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The significance of scientific results in efficient native language education

Важливість наукових результатів в ефективному викладанні рідної мови

Summary. According to a repeated questionnaire (2008 – 2018) research the language dialect attitude of native Hungarian teachers in Transcarpathia changed in a positive direction since the native language education reform as the result of scientific educational writings, further training. An assumed similar change can be observed concerning the language dialect attitude of their students as well, since the textbook they use conveys scientific knowledge concerning language dialects. Based on the above we assume that native Hungarian students in Transcarpathia, just like their teachers, have a more positive opinion about language dialects and we can discover similarities between the answers of the two groups, although the regional character of their language use is still not perceived by the majority of them. They consider the Hungarian speech of their motherland to be the most beautiful. Our hypothesis is that there is inconsistency in the received answers since their knowledge concerning language variants is still deficient, superficial, so many times the effect of language myths, language ideologies can be discovered in the answers.

To verify/refute the above, two questionnaire surveys were conducted in 2018 with the participation of 100 teachers and 280 school students, to repeat the earlier wide scale study. Based on the results presented above it can be said that the majority of our hypotheses were verified: as the result of the additive approach a positive change can be observed in native Hungarian schools in Transcarpathia concerning the judgement of language dialects, dialect speakers. Both teachers and students consider themselves language dialect speakers in a greater proportion. The opinion of the teachers (despite my hypothesis) is although reflected in the opinions of their students, still, the professional have a harder time distancing themselves from myths related to the native language many of them got used to in the course of their studies, career. The younger generation, who learnt scientifically soundly based knowledge from the textbooks prepared for the official curriculum form class 5 of elementary school, proved to be more perceptive for the multi-normative, more open approach. Teachers try to comply with the expectations they consider exist towards them. However, due to

their deficient metalinguistic knowledge, in many times it leads to discrepancies, inconsistencies between the above reports and the statistical data.

Key words: *metalinguistic knowledge, scientific results, native language, teachers, students, Transcarpathia.*

Анотація. Відповідно до повторного опитування (2008–2018 рр.), дослідження мовного та діалектного ставлення викладачів угорської мови на Закарпатті змінилося в позитивному напрямі після реформи освіти рідної мови в результаті наукових навчальних праць. Припускають, що подібні зміни спостерігаються і в мовному та діалектному ставленні своїх учнів, оскільки підручник, яким вони користуються, передає наукові знання і про діалекти. Виходячи з вище сказаного, припускаємо, що угорські студенти на Закарпатті, як і їхні викладачі, мають більш позитивну думку про діалектні явища. Можемо виявити подібність між відповідями двох груп, хоча регіональний характер використання мови все ще не сприймається більшістю з них. Наша гіпотеза полягає у тому, що в отриманих відповідях є суперечливість, оскільки їхні знання щодо мовних варіантів усе ще є дефіцитними, поверхневими, тому багато разів у відповідях можна виявити вплив мовних міфів та мовних ідеологій.

Щоб перевірити/спростувати вищезазначене, у 2018 р. було проведено два опитування за участю 100 вчителів та 280 учнів угорськомовних шкіл Закарпаття, щоб повторити попереднє широкомасштабне дослідження. На підставі представлених вище результатів можна сказати, що більшість наших гіпотез було перевірено. У результаті адитивного підходу можна спостерігати позитивні зміни в угорських школах Закарпаття щодо судження про мовні діалекти та носіїв діалекту. Думка вчителів (незважаючи на мою гіпотезу) хоча й відображається у думках їхніх студентів, проте професіоналам важче дистанціюватися від міфів, пов'язаних із рідною мовою, до яких багато хто з них звик у процесі навчання чи під час стажування. Підрастаюче покоління, яке засвоїло науково обґрунтовані знання з підручників, підготовлених до офіційної навчальної програми 5-го класу початкової школи, виявилось більш сприйнятливим до мультинормативного, більш відкритого підходу. Вчителі намагаються відповідати очікуванням, які, на їхню думку, існують щодо них. Однак через їх недостатні металінгвістичні знання здебільшого це призводить до розбіжностей, невідповідностей між вищезазначеними звітами та статистичними даними.

Ключові слова: *металінгвістичні знання, наукові результати, рідна мова, вчителі, учні, Закарпаття.*

Introduction. In the past decades, the multi-normative approach, according to which variants of a specific language besides the standard one are also equivalent, with each having its own function, became accepted among experts of Hungarian language studies studying the methodology of native language education. These concepts slowly appeared in the documents regulating public education as well [1; 2; 15, p. 66–69], which meant a serious progress in the past period, since it is still the schools that can do the most to convey scientifically founded knowledge concerning languages, language variants.

