Austrian History Yearbook (2023), **54**, 159–176
doi:10.1017/S0067237823000036

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

Building a Bilingual Elite: "National Indifference" and Romanian Students in Hungarian High Schools (1867–1914)

Ágoston Berecz

Central European University Pasts Inc, Budapest, Hungary and Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena, Germany
Corresponding author: Ágoston Berecz, email: oguszt@gmail.com

Abstract

This article highlights the role investment in Hungarian-language skills played in the social reproduction of the Romanian national elite in Dualist Hungary. At any point during the era, little less than half of middle-class Romanian students attended Hungarian-language high schools, which their parents largely considered as language training institutions. Parental choices and the sons' experiences gain significance when set against the view that such investment in linguistic capital was a subversive practice challenging nationalist mobilization. Based on former students' memoirs, school yearbooks, and histories, this article concentrates on the strategies of parents, the class-based inequality of access to Hungarian, the language policies of schools, and teachers' ambiguous treatment of Romanian students.

Keywords: secondary education; national indifference; Dualist Hungary; Romanian history; multilingualism; individual bilingualism

"Until now we had always been taught that Germany was inhabited by Germans, France by Frenchmen, and England by Englishmen; but here we have such a complex medley of nationalities as well nigh to upset all our school-room teaching," sighed Scottish-born Emily Gerard, looking back to her stay in Hermannstadt/Sibiu in the 1880s.[1] Rather than to her own sons, she was referring to Romanian students, who made up one quarter to one third of the student body in the Lutheran gymnasium, as well as to a smaller Magyar contingent. She had watched on as her sons tried to cope simultaneously with the Hungarian, Latin, and Greek taught to them in addition to the Saxon urban dialect. But they were already trilingual from home and proficient in the German language of teaching. For Romanian and Magyar boys, on the other hand, it often took several years to learn German well enough to be meaningfully questioned about their lessons. To complicate matters, most of them were taken out of the school as soon as they spoke fair German.[2]

Of course, Gerard's remark obscures the fact that schools in parts of Germany and France often faced similar difficulties, not to mention that peasant children entered high school with a linguistic handicap pretty much everywhere in Europe. To make full sense of her claim, one should bear in mind the linguistic distance between Transylvania's three languages, each endowed with its respective standard, authorities, and institutions. Gerard made the mandatory study of Hungarian, recently introduced into all high schools, a central target of her complaints. But the single most important factor that disrupted expectations of a monolingual classroom was the many Romanian students unversed in the medium of instruction.

Romanian parents in Dualist Hungary could choose from four full (eight-year) confessional Romanian-language gymnasia and several middle schools. Their enrollment figures kept pace with the slowly growing numbers of Romanian high-school students. Still, half of these continued to

[1]Emily Gerard, *The Land Beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures, and Fancies from Transylvania*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1888), 50.
[2]I am grateful to Irina Livezeanu for her comments on an early draft of this paper.

attend Hungarian and German schools. Despite nationalist agitation and permanent friction between the Romanian national movement and Hungarian state nationalism, 43.7 percent of the 1,511 Romanian high-school students in Hungary were enrolled in Hungarian-language schools in 1876/77 and 47.1 percent out of 2,480 in 1913/14 in Transylvania proper.[3] In terms of their social background, peasant boys accounted for half of the Romanians who took the matura exam at the end of the eighth year and certainly more of all Romanian high-school students—their share was thus much higher than among Magyars or Transylvanian Saxons, who were also predominantly rural.[4] This had to do partly with the late emergence and relative weakness of the Romanian middle class, but also with a plethora of church and private endowments offering tuition waivers, scholarships, and boarding. Significantly, Romanian peasant boys were the least likely to enter high school with a prior knowledge of Hungarian.

In this study, I will probe into Romanian students' attendance of Hungarian-language high schools, a field with interlocking questions of linguistic capital, nationhood, and social closure. I will first address what guided the considerations of parents who chose a Hungarian school and how they differed socially or culturally from the parents of children in Romanian schools. In an influential discussion of education choices in late Habsburg Bohemia, Tara Zahra suggested that enrolling one's Czech-speaking child in a German school, in the face of the ideological line that denounced the supposed evils of bilingualism, was a sign of "national indifference."[5] I will analyze the Romanian minority elite's affair with Hungarian in a polemic with this conceptual framing.

To underscore my argument, the next section will explore what Gerald perceived as a linguistic jumble in classrooms designed to be monolingual. In an earlier book, I examined the failure of primary schools in spreading a command of Hungarian in Dualist Hungary.[6] This diagnosis may appear one-sided because, as anyone with a passing familiarity with the context knows, the bulk of the Romanian elite in Dualist Hungary was at least bilingual in Hungarian, particularly as the era drew to a close. An inside view of Hungarian high schools as a key channel of language acquisition will also complete this picture. In the lower years of school, the challenge for teachers and students was, in fact, bigger than what Gerald saw, as fluent Hungarian speakers were often a minority in the classroom.[7] How far did such circumstances make the schools reconsider their goals and by how much did the schools have to adjust their programs, curricula, and methods to fit the needs of their student body? In addition, how were Romanian students able to keep up with their native Hungarian peers? What advantages did middle-class children have here over peasants?

Finally, I will explore how national conflicts crept into schools. Departing from the assumption that nationalism originated from the elite, this paper asks how class and ethnic identities are interrelated in these conflicts. What expectations Hungarian educators had of their Romanian students, and how they treated them beyond the initial language barrier?

I will draw on two main source types, contrasting the perspectives of teachers, headmasters, and school administrators with that of Romanian students and their families. For the former, I will mainly use the testimony of school yearbooks and school histories, while for the latter, I draw on a rich array

[3]*Magyar Statistikai Évkönyv* [Hungarian Statistical Yearbook] 9 (1879): 36–46; Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă* [The History of Romanian Intellectual Elite Formation in Transylvania and the Banat in the Modern Era] (Cluj-Napoca, 2000), 188.

[4]Antal Huszár and Nicolae Diamandi (pseud. Veritas), *A magyarországi románok egyházi, iskolai, közművelődési, közgazdasági intézményeinek és mozgalmainak ismertetése* [Presentation of the Ecclesiastical, Educational, Cultural and Economic Institutions and Movements of Romanians in Hungary] (Budapest, 1909), 8, 15–16, 45, 52, 59, 62, 223–25, 264–83; Petru Talpeș, *Amintiri* [Memoirs] (Timișoara, 2009), 37. The exact figure was 50.3 percent among matura-takers in high schools that provided data on the social background of their students. Calculation based on the database mentioned in note 9.

[5]Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), 19–27.

[6]Ágoston Berecz, *The Politics of Early Language Teaching: Hungarian in the Primary Schools of the late Dual Monarchy* (Budapest, 2013).

[7]István Miklóssy, "A magyar nyelv ügye a nemzetiségi vidékek középiskoláiban" [The Cause of Hungarian in the High Schools of Nationality Areas], *Az Országos Középiskolai Tanáregyesület Közlönye* 42 (1908): 24–25.

of Romanian autobiographical writing, encompassing a total of thirty memoirs.[8] In addition, I will also rely on a nearly complete database of matura-takers in Dualist Hungary, originally designed to study the socio-cultural factors influencing school performance.[9] My focus will be primarily on gymnasia (humanistic grammar schools), but will also include data about *főreáliskolák* (*Hauptrealschulen*) and *polgári iskolák*, the Hungarian equivalent of *Bürgerschulen*.

I must limit myself to boys. Education, bilingualism, and ethnicity were all highly gendered in nineteenth-century Europe. Higher schooling opportunities for girls were in general reduced in Dualist Hungary, and in particular, the choice of Romanian-language institutions beyond the elementary level was extremely narrow. On the evidence of census data and contemporary accounts, lower-class women were even less likely to be proficient bilinguals than men, but the same did not apply for daughters of the elite precisely because they overwhelmingly received their education in Hungarian and German institutions. Upper-class Romanian girls were apparently cast in different, although similarly contradictory roles, as keepers of the "mother tongue" and, at the same time, potential marriage partners for men beyond the narrow circles of the Romanian minority elite.[10] For all these reasons, Romanian girls' school choices and experiences are hard to explore under the same conceptual heading as those of young males' and would require separate treatment. It would also require a different methodology because, while school yearbooks and histories exist, relevant female autobiographies are all but lacking, and my database of contemporary matura-takers contains just a handful of young women.

Hungarian: Who Should Learn It and How

Before the creation of Romanian high schools in the 1850s and 1860s, Romanian students had already attended some of the same, formerly Latin, Hungarian ones that continued to figure among the most popular in the Dualist period. I have no data about the number of sons who went to the same schools as their fathers, but this popularity certainly owed much to family traditions. The Piarist gymnasium of Kolozsvár/Cluj had long been Transylvanian Romanians' citadel of learning, and Romanians still made up 23.6 percent of its matura-takers between 1850 and 1916.[11] Romanians favored Catholic over Calvinist high schools, a preference on display in Kolozsvár, where they mostly avoided the Calvinist gymnasium at the far end of the same street.[12] Apart from the dogmatic unity between Roman Catholics and Uniates—who accounted for half of Hungary's Romanian population—the Piarists' democratic atmosphere also contributed to their appeal, as opposed to the aristocratic reputation of the Calvinist school.[13] The Piarist gymnasium of Nagyvárad/Oradea and the state-run, formerly Catholic gymnasium of Hermannstadt were similarly among the most popular with Romanians. Between 1869 and 1919, more than half the students in the latter, which was not the same as the Saxon gymnasium that Gerard's sons attended, were Romanian.[14] Of the many Calvinist gymnasia, Romanians only visited the one in Orăștie/Szászváros/Broos in large numbers, the single eight-year high school in a vast, predominantly Romanian-speaking area. Their proportion always exceeded a quarter of its student body, peaking at 42.8 percent in 1877/78.[15]

[8]The archives of high-school inspectorates have perished and so did their reports, together with the rest of Ministry files from the era.

