



**LANGUAGE USE,
ATTITUDES, STRATEGIES.
LINGUISTIC IDENTITY
AND ETHNICITY IN THE
MOLDAVIAN CSÁNGÓ
VILLAGES**



Edited by: Lehel Peti – Vilmos Tánzos



THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE
FOR RESEARCH ON
NATIONAL MINORITIES

Cluj-Napoca, 2012

Title: *Language Use, Attitudes, Strategies. Linguistic Identity and Ethnicity in the Moldavian Csángó Villages*

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Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României
Language Use, Attitudes, Strategies. Linguistic Identity and Ethnicity in the Moldavian Csángó Villages / ed.: Lehel Peti, Vilmos Tánczos. - Cluj Napoca : Editura Institutului pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2012
Bibliogr.
ISBN 978-606-8377-01-8

I. Peti, Lehel (ed.)

II. Tánczos, Vilmos (ed.)

81

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Layout: Ferenc Sütő

Printed by: IDEA and GLORIA Cluj

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Klára SÁNDOR

Discourses on discourses: can we understand each other?

The year 1990 was a landmark in the Csángó research as well, as even if not immediately, the changes in the former socialist block created the basic conditions so that within a few years we could have access to a greater amount of research material than in the long decades before. Regarding the subjects studied, the number of researchers, the applied approaches, as well as the quantity of the publications, the research of the Csángós started to take shape in the second half of the 1990s.

One of the characteristics of the scholarly literature on the Csángós is that they do not or hardly ever include professional debates. One reason for that is that a significant part of this literature primarily focuses on presenting the newly collected empirical data – regardless of the whether they were collected and interpreted according to the rules of the classical ethnographic or anthropological approach. The descriptions of the respondents, of course, provide essential raw material for those interested in the various aspects of the community life of the Csángós, however they do not generate scientific debates, which is understandable. This does not mean that the scholarly literature on the Csángós does not feature any debating ideas, but these are mainly of a political-cultural ideological nature, and are closely connected to the two main discourses, which have long dominated the political and public thinking in the Hungarian culture. However this feature often seems to remain hidden, the distance between the individual views is presented as a “professional” antithesis, masking the ideological differences .

This can well be experienced in the Conversation¹ represented by the above mentioned writings which stimulate the undertaking or analyze the results of political actions. The supporters of the discourses participating in the Conversation are not necessarily aware of the fact that they formulate their

1 The interpretation of the Conversation follows below.

views in different frames of interpretation, so it is not uncommon that many of the supporters of the discourses think that they move within the same conceptual frame as the ones expressing the other view, so the other is simply “not right”. This phenomenon is very common in the scientific debates as well,² in the political, social, cultural space of the public discourse, if not exclusive, it can at least be considered general. Thus it is also understandable, that when the researchers of the Csángós analyze the effects of political actions, their disputes are not “professional” in nature, that is, they do not refer to the credibility of the data employed, to the applied methodology, the character of the arguments, the validity of the conclusions, but visualize different ideologies, mostly though, as I have mentioned, hidden – presented as a “professional” debate – but rarely also explicitly formulated.

Discourses and Conversation in the Csángó scholarly literature³

Discourses and Conversation

I use the terms *discourse* and *Conversation* in the same sense as James Paul Gee does (Gee 1999) slightly modified. The discourse (at Gee “with capital D”) is the ensemble of language use, actions, interactions, way of thinking, beliefs and values that display some kind of identity.⁴ A person can, of course, have more identities, thus he can display multiple discourses, and these discourses can get in conflict with each other. The Conversation indicates debates in the social/community sphere, that many recognize, and when they designate their own positions within them, and even the supposed position of others, it

- 2 Somewhat loosening the Kuhnean interpretation, the discourses existing parallel to each other can be called *paradigms* as well, with the restriction that incommensurability between them is not categorical, but scalable, and the paradigms in this interpretation are not only “mainstream” and “inclusions” (Békés 1997), but parallel to each other, and at least regarding the academic life as a whole, may be present as (almost) equal “trends” (see Sándor 1999a, 1999b).
- 3 The analysis focuses on the scholarly literature published in the last two decades, but where appropriate, I also mention earlier written works as historical-intellectual antecedents.
- 4 At Gee discourse “with a small d” means oral or written “text”, manifestation in the narrow linguistic sense. This distinction is not relevant here, and at the same time the discourse as a usual term represents what Gee calls a Discourse, and that is why I deflect from his way of writing.



also indicates identity (in a classical sense, such are the “divisive” social issues, for ex. abortion, the issue of smoking, the methods of education, etc). Thus Conversation is actually the debate of key discourses in a given community.

It seems that from the point of view of background ideology the scholarly literature on the Csángós can basically be placed between two poles. The texts which build the Conversation can be located on the scale between the two ends. There are authors whose works are less diffuse, and can mostly be placed around one pole or the other, the work of others is located between the two poles depending on the actual subject, genre and occasion, and sometimes even within the same writing this shift can be easily perceived, reflecting both the dynamism of identities and their contextualized nature.

The ideological (attitude) background of the writings on the Csángó communities, as in all discourses, basically determines the motivation according to which the researchers dealing with the question choose the Csángó topic as a broader subject, to which questions they devote more or less attention, which data they work with, which theories and methods they choose when processing their material, how they present their results, including in what proportion they choose the canonized elements of style of the scientific prose (and what they regard to be the relevant practice of the scientific prose), respectively the linguistic formation more typical for journalism; do they formulate proposals for action, and if so, of what kind (for who, to what imperative degree etc); how do they formulate the critique of the interpretations that are different from their own.

Embedding the Csángó-Conversation in the Nation-Conversation

The Csángó-Conversation of course does not exist in itself: the discourses involved in it through the relevant views and components of identity-marking are embedded in those great discourse-currents (and in their Conversations) which permeate the Hungarian culture, and they provide the interpretative framework of the Csángó-Conversation. Because the nation-issue is the strongest feature of the literature on the Csángós, at least the Hungarian authors cannot avoid somehow taking a stand in the Nation-Conversation. Those who don't do it are brought to book for it, whereas with the non-Hungarian authors this expectation does not appear.

A detailed presentation of the Nation-Conversation of the Hungarian culture is not possible here, but we cannot disregard its basic features. Briefly: the designation of the discourses constituting the Nation-Conversation is already problematic, because any denomination shows the point of view and interpre-

tation of one or the other discourse. During the history of the Conversation, the ones identifying with one or the other discourse gave multiple denominations to their opposition in point of view, the content of these denominations do not fully overlap, but there are quite considerable, sometimes lesser superimpositions between them. Today's Nation-Conversation is rooted fundamentally in the age of the forming of the Herderian concept of nation, analogically dominating the public discourse today, while more direct antecedents are to be sought in the first decades of the 20th century. One of the discourses described itself with the terms "Westernism, Europeanism, civilization, progress, acceptance of modernity, openness towards other cultures," while considering the other as "closing in, provincialism, backwardness, uncivilised". The other discourse defined itself first as being "Hungarian", to this the attributes "courage, being chosen, tradition, the cultural leader of the area" were added. In the 1920s, 1930s, these discourses were already explicitly linked to political ideologies, the first was connected to social democratic and liberal principles, while the other to conservative national organizations. In the communist era, from the end of the 1940s to the late 1980s no discourse could obtain a place in public spheres, but they were still covertly present. Just before the 1990 elections, the conflict between the two discourses strongly re-intensified. According to the most general interpretation, the fracture was provided clearly by a "national" versus "anational" separation for the conservative side, that called itself "national", while for the liberal sympathizers the difference between the two discourses was interpreted especially along the "enlightened" vs. "backward" opposition.

