

FOLK TRADITIONS IN THE TEACHING OF HUNGARIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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1. Introduction

According to Endre Hegyi the factors determining language teaching are the objective conditions, including the duration of teaching, the foreign environment and the linguistic milieu that has to be artificially created, and the subjective conditions that are made up of learners and teachers (Hegyi 1967, 5–12). Béla Giay ascribes great importance to the language learners' age and psychological characteristics, the composition of the learners' group, the course books and teaching tools, and the demands and expectations towards language teaching (Giay – Nádor 1998, 247). The area of the third condition is didactics that objectively influences the concept of our teaching and the forming of our methodology and forms the basis of the language teachers' preparedness in teaching methodology (Hegyi 1967, 5–12), by means of which they may be the possessors and developers of a wide methodological basis that provides high level of motivation.

During my studies and through my practical work I have often experienced that the so far known and applied methodological tools and processes created through scientific work often prove to be insufficient and make the teacher face a problem that seems to be almost unsolvable in the given situation. An essential condition of the successful pedagogical work, the successful relationship between teacher and student and the effectiveness of the joint work is the students' former knowledge, their attitude towards the language and their motivation. It is not the same whether students have professional or other interest in language learning (Antal 2010).

2. Who study Hungarian?

I work as a visiting lecturer of Hungarian in Bulgaria, I do not teach Hungarian in the target language environment. Three semesters long I was doing a survey in which I was examining why my students decide to study Hungarian, and, besides their abilities and competencies forming the basis of their effective learning, which types of learning motivation make them study Hungarian for a long period.

The first places of the order of importance examining **preferences of language choice** were taken by the interest in Hungarian being a peculiar language and culture and by the verification of the student's own ability, ambition and thirst for knowledge.

The students specified the positive, friendly, open-minded atmosphere of the classes, the teacher's personality and competence and the good company as the reasons for staying; in the education system and for the motivation to continue studying, in addition they marked their satisfaction with the instructor, the methods, the teaching style, the instructor's competence and the atmosphere of the language classes. In virtue of the atmosphere of the Hungarian courses they also consider their studies as recreation activity (Antal 2010).

Thus, in an environment of such complex motivation **learning the language as goal and as tool** is equally important to them. What takes the first place in the order of importance varies almost from person to person and depends on the student's motivation of their language choice and their different levels of knowledge.

The general experience of language pedagogy is that those students whose main motivating force is their commitment to and **interest in the profession** aim at understanding and acquiring the language as soon as possible. In this case language as a form of expression is related to the professional conceptual-objective meaning (Hegyí 1967, 5–12). In the case of those who specify **the peculiarity of the Hungarian language, the positive attitude towards the Hungarian language and culture** or their **personal challenge** as the most important motivation in their language choice, and the learning of the profession takes place in the lower degrees of the order of importance, knowing the language as a form of expression and getting to know its culture becomes important.

3. Methodological requirements

During my classes, when discussing a grammatical problem, my students often ask me questions that I may answer only through a game in spite of the fact that I work with adults. Despite this and based on my practical experience I put the question: what happens if one validates the holistic approach among adults, too? (For example, similarly to the way a child acquires the system of sounds, the words and the grammatical structures at the same time.) To do so one may rely on the game theory and some playful methods.

Studying course books and writings about methodology, I have noticed that besides the games that can be found among the ordinary methodological tools and besides some classic poetry and folksongs, neither course book writers, nor methodology experts use a wide interdisciplinary approach.

Knowing my university environment and students and analyzing my possibilities, I have drawn up the following:

- First of all I need to set my goals that are based on the given situations and the given students. These are goals that change almost every semester (or from academic year to academic year).
- The material to be acquired needs to be planned according to the demands, requirements and aims of individuals or mosaic groups.
- When choosing the linguistic material, one also needs to live up the requirements of students that are motivated on diverse levels.
- The methodological basis that meets the above mentioned wide range of goals and curriculum needs to be further developed. One needs to let in such areas of science and arts that have appeared in the Hungarian as a foreign language teaching to a lesser extent so far but may promote the successful language teaching through good analogies.