[9]The database was created by Victor Karády, Péter Tibor Nagy, and their colleagues in the framework of the research project ELITES08, funded by the European Research Council Advanced Team Leadership Grant nr. 230518.

[10]Ágoston Berecz, *Empty Signs, Historical Imaginaries: The Entangled Nationalization of Names and Naming in a Late Habsburg Borderland* (New York, 2020), 57–58, 65.

[11]Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești*, 186; Lajos György, ed., *Öreg diák visszanéz* [Old Student Looks Back] (Cluj-Napoca, 1926).

[12]Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești*, 188; Antal Beke, *Irányeszmék a felekezeti és közös iskolák ügyében* [Guiding Principles Concerning the Confessional and Communal Schools] (Alba Iulia, 1871), 26.

[13]László Passuth, *Kutatóárok: regény* [Excavation Ditch: A Novel] (Budapest, 1966), 34–35.

[14]Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești*, 186.

[15]Ferenc Simon, "A szászvárosi Kún-kollegium története, 1878–1895" [History of the Kún College in Orăștie, 1878–18], in *A szászvárosi ev. ref. Kún-kollégium története az 1894–95 tanévről* (Orăștie, 1895), 52–82.

Full Romanian gymnasia operated in Braşov/Brassó/Kronstadt, Blaj, Năsăud, and Beiuş/Belényes, the last one turning its upper-level classes bilingual under pressure in 1889.[16] A Romanian lower gymnasium in Brad and two Romanian middle schools in Braşov were founded in 1869, but the government later put a cap on their number. In 1882, it blocked the plan of the Caransebeş Community of Property to set up a Romanian-language gymnasium.[17] Given that the linguistic market was stacked against Romanian, however, it is unclear how many students any hypothetical new Romanian institutions could have absorbed. The Năsăud and especially the Brad schools mainly serviced their counties, but the rest of Romanian higher schools drew students from large areas.[18] These Romanian-language schools educated a steady half of Romanian students throughout the era.

This fact allows for testing the "national indifference" hypothesis by comparing the Romanian students at Romanian high schools with those in Hungarian ones. The only reasonably complete set of surviving data about them is their names. These, however, are an excellent tool for the purpose since Romanian first names were prominently used to index nationalism. The so-called Latinate first names (like *Aurel*, *Victor, Emil, Cornel*) had gained currency since the 1840s as markers of Romanian national consciousness and were viewed as such by the contemporaries. Far from shunning nationalist ideas, their evidence suggests that the parents of Romanians who graduated from Hungarian high schools were more, rather than less, engaged with Romanian nationalism than the parents of Romanian graduates from Romanian gymnasia. Between 1850 and 1918, the proportion of Latinate names was 30.1 percent among Romanian matura-takers of Hungarian and Saxon high schools, as against 25.1 percent in Romanian ones.[19]

The most likely explanation for this paradox, which the incomplete data on social background also support, is that proportionally more young Romanian middle-class men completed the eighth grade in Hungarian as opposed to Romanian high schools. The same data confirm that Latinate first names, an invented tradition, were vastly more popular in the intelligentsia and the wider elite, and they only spread among the peasantry with a long delay.[20] Thus, Romanian priests, teachers, officials, and practitioners of the liberal professions, who preferred nationally inspired first names, were slightly more likely to enroll their sons in Hungarian high schools, especially in old-established Catholic ones. Romanian high schools taught proportionally more peasant boys, although there was considerable overlap between the two student populations, since many educated Romanian parents divided their sons' school years between Romanian, Hungarian, and German gymnasia.

Thanks to its attendance at Hungarian and German schools, the Romanian elite had a wider language repertoire than the Romanian peasant masses and sought to reproduce its linguistic capital in the next generation. The distribution of competent Hungarian bilinguals was immensely top-heavy across the Romanian minority. While less than seven percent reported fluency in Hungarian in 1891, a striking 76 percent did among white-collar professionals, few of whom worked in public service.[21] A significant minority of middle-class Romanians had also grown up with two languages,

[16]Huszár and Diamandi, *A magyarországi románok*, 133; Constantin Pavel, *Şcoalele din Beiuş 1828–1928: cu o privire asupra trecutului Românilor din Bihor* [The Schools of Beiuş 1828–1928: With a Look at the Past of the Romanians in Bihor] (Beiuş, 1928), 198–202; Gavril Hădăreanu, "Evoluţia învăţământului de la revoluţia paşoptistă la Marea Unire" [The development of education from the revolution of 1848 to the Great Union], in *Beiuşul şi lumea lui: studiu monografic* [Beiuş/Belényes and its World: A Monographic Study], eds. Ioan Degău and Nicolae Brânda, vol. 2 (Oradea, 2008), 474.

[17]Antoniu Marchescu, *Grănicerii bănăţeni şi comunitatea de avere: contribuţiuni istorice şi juridice* [The Border Guards of the Banat and the Community of Property: Historical and Juridical Contributions] (Caransebeş, 1941), 383–86.

[18]Virgil Şotropa and Niculae Draganu, *Istoria şcoalelor năsăudene* [The History of Schools in the Land of Năsăud] (Năsăud, 1913), 365; Ioan Radu, *Monografia gimnaziului rom. gr.-or. din Brad* [Monograph of the Romanian Orthodox gymnasium of Brad] (Orăştie, 1919), 33; Andrei Bârseanu, *Istoria şcoalelor centrale greco-orientale din Braşov* [The History of the Central Greek Oriental Schools in Braşov] (Braşov, 1902), 554–55; Ion Bianu, "Amintiri din Blaj de acum 38 de ani" [Recollections of Blaj from 38 years ago], *Familia* 40 (1904): 248; Huszár and Diamandi, *A magyarországi románok*, 135 and the database described in note 9.

[19]Berecz, *Empty Signs*, 35. Calculation based on the source mentioned in note 9.

[20]Ibid., 33–36.

[21]József Jekelfalussy, "Értelmiségünk és a magyarság" [Our Intelligent Class and the Magyardom], *Közgazdasági és Közigazgatási Szemle* 18 (1894): 508; *A magyar korona országaiban az 1891. év elején végrehajtott népszámlálás eredményei* [Results of the Census Conducted in the Lands of the Hungarian Crown at the Beginning of 1891], vol. 1 (Budapest, 1893), 134*.

mostly in the towns (where the Magyar middle classes set the social tone) and often in ethnically mixed families. Elsewhere, where German had traditionally been the code of power, Romanian intellectuals were quicker to realize the indispensability of Hungarian for a career. On the other hand, illiterate peasants in the former Banat Military Frontier could still believe around the turn of the century that German had preserved its role as the dominant administrative language.[22]

Unless a young Romanian envisioned a career in Romania, which many in fact did, there was no way around the fact that universities in Hungary taught in Hungarian and most intellectual careers required a good working knowledge of the language. That was especially true for Romanian lawyers, who capitalized on their bilingual and bicultural skills to mediate between Romanian monolinguals and Hungarian institutions.[23] Memorialists noted that the alumni of Romanian gymnasia who had never attended Hungarian school started university with a linguistic handicap.[24] Romanian gymnasia were, of course, better prepared and more successful in teaching Hungarian than primary schools. But the state set similar matura requirements for them as for Hungarian-language high schools, with a focus on Hungarian literature, and grammatical and stylistic categories.[25] Although Romanian gymnasia sometimes assigned more Hungarian than Romanian classes, it was also often the case that high-school teachers found it beneath their dignity to act as mere "Sprachmeister."[26] Tellingly, Hungarian classes were mostly conducted in Romanian and made use of the grammar-translation method for language exercises.[27] In comparison, an extended language immersion in a Hungarian school, where the student could pick up the language from native schoolmates and hosts, was vastly more efficient at building practical skills.

Enrolling one's son in a Hungarian high school was by no means considered a transgression of norms in middle-class Romanian circles. However, the nationalist position entailed a distant belief in the prospect of linguistic autarchy, and Magyarizing government designs and discourses raised alarms. Romanian nationalists feared that the expansion of Hungarian bilingualism to the broader populace would become the antechamber of an all-out language shift. This fear gave rise to double talk about the issue. State school inspectors and other educationalists reported that Romanian priests and schoolteachers who enrolled their children in Hungarian school tried to deter peasants from doing the same, claiming that they themselves needed Hungarian to protect the people.[28] A priest's son wrote about the scorn heaped on peasants from his native village who had sent their children to Hungarian school. Remarkably, he did not see a contradiction with his attendance of Hungarian and German schools.[29]

The hazards of "foreign schools" also became a theme in Romanian literature for the masses. A case in point is Ioan Agârbiceanu's didactic story *Şcoala străină* ("Foreign school"), about a middling farmer who sets off a murderous avalanche by deciding that his son must learn the state language and sending him to Hungarian gymnasium and then to agricultural college. The boy finds employment in a central Hungarian manor, where the evil sway of his environment plunges him into depravity.

[22]P. Nemoianu, *Amintiri* [Memoirs] (Lugoj, 1928), 44.

[23]Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), 298.

[24]Constantin Stanca, *Îngerul de pe cupola: memorii* [The Angel on the Vault: Memoirs] (Petroşani, 1997), 86; Ion I. Lapedatu, *Memorii şi amintiri* [Memoirs and Recollections] (Iaşi, 1998), 59–60.

[25]Act XXX of 1883, sections 3, 7; *A gimnáziumi tanítás terve s a reá vonatkozó utasítások* [The Programme of Gymnasium Teaching and the Related Regulations] (Budapest, s. a.).

[26]Bârseanu, *Istoria şcoalelor centrale greco-orientale*, 441; Şotropa and Draganu, *Istoria şcoalelor năsăudene*, 232–34, 250, 257.

[27]Huszár and Diamandi, *A magyarországi románok*, 303, 308, 354.

[28]Samu Gagyi, "Emlék a közelmultból" [Memory from the Recent Past], *Fogarasvármegyei Népoktatás* 5, no. 9–11 (1913): 20; Gábor Téglás, "Észleletek: a délkeleti nemzetiségi területek népiskoláinak magyarnyelvi eredményeiről" [Observations: on the Results in Hungarian in the Schools of the South-Eastern Minority Territories], *Néptanítók Lapja* 39, no. 3 (1906): 3; the school inspector Lajos Réthi's report to Minister of Education Ágoston Trefort, 7 November 1881, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltár (henceforth MNL-OL) K305/52-1887-2624.