The Hungarian political discourse over the past twenty years has polarized the public opinion almost to oblivion.⁵ The discourse of the ones defining themselves by a "national"⁶ way of thinking lay a special emphasis on the Christian identity, on the grandiose or tragical historical events of the Hungarian history and sometimes on the cult of traditions defined as "folk", and increasingly on "independence" (explicitly on an anti-Europe and anti-U.S. attitude). According to the interpretation of the ones identifying themselves with

5 The political implications are valid for the situation in Hungary, but the characteristics of the discourses are larger in effect, in the Hungarian language culture and scientific life they can be considered generally valid.

6 It would be more accurate to call it "national/nationalist" discourse, to show both perspectives, for simplicity I denote the discourse only by its own name (this does not mean that I would consider the implication concealed as generally extendable, according to which the ones who don't follow the value system of this discourse, wouldn't be "patriots"). In the Hungarian language the word "patriotic" has a positive, the word "nationalistic" a negative connotation.



this discourse, they represent the interests of the nation, the other side is unpatriotic, even treasonous, cosmopolitan, unbeliever (irreligious). In this discourse the different opinions are judged on a moral level; they are not simply a “different opinion”, but “betrayal” because the only right way to experience the “national feeling” is identified with their own ideas and practices.

The ones identifying themselves with the other discourse use no denomination for themselves, they define their political identity “as leftist” as well as “liberal”. Despite the differences between them regarding their discourses, they build a common discourse regarding the concept of nation, the basic values (with different accents) of which are freedom, solidarity, modernization, belonging to the European culture, urbanization, future centeredness, tolerance and rationalism. In this discourse differing opinions are not the sign of moral weakness, but rather simply “distinct opinions” without any evaluation, dissent or faulty reasoning, unpreparedness, or interpreted as a possible consequence of a low intellectual level.

The fundamentally different approach of different opinions is the result of the opposition between the approaches of the two discourses. The “national” discourse openly accepting transcendentalism, if it wants to take itself seriously, can’t do anything else but regard its own interpretation framework as being solely valid: if it did not do so, it would essentially undermine its own credibility. However, as a necessary consequence, it also questions the moral legitimacy of all non-identical discourses, regards all actions resulting from the different discourses as sin, considers only its own (Herderian) concept of nation and culture exclusive, and questions the simultaneity of identities. All this result in the fact that it can conceive debates only in its own discourse, with its own concepts, within its own conceptual framework. If the other discourse provides the framework for a debated text, it does not even try to interpret it according to its rules, and either morally condemns it, or simply ignores its existence. Accordingly, the self-defining elements of the “other” discourse, relativism and tolerance in the “national” discourse is interpreted as “lack of value” and “anarchy”.

According to the “other” discourse (for the time being I will call it that) “culture” is in fact the totality of cultures, identity is not static, but dynamic, instead of the categorical (essentialist)⁷ Herderian concept of nation, the interpretation of the “nation” in the (non scientific) common talk of the discourse it comes increasingly closer to the Andersonian one; it is actually an ensemble of imagined community traditions, interpretations, cultures, patterns of behaviour, ideologies and identities (see Anderson 1983). Considering the expe-

7 On essentialism referring to linguistic meaning see Janiczki 1999.



rience of the transcendental as a private matter, not a moral command, the “other” discourse is not only aware that there are other discourses besides it, but does not deny their *raison d’être*. The ones opting for the constructed identity in this discourse, according to their own assumption, choose from the discourses based on rational considerations. (This is how they experience it, even though they are obviously affected by their emotions.) Therefore they primarily have a dispute with the other discourse, but do not seek to exclude it from the Conversation (and thus nullify it).

The essential words in the construction of identity in the two discourses have of course, different meanings, even if they seem identical. This is trivial when it comes to labelling identity: conservative is positive in the “national” discourse, while it has a rather negative meaning in the “other”. In contrast *liberal* in the “national” discourse is negative, while in the liberal one it has a positive connotation.⁸ Other key words (*nation, progress, history, past, future, Europe, tolerance, emotion, intellect* etc.) also have different meanings, because they are filled with sense within different discourses.

Embedding the Csángó-Conversation in the scientific discourses

The Csángó-Conversation is embedded in the Nation-Conversation on the level of public discourse on the one hand, on the other on the level of scientific discourses. The two are closely intertwined in the case of the Csángós, and this is in itself a source of conflicts. In the public discourse the “national / nationalist” discourse is dominant, however the relationship is more balanced within the scientific discourses. In the social sciences (sociology, social psychology, psychology) the “other” discourse is general, which in this case can be called a “constructivist”⁹ approach. This is understandable, since the ideology of constructivism was born mostly from the results in these areas.

These disciplines are free from the official political ideological influence, which the majority of the human sciences has not recovered from, and because of which the approach of the historical, literary, linguistic and ethnographic sciences is highly fragmented, not only in a scientific but also in a

8 On the variability of the words defining the identity of the political parties see Sándor 2004.

9 The scope of the construction is differently judged by some trends, for example the social constructivism and the naturalist-evolutional approaches, but in the aspect relevant for us they can be interpreted within a common framework.



political, ideological sense as well.¹⁰ The followers of these disciplines have their own areas of science labelled as “national science” because the subject of their research is the Hungarian culture, language, history, and thus deliberately lift it from under international control and system of rules of the particular science. From the point of view of the scientific orientation of the works identified as parts of “national science”, these are often built upon the positivist tradition, their authors are strongly against theories in the sense that they reject the cognitive frames offered by the modern schools, and suppose that a Hungarian author dealing with a “Hungarian national subject” must handle its research material differently, permanently keeping the assumed uniform “national interest” in mind. This negative attitude towards theory was for a long time a form of the behaviour required by the political ideology of the communist dictatorship regarding “Western science”, so it actually expressed the “socialist” – “capitalist” opposition.¹¹ After 1990 this opposition endured, but “national science” was re-interpreted, and now suits the discourse that dominates the common talk: the “socialist” was switched to “national” and the “capitalist” became “non-Hungarian (alien)”.

This division is of course present in the scholarly literature on the Csángós as well, particularly visible in the relationship between the “traditional” ethnographic, respectively the “modern / foreign” anthropological interpretation, because the two approaches also define themselves as two distinct disciplines (see Ilyés 2008). However, the division cannot at all be described as being clear, because amongst the authors of the articles that place themselves in the “ethnographic” category there are some who use the elements of the “constructivist” conceptual framework (as well) in their ethnographic-anthropologic activity, in other articles proposing more Csángó related actions however are dominantly thinking within the framework of the “national” discourse of the common talk.

