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Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute

2022-06-25

Paravina, A. Croatian Serb Culture, Language, and Minority Education Rights. Soc. Sci.
2022, 11, 275.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/346014>

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Article

Croatian Serb Culture, Language, and Minority Education Rights

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Abstract: This article examines the ongoing debate on national minority rights for Croatian Serbs in the spheres of education, identity, and minority language policies. The controversy results from research on legislative acts and integration strategies in the European Union, which are predominantly focused on citizenship issues and the integration of immigrant workers and less on the constitutionally recognised language rights of minorities and the new social space created after the collapse of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. A new sense of identity emerged for the Serb minority in Croatia as a result of the post-war environment. The article provides an analysis of in-depth interviews between Croatian Serbs and Croatian cultural and academic professionals through boundary-work that emphasises the importance of cultural values and legal norms for the minority, especially in minority education (Models A, B, and C).

Keywords: boundary-work; minority education; Serbian language; culture and representation; Croatia

1. Introduction

The research on majority and minority populations conducted in several European countries has focused on the role of integration and acculturation that can encompass linguistic and cultural rights within education, literature, and postcolonial theory (Pyrhönen et al. 2017, pp. 20–23). This is particularly true for the nation-states that were created after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Federal Republic (SFR) of Yugoslavia—events that resulted in many people belonging to the constitutionally recognised majority groups, *narodnosti* (nations or nationalities) in all republics and provinces (Vukas 1978, pp. 53–54), becoming members of linguistic, national, or ethnic minorities. In its Constitution, Croatia recognises 22 national minorities. National minorities make up 7.67 percent of the population with Serbs being the largest minority with 4.36 percent, followed by Bosniacs, Italians, Albanians, and Roma (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2013, p. 10).

The first Constitution of Croatia, adopted in 1990, guaranteed nondiscrimination and equality for all citizens, including minorities. The first Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities was adopted in 2002. As a consequence, national minorities are guaranteed the right to education in their own language and script, representation in the Croatian Parliament of at least five and at most eight representatives (based on their percentage of the population), as well as the right to local self-government statutes (*Ustavni zakon o pravima nacionalnih manjina 2002*).¹ The European Union (EU) has played an instrumental role in the development of laws related to minority rights in the former socialist countries. As stated in Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union, the EU is built upon a set of shared values, ‘for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities’ (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012).² When discussing minority languages in Europe, one also has to consider the relevant treaties of the Council of Europe, such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), which came into force in Croatia in 1998.



Citation: Paravina, Aleksandra. 2022. Croatian Serb Culture, Language, and Minority Education Rights. *Social Sciences* 11: 275. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11070275>

Academic Editor: Andreas Pickel

Received: 28 March 2022

Accepted: 20 June 2022

Published: 25 June 2022

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Croatia also enacted a Law on Minority Language Use and an Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities in 2000 (*Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju na jeziku i pismu nacionalnih manjina* 2000).³ According to Art. 12 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, minorities who comprise at least one-third of the population of a city or municipality (*jedinica lokalne samouprave*)⁴ have the right to access information, to protect their language and culture as well as to participate and exert influence. Croatia has selected seven minority languages to protect as Part III of the Charter: Serbian, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Ruthenian (Crnić-Grotić 2019, p. 54).

As a minority language, Serbian (the Ekavian and Ijekavian variants) is covered in Croatia under the ECRML as both are variants 'traditionally spoken on the territory of a state,' and speakers can decide by speaking with authorities and according to their traditions (Crnić-Grotić 2019, p. 57). However, there is no consensus as to what constitutes this language. Known as the Illyrian Project (Greenberg 2011), the nation language movement of Yugoslavia began in the nineteenth century and lasted almost a century and a half after the Vienna agreement in 1850, resulting in the formation of Serbo-Croatian, the largest language of multiethnic and multilingual Yugoslavia (Bugarski 2004, p. 3). According to most scholars, the Serbo-Croatian language exhibited polycentric standardisation, that is, it contained variants (*varijante*) that resulted from a combination of national and territorial factors, the two main variants of which were Serbian and Croatian (Bugarski 2004, p. 4). Yet, after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, Serbo-Croatian is no longer recognised under that name in any of the states that have since emerged, and its successor is now Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and [Montenegrin] (Bugarski 2004, p. 6).

The dissolution of the language into several 'splinter' idioms is a complex issue, and it is not neatly determined by ethnicity alone, but also by territorial origin, background, political outlook, habit, etc. (Bugarski 2004, pp. 5–6). This is demonstrated by the gap between the number of Serbs and those who speak Serbian in the 2011 Census by mother tongue.⁵ The language of ethnic Serbs in Croatia (local dialects) is predominantly the Ijekavian that is also spoken by Bosnian Serbs, by a significant number of Montenegrins, as well as by Serbs in a small portion of Western Serbia (Greenberg 2004, p. 78), by contrast, in the East of Croatia, the language is Ekavian (as in Serbia's neighbouring province of Vojvodina).⁶

The aim of this analysis is to assess the adoption of Serb minority rights, focusing on the language policies in minority schools by active community council members, university professors, lawyers, as well as other Serbs, and to examine the challenges they encountered when attempting to implement these rights. In this case, the concept of boundary-work will be adopted as defined by Gieryn (1995). This is an elementary constructivist idea that the boundaries of the discursive field are social conventions and rhetorical games of inclusion and exclusion. Initially, Gieryn follows Foucault's (1980) concept of the spatialisation of knowledge according to which in any historical moment, what can or cannot be said, by whom, and what will count as truth, is an exercise of power, a tactic, and a strategy. Originally, Gieryn explored boundary-work in science; I apply this to the discourse of legislative rights. Thus, this study adopts the constructivist approach, and it accounts for people from society such as 'journalists, bureaucrats, lawyers, and other interested parties accomplish[ing] the demarcation of science' (Gieryn 1995, p. 394), or in this case, legislative and minority rights.

Among the three basic models of minority language education that exist in Croatia, known as A, B, and C, minority language education can be implemented according to the constitutional and legal right of minority education. Using Model A, all lessons are taught in the language and script of the national minority with compulsory Croatian instruction. By contrast, Model B is a bilingual system, in which social science subjects, as well as minority-related subjects, are taught in separate classes in the minority language and script; whereas Model C in principle covers five hours per week of language instruction, along with the literature, history, geography, music, and art pertaining to the minority language (Council of Europe 2015, p. 14). The research conducted by

Čorkalo Biruški et al. (2019, p. 13) on interethnic relations in Model A suggests that the post-conflict community in Vukovar remains deeply divided, with clear indications of tension between the majority and minority.

