AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Research at the Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Literary Science in Nitra

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INTRODUCTION

The present-day Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Literary Science at the Faculty of Central European Studies at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra was formed in 1960 under the name Department of Hungarian Language and Literature. It was established as the only independent department of the Hungarian Section of the Pedagogical Institute.[1] The existence and work of the department have been closely interrelated with the political and legal situation of Slovakia's Hungarians and its impact on Slovakia Hungarian teacher training. Since its formation, the Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Literary Science has seen Hungarian teacher training as one of its most important missions. In recent years, however, the range of programs offered by the Institute grew considerably, in an effort to meet societal demands, and some of its more prominent goals include the training of professionals of cultural life and public administration in their mother tongue (cf. http://www.umjl.fss.ukf.sk/?lang=hu).

Right from the outset, scholarly activities of the lecturers of the Institute have specialized in two fields: linguistics and literary studies. Research has focused on various aspects of bilingualism, as well as the language, culture, and literature of Slovakian Hungarians.

Literary scholarship at the department/institute has always included research on (Czecho) Slovakian Hungarian literature, augmented in the past two decades with topics of general literary scholarship. Literary scholars at the Institute specialize, among other topics, on popular literature (Krisztián Benyovszky (see e.g. 2016, 2019)), contemporary Hungarian literature (Anikó N. Tóth, 2013, 2020), including child and youth literature (Gabriella Petres Csizmadia, 2015), but research is also carried out on theoretical and historical aspects of minority Hungarian literature (Zsófia Bárczi, 2008, 2014), on the genres of autobiography (Gabriella Petres Csizmadia, 2014), the interconnectedness of gender and literature, and methodological aspects

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[1] The predecessors of today's university were the Pedagogical Institute, Pedagogical Faculty, then the Pedagogical College, and Pedagogical University. The latter was reorganized as the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra in 1996.

of teaching literature (Gabriella Brutovszky, Gabriella Petres Csizmadia, Anikó N. Tóth (N. Tóth, 2012)). Most recently added research topics include the bi- and multilingual aspects of trans-culturalism as manifested in the Central European literary context (cf. Petres Csizmadia, 2020; N. Tóth, 2020).

The linguists of the Institute specialize in Slovakian Hungarian dialectology (Anna Sándor, 2000, 2020; Károly Presinszky, 2008, 2016); onomastics (János Bauko, 2015, 2019); sociolinguistics and bilingualism (Gizella Szabómihály, Ildikó Vančo (Vančo, 2009, 2012)); as well as the linguistic landscape (János Bauko, 2018, 2019; Gizella Szabómihály; László Angyal, 2019, 2020), language rights (Gizella Szabómihály, 2009, 2011, 2017), cognitive linguistics and education (Gábor Nagy Tolcsvai, 2010, 2012, 2018), the pluri-centricity of the Hungarian language, and the theory and methodology of teaching Hungarian grammar (István Kozmács, 2018; Kozmács–Vančo, 2016, 2020; Ildikó Vančo, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2020).

This prolific publication activity – proven by internationally published monographs, textbooks, collections of research papers and numerous studies – speaks of the success of the broad variety of linguistic and literary research carried out at the Institute. The Nitra Hungarian department overcame the difficulties confronted in the past half a century and has become an internationally renowned centre for linguistic and literary scholarship through its training and research, as well as a valuable partner in international academic networks.

The present issue provides representative samples of research carried out in the Institute. **Zsófia Bárczi**'s study, *Attempts at creating a new concept of literature: Hungarian literature in Slovakia between the two world wars,* discusses the inception and theoretical embeddedness of the concept of "Hungarian literature in Slovakia". The study aims to transform the geopolitical factors associated with identity into a constructed space through articulating the experience of intermediacy and reflecting on the "as-if" state of the intercultural existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia. **Anikó N. Tóth**'s paper, *Slovakian Hungarian prose in Slovakia after the change of regime in 1989*, showcases the achievements of Slovakian Hungarian prose in the past three decades and the changes in the literary institutional system brought about by the change of regime in 1989. **Gabriella Petres Csizmadia** deals with the transcultural literary-spatial position of contemporary Slovakia Hungarian prose in her paper *Transcultural Phenomena in Contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose*. For her study she selected works for interpretation from the representative writings of the last five years (Katarina Durica'a *Szlovákul szeretni [Loving in Slovakian]*, Anikó N. Tóth's *Szabad ez a hely? [Is this Seat Free?]*, Pál Száz's *Fűje sarjad mezőknek [The Meadows Grow their Grass]*. Due to their diversity in genre, language and subject, these works provide a cross-section of contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose. **Gábor Nagy Tolcsvai**'s study *Postcolonialism in Central Europe: A linguistic perspective* discusses historical developments in Central Europe in the post-1990 period as a specific instance of postcolonialism, particularly in the linguistic domain. The first part of the paper surveys the relevant literature, discussing the validity of the notion of postcolonialism for the given period in Central Europe, while the second part introduces general postcolonial features pertaining to the Hungarian speech community. These features are detailed first focussing on the developments in Hungary, then on the minority Hungarian communities outside Hungary.

János Bauko in his study *Minority language policy and bilingual name semiotic landscape in Slovakia* addresses the interrelated nature of Slovakia's minority language policy and the

bilingual name semiotic landscape; more specifically, the name semiotic landscape of communities of Slovakian Hungarians and the way Slovakia's laws regulating name use affect the visual display of proper nouns in the country. His paper seeks to answer the following questions: to what extent are minority language rights implemented in visual name use in communities of Slovakian Hungarians, whether Hungarian name usage is spreading, and to what extent do signage and name plates contain proper nouns in a Hungarian form. **Ildikó Vančo** in her article *The "they" vs. "we" distinction in Slovakian Hungarians' discourse* investigates how the notion of "we" occurs in the metalinguistic discourse of Hungarian speakers in Slovakia (with reference to Slovakian Hungarians and their Hungarian language use) in contrast to the notion of "they" (with reference to Hungarians living in Hungary and their Hungarian language use) in lay speakers' utterances referring to language. The study here referred to uses directed interviews and employs discourse analysis to provide insight into the use of "we" vs. "they" and their meanings in the Slovakian Hungarian variety. It also seeks to show how certain expressions become indexical in conceptualizations of identity and how the distinction of "we" vs. "they" is created by the language. In her paper on *The present and future of Hungarian regional dialects in Slovakia* **Anna Sándor** stresses the fact that the current language use of minority Hungarians is more regional, and the standard is spreading more slowly among them than in Hungary; however, it is a shared characteristic that is the kind of change that happens is convergence with the standard. **Károly Presinszky**'s study *Digital methods in researching Slovakian Hungarian regional dialects* overviews the most recent digital methods used in Slovakian Hungarian dialectology. Slovakian Hungarian dialectology started out by using the most modern digital methods in 2010 at Nitra/Nyitra university, creating regional dialect databases. The present paper provides an overview of digital methods in dialectology and summarizes the results of the Nitra/Nyitra team so far, illustrating the diversity of digitized dialectological data. **István Kozmács** in his paper *A receding paradigm as a tool of language discrimination* demonstrates how a paradigm that almost completely receded became the tool of language stigmatization as a result of the actions of those with linguistic power, and shows, on the basis of a questionnaire based study, to what extent the *ik*-paradigm is present in the language use of 14–19-year-olds at the beginning of the 21st century. In their study *Comparative study of reading comprehension skills among Hungarian students in Hungary and Slovakia* **Ildikó Vančo** and **Viktória Gergely** present the results of a comparative study of reading comprehension skills of Hungarian students in Hungary and their counterparts living in Slovakia. A total of 240 survey respondents from the two countries and belonging to two age groups participated in this phase of research. Based on data analysis, the authors point out a difference between the reading habits of Hungarian students in Hungary vs. Hungarian students in Slovakia in the analysed age groups, and a significant difference between the results of the reading comprehension test in the groups of students from the two countries.

We hope that through the studies presented here, professionals dealing with Hungarian studies gain insight into the diverse but thorough and committed academic work of our Institute.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Attempts at creating a new concept of literature • (The Hungarian literature in Slovakia between the two world wars)

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

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ABSTRACT

Using the term Hungarian literature in (Czecho-)Slovakia has been a problem for literary historiography specialised on reflecting on this corpus since the emergence of minority Hungarian literatures defined by geopolitics. Since the twenties onwards, the texts of the belletristic corpus have been asking, from time to time, about the relationships among space and identity, and providing answers from approaches heroic to ironic. The relationships of identity and space are reflected vigorously not only in belletristic representations but in the literary criticism that reflects on them and in literary historiography as well. In my study, I am going to follow the process having taken place in the literary-historical narrative between the two World Wars, which aimed to transform the geopolitical factors associated with identity into a constructed space through articulating the experience of intermediacy and reflecting on the "as-if" state of the intercultural existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia.

The term "Hungarian literature in Slovakia" has been present as a problematic concept in literary historiography since the emergence of minority Hungarian literatures defined by

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geopolitics. Following established practice, the phrase "Hungarian literature in Slovakia" could only be used with extreme caution or else reformulated almost each time it was used in the last three decades—although this terminological uncertainty, which refers to doubts about the existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia (or rather, the possibility to describe it), has essentially been haunting us since 1921, the year of the creation of the magazine "Tűz" and the conference on Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia (Fónod, 1990, pp. 41–44). Since then, the question arising in debates with certain periodic regularity – is there or is there no Hungarian literature in Slovakia? – has not changed (or has varied at best);[1] and the answers to the question may only have been expanded with new aspects at best, since the question itself determines the answers that can be formulated.

The above formulation of the question automatically allows for two types of response: one affirmative and one negative. The arguments in favour of the existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia refer mostly to geographical–institutional separation and the experiences expressed in minority literary works, while those negating it argue for a universal Hungarian literary tradition linked to one language, a lack of linguistic autonomy and the inability of Hungarian literature in Slovakia to create a literary canon (Görömbei, 2000, pp. 17–18; Szirák, 2000, pp. 45–46; Tőzsér, 1998, p. 50; Ardamica, 2006, pp. 103–113).[2]

Questioning the existence/non-existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia does not take into account the fact that the interpretation of literature simultaneously works with a variety of literary concepts (Kulcsár Szabó, 2012, p. 19); therefore, the positions on this issue are, primarily, representations of the literary concepts used simultaneously. The self-evident use of the attributive phrase "Hungarian in Slovakia" lays out a certain geographical and political framework for literature interpretation, and further concepts that shape the interpretation of literature are organized within this framework into systems that define the specific concept of literature—which change from time to time, from interpreter to interpreter. On the subject of the existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, Zoltán Németh speaks about the "multitude of equal positions" consistently with the aforesaid in essence (Németh, 2005, p. 9).

My paper focuses on the search for the literary concept (those literary concepts) which, following the Trianon decision (1920), makes the literature written in Hungarian in Slovakia after the territorial division of Hungary, between the two wars, possible to be identified as *literature*—and, beyond that, as the literature of a specific region. In order to identify this literary

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[1]However, the misguided nature of the question has been highlighted by several people over the last decade. At the end of his study referred to, Zorán Ardamica proposed to reformulate the question: "The question to be answered had better be, *how, in what form, with what purposes, by what means, based on what ideology and aesthetics, in what kind of system of relationships, in what institutional system, in what context, with what emphases, with how much one-sided or diversified nature, with how much stratification, perhaps against what can the formation be described that, for want of a better term, literary history refers to as minority literature.*" (emphasis added by A.Z.) (Ardamica, 2006, p. 112). József Keserű considers the issue of the existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia to be wrong because it "(...) ignores the fundamental difference between the institution and the desire, in other words, it blurs the boundaries between two levels whose separation is not incidental from the view point of the self-understanding of literature (literary science)" (Keserű, 2010, p. 79).

[2]Consider the possibilities between the two extremities by the Hungarian literature in Zoltán Németh in his paper entitled, *Szlovákiai magyar irodalom: létezik-e vagy sem? (Hungarian Literature in Slovakia: Does it Exist or Does it Not?)*: *Néhány fésületlen gondolat egy fogalom lehetőségeiről (Some Messy Ideas about the Possibilities of a Concept)* (Németh, 2005, pp. 19–24).

concept(s), it is necessary to clarify the preconceptions which define the narrative prevailing in literary historiography and in talking about the phenomena of literature. Literary historiography is a genre affected by at least as subjective considerations as literary criticism, and behind the systemic procedures are considerations that are defined in part by the paradigm of the particular age, in part by the author's individual system. Thus, when it comes to Hungarian literature in Slovakia, the following must also be discussed: according to what kind of systemic principles the relationship to a particular belletristic corpus is established; what preconceptions have allowed a certain cluster of texts to be perceived as a homogeneous corpus; or, conversely, what pre-conceptions allow the same texts to be perceived as so heterogeneous that their treatment as a separate corpus is considered untenable—that is to say (and more importantly for the present paper), the preconceptions and convictions that have created the framework for discussing Hungarian literature in Slovakia. Thus, it is not at all irrelevant what the literature interpretation strategy determining literary historiography is that underlies texts discussing Hungarian liter-ature in Slovakia with the ambition to be literary historiography.

The centralised nature of the Hungarian literature created in the first third of the 19th century was undermined by literary events at the end of the century. The process of natural and gradual decentralization was violently interrupted by the situation resulting from the peace treaties following World War I. The understanding of literature was based on the 19th century model of national literature, presenting language, culture, area and identity as an indivisible entity. The capturing of the national concept based on homogenisation is felt very strongly in this perception and it is also passed on to the practice of the literary historiography of the 20th century.

Upper Hungary at the turn of the century was ethnically mixed and denominationally divided, a place in whose cities the Hungarian, German and Slovak languages and cultures, though with different emphases, were all present. Hungarian writers from the region were seeking success in Budapest, and Hungarian literature in Slovakia is not the result of a kind of natural development, similar writers' orientation, equivalent purposes or an affinity to a literary centre, but rather the result of the border changes of 1920. The pressure for self-definition and the uncertainty are usually partly attributed precisely to the lack of regional literary centres and traditions following the period indicated by the formation of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the drawing of the demarcation lines and the decision of Trianon, which were both deepened by the prohibition to import books up until 1928 (Mezey, 2006, p. 53). In the Upper Hungary of the turn of the century, no strong Hungarian regional literary centres were formed, and there was also a lack of the buzzing intellectual life that characterised the Transylvanian cities of the time. It is partly due to this that, while there was a continued effort for self-organization and self-representation on the one hand, on the other hand the ambivalent attitude toward the possibility of the existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia can also be felt from the outset.

The area's separation from the general Hungarian literary life and the import ban on books led to a disruption of the centrum-peripheral model effective before, and the highly differen-tiated literary life in Budapest as a benchmark became inaccessible for some time for ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia—which also meant that the framework of the way of thinking about literature that previously appeared obvious had to be redefined, and the same for the way of thinking about community. When the national and territorial unity familiar from the 19th century ceased to exist, the previous reference system for thinking about literature, linking nation, language, culture and identity and previously providing a self-evident framework for

Hungarian literary history research (Rákai, 2015, p. 235), slackened. The concept of space, which used to be included in the historical structure of the Hungarian literature, changed and although writing in Hungarian remained the main criterion of belonging to the Hungarian literature, 'spatial sub-systems' developed with autonomous canons and institutions (Schein, 2019, p. 10). In his study, Gábor Schein outlined very precisely the context in which the Hungarian literature in Slovakia was (also) established:

> 'Local and Hungarian literary consciousness have both attributed special functions to the Hungarian literatures emerging in the successor states after Trianon since the earliest days. The abstract idea, which Toldy called the national spirit, found its expression in the sense of belonging to the region, in this particular form of being comfortable and in the preservation of the language together, which has become a kind of expectation and task toward authors living in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. So, while in the pre-Trianon era, the multitude of cities used to provide a multi-ethnic environment for identity formation, the signs of which are so obviously reflected in the prose of Jókai, Mikszáth, Krúdy, Kosztolányi and Márai, the Hungarian literary historiography later imposed the requirement of a kind of closed, static identity on authors of literature living on the other side of the borders of Hungary. This requirement also held value concepts and also served the function of moral control over literature and writers' identities' (Schein, 2019, p. 10).

It is worth tarrying with two phrases in the above quotation: the sense of belonging to the region and static identity.

The texts of the literary corpus linked to the region and originating between the two world wars sought to represent the specific Slovakian-ness by linking the language, a sense of belonging to the territory and identity, while also questioning their relationships from time to time. Some of these texts (primarily the novels of István Darkó, Mihály Tamás, Zoltán Vécsey and the poetry of Dezső Győry) attempted, on the one hand, to present the realignment, as a consequence of historical changes, of the relationships among language, identity, nationality and the space filled by the nation thus far supposed to be self-evident and, on the other, to put them in a new context, thus providing the conditions of self-recognition for a newly formed community.

This effort can also be felt in an attempt to create a new type of novel that can express new experiences and in which, precisely through this new experience, the Hungarian population in Slovakia could be represented (with more or less success) as a single community. 'Hungarian novels of destiny in Czechoslovakia' could even be regarded, due to the constant attempt to create them, as a separate branch of fiction.[3] First, Viktor Egri tried to present a description of the changing conditions in his work with a symbolic title (*A rácsablakos ház* (*The House with Lattice Windows,*1924)). This was followed by the novels of István Darkó (*Szakadék* (*Ravine*), 1928; *Égő csipkebokor* (*Burning Bush,* 1935; *Deszkaváros* (*City of Planks*), *1938*), Zoltán Vécsey (*A síró város* (*The Crying City*), 1931), Mihály Tamás (*Két part közt fut a víz* (*The Water Runs Between Two Banks, 1936*) and Viktor Szombathy (*Elesni nem szabad* (*It is Forbidden to Fall*), *1938*). These works treated the existential and moral problems, and the traumas caused by the

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[3]Several of them do consider it a separate branch of fiction, especially FÁBRY above, but also Endre KOVÁCS and László ZAPF as well. Some form of the phrase appears even in the title of several studies by László Miklós MEZEY: *Az idő és a történelem a szlovákiai magyar sorsregényben* (*Time and History in the Hungarian Novels of Destiny in Slovakia* (Mezey, 2006, p. 153) and *A szlovákiai magyar sorsregény kezdetei* (*The Beginnings of the Hungarian Novel of Destiny in Slovakia* (Mezey, 2010, p. 78–90).

serious social changes resulting from the exchange of state, haunting the everyday life of people turned into minority. The presentation of Hungarians in Slovakia as a homogeneous community (among the contemporary authors, primarily István Darkó) was also a matter of homogenisation—the community's primary definition being its spatial identity, and the differences arising from social, religious, social and gender differences becoming completely irrelevant beside the importance of sharing the destiny of the community.

In the meantime, in the contemporary literary journalism, a partly renewed model of thinking about literature also emerged, which modified the 19th century tradition by reducing the national framework for literature to the regional level on one hand and by broadening it (at least theoretically) to Central European on the other—placing the Hungarian literature in Slovakia into an imaginary cultural space that partly stayed below, partly went beyond the Hungarian national literature, while maintaining its tradition of connecting culture and identity. The restrictive nature of the concept of regionalism can primarily be detected in the editorial practices of the anthologies appearing one after the other (see in more detail in Csehy (2011) and Csehy (2012)) and in parts of the literary journalism during the period between the two wars— while it is journalism that expresses thinking within the Middle-European framework, at least as a desire, as a programme, this programme is, partly, also handed down to the later practices of Hungarian literary historiography in Slovakia (in particular in the case of Zoltán Fónod). However, the community-, social, identity-forming function of literature in the reformed models of thinking about literature continues to play a major role and, in reality, has even become an absolute value, which also appears in the era as a recurring argument against literary division. Gyula Farkas, the first to write about the development of Hungarian intellectual life in Slovakia with a view to summarising it, formulates this idea regarding the contrast between the literary concepts of writers in Košice and Bratislava as follows: '(…) Bratislava represented the insistence on national traditions, on the Christian world view, which Košice was willing to denounce as dilettantism and fustiness. Košice represented progress and literary modernity, which, in Bratislava's view, was lack of nationalism. In essence, the same contrast that divides the universal Hungarian literature into two parties. A similar fight, with similar slogans. But a lot more dangerous, *because literature in Upper Hungary is a true force for the maintenance of national identity* (emphasis by Zs. B.) and this power distribution nipped all welcome initiatives in the bud for years' (Farkas, 1927, p. 18). Farkas explains the contemporary lyric poetry being tuned to social issues by saying that 'The nation is no longer the same as the state, but only all the people speaking Hungarian, but that without exception: it includes master and peasant, rich and poor' (Farkas, 1927, p. 31). In the practice of understanding lyric poetry drawn up by Farkas, a homogenising procedure appears which allows for the interpretation of value and minority fate as supplementary categories and which (though with different emphases) is also reflected in so different minds as Gábor Kemény (Kemény, 1940, p. 73), Zoltán Fábry (Fábry, 1939, pp. 147–148), Endre Kovács (Kovács, 1932, p. 14) or in the 'minority genius' of Dezső Győry.

The idea of collective Slovakian-ness, as a procedure to understand literature exhibiting single works as a uniform literary corpus, is essentially based on the perception that the Transylvanian model is applicable to the situation in Slovakia. It appears in the work of Farkas (Farkas, 1927, p. 30); Endre Kovács, who calls for the discovery of Slovakian-ness based on the Transylvanian model (Kovács, 1932, p. 14); and Lajos Tamás, who thought that the spirit of Transylvania 'has more responsibility for its nation', its literature is 'more deeply Hungarian' and 'more earthbound', 'more closed' (Tamás, 1934, p. 162); but also with Zoltán Fábry. The

idealised model of Transylvanian-ness also appears in the work of László Zapf, who 'creates a world separated from the whole of Hungarian literature, with its own internal laws' (Csehy, 2011, p. 155).

However, the discovery of the region's mobile identity, which does not fit in with the concept of national identity at all, is seen as a disturbing notion for those who consider identity as a static phenomenon within the ideal of collective Slovakian-ness. In his study on the intellectual life of Hungarians in Upper Hungary, Farkas takes the national affiliation of the lyric poets he discusses in relation to literary life one by one, pointing out that 'in the homogeneous Hungarian literature, the race or national origin of writers is not a significant feature, not more than a tint; however, it is a key problem in the literature of Upper Hungary, as we are trying to prove below' (Farkas, 1927, p. 28). The issue of Transylvanian-ness, and the static identity associated with it, can serve as a useful basis of comparison for this problem. In the opinion of Farkas, separation from the Hungarian state has not become a problem for Transylvanians, 'because the concept of a single Hungarian state, which has always been one with the concept of the nation, has been replaced by the traditional sense of Transylvanian-ness for them' (Farkas, 1927, p. 30). Equalising the idea of the nation and the state, which Farkas replaces with the equalisation of the nation and Transylvanian-ness as a matter of course, is crucial in the quote. However, this model of idealised identity, suggesting continuity and a static nature together, is not applicable to Slovakian–Hungarian literature, where, once again in the words of Farkas, 'poets exist between two nationalities and seek to balance out their own inner duality' (Farkas, 1927, p. 31). The concept of the 'deeper Hungarian' Transylvanian literature put forward by Lajos Tamás (Tamás, 1934, p. 162) also implies a more superficial Hungarian (national) nature of the Slovakia-based literature: as something absent, something negative, as one can deduce from the tone of the article. Jenő Pintér, in the chapter 'Hungarian literature in Upper Hungary' of his literary history, roughly summarises the work of Gyula Farkas, describing it as something absent, something negative that 'beside pacifism, nationalism is still rather marginalised' in the emerging Hungarian literature in Slovakia (Pintér, 1928, p. 191). Aladár Schöpflin, in the matter of the Hungarian literature in Slovakia and Yugoslavia, also ascertains the "weaker expansiveness of Hungarians", together with less regional tradition and their dispersion, thereby explaining their weaker ability to reach the standard of universal Hungarian literature (Schöpflin, 1990, p. 417). The literary concept approaching literature from the direction of the tradition of nationality-based literary understanding cannot handle the mobile identity replacing static identity and is unable to recognize it as a key concept behind the self-representation attempts of the Hungarian literature in Slovakia between the two wars.

What appears negative on the one side means an addition on the other. Jenő Krammer (Krammer, 1937, p. 27), Pál Szvatkó (Szvatkó, 1994, p. 10) and Zoltán Fábry (Fábry, 1939, p. 147–148) find that special differentness precisely in the untraditional form of identity that lurks behind the Hungarian identity and literature in Slovakia. "We cannot be genuine, true-born, ur-natural Hungarians because if we were to show ourselves that kind, we would play a dishonest role. Our language has no taste, flavour, our images have not been shaped by the primeval Hungarian imagination, our Hungarian-ness is a profession, the role of a bridge and a constant state of being stretched between two worlds" (Krammer, 1937, p. 69).

The "the role of a bridge" was later, practically, reduced to the role of mediation among cultures, and the formation of the development of a mobile identity promoting literary understanding became marginalised. For a long time, papers with a literary-historical aspiration

that appeared after WWII did not ask about the literature comprehension design that lay behind the Slovakian literature of the twenties and thirties. The generation of the twenty-first century is returning to the age-old question of the literature of the region principally in terms of the contemporary literature: whether or not Hungarian literature exists in Slovakia.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Slovakian Hungarian prose in Slovakia after the change of regime in 1989

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ABSTRACT

The present study showcases the achievements of Slovakian Hungarian prose in the past three decades. It shows the changes in the literary institutional system brought about by the change of regime in 1989. It devotes detailed attention to the careers of Lajos Grendel and Alfonz Talamon; furthermore, it highlights some characteristic poetics and uses of language which resulted in intriguing works by Gábor Farnbauer, Attila Győry, Daniel Levicky Archleb, Zsófia Bárczi, József Gazdag, Norbert György, and Péter Hunčík. It also touches upon the experiments of the younger generation of prose writers such as Zoltán Szalay and Pál Száz.

INTRODUCTION

A unique characteristic of Hungarian literature is that it has become polycentric as a result of the political decisions and the social changes caused by the post-1918 restructuring of public administration. According to Péter Szirák, this cultural polycentricism, differing from other language cultures, had come into being through the territorial division of a unified national identity (Szirák, 1999, p. 403). This polycentric literature was published in regional canons –

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Romanian (Transylvanian), (Czecho) Slovakian (Upper Hungarian), Yugoslavian (Vojvodinian), Transcarpathian (Soviet Union), and Western (Western European, American, Australian) literature (Németh, 2013, p. 20).

