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From grassroots literacy to transliteracies in the educational context of the Moldavian Csángó

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates literacies in the Moldavian region of Romania, where bilingual speakers produce writings in a contested language they call the ‘Csángó mode of speaking’. The speakers sometimes define their language as collateral both with Standard Hungarian and Romanian. Our research question is the following: How are locally constructed collateral literacy practices transformed or neglected in standardising educational contexts? The theoretical question we raise in this article is whether Blommaert’s concept of grassroots literacy or the newer transliteracies framework is better suited to describe the process of a collateral language becoming literate. The collateral language, the Csángó mode of speaking, is no longer passed onto children by the parents, who still might use it among themselves, thus the children still might acquire a passive knowledge of it. Since 2001, a relatively popular educational programme teaching Standard Hungarian literacy has evolved. As our data, we use texts produced by c. 100 participants of the Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme from eight villages. Our contribution is to investigate how transliteracies can constitute a resource not only for local ways of speaking, but also for the development of general literacy skills instead of skills bound to a single language.

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Introduction

This article investigates the local literacy practices within the unique setting of the Moldavian Csángó Hungarian educational project in Romania. This context is characterised by multilingual students who compose texts in a collateral language, referred to by the speakers as ‘the Csángó mode of speaking’ (Bodó, Fazakas, and Heltai 2017). The Csángó are a multilingual Catholic minority group living among a monolingual, Eastern Orthodox majority population in the rural part of the Moldavian province of Romania. Their language is contested (see Tamburelli and Tosco 2021): it has (i) no established literacy tradition; (ii) no (widely accepted) standardised register; (iii) it does not serve as language of instruction at school, and it is (iv) usually not treated as a language by its speakers (see Laihonon et al. 2020 for details). The Csángó mode of speaking thus is seen by the speakers as collateral both with Romanian, the language of education and reading literacy in the Northeastern region of Romania (Moldavia), and with standard Hungarian, which is the ‘high variety’ of the Csángó mode of speaking. Standard Hungarian is taught in Hungarian-medium schools

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in Western Romania (Transylvania). This situation is somewhat similar to the Manx Gaelic situation, which Ó Murchadha and Ó hÍfearnáin (2018) find as collateral with Gaeltacht variation of Irish and English. A most relevant exception is that Hungary serves as the normative centre, which makes the Csángó way of speaking more reminiscent to Meänkieli in Sweden (Lainio and Wande 2015), to mention a parallel case with similar pertinent problems.

Even though critical sociolinguistic theory distances itself from named, ‘pure’, standardised languages with clearly defined boundaries (see e.g. Pennycook and Makoni 2020), in education, named languages and their standard and normative registers remain hard currency in most cultures and regions (e.g. Spolsky 2021, 200). However, locally emerging literacies serve as potential resources in education as well. Among others Abdelhay, Asfaha, and Juffermans (2014, 21) posit that a focus of contemporary research is to investigate ‘how the in-and-out of school literacies can be bridged and how the mainstream education system can draw on the insights provided by various community literacy practices’. Addressing this call is among the goals of our paper.

The literacy of collateral languages can be viewed from two approaches: grassroots literacies and transliteracies. Grassroots literacy, as introduced by Blommaert (2007), lays the foundation of understanding local, non-formal ways of writing and reading in contexts and marginalised language varieties such as the Csángó mode of speaking. Transliteracies, a more recent term, in turn points at the interaction and connections of such literacies with the broader communicative and information landscape (Stornaiuolo, Smith, and Phillips 2017). Grassroots literacy consists of “non-elite” forms of writing, or writing performed by people who are not fully inserted into elite economies of information, language and literacy’ (Blommaert 2007, 7). The grassroots framework emphasises the constrained mobility of the texts, in contrast to the transliteracies framework, which is defined as investigating ‘critical and creative social semiotic practices arising within complex ideological networks and characterised by the movement of people and things’ (Stornaiuolo, Smith, and Phillips 2017, 72). That is, transliteracies scholarship views mobility and immobility in the lives of people and technologies as mutually dependent and inseparable qualities. Inspired by the transliteracies framework, our research question is how are locally constructed collateral literacy practices transformed or neglected in standardising educational contexts? The theoretical question we raise in this article is whether constrained mobility is necessarily inherent to grassroots literacy texts, or whether grassroots literacy practices can become transliteracies?