[29]Octavian C. Täslăuanu, *Spovedanii* [Confessions] (Bucureşti, 1976), 71. Cf. Francisc Hossu Longin, *Amintiri din viaţa mea* [Memories from my life] (Cluj-Napoca, 1975), 58.

He accumulates debt, extorts money from his father, and commits suicide. In the end, the father's entire fortune comes under the hammer.[30]

By contrast, the former school inspector of the Romanian Orthodox archdiocese gleefully commented that during the forty-three years of the Hungarian regime, the Hermannstadt state gymnasium had not turned one single Romanian student into Magyar in language or feeling.[31] Although the German and Romanian-speaking city of Hermannstadt was hardly the ideal setting for Magyarization, the inspector's statement squares much better with the evidence at hand than Agârbiceanu's cautionary tale.[32]

Hungarian-language skills were not necessarily considered a priority at the outset of the era. Several schools made the shift from mixed language to monolingual Hungarian in the 1860s and early 1870s, and the quick overhaul of the Conventual Franciscan lower gymnasium of Lugoj/Lugosch and the Catholic lower gymnasium of Braşov, in parallel with their expansion into full gymnasia, severely dented their popularity with Romanian parents. The former had undergone a brief Hungarian-Romanian bilingual phase before 1867/68. By the time it began its upward expansion in 1874, the school had dropped Romanian and had moved to only use German as an auxiliary language.[33] Under a Romanian headmaster, the Braşov gymnasium had taught from German-Hungarian bilingual textbooks, reportedly in three languages.[34] In 1875, after the headmaster retired, the faculty made Hungarian the sole language of instruction.[35] These changes alienated the Romanians of the surrounding regions, who still attached more value to German than Hungarian. Later, however, the growing value of Hungarian for social advancement gradually reduced the Romanian contingent in German (Saxon) high schools from 6.4 percent in 1876/77 to less than 1.5 percent in 1913/14, while the number of German schools remained essentially the same.[36]

Many parents enrolled their sons in Hungarian high schools for a couple of years for language learning purposes, but only a fraction of Romanian students stayed there for the entire eight-year program.[37] Many left school after a year or two to become apprentices, others transferred to a military school or a teacher training college after completing the lower grades, and still others went to priestly seminary after the fifth or sixth grade. Dropping out from gymnasium was increasingly part of a strategy rather than the result of academic or financial failure, especially as teacher training colleges and seminaries set higher entry requirements.

Upon completing four years of Romanian school, those who could afford it would first enroll their sons for an extra year in a Hungarian primary school before gymnasium.[38] In 1886/87, the children of six Romanian priests attended the state school of Zam (Hunyad County) to get a smattering of Hungarian, even though Hungarian primary schools did not formally teach the language.[39] In areas

[30]Ion Agârbiceanu, "Şcoala străină" [Foreign School], *Cosînzeana* 2 (1912): 583–86.

[31]Onisifor Ghibu, *Pe baricadele vieții: anii mei de învățătură* [On the Barricades of Life: My School Years] (Cluj-Napoca, 1981), 73–74.

[32]Berecz, *Empty Signs*, 142–48.

[33]Károly Rettegi, *A lugosi állami főgymnasium története* [History of the Lugoj State Full Gymnasium] (Lugoj, 1895), 71, 75; István Iványi, *Lugos rendezett tanácsú város története: adatok és vázlatok* [History of the Town of Lugoj: Data and Sketches] (Subotica, 1907), 178–79.

[34]Balázs Kenyeres, *Jubileumi értesítő a százéves brassói főgimnáziumról: a Magyarországra szakadt brassói öregdiákok emlékkönyve* [Jubilee Yearbook of the Hundred-Year-Old Full Gymnasium of Brassó: Memorial Volume of its Alumni Living in Hungary] (Budapest, 1938), 19; Balázs Orbán, *A Székelyföld leirása történelmi, régészeti, természetrajzi s népismei szempontból* [Description of the Szeklerland from Historical, Archaeological, Natural and Ethnographic Viewpoints], vol. 6 (Budapest, 1873), 300.

[35]Ferenc Vargyasi, "Adalékok gymnasiumunk tannyelvének történetéhez" [Materials on the history of the language of instruction in our gymnasium], in *A brassai rom. kat. főgymnasium értesitője 1878–79. tanévről* (Braşov, 1879), 3–17.

[36]*Magyar Statistikai Évkönyv*, 36–46; Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești*, 188.

[37]Nicolae Ivan, "Icoane din trecut" [Icons from the Past], in *Almanahul Societății Academice „Petru Maior", al societăților pe facultăți și academii și al cercurilor studențești regionale din Cluj* [The Almanach of the Petru Maior Academic Society, of the societies by faculties and academies and of the regional students' circles in Kolozsvár], (Cluj, 1929), 9.

[38]László Ravasz, *Emlékezéseim* [Recollections] (Budapest, 1992), 30; Aurél Popp, *Ez is élet volt…* [This Has Been Some Kind of Life…] (Kolozsvár-Napoca, 1977), 27; Aurel Cosma Jr., *Memorii* [Memoirs] (Timişoara, 2010), 74.

[39]Lajos Kovács, *A zámi magyar királyi állami elemi népiskola története huszonötéves jubileuma emlékére, 1884–1909* [The History of the Zam Hungarian Royal State Primary School, on the Occasion of its Twenty-Five-Year Jubilee, 1884–1909] (Deva, 1909), 7.

where Hungarian was a scarce commodity, schoolmasters were also in demand as private tutors. The teachers from Romanian primary schools were seldom considered, although some of their counterparts in Hungarian institutions similarly struggled with the language.[40]

Literate parents with wider horizons were also better equipped to make strategic choices about which particular Hungarian school their son attended. The closest one was often cheaper because it enabled them to supply the child with provisions—but one or two years may not have sufficed in a linguistically mixed town. A Romanian pedagogical magazine made a point about exposure to spoken Hungarian as a key factor, as against the decontextualized environment of the classroom.[41] Romanian parents made similar calculations. One memorialist describes how his parents would have preferred to have him nearby in the grammar school of Kikinda. Kikinda, however, had a Serb and German ethnic majority. This circumstance made his father, a schoolteacher, reconsider and send him to the remote, Hungarian-speaking town of Makó, which he rightly judged a more suitable milieu for learning Hungarian.[42]

Romanians who sent their children to Hungarian schools in multilingual urban environments sought to negotiate room and board for them in Hungarian-speaking homes. The hosts in these arrangements were then obliged to speak Hungarian to the child.[43] Reciprocity-based child exchange (*Kinderaustausch*) did not work between Romanians and Magyars because the two languages did not share the same exchange value.[44] By the 1860s, however, when Romanian priests and wealthier peasants from the Banat began sending their children to the market towns of the Hungarian Grand Plain to pick up Hungarian, money economy had also started to erode the reciprocity of child exchange between Banat Swabians and the Magyars of the Grand Plain.[45] Ambitious parents tried to combine Hungarian and German-speaking environments. One Romanian boy enrolled in the German school of Reps/Cohalm (Rupea) in 1867 was housed with the Armenian postmaster, a rare Hungarian-speaking place in the town, and generations of Romanian students boarded in the house of "uncle Schuster," who was famous for his lack of Hungarian in Hungarian-speaking Kolozsvár.[46]

In stark contrast to the Romanian middle classes' instrumental approach toward Hungarian, the designers of Hungarian educational policy were driven by the idea that transmitting the language built a commitment to Hungarian culture and state patriotism. This belief motivated the founding of state gymnasia in areas with few native Hungarian speakers, notably in Weißkirchen/Bela Crkva (1875), Fogaras/Făgăraș (1898), Caransebeș/Karánsebes (1907), and Orawitz/Oravița (1913).[47] In

[40]David Prodan, *Memorii* [Memoirs] (Bucharest, 1993), 23–24.

[41]I. Crișan, "Metoadele aplicate de învățătorii noștrii la propunerea limbei maghiare" [The Methods Applied by Our Teachers in the Teaching of Hungarian], *Reuniunea Învățătorilor* 6 (1909): 416.

[42]Coriolan Băran, *Reprivire asupra vieții: memorii* [Looking Back at My Life: Memoirs] (Arad, 2009), 50.

[43]Nicolae Brînzeu, *Memoriile unui preot bătrân* [Memoirs of an Old Priest] (Timișoara, 2008), 36; Talpeș, *Amintiri*, 30; Gábor Kemény, "A magyar nyelv tanítása nemzetiségi vidéken" [The Teaching of Hungarian in Nationality Areas], *Az Országos Középiskolai Tanáregyesület Közlönye* 41 (1908): 676.

[44]The only institutionalized example was aimed at the mutual acquisition of agricultural practices, Lajos Nagy, "Csere gazdalegények" [Exchange Farmer Lads], *Ethnographia* 76 (1965): 610–12.

[45]Ioan Slavici, "Lumea prin care am trecut" [The World I Lived in], in *Opere* [Works], vol. 9, *Memorialistica, Varia* (Bucharest, 1978), 218; János Asbóth, *Társadalom-politikai beszédei* [Socio-Political Speeches] (Budapest, 1898), 445–46.

[46]Ioan Broșu, *Amintiri din viața preoțească adunate și scoase la iveală după o păstorire de peste 50 de ani* [Recollections from Priestly Life Assembled and Taken Down After more than Fifty Years of Service] (Brașov, 1936), 74; Alexandru Vaida Voevod, *Memorii* [Memoirs], vol. 1 (Cluj-Napoca, 2006), 16; *Kolozsvár* 1 July 1895, 3.

