

## POLYGLOT NATIONALISM. ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE IN 19TH CENTURY HUNGARY

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## **Polyglot Nationalism**

### **Alternative perspectives on language in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary**

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#### **Introduction**

The conventional, *monolingual* image of European linguistic nationalism that is evident in the scholarship of our day misrepresents the European past. It has blinded us to the disputatious discursive field in which the idea of monolingual nationalism gained continent-wide hegemony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. My goal in this essay is to focus on the alternative conceptualizations about language that this history elides. I document the *multilingualist* nationalisms that were proposed and enacted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by providing two kinds of evidence. The first comes from the ideologies of Hungarian linguists in the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These educated men denied the significance of “mother tongue” and proposed that loyalty to the Hungarian national cause was perfectly compatible with multilingual practice. The second source is the popular practice of “child exchange” through which many parents across the full range of social strata tried to ensure the multilingualism of their children. The practice survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Evidence like this has been omitted from our recent narratives of European linguistic nationalism. For instance, Benedict Anderson’s rightly influential book argued that print capitalism faced a world in which “the bulk of mankind is monoglot.” This claim erased the possibility of widespread multilingualism. Ernst Gellner declared that economic

modernization required a single national language. Both these theorists explained the practice of monolingualism in the very terms by which this practice was justified at the time they wrote their own analyses: as a “fatality” to be endured or a functional necessity for political and economic advance (Anderson 1991 [1983]: 38, Gellner 1983). Seeing monolingualism as a fatality or a necessity precluded understanding it as part of an ideology that had not always been hegemonic.

It has now become commonplace to analyze monolingualist nationalism as an ideology, yet we know little about the ways it was contested and finally triumphed. My aim is to show that many people in the Kingdom of Hungary (within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) *rejected* monolingual nationalism and instead valorized multilingualism. These alternative visions of language were often equally “nationalist.” Yet they imagined differently the relation between human linguistic abilities, languages, nations, and politics. This look backward seems particularly important now that multilingualism is being touted in European official circles with at least as much enthusiasm as monolingualism was urged for over a century and a half.

The first section considers how such a historical recuperation can aid current theory, as we analyze 21<sup>st</sup> century politics in which language diversity is increasingly valorized. Indeed, Austro-Hungary’s linguistic situation has again become interesting to scholars for its potential relevance to current language policies (Evans 2004, Rindler Schjerve 2003). Yet the comparison is problematic. I argue that the multilingualism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was quite different as an ideology and practice than the multilingualism of the current era. The second section of this essay analyzes scholarly arguments among Hungarian linguists that support this view. The third section takes up descriptions of “child exchange” that also show divergent values, as instantiated in the linguistic practices of popular classes. My focus is on German-speakers and Magyar-speakers. The goal is to analyze 19<sup>th</sup> century multilingualism and its supporting ideology in order to map the diverse discursive field out of which the monolingualist hegemony of the 20<sup>th</sup> century emerged.

### **1. Authenticity vs instrumentality in language ideology**

Although the 19<sup>th</sup> century visions I describe did not ultimately triumph, they are worthy of attention because they clarify the role of language ideology in regimes of linguistic diversity. Despite the dominance of monolingual nationalism for the last century and a half, today “monolingualism” is being devalued and “multilingualism” invoked as panacea in

the policy-circles of the European Union and in corporate headquarters. It is seen as a way to solve the linguistic problems of European unification and economic globalization. It seems contradictory that even while multilingualism in general is valorized, many multilingual migrants and multilingual regional minorities are having difficulties gaining state and supra-state recognition for their multilingualism. Yet, the contradiction is only apparent. As linguistic anthropologists have long known, “multilingualism” is not a unitary phenomenon; neither is it the crucial issue today. We should focus instead on the ideological axis of differentiation around which multilingualism in Europe is organized. That is one reason it is useful to look closely at the multilingualist ideologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They differed from official ideals of their time and from current official imaginings by rejecting the co-constitutive contrast between “authenticity” and “universality” that shaped linguistic practices in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues to do so in Europe’s current language regime.

Scholars distinguish two versions of linguistic nationalism. Both are ideologies traceable to 18<sup>th</sup> century thought, both presume language to be the major signal of a speaker’s singular national belonging, and both have been instruments of state-making. In the version attributed to philosophers like Herder, language is assumed to shape thought and thus national character. The national language is understood to be the reflex of speakers’ “authentic” self. This deep and even supposedly unconscious uniformity among speakers is seen as evidence of social cohesion, the genuine expression of a community. Such a community in turn justifies the demand for political unity. In the other version, of which post-revolutionary France is supposedly the great exemplar, citizens are taught to speak a single language so as to create social cohesion. As the story goes, the common language allows them to participate as universalized, abstract equals in a modern public sphere, part of a centralized state. Such participation, by using the state language, is supposedly heard as rational and disinterested.