Theoretical framework: from grassroots literacy to transliteracies

Blommaert (2007) mentions five features that distinguish grassroots literacy from other types of literacy:

1. Heterography (including visualisations)
2. A ‘way of speaking’ used in writing
3. Distant genres
4. Partial inclusion into knowledge economies
5. Constrained mobility of the texts

The four first features serve as our main analytical tool. The fifth characteristic has been revisited by Canagarajah and Matsumoto (2017, 391), who recognise Blommaert’s (2007) contribution to reconceptualizing literacy not necessarily as something carrying uniform and context-independent meaning, and thus universal global value. In Blommaert’s (2007, 7) words, ‘texts are often only locally meaningful and valuable. As soon as they move to other geographical and/or social spaces, they lose “voice”’. It is the social inequalities and lack of institutional support resulting in spatial constraints of (self-)representation that mostly distinguishes grassroots literacy from other approaches. However, as Canagarajah and Matsumoto (2017) point out, taking the constrained nature of the mobility of grassroots texts as granted, produces an unnecessary barrier for grassroots

literacy to have value for elite readers and for normative, elite literacies to have significance for locally emerging literacies.

Comparing Blommaert's (2007) ideas about grassroots literacy with other approaches to literacy, there are parallels with the concepts of multiliteracies (e.g. The New London Group 1996) and transliteracies (e.g. Smith, Stornaiuolo, and Phillips 2018); each approach sees literacy as a social practice (see e.g. Street 1995). Differences can also be observed, however. While the focus of multiliteracies is on education, the transliteracies framework focuses on the very mobility of literacy. Focusing on the mobility of literacies, we investigate whether there is a mobility of texts written in a collateral language that contributes to literacy in more prestigious and hegemonic languages. That is, our question is whether there is a place for collateral literacy practices in speakers' institutionally supported literacy development. For transliteracies scholars, the question of how constraints and restrictions on (im)mobility evolve and change is a crucial issue (Low and Rapp 2021; Smith, Stornaiuolo, and Phillips 2018). Their studies investigate (im)mobility as mutually dependent and inseparable qualities. Contrary to Blommaert's (2007) principle of restricted mobility of grassroots texts and their meaning, the prefix *trans-* in the name suggests that, as in *translanguaging* (García and Kleifgen 2020), there are no fixed boundaries between the mobile and non-mobile nature of languages, technologies and discourses. Stornaiuolo et al. (2017, 73) put it this way: 'A *trans-* lens, by leaving unspecified the direction, outcome, or nature of mobile literacy practices, holds in productive tension the ways mobilities, rooted in practices of power, simultaneously create and constrain opportunities'. In this manner, writing happens across contexts, activities, practices, identities, semiotic modalities, and temporalities (Prior and Smith 2020). Once again, this fluidity of literacies does not mean that writing travels freely, but rather that it is an ongoing becoming across place, time and settings, embedded in, and restricted or supported through, social structures.

According to Blommaert (2007, 12) 'a description of grassroots literacy these days must therefore necessarily have two sides: one, a description of the local economies in which they are produced, and two, analyses of what happens to them when they become translocal documents'. In this manner, we will next describe the research site especially from the point of view of (a lack of) literacy traditions. We do not assume that restricted mobility of local literacy practices is a precondition, but that the potential for mobility needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis. Finally, we conclude the article by offering a reorientation towards the perspective of transliteracies in the assumptions about the effects and mobility of grassroots literacy among the Moldavian Csángó.

Research site

Csángós are an ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous group of Roman Catholics in North-Eastern Romania, in the province of Moldavia. This originally Hungarian-speaking population migrated from the eastern part of the Hungarian Kingdom, Transylvania to the east of the Carpathian Mountains in several waves, beginning in the 13–14 centuries. The Csángó vernacular is a highly contested 'mode of speaking', usually described as archaic Hungarian with a lot of borrowing from Romanian (see Bodó, Fazakas, and Heltai 2017). The Hungarian linguistic tradition depicts Csángó as the most archaic and isolated variety of Hungarian, for example in Kiss' (2012, 115 terms): 'the Hungarian dialects of the Csángós – secluded from the other Hungarian dialects – preserved a very archaic linguistic situation and ethnic culture'. Due to the absence of stable and well-established Hungarian-medium institutions, intellectual frameworks, or educational systems in modern history within Moldavia, the Csángó vernacular, with c. 50,000 speakers, has almost no documented written culture or (elite) literacy tradition (see Sándor 2000). Csángó speakers have been affected by other factors in relation to Hungarian literacy than Hungarians living on the territory of the former Hungarian Kingdom – most significantly for our purposes the population living in Transylvania, contemporary Romania and those in present-day Hungary. Most importantly, the linguistic effects of modernity did not reach Moldavia in the same way as the territories of the

Hungarian Kingdom in the 18th and 19th centuries. This difference was most significant in that Moldavian Csángós did not take part in the Hungarian language reform and the formation of the modern Hungarian standard (see Sándor 2000).