[47]Gyula Berecz, *Fehértemplom város tanügy története a város keletkezésétől a mai napig (1717–1882): néhány adat hazai közoktatásügyünk történetéhez* [Educational History of Weißkirchen from the Foundation of the Town to the Present Day, 1717–1882: A Few Data on the History of Our Public Education] (Bela Crkva, 1882); Vencel Vodráska, "Adatok a fogarasi m. kir. állami főgimnázium történetéhez (1898–1909)" [Data on the History of the Fogaras Royal Hungarian Full Gymnasium, 1898–1909], in *A fogarasi m. kir. állami főgimnázium tizenkettedik értesítője az 1909–1910. iskolai évről* (Făgăraș, 1910), 3; Béla Gajda, "Az intézet alapítása" [The Founding of the Institution], in *A karánsebesi m. kir. állami főgimnázium első évi értesítője az 1907–1908. tanévről* (Caransebeș, 1908), 21–40; Talpeș, *Amintiri*, 33; Imre Jaeger, "Az oraviczabányai középfokú oktatás multja" [The Past of Secondary Education in Orawitz], in *Az oraviczabányai községi főgimnázium I. évi értesítője az 1913–14. iskolai évről* (Oravița, 1914), 16–20.

Weißkirchen and Caransebeș, the schools aroused open hostility from the locals.[48] The government was also prepared to make moderate sacrifices to attract non-Magyars into its high schools. In 1884, the Hermannstadt state gymnasium applied for and received an exemption from the planned tuition fee extension in recognition of its role "disseminating the Hungarian language among citizens of foreign tongues." Its above-average students had received tuition waivers since 1874, which the headmaster considered a powerful draw.[49]

By the early twentieth century, a growing tide of opinion had questioned the rationale of allocating resources to the peripheries. According to a senior government official, Hungarian gymnasia only Magyarized in mixed regions; elsewhere, they fed the minority intelligentsia.[50] The chronicler of the Weißkirchen gymnasium shared these views and denounced the creation of his own school as a blunder.[51] Around the same time, one gymnasium headmaster argued against opening a residence hall because that could upset the two-thirds majority of Magyar students, an outcome which he called "undesirable."[52]

However, these schools and half a dozen other new Hungarian gymnasia and főreáliskolák seemed to bring the allure of Hungarian within the reach of peasant families in their region who wanted white-collar jobs for their sons. Courting the disapproval of parish priests, Romanian peasant boys popped up in these schools more often than they did in the old-established Catholic and Calvinist ones. Over and above the ethnic stigma and various forms of humiliation, the biggest challenge that these boys had to face was an educational program tailored to Hungarian speakers from the beginning. Where neither the majority of the class nor the locals who provided lodging spoke Hungarian, the promise of fast language acquisition could turn out to be deceptive.

"[I]t takes great effort to get the class to understand Hungarian speech"[53]

The share of Romanians in Hungary with a reported fluency in Hungarian had grown to a modest 12.5 percent by 1910.[54] While a law from 1879 prescribed the teaching of Hungarian for mother-tongue primary schools, the conditions were lacking. The vast majority of Romanian pupils were enrolled in Romanian schools. Romanian schooling hugely widened its outreach during the era, but even still, a large part of (perhaps most) Romanian children continued to stay away from any school. Those who attended usually did in the winter months and four years instead of the required six. Romanian village schools remained overwhelmingly one-room-one-teacher affairs, typically staffed by underpaid, non-tenured, and often unqualified teachers, who tried to instill the three Rs in addition to the traditional fare of church singing and religion.

Hungarian governments promoted and later prescribed the then-cutting-edge direct method for the teaching of Hungarian. It is open to doubt whether the direct method, which had proved its worth in Berlitz language schools with small groups of motivated adult learners and specially trained instructors, could be adapted to large classrooms of children aged six to ten, all dealt with by the same teacher. Most teachers did not even try, if for no other reason than that the method ran starkly counter to their beliefs and routines. Fearful of state school inspectors, who kept Romanian schools in check under the threat of disciplinary actions, they put children to memorize sample sentences and patriotic poems.[55]

[48]Imre Botár, "A fehértemplomi állami főgimnázium harmincéves története (1875–1905)" [Thirty years of the Weißkirchen State Full Gymnasium], in *A fehértemplomi m. kir. állami főgimnázium XXX. értesitője az 1904–1905. tanévről*, ed. György Bodnár (Bela Crkva, 1905), 6; Ferenc Fodor, *Önéletírásai* [Autobiographies] (Budapest, 2016), 289.

[49]Gábor Boros, *A nagyszebeni állami főgymnasium történelme* [History of the Hermannstadt State Full Gymnasium] (Sibiu, 1896), 73.

[50]József Ajtay, "A nemzetiségi kérdés: A Magyar Társadalomtudományi Egyesület nemzetiségi értekezlete eredményeinek összefoglalása" [The Nationalities Problem: Summary of the Findings of the Hungarian Social Science Association's Colloquium on the Nationalities Problem], *Magyar Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 7 (1914): 122–23.

[51]Botár, "Fehértemplomi állami főgimnázium," 5.

[52]János Rencz, *A nagybányai m. kir. áll. főgimnázium első huszonöt éve: 1887–1912* [The First Twenty-Five Years of the Royal Hungarian State High Gymnasium in Nagybánya] (Baia Mare, 1913), 25.

[53]Ferencz Várhelyi, ed., *A verseczi m. kir. állami főreáliskola értesítője az 1902–3. tanévről* (Vršac, 1903), 25.

[54]*A magyar Szent Korona országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása*, vol. 5, *Részletes demografia* (Budapest, 1916), 117, 127–28.

[55]Ibid., 71–79, 108–15, 121–25, 152–80.

Here is how a teacher of the Erzsébetváros/Ibașfalău/Elisabethstadt (Dumbrăveni) gymnasium classified first-graders in 1893: "First of all, we can find a group among them that does not know a word of Hungarian. They make up 20–25 percent of the whole. A second group has learned Hungarian reading and writing, although their orthography is hair-raising and their pronunciation is deafening. They also learned a couple of poems and are ready to recite the daylight out of them at any moment, but their real language skills are close to nil. This cohort makes up an additional 20 percent."[56] But given its trilingual hinterland, the situation in Erzsébetváros was still mild compared to the pedagogical quagmire that teachers noted in Hermannstadt, Lugoj, Weißkirchen, Werschetz/Vršac, Caransebeș, Orawitz, Szamosújvár/Gherla, and Temeswar/Temesvár/Timișoara.[57] In these places, over half of first-grade high-school students were unable to express themselves in Hungarian or understand explanations. This was the case for not only children from mother-tongue village schools but even some former pupils of Hungarian primary schools.[58]

While a lively didactic discourse had already emerged on Hungarian as second language, it was limited to schools with a medium of instruction other than Hungarian.[59] Even though the 1868 Nationalities Act had pledged the state to "ensure" that "citizens living together in considerable numbers . . . shall be able to obtain instruction in the neighborhood in the mother-tongue, up to the point where the higher academic education begins,"[60] the makers of Hungarian politics found it inadmissible for publicly maintained schools to use a minority language, even in parallel classes or a transitional bilingual program as existed in Cisleithania.[61] For a few years after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, several Hungarian-language high schools used German as an auxiliary language, and at least two used Romanian.[62] Many school statutes continued to accord such a status to the local languages but it necessarily lost any real content as students were not separated by mother tongue and teachers' language skills were not taken into account in placements.[63] Moreover, some teachers who knew Romanian only used it as a last resort.[64] In their publications, schools certainly tried to give the impression that there was no place for any language but Hungarian within their walls. When forced to make concessions to the language of their students, they experienced it as a failure.

[56]György Mayer, "A felvételi vizsgálatokról" [On Entry Exams], in *Az erzsébetvárosi állam gymnasium II. évi értesitője az 1892–93. tanévről*, ed. Dávid László (Cluj, 1893), 6.

[57]Boros, *A nagyszebeni állami főgymnasium történelme*, 51; Botár, "Fehértemplomi állami főgimnázium," 10; Miklóssy, "A magyar nyelv ügye," 29; Sándor Láng, "Észrevételek a magyar nyelv tanításáról" [Observations on the Teaching of Hungarian], in *A karánsebesi magyar királyi állami főgimnázium II. évi értesítője az 1908–1909. iskolai évről* (Caransebeș, 1909), 2; Endre Horváth, "Az oraviczabányai községi polgári iskola" [The Communal Civil School of Orawitz], *Polgári Iskola* 1, no. 4 (1876): 56–57; István Berkeszi, *A temesvári magyar királyi állami főreáliskola története* [The History of the Royal Hungarian State Realgymnasium in Temeschwar] (Timișoara, 1896), 194; Imre Lovas, "A magyar nyelv tanítása a nemzetiségi vidékek középiskoláiban" [The Teaching of Hungarian in the High Schools of Nationality Areas], *Az Országos Középiskolai Tanáregyesület Közlönye* 41 (1908): 625–26.

[58]*Az Erdélyi Róm. Kath. Státus Gyulafehérvári Főgimnáziumának értesitője az 1906–1907. tanévről* (Alba Iulia, 1907), 6; Nándor Still, "Értekezés: magyar nyelven való tanításról nem magyar közönségü helyeken felállított középtanodáinkban" [Treatise: On the Teaching of Hungarian in High Schools Located in Places with Non-Magyar Public], in *A fehértemplomi m. kir. állami főgymnasium értesítvénye az 1877/8-ik tanévről*, ed. Gábor Töreki (Bela Crkva, 1878), 4.

[59]Berecz, *The Politics of Early Language Teaching*, 133–48, 152–80.

[60]Section 17, translation by R.W. Seton-Watson (pseud. Scotus Viator), *Racial Problems in Hungary* (London, 1908), 432.

[61]Hannelore Burger, *Sprachenrecht und Sprachgerechtigkeit im österreichischen Unterrichtswesen, 1867–1918* (Vienna, 1995), 71–72, 142, 144–46, 151, 181.