The majority of parents in this study did not choose Model A as their preferred model. One exception were the parents of Italian-language students. The educational needs of minority members thus need to be addressed in a more consistent manner, by including alternative models whenever possible, supplementing the currently existing models. However, according to the data obtained from the Ministry of Science and Education, 2702 students are currently enrolled in Serbian language educational models (mostly A and C), a drop from 3118 students in 2017 (Ministry of Science and Education 2021). Furthermore, the study by Čorkalo Biruški et al. (2019, p. 13) claims that minority education is not predominantly monoethnic in other minorities except for the Serb minority. In Istria, my interview data reveal that Serbs attend Italian schools alongside members of other minorities and the Croat majority. The Serbs attending these schools elect Serbian language classes in addition to their Italian and compulsory Croatian lessons. The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education has approved the curriculum for the Serbian language in minority education, while Prosvjeta d.o.o. published the textbooks.⁷

By applying the original research by Michael Savage (2015) on social class, I aim to acquire a deeper understanding of how Croatian cultural and ethnic boundaries function, and to strengthen the boundary-work by taking power relations into consideration. Savage (2021) argues that a key factor that influences the power relations between social groups is economic capital, and that the elites are pulling away. The clear separation between those with a substantial amount of economic capital and those without has the effect of eroding the very principles of field contestation that Bourdieu emphasises (Savage 2021, p. 67). The research question that I pose is: In the case of the Serb minority, how is the boundary-work and demarcation criteria constructed in the implementation of the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities?

Firstly, I present an overview of the historical context and the Constitutional Acts related to Serb minorities in Croatia. This is followed by a discussion on the methodology and the data that were used for the analysis. Through boundary-work, the empirical part examines the divisiveness of the Serb and Croatian communities and their understanding of the minority's educational and linguistic rights. The Discussion and Conclusions provide an overview of the key insights obtained through an analysis focused on the importance of ongoing debates pertaining to minority rights, democracy, and nationalism.

2. Serb Minority in Croatia

During the Croatian War of Independence (1991–1995), the Serbs in Croatia lost their special status as a semi-constitutive people as defined by the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia as the Serbs in Croatia and are currently equal to other national minorities (Mesić and Bagić 2016, p. 221). Serbs rejected a proposal by the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (Z-4 document) that would have guaranteed an autonomous Serb Krajina (RSK) within Croatia. Similarly, the Croatian government was not interested in that because it favoured an integrationist approach and considered it to be too autonomous (Ramcharan 2015, p. 169). Furthermore, this gave the Croatian government a pretext to act militarily, as it was backed by the USA. After the fighting and the ceasefire in 1992, the Vance Plan was established, named after UN envoy Cyrus Vance. As a result, the areas of Croatia controlled by the Krajina Serbs (26.5 percent of Croatia's territory with Knin as its capital) were placed under the protection of UN forces (UNPROFOR) (Barić 2014, p. 212). However, although the Croatian government initially accepted the peace plan, it was dissatisfied that the southern areas of Dalmatia were almost isolated from the rest of the country. As a consequence, in 1993, the Croatian Army launched a limited attack in Northern Dalmatia, which led to renewed clashes with the Krajina Serbs (Barić 2014, p. 214). In 1995, the goal of the RSK was to unify with the Serb Republic in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as a result of joint fighting, a new

offensive was launched at Bihać in a UN-safe area in Western Bosnia. 'In such circumstances Tuđman finally had the backing of the US administration for launching offensive on RSK' (Barić 2014, p. 220). During Operation Flash in May 1995 and Operation Storm in August 1995, Croatia moved militarily first into the Sector West and then into the Northern, and Southern Sectors of the RSK and retook them (Ramcharan 2015, p. 169). As a consequence, more than 250,000 Serbs from Croatia sought refuge mainly in Serbia and the Republika Srpska (Mesić and Bagić 2016, p. 229). During and immediately following the military-police Operation Storm, crimes were committed against Serb civilians as well as against the Croats who lived in a community with Serbs and in their homes (Documenta 2021).⁸ The property of the Serb refugees in the liberated territory was sequestered after the Storm and Flash operations because they were considered optants (Škiljan 2012, p. 177). Despite the Agreement on Succession recognising the occupancy right of its refugees, for nearly a decade, Croatia failed to acknowledge their rights, despite pressure from the international community, refugees themselves, NGOs, and Serb representatives (Škiljan 2012, p. 177). There were two parallel systems, one that applied to citizens of Serb ethnicity and one that applied to Croatian nationals, creating several categories of the population for which different rules apply. Through the housing programme, in addition to the housing they already owned in BiH, Bosnian and Herzegovinian nationals of Croatian descent acquired the property of Croatian nationals of Serb descent. Pursuant to the Law in Special State Concern Areas (*Zakon o područjima posebne državne skrbi*)⁹, the rights of the temporary user outweigh the rights of the owner (Škiljan 2012, p. 179).

A peace agreement signed in Erdut on 12 November 1995 established a Transitional Administration for the Danube region of Croatia, or Sector East, that lasted two years and was successfully concluded in January 1998 (Ramcharan 2015, p. 170). That agreement protected human and minority rights, as well as assuring educational and cultural autonomy. The 2011 census reports that in Vukovar, 34 percent of the population were members of the Serb minority, and this led to a legal obligation to introduce the Serbian language and alphabet into official use (Crnić-Grotić 2019, p. 57). Accordant to Article 12 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, members of a national minority are entitled to equal official use of the language and script they use in the area of their local self-government unit when they constitute at least one third of the population (*Ustavni zakon o pravima nacionalnih manjina* 2002). Nevertheless, the election of Tomislav Karamarko as president of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) in 2012 radicalised the political atmosphere and as a result, attempts to install bilingual signs by the government led by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) were met with opposition and eventual destruction (Ponoš 2021, p. 20).

Croatians protested Cyrillic signs in 2013, with 20,000 people taking to the streets and veterans threatening to remove the signs by force if implemented (Croatians protest against Cyrillic signs 2013). In 2014, a proposal was even brought forward as a referendum to exempt Vukovar from being required to use the minority language (Serbian) and to also increase the threshold of the minority requirement to 50 percent. The Constitutional Court rejected this claim and ordered the administration of Vukovar to regulate the issue of language use at the local and state level (Crnić-Grotić 2019, p. 57). Violent clashes broke out in Vukovar during the Croatian War of Independence, where Serb enclaves were located, and Serb soldiers committed crimes against humanity when they seized patients at the Vukovar hospital, murdered them, and buried them in mass graves, including a site in Ovčara (Ramcharan 2015, p. 172). In 2020, the Mayor of Vukovar, Ivan Penava, initiated a decision by the Vukovar City Council regarding a Law on the Use of Languages and Scripts of National Minorities in Croatia (*Zakon o uporabi jezika i pisma nacionalnih manjina u Republici Hrvatskoj* 2000) for the Serb minority, which will be conditional upon annual assessments of the level reached in understanding, solidarity, tolerance, and dialogue (Ponoš 2021, p. 20).¹⁰ The approach described here is in conflict with the ECRML The Sixth Report of the Committee of Experts and Article 7.2 states that authorities should eliminate any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference relating to the

use of Serbian. ‘According to the information received by the Committee of Experts, the decision by the Constitutional Court regarding the use of the Serbian language and script in Vukovar/Вуковар has not yet been implemented. Consequently, Article 7.2 is only partly fulfilled’ (Council of Europe 2020, p. 48). This topic will be explored in more detail in the section pertaining to the expansion of the article analysis.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

