

The protection of languages as an obstacle in the promotion of linguistic diversity

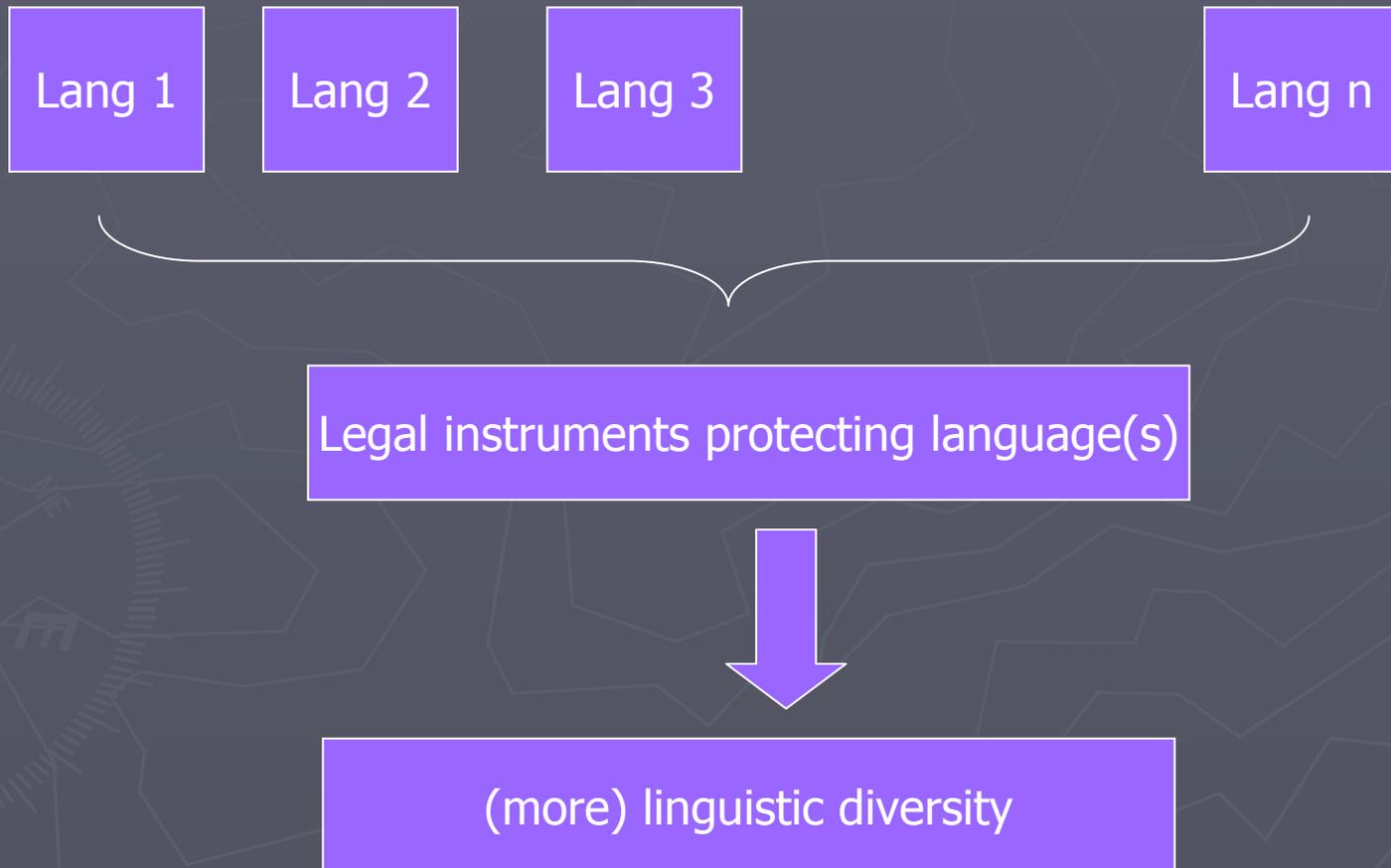
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Does the protection of languages necessarily protect linguistic diversity?



The definition of language(s) in legal instruments

➤ NO EXPLICIT DEFINITION PROVIDED

International level

- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992)
- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights (1993)
- Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)

European level

- The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1998)
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000)

▶ DEFINITION PROVIDED ?

- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992)

“Identity” and the protection of linguistic diversity

- ▶ Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992)
- ▶ Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
- ▶ Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995)
- ▶ The Oslo recommendations regarding the linguistic rights of national minorities & Explanatory note (1998)
- ▶ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992)

The place of non-standard varieties in national LPP

Croatian National Educational Standard

► Standard

- “mastering the Croatian standard language”
- “raising awareness about the importance of the familiarity with the Croatian language...”

► Non-standard

- the importance and value of their own local idiom
- the positive attitude about a pupil’s local idiom
- to render them vertically bilingual or multilingual persons

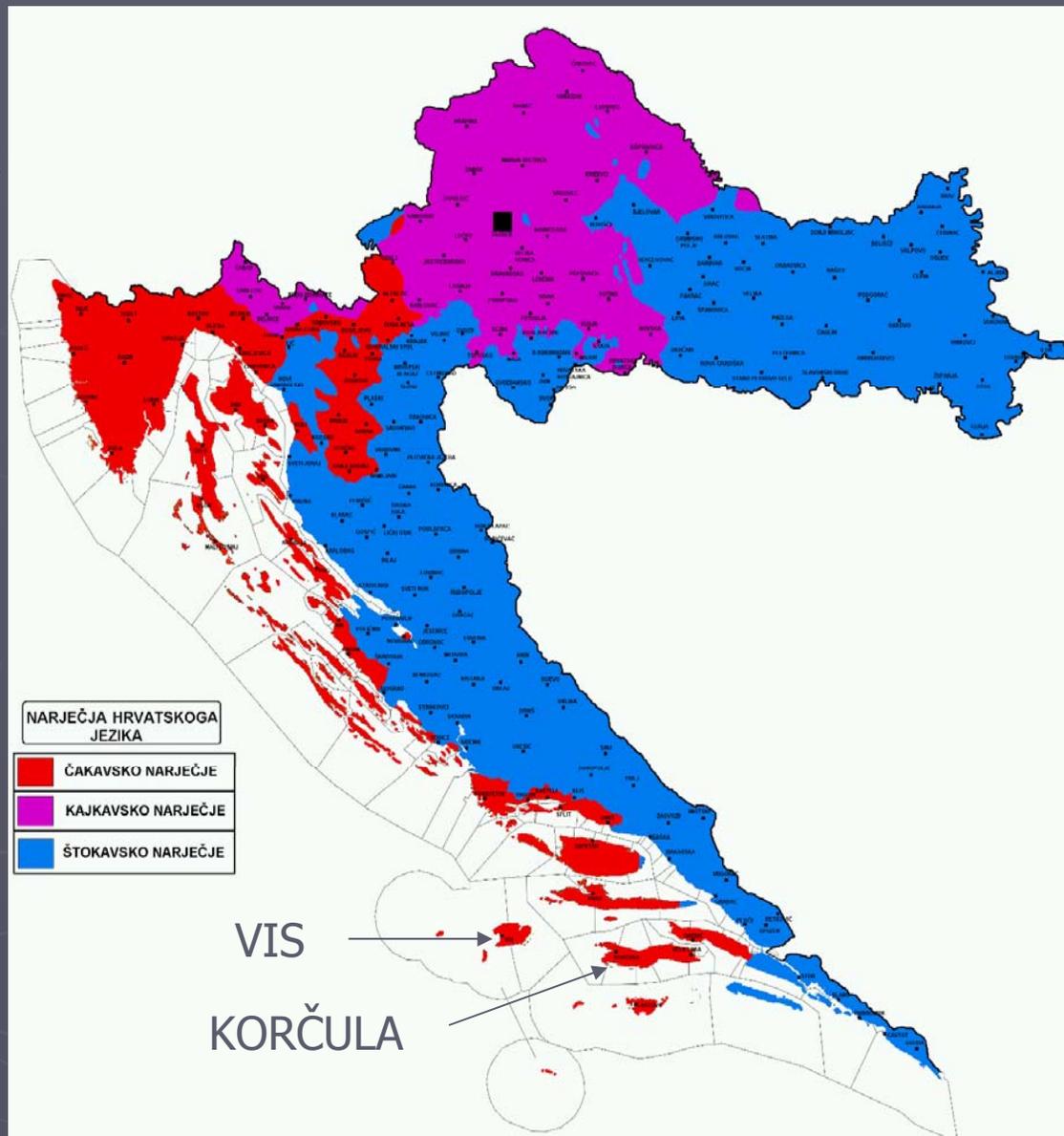
AIM of the study

- ▶ to point to some of the problems that might prevent the promotion of intralinguistic diversity even in those cases which declaratively support it due to the way that the term 'language' is conceptualized