Though often seen as opposites, these two positions share the presumption that a single language, with no rivals, is the proper mediator of a properly “modern” polity (Bauman and Briggs 2002: 195). They also share the view that monolingualism is the natural condition of ordinary people; learning a second language supposedly endangers the first cognitively. Politically too, multilingualism was seen as dangerous in this framework, raising the possibility that speakers had loyalties to more than one state. Concomitantly, a Europe-wide discourse of “civilization” came to evaluate monolingualism as the only “advanced”

and “modern” linguistic practice for states as well as for individuals. Western Europeans visiting the east of the continent took diversity of language as a sign of a chaotic and backward political economy, (Wolff 1994: 36, 38).<sup>1</sup>

States and their ruling elites attempted to enforce monolingualism among their citizens through linguistic standardization that invoked *both* these principles by valorizing “authenticity” on the one hand and “rational universality” on the other. Arguably, the ideological construction of this axis of differentiation – romantic authenticity and enlightenment universality – is itself the central feature of European language standardization.<sup>2</sup> Thus, authenticity vs. universality (what is sometimes called “symbolic” vs. “instrumental” value) are not simply alternatives but rather co-constitutive values that are seen to be “transcended” by the standard language that signals both, if at different scales and to different audiences (Gal 2006, Woolard 2008). At an international scale, speakers’ identity (i.e. “authenticity”) is indexed by use of their national standard language. Within the territory of the nation-state, or among speakers of the standard, that same national standard – in contrast to more “authentic” sounding regional languages, other registers, and local dialects – is heard as neutral, simply instrumental or informational. It is the objective “voice from nowhere.” The national language is “standard” exactly because it can be heard as both authentic and universal.

When regional languages are standardized, the process inadvertently reproduces this ideological contrast at a more limited scale. It creates within the ostensibly “authentic” regional language a relatively more universalizing (standardizing) register, thereby doubly demoting other, often rural, varieties of the regional linguistic form (see Urla 2001). Importantly, the ideological contrast can also be reproduced at a more encompassing scale. As Moore (2010) has shown, authenticity/ universality was exactly the distinction conjured up in the policy documents of the European Commission in 2007, in an attempt to organize and manage European multilingualism. In such documents, the ideal European speaker is figured as a multilingual. In this larger scale iteration of the ideological opposition, ideal speakers embody the “transcendence” of the constructed contrast between authenticity and universality *not* through use of a single standard, but by themselves

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1. Recent works look at effects of this ideological configuration, past and present: Heller 2007 and Duchêne 2008.
  2. Of course, many nation-states are legally multilingual and organized around different axes of value.

“having” at least one language for each value. In the current EU catch phrase: “one language for business, and other(s) for pleasure.”

At official levels the Austro-Hungarian Empire – and especially the Kingdom of Hungary within it – made substantial efforts to establish the kind of linguistically homogeneous nation-state that would be recognizable as “modern” within European politics. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for example, the “enlightened” ruler Joseph II tried to impose German as the language of administration on the entire Empire, which had large populations of speakers of at least eleven different languages, (Evans 2004). The Emperor’s initiative was opposed by Magyar<sup>3</sup> elites who confronted him with constitutional and strongly Herderian arguments, demanding that Magyar not German (or Latin) be the language of Hungary, and demanding an end to what they saw as the chaotic “poliglott Babel” of their polity (Gyurgyák 2007: 38). Once they had won the battle, Magyar elites imposed Magyar as the official state language on a linguistically diverse population within the Kingdom of Hungary. This is an example of the fractal nature of such language ideologies of differentiation (Irvine and Gal 2000). Hungary at the time had large compact settlements of German, Romanian, Slovak, Romani and South Slav speakers as well as smaller enclaves of Greek and Armenian-speakers.<sup>4</sup> Like the emperor, Magyar elites too saw their policies as a modernizing scheme, but for Hungary only. At the same time, the Magyar elite’s objections to Austria were reproduced within Hungary when elites arguing for Slovak, Romanian, Serbian and other nationalisms made monolingualist demands to the Hungarian state on behalf of minority languages.<sup>5</sup>

The history of Hungary within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy has often been schematized as a struggle between the two main versions of monolingual modernity: The centralizing state’s imposition of Magyar (the French model), in conflict with national mobilization, organized around other languages (the Herderian model). This essay

3. “Magyar” refers to language and the nationality, “Hungary” and “Hungarian” are the political labels for the state and its citizens. Given the large numbers of those living in Hungary who were not Magyars, note a further category of “Hungarus,” an 18<sup>th</sup> century designation for those who claimed loyalty to the state of Hungary but were not and did not want to become Magyar, (Pukánszky 2000, Seewann 2000).
4. For several of these languages, the literary and standard forms were just being developed by small language movements made up of clerics, nobles and some literati.
5. Magyar-speakers made up somewhat less than half of the total population but were the largest single group, according to estimates. Language groups were geographically distributed: Romanian in the east, Serb, Croatian and German in the south and west, Slovak and German in the north, Magyar in the center counties. Aristocracy and gentry were mostly Magyar, see Katus (2008).

looks at ideologies that question both. This revisionist view echoes the efforts of recent social historians writing about the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy. They have shown that the leaders of nationalist movements at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century battled widespread popular “indifference” to nationalist arguments based on language (Burger 1995, Judson 2006, Zahra 2009). The Monarchy did not simply fall apart in 1918 because it housed groups speaking different languages; rather, it was fractured by those who worked hard – sometimes against popular sentiment and official policies – in order to create social movements out of linguistic categories (see Brubaker 1996). On the Hungarian side, however, “indifference” was hardly the issue. Rather, a heightened politicization of language resulted in remarkably diverse views, among elites as well as popular classes.