The value of this qualitative study lies in its ability to enable a better understanding of minority values and practices (Brinkmann 2013, p. 51). In qualitative studies, arguments are discussed in greater detail. However, a qualitative approach cannot examine in detail the prevalence of values and arguments in the population as well as quantitative studies. I adopted a qualitative interviewing method along with different media (face-to-face, Internet, and telephone), using my listening, hearing, and observing skills to explore a complex and nuanced topic and to gain insight into what is meaningful to those being interviewed (Rubin and Rubin 2005, p. 9). Furthermore, I applied ‘continuous redesign’ (Rubin and Rubin 2005, p. 63), which entailed modifying the questions to test emerging ideas and to select new interviewees to determine whether the boundary-work in the context of the Serb minority can be generalised, and thus the results were convincing and meaningful. I began by formulating an open and inductive approach (data-driven) by searching for keywords in subsets of statements and utilising the rhetorical tools that indicate conflict. As a result, I discovered a new pattern abductively (breakdown-driven) that was linked to legislative issues and then tested it deductively (theory-driven) through boundary-work methodology (Brinkmann 2013, pp. 53–57).

The face-to-face interviews were conducted during an Erasmus traineeship at the University of Rijeka in the spring of 2018, and during the summer of 2018 at an NGO Documenta in Zagreb—Centre for Dealing with the Past. This was an organisation dedicated to establishing factual accuracy concerning the war and highlighting the falsification of war crimes and other war-related events from 1941 to 2000.¹¹ I identified potential networks within a given population and attended a number of cultural, educational, and commemorative events where I approached a number of interviewees. Further, snowball sampling was used (Baltar and Brunet 2012), especially during the Covid-19 pandemic and several earthquakes in the Zagreb and Banija regions of Croatia. Subsequent interviews with new interviewees were conducted by e-mail, telephone call, and Internet in 2020 and 2021. The informal channels also included three associations for Serb minority in Croatia (the Serb National Council (SNV)¹², the Serb Cultural Society Prosvjeta (meaning education or enlightenment)¹³, and the Serb Archive).¹⁴

The interviewees were twenty-four adults from 26 to 70 years old (five were over 60 years old, one was an emeritus professor). Interviewees were selected based on their (a) experience (first-hand knowledge of the wars in the 1990s), (b) knowledge of the research problem (legislative rights, culture, and language), and (c) ethnicity (Serb citizens in Croatia and Croats). The data are shown in Appendix A, Table A1. Interviewees were selected from the areas that have significant Serb populations, including Rijeka (7341), Zagreb (21,582), Lika-Senj (5057), Split-Dalmatia (4866), Šibenik-Knin (10,007), Vukovar-Srijem (21,728), and Karlovac municipality (11,884) (Croatian State Electoral Commission 2019).

During the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees discussed language, minority education, and culture. Additionally, they were asked to describe their experiences of war and whether they perceived Serbia as their native country and/or had a Croatian regional identity. The sample consisted of twenty-four interviews, ranging in duration from approximately 1 to 2 h. Fifteen interviews were audiotaped (recorded) for later transcription. The interviews were conducted in either Croatian or Serbian, and I transcribed and translated them as reconstructive transcriptions. Once that were conducted via e-mail, as self-transcribed texts, they were ready for analysis (Brinkmann 2013, p. 30). Additionally, I took notes on unrecorded telephone and Internet interviews that were predominantly

used during the deductive stage of the research as the most representative or paradigmatic cases. In these interviews, the focus was on aspects of the interviewee's life that were more personal and sensitive.

My family is Croatian Serb, but I was born in Serbia, Vojvodina, and have lived abroad since 1990. Given that an academic's sense of home tends to be fluid, even though I was not a 'researcher-at-home', I was familiar with the local culture and language, as well as having the affiliation and status of a doctoral researcher, which helped me during fieldwork (Adu-Ampong and Adams 2020, pp. 590–91). Reflexivity is regarded as an invaluable strategy for generating knowledge in qualitative research, especially when experience is shared with participants (Berger 2015, p. 224). I decided on several strategies to maintain reflexivity, such as peer review, alerting myself to 'unconscious editing' due to my sensitivities, full engagement with the data, and analytical depth (Berger 2015, pp. 221–22). Furthermore, the peer review was carried out through comments by mentors on my articles, other academics in the field, as well as by submission to peer-reviewed journals.

3.2. Methods

This study investigates how interviewees perceived linguistic and educational boundaries across society. In an empirical study, Gieryn examines four types of boundary-work related to science: monopolisation, expansion, expulsion, and protection. Each of these four types of boundary-work illustrates the constructivist idea of different boundary demarcation points. I used rhetorical tools to analyse how boundaries are constructed and transgressed: 'Rhetorical studies of boundary-work can contribute to the sociology of science by interpreting conflicts and making hidden assumptions about science and scientific knowledge visible' (Vuolanto 2013, p. 43). Among the rhetorical tools are the categories of entitlement, consensus, contrasting connectives, negatives, modalisation, hedges, and evaluative language (Vuolanto 2013, pp. 308–13). Using the textual analysis methodological framework that has been developed by Vuolanto (2013) and taking into account Fairclough (2003), I defined controversies, conflicts, and demarcation perspectives based on the interview data in combination with the documents outlined in Appendix A, Table A2. Documents were helpful in identifying policy actors and their activities (Karppinen and Moe 2019, p. 259). As a result, the demarcation perspectives relating to minority education and legislative issues were grouped into thematic categories that closely matched Gieryn's (1995) empirical study of the 'Boundaries of Science'. These main methodological descriptions are embedded in the analysis which will be presented in the following Results section of the article.

4. Results

An analysis of the theory of boundary-work (monopolisation, expansion, expulsion, and protection) is presented here to examine the manner in which legislative problems and minority's rights regarding language and education are addressed in post-conflict regions. In boundary-work, the points of demarcation are established based on the interviewees' statements and the areas in which they most often experience conflict and transgression. This is achieved by analysing the sub-sets of interviewees' statements when they discuss Serb minority education, language, and culture. To define *monopolisation*, Gieryn (1997, p. 309) uses a metaphor of the cartographic contest, with contending parties carving up the intellectual landscape, claiming authority and authenticity as their own while denying these qualities to outsiders. The boundary-work of *expansion* occurs when insiders seek to extend the boundaries of their cultural authority into spaces already occupied by others (Gieryn 1995, p. 429). The process of *expulsion* involves insiders attempting to expel not-real members from their midst (Gieryn 1995, p. 432). The boundary-work of *protection* might be described as defending science from outside interference by scientists-insiders while 'keeping politics near but out' (Gieryn 1997, p. 320). In the Discussion section, I examine the results and how they relate to boundary-work theory.