Living up to these requirements, relying on the game theory (within that especially on folk games) and its practice, the theory and practice of folk dance, the folk poetry and folk music, and the pedagogic and developing results of these areas, I have applied **processes** that:

- help the correct (clear) pronunciation;
- create a speech situation in a playful way;
- make one practice and understand the right intonation of the modes;
- make one understand the suffixation, its use and conditioning;
- provide situations that may be evoked in memorable and real situations, too;
- teach one to understand the non-verbal, identification gestures.

They contribute to:

- the creation of the milieu of the classes;
- the students' being familiar with a part of the culture of the Hungarian language environment (folksong, folk game, folk music, poetry, written music).

I borrowed the interpretation of the expression ‘**process**’ from the methodology of dance teaching (Antal 2002, 121). According to my interpretation, the processes in the teaching methodology of Hungarian as a foreign language are activities that are specifically carried out and adapted to the learners’ age, linguistic motivation and preparedness, and by complementing the applied methods they help understand the tasks and practice and also help the linguistic exercises become internalized quickly and exactly. Such processes are the **playful language learning** and the **improvisation**.

By applying the **playful language learning** we may take advantage of the possibilities lying in games, songs and dance. Here games and dance are not regarded merely as curriculum but are used as tools. Students reach their goals through games, ditties, songs without being aware of it. This process is also very suitable to keep the interest on a constant level.

The **improvisation** consists of the language learners’ acquired knowledge from which, in a given moment, they consciously choose certain expressions and long-used phrases or the visually engraved memories along with them. The already done movement appears as an effect of some external stimulus (situation, music, occasion, etc.). We may define the didactic steps the following way:

- learning the details and procedure of several typical, original versions;
- processing these and creating a freer synthesis, forming the “readiness of speech”;
- creating shorter and longer speech situations.

The levels and exercises of the application of improvisation depend on the learners’ age, willingness to play and knowledge.

We can find the basis of **thematic improvisation** in our singing and dancing folk games. The dialogues and pantomimic gestures that occur in these games are actually thematic exercises. The unbridled game, despite its constraints, allows various individual variations and solutions.

The goal of the improvisation is the development of creativity. It cannot substitute teaching. It only reflects the material that the learner knows, dares to or is able to apply. Beyond checking it serves the function of deepening the knowledge, reinforcement and practice. It provides the teacher with information about what they still need to get back to and which errors need to be corrected. The methodology of **teaching drama** provides a vast storehouse for its application.

Naturally, I do not think that these processes may be applied in every phase and on every level of education but it is proven that adults like playing games, too. As main principle I have followed the complex forming and development of competences, the priority of verbalism and the creation of a Hungarian language environment with English or Hungarian as the mediating language in class. The processes may render mainly the methods of the presentation of the curriculum and the methods of the complex practice of the studied material more effective (cf. Giay – Nádor 1998, 256).

4. The cornerstones of complexity

Tools other than language may provide a great assistance in language teaching. During my lessons music, singing, as well as games and dance that provide for the complexity of movement – text – song play a major role as curriculum content, tool or process – depending on what kind of exercise or place is devoted to them in class.

They are not only tools or processes but knowledge that provides not only cognitive knowledge about Hungary but through multi-faceted approach they bring one closer to it emotionally as well. They give information not only about the capital of the country, its geography, architecture, economic situation but also about the soul of the living people, their games, songs, emotions and arts. In the interacting dialectics of getting knowledge and its application one needs to find their place, let it be acquiring new knowledge or the continuous forming of the necessary **skills** through new knowledge by applying former knowledge, which ultimately needs to develop into **competence** (Hegyí 1967, 5–12).

From a psychological point of view **games** – for a given age – are a possible form of self expression, cognition and in general that of social existence. A mentally healthy person does not always consciously aim at identifying themselves with their environment made up of a social group and its culture. One of the first tools of this psychologically driven adaptation is games. Why can games be important for us from a pedagogical point of view?

– Because they are realistic but not real actions. Games only “play”, “animate” the real world but its laws do not apply to them.

– A semiotic feature of games is their use of signs: the denotat of the sign can be found in each case, i.e. the game indicates something(s) that actually exist(s). It is not a productive activity but forms certain competences,

orientations and points of view, that is it prepares individuals and groups for doing productive activities that can be measured financially, too. This element fundamentally characterizes all learning activities, it essentially characterizes socialization itself through which the individual and/ or the group acquire the rules and laws of living in the given culture. The “result” of the game is the content knowledge of the rules and laws, the recognition of the frames of living in a given culture. We may also say that game is a social action: the game also has subjects (the players), objects (the things that are played, the roles), codes (objective, verbal, gesture), spatial and temporal frames (Niedermüller 1990, 537–539).