The rural Csángó communities have had few local or Transylvanian-origin Hungarian-speaking priests since the Moldavian Catholic Church was separated from the church administration of the Hungarian Kingdom and Transylvania in the sixteenth century (see Sándor 2005). After the establishment of Romanian rule and liturgy for the Catholic Church in Moldavia in the nineteenth century, liturgical texts in Hungarian have almost altogether disappeared from Moldavia. However, the Hungarian language was used in religious contexts by local folk deacons, who produced local literacy, some of which has been preserved by the deacon families until today (see Tánzos 2000). Among the few educated Csángós, there have been also some who have brought books and other texts in standard Hungarian from Transylvania.

Since 1990, Hungarian activists have attempted to produce (standard and local) Hungarian texts on topics locally relevant in Moldavia, such as folklore and religious songs. Within the activist community, there has been an increasing need for proficiency in writing and reading Hungarian. This is attributed to the now frequent interactions with Hungarians and Hungarian institutions in Hungary and Transylvania. These entities also represent the primary source of funding for Hungarian language teaching and cultural activities in Moldavia. Most significantly for literacy practices, we have noticed that social media has brought along a general need for producing and reading multimodal texts among Csángó speakers. On social media, most often Romanian is used by the local community in general, whereas activists use both Romanian and (Csángó)-Hungarian.

The ethno- and glottonym Csángó labels in modern Hungarian scholarship a linkage to an ethnic category and a basic dialectal variety of Hungarian, considered archaic and influenced by local varieties of the Romanian language (Kiss 2012). Until the early 1990s, people attached to these communities referred to their language more often as Hungarian (Gábor 2005, 11) and more often rejected the term Csángó (Pávai 2005, 78), which had been used as an exonym since the eighteenth century (Pozsony 2005, 9). After the fall of communism, members of the previously isolated rural communities have increasingly come into contact with other Hungarian speakers. Rejection of the term Csángó began to fade, and the locals increasingly contrasted their own linguistic practices with those of the present-day Hungary or Transylvanian Hungarian-speaking communities. Moldavian speakers of Hungarian thus now call their own variety ‘the Csángó mode of speaking’ as opposed to standard, or ‘clean’ Hungarian (Bodó, Fazakas, and Heltai 2017). Finally, the labels Hungarian and Csángó are used in Moldavia according to the situation and interlocutors and the isolation of the Csángó mode of speaking is not clear-cut, either (see Heltai 2012).

There have been international initiatives to recognise Csángó as an independent language. Among others, the ‘archaic’ Csángó language and culture have been defined to be of special value by the Council of Europe (see REC 2001). However, Csángó is still most often not recognised as a language by general reference sources such as the Ethnologue (<https://www.ethnologue.com/>, search on March 21, 2024). Further, a proposal to standardise Csángó has also been published by a Hungarian linguist (Sándor 2000). However, there has not been any academic support to the proposal and this attempt has gradually died out.

Few non-standard local scripts aiming to reach a wider readership than Moldavia have appeared as a kind of archaic cultural heritage or as a dialectological curiosity in the imagined (Anderson 1991) Hungarian community. In the twentieth century, few naïve poets published poems, which have been occasionally included in anthologies in Transylvania and Hungary. Despite being a significant figure, the works of Demeter Lakatos, a mid-twentieth century Csángó poet, remain largely unrecognised by Hungarian readers. His texts have been published in Hungary on two occasions: firstly in 1986 as part of a linguistic series (Hajdú 1986), and later in 2003 in a volume released by a cultural association (Libisch 2003). In the earlier publication (Hajdú 1986), the author’s heterographic approach is evident, employing the Hungarian alphabet in an intuitive manner. This style showcases the influence of Romanian literacy on his writing. The latter publication (Libisch

2003) contains more edited texts, where the transparent influence of Romanian has been erased. In addition, the poems are accompanied by a glossary of linguistic resources that were considered unavailable in Hungary.

In the local community, there are no Csángó activists advocating for the recognition of Csángó as an autonomous language. Additionally, efforts to standardise the Csángó language at a local level have not been documented. However, there have been persistent local activists, requesting Hungarian-medium education or the teaching of Hungarian in Moldavian schools from 1990 onwards. A burning issue among the local and majority Hungarian language activists has been that Hungarian/Csángó is no longer passed on to children by the parents in Moldavia, who still might use the Csángó mode of speaking among adults, thus the children still might acquire a passive knowledge of the vernacular that they might start to use once they enter adulthood.