4.1. Monopolisation

The majority of the Serb communities in Dalmatia, Banija, and Kordun use the minority education Model C, a model that fosters learning the mother tongue and culture. In principle, this instruction is offered five hours per week. A more regional language is spoken here, the Croato-Serbian variant, *zavičajni*. Boundaries are carved up between (1) the social world (community and shared values), and (2) the sociology of professions, and how the contending parties attach authority and authenticity to the intellectual landscape. For the purposes of this article, I will use the teaching in minority schools as an example of professionalisation. The laws that regulate licensing, professional schools, and codes of ethics are also outlined in Articles 13 and 14, of the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities (*Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju na jeziku i pismu nacionalnih manjina* 2000). Under Article 13, seven professional advisers have been employed by the Agency for Education to teach minority languages and scripts, including two full-time advisers and one part-time for the Serbian national minority.¹⁵ In Model C, however, minority subjects are often taught by teachers who are required to fulfill the number of teaching hours requirements to comply with the law, regardless of whether they specialise in subjects that preserve Serb identity and culture (Ponoš 2021, p. 17). Teachers and professional associates in primary schools must attain appropriate levels of education as prescribed in Art. 27 of the related ordinance (*Pravilnik o odgovarajućoj vrsti obrazovanja učitelja i stručnih suradnika u osnovnoj školi* 2019).¹⁶ The Department of Southern Slavic Studies at the University of Zagreb, which offers a wide variety of language classes, currently has a degree course in Serbian language and literature. However, this course focuses more on literature and culture than on language. According to one of the Serb interviewees, an active member of the SNV, this is a dimension that has not been developed for various reasons. Some of these are existential, such as the return of property to Serb refugees or the growing intolerance in Croatia.

What we have managed to do to some extent is that we have formed an independent sector in the Ministry of Education for minority education. This is the first time so far. There was an assistant position but there was no organisational unit in the Ministry to deal with it. So that is what we will continue doing, fighting for education of the people, and for preparing textbooks. [Interviewee 12, 3 August 2018]

By adopting the *we* rhetoric, the interviewee indicates that the views regarding the responsibility for the *education of the people / obrazovanje ljudi* (Cro. or Serb.) are shared by several unified actors, including the SNV, the Ministry of Education, and the Prosvjeta cultural organisation; in addition, the contrasting connective *but* indicates denial of expectation in a preceding clause (Vuolanto 2013, p. 312). In a comparative study of cosmopolitan and vernacular literary cultures, Helgesson (2018, p. 8) asserts that cosmopolitan and vernacular literature reshape the boundaries of the cultural universe by renouncing the world for a smaller place. In addition, the vernacular language also connotes class and social dimension of some sort (Helgesson 2018, p. 8). The Serb interviewee, a writer and active member of the SKD Prosvjeta, observes the following:

Serbs from Croatia are indeed slowly disappearing from these areas where they lived. There is no other name for it. Numbers dwindle away and quality has long since melted away. Many settlements are already empty, and the rest will soon be almost empty, and what more now and when they do not have that ground because it was the source of our language, the Ijekavica of the Krajina region, as Okuka called it, the Herzegovina-Krajina dialect of Serbian. And when that base is missing, we are left with just a little bit of literature and what we have written so far. And we wrote relatively little of that linguistic treasure. [Interviewee 11, 27 July 2018]

The interviewee utilises evaluative language in this interview, using the adverb *indeed/zaista* (Cro. or Serb.), to emphasise the gravity of the statement as well as the repeated use of the adjectives *just a little bit of/samo nešto malo* (Cro. or Serb.), and *relatively little/relativno malo* (Cro. or Serb.), which clearly indicate the importance placed on its mean-

ing and accentuate its strongest message (Vuolanto 2013, pp. 312–13). Furthermore, the interviewee builds contrast by using they/we to strengthen the ‘we feeling’ through a positive sense of unity that many minorities and most ethnic groups share, and that ‘ties tend to be maintained as long as individuals feel bound to the community’ (Rose 2006, p. 179). It is difficult to reduce Krajina culture to its organic authenticity. Due to the number of historical references to past wars, even the relevance to local culture has been denied. For instance, in the town of Glina, an unsuccessful attempt was made to establish a museum honouring Josif Runjanin, a Serb and young cadet in the Austro-Hungarian army. As a first tenor, Runjanin sang in a local Serb male choir and composed the Croatian national anthem (Mrkalj 2020, pp. 28–33).

According to a Croatian Serb in her thirties who was a post-war returnee to Croatia from Southern Serbia, it is not necessary to use the standard Croatian language in rural areas, and it depends on the type of work. Although she states: ‘I think a lot has changed, and some words have been introduced in Croatia’¹⁷ [Interviewee 16, 16 December 2019]. She lived in a village 50 km from Kruševac where, as a child, she moved with her family during the war. In Serbia, she was initially enrolled in the Higher School of Tax and Customs. During that time, her family decided to return to their native Kordun region in Croatia. However, she lacked the financial resources to continue her studies on her own in Serbia. She currently works in the kitchen of an *ćevabžinica* (a catering place where grilled meals are served).

Look, since I’m not just working in an environment where I have to use these new words, I don’t use them exactly. I don’t use them since, you know, I don’t hang out with this circle of people, I don’t do that certain job. I don’t know how to tell you, the one who deals with government, or something, that I have to use these new words, so I do not really use it. [Interviewee 16, 16 December 2019]

The interviewee used the adverb *just/baš* in (Cro. or Serb.) and the adjective *certain/neki* (Cro. or Serb.) to indicate the meaning attached to these qualities, as well as the comparisons made with some other qualities (Vuolanto 2013, pp. 312–13). While the interviewee can retain her mother tongue in the current context, were she to advance in her career or study Croatian, she would need to overcome the boundaries of the Croatian socio-political environment.

4.2. Expansion

Several Serb communities in Eastern Slavonia have schools that have adopted educational Model A, which has all lessons taught in the language and script of the national minority. Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities (*Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju na jeziku i pismu nacionalnih manjina* 2000) allow the establishment/implementation of such a programme at the level of the institution or at the level of the class department. In October 2019, the Ministry of Science and Education recommended that the agenda of Vukovar-Srijem County include the requests for the transfer of founding rights of Serb minority primary schools from the municipalities of Borovo, Negoslavci, and Markušica.¹⁸ According to Article 96 paragraph 3 of the Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (*Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi (Pročišćeni tekst)* 2012), a unit of regional self-government must decide on the transfer of founding rights within 60 days of receiving the request from the local self-government unit.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the issue has yet to be settled: ‘The Serb national minority is an exception when it comes to registering schools as minority schools. Other national schools for minorities have been registered’ (Ponoš 2021, p. 17). This boundary-work focuses on (1) community and shared values, and (2) the power of a group with authority that controls licensing legislation and ethics codes. These are representatives of the Vukovar City Council, some of whom are also members of the Serb community. There is a change in the we-group identity, an alternation between national or ethnic identity reference frames (Elwert 1995).