[62]Rettegi, *Lugosi állami főgymnasium története*, 71, 75; Vincențiu Babeș's rejoinder to Minister of Education Tivadar Pauler in the Chamber of Deputies, 17 December 1871, Gábor G. Kemény, ed., *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez Magyarországon a dualizmus korában* [Documents on the History of the Nationalities Problem in Hungary in the Dualist Era], vol. 1 (Budapest, 1952), 285.

[63]Valeriu Braniște, *Amintiri din închisoare* [Memoirs from Prison] (Bucharest, 1972), 86; Emil Rombauer, "A brassói m. k. áll. főreáliskola alapításának és eddigi működésének története" [History of the Founding and Operation of the Hungarian Royal State Realgymnasium of Brassó], in *A Brassói magyar kir. állami főreáliskolának kilenczedik évi értesitője: az 1893–94. tanév* (Brașov, 1894), 15–16.

[64]Ghibu, *Pe baricadele vieții*, 86; Nemoianu, *Amintiri*, 46.

A 1912 survey of polgári iskolák from Hungary's minority-majority counties found that it took two to three years for most children to become proficient Hungarian speakers.[65] Yet many students continued to have difficulties with Hungarian in the upper years, and children transferring to a school with a different language of instruction experienced hardships even when they understood the new language.[66] The most detailed first-person account of grappling with Hungarian comes from Valer Braniște, who spent his first years at the Hermannstadt state gymnasium frequently paralyzed by the languages swirling in his head.[67] In the German homes of the city, where most Romanian students lived, Hungarian was hardly spoken in the 1880s. By his admission, only well into the upper grades did Braniște learn Hungarian well enough to really concentrate on the content of what he read and freely express his thoughts.[68] Bilingual Magyar students transmitted the teachers' explanations to their Romanian colleagues in a nutshell, who crammed the material mechanically.[69] A faculty meeting of the gymnasium concluded in 1880 that it made no sense to verbally reprimand the lower classes because most students would not understand it. Around the same time, students' limited understanding of Hungarian forced the Fogaras polgári iskola to confine itself "to the most important and the most necessary . . . in the teaching of all subjects."[70]

Beginning in the first grade, Latin classes heightened the paradox of the situation, since they relied entirely on the language of instruction.[71] Or, as one teacher-priest of a Catholic gymnasium put it, "a child who thinks in Romanian must study Latin in Hungarian."[72] At best, this led to the sort of unedifying mnemonic exercises that Braniște relates about: "in Latin, where our task was to translate and parse, we copied from one another, after a fashion, the Hungarian meaning of the Latin sentence and vice versa, imprinting them in our ears, so that, when reciting, we often did not know where the Latin text ends and the Hungarian one begins."[73] Latin teachers in Weißkirchen "taught in three languages at once; they first translated the Latin text into German and only then did they try it in Hungarian."[74] Since no Romanian or Serbian was used, "the Vlach and Serb brigade remained insensitive . . . to the long and passionate explanations about the agreement of the adjective with the noun,"[75] coming right on the heels of a Hungarian crash course.

To remedy the situation, schools tried everything permitted to them, from prizes for students excelling in Hungarian to poetry recitation contests, drama groups, and carefully selected compulsory readings to private tutoring.[76] Inherited from the time of Latin high schools, a popular method to promote the mastery of the language of teaching was to enforce its use on the students. This tactic was so widely implemented that one Transylvanian Saxon gymnasium even punished its students for lapsing into the Saxon dialect.[77]

[65]Adolf Pechány and Sándor Mihalik, *Jelentés a magyar nyelv tanitásáról a nem magyarajku vidéken működő polgári iskolákban* [Report on the Teaching of Hungarian in the Civil Schools of Non-Hungarian-Speaking Areas] (Budapest, 1913), 9.

[66]*A verseczi m. kir. állami főreáliskola értesítője az 1902–3. tanévről*, 25; Hossu Longin, *Amintiri din viața mea*, 103; Tăslăuanu, *Spovedanii*, 103.

[67]Braniște, *Amintiri din închisoare*, 88.

[68]Ibid., 64, 88.

[69]Ibid., 90.

[70]Boros, *A nagyszebeni állami főgymnasium történelme*, 86; *Jelentés a fogarasi állami polgári fiú- és leányiskola 1881–2. tanévi állapotáról*, MNL-OL K305/12-1887-308.

[71]Mayer, "A felvételi vizsgálatokról," 6; Still, "Értekezés," 8; Dorin Pavel, *Arhitectura apelor* [Water Engineering] (Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 53.

[72]*Az Erdélyi Róm. Kath. Státus Gyulafehérvári Főgimnáziumának értesitője*, 6.

[73]Braniște, *Amintiri din închisoare*, 88.

[74]Botár, "Fehértemplomi állami főgimnázium," 10.

[75]Nemoianu, *Amintiri*, 45.

[76]János Kárpiss, ed., *Értesítő az erdélyi róm. kath. státus gyulafehérvári főgimnáziumának 1913-1914. évi működéséről* (Alba Iulia, s. a.), 139; István Gneisz, "Intézetünk 25 éves története: 1873–1898" [25 Years of Our Institution, 1873–1898], in Vilmos Flaschner, ed., *Az oraviczabányai államilag segélyzett községi polgári fiuiskola értesitője az 1897/98. iskolai évről* (Oravița, 1898), 1; *A karánsebesi magyar királyi állami főgimnázium II. évi értesítője az 1908–1909. iskolai évről* (Caransebeș, 1909), 47–48; Jenő Binder, *Rombauer Emil, 1854–1914* (Budapest, 1914), 17.

[77]V. Gr. Borgovanu, *Amintiri din copilărie: școala primară, românească și nemțească, preparandia și gimnaziul; 1859–1873* [Childhood Memories: Primary School, Romanian and German, Teachers' College and High School; 1859–1873] (Brașov, 1909), 119.

There is evidence from four Hungarian secondary schools that conversation in minority languages was banned for the entire period or for some time, at times even outside the classroom.[78] Such bans did not affect the popularity of schools. But then, they had also no more than a superficial effect where only a minority of the students knew Hungarian from home.[79]

Teachers believed that real improvement could come from three things that, to varying degrees, conflicted with the central policies: language entrance exams, a preparatory year, and the partial remodeling of Hungarian lessons.

For a long time, admission decisions were left entirely to the schools. Several schools are known to have subjected applicants to a Hungarian admission exam in that early period. In Orawitz, the teaching staff decided in 1875 not to take in children with insufficient Hungarian, only to backpedal after realizing that this measure put their future at risk.[80] Uniquely at the time, they later divided first-graders into parallel classes according to their level of Hungarian.[81] The Temeswar főreáliskola held rather basic Hungarian entrance exams tailored to German-speakers until 1884, and around 1880, the local Piarists flatly refused to take in students from Romanian schools, citing their poor Hungarian as a rationale.[82]

Then, Section 10 of the High School Act of 1883 declared that all children must be admitted to the first grade upon proving successful completion of four elementary classes or "a similar level of education." People in power felt that applicants to Hungarian secondary schools, even if they did not understand the language of teaching, "could not be rejected exactly due to patriotic considerations."[83] This provision tied headmasters' hands.[84] Defiant, a few schools interpreted the law as permitting Hungarian entrance exams. The Orăştie college seems to have conducted such exams over the entire period, while the Hermannstadt state gymnasium introduced them in 1894.[85]

Once the government has deprived high schools of the right to select their students, one teacher argued, it should allow them to set up language preparation courses.[86] This idea emerged at least five times from multiple quarters, but the ministry resisted it.[87] Only the Weißkirchen gymnasium was allowed to set up a preparatory year in its second year of existence and it was terminated after two years.[88] Unofficially, however, the gymnasium still operated a Hungarian-language prep course around 1902, albeit only for three months.[89]

In the 1870s, Hungarian-language teaching was still in the open in the Temeswar főreáliskola. Instead of the philology-oriented central curriculum designed for native students, the school's Hungarian classes concentrated on teaching the language from textbooks developed for the local

[78]Dénes Dósa, *A szászvárosi ev. ref. Kún-kollegium története* [History of the Reformed Kún College in Orăştie] (Orăştie, 1897), 117, 130; Pavel, *Arhitectura apelor*, 52–53; Berkeszi, *A temesvári főreáliskola*, 199; János Pfeiffer, "A lippai állami polgári és felső kereskedelmi iskola története 1874–1896" [History of the Lippa State Civil and Upper Commercial School], in idem, ed., *A lippai állami polgári és felsőkereskedelmi iskola értesitője az 1895/96. iskolai évről* (Arad, 1896), 33; *Hogyan töltsük a szünidőt? (Néhány jó tanács tanulóinknak): melléklet a karánsebesi m. kir. főgimnázium 1911–12. isk. évi Értesitőjéhez*, 9.

[79]Talpeş, *Amintiri*, 34; Ghibu, *Pe baricadele vieţii*, 69; Axente Banciu, *Valul amintirilor* [The Flood of Memories] (Cluj-Napoca, 1998), 134; Constantin Lacea, "Din copilăria lui Ştefan O. Iosif" [From Ştefan Octavian Iosif's Childhood], *Ţara Bârsei* 3 (1931): 37; Ilie Lazăr, *Amintiri* [Memoirs] (Bucharest, 2000), 32. Cf. Petru Râmneanţu, *Visuri pe Semenic* [Dreams from the Semenic] (manuscript), Arhivele Naţionale ale României (Bucharest), Fond personal Petru Râmneanţu 6, 167

[80]Horváth, "Az oraviczabányai községi polgári iskola," 54; Gneisz, "Intézetünk 25 éves története," 7.

[81]Ibid., 13.

[82]Berkeszi, *A temesvári főreáliskola*, 196; Cosma, *Memorii*, 74.

[83]Lajos Bilinszky, ed., *A Sz. Ferenc-rendi nővérek nagyszebeni tan- és nevelőintézetének értesítője az 1911–1912. iskolai évről* [History of the Teaching Institute of the Franciscan Sisters in Hermannstadt] (Sibiu, 1912), 13.

[84]Mayer, "A felvételi vizsgálatokról," 7; Radu, *Monografia gimnaziului rom. gr.-or. din Brad*, 38.