## **2. Elite Linguists: The Beginnings of Linguistic Science**

As elsewhere in Europe, scholars in Hungary studying language in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century argued with each other about a long list of issues: “Speculative” linguistics opposed “naturalistic” approaches; those studying single languages argued against comparativism; morphological analysis contrasted with historical evidence. In Hungary, among those writing in Magyar – whatever their national background – these and other dimensions of difference were organized around views on polyglossia as desirable vs. dangerous. Some urged polyglossia; others celebrated “mother tongue” and monolingualism. They were all well-informed about trends elsewhere in Europe, but eclectic in their allegiances. The significance of a theory for them depended on its implications for particularly Hungarian circumstances.

The key figures, the men who disagreed vociferously with each other about the values vs. dangers of a “poliglott Babel,” were born between 1800 and 1825. They constituted a cohort in another sense as well: The decisive event in their lives was the failed Hungarian War of Independence against Austrian rule in 1848-9. This military action was a liberal revolution; it ended serfdom and declared relatively wide manhood suffrage. But it championed the Magyar language and failed to attract – indeed incited the opposition of – nationalizing elites arguing in favor of monolingualism in one of the many languages of the several nationalities (also called nations) within the Kingdom of Hungary. All of the scholars I discuss considered themselves liberals and patriotic citizens of Hungary, but not all claimed Magyar nationality. All supported independence and were active in the war. Yet some advocated mono-

lingualism in Magyar, others proposed a new comparative-historical linguistics that, for a few decades at mid-century, lent the weight of science to the idea of a polyglot modernity.

The Hungarian version of linguistic nationalism is well exemplified by writings of the 1880s, when the public atmosphere was pervaded by a frenzied celebration of everything Magyar. Popular magazines, textbooks and scholarly publications lauded the Magyar language while attacking polyglossia. A heated emotional tone was typical of the genre, as in a Budapest newspaper article that warned: "...the life of the nation is the life of its language...without it the nation ceases to exist ... and picks up the qualities of the nation whose language it adopts...and ruins its own." (Rákósi 1914 [1882]: 8-9).<sup>6</sup> There is an echo here of Herder's teachings in the connection made between language, thought and nation, but also in the fear that Magyar would die out – Herder had predicted as much in 1791 – and in the importance of language for the speaker's mentality. The supposedly inevitable dangers of bilingualism also loomed large in a more analytical register, written for teachers of language and literature:

...thinking necessarily and involuntarily follows the forms of language; what a person cannot say he cannot think... whoever speaks a particular language thinks in that language... and let me note that by mother tongue we mean the language with which one thinks. Ordinarily and generally every person has only one mother tongue. One can learn other languages too... but will never think with them, except at the price of forgetting how to think in one's original language...(Finály 1888: 25-26)

These ideas were part of the broad redefinition of "mother tongue" in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, to which Herder also contributed. For centuries the term had referred to the various, restricted and derogated codes other than Latin that were in use in daily life. Languages of the "folk" had long been used as a way to distinguish between speakers of different origins and backgrounds. In the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century such "mother tongues" came to signal linguistic forms deemed worthy of study as an "object" of scholarly attention; a means by which thought could be "reflective." Speakers were credited with *Sprachgefühl*, a special talent for the norms of their own language. This set the stage for the famous "emotionalization" of the concept in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when mother tongue was increasingly linked to childhood, identity, private interactions, and the sentimentality often attributed to the Victorian era (Ahlzweig 1994: 92-126, 127; Formigari 1999).

6. Translations from Magyar are my own.

In Hungary, Herder was not the only source for this set of ideas. Privileged youths – especially Protestants who avoided Catholic Vienna – often studied at German universities, in the course of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Göttingen was particularly favored. There they acquired directly what have since been called the foundations of “romantic science” (Leventhal 1987). Of the Hungarian students, some became leaders of the Magyar language revitalization movement and inspired a lineage of Magyar speakers open to “romantic” and relativistic ideas (Békés 1997). Fogarasi János (1801-1878)<sup>7</sup> was one of these, a lawyer, self-proclaimed *nyelvbölcsész* – the Magyar term coined to translate *Sprachphilosophie*, that is, an adept at a philosophical and psychological approach to language. As was typically the case, he was also a folklore collector and government bureaucrat. Fogarasi co-authored the first interpretive and etymological dictionary of the Magyar language, published in six volumes between 1862 and 1874.

