

# THE EFFECT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING ON SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SÁROSPATAK

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*One can only acquire knowledge of the most modern scientific achievements with the help of foreign languages. The teaching of foreign languages has always been greatly affected by the geopolitical circumstances as well as by the economic and political goals of the country in question. In 1931 a change of special line took place in the Reformed College of Sárospatak which led to the giving up of the teaching of Greek in some groups of students and also caused less students to learn Latin while more and more students started learning English. This process had two purposes. One of them was to make the school more attractive for the students as the borders of Hungary changed due to the Trianon Peace Treaty and consequently the schooling-district became much smaller. On the other hand, Hungary wanted to strengthen the cultural relationship with England to review the policy of the Trianon Peace Treaty as the English aristocracy seemed to be willing to support Hungary's aims in the 1920's. The introduction of the teaching of English changed the composite of the school's students. The number and proportion of students coming from far off counties and from Budapest increased. The members of the economic and intellectual élite sent their children in greater proportions to English-learning classes than people with other social backgrounds. The introduction of the teaching of English increased the number and proportion of non-Reformed students which made it possible to strengthen the effects of the Reformed spiritual education. The education of students with different social and religious backgrounds in the same school improved the students' sense of tolerance and toleration.*

Before 1931 Sárospatak organised its education in a humanistic grammar school. As the importance of the Reformed educational centre decreased as the academic lawyer training was suspended both the Reformed College and the main dignitaries of the Reformed Church aimed for restoring the old role of the school complex. The Reformed College that had a faculty of divinity and a grammar school of eight years in 1931 had lost its academy of law in 1923.

In order to attract more students to the school, teaching English as a foreign language was introduced in the then starting first and fifth

classes. The heads of the institution carried out the change with the help of Klebelsberg Kunó, Minister of Education. The teaching of English was an important part of the conception of the Bethlen Government that did its best to review the Treaty of Trianon. As a part of the English aristocracy was willing to support this revision of policy in the 1920's, the Government tried to strengthen its relationship with England. Developing the teaching of English gave hopes to reaching the Government's aims.

The teaching of foreign languages has always been considered important in the Reformed College of Sárospatak. This was due to the recognition that the teachers of the school could only obtain the most modern scientific and humanistic knowledge by the use of foreign languages. Peregrination, the students' studies at Western-European universities also helped to improve students' knowledge of foreign languages.

The change of special line was also motivated. by the international and national change of educational policy according to which the teaching of Greek was given up and the teaching of Latin was restricted. The changes in economic and social life demanded the expansion of the teaching of modern languages.

In Sárospatak 1931 meant the end of a critical period and the beginning of the development of the school. The main topic of this study is the effect of the school's change of special line on the recruitment of students.

Year-books of the given era were used to the research. The composition of student recruitment was analysed on the basis of permanent address, the job of the breadwinner, denominational status and school achievement. The data were coded and the correlations were explored using the SPSS programme. Three tables were made using secondary sources, the data found in the year-books of the institution.

The researches of the data of the students in the 1930's and in the 1940's were carried out separately as the distorting effects of the preparatory processes of World War II did not come across in the 1930's. The first two parts of the analysis are based on cross-sectional examinations as the data of all first and fifth graders were used which made it possible to examine fluctuation on the one hand and on the other hand the data properly show student recruitment. In the third part of the study three school-years' data at our disposal were compared.

English was taught in Sárospatak in two different ways between the two world wars. There were some students, aged 10, who started learning English as well as Latin and German as first graders in the eight grade grammar school. They were taught some subjects in English (e.g. world-history) in the upper forms of the school.

It happened many times between the two world wars that students finished their studies after the first four years or they continued their studies in another type of school. To retrieve the decrease in the number of students caused by the dropping out of students some fifth grades were started in Sárospatak. Even those students were accepted to these classes who started learning English as fifth graders. This type of training meant lighter financial burden to parents than the education from the first grade in Patak and at the same time it also made it possible for the school to recruit talented students.

## The 1930's

The presentation of the researches is started by the analysis of the data from the 1930's. To analyse this era we have the data of 904 students.

