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DOI: 10.15290/CR.2025.48.1.03

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Bilingual attitudes of philology students in a multilingual environment

Abstract. The aim of the present study is to investigate the attitudes of philology students towards bilingualism in a multilingual environment. The research was conducted among students majoring in Hungarian, English, Ukrainian, and German language and literature at the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education in Transcarpathia, Ukraine. Data were collected with the help of an online attitude survey (N=185) and three focus group interviews (N=12). Based on the results, philology students have generally positive attitudes towards bilingual language use, code-switching and lexical borrowing. They consider language learning as extremely important nowadays, especially English if someone wants to live or work abroad, while Hungarian–Ukrainian bilingualism is most useful in Transcarpathia. The main problem is that the Ukrainian state language is taught as a first language to ethnic minorities instead of being taught as a foreign language like English. As a result, many Hungarian children cannot speak Ukrainian. Furthermore, most students are not aware of the importance of additive language teaching, which considers the native dialect of learners to be as precious as the standard language variant. Therefore, it would be advisable to introduce the additive approach into the curriculum of all prospective teachers in multilingual environments.

Keywords: additive language teaching, bilingualism, language attitudes, prospective teachers, Transcarpathia

1. Introduction

One of the most prominent topics of research on bilingualism is the definition of who exactly can be considered bilingual, as well as what individual and community attitudes are related to the concept of bilingualism. An example of a multilingual territory is Transcarpathia, one of Ukraine's westernmost regions, bordering Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Its population of 1.2 million people provides a particularly ideal ground for conducting bilingual studies,

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since according to the last official census data from 2001, more than a hundred nationalities live in the area, which is largely due to the fact that the state affiliation and official language of Transcarpathia changed several times in the last century (Csernicskó et al., 2023). However, many Hungarians emigrated after 2022 as a result of the Russo–Ukrainian war, and this tendency is still present nowadays (Csernicskó & Gazdag, 2023).

Ukrainians form the largest proportion of the population (80.5%), but among minorities, the proportion of Hungarians is the highest (12.1%). They are followed by Romanians (2.6%), Russians (2.5%), and Roma (1.1%) (Molnár & Molnár, 2005). Different languages affect each other as a result of language contact, which can be observed in the language use of bilingual speakers. The two most obvious effects of bilingualism are the appearance of code-switches (Márku, 2013), and the use of Ukrainian and Russian loanwords in Hungarian sentences (Gazdag, 2021).

In this study we examine the bilingual attitudes of philology students from the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, which is one of the cultural and educational centres of the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority, in the framework of an online attitude survey and three focus group interviews. The purpose of the research is to assess the bilingual attitudes of students majoring in English, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and German language and literature at the Rákóczi College.

The choice of topic is justified by the fact that philology students are also prospective language teachers, who will be responsible for the development of the mother tongue, state language and foreign language skills of the Transcarpathian youth. As a result, it is particularly important to find out how they relate to the characteristics of Transcarpathian language use, the languages and dialects used in the area, the effects of bilingualism on language use, what language learning motivations guide them in everyday life, and how well they are aware of the meaning of concepts related to bilingualism. The obtained results will be particularly useful in planning college and university philology courses.

2. Bilingualism in Transcarpathia

For a long time, scientists frequently used the terms *bilingualism* and *multilingualism* interchangeably, referring to the use of two or more languages or dialects in everyday life (Grosjean, 2013). Hungarian researchers define bilingualism as “a continuum with monolingual speakers at one end, and perfectly balanced bilinguals with native-like knowledge of both languages at the other end; all speakers between these two extremes can be considered bilingual” (Kontra, 1981, p. 8; Crystal, 1998, p. 452; Beregszászi & Csernicskó, 2003a, p. 30).

Based on the functional approach, those speakers are bilingual or multilingual who use two or more languages (in speech or writing) in order to satisfy their social and communicative needs (Bartha, 2000). To sum up, an individual or a community can be considered bilingual if they are able to communicate in two different languages (Sirbu, 2015).

The Transcarpathian Hungarian minority is characterised by the dominance of their Hungarian mother tongue. In the private sphere they communicate using the Hungarian language, while

the Ukrainian state language comes to the fore in the public space. Mother tongue-dominant bilingualism contributes to the development of additive bilingualism, but this requires long-term language planning and favourable language and educational policy decisions in order to ensure the survival of the Hungarian minority (Beregszászi, 2021).

Minority bilingualism is characteristic of Transcarpathian Hungarians, as their first language (Hungarian) has a subordinate role compared to the Ukrainian state language. The local Hungarian minority is characterised by indigenous and state-ordered bilingualism, but natural bilingualism also occurs in ethnically mixed families and settlements (Beregszászi & Csernicskó, 2003b).

3. Choice of language of schooling and additive language teaching

In order to preserve the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority, it is essential to ensure the possibility of mother tongue-based education. This contributes to the preservation of Hungarian culture and national identity. Although Hungarians live as a national minority in Transcarpathia, parents must also ensure that their children learn the Ukrainian state language properly, as this is the duty and interest of every Ukrainian citizen. For this reason, Hungarian parents often decide to send their children to Ukrainian-language schools (Ferenc & Séra, 2012). In the last decade, the state aimed to establish the Ukrainian language as the only legitimate language of public communication, and thus minority languages became less prestigious (Roter & Busch, 2018).

The educational planning goal of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community is to establish mother tongue-dominant bilingualism, which is linked to an adequate level of knowledge of the Ukrainian state language and at least one foreign language (usually English). In order to achieve these goals, additive language teaching has been emphasised, which supports linguistic diversity, takes into account the characteristics of the Transcarpathian Hungarian dialect, accepts the emergence of bilingualism in education, and imparts language knowledge that can be used in real-life situations through communication-oriented education. As a result, students are more aware of the differences between the local dialect and the standard language variant – this is called communicative competence (Beregszászi, 2012).

In the additive approach, bilingualism is treated with high value, thus promoting the preservation of the minority language. Unfortunately, Hungarian minorities living in the states neighbouring Hungary mostly experience subtractive bilingualism, being forced to use the language of the state only, which is probably the explanation for their negative attitudes towards bilingualism. The main problem in Ukraine is that the state language is taught to ethnic minorities as a first language, not as a second language, which is also reflected in the textbooks and educational programmes used in schools (Csernicskó, 2010a). In other countries, however, the additive approach is used. For example, in Finland both Finnish and Swedish are official languages, even though only 5.5% of the population speak Swedish as a first language. English is added to these two languages, which results in a stable multilingual situation, as all three languages are valued equally (Csernicskó, 2010b).

4. Attitudes towards bilingualism and multilingualism

Two communities speaking different languages or language variants can communicate with each other only if one (subordinate) group acquires the language or its variant used by the other (dominant) group. Ultimately, this leads to the development of bilingualism, which was seen in the past as an avoidable, negative phenomenon which only hindered people from advancement on the social ladder (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

When learning a state or regional language, integrative motivation is of utmost importance. However, the acquisition of English as a lingua franca is facilitated to a greater degree by instrumental motivation (Lasagabaster, 2019). In addition, language attitudes also play a key role in the successfulness of language learning. Language attitudes are often unconscious and stereotypical evaluative reactions to different languages and dialects. They are usually measured in relation to standard and non-standard language varieties (Dragojevic, 2018).

Researchers have carried out several language attitude studies in Transcarpathia. In one of these investigations the dialectal attitudes of Transcarpathian Hungarian teachers were examined during 2007–2008, and the research was repeated ten years later to shed light on the changes in attitudes as a result of the promotion of additive mother tongue education. During the first study, teachers recognised the characteristics of the dialects used in their environment, but they showed distant attitudes, which changed in a positive direction ten years later. They became more tolerant of non-standard language forms and expressed regret for the possible disappearance of dialects (Dudics Lakatos, 2019).