It is obvious that the author of the present study cannot place herself outside the above-described discourses – just like no one else in her opinion. From the scientific discourses, I identify myself with the “constructivist” (within that the evolutionary linguistic) approach, while from “the nation-

10 But the “escape” is due to the fact that dictatorship tried to overshadow them as much as possible.

11 For more details see the articles in the volume edited by Harlig and Pléh (Harlig–Pléh 1995).



discourses” with the liberal one.¹² In my scientific work I share the general directive among the fellow-linguists that it is our duty to use the knowledge acquired during our research for the benefit of the studied community. I agree also that we must be aware of the fact that there can be no ideology-free science, so we should try to achieve the highest possible degree of objectivity in our scientific work.

The interpretation of the Csángó related discourses from the perspective of the “national” discourse (interpreted from a “constructivist” perspective)

Regarding the differences in ideology and approach identifiable in Csángó related scientific publications, little explicit comments can be found in the literature – the majority either does not consider it to belong to its research topic, or regards the texts representing different discourses as professional differences in opinion. So far perhaps Vilmos Tánzos (Tánzos 2001) wrote in the most explicate way on the discourses of Csángó literature.

Tánzos, according to his topic labelled by the title of his article, did not plan to write about the two existing discourses of science, but mainly intended to disclaim the science-critique coming from the “Csángó rescuers”, volunteers and activists calling for action. According to Tánzos this criticism often finds the anthropological and ethnographic descriptions useless, which constitute the bulk of writings on the Csángós, they would rather increase the number of “rescue-actions” instead.¹³ The author’s primary intention is also achieved, nevertheless a whole subchapter is devoted to the antithesis of the two scientific discourses.

He calls one of them “community-centred”: this according to Tánzos’s description considers identity as being of community nature, which can be formed by intellectuals, while intellectuals have the moral responsibility to shape the identity of the community. Tánzos considers this kind of thinking

12 From the various possible interpretations of the term *liberal*, I identify mostly with the social-liberal one, which in its answers and approach stands probably closest to the Democratic Party in the U.S., so before all a human rights liberalism and not an economic neo-liberalism. It might be relevant for the interpretation of the “national” interpretation below, that between 2003–2007 I was a member in the board of the Hungarian Liberal Party (SZDSZ), between 2006–2010 a representative of the Hungarian Liberal Party, and of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats of Europe (ALDE) of the European Council, so my political identity is evident not only from my writings.

13 On the nature of the “rescue actions” see below.

to be of metaphysical nature, and “believes that the individual should assume the fate of the family, the village, the religious community, the ethnic group.”

He calls the other one the “individualistic” approach, this in his opinion has no “higher metaphysical substance”, its starting point is that “every individual has the sovereign right to choose the identity which he wishes to identify with” and “identity, so to speak, ‘moves freely’ according to the actual social interests”. He notes here that “it was astounding that Hungarian intellectuals when referring to this system of ideas, raised their voices against the Hungarian language schooling of the Csángó children, considering unnecessary for example the urge for Hungarian language masses in Csángó churches, saying we would violate the personality rights of the Csángós”.

Tánczos sees the relationship between the two approaches not only being contrary, but mutually distrusting: “one party fears that the liberal ideology destroys what has been managed to be built up, the other half always suspects that the community model is ready to ‘assassinate’ the individual”. The antithesis continues with a series of oppositions, some of them follow the previously defined rupture line:

- The Csángós are obviously Hungarians ↔ if they do not consider themselves as being Hungarian, us, outsiders have no right calling them that;
- the language used by the Csángós is a dialect of the Hungarian ↔ if the Csángós consider their language as “in between”, with dual affiliation, we also have to speak of the Csángó language;
- the ethnic consciousness of the Csángós is determined by their need of commitment to their Hungarian identity ↔ identity is situational, and is determined by social emergence;
- The rights of the Csángós are being violated, they are being suppressed ↔ there are violations in Moldavia, but natural assimilation is more accentuated;
- The Csángó intellectuals serving the cause Romanianization are enemies of their own ethnic group ↔ these intellectuals behave according to their new identities;
- Results of the census have been forged ↔ with a few exceptions no one was forced to appoint a Romanian identity;
- We need to do something for Csángós ↔ there is no ideology, which gives us the right to intervene in the fate of the Csángós.

Tánczos considers none of these (in his words) “paradigms” fully acceptable, because he believes that the situation underlying the oppositions is far more “complicated as the illustrated one” in the case of any dichotomy, “so

both ideologies polarize and schematize, and acknowledges only certain arguments as arguments,” furthermore “the ideological discourse presented as scientific discourse comes into being”.

Others would set up these oppositions probably differently, Tánczos constructed the dichotomy and the basic features of the opposition in a perspective based on his own interpretation, – there it is no problem with that, no one could do it otherwise. It is also natural that these oppositions schematise and polarize, because they do not exist by themselves, but created by the author, so if they polarize and schematize, it is in fact done by the author – but again quite rightly, as it is his aim to demonstrate that the two approaches are opposed. But he set a trap for himself by not clarifying his own position – neither to the reader nor to himself. On the contrary: he displays his position as being outside the discourses (and speaking from the analysts’ position: rising above them, “objective”), while being critical in both directions, and when explicitly stating that “politicians are ideologically committed, scientists are not” – identifies himself in the same writing as “scientist”, as opposed to the activists. He sets an example exactly for what he objects against, if that appears in the literature on the Csángó research: how identity changes according to the context-specific “personal interests”: as opposed to the activists he accentuates his identity as researcher, while as opposed to other researchers presenting his outsidersness on the one hand, while on the other, even if overtly, he displays identification with one of discourses.

Some comments of the author implicitly carry his discourse-identity, at least from the perspective of the other discourse the features of belonging to a “national” discourse can well be distinguished. On the one hand this is shown by the interpretations he considers to be the viewpoint and action of those working with a perspective he calls “individual”: these, in the interpretation framework of the “constructivist” discourse prove to be simple misunderstandings, and this discloses that the author either does not feel at home in this framework or, if he does, the “constructivist” perspective of the discourse is for him, overwritten by another framework of interpretation.

The attitude between the discourses is also perceptible in cases where although the author distances himself from the discourse by organizing his statement by the rhetorical parallel, but the use of words shows being closer to one discourse, and being more distant to the other. “One party fears that the liberal ideology destroys what has been managed to be built up, the other party always suspects that the community model is ready to ‘assassinate’ the individual” - he writes. This attitude is obvious to the “other side”: the author does not place himself in that discourse, but in the discourse of the “one side”. After all, the expressions “fears” and “destroys” are probably acceptable terms

for those who belong to “one side”. But the representatives of the “individualistic” approach, now even labelled politically as well (“liberal”) however, will find it difficult to identify with “they suspect”, furthermore “always”, and the irony can clearly be sensed in the fact that they are supposed to be afraid of “crimes” against the individual. (With the fears of “one side” there are no ironic overtones.) The two labels also disclose a lot: while in the ‘national’ discourse community is a special identity-defining element, so they probably would not protest against it, the constructivist discourse does not call itself “individualistic”, and liberalism appears to be that only from the outside, from the perspective of a patriarchal and community ideal demanding exclusivity.