[85]Prodan, *Memorii*, 23–24; Brînzeu, *Memoriile unui preot bătrăn*, 44; Ignác Veress, ed., *A nagyszebeni állami főgymnasium értesitvénye az 1893/4. tanévben* (Sibiu, 1894), 61.

[86]Mayer, "A felvételi vizsgálatokról," 7.

[87]Boros, *A nagyszebeni állami főgymnasium történelme*, 51; Horváth, "Az oraviczabányai községi polgári iskola," 56–57; Mihály Horváth's report to Ágoston Trefort on 17 August 1883, MNL-OL K305/12-1887-308.

[88]Botár, "Fehértemplomi állami főgimnázium," 11–12.

[89]Nemoianu, *Amintiri*, 45.

German schools.[90] Elsewhere, ambitious teachers dedicated part of their Hungarian classes to improving students' language skills. It went to the detriment of the curriculum, but then, teachers could contend that so did talking to students who did not understand. Branişte had already graduated when a young teacher joined the Hermannstadt state gymnasium who, according to a former student, "achieved results beyond expectations in teaching colloquial Hungarian" by having the best native Hungarian storytellers in the class tell fairy tales.[91] Another idea was to introduce textbooks in simplified Hungarian.[92] With their preparatory year eliminated, teachers in Weißkirchen were working on such teaching aids.[93] Apparently, however, although the ministry did authorize locally developed textbooks, it could not tolerate the use of textbooks for non-natives in Hungarian gymnasia.[94]

As a compromise more acceptable for the ministry, two primary schools in Orăştie and Fogaras informally acted as language prep schools.[95] But the least controversial solution was to add one or two extra Hungarian classes a week. It was done at the expense of Latin in most places—by no coincidence given the Sisyphean effort it took to comply with the Latin curriculum.[96]

Friends or Foes?

Ethnic categories were as sharply drawn for most Romanian students as they were for their Jewish colleagues. High schools kept a record of students' mother tongues and, perhaps more importantly, Romanians had classes of Orthodox or Greek Catholic religion as well as Romanian, sometimes as a mandatory subject. Once fluent in Hungarian, the relevance of ethnic categories may have varied across a spectrum of interactions with peers. It could withdraw to the background and give way to solidarity between peasant boys of various extractions against the teachers.[97] Thus, it was possible to make lifelong friends with Magyar classmates.

Romanian autobiographers often employed the concepts of "tolerance" and "chauvinism" to describe the atmosphere of Hungarian high schools and, in particular, attitudes toward Romanians. The kind of tolerance encountered in Hungarian high schools was permeated by a civilizing strand of state nationalism. At best, it meant an inclusive spirit that valued academic performance above social distinctions and presented Hungarian as a tool of emancipation. It did not simply further assimilation but aimed at educating a bilingual elite of Hungarian culture from the ranks of national minorities, who could then guide their kin in a patriotic direction. The authorized view was to regard Romanian students as Magyars in the making.[98] But even so far as this view remained operational, they were still treated as different.

The uneasy maneuvering between the persona expected by teachers and the self-image that students felt as authentic is a theme encountered in several memoirs, and seventeen-year-old Valer Branişte repeatedly reflected on it in his diary. He reminded himself that "we go to a state high school, circumstances force us to hide our feelings and show enthusiasm for the Magyar cause."[99] All this surrounded by Saxon burghers who, he reckoned, viewed students of the state gymnasium as "Saxon-bashing Magyars" regardless of their ethnic background.[100] This balancing act became ever more delicate as many teachers grew insecure of their role as confident Magyarizers.

[90]Berkeszi, *A temesvári főreáliskola*, 195.
[91]Banciu, *Valul amintirilor*, 132.
[92]Lovas, "A magyar nyelv tanítása," 627–28.
[93]Still, "Értekezés," 10.
[94]Botár, "Fehértemplomi állami főgimnázium," 10, 12–13.
[95]Benjámin Váró, ed., *A fogarasi magyar királyi állami polgáriskolák és elemi népiskola 1884–85-ik évi értesítője* (Făgăraş, 1885), 1; Dósa, *A szászvárosi ev. ref. Kún-kollegium története*, 188, 204.
[96]Pfeiffer, "A lippai állami polgári," 40; Rettegi, *Lugosi állami főgymnasium története*, 71; Láng, "Észrevételek a magyar nyelv tanításáról," 8.
[97]Octavian Goga, *Insemnările unui trecător: crâmpeie din sbuciumările dela noi* [Notes of a Passerby: Glimpses of Our Troubles] (Arad, 1911), 54.
[98]Ibid., 50; Fodor, *Önéletírásai*, 289; József Németh's diary entry on 4 November 1898, in József Németh, *Hét év [1914-1921]/ Napló [1898–1911]* [Seven years (1914–21)/Diary (1898–1911)] (Budapest, 1993), 29.
[99]Valeriu Branişte, *Diariul meu de septiman: jurnal de licean, 1885-1886* [My journal from the seventh grade] (Cluj-Napoca, 2014), 252.
[100]Ibid., 210.

Tolerance had taken the form of neglect in the 1860s as some teaching friars of Catholic institutions sat students with poor Hungarian in the rear benches and graded them based on their behavior.[101] To the extent that educators paid equal attention to all students, however—which also stemmed from the Magyarizing ethos—linguistic disadvantage left verbatim memorizing as the only way students could stay afloat in the initial phase.[102] Those who went on to the upper years then often outperformed their Magyar peers, partly because of the self-imposed habit of hard work and because scholarships and tuition waivers required a good average.[103] According to Mihály Babits, the leading poet of his generation and teacher at the Fogaras gymnasium, "in the upper standards, most high honor students came from their (the Romanians') ranks and not from that of the sons of Magyars officials, conceited on their mother tongue and with thoughts revolving around the ball."[104]

But the inclusive surface was cracking. Except in a few schools, Romanian students had to put up with ethnic stigma in the form of nasty remarks and humiliation from some teachers. What memorialists called chauvinism most often referred to teachers applying the stereotype of the treacherous, animalistic, barbarous, and bloodthirsty Wallach to Romanian students. A few teachers were notorious for their anti-Romanian antics, and more of them could slip into such insults under stress. Two autobiographies recall teachers who also discriminated against Romanian students when grading them.[105]

A political pamphlet from 1892 claimed that "in Hungarian high schools, where we also went, students of non-Magyar nationality are treated not only as strangers, but also as enemies."[106] A middle-class Magyar observer formed the same impression: "Teachers regard every Romanian youth as a future traitor and do not treat them as others."[107] Memoirs enliven this one-sided, dark picture with lighter hues. Yet, suggestively, Romanian authors found the most welcoming school environments outside of Romanian-speaking areas.[108] The question is complicated by the fact that young teachers were placed in the peripheries largely independent of their will, where they might adopt the attitudes of their colleagues and often swung between inclusive and exclusionary moods. The poet Babits first identified with the former: "I came as a civilizer; as a young Roman to a faraway province."[109] Before long, however, he developed second thoughts that he might be putting weapons in enemy hands instead of raising Magyars.

Some teachers harbored deep skepticism toward "elevating" the minorities to the Magyar middle class, and the shaming of Romanian students could become more frequent as teachers lost faith in their mission of creating a Magyarophile elite. Even vague assertions of cultural otherness could startle them out of their role and made them lose their temper. The later prime minister Petru Groza and the later Jesuit Nicolae Brînzeu unleashed the fury of the Orăștie headmaster, who edited the local Hungarian paper in an intransigent nationalist stance, by asking him to correct the spelling of their family names in their matura certificates. The misspellings quoted by Groza (*Gróza* and *Brînza*) were not Hungarian transcriptions but could have unpleasant connotations in Romanian. As the two students came up with their request, the headmaster suddenly felt that he had "nurtured snakes

[101]Slavici, "Lumea prin care am trecut," 210–11.

[102]Mihály Babits, *Keresztülkasul az életemen* [Through My Life] (Budapest, 1997), 38; Fodor, *Önéletírásai*, 292; Pavel, *Arhitectura apelor*, 55.

[103]Simion Retegan, *Sate și școli românești din Transilvania la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea* (1867–1875) [Romanian Villages and Schools in Transylvania at the Mid-Nineteenth Century, 1867–75] (Cluj-Napoca, 1994), 127; Pompiliu E. Constantin, *Însemnări din viață* [Notes from Life] (Sighișoara, 1931), 23; Lazăr, *Amintiri,* 29; Valeriu Pop, *Amintiri politice* [Political Remembrances] (Bucharest, 2018), 205; Nemoianu, *Amintiri*, 45.

[104]Babits, *Keresztülkasul az életemen*, 38.

[105]Slavici, "Lumea prin care am trecut," 211; Ghibu, *Pe baricadele vieții*, 85.

[106]*Cestiunea română în Transilvania și Ungaria: replica junimii academice române din Transilvania și Ungaria la "Răspunsul" dat de junimea academică maghiară "Memoriului" studenților universitari din România* [The Romanian Question in Transylvania and Hungary: rejoinder of the Romanian students of Transylvania and Hungary to the "Response" given by Hungarian Students to the "Memorandum" of University Students from Romania] (Sibiu, 1892), 54.

[107]Elemér Gyárfás, *Erdélyi problémák, 1903–1923* [Transylvanian Problems, 1903–23] (Cluj, 1923), 13.

[108]Băran, *Reprivire asupra vieții*, 51–53; Iosif Velceanu, *Autobiografie* [Autobiography] (Timișoara, 1937), 30; Cosma, *Memorii*, 70.

