

THESES OF PhD. DISSERTATION

**Learning, following and disseminating language rules as a topic in
the metalinguistic knowledge of students and their teachers**

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0. Introduction

The main goal of the dissertation was to present the field of learning language rules as learning language ideologies. This approach makes its findings comparable to surveys on language ideologies carried out worldwide. The topic suggested in the title was restricted to the analysis of repair concerning theoretical reasons.

Hungarian is a standard language culture (cf. Milroy 2001; Kontra 2006). Other-initiated repair – the reformulation and evaluation of the utterances of the conversational partner – plays an important role in standard language cultures. Formal training takes aim at disseminating standard language use. Taking these issues into consideration, the dissertation focuses on other-repair by the analysis of metalanguage.

Analysing other-repair within the theoretical framework of language ideologies and discursive social psychology is rather new in the context of Hungarian sociolinguistics. This can be regarded as an innovation of the dissertation.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. Chapter 1 gives the definition of language ideologies and language rules, and formulates the research questions. Chapter 2 presents the fieldwork and data of the research. Chapter 3 deals with the possibilities of data analysis. Chapter 4 discusses learning, following and disseminating language rules as a question of socialization. The empirical analysis of research data (Chapters 5–7) focuses on other-repair carried out in different contexts (in research interviews and in classroom discourse), presenting the ideologies constructed on the use of other-repair.

1. Theoretical issues

Pilot studies were carried out from 2002 before the final doctoral research. Previous data was analysed adapting the theoretical framework of folk linguistics (cf. Preston 2004), social constructivist pedagogy (in Hungarian context cf. Korom 2005; Nahalka 2002) and the cognitive theory of metaphors (in Hungarian context cf. Kövecses 2005). The methodological and theoretical problems of data analysis made the change of theoretical framework necessary.

Researches on attitudes and on ideologies is often legitimized by their presupposed usability in changing social structures and maladaptive behavior patterns. This legitimization is acceptable only if one presupposes that attitudes and ideologies can merely form behaviour. This hypothesis implicates the oversimplification of the results of cognitive psychology. In this oversimplified approach reality is the input of cognition, while action is the output: one can recognize something in his or her environment and then this recognition can be the basis of his or her decisions on behaving in a certain way. Mainstream flows of cognitive psychology reject this approach, evaluating it as a folk theory based on a Cartesian tradition (Győri 2008). Győri (2008) argues that awareness is not an antecedent but an outcome of behaviour.

The above mentioned results made the change of the theoretical framework of the doctoral study inevitable. This modification was substantiated with the following. Kripke (1982) – analysing the theory on language use developed by Wittgenstein – argues that language use is not based on rule-following. P. J. Hopper (1998) claims that “[a]s an unintended outcome of the communicational behaviour, grammar is a product of »structuration« (Giddens, 1984) rather than a bounded object to be thought as a structure”. He concludes that language use emerges always in present communicational contexts so it cannot be formalized by the means of traditional grammars. The argumentation of Kripke and P. J. Hopper advised the analysis of discourse features as a usable and necessary means in the description of language use.

While cognitivist approaches explain behaviour presupposing the order of cerebral activity → behaviour → awareness, Discursive Social Psychology (DSP) does not investigate cerebral activity nor mental processes (Potter–Edwards 2001, 2003). According to DSP, one learns to do something somehow and then learns ideologies explaining, legitimizing or illegitimizing that behaviour. These ideologies make behaviour meaningful. Ideologies are never stable nor finished: they are always maintained by people who construct, reconstruct or deconstruct them.

Ideology research in the context of DSP analyse ideologies as social constructions explaining, legitimating and rationalising behaviour. Analyses regularly adapt the methodology of Conversation Analysis (CA). Thus the process of ideology (re/de)construction becomes observable. CA studies mainly deal with spontaneous speech but recent papers give

examples to the analysis of research interviews or focus groups as well (cf. Grindsted 2005; Laihonen 2008; Puchta–Potter 2002). In DSP and CA studies cognitive or mental processes are not investigated. The stress is on the interactional patterns of discourses (cf. Coulter 2005; Drew 2005; Edwards 1993; R. Hopper 2005; Laihonen 2008; Puchta–Potter 2002).

2. Research questions

The dissertation examines metalinguistic discourses and the emergence of ideologies in the context of formal education. The dissertation addresses the following research questions:

1. What language ideologies and narratives are presented in various metalinguistic discourses (questionnaire data, observation of classroom discourse, research interviews)?
2. How do the participants of these discourses present these ideologies and narratives?
3. What can a researcher learn from the applied methodology?