Historical framework

(Czecho) Slovakian Hungarian literature goes back a hundred years and is usually divided into periods based on historical–political turning points. The term was coined after World War I, when the regions of Upper Hungary inhabited by Hungarians had become part of a new state following the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Geographically, they belonged to Czechoslovakia, but citizens of Hungarian nationality were not members of the new nation. Therefore, Hungarian people living there had to struggle to attain their positions, create their own cultural institutional system, and develop a new sense of self, all of which was a huge challenge in the 1920s, and literature took on a serious role in this. *Slovenskoism* was based on the experience of being different: Hungarians who ended up in Czechoslovakia differentiated themselves from Hungarians living in the mother country (i.e., in Hungary) while developing a new kind of relationship with the Czechs and Slovaks within a democratic state which provided a freer atmosphere than dictatorial Hungary, which retained semi-feudal characteristics. As a result of this change in position, the notion of *minority messianism* was born, according to which Hungarians separated from their center of culture and through their exceptional situation can show their nation new paths and can bridge the gap in a mediating role between the Hungarian and both Czech and Slovak cultures. However, after two decades of intense laying of cultural foundations, by virtue of the First Vienna Award in 1938 Hungary regained these territories inhabited by Hungarians; and as a result, the established structure of publishing houses and periodicals collapsed. In Tiso's first Slovak Republic in and around Bratislava and Nitra, there lived a significant number of Hungarians even after the First Vienna Award, but opportunities for publication had become very scarce for Hungarian intellectuals. Between 1945 and 1948, Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia were deprived of their civil rights because of an allegation of collective war crimes. During this period, also called the years of homelessness, in order to create a nation state via a forced population exchange, a great number of Hungarians living in Slovakia were forced to move to the Czech territories (in place of the Germans who had been driven away) and to Hungary (in place of the Slovaks living in Hungary who voluntarily moved back to Czechoslovakia). The Hungarians living in Slovakia could perhaps stay in their country of birth by reslovakization (which entailed the renunciation of their Hungarian nationality). This was a period of literary silence, since during the liquidation of minority institutions, Hungarian language periodicals and publishers were banned. The communist dictatorship established from 1948 on expected unconditional loyalty from Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia. As the situation gradually got back to normal, cultural life was reorganized in a strictly ideological framework: in 1958, *Irodalmi Szemle* [Literary Review], the first literary periodical in decades was started, and in 1969, the publishing house Madách Könyvkiadó was established. The fall of the communist regime, the so-called Velvet Revolution of 1989, brought about new changes, political pluralism, free-competition capitalism and the consumer society. Democratic Czechoslovakia split up in 1993 and the Hungarian population living there had to reposition itself in the independent Slovak Republic, often having to face political headwind.

Self-definition and self-representation

The changes of empires, borders and ideologies also affected literary processes: the regular halts in publishing and having to start anew forced the (Czecho) Slovakian Hungarian literature to constantly question its own existence (Hangácsi, 2017, p. 39). This shows itself in the diversity of names, in the problem of structures with modifiers (Bárczi, 2011a, p. 9): between the two World Wars, the term "Slovensko" Hungarian literature was in use (the term carries a territorial reference, Slovakia's place name used in Slovakian but with a Slovakian Hungarian transcription, which expresses the tension between foreignness and familiarity). During the time of totalitarianism, besides the geographical denominator (Czechoslovakian), the more general attributes of minority and nationality were also used, which are legal and political allusions to the relationship with the Czech and Slovak majority (the vulnerability to power), whereas the term "transborder," created from a motherland perspective, also raises the question whether center and periphery can be divided. After the change of regime in 1989, beside Slovakian Hungarian, the syntagm "upland Hungarian literature" also began to gain traction (the latter mainly in non-academic publications). All of the above variations call our attention to the restraining framework of cultural boundaries, the peripheral situation of literature.

The generation arising in the early 2000s also debated the durability and legitimacy of the notion of "Slovakian Hungarian literature" and deemed it unsuitable to describe the current state of events. One of the originators of this debate, Zoltán Németh, whose much-quoted essay, "Szlovákiai magyar irodalom: létezik-e vagy sem?" [Slovakian Hungarian literature: does it exist or not?], while offering numerous possibilities of categorizing the works and careers which might be grouped under the term, also brings face-to-face the two directions of thinking about Slovakian Hungarian literature. The first view primarily concentrates on the text itself, while the other emphasizes historical, social, cultural and territorial determination (Németh, 2004a, pp. 11–27). József Keserű suggests that Slovakian Hungarian literature should be discussed exclusively in an institutional sense: in the context of esthetic communication, he suggests using the more neutral term "minority" (Keserű, 2010, p. 79). In his further studies, Zoltán Németh repeatedly revisits the problem that in the minority literature approach, the question of identity versus language is decisive (Németh, 2013, p. 19). He identifies two different interpretations: according to the first one, Slovakian Hungarian literature is a specific literature which profits from the achievements of Hungarian and Slovak literature, and by discussing the fates of minorities, it also takes on a culture preserving role mediating through language. The second approach, on the other hand, posits that the language of Slovakian Hungarian literature is colloquial Hungarian; and as a result of this, these works are born out of different poetics and do not really share any special common characteristics (Németh, 2015, p. 82). Zoltán Csehy talks about a relationship oscillating between these two extremes, in which both aesthetics-based and devoted literature can exist, meaning that minority literature can be on the one hand the subcultural field for striving for emancipation, but on the other hand it is also a stigma borne by the author through assuming different (community) roles (Csehy, 2016, p. 168).

The institutional framework of (Slovakian Hungarian) literary life

As a result of the change of regime, the structure and conditionalities of (Czecho)Slovakian literary life have changed. Providing financial support was the biggest problem, which had been

heavily influenced by the relationship between the governing parties and the Hungarian community in Slovakia. Besides public sources, private individuals, foundations and local governments helped with publishing and arranging literary events. The Hungarian support system has also regularly contributed to providing the necessary financial background for Slovakian Hungarian literary life; but at the same time, granting of financial support has become subject to the expectations of political governments, especially in recent years.

Before 1989, socialist cultural policy kept the potentially subversive, anti-regime literary movements easily under control via its monolithic structures (a single, heavily censored publishing house and one periodical were allowed to exist), but after the change of regime, new magazines and publishing houses with individual profiles emerged one after the other. Besides *Irodalmi Szemle* that has been active since 1958, other venues appeared in the literary scene: *Kalligram* in 1992, *Szőrös Kő* in 1996, and *Opus* in 2006. These journals have certainly undergone changes throughout the years according to different editorial concepts. *Irodalmi Szemle*, currently headed by Attila Mizser, is a significant forum of contemporary literature (not only for authors living in Slovakia) which also stands out with its thematic blocks (e.g., transculturalism, pseudonym literature, Palóc Hungaro-futurism). Besides its printed version, it is also published with different contents online. *Kalligram* (with current editor-in-chief Sándor Mészáros) does have a strong canon-forming potential even on a pan-Hungarian level, thanks to the significant Hungarian and transborder authors published on its pages, its thematic issues and last but not least, its unique design (created by Tibor Hrapka). *Opus*, the journal of the Hungarian Writers' Association in Slovakia, opened up to the use of multimedia as well as both popular and fringe genres, especially under the editorship of Péter H. Nagy. (Recently, there has been a change of editors; the journal's profile under Péter Jancsó as editor-in-chief is still evolving.) *Szőrös Kő*, which is mainly published online these days (editor-in-chief: Attila Balázs F.), primarily provides publication opportunities for early-career writers. The extremely dynamic online cultural magazine, *dunszt.sk* (editor-in-chief: Zsolt Beke) has been around since 2016. It does not only reflect on literary (and artistic) processes but has also been publishing high quality literary material for the last few months.

Besides literary journals, publishing houses also have an important role. A number of new publishers: Kalligram Kiadó, Nap Kiadó, Lilium Aurum Kiadó, AB-Art Kiadó, Méry Ratio, Plectrum, Phoenix, and Pozsonyi Kifli have emerged alongside Madách Kiadó, which has undergone several changes after the change of regime. Among these, Kalligram, founded by László Szigeti, became the most prominent due to the unparalleled value it promotes both in terms of quality and quantity. As a transborder publishing house, it has succeeded in becoming an intellectual and cultural center that influences the development and history of pan-Hungarian and even Slovakian literature. All of this can be traced quite well by highlighting a few of their activities: they have published significant contemporary authors, from Miklós Mészöly through Endre Kukorelly, Szilárd Borbély, Zoltán Csehy, and Dénes Krusovszky to Zoltán Németh; their *Tegnap és Ma* [Yesterday and today] book series, which includes more than thirty monographs so far, leading literary scholars (e.g., Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, Péter Balassa, Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy, Beáta Thomka, Péter Szirák, Zoltán Németh) discuss and reinterpret oeuvres of artists like Géza Ottlik, Péter Nádas, Péter Esterházy, László Nagy, Miklós Mészöly, Lajos Grendel, and Alfonz Talamon, among others, applying up-to-date understanding of literature; it has also started a similar series with the aim of reevaluating important oeuvres of Slovakian literature; the publishing house has taken upon itself to publish critical editions of

canonical Hungarian authors (e.g., Dezső Kosztolányi and Gyula Krúdy); its book series *Mercurius Könyvek* [Mercurius Books] has provided opportunities for historical, sociological and linguistic scholarly analyses of the Slovakian Hungarian experience; it has called attention to Central Europe as a unified cultural sphere through the works of Czech, Polish, and Slovak authors (Bohumil Hrabal, Tadeusz Konwicki, Dominik Tatarka, and others); it has played a great role in introducing Hungarian literature (Sándor Márai, Péter Esterházy, Pál Závada, etc.) to Slovakia; etc. (Németh 2018, pp. 98–100).

As a result of the change of regime the cultural space became freer and more open, with more possibility to cross over: differing from earlier practice (only in exceptional cases could they publish their works in Hungarian periodicals abroad), the authors living in Slovakia could not only choose a forum from within the country but could publish in Hungarian and other transborder print journals (*Élet és Irodalom*, *Alföld*, *Bárka*, *Tiszatáj*, *Jelenkor*, *Műút*, *Prae*, *Korunk*, *Látó*, *Híd*) and online platforms (*szifonline.hu*, *kulter.hu*, etc.). It also happened that a poet, critic, literary historian living in Slovakia became the editor of a Hungarian journal for years (e.g., Zoltán Németh for *Új Forrás* between 2001 and 2006), or even editor-in-chief (Attila Mizser for *Palócföld* between 2008 and 2016). Thanks to the abolishing of cultural borders, authors living in Slovakia could become members of literary organizations (József Attila Kör [Attila József Circle], Szépírók Társasága [Society of Hungarian Authors], Fiatal Írók Szövetsége [Fellowship of Young Writers]), they were eligible for scholarships and awards (József Attila Prize, Kossuth Prize, Márai Prize, Bródy Prize, Artisjus Prize, Alföld Prize, etc.).

It is important to highlight that in the 90s, several discourses of literary theory living alongside each other provided frameworks of interpretation, and building upon these, a new generation of literary historians, theoreticians and critics (Krisztián Benyovszky, Zsófia Bárczi, Zoltán Németh, Zoltán Csehy, Anikó Polgár, József Keserű) emerged at the millennium. Its members, due to their theoretical knowledge, made studies and criticism a strong genre after their lack in earlier periods (Németh, 2003, p. 240). Not only did they reinterpret the already published works, but also generated an intense critical reception for fresh writings, helping them become canonized. At the same time they did not consider Slovakian Hungarian literature their exclusive field of analysis. In 2001 they founded the Sambucus Society of Literary Studies, and in 2006 they launched *Partitúra* [Partiture], a periodical of literary studies. This journal featuring theoretical treatises, analyses and reviews has been published by the Faculty of Central European Studies at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra since 2007, with Krisztián Benyovszky as editor-in-chief.

The national organization of the representatives of Slovakian Hungarian literacy, the Society of Czechoslovakian Hungarian Writers, was already formed in December 1989. From January 1993 on, under the name of Society of Slovakian Hungarian Writers, it has taken on the responsibility of protecting authors' rights and organizing literary life: it announces public calls (Pegazus, Arany Opus), organizes literary festivals and talent nurturing camps, hosts publications, establishes and awards prizes (Imre Forbáth Prize for poetry, Alfonz Talamon Prize for prose, Tibor Simkó Prize for children's literature, Lajos Turczel Prize for social science). From the 2010s on, a number of members have left the society in several waves because of their dissatisfaction with its functioning and mentality. In 2019, an independent organization was formed under the name Bázis – Magyar Irodalmi és Művészeti Egyesület Szlovákiában [Base – Hungarian Association of Literature and Art in Slovakia], with members including fine artists, dancers and actors alongside literary artists.

Tradition, antecedents

The constant interruptions characteristic of Slovakian Hungarian literature have also left their mark on the relationship to tradition. Authors often felt that they had to start anew, and for this reason they would battle heroically to establish a tradition. At the same time, Zoltán Csehy points out that everyone who sets foot in the literary space devoid of political or geographical boundaries has to face the Hungarian literary tradition and decide which values to embrace and renounce. "Only a dilettante lacks literary traditions, someone who hopes for a place for themselves in a narrowed down space" (Csehy, 2008 – The trans.). Zoltán Németh calls Slovakian Hungarian literature an offshoot literature, one that reflects the changes in Hungary with some delay, "living off of cultural morsels coming from the center that is Hungary." (Németh, 2004a, p. 26) It reflects ironically on the non-existent tradition, e.g., Lajos Grendel in his "Csehszlovákiai magyar novella" [Czechoslovakian Hungarian short story], and the "oeuvre" of Sándor Tsúszó, brought to life in the 90s by Zoltán Hizsnyai and later used as a collective mask or disguise.[1]

Between the two World Wars, the communal-social, identity-forming function of literature was brought to the fore, which resulted in the marginalization of the esthetic function (Bárczi, 2014, p. 19), and resulted in the proliferation of dilettantism. Although poetry was the dominant genre of the period, Zoltán Fábry and other literary critics urged the birth of a Czechoslovakian Hungarian novel to systematically examine the existential and moral concerns of individuals stuck in a minority position, as well as the changes brought about by the turn of political events (Bárczi, 2014, p. 24). This program could not be completely fulfilled by the dominant writers of the era, such as Mihály Tamás, István Darkó, Viktor Egri, Piroska Szenes, and Pál Neubauer; yet the expectation lived on in the second half of the century and only lost its primacy after the change of regime. In the interwar period, several different trends, poetics and interpretative styles lived side by side in the Slovensko Hungarian literature, from certain strands of esthetic modernism through the avant-garde to neo-rusticism.

Between 1948 and 1989, the ideological violence rooted in Marxist-Leninist principles left its mark on works of literature, the rules of which were dictated by the so-called socialist realist style. Politically loaded, generic works were born showing a manipulated image of reality. Due to the dilettantism of their formulation, these texts might appear as parodies to contemporary readers (Németh, 2010, p. 98). The intention of modernizing prose can be observed from the sixties, even in the case of authors who are considered representatives of realist prose, such as Gyula Duba and László Dobos. Also striving to create the Slovakian Hungarian novel, they both started experimenting with metaphorization, the deconstruction of linear structures, and film-like cuts. The unique prose language of Dezső Monoszlóy, who applied the "dream technique" and the circular structure, had a great effect on the members of the so called "Fekete szél" [Black Wind] generation[2] emerging in the seventies. Lajos Grendel, who also started out around this

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[1] Several poets and prose writers – e.g., Slovakian Alfonz Talmon, Zoltán Csehy, István Z. Németh, Hungarian Lajos Parti Nagy, Yugoslavian Bálint Szombathy, Transcarpathian Károly Balla D. – have published works under the pseudonym "Sándor Tsúszó". Moreover, fictitious studies have been written about the fictitious author, containing analyses of his fictitious volumes, and even situating his oeuvre in literary history (Németh, 2015, pp. 86–87).

[2] The authors included in the *Fekete szél* [Black Wind] anthology, edited by Gyula Duba and published in 1972: József Bereck, Antal Fülöp, Ferenc Keszeli, Magda Kovács, János Kövesdi, Anikó Mikola, Imre Varga, and Gábor Wurcel.

time, doubted the communicability of history, and placed the tradition of the Slovakian Hungarian novel in an ironic or absurd context (Bárczi, 2011b, p. 29).

In the 80s, members of the Iródia-movement or -generation found the Slovakian Hungarian theme to be unproductive, and they consciously connected themselves to the processes in Hungarian and world literature. Their most important authors – Alfonz Talamon, Gábor Farnbauer, Zoltán Hizsnyai, József Juhász R. – did not employ registers strengthening regionality but instead exploited the possibilities of esthetic creation of meaning, thus having a decisive effect on literary movements in the 90s (Németh, 2005a, p. 36).

Poetics, prose writers, oeuvres

1989 brought about a chiefly political change, of course, which created new possibilities, mainly in the construction of a literary establishment. But the changes in literary processes do not (necessarily or exclusively) depend on politics and cannot be linked to specific dates. In any case, the postmodern paradigm shift and the tendencies referred to as the "prose turn" taking place in Hungarian literature since the 70s also had a seminal effect on authors living in Slovakia. Zoltán Németh differentiates between three postmodernist strategies. The early postmodern responds to the challenges of existentialism and realism based on the experiences of late modernism: its characteristics are a sensitivity towards metaphysical problems, the inclusion of metanarrative elements, the multiplication of points of view, the play of identities, the imitation of style, the productive recycling of past experiences and textual forms, and the use of irony and parody (Németh, 2012, p. 16). Its most significant branch is magical realism, which walks the thin line between the realistic and the irrational, introducing a community through the use of myths, tales, and folklore in the course of its metaphorical storytelling. Németh groups the works of Miklós Mészöly, Péter Nádas, László Krasznahorkai, Ádám Bodor, János Háy, László Darvasi, Lajos Grendel, Norbert György, Gábor Kálmán, Zsófia Bárczi and others under the category of early postmodern. The second, so called "areferential" strategy of the postmodern builds on neo-avant-garde experiences on the material level of the text. According to the representatives of the paradigm referred to as "textual literature" – Péter Esterházy, László Garaczi, Lajos Parti Nagy, Gábor Farnbauer, among others – the text is the world itself: they consider reality outside of language illusory, which is why conscious intertextuality, rewriting, imitation of style, ironic-parodistic phrasings, an eclectic style, linguistic gags, and the mixing of registers become important for them (Németh, 2012, p. 24). An accompanying phenomenon of this strategy is the play of masked identities, from Esterházy's Lili Csokonai through Lajos Parti Nagy's Jolán Sárbogárdi to Zoltán Hizsnyai's Sándor Tsúszó. The third kind of postmodern (referred to as "anthropological") focuses on the questions of power, tackling social issues, the nature of otherness, and the displaying of marginal points of view. It takes inspiration from the experiences of postcolonial and feminist literatures. Autobiographical genres (diaries, memoirs, autobiographies) gain greater value (Németh, 2012, p. 35). Its representatives include Péter Esterházy, Pál Závada, Endre Kukorelly, György Dragomán, Krisztina Tóth, Lajos Grendel, Péter Hunčík, and Pál Száz. These three strategies of the postmodern are not strictly separate: all three of these might appear within a single oeuvre.

All these phenomena are also observable in the development of Slovakian Hungarian literature. The following sections will discuss this: I will highlight a few oeuvres of serious professional reputation as well as works elaborating on unique poetics, which will provide a possible pattern as we twist and turn the kaleidoscope of "Slovakian Hungarian literature".

The oeuvre of **Lajos Grendel** (1948–2018) is without a doubt among the most important achievements in contemporary Hungarian prose. His extraordinarily successful start and quick canonization was helped by a lively Hungarian reception, which viewed the author as one of the active participants of the prose turn. (The validity of the earlier interpretations was later doubted and further elaborated upon by later interpreters.) He is the only Slovakian Hungarian author featured in Ernő Kulcsár Szabó's literary history, in which he receives praise for the creation of his unique storytelling formula, developed from the language use of minority literary tradition, as shown in his novel trilogy *Éleslövészet* [Live-fire Shooting] (1981), *Galeri* [Gang] (1982) and *Áttételek* [Transpositions] (1985) (Kulcsár Szabó, 1993, p. 167). Examining his early prose, Péter Szirák pointed out that Grendel recognized the boundaries of dialogic ability of the Slovakian Hungarian literary tradition and the deficiencies of its esthetic values, and therefore – influenced by Miklós Mészöly and Péter Esterházy, among others – he set off in a different direction: on the one hand, he was interested in the wider sphere of the Hungarian epic tradition – Gyula Krúdy and the turn-of-the-century short story writing – and on the other, in the French *Nouveau Roman* (Szirák, 1998, p. 106). In the novels *Éleslövészet* and *Galeri*, the mediated nature of the past, the loss of trust in the communicability of history, the blurring of lines between fiction and reality and the thematizing of the discontinuity of personal and social existence all have central roles. From a narrative perspective, he chooses to break linear time, disregards cause and effect, uses mosaic-like editing, and applies the marked distancing of story and storytelling and the multiplication of metanarrative elements. Zoltán Németh assumes that the view of history in Grendel's early novels had an effect on the (pseudo)historical novels which appeared in great numbers in the 90s: the works of János Háy, László Darvasi, and Zsolt Láng (Németh, 2015a, p. 85). Also, in *Áttételek*, the conjuring up of the past has an important role as it balances out the protagonist-narrator's empty life. In this story of decline, self-analytical and self-reflective passages are built into the storytelling.

In Grendel's novels published at the turn of the decade and in the early 90s, one can observe a point of view perpetually questioning the individual's existential situation. *Szakítások* [Breakups] (1989) introduces the story of a love triangle into a moral parable of clashing ways of living. In *Thészeusz és a fekete özvegy* [Theseus and the Black Widow] (1991), focusing on personal crisis, he establishes an intertextual connection with *Szakítások*, while narrowing down the space for procedures of creating meaning of myth deformation (Szirák, 1998, p. 110). In *Einstein harangjai* [Einstein's Bells] (1992), the author exposes the operating mechanisms of Eastern European absurd systems in a fictitious autobiography, while presenting the falling apart of the protagonist-narrator's personality in a farcical way. *És eljön az ő országa* [And His Kingdom Shall Come] (1996) intends to portray the period leading up to and following 1989. According to Zoltán Németh, the novel may be interpreted from the perspective of Central European catastrophism, which conveys the crisis of a shaken trust in the freedom and self-image of a personality (Németh, 2000a, p. 138). The critic does not differentiate between various stages of his oeuvre; instead, he calls attention to Grendel's "shifts in style", which do not necessarily coincide with the textual boundaries of the novels. He differentiates five types of *language*: the first one is the decentralized-deconstructed-relativized post-historical text (*Éleslövészet*); the second one is the anecdotal, investigative writing organized of fragments of ethical relativisms (partly *Éleslövészet*, *Galeri*, partly *Áttételek*); the third one is the monological stream of consciousness based on existentialism (partly *Áttételek*, then *Szakítások*); the fourth one is the ironic, world-modeling, absurd fictionality (partly *Szakítások*, then *Thészeusz és a*

fekete özvegy, E. harangjai, És eljön az ő országa) (Németh 2000b, p. 151). The 1999 *Tömegsír* [Mass Grave] markedly breaks with the fictionality strongly present in the previous three or four novels and establishes its new language under the banner of hyperrealist rhetoric, the emphatic referentiality of which can be related to that of minimalist prose (Németh, 2000b, p. 157).

This is continued in the novel *Nálunk, New Hontban* [In Our New Hont] (2001), which, employing the tradition of Mikszáth, returns to the prose language used in *Galeri*. The parodistic, slapstick-like fictitious anecdotal elements not only portray the struggles of the inhabitants of a fictitious small town after 1945, but also tell the story of the Central European colonization of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia (Németh, 2005b, p. 81). In New Hont, Grendel creates the present mythology of the province by telling satirical stories of the loss of mythology (Bányai, 2007, p. 49). *Mátyás király New Hontban* [King Matthias in New Hont] (2005) combines two storylines and paints an ironic picture of the fates of those who lost out on the change of regime, shown from an insider's perspective (Elek, 2006). The critical reception of *Tömegsír*, *Nálunk, New Hontban* and *Mátyás király New Hontban* treats these novels as a trilogy.

Among Grendel's later novellas, *Négy hét az élet* [Life Is But Four Weeks] (2011) stands out, in which he examines what kind of memory could be created in a web of silence and lies (Horváth, 2012). This "elimination novel" takes account of the disappearance of the Hungarian middle class with a splayed narrative technique similar to that of *Éleslövészet*. His final work *Bukott angyalok* [Fallen Angels] (2017) conducts acts of processing the past and, like most of Grendel's works, brings its protagonist and readers face-to-face with the basic questions of existence.

According to Zoltán Csehy, several of Grendel's texts unfold in a space within a political and poetic margin of tolerance. His way of writing could even be called a public aesthetics, which "paradoxically only appears to be radically new: in reality, it approaches traumatic questions very "tactfully". This tactfulness, however, opens up a way for the inclusion of otherness and in the end becomes the key to a discourse" (Csehy, 2016, p. 170).

Grendel's works also affect Slovak literature. Thanks to translator Karol Wlachovský, his works were also available in Slovakian almost simultaneously with their original publication. He influenced authors such as Vladimír Balla, Ján Litvák, Václav Pankovčín and Pavol Rankov. According to Wlachovský, besides Pavol Vilikovský, Grendel is the most widely translated Slovakian author, who contributed to Slovakian Hungarian literature's breaking out of its regional boundaries (Keresztesová, 2016, p. 20).

Alfonz Talamon (1966–1996) had only a good decade of creative work in his tragically short life, yet penned such texts that attracted the attention of leading critics and literary historians. His start can be linked to the Iródia Group, which would constantly seek out new voices. Although usually Grendel is mentioned as one of Talamon's masters, and his short stories and novel convey an experience of otherness, they should not be interpreted in the context of (Czecho)Slovakian literature but in the wider context of world literature (those of Latin American magic realism as well as the Central European absurdism, marked primarily by the names of Kafka and Hrabal) (Németh, 2001, p. 52). Already his first volume *A képzelet szertartásai* [Rituals of Imagination] (1988) showcased, with its many voices and layers, his exceptional writing skills, with short stories including the volume's eponymous piece, or "Az éjszaka árkádsorai" [Archways of the Night], *A pikádorok ivadéka* [Offspring of the Picadors], and "A nap, melyen ledőlt az első kiszáradt eperfa" [The Day the First Dead Mulberry Tree Fell].

In 1992, he published a novel, *Gályák Imbrium tengerén* [Galleys on the Sea of Imbrium], which shows the hardships of the protagonist wandering in the labyrinth of inscrutable power from a double perspective. The story is punctuated by dream scenes, with fantasy and reality constantly overriding each other (Németh, 2001, p. 135). The volume titled *Az álomkereskedő utazásai* [The Travels of the Dream Peddler] (1995) contains seven short stories, and it deals with the themes of the dominance of dreams and imagination, travel, an anxiety caused by the uncontrollable factors endangering the individual, the fetishization of women, and the father as someone to identify with as well as a source of danger (Németh, 2001, p. 198).

One of the most often emphasized features of Talamon's prose is the monological narration, which conveys the lonesome protagonist's anxieties and peregrination – sometimes in the first person singular, sometimes addressing the self, or through a third person singular free indirect speech (Németh, 2001, p. 157). His narrator-protagonists are characters losing or constantly altering their identity, who are incapable of communication, have drifted to the margins of the human community, who only feel at home in the world created by their overactive imagination and dreams where they can live out their schizophrenic, sexual, narcissistic desires. Many of the stories attempt to record a certain state of consciousness, the defining element of which is self-interpretation. Self-reflections on the one hand thematize creativity-related sufferings, while on the other hand they culminate in self-deprecating comments. The observable metanarrative processes include self-reflection through visuality (Keserű, 2000a). It is noteworthy that the constructed experiencing selves are indifferent to concrete life situations and to their social constraints (Németh, 2001, p. 163). An important organizing principle of the text is remembering: it often cuts the text into parts, keeping the referential context of the story in motion (Németh, 2001, p. 114). With his long sentences generated by automatic writing, Talamon creates a textual world with a special atmosphere: one can witness the uncontrollable proliferation of language through the intertwining, twisting, attractive syntax teeming with surreal imagery, which sweeps away the illusion of the recordability of meaning (e.g., *A pikádorok ivadéka*). His orgiastic texts, in which sometimes the subject of writing gets lost, offer readings that are perpetually self-destructive (Németh, 2001, pp. 109–110). The "megasentence", which can take up the entire text itself (e.g., *Az ősök földje* [Ancestral Land]), has become the author's trademark.