[109]Babits, *Keresztülkasul az életemen*, 33.

in his bosom for eight years" and, showering angry reproaches on the two ungrateful propagators of anti-Hungarian plague, drove them out of his office.[110]

Hungarian secondary schools also grew suspicious and intolerant of any Romanian-language activity that took place on their premises. Most of them did not allow Romanian literary societies, the most popular form of extracurricular activities at the time.[111] Schools with sizeable Romanian student contingents usually offered Romanian as an optional subject. Eleven Hungarian gymnasia and főreáliskolák and several polgári iskolák ran Romanian classes in 1895/96.[112] The government, for its part, tried to take the wind out of the sails of the subject, regarded as dangerous for its focus on the national literary canon and the standard variety. It curtailed the requirements that teachers were allowed to set in Romanian, ruling out homework, revoked its compulsory status for Romanian students in some schools and levied extra fees for it in others.[113] Starting in the 1880s, several school leaderships pitched in by forbidding teachers the use of Romanian or appointing teachers who turned the subject into a travesty, an excuse for practicing Hungarian or reading Hungarian classics.[114]

Most Romanian students took Romanian classes anyway, often because funding institutions set it as a requirement. But the Calvinist college of Orăștie seems to have crossed a red line when it latched onto a government campaign to Magyarize religious education. The headmaster ordered Romanian priests to teach in Hungarian in 1909, but church authorities resisted. The headmaster's gambit backfired. Enrollments fell off a cliff from one year to the next to such an extent that the school only started two first-year classes instead of five.[115]

Many schools prescribed the use of Hungarian outside class under the rationale of speeding up its acquisition. However, once the medium of instruction was no longer Latin but Hungarian, this measure installed a clear hierarchy between students and contained a heavy dose of symbolic violence. This aspect came to the fore when such a ban was enforced with disciplinary intent or fueled by suspicion. According to its chronicler, the Orăștie college introduced a ban on Romanian speech partly to prevent Romanian students from forming cliques and to preserve the institution's Hungarian character: " . . . since the Magyars and Saxons all knew Romanian, whereas the Romanians either spoke no Hungarian or spoke it poorly, the conditions deteriorated to a point where Romanian became a competitor of Hungarian as the language of exchange in the institution, threatening to outstrip it."[116]

The prohibition of Romanian speech sparked far-reaching conflict at the Nagyvárad Premonstratensians, where it was all the more offensive as Romanian students represented a Romanian-language institution, the local Greek Catholic bishopric. Greek Catholics educated their

[110]Petru Groza, *Adio lumii vechi! Memorii* [Adieu to the Old World! Memories] (Bucharest, 2003), 37–38.

[111]Ioan Popa, *Dimensiuni etno-identitare și național-politice în spațiul școlar sud-transilvănean 1849-1918* [Dimensions of Ethnic Identity and National Politics in the Southern Transylvanian Education Scene, 1849–1918] (Cluj-Napoca, 2013), 365–66; Valeriu Achim, *Nord-Vestul Transilvaniei: cultură națională—finalitate politică, 1848–1918* [North-Western Transylvania: National Culture – Political Purpose, 1848–1918] (Baia Mare, 1998), 136; Ioachim Lazăr, *Învățământul românesc din sud-vestul Transilvaniei (1848–1883)* (Cluj-Napoca, 2002), 6. As an exception, the Piarists of Kolozsvár gave home to a Romanian literary society as late as 1893, *Societatea de lectură a junimei studiosa dela archigymnasulu romano-catholicu dein Clusiu pre anul 1885–1893*, "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library (Cluj-Napoca), Manuscript Collection, Col. Doc. 64.

[112]Kemény, ed., *Iratok*, vol. 2 (Budapest, 1956), 411–13.

[113]*Magyarországi rendeletek tára* 26 (1892): 1355–58; Miklós Csiky, "A gyulafehérvári róm. kath. főgymnasium története. 1579–1896," [A History of the Gyulafehérvár Roman Catholic High Gymnasium: 1579–1896], in *A gyulafehérvári róm. kath. főgymnasium története és értesítője az 1895/96 tanévről* (Alba Iulia, 1896), 63–64; Ioan Stanciu, *Elementul românesc în trecutul liceului "Gh. Lazăr" din Sibiu* [The Romanian Element in the Past of the Gh. Lazăr Lycée in Sibiu] (Sibiu, 1938), 18–19; Rettegi, *Lugosi állami főgymnasium története*, 71–75; Pfeiffer, "A lippai állami polgári," 58; MNL-OL K305/12-1887-1308.

[114]Constantin Brătescu, *Protopresbiterul Andrei Ghidu (1849–1937): între biserică și neam* [The Protopresbyter Andrei Ghidu (1849–1937): between Church and the People] (Caranşebes, 2006), 46–47; Onisifor Ghibu (pseud. Grigore Sima), *Școala românească din Transilvania și Ungaria* [Romanian school in Transylvania and Hungary: its historical development and present situation] (Bucharest, 1915), 79; Ghibu, *Pe baricadele vieții*, 74–76; *A fogarasi m. kir. állami főgimnázium értesítője az 1908–09. évről* (Făgăraș, 1909), 52.

[115]I. C., "Românii din Orăștie și jur alungați dela gimnaziul de aici!" [The Romanians of Orăștie and their Expulsion from the Local Gymnasium], *Libertatea* 22 August/4 September 1909, 2–3; "Románok között: uj nemzetiségi harcok" [Among Romanians: New Nationality Struggles], *Pesti Napló* 1 October 1910, 3; as well as the yearbooks of the high school for 1909, 1910 and 1911.

[116]Dósa, *A szászvárosi ev. ref. Kún-kollegium története*, 130.

trainee priests in the Premonstratensian gymnasium in the lower standards and the Latin-rite seminary in the upper ones. The Premonstratensians demanded that Romanian students speak "a language that everyone can understand" when their Magyar peers were present.[117] At least since the Millennium of 1896, there had been a permanent tension between students belonging to the two rites. The teachers not only encouraged the denunciation of "unpatriotic behavior" and Romanian speech, but the Premonstratensian headmaster even stirred up a scandal out of one Romanian boy's unintentional mangling of a Hungarian word.[118] It all came to a head in 1912, after Romanian students had visited their fellow Romanian comrade in the infirmary, and one Magyar student present picked a quarrel with them for "exciting" the patient by speaking loud Romanian. A student called Bonea talked back, to which the Magyar boy denounced him. The bishop first called on the Romanian students to apologize and then expelled the unyielding Bonea, along with the fifteen seminarians standing in solidarity with him. The Latin-rite students celebrated the departure of their Uniate peers by singing the Hungarian anthem. After a joint probe condemned the conduct of the teaching faculty, the government granted permission to set up an independent Greek Catholic priestly seminary.[119]

Interestingly, peasant boys bore the brunt of teachers' verbal aggression, although they were less likely to bring a Romanian nationalist world-view from home than the children of educated parents. One of teachers' favorite stumbling blocks was Romanian peasant attire, complete with a wide leather belt and a long shirt.[120] Multiple shifts of urban ("German") clothes constituted a great expense and represented a symbolic break with the parents, which the latter might wish to avoid.[121] Romanian gymnasia proceeded tactfully and let their students wear clothes from home, at least in the lower classes. This was not the case in Hungarian schools.[122] Unable to force modern clothes on them, some teachers of the Fogaras gymnasium demonstratively made Romanian peasant boys tuck in their shirts.[123] Since middle-class Romanians had easier access to Hungarian, teachers' ire also hit peasant boys disproportionately when lashing out at students' faltering Hungarian or thoughtless memorizing.[124] A Romanian student's grammatical mistake could easily trigger the beloved nationalist trope about the ungrateful devourers of Hungarian bread, as in the following outburst, quoted by a former student: "They have been gnawing at this nation for a thousand years, eating the good Hungarian bread, and they don't take so much effort as to learn this beautiful, sonorous language!"[125]

The stigmatization of Romanian students was likely a major reason that Hungarian schools were inefficient at making Magyars out of the Romanian peasant boys that flocked to the new state gymnasia, to say nothing of the sons of Romanian priests, schoolteachers, and other intellectuals. The latter group was less amenable to that offer, and the former was singled out more often for discriminatory treatment and remarks. In the early stage, until they spoke enough Hungarian, they could mostly rely on their fellow Romanian peers. Then, by reminding them daily of their ethnic background and exercising overt and covert acts of social closure, teachers reinforced these solidarities and inadvertently helped reproduce the Romanian minority intelligentsia. Students' almost inevitable conflicts with teachers were likely to deepen their opposition to Hungarian state nationalism. As shown earlier, some teachers had drawn similar conclusions by the end of the era.

[117]"A kicsapott román kispapok" [The Defrocked Romanian Seminarians], *Budapesti Hirlap* 13 February 1912, 10.

[118]Petru Tămaian, *Istoria seminarului și a educației clerului diecezei române-unite de Oradea* [History of the Seminary and Priests' Training in the Oradea Romanian Uniate Diocese] (Oradea, 1930), 42.

[119]Ibid., 94–95; Sorin Farcaș, "Eliminarea seminariștilor români din seminarul latin din Oradea în anul 1912" [The Discharging of Romanian Seminarians from the Latin Seminary of Nagyvárad in 1912], *Crisia* 45 (2016): 143–48; "A kicsapott román kispapok," 10.

[120]Ivan, "Icoane din trecut", 9.

[121]Brînzeu, *Memoriile unui preot bătrăn*, 44.

[122]Ibid., 43; Tăslăuanu, *Spovedanii*, 71; Râmneanțu, *Visuri pe Semenic*, 159.

[123]Babits, *Keresztülkasul az életemen*, 38.

[124]Ioan Georgescu, *Amintiri din viața unui dascăl: pagini trăite* [Remembrances from the Life of a Teacher: Pages Lived Through] (Craiova, 1928), 22.

[125]Lazăr, *Amintiri*, 33.

Conclusions

Hungarian schools and middle-class Romanian parents held opposing visions of a (male) bilingual minority elite. In their public rhetoric, the former presented the dissemination of Hungarian-language skills as the backbone of "Magyarization," meant to build attachment to the Hungarian state. Since Hungarian was not much spoken over large swaths of the Hungarian state, the government and other school-maintaining bodies supporting the status quo strove to increase the numbers of bilinguals amongst minorities. The statistical office carefully tracked their growth, while state nationalist organizations organized language exchange.[126] The acknowledged aim was to replace dissenting minority intelligentsias with bilingual and bicultural elites acquiescent to Magyar sovereignty and the political status quo.