In 2001, the Moldavian Csángós were officially recognised by the Council of Europe (see REC 2001). In the same year teaching of Hungarian was launched in Moldavia as a part of the optional subject 'Hungarian mother tongue communication for pupils belonging to the Hungarian national minority in Romanian medium schools' included in the Romanian national curriculum, which is oriented towards teaching standard Hungarian reading literacy (see Brown and Laihonen 2023). The Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme with the goal of teaching Hungarian among the Csángó operated in 2020 in c. 30 villages with c. 2000 children (Laihonen et al. 2020). The availability and support of Hungarian teachers in public Moldavian village schools has been managed through a civic association, which has also organised after-school teaching, cultural activities and community events in Hungarian in Moldavia (see Laihonen et al. 2020 for details). The Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme does not promote the concept of Csángó standardisation, either (e.g. Tánczos 2012). The Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme in Romania relies on funding from the Hungarian state, support from Transylvanian activists and teachers, as well as contributions from civil donors. These stakeholders predominantly adhere to mainstream Hungarian language ideologies, which view Csángó primarily as a dialect of Hungarian, not deemed appropriate for literacy development (Laihonen et al. 2020). The Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme is fraught with controversies as it is aimed to revitalise local Csángó modes of speaking in Moldavia, but it implements this by means of modernist schooling based on standard Hungarian used in Hungary and Transylvania (e.g. Tánczos 2012). The majority of qualified teachers in the Moldavian Csángó Educational Programme are Hungarians, trained in Hungarian-medium teacher education institutions in Transylvania and Hungary. Often, their first visit to Moldavia coincides with the commencement of their employment in the programme. Consequently, the use of the Csángó mode of speaking among Hungarian instructors in public schools tends to be mostly imitative and improvised. In contrast, Moldavian-born educators, primarily engaged in after-school activities, typically practice the Csángó mode of speaking much more spontaneously and naturally (Brown and Laihonen 2023). Reading and writing are mostly taught in standard Hungarian, except for some local lexical phenomena, which is sometimes cherished for artistic purposes (e.g. in folk songs and poetry) or encouraged by the teachers for creating an authentic impression when writing letters to the Hungarian sponsors (see Bodó and Fazakas 2018). Due to the emphasis on teaching reading literacy in standard Hungarian and the reliance on Hungary-based resources within the Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme, local literary efforts that offered alternatives to standard Hungarian orthography and literacy conventions have either been dismantled or have ceased entirely (Sándor 2005).

Data and methods

Our data originates from Laihonen's participatory research on the Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme. He carried out four 1-month fieldwork trips to Moldavian villages where teaching of Hungarian took place (see Figure 1) in 2017–2019. Carina Fazakas-Timaru, Laihonen's local co-researcher who actively bridged the gap between the participating students and the



Figure 1. Map with the c. 30 teaching sites (2020) in the Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme. Copyright Agreed with Lehel Peti and Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities.

academic community, conducted an independent 4-month fieldwork session in the region. The co-creation of new knowledge was participatory in the sense that the students were not involved as ‘informants’, but they were invited to create meaningful language-centred multimodal contents of their own life-words. The data for this article contain a wealth of visual methods activities, both digital and traditional, such as iPad movies produced and edited together with pupils (see Szabó and Laihonen 2024), and a variety of paper-and-pen visual tasks, where students draw and comment on their village, their relationship to Hungarian and their future plans using the Csángó mode of speaking, Hungarian and Romanian according to their choice. Such tasks were carried out by c. 150 students (aged between 11 and 16) in 13 villages, each student has contributed with c. 3 pages. The study is informed also through 27 teacher interviews (analysed in Brown and Laihonen 2023). The activities were predominantly carried out in the informal after-school sessions, which occasionally included practice of the Csángó mode of speaking, such as through folk singing. The majority of the participating students had been enrolled in the Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme for several years. The paper-based visual methods included use of emoticon stickers and other means to focus on multimodal spontaneous text production. The researchers and teachers deliberately refrained from correcting or evaluating the texts produced by the students. The students’ linguistic backgrounds varied, influenced by the degree of language shift in their villages. Typically, grandparents were native Hungarian speakers, while parents, except a few from outside the community, had the Csángó mode of speaking in their repertoire. However, they seldom used it with their children, who developed passive understanding of it. The tasks created by Laihonen and Fazakas-Timaru offered activities focusing not on formal Hungarian literacy (as mostly practised with teachers) or performative Csángó usage (see Bodó and Fazakas 2018 on letters to godparents), but on utilising all available Hungarian literacy resources towards creating multimodal outputs (see Laihonen et al. 2020 for details).