In the dissertation metalanguage is conceptualized as a socially constructed, (self-)reflective discourse on language as a system or as a communication practice (cf. Laihonen 2008). Narratives are defined as a socially constructed phenomenon, too, as in Mandelbaum (2003). The first research question is traditional in ideology research: to collect ideologies emerging in the database. Since ideologies are collectively used explanations and are referred to in interactions, the second research question aims to investigate interaction patterns using the methodology of CA. The third research question is relevant in the context of Hungarian sociolinguistics because it is not widely used in Hungarian papers.

3. Fieldwork and data

The data was collected in 2009, from January to May. During research (1) questionnaires (1195 students), (2) notes on classroom observations (61 school lessons)

and (3) semi-structured research interviews were collected (133 interviewees, partly students, partly teachers). The collection was carried out in elementary schools, training colleges and grammar schools, on year 1–4, 7 and 11 in Hungary (Budapest and ten counties), Slovakia and Serbia. Questionnaires were only collected on year and 11 year.

The sampling fits the requirements of qualitative representativity (Sántha 2006): the data is rather heterogenous and contains both typical cases and extremities.

Questionnaires were analysed as mediums by which a discourse emerged between the researcher and the informant in the form of question-response sequences. Notes on classroom observations focused on the organization of a lesson and on the patterns of teacher-student communication. The observation was made by the dissertant applying an online method used in psycholinguistics as well (continuous handnoting of sequences perceived; cf. Gósy 2004). The corpus contains cca. 29,000 words. It is stored in XML format and is ready to be analysed with corpus linguistics tools. The applied tool was a software called CLaRK (Simov et al. 2001). The research interviews were made with 1, 2, 3 or – in extreme cases – more interviewees. All of the interviews were recorded, transcribed and annotated by the dissertant. The corpus contains cca. 47.7 hours of speech (346,500 words). It is stored in XML format as well and is ready to be analysed with corpus linguistics tools. The applied tool was CLaRK, as in the case of the above mentioned corpus.

4. Self- and other-repairs in the focus of the analysis

The dissertation follows Schegloff–Jefferson–Sacks (1977) in the characterization of repair:

Table 1. Self- and other-repair after Schegloff–Jefferson–Sacks (1977: 364–365)

Initiation	Outcome
Self-initiated	self-repair
Other-initiated	self-repair
Self-initiated	other-repair
Other-initiated	other-repair
Self-initiation	failure
Other-initiation	failure

In the dissertation, repair is defined as evaluation of word(s) or clause(s) occurring (or may occur) in the present discourse. In this way, these evaluations are reflective acts and appear in side sequences. Reformulation of closed utterances and/or their explicit evaluation are both defined as evaluations in the dissertation. Explicit evaluations or metalinguistic statements are of special interest in the dissertation because these are ideologies legitimizing or explaining the present repair. Repairs and the ideologies emerging after repairs are often referred to immediately during the conversations.

Self-repair is more common than other-repair in spontaneous speech (Schegloff–Jefferson–Sacks 1977), that is why other-repairs become markers. Their use can be analysed as means of socialization. By other-repairs, the initiator can reconstruct dichotomies such as expert vs. novice or standard speaker vs. non-standard speaker (cf. Egbert 2004; Laihonen 2008). For example, Laihonen (2008) claims that in research interviews, an interviewer positions himself or herself as a standard speaker if he or she evaluates or repairs the verbal production of his or her interviewee.

The provides gives 112 examples from the two XML corpora and more examples from the database of the questionnaire data. Considering the above mentioned issues, the dissertation focused on the analysis of self-positioning and the evaluation of language competence by the means of other-repair.

5. General summary of results

5.1. What language ideologies and narratives are presented in various metalinguistic discourses (questionnaire data, observation of classroom discourse, research interviews)?

5.2. How do the participants of these discourses present these ideologies and narratives?

The first and the second research questions cannot be answered separately because of the interdependence of the interactional patterns of the discourse and the ideologies emerging in that discourse.

The analysis of other-repair in classroom discourse concluded that teachers often use other-repair as a means of the reconstruction of three dominant positions: (1) more competent speaker, (2) primary knower and (3) discourse manager. If repair was completed by a metalinguistic explanation or an explicit evaluation, it was analysed as a secondary legitimizing act of the repair (the primary legitimation comes from the position of the teacher guaranteed by the hierarchical structure of school system). The same was the case in the research interviews when one of the informants repaired the speech of another and he or she explained what he or she did. Ideologies also emerged in narratives (narration on situations in which the role of language use is relevant). Ideologies on linguistic accuracy were also mentioned and evaluated, often by constructing metaideologies on these ideologies.

In the context of the survey, ideologies that emerged in the discourse were often similar to those mentioned and defined in the overview of Lanstyák (2010): standardism, platonism, mentalism, necessism, vernacularism, moralism, defectivism, egalitarianism, usualism, exactism, simplicism, competentionalism etc. But this fact is not merely interesting from the point of view of DSP. The inseparability of ideology and interaction is more important.

