

The social impact of sociolinguistic research

**22nd Hungarian Sociolinguistics Conference, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University
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The intensity and depth of the knowledge created so far in the decades of Hungarian sociolinguistic research, as well as of the reflection on this knowledge require us to look beyond the professional sphere to see the impact of our work. From its very beginnings, sociolinguists have sought to achieve social impact through the critique of the processes of linguistic differentiation associated with marginalised groups (see, e.g., Hymes 1980; 1996; Labov 1969/1972; Labov 1982; Wolfram 1993). Although there are many different practices of linguistics “for the public”, “useful” or “socially engaged linguistics” (Kontra 1999; Kontra 2010; Kontra 2018) among Hungarian linguists, there has been no comprehensive attempt to interpret and evaluate them. More pointedly, Lawson and Sayers (2016: 8), in their introduction to the volume on the application and impact of sociolinguistic research, describe “the general quietude about the history of impact in sociolinguistics” and call for a (re)interpretation of the concept of social impact already developed in other fields.

We do not approach the concept of social impact in an exclusive way: the conference aims to provide a comprehensive overview not only of the approaches that focus on the impact Hungarian sociolinguistics has on society, but also of those approaches that aim to (re)shape the academic community, and whose social implications outside the academic sphere have so far been little discussed. At the same time, areas, issues and perspectives in the humanities and social sciences that are centred around the contribution to social change are considered to be of great significance; these include: participation (Heltai 2021; Bodó et al. 2022), involvement and engagement (Bartha & Holecz 2017), socially just research (Bucholtz et al. 2016), Citizen Sociolinguistics (Svendsen 2018; Rymes 2020), and the concept of empowerment (Cameron et al. 1993; Lajos et al. 2021; Kraft & Flubacher 2020).

Important aspects of the social impact of sociolinguistic research may include:

- Whose responsibility is it to consider the social impact of research? How can these impacts be taken into account as widely as possible throughout the research process?
- What are the ethical implications of a sociolinguistics that intends to have a social impact? What are the unintended – short and long-term, negative and positive – effects of research? Which groups might be affected?
- How can the positive impact of research be maintained? How is sustainability (see Borbély 2016 on bilingualism) linked to the social embeddedness of research?
- How can the whole process of research be made participatory, while becoming involved and engaged as a researcher? Is it possible and necessary to act responsibly during the research in the interest of the intervention and of the stakeholders? How does activism relate to all of this (on the relationship between activism and sociolinguistics, see Charity-Hudley 2018)?
- How can the approaches of language policy (see, e.g., Csernicskó et al. 2021) be integrated with research practices aimed at achieving social change?

We welcome initiatives which, in an attempt to transform the traditional structure of conferences, emphasise the sharing and discussion of the experiences of non-linguists with linguists. We invite presentations and workshops, as well as any experimental events (e.g., exhibitions, participatory theatre, world cafés) which are in some way related to the issue of social impact, as defined as the central theme of the conference.

On behalf of the Organising Committee,

dr. Csanád Bodó

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