The **rhymes**, the **singing game** and the **folk dance** are the complex presentation of rhythm, melody, text, plot, movement or function. They are verbal and non-verbal (gesture) systems (Antal 2002, 36–40). The roles within the playing groups, the relationship between the players are expressed by prose and sung texts and their tones. The messages are reinforced by gestures and mimicry. The roles (animal, object, bride, bridegroom, etc.) may be expressed by movements, gestures, non-verbal signs. These are obvious for everyone in the context of the group. Even though full external imitations (such as the iconic expression of washing oneself, combing one’s hair, sleeping, flying, etc.) are little in our games, there are more symbolic expressions of role plays, the meanings of which are more than their simple significance. They are always connected to a specific occasion, they always happen in the interest of a clearly definable aim and intention: putting the baby to sleep, feeding, healing, doing exercises, playing a plot, with a ritual or entertaining function, etc. (Borsai 1984, 17–110). Among other things it develops the sense of rhythm and melody; with its bound and free forms and variations it spontaneously creates the synthesis of the musical motional mother tongue and the general international game – dance – gesture – language. The link to the musical foundation of the auditory education is obvious. The sung music together with the motion establishes a constant relationship between the two functions. The movements or chains of movements during rhymes, games or dance are realized by rhythmic texts, declaiming or melodic intonation, richly designed melody motives or accompanying melodies formed by twin-bar structures (Borsai 1981, 23–24). The instrumental dance music without singing becomes a living activity by dancing. All of these are realized mainly in communal frames. Let us compare this to some stipulations dealing with the close relationship between music and language.

Iván Fónagy mentions the parental experience that during the period a child learns to speak, the melody of the sentence precedes the sentence itself. Thus, during the ontogenesis the already existing melody spans get filled up with linguistic content. According to this the melody, the music is already in us when language is born (Fónagy 1990, 2). Let us add that both empirical observations and research have also shown that they are linked to a movement or motion both in the case of a child and that of an adult holding their child on their lap. Zoltán Kodály might have been right indeed when he said that the development of musical mother tongue starts already in the uterus – the way that of the mother tongue, too.

According to László Deák one may draw parallels between speech sound and musical sound, syllable and motif, word and topic, syntagm and period, sentence and musical phrase, text and movement but the functions are as different as they are similar. Some examples to be thought of are cited by Géza Balázs:

“...the musical sound is a qualified speech sound (differentiated according to the voice pitch). (...) The closest relative of the musical sound is the notes’ names. (...) ...the musical word, the lexeme typically matches the motif. (...) If the motif is typically the signifier of the word, the lexeme, then the topic stands for the syntagm. (...) The argument exists in music as well; it is a sound, motif, chord or the combination of these that typically or compulsorily stands in front of or after something. (...) The musical sentence is related to the sentence of human language... (...) The musical sentence has a closed intonation structure...” (...)

“The simple sentence is a sentence that either does not contain clearly recognizable motif transformations or is made up of one single motif and its transformations and does not contain a caesura capable of breaking up the pulsation... (...) The inarticulate sentence is a sentence that does not have a motif structure and does not relate to any other sentence in a text as for the transformation of the elements. Such is the long-held sound with the wooden horn...” (Balázs 2006).

According to Gábor Czákó the first and most spectacular similarity between our folksongs and speech is the use of pictures, furthermore, suffixation is our basic linguistic experience because the root system is the inward, maintaining force of our language. The simpler sentence is structured

the same way: the message is put in the beginning. The Hungarian folksong has exactly the same structure: it starts with a powerful picture that is complemented by others that fit them as if they were suffixes: “Az hol én elmegyek, / Még a fák es sírnak, / Gyenge ágaikról / Levelek lehullnak.” He also draws one’s attention to the fact that the ancient Hungarian descending-falling melody style is represented in the basic structure of the Hungarian declarative sentence. (Naturally, only if one does not “sing”, that is one does not utter the end of the sentence at a higher pitch.) In our songs the tone descends until the next sentence, i.e. the next musical thought (Czakó 2008).

