

Language Ideologies in Hungarian Prescriptive Linguistics

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Language cultivation is the most widespread form of language planning in Hungarian context. This metalinguistic activity is aiming at improving the speech by correcting the nonstandard use in accordance with the rules of an idealized standard language. In practice, it means that every linguistic feature is evaluated and classified into categories of correctness or incorrectness. However, the criteria of the classification have somehow to be justified: therefore **language features** which in themselves, as language elements do not have a special value (beyond their communication value) are **connected to values** reflecting political, economical, social and other interests, which may be arranged on a scale of values. **The connecting link between these two sides** will be considered as **language ideology** in our conception.

As we have seen, value judgements are preconditions for the presence of language ideologies. Consequently, the prescriptive approach necessarily involves ideologies. In the case of normative linguistics these are destined to legitimize the norm which for many is “the” language, or rather the pattern of correctness that should be observed.

Method of revealing language ideologies

The ideologies of so-called correctness are usually not noticed. Nevertheless, these may be uncovered **by analysing the advices on correct usage**. This technique consists of three parts:

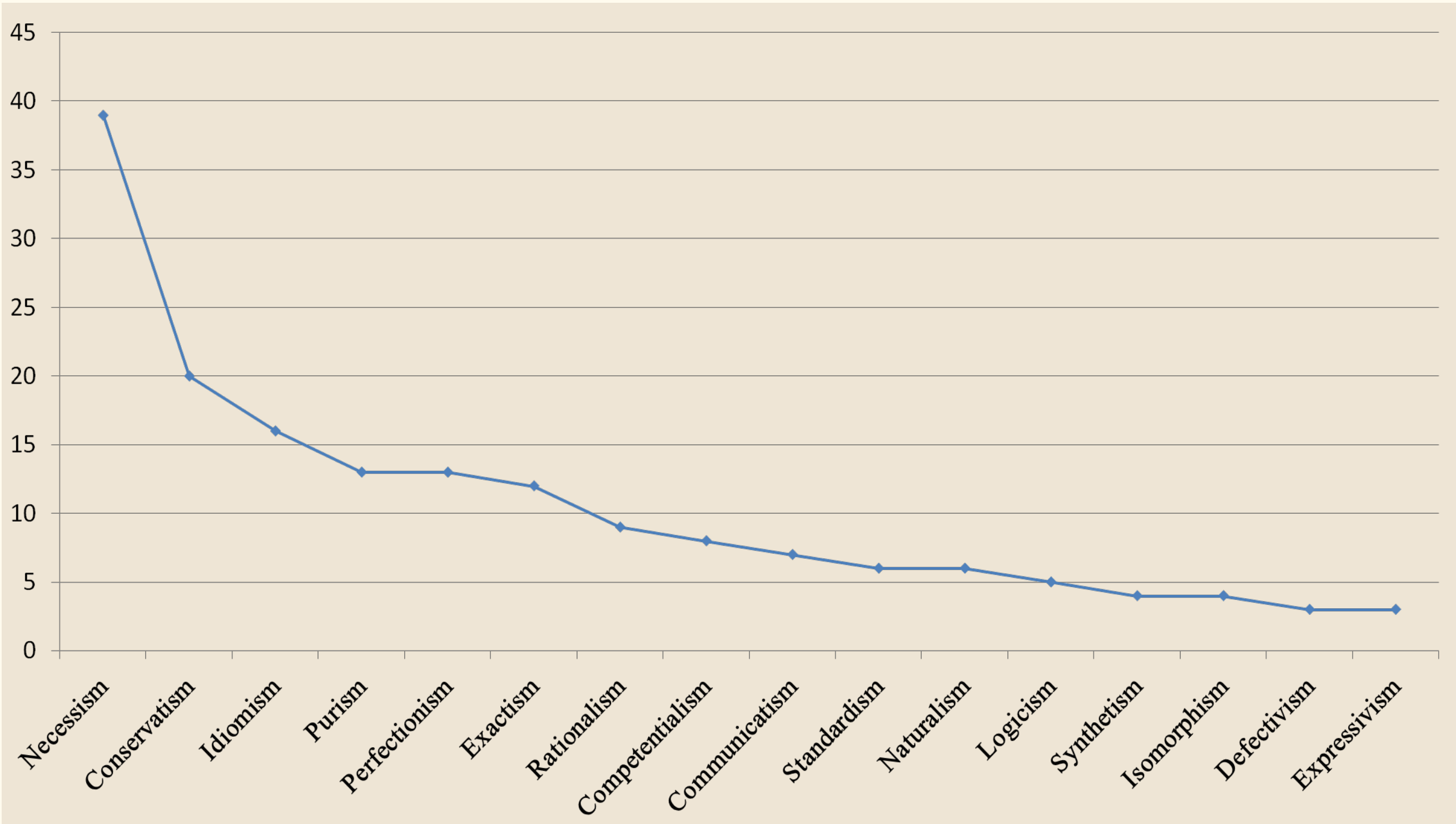
- a.) the value judgements are **separated** from other statements;
- b.) the motivations and goals of the language cultivators are **revealed**;
- c.) ideologies which the cultivators use in order to accomplish their goals are **identified**.

