

# **Saving the national language: Globalisation, nationalism, and the revitalisation of Hungarian in North-East Romanian Moldavia**

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In social sciences globalisation is interpreted as a shift from the nation-state to the re-territorialisation of modernist spaces, where the globalised new economy has a key factor in national and political practices. This concept of globalisation has been introduced into linguistics, for instance by Blommaert (2010) in reference to multilayered and polycentric orders of indexicality, or by Heller's (2010) focus on language as a tradeable commodity. Although there is a growing body of work on perpetual tensions of processes still working towards unifying national markets, communities or languages and the opposite tendencies towards niche markets, ethnolinguistic hybridity or Bakhtinian heteroglossia, the emerging contradictions have mainly been investigated in terms of the developing late modern social organisation – the new economy – in contrast to modernist national frames. From the opposite perspective, however, the question has hardly been raised as to how the nationalist ideologies make use of globalisation. The presentation focuses on this aspect in the context of the revitalisation of Hungarian – the so-called Csángó dialect – in North-East Romanian Moldavia.

It will be argued that this revitalisation programme can be interpreted as a commodification of the language. In the process of language becoming a commodity, i.e. a tradeable object of education, it is seen both as a standardised skill and as 'authentic' identity; these attributes will appear in the same practices in the linguistic market. Within this framework, linguistic revitalisation can be interpreted not only as a modernisation and emancipation project that is implemented through

the acquisition of (standard) Hungarian language skills, but also as a language political attempt to create new transnational forms of belonging to the Hungarian language community.

Based on multi-sited ethnographic research conducted between 2014-2016 both in Moldavia and Hungary, it will be shown that the revitalisation of Moldavian Hungarian is organised along the ideological expectations of the supporters of the programme – the so-called ‘godparents’ – from Hungary. The godparents undertake the sponsorship of a Moldavian child and subsidise his or her participation in the Hungarian teaching programme. The representative events set up for them by the programme (performances, private letters or video messages sent by the children etc.) create a language use which sometimes is structurally unregulated at the level of phonetics and grammar, but sometimes overregulated because not showing the lexical and pragmatic heterogeneity of Hungarian-Romanian bilingualism. The control mechanisms thus result in an ‘authentic’ – or intended to be authentic – Hungarian language use; it is a mediatised Csángó language undergoing standardisation, which results in forms of speech that falls into the category of what Agha (2011) calls commodity registers. In this case, transnational commodification helps develop a language policy aiming at nationalising the Moldavian people of Hungarian descent.

#### **References:**

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