The above stated may be compared to folk dance, the movements of which are bound; the rhythm of the music and often the articulation of the recitative bind the steps. Children are already familiar with this kind of articulation through rhymes and child games, which facilitates the learning of the dance. Regarding the structural construction of dance, György Martin states the following: the smallest, meaningful unit of dance is the motif whose elements are the phases. Their extended forms are made up of extended motifs and motif chains of various complements and repetitions. Phases and movements are born of them creating “dance phrases”. The laws of the motifs and their compounds making up the dance treasure may be compared both to the living, rhythmic speech and the processes of melody creation: independent, closed units, rhythm, break at the end of the “sentence”, relief, descending intonation, rhythmic closing forms, rhymes as cadences, lengthening of the rhythm value (Martin – Lányi 1964, 59–67).

The basis of the complexity needs to be looked for in these similarities, through the utilization of which tools and processes may be developed.

5. Summary

In my paper I have studied a theoretical basis through which I can enrich the methodological basis of the Hungarian as a foreign language teaching for myself in a way that I can apply it among adults, too.

I have ascribed importance to games as activities oriented to future through which learners, without noticing it, can quickly apply grammar and understand a grammatical problem of the given moment or appearing later.

In my methodology the rhymes, the complexity of dance and games of singing, moving and dancing play an important role, by the help of which the synthesis of them and that of language may be created. The complexity of the song text and movements, their mutual helping and reinforcing effects,

as well as the positive emotional impact lying in the complexity may render language teaching and the relationship towards the Hungarian language more effective.

I consider it important that the tools and processes created along the above mentioned criteria may bring the foreign student emotionally closer to Hungary. I intend this to be the topic of another study.

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ФОЛКЛОРНИТЕ ТРАДИЦИИ В ПРЕПОДАВАНЕТО НА УНГАРСКИ ЕЗИК КАТО ЧУЖД

ЖОФИЯ АНТАЛ

Резюме

Преподаването на унгарския език като чужд, е ефективен само тогава, когато имаме ясни цели, познаваме добре обстоятелствата, които способстват за успеха на нашата работа и факторите, които поставят трудности пред нея. В хода на работата си наблюдавам, че досега познатите и прилагани методологични подходи, се оказват недостатъчни и нерядко затрудняват учебния процес. Затова педагогическите цели и подходи трябва да бъдат подбирани в зависимост от конкретната ситуация и конкретния ученик; за да бъде усвоен, учебният материал трябва да е съобразен с нуждите, изискванията и целите на ученика или с тези на отделните мозаични групи. При подбора на езиковия материал също трябва да се вземат предвид изискванията на обучаващите се, които са в различна степен мотивирани. Методологичната база, която отговаря на споменатия обширен набор от цели и подходи трябва да бъде доразвита. В това отношение, важно място в методиката на обучението заемат детските стихчета, песнички, фолкорната игра, танците, движението и техният синтез, защото създават езикова единна цялост. Сложността на текста и движенията, тяхното взаимно действие, както и положителният емоционален заряд, който се крие именно в сложността, правят езиковото обучение и отношението към унгарския език още по-ефективно.

FOLK TRADITIONS IN THE TEACHING OF HUNGARIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Summary

We may only regard ourselves successful in Hungarian as a foreign language teaching if we have set an exact goal, we know the circumstances that bring our work to success and the factors that put obstacles to it.

Through my practical work I have often experienced that the so far known and applied methodological tools and processes created through scientific work often prove to be insufficient and make the teacher face a problem that seems to be almost unsolvable in the given situation.

Therefore I need to set my goals that are based on the given situations and the given students, the material to be acquired needs to be planned according to the demands, requirements and aims of individuals or mosaic groups, when choosing the linguistic material, one also needs to live up the requirements of students that are motivated on diverse levels. The methodological basis that meets the above mentioned wide range of goals and curriculum needs to be further developed.

In my methodology the rhymes, the complexity of dance and games of singing, moving and dancing play an important role, by the help of which the synthesis of them and that of language may be created. The complexity of the song text and movements, their mutual helping and reinforcing effects, as well as the positive emotional impact lying in the complexity may render language teaching and the relationship towards the Hungarian language more effective.