If the advice on correct usage attempts to convince somebody e.g. about the incorrectness of a certain foreign word and recommends to use conventional, domestic variants, it is possible to draw at least two conclusions: on the one hand foreign words are worse than their domestic counterparts; on the other hand customary or traditional ways of expression are better than those that have appeared recently. Consequently, the analysis of the advice reveals purist and conservative ideology.



Research

In this paper I have **analysed articles** in a representative publication of prescriptive linguistics – the Concise Dictionary of Correct Usage (NymKsz.²) – which deal with an ongoing language change in Hungarian, **the modification of the functions of verbal prefixes**. By means of the above mentioned method **16 types of ideologies were uncovered**: defectivism, exactism, expressivism, idiomism, isomorphism, communicatism, competentialism, conservatism, logicism, naturalism, necessism, perfectionism, purism, rationalism, standardism and synthetism. The following diagram presents the incidence of the afore mentioned ideologies. (The terminology is adopted from István Lanstyák’s publications.)



The most conspicuous result is the **dominance of necessism**, i.e. the refusal of the new – usually commonly used – forms because these are “unnecessary” (with 39 hits). Further, the **reference to conservatism** appeared roughly half as often as necessism and this follows a gradual decrease of occurrence of other ideologies: from idiomism (with 16 hits) and purism (with 13 hits) through perfectionism (13), exactism (12), rationalism (9), competentialism (8), communicatism (7), standardism (6), naturalism (6), logicism (5), synthetism (4) and isomorphism (4), until defectivism (3) and expressivism (3).

At this point it is important to note that the statistics of ideologies in itself does not reflect the real distribution of them, because the ideologies are shown in isolation, without respect to theirs relations to each other. The lack of hierarchical arrangement or rather the hierarchization according to the incidence of certain ideologies has its pros and cons. Understanding them requires to make a brief characterisation of language ideologies.

Three ways of classification

From the viewpoint of their appearance, language ideologies can be divided into two groups:

- 1. a.) **explicitly** formulated ideologies
- b.) **implicitly** formulated ideologies