Talamon's posthumous work, written under the pseudonym "Samuel Borkopf", is titled *Barátaimnak, egy Trianon előtti kocsmából* [To My Friends from a Pub before Trianon]. In its extensive critical reception, there have been several suggestions as to its genre: it can be read as a string of short stories and as a novel as well. The former is supported by the fact that the individual texts are only connected by the person of the narrator-author. If read as a novel, the interchangeability of chapters facilitates a combinatorial reading (Nagy, 1998). Straightforward categorization is also difficult as the volume remains unfinished because of the author's death. The basic plot of the text features an innkeeper in a multi-ethnic village who tells entertaining stories to his patrons. Members of his audience also appear in the stories, showing that the storyteller is interested in recalling and reconstructing shared memories, in keeping the community's memory alive (Nagy, 1998), especially as these friends are not in fact present (they have either left or died). The narrator turns the clumsy characters into heroes, transforms their deeds into legends, endowing the time of the story with a mythical dimension (Keserű, 2000b). As a new element compared to the earlier volumes, the storytelling in *Barátaimnak...* activates irony in its different manifestations: paralleling or interchanging the sacred and the profane (e.g.,

comparing events in national history to the deeds of the characters), the misinterpretation of historical events, the characters being underinformed (Keserű, 2000b). According to Péter Rácz I., Talamon's posthumous volume is a remarkable continuance of the anecdote-style storytelling of Hungarian prose tradition. Its mode of storytelling that pits linguistic realities against a world outside language, contributing significantly to the realignment of contemporary Hungarian prose writing and reading (Rácz I., 1999, p. 224).

One of the most enigmatic and confusing books of the 90s is the "thought novel" *Az ibolya illata* [The Scent of the Violet] (1992) by **Gábor Farnbauer** (1957). It creates a completely new genre without any existing tradition, and (also) discusses its own creation and existence as a text. Each and every totalizing reading of the book is doomed to fail. It is a text, lingering at the borders among a critical review, an essay, and a study, that traces the meandering within the text and the movements through different intra- and intertextual relations. Its dominant stylistic modality is that of conceptuality, the seriousness of which is constantly counterbalanced by irony (Benyovszky, 2004a, pp. 70–72). The narrator strives to de-write the subject: instead of actual characters, thoughts are made the protagonist, while the narrator remains a developing self with a bound perspective whose identity unfolds in a series of events in a process of self-discovery (Beke, 2004, p. 82). One of the unique characteristics of Farnbauer's language use is the strong presence of an essayistic quality, infused with the conceptual apparatus and logical reasoning of the language of natural science (Vida, 2004, p. 92). Verbal language is limited to the representation of the perceptible but it can be substituted with the combinatorial language of mathematics. The subject attempts to create a language that makes it possible to control the infinite (Vida, 2004, p. 95). It also contains visual effects and expands the possibilities of linguistic play. As to its form, a parallel can be drawn with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Németh, 2005c, pp. 114–115). The thought novel also warns that, due to the figurative nature of language, the exact sciences can also become parts of literature (Németh, 2005c, p. 123).

Attila Győry (1967) attracted attention mainly by his inclusion of the punk subculture in his work. His writings thematizing sex, drugs, rebellious border-crossing and self-indulgence found in his volume of short stories *Vércsapolás* [Tapping Blood] (1992) were seen as a breaking of taboos, made even more prominent by their frequent use of slang and obscene language. His 1993 novel *Kitörés* [Break-out] is the Slovakian Hungarian version of the picaresque novel (Kocur, 1999): its vagabond punks experience the bliss of freedom during their adventures in Western Europe and recognize their earlier constraints. Elements of biopoetics are also present in the text, with bodily needs playing a major role. The short stories in *Az utolsó légy* [The Last Fly] (1995) are still characterized by their outspokenness, but the crisis of the punk subculture can also be felt. Győry's novel *Ütközés* [Collision] (1997) is an attempt at creating the Hungarian cyberpunk novel. In a globalized, multicultural world, its aberrant characters struggling at the fringes of society lead a computer-driven "techno-pop" lifestyle: with the help of drugs and the internet, they end up in a virtual reality and have multi-sensory experiences. The protagonists of *Kerékkutya* [Wheel Dog] (2002) are misfit big-city intellectuals and artists, driven by their will to and ultimate desire for pleasure (drugs, sex, alcohol, eating, meditation). Győry organizes the reading of the novel along the dealing of tarot cards which questions concerning existence through language, sexuality, (card)play, and the identity generated by coincidence within them (Németh, 2004b, p. 286).

Daniel Levicky Archleb (1975) tells us about a post-apocalyptic world following an era of catastrophes. His "novel of passing" *Aua és Atua* [Aua and Atua], co-written with his (fictitious) co-author Upor Tonuzaba, employs the code of SF and dystopian novels: it presents its characters (and the reader) with an extreme image of the future. In his interpretation, civilization may be responsible for the destruction of nature, and thus, his heroes strive to eliminate civilization. Ridding themselves of their moral obligations, they fight against their construed enemies under the banner of different (compatible, interchangeable, even contradictory) ideologies, such as green ideology, racism, or feminism. Through the depiction of a series of problems, the inclusion of horrifying scenes, and the brutality of expression, the novel shocks and removes the reader from established norms, while also creating a dilemma of interpretation, forcing them to confront their own existential predetermination (Keserű, 2004, p. 242).

Zsófia Bárczi (1973) has remarkable volumes of short stories to her name. The works found in *A keselyű hava* [The Month of the Vulture] (2004) create a complex textual universe relying on different literary traditions, e.g., magic realism and Eastern tales. A recurring motif of this prose world is the miracle, revealing itself through events that contradict the laws of nature. Other plot-forming forces are the secret, which provides a space for forms of withholding, the presence of images with magical functions, and the interactions among texts and images (Benyovszky, 2004b, p. 226). In connection with the short stories in the volume, Zoltán Németh highlights the emphatic and complex depiction of female fate and female storytelling as well as the colorful play on the possibilities of female writing, in which womanhood is portrayed as something exotic, a mood and a nostalgia, a transcendent, mystical, and elusive identity that suffers under authority (Németh, 2009). The volume entitled *Vidéki lyányok énekeskönyve* [Songbook of Country Gals] (2018) can be read as a special kind of breviary: it contains a multitude of genres and voices, ranging from folktale-like stories to scientific treatises. The stories are often set in a university or library environment, which sets their tone and linguistic register. The most important common feature of the texts is the author's intellectual humor and her irony stemming from linguistic ingenuity (Csanda, 2019).

The volume of short stories *Kilátás az ezüstfenyőkre* [A View of Silver Firs] (2004) by **József Gazdag** was met with an exceptional recognition in literary circles. Its interpreters praise Gazdag's extraordinary skill as a writer, the defining features of which are the closedness of the world he depicts, a monological way of speaking, the vivid depiction of the world of physical objects, the richness of his space and world construction, cinematic imagery, linguistic suggestiveness, and reductionism (Keresztesi, 2004, pp. 1,297–1,299). Its protagonists – lonely and unable to communicate – steadily end up trapped in existential conflict. His volume entitled *Egy futballfüggő naplójából* [From the Diary of a Soccer Maniac] (2015) also received significant attention: it creates a unique genre by merging the op-ed (soccer reportage), short fiction (feuilleton), and the essay. In these tightly written texts, soccer transcends itself: it becomes the interpretant of existence and literature (Varga, 2017).

Norbert György (1972) published his novel entitled *Klára* [Claire] under a "pseudonym" created by switching up his first and last names (György Norbert). The novel shows the stages of the protagonist's search for identity while wandering in a multicultural linguistic space. Its poetic program was to create an artificial, hybrid novel language by including Slovak-Hungarian contact phenomena as well as English phrases and textual fragments, thus giving up on the

illusion of a sterile literary language, and taking part in the local, mental, linguistic, and personal positioning of foreignness (Csehy, 2016, p. 174).

The novel *Határeset* [Borderline case] (2008) by **Péter Hunčík** (1951), with its anecdotal editing, also has its characters move around in a multicultural Hungarian–Slovak–Jewish milieu, thematizing the conflicts of minority existence. It can be interpreted as a text evoking geocultural modes of reading that expresses a markedly Central European worldview using rhetorical tools characteristic of magic realism (Keserű, 2017, p. 88).

Zoltán Szalay (1985) has published three volumes of short stories (*Ártatlanság* [Innocence], 2006; *A kormányzó könyvtára* [The Governor's Library], 2010; *Felföld végnapjai* [The Last Days of the Uplands], 2017) and three novel (la)s (*Nyelvjárás* [Dialect], 2007; *Drága vendelinek* [Dear Vendelins], 2014; *Faustus kisöccse* [Faustus' Little Brother], 2019), all of which are characterized by a tension between the desire to tell a story and a questioning of the evolution and existence of the text (Márton, 2019; Melhardt, 2020, p. 569). His texts use philosophical elements and mythic and apocalyptic visions, and they often revolve around absurd Eastern European life situations, tales of decline, and the traps of becoming a writer. He is no stranger to ironic and satirical imagery. His novels can also be of interest due to their revitalization of the codes of the artist-, career-, devil-, meta-, and social novel.

Pál Száz (1987) published his first volume titled Arcadia in 2011, in which he displays his exceptional linguistic creativity: he creates two parallel textual worlds in the love story, mixing the tropes of classicism, rococo, and sentimentalism, and the love comedy made up of Renaissance clichés (Bazsányi, 2011). *Arcadia* can be read as a study of style and a parody as well. His collection of short stories *Halott föld, halott lányok* [Dead Land, Dead Girls] (2013) makes use of the *Noveau Roman* technique, among others. The author's phytolegendry entitled *Fűje sarjad mezőknek* [Grass Grows on Meadows] (2017) attracted the greatest attention. This unique genre establishes a fruitful connection with a diverse range of textual traditions, from the Bible through mystery plays, fables and herbaria to contemporary works (Mellár, 2018). The loose string of phytoaphorisms, phytoicons, phytoenigma, phytolegends, and phytoanecdotes evokes the past of a village community and a family in it through the gestures of folk storytelling and oral history. The special feature of the legendry is its use of a regional dialect ("mátyusföldi", "maradi") which is made "spectacular" due to the verbatim transcription of the dialectic elements, while also drawing a multilingual, multicultural region through Slovak-Hungarian contact phenomena, loanwords, and hybrid-language sentences (Petres Csizmadia, 2018, p. 85). Its most basic innovation is that the use of dialect does not serve the aim of getting to know folk life or the preservation of traditional linguistic forms in Száz's stylized sociolinguistic space; instead, certain elements of the non-standard language constitute the patterns of thought of certain characters, which are in turn supplemented by the languages of literary tradition (Csehy, 2016, pp. 184–185).

Among the prose writers emerging in the 2010s, **Gábor Kálmán** (1982) is worthy of attention with his short story cycle/novel entitled *Nova* (2011), set on the Hungarian-Slovak language border and containing stories of deterioration, as well as with his "father novels" *Temetés* [Funeral] and *Janega Kornél szép élete* [The Beautiful Life of Kornél Janega]. The same goes for **István Veres** (1984), with his collection of short stories *Galvánelemek és akkumulátorok* [Galvanic Cells and Batteries] (2011), and his novel *Dandaranda* (2013), which brings into play the feeling of cultural foreignness; and **Noémi Bogyó** (1970), with her novel *Vakfoltok* [Blindspots] (2017) thematizing the change of regime. Based on their work published in

periodicals, the forthcoming volumes of prose by **Hajnal Csilla Nagy** (1992) and **Tamás Plo-niczky** (1990) are also highly anticipated.

SUMMARY

The post-1989 political and cultural processes shattered the closed framework of "Slovakian Hungarian literature". Postmodern strategies resulted in extremely versatile, multi-layered, and often highly original textual worlds of prose and oeuvres, which, also falling short of being a paradigm-changing force, stepped out of the scope of regional aesthetics, garnered attention and earned a place in the contemporary (pan-)Hungarian literature.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Transcultural phenomena in contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose

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ABSTRACT

In my study I deal with the transcultural liteary-spacial position of contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose. I have selected the works for interpretation from the representative writings of the last five years (Katarina Durica: *Szlovákul szeretni [To love in Slovak]*. Libri, Budapest, 2016; Anikó N. Tóth: *Szabad ez a hely? [Is this seat free?]*. Pesti Kallgiram Kft., Budapest, 2017; Pál Száz: *Fűje sarjad mezőknek [Grass grows on meadows]*. Pesti Kalligram Kft., Budapest, 2017). Due to their diversity in genre, language and subject, these works provide a cross-section of contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose. The peculiarity of the corpus is that it reflects on the hibridity, inter- and multiculturalism typical for Central-European literature (cf. Welsch, 1999), and it also demonstrates translocality, multiculturalism, multilingualism and the experience of using multiple language varieties.

Toward the end of twentieth century, studies of international literature emphatically began to reflect on societal and cultural processes that relativize globalized, bi- and multilingual, and national perspectives (Németh and Roguska, 2018, p. 5), and approach literature in a wider context, through the lens of transculturalism. Transnational or transcultural approaches to literature focus on the gesture of border crossing (broadly construed), and direct attention to the

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crossing over, permeation and hybridization of local, homogeneous characteristics (Jablonczay, 2015, pp. 137–138). It is no accident, therefore, that transcultural interpretations of literature apply methodologies that are closely related to those of postcolonialism, migrant literature, multiculturalism and *littérature mineure* (minority literature), all of which consider topics like multilingualism, multinationalism, dislocation, or xenism in the textual spaces of literature (Németh, 2018, p. 5).

Slovakian Hungarian literature, a minority literature marked by various debates on terminology (viz. Ardamica, 2006; Bárczi, 2014, pp. 9–16; Keserű, 2010; Németh, 2005) includes a corpus which is linked, on a thematic/linguistic/geographic level, to the Slovakian Hungarian community, their language use, and the problematic of defining the Slovakian Hungarian identity. The Hungarian literature of Slovensko/Czechoslovakia/Slovakia lacks poetic unity; its cohesion is based on geographical and linguistic identification. Its recorded history goes back to post-World War I border changes, when the parts of Upper Hungary (*Felvidék* in Hungarian, formerly a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) with a significant Hungarian population became parts of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), the Second Czechoslovak State (1945–1989), the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (1989–1993), and finally, Slovakia (since 1993) (Szarka, 1996). Following the first border changes, Hungarians of former Upper Hungary were cut off from the literary and cultural life of Hungary, and from the early 20th century on were forced to develop their own literary traditions, to establish a (Czecho) Slovakian Hungarian literature. At the onset, it focused on the community- and identity-building, societal functions of literature, reflecting the needs of a Hungarian community scarred in its national identity (Bárczi, 2014, pp. 18–23). Zoltán Németh points out that for this reason, the Hungarian/Upper Hungarian literature of (Czecho)Slovakia/Slovensko has primarily defined itself through the concepts of "a bridge between cultures," "vox humana" and "minority genius," i.e., on the border between Hungarian and Slovak cultures. Another, equally significant strand of the (Czecho)Slovakian Hungarian literary corpus distanced itself from such an understanding, and considered itself part of a single Hungarian literature, citing the common language of literatures in Hungary and abroad as well as the texts' lack of reflection on local/regional/bi-national coexistence. According to Németh, interpreting Slovakian Hungarian literature using a transcultural framework could help resolve, or at least develop a more nuanced approach to, this dilemma of self-definition: a transculturally-based interpretation of texts considers the transcultural positions of author, text, reader and context, and internalizes and reconciles the two different approaches to the corpus in an inclusive way (Németh, 2019, pp. 12–15).

Contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose is closely connected to Central European literary trends that markedly reflect the experience of penetrating cultural barriers by dealing with themes of hybridity, mixedness, permeability, and inter- and multiculturalism (Welsch, 1999) and refuse patterns of incorporation into a homogeneous culture and the exclusivity of interpretation through a national literature (Németh, 2018, p. 9). This paper traces developments of the poetics of transcultural phenomena through a selection of representative texts of Slovakian Hungarian literature published in recent years that have garnered significant critical attention and provide a cross-section of contemporary Slovakian Hungarian literature through their generic, linguistic and thematic diversity. I consider the selected works – *Szlovákul szeretni* [To Love in Slovakian] by Katarina Durica (Budapest: Libri, 2016), *Fűje sarjad mezőknek* [Grass Grows on Meadows] by Pál Száz (Budapest: Pesti Kalligram, 2017), and *Szabad ez a hely?* [Mind If I Sit Here?] by Anikó N. Tóth (Budapest: Pesti Kalligram, 2017) – through the lenses of multiculturalism, multilingualism and translocality.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MULTICULTURALISM

In the interwar period, Czechoslovakian Hungarian writers were striving to create a "novel of the Czechoslovakian Hungarian destiny," a "minority novel" on the themes of the experience of living in Slovensko and the Slovakian Hungarian identity (Bárczi, 2014, pp. 18–23). The novels *Vakfoltok* [Blind Spots] (2017) by Noémi Bogyó and *Szlovákul szeretni* (2016) by Katarina Durica[1] both fit into this tradition, which is still very much alive. I will discuss the manifold, transcultural approach to Slovakian Hungarian identity and the complex web of connections to space and nationality through Durica's novel that reflects both the author's autobiography and her personal experiences as a journalist.

The novel follows and describes the characters' lives during two distinct periods, in the 1980s under socialism, and in the 2010s of the so-called capitalist era. The primary common denominator among the characters is their experience of the lack of a sense of home and of community roots, which mainly stems from their complex ethnic and geographic backgrounds. The novel seeks to be documentary in style (Gágyor, 2016) and it can be seen as a "display novel" about Slovakian Hungarians: through the characters' recollections and the references to key historical events, it aims to provide a cross-section of the life experiences of Slovakian Hungarians since World War 2, and – primarily through articulating ethnic stereotypes – it covers the relationship between majority and minority populations, i.e., between Slovaks and Slovakian Hungarians. The novel provides an overview of "minority history" and offers insights into the daily life and layered identity of the Slovakian Hungarian community, mainly for readers with little or no knowledge about this group: with the exception of the character called Sali, who hails from Africa, all major characters in the novel are of Slovakian Hungarian descent, from Dunaszerdahely[2] and the surrounding island of Csallóköz.[3] As a result of historical-political developments, one group of characters were forcibly expelled from their homes and deported: they were either resettled to Hungary[4] after World War 2 (e.g. Szabi's ancestors), or they fled to Western countries from the Communist dictatorship[5] (e.g. Aunt Vali and her family). Another group left their native country in hopes of a better life (e.g. Petra), whereas a

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[1]Katarina Durica is a journalist of Slovakian Hungarian descent, the author of three volumes of prose, currently living in Budapest. Minority living and the identity constructs of minorities are prevalent themes in both her journalistic and literary work. Her second (*Szlovákul szeretni*, 2016) and third novels (*A rendes lányok csendben sírnak* [Nice Girls Cry Silently.], 2018) both deal with stories of Slovakian Hungarians from the second half of the 20th century.

[2]Dunajská Streda in Slovakian.

[3]Žitný ostrov in Slovakian.

[4]Being on the losing side, after World War 2, the northern regions of Hungary were attached to the newly-established Czechoslovakian state, and ethnic Hungarians living there were considered war criminals. Under the Beneš decrees, part of the ethnic Hungarian population was either deported for forced labor to the Czech lands, or was relocated to Hungary, calling it "population transfer." The "expulsions" mentioned in the novel meant the forcible deportation and relocation of Hungarian inhabitants of Csallóköz to Hungary. Following the expulsions, family members living in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia were only allowed to meet subject to official permission (Vadkerty, 2007). Characters in the novel living in different countries could only see one another when attending funerals.

[5]In 1968, an attempt to weaken the Communist dictatorship took place in Czechoslovakia. The ensuing more democratic atmosphere lasted for only a few months before it was ended by the incursion of the Soviet army. The restrictions and cleansings following the revolution led many to emigrate to Western European countries (Szarka, 1996); in the novel, this is how Aunt Vali and her family ended up in Switzerland.

third group remained at home (pl. Erika and Feri). The geographically dispersed characters face dilemmas around the questions of who they are and where they belong: the notions of 'homeland', 'home', 'native country', 'nation' and 'mother tongue' become blurred for them, and they can only interpret these in a hybridized, permeated way. One of the key features of the novel is the way it unravels the personalities of Slovakian Hungarian characters living in Csallóköz and of those living abroad in parallel, and grounds their identity issues in the complexity of their spatial relationships and their attitudes toward their problematic and complicated national and familial past. In this way, the novel relays the simultaneously familiar and alien, transcultural experience of being stuck between different spaces, languages and nationalities.

The novel has a well-construed structure, evidenced by the fact that it first introduces the paradoxical experience of cultural foreignness and familiarity through a meeting between characters hailing from different, very distant places, followed by the depictions of exchanges between characters living at closer and closer to one another, without ever mitigating the sense of cultural foreignness drawn up along the lines of ethnic, national and cultural stereotypes. The foreignness of different continents, that is, the opposition of the European and African realms is primarily seen through the eyes of European-born protagonist Petra, who used to work trading antiques in Africa for a few months. The sense of foreignness stems from a sense of cultural primacy, a hierarchical relationship between the West and the Global South; it is organized along the lines of Western stereotypes regarding Africa, and becomes manifest through existential anxieties, manic disinfecting (Durica, 2016, pp. 11) and developing quasi-ritualistic means of protection against malaria (Durica, 2016, p. 19). Yet the image of Africa seen from the perspective of an outsider changes into an insider's sense of familiarity as the protagonist gradually settles in and is reminded of scenes from her childhood by the desolation of the neighborhood and the apathy of the locals. *A maguk elé bambuló, cigarettázó öregemberek, az egyforma szürkeség, a káromkodó kamaszok, akik sosem mulasztották elmondani, hogy mit és hová tennének nagyon szívesen, ha egy fiatal lány ment el előttük, mind nagyon ismerősek voltak Petrának. Ez volt ugyanis az ő megszokott, otthoni közege, ebben nőtt fel, és ebből sikerült "kivakaródznia". Igen, így mondták ezt Ligetfaluban, Pozsony panelrengetegében* (Durica, 2016, p. 36). [The old men smoking and staring in front of themselves; the uniform grayness; the swearing teenagers, who never forgot to emphasize what they would love to put and where every time a young girl walked by; all these felt utterly familiar to Petra. This was, after all, her well-known, homely atmosphere she grew up in and managed to "scrape" herself out of. Yes, that's how they used to put it in Ligetfalu, in the concrete jungles of Bratislava]. Later on, the novel plots out connections not only between African and Central European (or, in the novel's terms, Eastern European) spaces but also a parallel between the impossibility of coming to terms with the past for their respective inhabitants: Sali, a native African survivor of the massacres in Rwanda, considers silence and the fleeing of one's homeland the most acceptable method of processing one's past, as does Slovakian Hungarian Petra, having seen her share of . . .*kelet-európai családi traumákat* (Durica, 2016, p. 273) [Eastern European family traumas].

Experiences of foreignness in the different continents also become apparent within a hierarchical cultural relationship between Western Europe and Central Europe. Petra is a particularly good example as she experiences a number of different cultures: hailing from Csallóköz, she grew up a Hungarian girl in Bratislava, went to university in Vienna, takes up

work there, then travels to Africa on a service trip. Petra initially saw herself as cosmopolitan, and begins to become aware of her uncertain identity and her ambivalent relationship toward space and nationality only when she returns to Europe after experiencing foreignness in Africa. As a university student in Vienna, she is primarily seen as an economically and culturally backwards Eastern European girl (*A sok nyugati pénzes diák úgy nézett a szőkített hajú, kopott tornacipős pozsonyi lányra, mintha egy másik univerzumból érkezett volna közéjük. A Bécs és Pozsony közötti negyvenperces út úgy tűnt, mintha a múltból a jövőbe szállítaná a fiatal művészettörténész lányt.* – Durica, 2016, p. 39 [Well-off Western students were looking at the Bratislavan girl with her bleached hair and worn sneakers as if she were from another universe. The young art historian felt as if the forty-minute train ride from Bratislava to Vienna took her from the past to the future]), who, having recognized her own disadvantage, is willing to study and work more and harder than local students. A symbol of the Western European sense of cultural superiority is *…hogy a szinte tökéletes német nyelv-tudása ellenére folyton csipkelődtek vele az akcentusa miatt. Pedig megszokhatta volna ezt már, gyerekkorában folyton a magyar akcentusa miatt cikizték* (Durica, 2016, p. 39) [that in spite of her near-perfect command of German she was constantly mocked for her accent. She could have gotten used to it, though; as a child, she was always made fun of due to her Hungarian accent]. Central European identity is presented as a difference to be addressed in the ways both she and others see herself, and she tries to improve her inferior position by striving to rid herself of her Central European identity.

Following the oppositions between Europe and Africa and between Western and Central Europe, the novel deals with Hungarian and Slovakian Hungarian experiences of foreignness, raising questions around a Slovakian Hungarian identity and highlighting the problematic nature of the attachment to space and nation. Senses of difference and cultural distance are expressed through the ways the defector, the expelled, the relocated and the economic migrant see themselves, are seen by others and look at those around them. The difference of the Slovakian Hungarian identity from the Hungarian one (implied to be the "original Hungarian" identity) is most markedly presented through the eyes of the characters living in Hungary. Descendants of the originally Slovakian Hungarian relatives deported to Hungary see Petra and her family as strangers: according to them, *…ők voltak a határon túliak, a cseszkók, akiktől a fiatalabbak folyton azt kérdezték, hogyhogy ilyen jól beszélnek magyarul, hol tanulták a nyelvet, és mikor költöztek Csehszlovákiába* (Durica, 2016, p. 119) [they were from abroad, the Ceskos, whom the younger ones always asked, 'How come you speak Hungarian so well?' 'Where did you learn the language?' 'When did you move to Czechoslovakia?']. The deported Slovakian Hungarians reacted to their traumatic change of homeland by categorically distancing them-selves from those who remained home, and by silence. Similarly, the rhetoric of silence serves as the way to process the past for those who remained in Csallóköz. A similar sense of distance between Hungarian characters living in Hungary and those living in Slovakia is underpinned by their differences in language use: the novel emphasizes the use of loanwords (*szemafor* [sem-aphor], *blokk* [block], *stekker* [electric socket]), the appropriation of characteristic meals and drinks of the region (*Kofola* [a carbonated soft drink], *treszka* [a type of cod salad with mayonnaise]), and the names of products from Hungary that are alien to the language of Slovakian Hungarians (*közért* [grocery store], *mirelit* [frozen food], *rizibizi* [a side dish made of peas and rice]), all of which serve as tools to linguistically distance Hungarian and Slovakian Hungarian characters and bring about feelings of inferiority in Slovakian Hungarian characters:

A hetven körüli néni rögtön kiszúrta, hogy ők ketten "nem idevalók" [értsd: Budapest], talán csak a külföldi rendszám miatt, de Feri meg volt győződve róla, hogy a néni gúnyos mosolyát a tájszólása váltotta ki (Durica, 2016, p. 109). [The elderly lady of around seventy immediately sniffed the two of them were not 'from around here' [i.e., from Budapest], maybe only because of the foreign license plate, but Feri was convinced that the lady's smirk was attributable to his accent].