Despite this, several empirical studies proved that despite “good intentions” even teachers cannot fully discard negative preconceptions towards the non-standard variants of Hungarian language many of them formed as the result of the former secondary school, higher education studies and everyday activities [7, p. 291–300; 6, p. 123–134; 10; 15, c. 69–75]. Despite their intentions in many occasions, they negatively discriminate those students who use their language variants in the course of their language use in school.

In the case of native Hungarian speakers in Transcarpathia this native language variant is a local dialect with Slavic elements [14, p. 3–18; 8, p. 47–54; 9; 19; 20, p. 615–627]. Surveys proved that Transcarpathian students chose/produced/accepted language phenomena strongly stigmatized in the Hungarian language area, or even loan words from the Russian/Ukrainian language as standard in large proportions, in writing, when filling in a questionnaire on language use [3, p. 179–207; 7, p. 136–140; 13]. It was discovered from the surveys that despite this they distance themselves from language dialects, language dialect speakers; they consider such variants to be some kind of antiquity, tradition. The same applies to teachers who teach them.

According to a repeated questionnaire (2008 – 2018) research the language dialect attitude of native Hungarian teachers in Transcarpathia changed in a positive direction since the native language education reform as the result of scientific educational writings, further training. “Through filling in the questionnaire concerning language use, language variants, a larger proportion of answers arrived that indicate the additive perspective conveyed by the official curriculum than in 2008. Despite this, signs of the former approach can be felt in the explained responses received as supplements to the more positive statistical data: the language, language dialect awareness of a large part of the respondents can in no way be called resolute, confident. Several such stereotypes appear in the seemingly well-intentioned but more like lenient writings that must take a longer time to discard.” [6, p. 131].

An assumed similar change can be observed concerning the language dialect attitude of their students as well, since the textbook they use conveys scientific knowledge concerning language dialects.

Methodology. Between 2006 and 2008 1490 Transcarpathian native Hungarian students and 150 native Hungarian teachers answered questions concerning languages, language dialects [12]. From these data it was discovered that both groups strove to distance themselves from the low-prestige, non-standard variants, although language dialects had hidden prestige among them: they considered such dialects to be tradition, legacy, the majority of them stated they did not speak the language dialect. We received answers several times when determining language dia-

lects as well that clearly imply that neither the teachers nor their students have reliable information about Hungarian common language, local language variants. Their knowledge is based on language myths rather than on scientific results. However, in the period since then youth in native Hungarian schools in Transcarpathia studied according to the Hungarian language curriculum prepared with the additive approach¹, and in theory this was the approach conveyed to them by their teachers as well.

Based on the above we assume that native Hungarian students in Transcarpathia, just like their teachers, have a more positive opinion about language dialects and we can discover similarities between the answers of the two groups, although the regional character of their language use is still not perceived by the majority of them. They consider the Hungarian speech of their motherland to be the most beautiful. Our hypothesis is that there is inconsistency in the received answers since their knowledge concerning language variants is still deficient, superficial, so many times the effect of language myths, language ideologies can be discovered in the answers.

To verify/refute the above, two questionnaire surveys were conducted in 2018 with the participation of 100 teachers and 280 school students, to repeat the earlier wide scale study.

I polled teachers with the help of the online version of the earlier questionnaire. We sent it to acquaintance colleagues and we asked them to also forward it to at least a couple people. Older colleagues filled it in printed format. With this method we could address respondents well representing the earlier sample. A total of 100 teachers teaching different subjects answered the open and closed questions, since not only professionals teaching native language shape the language awareness of students.

Students filled in the questionnaire in school, during class. To represent the group from 10 years before we visited 20 elementary and secondary schools in person or sent the questions to. Filling in the questionnaire took 35-40 minutes. Due to the low number of students per class² a total of 280 ninth and eleventh class students from 20 institutions participated in the survey.

Results. Based on the results of similar surveys, our observations as practicing teachers, college educators we again considered it important to ask our respondents whether they perceive the differences between the language variants in Hungary and other cross-border regions, and if so, which one they consider more beautiful. This is why we asked the question “Where do they speak the most beautiful version of Hungarian?” which is

¹ For more details on changes occurring since then see [4, p. 150–164]

² While in the Barkasovo Secondary School 23 graduating students participated in the survey in 2006, in 2018 only 8 students studied in the graduating class.

a frequent one in social-linguistic studies. All the cross-border Hungarian regions and several Hungarian ones were among the answer options of the closed question. We refer to the latter ones hereinafter as one group, Hungary. We also asked teachers to provide reasons for their choice. The difference between the answers of the two groups is remarkable:

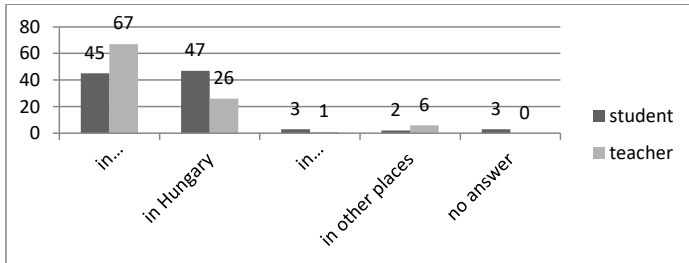


Fig. 1. Where do they speak the most beautiful version of Hungarian? (%) N=280+100

Young people indicated Hungarian regions and their motherland in more or less the same proportion, while 67% of teachers considers Hungarian speaking in Transcarpathia to be the most beautiful. This positive attitude seems rather promising, since emotional attachment increases the prestige of the language variant concerned. However, if we read the reasoning, we can see that the opinions that determine the answers are in many cases based on language myths the removal of which would be the task of the school itself. Beliefs about the “clean” Hungarian language, the negative “mixing” of bilingualism, the shabbiness of “slang” are very widespread among respondents: whether they indicated Transcarpathia or Hungary, it always appears among the opinions.

Those who answered that Hungarian is spoken the most beautiful way in Hungary mostly mentioned towns, villages in the countryside: „*Ott még vannak nyelvi változatok, viszont tisztán ejtik a hangokat*”, „*A városi emberek több helyen fordulnak meg, mint a falusi egyszerű emberek*”, „*A városokban szebben beszélnek a magyar nyelvet, mint a falvakban, vagy Kárpátalján, mert Kárpátalján is és a falvakban is nyelvjárások vannak. Budapestiek viszont már annyira szépen akarnak beszélni, hogy azzal teszik csúnyává*” (“*They still have language variants there, but the way they pronounce sounds is clean*”, “*Townspeople go to more places than simple village people*”, “*In the cities they speak Hungarian in a more beautiful way than in the villages or in Transcarpathia, because there are language dialects in Transcarpathia and in the villages too. However, in Budapest people want to speak so nice they make it ugly with that.*”)

Several respondents justified indicating the Hungarian region by mentioning Hungarian speech in Transcarpathia as a negative example, more exactly its contact phenomena. Respondents did not really like it, because it implies “shabbiness”: *„Sajnos, Kárpátalján a szláv nyelvi közösség nagyon rányomja a bélyegét a magyar nyelvhasználatra, az igénytelenség abban mutatkozik meg leginkább, hogy az itteni magyar nemzetiségű ember keverék nyelven beszél”, „Szerintem magyarországi kis falvakban beszélnek a legszebben, mert ott nem keveredik az ukránnal, de nem is városias a nyelvhasználatuk” (“Unfortunately, in Transcarpathia the Slavic lingual community really has its mark on Hungarian language use, shabbiness mostly shows in ethnic Hungarian people from here speaking a mixed language”, “I think people in small Hungarian villages speak in the most beautiful way, because their language use is not mixed with Ukrainian there, but is also not urban”).*

Those who say Hungarian is spoken in Transcarpathia in the most beautiful way, mentioned it several times that slang use is not widespread here. Several such concepts appear here the meaning of which cannot be exactly determined: *„A hivatalos nyelvhez véleményem szerint az itt beszélt dialektus áll a legközelebb”, „Tisztán csengő, világos. Formailag és szókinésében a leginkább magyaros”, „A külhoni magyarok vigyáznak nyelvük szépségére, tisztaságára”, „Magyarországon szerintem az emberek többsége már rengeteg idegen szót átvett, szleng szavakat, és használja is a mindennapi beszédében, ami szerintem csorbát ejt a nyelv szépségén”, „Szlengmentes, tisztább, kifejezőbb”. (“In my opinion the dialect spoken here is the closest to the official language”, “Sounds clear; clean. The most Hungarian-like in its form and vocabulary”, “Foreign Hungarians take care of the beauty, clarity of their language”, “I think most people in Hungary took a lot of foreign words over, slang words, and they use them in their everyday speech, which in my opinion damages the beauty of the language”, “No slang, cleaner, more expressive”).*