Romanian parents undercut these expectations, about which even most teachers felt ambivalent. They enrolled their sons in Hungarian schools because proficiency in the code of power was a vital advantage for their prospects in a middle-class career and well-informed parents judged it easier to obtain there than in a Romanian gymnasium. It also cemented many educated Romanians' leadership positions over the technically monolingual Romanian masses. For a priest, it meant the ability to draft and explain official letters and intervene on behalf of his parishioners in speech and writing.

The sympathy middle-class parents had for Romanian nationalism was not a major consideration in their choices. Certainly, few parents would have consented to their sons turning their backs to the ancestral language. They typically made sure that they learned how to read and write Romanian and often enrolled them for a couple of years in a Romanian gymnasium. On the other hand, Hungarian schools did shape the identities of their Romanian students, but seldom in the direction that they hoped for. In the end, Hungarian schooling did not prevent the self-reproduction of the Romanian middle class and even allowed it to replenish itself from the ranks of the peasantry. Few Romanian minority politicians of the Dualist era had not attended Hungarian school. This was not a foregone conclusion, but came at the price of constant negotiation, frictions, wounds, and dissimulation.

Former students' recollections and teachers' pedagogical reflections from Transylvania and eastern Hungary give some credit to the seemingly hyperbolic Czech tirades against German schools quoted by Zahra, claiming that Czech children there "staggered behind the others," "received no attention from their teachers," and, as a consequence, were full of resistance and "suffered from low self-esteem."[127] German teachers in Prague also struggled to enforce the language of teaching and were as ill-equipped to deal with students unversed in it as were their Hungarian colleagues, an unhealthy mix against the backdrop of ethnic politics.[128] In Hungary, and likely Prague, parents sent their children to learn a valuable second language in spite of the mistreatment to which they were subjected. Even if many Bohemian Germans balked at the idea of learning Czech, that only gave bilingual Czechs an edge in the employment market.[129] However, since I cannot pretend to know how many Czech nationalists enrolled their children in German schools, let me close with some more theoretical reflections.

In the end, what does it reveal about parents' loyalties that they wished to maximize their children's linguistic capital? Or even, as was the case with Hungarian, to secure them a linguistic asset indispensable for a respectable middle-class life, which for hundreds of them also became a tool of minority representation and nationalist militancy? Once again, advocates of the concept would like to classify

[126]József Sándor, *Az EMKE megalapítása és negyedszázados működése, 1885–1910* [The Founding and Quarter of a Century of Work of the EMKE] (Cluj, 1910), 289; Lajos Perjéssy, *A Verseczi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület története, 1885–1910* [The History of the Hungarian Cultural Association of Werschetz] (Vršac, 1910), 100–6; *Budapesti Hirlap* 9 February 1890, 11.

[127]Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 25.

[128]Ingrid Stöhr, *Zweisprachigkeit in Böhmen: Deutsche Volksschulen und Gymnasien im Prag der Kafka-Zeit* (Cologne, 2020); Hannelore Burger, "Zwang und Gerechtigkeit in der Sprachengesetzgebung der Habsburgermonarchie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung italophoner Gebiete," in *Die Sprache des Nachbarn: Die Fremdsprache Deutsch bei Italienern und Ladinern vom Mittelalter bis 1918*, eds. Helmut Glück et al. (Bamberg, 2018), 174.

[129]John Deak, *Forging a Multinational State: State Making in Imperial Austria from the Enlightenment to the First World War* (Stanford, CA, 2015), 224.

their investment in linguistic capital as "national indifference." But its canonical formulations reveal that only a negative definition holds together the miscellaneous things grouped together under this epithet, which is exactly the reason why most of its critics question its value as an analytical concept.[130] Bilingual practices, along with neutral, pre- and anti-nationalist stances, multiple and nested loyalties, and opportunism qualify as indifference because nationalists combated them or underplayed their prevalence, and nationalist historiographies tried to efface them.[131] Leaving aside other problems that this negative definition raises, it is far from clear that it can apply to Romanian nationalists in Dualist Hungary. Even the Romanian nationalist penny press broadcast conflicting messages about bilingual skills. Warning against Hungarian and German schools, it also regularly applauded Romanian leaders for allegedly speaking better Hungarian in public than the Magyars.

Being drawn from nationalist propaganda also encumbers the concept of "national indifference" with a one-dimensional model of human beliefs and action, which passes over the situational, inconsistent, and often pragmatic way people relate to ideologies. To take the word of nationalist hardliners amounts to a litmus test that not even they can pass, if for no other reason than (with the title of a paper seeking to unmask nineteenth-century Flemish activists as indifferent), there was "too much on their minds."[132] They held strong nationalist beliefs in moments of conflict or collective action and may have even persisted in them in some roles and contexts, but may not have acted upon them when their emotional focus lay elsewhere.[133] With a healthy self-irony, they might even joke about their activism in private. This remained the case at least until national categories solidified into taken-for-granted frames, that is, as long as there was little "banal" or "structural"[134] about them, and wherever opposing nationalisms contested their validity.

The Romanian minority elite did not embrace investment in bilingualism as a strategy against the call of nationhood. True, individual bilingualism could represent alternative loyalties and open people to alternative identity projects.[135] This idea underpinned Hungarian state nationalism when it hoped to bring about minority elites with dual loyalties through education and, in its more voluntaristic mood, regarded bilingual citizens as quasi-Magyars. One thing it left out of consideration was the complex embroilment of language with informal hierarchies, hegemony, and discrimination in asymmetrical settings. The stigma and feeling of underachievement accompanying language acquisition in the milieu of high schools bred resentment rather than loyalty, and the strings attached to it gave rise to anxieties about the authentic self. For most students, the reaction (also supported by their families) was to strengthen their emotional ties to the maligned home language in search of solace, a sense of authenticity, and superiority.

Some historians' understanding of bilingualism as a subversive practice against nationalist mobilization departs from national propaganda's pervasive stress on language loyalty. As a wandering theme, the latter was present in dominant and minority nationalist discourses alike, although Magyar writers of the Dualist period also praised the benefits of bilingualism for minorities. However, national movements could aspire to less here than state nationalisms. The more the latter tried to impose the officially dominant language as the unmarked code for the entire citizenry, the more the former had to postpone the utopian state of linguistic self-reliance to a distant future, as an oppositional and (to borrow the late Hungarian historian Miklós Szabó's term) "programme ideology."[136] Middle-class

[130]On the critical reception, Ágoston Berecz, "Recepciótörténeti széljegyzet Tara Zahra tanulmányához" [Reception-Historical Marginalia on Tara Zahra's Paper], *Regio* 25 (2017): 43–50.

[131]Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69 (2010): 93–119, especially 105.

[132]Tom Verschaffel, "Too Much on their Minds: Impediments and Limitations of the National Cultural Project in Nineteenth-Century Belgium," in *National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe*, eds. Maarten Van Ginderachter and Jon Fox (Abingdon, Oxon, 2019), 15–34.

[133]Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), 44.

[134]John Breuilly, "What Does It Mean to Say that Nationalism Is "Popular"?" in *Nationhood from Below: Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Maarten Van Ginderachter and Marnix Beyen (Basingstoke, 2012), 34.

[135]Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 5.

[136]Miklós Szabó, "Program és állapotideológiák" [Programme and status quo ideologies], in *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon: 1896–1986*, ed. Ferenc Tallár (Budapest, 1989), 93–108.

Romanians hurled denunciations at one another for transgressing the acceptable use of Hungarian in public and especially in official contexts, but no one was rebuked for high proficiency in the language. What seemed more urgent to them was to deter peasants (and, to a lesser extent, young Romanian ladies) from giving in to the allure of Hungarian, which they feared threatened the survival of the community in the long run. Predictably, such appeals to the peasantry often fell on deaf ears. The lack of means and not their lack of desire hampered Romanian peasants from getting their sons to learn Hungarian, an entry ticket to white-collar professions.

Finally, associating bilingualism with a hypothetical popular resistance against nationalisms is also confusing because, in most cases, at least the early generations of European "national awakeners" were highly bilingual and sometimes more proficient in the dominant high code than in the vernacular they championed. Indeed, the birth of new national movements has often been attributed to their blocked mobility and subsequent disaffection with core-group hegemony.[137] They lived in the dominant high culture and modeled on it the cultural paraphernalia of their nation-to-be, including its new linguistic standard.[138] With the critical difference of a kin state that slowly imposed its cultural norms on them, the cultural parameters of the Romanian minority intelligentsia in Dualist Hungary resembled this widespread pattern.

Around the same time, the dominant Magyar elite could already afford to speak other languages poorly, although the nationalist government of Kálmán Tisza made German a mandatory subject for Hungarian high schools. But even there, the monolingual national world that communicates with other nations via translation was just a program ideology and a symbolic affirmation of values. Its violation by peasants, the supposed holders of the national essence, could be deplored as an anomaly and a worrying sign—but after all, weren't the elites entitled to the moniker "intelligent classes?" Middle-class parents may have agreed with the opposition's demand to introduce the Hungarian command language into the Common Army but simultaneously hired German nurses for their toddlers just as German assimilants into Magyardom looked for ways to pass on the advantage that German represented and how teaching decent French was a requirement from girls' institutions. There is little reason to believe that public writers lashing out against language education either suited their actions to their words or seriously moved more than a couple of their fellow-nationalists to mend their ways.

[137]Jeffrey J. Cormier, "Blocked Mobility and the Rise of Cultural Nationalism: A Reassessment," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 16 (2003): 525–49. On the Romanian elite of pre-WW2 Hungary, Călin Goina, "How the State Shaped the Nation: an Essay on the Making of the Romanian Nation," *Regio* 5 (2004): 167.

[138]John Earl Joseph, *Eloquence and Power: The Rise of Language Standards and Standard Languages* (New York, 1987).

Cite this article: Berecz Á (2023). Building a Bilingual Elite: "National Indifference" and Romanian Students in Hungarian High Schools (1867–1914). *Austrian History Yearbook* **54**, 159–176. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237823000036