In addition, the Nansen Dialog Centre through Norway Grants as well as the Iceland and Lichtenstein grants initiated the establishment of an intercultural school, the Danube 'Dunav', in Vukovar. After completing the legal conditions to begin operating the school, the Ministry of Science and Education issued a decision in June 2017 approving the initiative. Local community members and local political leaders, however, were against the plans to establish a school. In November 2019, the Ministry revoked its decision after discovering that the school failed to commence operations within the legal deadline of two years from the date of enforcement.²⁰ The initiative was nonetheless beneficial for the development of extracurricular intercultural programmes for schools by the Nansen Dialogue Centre.²¹

The public perception in the Vukovar municipality is that schools for minorities perpetuate segregation. Secondly, the Serbian language does not have the same social capital as the Italian language in Istria. One Croatian interviewee, a professor of law, commented on this as follows:

*Every historical conflict returns. Our experience with the Serbian language is that the Charter (ECRML) encourages the establishment of a school that will teach the minority language. And that works in Istria for the Italian language because Croats, Italians, and Muslims enroll in those schools, **but** the same policy in Vukovar is not good. In other words, you allow Serb children, members of the Serb minority, to study Serbian literature in schools that speak Serbian, **but** you ended up with new segregation and encouraged segregation and mistrust, so a **good** idea maybe **must not** always end well. [Interviewee 8, 14 May 2018]*

Using the contrasting connective *but/ali* (Cro. or Serb.), the interviewee conveys a denial of a previous expectation, and the evaluative language adjective *good/dobra* (Cro. or Serb.) emphasises the importance of these qualities. The repetition of the adjective *good/dobro* (Cro. or Serb.) serves as an intensifier and places additional emphasis on the argument; the modal verb *must/mora* (Cro. or Serb.) combined with the negatives expresses the expectations of the interviewee based on her experiences and criteria (Vuolanto 2013, pp. 312–13).

While there is justified criticism of the relationship of Croatian Serbs to the kin state Serbia insinuating irredentism, it is important to mention that Croatia was the first state in Central and Eastern Europe to use a citizenship law in 1993 to connect external kin to the state (Csergő and Goldgeier 2013, p. 91). One Serb interviewee, a woman in her early thirties, grew up in a predominantly Croat village [Interviewee 21, 20 September 2021] and states that she did not have any opportunities to attend minority education: 'Most Serbs left, and some exchanged houses with Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina'. During the war, her family briefly moved to Germany in 1991 to live with her aunt. Since her speech is characteristically Croatian, she is sometimes perceived as a Croat when she visits relatives in Serbia. The interviewee supports education for Serb minorities. She holds a degree in mathematics, a master's degree in education, and has worked in schools. In response to a question about her musical tastes and preferences, she says that she likes many genres of music but has never listened to turbo-folk *narodnjaci*, for fear of not fitting in with her Croat peers. This type of music is often associated with Serbs, especially the unintelligent ones. Currently, most clubs in her area only play this type of music. This type of negative representation of 'others' that use negative stereotypes need to be addressed further in Croatian culture and can be compared to the experiences of the black minorities in the Nordic countries (Mkwesha and Huber 2021).

A Croatian journalist who is originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina and currently working at *Portal Novosti* (Portal News)²², explains the dichotomy:

*It just seems logical that **they** would move to Novi Sad or Belgrade to study and look for a job. Zagreb is a bit too far for them, Novi Sad is still very close and most of them go to study in Novi Sad, most often or in Belgrade. [They are] looking for a job, so that is geography again. I consider that geography plays a major role in their language as well. As [they] rely on people who speak Ekavian and that **truly** Serbian language, that is*

*why.*²³ *And the further we move towards the interior of Croatia, the more that moment is lost.* [Interviewee 3, 3 May 2018]

By using *they* and *we*, the interviewee creates a contrast, and emphasises the intergroup understanding of ‘why other people think and act as they do and to be able to empathise with their perspectives’ (Rose 2006, p. 123). The evaluative language *truly* or *zaista* (Cro.) speaks of the significance that is attributed to these attributes and comparisons with some other qualities (Vuolanto 2013, pp. 312–13). Certainly not all Croatian Serbs view Serbia as their motherland, but the boundary is particularly evident in eastern Slavonia as described by a Croatian Historian and researcher:

When you ask Serbs in Croatia what their homeland is, those in Eastern Slavonia will tell you in Baranja that their homeland is Serbia (not all of them). However, if you ask these people in western Slavonia or in the region of northwestern Croatia and even in Banija, Kordun, and Lika, perhaps less in the Dalmatian hinterland, because they will also say that Serbia is partly their homeland, you will rarely get the answer that Serbia is their homeland. [Interviewee 1, 2 May 2018]

There is a similar comparison with the Transylvanian Hungarian minority, who wanted to maintain relations with their bordering native country (Brubaker et al. 2006). The relationships and support given by kin-states are important on several levels, although the van Dongera et al. (2017, p. 24) study indicates that the situation is politically sensitive in Slovakia and Romania with regard to the Hungarian minority. The same could be claimed for Vukovar, where wartime violence reinforced the sense of group membership in an ethnically divided city, challenging Croatian conceptions of a unitary state.

4.3. Expulsion

‘In the 1990s, books were thrown out of Croatian public libraries because they were written by Serbian authors, in Cyrillic, and about socialism’ [Interviewee 24, 5 May 2017]. This interviewee, a Croatian media professional and academic, was involved with a project to digitise and preserve these books.²⁴ In this case, the boundary-work of expulsion was guided by the cultural norm as perceived by the evolving social reality rather than the ‘social norms of science’ (Gieryn 1997, pp. 298–99). If we consider the knowledge of the Cyrillic script, one of the interviewees [Interviewee 4, 3 May 2018] noted that when we look at the bookstore displays in Serbia, we see many more books written in Cyrillic, not half-and-half as it once was during the socialist times. In Croatia, however, young people have very limited knowledge of the Cyrillic script:

*Few people write in Cyrillic in Croatia, but if there is a law that it is a right in Vukovar if over a third of the population writes in Cyrillic, then it **must** be respected even if no one writes it. So, it is a matter of obeying the law and respecting someone else who lives there as well.* [Interviewee 4, 3 May 2018]

The interviewee uses the modal verb *must/mora* (Cro. or Serb.) to emphasise expectation that this type of action is desirable or wanted (Vuolanto 2013, p. 312). A recent study of intercultural educational content in school history textbooks has reported that national minorities are rarely addressed in textbooks and that the Serb minority or a part of its members are most often referred to specifically in content on the Homeland War, with their anti-Croatian sentiment and participation in the armed uprising (Baketa 2021, p. 22). The eighth-grade history textbook (Alfa publication, 2020) mentions that some of them joined an armed rebellion and characterises them as Serb terrorists and extremists, however, it is mentioned that national minorities, including Serbs, participated in the defense of Vukovar (Baketa 2021, p. 22). This is another example of expulsion, as minorities should be more fully represented in intercultural educational content.