*Table 1 The first and fifth grader English learning students of the Reformed College of Sároszatak between 1931 and 1942 according to permanent address(%) (A- Sároszatak [N=169], B- 20 km round the town [N=106], C- Zemplén County [N=95], D- Bordering counties [N=263], E- Far off counties [N=157], F- Abroad, historic Hungary, G-Budapest [N=55], H- No data available)*

Learnt English	Permanent address								Total N=904
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Yes	46	25	46	47	60	12 pupils	95	14 pupils	49
No	54	75	54	53	40	8 pupils	5	15 pupils	50
No data available								10 pupils	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	20 pupils	100	39 pupils	100

It can be seen from Table 1 that the rate of students learning English increases receding from the District of Sároszatak. It is probable that students coming from Budapest,abroad (respectively the area of the historic Hungary) and far off counties chose the institution as it made it possible for its students to learn English. It can be seen from the data that students coming from the above-mentioned areas got into English learning classes in greater proportion. The proportion of those who chose the English language was the smallest among those students who came from the immediate vicinity of Sároszatak. There is a well-marked contrast between the given areas and Zemplén County as well as Sároszatak. The explanation for this can be that the social composite of those who enrolled in the school from Sároszatak was different from that of those who did so from the environs of the town. A significant stratum of brainworkers lived in Sároszatak while from the environs of the town mainly school-teachers,cantors and well-off peasants enrolled their children in the institution and the latter groups did not recognise the importance of the teaching of modern languages.(Table 2)

When determining the job categories we took into consideration the census data. As there are a lot of cantors,school-teachers and petty peasant proprietors in our data base we considered the analysis of these categories important.

The English language was preferred by parents pursuing priesthood and the teaching profession,major civil servants, the freelance intellectual class, capitalist owners, entrepreneurs and landowners,that is, the economic and intellectual elite. In contradiction to this minor officials,school-teachers and petty peasant proprietors held on to the traditional humanistic grammar-school type of education. This was probably due to their lack of information and their insusceptibility to new things.

*Table 2 Learning English as first and fifth graders between 1931 and 1942 in accordance with the breadwinner's job (%) (Peasant, tradesman [N=146], B-Minor official [N=48], C-Priest, schoolmaster; official [N=229], D-Major official, E-Clerk of private office [N=67], F-Freelance brainworker [N=76], G-Member of the economic elite [N=73], H-School-teacher, cantor [N=91], I-Petty peasant proprietor [N=115], J-No data available)*

Learnt English	The breadwinner's job									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Yes	33	17	53	25 pupils	69	83	77	25	35	13 pupils
No	66	83	44	11 pupils	30	16	23	74	65	10 pupils
No data available	1		3		1	1		1		
Total	100	100	100	36 pupils	100	100	100	100	100	23 pupils

*Table 3 Learning English as first and fifth graders between 1931 and 1942 in accordance with the students' denomination (%)*

Learnt English	Denomination					
	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Reformed	Evangelistic	Other Protestant	Jewish
	N=94		N=700			N=62
Yes	62	2 pupils	44	31 pupils	2 pupils	74
No	37	4 pupils	55	9 pupils		24
No data available	1		1			2
Total	100	6 pupils	100	40 pupils	2 pupils	100

The rate of students who learnt English is higher than the rate of those who did not learn English in all denominations except the Reformed one. (Table 3) This proportion unambiguously shows that the choice of school of non-Reformed students was mainly motivated by the teaching of English. With the introduction of the English language the school had twofold character. It had its denominational character as 77 percent of the students remained Reformed but the teaching of English attracted students belonging to other denominations as well. The data precisely prove the school's receptive character, the tolerant behaviour of the teachers. The analysis of the students' school-achievement confirms this as the average results of non-Reformed students were usually higher.

On the basis of the data it can be stated that the introduction of the teaching of the English language restrained the dropping out of students. Grammar school education between the two world wars was strongly selective. In Sárospatak 37 percent of the students got from class 1 to class 5 while the proportion of students dropping out while learning English was only 20 percent. These data refer to the fact that the introduction of English restrained student fluctuation. This phenomenon can be explained with two reasons. Because of the higher costs mainly those students came to Patak from far off areas who did well at school. At the same time, as it has been shown, the social composite of the students also changed. The parents with better social background could motivate their children better to continue their studies and it is likely that they could afford to ensure their children's school-achievement with the help of private teachers.

