

Sárkányiné Szabó Olga

The Status of the Teaching of Foreign Languages and Communication in the Royal Hungarian Territorial Army 1868-1914

A Dissertation

General

It is characteristic of multinational countries that the instruction of foreign languages is given an outstanding role. It was also true for the Hungarian educational system following the General Compromise of 1867. The establishment of the Royal Hungarian Territorial Army which symbolised independence within the Austro-Hungarian Empire came along with the establishment and provision of the necessary objective and subjective conditions.

The use of the official languages, Hungarian and German, of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as the use of the languages of the different nations in the land were paralleled in the Hungarian Army. In my dissertation I examined how the difficulties arising from the lingual differences were overcome in the multilingual army.

The military schools of different levels all relied greatly on the instruction of foreign languages by civil schools. Foreign languages were already taught in elementary schools. No matter which official language is considered, be it German, Hungarian, Croatian or even the languages of the minorities the teaching of which was allowed for in elementary schools, one thing is sure, one or the other was a foreign language for the students. This explains why the number of foreign language classroom hours was high in all sorts of schools and expectations for the teachers were set high as well.

In the syllabus of military schools the Hungarian language appeared as the official language of the country, German was the official language of the Empire while French was the symbol of education and diplomacy. At entrance exams special emphasis was put on the knowledge of foreign languages and this extraordinary attention remained typical for the whole process of education.

Military terminology was gradually built into the syllabus of foreign language classes and was taught by military officers – teachers who had adequate knowledge of the foreign language and also had military experience. It was undoubted by the organizers of education and the management of the Army that to get the expected outstanding results they must provide the necessary conditions. The further training of teachers, the production of the necessary subject materials, the establishment of military libraries and the continuous development of the quality of military papers and journals all greatly contributed to the development of the general and technical knowledge of officers and subordinated officers and last but not least to the development of their knowledge of foreign languages.

I am not trying to idealize the military officers of the age of the dual monarchy, of course, I have found enough negative examples in the literature of the topic, nevertheless it can be stated that they took their career and daily duties very seriously and did their best to become most up-to-date in that age.

Today the knowledge of foreign languages remains a decisive element. Contrary to their abilities military schools do everything they can to provide the best possible conditions for the learning of foreign languages.

Relying on the military literature of the period I showed the characteristic features of the communication in foreign languages inside the armies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The establishment of the 'goulash language' and other tools facilitating communication made the establishment of contacts between soldiers with different mother tongues easier. It was typical

for the instruction of foreign languages that the most modern methods and teaching materials were used.

The educational and training system established met the requirements: the production of teaching materials with thorough consideration of the overall objective, the conversational and military locution (idioms) created by the influence of practicality, all contributed to the establishment of the Royal Hungarian Territorial Army – a recognized body all over Europe.