4.4. Protection

In this context, boundary-work refers to the protection of (1) the Croatian political and social situation and (2) linguistics as a discipline. According to Gieryn (1997, pp. 320–21),

protection is the control of science by insiders, or ‘keeping politics near but out’. As an example of this symbiotic relationship between science and politics, government officials are more likely to legitimise their policy decisions by appealing to the cultural authority of scientific expertise (Gieryn 1995, p. 435). It is true that some linguists and language professionals support the puritanical and restrictive Croatian language politics in order to “emancipate” Croatian from the prior Serbo-Croatian Standard: ‘the scientific veneer of linguistics was useful in authorizing nationalist political decisions regarding standard language as some kind of scientific intervention’ (Hodges et al. 2016, p. 11).

As a professor of linguistics and an outspoken representative of the Serb community observes:

This is a problem in that sense, so linguistic rights are involved. Regardless of the degree of difference, I am not enthusiastic about these differences. I do not think they are good, and for whom? But since Croatian language politics is of a directive authoritarian type which aims to distance the standard Croatian language as far as possible from the previous version (Serbo-Croatian) and it does so by intervening in language, by some kind of linguistic inventive, then that sort of argument [] uses is not valid as it is not recognised in Eastern Slavonia, and obviously, when it comes to teaching Cyrillic script and content in Serbian in Croatia, it is something that should be different. So, if Serbs use two standard linguistic expressions, and they use one is Ijekavian and the other Ekavian, one is referred to as Western and the other as Eastern, then they should be allowed to do so and they should not be limited in their right. [Interviewee 12, 3 August 2018]

The interviewee uses the evaluative language *good/dobre* with the negative to indicate the significance placed upon the linguistic differences; the contrasting connective *but/ali* (Cro. or Serb.) as a denial of expectation in the preceding clause; the repetition of hedge-like expressions *kind of/nekom vrstom* (Cro. or Serb.) and the *sort of/ta vrsta* (Cro. or Serb.) to assess whether the idea or action has happened as expected; and the modal verb *should/trebalo* (Cro. or Serb.) indicates that this sort of action is desirable or wanted (Vuolanto 2013, p. 312).

The ECRML states in the definition of regional or minority languages (Art. 1, paragraph (a) sub-section 32.), that ‘These languages must clearly differ from the other language or languages spoken by the remainder of the population of the State’ (Council of Europe 1992). It is also stated in (Art. 1, paragraph (a) sub-section 32.) that this question depends not only on strictly linguistic considerations, but also on psycho-sociological and political phenomena, the answers to which may differ in every case. In addition to considering the Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin variants as one polycentric language, scholars have criticised the undemocratic approach adopted by Croatian language scholars, which includes purism (*čišćenje jezika*) that is politically motivated (Kordić 2010, pp. 61–78). The purist position aims to cleanse the Croatian language of its German or Serbian (*srbizmi*) influences, as well as Anglicised words. Among the lexical changes are: *zrakoplov* (Cro.) instead of *avion* for ‘airplane’ (Serb.) and *zračna luka* (Cro.) instead of an *aerodrome* for ‘airport’ (Serb.) In Croatia, both *avion* and *aerodrome* are still in common use. However, *zrakoplov* and *zračna luka* are used only very formally such as on television or on signs. The Croatian interviewee, who studied Serbian language and literature, approves of newly coined words unless they are ideologically motivated:

I look at new coins from a functional point of view, that is, if it is clearly visible that they are serving as a substitute for “undesirable” words, especially if their use is imposed by the institutions, I consider this an interference with private linguistic identity and linguistic freedom generally. [Interviewee 17, 12 February 2020]

The interviewer uses evaluative language and the adjective *undesirable/nepoćudni* (Cro.), which reflects the importance attributed to these qualities (Vuolanto 2013, pp. 312–13). Kordić (2010) criticises Croatian linguists who view spoken language as secondary to standard language, as a universal language for all strata of society. As Starčević et al. (2019, pp. 117–18) emphasise, scientifically speaking, no standard form can be deemed

superior to a non-standard one, however, in practice, this is not always the case. The interviewee, a Croatian professor of linguistics and politics, emphasised the importance of a standard Ijekavian Croatian in Eastern Slavonia for the Serbs who speak the Ekavian dialect of Serbian:

*Yes, because they are Ekavians, **but** they are Ekavians at the dialect level. In my opinion, they have the right to speak like that in schools, **but** at the level of the standard language, I think they **should** speak standard Croatian. Because they are a minority and within the Serb minority. And if they were looking for Ekavian, then they would actually stand out from the majority of Serbs in Croatia, the vast majority. They may stand out but I don't know the numbers. **But** I must say that the Vukovar-Srijem Serbs, as many as there are, are perhaps **10 percent** of the total number of Serbs in Croatia. Maybe fewer who speak Ekavian. And now, if they wanted to, then they would be like some kind of sub-Serb identity that would stand out from **Pupovac**. Not only from me, but also from 90 percent, maybe more, of my compatriots in Croatia who find it natural to speak Ljeko, Bijelo, Realizirati and Konkretizirati. And it is a dialect. [Interviewee 2, 2 May 2018]*

By using the contrasting connective *but/ali* (Cro. or Serb.), the interviewee indicates the denial of an expectation in the preceding clause; the modal verb *should/treballi* (Cro. or Serb.) expresses the expectations of the interviewee that is based on his experiences and criteria (Vuolanto 2013, p. 312). Furthermore, there are references to quantification, *10 percent*, which is intended to convey the impression of uncontradicted knowledge or facts, and the contrast pairs, sub-Serb identity versus Milorad Pupovac (linguist and president of the Serb National Council at the time) characterizes the interviewee's opinion in a negative light (Vuolanto 2013, pp. 310–11). For the Serb minority, a more concerning trend was the parallel that was drawn between the purist activities in the NDH during the war (1941–1942) in the use of language (Starčević et al. 2019, p. 324), and the revival of such words in the 1990s, for example, *bojnik* (Cro.) instead of *major* (Srb.) for 'Major' (military rank) and using *stožer* (Cro.) instead of *štab* (Srb.) for 'headquarters', and *kuna* (Cro.) for 'unit of currency'. Despite President Tuđman's support in 1994 for the decision to adopt *kuna* as a symbol of national tradition (the term for the furry marten that inhabits Croatian forests), Billig (1995, pp. 41–42) observes that 'the tradition, including the Nazi heritage, would be neither consciously remembered, nor forgotten: it would be preserved in daily life' and thus become 'symbolically banalized when the citizenry exchange their kunas'.