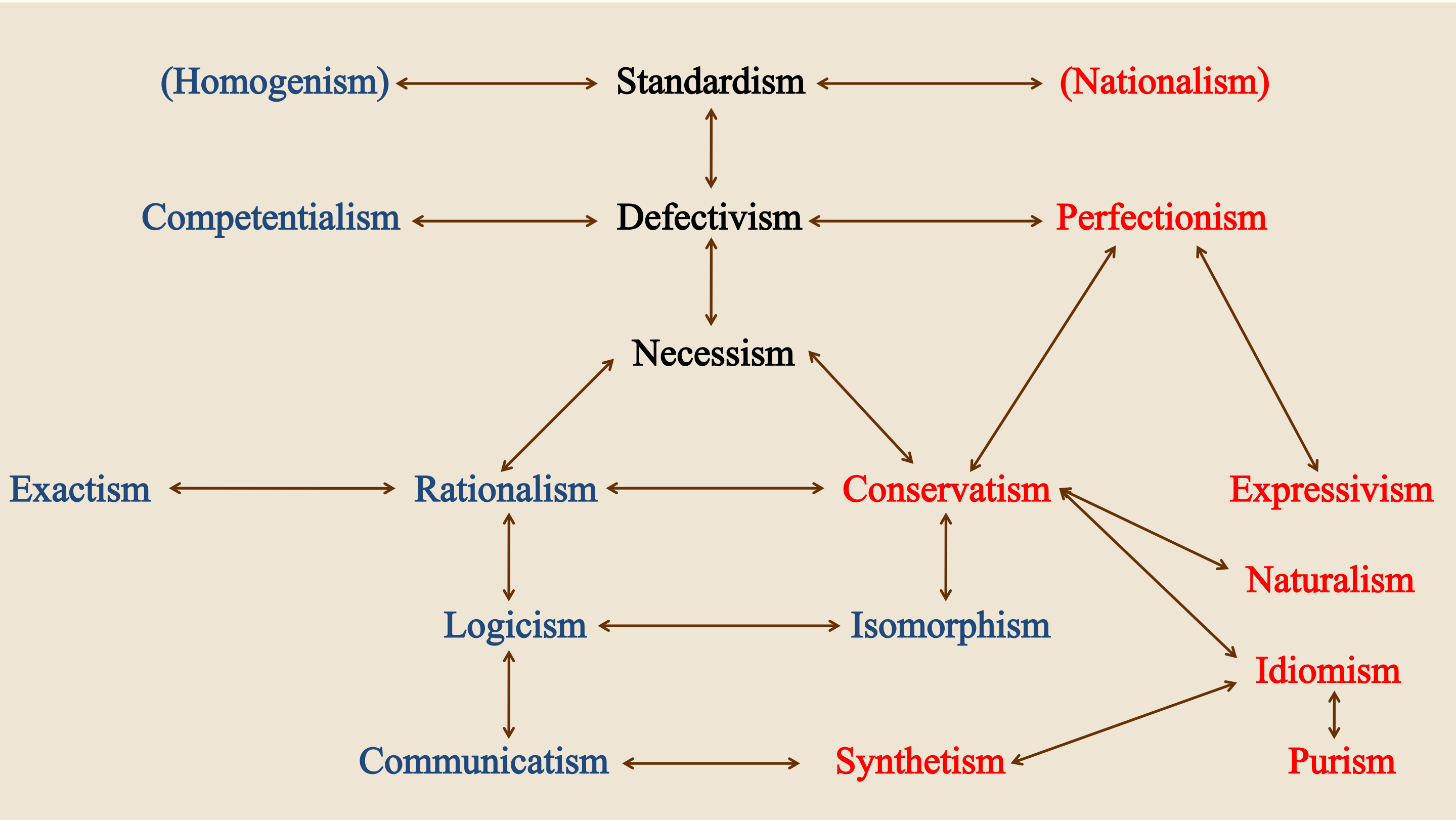
a.) The former group includes ideologies which are **directly linked** to a certain “key word” which represents concisely its characteristic feature; e.g. if an article in the dictionary labels a neologism as “unnecessary”, it indicates the presence of necessism.

b.) To the latter group belong the ideologies which are **not linked directly** to a “key word”, however their association with a demonstrated explicit ideology or ideologies can be deduced; e.g. if the ideology of necessism is explicitly present in the dictionary article, it implicitly requires three conclusions: firstly, the assumption of existence of expressions, which are inherently wrong or at least worse than preferred forms; next, the support of an idealised standard language; and finally, the struggle with heterogeneity of language. In other words it means the presence of defectivist, standardist and homogenist ideologies.