The complex Slovakian Hungarian identity depicted in the novel is further elaborated on through the description of the relationships between Slovaks and Slovakian Hungarians. The novel contains several short, reference-worthy episodes, but even more important are the apt sociographic observations that capture moments in an almost naturalistic way, presenting factual images without pathos. Examples of such observations are the depicting of the village fair as a social function (*délelőtt focimeccs, főtt kukorica, hűtött sör, estére teljes lerészegedés* – Durica, 2016, p. 168 [footie in the morning, corn on the cob, cold beer, punch drunk by night]) or the description of the tower blocks presented as the symbol of Central Europe (*Hiába a vidám színek, az új lift és a fém postaládák, a panelek beton építőelemeibe mélyen beivódott az egész előző rendszer. A frissen dauerolt haj, a kiömlött Kofola illata, a szőrös női hónaljak párája, az olcsó Pitralon, a csempészett benzin, a sokszor mosott textilpelenka szaga kering* – Durica, 2016, p. 228 [The bright colors, the new elevator and the metal letterboxes notwithstanding, the concrete panels of the tower blocks were thoroughly permeated by the previous regime. Freshly permed hair, the scent of spilled Kofola, the breath of hairy female armpits, the smell of cheap Pitralon [a brand of aftershave lotion], smuggled petrol and washed textile napkins was everywhere]). The text treats choices of names as an iconic example of the Slovakian Hungarian identity, most aptly illustrated by the story of the protagonist's defecting father. The father, Károly, first changes his name to Karol and then to Charlie, with both changes symbolizing a shift in his identity brought about by a spatial change: he first leaves the Hungarian-speaking environment of Csallóköz for Slovakian-speaking Ligetfalu, and then, after being approached to become an informer, he defects to Australia. Károly has trouble finding himself in both foreign-language environments, and this difficulty is expressed by the fact that he does not respond to his new location-specific names; he even feels uncomfortable with attaching his foreign-language names to his letterbox.

The novel provides a sensitive overview of the power of one's spatial and linguistic relations to form one's identity, and of the way in which experiences of foreignness resulting from one's unclear and layered spatial and linguistic relations can unsettle one's identity. In the text, the borders between "own" and "foreign", between "us" and "them" become blurred and gives rise to a hybridized experience of multiculturality.

EXPERIENCES OF MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTIDIALECTALISM

It is characteristic of a significant portion of contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose to connect characters with Slovakian Hungarian identities from multiple cultural environments with multiple uses of language. Characters bearing traces of Hungarian and Slovakian cultures are often depicted as being bi- or multilingual, frequently communicating with one another in a language studded with code switches and loanwords. This phenomenon is apparent in György Norbert's novel *Klára* (2004) or in Pál Száz's 'phytolegendarium' *Fűje sarjad mezőknek* [Grass Grows on Meadows] (2017). The unique features of language use in contemporary Slovakian

Hungarian prose will be demonstrated using a work by Pál Száz[6]; similarly to Durica's novel, Száz's work also depicts the lives of Slovakian Hungarians, but it does so by choosing a unique generic framework, language use and an ironic perspective.

    Pál Száz's phytolegendarium qualifies as a unique enterprise in Hungarian literature because the specific text types of the volume, which are tied to the world of plants (phytoaphorisms, phytoicons, phytoenigmas, phytolegends and phytoanecdotes), "for the first time in Hungarian language region" (Juhász, 2017) are used to convey life stories of people and communities not in the common language norm, but in the Slovakian Hungarian language variety (Vančo and Kozmács, 2016, p. 313). The writings collected in the volume follow the 20th century history of the Slovakian Hungarian minority, which is burdened with numerous traumas. They offer an insight into the everyday life of a village of Hungarian nationality, which belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the beginning of the 20th century, after which it was attached to Czechoslovakia following World War I. During the war it got reattached to Hungary, and after World War II, it was attached to Czechoslovakia again, and then finally it became part of Slovakia. The Hungarian community went from a majority to a minority and thus was faced with many challenges: its mother tongue was not an official language in the country anymore, and compared to the majority ethnicity, it only had restricted rights (in the next few years, which followed World War II, this meant that people were entirely deprived of their rights and had to undergo enforced deportation to the Czech Republic and Hungary). On top of all this, they had to adapt to the expectations of the continuously changing political power systems. In Pál Száz's work, we can read short stories and wise sayings which are the reflections and imprints of the historical events this community lived through. Hence they are strongly tied to the Slovakian Hungarian community both thematically and linguistically. The linguistic world of Pál Száz's volume is borne out by the exclusive use of the Slovakian Hungarian language variety. By reflecting the language of the local speech community, it supports widening the scope of what counts as an acceptable literary language beyond just standard Hungarian. The language of the volume, the Slovakian Hungarian language variety, is marked by specific, colloquial language items (e.g. phrases not used in standard Hungarian, since they are connected to the Slovakian reality – *alapiskola* [basic school] : *általános iskola* [general school]), uncodified language items which differ from the Hungarian used inside or outside the borders of the country – dialect-based regionalisms (*ēcsikkasztnak : elpusztítnak* [they destroy]), contact phenomena (e.g. *jéerdé : TSZ* [agricultural production association]) (Lanstyák and Szabómihály, 1998, pp. 211–214). This unusual language variety selection in literature is present in the whole volume visually too, since the author published the entire corpus in a phonetic representation of the Transdanubian dialect full of contact phenomena. He does all this in a way that is less characteristic for written language – therefore for the style of tropical expression and metaphorical perspective of literature used in this volume as well–, because he uses language resembling live, everyday speech with its idiomatic turns and twists.

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[6]Pál Száz belongs to the promising young writers of the literature of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia, he teaches at the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature of Comenius University in Bratislava [Pozsony in Hungarian.]. An author of three books, Száz has established himself as an author of note with his volume entitled *Fűje sarjad mezőknek*: besides the highly positive criticism (Fried, Mellár, Gaál, Juhász etc.), he also received the Alfonz Talamon Prize for the best work of Slovakian Hungarian prose in 2018, and the Artisjus Literary Prize, one of the highest pan-Hungarian honors for literature, in 2019.

The dialectical items can be observed in all levels of the text, and they mostly correspond to the dialectical phenomena described by dialectological research: e.g. using long *í*-s *repedísëk* [repedések – cracks]; closed *ë*-s – *sëmmi* [semmi – nothing]; shortening of vowels – *husvít* [húsvét – Easter], etc. (Menyhárt et al., 2009, pp. 75–97). The application of dialect does not only serve to make the text more colorful – its manifold functions are way more complex. It has a location-appointing function; its role is to designate a region – István Fried says that "one's regional language indicates where one belongs" (Fried, 2018). In the work it designates the geographical coordinates of the fictitious village, Marad, within a referential region, between *Gelánto* (Galánta) and *Sélle* (Vágsellye). The text-flow narrated in the dialect takes the possible textual effect the receiver can get into account, since, by using the recording methods of oral history, it intends to transform the narrational rags into a documentarist gown, and by summoning the language use typical of the region it aims to create a pretense of the referential readability of the narrations. The selection of a dialect qualified as authentic encourages the receiver to read not only the language of narration as authentic, but the narrative as well.

The corpus, written in dialect, is filled with Slovakian Hungarian spoken language registers which deviate from the Hungarian standard. The phoneme level marks of the suprasegmental tools emphasize the live speech quality of the text: the coherent thoughts are merged, indicating speech pace: *istentuggyahun* (Száz, 2017, p. 16) [isten tudja, hol – God knows where]; shifts in the borders of letters words: *vësz a zembër* (Száz, 2017, p. 62) [vesz az ember – the man buys], which extends to the writing of proper names: *Szökösferi* (Száz, 2017, p. 62) [Szökös Feri]; and long dashes used to indicate breathing which are present in transcriptions imitating intermittent speech: *Somogyomáro – tizënnyóc család – Miiind maradi – Mind, mind* [Somogyomáról tizennyolc család – Mind maradi – mind, mind – From Somogyomáro eighteen families – all of them from Marad (all of them are old-fashioned) – all, all of them] (Száz, 2017, p. 280). The lengthening of the speech pace and the attitude of the utterance is indicated by multiplied sounds as well: *jóóómegcsinátom* (Száz, 2017, p. 277) [jól megcsináltam – I did it well]. The live speech nature of the transcribed speech-flow is confirmed by the unfinished clauses, thought-flows interrupted by interjections, and interpunctions which deviate from the spelling rules and are marked based on speech rhythm: *ami kötve vót elódozza, mi zárvo vót megnyissa* [Ami kötve volt, eloldozza, mi zárva volt, megnyitja – The thing which was tied was let loose, and the thing which was locked got opened] (Száz, 2017, p. 206). Striving for the transcription of the flow of the thought process, the narrations recording oral accounts oftentimes use self-correction; they fix and realign their utterance: *No, nem is úgy vót, mert akkor vót a ruszkikarácsony* (Száz, 2017, p. 16) [No, nem is úgy volt, mert akkor volt a ruszki karácsony. – It wasn't like that because that was the time of the Russian Christmas], as well as they repeat entire sections of the narration creating an intratextual web above the text-corpus (such piece, for example, is the tale of the *galajfű* [lady's bedstraw, *Galium verum*] on the 18th and 23rd page). These retellings do not only serve to strengthen the spoken linguistic situation; they represent the self-tricking quality of the capacity to remember self-stories as well as the phenomenon of the layering feature of the past causing one to forget a wide spectrum of details, thus creating a memory-flawed, foggy atmosphere around the thought-process flow: e.g. *és az megbetegëdëtt, nemcsak valahol, minnyá eszëmbe gyün, Pozsony mellett valahol, megbetegëdëtt* (Száz, 2017, p. 71) [és az megbetegedett, nemcsak valahol, mindjárt eszembe jut, valahol Pozsony mellett betegedett meg – and that one got sick, not just at any place, it will pop into to my mind, that one got sick somewhere next to Pozsony]. The fact that the author uses words of real and meaning-based regional varieties

further validates the point that the analyzed work has a dialect-based regionalist nature. If the reader is not familiar with the dialect in question, such words, e.g. *no në gebeszkëggyé* (Száz, 2017, p. 231) [Na ne erőlködj – Don't exert so much effort] might cause difficulties in understanding.

Beside dialectical elements, the linguistic corpus of the phytolegendarium contains many contact phenomena, which – except for a few examples – can be placed inside the (sub)standard part of the Slovakian Hungarian vocabulary (Lanstyák and Szabómihály, 1998, p. 214). The language of the volume is full of direct and indirect borrowings, which are specifically typical for the Slovakian Hungarian language variety: e.g. *obcsánszki* (Száz, 2017, p. 71) *'identification card'*. They markedly detach the variety in question from the Hungarian standard. Some of these borrowings serve as designators of the area of a given story, since they are only used at events happening on the Slovakian Hungarian territory, e.g. the phrase *jéerdé* (an acronym of Slovak *jednotné rol'nícke družstvo*, 'unified agricultural cooperative,' from the socialist era from Slovakia) gets replaced by *téesz* (a Hungarian acronym for *termelőszövetkezet*, 'agricultural cooperative') when the narration turns to the life-stories of those deported into Hungary. The texts are much more receptive to the code switches as opposed to the use of borrowings, since in order to authentically recall certain speech situations, entire sentences and story parts are transmitted in a foreign – in most cases Slovak – language: *Krucifiksz, ti szi magyar?* (Száz, 2017, p. 101) [Crucifix, are you Hungarian?]). The linguistic curiosity of the addition of foreign language text sections is that – regardless of what the writing style or the phonemic system of the given language is – they become the victims of the phonetic writing style characteristic of the entire corpus. The linguistic monopolization generates linguistic distortions and misunderstandings, which can be regarded as the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the narrators who have an unsteady level of foreign language competence; it also reveals certain attitudes towards the Slovakian Hungarian language variety and identity. The Hungarian performers often express themselves with the help of literal translations: *Aszonta nás vojín, hogy vízér vigyenek embërëkët* (Száz, 2017, p. 98) [Azt mondta, a mi katonánk, hogy vízért vigyenek embereket – *Our soldier* (in Russian) said to take people for water]. One can observe the phenomenon of code-blending several times too, when either the Slovak or the Hungarian phrase gets the affix of the other language, e.g. *Legyüttek valahunnan Oraváru. Hunné gyüttek? Árváru na Vágrú, felëtík, csak ennyit tuttak mondanyi. Há ha Vágrú, akkor Vágrú, árvának ippensíggē árvának níztek ki* (Száz, 2017, p. 215). [Lejöttek valahonnan Árváról. Honnan jöttek? A Vág-menti Árváról, felelték, csak ennyit tudtak mondani. Hát, ha Vágról, akkor Vágról, árvának éppenséggel árvának néztek ki. – They got here from some place called Árva (literal meaning: orphan). From where? From some place called *Árva at Vág* (in mixed Hungarian and Slovak), they replied, and could only say this much. Well, if from Vág, than from Vág. Yes, they actually look like orphans.] The foreign language additions are not exclusively Slovak, since we can find Czech: *Jësztli mnyë nëvjerzsítë pánové, pogyívëjtë së co së gyeje v Americe! Monta Maszarikelftárs* (Száz, 2017, p. 200) [*Ha nem hisztek nekem, uraim, nézzétek meg, mi történik Amerikában!* (in Czech) – mondta Masaryk elvtárs. – If you don't believe me, gentlemen, take a look at what is happening in America – said comrade Masaryk.], Russian: *ordítt ëggy hang, hogy davaj na csetiri cseloveka* (Száz, 2017, p. 97) [ordít egy hang, hogy *négy ember jöjjön* (in Russian) – someone is shouting for four people to come], English: *no jóvan, misztër* (Száz, 2017, p. 245) [Na jól van, *uram* (in English) – It's okay then, sir], German: *Mondanyi nem mert sëmmit, mer nem tudott amërikajiú, së nímëtü, csak három szót, ich hilfë dú csálën* (Száz, 2017, p. 245) [Mondani nem mert semmit, mert nem tudott

amerikaiul, se németül, csak három szót, *én segítek neked* (in German) – They didn't dare to say anything, because they didn't speak English, nor German, only three words, I help you], Romani: *Fut ehhë a fáho, kérdëzi ettű, attú, amattú is, tavës, tu szan a nyírfácsko?* (Száz, 2017, p. 39) [Fut ehhez a fához, kérdezi ettől, attól, amattól is, *te vagy* (in Romani) a nyírfácska? – They are running towards the tree, they are asking from this one and that one, too, are you the birch-tree?] and even Latin sections in the text-flow. This language cavalcade can be interpreted as a natural phenomenon of the narrations set in the area of Central Europe, and it is evidence to the multiculturalism and multilingualism of the region (e.g. N. Tóth, 2020, pp. 259–270).

THE TRANSLOCAL EXPERIENCE

Besides the experience of multiculturalism and multilingualism, another important theme in contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose is the problematic of spatial relations, the literature of mobility and the interpretation of a translocal experience. Perpetual en-routeness, mobility, border crossing, dislocation, removal and relocation are characteristic features of globalized world (Jablonczay, 2015, pp. 153–154), and they are at the core of Anikó N. Tóth's[7] 2017 volume of short stories *Szabad ez a hely?* [Mind If I Sit Here?], particularly its story cycle entitled *Úti jegyzetek* [Travel Notes] that focuses on the trope of mobility and captures the experience of travel. Apart from a few pieces about traveling for leisure, N. Tóth's short stories primarily focus on forced travel, that is, on the sociography of forced commuters (Juhász, 2018), and, through capturing the micro-events of waiting, departure, arrival and en-routeness, the process of traveling as well as on travel-related attitudes. The 38 pieces of microfiction in *Úti jegyzetek* offer varieties of being set in motion: passengers are ambling, taking walking tours, taking a bus, a train, a boat, or a tram, or riding a horse. Their departures are mostly motivated externally; they are forced to commute, yet there are also occasional examples of travels for leisure. The short stories provide a cross-section of passengers: besides people of various ages and occupations, we also witness the wanderings of animals, objects, ideas and desires. Most of the narratives are related from an external, objective point of view, surrounded by occasional tinges of magical realism and poeticality. The cycle's internal cohesion is enhanced by the retellings of stories that offer alternative versions of the realities of mobility (e.g. *Csomagmegőrző* [Checkroom], *Anya* [Mother]). The various routes and travel experiences can be interpreted as a single overarching narrative that begins with a crowded early Monday morning bus ride (*Az állva maradás joga* [The Right to Stand]) and ends with a lonely, single-passenger bus ride to the terminus (*Az utolsó utas* [The Last Passenger]), and that, similarly to a guidebook, …*mintha hosszabb-rövidebb vagy több-kevesebb megállóhellyel megszakított útvonalakat jelölne ki oda-vissza* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 111) [seems to trace routes of varying length back and forth, interrupted by more or less stops]. The stories have a characteristic structure based on dichotomies, which helps maintain the dynamism of travel-related difficulties, circuitousness and the vulnerability of the passengers. The exploration of inner and outer sceneries, the perpetuation of mobility in one's

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[7]Anikó N. Tóth is the author of many books, a lecturer at the Institute of the Hungarian Language and Literary Science of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, and one of the presidents of BÁZIS – Association for Hungarian Literature and Art in Slovakia. She has been publishing her work since the 1980s and has been the recipient of several awards (Imre Madách Award, 2006; the Grand Prize of the Posonium Literary Prize, 2006; Alfonz Talamon Prize, 2009).

personal life, generates a constant sense of anxiety in the characters and contorts them into a never-ending crouch on a starting block: they can no longer unwind or relax, they cannot stop in their lives. Inert, they …*start és cél között rázkódják* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 10) [judder between start and finish] all their lives. Hedvig Gyarmathy therefore refers to these short stories as tiny life moments condensing the marginality of travel that present the universe of the fatigued and terrified passenger (Gyarmathy, 2018). Dávid Mellár emphasizes the passengers' vulnerability in the face of external circumstances and the burden of depending on others (Mellár, 2018a, 2018b). Besides such vulnerability, Zoltán Szászi also calls attention to trying to find one's place en route, the loneliness of travel, and an inevitable association with others (Szászi, 2018). Travel shrinks to a space of vulnerability and fills passengers with feelings of anxiety and panic, making them believe that …*igazából nincs biztonságos hely* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 34) [there really is no safe place] when traveling: …*kiszolgáltatottak vagyunk. Tervezetten-szándékoltan. Váratlanul-ártatlanul. Egyremegy* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 43) [we are vulnerable. By design, intentionally. Un-expectedly and innocently. It makes no difference]. Perpetual en-routeness is therefore a depressing experience – subject only to a couple of exceptions – and forced mobility does not provide an opportunity to go beyond the limits of any one culture as highlighted by Arianna Dagnino (2013).

According to Zoltán Németh and Magdalena Roguska, authors located within the discourse on transculturalism are characterized by linguistic and cultural border-crossings (Németh and Roguska, 2018, p. 6). Henri Lefebvre calls spaces that dissolve such borders the maps of social spaces, which is never sterile but is multilayered and multisense courtesy of the aspects of mobility and fluctuation (Györke, 2015, p. 227). The modes of transportation featured in N. Tóth's cycle of short stories become scenes of cultural diversity and culture mixing where various social groups and representatives of different cultural milieusare forced to interact, creating a web of cultural interference. Passengers step into a transpatriated space and thus become participants in a miniature society where people from different cultures meet and affect one another (Jakab, 2009, p. 167). For example, the short story *Egy asszony beszél* [A Woman Speaks] offers a glimpse into the neonomadic existence of a commuting nurse, which is defined by the transience of the perpetual crossing of physical and mental borders and which proposes an alternative approach to the cultural otherness between "us" and "them." As a means of illustrating the diversity of passengers, several stories survey the passengers and those waiting for travel (e.g. *Mentő* [Ambulance], *Nem férsz el mellettem* [There's No Space Next to Me], *Foglalt* [Taken]). They all come from different lives and backgrounds, are of different ages, and have different expectations (the latter is poetically presented in the piece *Igényes utas* [The Sophis-ticated Passenger]). The most compelling depiction of this cavalcade of cultures can be found in the short story *Egy közönséges kombínóút* [An Ordinary Tramride] which features a wide range of passengers who are strangers in their surroundings. Off-duty ticket controllers wearing their uniforms; a father and his son speaking with a foreign accent and in a language different from that of those around them; the black twins traveling with their blonde, white mother: all these characters are shown to be the 'others' of the crowd of passengers.

Traveling on public transport is governed not only by the provisions set forth in the terms and conditions of travel but also by …*iratlan törvények, láthatatlan hatalmak* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 62) [unwritten rules, invisible powers]. The dynamics thereof bring about a peculiar social stratification among passengers. On the top of the passengers' hierarchy sits the mythical character of the driver (ticket controller), being the mover, lingering at the margin of staticity

and dynamism, . . .*kint és bent határán* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 24) [on the border between inside and outside], and as guardian of the border separating these two realms, they have the power to allow or refuse one to travel (*Késésben vagyunk* [We Are Late], *Hosszú az út* [It's a Long Way]). Besides the publicly advertized terms and conditions, the culture of travel is also markedly regulated by hidden rules that prevail among passengers. Knowledge of these rules is the privilege of regular commuters, as is the power to amend them: they are the "first people," the natives. In contrast, occasional travelers are fumbling about as culturally illiterate outsiders, not unlike immigrants. Regular commuters can even make the driver make an extraordinary stop for them (*Rendkívüli megálló* [Extraordinary Stop]), and their interactions with the driver are characterized by a sense of familiarity (*Cipity*).

Mobility provides a thematic framework for the cycle of stories, and it is presented as a basic situation or state, as an integral part or even attribute of identity; this is also implied by the motto *Útközben lakom* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 7) [I live en route], borrowed from Miklós Mészöly. For the characters in the texts, travel is not merely a means of getting from one place to another so that they can get on with their lives, having endured the transitoriness of travel; it becomes a significant position in their lives – whether they like it or not – as life itself goes on while traveling. The overarching mobility through physical and virtual spaces triggers the most basic activities in life: people are eating, drinking, sleeping, working, talking, fighting and flirting en route. The constant physical mobility and need to live life on the way allots the characters a neonomadic existence (Roguska, 2018, p. 40) and forces them to strive to create a momentary sense of at-homeness. Thereby, the experience of travel reshapes the passengers: while on the way, "the need to settle the passenger compartment" becomes their primary driver instead of the aim of reaching a specific destination. The stories constantly circulate . . .*start és cél között* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 10) [between start and finish], relativize destinations (being further and further away from the start yet getting ever closer to the destination, . . .*egyszerre fogy és nő a távolság* (N. Tóth, 2017, p. 10) [the distance is growing and shrinking simultaneously]), and reveal the characters' lives through their commute: from the reader's point of view, passenger compartments are the only scenes in the characters' lives. Through the appropriation of these spaces, passengers shamelessly expand their private sphere into the means of transportation, turning it into their makeshift home. In most cases, however, establishing one's personal comfort entails an inevitable breach of other passengers' privacy, manifested in a constant confrontation between "me" and "the other": one strives to make oneself comfortable without regard to the needs of others.

In the short stories, the notion of traveling goes beyond passenger transport. Vehicles, letters and packages are in constant circulation (*Bőröndök, hátizsákok cserélnek helyet hátizsákokkal, bőröndökkel.* – N. Tóth, 2017, p. 22 [Suitcases and backpacks keep switching places with backpacks and suitcases.]), and besides physical mobility, virtual travel also has an important role in the cycle, with thoughts, desires, feelings and memories lingering across space and time. According to Gaston Bachelard, space – in this case, that of the passenger compartment – is not homogeneous and empty, but is saturated with sensations and dreams (Bachelard, 2011, pp. 29–30); that is to say, exploring and experiencing one's inner space is just as important as the exploration of external space. A scarf left on a seat metonymically recalls a love from thirty years prior (*Szabad ez a hely?* [Mind If I Sit Here?]); a bus departing late launches a chain reaction of anxiety and panic over potential consequences (*Tűréshatáron* [Tolerance]); a fight during the commute determines the fate of relationships (*Juli, Gergő*); visiting one's alma mater layers

events and experiences from various ages into a single space (*Üzenet egykori iskolákba* [Message to Former Schools]). Books and stories are traveling, too: as Tímea Jablonczay writes, the trope of mobility expands beyond human subjects, and embraces and encourages the transcending of literary boundaries, of those between life and literature, author and reader (Jablonczay, 2015, p. 138). The short story *Útikönyv* [Guidebook] (which can be seen as a *mise en abyme*) follows the physical journey of book supposedly about traveling, and raises questions about the comprehensibility of a story in a foreign language. Moreover, the entire cycle itself is a 'Grand Tour' across works of literature, enmeshed in an intertextual web of canonical Hungarian literature (through quotations from István Örkény, Ágnes Nemes Nagy, Attila József, Miklós Radnóti, Dezső Kosztolányi and Miklós Mészöly).

SUMMARY

Considering representative works of contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose, it can be said that in the selected works, elements of bi- and multilingualism, phenomena of the Slovakian Hungarian vernacular expressed through dialect and code switching, and the flows of foreign-language quotations and allusions are endowed with a poetic function. According to Zoltán Németh (2018), these elements and phenomena contribute to the performance of thinking about a literary language. The narrative perspective of transcultural prose works is dominated by a sense of in-betweenness, through which the notions of "own," "foreign," "different," "minority" and "majority," and thus the self-definition of Slovakian Hungarians, receive new meanings. By situating the stories in a transcultural literary space, the notions of mobility and exploration of physical and virtual spaces are enriched with new layers of meaning and interpretational possibilities (Dagnino, 2013). As a result, the geological definition of regional affiliation requires redefinition and a translocal approach.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Postcolonialism in Central Europe • (A linguistic perspective)

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the post-1990 historical developments in Central Europe as a specific instantiation of postcolonialism, particularly in the linguistic domain. After the severe communist rule and Soviet military occupation in most countries (which enjoyed a non-typical colonial status), this region was freed, but many socio-cultural features of culture, language policy, language use, and everyday communication activities show that many forms practiced during the colonial period are still maintained. These remnants show a certain postcolonial way of life in the region. The paper first surveys the literature, discussing the validity of the notion of postcolonialism for the given period in Central Europe. In the second part, general post-colonial features pertaining to the Hungarian language community are introduced. These features are detailed first focusing on the developments in Hungary, then on the minority Hungarian communities across the border around Hungary. Factors are presented including communicative systems, language policy, language variants, reflection, and self-reflection on the language community and identification, language rights, and public education, with attention paid to adherence to colonial schemas and the quick transition to postmodern communication forms.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD

The Hungarian linguistic and ethnic community lives in the heart of Central Europe, in the Carpathian Basin. (There are Hungarians outside this region, mostly individual emigrants.) The history of the Hungarian language community gives a clue to the historical developments of the whole region of Central Europe over the last 150 years.