During the years of his lexicographical work, Fogarasi’s perspective collided with the alternative view, presented most forcefully by the lawyer, historian, self-taught ethnologist and linguist Hunfalvy Pál (1810-91), who introduced the technical apparatus of comparative-historical linguistics to Hungary. The Academy of Sciences supported not only the dictionary but also the new Magyar-language journals edited by Hunfalvy in which the methods and theories of the dictionary were systematically debated. Thus these men were not only a single cohort, but also institutionally connected. Foreign publications were often summarized and critiqued at length, providing venues for arguments among Hungarians by proxy. Prestigious foreigners could be displayed as supporters of one’s ideas or as surrogates who could be presented as (apparent) attackers of one’s opponents.

We can locate directly the sympathies of the two contrasting Hungarian positions within the wider world of European writings by noting that Fogarasi reviewed Heymann Steinthal’s work with great admiration. Steinthal was the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century’s major representative of the neo-Humboldtian, philosophical view that located national spirit and mentality within the national language. Hunfalvy, by contrast, often dismissed Steinthal, but quoted with approval the technical work of Franz Bopp, a major exponent of the scientific and comparative approach that opposed Steinthal’s perspective. Hunfalvy wished to create a Finno-Ugric linguistics, on the model of Bopp’s study of

7. I use the Hungarian practice of surname first for Magyar names.

the Indoeuropean language family.<sup>8</sup> To some extent, the Hungarians reproduced among themselves the contrasting theoretical and methodological commitments found in the German and English-language scholarship of the time (see Morpurgo Davis 1994: chap 8). Hunfalvy called himself a *nyelvész* (linguist), in contrast to Fogarasi's claim to be a *nyelvbölcsész* (language philosopher). These labels also link each theorist to Europe-wide scholarly trends (Békés 1997). The Hungarian adversaries differed most on two crucial issues: The proper goals for a study of language and the relation of language to thought.

The language philosophers considered the goal of language study to be the description of Magyar. "Our first task is to reveal the inner secrets of our own language," wrote Czuczor, Fogarasi's co-author on the dictionary project. Accordingly, the dictionary focused on Magyar's spirit, its inner unity. The dictionary eschewed foreign models. They said this would "liberate" Magyar from Latin or German definitions and parallels. In etymology, the starting assumption was that all words used by Magyar-speakers were Magyar, never borrowings. The dictionary was meant for mother tongue speakers, who were supposed to learn the world through this language, not vice versa. Instead of explication, there were examples of usage from poets. This philosophical approach argued that just as in people, so in languages, individuals had certain *sajátosság* (particularity), along with universal features. Philosophers preferred to study those *eredeti* (original or authentic) aspects of Magyar not found in other languages (Fogarasi 1862: 45-46). These features were evidence of *egyedi észjárás* (unique habits of thought) and a source of pride in the contest for beauty and precision among the languages of the world. Those calling themselves linguists countered with the theoretical importance of controlled comparison within language families. Originality, wrote Hunfalvy, "... is a relational concept.... Considered by itself, every language is original; by comparing it with [the right, particular] others one finds the nature of that originality," (1863: 138).

The response to this dispute by a younger scholar reveals that more than academic politics was at stake in this argument. Siding with the philosophers, the younger man drew attention to the failure of the War for Independence and the subsequent censorship of the Hungarian press by Vienna. He wrote: "...in the recent past... talking about the

8. Jobs were involved: chairs at the university in Budapest and positions at lyceums, gymnasiums, and collegiums around the country. Assignments went through government channels; real-world politics alluded to in the debates also connected intellectual and institutional stakes.

originality of our language counted as a crime bordering on a violent attack.” In this view, linguistic study focused on Magyar, as “independent” of other languages, and “liberated” from German was likened to, indeed the equivalent of, patriotic devotion to an independent Hungary.

The linguists’ point of view proposed a different – no less political and no less nationalist – understanding of what Hungarian linguistics should be. Trying to deal with the failed Revolution during the subsequent period of Viennese censorship, Hunfalvy urged a regeneration of Hungarian scholarly life through the study of *all* the languages of Hungary. He acknowledged that Magyar should be the first priority of research. But it would be through a universal approach that included the study of “Vlach, the Carpathian and southern Slav, the forms of German....and...the Armenians and Gypsies.” This would allow “intellectual ownership of our historical territory,” (1856: 1-2). Political independence and political power were nowhere in sight, but Hungarian linguistics could aim for the intellectual power to claim the country. Study of Magyar itself was to be conducted not with “childish pride,” but as a contribution to the new pan-European and modern science of comparative-historical linguistics.

The difference of opinion about the relationship between language and thought was equally sharp and also had significant political implications. Hunfalvy the linguist denied the philosophers’ idea that mother tongue and thought constrain each other. He rejected the claim that the accent system of German explained German scholars’ propensity for detailed work, as well as the logical reverse: that French people’s predilection for story-telling caused the profusion of French past tenses (1862: 469). For him, thoughts in the form of concepts were ontologically different than words, which could only *represent* thought. Therefore, speech could not be “audible thought,” in the fashionable phrase attributed to Steinthal. Even less could language be characterized in that way. As a historical phenomenon, language was more like multiple strata of petrified thought (1864: 255-6).