To regard constructivism as “individualistic” is actually a basic misunderstanding: the main principle of this perspective is exactly that our thoughts, our values, our views, sometimes even our emotions are community structures. The difference between the “national” and “constructivist” approach is not caused by the acceptance or denial of the community being, but in the senses of “community” and the “communal”. In the “national” interpretation the starting point, the reference frame of the community is the “nation” assumed to have uniform goals, interests, culture and language. In the “constructivist” discourse though, communities are the groups which the individual becomes part of through his network of personal contacts. So it is true that in the “constructivist” discourse the starting point of community participation is the individual, but it is not true that this approach would not consider the community to be a determining factor. Accordingly, this approach considers it natural that the community makes decisions regarding its own name or names, its identity and about the denomination of its language or languages, in fact it also considers it natural that even within communities apparently united when viewed from the outside different responses will be born, as communities are articulated, and thus the members can give different answers to these questions, according to the position occupied in the community, the generational differences, attitudes, life stories, life goals, and in different moments of their lives, talking to different partners as well.

The readers not aware of the differences of the discourses can be misled by the following sentence: “it was astounding that Hungarian intellectuals when referring to this system of ideas, raised their voices against the Hungarian language schooling of the Csángó children, considering unnecessary for example the urge for Hungarian language masses in Csángó churches, saying we would violate the personality rights of the Csángós”. The presentation of the proposed action within the framework of the “constructivist” discourse as well as its justification is missing, namely, that in the spirit of a different interpretation of the community and the different orientation from the point

of view of the philosophy of language, in the framework of the “constructivist” discourse the following proposal arose, that the Csángó children in the first years of their studies should be taught the community’s own language variant and not the idealized one, the one closely related to the “national” discourse, the standard Hungarian variant, considered by the normative language approach as the only “correct” and “national” variant, i.e. assumed as “the” Hungarian language, standing far or very far from the Csángó communities’ own variant of the language from the linguistic point of view as well¹⁴ regardless of whether we consider these Csángó language variants of Hungarian origin as dialects of Hungarian, or a Hungarian origin Ausbau-language, very close to the Hungarian.¹⁵

The sentence switches, in a logically difficult manner to interpret, from religious service to education – a mistake, however, well explained by the close association of “church and school”, an often repeated slogan of the “Csángó rescue” actions. But this, wanted or not, calls in the “national” discourse and makes it the interpretation framework of the text. Moreover, as the poem conjured by the slogan¹⁶ sets out that the token of the survival in minority existence lies in the use of the mother-tongue in church and education, and also many know that, it was written in 1925, not long after the Treaty of Trianon, in the “national” discourse is not only simply anational, but clearly anti-national denying the Hungarian language from the “church and the school”. All these associations will probably not become obvious for all who read the text, but for those who are familiar with the “national” discourse it probably will.

14 In detail, see Sándor 1996, the argumentation behind the proposal in English: Sándor 2000. The “language variant of the community” denotes idioms which in a part of the Csángó communities are being used next to the Romanian. These idioms of Hungarian origin show great variety from the perspective of being mutually understood with the variants spoken within the Carpathian Basin, and some Csángó settlements show great variety in the percentage the community uses its own idiom, in which language regions, in the kinds of generational stratification they present. According to Táncczos’s previous estimations (Táncczos 1997), based on the fieldwork performed in the mid nineties, out of the 240 thousand Moldavian Catholics 60 thousand still possessed the Csángó idioms on some level, with very different levels of competence. According to the newest data (Táncczos 2011), gathered in the second part of the first decades of the 21st century, today only 48-49 thousand is the number of those who speak these idioms as first or second language, and based on his experience there is no such Csángó community where the first language of the children under 10-12 years wouldn’t be Romanian.

15 On the Ausbau-, and Abstand-languages, as well as on the possible Ausbau-language status of the Csángó variants, see Trudgill 2001 1.: 11-12.

16 The author quotes the poem *Church and School* by Reményik Sándor, written in 1925.

The other components of the opposition primarily connect with the “constructivist” identity-approach, this has been discussed above. It is a misunderstanding that because of the “double bond” within the “constructivist” discourse anyone would have proposed, that we should accept the way the Csángós denominate their own idiom. This cannot be interpreted linguistically, as “mixed language” is not a part of the linguistic, but that of the lay discourse: the Csángós themselves define their language as “hybrid” (*korcsitúra*), linguists, however, do not speak of mixed language, but (without any value denomination) they talk about a strong contact effect. The “double attachment” is a label related with the bilingualism of the Hungarians living outside Hungary, the framework for its interpretation being on the one hand the lay-linguistic ideology, that considers monolingualism natural, on the other hand the “national” discourse. Both see bilingualism as a stage in the process of losing the mother tongue, and eventually see the danger in it, that bilingual groups are also “two-hearted”, and eventually “become lost” for the nation.

The “constructivist” element of the last opposition also originates in a misunderstanding, at least as far as I know, there has been no researcher who representing the view, that there is no ideology that would give you the right to interfere with the fate of the Csángós. And once again, the differences in interpretation will result in what we consider as being the interests of the Csángó: if we want to “rescue” them by all means or if we let them decide about their identity, their lifestyle, their language, and by respecting the different decisions, help them in achieving their own different goals.

It seems that Vilmos Tánzos sees the latter as what he calls the “betrayal of the scientists”: in his view “some people justify extreme nationalism which wants to assimilate the Csángós, others through the misuse of the rhetoric of liberalist ideas, make the essential Csángó issues *bagatelle*”. This sentence is also clearly a part of the “national” discourse, in a framework where the concept of “community” is interpreted differently, the first question would be, which one of the Csángó-assimilating nationalism is implied, the Romanian, or the Hungarian, or both perhaps? From the perspective of the “national” discourse Hungarian nationalism is not seen as nationalism, but as a responsible and required national behaviour, so the attribute can be omitted from the sentence. In addition, the scientists considered to be liberal-minded (it is not clear who belong here, since the opposition showing the “other” views probably derive from writings of more authors) are deprived even from their self-identity: they do not simply “*bagatellise*” the Csángó “fate matters”, they do not even do this out of conviction, but as traitors, as political slaves, not vindicating their own approaches, but only “misusing” the liberal “rhetoric”. The “national” discourse’s perception on debate is reflected here: the “other”

approach as conviction is unintelligible, but serves the “strangers” (here, the Romanian nationalism) and / or is humanly insensitive (“bagatellises” the Csángó “questions of fate”). This means that the “other” discourse’s moral legitimacy is questioned, but if it already exists, the “national” approach in a patriarchal way knows even better what the “real” perspective of liberalism is like, when it is not just a “misuse of rhetoric.”