Another result of this study is that the teaching of English made the school-achievement of the recruited children better as more ambitious and

more motivated students came to Sárospatak. The data of 3 school subjects were used to analyse school-achievement. The marks given to the Hungarian language, mathematics and the English language or in the case of students who did not learn English, grades given to the Latin language were taken into consideration while counting the averages of the students. According to the data it can be stated that the average grade of students learning English was 2.11 while that of those who did not learn the language was 2.33. (On the five grade scale of grading one was considered the best mark).

## The 1940's

In the second part of the study the differences between the composite of the English learning groups in the 1930's and the 1940's are analysed. The data of 755 students were used to show the composite of the students in the 1940's. Out of the 755 students 413 learnt English.

*Table 4 The proportion of first and fifth grader students learning English in accordance with permanent address in two periods (A-Sárospatak, B-20 km round the town, C-Zemplén County, D-Bordering counties, E-Far off counties, F-Abroad, historic Hungary, G-Budapest)*

	Permanent address							Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
The proportion of students learning English in the 1930's (%)	46	46	46	47	60	60	95	49
The proportion of students learning English in the 1940's (%)	59	43	43	39	71	83	93	55

By the 1940's the proportion of students learning English had increased in the whole student recruitment. ( Table 4 ) It needs to be pointed out that students from far off counties and Budapest chose the institution mainly because of the learning of English in both periods and what is more their proportion in these two permanent address categories even increased. The popularity of the English language also increased among students from Sárospatak. The change of proportion in the other permanent address categories is not relevant. The proportion of students who arrived from bordering counties and learnt English decreased. The explanation of this is that these areas belonged to the school's traditional schooling district from where mainly talented children living in Reformed villages and leading a peasant's life came to the school. For them the connection with the Reformed Church was more important than the choice of language. The greatest change in the recruitment in accordance with the permanent address in the two periods was that the number and proportion of the students coming from the bordering counties had decreased by the 1940's. While 28 percent of the students arrived from the bordering counties in the 1930's the proportion of the same group of students was only 18 percent in the 1940's.

*Table 5 The proportion of first and fifth grader students learning English in accordance with the breadwinner's job in two periods (A-Peasant, tradesman, B-Minor officer, C-Priest, teacher, official, D-Major officer, E-Clerk of a private office, F-Freelance brainworker, G-Member of the economic elite, H-School-teacher, cantor, I- Petty peasant proprietor)*

	The breadwinner's job								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
The proportion of students learning English in the 1930's (%)	34	17	55	69	69	83	77	25	35
The proportion of students learning English in the 1940's (%)	32	43	56	95	77	82	90	45	47

By the 1940's the proportion of the students learning English had increased in all occupational categories only the proportion of the children of peasants, tradesmen, freelance brainworkers, priests and teachers stagnated. (Table 5) The greatest proportional change occurred in the case of the children of major officials. This social group increasingly represented itself in the recruitment of students and at the same time the proportion of the students choosing English was increasing within this student group. This can be explained by the fact that the school became more and more well-known (printed descriptive booklets were sent out) on the other hand the children of civil servants were granted scholarship. The English Boarding-School was wrestling with difficulties caused by likely liquidation during the whole era so it was important for the institution to have as many students as possible. Tuition-fee and boarding expenses amounted to 800-900 pengos for a scholastic year and it meant problems for even well-off families.

The school in Sárospatak represented the success of education policy between the two world wars. Its proper functioning was of governmental interest. Then again alumni of high status (Puky Endre, Perényi Zsigmond, Finkey Ferenc) probably did their best in order to ensure the undisturbed operation of the school. This group of parents may have known the aim of the government to become more independent of Germany and to get prepared for the marching in of the English or American troops. This seemed a realistic aim in 1942. The result of all these factors was that a lot of state officials' children came to the school.

The number of the children of freelance brainworkers, priests and teachers stagnated supposedly because the school had a lot of students in the 1930's and also in the families of Reformed pastors the children followed their fathers' profession and for theological studies Latin and Greek were expected, so a great proportion of these children chose to go to humanistic grammar schools.