Nevertheless, ideologies per se do not have a specific character of explicitness or implicitness, but they are implemented somehow in a particular dictionary article: either of the ideologies may reach central position in the article and become explicitly expressed, or may stay in the background of the central argument.

This dual classification does not reflect the complicated relations of language ideologies functioning in an article. To demonstrate this complexity it is very useful to take an advantage of one metaphorical assumption: each of the ideologies has its own “rhetoric” and all of them participate in a dialogue with others. This metaphor simplifies the system of relations to the pure question:

with whom do the particular ideologies “talk”? The answer points out the way of ideological operation of the articles, or rather the “discourse” of normative rules. The model of it can be seen in the following figure.



The model attempts to demonstrate the mentioned ideological “discourse” from many standpoints. This model corresponds to Lanstyák’s classification which divides language ideologies into three:

a.) **General language ideologies**, which are closely related to social and political ideologies. These are in the upper line of the figure (homogenism, standardism, nationalism).

b.) **Ideologies about language functioning**, which do not have an equivalent among the political and social ideologies, but serve as a starting point for correctness judgments. These are in the second line of the figure (competentialism, defectivism, perfectionism).

c.) **Correctness ideologies**, which are specifically aimed to justify the correctness judgements on the character of language elements and language system. This group includes necessism and all the ideologies below it.

This classification – after the “explicit” vs. “implicit” division – gives a **second hierarchisation** that can be demonstrated on the following example: logicism as a correctness ideology is subordinated to necessism (which belongs to ideologies about language functioning), because it “clarifies” that an expression is “unnecessary” if it is “illogical”. Further, necessism is subordinated to standardism (which belongs to general language ideologies), because it introduces the criterion, that “unnecessary” expressions cannot be components of standard language. From this follows that it is the general language ideologies that are most frequently presented in the articles, even if they are not expressed explicitly.

3. The **third way of classification** is to divide ideologies into three groups **from the viewpoint of the mode of their influence**. The first group includes ideologies attempting to make an **impression on somebody’s reason** (these are written in blue on the left side of the figure); and ideologies in the second group tries **to influence somebody emotionally** (these are written in red on the right side of the figure); standardism, defectivism and necessism – in the middle of the figure – belongs to the third, from this viewpoint neutral group.

Instead of conclusion

Finally, in accordance with the introduced theoretical background, I will demonstrate the “discourse” of ideologies on a specific advice concerning correct usage. It is translated from the Concise Dictionary of Correct Usage (NymKsz.²).

elszeparál 'to separate (off)'
The word is typical for **vulgar usage**, for the **less educated speech**. It is used by speakers who **do not feel or do not know** that the verb *szeperál*, which is of Latin origin means in itself ‘to separate, to divide from’. Consequently, it is unnecessary to attach verb prefix to this verb. Therefore the verb *szeperál* (*separate*) [without verb prefix] is by all means **better than** *elszeparál* ‘to separate off’ [with verb prefix], however even more correct solution is **to leave this term for the dairy industry** – [...] – and **substitute it with Hungarian equivalents**: e.g. [...].



The first sentence of the article has a descriptive tone, however in spite of that it includes value judgements and ideologies: the attribute “vulgar” evokes negative associations and thus it stigmatises this neologism; then the mention of “less educated speech” implicitly alleges that **carefully formulated speech is better** than other modes of expression. These features are the attributes of **perfectionism**. The influence on emotions is followed by manipulation of rational discretion: **competentialism** explicitly states that there is a **relation between the use of stigmatised expressions** and the speaker’s **language competence**. As can be seen on the figure, these two ideologies are implicitly linked by **defectivism**



which is followed by **necessism** and the explicitly formulated idea of a **form being “unnecessary”**. Further, **restricting the sphere of applicability** of the “better” form indicates the “reasonable” solutions of **isomorphism** which is implicitly linked with necessism and perfectionism by **conservatism**. This language ideology **defends customary expressions against neologisms** which in this article serves to **idiomist** and **purist** aims. Eventually, the **standardist** language ideology joins the “discourse”.

Literature cited

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