The Hungarian Kingdom, roughly within the borders of the state in the Middle Ages, was one semi-independent part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy for fifty years, as a result of the Settlement (*Ausgleich*) of 1867. The Hungarian Kingdom was a state with a Hungarian population of up to 50% and with ethnic and linguistic minorities, as the whole Monarchy was multi-ethnic. This political, economic, and cultural situation was broken up over the course of World War I. Central Europe has had a special history during the 20th century. The future of the region was basically determined by the Paris peace treaties (1920) that followed World War I (for the basic, mistaken motivations of the decision makers and the tragic consequences see Leonhard, 2018). New states were established (e.g., Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia), others were enlarged (e.g., Romania). New state borders were, at least in part, artificially determined, as they did not follow traditional linguistic and ethnic borders. Most new states were burdened with minorities cut from their natural communities, though living as aboriginals (indigenous people; cf. Cobo, 1982) who stayed on their ancient territories. In most cases these minority populations covered one hundred percent of a given territory just over the national borders, and they found themselves in new states with a totally new public administration and official languages. These circumstances led to continuous conflicts between the newly formed state majorities and the minorities living with the new territories, in most cases triggered by the nationalist policies of the new countries—policies that aimed for the ethnic and linguistic homogenization of these states, entailing serious violations of human rights. Also, the peace treaty and its consequences forced masses to flee to other countries (as happened during and after World War II, too). The newly formed Hungary lost two thirds of its earlier territory and 56% of its population after World War I, while 3.2 million people of Hungarian origin were detached to the newly formed neighboring states; these detached Hungarians prototypically lived along the border in areas with one hundred percent Hungarian populations (Romsics, 2001, p. 147). Hungary itself became a nearly homogenous country with an almost 100 percent population of Hungarian origin.

World War II made the circumstances even more tragic and difficult. Besides the devastation of the war, the new peace treaties left the states and borders almost untouched, preserving all the tensions and conflicts. Still, the geographical state of Poland and Germany changed radically; and the Baltic region was dissolved into the Soviet Union. As a new factor, collective responsibility was introduced and executed by certain states with traumatic consequences (e.g., mass deportations, deprivation of citizenship, and basic human rights). In 1945 the whole region was occupied by the Soviet army and was placed under Soviet colonial rule (a specific form of colonialism), which ended in 1990–1992. The countries and societies of the region were forced to introduce the Soviet communist system in every domain of life, controlled by the Soviet and

the local communist parties. During this period, the aftermath of the two world wars had a serious effect also on the language policies of these countries, covered by the surface of the communist ideology in most cases. In 1990–1992 Central Europe was freed from Soviet occupation, and a postcolonial historical period began. Ever since this historical turn, the region has had a double face. On the one hand, modernization has been performed in a very fast, determined and effective fashion, bringing radical changes again to all aspects of life. On the other hand, the cultural and socialization schemas of the previous era still live on and influence the ways of life in the region.

The next section discusses the basic features of colonialism and postcolonialism in relation to Central Europe.

COLONIALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM, IN CENTRAL EUROPE

It is a postcolonial effect that history writing does not interpret the history of Central Europe between 1945 and 1990 as a colonial period. The region was under Soviet rule after World War II, occupied by the Soviet army, except Romania, and Yugoslavia—a fact that in of itself calls for a colonial interpretation. Certainly, colonialism has many forms (cf. Osterhammel, 1995; Conrad, 2012), and Soviet rule showed many characteristics of Western colonialism in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

The Soviet occupation took the form of colonialism in certain factors: it was the reign of foreign (i.e., Soviet) rulers, directed in the political, economic, and social interest of the colonizer (with the direct help of local governors). The Soviet colonizers and their local representatives were convinced of their cultural and political superiority, not recognizing the more advanced state of the occupied countries. There were traces of early colonization: the division of the region (by the peace treaty) and the providing of free labor (about 600,000 people were taken from Hungary to forced labor camps in the Soviet Union after the end of World War II; of these, two thirds never returned). On the other hand, after a post-war period, spontaneous migration was completely prohibited during the whole Soviet period. Also, the Central European countries were used as a source of raw materials that were fundamental for the USSR. Nevertheless, these developments were not channeled into the world economy, as had happened in Western colonization, but were strictly constrained within the communist sphere.

The other decisive factor was the radical social transformation triggered in a top-to-bottom manner and brutally aggressive style, based on the Bolsheviks' communist ideology. The colonizers and their governors managed this process with the strong conviction of their superiority and in the form of a political and ideological mission. The radical social change was supported by certain social groups, at least in the first years of the Soviet rule. The colonial reign made its way into local political power, economic, and social structures, the law, education, mass media, infrastructure, culture, and everyday social relations.

The colonial reign was not full; rather, the colonizing army and the foreign elite stayed in the "islands of rule", behind security fences, in particular after the first uprisings.

Postcolonialism as an intellectual (ideological and political) movement came into being when Western colonies in Africa and Asia gained their independence in the 1960s and 1970s. Postcolonialism came from Cultural Studies, literary studies, the archeology of knowledge and other poststructuralist intellectual trends. In its original form, postcolonial theory is concerned

with the cultural and ideological aftermath of colonialism: it focuses on the earlier discourse orders that perspectivized the relation between colonized and colonizer in a hierarchical, essentialist, and Eurocentric frame. In the original framework, its main theoretical sources are drawn from poststructuralist and Marxist approaches along with leftist political movements. The founding works of the theory are Said (1975), Bhabha (1990), and Spivak (1990, 1999).

Postcolonial theory has changed into a wider interpretation of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism, and in many investigations it is used without its original leftist and Marxist background. This alteration is necessary and expedient for a wider application in the humanities and social sciences. Also, some shortcomings of the theory have been recognized, e.g., representation and identities were in the focus, while the material dimension remained in the background; and the theory also made use of stereotypes, just like the ideologies that it criticized. Nevertheless, the theory is on the verge of description and criticism (even activism), even today.

In the post-millennial scene, the basic idea is that colonialism did not end with independence (Conrad, 2012; see also the literature on Central Europe referred to in the present paper). Many features that belong to the colonial scene in the wider sense have been realized recently (Osterhammel, 1995; Conrad, 2012). Many of these features listed below prove to be significant from the Central European perspective.

The former colonies have dependence relations with the former colonizers, and post-millennial neo-colonialism further supports this relation. Also, the effects of colonization on the colonizers are realized and discussed: mutual relations, histories and effects seem to be important, as in many cases no sharp borders between colonized and colonizer can be set up. In other words: the double historical perspective, Eurocentrism as if Europe remained untouched in the course of colonization cannot be maintained; the hidden tensions and the aftermath of oppression and violence come to the surface.

In many countries the local elites remained almost the same, and political structures did not change fundamentally. In many cases, there remained the notion of asymmetrical, hierarchical cultural differences in the background: the source of modernity, universal development of human societies, general progress (with a linear time interpretation), the "civilizing mission" of the western world—a superior domain compared to the primitive colonies. Modernization has been organized with principles and methods that are ideologies of the colonial age.

In the cultural domain, written and oral histories (both scientific and popular) of the former colonies are constructed with a colonial mentality, i.e., the central theses of the colonial discourses organize the histories of the colonies and the general discourse about colonialism. These trends are based on colonial cultural dispositions which had been aimed at the reception and acceptance of the foreign colonial reign.

The question can now be raised: how does all of the above come to the millennial state of Central Europe, and to the Hungarian language community in particular? The answer lies in some of recent publications focusing on this specific problem: the developments of the post Soviet region. One volume (Pucherová and Gáfrik eds., 2014) approaches some of these questions in detail, mainly in literature, visual culture, memories of collective and individual Soviet colonial traumas, and the relations of the region freed in 1990 to join the western world (see also the volume 48 (2) 2012 Journal of Postcolonial Writing on Central Europe).

Pucherová and Gáfrik (2014, p. 12) considers the term "postcolonialism" at least one suitable expression to characterize the situation in Central Europe: "Post-communist discourse [...] shows that the experiences of the countries formerly belonging to the USSR and the Eastern

Bloc, and those previously colonized by West European powers, share a number of characteristics. These are, for example:

> structures of exclusion/inclusion (the centre/periphery model and theorizations of the liminal ans "in-between"); formations of nationalism, structures of othering and representation of difference; forms and historical realizations of anti-colonial/anti-imperial struggle; the experience of trauma (involving issues of collective memory/amnesia and the rewriting of history); resistance as a complex of cultural practices; concepts such as alterity, ambivalence, self-colonization, cultural geography, dislocation, minority and subaltern cultures, neo-colonialism, orientalization, transnationalism."[1]

Since – as was mentioned above – colonialism has delayed effects on the colonizers, globally, in the broader sense, "this region should play a major role in the current debates in postcolonial studies on European identity" (Pucherová and Gáfrik, 2014, p. 14). Postcolonial scholars have not recognized the importance of the region: "Nor are post-communist studies yet considered as part of the same discourse that seeks to re-evaluate the consequences of decolonizations and rethink the cultural and mental implications of both colonial and anti-colonial discourses. One reason for this, [. . .] is the typically Marxist orientation of postcolonial critics based in the West, which has made them resist seeing the Soviet Union as an imperialist power" (Pucherová and Gáfrik, 2014, p. 14).

The volume quoted here concentrates on specific questions such as the following (listed from Pucherová and Gáfrik, 2014, p. 15):

- How does the recognition of Soviet expansion as part of European imperialism alter the understanding of Western modernity?
- What effect did the Cold War have on the East-Central European space, reconfigured after 1989? How has this affected individual and collective identities?
- How can a post-communist subject be reconstituted out of the void that became his or her main identity marker under Soviet cultural domination and Western Orientalism?
- What types of postmodernism developed in Central and Eastern European cultures as a result of Soviet domination?
- How does Russian colonialism continue into the present and what does it mean for the current world order?

In the following sections of the present paper, I give an overview of some developments characteristic of the Hungarian language community in the domains of communication systems, language policies and (self-)reflexive everyday language use. In the present study, postcolonialism is a non-activist term, used and adjusted for the scientific description of this specific historical situation with a process-like character.

POSTCOLONIAL EFFECTS IN THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE COMMUNITY

The Hungarian language and its speaker community as a whole were exposed to political, even military and administrative decisions without the real chance to discuss and influence these

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[1]The authors refer here to Kołodziejeczyk and Sandru (2012, p. 113).

decisions. The historical developments have had a severe outcome in language use and communication. Some of these are treated below.

The communication system of societies and states show typical historical instantiations (cf. Luhmann, 1998, p. 312ff). One basic type is the hierarchical communication order. This system is centralized; control and influence are directed from top to bottom; and the information sent from the center usually spreads successfully through to the destination, the target audience. The other type is the heterarchical communication order. This system is shared and decentralised; it has a network structure; and the contacts hinge upon the spatio-temporal conditions of the situation.

One of the first political decisions completed by the communists in Central Europe after 1945 was to put social and state communication under strict central ideological supervision, introducing a total, hierarchical communication order. The measure of this totality differed between the countries and also between certain periods; still, party control remained in service in the whole region until 1990. Any kind of public information was allowed to go out only with the overall central party control. This control was, for instance, extremely severe during the 1950s in the whole region, looser in 1968 in Czechoslovakia and in the 1980s in Hungary, and much stricter in the DDR and Romania than in Hungary during the final decade. As a result of the social homogenization efforts, people were forced to publicly speak one ideologically controlled variety of the state language, unified in its semantics and pragmatics: people had no choice but to use the words related to social life with the meanings defined centrally, to repeat the same clausal and idiomatic constructions used by the political leaders, and to not deviate from the central ideological line – thereby avoiding the risk of punishment (whether formal or informal) for a joke or a critical note, for instance. The centralizing language policy used censorship as a fundamental instrument (cf. Schöpflin, 1983). Censorship was directed primarily inwards, but also outwards – in relation to other states and countries. On the one hand, the central control and censorship defined those entities (e.g., books, newspapers, ideas and innovations, words, works of art) that were allowed to go across the border and those that were banned from coming in, and, on the other hand, what could go out even to the neighboring "sister" countries within the region.

This hierarchical communication system was changed formally to a modernized heterarchical one within a strikingly short period of one month, in 1990.

One basic change was the transformation of public discourse. The instinctive distrust felt when talking to strangers or principals faded in general, at least with respect to the commitment to the central ideology required earlier throughout the society. Certainly, many social and institutional dependencies kept on functioning. At any rate, the legal and structural conditions of the overall system took on a new shape, one contrary to the previous one:

- Any kind of communication from diverse sources, including that of the state and public administration, became subject to independent control and discussion.
- Any communication with local scope (e.g., information about and statements by and in settlements and districts, bureaus, firms and other workplaces, including schools and other institutions) was rendered independent from the direct control and practice of the central government organizations and other (e.g., political party) headquarters.
- Informal talk among family members, friends, colleagues and acquaintances was freed from the fear of informing (i.e., reporting on ones' views and acts by spies; such informing was

organized and maintained by the secret police until the last minute of the collapsing regime) and also from its constraining power on linguistic expression.

Colonial and postcolonial linguistic features in Hungary

This new freedom of speech and information affected the reflexive and self-reflexive processes of the Hungarian language community. On the one hand, those living in the Hungarian state realized the existence and practice of linguistic variants within the Hungarian language. Before 1990 traditional rural dialects were declared unsuitable for the goals of the communist ideology, in accordance with the political stigmatization of the peasantry. Rural dialects as well as urban varieties (slang, vulgarity) were stigmatized in public; rural dialects were criticized even in textbooks. Closely related to these negative evaluative decisions, the standard varieties were declared the right forms. Still, the standard variety was deprived of its middle class origin, adjusted to the standardized party language (a certain type of "newspeak"), and disseminated to the whole population through public education. This led to various forms of linguicism. After 1990 the variants were considered once again in their normal functional status: people began to use their vernacular and other social variants to express individual and collective identities, world views and personal behavior and to denote subtle factors of social relations that had been almost totally prohibited and forgotten in the communist era. Dynamism and creativity were revitalized; the traditional registers were rehabilitated. Still, these developments were not initiated nor welcomed unanimously.

It is a true-to-life experience that innovation in technology, in social relations, and in ways of life all accompany innovation in language. New ideas, objects, processes and relations should be named, discussed, and described through linguistic expressions. Thus, the conceptualization and linguistic expression of innovations require linguistic innovation. Since ways of talk were freed from central control and censorship, normal human imagination underwent a revival in the Central European region. This complex process has had its potential in the relation between style and individual reflexive self-identification. The traditional stylistic criteria gradually turned into linguistic and cultural potential for the expression of identity and self-identity, with the individual and the historical nature of culture and communication in focus. Thus, style became one important relational medium for individual diversity and identity.

This shift from matching the stylistic ideal to the functions of the current communicational intention and to the speaker's self-identification is characteristic of the "post-middle class" society. In this cultural situation, style is the spontaneous, direct construal of certain contents. It utilizes the potential for meaning formation from the side of individual and social actors and from culture with current motivation, and it uses the potential of the language system only as a secondary source.

The main functions of the individual behavior in linguistic formation are as follows:

- the self-construction of the individual, or its attempt or its illusion, in relation to the object of attention,
- the social relevance of the acts by the speaker,
- the creative and innovative force demonstrated by the speaker,
- the construction of the current discourse space and the relation between the interlocutors.

Style is construed by the speaker through subjectification (Langacker, 2006; Tolcsvai Nagy, 2005), which is the implicit presence of the speaker through the implicated expression of her/his attitude, beliefs, and viewpoint, without being an overt and objectified participant of the scene described in the discourse. It is quite rare when the speaker announces that "I am going to speak to you in a kind of official or coarse style".

The result of this change was that stylistic forms that oriented intersubjective and interpersonal encounters became ambivalent; interlocutors felt uncertain about the current behavior and goal or even the basic individual characteristics of their partner, all of which is necessary for successful communication. This led to false attributions, misunderstanding, and, as a matter of fact, to avoidable conflicts. The traditional normative practice of style as a part and a medium of human dignity tried to find its functions in the millennial age, but was weakened by the practice of almost unbounded variability. On the other hand, since a style's main function became in many cases and social groups the expression of social action, the speaker's innovative force, identity, and self-identity, and the continuous construal and processing of the current discourse space, this latter type of stylization generated tensions between normative and creative practices in communication, reinforcing uncertainty in communication.

Also, millions of Hungarians, mostly from the younger generations, were surprised to learn at the end of the 1980s that large Hungarian-speaking populations lived immediately on the other side of the border. This realization had a huge impact on those within the mother country, and with the newly discovered functions of linguistic variability, this development radically transformed the overall idea of language and of Hungarian in particular. Discussions and public conflicts originating from the diverse functions attributed to the mother tongue appeared in discourses that focused on political and cultural power and dominance, language norms for public education, and the media. Political movements and ideologies chose or created their own languages within the language—a totally fresh experience for the new generations. These developments proved to be something hard to comprehend for large social groups (e.g., for the elderly), and also for many it brought the feeling of uncertainty: aggressiveness was attributed to those speaking in an unexpected or unknown register. Those who were not accustomed to such alterity and plurality had traumatic experiences (contrary to those who enjoyed this freedom) and felt lost in the new diversity; they were alone or belonged to newly formed cultural minorities. There were those who saw the decline or death of the Hungarian nation in the lack of a central and joint, ancestral standard variety held in high esteem, while others supported the intention to create new forms to construct new meanings.

In the wake of linguistic plurality, three characteristic language ideologies have been developed and used in discourses over the Hungarian language (partly before 1990, in the so-called second public):

- The idealization view: every language has an ideal variant in its pure, intact, and fulfilled form; thus, language change is deterioration, and speakers and communities should elaborate and adjust to the ideal version.
- The national view: language is the essence of the nation as such; the national language has a tragic history; it is attacked and threatened with annihilation by external forces; speakers should recognize and maintain the national essence of the mother tongue.

- The structural view: language is structure, a tool for communication; independent of the individual and the community, it has no substantial historical and cultural relations; speakers have proficiency in their mother tongue and they know how to use their linguistic knowledge.

All three show postcolonial effects: the first two try to find the traditions (whether real or not) behind the collective linguistic and national amnesia, the third one tries to avoid any allusions to the past, fleeing from uncertain and ambivalent anchors towards a practical interpretation—without the presumed burden of history.

Hungarian minority communities in neighboring states

After World War II, all minority languages were discriminated against once more in the Central European region. Every country in the region had and still has ethnic and linguistic minorities (with the smallest one just in Hungary). These developments were sometimes carried out in an overt way; for instance, Hungarian and German as a minority languages were simply banned for years in Czechoslovakia in all public settings (schools, public administration, healthcare, jurisdiction, public transport, together with minority language forms of personal and place names, etc.). And there were hidden ways to oppress minorities and minority languages: there was a lack of minority language media and textbooks, and teachers and officials (e.g., policemen, physicians, presidents of the executive committee of the council, i.e., the political and administrative leader of the settlement) who only spoke the majority state language were brought in from other regions of the country.

Concerning minorities, nationalistic tendencies dominated the language policies of the countries. The language of the ethnic majority ("the nation forming population", using the national language) was the official language, namely, the standard version of the language used by the majority. The legal regulation of these matters was based on the communist ideology combined with a tacit or overt nationalism. In most countries the language minorities were oppressed by the authorities in all respects, as well as by members of the majority in everyday situations—often in emotional statements of exclusion (see for instance Lanstyák, 2000, pp. 77–121). The situation within the region was worst in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine and Bulgaria. Minorities had relatively more language rights in Poland, Yugoslavia and Hungary (this latter with the smallest proportion of minority population). The severe suppression and prohibition of language rights changed over the decades. In Romania and Czechoslovakia there were shorter periods of ease, but on the whole strict formal and informal rules were maintained. In Yugoslavia, after an initial hardcore period, the general circumstances changed for the better from the 1960s—but were still far from the normal.

After 1990 the cases of ethnic and language minorities could not be hidden, and the tensions that stemmed from oppression had to be put on the agenda. All states declared human rights—including the rights of the minorities—as the constitutional basis of the political system. At the same time Czechoslovakia (three years later the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia also declared and interpreted themselves as nation states in their constitutions. Hungary and Poland have no such definitions in theirs.

In Central European countries with large minority populations the question of language rights has been subject to permanent political, legislative and administrative struggle since 1990. Most states intend to restrain the use of minority languages in all domains of everyday life. Language laws or minority laws were codified and introduced in many countries, partly due to

international obligations, partly to keep minority rights within limits. Those countries that have a high proportion of national and ethnic minorities made similar laws in many respects, as follows.

The results of the factors listed above have had serious consequences for the existential conditions of the Hungarian minorities. These regional communities were totally isolated from the mother country and also from the majority societies before 1990, since Hungarian was rarely or not allowed in public and administrative use, and the artificially triggered tensions between majority and minority groups also hindered normal communication among members of different language communities. Hungarian and other minority languages were discriminated against in many ways—in public administration and education, in health care, and in general domains, mainly in cities and larger settlements. Meanwhile small villages were controlled linguistically by the head of the local soviet, the teachers, the policeman and the doctor, who were usually sent from other regions of the country and who were often of non-Hungarian origin and lacked Hungarian language skills. Nevertheless, language contact in territories with traditionally multilingual populations had far fewer informal conflicts.

It was and is a hard task to find the right answers to such problems as these when a smaller or larger social and ethnically minority group is isolated from their mother country, even from any external connections. The answers, rather intuitive, included (among others) self-isolation, self-maintenance, and the preservation of the local dialects in local speech communities, where the mere act of speaking in the mother tongue counted as the demonstration of one's basic values.

After 1990 the situation in this respect has changed only in a tempered manner and with only moderate results, in spite of the declared right to free speech. In everyday communication the use of the mother tongue was practiced with much more self-consciousness and will, and also more openness for bilingual situations. In this setting, vernacular language use is not a political act nor part of ideological movements; rather it is the normal social behavior to speak the mother tongue – a sign of getting free from colonial aspects. Still, officially supported linguistic discrimination in quasi-colonial style hinders this development in many places and situations. Bilingual circumstances are familiar for the younger generations and with less oppression among peers, code switching is a more natural situation for them. E-communication may ease the tensions among young generations, but there are not much data available yet. It may be supposed that e-communication among young people with diverse mother tongues takes place rather in the language of the majority.

But uncertainty exists and does not decrease, e.g., in private decisions (demonstrated by attitude surveys), not only in direct communication settings, but also in long term decisions, e.g., in the cases of children sent to school with mother tongue or state language instruction (Vančo, 2017). In this communication domain no real official state support is offered to overcome the difficulties, except in Slovenia. The remnants of the colonial mentality, a sign of the postcolonial situation, are clearly observable in this respect.

Another factor is the continuous struggle for language rights. Since 1990 it has occurred publicly on the political scene—in the countries around Hungary, in the European Union, and also in local actions, in the everyday communication practice. This is a typical postcolonial situation: the cultural memory of the majority and the minorities, intentions of exclusion with the minority language and forced inclusion with the majority language have a significant role, besides the legal setting itself.

In the course of these developments, a postcolonial factor is the focus on linguistic perfor-mance both in the mother tongue and the state language. However, high level language skills are needed to cope with new economic, social, and intellectual developments—but this factor is backgrounded in the forced political struggle.

Besides the postcolonial factors mentioned above, there is the hidden problem: the unsolved tensions in state language education, i.e., second language education for minorities. Since the political frame of the nation state implies the idea of the ethnically and linguistically homo-geneous state, the official expectation is that all citizens will speak the national language with the same competence. This expectation is demonstrated in the deficient (old-fashioned and colo-nial-like) methodological viewpoint of language pedagogy in most countries in question: mi-nority students whose mother tongue is different from the national language are taught the national language with the same methodology used for the majority students who speak it as their vernacular, in many cases even from the same textbook. The students of minority origin have a double handicap: they have not natively acquired the national language at the highest level, in spite of being bilinguals in most cases; and they are not taught the national language as a specific kind of second language. The result of this false interpretation and practice on the part of the nation state is that minorities cannot have the desired and needed proficiency in the national language (for details see Vančo, 2019). This state of affairs seem to change very slowly, after almost one hundred years of misconducted public education.

Holistic reflections

There are some factors that occurs in the Hungarian language community as a whole, which has been united since 1990 in the communicative sense. These postcolonial factors have discursive reflections in the whole community.

During the communist era, the official contacts and joint linguistic projects with researchers from Hungary and Hungarian linguists from the neighboring countries were almost completely banned from all sides. After 1990, a new fresh wave of investigations began, with high level results. It is by no means accidental that within this complex and many folded process, two ways of investigation emerged as fundamental (besides others, e.g., linguistic variables): language attitude surveys and detrianonization.

Attitude surveys were planned to map the attitudes of native minority Hungarian speakers in the neighboring countries, to understand the motivations and results of their decisions con-cerning the situations where they use the mother tongue or the official state language. When and why do they code switch? The results show the general trends in the relations towards Hun-garian as a mother tongue and the official state language in their tense relations. The significance of these investigations lies in the course of social developments: the many local results show the intention to find the right answers and the extreme difficulties these people face in a formally free world, but loaded with obstacles.

Detrianonization is the process of breaking down the artificial borders between the parts of the Hungarian language community raised by the post-World War I and II peace treaties. This process demonstrates the overall pluralistic unity of the language community and the language itself, in their variants. It is being completed in linguistic works (dictionaries, descriptive papers, including data from all parts of the language territory; see e.g., the linguistic activities of Termini (http://termini.nytud.hu), Benő and Péntek, 2011), and also an intellectual and social process of

reflection and self-reflection to demonstrate the unity for its members (as mentioned above, before 1990 generations were not informed about the Hungarian communities across the borders).

Another characteristic trend concerns the ideal version of the language, initiated from the mother country, the center. There is a widely accepted notion of the ideal Hungarian, based on the idealization of minority variants of Hungarian, particularly the ones in Erdély (Transylvania, now in Romania), and even by reinterpreting the existing rural dialects as one "perfect" Székely (Szekler) dialect in a wider non-scientific perspective. This notion also comes from the feeling of being on the periphery, combined with a partly imaginative collective memory, in defence against colonial rule.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper described the historical developments after 1990 in Central Europe as a specific instantiation of postcolonialism, in particular in the linguistic domain. The first part outlined the historical background and the main features of the post-communist period from a communicative and linguistic perspective. When in 1990 the region was freed from Soviet rule, many socio-cultural features of culture, language policy, language use and everyday communication activities that were practiced during the colonial period survived. The paper argues that these remnants show a certain postcolonial way of life in the region. The paper first surveyed the literature to discuss the validity of the notion of postcolonialism for the given period in Central Europe. In the second part, general postcolonial features in the Hungarian language community were introduced. These features were detailed first focusing on the developments in Hungary, then on the characteristics of minority Hungarian communities across the border around Hungary. Factors like communicative systems, language policy, language variants, reflection, and self-reflection on the language community and identification, language rights, public education, and others were presented. All of these developments must face adherence to colonial schemas and quick transition to postmodern communication forms.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Minority language policy and bilingual name semiotic landscape in Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

The present paper addresses the issue of the interrelatedness of Slovakia's minority language policy and the bilingual name semiotic landscape; more specifically, the name semiotic landscape of settlements populated by Slovakia Hungarians and the way Slovakia's laws regulating name use affect visual proper noun use in the country. The name semiotic landscape constitutes an integral part of the linguistic landscape, comprising proper nouns and extralinguistic signs referring to, or accompanying names in name plates, signage in public spaces, and on various other surfaces. The name semiotic landscape is a component, an aspect, and a consequence of language policy and name policy. The way minority proper nouns can be displayed in public spaces is regulated by laws approved by the state. Some areas (such as personal name plates, business cards, and names of private institutions) are unregulated, and the forms of proper nouns can be chosen freely. This paper seeks to answer the following questions: to what extent are minority language rights implemented in visual name use in settlements populated by Slovakia Hungarians, whether Hungarian name usage is spreading, and to what extent do signage and name plates contain proper nouns in a Hungarian form. In bilingual societies, proper nouns and other signs in the minority language increase the prestige of the minority language and have the function of marking ethnic identity. In this paper, the proper noun semiotic, place name semiotic, and institution name semiotic landscapes are investigated for various proper noun types in Slovakia Hungarian settlements.