While knowledge of a foreign language is becoming more and more valued nowadays, especially in the case of English as a global language, the assessment of bilingualism is far from ideal. Generally speaking, attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language are extremely positive around the world (Liu & Zhao, 2011; Ahmed, 2015; Mašić & Bećirović, 2021). However, the same cannot be said about learning the Ukrainian state language by minorities in Ukraine because of the negative attitudes among learners as a result of promoting language shift to the dominant language (Csernicškó, 2010b).

5. Methodology

The attitudes of philology students towards bilingualism were investigated using two research methods. First, the bilingual attitudes of English, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and German philology students were assessed in the framework of an online attitude survey. After that, our knowledge about the research topic was expanded with the help of three focus group interviews. As a result of this mixed-method approach, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analysed.

5.1. Online attitude survey

The attitude questionnaire contained both open-ended and closed questions, and was divided into four parts: background information; language knowledge and use; language learning motivation; and attitudes related to bilingualism and multilingualism (see Appendix 1). Since there

were both Hungarian and Ukrainian native speakers among the students, the survey was also compiled in these two languages.

The questionnaires were sent out through the internal mailing system of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, to the institutional e-mail addresses of students majoring in Hungarian, Ukrainian, English, and German philology (both full-time and correspondence courses). The links were forwarded to a total of 425 e-mail addresses, of which 126 belonged to Hungarian, 203 to English, 79 to Ukrainian, and 17 to German language and literature students. As a result, a total of 185 completed questionnaires were collected, which means a return rate of 43.5%.

121 students filled out the Hungarian questionnaire, while the Ukrainian version was completed by the remaining 64 respondents. Out of them, 151 were females (81.6%) and 34 were males (18.4%). In terms of age, the most common category was the 17–22 age group. 118 people (63.8%) declared themselves to be of Hungarian nationality, and 59 people (31.9%) to be Ukrainian. The remaining 8 people (4.3%) stated that they were of Hungarian–Ukrainian or Ukrainian–Hungarian dual nationality. Among the respondents, 134 (72.4%) selected Hungarian as their mother tongue, while 51 (27.6%) chose Ukrainian.

The research was conducted between September 2022 and February 2023. At that time, four majors belonged to the Department of Philology, as shown in Figure 1. It is important to note that the English, Hungarian, and Ukrainian philology majors were operating with six different years, but the German philology major had been established in September 2022, so only one group was operating there during the research period.

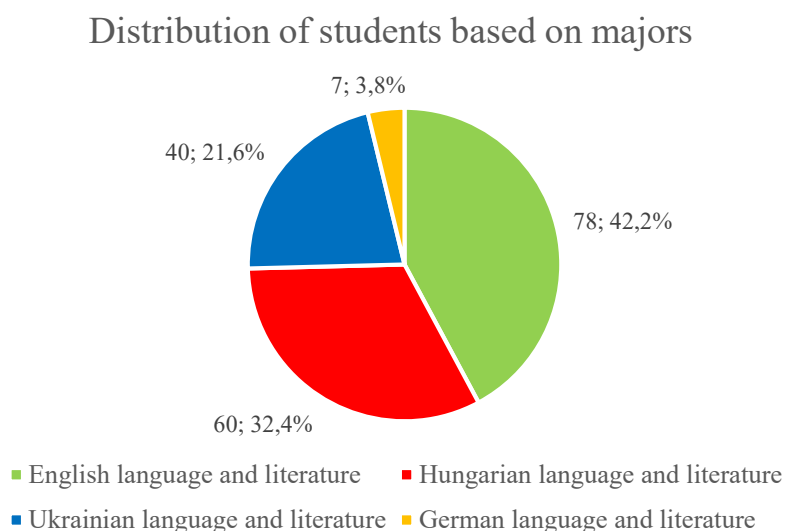


Figure 1. Distribution of students based on majors

In terms of language knowledge, most of the respondents of the Ukrainian questionnaire understood and spoke Hungarian well, even at native-like level, alongside the Ukrainian language. Although the knowledge of the Ukrainian language was not so extensive among the respondents

of the Hungarian survey, those who could not speak Ukrainian probably had some level of Ukrainian language proficiency (Csernicskó et al., 2023). Russian and English were spoken nearly at the same level, but the majority of students did not speak German at all, since this language was only taught to English and German philologists. The results are summarised in Figure 2.

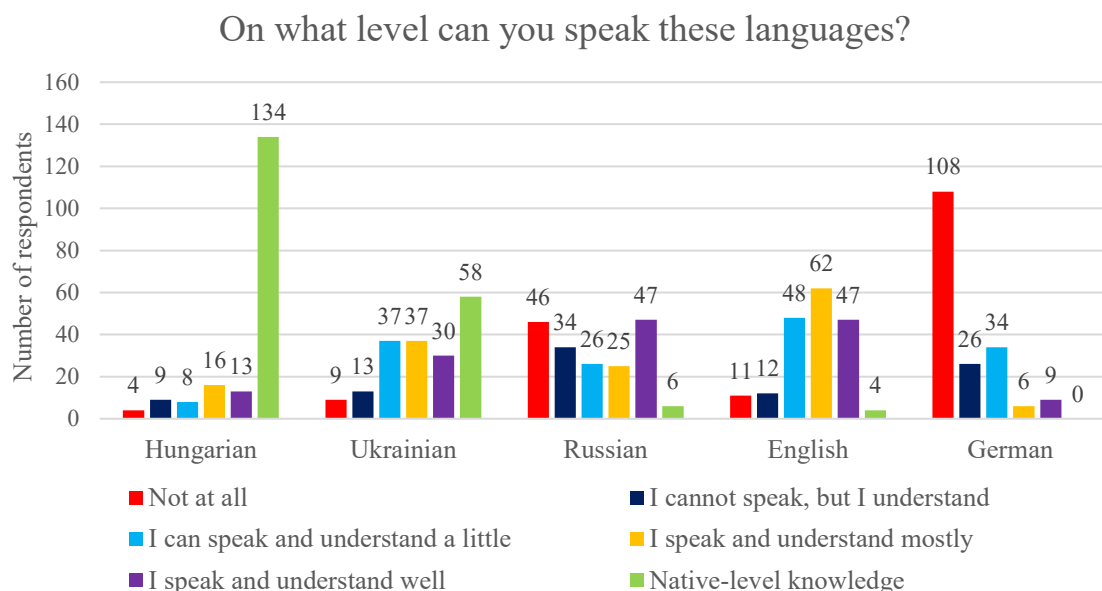


Figure 2. Language knowledge of philology students

Hungarian was used by almost everyone on a daily basis, even among those who filled out the Ukrainian questionnaire (157 in total; 84.9%). Hungarian native speakers used Ukrainian several times a week, while Ukrainian native speakers used it on a daily basis. Russian was never used by 81 philologists (43.8%), similarly to German (118; 63.8%). English was used at least several times a week by the respondents of both questionnaires.

5.2. Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted after the evaluation of the results of the attitude surveys. The interview questions were compiled in such a way as to focus on those areas which were the most controversial during the completion of the questionnaires. Interviews took place in three focus groups, each with four philology students. The first two focus groups consisted of students majoring in Hungarian language and literature separately on Bachelor and Master of Arts levels, while the third group included students majoring in English and Ukrainian philology on both levels. Two interviews were conducted in person and one interview was conducted online on Google Meet.