Following Blommaert (2007) and Stornaiuolo, Smith, and Phillips (2017) we analyse our data from the perspectives of their structure, production and trajectories. We will proceed by first delivering a brief linguistic inventory of the characteristics of grassroots literacy in our data. The structural inventory provides a comparative illustration of how Hungarian and Romanian normative orthographies impact how the Csángó mode of speaking is written. That is, we examine how students with at least receptive knowledge of the Csángó mode of speaking practice Hungarian grassroots literacy on the basis of learning to write and read in Romanian at school first and then participating in Hungarian formal language education. Second, we analyse two examples of how general literacy skills are practised through grassroots literacy in the data. The two texts were selected for their structural features: the texts are typically brief and paired with drawings, offering a balanced mix of textual and visual elements. For our multimodal analysis, we chose longer texts accompanying images and excluded those obviously corrected by teachers. Here we deliver a qualitative analysis of literacy activities and genres as indicators of literacy meaning making and skill development. Finally, we discuss what trajectories emerge from students' meaning-making textual practice, and where the emerging pathways can lead to, and what doors they open up or close down in their literacy development.

Analysis

Features of texts

For the structural analysis, we selected phenomena that were more prevalent in our data set, aligning our approach with established research literature (Bodó and Fazakas 2018; Sándor 2005). The texts written by the participating children and youth in the tasks described in Section 4 show the features summarised in the following table (Table 1). Table 1 compares the locally emerging forms to standard Hungarian orthographic and vocabulary conventions. The column next to the description of the feature shows examples from children's writing, followed by their Hungarian Standard and English translation.

The features and characteristics of locally emerging literacy can be concisely described as follows. There are two main sources of **phonetic differences**: first, the written language recording of spoken language phenomena differs from standard Hungarian orthographic norms, such as the shortening of -ll or the spirantization of gy into j in the structure of *kel tejen*. Second, features traditionally classified as dialectal, such as the occurrence of the vowel *ö* in our second example as the equivalent of the Standard *e* vowel. **Effects of the standardised spelling system of the school reading literacy** (Romanian) are mainly linked to the choice of letters. The language in which schools teach reading

Table 1. Locally emerging features of children's written texts.

	Children's texts	Hungarian standard	English
Marking of phonetic differences	<i>kel tejen</i> <i>megekötlek</i>	kell tegyen megekettek	has to be done I marry you
Direct effects of the standardised spelling system in the school language, Romanian	<i>mašt</i> <i>cigani</i> <i>tanulunc</i>	most cigány tanulunk	now 'gypsy' we learn
Indirect effects of Romanian orthography (lack of marking long phonemes)	<i>csilagok</i> <i>palinkaval</i>	csillagok pálinkával	stars with brandy
Translanguaging	<i>In acartam raizolni edi fot/egy tracturt/osto egy steagot franței/și egy steagot englezei</i>	(Én) akartam rajzolni egy fát/ egy traktort/aztán egy francia zászlót/és egy angol zászlót	I wanted to draw a tree/a tractor/then a French flag/and an English flag
Idiosyncrasies	<i>töktököt</i>	titeket	you (plural, objective case)
Frequent variability	<i>kerestapa – keresztapa</i> <i>eneklés – éneklés</i>	keresztapa éneklés	godfather singing

literacy is Romanian in all schools in Moldavia. Therefore, it is no wonder that the Romanian writing system has a significant impact on the texts in our data: our examples show how children write a sound of the Csángó way of speaking with a letter used in Romanian to indicate a sound that is closest to it. For example, in Romanian orthography, *ș* stands for the voiceless postalveolar fricative /ʃ/ and *c* stands for the voiceless velar stop /k/. Their equivalents in Hungarian orthography are *s* and *k*. **Effects of Romanian orthography** are shown in the lack of marking of long phonemes, as in the examples *csilagok* and *palinkaval*, where the children do not use the Hungarian systematic distinction between short and long consonants (*l* vs. *ll*) and vowels (*a* vs. *á*). The latter example also shows that the spelling of the texts varies: the student follows the Romanian spelling system for marking vowels, but the Hungarian spelling system for marking the /k/ sound. Another feature is the occurrence of **translanguaging** (see e.g. Heltai and Tarsoly 2023) in writing. The table's example illustrates that the author blurs the lines between named languages, utilising linguistic elements traditionally associated with both Hungarian and Romanian within the same text, contrary to normative linguistic boundaries.