I have analyzed the study of Vilmos Táncoz in such detail, because even though he is the only person to explicitly state how people thinking within the perception frame of the “national” discourse (at least one of them) interpret their own discourse, but mainly the “other” discourse, the similar interpretation of the opposition latently lurks in many studies, criticism, passing judgement on the ones working with the other approach, but the moral stigma is disguised as professional criticism. On the other hand, because Vilmos Táncoz is one of the most respectable figures in today’s Csángó research – and he rightfully is. His collection of archaic Csángó sacred texts, stretching over decades, his text publications and analyses are indispensable and represent the highest academic quality. There is no doubt that thanks to his gathering work, Táncoz possesses a huge field experience, and certainly he knows the the language-demographic conditions of certain settlements best – that is the reason I am basing my work, and others as well, on his related observations. This does not mean that from the data presented by him and others only one conclusion can be drawn, and it also does not mean that the moral judgments which classify the different conclusions can be considered generally valid.

Táncoz, using anthropological methods himself, does not deny the scientific value of these, on the contrary, in the article analyzed, he stands up just for these, even in the case when considering the perspective of the discourse, distinct from his, as morally unacceptable. Moral judgement is present in a much more accentuated manner in the writing of Pál Hatos (Hatos 2009). In his article he shows some ideas of how some 19th century authors of the Csángó research wanted – unsuccessfully – to integrate the Csángós as part of the Hungarian nation. He characterizes Hungarian historicism “with the hopes of the rationalist enlightenment, tracing the former national greatness, contemplating over its ruins”, and “buried in the ‘culture of defeat’”. From this statement, from the parts difficult to interpret, he derives the appearance of anthropology as a discipline and that of the related “constructivist” approach in the Csángó research at the beginning of the 21st century, primarily quoting the works of the young researchers of the anthropological workshop in Cluj as an example: “It is no wonder that if after the failure of almost two centuries of continuous community planforging, the Hungarian Csángó research also starts to be overtaken by ignoring the nation-centred historical discourse and



considering it a deviance. For the cultural anthropology, reflecting/describing the agnostic experience-seeking of the Postmodern Erlebnisgesellschaft, there are no and cannot be any significant matters for the continuity or reconstruction of identity, and just like the genre of the beginnings, its reports process the seductive experience of alienation, of distance and of the periphery, in which the ‘opened gate of the East’ gives opportunity for ‘border-crossing adventure’ which meeting the Csángós tends to deconstruct the illusion of identity and the drama in the narrative of Csángó destiny.”

In Hatos’ opinion the opposition of scientific paradigms utterly disappears, and does not even occur that his own interpretive framework would not be generally valid. Therefore, he experiences the very existence of the “constructivist” discourse as an attack at the image of the “national” discourse, as from the perspective of the approach that considers itself as generally valid, the existence of any other approach is an “attack”, because actually no researcher called the “national” discourse a deviance. Only as a result of disillusion, deception he considers it conceivable that someone “ignores” the “historical nation-centred discourse”, that is he regards anthropology as some kind of substitute, for which young researchers (in the 21st century) reach only in their disillusionment felt over the failed actions of their 19th century predecessors. Anthropology rooted in postmodernism and structuralism, the differences between the different variants of social constructivism can be washed together only from the “national” – in this case the very far – point of view and can be interpreted as an attack at the “national interest” only from this perspective in describing the Csángó communities following the contemporary mainstream academic school. What from the perspective of the “national” discourse can be considered “the drama in the narrative of Csángó destiny”, in the “constructivist” discourse is interpreted as the changes of the Csángó community structure, which mostly result in the overshadowing or denial of the “traditional” values, but also ensure better jobs, better life and healthier living space, more choices – not only for the individual, but for a differently organised community as well.

The Csángó related “national” discourse from the perspective of the “constructivist” discourse

On the Csángó related discourse from the “constructivist” perspective Sándor Ilyés (Ilyés 2008) has written in detail, and formulated very similar observations to the ones mentioned above. He examined the constituting elements of the Csángó-image, which was built in the Transylvanian Hungarian language

press around the turn of the century, and below I'm going to examine the image which unfolds from the scholarly literature (or the popularizing literature) on the Csángós identifying themselves with the "national" discourse. The two pictures are almost identical meaning that in both cases the writings have the same "national" discourse framework, and this is more important than them considering themselves as part of the "scientific" or "journalist" modes of speech.

By a fortunate coincidence we both presented our analysis at the same conference,¹⁷ one after the other. And both received the same criticisms from Laura Iancu informing the readers of the Hungarians in Moldavia magazine about the Conference (Iancu 2005): first the choice of themes received a sort of (mild) morally tinged apprehension, that ethnographers and anthropologists would receive from "Csángó rescue" activists: Every time I am in Moldavia, I am shocked by the appearances of the unrevealed fading and dying, modestly muzzy 'raw material'. However, in the intellectual regions of the Hungarians the tract on the Csángós is in the phase of interpreting the interpretation. Of course, the noble and healthy science has more than two wings, not everybody can be a collector and analyst, or both simultaneously. It is understandable and appropriate for the parts to soar individually." The ironic phrasing reveals that, according to the author, the "artefact saving", the collecting work is more valuable than the speech on the speech, but the real problem with the two performances in Iancu Laura's opinion was that their allegations were unfounded, or at least it is doubtful how they can be extended: one performer in her opinion used "illustrative quotations", the other "scraps of quotes", the latter (Sándor Ilyés) even consciously and somewhat maliciously selected his material: "The young author very likely limited his interest only to published materials, phrases and thoughts, which are specifically triggering negative feelings – of course his performing behaviour also emphasized this."

Behind this gesture of disbelief the difference in methodology may also lie hidden: the failure to recognize the methodological feature that according to the "constructivist" practice the types arise from the analysed material, and we are not forcing our data into prefabricated categories, therefore, to create a type can only be done based on a sufficient number of examples. It is more likely, however, that in the background, the action considered an attack against the "national" discourse has been rejected, this reveals the way Iancu opposes the two discourses with each other: "In practice, we are talking about a conservative, thus emotionally heated, or liberal, that is, a rational, cold type of communication, which is driven in both cases by the ideological motivation." With the dichotomy the author puts herself in the position of the "objective outsider", but

17 Endangered Cultures – Endangered Heritage, Budapest April 14–15, 2005.

the text reveals that (understandably) she herself did not interpret the performances free of ideologies. The first member of the emotionally heated – rational, cold contrast allows the identification for the author, already the generally valid meaning of the hot–cold dichotomy makes us think of that. The linguistic formulation of the attitude displayed towards “artefact saving”, “fading, dying, modestly muzzy apparitions” from the “rational, cold” perspective certainly seems at least “emotionally overheated”, but rather perhaps sentimental.

In the “national” discourse concerning the Csángós is not strange that the authors reveal strong emotional relations to the subject of their research, and this can not only be applied to journalism, but is also characteristic of the scientific prose as well. This can also be understood from the perspective labelled as “rational, cool”, the difference between the participants of the two discourses lies not in the fact that one “loves” the Csángós, the other does not, but in the fact, whether they consider a dominantly emotion-driven behaviour suitable for the planning of actions for the good of the community researched by them, respectively what degree and type of emotional expression they find admissible in the scientific-orientated presentation of their data, views.