Sample & methods

► Qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews:

- Island of Vis (6 informants incl. 2 in formal edu.)
- Island of Korčula (6 informants incl. 3 in formal edu.)



Local varieties in formal education: negative experience

“I remember when we went to elementary school, first or second grade, then we were told to say everything in the standard and we were taught to write in the standard...and that the teacher corrected us, I remember that well...and especially later when we'd talk in our own way, we had to start speaking the way the teacher said depending on the subject”

(Vis, student, around 20 yrs.)

Local varieties in formal education: positive experience

“What I liked as a pupil back then and what I try to encourage as a teacher is not to correct the local idiom harshly. My experience at least was that when we were expected to respond in the standard and did use the local idiom instead, then the teacher would only repeat the word in the standard; I was lucky with that indeed. This means that there was no oppressive correction and derision; to me it seemed rather like caring for the local idiom.”

(Lumbarda, teacher of Croatian, around 30 yrs.)

Negligence of local linguistic practices in formal education

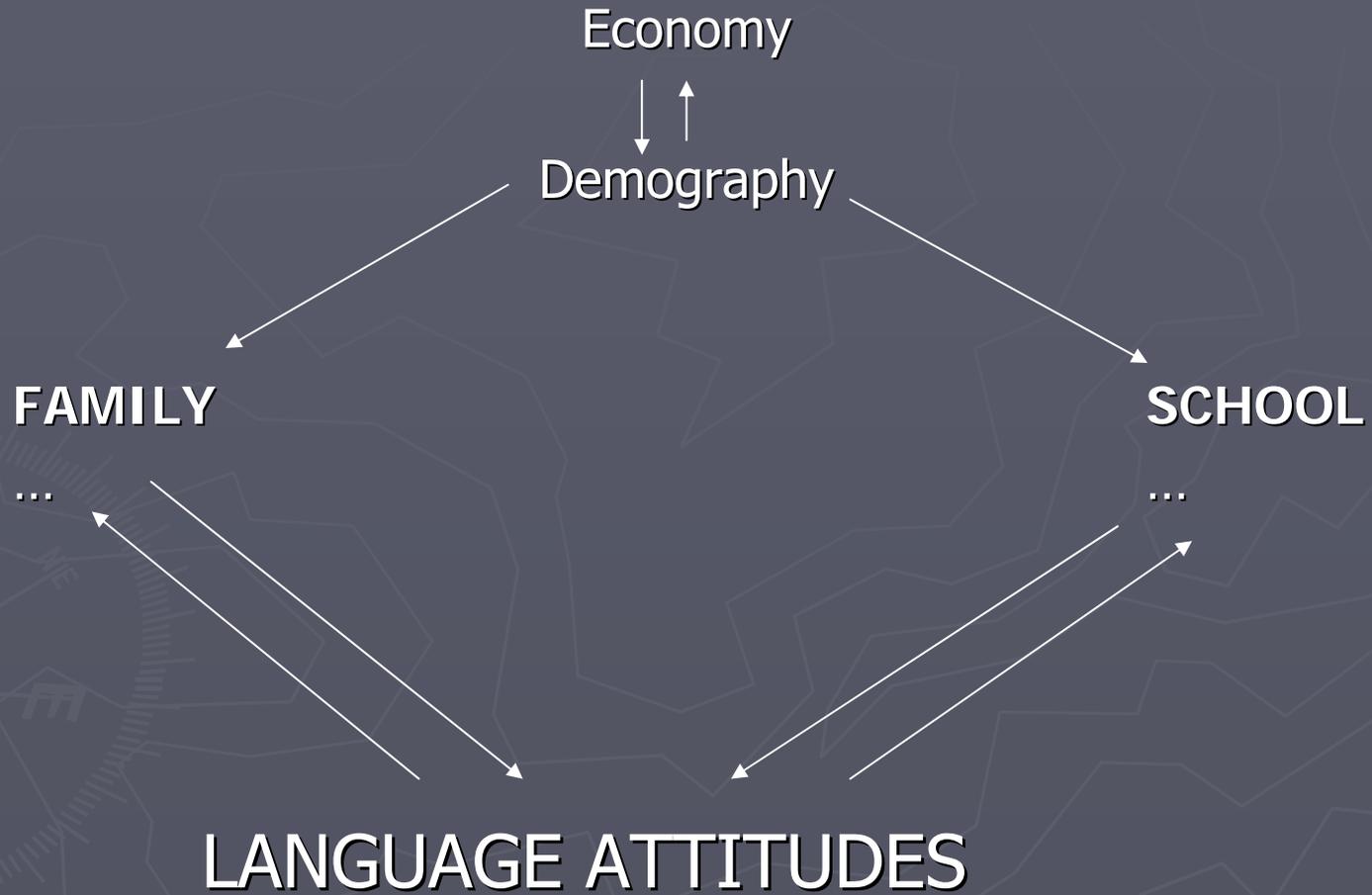
“...it means that the Ministry recommends the treasuring of that local culture, but it is the matter of the institution itself to decide on the extent to which it is going to be employed”
(Komiža, teacher, around 50 yrs.)

