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Language attitude, language choice and language substitution in a bilingual family in Aranyosgyéres

1. Bilingual families – a theoretical approach

Susan Gal has pointed out in her study on language substitution that '[it] is a world phenomenon: every continent and every period of history can provide examples of a people or a group of people who leave their language and choose another one. In this process bilingualism is a transitory phase, though it can remain a permanently stable state. The more general situation is that the state-language supersedes the minority language when the speakers of the two languages are living in the same economic and political system' (Gal 1992:47).

Language substitution usually is observed on the level of the community, from the point of view of an ethnic group. It is, however, worthwhile to examine how this phenomenon operates within the family, what kind of processes, factors define the way of the language substitution in a family. Such a research would reveal too, which are the external and internal factors supporting the stabilisation of bilingualism in a family.

When language substitution starts in a family, the situation is similar to the one in a mixed-language family. In the family under observation the man and wife - during the progress of the language substitution – took on roles usual in the case of couples with different languages: one of them preferred the state-language (Romanian) the other the mother tongue (Hungarian). The role model influences the language use of the family. External factors also played roles (political and economic situation, domicile, work place, schools), as well as internal ones (mentality, attitudes toward languages, the prestige of languages) (Gal 1992: 48).

The social changes characteristic of the 20th c., industrialisation, urbanisation, the development of mass communication drew nearer the minorities to the establishment requiring the dominant language: to schools, work places, offices, etc. (Gal 1992:48). It seemed necessary to examine how these external factors effect the scale of values of the couple and their attitude to the languages in question; after all, the internal factors are

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the ones which will determine their choice of language and what is more important, the choice of language and ethnic affiliation of their children, the next generation. László Vetési (1980) draws attention to the point made by Ganckaja and Tyerentyeva that in ethnically mixed families language and ethnic consciousness are the decisive factors in the process: 'Of these two factors the influence of the former starts operating in the moment the ethnically mixed family is formed, the latter starts being effective in the next generation of the family when the family members decide upon the ethnicity they wish to belong to.' (Ganckaja and Tyerentyeva 1971:260, cited by Vetési 1980:55).

In a family moving toward language substitution the linguistic factors start working when the above mentioned roles become decisive after the external factors had already influenced the mentality of the members: one of the spouses prefers the language of the majority, the other adheres to the use of the mother tongue. The question of ethnic consciousness will appear only in the case of the next generation since the choice if the one or the other language defines ethnic affiliation.

2. Introducing the family under investigation

The family are living in Aranyosgyéres. It is a settlement in Transylvania with sporadic Hungarian inhabitants. According to the data of the 1990 census, 9,6% of the population is Hungarian. Industrialisation, urbanisation have changed this settlement too, a big housing estate has been built. At the beginning of the 1970s the grown up children (the generation of 40-50 years of age) of parents who moved here from a village, could settle down mainly in flats in housing estates. This eminently was a Romanian speaking surrounding. Kindergarten and school with Hungarian as their language of instruction were only in the centre of the town.

F.I. and F.I., a Hungarian speaking young couple moved into a flat of the housing estate of Aranyosgyéres at the end of the 1970s. Language substitution started as a result in the family.

3. Work methods

The family was interviewed in the last days of 1998. It will be examined which phase of language substitution the family have reached in the past 25 years. There are four members; the new generation is represented by a girl (21, from now on L), and a boy (19, from now on F). Only three

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members of the family were interviewed: The mother (A1) and the young ones. The father (A2) refused to participate. However, my own observations and information culled from the answers of the other informants offered enough information about A2 to be included in the study. I tried to repeat the same questions in each of the 20 minutes interviews in order to be able to compare details. During the interviews I used both Hungarian and Romanian languages agreeing with the request and language ability of the informants: A1 spoke only Hungarian, L both Hungarian and Romanian, F only Romanian.

During the interviews there were direct questions about language attitudes and language use (Borbély 1995:287). There were questions about the mother tongue and national affiliation too, as it was also an aim to learn how language attitude and use are forming language and national affinity auto identification.

4. Aims and hypotheses

The aim was to examine how the prestige of languages, the attitude toward languages influences the use of language and identity patterns (mother tongue, nationality) of the family. The role of religion in language substitution was also of interest; and also whether the external and internal factors can contribute to the rehabilitation of the mother tongue, to the reversal of processes.

