research suggestions and implications

This sub-section contains suggestions and implications for future research regarding our investigated phenomena, namely language and cultural identity in Moldavia. It should be perceived as a starting point which would lay foundation to further understanding of how Moldavian cultural identity unfolds.

In this paper we furnished a conceptual framework of cultural identity construction from a multifaceted perspective. Drawing upon semi-structured interviews with our focused sample, we attempted to portray how labyrinthine the process is but also to present a portrait of how people actually feel and think concerning their own cultural identity.

First of all, a large-scale population-based investigation, drawing high-educated participants from different universities (universities majoring in Russian as well) in Moldavia, should definitely be conducted, which would help researchers to generalize the findings and label them to that of the representative samples. To lighten the key process of Moldavian cultural identity formation, additional investigations might have been done, recruiting as well (young high-educated) participants from the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria – the unrecognized unit of Moldavia) and Gagauzia (the autonomous region of Moldavia), as these two autonomous units still represent territorial realms of Moldavia. These investigations would identify and determine the reasons in ascribing different cultural identity(-ies) as well as provide

valid and reliable evidence concerning the controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia.

9. Conclusion of Study 1 and Study 2

‘Do Moldavians shape distinct language(s) and cultural identity/identities?’ In the context of our current work, we attempted to address this question from different viewpoints, but still additional research shall be performed in order to offer a spectrum of valid responses in this respect since the political borders of a country do not often coincide with language and cultural borders, as our thesis has revealed.

One must bear in mind likewise that Moldavian culture is the continuum and the interface of two ‘antithetical’ Romanian and Russian (Slavic) influences and/or other minor sub-cultures, where they intermix and dialogue. Though such powerful influences might produce for a segment of young and mobile Moldavian individuals a ‘new’ or alternate identity (see relatable arguments and illustrations in the *Results* section).

Furthermore, several important findings have stemmed out of this research effort. In the first place, our research has confirmed the existence of controversy over linguistic and cultural identity in Moldavia. The above-cited controversy is partly due to history and historical stereotypical narratives that influenced the beliefs of our participants from the second research study concerning their own linguistic and cultural identity. Additionally, they reported that the historical phases when Moldavia was under Romanian and Russian rule and the dissolution of the Soviet Union as important periods in constructing their perception of cultural belongingness and cultural identity(-ies).

Secondly, our investigation has substantiated the existence of *Moldavian identity* (be it linguistic, political or cultural) or at least the emergence of the so-called ‘Moldavian identity’ perception. In relation to this, the most significant finding resulting from our research is that Moldavian identity is perceived as an extension of Romanian identity and culture. This perception is linked to the provided interviewees’ substantiation that both countries share a common history and language traditions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that language and cultural identity in Moldavia are seen whether as a continuation of the Romanian culture, as a ‘new-built’ avowed identity (Moldavian cultural identity), as a questioned identity, diasporic identity or as the identity of ‘dilemma’. As

highlighted above, cultural perceptions can intersect because the Romanian and Russian sub-cultures interfere. The participants of Study 1, who self-identified as Moldovans or Russians, strongly identify with the culture or ethnicity of their parents. Contrary to Study 1, Study 2 has shown a relationship between one's avowed cultural identity and the current living country of the subjects.

Moreover, scrutiny of responses helped us to conclude that the reported 'cultural identity' by the participants does not always coincide with the citizenship and constitutional language in the country but often indicates an intricate relationship between them. Specifically, the participants who hold dual citizenship of Moldavian and Romanian or Moldavian and Russian may express a singular cultural belonging – Moldavian, despite the fact that Romanian is the official and *constitutional* language of Moldavia, declared in December 2013 (see the *Constitution of Moldova*). Subsequently, there is not a direct linkage between the self-reported 'cultural belonging' and constitutional language of the Moldavia country because of the spoken languages within the country (including Russian interethnic language), which are not included officially in the Constitution of Moldova, but still play an important role in the expression of cultural belongings and/or in defining their mother tongues by the participants of Study 2.

As expected by the investigator of the current work, a few respondents experience confusion and doubts while providing their cultural self-identification because of Romanian and Russian cultures. Nevertheless, individuals are likely to possess a sense of 'well-defined' cultural identity. Moreover, this research has justified that individuals may possess two or more distinct cultural belongings; as it is the case of a few participants of our purposeful sample, who advocate that they belong to two different cultures, Romanian and Russian, whereas Moldavian identity is an intercultural form that shares and illustrates their interrelations.

As essential point, Moldavian cultural identity, as confessed by the respondents of both studies emerges from national sentiment and is processed in terms of national values. A strong inter-relationship between cultural and national identity is also reflected in the data. The participants are influenced by the powerful concept of nationalism while they self-identify 'culturally' and are likely to describe cultural identity phenomenon as a part of their of national identity. As demonstrated throughout this master thesis, the sense of 'cultural identity' and the sense of cultural belonging is often constructed upon the country, ethnicity or nation.

The findings of our conducted self-concept questionnaire suggest that the purposeful group has a propensity for thinking primarily of language while constructing the notion of cultural identity

since *seven* participants of Study 1 involve language per se (be it native language, mother tongue, language of instruction in educational settings, functional language (language spoken or used the most by the respondents), national language or the dominant languages of the Moldavian country (see the detailed analysis in the *sub-chapter 5.1.9*), whereas *seven* respondents spoke of different identity mechanisms such as ethnicity, nation, history, country, birthplace, citizenship, national identity as well as Romanian and Russian cultures per se.

In conclusion, language, ethnicity, national history, religion and beliefs, principles, self-concept, set of (moral) values, traditions/customs, national identity, human essence, country, etc. may be considered the most foundational elements in cultural identity building (see *Result* section).

Additionally, several conceptual elements (taken together) indicate a significant tendency which depicts that cultural identity is construed a set of values, principles and beliefs, having a moral and spiritual character.

Although the semi-structured interview had distinct questions for “language” and “cultural” identity, many interviewees responded interchangeably. As estimated, ‘Moldovan’ cultural belonging is the most predominant among the participants followed by Romanian cultural belonging (see sub-chapter *6.1.3*.)

An unexpected finding during our research was that only a few of our participants indicated their cultural identity as Russian. Firstly, this result may be related to a methodological shortcoming that was not acknowledged at the very beginning. As the investigator of this current work is a Romanian speaker she recruited a sample which is not at all representative of the proportion of the population of Russian origin (or ethnicity) in Moldavia. Due to limited access to Russian-speaking potential participants, we consider that the findings of both studies are still valid and reliable. Secondly, it could be linked to the ‘utilitarian’ status of the Russian language which become less dominant in the country since it is just denominated as the “language of interethnic communication” and since it is not officially recognized in the Constitution of Moldova.

Overall patterns of results (see chapter 8) revealed that history (or at least interviewees’ personal historical reflections) represents the central pillar of Moldavian cultural identity formation (as narrated by the respondents of our research studies), whereas “Moldavian identity” was also categorized by a few interviewees as a ‘local identity’ and regarded as a continuum or as a developing process.

Our data analysis has shown that *education* being ranked in the top of the list of causal factors is the most significant in shaping identity and identity construction process. As a consequence, through education (be it at home or outside), the set of our representative individuals formed certain beliefs and stereotypes related to identity, languages and *collective* history that were inserted in their sub-consciousness. As a result, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and after the declaration of independence, strengthening the Moldavian cultural identity awareness was deeply internalized in the cultural belonging feeling of Moldavians. Language, history and society were reported significant determinants in the process of identity construction attested by the participants of Study 2.

Surprisingly, the religion which is thought to be one of the most crucial determinants in defining and expressing one's cultural identity did not play the greatest role for the participants of our research. Consequently, it could be inferred that the new generation (formed of young individuals) indicates a shift of attitudes toward religion.

During our analysis, we have noted that majority of participants recognize and process their cultural identity through a set of national values, whereas a very small number of participants do not intensely relate their cultural identity identification to national identity.

To sum up, identity is an amorphous construct, that is why individuals of today have the capability to ascribe to several identities or create complex patterns of cultural identities, as our research has established.

This master thesis has offered partial and some full answers to the research questions outlined in the methodological part of the thesis. It represents a good illustrator of the present-day 'young', highly-educated and relatively mobile society because this rendering displays the beliefs and attitudes of young individuals toward their language and cultural identity (-ies). What do the participants associate their cultural belonging with? They associate the concept of cultural belonging directly or indirectly with the sense of pride and self-worth, as we observed directly and implicitly in the data. This conception complies with Eder's notion of collective identities who states that "the sense of proud and shame" are essential elements to collective identities (Eder, 2009, p. 7, see sub-chapter 3.6.). As well, they do not construe cultural identity belonging as *an evanescent product* or *fluctuating phenomenon* comparatively to the majority of current research studies advocate, but construe as a relatively '*fixed*' though '*permeable*' (see *Defining identity* sub-chapter).

A significant consideration is that our purposeful group of Study 1 develops the notion of cultural identity through the lens of collective identity notion presented in the theoretical chapter. Based on this, we might conclude that people perceive their cultural identity and collective identity indistinguishably.

Contrary to Yuval-Davis's definition of 'cultural belongingness', our young and relatively mobile individuals do not define this as a sense of comfort, or feeling "like at home" (as quoted from Steen-Olsen, 2013, p. 314) but rather as a *controversial* and *conflictual* concept, which could imply tensions, dilemma and questioning. This assumption conforms to the claims of Simmel (2009) and Melucci (1996) who postulate that conflict lies at the epicentre of collective identity construction and argue that tensions are integral components of any collective actor (see sub-chapter 3.4.1.).

As well, our investigation confirmed Epstein's assumption (1978) that ethnic group boundaries are perceived psychologically (see sub-section 3.4.2.) and Joseph's assumption (2004) that linguistic boundaries are often (but not always, see sub-section 5.1.9.) correlative with ethnic boundaries (see sub-section 3.1.1.).

The current qualitative research is a compelling illustrator of how individual identity intermingles with social, cultural, national and collective identities of people.

PART II. Quantitative research

10. Methodology of quantitative research *Study 3*

The third stage of the current master thesis consisted of conducting a quantitative questionnaire on language attitudes and cultural identity in order to build a picture of the representations of language practices of a segment of Moldavian people. We chose the quantitative methodology after conducting qualitative analysis because it is more deductive, as well as it enables us to examine information quantifiably. Moreover, Collis & Hussey (2003) emphasises that quantitative methodology provides a broad and comprehensive description of the research subject without restricting the scope of the study and/or the nature of respondents' answers. Weinstein and Tamur (as cited in Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 41) suggest that quantitative analysis introduces techniques that “add power and sensitivity to individual judgement when one attempts to detect and describe *patterning* in a set of observations.” Miles and Huberman (1994) believe that quantitative and qualitative analysis are inextricably interlaced and should be undertaken jointly. In a deeper sense, our quantitative investigation is meant to complement the qualitative one with the purpose to illustrate how the various variables and aspects interact. In this regard, Rossman and Wilson extended this postulate advocating that we should link the both types of investigation “to initiate new lines of thinking through attention and paradoxes”, “provide richer details” and more generalisable outcomes, but above all, overcome the abstraction (as cited in Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 41). According to Greaves et al. (2013), questionnaires are one of the most effective tools of data collection in the field of linguistics, particularly in measuring human preferences, behaviours, opinions, attitudes, and intentions, especially where numerous participants are involved. Further, the author indicates that questionnaires are economical and quicker in contrast to some other modern methods, justifying its choice in this particular study (Greaves et al., 2013).

10.1. Research design

In the third quantitative research study, the *questionnaire method* is used in order to obtain more specific information on language attitudes and representation of their language practices and analyse data more at practical level²⁶, compared to the first part of the master thesis.