Questionnaire data was analysed as a second part of an adjacency pair (question → answer). “I don’t know” and “I don’t answer” answers were analysed as the interruption of the discourse initiated by the researcher. The “I don’t answer” answer and the absence of answer (empty line in the questionnaire) was analysed as implicit rejection of continuing the discourse, and, hereby, (re)constructing an ideology. The answers were compared along three dimensions: (1) gender; (2) age (year 7 and 11) and (3) school system (primary school vs. grammar school on year 7, technical college vs. grammar school on year 11). If a statistically significant difference occurred, girls and grammar school students positioned themselves as more conform and they continued more frequently the construction of ideologies initiated by the questionnaire. This difference could also be seen in the answers on social status and on formal training career. Ideology construction on language use was more often continued than on the evaluation of persons who used stigmatized language forms. The argumentation during ideology construction often referred to communication means such as sms or chat. On the other hand, normative dictionaries and other artefacts of language cultivation were

rarely referred to. This is in accordance with the picture emerging from the questionnaire data on communication habits and cultural activities of the students.

A more complex analysis was possible in the case of the interview data. Efforts to make consensus could be found during common ideology construction. Argumentation techniques and the basis of argumentation varied in a wide range. Arguments were often altered (in cases, argument 1, 2 and 3 were presented subsequently, by the same speaker, in the same turn). The topic of the discourse changed often, too. The ideology construction was a dynamic process in which the quotation of other persons (Aro 2009) and reference to other discourses was common. In such a construction activity, the interviewer played an important role. The analysis of agency concluded that in ideology construction and ideology learning, quoting and the assimilation of other people's voice both have special impact (cf. Aro 2009; Karasavvidis et al. 2000).

5.3. What can a researcher learn from the applied methodology?

Data analysis combined qualitative and quantitative approach in the presentation of three data groups. The aim of the analysis was the detection of interaction patterns but not the explanation of the cause of these patterns. This decision guaranteed that the text of the dissertation could always refer to the data and not to social, demographic or other issues, not investigated directly during data collection.

The combination of the theoretical framework of DSP and the methodology of CA proved to be fruitful, especially in the case of questionnaire data. The non-investigation of mental processes and the absence of researcher's normative evaluation concerning language use had a stimulating effect on data analysis. This approach was not ideology-free (because the non-investigation of mental processes and the absence of researcher's normative evaluation can be legitimized only by ideology), but rather novel in the context of Hungarian sociolinguistics. The same was the case in the analysis of observation notes and interview data.

5.4. Learning rules as learning ideologies

One possible field of application of the results of the dissertation is the development of methodology in mother tongue education. From this perspective, the common

activity in ideology construction can be relevant. In the dissertation metalanguage was not conceptualized as telementation of inner beliefs or knowledge, but as the assimilation of various discourse fragments and their reproduction in different communicative contexts. This result may be relevant in the evaluation of students' verbal production and their competence in formal training subjects.

Numerous papers (e. g. Schütze 1996; Király 2007; Krashen 1982/2009; Schank 2010) argue that there is a non-interdependence and a non-interface position between “know what” and “know how”. Metalinguistic utterances (e. g. answers on grammaticality, statements on linguistic accuracy etc.) and observable, spontaneous (or semi-spontaneous) language use are regularly not in accordance with each other (in Hungarian context, cf. Karácsony [1938] and Bánréti [1995]). Although the above cited authors investigated mental processes, the conclusion of the dissertation is similar: causality between communication practice and language ideologies cannot be assumed. Rules of linguistic accuracy and teachers' explanations on repair can be regarded as ideologies. Ideologies cannot be assumed to conduct language use, and at the same time, language use does not predict what kind of ideology occurs concerning the language use itself (or the evaluation of it). A case study of the dissertation focused on language ideologies on discourse marker *hát* (~ ‘well’) and its occurrence in interviewee's utterances. The study proved that *hát* was present in almost all of the interviewee's verbal production, whether the constructed ideology defended or forbid the use of it. The use of *hát* did not predict its legitimation in an ideological level, nor the negative evaluation of *hát* did not foretell the absence of it in the utterances of the speakers.

Analysing questionnaire data, the dissertation argued that answering a question in formal training context means only that the informant has practice in the discourse initiated in the questionnaire. This can be projected to formal training processes. During the formation years students practise techniques of deconstruction and reconstruction of ideologies by reading, listening and repeating – later assimilating – metadiscursive texts or text fragments. The only thing an answer in an exam shows is that if the student has (or has not) practice in the de- or reconstruction of the given ideology, or rather if he or she continues the construction of an ideology initiated by the teacher. This statement

can be relevant in connection with social constructivist pedagogy because of its aim in the promotion of conceptual change and the improvement of metacognition.

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