For Hunfalvy and other self-styled linguists, language, thought and national characteristics were not related directly; they were mediated by the sovereign individual. To be sure, a nation’s language was its chief and most precious feature, he wrote. It is the nation’s intellectual property, carrying traditional traces of the nation’s experiences, deeds, sufferings and hopes. Yet, anyone who learned the language and its stories would share in these experiences and could thereby be part of the nation. The political, implication was clear: “...in addition to one’s so-called mother

tongue, learned in childhood, one can learn another language, many other languages, and in that way step into other societies, be a member of other nations, as one wills..." (1876: 47).

The next generation of Hungarian language scholars, the first to be professionally trained, adopted Hunfalvy's scholarly goals and methods. Language for them was indisputably a historical object to be studied comparatively and scientifically. Mainstream historiography today hails Hunfalvy as the first real linguist of Hungary. "Feeling" and "spirit" were banished to literary and popular discourse. Science was ostensibly separated from politics. It is rarely noticed, however, that the new linguists did not follow Hunfalvy in opposing the increasingly raucous political emphasis on monolingualism. While taking up Hunfalvy's call for a science of language, they did not continue his attempts to valorize polyglossia. On the contrary, monolingualism was supported by arguments from science about language as a systematic object separate from its speakers (see Gal 2001). Arguments between poet-philosophers and technical linguists continued, but within a wholly monolingualist frame.

### 3. Child Exchange and Polyglossia

We have few written declarations to help document the ideological assumptions guiding people less literate than linguists and philosophers. We must turn to the presumptions signaled by their linguistic practices as these were described by contemporaries. In several respects the presumptions of non-elites contradicted the dominant monolingualist ideology being pressed by the government. Three principles of this state-sponsored view became relevant to virtually all parents after mid-century because these touched on elementary schooling, which was made mandatory when a political compromise created the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867.

All three were baldly set out in 1875 in an influential polemic by the linguist Imre Sándor entitled "Nation and Education." The first principle was the corrupting influence – for cognitive development, linguistic facility, and for national loyalty – of exposure to foreign languages early in life, on the argument that only one "mother tongue" can shape each mind. The second principle was that nationality is signaled by language. Thus, for Imre the goal of speaking a foreign language without accent was "pointless and laughable." When it occurred, it was exceptional and suspect. A third principle followed logically: If children whose parents had non-Magyar mother tongues learned Magyar early enough, this would "... strengthen their patriotic character..." and so they could join

with “the children who [already] belong to our language and nation... in the great and noble spiritual fight ahead.” That imagined fight was the motivation for heeding the three principles. It was the evolutionary “struggle for survival” among nations that Imre saw as the “mood of our era,” (Imre 1875: 115-116). In the same spirit, he urged Magyar literati to stop imitating foreign models, in order that Magyar could become competitive with German as a means of advance on the European civilizational scale. In a more mundane sense, knowledge of Magyar enabled individual upward mobility in the late decades of the century as the state imposed increasingly strict policies that required Magyar for employment in administration, and later for school teaching.

The leaders of the non-Magyar nationalities in Hungary argued for their languages by invoking the very same three monolingualist principles. In the struggle for numbers that would signal “survival” in international politics, all sides saw assimilation (*asszimiláció*) as the threatening evil. This was an old concept, put to new use largely through the novel administrative tool of the census. While the first census conducted by Hungary within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867 refused to count nationality at all, by the second (1880) the Hungarian statistical bureau, like the Austrian one, had succumbed to international and domestic pressure to count “mother tongue” as an index of nationality.<sup>9</sup> The Hungarian bureau’s director feared that Magyar speakers would show low numbers vis-à-vis the combined total of other language groups. According to demographically and democratically inflected political ideas, this would undermine the Magyar claim to being the ruling national group in the country. He proposed to counterbalance the required question about mother tongue with a further one: “Besides your mother tongue, what other language of our country do you speak?” He argued that: “If our nation has the ability to assimilate others, the answers to this question will reveal how many of our citizens have learned Magyar, and we know that anyone who once learns to speak our melodious language will be welded to our nation and will stop being a foreign element in our homeland,” (Keleti 1882: 10).

It is a great irony of the era that while bilingualism was feared and denounced by the official voices of the Magyar elite, it was also carefully measured and tracked by a different arm of that same officialdom. In the dominant logic of the Magyar elites – shared by the otherwise violently

9. For a discussion of the debate around the census in the Austrian half of the Monarchy, see Burger (1995).

opposed Slovak, Romanian and other linguistic nationalists – bilingualism was a temporary condition between monolingualisms. Frequency of bilingualism and hence of “assimilation” became a matter of obsessive attention for politicians of all national groups in Hungary. In the next century and a half, the definition, possible causes and final consequences of “assimilation” as measured by numbers of bilinguals in the census have continued to be topics of hot contention among politicians and historians of the Monarchy’s successor states. The census itself has been analyzed as evidence of “forced assimilation” (historical blame) or “voluntary assimilation” (self-defense against blame). More recent scholarship has pointed out that the census is more an indication of state ideology than of popular usage, thus not a reliable guide for this kind of moral argument (Szarka 1995, Babejová 2003).