The current questionnaire contains 37 open and closed questions in which the participants were supposed to fill. Though, the majority of the questions have an open-ended format. We opted more for open-ended questions' format because they may better reflect how Moldavian people view the focused phenomena and unveil certain remarkable things that probably the author may not be cognizant while elaborating the questionnaire. The questionnaire employed used open-ended questions, giving participants an opportunity to thoroughly share their opinions. In addition, this study carefully examines the role of language/s in the construction of Moldavian and/or another cultural identity.

Our tailored questionnaire was published publicly online. In this regard, the questionnaire was open to every respondent, regardless the age, sex, ethnic background, country of residence, etc. The data was selected under accurate *random sampling*, because it is the most basic method for gathering information from the population wherein each member of the subset is provided equal chance to participate.

10.2. Participants

STAGE 3. Questionnaire on language attitudes and cultural identity

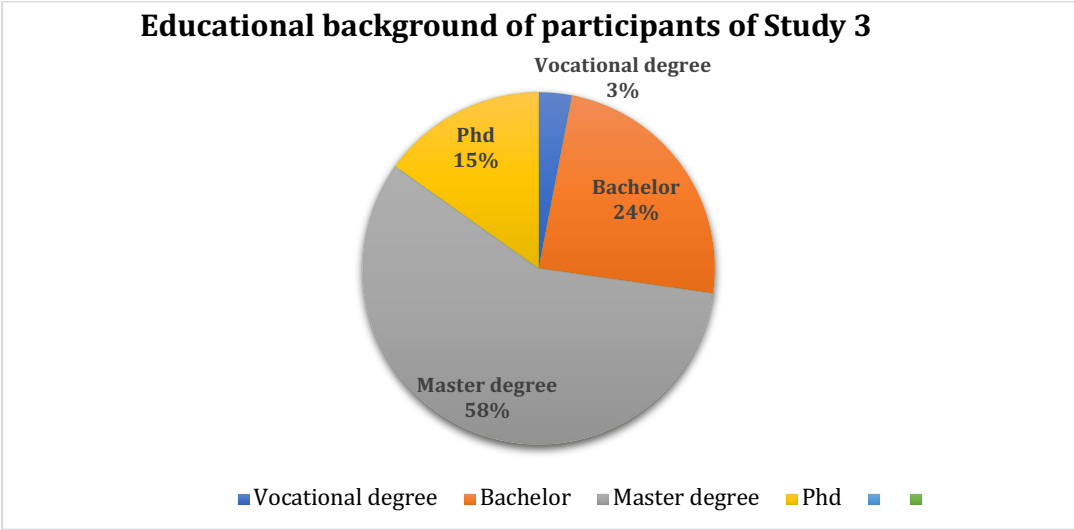
For the third stage of our research, the author recruited the participants via internet-based platforms such as Facebook (open to all the members) and then targeted a diasporic Facebook group named 'Moldavians in Belgium.' In this regard, we utilised internet-based platforms due to the fact that they have become increasingly essential in both our personal and professional lives, and, lately, it has undoubtedly become an important tool in conducting research. The researcher maintained her desire to conduct the quantitative study in English. The main reason

²⁶ “**At practical level**” is used in this context as the antonym of ‘*theoretical level*.’ *Study 3* relies primarily on actual and relevant experience of respondents concerning their language attitudes rather than on theoretical investigation.

for performing the quantitative study in English was to bridge the translation gap and reduce errors while processing the data in order to deliver relevant empirical results.

In the last part of the questionnaire, the volunteers reported pertinent profile information such as: mother tongue, current country, age, educational background, etc. We presume that each participant has good comprehension skills of the English language, as the non-response rate is extremely low. Perhaps, this is related to their academic background, since respondents' level of education ranged from PhD to vocational degree. Subsequently, 24% of respondents reported as having bachelor degree, 58% of respondents stated that they possess one or more master degrees, 15% declared that they hold PhD degrees. Only three percent of the respondents declared that they possessed vocational qualifications (see *Figure 2*). The education level of respondents shows that most of them are graduates and post-graduates, with the rate of 97% of participants.

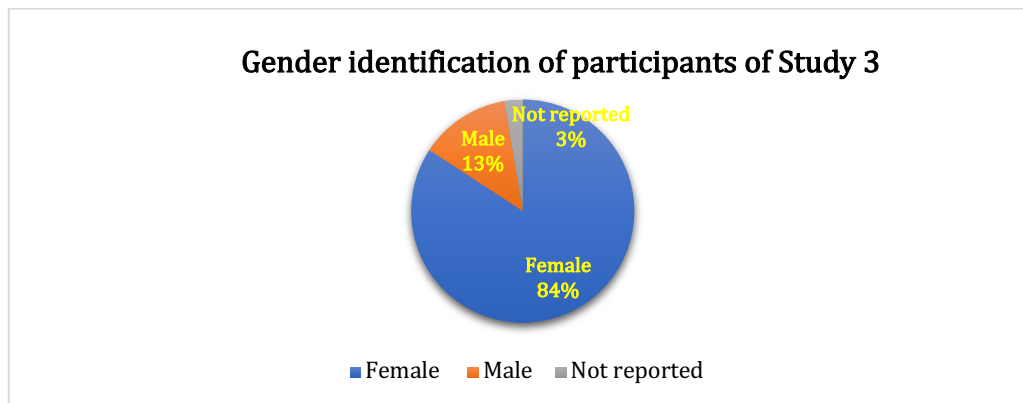
Figure 2. Educational background of participants of Study 3



As we can note, the age of participants ranges between 20-49 years. Thirty-four respondents were born in Moldavia, 3 respondents reported their birth country as Russia and one respondent declared that he was born in Ukraine. The number entailed male and female participants. Even if the online questionnaire was open to any interested person, 84% of participants were of female gender, 13% of male gender and 3% (“unknown”) did not indicate their gender as it is possible to notice in *Figure 3*. We presume that the disproportionate ratio of female to male can

be explained by the fact that women are more cooperative and active in responding a questionnaire in social networks than men. Moreover, Szell and Thurner (2013) found significant gender differences regarding networking and participation on social platforms. They have explicitly discovered that women are more engaged and “invest more in reciprocating friendships” on social networks than men (Szell and Thurner, 2013, p. 4).

Figure 3. Gender identification of participants of Study 3



10.3. Procedure

STAGE 3. Questionnaire design

The online questionnaire²⁷ was created using google platform for personal use and building up surveys. It is composed of 37 questions, and the questions' elaboration were partly generated and sketched by the results of Study 1 and Study 2 of the current master thesis.

Potential respondents were recruited online via Facebook to ensure a high level of confidentiality and reach participants originally from Moldavia as well as Moldavians residing in different countries. Furthermore, the quantitative questionnaire was self-paced, and each participant accessed it at their convenience. The online questionnaire took in average between 20-35 minutes to answer, as reported by the majority of participants.

The open-ended answer is expected to this kind of questions, as the author of this master thesis seeks to obtain unbiased responses. The lack of the pre-set options is crucial to reduce the

²⁷ The **online questionnaire** can be accessed using the following link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeuWeC-3RKlrC0wuKDFi3Ti02kUAhrM1NfqP4cufV7K2VswQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

anchored bias (stereotypes, hypothesis, preconceptions) and also to identify tendencies and compelling connections within different contexts.

It is important to highlight that the researcher was remarkably interested to integrate questions on language attitudes that could derive from daily life such as:

- a) ‘In which language(s) do you pray? (if applicable). Fill in the blank the language (only one)’;
- b) ‘When you are surrounded by your friends, you prefer to speak...? Please write/fill in the blank the language(s) depending on usage frequency’; etc.

10.4. Questionnaire design: choice of items

This section provides an overview of the content, structure, techniques and choices of items made by the researcher in the final version of the questionnaire (see *Appendix 71*). It should be pointed out that a concerted attempt was made to decompose multidimensional concepts into separate constituents in order to allow respondents to express varying views towards these distinct constituents and avoid contrastive statements. Deliberately, we opened our questionnaire with two essential questions:

- Q1. ‘How do you identify yourself?’
- Q2. What is/are your mother tongue(s)?

The very opening question was addressed in order to understand how individuals identify themselves. Firstly, this question seeks to gauge whether the respondents are more likely to refer to belonging to an ethnic group/affiliation or cultural affiliation, etc. Secondly, given the general and vague formulation, one could think that this question has a reflective goal, since this allows subjects to think about who they are.

The third question (Q3. ‘Please write/fill in the blank the language(s) you use at home the most often’) and the fourth question (Q4. ‘What language(s) your parents use at home?’) were incorporated into the questionnaire to investigate similar patterns from the responses and establish if there are any analogous intergenerational attitudinal orientations (more precisely, two generations: parents and their descendants). The both questions refer to language use and intrafamilial communication in the home domain.

The purpose of fifth question (Q5. ‘When you are surrounded by your friends, you prefer to speak...? Please write/fill in the blank the language(s) depending on usage frequency.’) was to elicit language attitudes in a specific social context: intimate friendships. This type of questions feature overt language attitudes in day-to-day life and seeks to answer one of the research question, more precisely ‘Do people use the same language in all areas of their socialisation or do they use different languages in different contexts?’ In addition, by asking such direct questions, we intend to figure out the most utilitarian and functional languages spoken by Moldovans.

Question 6 ‘Have you ever been exposed to a second language from an early age? If yes, please state/fill in the blank the language(s).’ relates to second language exposure. It was indispensable to insert this particular question into the body of the questionnaire in order to answer the paramount research question, namely ‘What are the primary languages used and spoken in Moldavia and what attitudes people have towards them?’.

The set of question 7, question 8 and question 9 cover attitudinal inclinations about participants’ attitudes toward Moldavian culture (see below):

- Q7. ‘According to you, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are? Please state/fill in the blank the language(s).’
- Q8. ‘According to the majority of the people in Moldavia, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are?’
- Q9. ‘According to the main political and media elite discourse, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are?’

Additionally, the answers to these particular questions will indicate how culture operates in relation to language. We presume that these answers will help us determine if there is a complex relationship between the language communities and cultures, as well as to ascertain the extent to which the individual opinion, mainstream opinion and political decision makers’ opinion intersect. We opted for the verb ‘describe’ instead of ‘represent’ or ‘illustrate’ in order to invite them to reflect if is there possible to depict a ‘definite’ culture by a ‘definite’ language. Also, we intended to obtain a more comprehensive picture of how people conceptualises Moldavian culture, as the aforementioned verbs insinuate appointing a language.

Another set of questions were grouped to focus on language skills required in professional development:

- Q10. ‘To achieve high professional achievements in Moldavia you would better master...? Fill in the blank the language(s).’
- Q11. ‘Besides Moldavian, which language(s) should Moldavians imperatively learn?’

The set composed of question 12 and question 13 concern the topic of ‘real’ Moldavian people representation. We attempted to examine participants’ attitudes on languages that mostly represent the Moldavian country and their inhabitants.

- Q.12. ‘According to you, to be a ‘real’ Moldavian you should definitely speak...? Fill in the blank the language(s).’
- Q13 ‘According to the majority of the people in Moldavia, to be a ‘real’ Moldavian you should definitely speak...?’

Questions 14 and 15 aimed to provide further insight into the language attitudes Moldavian people hold towards education.

- Q14 ‘The language that impacted your education (be it at school, university, etc.) the most is...Fill in the blank the language (only one).’
- Q15 ‘If you had the opportunity to teach one single language or educate your child (in only one language) what would it be?’

The collection of question 16, question 17 and question 18 refer to actions that encompass ways in which Moldavian people do certain things using different languages. The above-mentioned questions aimed to figure out the utilitarian value of various languages/varieties attributed by respondents:

- Q16 ‘In which language(s) do you listen to the music the most? Please write/fill in the blank the language(s) depending on usage frequency. (i.e. Always 100% – English; Mostly 75% – French; Frequently (50%) – Russian; Occasionally (25%) – Spanish).’
- Q17. ‘In which language(s) do you think/reflect? Fill in the blank the language (only one).’
- Q18. ‘In which language(s) do you pray? (if applicable). Fill in the blank the language (only one).’