The qualified teacher [Interviewee 20, 19 June 2020] spoke of her struggles during the war and her exile with her family in Serbia that lasted several years after Operation Storm. After being unable to find teaching work in Serbia, she returned to Croatia with her family and worked odd jobs until she found some part-time work as a Serbian language teacher. On occasion, she was also a classroom teacher. Her daughters, who had to work hard and were not adequately supported, completed their university studies in Zagreb and one of them is a qualified doctor. As Savage (2015, p. 197) notes, 'more opaque and hard to acquire resources of cultural and social capital that the privileged tend to inherit from their parents continue to be more important for ensuring access to the most traditional professions' such as law, medicine, and business. According to the interviewee, their daughters did not declare their nationality when they enrolled at university. This sense of covertness is explored in extensive detail in anthropological writings (Eidheim 1969), and the interviewee understands the changes in language through her younger son's education: 'My son described himself in Croatian: Maybe I was selfish; my dad criticised me because I ate all the cherries'. His Croatian teacher corrected his error when he wrote *kritikovao* (Srb.) instead of *kritizirao* (Cro.) for 'to criticise'. Similar examples can be found in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the difference between the E-form (or the Eastern version, Serbian) and the W-form (Western version, Croatian). Thus, the endings—*'tija, -isati, -ista, -ko, -lac, -ovati, -pisaću* correspond to a series of words in their E-form, such as the noun *demokratija* instead of W-form *demokracija*, the verb *komentarisati*, present tense *komentariše* instead of the W-form *komentirati, komentira*; nouns such as *humorista*, instead of the W-form *humorist*, pronouns such as *ko, neko*, instead of W-form *tko, netko*' (Gustavsson 2009, p. 168).

Although the interviewee has strong ties to Croatian regional identity, Serb returnees in Croatia are forced to re-negotiate their re-settlement in a very different political and ideological context (Mesić and Bagić 2016, p. 213). When a minority is subject to strong assimilation, the interests of the minority and the boundaries of their culturescape must be valued and protected by the minority members themselves.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on in-depth interviews and supporting documents, this article explored the approach that the Croatian Serb interviewees adopted to protect minority rights in education. This research contributes to boundary-work methodology by applying it to a legislative and educational context. Firstly, this article supports Gieryn's (1995, p. 417) observation regarding cultural categories of science, that 'knowledge functions as a form of power' and that a scientific field is the locus of competitive struggle as described by Bourdieu. As Savage (2021, pp. 68–70) notes, 'Bourdieu frequently uses the concept of capital—as a resource' accrued by the victors in field contests, but as 'economic inequality increases, so fields stop being effective' because the distance between the winners and losers are too great. The analysis revealed that the majority Croats have monopolised the teaching of Serbian, as evidenced by their occasional lack of adherence to the regulations, which constitute the criteria for teachers of Serbian in Model C. There could be a more comparative approach in education, especially if Eastern and Western forms, doublets, or variants are discussed, and when 'lexicon matters are presented when synonyms are treated, and when word-formation is described' (Gustavsson 2009, p. 211). Important factors for effective minority education are high-quality teaching materials and the proficiency of minority language teachers (van Dongera et al. 2017).

Secondly, interviewees recognise how boundaries are constructed in society, and the analysis of expansion reveals a pronounced emphasis on multicultural education and criticism directed at the segregation of students in Model A education, from the political authorities and various researchers (especially in Eastern Slavonia). Researchers have also reported that ethnic identities and particularly ethnonationalism create an intergroup threat, a greater tendency to discriminate against out-group members, and a lower tendency to act pro-socially towards them (in the case of the Serb and Italian minorities), except for the Czech minority that has become highly integrated and could even be assimilating (Jelić et al. 2020, p. 545). However, this analysis demonstrates that language occupies a central place in intercultural education, as culture cannot be understood as a static, fixed entity like national culture, but instead with an anthropological lens that focuses more on 'human beings as the social enactors of culture' (Dervin and Liddicoat 2013, p. 6).

Thirdly, the interviewees indicated that the removal of references to socialism and Cyrillic from public libraries and the public culturescape represented the boundary-work of expulsion. During and after the Homeland War, many Serbs fled to Serbia and other countries in the region, and their property was seized when they escaped as refugees. A significant number of state-owned and private properties owned by Croatian nationals of Serb descent who fled were occupied by Bosnian and Herzegovina refugees, Croats from other parts of the country, and Croats (Janjevci) from Kosovo (Škiljan 2012). The Law in Special State Concern Areas gave priority to temporary occupiers, making it difficult for Serbs to return to their private property and return to their homes.

The fourth point is that the analysis of the boundary-work of protection demonstrates that the legislative framework for legal language recognition is ratified through the ECRML, which leads interviewees to perceive Serbian as a separate language from Croatian. Nonetheless, the boundary-work has been emphasised in the scientific linguistic definition of language, which has been promoted by many Croatian scholars who argue for the polycentric view of the language and are critical of the restrictive and puritan Croatian language politics (Kordić 2010; Kapović 2010).

The present study also examines the role of socio-economic resources in attitudes towards minority education and language use. The Croatian Serb community is fragmented:

(1) In the areas devastated by the Homeland War, Serbs in Dalmatia, Banija, and Kordun have adopted a more regional approach with the use of *zavičajni* and most attend schooling that is based on the minority Model C. Croatian Serbs who have higher education in Croatia generally speak Croatian and many do not declare their ethnicity out of fear of being stigmatized. However, there is also (2) acknowledgement of the importance of culture as both a pan-ethnic category in Eastern Slavonia, and the knowledge of Serbian Ekavian. This places them within a broader national canon with Serbia as a neighbouring country.

In addition to observing the EU Treaty, Croatia must respect the rights of minorities, which are included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is evident in Art. 6 of the EU Treaty and has the same legal value as the Treaties. In Art. 14 of the Charter (2012/C 326/02), the right to education is stipulated, as is the right to establish educational institutions. In the county of Vukovar-Srijem, several minority Serb schools have been unable to register since 2019. Minority education is constitutionally guaranteed in Croatia for Serbs. The exercise and protection of these rights are accepted as values that are cultural, moral, as well as those of democratic, civilised societies, and these arise from the totality of our shared universal heritage, based on the ideals and values of freedom, equality, and social justice (Arlović 2019, p. 786). An important tool to assess how prepared the majorities are to accept these democratic values is their positive discrimination for minorities who would be otherwise deprived of equal opportunities.

In the context of EU legislation, however, there is a strict proportionality test that ensures that positive discrimination measures are also necessary and justified. In this sense, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia has made some significant decisions regarding the rights of the Serb minority in the City of Vukovar (Arlović 2019, pp. 808–9). Nonetheless, the majority remains focused on the needs of the Croat majority as well as on the unresolved consequences of the Greater Serbian aggression that occurred in the early 1990s. Legislative rights for the Serb minority are still not fully implemented and perhaps some comparisons can even be drawn between Asian countries that have questioned the universality of human rights norms (Mushkat 2004). This seems rather unfair for the younger generation of Serbs who are being told that their mother tongue and script is somehow linked to war atrocities. In addition, students should not have to study in Model C or Model B in order to maintain a more intercultural relationship. Social psychology studies have demonstrated that an ‘ideological’ (Doise 2002) element needs to be taken into account when developing (or sustaining) new positions through transformation and rapture, as relates to cultural beliefs, values, norms, and the deeper levels of the human mind in concert with others across contexts (Nicholson 2021). In order to encourage interaction, institutional, social, or personal, other means must be devised, such as media, films, travel, books, personal friendships, and other interests.