Several respondents mentioned the observation which is very widespread among Transcarpathian people according to which Hungarians do not pronounce the sound ó, using o instead: *„Véleményem szerint a Kárpátalján élő magyar emberek beszélnek legszebben a magyar nyelvet, mert mivel mi minden hangot és betűt helyesen ejtünk ki. Én azt tapasztaltam, hogy Magyarországon eltűnt az Ó betű, helyette a O betűt ejtik hosszabban, és így lett rövid O és hosszú O, nem pedig Ó”. „Véleményem szerint, azért a Kárpátaljai magyarok beszélnek a legszebben mivel mi hangsúlyosan és kifejezően beszéljük a nyelvünket. Nekem a Magyarországon élők beszédstílusa azért nem tetszik, mivel ők egyes hosszú magánhangzókat rövidnek ejtenek” (“In my opinion Hungarian people in Transcarpathia speak the Hungarian language in the most beautiful way,*

because we pronounce every sound and letter right. In my experience the letter Ó disappeared in Hungary, instead they pronounce the letter O longer, so they have a short O and a long O and not an Ó.” “In my opinion Hungarians in Transcarpathia speak in the most beautiful way because speak our language with emphasis and expressive force. I do not like the style of speech of those living in Hungary because they pronounce certain long vowels short.”)

Language dialects also appear several times in the reasonings although it is not always clear whether they are mentioned in a positive or negative way and what they mean by language dialect: *„Kárpátalján megmaradt a hagyomány a nyelv terén, Kárpátalján nincs tájszólás”, „Nálunk jelen van az ízes magyar és a tájnyelv egyaránt”, „Ha nem tájszólásban beszélnek, itt ejtik ki a legszebben a szavakat”. (“Tradition was preserved in Transcarpathia in the area of language use, there are no dialects in Transcarpathia”, “Spicy Hungarian and regional dialect alike are present here”, “When they do not speak a dialect, then it is here where words are pronounced in the most beautiful way”).*

From this reasoning it can be well seen that teachers of different subjects participating in the survey (not laypersons) have an emotional attachment to their native language variant, but worded their opinion based on several misbeliefs, often contradictory knowledge without any scientific basis.

During both surveys we asked the participants what they called language dialect: 85% of teachers and 63% of students answered this question.

A definition came from teachers emphasizing regionality, variant nature (*„A nyelvjárás olyan nyelvváltozat, ami meghatározott földrajzi területhez kötődik, és hangtani, alaktani, vagy szókészletteni szempontból eltér a köznyelvtől”*)(“Language dialect is a language variant tied to a specific geographical region and is different from common language from a phonetic, morphological or vocabulary perspective”), and there were some mentioning it only as tradition (*„Egyes vidékek megszokott, régről örökölt beszédkézsége, ami utódról, utódra száll”*)(“The common speech pattern of specific regions inherited from long ago, passed from generation to generation”). There were explanations defining dialects as a tool of expressing identity, as opposed to “right” speech, however, already branding the person indicating their local ties with their language use (*„Egy adott területre jellemző kissé a helyes magyar kifejezéstől eltérő beszédstílus, amely sokszor a hovatartozás jele. Tájszólás alapján akár személyek lakhelyét is beazonosíthatjuk”*)(“A speech style different from the right Hungarian expression is a bit characteristic of a specific region; it is often the sign of identity. By dialect we can even identify the residence of persons”). We can read several explanations that, in the absence of knowledge in dialectology, express

clearly negative preconceptions: „Nyelvjárás-nyelvváltozat, ugyan abból a nyelvből alakul ki, de használata során eltérést mutat attól a nyelvtől, amelyből ered”, „Egy elszigetelt vidék lakosságának nyelve”, „Egyes falvak, faluk, saját szavaikkal másá teszik a falujukat, nem csúnya, de mégis felismerhető, hogy az már tájszólás, mert eltér a saját magyar nyelvtől”, „A szavak furcsa kiejtését, ami egy népcsoportra jellemző”, „Mikor egy adott szót, kifejezést különbözően ejtenek ki, nem a megfelelő betűket használva” (“Language dialect – language variant, although formed from the same language, but in its use it shows differences from the language it originates from”, “The language of the populace of an isolated region”, “Certain villages, hamlets make their village different with their own words, it is not ugly but still recognizable as a dialect, because it is different from our own Hungarian language”. “Weird pronunciation of words, characteristic of an ethnic group”, “When a specific word, expression is pronounced differently, not using the right letters.”)

Contrary to our hypotheses, the definitions of the students are different from those of the teachers at several points. We can read definitions from young people that resemble the perspectives of the definition in the Class 11 Hungarian language textbook: „Nyelvjárás - a nyelvhasználatnak egy meghatározott földrajzi területhez kötődő jellemző nyelvhasználat.”, „a nyelvjárások az irodalmi és a köznyelv egységesítő hatásától viszonylag mentes nyelvváltozatok, amelyeknek önálló rendszerük van”, „A standard magyar nyelvtől eltérő nyelvváltozat” (“Language dialect – language use characteristic of a specific geographical area.”, „language dialects are language variants relatively free from the unifying effect of literary and common language, with their independent system”, “A language variant different from the standard Hungarian language”).