The bunch of questions 20 and 21 had the following objectives: to examine if a vast majority of Moldavians strongly support the official language in the country, to gauge people’s opinions, perceptions and attitudinal differences between the both questions:

- Q20. ‘According to you, what language(s) should the government employees from Moldavia use? Why? Please provide arguments in this regard.’
- Q21. ‘According to you, which official language(s) of the Republic of Moldova should be?’

Question 27 sought to find out the premises and criteria on which people base their arguments while expressing their opinions about being Moldavian, Romanian, Russian, etc. or other:

- Q27. ‘How can you establish if someone is Moldavian, Romanian, Russian, etc. in Moldavia? On what criteria will you base your judgement? Please provide your arguments in this regard.’

Question 28 was raised to identify relevant information about key features that best describe the Moldavian people:

- Q28. ‘What are the defining features which would best describe the Moldavian people? Please provide arguments in this regard.’

Accordingly, the responses to this question will include to some degree answers to one of the main research questions of the current study, namely: ‘What are the factors (if any) that make some languages more regarded than the others?’

Question 29 was asked to build on an idea of how a ‘representative’ personality or a typical/emblematic person of Moldavian people is supposed to be or should be. Participants were asked to provide three characteristics of a representative person/personality:

- Q29. ‘Are there any representative people who illustrate the Moldavian people? Then, how would you characterise them? Please write 3 key ideas.’

Item 30 and item 31 were designed to elicit attitudes towards bicultural duality. More specifically, both of these questions relate to the possibility of identifying both Moldavian and Russian; and Romanian and Moldavian:

- Q30. ‘Do you think one person can be Moldavian and Russian at the same time/at once? If yes, please state your main argument(s). If not, please state your main argument(s).’
- Q31. ‘Do you think one person can be Moldavian and Romanian at the same time/at once? If yes, please state your main argument(s). If not, please state your main argument(s).’

Item 32 of the present research instrument (Q32. ‘According to you, what is the most beautiful language in the world?’) focused on evaluation of participants’ attitudes towards language as an attractive and aesthetic dimension. We intended to determine the key reasons why they tend to find a language more beautiful than another. Besides, we aimed to see if there is a propensity to associate mother tongue to the most beautiful language in the world, because it is commonly thought that mother tongue represents an embodiment of emotional, social and cultural values of a person.

The questions on profile information (see below) were presented at the end of the current questionnaire in order to draw connections between language use, attitudinal inclinations with their age, country of residence, sex, birth country, mother tongue(s), level of education, etc.

- Q33. ‘What is the month and year of your birth?’
- Q34. ‘What gender do you identify as? i.e. female.’
- Q35. ‘What is your birth country?’
- Q36. ‘What is your current country of residence?’
- Q37. ‘What is your current level of education? i.e. master degree.’

10.5. Data collection

As far as data collection tools were concerned, then the questionnaire was conducted starting from September 2020 to January 2021. To identify individuals’ language attitudes from Moldavia, we relied on a panoply of questions such as: ‘Have you ever been exposed to a second language from an early age? If yes, please state/fill in the blank the language(s).’; ‘To achieve high professional achievements in Moldavia, you would better master? Fill in the blank the language(s),’ etc.

The quantitative research sought to answer the pivotal questions on aspects of the identity of Moldavians mentioned in the *Problem statement and research questions of Study 3* sub-section. Each graphic, chart, numeric operations and calculations of quantitative investigation were made in *Microsoft Excel* using specific and pertinent formulas. *Excel* is considered one of the most efficient data analysis instruments worldwide. The major advantage is to structure, store and examine a substantial volume of data in columns and rows that afterwards may be adjusted manually. To facilitate perception of the results, the answers from the questionnaire were for fostering integrity, reliability and adequacy. It is worthwhile noting that we used both *descriptive*, *analytical* and *critical* research methods while processing the data.

10.6. Problem statement and research questions of *Study 3*

The primary purpose of this research study is to quantitatively assess language attitudes between people in Moldavia and how it impacts their cultural identity. By undertaking the research, it will play a central role in enabling us to identify the various languages spoken by Moldavians in different contexts, in various areas of their socialisation, the language attitudes people have towards the various languages in the country and in diasporic contexts. The numerical data will be used to describe the results of the study.

The research questions in this quantitative study will act as a blueprint which guides study towards the desired objectives. The research questions that the quantitative research seeks to answer are the following:

- I. What are the primary languages used and spoken in Moldavia and what attitudes people have towards them?
 - a) Are there any languages that are highly regarded than the others?
 - b) What are the factors (if any) that make some languages more regarded than the others?
 - c) Do many Moldavian people have positive or negative attitudes towards speaking foreign languages spoken in diasporic contexts?
- II. How do the language attitudes influence cultural identity among the people in Moldavia and in diasporic contexts?
 - a) Do people use the same language in all areas of their socialisation or do they use different languages in different contexts?
 - b) Is it easy to identify people from a different culture/group based on the language they use/speak?

11. Interpretation of Findings of Study 3

This chapter is devoted to expose the most remarkable and unexpected findings of the quantitative research study. In addition, this chapter will provide valuable examples that attempts to illustrate language shifts, overt language attitudes²⁸ of a segment of Moldavian people. Furthermore, in this section we intend to answer the research questions stated in the

²⁸ **Overt language attitudes** are defined in the current research as reactions towards various languages which can be openly acknowledged and observed.

methodological section and stem out key factors which are assumed to determine the language attitudes of participants.

11.1. The linkage between *Question 1* and *Question 2*

The first and second question of the present quantitative study are fundamental and germane to the object of study under consideration. Thus, exploring the responses of question 1 and question 2, the results below indicate that there is no linear relationship between respondents' ethnic affiliation and their self-reported mother tongue.

Respondents were not constrained to choose only one language for question 1 (Q 1. 'How do you identify yourself?') and question 2 (Q 2. 'What is your mother tongue?') cited below, but were instead given the option of filling as many languages as they considered applicable for each question. Therefore, *Figure 4* illustrates that 60% of the respondents claim themselves as Moldavian, 29% claim themselves to be Romanian, 2% consider themselves as Russian, 3% self-proclaimed as Ukrainian, 3% proclaimed to be Moldavian and Romanian and 3% - European (see *Figure 4*).

In responding to the *Question 2* 'What is your mother tongue?', 71% of participants declared Romanian their mother tongue, 18% of participants revealed that their mother tongue is Romanian and Russian, 5% of participants claimed that Russian is their mother tongue, 3% — Ukrainian, and 3% — Moldavian (see *Figure 5*).

In light of the results discussed above it is crucial to mention that participants who claim themselves as Moldavian (60%) feel 'free' (Melucci, 1988) to express their sense of belongingness associated with the homeland denomination, without taking into the consideration the institutionalisation of Romanian language in December 2013. In fact, this tendency accords with the previous tendency revealed in Study 1 and Study 2, which highly explored the ascribed identity conceptualisation. In summary, it may be said that Moldavians are inclined to ascribe to Moldavian identity, when they are asked to self-identify, due to their (primary) nationality, birth country, national ideology, etc.

Figure 4. Ethnic affiliation of participants

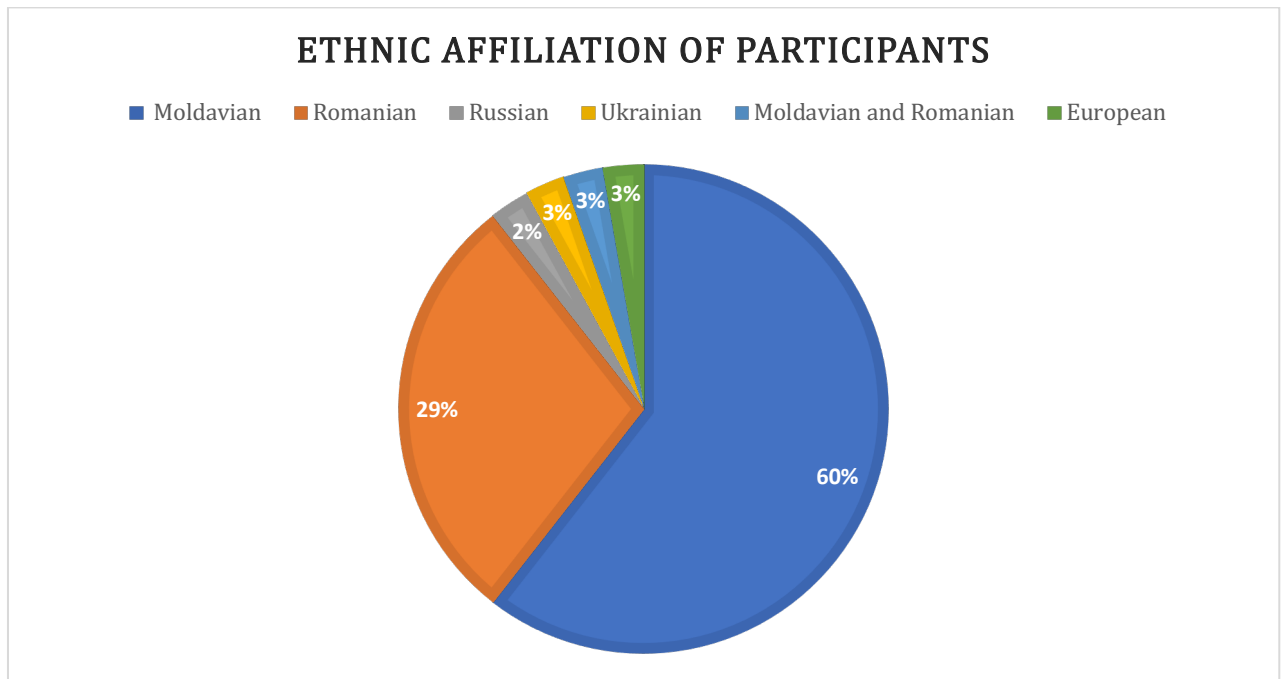
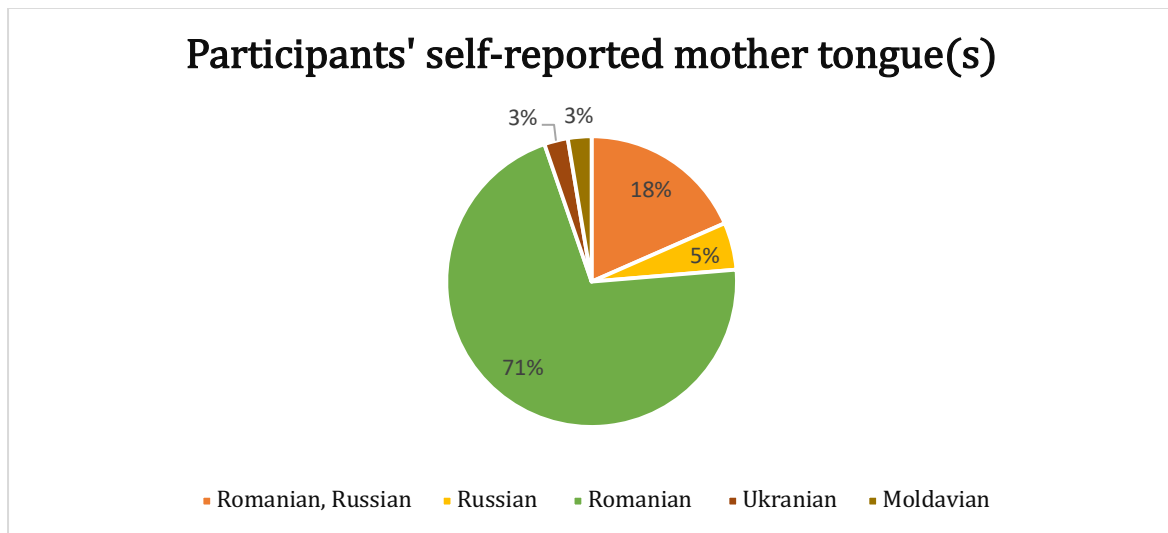


Figure 5. Participants' self-reported mother tongue(s)



Besides, similarly to the previous findings of Study 1 and Study 2, this finding matches the existence of *Romanianism-Moldovanism* opposition narratives explained in *Language, Culture and Identity in the Moldavian History* chapter.