The fact that the children of minor officials, school-teachers and cantors chose English in greater proportion in the 1940's than in the 1930's can be explained with the phenomenon that the less informed social groups needed more time to realise the importance of the new type of education.

In the almost same sized student groups the number and proportion of the children of peasants and tradesmen grew significantly (11 percent in the 1930's and 19 percent in the 1940's). As the survey of data can be followed up to 1946 it can be assumed that the supply of data served the following social and political changes.

*Table 6 The proportion of first and fifth grader students learning English in accordance with denomination in two periods*

	Denomination					
	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Reformed	Evangelistic	Other Protestant	Jewish
The proportion of students learning English in the 1930's (%)	62	2 pupils	44	77	2 pupils	74
The proportion of students learning English in the 1940's (%)	57	5 pupils	52	83	4 pupils	84

The analysis of the data of the Greek Catholics and of other Protestants can be disregarded as both their number and proportion are very low. There is significant change neither in the number nor in the proportion of the Roman Catholics. The Reformed, the Evangelistics and the Jewish chose the English language in growing proportion. In all these three denominations there are strong traditions of education and the promotion of cultural traditions is also important. The number of the Jewish students dramatically decreased due to the anti-Jewish laws ( from 46 to 16 students) but the proportion of those learning English increased even among them. (table 6 )

### The time change of registration data

The effect of the change of special line can best be presented if the data of a school-year when the English language was not taught (1930-31) is compared with the data of a school-year when English was already taught in all eight grades (1938-39). In this case the school-achievement of the students of only two school-years can be analysed but the data of all classes are taken into consideration, not like in the longitudinal examination where the data of the subsequent first and fifth classes were analysed. To represent the state of affairs before the Peace Treaty of Trianon the data concerning the students' permanent addresses during the 1915-16 school-year are at our disposal. (Table 7)

*Table 7 The composite of the students of the Reformed College of Sárospatak in accordance with the permanent address*

School-year	Permanent address					Total	
	Zemplén County	Bordering countries	Far off countries	Abroad	Budapest	%	N
1915-16	55	29	16	-	0 (0,4)	100	445
1930-31	51	36	8	3	2	100	478
1938-39	36	32	22	1	9	100	542

During analysis the following facts had to be taken into consideration: before the drawing of the new borders of Trianon Zemplén County's area was more than twice as big as after the border-line changes. Consequently the 'Bordering counties' category referred to a greater area as well. The data concerning permanent addresses represent the conditions before the Peace Treaty of Trianon well.

The 1930-31 school-year was just before the school-year when English teaching was started so theoretically the basic social and political effects were not different from those ones that characterised the period when the

English language was already taught. In the 1938-39 school-year English was taught in all eight grades. This is why the data of these school-years were chosen from the year-books.

There are no data available concerning Sárospatak and its environs from the 1915-16 school-year. As a result the data of the other school-years concerning the above-mentioned areas were analysed together with the data concerning Zemplén County. On this basis it can be stated that the proportion of the students from Zemplén County was greater before the peace treaty than after it. This resulted from the fact, as it has been stated before, that the county used to be bigger. The proportion of the students from the bordering counties was increasing after 1920 then later after 1931 as English teaching was started it was decreasing. As the English language was introduced the proportion of the students coming from far off counties trebled. The increasing proportion of the students from Budapest is even more spectacular (from 0.4 percent to 9.4 percent).

In the 1915-16 school-year there were no students from abroad as a great part of those students who were later considered foreigners came from the area of the historic Hungary. In 1938 students from Upper Hungary (Felvidék) were not considered foreigners so the shown decrease can be mainly explained by this fact.

During the representation of the social composite (Table 8) the categories used are not the same as those in the first two parts of the study as, as it has been stated before, these data were taken from the year-books, so the category 'year-books' are used instead. The social composite of the students greatly changed. The most rapid change can be seen in the freelance brainworker category. This is probably so as these parents intended their children to have the same profession where it was possible to become successful only if they had the most marketable knowledge that involved some knowledge of the English language. This is why they had the ambition to send their children to study here in great numbers. The proportion of those students whose parents belonged to the economic elite more than trebled. Interestingly enough the number and the proportion of students whose parents were peasants, workers, tradesmen and merchants also increased. This refers to the democratization of education. This process was promoted by the 'talent saving' movement that was started in Patak in 1936.