Funding: Open access funding provided by University of Helsinki.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study did not require ethical approval.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data not available at this time.

Acknowledgments: I wish to thank my supervisors, Ilkka Arminen and Sigrid Kaasik-Krogerus, for their constructive engagement in the writing of this article. I would also like to express my gratitude to the editors of the Social Sciences journal, anonymous reviewers, Mate Kapović for their helpful comments, and my interviewees who kindly participated in the research. Finally, special thanks to Kate Moore who helped me with my English text.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. The demographic characteristics of the participants.

Name	Gender	Current Age	Profession	Ethnicity	Region of Origin	Date/Media	Number of In-Text Citations
Cited in the article							
Interviewee 1	Male	30 s	Historian, postdoctoral researcher	Croat	Northwest Croatia	2 May 2018 Recorded	1
Interviewee 2	Male	60 s	University professor of linguistics and political science	Croat	Southern Dalmatia	2 May 2018 Recorded	1
Interviewee 3	Male	40 s	Journalist, writer	Croat	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3 May 2018 Recorded	1
Interviewee 4	Male	50 s	University professor in political science, writer	Serb/ Croat	Central Croatia	3 May 2018 Recorded	2
Interviewee 8	Female	60 s	University professor of law	Croat	Istria	14 May 2018 Recorded	1
Interviewee 11	Male	60 s	Writer	Serb	Kordun	27 July 2018 1 August 2018 Recorded	1
Interviewee 12	Male	60 s	University professor of linguistics	Serb	Northern Dalmatia	3 August 2018 Recorded	2
Interviewee 16	Female	30 s	Cook	Serb	Kordun	16 December 2019 Recorded	1
Interviewee 17	Male	30 s	NGO work	Croat	Southern Dalmatia	12 February 2020 E-mail	1
Interviewee 20	Female	50 s	Serbian language teacher	Serb	Lika	19 June 2020 Telephone call	1
Interviewee 21	Female	30 s	MA in Education	Serb	Western Slavonia	20 September 2021 Zoom call	1
Interviewee 22	Male	40 s	General manager at Nansen Dialogue Centre	Serb/ Croat	Eastern Slavonia	16 September 2021 Zoom call	1
Interviewee 24	Male	40 s	Doctoral student in the political economy of technology	Croat	Central Croatia	5 May 2017 Facebook chat	1
Not cited in the article							
Interviewee 5	Female	30 s	Doctoral student in linguistics	Serb	Southern Dalmatia	4 May 2018 Recorded	
Interviewee 6	Male	40 s	Historian, writer	Serb	Bosnia and Herzegovina	4 May 2018 Recorded	
Interviewee 7	Male	30 s	Doctoral student in history	Serb	Southern Dalmatia	7 May 2018 Recorded	
Interviewee 9	Male	70 s	Emeritus Professor in Serbian literature	Serb	Lika/Bosna and Herzegovina	2 July 2018 Recorded	
Interviewee 10	Female	30 s	Works at Prosvjeta	Serb/ Croat	Eastern Slavonia	13 July 2018 Recorded	
Interviewee 13	Female	50 s	Director of NGO Documenta	Slovene	Slovenia	6 August 2018 Recorded	
Interviewee 14	Male	40 s	Lawyer at Prosvjeta	Serb	Lika	8 August 2018 Recorded	
Interviewee 15	Male	40 s	Economist	Serb	Kordun	5 January 2020 E-mail	
Interviewee 18	Male	40 s	Head of Supply Chain	Croat	Banja	13 February 2020 E-mail	
Interviewee 19	Male	20 s	Student of philosophy	Serb	Eastern Slavonia	28 May 2020 E-mail	
Interviewee 23	Female	30 s	Serbian language teacher	Serb	Eastern Slavonia	20 September 2021 Zoom call	

Table A2. A description of the documents under analysis.

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Reports	Sixth Report of the Committee of Experts in Respect of Croatia (Council of Europe 2020).	Explanatory Report to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe 1992).	Application of the Charter in Croatia (Fifth Monitoring Cycle) (Council of Europe 2015).
Serb National Council Report	'Historic Revisionism, Hate Speech and Violence against Serbs in 2020' (Ponoš 2021).		
Legal texts	Constitution of Croatia	The Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities	Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities
	Law on Education in Primary and Secondary School	Ordinance on the appropriate type of education of teachers and professional associates in primary school.	Law on the Use of Languages and Scripts of National Minorities in Croatia

Notes

- 1 *Ustavni zakon o pravima nacionalnih manjina* [Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities]. 23 December 2002 (last amended 28 June 2010). Available online: <https://narodne-novine.nn.hr> (accessed on 27 March 2022).
- 2 For a full text version, see: Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>.
- 3 *Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju na jeziku i pismu nacionalnih manjina*. 19 May 2000 (last amended 6 June 2000). Available online: <https://narodne-novine.nn.hr> (accessed on 27 March 2022).
- 4 *Zakon o lokalnoj i područnoj (regionalnoj) samoupravi*. 11 April 2001 (last amended 23 December 2020). Available online: <https://narodne-novine.nn.hr> (accessed on 27 March 2022).
- 5 Population by mother tongue census 2011 showed that out of 186,633 Serbs, 52,879 spoke Serbian, 7822 Serbo-Croatian, and 3059 Croato-Serbian (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2013, p. 12).
- 6 Štokavian dialects are the most widespread dialects of the Central South Slavic area and they are divided into Ijekavian, Ikavian, and Ekavian dialects according to the reflexes of the Proto-Slavic vowel *jat* (ě) (there are also certain lexical and stylistic differences, as well as morphological and syntactic features). In Ikavian, the reflex is *i*, in Ekavian, the reflex is *e*, and in Ijekavian, the reflex is *ije* (<long *jat*) or *je* (< short *jat*). Thus, the Proto-Slavic **lěp-* (beautiful) > *lip*, *lep* or *lijep*, ... ' occurs (Gustavsson 2009, p. 16).
- 7 This is a reformed curriculum based on the European *Bildung-Didaktik* theory (Wang 2019, p. 13), which places stronger emphasis on teacher autonomy and individual freedom as well as on the issues of teaching and learning goals.
- 8 There were 3728 criminal cases brought against persons committing criminal offenses during or after the military-police Operation Storm, and 2380 convictions were handed down by the competent courts (DORH 2017).
- 9 *Zakon o područjima posebne državne skrbi*. 23 July 2008 (last amended 1 January 2019). Available online: <https://www.zakon.hr/> (accessed on 27 March 2022).
- 10 *Zakon o uporabi jezika i pisma nacionalnih manjina u Republici Hrvatskoj*. 19 May 2000 (last amended 16 March 2012). Available online: <https://narodne-novine.nn.hr> (accessed on 27 March 2022).
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