11.2. The linkage between *Question 3 and Question 4: language attitudes in home-based settings*

In this section, the data regarding language attitudes, representation of language practices, as well as language use patterns in the different contexts and settings (i.e. home domain) will be presented.

Overall, the presence of the overt language attitudes towards the use of available codes in the home-based settings was attested. For the purpose of this comparative analysis, we compared the results of the question 3 and question 4, in order to examine the relationship between the both questions, more precisely:

- ‘Q 3. Please write/fill in the blank the language(s) you use at home the most often. If you cite several languages, please indicate their respective frequency. (i.e. 1. French, 2. English).’
- ‘Q 4. What is the language(s) your parents use at home? If you cite several languages, please indicate their respective frequency. (i.e. 1. French, 2. English).’

As shown in the responses, the participants’ use of language was similar to the parents’ language(s) used at home, which is an indication that participants’ language use is analogous to the same patterns shown with their interlocutors (see the responses of *Question 3* and *Question 4*). Likewise, given the post-soviet family structure and the value put on respect for siblings, relatives, but especially to older caregivers, we may infer that respondents’ language use mirrors this regard, since it coincides with the language used by their parents. Consequently, they are inclined to perpetuate the use of the given language in the home domain with their children as well. To sum up, some variations in language use patterns among participants are linked to the fact that they live abroad and are obliged to use the language of the host country. Hence, the majority match their linguistic practices with those of their interlocutors in the home-based settings.

11.3. Second language exposure of participants

The results from question 6. (Q6. ‘Have you ever been exposed to a second language from an early age? If yes, please state/fill in the blank the language(s).’) reveal that a large number of respondents were exposed to Russian as a second language (55%), whereas 13% of participants denied that they were exposed to a second language from an early age (see *Figure 8*).

Unpredictably, some participants declared they have contact with two (Russian and English – 8%, French and Russian – 3%) or three languages from birth or from an early age (Moldavian, English and French – 3%); (see *Figure 6*). Though, by examining the data, we must admit that we do not know their degree of their language exposure/contact either or full immersion, cross-linguistic or low-level linguistic exposure.

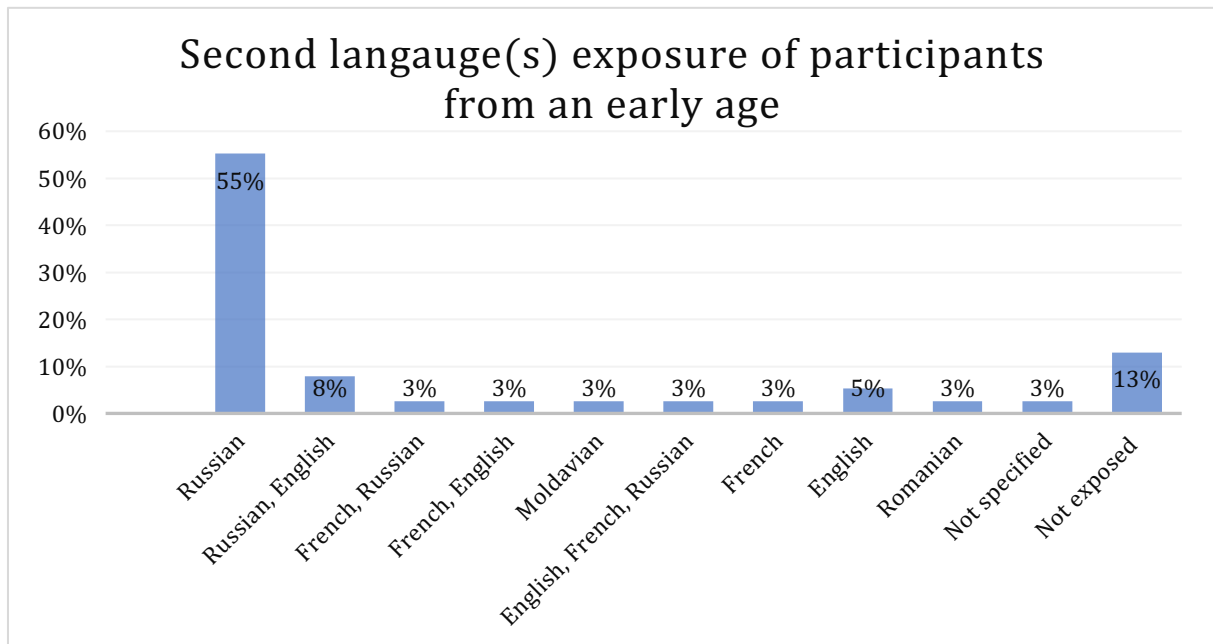
Nonetheless, this result confirms the maintenance of lingua franca status of Russian within the country, as expected by the author of the present work, since the respondents did not designate Russian as their second native language or as their self-proclaimed mother tongue. Subsequently, Russian keeps its presence in their linguistic background and cultural memory as a souvenir since Romanian-speaking community acquires Russian language naturally through television, streets, mass-media, etc. As such, there is a social asymmetry attested in the responses, as the function of interethnic Russian language switches to its ‘unofficial’ function as lingua franca after the official institutionalisation of Romanian language. This can be evidenced by the decision of Constitutional Court which denied the status of Russian language as the “language of interethnic communication of Moldavia” in the Constitution of Moldova (see the *Constitution of Moldova*) after the officialization of Romanian. The main argument for this Constitution amendment was stated as follows: “a minority language cannot be imposed on other minorities.”

Though, the ‘omnipresent’ representation of Russian language in Moldavia is quite evident. Russian still dominates in television, signage (images of consumerism and billboards), media and streetscape. As such, the government lacks any support and political will to dominantly reincorporate it into the field of education as a second language of instruction as it was before the independence in 1991. In fact, one questionnaire participant reveals:

- Respondent 17: “*In my family we always spoke Romanian, but I was exposed to Russian - due to living in Moldova (TV, radio, media, in the street).*”

This power dynamics shift of Russian is realised owing to the fact that the pro-European government headed by the new president of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu does not empower young people to perpetuate its political, economic, particularly sociocultural dominance.

Figure 6. Second(s) language(s) exposure from an early age reported by participants



11.4. Language(s) that best describes the Moldavian culture reported by participants

Are we culturally what we speak? This question has always implied vexing issues among people across the world. Is the language choice depicted as a cultural identification act?

Scrutiny of responses to question 7 (Q7. ‘According to you, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are? Please state/fill in the blank the language(s)’) enabled us to find out that Romanian is the language which best describes the Moldavian culture with a 61-percent rate (see *Figure 7*). Moldavian is reported as a second language that illustrates Moldavian culture (13%), followed by Romanian in conjunction with Russian (8%), Romanian with the Moldavian dialect/speech (5%), while the other combinations are not significantly relevant with a 3% rate.

This intriguing finding is in contrast to the Fishman postulate (1989, p. 5), where he underlined that “ethnicity is the definitional dimension of culture” since, in our case, the reported Moldavian ‘culture’ language does not coincide with ethnic identity. As mentioned above, results on ethnic affiliation of participants reveal that 60% of the respondents claim themselves as Moldavian, 29% claim themselves to be Romanian, 2% consider themselves as Russian, 3%

self-proclaimed as Ukrainian, 3% proclaimed to be Moldavian and Romanian and 3% — European (see *Figure 7*).

However, mother tongue could represent an indicator of their culture, as it is worthwhile recalling that 71% of participants declared Romanian their mother tongue, 18% of participants declared that their mother tongue is Romanian and Russian, 5% of participants claimed that Russian is their mother tongue, 3% — Ukrainian, and only 3% — Moldavian (see *Figure 5*).

Two tendencies emerge from this finding. Firstly, our initial observation was that Moldavian is viewed by young participants²⁹ as a variety of Romanian, as a ‘fractured language that need to be improved’ or as an ethnolect³⁰ rather than a (separate and unique) standard language. Therefore, we could surmise that parents of the last generation have propagated the idea of Romanianism to the younger generations. More precisely, the iconic stereotyping propaganda “the language we speak is Romanian” that circulates recurrently in every corner of Chisinau city and other regions could influence people’s opinion towards adhering conceptually to Romanian culture at macro-level while maintaining Moldavian spirit and nationalist views at micro-level.

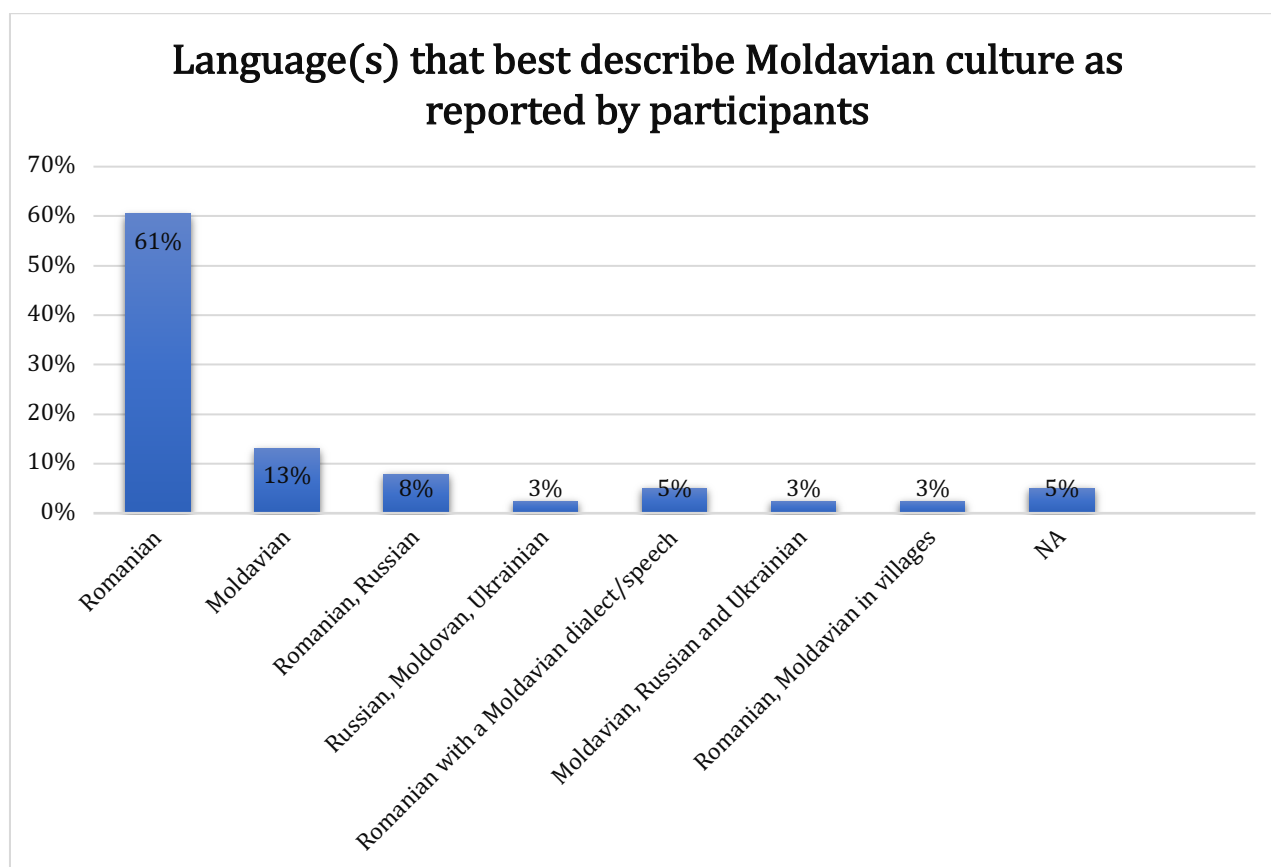
Moreover, this result is in contradiction with the Census regarding Linguistic Characteristics carried out in 2004, which indicates that 78,4% of people among the population of Moldavian ethnicity who hold Moldavian nationality declared Moldavian language as their mother tongue, 18,8% declared Romanian as their mother tongue, 2,5% claimed Russian language as their mother tongue and 0,3% declared other languages as their mother tongue (see sub-chapter 5.1.).