The conceptual metaphors constructing the Csángó image

In the Csángó range of the “national” discourse there are some very characteristic conceptual metaphors, which reveal on the one hand the ways of thinking about the Csángós, on the other hand it constructs it as well.

One conceptual metaphor is the skanzen, the living museum: this lies in the formulations according to which the Csángós today speak the Hungarian language in its state from previous centuries, typical of the 15th century (in fact there are some who go even further, and believe to hear the language of the first Hungarian text relics from the end of the 12th century in the speech of the Csángós). They present the Csángós’ spiritual and material culture, their religiosity to be similarly archaic, regarding the present lifestyle of the Csángós the golden age, when the “clean source” had not yet been polluted by civilization.¹⁸ The metaphor suggests that the Csángós do not even live in the 20-21st century, but in the Middle Ages, and if we go among them, it’s as if we would travel back in time. Some examples:

18 The Hungarian public opinion, especially intellectuals – based on the examples of school education and the Hungarian cultural traditions, such as Kodály and Bartók – usually highly appreciate the folk culture, so are susceptible for such topics, and therefore are more defenceless against an idealized way of presentation.



LANGUAGE USE, ATTITUDES, STRATEGIES

- [some of their words] “give insight into the soul of people from ancient times. Message from distant centuries.” (Beke 1993: 88)
- [in the poems of the Csángó poet Demeter Lakatos] “The voice of the Halotti Beszéd (Funeral Oration) spoke, rang from the depths of folk consciousness, of the folk language, in the middle of the twentieth century” (Beke 1997: 89)
- “Not only ethnography, linguistics, musicology gains by collecting and presenting what the Hungarian language, the folk-songs and the life of the people 200-300 or 500 years ago was like, but the whole Hungarian culture is enriched by new knowledge” (Halász 1994: 1).

The skanzen-metaphor did not, of course, come into existence without any foundation, it extremely simplifies and exalts reality when dialects – with elements that the Hungarians in Hungary no longer use – are identified with the various stages of the “old Hungarian language”; when only the “intact” Csángó environment is filmed, that is only the parts which the majority of Hungarians associate with Hungary from the last century (or earlier), the modern houses, the people who do not wear the specific costumes are not included.

Another conceptual metaphor presents the Csángós as the orphan little brothers according to which the Csángós have been living for centuries left to themselves, like “orphans”; their home country left them on their own, therefore the Hungarians should feel remorse, and it’s time to help and protect them as a sort of big brother who has the duty to protect and guide his little brother. The metaphor suggests that the Csángós themselves are unable to take their destinies into their hands. Examples:

- “The Moldavian Csángós are one of the minorities in the most difficult situation in Europe and in the world, having no appropriate identity and necessary self-defense organization, are exposed to the hostile nationalist forces, and they have neither teachers nor priests, nor other intellectuals to protect them. The Hungarians from all over the world should pull together to protect and help them” (Halász 1993: 173).
- “Their own home country, which - it hurts to describe, but it’s true - for centuries did not really care about the fate of the Hungarians living over the Carpathians” (Beke 1997: 89).
- [A large part of the Csángós] “because of their lifestyle is not accustomed to abstract thinking” (Szócs 1993: 163).
- “... if they form a phrase for something, it sounds like simpletons, but it is only being honest. As the child’s prattle” (Beke 1993: 86).



- "... the Moldavian Csángó Hungarians, most orphan members of our national community" (Beke 1997: 82).

To some extent, both previous conceptual metaphors are related to the metaphor of the hero, the guardian. This presents the Csángós as almost holy people who hold on to their ancient culture and language despite of all desolation and oppression, persistently affectionate, deeply religious, who preserved the main values of the Hungarian culture unspoiled, and the assistance in preserving these values yet again is the responsibility of the Hungarians:

- [The Csángós were kept Hungarians by the Catholic religion.] "But this would not have been possible if the Moldavian Hungarians did not have the determined desire of wanting to stay Hungarian" (Benda 1993: 44).
- "A strata of the nation, which by its self, by its own unique character and way of thinking, deep faith, language, taste should deserve a separate, special place foreseen on the ethnographic map of Europe - that pays attention to special values, colour - is deliberately destroyed by the assimilative intent, the nationalism of the majority. Knowing this: one should look upon them with even more care, concern, and understanding will to help" (Gazda 1994: 269).

The metaphors define not only the Csángó related image-forming, but the Csángó related actions, the forms of relationship-building and of assistance as well. Because of the skanzen-metaphor the current situation of the Csángós loses the touch with reality and becomes a kind of a fairy-tale. Since this idyllic fairy-tale world is in danger, the most urgent task is its preservation and the saving of artefacts: "In organizing the higher education of the Csángó young people in Hungary it is an important aspect to support the study of subjects primarily related to the cultivation and teaching of tradition" (Szócs 1993: 164). In this conservation the Csíksomlyó Pilgrimage received a key-role: since 1990, a special Mass is being celebrated for the Csángós, according to Gábor Barna (Barna 1993: 58) with the aim is to strengthen in them, besides the sense of Catholic consciousness, the Hungarian self-consciousness as well.

The orphan little brother's metaphor continues in the idea of "tutelage", that implies that the actions initiated in Hungary and Transylvania in the 1990s took place without consulting the Csángós – based on the assumption that as "children" they would not be able to take responsible decisions regarding their own fate without the "elder brother" (Transylvania) and the "mother country". The "assistance" accordingly is usually more a patronage, for which

the Csángós should also be grateful. Zoltán Pálffy M. (Pálffy 1997: 74) considers that within the schooling of Csángó children in Transylvania “the accent is not on trade or specialisation that can be studied in a Hungarian-language school (i.e. on the content aspect), but rather on ensuring a formal framework, namely in a rather ‘be glad you can be here’ way”. When on a symposium organized in 1994, under the name Csángó issues of fate, a representative of the Csángó students studying in Hungary spoke of the cultural, social and financial difficulties they (would) have to deal with during their studies in Hungary, a prominent Csángó researcher put him in his place by saying that they should be rather grateful for the sacrifices the mother country makes for them.¹⁹

The hero metaphor results in reward and celebration: they preserved the old values in pure state, thus they deserve to be “honorary Hungarians”, using the term of Táncczos (Táncczos 1996: 187). This is above all manifested in the prominent political attention: “in 1991 the Csángó Festival was attended Árpád Göncz, the president, and József Antall, the prime minister, in March 1998 the main patron of the Csángó Festival was Viktor Orbán party president (a few weeks later prime minister), in 1990 Luca Hodorog from Klézse, who was a well known respondent, was buried in Jászberény by the Catholic bishop of the archdiocese of Eger, at his coffin Bertalan Andrásfalvy [at that time minister of culture and education] gave a eulogy” (Pozsony 1994: 10–11). Not only honorary Hungarian initiation, but the other aspects of Csángó myth-building are also exemplified in the following quote: “thousand Csángós in their specific costume, under a cross processed along the bank of the Danube river in Pest, as far as the St. Stephen’s Cathedral, where Pál Péter Domokos greeted them, then our board member Teodóz Jáki and deacon Antal Horváth born in Kalugerpaták, celebrated a Mass for them. Never ever, not even during the Millennium were there so many Csángó Hungarians in Budapest, let alone attending a Mass held for them! Finally, the greatest event: a meeting with the Pope in Heroes’ Square, where the representatives of the Hungarians Csángós handed over their gifts and their request to the Holy Father” (Halasz 1993: 170-171).