In the following student's text translated into English as 'I wanted to draw a tree/a tractor/then a French flag/and an English flag' (the slashes indicate a line break), we have highlighted the elements that are conventionally related to Romanian: *In acartam raizolni edi fot/egy tracturt/osto egy steagot franței/și egy steagot englezei*. In the Hungarian language class, the child names the 'flag' with the word *steag* that is mostly associated with Romanian. Following the Romanian word order, she puts the adjective after the noun, and since she probably has not been exposed to the names of different countries in Hungarian, the adjective 'French' and 'English' are in Romanian. She uses the Hungarian accusative case *-ot* suffixed to the noun, but not to the Romanian-language adjectives. Not surprisingly, **idiosyncrasies** also occur during writing practice in Hungarian. The example given in the table is an attempt to describe a word that in local speech might sound like this: 'tiktököt' or 'tik-teket'. Finally, **frequent variability** is observed in the texts. This can include all the phenomena mentioned so far, such as *s* vs. *sz* or long and short vowels.

The features presented in the linguistic description draw attention to the fact that students make use of all of their available semiotic resources in a creative way when attempting to put the Csángó mode of speaking into a written form. This indicates the formation of a novel literacy variant of a predominantly oral language, frequently contrasting with the standard Romanian orthography taught in schools. Considering the standards of Hungarian orthography, these texts might be perceived as imperfect or distorted forms of literacy, characterised by numerous errors, misspellings, and Romanian interference. Consequently, they could be seen as requiring constant correction and oversight from teachers.

In order to examine the above non-supervised grassroots Hungarian literacy practices, which were the product of a cooperation between the Programme and Laihonen's research project, we can compare the above texts here with those produced through the *Godparent* initiative, previously studied by Bodó and Fazakas (2018). The Godparent initiative of the Moldavian Csángó Hungarian Educational Programme includes a language teaching practice, according to which teachers edit and correct texts following the norms of standard Hungarian orthography and erase expressions deemed as Romanian (Bodó and Fazakas 2018). This practice is closely linked to the trajectories of the texts' travel: in one case such edited texts are sent as letters to the 'godparent' sponsors of the Moldavian Csángó Educational Programme. Godparents are Hungarian monolingual patrons, most often living in Hungary, who send gifts to a Moldavian Csángó 'godchild' and some host their godchild during stays in Hungary. Becoming a godchild in this charity scheme is established through correspondence with the godparents in Hungarian. Teachers organise and supervise the writing of letters by godchildren and correct them striving to produce the Hungarian standard while preserving some of the non-Romanian features of the Csángó way of speaking for the sake of simultaneously performing authenticity, thus making such performative and commodified communication successful (Bodó and Fazakas 2023). In contrast to this practice of institutional correction, the texts analysed above were not subject to such normatively imposed practices and

restrictions. This non-normative literacy practice may also motivate the development of narrative genres, as indicated in the next section.

Narratives

Two narratives are analysed next: both were produced by around 12-year old boys, the first one was produced to the task ‘tell a significant event from your life’, the other was to the task ‘what do you want to be when you grow up’. The first text is multimodal, since it contains a drawing (see Figure 2).

This is the linguistic text in original and in English translation:

Én a barátaimval mikor kicsikék voltunk mentünk haza éskalabál és mikor tél volt otok hó golyóval a kertekben és volt egy ablak maik nem ultr senki a hazba és a barátaim oták o kartecko in im az ablakba és eccer erusen attam és bé tört az ablak én anytt fottam meddig el fáratlan.

I and my friends, when we were little, we walked home from school, and when it was winter, they threw snowballs at fences, and there was a window of a house that nobody lived in, and my friends threw snowballs at the fences, I threw snowballs at the window, and one time I threw them hard and the window broke. I ran until I was exhausted.

Briefly analysing the image in Figure 2, we can see how it illustrates the part of the story how the children throw snowballs at fences. It also indicates that the narrator broke a window accidentally, because the window was behind the fence and the ball flew through the fence. In this manner, the image is used as a resource for re-telling the story (cf. Blommaert 2007, 14).

