

## Preface to the English Special Issue of Romology Journal (2015/issue 10)

While English language has become the *lingua franca* of knowledge, even pioneering academic research in other, primarily rare (peripheral) languages is frequently overlooked. This suggests a paradoxical situation: while the use of English is necessary for scientific recognition in the international arena, yet local scholarship inevitably produces a culturally sensitive and grounded research. In the case of Romani Studies, which has successfully united academics and researchers around the world and generated interest among practitioners as well, there still remains significant original research that is largely confined to country borders.

Knowledge production, however, is a cooperative endeavor; ideas and expertise should be debated, challenged and advanced in spaces that are inclusive for everyone. Research should not be bound by language, but language (English, in the contemporary world) should be used to share and generate knowledge. This special issue is an example of such an attempt that strives to show the accumulated knowledge about Roma student colleagues in Hungary, introduce the research of advanced students, junior and senior faculty affiliated with the University of Pécs, and extend these findings to the international community of scholars and researchers.

This special issue focuses on Roma “student colleges” or *szakkollégium*, which is a part of a unique movement in Hungary aimed at talent management, especially of those in need (in this case—Roma students). Throughout the articles, “student college” and “college” thus refers to this movement, at times used interchangeably, while other literature sometimes denotes it as “special circle” or “student college.” The topic is sporadically discussed in English language literature, and thus the current special issue intends to fill this gap.

The purpose of student colleges in Hungary is to create equal opportunities in the realm of education for disadvantaged students. The Hungarian Higher Education Act of 2005, besides talent-nurturing also defines the goals of student colleges as giving “support for gifted students, to encourage them to play an active role in public life, to contribute to the creation of infrastructure conditions and personal criteria of preparation for professional duties, and to educate students so that they become professionals who are receptive to social problems and ambitious enough to sustain a high standard in their profession.”<sup>1</sup> In 2011 the European Roma Strategy and the Hungarian

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1 See full Act at [http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/letolt/nemzet/naric/act\\_cxxxix\\_2005.pdf](http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/letolt/nemzet/naric/act_cxxxix_2005.pdf).

Roma Strategy was a significant impetus for Roma student colleges, and they have been accepted as an integral part of the higher education institutional network in the country.<sup>2</sup>

The translators are nearly all students of Eötvös Lóránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, Hungary, attending the School of English and American Studies (SEAS), Applied Linguistics Department (DEAL) and in their senior year. The student-translators are an integral part of the special issue in making the articles accessible to an international audience, and hence in this introduction I find it important to name each of them with a few accompanying details. Dóra Babilai's major is English and she minors in French; Júlia Ribiczey is similarly an English major with a Japanese minor and upon completing her education she imagines her future as a literary translator-interpreter as she is interested mostly in literature and culture. Likewise, Eszter Fórián would like to be a literary translator and studies English and Russian as her major. Hajnalka Kiss majors in English with a minor in Swedish, and she is already working as a translator and planning to start a translation agency one day. Márton Sajben, who also majors in English, wishes to become a language teacher and a translator. Equally, Regina Tóth, with a major in English and a minor in Finnish, is planning to become a translator; Viktória Kondi, who specializes in Drama and Theatre at SEAS, plans to become a translator, too, with a particular interest in contemporary literature. Boróka Madarász aspires to become an interpreter and translator in both English and French. Finally, Viktor Dési, while not affiliated with ELTE already works as a freelance translator, with plans to be full-time fiction writer.

Overall, this special issue is a unique opportunity for the participating scholars to share their outstanding research, for the international academic and non-academic audience to gain an insight into a critical topic—that of Roma in Hungary and projects on Roma youth empowerment through special colleges—as well as for the students of linguistics interested in translating and building much-needed bridges between national academia and the international audience. It has been my honor to participate in this imperative endeavor in the capacity of guest editor. My role consisted of selecting a group of student-translators, most of whom were my diligent former students with translating ambitions, and assuring the quality of their work. The subject itself is also central to my own research. I received my PhD from the department of Political Science at the University of Oregon (USA) and my dissertation focused on Roma identity formation by examining disciplinary practices in educational institutions in Hungary and Russia.

I hope this special issue finds a wide audience and will duly contribute to the scholarly debate and academic knowledge-production about Roma, as well as broader topics of inquiry.

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2 See report by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, founded by the Ministry of Human Resources, at [http://www.ofi.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/ofi\\_szakkollegiumi\\_helyzetkep\\_felmerese.pdf](http://www.ofi.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/ofi_szakkollegiumi_helyzetkep_felmerese.pdf).