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THE NOTION OF THE NAME SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPE

The description of the linguistic landscape is one of the relatively new and dynamically developing topics of sociolinguistics, whose focus includes name use in signage as well. Definitions of the notion of linguistic landscape also encompass the use of proper nouns. According to Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25), the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or town is composed of official road signs, advertisements, street names, place names, signage on commercial establishments, and official signs on government buildings. This definition includes the official plates bearing place names and institution names. The name semiotic landscape is an integral part of the linguistic landscape, including unofficial proper nouns, personal names, other names in public spaces, and extralinguistic (non-verbal) signs referring to names as well. The name semiotic landscape is composed of proper nouns and extralinguistic (non-verbal) signs (such as emblems, photos, drawings, and sculptures) referring to or accompanying names on name plates, signage in public spaces, and various other surfaces (e.g., walls, tombstones, posters, and class collages) (Bauko, 2019, pp. 137–156). Nonverbal signs referring to proper nouns are often connected to the meaning of the name in question, for instance in the case of imagery accompanying names of businesses.

Research on the name semiotic landscape is interdisciplinary, using the findings of linguistics, semiotics, ethnography, history, law, geography, translation studies, psychology, and onomastics. Name semiotic research is typically empirical, involving fieldwork, during which researchers take photographs of name plates and other surfaces containing proper nouns and extralinguistic signs referring to them in order to document linguistic data. About the "photographic" way of data collection, Blommaert (2012, p. 5) writes that sociolinguists roam the world now armed not only with notebooks and recorders but also with digital cameras, snapping pictures of what has become known as the linguistic landscape. The analysis of such data should also be extended to signs other than text (e.g., flags, portraits, and images of products), and take into account the spatial arrangement of all elements: the placement of the text, and the color, size, and other characteristics of the lettering (cf. Bartha et al., 2013; David and Mácha, 2014; Gorter ed., 2006; Jaworski and Thurlow eds, 2010; Scollon and Scollon, 2003).

LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE NAME SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPE

The visual representation of proper nouns in public spaces is affected by a variety of factors. The name semiotic landscape changes dynamically depending on the dimensions of time, space, and society. The name semiotic landscape is a component, aspect, and consequence of language policy/name policy. Name policy is conscious action on the part of the state, or another organization or institution engaged in political action aimed at influencing official name use (cf. Csernicskó, 2013; Megyeri-Pálffy, 2013; Walkowiak, 2016). Government policy affects the official use of proper nouns (the registration of personal names and the official use of place name and institution name), and laws regarding names regulate minority name use. Societal change and ideologies influence the name semiotic landscape, while changes in traditions of naming are greatly affected by how people adapt to political powers. Proper nouns serve the strengthening of the representation of power in every era and society. The naming strategies of various periods reflect the ideology deemed to be followed by the powers that be (cf. Tóth, 2013).

Majority patterns of name use strongly affect minority name use and the name semiotic landscape of the given territory. Majority name forms are given preference over minority name forms, and the relations of subordination are reflected by the visualization and spatial relations of proper nouns: name plates usually contain text in the language of those in power, and they are placed higher than and before all others, as well as being in a larger font size. The majority may limit the public use of minority language proper nouns in various ways (cf. Csernicskó, 2019; Gorter et al. eds., 2012; Horony et al., 2012; Kontra, 2017; Laihonen, 2012; Szabómihály, 2020; Szoták, 2016; Vörös, 2004). The terms "place name war" and "personal name war" in Slovakia stemmed from such limitations on the official use of place names and personal names. After the change of regime in Slovakia in the 1990s, the registration of personal names in official registries in the minority languages, as well as the use of minority place names, was limited by the country's language law (Zalabai ed., 1995).

Name plates and other signage in public spaces that contains proper nouns convey information to visitors about the composition of the local population, the status of the language spoken, and language and name policy. The bilingual name semiotic landscape signals a strong interrelatedness of society and name use, its study being a topic of socio-onomastics. An understanding of historical, political and sociocultural relationships and the identification of causes behind the existence of the visible, visualized image are essential in interpreting bilingual name plates. Language ideologies are actualized in the name semiotic landscape (cf. Lanstyák, 2015; Shohamy, 2006). "Investigating language ideologies means an analysis of what extralinguistic connections and meanings are presupposed by those who put up the signs and those who read the signs regarding language choice, the semiotic characteristics and placement of signs" (Bartha et al., 2013, p. 16).

In bilingual environments, proper nouns (and other displayed text) in the minority language increase the prestige of the minority language, express collective identity, have identity marking functions, and can be regarded as ethnic symbols. Beregszászi (2005, p. 158) states that "minority people's feeling of home is greatly enhanced by the presence and extent of the presence of their language in public minority texts: does the language of the minority have the chance to be visible, or is it invisible, with its use limited to being oral (which no doubt is very important in itself)?" Minorities typically use proper nouns bilingually, since they use names in the majority (state) language as well as in their minority language (their mother tongue). Members of minority groups use dual personal, place, and institution names, with each variant attached to one of their languages, due to their bilingualism.

Below, I aim to discuss what the connection points are between Slovakia's minority language policy and its name semiotic landscape, how Slovakia's laws regulating name use affect visual proper noun use, as well as the personal name, place name, and institution name aspects of the semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements.[1]

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[1]As a result of historical changes, Hungarian settlements of today's Slovakia belonged to a number of different countries throughout the course of the 20th century. In the early 20th century, they belonged to Austria–Hungary. After WWI, as a result of the Treaty of Trianon, they became part of the newly formed (1918) Czechoslovakia. The First Vienna Award of 1938 connected southern Slovakia to Hungary, and then, after WWII, these territories were reconnected with Czechoslovakia. These social changes can be witnessed in name use as well, primarily in the way names were entered in registries and used in official contexts.

SLOVAKIA'S MINORITY LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE BILINGUAL NAME SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPE

Slovakia's Law 184 of 1999 on the use of the languages of national minorities[2] (a law that has been amended several times over the years) states that citizens of the Republic of Slovakia who are members of national minorities and reside permanently in a given settlement are eligible to use their minority language in local administrative offices, if members of the minority constitute at least 20% of the population of the settlement in two consecutive censuses (the latest amended version of the law, Tt. 287/2012, mentions a 15% threshold, which will be effective as of the 2021 census). All publicly displayed official texts (announcements, especially at markets and shops, sports venues, restaurants, bars and cafés, in the street, by or above roads, at bus, and railway stations, etc.) can be bilingual using the minority language.

The use and visual presentation of various names (personal, place, and institution names) is regulated by the various name laws as well.

Slovakia's minority language policy and personal name semiotic landscape

After the formation of Slovakia in 1993, two laws regulating the entry of names in registries were passed: Law 300 of 1993 on first names and family names, and Law 154 of 1994 on registries, both amended several times, allowing the official entry of first names in registries in the person's mother tongue, the correction of names originally entered in their Slovak forms to their minority language variants, and the entry of the family names of women of non-Slovak nationality without the *-ová* suffix.[3]

The visual representation of personal names on various surfaces (name plates, memorial plaques, tombstones, class collages, etc.) varies. The outer and inside walls of public buildings bear names of lawyers, notaries, doctors, administrators etc., and front doors of shops may bear the name of the owner or person in charge. Personal names are represented on name plates primarily in their majority language variants, and to a lesser extent in their minority language variants. If the bearer of the name has a title, it usually also appears by their name. Slovak variants of names predominate in the visual representations of personal names even in settlements populated by Hungarians in Slovakia, i.e. the ordering of the names is first name + family name, with women's names bearing the *-ová* suffix: e.g., *Katarína Nagyová, Jozef Nagy* (with a Slovak first name variant + Slovak family name variant + Slovak order). Name forms following the Hungarian name order[4] sometimes include Slovak variants of names: e.g., *Kováč Štefan,*

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[2]According to the latest, 2011 census, 80.7% of the population of Slovakia are of Slovak nationality. In addition to the majority population, the following minority groups are represented in the country: 8.5% Hungarians and 2% Romani; less than 1% each Czech, Rusyn, Ukrainian, German, Polish, Croatian, Serbian, Russian, Jewish, Moravian Bulgarian, and other; 7% unknown (undisclosed nationality). The largest single minority group in Slovakia are the Hungarians: in 2011, 8.5% of the whole population (458,467 people) professed to be of Hungarian nationality and 9.4% (508,714 people) to speak Hungarian as their mother tongue (for more on this, see Gyurgyík, 2014).

[3]The *-ová* suffix is attached to the base form of the family name to signal the female gender of its bearer, e.g. *Nagyová, Tóthová* from the Hungarian family names *Nagy* and *Tóth*.

[4]In the Hungarian language, the order of names is family name preceding the first name, in line with the general pattern of attributive adjectives preceding the modified noun: family names function as attributive adjectives in this sense (e.g. *Polák Angelika* – Which *Angelika*? The one belonging to the *Polák* family).

Vargová Katarína (with a Slovak family name variant + Slovak first name variant + Hungarian order). Hungarian name variants and/or parts of names may refer to the ethnic identity of the name bearer. On name plates, this may be indicated by a Hungarian first name, or, in case of women, leaving off the *-ová* suffix: e.g., *Tünde Mészáros, András Marsal* (Hungarian first name variant + Hungarian family name variant + Slovak order); *Stubendek Mária, Vörös Attila* (Hungarian family name variant + Hungarian first name variant or first name variant that is the same in both languages + Hungarian order).

More rarely, double family names also occur in the name semiotic landscape. Women sometimes keep their own family name after marriage, while also taking their husband's, with the husband's family name preceding the woman's, e.g., *Nagy Kovács, Nagyová Kovácsová, Nagy Kovácsová, Nagyová Kovács*.

Slovakia Hungarians often use their own names in two variants (cf. Bauko, 2020), with both family names and first names used in both Slovak and Hungarian forms (e.g., *Katarína Kovácsová: Kovács Katalin, Ján Varga: Varga János*). In minority populated settlements such dual name use also appears in bilingual memorial plaques, business cards, and other situations, with Slovak variants of names preferred in the context of the Slovak language text, and Hungarian variants in the Hungarian language text.

On rare occasions it happens that the dual name use in a name plate results in hybrid name variants, producing unusual forms: the form *Ján Thain János* appears in a memorial plaque (see Fig. 1), with the family name (*Thain*) between two first name variants, the Slovak variant (*Ján*) preceding it and the Hungarian variant (*János*) following it. The hybrid name form, uniting elements of the two languages, contains both the Slovak and Hungarian name variants at the same time (*Ján Thain* and *Thain János*, respectively). The two variants of the same name (e.g. *Juraj Mészáros György*) sometimes appear in this way in business cards, leaflets, published materials, etc. and may be an indication of their bearer's dual identity.

Name plates and other signage that display only the Hungarian variants of names, found in some Slovakia Hungarian settlements, attest to the Hungarian nationality of their bearers.

Name plates and graduating class collages[5] in Slovakia Hungarian schools that use Hungarian as a language of instruction usually include the students' and teachers' names in their Hungarian variants, attesting to the bearers' nationality, even though these name forms are not always the legally registered forms.

In cemeteries in Slovakia Hungarian settlements, is typical for many personal names to appear in their Hungarian variants on tombstones (depending on the proportion of Hungarians in the settlement). These Hungarian name variants and other Hungarian text found on tombstones are indicators of the late name bearers' identity.

Nicknames are also a part of the name semiotic landscape. An election campaign poster included a candidate's nickname in both Hungarian and Slovak, in addition to his first and family names: *Gömöri Obama/Gemerský Obama* (after the former President of the United States Barack Obama). Nicknames also appear in obituaries and on tombstones, typically in the case of Gypsy individuals.

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[5]High school graduating classes in Hungary and Slovakia produce large framed collages with formal photographic portraits of all students and their teachers, typically displayed in shop windows during the last semester of school.

Fig. 1. A memorial plaque with dual name use (photograph by the author)

Slovakia's minority language policy and the place name semiotic landscape

According to Law 191 of 1994 on place name signs (and governmental decree 221 of 1999 later), place name signs of settlements populated by minorities may include the name of the settlement in the minority language, in addition to the Slovak variant, if the minority constitute at least 20% of the local population. In accordance with modification 19/2018 of the Ministry of the Interior's decree 9/2009, the installation of place name signs of equal sizes started in 2019: the minority language variants of the names of settlements are included (in block capitals in black against a white background and in a blue frame) below the Slovak variant (in block capitals in black against a white background and in a black frame). Some settlements have not yet replaced the old name signs with the new ones: signs of unequal sizes follow the earlier regulations (with the bigger, Slovak language name in black against a white background above the smaller sign, with the minority language name in white against a blue background).

If an official place name is homonymous with the name of another settlement, the two have to be differentiated through other name elements – which results in the fact that unofficial name variants sometimes also occur in the name semiotic landscape. Since the Treaty of Trianon (1920), *Komárom* has been the official Hungarian name of two neighboring settlements, one in Slovakia, the other in Hungary. The motto "One town – two counties", used in the 2019 town festival posters and leaflets indicates the close sister city ties of the two settlements. The official bilingual name of the town in Slovakia is *Komárno/Komárom* (Bauko, 2018). The place name sign by the major road leading into the town has two signs of equal sizes, one with the Slovak variant, the other with the Hungarian one, but the less popular minor roads still have the older signs of non-identical size. In Komárom, Hungary, road signs indicate the direction to Komárno/Komárom, Slovakia, providing the name of the latter as *Révkomárom* and *Révkomárom–Komárno*. Due to their geographical positioning, the two towns are also sometimes differentiated as *Észak-Komárom* ("North Komárom", Slovakia) and *Dél-Komárom* ("South Komárom", Hungary) in both speech and writing (Figs 2 and 3).

Hungarian language place name signs have, in the past, been vandalized in some places in Slovakia. Hungarian place name variants can be used in official documents, railway-, and bus

Fig. 2. Official place name variants (photographs by the author)

stations, and on some signage, but this has not always happened in practice. Railway stations have not displayed Hungarian place names in recent years. Minority language place name signs, placed in railway stations of Slovakia Hungarian settlements by the activists of the Bilingual Southern Slovakia Movement,[6] were quickly removed. After this, the activists painted the Hungarian names on some railway station buildings, or placed Hungarian signs on private property (for instance, in gardens next to the railway stations). By now the situation has changed: the placement of official Hungarian place name signs began in March 2017 (under or next to Slovak language signs) in railway stations of settlements populated by Hungarians in Southern Slovakia, in accordance with the decree of the Minister of Transport, and these signs are all the same size.

During the place name reform after the 1948 Communist takeover, the Slovak names of 710 mostly Hungarian settlements were changed or legally abolished. Following the change of regime in 1989, some municipal governments have attempted to change the Slovak names of settlements to names that are closer to the Hungarian names (these are usually the place names made official in 1920). In some cases, Slovak legislation approved these requests following local referendums, but quite a few were rejected. The latter typically involved settlements named in Slovak after Slovak historical personalities. For instance, despite two local referendums that showed overwhelming support, the village of Pered was not allowed to change its name, *Tešedíkovo*, formed from the name of Sámuel Tessedik (1742–1820), Lutheran minister, teacher, and author in pedagogy and economy, to the previously used *Pered*. The activists of the Bilingual Southern Slovakia movement changed the place name sign *Tešedíkovo* to *Pered*, which was removed within a day by the public roads maintenance company, together with the

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[6]The Slovakia Hungarian "Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia Mozgalom/Dvojjazyčné južné Slovensko" (Bilingual Southern Slovakia Movement) is an unofficial and anonymous movement whose language activists aim to extend visually represented bilingualism to the Hungarian populated areas of Southern Slovakia.

Fig. 3 . Non-official place name variants (photographs by the author)

supplementary trilingual (Hungarian/Slovak/English) red sign that aimed to remind people of the ignored referendums, stating that "On 5 March 1995 and on 10 March 2012, a local referendum changed the municipality's name from Tešedíkovo to Pered, which was arrogantly and antidemocratically rejected by the government. This sign is implementing the legitimate decision of Pered's residents."

In some cases, the residents of villages with a local Hungarian majority prefer the visual representation of the Hungarian name of the settlement. A case in point is Bart/Bruty, a village that is over 90% Hungarian, according to the figures of the 2011 census. The road signs marking the limits of the village are bilingual. In addition, the village has a flower bed in which flowers spell out *Bart*, the Hungarian name of the village in red, white, and green, the colors of the Hungarian flag, giving a clear indication of the Hungarian identity of the locals. A wooden post by the road leading to the village displays a bilingual greeting sign, but it gives the name of the village only in Hungarian: *Üdvözöljük falunkban/Bart 1223/Vítame vás v obci* "Welcome to our village [Hungarian]/Bart 1223/Welcome to our village [Slovak]". Most of the postcards depicting the sights of the village also only inclue the name *Bart*; only rarely do they include both names, and even when they do, the Hungarian name is placed first: *Bart – Bruty.*

According to Law 184 of 1999 on minority language use, settlements can provide the names of streets and other local geographical places in the minority language as well. The bilingual street signs approved by the municipal governments of Hungarian populated settlements are included in the official listings as well. Bilingual street signs usually contain the Slovak name above and the Hungarian name below (e.g., *Svätoondrejská ulica/Szent András utca* "Saint Andrew's Street"). In some places, for instance, in Vrakúň/Nyékvárkony, the Hungarian street name precedes the Slovak one. In others, where there are no official bilingual street signs, unofficial street signs are used. For instance, in Hajnáčka/Ajnácskő the residents placed unofficial Hungarian street signs in public places, which include place names that are used in everyday conversation (such as *Felvég* and *Keskeny*). In the town of Komárno/Komárom, the building in which the flower shop *Krisztián* (named after its owner) is situated has a sign with

the Hungarian/English hybrid name *Krisztián street*. The building opposite the shop has the official street name, *Ulica Františkánov – Ferences barátok utcája* "Franciscan brothers' Street".

Slovakia's minority language policy and the institution name semiotic landscape

Names of institutions can also be displayed in the minority language in settlements populated by a minority.

In the case of state institutions, bilingual Slovak–Hungarian name plates predominate in Slovakia Hungarian settlements. The Hungarian name is usually placed underneath the Slovak name, in the same font and font size.

Section 21 of Law 596 of 2003 on education administration and the self-government of schools regulates signage in educational institutions. Schools that conduct most of their educational activity in the minority language have to indicate their language of instruction in the name of the school. In case the school headquarters are found in a settlement where minority persons constitute at least 20% of the local population, the location has to be indicated in the minority language as well. Signage on the outside of the school must indicate the name of the school without the address or location. After the change of regime in 1989, many Slovakia Hungarian schools officially changed their names, most of them adopting the names of either regionally prominent people or people of Hungarian historical significance (e.g. *Gymnázium Hansa Selyeho Komárno s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským – Selye János Magyar Tannyelvű Gimnázium Komárom* "János Selye High School of Hungarian Language Instruction, Komárno/Komárom"[7]).

Other state-run institutions in Slovakia Hungarian settlements (administrative offices, museums, libraries, cultural and medical centers etc.) also typically have Slovak–Hungarian bilingual signage (see Fig. 4, *Okresný úrad Šaľa/Járási Hivatal Vágsellye* "District Administration, Šaľa/Vágsellye").

Signage involving proper nouns is linguistically diverse in the case of privately-owned institutions (such as shops, hotels, and restaurants). Bilingual Slovak–Hungarian signage is less frequent than monolingual signage (in Slovak, Hungarian, English, or another language), and the names of institutions do not really have limitations: any word can become a part of a name (e.g., *Baby Shop, Club Las Vegas, Crystal, Diving Shop, Happy Dog, Happy Day, Hell, Outlet Center,* and *Sweet Home*, etc.).

Monolingual Hungarian proper nouns used by private institutions indicate their founder's language identity, attitudes, and a preference for name use in the mother tongue. In some cases, names or parts of names are also represented visually. The name plate of the café *Bufet CsirkeFogó* "Buffet Rascal" [lit. "chicken catcher"] depicts a chicken with a chef's hat on. The place used to specialize in grilled chicken and functions as a café today (with the name unchanged). The spelling of *CsirkeFogó*, with the *F* capitalized (*Csirke + Fogó*), refers to the multiple possible interpretations, evoking the meaning "rascal" among other things. Underneath the name plate of *Presso Lesz Vigasz* "Café Find Solace" [lit. "Café There Will Be Solace"] a picture of the American city of Las Vegas is placed, to underscore the pun in the name of the

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[7]The two different variants of the first name, *Hans* vs. *János*, refer also to the Austrian–Hungarian origin of the renowned researcher of stress. This duality of name use also appears in his own publications: he used his name as *Selye János* in papers he published in Hungarian, and as *Hans Selye* in papers he published in other languages.

Fig. 4. The Slovak–Hungarian bilingual name plate of a state-run institution (photography by the author)

establishment (the Hungarian phrase *lesz vigasz* contains the same consonants as Las Vegas and suggests the idea of finding solace in drinking). In the name of *Gombaszögi Nyári Tábor* "Gombaszög Summer Camp", the largest, week-long festival of Slovakia Hungarian young people, a part of the name, *Gombaszög* (lit. *gomba + szög* "mushroom + nail")*,* is visualized in an image: a mushroom shaped area contains the name of the festival, with a nail hammered into the cap of the mushroom. This suggests a folk etymological interpretation of the place name, since the real etymology is based on an older meaning of *szög* (*szeg ~ szög* 'corner'), referring to a place rich in mushrooms (Kiss, 1988, p. 521).

CONCLUSION

State administration, municipal governments, private businesses, and non-governmental organizations all take part in shaping the name semiotic landscape. The presentation of minority proper nouns in public spaces is regulated by laws passed by the powers that be. The presentation of signage is, to a great extent, an issue of power, which is why language laws also address it. However, the linguistic presentation of proper nouns is up to individual choice in a number of unregulated areas. The presentation of names is also relevant in the private sphere (cf. personal name plates or business cards, etc.). Official regulation influences cemeteries and private establishments (shops and restaurants, etc.) to a lesser extent, and names displayed in them are shaped by people who make the signs and inscriptions, which, in turn, reflect the sign makers' attitudes towards power, the environment, and practical considerations. The presentation of minority names on name plates and signage in general is an important issue of language strategy.

The visual presentation of proper nouns in Slovakia Hungarian settlements depends on the type of name in question. The use of personal names in signage is unregulated by laws, which results in great variability in names in the name semiotic landscape. The use of place names (i.e., names of settlements and streets) in street signs and settlement signs is regulated by laws about

names. The use of institutions' names is regulated in case of state institutions (e.g., schools and administrative offices) but not in the case of private institutions (e.g., companies and restaurants). Thus, name use is more liberal in the latter, with names of any form, or language presented visually.

The personal name semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements is characterized by the presence of both Slovak and Hungarian name variants in name plates and other signage. Slovak name variants are more frequently used, but dual name use also occurs, and in some contexts Hungarian name variants predominate. Tomb inscriptions and graduating class collages of schools with Hungarian as a language of instruction often display names in Hungarian forms used by individuals and the community, even when the person's name appears in the official registry in its Slovak variant.

The place name semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements is characterized by bilingualism (primarily in the names of settlements and streets): the Slovak name variant usually appears above the minority language (Hungarian) variant.

The institution name semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements is variable: in state institutions (such as administrative offices and schools with Hungarian as a language of instruction) bilingual Slovak–Hungarian signage predominates, while private institutions (such as shops, hotels, and restaurants) usually have monolingual (English) names.

Due to the efforts of organizations and individuals of Hungarian identity – primarily, municipal assemblies with Hungarian representatives – in recent years Hungarian language name use and Hungarian signage have been spreading in some Slovakia Hungarian settlements where Hungarians constitute a local majority. The increased presence and visibility of the Hungarian language in visual representations has been encouraged by bottom-up initiatives and language activists, who work on calling attention to opportunities of visually using the minority language in names, and in general, in order to exercise minority language rights in practice more widely.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

The "we" vs. "they" distinction in Slovakia Hungarians' discourse

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic differentiation is a basic component of sociocultural differentiation: social processes create the social and linguistic meanings of variants, sometimes also contributing to language change through discourse processes. In addition to being continuously constructed, discourse is in a dialectic relationship with extra-discursive factors and can therefore be studied only when embedded in its social and linguistic contexts (cf. Fairclough 2010: 3–5, Laihonen 2009). In this article I investigate how the notion of "we" occurs in the metalinguistic discourse of Hungarian speakers in Slovakia (with reference to Slovakia Hungarians and their Hungarian language use) (cf. Kontra 2006) in contrast with the notion of "they" (with reference to Hungary Hungarians and their Hungarian language use) in lay speakers' utterances referring to language. The study reported on in this article uses directed interviews and employs discourse analysis to provide insight into the use of "we" vs. "they" and their meanings in the Slovakia Hungarian variety. It also seeks to show how certain expressions become indexical in conceptualizations of identity and how the distinction of "we" vs. "they" is created by language.

The present analysis focuses on the opinions of Hungarian bilingual minority speakers in Slovakia about their own variety and other Hungarian varieties. Judgments regarding the varieties used by minorities and regarding various social groups and their languages is more about the relationship of these groups and their acceptance of each other (see Vančo, 2020). The value

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of differences between minorities and their languages are demarcated by the varying degrees of the societal acceptance of diversity (cf. Kontra, 2006).

The Hungarian language is, in our interpretation, using the theoretical basis and typology established by Clyne (1992) and Muhr (2012), a pluricentric language.[1] The criteria of pluricentricity, as defined by Muhr (2012), hold for Hungarian. I want to single out two of those criteria here:

1. Linguistic distance (*Abstand*): The variety must have enough linguistic (and/or pragmatic) characteristics to distinguish it from other; these characteristics can serve as a symbol for expressing identity and social uniqueness.
2. Acceptance of pluricentricity: The language community must accept the status of its language as a pluricentric variety and consider that pluricentricity as part of its social/national identity (Muhr, 2012).

In the past 100 years, the varieties of Hungarian in countries neighboring Hungary have developed in language situations that are asymmetrical to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the country in question. The features that differentiate the Hungarian language use of Slovakia Hungarians from that of Hungary Hungarian are the following:

- The Slovakia Hungarian variety is a bilingual variety, whereas the Hungary Hungarian variety is a monolingual one;
- A greater number of regionalisms is used in the Slovakia variety – since the regional dialect is used in more communicative situations than the Hungary Hungarian variety;
- The speakers of Slovakia Hungarian often do not know a Hungary Hungarian variant and experience this as a linguistic gap from the point of view of the Hungarian standard. They tend to use hypernyms, loanwords or codeswitching in such cases;
- Contact phenomena are found in every linguistic subsystem;
- From the point of view of the societal and language policy perspectives, the Slovakia Hungarian variety lacks an appropriate formal status: it only has the status of a minority language in Slovakia.