My strategy here is to turn to other sources of evidence for popular – as opposed to official – presumptions about language. (Auto)biographical materials and family histories make clear that in all social strata, in all regions, and among speakers of all the languages of Hungary there were some parents who wanted their children to learn *several* languages. The expression *hazai nyelvek* “the languages of our country,” was in common use to designate the field of languages at stake. Arrangements varied across strata and regions, but the terms and concepts of “child exchange” (e.g. *gyerekcseré*, *Kindertausch*) or “guest child” were widely familiar in all the languages. The goal was named in cognate terms: In Magyar and German, children were said to go *a német szóra*, *das ungarisch Wort zu hören* “for the German word; to hear the Magyar word.” There were widely accepted informal norms governing the behavior of the children as well as the host families. Thus, parents participated in an informal yet institutionalized social system that was neither universal nor unusual. There was no stratum or sector of Hungarian society that failed to participate; but there was also no stratum in which everyone took part. Numbers are of course impossible to ascertain. More important is the fact that, in these practices, the three ideological principles of the official “line” were systematically negated; moreover, knowledge of languages was evaluated in ways that cross-cut what would become the “authenticity/instrumentality” axis of differentiation.

Contrary to the dominant advice that warned parents of the dangers of early language learning, many parents acted on the assumption that children should and could learn languages in early childhood, between the ages of five and eleven, preferably by practicing the language in a milieu where it was widely spoken. In service to this goal they took on

financial burdens and accepted separations from their young children that often lasted for a year or more. Arrangements differed by social stratum.

The highest strata relied on private tutors along with monastic and military academies. Tutors lived with families and taught German, Latin and French to the children of aristocrats, magnates and wealthy burghers. Many young men of modest background but good education and seeking careers in law or teaching, spent their twenties as private tutors for aristocratic families. Latin had been part of elite curriculum for centuries. In the “enlightenment spirit” of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, learning of languages other than Latin became part of elegant child-rearing in Hungary. Let Kazinczy Ferenc (1759-1831), a nobleman, writer and cultural leader of the Magyar language movement stand as an example of this stratum. Kazinczy’s first language was Magyar; at seven or so he had a German tutor who hailed from Késmark, in the German-speaking northern region of Hungary. By the age of nine Kazinczy went to the Késmark lyceum himself to learn German better. His wife, from a more distinguished aristocratic family, had attended a nunnery school near Vienna from age 5, where French was the language of instruction. By all accounts she spoke French, German, Magyar, and Slovak in that order of proficiency (Dávidházi 2004: chap 2).

The linguistic training of aristocrats did not change much over the century. In 1833, before entering on his career as a linguist, Hunfalvy – aged 23 and fluent in German, Magyar and French – served as tutor to the children of Baron Podmaniczky, who were aged seven and ten (Urbán 1986). Even before tutors arrived, such children – like Kazinczy’s wife – would have learned something of the languages of nursemaids hired from the local farming population that often spoke other languages than the parents and tutors: Slovak, Romanian, German, and/or Magyar.

Middle or small nobility, living on agricultural estates of smaller size – often simple subsistence farmsteads – could rarely afford tutors. They are our first example of “child exchange,” or the more common version, “guest” children. Elementary schools – whether run by churches or the state – invariably provided teaching in each community’s main language, at least until the 1880s. Sending one’s child to distant kinsmen whose estates were in regions that spoke languages other than the family’s own would secure elementary education in those languages, since church schools taught in the region’s languages (see Kosáry 1996). Middle nobles often took advantage of their far-flung kin ties and the linguistic mosaic of the country to educate sons in this way. Higher levels of education also provided such opportunities. Gymnasiums throughout the century

taught mainly Latin and classical texts, but some were famous for also encouraging German, Magyar or Slovak studies, or for being attended by students who spoke one of those languages, or being located in cities with majority populations speaking one of those languages, thereby providing a linguistically diverse milieu.

Let Krasznai Péter (1830-1916) stand as one example of this stratum. He was from a Roman Catholic, Magyar-speaking family with a small estate in a northeastern county. He began writing a diary in 1858. According to the summary of his childhood with which he began the diary, his father decided the son should enter the priesthood after noticing the young child's cleverness with words. In September of 1835, the father sent the five year old to relatives in another village where "for two years [I] practiced the German and Magyar languages." He was then sent to other relatives and other schools: At age 10, he started studying Latin at a gymnasium, and at 14 he went to another gymnasium in a linguistically mixed town in order to follow his father's wishes to "practice German and Slovak," (Takács 1991: 58-9). The father died in 1846 and Krasznai married instead of entering the priesthood. Later, he studied law, fought for independence in the 1848 revolution, and entered local politics near his ancestral estate.

Burgher families also sent their children away at the age of eight or so. Merchants, administrators, and craftsmen in the cities were often German-speaking. If they had no relatives to serve as hosts in other towns or cities, they relied on business connections in cities with Magyar or Slovak-speaking majorities. Or, they would write to a school director in a town known to speak (mostly) the target language, and to a school operated by their own church – whether Catholic or a Protestant denomination. The director would then find a suitable family for the child, often the director's own. Sometimes children from such families were actually "exchanged," so that each family both sent and hosted a child. In that case no money was involved. But for children who simply went as "guests" there were expenses of upkeep. There were also norms for behavior, described in detail by memoirists with burgher backgrounds: Children were to obey their host parents as they would their own and to call them "mother" and "father;" host adults were expected to treat guest children kindly and not use the child's mother tongue, even if they knew it. As a rule, parents did not visit their child until the child's sojourn of a year or more was over, nor did children return home for visits.