These conceptual metaphors play an important role in the appearance of a kind of a myth surrounding the Csángós, because the Csángó myth summarises the meanings suggested by these metaphors: about the Csángós’ deep religiousness, “their medieval Hungarian language”, their museum culture. In the creation and dissemination of the myth a prominent role is given to the media. The popularizing press and electronic media, however, cannot be

19 Personal statement of Antal Csicsó, the former president of the Association of the Moldavian Csángó Hungarians.



blamed exclusively for painting such a vivid pink reality, since the metaphors structuring the thinking about the Csángós while the elements of myth based on them had a strong presence in the literature dealing with the Csángós in the 1990s. Around the turn of the millennium the proportion of studies written according to the demands of the “national” discourse decreased, however, essentially this had no effect on the common talk and political thinking identifying itself with the “national” discourse. The Hungarian common talk on the Csángós is still dominated by the myth, since for a long time in Hungary the majority of people knew nothing about the Csángós, travelling to Moldavia, gaining personal experience even nowadays is not without any difficulties, so the public still is exposed to the media’s taste and interpretation.

The myth by its nature prevents the large audience (often even the ones researching within the context of the “national” discourse) from taking into account the facts that do not fit into the myth: from the perspective of the myth, the acculturation process appears of course, as something that threatens the ancient culture, as a disruptive, destructive factor, which must be eliminated rather than be taken into account, or let alone be accepted. The myth does not merely obscure facts, but because its politicization and its embedded nature in the ‘national’ discourse makes it unquestionable, while mentioning the facts that do not fit in the myth becomes taboo.²⁰ Moreover, if the defenders of the myth are placed in a political context, the ones challenging the taboo can become “politically suspect” looking from the perspective of the “national” discourse.²¹

In order for it to become taboo there was need for the contribution of the constitution of a new conceptual metaphor. First, in the period of the shock following the decision of Trianon, in 1920, the idea was born that the Hungarians of the detached territories by the decision of Trianon will have the same fate as the Csángós, namely dispersion, loss of language and culture, assimila-

20 This could be systematically experienced by the researchers disassembling the myth, for example in the fierce, but not scientific debates following their presentation at conferences.

21 In 1996 with the help of the head of department of the Ministry of Culture (helped in the organisation and coordination) I interviewed the Csángó students studying at the International Preparatory Institute in Budapest, under the jurisdiction of the ministry – the Csángó youth enrolled in the higher educational institutions in Hungary, learned for a year Hungarian, at this institution. Quite inexplicably, I could do this only with two members of the World Federation Of Hungarians, defining themselves as a non-governmental organization, were sitting in the next room, as “observers” as they said, listening to our conversations. (The World Federation Of Hungarians did not have any official license to do this, nor could they have, and the Ministry was not aware of it.)

tion.²² The idea has created its own metaphor, the (signal)buoy, and was also integrated into the Csángó related myth. According to the metaphor the fate of the Csángós indicates similar to a “buoy” the currents which dominate the Hungarian minority politics:

- “A sad example of a nation’s slow vernacular-national demise. For us it is a memento of distress for the future” (Veress 1989: 8).
- “The memento of Szabófalva (Săbăoani) is not a good omen. Especially when one considers that the nightmares of distress now included Transylvania as well” (Veress 1989: 13).
- “With the Csángós [...] one can [...] - painfully - look forward too, towards a possible future of the Transylvanian and of all Hungarians living in minority” (Gazda 1994: 269).
- “By the fate of the Csángós the historic responsibility of the mother nation can be measured. They are the most secure buoys of the Hungarian minority policy, which perceive the currents both underwater and on the surface” (Beke 1994: 91).

The buoy metaphor supplies the final explanation as to why the “rescue” of the Csángós became so important to many people in 1990. The Csángós are regarded as “trans-border Hungarians” of the Hungarians in Transylvania (the minority of a minority) whose fate is a preview of the future of the ethnic Hungarians (including ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania), so in conformity with the belief, if we can “rescue” the Csángós, then we will succeed in preserving the Hungarians beyond the border Hungarians as well.²³

The action resulting from the Csángó image constructed by the metaphors is: the “Csángó-rescue”

The metaphors presented are not from the end of the 20th century, but much earlier, actually since the Csángós becoming a “subject” they are present in the image formed about the Csángós and have always activated the same form of action: that the Csángós “must be rescued”. The conceptual framework of the “Csángó rescue” is provided by the “national” discourse, the starting point of the “Csángó rescue” missions is that Csángós belong to the

22 The writing of Györffy from 1920 is quoted by Mikecs 1989, 314.

23 Many (ex. Tánzos 1996: 175, Benedek H. 1997: 196, Pálffy M. 1997: 71) drew attention to the fact, that the Transylvanian Hungarians see their own fate in the fate of the Csángós, that is giving up on the Csángós, would mean giving up on themselves. This also characterises the publications with Csángó topic at the turn of the century (see Ilyés 2008).

Hungarian nation, but due to unfortunate historical circumstances have forgotten or do not dare to assume their Hungarian nature (see e.g. Pávai 1995). Therefore, what is the most important task is to make the Csángós aware of the following: that in fact, they are part of the Hungarian nation-body and help them to get better acquainted with the Hungarian national culture and symbols, in order to develop their sense of belonging to the Hungarian nation. In this context, the intrinsic value of belonging to the Hungarian nation appears as a premise.

Even in the 19th century attempts were made for the introduction of the Hungarian language in the church and in the schools – it aimed at remaining on the native land and at survival - but all such efforts ended in failure (see Seres 2002). Even more spectacular was the failure of “Csángó-rescue” measures aiming the resettlement of the Csángós. In 1883, several thousand people were resettled from Bukovina to Hungary,²⁴ greeted by huge public enthusiasm. However, less attention was given to planning than to celebration, as the new lands were on floodplains, and in 1888 a major flood destroyed the five years of work of the new settlers from Bukovina. Many moved back to Bukovina, who remained became completely impoverished. Despite the setbacks the settling of small groups from Bukovina to Transylvania, in fact their scattering, continued even for decades, amid scandals (Mikecs 1989: 306-307).

In 1941 again the inhabitants of the villages of Bukovina were “rescued”: about fifteen thousand people, practically the whole Szekler community of Bukovina was resettled to Bácska, in the southern part of Hungary, from where in 1944 they had to flee. Finally they ended up in southwestern Hungary, scattered in over 30 villages, in the houses of the Hungarian Germans, deployed after the war. They had to leave everything behind in Bácska, and many feared that the displaced Swabians would come back, while because of their strange speech and customs their Hungarian environment despised and mocked them (Forrai 1987: 27–29) – but finally “they were saved”, that is, assimilated into the local Hungarian population.