In this framework, the relationship between speakers and their own variety gains special importance, as does the way in which the use of the variety shapes individual and group identities. The investigation of Slovakia Hungarian uses the theoretical framework of pluricentric languages as its point of departure and has been carried out at the Department of Hungarian at the University of Nitra.[2]

A next step taken is an investigation into the interrelation of language and individual structures of identity in order to better understand identity structures, including examining utterances as a means of creating social reality.

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[1]See Muhr (2012); for more on Hungarian as a pluricentric language, see, for instance, Lanstyák (1995a, 1995b, 1996, 2008), Kontra and Saly (1998), Szilágyi (2008), Kozmács and Vančo (2016), Huber (2020), and Vančo et al. (2020).

[2]Some of our research has an educational focus, investigating issues surrounding the teaching of Hungarian grammar and of varieties of Hungarian in both minority and majority educational settings. We have also studied the effect of varieties used by students on the evaluation of students' school work (Jánk, 2020), as well as the characteristics of the vocabulary and language use of the Slovakia Hungarian 14- to 18-year-old student population (Gál, 2020) and the characteristics of the community identity associated with the variety and the region. In 2020 we edited (Vančo et al.) a volume of studies addressing issues of the pluricentricity of the Hungarian language.

Individual identity is determined by factors such as knowledge and attitudes acquired during socialization, the experience of belonging to a group or community, and the emotional relation to the native land, culture and language (both the standard and the vernacular) and languages (including the majority language, in a minority situation). 'Language' in the sense of what a particular person says or writes, considered from the point of view of both form and content, is central to individual identity. It inscribes the person within national and other corporate identities, including establishing the person's 'rank' within the identity (Joseph, 2004, p. 225) Joseph, John E. 2004: *Language and identity: national, ethnic, religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan). In this sense, language is an identity-forming entity with the help of which one places oneself and others within the given community via discursive utterances.

Numerous studies have examined the role of varieties used by linguistic minority groups in shaping group identity. A case in point is Csernicskó's work from 2008, in which he convincingly demonstrates that "[l]anguage as an identity-forming factor works not only in opposition with other languages in Subcarpathia. [. . .] Most small communities [in Subcarpathia] distinguish their own language and language use from both that of Hungarians in Hungary and the dialects of the surrounding villages. The local varieties often become valuable markers of self-identification, the source of pride, and important indicator of regional, Subcarpathian identity, defined in opposition to Hungary Hungarians" (Csernicskó, 2008, p. 161).[3]

This research perspective and method regards the construction of discourse as a reality-constructing practice. It is a basic tenet of discourse analysis that the subjectivity of the individual is constructed and expressed through language, and it is also through language that we are able to carry out social action and form power relations (Carver, 2004, p. 144.) Our study focuses on the reality-constructing process created by language, how the notions of "we" [minority Hungarian speakers] and "they" serve to other Hungarian speakers who are not "us", and how these notions occur in discourses about language by lay (non-linguist) speakers (cf. Bartha and Hámori, 2010). This approach originates in postmodern paradigms according to which identities are constructed partly in the course of language use, by accepting or rejecting explicit or implicit interpretations of meanings (cf. Edwards and Potter, 2001; Fairclough, 2010; Laihonen, 2009a, 2009b; Puchta and Potter, 2002).

During discourse, the variability of and change in the rules of language choice may lead to the reorganization of the repertoire, which can change societal meanings associated with individual languages as well as social identities expressed through language (Gal, 1979, p. 171). In such changes it is crucial to examine how speaker groups perceive and interpret their own boundaries subjectively and by using differences of language use and language proficiency in order to decide whether somebody is from the group or not. In this situation the we-code and the they-code can be assigned different meanings in different social groups and, especially, in different age groups (Bartha, 2003, p. 73).

In this framework, linguistic texts are reflections of reality constructed via language. Through these texts not only social relations become empirically analyzable but also the language-related identity constructions of the individual.

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[3]See Péntek (2008).

METHODOLOGY

The first phase of the investigation involved the collection of empirical data. The context of the investigation was that the Slovakia Hungarian students used as subjects for this study participated in a study-abroad period at a university in Hungary (and one in an ethnically Hungarian town in Subcarpathia, Ukraine). A total of four Slovakia Hungarian students, all majoring in Hungarian, participated in the investigation as subjects, three females and one male.

I conducted a structured interview, recorded with prior knowledge and consent of the interviewees. The topic of the conversation was whether during their stay in Hungary they noticed a difference between the way of speaking used there and the way of speaking Hungarian in Slovakia. The participants completed a one semester course called "Fundamentals of Sociolinguistics and Dialectology", during which they learned about the connections between language and society, including the existence of the Slovakia Hungarian variety and various regional dialects. The conversation was informal, and my conversation partners had a lot to say, interrupting each other talking about their opinions. The interview was about 60 minutes long and was transcribed.

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF THE AXIS "WE" VS. "THEY"

The aim of the investigation was to demonstrate an axis of differentiation on the basis of metalinguistic comments about the Hungarian language as used in Hungary and in Slovakia with the help of which we can differentiate between the "we" code and the "they" codes and can contrast their respective characteristics.

We can gain insight into the process of enregisterment through observing the metasemiotic process by which a cultural model works while speakers identify indexical associations of a speaker type or a variety (Gal, 2018, p. 109). In the analyzed statements I examine the metapragmatic classifications of linguistic forms and their associated properties, that is, the process in which language activity, or some aspect of it, becomes the subject of reflection by average language users.

By contrasting their own speech with that of others, speakers typify the latter, thereby creating and using models, pointing out speakers' attitudes and commitments through their word choices.

Such designations appear in groups of opposites. A characteristic of metapragmatic qualifications in these communications is that they can be placed on an axis of differentiation, thus demonstrating the difference between "us" and "them".

Below, I quote the sentences that were said about speakers or utterances in the course of the conversations. I present the data as follows: I first provide the utterance in Hungarian, followed by its English translation. In the texts (both in the Hungarian and English versions) I highlight (in boldface) the elements that contain the metapragmatic qualifications in the given utterance. S1 denotes the first subject and the other subjects are numbered accordingly.

Connecting linguistic forms and characteristics

The interview participants connected the intonations and pronunciation features of the utterances heard in Hungary with the characteristics of the subjects.

"They":

S1: *Magyarországi magyarok sokkal **jobban artikulálnak**,*

*az már olyan **túlságosan** olyan **erőltetett** (nevetés)*

nem is tudnám magamat elképzelni tiszta vicces lennék.

Mondjuk nekik az vicces ahogy én beszélek.

Jaj még vannak olyan beszólások hogy ez **parasztos beszéd, elmaradott**.

S1: "Hungary Hungarians **articulate** much **better**,

it's like overly, **forced** [laughs]

I could not imagine myself, I would be too funny.

Well I guess they find the way I talk funny.

Oh and there are those comments like this is **peasant speak, backward**."

"They"

S2: *Hát nem érzékeltük azt a . . . **nyávogást**? Érti, hogy mire gondolok. . . . .*

*mert Budapesten ez volt amíg várakoztunk a vonatra, jobbról balról a összevissza **nyávogós hanghordozás**.*

S2: "We didn't perceive that. . . **miaowing**? You know what I mean . . . .

because that's what it was while we were waiting for the train, from the left and from the right, all those **miaowing** intonations."

S3: *És magyarországi magyarok ugye, nem tudom, olyanok mintha kicsit **büszkék lennéne**k, és a nyelvhasználatuk pedig például **jobban hangsúlyoznak**, nem is hangsúlyoznak, **másképp** ejtik a szavakat.*

S3: "And Hungary Hungarians, well, I don't know, it's as if they are **somewhat proud**, and their language use, for instance, they **intonate better**, not intonate, they pronounce words **differently**."

My subjects designated speech of Hungary Hungarian speakers with such intonation as a general sign of "affectation", and speakers using it as "affected", and as "miaowers" which they link to another general trait, 'proud'. In the excerpts above, the "they" vs. "us" axis of differentiation appears in two different ways. First, Slovakia Hungarian speakers regard Hungary Hungarians' speech as "affected", and, second, Hungary Hungarians, in contrast with affectation, disdainfully regard contemptuously the speech of Slovakia Hungarians as "peasant-like",

and, thus, backward, as if legitimating the Slovakia Hungarians' opinion about the Hungary Hungarians' affectation.

Another differentiation can be described with the **simple** vs. **colorful,** and **easy** vs. **hard** opposition.

"They"	"We"
S3: *Ahogy tanultuk is hogy Magyarországon egy* **csomó nyelvjárás** *van,* **nem venni észre.**	S4: *szerintem a miénk* **színesebb.** *Ott mindenki próbálja a köznyelvet beszélni.*
S4: *Nem, ott* **olyan egységesnek** *tűnik.* **Egyszerűbb.**	S3: *Itt eljöttünk, akkor elég* **sok nyelvváltozat** *megtalálható már csak az osztályunkban is.*
S3: "As we have learned, that there are **lots of dialects** in Hungary, **you wouldn't notice that.**"	S4: "I think ours is more **colorful.** There everybody tries to speak the standard."
S4: "No, it seems **very unified. Simpler.**"	S3: "Here we came, and there are **many varieties** to be found, even in our classroom."
S3: *Hát ő nekik mindenképp* **könnyebb** *a helyzetük, mint nekünk, de viszont* **nem** *mondom hogy* **jobb.** *Mert* **mi** *annyival vagyunk* **többek,** *amivel* **ők kevesebbek.**	S4: *két nyelven beszélünk…nem két nyelven beszélünk de* **két nyelven beszélünk legtöbbet,** *amit* **ők** *nem.*
S3: "Well their situation is definitely **easier** than ours, but I **wouldn't** say it's **better.** Because **we** have that much **more,** and **they** have that much **less.**"	S4: *Alapból ez a viszonyunk, ami itt van Szlovákiában, ez a magyarok és a szlovákok közötti együttélés, itt is* **alkalmazkodnunk kellett** *egymáshoz.* **Őnekik nincs** *mihez alkalmazkodni,* **ők ilyen egységben** *élnek. Attól is* **többek vagyunk,** *hogy* **megtanultunk** *alkalmazkodni a másikhoz és* **megtanultunk** *együttélni.*
	S4: "we speak two languages… we don't speak two languages, but **we speak two languages mostly,** which **they don't.**"
	S4: "Basically, the way we relate, what we have here in Slovakia, this coexistence of Hungarians and Slovaks, **we had to adapt** to each other here too. **They don't** have to adapt to anything, **they** live like in **unity. We have more** because we **learned** to adapt to others and **learned** to coexist."

The use of the "easy" vs. "hard" opposition also involves the assignment of social values. Difficulty and complexity connected to "we" is a value and knowledge, whereas easiness connected to "they" is assigned the meaning of "lack of knowledge". "They" do not have to do anything; knowledge is connected to the "we" code; and bilingualism – its existence and formation, as well as its ongoing adaptation – appear as values within it.

The opposition between "correctly in Hungarian" and "not properly" in Hungarian, and the feelings connected to this opposition, are demonstrated in the following excerpts:

S4: *Például amikor Beregszászon* (Ukrajna) *voltam, ott teljesen más volt mint amikor elmentünk Kecskemétre. Volt bennem egy kicsit ilyen **féltségérzet** (sic), hogy mi van akkor, ha én jövevényszavakat fogok használni és nem fogják érteni. Mindig el kell gondolkodnom azon, hogy az a **szó** hogy van **másképpen**. Hogy van **rendesen** magyarul. És ö. . . Beregszászon például ez **nem volt meg** bennem, nem volt bennem meg az, hogy most **féltem** volna jövevényszavakat használni, mert náluk is voltak olyan szavak, amiket ők megértettek. Hogy hiába azt mondtam hogy horcsica megértették. Vagy ők is rengeteg jövevényszót használnak, ami az ukránból jön még a tanárok is, szóval ilyen mindenki által elfogadott jövevényszavak, például nem azt mondják, hogy: lesz órád, hanem: lesz még parád. És a tanárok is így kérdezik meg, csak nem tudom ott valahogy kicsit közvetlenebb volt az egész. **Így érzem.***

S4: "For instance, when I was in Beregove [Ukraine], it was very different than when we went to Kecskemét [Hungary]. I did have a slight **feeling of fear** about what would happen if I used loanwords and they didn't understand them. I always have to think about how that **word** can be said **differently**. How it is in **proper** Hungarian. And umm. . . in Beregove I **didn't have** this in me, I wasn't **afraid** to use loanwords, because they also had words that only they understood. It was no problem if I said *horcsica* ["mustard"], they understood. And they use a lot of loanwords that come from Ukrainian, even the teachers do, all sorts of loanwords accepted by everyone, for instance, they don't say *lesz órád* ["you'll have a class"] but *lesz még parád* ["you'll have a class"]. And the teachers also ask like that, and I don't know, there the whole thing was a little more intimate. **That's what I feel**."

In this sequence, the category of "they" is further stratified, and non-Hungarian "they" partly overlap with the "we" group. In Hungary, people belonging to the "we" group have to look for words, because "they" speak differently: the words of the "we" language are not proper Hungarian and their use may cause stigmatization. In Berehove/Beregszász, Ukraine, there was no need to be afraid to use "non-proper" words: although "they" (the Hungarian speakers from the Ukraine) speak differently than the Hungarians in Slovakia do (the respondent supplies an example), they do so in essentially the same way as the "we" group does. (From the point of view of "them", the people of Subcarpathia do not speak Hungarian properly; rather, they use a contact variety.)[4] "We" carries a narrower and broader meaning at the same time. The indicated sense of fear, which can be linked to talking differently, disappears with the recognition of a similar situation in life and the inclusion of "them" in the "we" group.

The axis of differentiation can also be described by the notion of **spatiality**, with the spatial placement of the high and low: the high is related to the meaning with the higher prestige, the low with the lesser prestige. "They" is expressed through "the high", the superior, and "we" through the contempt, which represents the point of view of the "they" group.

S1: *nem azt mondom hogy **fentebb** hordanák az orrukat, de olyannak tűnt.*

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[4]In order to protect the "proper Hungarian language", some linguists also create the "we" vs. "they" differentiation, cf.: "But let us not forget that the Hungarian language is not spoken only inside Hungary's borders but also by more and more people in diaspora, while lacking any connection to the Hungarian language area. We can experience very strange forms of language use. Language use is truly being debased there" (Balázs, 2005, p. 65).

S2: *ott is a főnök, vagy a kisfőnök aki volt ott nagyon **lenézően**, mintha magasabbrendűnek képzelte volna magát, úgy beszélt velünk.*

S2: *Vannak előnyei meg hátrányai is. Na a plusz nyelv az előnye ugye. De a negativuma az hogy hogy egy kicsit **le is vagyunk nézve**.*

S1: "I'm not saying they **turn up** their noses, but it seemed like that."

S2: "there, the boss, the vice boss there, he spoke to us very **disdainfully**, as if he imagined himself to be higher."

S2: "There are advantages and disadvantages. The extra language is a plus of course. But the down side is that we are somewhat **looked down on**."

The dual allegiance is also expressed by the mitigating expressions *but it seemed like that* and *somewhat [looked down on]*.

While in the first sequence presented, the different pitch associated with the "they" code is connected to the negatively interpreted characteristic *proud*, in the case of the "we" code, *pride* is associated with the expression of the positive value of belonging to Slovakia Hungarians. Belonging to the group is expressed as a mission:

S1: *Mert….bennem is **van** egy kis **büszkeség** hogy az **nem** pusztán **azért** mert **szlovákiai magyar vagyok** és ide születtem, hanem azért mert az én . . . . én **hozzáállásom** a dolgokhoz meg az **értékrendszerem**. . . . . . . Azért ad egy kis büszkeséget mert az maga **egy ilyen**, nagyon sokan eztet egy ilyen **küldetéstudatnak** veszi. Szlovákiai magyarnak lenni az **küldetés**, ezt a küldetést inkább azt mondanám hogy ez a küldetés az úgymond a **megmaradásnak a fontossága**, és ez az ami motivál engem meg minden.*

S1: "Because… there **is** some **pride** in me that **not** just **because** I **am a Slovakia Hungarian** and I was born here, but because my. . . . . the way **I relate** to things and my **system of values**. . . . . . They give me some pride because this is, many people would call it like a **sense of mission**. Being a Slovakia Hungarian is a **mission**, and this mission, I would rather say this mission is the **importance of survival**, and this is what motivates me, these kind of things."

The "we" vs. "they" differentiation, however, is not manifested only in the Hungary vs. Slovakia Hungarian differentiation, but the same axis can be used again to make differentiations within the "we" group. "We" is further divided, and a "they" group appears within the "we" group.

S3: *Most a himnusztörvény kapcsán ugye volt tegnap a himnuszéneklés stb. . . . . . . Volt egy facebook csoport ahova valami 30 ezer ember becsatlakozott abból kb. 15 ezer kommentelt posztot stb, és végül ezren megjelentek a parlament előtt énekelni és előkerült a vissza mindent, Trianon stb. na ez a **nagymagyar** aki azt se tudja hogy mit **fröcsög de fröcsög** mert az jó. Meg az a **nagymagyar** aki odaposztolt egy képet egy felhőről, és megkérdezte, ti is látjátok a turult a felhőben?*

S3: *És én azért nem mentem el himnuszt énekelni mert **én ezekkel nem akarok sorsközösséget vállalni**.*

S4: ***Köztünk** is van ellentét igen. A **szlovákiai magyarság se egységes***

S3: *. . .. volt az a felvonulás és* **énekelték a magyar himnuszt** *és* **énekeltek magyar daloka**t*, és utána amikor* **elkezdtek ria-ria hungáriázni** *az már valamikor kicsit* **sok***.*

S3: "Now, in connection with the anthem law,[5] there was the anthem singing yesterday, etc. . . . . . . There was a Facebook group that something like 30 thousand people joined, and about 15 thousand of them left comments, and then in the end one thousand people were there in front of the parliament to sing, and everything came up again, return everything to us, Trianon, etc. Well, these **great Hungarians**[6] who do not know what they are **spewing, but they spew it anyway**, because that's great. And those people are the great Hungarians like the person who posted a picture of a cloud and asked 'Do you also see the *turul* bird in the cloud?"[7]

S3: "And I didn't go to sing the anthem because **I don't want to express a community of fate with these people**."

S4: There are disagreements **among us**, too, yes. **Slovakia Hungarians are not unified either**."

S3: ". . . there was that march, and people were **singing the Hungarian national anthem** and **singing Hungarian songs**, and then when they **started to shout 'ria, ria, Hungária'**, now that a little **too much**."

The differentiation of "we" vs. "they" also appears within Slovakia Hungarians expressed with the "we" code. Those who can be linked to the characteristics of "them" in Hungary form a new side of the axis of differentiation. Speakers recreate cultural frames when they interpret events that are topical and often contradictory in the current interaction. A certain feature perceived by the speaker to be a characteristic of some Slovakia Hungarians, "the great Hungarianness", is magnified and becomes significant in relation to their identities, serving as an explanation of the speaker's activity and the new frame thus created. Speakers create the frame in which they place their group identities by developing complex categories of certainty and uncertainty. Within Hungarians, a smaller group is designated, that of Slovakia Hungarians, which, however, also carries an element of uncertainty. By including a different point of view, this frame is erased and creates two other, opposite frames, the frame of Slovakness from the Hungarian point of view and the frame of Hungarianness from the Slovak point of view.

S1: *Magyaroknak tartjuk magunkat, de* **nem úgy szoktuk mondani** *hogy* **magyarok***nak tartjuk magunknak,* **hanem szlovákiai magyarok vagyunk***.*

S2: *Is-is amúgy. Mert ha* **Szlovákiában** *vagyunk azt mondják ránk hogy* **magyarok***, de ha elmegyünk* **Magyarország***ra azt mondják hogy* **szlováko***k. Úgyhogy mintha* **beazanosíthatatlanok** *lennénk.*

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[5] The Slovak parliament passed a law in March 2019 which prohibited the singing of other nations' national anthems at community events if no official delegation representing that nation is present at the event. In the discussion of the law in parliament, one argument for the law was to prohibit the singing of the Hungarian national anthem. The law was modified by decree in May of this year.

[6] "Great Hungarian" is used by the speaker in reference to current day proponents of the historical (pre-Trianon) Hungary.

[7] The *turul* bird is a mythological bird of early pagan Hungarians.

S2: *A magyarországit lehet megkülönböztetni, és mi szlovákiai magyarok különbözőek vagyunk, de sokkal eltérőbb mint a magyarországi magyar. **Őket egyértelműen lehet** azonosítani és **tudni lehet hogy ők magyarországi magyarok**.*

S1: "We consider ourselves Hungarians, but **we do not say** that we consider ourselves **Hungarian**, **but that we are Slovakia Hungarians**."

S2: "It's both really. Because when we are in **Slovakia**, people say that we are **Hungarians**, but when we go to **Hungary**, people say we are **Slovaks**. So it looks like we are **unidentifiable**."

S2: "Hungary Hungarians can be differentiated, and we Slovakia Hungarians are different, but much more different than Hungary Hungarians are. **The latter can be clearly** identified and one **knows** that **they are Hungary Hungarians**."

Certainty is given to the "they" group, who can be interpreted in the same way from all points of view.

CONCLUSION

Using the analysis of the codes "we" vs. "they", I have attempted to demonstrate how the values of social existence are configured and shaped through linguistic practices, how speakers create complex patterns of identification in a given social situation, and how the components of individual identity are expressed in these patterns. The characteristic features of the distinction of "we" vs. "they" and the characteristics of their construction can be described along an axis of differentiation.

Speakers assign values and qualities to linguistic utterances, with the help of which they express their local and regional identities, designate their own and others' place within the community, and express their solidarity with their own group.

It is safe to conclude that their attitudes to the Slovakia Hungarian variety is positive and the community recognizes the differences between its variety and the Hungary standard. They look at the Slovakia Hungarian linguistic variety as their own, as a part of their identity and as the expression of this identity.

However, other types of identification also appear, such as identification with Hungarians living outside of Hungary in general, or the ambivalent relationship with Hungary Hungarian speakers.

By analyzing utterances and speech in general, we can gain insight into the process of shaping elements of ideologies about language and of personal identity and can uncover explicit, symbolic connections constructed in discourse about language — connections that constitute components of the conceptualization of identity.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

The present and future of Hungarian regional dialects in Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on characterizing the present day situation of Slovakia Hungarian dialects and on outlining strategy for the future based on the status quo. After a brief overview of the dialect regions and their subregions, the present situation of Slovakia Hungarian dialects is described. The situation of the dialects is dependent on their linguistic features, their distance from the standard, as well as on extralinguistic (demographic, geographic, social, economic, educational, cultural, and settlements structural) factors. The present situation of the Slovakia Hungarian dialects is discussed, along with their changes, functions, and attitudes attached to them. The paper concludes that the differences are greater between the Slovakia Hungarian vs. Hungary Hungarian dialects than among the various Slovakia Hungarian dialects.

Regarding one of the topics indicated in the title, the present of Hungarian regional dialects in Slovakia, it is safe to say that it is in many respects similar to that of the dialects of other regions, including the dialects in and outside Hungary, but that it also differs from it. As is well known, the situation of Slovakia Hungarian dialects differs more from that of Hungarian dialects in Hungary and less from that of minority Hungarian dialects elsewhere. The intense change of dialects and the spread of the standard are characteristics found everywhere in the Hungarian language area; however, the extent to which this is happening is different in the minority context

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from what is happening in Hungary. The language use of minority Hungarians is more regional, and the standard is spreading more slowly among them than in Hungary; however, it is a shared characteristic that is the kind of change that happens is convergence with the standard. Attitudes toward regional dialects, which also affect their situation, differ: in Transylvania, Romania, they are more positive than in Hungary or even in Slovakia.

As regards the other topic in the title, no long term prognosis is possible, since the situation of regional dialects is determined by many factors in general, and this is especially so in minority contexts, and all that is possible is to articulate suppositions. Knowing the present situation, however, it is possible to formulate a strategy whose implementation can produce a better situation for our dialects in the future.

In the present paper, I first discuss the regional differentiation of Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects and the most important factors affecting their situation.

Slovakia Hungarian dialects can be classified on the basis of one of two dialect typologies. One of them is Imre's 1971 classification, based on the materials in his atlas, which had 26 research sites in Slovakia.

The other one is Dezső Juhász's classification based on Imre's, which divides the Hungarian language area into ten dialect regions (Juhász, 2001, p. 264). Three of these, the Middle Transdanubia and Little Hungarian Plain dialect, the Palóc dialect, and the Northeastern dialect, extend into the territory of Slovakia. The three regions can be divided into nine small dialect groups, and, in addition to these, there are several dialect islands, language islands, and transitional dialects in these dialect regions. Of the Slovakia Hungarian dialect regions, the Palóc region is the most divided: it has six dialect groups and the highest number of dialect islands.[1] The above mentioned dialect regions are all found in Hungary, as well as in other regions outside Hungary; however, there are several dialect groups and dialect islands that exist only in Slovakia, such as the Northwestern Palóc dialect group, a part of which forms a language island in the vicinity of Nitra/Nyitra, or the dialect island in the vicinity of Senec/ Szenc (Table 1).