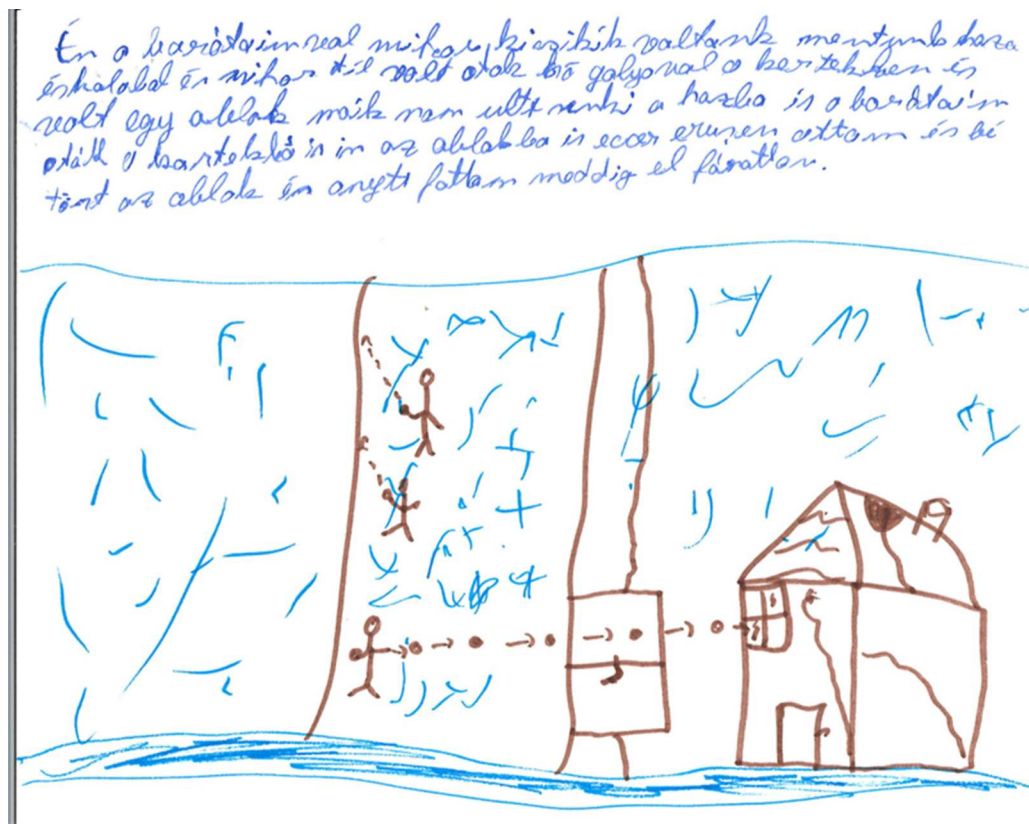


Figure 2. A multimodal narrative © Laihonen.

The second text shows how a boy attending Hungarian lessons develops a narrative about his own future as part of new literacy practices. His own editing solutions (cf. strikethrough text segments) are reproduced in the text.

Én mikor nagy leszek kamionos akarok leszni és forma 1 pilot. ~~Én a magyar és fődbaliszt.~~ Én a magyar nyelvet főgom használni legtöbbedt itond és lehetne hogy vissza és itten a XX-ba mert vissza fogok jönny hogy lássam meg mit csinálnak az emberek mejket itt haitam mikor el mentem dolgozni.

English translation: When I grow up, I want to be a truck driver and a Formula 1 driver. ~~I want (?) the Hungarian~~ and a football player. I'm going to use Hungarian mostly at home ~~and might be that [...]~~ back and here in [place name], because I'm going to come back to see what those people do that I left here when I went to work elsewhere.

The same features as listed in the [Table 1](#) above can be observed in both short narratives: marked phonetic differences to Hungarian standard (*éskalabal* vs. *iskolából*, *mikór* vs. *mikor*, *fődbaliszt* vs. *futbalista*), effects of the standardised spelling system in Romanian (*akarak* vs. *akarak*, *haitam* vs. *hagytam*), effects of Romanian orthography as the lack of marking the long vs. short opposition of consonants (*itond* vs. *itthon*, *legtöbbedt* vs. *legtöbbedt*), idiosyncrasy (*anytt* vs. *annyt*, *jönny* vs. *jönni*) and text-internal variability (*mikór* and *mikor* vs. Hungarian standard *mikor*). In contrast to the text fragments analysed in the previous section, both narratives are oriented towards the standard Hungarian language through the attempt not to use resources associated with Romanian. This is not always the case, but in the first narrative these elements do not occur at all, while in the second they are scarce (vocabulary associated with Romanian include *pilot* and *fődbaliszt*).