*Table 8 The students of the Reformed College of Sárospatak in accordance with the fathers' jobs (%)*

*(A-Peasant, worker; B- Tradesman, merchant, minor official, C- Employed brainworker, official, D- Freelance brainworker, E- Economic elite, F- Petty peasant proprietor, G- No data available)*

School-year	The breadwinner's job							Total	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	%	N
1930-31	2	24	30	2	2	37	3	100	478
1938-39	5	30	25	14	7	18	1	100	542

According to the data the proportion of the petty peasant proprietors greatly decreased in recruitment. This fact refers to the pauperism of the peasants in the given district. The Church noticed the social tension that was getting stronger and this led to the people's college movement and it was stated back in 1940 that land distribution was necessary. The peasant proprietor category referred to people with very different living. Dwarf holders with a 1 or 2 "hold" of land (1 "hold" = 0.57 hectares or 1.42 English acres) were included in the same category as peasants with a 20 or 30 "hold"

of land. The existence of the landowners was also affected by the quality of the land.

The analysis of the denomination composite of the two school-years leads to similar results as the cross-sectional one. (Table 9)

*Table 9 The students of the Reformed College of Sárosptak in accordance with denomination (%)*

School -year	Denomination						Total	
	Roman Catholi c	Greek Catholi c	Reforme d	Evangelisti c	Other Protestan t	Jewis h	%	N
1930- 31	12	9 pupils	81	2	1 child	4	10 0	478
1938- 39	11	5 pupils	75	5	5 pupils	7	10 0	542

There are so few Greek Catholics and other Protestants that the analysis concerning them can be left out of consideration. The proportion of Roman Catholics hardly changed. The proportion of the Reformed students decreased while that of the Evangelistic and Jewish students greatly increased. These data were not affected by the first anti-Jewish law so they give a realistic picture of the denominational composite of the students. This also proves that the teaching of English attracted non-Reformed students to the school and this decreased the dominance of Reformed children in student recruitment.

## Summary

It needs to be stated that 1931 was the beginning of a new era in the history of the Reformed College of Sárosptak. The examinations carried out in three different ways prove that the introduction of the English language induced important changes in the improvement of the school. The number of students coming from far off counties and Budapest increased and at the same time the social composite of the children also changed. The economic elite and the freelance brainworkers gave their children to the school in growing numbers. The ' school of the poor ' became a school of high educational attainment with special English classes whose aim was to train an educated intellectual elite. They wanted to reach this aim by attracting the children of the elite classes to Patak to acquire important promoters and sponsors. With the support of talented children of peasant and working-class background the aim of the school was to train an intellectual elite that would serve the cultural development of our people. The education of the elite by origin and the intellectual elite in the same community meant a very long lasting experience and advantage for both groups. The denominational variability helped build up tolerance felt towards people of other denominations in a way that the Reformed students could strengthen their Reformed identities. At the same time the institution ensured a certain attachment to the Reformed Church among non-Reformed students. Patak could become such an intellectual place that provided students with high educational attainment and also successfully helped students' political socialization in a democratic sense.

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The data of the following year-books were used during the empirical research:

School-year:1931-32 TIREL K.f.III.46.

School-year:1932-33 TIREL K.g.1.1.

School-year:1933-34 TIREL K.g.1.2.

School-year:1934-35 TIREL K.g.1.3.

School-year:1935-36 TIREL K.g.1.4.

School-year:1936-37 TIREL K.g.1.5.

School-year:1937-38 TIREL K.g.1.6.

School-year:1938-39 TIREL K.g.1.6.

The year-books of later school-years can be found in the Archives of the Reformed College of Sárospatak.

Footnotes. TIREL stands for Tiszáninneri Református Egyházkerület Levéltára(The Archives of the Reformed Church District west of the River Tisza).

The codes after the word "TIREL" are references.