According to the results of sociolinguistic research (Schlieben-Lange 1997, Gal 1979, Brunder 1972, Eckert 1983, Paulston 1994: 13) language substitution is usually started by women. This can manifest itself in the choice of spouse, of language and also which language they use when speaking to their children (the mother tongue or the state-language). The general explanation is that women do not stand at as high a social position as men. The choice of the state-language, the language of power expresses a striving for social acknowledgment.

In the family in question and in the traditional communities of the Carpathian-basin the role of women is the opposite: they are the ones to preserve the mother tongue, their work and occupation does not take them close to the language of the dominant stratum. Their social standing allows more opportunity to keep family ties, which supposes the use of the mother tongue (i.e. a more intensive relationship to parents, older relations, etc.).

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5. The language attitude and language use of the mother

A1 declares to have Hungarian as her mother tongue. Of the external factors, her work place and domicile were responsible for her bilingualism and language loss. In 1998 she was still working in a bakery in Aranyosgyéres. Both at her work place and dwelling place she has been surrounded by Romanian speakers.

The schooling of the children played a more important role in language preservation or language substitution; indeed it was what accelerated the process. There was no Hungarian instruction in the local kindergarten. Lack of time and the requirements of the work place motivated the parents to choose the Romanian kindergarten nearby. 'We went to work and there was no one to take the children to the kindergarten.' The language used in the kindergarten influenced the language use at home; the mother tongue was neglected. Beside the external factors (lack of time, work place, bigger distance to the Hungarian kindergarten) another factor played an important factor, that of prompting to follow a mutual pattern. 'There were two Hungarian families in the block of flats, all of them sent their children to the Romanian kindergarten.' The children's language use and knowledge was so much influenced by the kindergarten that it became natural to send them to Romanian schools. The children's use of language defines the use of language of the whole family. They speak less and less Hungarian. Talking about school, the language of learning is Romanian; Hungarian starts to lose its importance even in family situations.

Considering language attitude, in the case of A1 the symbolic value of the mother tongue is very high. Her answering to the question: 'Which language do you prefer? Which is nicer?' is: 'I prefer Hungarian, its nicer than Romanian because it is my mother tongue.' In spite of the driving forces, the high symbolic value of the mother tongue has been preserved. It is because Hungarian is the language of familiarity, it contributes to the feeling of 'belonging', enhances the feeling of security.

The mother tongue less frequently spoken feels more difficult than the more frequently use of Romanian: 'I feel Hungarian to be a more difficult language, more difficult than Romanian. May be because we speak it more often during work and with the neighbours. We feel Romanian is easier; as it is, we are surrounded by more Romanians.'

Within the family she speaks Hungarian only with her parents and relatives, with her husband Hungarian and Romanian, tries to speak in Hungarian with L who rejects it and with F she speaks only in Romanian.

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She does not know the Romanian language sufficiently, she makes lots of mistakes, is frequently corrected. She admits to know Hungarian better than Romanian: 'I am sooner recognised as a Hungarian than A2 or the children.' She explains her better Hungarian by: 'I spoke Hungarian at school too... the children went to Romanian schools, but I finished eight grades in a Hungarian school and also in kindergarten.'

In the case of A1 we can talk about subtractive bilingualism where the mother tongue has preserved dominance from the point of view of competence: her mother tongue (L1) can function independently from L2 (Veress 1996:55), but L2 is eroding L1, linguistic interference occurs frequently and there is a feeling of linguistic lack.

6. The linguistic attitudes of the father as reflected in the opinion of the other members of the family

A2 refused to participate; from the answers of the other members of the family it can be deduced what role had the father in the process of the family's language substitution. His nationality and mother tongue has been preserved as Hungarian; his Hungarian identity consciousness has not been lost (according to A1). In his language loss his work place and occupation played the decisive role. A2 is a coach in the sports club of Aranyosgyéres. Sports proved to be a field where he was drawn nearer to the state-language. It also influenced the communication and language use of the family too; on external influence, he brings home the language of his social contacts and his work place; this hastens the process of language substitution of the family toward L2 monolingualism.

