

Péter Hamvay's (Magyar Narancs) written interview with Attila Paládi-Kovács, Chair of the Section of Linguistics and Literary Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) (The full text of the interview, only a short part of which appeared in Magyar Narancs, and which we publish with the consent of Attila Paládi-Kovács. Date: 8<sup>th</sup> March 2014)

Péter Hamvay's questions:

- What gap is the institute intended to fill? What have the Academy of Sciences or university departments been unable to carry out in the list of duties assigned to the institute?
- What kind of language strategy is needed?
- Will it have a beneficial effect if the institute provides expert opinions for public administration and the media, and if it elaborates the linguistic
- In your opinion, how can the institute “maintain the richness of language”, and what can it do “to protect linguistic minorities”?
- Is it necessary to formulate and coordinate the principles of supporting Hungarian-language databases in the area of information technology?
- What do you think of the “tasks to counter the devalorisation of the Hungarian language”?

Attila Paládi-Kovács' answers:

I can answer some of your questions briefly:

a/ The Section of Linguistics and Literary Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences had not been contacted or informed about the planned institute until 6<sup>th</sup> March. This does not mean that the Secretariat of the Presidium of HAS cannot have been informed either.

b/ The Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences does an excellent job at its tasks, it has well-prepared, internationally renowned researchers of the area of language strategy and language policy as well (e.g. Csilla Bartha and her colleagues). This was evident at the Academy's conferences held in relation to the Slovakian language law in

2010-2011. Experts from several Hungarian universities held lectures at that conference. They are the ones who could tell what kind of personal and material developments would be necessary at their work-places.

c/ There is no short answer to the question of what kind of language strategy is needed. However, the researcher background for this can be found at the Academy. Its public bodies (sections, committees) constantly deal with the tasks of taking care of the Hungarian language of scientific disciplines and developing Hungarian terminology. Editorial boards of scientific journals and scholarly publications also work within the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

d/ The already existing institutes of the Academy, institutes and research groups at universities could also very well perform the Hungarian linguistic supervision of the language textbook programme, with the involvement of secondary and primary school teachers and the Society of Hungarian Linguistics (Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság).

e/ The protection of language minorities is already part of the programme of the Research Institute for Linguistics, and other departments of Hungarian language at universities in Hungary and abroad, in book publications, in the press, in electronic media, and even on the internet.

f/ In the area of information technology, the Research Institute for Linguistics has important results, their experts cooperate with computer scientists of the Section of Mathematics and the Section of Engineering, experts of acoustics, etc., at universities (e.g., Gábor Prószéky, Tamás Váradi). The status of Hungarian on the internet is also adequate, they are 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> among the languages of the world. However, András Kornai rightly suggests that keeping this position and quickly expanding digital contents needs special attention and significant government funding.

g/ The expression “devalorisation of the Hungarian language” is rather vague. Ever since its foundation, the Academy of Sciences has considered it its task to make our language suitable for carrying out scientific work, conveying scientific knowledge from elementary schools to universities and to the training of scientists. I think that writers, poets, theatres, and the media in a broad sense all consider it their job to cultivate and enrich the literary language, standard Hungarian, and well-articulated spoken language, as well as to support the creation

and dissemination of literary works.. In these areas, I believe that increase in the role of government funding is desirable, considering the fact that our language is only a national language of a single country, and this country has social strata that cannot join in the consumption of “high culture” for lack of financial resources.