Secondly, we believe that replacing the ‘name’ of Moldavian by officializing Romanian language produced ideological shifts among people. Consequently, intergenerational language attitude changes occur because the concept of Moldavian language perceived as a ‘separate’ language is less powerful than that of Romanian language in the mainstream discourse. Furthermore, the Romanian dominance represents the causal factor which forces the language shift toward Romanian language and/or their massive culture.

²⁹ We recall that the age of participants ranges between 20-49 years.

³⁰ **Ethnolect** is a term that combines the concepts of an ethnic group and dialect and is primarily defined as a variety of a language which is spoken by a particular ethnic/cultural subgroup. Generally, this variety serves the role of a language within several groups, communities because it represents a genealogical subgroup descended by from Romanian ancestry (<https://www.definitions.net/definition/ETHNOLECT>)

Figure 7. Language(s) describing Moldavian culture



11.5. The linkage between *Question 8* and *Question 9*: language that best describes the Moldavian culture according to the majority of the people vs. the main political and media elite discourse in Moldavia

In order to examine the linkage between the language that best describes the Moldavian culture according to the majority of the people in Moldavia (more precisely, Q. 8 ‘According to the majority of the people in Moldavia, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are?’) versus the main political and media elite discourse (Q.9. ‘According to the main political and media elite discourse, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are?’), we made a comparative analysis between the answers of both questions. Therefore, we found a very strong connection between the answers that depict similar patterns between both of these (see *Table 3* and *Table 4*).

Accordingly, this signifies that participants have the propensity to think that Romanian is the language that best describes Moldavian culture, followed by Moldovan and Russian. This result may reflect the legitimacy high status achieved by Romanian within the country. As such, this result may lend support to Tabouret-Keller’s claim about the impact and linkage between state constitution, name of the language, the given language legitimacy and ultimately its symbolic power over a particular territory.

Table 3. Q8. ‘According to the majority of the people in Moldavia, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are?’

Responses to Question 8	
Romanian, Russian	11%
Moldovan	24%
Romanian	55%
Moldovan, Romanian	5%
Other	5%

Table 4. Q9 According to the main political and media elite discourse, the language(s) that best describe(s) the Moldavian culture is/are?’

Responses to Question 9	
Romanian	55,26%
Moldavian	2,63%
Russian	7,89%
Romanian, Russian	13,16%
Romanian, Moldavian	7,89%
Jewish	2,63%
NA	10,53%

11.6. The linkage between *Question 2* and *Question 22*

The investigation has found that there is no strong correlation between the self-reported mother tongue(s) (Q 2 ‘What is your mother tongue(s)?’) and the language that define them the best (Q

22 ‘What is the language (only one) that defines yourself the most?’). We consider this finding is surprising but somehow logical as 86% of participants were exposed to a second language from birth or an early age and could be inherently influenced by that pervasive culture. Accordingly, we may draw the assumption that the conceptualisation of mother tongue for the majority of respondents is intricately related to the first language spoken at home rather than to function or competence as defined in the section 3.2. following SkutnabbKangas’s model (2000) (see the responses of *Questions 2 and 22*).

Here again Romanian language dominates among the responses related to languages that define participants the most with the percentage rate of 76,316% followed by Russian with the percentage rate of 10,526%, Romanian, English (2,632%), French (2,632%), Moldovan, English (2,632%), and English (2,632%) (see *Figure 6*).

Table 5. *Participants’ self-reported mother tongue*

<i>Participants’ self-reported mother tongue</i>	
Romanian	71%
Russian	5%
Romanian, Russian	18%
Ukrainian	3%
Moldavian	3%

Table 6. *Q22. ‘What is the language (only one) that defines yourself the most?’*

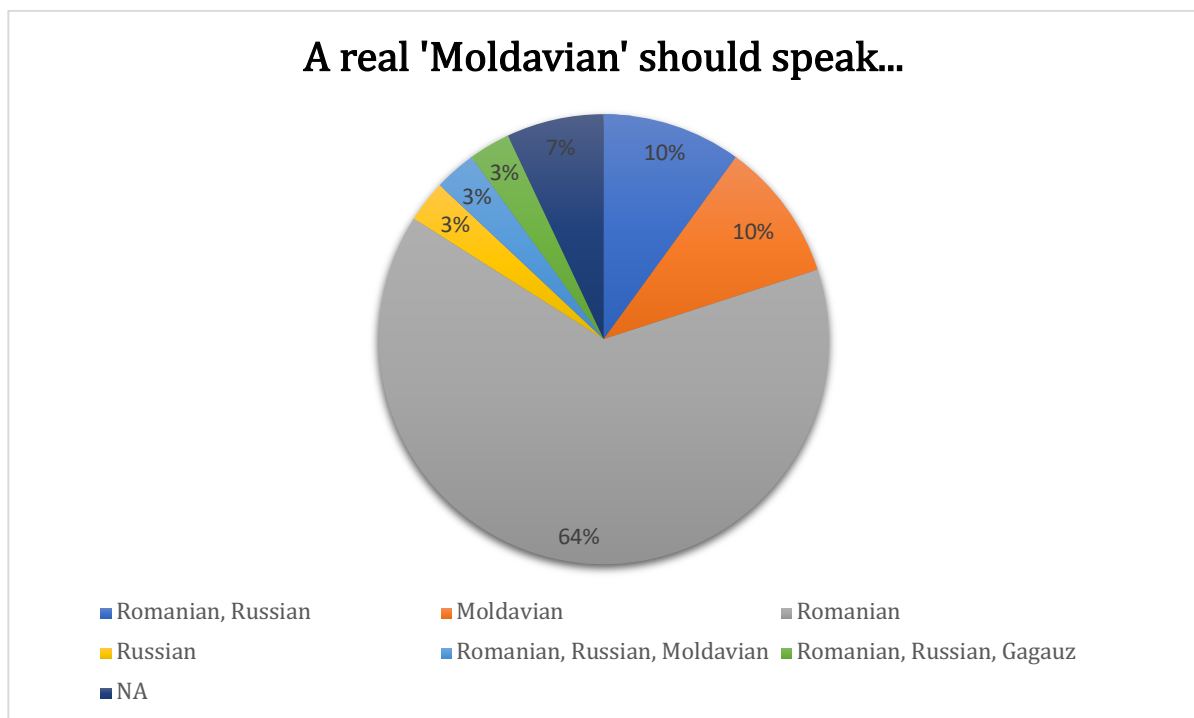
<i>The language that defines respondents</i>	
Romanian	76,316%
Rusian	10,526%
Romanian, English	2,632%
French	2,632%
Moldovan, English	2,632%
English	2,632%
NA	2,632%

11.7. Language(s) to be or become a 'real' Moldavian³¹

Romanian (64%) turns out to be the leading language in order to be a 'real' Moldavian within this multi-linguistic framework. The symbolic, practical and political domination enacted the linguistic hegemony of Romanian language to become paradigmatic across the Moldavian territory. We think that constitutionalizing of Romanian and the inflated pro-Romanian propaganda particularly in the educational domains, starting from the '90s till now are the chief reasons behind this finding.

At the question 12, 10% of respondents declared Romanian and Russian languages as the definitional markers of being a 'real' Moldavian and unpredictably only 10% of respondents reported Moldavian as the language shaping the concept of being a 'real' Moldavian.

Figure 8. To be a 'real' Moldavian you should speak...?



³¹ See the detailed responses to the Q12. 'According to you, to be a 'real' Moldavian you should definitely speak...? Fill in the blank the language(s).'

11.8. The language(s) that impacted the education of respondents

The respondents' rationale reveal that Romanian is the language that impacted the education of respondents the most with percentage of 65%, followed by English (17%), French (5%), Russian (5%), Romanian and English 4%. Only 4% of participants stated that there is no such language that impacted their education (see *Table 7*).

As we may observe, Moldavian language is not even mentioned as a language that impacted the education of participants. Modern linguistics suggests when young children/younger generation(s) cease to learn or use a certain language (Moldavian) in favour to another (Romanian), that language is endangered or will cease to exist after a certain period of time. This theory is debatable in Moldavian context, but if high prestige and positive attitudes towards a particular language are chief factors in language maintenance and ethnolinguistic vitality, then we can presume with near certainty that after a few decades Moldavian concept of 'separate' language will not survive. The answers from different questions of the present study are evidence rectifying this prediction.

This compelling result validates the theoretical assumption that Romanian language indoctrination and its mass persuasion impact the way people perceive their education (see sub-chapter 4.4.). In this line, we may notice that people who were exposed to teaching in Romanian language after Moldavian proclamation of independence in 1991 feel more attached to Romanian culture and are inclined to believe that Romanian contributed substantially to their education. Moreover, this finding gives support to the assumption that when mother tongue is used as the language of instruction, individuals embrace stereotypical behavioural modes and ways of thinking of that language.

Table 7. Q14. 'The language that impacted your education (be it at school, university, etc.) the most is...? Fill in the blank the language (only one).'

<i>The language that impacted respondents' education</i>	
Romanian	65%
English	17%
French	5%
Russian	5%
Romanian and English	4%
No one	4%

11.9. The most dominant prayer languages and reflective languages reported by participants

At the question 17 (Q17. ‘In which language(s) do you think/reflect? Fill in the blank the language (only one).’, the majority of participants expressed high appreciation to Romanian language. Romanian was predominantly cited (22 times) compared to other languages, followed by English (5 times), Russian (3 times) and Romanian and Russian (2 times) (see *Table 8*).

Table 8. Q17. ‘In which language(s) do you think/reflect? Fill in the blank the language (only one).’

<i>The most dominant reflective languages reported by participants</i>	
Romanian	22
English	5
Russian	3
Romanian, Russian	2
Multiple languages	1
Ukrainian	1
French, Romanian	1
Depends on the context	1
French	1
Mostly - English, sometimes Romanian, Russian	1

At the question 18 (Q18. ‘In which language(s) do you pray? (if applicable). Fill in the blank the language (only one).’, most respondents expressed high degree of attachment to Romanian language. This attachment seemed to be bound up with the idea that Moldavian people prefer to pray in their mother tongue. More specifically, Romanian language was cited 23 times in the data, Russian (2 mentions), Romanian and English (1 mention), and one person stated that he does not pray. Eleven respondents did not answer this question because the author of this investigation deliberately made it optional.

This finding can speculate that mother tongue is the language that shapes the spiritual heritage and emotions of people. Consequently, the prayers they learn from the childhood will last a life time without any significant language shifts (see *Table 9*).