7. The development of the younger generation's identity in the mirror of their language use.

The linguistic attitude of the younger generation is influenced not only by work place and the circle of friends but by the attitude of A2 too. Thanks to her closer contact to A1, L has not reached language loss yet. F on the other hand has been monopolised by A2, his occupation being similar to that of his father (The 19 year old F is the member of the same sport club), their similar interests (sport being work and leisure time activity in one) helped to complete the process. In the case of F the language substitution has been completed and has resulted in a new identity-consciousness? F declares to ha Romanian as his mother tongue and to be of Romanian nationality.

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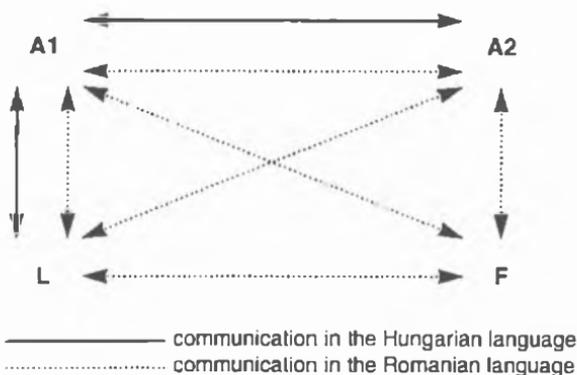
When plotting the internal communication system of the family it is clear that the Hungarian language has been relegated to the background.

L (girl, 21) after finishing her general schooling graduated from a three-year vocational school. She had several work places, mostly worked as a shop assistant. It is more problematic to define her mother tongue and nationality. She is at the stage of bilingualism that induces mixed identity patterns: there is an inner identity for herself but there is an outer identity for her environment. This dual identity serves as a defence-mechanism to cover up her insecure, ambiguous situation: she carries a Hungarian name but cannot satisfactorily in Hungarian. The psychological background of this dual identity, or rather 'half-identity' causes her shame and embarrassment. For the Hungarian acquaintances she explains her Hungarian name and scanty knowledge of the Hungarian language by a half-and-half (half Hungarian – half Romanian) identity. When talking to Romanians she uses the same explanation explaining her Hungarian name. If asked which language does she consider to be her mother tongue, she gives the answer: *"Păi ... mie îmi pare rău acum că nu știu bine să vorbesc ... că mi-ar place mult ca să pot, dar e greu pentru mine ca să învăț de la început ... păi ... limba maghiară"* [Well, I am sorry that I cannot speak well – I would like to know, but it is difficult to start from the beginning well – the Hungarian language]. Do you declare to be Hungarian? – Yes; among Romanians, however, her behaviour changes: 'If I am among Romanians- it's half and half and if somebody asks I say, because I cannot speak well, rather do not speak in Hungarian, because I see they are looking at me strangely when I say I am Hungarian.' It seems that it is not only among Romanians she needs this half-and-half identity, as the Hungarian speakers cannot accept her scanty knowledge of Hungarian. The denial of her Hungarian identity became 'necessary' to avoid embarrassing explanation.

It is difficult to decide how much the admitting of the inner identity (Hungarian mother tongue, Hungarian nationality) depends on the need to comply to the demands psychically. In her answers there appears frequently the adjustment to the behaviour she believed me to represent. She has stressed several times how much she would like to improve her knowledge of Hungarian and would like speak Hungarian more frequently: *"Ha tudtam ... dacă aș știu să vorbesc perfect ungurește mi-ar place să vorbesc numai așa. Dar acum mi-e greu, deci mai bine pot vorbi pe*

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românește, mai bine vorbesc pe românește ... și nici nu prea am cu cine să vorbesc, deci numai acasă, dar prietenii mei toți sunt români" (If I could speak Hungarian well I would speak it all the time, but now it is difficult because I speak Romanian better, I prefer to speak Romanian, there is no one to speak to, only at home, all my friends are Romanian.) A1 draws attention to L's ambiguous attitude (I do speak to her in Hungarian but she is angry because she cannot and said she rather in Romanian). L does not speak Hungarian even when she has the opportunity to do so.