In the 1990s, the “rescue” primarily took form in the schooling of the Csángó young people in educational institutions in Hungary and Transylvania. Within the interpretation framework of the “national” discourse the knowledge of the Hungarian “national language” did not appear as a problem, as in this discourse it is considered evident that it is good for Csángó children to learn

24 The Szeklers living in the villages in the northern part of Bukovina, based on historical, ethnological and linguistic considerations are considered Szeklers by the scholarly literature, for decades, however, earlier, based on the fact that they live outside the Carpathian Basin they were considered Csángós.

the Hungarian language. Thus many received with incomprehension the fact that the in some cases young people who left for school to Hungary not only did not know the standard Hungarian language, but knew only Romanian, or that the children taken to Transylvania, only thanks to the sense of vocation, humanity and the skills of the teachers dealing with them (and a lot of extra work) could fall into line with their colleagues from Transylvania, after having acquired the Hungarian language used at school.²⁵

In recent years, the centre of the “rescue actions” focusing on education became the Hungarian language classes, that were supported by the Hungarian government and foundations, held either in schools, or in buildings built for this purpose, by volunteers – Transylvanians, Hungarians alike. Their enthusiasm and commitment deserves respect, but does not replace proper preparation and an elaborated educational program. The children who feel comfortable in the community at the Hungarian classes, learn a language besides their Romanian mother tongue, and to the personal idiom spoken at home, probably profit from these classes – in the future it can increase their mobility and it facilitates employment in Hungary. However the teaching of the Hungarian language in Moldavia is completely unsuitable in bringing us closer to the desired aim of “rescue”, the conservation of the traditional Csángó form of life, language and traditions. (This is not a problem in an absolute sense, but from the perspective of the “national” discourse, i.e. only according to the “Csángó rescue” ideology).

Another form of the “rescue” can be the familiarization with the traditional culture of the Csángós: organizing festivals, photo albums, musical publications, educational films, the organisation of the Moldavian folk tourism, organization of scientific data collection, etc. The forms and effects of the “Csángó rescue” were analyzed in detail by Lehel Peti (Peti 2005). During his fieldwork, he found that the “rescue” significantly interferes with the lives of the Csángó communities: polarizes the identity assumption of the ones belonging to the same community (between the Romanian and Hungarian), and thereby generates hidden or open conflicts. In many cases, it accelerates acculturation, the different attitudes towards the people carrying out the Hungarian language education in villages divides the communities, and disturbs the internal dynamics that also contributes to survival. The Csángós who were the subjects of any kind of rescue action, often find the myth-based discrimination inconvenient, burdensome even when it seems to favor them (cf. Palffy M. 1997: 69). It is even worse, if the environment of Transylvania and Hungary which is “disappointed” in the Csángós turns openly against them, and cre-

25 For details see Sándor 2000.

ates a psychological situation, which turns “the ones to be rescued” against themselves, or against their own Csángó community. There is no doubt that the “Csángó rescue” actions have their supporters among the Csángós as well, especially those who assume very consciously the Hungarian identity constructed “within the framework of the national” discourse. We must respect their intentions and interests, but also it must be remembered that they do not represent the uniform will of their community.

The “Csángó rescue” can cause confusion by deceiving the public, and even “Csángó rescuers” themselves. The rescue operations make us believe that both the Hungarians of Transylvania and Hungary, by making sacrifices for the Csángós, does a lot for them. Thinking in the framework outlined by the myth the politicians, many researchers and the public rarely hears and listens to the opposing argument that are formulated by the teachers who know the Csángó children best, the anthropologists studying schooling and living conditions of the Csángós, for example that besides the presentation of the people’s lifestyle, their archaic language, not much is happening for the improvement of their social, economic, political and cultural situation (Borbáth 1996: 71); that the Csángó interests would better be served with sound economic assistance as with the spiritual nourishment or ad hoc rescue actions distributing clothes and perfume (Benedek H. 1997: 209); that the majority of the Csángós receive incredulously and indifferently their turning into honorary Hungarians (Tánczos 1996: 187), and that in a certain sense nothing more happens than that “the Romanian dependence becomes a dependence from the Hungarians” (Pálffy M. 1997: 71).

The nature of the myth result in the fact that it continues to have effects even when it has apparently been destroyed. The ones who get to know the Csángós closer, sooner or later must face the fact that the Csángós simply do not fit into the image created about them, but they rarely blame their own Csángó-image. Being further under the influence of the myth it is not possible to moderately look for the causes of the failures, and the disappointment, of course, primarily affects the Csángós: clearly they are blamed for not behaving according to the myth, and thereby endanger their own rescue – let us add: for the myth. The myth offers a ready explanation: in less severe cases, this could be that the subjects to be rescued were not suitable for rescue. The frustration, however, is generally greater, and usually leads to generalizations: the Csángós, on the whole, are being considered inappropriate (and often unworthy) for any kind of help.

Many of the Transylvanian teachers, for example, developed condemning opinions about the Csángó students: they are not persistent enough, they do not know proper Hungarian, they have no real national self-awareness (Pálffy



M. 1997: 68-69). It was a common complaint among the Transylvanian (see Pálffy M. 1997: 69) and Hungarian teachers, that “we do everything for their language and they speak among themselves in Romanian”; a member of a Hungarian Aid Society drew the conclusion, from a singular case, that “the Csángós lie”,²⁶ the music researcher Sándor Veress (Veress 1989: 8) called the people of Szabófalva (Săbăoani) “hybrid folk”, “amphibious, lying nowhere at anchor, tangling in a spiritual homelessness”, who opposed to his expectations were speaking Romanian among themselves; etc

As conclusion

Every researcher has the right to choose a research topic, a framework of interpretation, according to its views and turn of mind. Following the “constructivist” approach we cannot say anything else, than that the existence of a discourse can be neither questioned nor justified. This does not mean that we should accept the conviction expressed from the perspective of the “national” discourse, that the “constructivist” discourse is morally inferior, less committed than the “national” or that we should accept that the “national” discourse is general and of absolute validity. And it does not mean that we cannot dispute with it.

The data, reports, experience shows: the “national” ideology and the resulting action for the Csángós failed many times, not just from the perspective of the “constructivist” discourse, but above all in reaching of its self-defined goals. This does not imply at the same time, that among the members of the Csángó communities aren’t people who by their own discretion identify with this set of values, this attitude. To this – from the “constructivist” interpretation of discourse – they have the right, just as they, and others also have the right to choose from different identities. Which no one has the right to is not the “intervention” in the life of the Csángós, but the intervention against their own will. And because the Csángó communities are not homogeneous this volitions will be different too. Maybe it does not matter if the various “interventions” don’t bring smashing successes. But with responsibility only such actions can be started, through which we do not harm – not some imaginary, idealized “nation”, but the actually existing Csángó communities.

26 The “lie” had however socio-culturally and politically understandable reasons: the “rescued” young Csángó woman got pregnant as a maiden, and contrary to her promise did not return to Hungary.

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