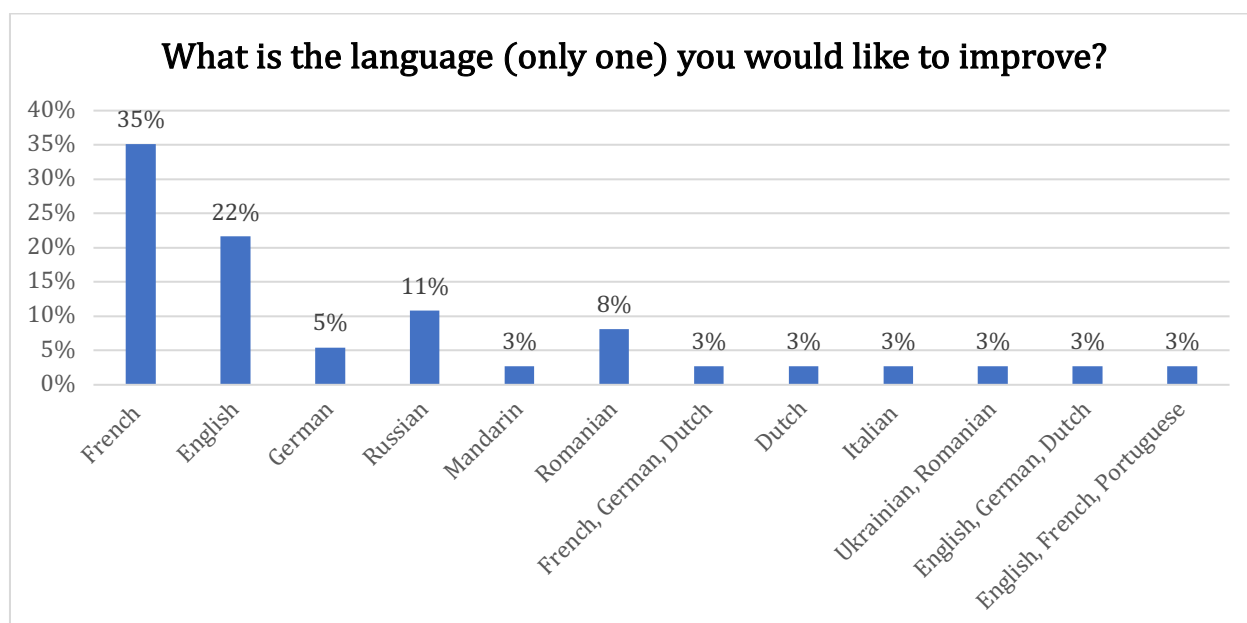
Table 9. Q18. ‘In which language(s) do you pray? Fill in the blank the language (only one).’

<i>The most dominant prayer languages reported by participants</i>	
Romanian	23
Russian	2
Romanian, English	1
I don't pray	1
NA	11

11.10. The languages to be improved by participants

The question 19 (Q19 ‘What is the question (only one) you would like to improve? Please provide arguments in this regard.’) of this quantitative analysis was integrated to shed light on the following research sub-question: ‘Do many Moldavian people have positive or negative attitudes towards speaking foreign languages spoken in diasporic contexts?’ Accordingly, we were particularly interested whether participants have the propensity to invest in their reported mother tongues or in the acquisition of foreign languages.

Figure 9. The languages that are highly regarded by participants to be improved



The results above show the focus group's attitudes toward the language they would like to improve. The arguments from the language attitudes questionnaire revealing this 'foreign language' tendency are variate. Many of the responses are linked to the career and socioeconomic advancement, work-related languages in order to achieve an effective communication, as well as some of them are associated to the language status in the international linguistic market and labour domain:

- a) *"German. I did study it in school, I have some vocabulary and a bit of grammar so it would be a good basis if I have the time to learn it better. **It would surely make me more competitive on the labour market.**"*
- b) *"French (because **I need it for work and studies.**)"*
- c) *"English. **I need to improve it for my professional career.**"*
- d) *"English, because it's the **most used in every field.**"*
- e) *"English - **my working language.**"*

Other arguments highlight the popularity and high status of the languages such as:

- a) *"Mandarin, cause it's one of **the most popular** languages in the world".*
- b) *"English - first **international language**".*

Respondents' remarkable justifying factors are related to the geographic location of subjects and the utility of language rather than their mother tongue:

- a) *"French, **I live in Belgium.**"*
- b) *"Russian - to have access to the culture of a large minority in our society."*
- c) *"French, German and Dutch, because **I live in country where these are the official languages.**"*
- d) *"English-because **I live in English-speaking country.**"*

The given results are indicative of how the spoken languages by the subjects of this current study, residing abroad, directly affect the desire to increase their linguistic competences in conjunction with the more dominant languages that are internationally used. Besides, participants situated between two spatial polarities (namely, Moldavia and their current country of residence) expressed diasporic sensibility³² as a vehicle of positive language attitudes toward foreign languages they learn, speak and use.

The responses to this particular question show that participants are less supportive of improving their mother tongue, or lingua franca (i.e. Russian for Romanian speakers) and they do not reveal an overt tendency to advocate for their national, official or 'hometown' or 'country' language. As such, on the one hand, we may assume they believe the mother tongues, national languages' improvement function only for national prosperity rather than individual

³² We define the term of **diasporic sensibility** as a new concept that signifies individuals' feelings, sufferings, dislocation, nostalgia, cultural change, identity crisis, etc. when they settle down in a new country.

advancement. On the other hand, we may deduce that participants understood this particular question as ‘What is the language you would like to become more proficient in?’ rather than the apparent formulation.

Another insightful result is that a large number of participants in this research (namely 37 %) express their desire to learn and invest efforts first and foremost in French language and then in English (21%). Therefore, they view French and English languages, as a venue for socioeconomic and professional development. Russian (11%) is the third language ranked after French and English, followed by Romanian (8%), Mandarin (3%), French, German and Dutch (3%), Dutch (3%), Italian (3%), Ukrainian, Romanian (3%), English, German and Dutch (3%), and English, French and Portuguese (3%); (see *Figure 9*).

Firstly, these remarkable results might show a clear connection to the educational background of participants. As *Figure 2* demonstrates, the highly-educated people are overrepresented in our sample with the rate of 97 % of participants who hold university, master or PhD degrees (see *Figure 2*). In brief, highly-educated people tend to learn multiple languages in order to feel ‘linguistically secure’ while travelling, commuting or immigrating.

Secondly, the desire to invest efforts in improving French language might be justified by the country of current residence of participants. *Figure 10* depicts 55% of subjects living in Belgium, 24% in Moldova, 8% in France, 3% in Canada, and 3% of respondents reported Luxembourg as their current location of residence. Two percent of participants reported United Kingdom, 2% - Moldavia, Romania as their current country(-ies) of residence.

As we may note, the country of residence may have a strong effect on participants’ desire to learn the main and/or official languages of the host countries.

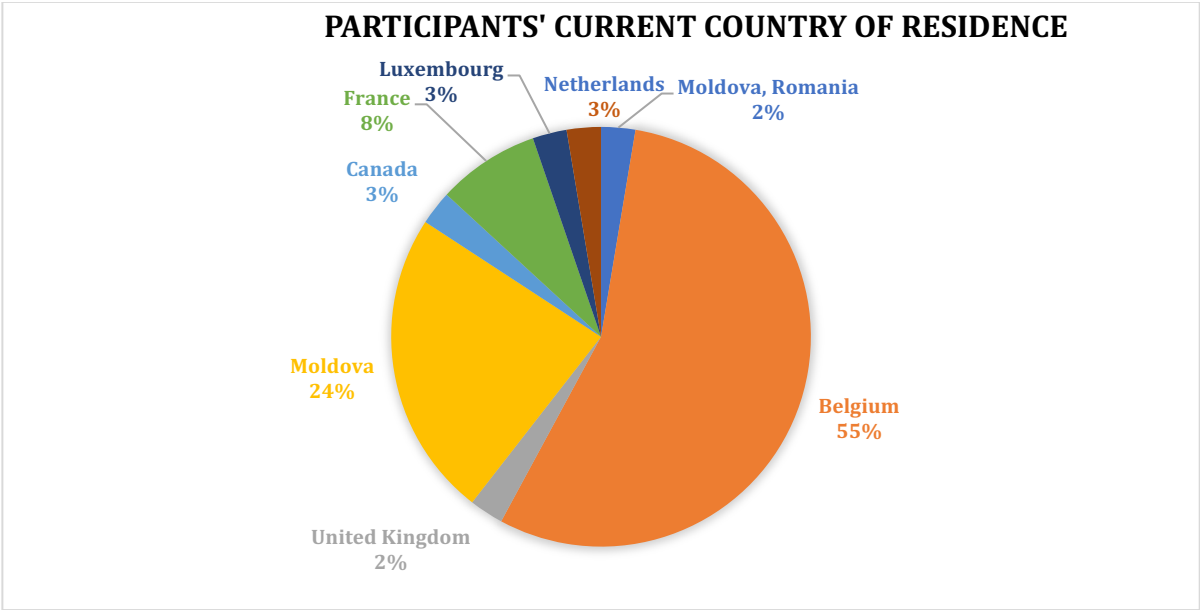
Moreover, English and French have attained international status due to globalization and human mobility. On the one hand, the willingness to study a foreign language is associated to ‘occupational prestige’³³ in the host country that are highly linked to wealth and income. On the other hand, there is a tendency to learn the local language(s) to achieve social goals such as social integration and the upward of social mobility within the country.

³³ **Occupational prestige** refers mostly to the social evaluation or a value ascribed to a particular job of a person. Source: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100244553>

As such, the various context, different areas of socialisation could effectively stimulate individuals' strong enthusiasm to build positive and active learning attitudes. We believe these factors will, in turn, lead to learning efficiency of host languages.

Hence, this finding is consistent with numerous research studies across the world which have shown that the knowledge of English or other international languages helps immigrants to get highly-remunerative jobs and consequently contributes to their career advancement in general.

Figure 10. Participants' current country of residence



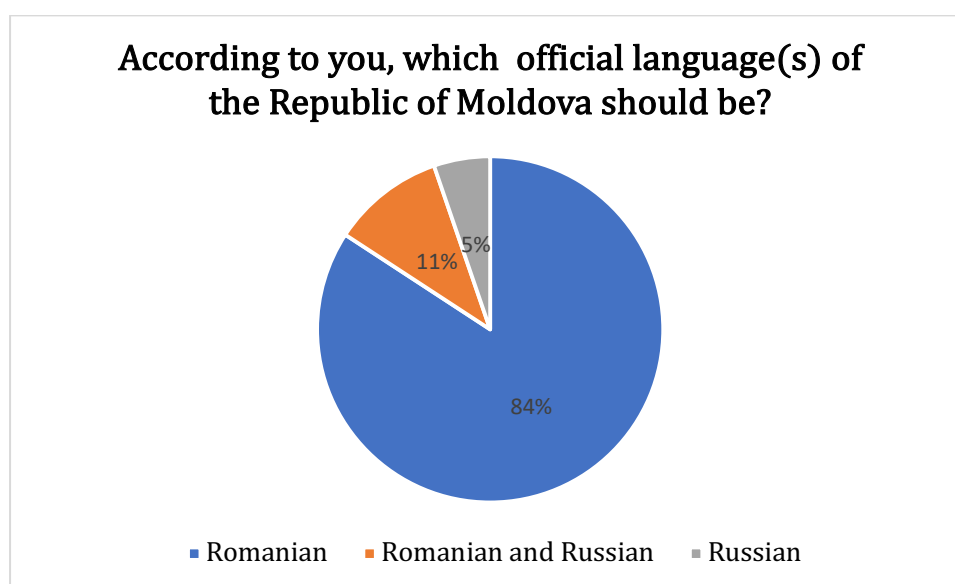
11.11. Official language desired by respondents

While incorporating the question 21 (Q21. ‘According to you, which official language(s) of the Republic of Moldova should be?’) we had the preconception that Moldavian would hypothetically be on top among the responses of participants. This preconception was substantiated by the Census results (see sub-chapter 5.1.).