According to Susan Gal 'The strength of a minority language grows if it connects the speakers symbolically or practically with an economically or politically more developed world (Gal 1992:58). The mother country and economic connections strongly influence language attitudes. This what influences L when she declares her mother tongue. She explains choice: "*Cum am fost plecată am văzut ce diferență mare e între viața de aici și viața de acolo*" [As I was abroad I saw the great difference between the life here and there]. The remark refers to her two-month stay in Hungary in 1998; she worked there, that is how she collected her experience. The better conditions, the more developed economic situation enhances the prestige of the Hungarian language for her so much that it proves to be decisive in identifying her mother tongue. Her relationship to the Hungarian language was formed in a positive way. L would like to go back to work in Hungary but better knowledge of the language would be necessary: 'I want to go back to Hungary, if I could speak better, and read and write.. then there would have been no problems.'

L always speaks with A2 and F always in Romanian, with A1 sometimes in Romanian, sometimes in Hungarian, however, more frequently

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in Romanian (A1's remark). The grandmother on the mother's side (only one grandparent is still living) does not want to speak in Romanian with her grandchildren. The language attitude of the grandparent, however, does not influence the younger generation in preserving their language. The reason is that the grandmother was not a dominant person in the family, neither was there a close contact between her and the grandchildren because of the distance (she lived in an other town). L speaks in Hungarian with the relatives but in her case the connection is not as strong as in the case of A1.

L characterised her command of languages that her knowledge of Romanian is much better than that of Hungarian. When speaking in Romanian her pronunciation shows Hungarian interference.

In contrast to A1, L is an example of subtractive bilingual where her L1 (Hungarian) depends on her L2 (Romanian) without which she cannot exist.

F (boy, 19 years of age) is the employee of the Aranyosgyéres sports club (football player). The close connection between A2 and F has been mentioned above. The Romanian language was decisive for F from his childhood through the common interest and in communication with his father it became more and more dominant and finally it completely replaced the Hungarian language. The language use of the father and the son defines the pattern of language use at home.

F does not make any effort to find any justification for his Hungarian name and lack of knowledge of the language. He declares that his nationality is Romanian, and his mother tongue Romanian. (*"Normal sunt maghiar dar la prieteni sau la alții le zic că sunt român ... oricum nu mă cred, că după nume sunt maghiar"* [I am actually Hungarian but I tell friends and everybody that I am Romanian though they do not believe it because by my name I am Hungarian]). He takes the situation easier than his sister because there are no sentiments attached to his being Hungarian. The exclusive use of the Romanian language means language assimilation naturally leads to the acceptance of the new nationality. Language serves as an absolute identity marker for him. He justifies his claim to be a Romanian national with his language use: *"Mă cred român pentru că vorbesc românește toată ziua"* [I claim to be Romanian because I speak in Romanian the whole day].

The possibility of forming contact with the mother country could enhance the prestige of the Hungarian language in the case of F too (a football club was interested in taking him over). Hungary lives in his mind

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as a country of success with possible contact to the west “*Îmi pare rău ... că acum poate trebuie să mă duc în Ungaria la o echipă de fotbal și nu știu nici să citesc, nici să vorbesc corect, numai de înțeles ... mi-ar fi folosit foarte mult, chiar dacă nu mergeam în Ungaria, dar mi-ar fi folosit...*” [I am sorry, may be I have to go to a Hungarian football team and I can neither read nor speak properly, I understand only the language... it would have been useful even if I would not go to Hungary, I could have used it]. There are no negative associations in his thinking about his Hungarian mother tongue.

He speaks in Romanian with everybody in the family, even with his maternal grandmother or does not communicate with her at all because he is not willing to use Hungarian. During the interview he frequently mentions that he has no opportunity to speak in Hungarian, this is why he does not use it (Romanian acquaintances, Romanian friends). The insufficient knowledge influences his choice of language because he refuses to speak in Hungarian even if he had the opportunity, similar to L.

He believes his command of the Romanian language perfect “*Vorbesc perfect româna*”. If he does not say his name no one would believe him to be Hungarian. He cannot read or write in Hungarian but admits to understand it and could also speak it but does not know the more difficult words: “*De înțeles înțeleg foarte bine ... înțeleg orice ... dar nu ... Știu și să vorbesc, dar nu știu cuvintele mai grele*” [I can understand it well, I can understand everything, but cannot speak, do not know the more difficult words].