The interviewees were selected based on the structured sampling technique. Only those philology students who indicated at the end of the attitude questionnaire that they would like to provide additional information on their bilingual attitudes were asked to participate in the discussions. Participant students were chosen based on their majors and levels of study in order to form the focus groups. All twelve respondents were female, between the ages of 19 and 28 years. At the time

of the research they were on various levels of their studies, from the first year of the Bachelor of Arts course up to the last year of the Master of Arts course. The main goal was to get an insight into the knowledge and opinions of students from various majors, with different years of experience.

The focus group discussions took place in April 2023. Interviews lasted 35–45 minutes per group. Before the discussions, participants were informed about the goals and main topics of the research, and they were assured of their anonymity. After requesting prior permission, the conversations were audio-recorded. As a result of writing down the audio recordings, 19 pages of data emerged. Results were organised with the help of thematic analysis since the interview questions were compiled in such a way that multiple questions covered each main topic which emerged from the questionnaire study (see Appendix 2). The following themes were identified in the thematic analysis: difficulties of learning the Ukrainian language; the importance of language knowledge for living abroad and staying in the homeland; choosing a school with a different language medium than the children's native language; attitudes towards using dialects in the school; methodological problems of teaching the state language for minorities; defining who can be considered bilingual; the concept of additive language teaching.

6. Results and discussion

6.1. Philology students' language use and attitudes

From the point of view of our research, it was important to examine which languages the philology students considered the most important to get by in their homeland. They had to rate each language on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important), which is summarised in Figure 3 below. It is clear from the results that knowledge of the Ukrainian and Hungarian languages was considered most important by the respondents in terms of living in Transcarpathia.

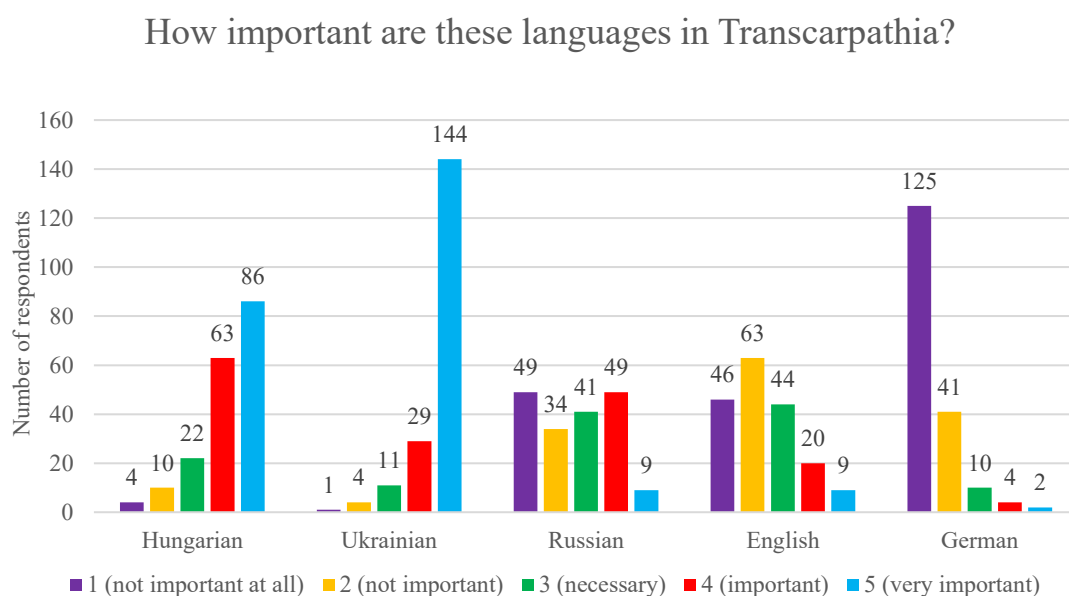


Figure 3. The importance of language knowledge in Transcarpathia

It was interesting to examine how much the prospective language teachers were aware of the concept of code-switching. Respondents could choose multiple answers. Most students correctly knew that during code-switching we change languages (131; 70.8%) or language variants (70; 37.8%) within the same communicative situation (Trudgill, 1997), but 22.7% also chose the change of forms of communication and 15.7% selected communication goals incorrectly. According to 14 students (7.6%), switching the speed of speech also plays a role in code-switching.

Of all the philologists participating in the research, 149 (80.5%) used loanwords in their everyday speech. Those who completed the Hungarian questionnaire listed a total of 76 Ukrainian/Russian borrowings. This is in line with Váradi (2022), who also found that Transcarpathian Hungarian students frequently use Slavic borrowings; most of them are listed by Gazdag (2021). The respondents of the Ukrainian survey named 39 Hungarian and English loanwords which they use in their Ukrainian sentences. These borrowings have already undergone phonological and morphological adaptation in the receiving language (Bárány & Gazdag 2024).

During the focus group interviews, it was revealed that all participants used code-switches and Slavic loanwords in everyday communication. For instance, one participant stated that *“if I am in a free environment with acquaintances or friends, we speak more slang and use some loanwords. However, at school, we are there to teach and educate, so if a pupil used a Slavic loanword, I would show him/her which Hungarian standard word he/she could replace it with”* (Hungarian philology, BA 4th year).

Therefore, students had a positive attitude towards one of the characteristics of the Transcarpathian Hungarian language variety, the use of Ukrainian/Russian loanwords, but they were also aware that the use of Slavisms is not recommended in all cases. Based on the answers, the use of dialects is acceptable at school. However, when it comes to Hungarian language classes, it is necessary to explain to the pupils in which speech situations the use of dialect forms is ideal. This is the main guiding principle of the additive mother tongue teaching approach (Beregszászi, 2012).

In the third focus group, however, those students who were not studying Hungarian philology had a different opinion: *“In my perspective, it is not acceptable for teachers to use dialect in school, but it is acceptable for learners, because dialect is a value that only makes their language repertoire more colourful. However, it is important to emphasise that they should also know the standard version of the words and use only standard words in writing”* (English philology, MA 1st year).

6.2. Language learning motivation

Philology students – as prospective language teachers – declared which language learning methods they considered to be the most successful. In addition to the answers shown in Figure 4, further responses included listening to music; watching series, videos and movies in foreign languages (with subtitles); using social media; playing video games; spending time in the target language country; and getting to know the target culture. These are all well-known methods of

language learning, facilitated by digital technologies and Web 2.0 tools, used especially often when learning English as a foreign language (Váradi, 2021).

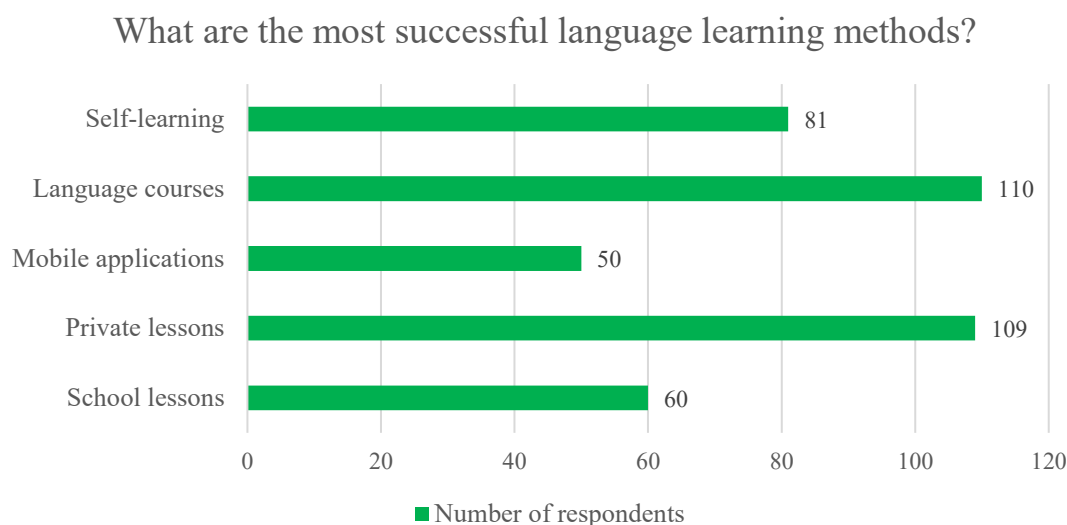


Figure 4. The most effective language learning methods

70 students (37.8%) stated that they had already studied in an educational institution with a language of medium other than their mother tongue. The most common reason for this was that their parents thought it was a good idea (36) or they wanted to learn another language (24). Only 10 students indicated that there was no educational institution available in their native language near their birthplace.