Unexpectedly, when asked to state their own opinion about the desired official language of the Republic of Moldova, 84% participants opted for Romanian, 11% opted for Romanian and Russian, and only 5% opted for Russian language officialization (see *Figure 11*). This result matches the actual situation within the country, the historical state of art (see sub-chapter 4.3.5), as well as the postulate of Eugeniu Coseriu about the Romanian linguistic identity, who believes

that naming Romanian as Moldavian is a genocide of the national, historical and cultural identity of the people from Moldavia. Since Moldavia declared its independence in 1991 from the USSR's collapse, pro-Romanian artists, writers, politicians and the press representatives were engaged in Pro-Romanian propaganda, especially in the early 1990s in Chisinau, accelerating thereafter in the whole country with different cultural revival and language purification projects (Calus, 2015). This finding matches the observation of Monica Heller (2011) who argued that 'commodified' multilingualism is endowed with mobility of people, their volatile values and their political visions constructed in the Moldavian discursive space. Moreover, this finding conforms to the older assumption of Tabouret-Keller (1998, s. p.) who claims that "identification involves all sorts of construed representations, such as types and stereotypes". In addition to that, it matches Page's theorization on totemization (as cited in Tabouret-Keller, 1998) who describes the officialised language as one of the defining social property of a group (see chapter 4.3.). As such, by granting legitimacy of a language, its status changes dramatically, as it is the case of Romanian.

Figure 11. Official language(s) as desired by respondents



11.12. The most representative people in Moldavia

As expected by the investigator of this master thesis, the analysis of responses at question 29 (Q29. 'Are there any representative people who illustrate the Moldavian people? Then, how would you characterise them? Please write 3 key ideas.') has shown that participants tend to

point contemporary or historical celebrities while reporting representative people in Moldavia. As such, participants' answers are instructive for understanding some of the operational logics behind their choice. There is a trend to associate representative people of a country to achieved celebrities who gained fame and recognition in various industries such as showbusiness, politics, TV and writing. Respondents listed: political rulers, writers, singers, composers, journalists as the most representative of the country (see *Table 10*).

Eugen Doga is the most representative personality in Moldavia, as attested by participants. His name was cited 5 times in the answers of participants. The reason of describing him as one of the most representative persons of the country is probably due to the fact that his famous waltz „Gingaşa şi tandra mea fiară” was designated as the fourth musical masterpiece of the last century by UNESCO:

- *Subject 38:* (...) “Eugen Doga, the most important composer of the country and his Unesco Watz.”

Table 10. The most representative Moldavian personalities

<i>The most representative Moldavian personalities</i>				
Political rulers	Poets and writers	Singers	Composers	Journalists
Stephan the Great (2)	Mihai Eminescu (2)	Nelly Cionanu (1)	Eugen Doga (5)	Nata Albot (1)
Igor Dodon (3)	Grigore Vieru (2)	Lautarii (1)		
Maia Sandu (2)	Eugenju Coseriu (1)	Dan Balan (2)		
		Maria Biesu (1)		
		Catalin Josanu (1)		
		Pasha Parfeni (1)		
		Maria Dragan (1)		

When asked to specify the characteristics of the most representative people in Moldavia, participants report a high degree of respect and admiration toward their nation, country and people. Even though some responses were incomplete and multivariate, we were able to identify some tendencies regarding the characteristics of the most representative people in Moldavia (see *Table 11*).

During the exploration and interpretation of data we used the following technique: we calculated the number of instances of the most prevalent characteristics given in the participants' rationale in order to underline the most surprising results and dominant tendencies.

Firstly, participants believe that Moldavian people are “intelligent” and “knowledgeable” people, as this stereotypical and predominant characteristic was cited 7 times in the participants' responses. Another stereotypical characteristic found in the quantitative data is linked to work ethics skills. Participants specified that Moldavians are “very hard-working” people. This generalized self-proclaimed stereotype circulates in the country for centuries because Moldavians are well-renowned for their agricultural activity and excellent wine production. Agriculture, as a share of GDP represented 56% in 1995 and has gradually declined with 12% in 2014³⁴. On the third place, the following characteristics were mentioned 3 times in the data: *talented, brave and flexible. Hospitable, ambitious, patriotic, musical, great, and warm/kind* were mentioned two times in the responses given by respondents of this research. Other characteristics such as *optimist, romantic, honest, fatalistic, innovative, corrupted, and fighters*, etc. result to be clearly insignificant.

Table 11. The characteristics of the most representative Moldavian people

Characteristics of the most representative people in Moldavia	
Characteristics	N° of times mentioned in data
Smart/intelligent/wise/knowledgeable/the way they prioritise	7 times
Hardworking	6 times
Talented	3 times
Brave	3 times
Flexible/ adaptable/perseverant	3 times
Hospitable	2 times
Ambitious	2 times

³⁴ Japan International Cooperation Agency, *Data Collection Survey on Agriculture Sector in Moldova*, September 2017. Source: <https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/1000041538.pdf>

Patriotic	2 times
Musical/vocal	2 times
Great personalities	2 times
Kind/warm	2 times
Optimist, romantic, honest, fatalistic, innovative, corrupted, fighters	1 time

11.13. Dual identity? Can one person be Moldavian and Russian at once?

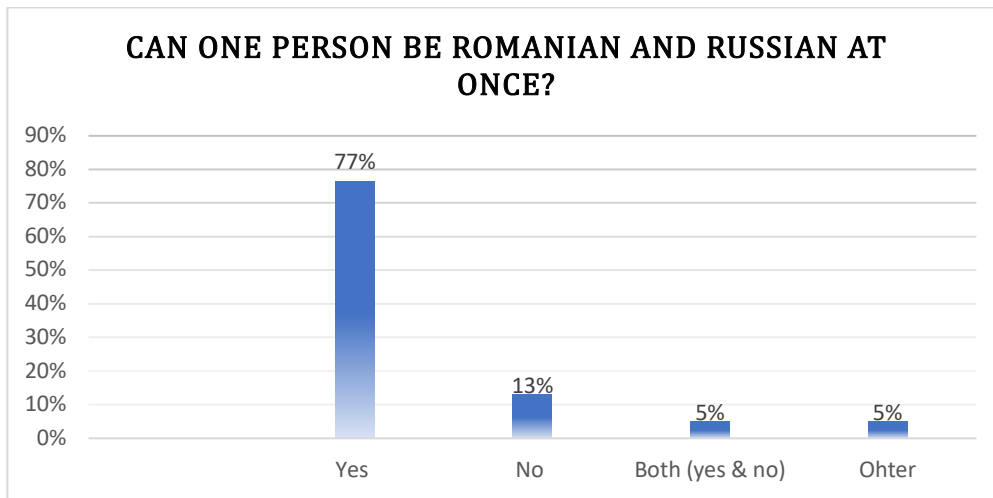
Questions 30 and Question 31 were incorporated into the questionnaire body to tackle presumably the duality of identity. Responses at the Question 30, more precisely: *Q30. 'Do you think one person can be Moldavian and Russian at the same time/at once? If yes, please state your main argument(s). If not, please state your main argument(s).'* reveal that 77% of subjects believe in bicultural duality or double ethnicity, 13 % expressed negative attitudes towards the idea of being Moldavian and Russian at once (see *Figure 12*). Five percent of participants did not express neither positive nor negative attitudes in this regard, questioning the relevance of this question, whereas 5% expressed ambivalence in their choice, offering contradictory arguments (see the answers displayed below):

1. Yes. We have a lot of mixt families, so **kids are bilingual, bicultural**.³⁵
2. You're Moldavian or Russian, **you can't be both** (except if one of your parents has another nationality of course).
3. Anyone can be whatever they want to be, and **have the freedom to identify themselves as they wish**.
4. No.
5. Yes, each person can identify themselves however they see fit.
6. Yes, it's **close nations**.
7. Yes, can be, **if we talk about the citizenship**.
8. No.
9. Yes, **citizen of Moldova of Russian ethnicity** or, mostly, **by language**.
10. If the **person has the origins from Moldova, and Russia**, yes. But, if someone was born from both parents moldavians, then, no. It's like me, I was born in Moldova. I can't say I'm half American, only because I'm a English talker.
11. Yes, as a Moldovan citizen of Russian descent
12. It can be. **It was raised in both cultures**.
13. He could be **Russian by nationality and Moldovan by citizenship**, and vice versa

³⁵ Some misspelled words from the responses to *Question 30* were corrected by the author of this master thesis in order to enhance reading comprehension and text clarity.

14. Why not, **if they got 2 citizenships**
15. Yes, if you **have the double nationality.**
16. Yes, if this **person has double citizenship.**
17. Yes, if the Moldovan has traveled/interacted enough with the (genuine) Russian culture.
18. The question it is unclear, what does it mean this differentiation??
19. Yes, **if he speaks fluently the 2 languages.**
20. Yes.
21. yes, if they have been speaking both languages since an early age and **have been exposed to both cultures**
22. Dacă sa născut moldovean și în copilărie a vorbit în rusa (**If he was born Moldovan and, in the childhood,, he spoke in Russian language – our translation**)
23. Usually are those **who have parents from both nationalities.**
24. Yes.
25. Definitely yes. **We have such a big influence from Russian culture and we just cannot disregard this.**
26. No, **you are Moldavian if you were born in Moldova or Russian if born in Russia,** and yes - otherwise you have 2 citizenships.
27. It's not clear your question. A person can speak 2 languages and have two nationalities and love/hate both home countries the same way.
28. What kind of question is this? yes if **you have double nationality or identify with both,** or your parents are from both these countries.
29. Yes, only **if they have double citizenship.**
30. Yes, I feel like this.
31. Yes, because **you watch movies in Russian, you have lived in Russian culture,** films, but speak and study in Russian.
32. Yes, absolutely. **There are Russian people who were established in our country** and they speak only Russian, they even don't study Romanian or other languages. It's quite strange.
33. No, **if you are Russian you cannot be Moldavian.**
34. Yes, if they feel this, they can.
35. Yes, **having parents that represents their ethnicity and implanting both culture** in the child's lifestyle.
36. Yes. you are a **Moldavian because you were born in Moldavia but if you live for more than 10 years in another country for ex Russia,** with other people and other traditions you can say that u are a Russian. It is like that country adopted and raised you. you can't deny that it is our parent even though not biological.
37. Yes, because we were a part of Soviet Union and Greater Romania, so we are Moldovan
38. Yes, they can be **if they have the same level of both languages.** If not, they are or Moldovan or Russian.

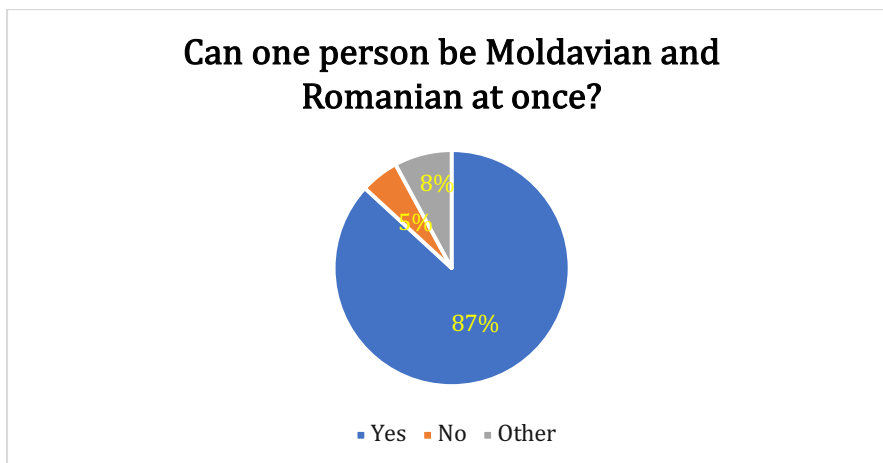
Figure 12. Moldavian and Russian dual identity



11.14. Dual identity? Can one person be Moldavian and Romanian at once?

At the Question 31 'Do you think one person can be Moldavian and Romanian at the same time/at once? If yes, please state your main argument(s). If not, please state your main argument(s).' 87% of respondents show positive attitudes towards a bicultural (Moldavian and Romanian) identity. Five percent of respondents reported negative language attitudes toward the idea of being Moldavian and Romanian at the same time, whereas only 8 % of respondents did not state a clear position regarding a dual identity. The image of language is definitely impregnated in this bicultural tendency, because "humans are linguistic and cultural beings" at once (Zriba, 2020, p. 17). Interestingly, this finding is consistent with Stuart Hall's assumption that cultural identity represents a *creative* force; it is genuinely a shared culture that mirrors the historical experiences embedded into it (see *Introduction*).