The textual organisation of the two examples shows that their authors are capable of creating a structured narrative in Hungarian and, as analysed in the first case, using multimodal means as well. This literacy genre is manifested both in the first text which is a coherent and temporally linear story about a childhood memory, and in the second text which is subject to editing, e.g. the beginning of the second sentence is interrupted by the completion of the first. Interpreting texts through the concept of 'writing across' (Prior and Smith 2020) points to the processes by which translanguaging becomes transliteracies in the context of Hungarian language education. This means that writing serves as a synecdochal (part-for-whole) representation of the comprehensive semiotic activity inherent in any writing act. As a result, communication that transcends distinct entities like languages and dialects is authoritative for all involved, including students who engage in writing, as well as teachers and researchers who facilitate these processes. This dynamic is underpinned by the translanguaging practices of the students and the translanguaging stance adopted by teachers and researchers in our participatory project. The mobility of these texts becomes socially significant by meeting local expectations related to the teaching of Hungarian, but it also represents a shift away from a restricted mobility grassroots literacy in which written narratives can be created in relation to either one named language or another. The development of literacy in these texts is not a sign of success in learning Hungarian, but rather that writing is on the move; and the texts produced by the students reflect the possibility of developing new writing practices.

Conclusions

In our analysis, we have pointed out that Blommaert's concept of grassroots literacy has drawn attention to the written practices of non-standardised languages whose mobility is contentious. In the case of collateral languages, this issue is even more acute, since, compared to non-written, transparently more established and widely recognised 'oral' languages, there is a clear and prestigious model of creating a written standard that many take for granted. In this paper, we have shown that despite the Hungarian standard serving as a model for the collateral Moldavian Csángó, written practices that do not comply with this model are constantly (re-)emerging. Simultaneously, these writing practices do not develop into a standardised form of literacy, as observed in Ausbau

languages, owing to the absence of activists and resources necessary for establishing an autonomous Csángó language.

The above could be seen as support for Blommaert's (2007) argument that meanings that are locally associated with grassroots literacy do not travel well. However, a transliteracies perspective avoids emphasising a connection between emerging writing practices and immobility. Rather, it aims to recognise the potentiality of these practices to carry further across languages, modalities, spaces and times. We have seen that children's writing is not linked to any standard literacies, but we should also see that students are able to move away from locally 'restricted' forms of literacy in their autobiographical narratives and develop practices that reach towards a variety of Hungarian literacies in the supportive environment of a participatory project. The students' transliteracies were leveraged within the participatory space, which emphasised multimodal and digital methodologies over correctness. This approach centred on the translanguaging semiotic potential and the reflective narrative capacities inherent in the project.

During the participatory project, the children also gained recognition of Csángó culture in their families. Further, the project connected different generations of Csángós, as well as built a bridge between education and home. When Laihonen later visited the villages, the children told him how they have proudly shown their products to parents and other family members. In that context, it was important to use a language understandable also in the local context with practically very little exposure to standard Hungarian literacy. In this manner, our project contains an example for how to find the best way to facilitate literacy practices which respect local ways of speaking and support general linguistic competences (see also Heltai and Tarsoly 2023).

We argue that building on the whole language repertoire of the students can contribute to the acceptance of written performance of such genres as the narrative in the Csángó way of speaking. In traditional educational settings, where Hungarian is seen as an 'artifact tied to literacy and nationhood' (Pennycook and Makoni 2020, 79), students do not get that far, because they make too many 'mistakes', 'mix' registers and 'violate' language standards and 'borders' of named languages (e.g. in orthography). Our analysis has shown that the locally emerging literacy of a collateral language does not remain grassroots as defined by Blommaert (2007). That is, they are not restricted in terms of mobility, but have the potential to become transliteracies. This is due to the absence of normative constraints or controls over the use of their diverse multimodal resources. This freedom, combined with the excitement of creativity and the pride derived from sharing their own world with distant audiences, enhances their transliteracy potential. In this way they can contribute to the development of the individual's general literacy practices, while supporting speakers of the collateral language to communicate across the boundaries of languages and literacy practices. How can promoting multilingual students' local literacy practices in a collateral language contribute to the development of (general) literacy skills in named elite languages then?

In brief, local literacy practices contribute in general to the written performance of such genres as the narrative in the collateral language. In this manner, we propose a focus on functional meaning making and creativity of expression, not on normativity. It was also important that narratives were practised in the scope of a participatory, multimodal methods project which was meaningful for the participants' life, and socioculturally relevant for the students.

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