It was also examined whether philologists would prefer to live in a monolingual environment where the knowledge of two or more languages was not necessary. An interesting difference could be observed between the respondents of the Hungarian and the Ukrainian questionnaires. Among the former, 64.5% would prefer to live in a monolingual environment because the learning of the state language in Transcarpathia is a problem for minorities, as it is not taught as a foreign language, but as a first language.

On the other hand, 56.3% of those who completed the Ukrainian questionnaire did not want to live in a monolingual environment. The reasons for this were as follows: they like to learn languages; they are used to a multilingual environment; it would be boring to use only one language; and knowing different languages is like *“a bridge between people of different nationalities”*.

During the focus group discussions, the Transcarpathian multilingual environment was seen as an advantage, as it makes people more accepting of other cultures, explained as follows: *“The more languages you speak, the more of a person you are. But a speaker of the Transcarpathian dialect is like several people in the same body”* (Hungarian philology, MA 2nd year).

A difference could be observed in connection with the languages that the respondents of the Hungarian and Ukrainian questionnaires would like to learn at a higher level. In both cases, learning the English language was clearly the most desired option, followed by the Ukrainian language

for Hungarian native speakers, and the Hungarian language for Ukrainians. However, philology students who filled out the Hungarian questionnaire showed a much more positive attitude towards the Russian language than those who completed the Ukrainian survey. This is not surprising because in the shadow of the Russo–Ukrainian war, Russian schools have been abolished, and the use of the Russian language in public spaces and the teaching of Russian literature in schools became forbidden, and thus attitudes towards the Russian language are generally negative among the Ukrainian population (Malysh et al., 2022). A detailed comparison can be found in Figure 5.

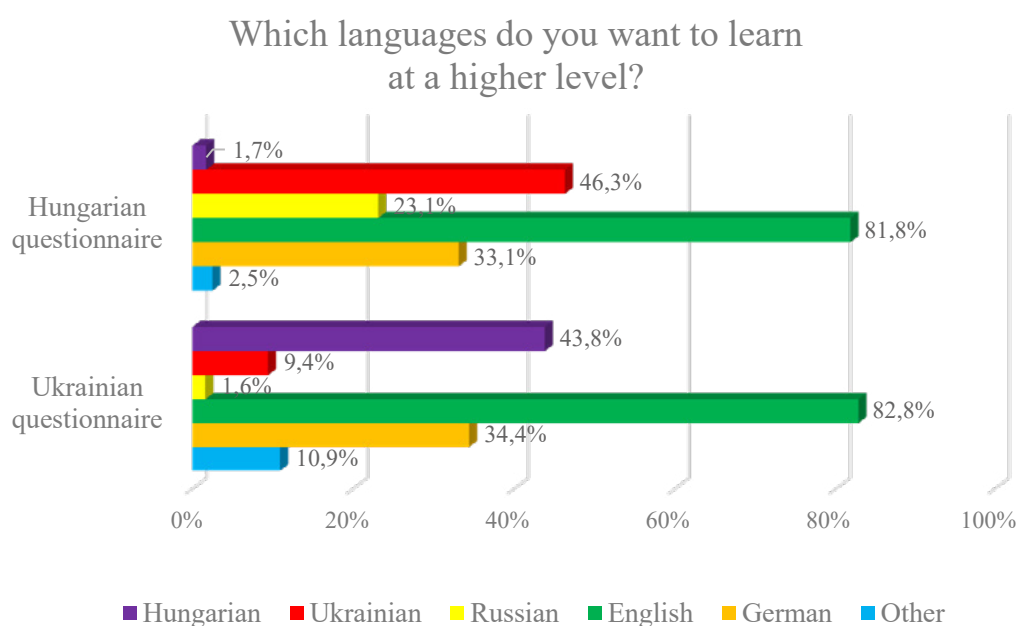


Figure 5. Language learning attitudes of philology students

The reasons for learning the Hungarian and Ukrainian languages were mainly connected to making communication and everyday life in Transcarpathia easier. In addition, the state language status of Ukrainian was emphasized as a decisive factor in language learning. In connection with foreign languages, the most important one to learn was definitely English because it is necessary for living or travelling abroad, and it has many benefits such as better employment and educational opportunities. Moreover, an English language exam certificate was very inviting for students as they considered English as the most useful language in the world. Other foreign languages like Russian or German were not seen as desirable as English.

To the question of what can motivate children to learn the Ukrainian language, the most obvious answer was its official language status. However, philology students emphasised the importance of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language for minorities, instead of being taught as a mother tongue. According to several respondents, nothing can persuade Hungarian-speaking children to learn the Ukrainian language at the moment because the state language is “*forced on them*”, even though they should learn it of their own free will. Therefore, more understanding minority laws are required in Ukraine (Csernicskó et al., 2020).

Focus group responses also reflect that making the learning of the Ukrainian language compulsory does not motivate students to learn the state language. The only thing that could motivate them is the realisation that if they want to stay in their homeland, they will need to learn Ukrainian for everyday communication. Students expressed their concerns that the curricula aimed at teaching the state language were compiled for students whose mother tongue was Ukrainian. In addition, more emphasis should be placed on real language use instead of teaching solely the grammar.

Positive attitudes towards language learning were reflected in the responses that, according to 82.7% of the respondents, children should learn as many foreign languages as possible. In conclusion, philologists had positive attitudes towards learning languages only if they were taught as foreign languages like English, further strengthened by the practical usefulness of the given language in international contexts.

6.3. Philology students' attitudes towards bilingualism

In the 2000s it was common practice among Ukrainian families to send their children to Hungarian kindergartens or schools because of the high prestige of the Hungarian language and the possibility of obtaining Hungarian citizenship (Karmacsi, 2007). However, after the nationalisation policy of Ukraine, this tendency changed into the opposite direction. Respondents had to express their opinions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of a Hungarian-speaking child attending a Ukrainian-language educational institution. The answers of the Hungarian respondents are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Enrolment of Hungarian children in Ukrainian-language schools
(Hungarian attitude survey)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Faster learning of the state language	Alienation from the mother tongue
Easier life and office administration, more job opportunities in Ukraine	Decline of native language knowledge, emergence of Ukrainian accent
Learning the standard Ukrainian language variant	Weakening of Hungarian national consciousness
Larger vocabulary than that of pupils attending Hungarian-language schools	Problems with integration in school, ostracism, deterioration of grades
The development of bilingualism	Difficult communication with classmates
Getting to know the Ukrainian culture	Getting less familiar with Hungarian culture
We need to speak as many languages as possible	Falling behind in school, feeling of inferiority, anxiety, learning disabilities

Advantages	Disadvantages
A minimum knowledge of the state language is obligatory if someone wants to stay in his/her homeland	The Hungarian minority may be in danger as more and more people will send their own children to Ukrainian schools

It is interesting to compare these advantages and disadvantages with the responses of Ukrainian native speakers. This way, we can examine whether there are any differences in the attitudes of philology students towards schooling in a language other than the mother tongue. Table 2 summarises the responses from the Ukrainian questionnaire.