Figure 13. Moldavian and Romanian dual identity



The answers from Question 30 and 31 show a tendency towards the cultural/ethnic ambivalence of identity. Though, the ambivalence of Moldavian and Romanian identification is relatively higher than the ambivalence of Romanian and Russian with a difference score of 11%³⁶. We consider the gathered answers to these questions serves as a backbone to support the evidence delivered in Study 1 and Study 2.

11.15. Respondents' language attitudes toward the concept 'the most beautiful language in the world'

While designing the questionnaire, question 32 (Q32. 'According to you, what is the most beautiful language in the world?') was included to investigate if there is an intimate tendency to link mother tongue to the concept of 'the most beautiful language in the world', since it is widely assumed that mother tongue being 'a language of emotions' provides a shape of our thoughts with special perceptual and emotional meaning.

Although a variety of responses were provided, participants stated one, two or more languages that seem the most beautiful in the world to them. In this regard, we calculated the number of instances of each prevalent language from the answer in order to discern some dominant tendencies (see *Table 12* below).

It seems that Romanian language is reported the most beautiful language by subjects with 12 mentions followed by Italian with 8 mentions. "Mother tongue" (without specifying exactly which one) was mentioned 3 times and "all languages" syntagma was cited 3 times.

The valorisation of Romanian as the most beautiful language is quite evident because 71% of participants declared Romanian their mother tongue. As such, this finding confirms that people have propensity to associate mother tongue with the most beautiful language in the world.

Italian is the second most beautiful language in the world as evaluated by participants. Presumably, this is also linked to the melodicality and plasticity of this language. In this sense, it is important to highlight the conventional saying that Romance languages such as Romanian along with Italian and Spanish are stereotyped as the most melodic and romantic in the world. Patty Adank, a professor of speech, hearing and phonetics at University College London believes that Italian is one of the most appealing to the ear because of its melodicality and words

³⁶ Please compare *Figure 12* and *Figure 13*.

such as “belissima”, “amore” are ear catching and attractive to use not only to the native speakers. Though, such appreciations are reflections of societal beliefs and mainstream stereotypes rather than grains of truth since many linguists argue that there are no languages which are superior to others, linguistically speaking.

Table 12. The most beautiful in the world

<i>The most beautiful in the world</i>	
Mother tongue	3
Romanian	12
English	2
Arabic	1
French	4
Italian	8
Ukrainian	1
Spanish	2
Russian	2
Love	1
Difficult to answer	2
All languages	3

12. Conclusion of quantitative *Study 3*

This study helped us to discover valuable insights about the relationship of language attitudes and cultural identity. The valorisation of Romanian language as a prevailing code does not limit itself only in formal settings such as education, politics, etc. This confirms the fact that the use of Romanian has dramatically increased its *de facto* conceptual dominance after the independence in 1991 and its officialization in 2013 in Moldavia. This is also revealing of how Romanian symbolic power translates to modernity and linguistic hegemony. More specifically, participants reveal language attitudes and language practices indicative of linguistic hegemony towards Romanian regardless their different self-identification, or ethnocultural sense of belongingness. Such valorisation will probably catalyse a gradual linguistic accommodation among people or incites a tendency in this regard, as the linguistic hegemony over-relies on a particular ideological philosophy that non-officialization of a particular language like Moldavian does not equate with its maintenance. Consequently, the non-standard language ‘Moldavian’ will be brought under Romanian linguistic domination and control because any language planning efforts were not put forth in Moldavian language development.

Hence, a dynamics of speech and linguistic divergence will always exist between the two countries, especially in home-based settings and particular social contexts, whereas in educational, political, mass media fields this finding is not applicable. In the recent years, it is evident that the new generations speak a variety more comparable to Romanian rather than Moldavian. This could also be linked to the speakers’ awareness that Romanian code is widely considered the most modern and prestigious in Moldavian country, whereas Moldavian code is more connected to the concept of a former ‘nationalist’ language. As such, Moldavian is considered the most useful for expressing their ‘nationalist’ views and national identity at local level. In addition to this, exploring the data made us conclude that Moldavian language does not represent an idealized form of language any longer, probably due to the decreasing number of pro-Moldavian propagandists.

The prime importance accorded by participants to Romanian language portraying Moldavian culture shows that Moldavian as a ‘nationalist’ concept of language loses its power gradually after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Thus, one of the most intriguing finding of the present study is that Moldavian was not even mentioned by respondents to compete for the status of official language of the Moldavian state due to its controversial past. This result legitimates

political authority of Romanian language, whereas Moldavian is more linked to people's self-identification philosophy.

Switching the 'name' of Moldavian by Romanian language in the Constitution produced ideological shifts among people. Intergenerational language attitude changes emerge because the concept of Moldavian language perceived by some individuals as a 'separate' language is less powerful than that of Romanian language in the mainstream discourse. Moreover, the research has shown that there is no strong correlation between the self-reported mother tongue and the language that defines respondents.

The present study corroborates the assumption of the previous studies of this work (*Study 1* and *Study 2*) that individuals could hold dual identification, as asserted by respondents. Accordingly, they expressed positive attitudes toward Romanian and Moldavian and/or Romanian and Russian bicultural dualities.

Additionally, Russian maintains the status of lingua franca, especially in streetscape, mass media, television, etc. within the country, having the most important level of exposure as a second language (see *Appendixes 34-70*). The diglossic nature of the Romanian and Russian is only evident in streetscape which might build the illusory sense that Moldavia is an officially bilingual state.

Participants show positive attitudes towards speaking foreign languages in diasporic contexts. The prevailing use of French and English in professional domains is related to their expertise in labour market, diasporic sensibility, desire to socially integrate the country, current country of residence, or socioeconomic progress with the intention to develop an efficient communication in the daily practice. These results illustrate the high degree of *de facto* usefulness of French and English among Moldavian mobile individuals into labour domains.

The present study has disclosed covert language (negative) attitudes towards Moldavian 'language' incorporation into educational curricula as it is more likely perceived as a local language whereas symbolic power is invested in Romanian language.

In conclusion, Moldavian is viewed by young participants as a variety of Romanian, as a 'fractured language that need to be improved' or as an ethnolect rather than a high standard language. Indeed, Moldavian country faces a complex form of diglossia, interpreted through the lens of Anghelescu's definition, as Romanian and Moldavian languages are sufficiently similar for the users to confound or intermingle them.

Is the so-called Moldavian language endangered? Actually, we could speculate that Moldavian is an endangered language due to the high prestige of Romanian language that affected communication patterns and *language shift* but also due to the stereotypes of Moldavian people. More precisely, the deeply-rooted stereotype: “the language we speak is Romanian” that circulates frequently in different regions could have a substantial impact on people’s attitude towards adhering conceptually to Romanian culture at macro-level while maintaining Moldavian spirit and nationalist views at micro-level. If high prestige and positive attitudes towards a particular language are chief factors in language maintenance, then we insinuate that after a few decades Moldavian concept of ‘distinct’ language will not survive.

The positive valorisation of Romanian language as marker of Moldavian culture is related to the legitimacy and its symbolic power over Moldavian territory. Moreover, the highly valued Romanian language implies the affective dimension of the mother tongue reported by participants. In this context, we surmise that when mother tongue is used as the language of instruction, individuals embrace stereotypical modes of thinking of that language.

Overall, Moldavians have propensity to switch their sources of identification but also to switch from one linguistic variety to another according to the various communication intentions and contexts. This language alternation confirms the existence of bilingualism among Moldavian people, as the majority of participants were exposed to Russian language from birth or an early age. In general, participants expressed high degree of connection to their mother tongue and are more likely to use their mother tongue while praying, thinking processes and intrafamilial communication. Some individuals tend to switch between languages in diasporic areas of socialisation. The data analysis has shown that participants are less supportive of improving their mother tongue, or lingua franca (Russian). This can be seen as a product of an increased exposure to international languages.

Our findings validate Erwin’s (2014) and Dragjevic’s (2017) assumptions that individuals’ attitudes affect how they use and perceive certain languages. More specifically, when respondents show positive attitudes towards Romanian language, they are more likely to use it in day-to-day life: in intrafamilial communication, with friends, while reflecting or praying, etc. Though, some values linked to the functional dimensions of language will incite learning other languages such as French, English, German, etc. This idea gives support to Joseph’s postulate that languages used in various international contexts are pivotal in promoting international identity such as English language, because this powerful language does not always match to

certain 'cultures', ethnicities or territorial borders. Analogously, these findings are consistent with Coe's and Neumann's (2011) idea that identity is shaped more often by foreign nations jointly with our own, especially for people living abroad. In similar vein, it corroborates Tabouret-Keller's (1998) presumption that the link between language and identity seems one of the weakest because of the uncertainty and fuzziness of social future, but also because of individual differences of each individual.

Nevertheless, some results refute Charaudeau's conceptualisation (2001) that speaking is a direct testimony of one's identity, since Moldavian people switch from one linguistic variety to another, from one language to another to meet different needs in various settings.

We have noted that some results are consistent with Heller's view that naturalising ideologies of languages and culture contribute to the naturalization of language power as it is the case of Romanian language in Moldavian country. The analysed data are in stark contrast with Norton's belief (2010) that identity refers to how people associate themselves with a particular culture because the majority of respondents are convinced that Romanian language represents Moldavian culture but not the majority of them self-identify as Romanian. Moreover, our evidence lends support to Tabouret-Keller's assumption that narratives and stereotypes about language impact their attitudes towards their language.

In conclusion, our work contributes to a more nuanced analysis of language and cultural identity/language attitudes fields applied to Moldavian context.

13. Limitations of *Study 3*

This sub-chapter discusses the most relevant limitations of the current study and proposes several suggestions for further research.

Overall, *Study 3* presents several limitations that affected our ability to answer all research questions but could, hypothetically, be addressed in future research. First of all, we concluded that a large-scale population-based investigation should be conducted because our focused group included a considerable number of well-educated individuals sample. Consequently, the highly educated respondents are overrepresented in this research study and thus due to this insufficient sample size we were not able to generalize the findings. Therefore, participation between low-educated and well-educated individuals is needed to fill this gap. More precisely, the mismatch between the questionnaire's target population and its sampling frame originates because not all representative individuals could be surveyed due to money constraints or unequal access to internet.

Second limitation concerns the lack of explicit questions regarding the factors that make some languages more regarded than the others should imperatively be included into the body of the questionnaire. These questions would bring in new perspectives on identity construction and would answer the most essential questions of the current research.

Thirdly, the large size of the questionnaire represents an important limitation. As predicted, the questionnaire length affected the willingness of respondents to take part because only 38 individuals completed the questionnaire till the end. In addition, we concluded that the 'multidimensional' aspect of the questionnaire affected the data quality and participants' cooperation because some participants declared that "the web-based questionnaire was too long and we are not be able to fill in all the answers." Because of these methodological issues, it was difficult to identify significant relationships from the data and conclude valid results that would consider the whole Moldavian population.

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