There were who specified the concept in a less professional way but as theirs: „Nyelvjárásnak nevezzük azt, amit a saját falunkban használunk. Amit már gyerekkorunk óta beszélünk.”, „Azt nevezzük nyelvjárásnak, amit a mi falunk és házunkon beszélünk, ami csak arra a helyre jellemző.” (“We call what we use in our village to be a language dialect. What we have been speaking since we were children.”, “Language dialect is what we speak in our village, in our homes, what is characteristic of only that place.”)

There were answers that, contrary to the above, implied more deficient knowledge of metalanguage or that spread widespread language myths: „A magyar vagy más nyelvet sajátosabban, parasztiasabban beszélnek. Nekem személy szerint nagyon tetszik, kár hogy kihalóban van.”, „amikor nem tisztán beszélsz valamilyen nyelven”. (“They speak the Hungarian or other language in a more special, more peasant-like manner. Personally, I like it a lot, too bad it is going extinct.”, “when you don’t speak some language clearly”).

In total, however, the 280 school students who participated in the survey showed scientifically more grounded metalinguistic knowledge concerning the definition of language dialects than the teachers teaching them. We must mention here that among the respondent teachers there are several who last learnt about the Hungarian language or in Hungarian language in secondary school. We do not make analyses in this regard in the present study, but earlier studies supported that those who received dialectology or social-linguistical knowledge in the course of their studies had a more aware, more positive attitude towards non-standard variants [5; 15, p. 69–75; 16, p. 241–248; 17, p. 231–239; 18, p. 135–144). The last time teachers participating in the research (not teachers of Hungarian language) learnt about Hungarian language, it was in a homogenizing, single normative, replacing native language education concept.

Contrary to this, youth studying in classes 9 to 11 learnt about their native language according to the additive native language education method already; they could get to know its language system, but compared to the variant brought from home, they could gain knowledge about its language variants, usability. They could learn to choose the most appropriate according to their discretion from among the language codes they know, according to the situation. These relatively new skills probably influenced the results presented above. Indeed, from the answers of young people it turned out that compared to the data from 10 years ago they now had more positive, consistent statements about language dialects, their knowledge was more soundly based.

This is also verified by the proportions on the next illustration. While in 2008 only 27,5% of them declared themselves to be language dialect speakers, now this proportion is higher than that of the teachers.

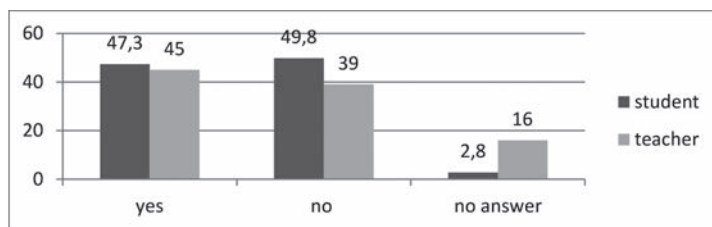


Fig. 2. Do you speak any language dialect? (%) N=280+100

Conclusions. Based on the results presented above it can be said that the majority of our hypotheses were verified: as the result of the additive approach a positive change can be observed in native Hungarian schools in Transcarpathia concerning the judgement of language dialects, dialect speakers. Both teachers and students consider themselves language dialect speakers in a greater proportion. The opinion of the teachers (despite my

hypothesis) is although reflected in the opinions of their students, still, the professional have a harder time distancing themselves from myths related to the native language many of them got used to in the course of their studies, career. The younger generation, who learnt scientifically soundly based knowledge from the textbooks prepared for the official curriculum form class 5 of elementary school, proved to be more perceptive for the multi-normative, more open approach. Teachers try to comply with the expectations they consider exist towards them. However, due to their deficient metalinguistic knowledge, in many times it leads to discrepancies, inconsistencies between the above reports and the statistical data.

Despite all this, compared to the data from 10 years ago, the native language education reform in Hungary can be called successful. Moving forward on this road, consistently in line with the additive approach, insisting on conveying scientific knowledge in both the public education and in higher education, native Hungarian teachers in Transcarpathia will show (and thus convey) an accepting attitude towards the potential regionally-enriched language use of their students, not only in intention, but in practice as well. In the past years, however, teaching Hungarian as native language in Transcarpathia detracted from the practiced ways (4, p. 150–164). This is definitely a step back from the perspective of successful native language education which could increase the prestige of Hungarian language.

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