Table 2. Enrolment of Hungarian children in Ukrainian-language schools
(Ukrainian attitude survey)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Knowledge of the Ukrainian language is necessary for living in Transcarpathia	More and more young people want to live abroad, where Ukrainian is not necessary
Every Ukrainian citizen is obliged to know the Ukrainian state language	It is difficult for children to switch between languages, and thus learning is also harder
Knowing two languages makes the children's future easier	In the beginning, Hungarian pupils are not going to understand Ukrainian teachers
More options for studying in Ukrainian universities and colleges	A dialect will be developed within both the Hungarian and Ukrainian languages
Anyone who lives in Ukraine should be able to communicate in the state language, as this will make it easier to find a job, and get to know a new nation and its culture	If children are not enrolled in a Ukrainian-language school from the first grade, they will fall behind their peers and their grades will deteriorate
Ukrainian is acquired at a native level	Hungarian is acquired at a lower level

There was a slight difference between Hungarian and Ukrainian philologists regarding the choice of a school with a language of medium other than the mother tongue. Hungarian respondents highlighted the faster and easier acquisition of the Ukrainian state language as the biggest advantage, but expressed their concerns about the decline of Hungarian children's national consciousness and mother tongue knowledge, as well as the growing danger of the disappearance of the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority. Ukrainian respondents emphasised much more that all Ukrainian citizens should know the state language. On the other hand, everyone agreed that learning difficulties may arise if children did not attend a Ukrainian school from the first grade. As a result, they will have difficulties in communicating with others, and may become victims of ostracism.

The enrolment of Hungarian-speaking children in Ukrainian-language schools was also investigated during the focus group interviews. None of the students majoring in Hungarian language and literature supported this option, because it could lead to a loss of linguistic identity and various discriminatory language situations, which only harms young children. At the same time, there were also those who saw the advantages of state-language schools. According to them, it is worth choosing a Ukrainian-language school if the child is planning his/her future in Transcarpathia (or somewhere else within Ukraine). Some interviewees felt that they were unable to communicate in Ukrainian because they were enrolled in a Hungarian school from the first grade.

Philology students were also asked to determine who is considered bilingual. 40% of the respondents considered only those who could speak at least two languages at a native level to be bilingual, while 30.3% thought that the main criterion for being bilingual was the ability to interpret messages in at least two languages. Finally, only 27% selected that the minimal knowledge of at least two languages was enough for being bilingual. Some students gave the following definitions to the question of who can be called bilingual: someone who speaks two languages at the same level; who considers himself/herself bilingual; who is forced to use a second language in certain situations. However, it is surprising that according to 40% of the respondents, only those who speak both languages at a native level can be considered bilingual, even though nowadays it is a well-known fact that most bilinguals do not achieve native-like proficiency (Grosjean, 2022). Furthermore, De Houwer (2018) defined the ability to comprehend messages in two languages as the main criterion for bilingualism. Consequently, prospective language teachers should acknowledge the fact that native speaker proficiency in two or more languages is not a realistic expectation from bilinguals.

During the focus group discussions, the question of at what level it is necessary to know two languages in order to consider someone bilingual also arose. According to students majoring in Ukrainian and English philology, *“you do not need to have a language exam or to use complicated words, but you do need to be able to express yourself in the given language”*. Hungarian philology students had a similar opinion, since they also called those people bilingual who *“in addition to their mother tongue (which they know and use at the highest level), also communicate in another language in everyday life”*.

Among the respondents, 129 (69.7%) considered themselves bilingual because they spoke at least two languages at an advanced level, lived in a bilingual environment, and could interpret messages in at least two languages. Some of them attributed their individual bilingualism to the Transcarpathian linguistic situation, because *“in this area, it is impossible not to be bilingual”*. Conversely, 56 students (30.3%) did not consider themselves bilingual because they could not speak two languages at a native level or because they were not confident enough in their second language.

The attitudes towards bilingualism are also clearly shown by the fact that according to 54.6%, it is not possible to distinguish between monolingual and bilingual speakers in terms of who

can speak Hungarian or Ukrainian more eloquently. However, 29.2% preferred the language of monolingual speakers, and only 10.3% considered the speech of bilinguals more beautiful. In addition, there were responses such as *“there is no such thing as beautiful Hungarian or Ukrainian speech, just as there is no right or wrong”* or *“a dialect is just as beautiful as the literary language”*. According to most people, therefore, the beauty of the language is not affected by bilingualism; everyone’s speech is equally beautiful.

In Transcarpathia, knowledge of different languages is of particular importance, which was confirmed by the results of the focus groups. Prospective teachers stated that it is very difficult to get by as a monolingual speaker in Transcarpathia. Several people complained that if they wanted to manage official matters and did not speak Ukrainian properly, they needed the assistance of an acquaintance who helped them communicate in the state language. College students expressed their opinion that *“in such a multicultural environment, even those who only know Ukrainian, which is the official language, will run into many obstacles”* (Hungarian philology, MA 1st year).

Interesting results were also obtained regarding how someone becomes bilingual. The respondents could select several answers, but 167 philologists (90.3%) chose ethnically mixed families as the most common reason for bilingualism. Intermarriage was also mentioned by Grosjean (2013) as one of the main reasons for becoming bilingual. Detailed results are presented in Figure 6.

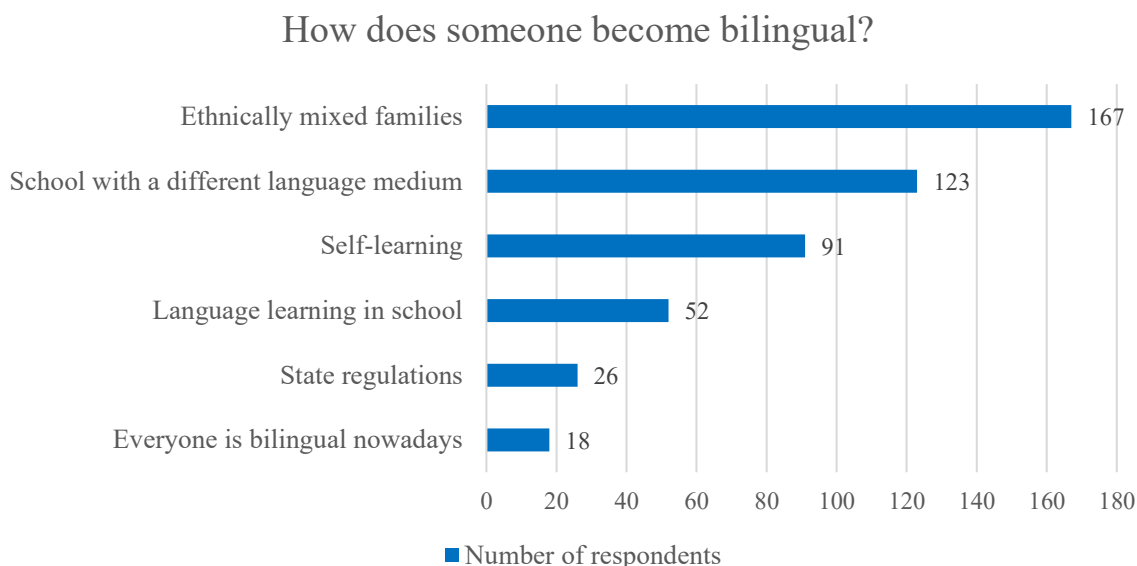


Figure 6. Reasons for the development of bilingualism

According to 41.6% of the respondents, it varies from person to person in which languages bilinguals can express themselves better. 37.3% of the students felt that they always speak their mother tongue better, and only 21.1% thought that bilinguals speak both languages at the same level. The first type is called dominant bilingualism, while the latter is balanced (Birdsong, 2014).