In the case of F, though in his mind the prestige of Hungarian is still intact, we cannot speak about bilingualism. Considering own statement (cf. the quotation above), he can be suggested to be in the early stage of ‘new monolingualism’, which – under optimal circumstances – could still be reversible.

8. The role of the religious affiliation in the language substitution of the young generation

In the Carpathian –basin the reformed church is strongly connected to the Hungarians historically and ethnically and had an important role in the development, maintaining and preserving the Hungarian culture. In the 20th c. is changed. In Slovakia followed in the wake of Slovakisation by giving up its ethnic attachments and thus has hastened the process of the loss of Hungarian culture and language (Barna 1996). In the case of

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the Hungarian Calvinist minority in Romania there also is a kind of attitude, which helps assimilation and which may be ascribed to the 'more open' system of the Reformed church. The use of the Romanian language in religious instructions encourages linguistic assimilation and helps the appearance of new identity. Though in Aranyosgyéres this was not the practice, it was not at the assistance of the subjects of the present research in their language preservation either.

In my analysis I have described what kind of a role the religious affinity could have played in helping language preservation. Religious instructions could have improved L's knowledge of her mother tongue; however, for the reformed church was satisfied with the ritualistic repetition of the text without requiring understanding of it. Thus it could not even serve as a lesson in the mother tongue. Since only memorised texts were expected of her, the instruction did not play any positive role for L in preserving her mother tongue. There was no attempt at increasing her language competence, at strengthening the prestige of the mother tongue (e.g. by courses helping to improve her knowledge, etc.)

Her brother could not meet even the basic requirements. F was not confirmed because at 14 years of age his knowledge was so scarce that he was unable to recite the memorized text and he was not allowed to be confirmed in Romanian.

Comparing the situation of the two informants it becomes evident that language substitution can be facilitated not only by the constant use of the Romanian language but also by the lack of courses to maintain the mother tongue. In the case of L and F their religious affiliation did not play any positive role in ensuring the preservation of their mother tongue.

9. The relationship of language attitude and identity patterns of the informants

The next figure represents how important it is which generation a member of the family belongs to. The youngest member abandoned not only his mother tongue but his nationality as well.

Of the questions about language attitudes the first one was directed toward sentiments about the mother tongue, the symbolic value of languages. There is a correlation between the answers to the first question and the identity markers (mother tongue, nationality). A1 ascribed a greater symbolic value to the Hungarian language and it defines her identity consciousness. L prefers Romanian. The acceptance of Hungarian

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and the 'half' preserved Hungarian identity is due to the closer mother-daughter relationship and to her visit to Hungary. These factors are slowing down her change of identity. In the case of F, who is indifferent towards Hungarian identity, and who is closer to A2, his attraction to the Romanian language helped him develop his Romanian identity consciousness.

	A1	L	F
Nationality	Hungarian	Hungarian (I) half-half (O)	Romanian
Mother tongue	Hungarian	Hungarian	Romanian
1. Do you prefer the Hungarian or the Romanian language?	Hungarian	Romanian	Romanian
2. Which seems more difficult: Hungarian or Romanian?	Hungarian	Hungarian	Cannot decide
3. Do you prefer to speak in Hungarian or in Romanian?	In Romanian	In Romanian	In Romanian

I = "inner identity"

O = "outer identity"

Analysing the language attitude of the Romanians of Kétegyháza, Anna Borbély pointed out that the preference of languages (Question 3) and the answers about their difficulty (Question 2) are in correlation with the language choice (Borbély 1995:298). We could observe the connection in the case of our three informants, since all three prefer to use the Romanian language. The answers are not always in positive relationship with the identity-pattern. A1 finds Hungarian more difficult (Question 2) and prefers to speak in Romanian (Question 3), however, she has a strong identity consciousness. This is in agreement with the high symbolic value of her mother tongue (Question 1). F's answer referring to the difficulty of languages (Question Question 2) shows that he has already completed language substitution because in his mind the Hungarian language has already been repressed and he is unable to decide which language is more difficult. For him only the Romanian language exists.

10. The language situation of the informants and the development of their identity in the past five years

The bilingual situation discussed above was researched in 1998. After five years, in 2003, I went back to find my informants. The period

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between the meetings did not bring them closer to the Hungarian language and identity, on the opposite; they belong to the losses registered in the 2002 census. Their lives prove that they departed from everything connecting them to Hungarians.