Lack of implementation (some reasons):

- LACK OF TIME & OVERLOADED CURRICULUM
- LACK OF LOCAL TEACHERS AND/OR ADEQUATELY EDUCATED TEACHERS LINGUISTICALLY COMPETENT IN THE LOCAL VARIETY
- LACK OF STANDARDIZATION (sp.in the written form)
 - local variety – not a ‘language’



...and elsewhere...



Language attitudes in formal education: negative

“There is another ugly thing: in the kindergarden a child starts to be corrected as soon as (s)he says something in [a local variety]...and they grow up with the feeling that they do not speak well, not the way they should speak, and this kind of correcting continues throughout the elementary school. In the end you get the complex of a dialect, meaning that if you say something in the dialect, you are less worthy. It can take years, it took me years, because I am from Vis, to understand that it is not like that, and that it is all put askew.”

(Vis, teacher, around 30 yrs.)

Language attitudes in formal education: positive

“...that I was lucky since from the fifth through the eighth year of ES I had a wonderful teacher who was from Vis and who worked so much on the dialect that she managed to strengthen this in our repertoires for ever, and then in the high school again I had [the name of the teacher] who also insisted on the dialect so that it is (...) it can be achieved,...but now I watch my children, they have a teacher who is not from Vis and who has no clue about the dialect; there are no teachers from Vis in the HS and there is no one who can teach them.”

(Vis, teacher, around 30 yrs.)

Perception of local varieties by their speakers

- ▶ How important is a local variety for you?

“Extremely important. It is something that makes somebody what they are (...) It is you, you cannot run away from it. You can speak the standard language perfectly (...). That is something you can learn. And this [local variety] is something that makes you what you are.”

(Korčula, teacher of Croatian, around 40 yrs.)

“Because it is the language which makes us what we are; we’ll live as long as the language lives. The beauty of the Croatian language is its diversity; the more diversity, the richer it is. Here on the island we speak so differently from one place to another that no one would say that we live so close physically. And I like to hear it. I like that diversity.”

(Lumbarda, teacher of Croatian, around 30 yrs.)

Conclusions

- ▶ underlying assumption:
 `language' = standard variety
- linguistic diversity in LPP: restricted, exclusionary, no place for intralinguistic diversity
- language – identity link thus obfuscated

Possible alternative approaches

- Redefinition of the object of protection in LPP (e.g. Ammon, 1987/88) / working definitions as a means of promoting the development of positive attitudes
- Local languages as a means of identity, it is good to be different, localization as a counterforce to globalization → insistence on assigning different domains to local varieties
- Rethinking the need to protect languages linguistic diversity

References

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- ▶ Lippi-Green, R. L. English with an Accent. Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States. London - New York: Routledge, 1997.
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