However, bilingual people's language dominance changes over time, as is illustrated by the grid approach of Grosjean (2010). Attitudes were therefore mixed regarding the degree of language proficiency of bilingual speakers.

According to 140 students (75.7%), it is noticeable in someone's speech that the person is bilingual. The following signs may indicate this: accent; code-switching; use of loanwords; incorrect word order in sentences; incorrect stress patterns; mirror translations.

Moreover, if a child is exposed to two different languages from a very young age, it will be easier for him/her to learn both languages (79.5%). Therefore, ethnically heterogeneous families, where the parents speak different languages, contribute to the development of bilingualism. Additional answers received much fewer votes, as can be seen in Figure 7.

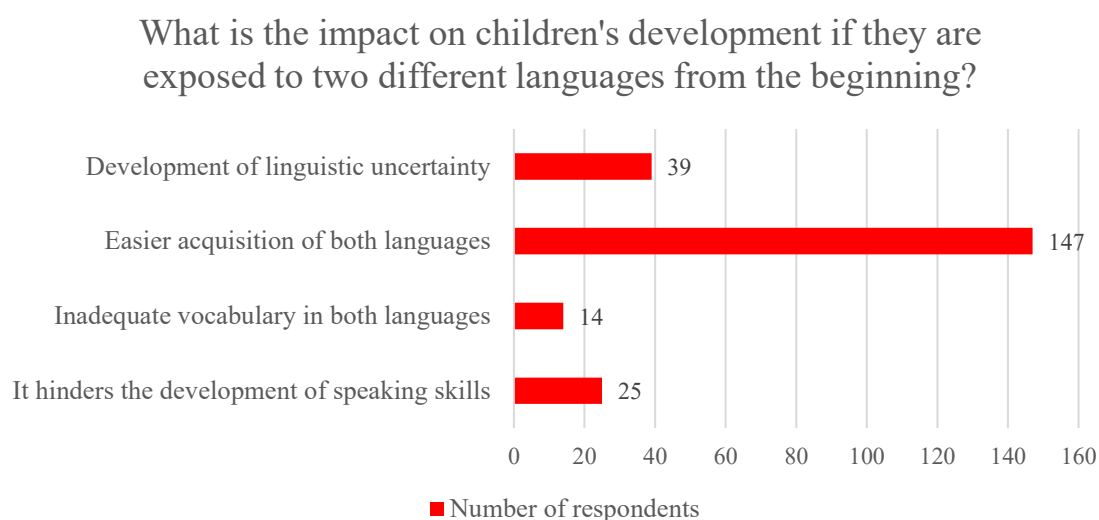


Figure 7. The effects of ethnically mixed families on young children

Prospective teachers stated that knowledge of the Ukrainian and Hungarian languages was most advantageous in Transcarpathia (176; 95.1%). The Ukrainian–English (7) and Hungarian–English (2) language pairs were chosen only by a very small percentage of the respondents. During the focus group interviews, everyone agreed that the Hungarian and Ukrainian languages were necessary for living in Transcarpathia.

However, in order to live abroad, most students mentioned the Ukrainian–English language pair as the most useful type of bilingualism. The main reason for this is that English is a world language, and Ukrainian is very similar to other Slavic languages. Nevertheless, it largely depends on the target country because *“if the destination is Hungary, then Hungarian–English bilingualism is most useful; but if you were to stay in Eastern Europe, for example, the target country would be Poland, and then Ukrainian–English language skills would be more valuable”* (Hungarian philology, MA 1st year).

Only 19 students (10.3%) thought that there are disadvantages to being bilingual, including the uncertainty of self-identity; language-mixing; using loanwords in monolingual environments;

smaller vocabulary in both languages; the increased difficulty of creating grammatically correct sentences; and developing an accent in both languages, which is judged negatively by many people.

The next questions were about how the respondents related to someone mixing Ukrainian and Hungarian words in sentences. The answers to the two questions suggested that in both cases a peculiarity of the Transcarpathian dialect was described. The comparative results are shown in Figure 8.

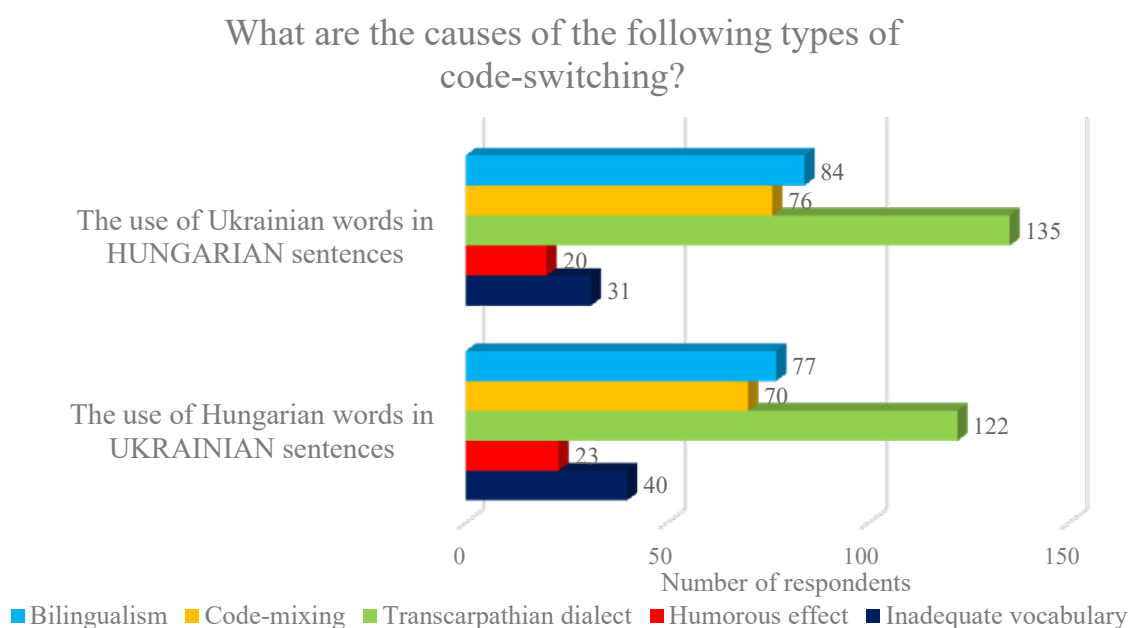


Figure 8. Attitudes related to code-switching

During the focus group interviews, philology students – as prospective language teachers – were asked about how they would react if one of their pupils used code-switching or Russian/Ukrainian loanwords in class or during school breaks. Several respondents stated that it would only be considered a mistake in a Hungarian grammar lesson. Of course, this should be handled with the additive approach in mind, drawing a parallel between the characteristics and scope of the use of the standard language variant and the Transcarpathian dialect of the Hungarian language. We should not judge the learner because of his/her language use because “*the child grew up hearing and using the loanword; he/she learned it from the parents. But there are situations when the use of loanwords is inappropriate. I would correct it during the lesson, but dialect can be used during the break with their friends, because everyone speaks the way they want in their private sphere*” (Hungarian philology, MA 2nd year).

The question that focused on the language acquisition of children growing up in ethnically mixed marriages raised an interesting topic. According to 97 students (52.4%), children will learn the languages of both parents equally. In addition, more students thought that they will know their school’s language (55; 29.7%) or their mother’s language (46; 24.9%) better. It was

particularly interesting that only 4 respondents (2.2%) felt that the child will speak the father's language at a higher level. Based on the additional answers, children born into mixed marriages learn the language of the dominant parent better, that is, with whom they spend more time and communicate more, in accordance with the dynamic nature of language dominance in bilinguals (Grosjean 2010). But factors such as the narrower social environment also play an important role in this issue.

