

"Language policy in Armenia: Language teaching – nationhood teaching."

In 2006, 2007 and 2008 J. Dum-Tragut visited various Armenian schools (elementary, secondary and high schools) both in urban Yerevan and in some villages to observe the teaching of Armenian language and literature. She has observed and studied the following aspects of language teaching:

- a) How do teachers treat the obvious differences between prescriptive Standard Armenian and Colloquial Armenian? Which utterances are acceptable, which are not? What is conventionalized, what is grammaticalized – what is absolutely wrong? (i.e. the degree of acceptance/grammaticality of colloquial forms in Standard Armenian and the question of "mistakes")
- b) The language policy of Armenia in schools: linguistic purism (in form of de-russification, avoiding Turkish and English words).
- c) The developing of Armenian ethnicity, patriotism and nationhood by the medium of language teaching: (Fishman's trinity: Holy land, holy people, holy language.) Starting from the first grade, children are brought up to be patriots: they have to learn patriotic songs and lyrics (which are almost never suitable for children) by heart and have to utter or write texts with patriotic contents.

Language teaching in Armenia is not only a means to maintain the Armenian language "pure and free from any foreign influence" and even free from "any bad influence from colloquial and dialectal and (Western?!) Armenian" but also to bring Armenian children up to be patriotic (even nationalistic?), dutifully and loyal citizens of the independent Republic of Armenia.

This aspect of language teaching shall be compared to the language teaching in an Armenian Diasporan setting: at the Armenian school in Vienna. Diaspora Armenians are usually not brought up to be patriotic Armenians. And thus it is not only the language variants that separate Republic Armenians from Diaspora Armenians, but also and recently even more often the self-assessment of one's ethnicity and the ethnic/nationalistic behaviour. Once more it will be shown, that language and particularly language teaching can be a powerful means of policy of a country.

This project shall be conducted together with some students and Armenian schools in at least two different Diaspora communities (probable Vienna and Jerusalem).

Since some aspects of this project represents a rather sensitive (even political) issue, particularly in Armenia, the progress will be comparably slow and some field work will have to be conducted in a very careful and even cautious way.