The only son of the Schedel family provides a good example. Franz (1805-1875) grew up to be a poet and literary critic. His father and

mother were German-speakers in Buda (later part of Budapest), the father a postal administrator. They sent their son to the largely Magyar-speaking city of Cegléd at the age of eight for the express purpose of learning Magyar, or learning it better than in largely German-speaking Buda. In memoirs written many decades later, the by-then famous literary man fondly recalled the whole year, and especially the older sister in the host family who secretly helped him learn Magyar. His father sent him a few years later to a largely Slovak-speaking city to attend school and learn that language, but with less happy and less successful results. While young Schedel is remembered by his older self as a happy “guest child,” other memoirists remembered horrible experiences of loneliness and discomfort (Dávidházi 2004: chap 2). Families who had such arrangements helped others to forge them. Schools, cities and families often remained connected in this way over several generations.

Child exchange was also practiced by farmers and artisans. This was especially true along the informal borders of linguistically contrasting regions, or where sets of villages in a single region spoke different languages. The details of local practices are documented in scattered reports from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> among Slovak-German- and Magyar-speaking villagers in the northern counties, along the boundary between compact Magyar, German, and Slovak settlements (see Liszka 1996, Kósa 1987). But the practice was also common in the southwest and around German-speaking cities, where children were sent into neighboring villages that spoke other languages and vice versa.

Inter-village arrangements were no less systematized than urban ones. Children were as young as 8 and as old as 14; they stayed for a year, sometimes more. Sending and hosting were coordinated so that neither family lost workers needed in seasonal tasks and only two or three children would be sent from a village in any year. Well-to-do farmers were most likely to participate in such systems. Child-exchange was often linked to exchange networks of other kinds, such as small-scale regional divisions of labor (grain vs. wine) or of expertise (crafts vs. animal husbandry). If these villages – as happened in the southwest of the country and in the east –also differed in their main languages, then child exchange was a likely concomitant of trade. But even landless laborers sometimes considered language learning important enough to seek servant-work for their children in the households of farmers who spoke other languages than their own. Even girls were sent in such circumstances to take care of younger children or help with household tasks (Kósa 1987). Among

farmers, as in cities, there were norms for behavior: the child was to be treated age-appropriately, as a member of the family, to sit at the family table for meals and to do the farm work assigned. As in cities, families' exchange relations often lasted for several generations.

People of virtually every social stratum participated to some extent in these various modes of language learning.<sup>10</sup> The expense and effort in travel, and the care in creating or sustaining the social arrangements, all suggest that many parents did not consider polyglossia dangerous for the development of their children, nor harmful for the very young. On the contrary, many sought it out. How did they understand the goal and value of multilingualism? It is not possible to survey here all the many different ways people thought about the advantages of multiple languages. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary, people generally claimed at least one linguistic form as "their own," but this did not preclude more than one as "our own," nor did it devolve into the familiar dichotomies of today's official multilingualism.

To be sure, learning Magyar in families speaking other languages could be instrumental, a step towards upward mobility; and in such cases Magyar also guaranteed authenticity as a citizen of Hungary, if one adopted other aspects of Magyar habitus. Thus both instrumentality and authenticity could be involved as motivating values. Many people born into German-speaking families achieved upward mobility into scholarly, pedagogical, artistic and diplomatic careers in part by adopting Magyar in this way (Pukánszky 2000 [1940]). These are the classic "assimilators" of the standard narratives. Despite the association of German with the more prestigious and richer Austrian half of the monarchy, despite the status of German as an international language and as a respected language of scholarship, in Hungary it remained relatively unstandardized and hence resonant of the provinces (Hutterer 1991: 253-285). The enthusiastic assimilators, following the official discourse, argued that Magyar was more elegant and superior; they derogated German as unpatriotic, unnecessary and rustic, (Maitz 2005).

Yet, these ostensible "assimilators" did not always give up German, nor did their children. And there were often other values invoked than the authenticity/instrumentality axis. Among the many such patterns in evidence, I focus here on two. First, skillful polyglossia was a linguistic practice that indexed many relatively lofty social positions. Titled aristocrats were assumed to be multilingual throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century;

10. An important issue that could not be taken up in this context is the actual linguistic form of the multilingualisms of 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary.

no single language was taken as a sign of their social identity. Their national belonging was recognized and valued, but was not signaled by a single language. In addition, until the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the well-to-do stratum of merchants in the city then known in Magyar as Pozsony (German: Pressburg, later Slovak: Bratislava) identified themselves as Germans, but they prided themselves on being trilingual in German, Magyar and Slovak. They sent their sons to three different gymnasias in succession, as a means of assuring the trilingualism that indexed their social position. Through the lens of the ideology that became hegemonic, one might see this as Germans reluctantly – or eagerly – learning other people's languages in the interests of economic advance. But in the native perspective of the time trilingualism constituted the proof of one's belonging to the upper stratum of merchants in Pozsony/Pressburg. This did not endanger the Germanness of the merchant families, nor their political stance as Hungarian citizens (Sas 1973, Babejová 2003: 38-42).