6.4. The emergence of bilingualism in Transcarpathian schools

Young philologists explained that the task of Ukrainian and Hungarian language teachers in Transcarpathia is much more complicated than their colleagues' job in Kyiv or Budapest. The main difference is that they must have adequate knowledge of socio-dialectology, so that they will be able to deal with dialects in the classroom.

As prospective language teachers, they also had to state what would be necessary to change in the education of the Ukrainian state language in Transcarpathia in order to enable more Hungarian children to learn the state language. According to the respondents, inadequate teaching methods are mostly at fault (112; 60.5%), while teachers' attitudes (97; 52.4%) and the lack of Hungarian language skills of Ukrainian language teachers (92; 49.7%) are also huge problems. These were also mentioned by Csernicskó (2010a). Outdated textbooks, and lack of time and digital devices are only secondary factors.

We also asked the participants of the focus group interviews about the one thing they would change in the education of the Ukrainian state language in Transcarpathian schools. Philology students expressed their wish that *"Ukrainian should not be taught as a mother tongue to Hungarian learners, but as a foreign language"*, and that *"emphasis must be placed on everyday communication instead of grammar"*.

Closely related to the concepts of educational planning and school bilingualism is the concept of additive bilingualism (Beregszászi 2012), which surprisingly only 38 respondents (20.5%) were able to define according to the literature. This issue was also addressed during the focus group interviews. Students majoring in Hungarian language and literature were aware of the concept and fully supported it because *"if we tell the child in school that it is incorrect to speak like his/her parents, the child will have a lot of questions: Who should he/she listen to? Who is telling the truth: the parents or the teacher? The two language varieties must be built on top of each other, and the child must be taught how much their use depends on the situation"* (Hungarian philology, MA 1st year).

The meaning of additive bilingualism was unknown to English and Ukrainian philologists, but after the essence of the method was explained, they completely supported it. Although the Hungarian philology major fully prepares students for additive language teaching, this cannot be said about other teacher training courses. As stated by one of the participants, *"it can have a negative effect if someone does not teach according to the additive approach. And here we are not only talking about Hungarian language teachers, but about teachers in general. Non-standard*

words emerge during maths or biology lessons in the same way. The majority of teachers are not aware of how to deal with dialects, so I would teach all prospective teachers how important the additive approach is” (Hungarian philology, MA 2nd year). This is especially important in Transcarpathia and other territories neighbouring Hungary where Hungarian minorities reside, having developed their own regional dialects (Lőrincz et al., 2022). The same applies for English language teaching – students must get acquainted with the different regional and social varieties of the language (Hughes et al., 2012).

In the next question, philologists were asked whether young Hungarians in Transcarpathia speak English better than Ukrainian. According to 64.9%, the English language skills of Transcarpathian children are more developed than their knowledge of the state language. This was justified by the fact that English is really taught as a foreign language from the basics, and young people consume much more content in English than in Ukrainian. In addition, young people often use English as a lingua franca to communicate with each other if they do not speak each other’s native language (Csernicskó, 2012). However, it is not possible to generalise, as it varies from person to person which language they know at what level and how often they use it. If data from the 2001 census are taken into consideration, only 0.69% of the Transcarpathian population indicated that they spoke English (Beregszászi, 2004), but this percentage is obviously higher nowadays due to globalization, increased language learning opportunities, and the growing importance of speaking English.

During the focus group interviews, everyone agreed that Hungarian secondary school students in Transcarpathia want to learn English much more than Ukrainian. The reason for this is that most of them plan to continue their studies abroad, where English is more necessary. In connection with this, we also asked the philologists what is more important: knowledge of the state language or a world language? The answers suggest that it all depends on where we plan our future. If someone wants to stay in Transcarpathia, they will need the Ukrainian state language. However, if we want to live abroad, knowledge of a world language will be essential.

7. Conclusions

The aim of the research was to assess the bilingual attitudes of students majoring in English, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and German language and literature at the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education. Results show that knowledge of the Hungarian and Ukrainian languages is most useful in Transcarpathia, but most philologists wanted to learn English because of its status as a world language and its usefulness in building a career or living abroad. The positive attitudes towards learning English as a global lingua franca, therefore, were clearly visible among philology students in Ukraine.

The main problem is that laws restricting the rights of minorities to mother tongue education are being accepted in Ukraine, and the state language is not taught to ethnic minorities as a foreign language like English, but as a first language (Csernicskó, 2010a). As a result, many Hungarians are not able to acquire the Ukrainian language at a higher level. In general, participants favoured

the learning of foreign languages, but only if they were taught with the correct method, and native speaker proficiency was not expected from them. English is definitely the most favoured language by the youth, but people need to know at least three languages in multilingual environments: their mother tongue (e.g. Hungarian), the language of the close environment (e.g. Ukrainian), and a global language (e.g. English). However, it must be taken into consideration that languages have an effect on each other in various forms, including the use of borrowings, frequent code-switches, as well as morphological and phonological deviations from standard norms (Sankoff, 2001).

Furthermore, the concept of additive language teaching and the effective handling of dialects in school (Beregszászi, 2012) should be introduced into the curriculum of every teacher training course in colleges and universities located in linguistically mixed areas. Although students majoring in Hungarian philology were aware of the concept of additive language teaching, prospective Ukrainian and English language teachers should also get acquainted with its basics because of the many different social and regional dialects of the Ukrainian (Bidnoshyia & Dyka, 2022) and English languages (Hughes et al., 2012). The home language variant of pupils should be treated equally in schools with standard variants of the language, together with an emphasis on the development of the learners' pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2012). As a result, pupils will have the ability to choose the correct language variant in formal and informal sociocultural contexts.

The results of the research will be useful in the planning of teacher training courses, as they provide insight into the current situation of multilingualism and multiculturalism in Transcarpathia, the perception of bilingualism and the Transcarpathian language variety by philology students, the problems of teaching the Ukrainian state language, and the importance of mother tongue teaching in an additive approach. Additionally, it is advised that the results be taken into consideration in the language policy and planning of countries where significant minority groups exist, so that the teaching of the state languages would follow the same procedure as the teaching of the English language. Because of the limitations of the current study, the investigation of language learning motivation and the latest changes in the attitudes towards minority languages in Ukraine should be examined in a different study in the future.

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Acknowledgement

The present study was supported by the Collegium Talentum Programme of Hungary.

Appendix 1

Attitude questionnaire

1. Gender: a) Male b) Female
2. Age:
3. Type of residence:
 - a) City with Hungarian majority b) City with Ukrainian majority
 - c) Village with Hungarian majority d) Village with Ukrainian majority
4. Nationality:
 - a) Hungarian b) Ukrainian c) Other:
5. Mother tongue:
 - a) Hungarian b) Ukrainian c) Other:
6. What major are you currently studying at the college?
 - a) English language and literature b) Hungarian language and literature
 - c) Ukrainian language and literature d) German language and literature
7. What is your year of study?
 - a) I. b) II. c) III. d) IV. e) V. f) VI.

8. In your opinion, on what level do you speak the following languages?

Languages	Not at all	I cannot speak, but I understand	I can speak and understand a little	I speak and understand mostly	I speak and understand well	Native-level knowledge
Hungarian						
Ukrainian						
Russian						
English						
German						

9. What are the most successful language learning methods?

- a) School lessons b) Private lessons c) Mobile applications
d) Language courses e) Self-learning f) Other:

10. Indicate on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important) the extent to which knowledge of each language is necessary in Transcarpathia.