Both young persons have chosen Romanian spouses, the Romanian language dominates their family communication. In the new family of the girl Spanish came into the picture as, similarly to other young Romanians, she and her husband believed emigration to Spain to be only acceptable solution. The mother, who seemed to be most committed to the Hungarian language, has also chosen Spain after retirement. She takes care of her grandchildren; her use of language is dominated by Romanian and Spanish and speaks in Hungarian only when going home to visit relatives, which is getting rare.

The young man is still a football player, now belonging to a club in Torda. His Romanian contacts at the work place and family communication have completely distanced him from the Hungarian language. Of his Hungarian relatives he has contact only to his father and they speak only in Romanian with one another.

Examining the language use of the two young persons it is obvious that not only the state-language but also living under the influence of a world language can also wear away the mother tongue, which was pushed into the background from the beginning.

Conclusions

1. At the onset of the process of language substitution in the family under observation two different role models developed: one of the spouses (A²) being indifferent to the Hungarian identity, enforced the use of the second language (L2); the other (A¹) adhered to their mother tongue (L1). Their surrounding (Romanian friends and neighbours), the dominant position of the husband, the weakening of the Hungarian identity consciousness of the younger generation, all contributed if not to the complete abandonment of their national affiliation but at least to the loss of importance of the use of the Hungarian language.
2. The external factors (Romanian setting at the work place, Romanian neighbours and friends, the isolation of the housing estate, lack of kindergarten and school with instruction in the Hungarian language near the home, the occupation (sport) encouraging language super

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substitution played an important role in breaking up the process of language preservation. To this were added the internal factors which also influenced the process.

The research disagrees with the earlier findings of sociolinguistic research (Paulston 1994:13). In this case it was not the woman, the mother who preferred the state-language and thus helped the language substitution; on the contrary through her closer contact to her Hungarian-speaking relatives she is the one who preserves the mother tongue. In addition she had her positive attitude toward Hungarian that manifests itself in her high symbolic valuation of the mother tongue. The husband had less time to maintain family relationships because of his occupation (he spends more time away from home). This is accompanied by his indifference towards Hungarian identity and consciousness; he is speaking less in Hungarian, which leads to language loss. If the change is not still clear in the father's identity pattern, the son already has a new identity consciousness: he declares to have Romanian as his mother tongue and to be a Romanian national.

3. From all this it follows that the road leading to the language substitution of a family is greatly influenced by parents' pattern and the inner psychic bondage characteristic of the family. For the new generation not only the language but also the national consciousness is an important factor. The members of the new generation choose their identity after the parent they identify closer. While F was closer to A2, L was to A1, thus she could form a closer contact to the Hungarian-speaking relatives. This is why in spite of her speaking in Romanian most of the time and her scanty knowledge of Hungarian she has preserved in her identity pattern Hungarian as her mother tongue and her so called 'inner' Hungarian identity consciousness.
4. The answers given to the questions of the interviews revealed the external and internal factors, which facilitated language substitution and also those, which could reverse or as in the case of the present study could have reversed the process. For the parents' generation the symbolic value of the mother tongue is enhanced by the need of 'belonging', of the closer contact to the Hungarian-speaking relatives. The language attitude of the younger ones depends more on political-economic situations. The prestige of the mother tongue grows if their minority language connects them to a mother country, which counts as economically more advanced in their view. Apart from these exter-

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- nal factors there are internal ones for the young persons too which can check linguistic assimilation (e.g. the closer contact between A1 and L).
5. Religion could have a positive role in preserving the language. Since the reformed church did not feel important to maintain the Hungarian language of the scattered Hungarian population, its dedication towards the Hungarian language weakened (cf. their allowing to use the Romanian language during instructions, or the lack of language programmes to check language loss). From the point of view of the preservation of the mother tongue it was – if not a negative force – but in the case of our informants an indifferent factor.
 6. After five years the economic instability, the rootlessness, the lure of western countries, emigration which is not directed any more toward the mother country, the new country with its higher prestige leads to the choice and exclusive use of a new world language and the complete abandonment of the minority mother tongue. For those members of the family who remained behind the separation from the family and the community exerting preserving force resulted in the total dominance of the state-language, i.e. that of the Romanian language.

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