A similar ideology was typical of much of the clergy. As we have seen, Krasznai Péter's father sent him to learn languages in order to prepare him for the Catholic priesthood. Many parallel examples come from the Lutheran clergy, who often started as speakers of German. One such man revealed in his memoirs his self-understanding as a German by nationality (a member of the *Volk*), and also a fervent Hungarian nationalist who wrote poetry in Magyar and German. During his long ministry in a German-speaking village he encouraged the child exchange system that assured bilingualism in German and Magyar for the village's agricultural population (Seidler 2004). The relationship of clerics to their languages cannot be seen as instrumental or authentic. Consciousness and devotion to their non-Magyar nationality and speech did not preclude knowledge of Magyar and patriotic attachment to Hungary.

A second pattern is evident from descriptions of polyglossia in the countryside. We have seen that child-exchange in rural areas was often a concomitant of trade and markets. Thus, one might be tempted to see the second language acquired in this way as valued for its economic instrumentality. Yet on closer inspection it is clear that farmers went out of their way to sacralize and sentimentalize the exchange relation and hence the language learning that went along with it. In some cases people insisted that the commodities traded were only an excuse for the child exchange that established long lasting relations between families and villages (Kósa 1987). Elsewhere it became common to seek godparents for one's own children in the village where one had been a guest child, even

if this meant the otherwise unusual step of crossing religious lines to seek godparents (Andrásfalvy 1972). No simple judgment of instrumentality will cover these circumstances.

#### 4. Conclusions

My goal has been to describe some of those alternative ideological configurations in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary that have been elided by the overwhelming success of monolingualism and the axis of differentiation that justifies and organizes it: authenticity vs. instrumentality. This distinction is a foundational feature of European standardization under the aegis of linguistic nationalism. It legitimates standard languages that are heard as both authentic (in international contexts) and universal or disinterested (domestically). The semiotic principle of fractal recursion that is so common in language ideologies has allowed this distinction to be invoked at narrower scales and at wider scales. Today, while continuing to index national or regional/ethnic selves, some uses of national and regional linguistic forms are commodified, that is resignified as instrumental, “useful” in an economic sense (Heller 2007). At a more encompassing scale, the attempts to organize and *manage* multilingualism in Europe have invoked this dichotomy, designating the multilingual person as the ideal European who embodies a transcendence of the founding dichotomy not by speaking a standard language that itself overcomes the difference, but rather by command of a linguistic repertoire in which one language is “for business” (instrumental) and at least one language is a mother tongue or “for pleasure” (authenticity).

Set against this ideological formation are the alternatives that were debated and enacted in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary, ones neglected by the historiography of linguistic nationalism. The evidence suggests that print capitalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not build on a “fated” monolingualism. On the contrary, a widespread customary system that produced multilinguals was destroyed by the ideology of monolingual nationalism and later linguistic centralization. Those practicing child exchange were not primarily interested in distinguishing one language as “ours,” and thus a sign of our true identity, in opposition to another language that was merely “useful.” This distinction does not do justice to the various 19<sup>th</sup> century perspectives evident in the historical materials. Distinct nationalities were claimed by speakers, identities were signaled by linguistic practice, but often not by the exclusive use of a single language.

As these materials suggest, nineteenth century Hungary was a rather unusual polity in Europe. Like France, it had very large linguistic minorities (more than half the population). Unlike France, it had

little centralization in education, politics or the economy. It also lacked strong regional governments that could have been linked to linguistic or religious difference, as in Switzerland. Many of the languages extant in the country had not been standardized; the intelligentsia fighting for the minority languages was in many cases extremely small. Until the end of the century there was no single, country-wide status hierarchy among the four or five demographically largest languages. For much of the century, Latin remained a lingua franca. The official and ultimately magyarizing educational policy at the end of the century was never fully implemented for want of funds. The country was domestically-independent, with a separate government yet economically, militarily and in foreign policy it was a subsidiary and troublesome dependent of Vienna. Such factors certainly contributed to the emergence of the diverse language ideologies I have discussed here. But this cannot explain them.

Language ideologies constitute a separate factor in understanding the significance and political implications of linguistic practices. “Multilingualism” is not a single analytical category for scholars, nor is it a singular practice. The multilingualism urged by today’s official Europe is quite different in the axis of differentiation that it evokes than the various modes of multilingualism conceptualized, proposed and practiced in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary. The descriptions of the earlier patterns allow us to see more clearly how the official discourse of that time emerged from a field of alternatives – created and reproduced in non-official social domains – that contested ways of imagining the links between language, human abilities, nation and identity. A novel picture of one piece of the European past is valuable in its own right. It also usefully reveals some of the discursive work that went into establishing hegemony for what became the dominant view.

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