Languages	1	2	3	4	5
Hungarian					
Ukrainian					
Russian					
English					
German					

11. How often do you use the following languages?

Languages	Never	Once a month	Once a week	Several times a week	On a daily basis
Hungarian					
Ukrainian					
Russian					
English					
German					

12. What do we change during “code switching”? Multiple answers can be marked.
 - a) Languages b) Communication goals c) Language variants
 - d) Speed of speech e) Forms of communication f) Other:
13. Do you use loanwords of Ukrainian/Russian origin in your everyday speech?
 - a) Yes b) No
14. What Ukrainian/Russian loanwords do you know? List a few!

.....
15. Have you ever studied in an educational institution with a language medium other than your mother tongue?
 - a) Yes b) No
16. If yes, why?
 - a) I wanted to learn another language
 - b) My parents thought it was a good idea
 - c) There was no school with the same language as my mother tongue near my settlement
 - d) Other:
17. Do you sometimes use different languages within the same conversation?
 - a) Yes, I usually use HUNGARIAN words in UKRAINIAN sentences
 - b) Yes, I usually use UKRAINIAN words in HUNGARIAN sentences
 - c) It is not typical for me
18. Would you rather live in an environment where knowledge of ONE language is enough?
 - a) Yes b) No

Reason:
19. Which language would you like to learn at a higher level than your current one?
 - a) Hungarian b) Ukrainian c) Russian d) English e) German f) Other:
20. For what reason would you like to speak the given language better?

.....
21. What are the **advantages** of a Hungarian child attending a Ukrainian-language school?

.....
22. What are the **disadvantages** of a Hungarian child attending a Ukrainian-language school?

.....
23. What can motivate children to learn Ukrainian?

.....
24. Do you think children should learn English, German or Russian in and out of school?
 - a) Yes, they must learn as many foreign languages as possible
 - b) It is enough for them to learn English
 - c) No, knowledge of Ukrainian and Hungarian is enough
 - d) They only have to learn Ukrainian
 - e) They only have to learn Hungarian

25. Does the task of a Ukrainian language teacher in Transcarpathia differ from that of a teacher in Kyiv?
- a) Yes b) No
- If yes, in what ways?
- Response:
26. Does the task of a Hungarian language teacher in Transcarpathia differ from that of a teacher in Budapest?
- a) Yes b) No
- If yes, in what ways?
- Response:
27. Who do you think can be considered bilingual?
- a) Those who speak at least two languages at a minimal level
- b) Those who can interpret messages and texts in at least two languages
- c) Those who speak at least two languages at a native level
- d) Other:
28. Do you consider yourself bilingual or multilingual?
- a) Yes b) No
- Reason:
29. Do monolingual or bilingual speakers speak Hungarian/Ukrainian better?
- a) Monolinguals b) Bilinguals c) No distinction can be made
- Other:
30. How does someone become bilingual?
- a) Ethnically mixed families
- b) Being enrolled in a school with a language medium other than their mother tongue
- c) Self-learning
- d) Language learning in school
- e) Language learning as a result of state regulations
- f) Everyone is bilingual nowadays
- g) Other:
31. In your opinion, if someone in Transcarpathia... (You can put only one X in a row).

	They will easily get by	They may face some problems	They will hardly get by
speaks only Hungarian...			
speaks only Ukrainian...			
speaks only Russian...			

32. Can bilingual people express themselves equally well in both languages?
- a) Yes, they speak both languages at the same level
 - b) No, they always speak their mother tongue better
 - c) It varies from person to person
 - d) Other:
33. Is it noticeable in someone's speech that they are bilingual?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
- If yes, what are the signs that an individual is bilingual?
-
34. Are there any disadvantages of being bilingual?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
- Disadvantages:
35. In your opinion, which language pair is most beneficial to know in Transcarpathia?
- a) Ukrainian–Hungarian
 - b) Ukrainian–English
 - c) Hungarian–English
36. If young children are exposed to two different languages from the beginning, what effect does it have on their development?
- a) It hinders the development of speaking skills
 - b) Inadequate vocabulary in both languages
 - c) Easier acquisition of both languages
 - d) Development of linguistic uncertainty
 - e) Other:
37. Why do people use Ukrainian words in their Hungarian sentences?
- a) It is a sign of bilingualism
 - b) It is a sign of code-mixing
 - c) It is one of the characteristics of the Transcarpathian Hungarian dialect
 - d) It creates a humorous effect
 - e) It is a sign of inadequate vocabulary
 - f) Other:
38. Why do people use Hungarian words in their Ukrainian sentences?
- a) It is a sign of bilingualism
 - b) It is a sign of code-mixing
 - c) It is one of the characteristics of the Transcarpathian Hungarian dialect
 - d) It creates a humorous effect
 - e) It is a sign of inadequate vocabulary
 - f) Other:
39. Which language do you think children growing up in ethnically mixed families will learn better?
- a) The father's language
 - b) The mother's language

- c) Both languages equally
 - d) The one that matches the language of their school
 - e) Your opinion:
40. As a future language teacher, what do you think should be changed in the teaching of the Ukrainian language in Transcarpathia so that more Hungarian children could speak the state language?
- a) Outdated textbooks
 - b) Teachers' attitudes
 - c) Inappropriate teaching methods
 - d) Ukrainian language teachers do not speak the pupils' mother tongue (Hungarian)
 - e) Lack of time
 - f) Lack of digital devices
 - g) Other:
41. What does additive bilingualism mean?
.....
42. Do you think young people from Transcarpathia speak English better than Ukrainian?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
- Reason:

Appendix 2

Focus group interview questions

1. Is it advisable to enrol a Hungarian child in a Ukrainian-language school? If yes, from which grade?
2. What methods would you use to teach the Ukrainian language to pupils whose mother tongue is Ukrainian or whose mother tongue is Hungarian? How would they be different?
3. Which type of bilingualism do you think is the most beneficial if we want to live abroad? Why? (Hungarian–English, Hungarian–Ukrainian, Ukrainian–English)
4. Which type of bilingualism do you think is the most beneficial if we want to live in Transcarpathia? Why? (Hungarian–English, Hungarian–Ukrainian, Ukrainian–English)
5. Is it possible to live in Transcarpathia if someone only speaks Hungarian, Ukrainian or English?
6. Which language would Hungarian secondary school pupils prefer to learn: Ukrainian or English? Why?
7. What is more important: knowing the state language or a world language?
8. In your opinion, if someone grows up in a bilingual environment (ethnically mixed family or school with a different language of instruction), can this lead to language loss or cause

- problems in the correct use of the person's native language? Have you experienced this before?
9. Will the two languages have an effect on each other? Can you give some examples?
 10. How would you react if one of your pupils used code-switching or borrowings of Slavic origin in their speech/writing in class? And during the break?
 11. Do you usually switch between languages or use Slavic loanwords?
 12. To what extent do you try to stick to the standard Hungarian language variety? How acceptable is the use of dialects by pupils and teachers at school?
 13. What are the advantages of living in a multilingual region? Do you think it is more advantageous or disadvantageous?
 14. In your opinion, who can be considered bilingual? At what level does one need to know a language in order to be considered bilingual?
 15. In your opinion, how acceptable are the laws requiring the mandatory use of the state language? Can restrictions like this motivate Transcarpathian Hungarians to learn Ukrainian?
 16. If you could change one thing about the education of the Ukrainian state language in Transcarpathian schools, what would it be?
 17. Do you know the concept of language teaching in an additive approach? How effective do you think this method is?
 18. To what extent did your college education prepare you for the application of additive mother tongue teaching?

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