Table 1. Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects and dialect groups

Dialect region	Dialect group
Middle Transdanubia and Little Hungarian Plain	North Danube, Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz and Malý Žitný/Szigetköz
Palóc	Western, Northwestern, Ipoly region, Middle Palóc, Eastern Palóc, Hernád region
Northeastern	Ung region

[1] Imre (1971, pp. 368–370) classified the Váhovca/Vága, Veľké Chyndice/Nagyhind, Čučma/Csucsom, and Bidovce/ Magyarbőd Palóc dialects as dialect islands. Recent investigations in Veľké Chyndice/Nagyhind, however, confirm that by the late 20th century the absence of front rounded vowels (ö, ü, ő, ű) and with it the basic criterion of the categorization as a dialect island disappeared (cf. Fodor, 2001, pp. 330; Presinszky, 2008, pp. 76−77; Sándor, 2004, p. 36), since the dialect's vowel inventory differed from the other Nitra/Nyitra region dialects in this regard. With the disappearance of this feature, this dialect then became similar to the middle subgroup of the outer dialect island of the Nitra/Nyitra region and cannot be regarded as a separate dialect island.
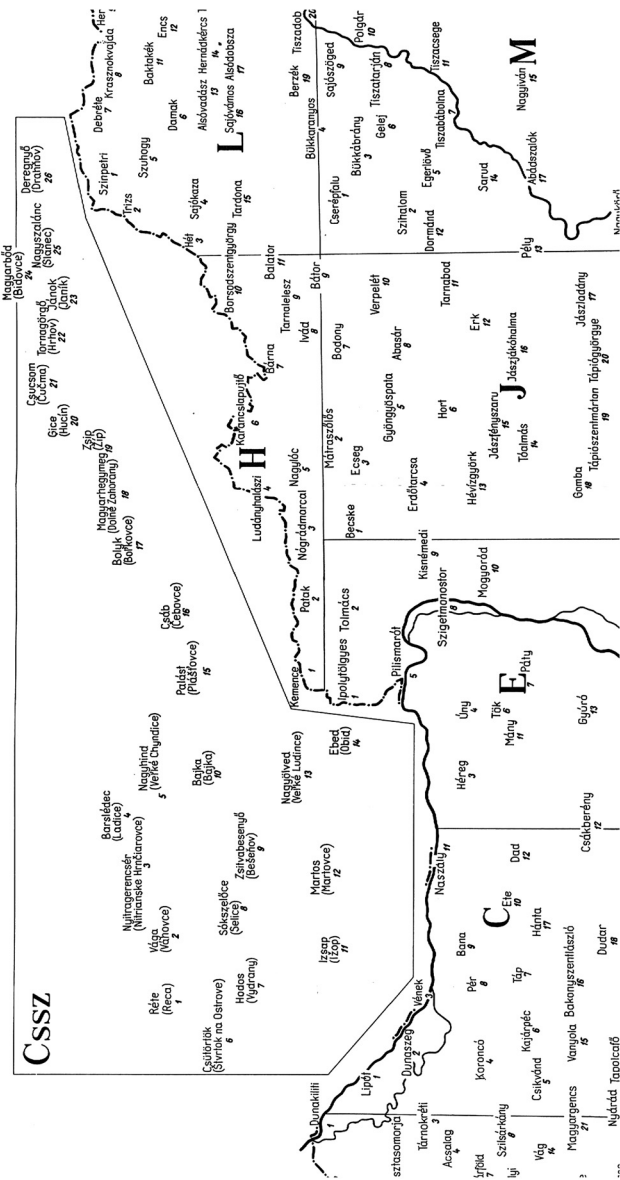
Map 1. The Slovakia Hungarian research sites of Imre's 1971 atlas of Hungarian dialects

The **general situation of Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects** can be briefly characterized by the duality of similarities and differences, which is traceable within the various regional dialect regions and also among the local dialects of the various dialect groups. This is due to the different linguistic character of the various dialects, their distance from the standard, as well as extralinguistic (demographic, geographical, social, economic, cultural, and settlement structural) factors. Of these, the size of the community, the type of settlement, or the settlement geographical situatedness is the most prevalent. The cumulative effect of these factors can affect the development of further components, such as the presence or absence of mother tongue education and cultural self-organization, the proportion of exogamous marriages, or the language of religious ceremonies, etc. The cumulative effect of these can strengthen or weaken the situation of varieties of the Hungarian language, regional dialects among them. When we discuss the spread of the standard at the expense of dialects, it might sound like a contradiction that the situation of dialects, and along with them the situation of the Hungarian language, is the most stable in places where speakers speak both their regional dialect and the standard. This is not a uniquely Slovakia Hungarian feature of language use, but a universal feature of bilingualism characteristic of the linguistic situation of other minority languages as well. As (Borbély, 2014, p. 121) states, "The maintenance of one's own language is best helped by augmenting the use of the regional dialect with the use of the standard, and by forming and stabilizing equally positive language attitudes about both among the members of the community". If we examine the linguistic repertoire of Slovakia Hungarian speech communities in the last phase of language shift, where the only variety of the Hungarian language spoken is the regional dialect, we can draw the same conclusion. Those communities that live scattered and constitute less than 10% of the local population in their settlement (for instance, at the edge of the Nitra/Nyitra area language island), the regional dialect is the only variety of Hungarian that people speak.[2] If the Hungarian regional dialect disappears from these villages, that will mean the death of Hungarian in these places. This is part of a complex and controversial process of language shift, of which we can state, quoting Péntek (2015, p. 79), that "[. . .] it is not only the case that 'in the beginning there was the dialect'" but also that in the final stage of the receding of the language, this is the variety that constitutes Hungarian.

Changes in the size of the Slovakia Hungarian population mean a decrease in almost all micro-regions. Between the censuses of 2001 and 2011, the total Hungarian population decreased from 521,528 to 458,467, and the territory they inhabit is continuously shrinking.[3] Demographic factors account for some of the decrease, since the natural population growth of Hungarians is lower than that of Slovaks, and migration also produces some population loss, but the main cause of the decrease of the Hungarian population is assimilation (Gyurgyík, 2006, p. 109).

The proportion of Hungarians is decreasing at a greater rate in towns than in villages. At the time of the 2001 census, Slovakia Hungarians lived in a total of 551 towns and villages, mostly in

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[2]Among them are the villages from the edge of the Nitra/Nyitra region language island, whose Hungarian populations have decreased by over 50% in the past 60 years: Výčapy Opatovce/Vicsápapáti, Jelšovce/Nyitraegerszeg, Bádice/Béd and Mechenice/Menyhe in the north, and Paňa/Nemespann and Vinodol/Nyitraszőlős in the south.

[3]Slovakia's statistics consider those settlements to be ethically mixed settlements where a minority group constitutes over 10% of the local population or exceeds 100 people (Gyurgyík, 2006, p. 25).

villages and small towns (Gyurgyík, 2006, pp. 26–27).[4] This is conducive to the use of regional dialects, since even in small towns there are a lot of people moving in from villages, bringing their dialects with them. This aspect of the demographics of Slovakia Hungarians has been little studied, however.

The distribution of Slovakia's Hungarian population is also becoming more and more disadvantageous. Even though most Hungarians in 2011 still lived in settlements where they constituted a local majority, all in all, in the last few decades the number of settlements where Hungarians are a local minority has grown, as has the number of Hungarians living in scattered communities, while the proportion of Hungarians living in settlements with a local Hungarian majority has decreased (http://adatbank.sk/lexikon/demografiai-valtozasok/).

The situation of the Hungarian language is most vulnerable to the effects of various language policy measures in settlements where the proportion of Hungarians went down to under 20%, and it is the most endangered in scattered settlements of over 100 people where Hungarians constitute less than 10% of the population.[5] Most of the scattered settlements (16.3%) are towns but some of them (0.2%; Gyurgyík, 2006, p. 38) are villages Most are found in the vicinity of cities (Bratislava/Pozsony, Košice/Kassa, and Nitra/Nyitra) and along the edge of the Hungarian language area, especially the lengthy northeastern part of it. This geographical factor negatively affects the situation of the Hungarian language in general and of the regional Hungarian dialects in particular.

Geographically, the Hungarian populated areas of Slovakia run along its southern border, from Bratislava/Pozsony to the Ukrainian border. An advantage of this long band of territory of varying width is its direct proximity to Hungary, but its disadvantage is the increased number of peripheral settlements near the Hungarian–Slovak language border, which are more susceptible to assimilation. The assimilated villages gradually break up the unity of Hungarian populated areas, causing the formation of new language islands by isolating the villages still populated by Hungarian speakers (cf. Lanstyák, 2000, p. 46). The language erosion of the Hungarian population is also affected by geographical location, the effect of which is clear even to the average speakers, as is evidenced by interview data collected in Jelšovce/Nyitraegerszeg: "When we die, there will not be Hungarians here any more. You know, we live in the wrong place. You over there are in a good situation. While there are many Hungarians around you. But here it's used only by us and in Vicsápapáti.[6] And Vicsápapáti is even in a worse situation" (Sándor, 2004, p. 210; my translation).[7]

The above mentioned factors operating in Hungarian populated settlements of Slovakia exhibit their effect differentially by region and sometimes even by settlement, producing different configurations of the state of the Hungarian language as a result. Despite these

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[4]In 2011, 39.1% of Slovakia's Hungarians lived in settlements of over 5,000 people, that is, in towns, since a town in Slovakia is not defined through its legal status but through having a population of over 5,000 people. http://adatbank.sk/lexikon/demografiai-valtozasok/.

[5]Slovakia's law (and its modifications) on the state language allowed the use of minority languages in official discourse in settlements where the given minority constitutes more than 20% of the local population. But since this threshold was heavily criticized by various international organizations, it was lowered to 15% in 2011 in another modification of the law, effective as of 2021 (cf. Szabómihály, 2011, p. 23).

[6]Vicsápapáti is called Výčapy Opatovce in Slovak language.

[7]All interview excerpts quoted in this paper have been translated from the original Hungarian.

differences, the main features characterizing the situation of Hungarian dialects in Slovakia are generally the same, even if they may be present to varying degrees.

The description of the situation can be summarized under the following three headings: (1) the changes in, (2) the functions of, and (3) the attitudes towards the regional dialects.

1. An accelerated rate of change of the Hungarian regional dialects is characteristic in general today. It is happening along two lines: general language change and the use of the language (Kiss, 2017, p. 200), both of which produce observable changes in Slovakia Hungarian dialects.

   1.1 **Language change**: of the dialect features, phonological and lexical characteristics are most likely to change in Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects. Phonological change affects the most marked and unusual features the most, such as the dialectal use of the long *i*, the use of *ö*, palatalization, the deletion of coda *ľ*s, and the replacement of *ly* with *l*. Lexical characteristics that change include the loss of regional words related to traditional peasant life, plant and animal names, and regional expressions. The lost regional words are usually replaced by standard vocabulary (*tëngëri szőllő>ribizli* "currant", *istenkörtí>g™ľ™gony™* "bramble", *evetke>mókus* "squirrel"), or a form closer to the standard (*búh™>bóh™* "flea" [cf. standard *bolha*], *kinyér>kënyír* "bread" [cf. standard *kenyér*]). It is not uncommon to have compartmentalization of meaning between the regional dialectal and standard form: cf. the cases of *firhang* vs. *függöny* "curtains", and *siskó* vs. *kemence* "stove", where *firhang* came to mean a nontransparent curtain used in peasant houses, whereas *függöny* acquired the meaning of a transparent, lace-like curtain; and *siskó* came to mean a stove inside a peasant house, different in shape and function from the *kemence* built outside the house and used only for baking (Sándor, 1994, p. 53).

Even thoughchanges that make dialects more similar to the standard dominate quantitatively, neighboring dialects can also trigger change to a lesser extent, in which cases it is not the standard variant that spreads, but another regional one. A case in point is the word for "bread" in the Nitra/Nyitra region, where it has two variants *kinyér* and *kënyír*. In places where the form *kinyér* was common in the past, today the form *kënyír* is becoming more and more frequent; however, the standard variant is only used in conversation with strangers who speak the standard (cf. Sándor, 2004, p. 188).

The latter case, and many others, indicate that change has two faces to it: from the outside, it might look intense, but from the perspective of the speakers of the community who use these forms, it might seem slower (Kiss, 2017, p. 201). This duality stems primarily from the different speech situations, touching also on the use of the language.

1.2 **Change in the use of the language** is more complex in minority contexts, because the linguistic repertoire of the bilingual community is composed of a greater number of languages and varieties than in a monolingual context. In the language use of Slovakia Hungarians, the Hungarian and Slovak languages and their standard vs. regional (and sometimes other) varieties fulfill specific functions depending on the speech situation, and speakers can choose from four codes in their everyday communication activities (I disregard other social dialects for the sake of this discussion). Despite their differences, speech situations also have similarities, and similar speech situations trigger similar language use, which can, in turn, be used to define types of speech situations as well (Kiss, 1995, p. 68).

The two end points of the spectrum of speech situations are family vs. public situations. The former comprises informal and the latter formal speech situations, which also involve different choices of code. In the Hungarian language area, informal speech situations trigger the use of substandard varieties, while the formal speech situations trigger the use of the standard. However, in the bilingual context, choices are more complex, since speakers can choose from several codes; although in everyday life there is often no choice, since there are formal speech situations that are limited to the use of the majority language. But informal speech situations do not always offer the option of code choice either, since in the presence of a majority language speaker, bilingual speakers are often forced to choose the majority language in order to avoid conflict.

Slovakia Hungarian language use in formal speech situations differs from language use in Hungary in the following two respects: (1) there may be limited possibility to use the Hungarian language, and (2) regional dialects are used in Hungarian language communication more often than in Hungary. The reason for the latter is that a relatively high proportion of Slovakia Hungarians do not have active competence in the standard and are able to produce only regional dialectal speech, and if a speaker is not ashamed of their dialect, they will use it in formal situations as well. Among the Slovakia Hungarians who do not know the Hungarian standard there are also speakers who, for various reasons, do not regard the regional dialect suitable for use in public, thus giving preference to Slovak. Thus, the gradual exclusion of regional dialects from public situations does not always result in the use of standard Hungarian, but instead in the use of Slovak. In Slovakia, this phenomenon occurs especially at the edge of the Hungarian language area, in the language islands where Hungarians are the local minority, in towns, and in scattered settlements. In small towns and regions where Hungarian populations are continuous and their proportion is high, the status of the Hungarian language, and of standard Hungarian in particular, is more stable. When people choose to speak Hungarian in public, they usually attempt to use the standard. The speakers who are able to do this are primarily those (of any age group) who have higher levels of education (high school or university) and who were educated (at least through high school) in schools with Hungarian as a medium of instruction. However, in longer speeches and/or in more emphatic parts of a text, or when the topic requires greater attention on the part of the speaker, even these speakers diverge from the standard and start to use dialectal and contact-induced forms in their Hungarian (Sándor, 2000, p. 43; Schulcz, 2018, p. 18).

The factor of age manifests in the pragmatic exclusion of regional dialects in Slovakia Hungarian in such a way that it is the younger generation that tends to do this, but not nearly to the same extent as in Hungary. The reason for this is twofold.

First, there are still many Slovakia Hungarian children who acquire a regional dialect as their vernacular. This is attested by the results of a survey carried out among Hungarian students majoring in Hungarian at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra/Nyitra, which shows that 25% of the 64 students surveyed speak a regional dialect because that dialect is their vernacular. Only 17.18% of these students acquired standard Hungarian at home, while the others learned it at school and from the media (Sándor, 2009, pp. 233−235). Another, informal survey I have carried out recently demonstrates that all 20 of the 4th year students in my dialectology class acquired a regional dialect as their vernacular and learned the standard during their school years.

Another factor that increases the dialectal nature of the speech of Slovakia Hungarian young people is that many of them attend schools that use Slovak as a language of instruction, where they do not encounter the Hungarian language, and especially not standard Hungarian, at all. They acquire a regional dialect of Hungarian at home but use it less and less later on. Such Slovak dominant young (and today also increasingly middle aged) people are theoretically speakers of dialectal Hungarian, but in practice they often choose to speak Slovak instead of the low prestige dialect – exactly because of its low prestige, and also because of their limited proficiency in Hungarian. In addition to communication with peers, such code choice is increasingly typical in the family, between various generations, often leading to conflicts (especially in communication between grandparents and their grandchildren). Recordings of interviews attest to many such situations. One is from Jelšovce/Nyitraegerszeg ("I speak to him in Hungarian, and he speaks back to me in Slovak"; Sándor, 2004, p. 210), the other one from Výčapy Opatovce/Vicsápapáti ("The young people do not respect their mother tongue. [...] They are all Slovaks now. Because they all went to Slovak schools") (www.tajnyelv.hu/helynevfel. php?id=56).

This latter group of young Hungarians speak a dialect of Hungarian to some extent, but they do not strengthen the speaker base of Hungarian regional dialects much, and they are also unlikely to pass the regional dialect on to their children. Because this is characteristic of young people at the edge of the language area, in language islands, and in the vicinity of Slovak cities, the phenomenon requires attention, since the way these young people are getting distanced from the Hungarian language and culture is a serious loss for the Slovakia Hungarian community, as well as for Hungarians in general.

2. **Present day functions of regional dialects:** Hungarian regional dialects are used and commonly regarded as spoken varieties today, which are used primarily in everyday text types and informal speech situations. It is well known, however, that before the development of a unified written standard, regional dialects were used in both speech and writing, since they existed much before the standard did (Kiss, 2001, p. 34). This has, however, changed, and the standard has taken over many functions of the dialects, including being used in writing, , even though the dialects would also be able to express content associated solely with the standard today, since functional differentiation is not a characteristic of only the standard (Lanstyák, 2016, p. 16).

Multifunctionality is characteristic also of the Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects, since despite their limited communicational validity, they fulfill several functions: they ensure communication and cognitive activity in their communities, and they are also the means of primary socialization as well as of the expression of social identity and regional affiliation. Their esthetic function is indisputable as well, in folklore as well as in literature, despite the prevailing view that only the standard is suitable as the language of literature (Kiss, 2001, pp. 49–53). The prevalence of this view is especially surprising in light of the fact that the metaphors and imagery of regional dialects often appear in the language of poets and writers (Péntek, 2015, p. 78).

A case in point is a work of fiction published in Slovakia in 2017, in which the regional dialect is not just a stylistic tool but the sole means of linguistic expression. The most noticeable linguistic characteristic of Pál Száz's work Fűje sarjad mezőknek – phytolegendárium phytole-gendárium ("Grasses grow in fields: A collection of phyto-legends") (2017) is that the folk memory of a fictitious settlement in the Matúšova zem/Mátyusföld region is recreated in the

regional dialect of the region. The fictitious settlement is called Marad[8] and is situated geographically between Gelánto/Galánta and Sélle/Vágsellye.

The regional dialect is a means of expression not only of esthetics but of regional affiliation (Fried, 2018). This work may raise issues of the linguistic consciousness of Slovakia Hungarians (Petres Csizmadia, 2018) and can increase the prestige of the regional dialect as well, since if a dialect can prove itself in the high poetic function, it cannot be worthless and illegitimate.

3. **Language attitudes**, i.e. the speakers' evaluations of their variety, are significant aspects of the investigation of regional dialects, which are evaluated in sometimes controversial ways in studies and subjective informal investigations: some people regard them as valuable, others as worthless but still important to preserve. Such controversial views indicate the unreliability of the linguistic value judgments of speakers, which can decrease their feeling of comfort and result in shame and avoidance of their vernacular.[9]

The way people relate to regional dialects, nevertheless, varies in the Carpathian Basin: people's attitudes are more positive in Transylvania, Romania, than in Hungary or Slovakia (cf. Fodor and Huszár, 1998; Péntek, 2015; Presinszky, 2009; Rancz, 2017).

The language attitudes of Slovakia Hungarians are usually uniform in that they consider the Hungary Hungarian standard to be the ideal Hungarian language. In contrast, they rate their own variety negatively, due to its subordinated position and limited communicational range.

The loss of the value of regional dialects is widespread among Slovakia Hungarians, but its extent varies by region and even by speech community. In addition to various extralinguistic factors, these differences are caused by the linguistic features of the given dialects as well, since speakers of dialects close to the standard are not always conscious of the dialectal nature of their own speech and usually have positive attitudes towards it. I encountered this phenomenon in one of my questionnaire based surveys, in which some of the first year students of Hungarian at Nitra/Nyitra University, who were from the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region, stated that they did not speak a regional dialect because, as far as they knew, there is no dialect in and around the town of Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely. Other linguists have noticed before that high school students in Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely believe that their speech does not differ from the standard (Okamoto, 2002, p. 350). In addition to students who speak the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz and Malý Žitný/Szigetköz dialect, students from the Northeastern dialect area also believed the same about their own dialect (Sándor, 2009, pp. 233–236). It is well-known that these two Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects are the closest to the standard. Most students regarded their own dialect as beautiful and rated the Palóc dialect as the least beautiful (Sándor, 2009, p. 237).

The strong stigmatization of the Palóc dialects was demonstrated by earlier attitude studies (Fodor and Huszár, 1998; Kontra, 1997). These negative evaluations are probably due partly to their most characteristic features, the use of the unrounded short™ and the rounded long #

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[8]*Marad* means "to stay" in Hungarian.

[9]This controversy is sometimes accentuated in the spontaneous utterances of the average speaker. I distinctly remember a dialog, whose content hopefully does not reflect a general view, which I overheard in the early 2000s. In the conversation in question, a standard speaker commented on the beauty and value of their unfamiliar conversation partner's regional dialectal speech. The Palóc dialect speaker tersely and ironically responded saying "yes, that's why all Palóc speakers want to get rid of it".

(these are the features that speakers would change about their own speech if they could). In addition, the low prestige of the Palóc dialects is also probably affected by the contrast between them and the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz and Malý Žitný/Szigetköz dialect and the Northeastern dialect, which enjoy a much higher prestige. Palóc speakers are often confronted with the near-standard features of these dialects, since western Palóc speakers live in relatively close contact with the speakers of the former, while eastern Palóc speakers with the speakers of the latter. According to Palóc speakers in the Nitra/Nyitra region, the Hungarian speakers south of them in Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely, and Komárno/Komárom speak a more beautiful Hungarian than they do. Here are some interview excerpts: "In southern Slovakia, because the proximity of the border affects the local population"; "In the south, because they speak the standard"; "their dialect is similar to the Hungarian standard"; and "there people don't adopt features of Slovak" (Sándor, 2000).

Another typical example is from the eastern end of the country. A former teacher trainee student of mine, who speaks an eastern Palóc dialect, recalled some unpleasant memories connected to their dialectal speech: "My linguistic roots are in Hrhov/Tornagörgő, so using the standard accent was very strange for me, but the teachers in Košice/Kassa found our dialect equally strange. Our dialect was not valued at all, and our grades reflected that. This is where my fight to learn the standard began. I ran into difficulties in the beginning, because at home I was laughed at for speaking the standard, and at school I was required to speak the standard. My jaw hurt when I had to switch from one to the other [. . .]" (Sándor, 2007, p. 235).

Negative attitudes also appear in regions where dialects close to the standard are used, for instance in the Northeastern dialect region. In one study, participants demonstrated surprisingly negative views when talking about village living conditions and the dialectal way of speaking connected to them: ". . .if they stay here, they will speak the dialect, but they will also become stupid and have no future"; ". . .they should go to the city instead, but they can't speak like this there" (Ádám, 2003, p. 36). We can state in general that regional dialects spoken in the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region and in the Northeastern region are not evaluated entirely positively either, only less negatively than the Palóc dialects.

The above quoted negative experiences gained in a school environment are not unique, since it is fairly usual for teachers' and fellow students' reactions to make a bad impression on dialect speaking students, which then prompts them to stigmatize their own dialect and avoid it in certain contexts. One respondent talked about exactly this: "Back when I was in primary school, one of my teachers scolded me badly for not using a word the way they taught it, which I pronounced in its dialectal form. Now I don't use that word at all" (Sándor, 2009, p. 236).

In addition to having emotional consequences and influencing language use, negative attitudes towards regional dialects affect student evaluations by teachers. Jánk's 2018 dissertation, defended at the Institute of Hungarian Literature and Language, Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra/Nyitra, has invaluable data in this regard. Jánk (2018) reports on a study carried out among teachers and teacher trainees of Hungarian, in four countries in the Carpathian Basin, to see if there is any language based discrimination and bias in their evaluations of students. The results show that teachers' evaluations indeed reflect the presupposition, based on language bias, that students speaking the standard have greater knowledge than their dialect speaking peers (Jánk, 2018, p. 197).

In addition to the effect of schools, attitudes towards regional dialects are also, importantly, shaped by Hungary Hungarian speakers' attitudes. When these speakers demonstrate positive attitudes towards regional dialects, the prestige of such dialects can grow, whereas when these attitudes are negative, the dialects' prestige decreases (Sándor, 2009, p. 235).[10] The linguistic evaluations of everyday speakers could be shaped by popularizing relevant scientific views with the help of the media, but even more could be done on this front in the schools and teacher training programs.

Strategies of the near future should be aimed at giving regional dialects a better place in the hierarchy of varieties (through emphasizing their functions rather than myths about them). However, this effort should be supported by schools and the media, as well as by science and scholarship – in the realm of the latter, by providing the institutional background for investigating dialects along well thought out strategy. Decrease in the prestige of regional dialects will be to the detriment of minority as well as majority Hungarians, since the overemphasizing of the superordinate position of the Hungarian standard, along with its often forced teaching, results in the stigmatization of regional dialects, which, in turn, speeds up the language shift of minority Hungarians instead of contributing to the spread of the standard itself.

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[10]Relevant but unconsciously provided answers are provided by various conversations as well as questionnaire based surveys (Sándor, 2009, p. 236), since Slovakia Hungarians invariably mention the positive and negative attitude shaping effect of Hungary Hungarians' views, cf., for instance, the interview with the well-known actress Alexandra Borbély (https://ma7.sk/kultura/borbely-alexandra-mindig-masok-hataroztak-meg-hogy-a-szegyent-erezzem-vagy-a-buszkeseget-magyarsagom-miatt).

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Digital methods in researching Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects

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ABSTRACT

This study overviews the most recent digital methods used in Slovakia Hungarian dialectology. Slovakia Hungarian dialectology started out by using the most modern digital methods in 2010 at Nitra/Nyitra university, creating regional dialect databases, first for the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region and then for the whole Slovakia Hungarian dialect region. Recording and processing data has been carried out with the help of the Bihalbocs software developed by Domokos Vékás and Fruzsina Sára Vargha in Hungary. The present paper first provides an overview of digital methods in dialectology and its results for Hungarian dialects, and then summarizes the results of the Nitra/Nyitra team so far, illustrating the diversity of digitized dialectological data. It discusses the findings of publications reporting on the results of this research, including maps showing the geographical and social distribution of linguistic phenomena and acoustic phonetic analyses of data aligned with sound files. Important output of this research also includes recently published audiobooks of Slovakia Hungarian dialects. The paper outlines further avenues of research based on the most recent findings.

Dialectology is an empirical discipline. It handles large amounts of data in diverse ways, and this fact makes it not only possible to use modern digital tools but also necessary. Digital methods provide immense opportunities in storing, visually presenting, and processing dialect data. The first attempts to use them in Hungarian dialectology emerged in the 1990s, when, at Lajos Balogh's

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initiation, the entry of the data from the atlas of Hungarian dialects (Deme and Imre, 1968) (*A magyar nyelvjárások atlasza*, widely referred to as MNyA) into a database began (Balogh and Kiss, 1992). Domokos Vékás developed various technological tools for efficient digital recording and handling of dialect data in Hungary. He used methods developed in other countries and adapted them to Hungarian data, creating the Bihalbocs software (Vékás, 2007), which meets the needs of researchers studying dialects and processing regional dialect materials in the 21st century. It is a special word processing, audio engineering, and map generating software that allows for specially coded regional dialect data to be recorded and organized in a database and then used in diverse ways by researchers (Bodó and Vargha, 2008). The advantage offered by digitized data and databases is that they can be integrated with other databases, are precise in recording of data, and connect transcriptions with audio files, allowing for various ways of subsequently analyzing the data. The Bihalbocs multimedia database software has been used in the past 15 years for the digitization and integration of dialect dictionaries and dialect atlases as well as the creation of audio dialect databases. Juhász (2014) provides an overview of the results of Hungarian digital dialectology. Bihalbocs is being further developed by Fruzsina Sára Vargha, who provides accounts of an increasing number of applications of digital technology in dialectology in her articles as well as her recent monograph on the dialectometric analysis of Hungarian regional dialects (Vargha, 2017).

The digital processing of Slovakia Hungarian regional dialect data has lagged somewhat behind similar work on Hungarian dialects in other countries neighboring Hungary, offset in the past 15 years by Anna Sándor's dialect atlas of the Nitra/Nyitra region (Sándor, 2004) and Lajos Cs. Nagy's dialect atlas of Podmedvedie/Medvesalja (Cs. Nagy, 2011). The most recent research in digital dialectology has been done at the Institute of Hungarian Language and Literature, Constantine the Philosopher University, in Nitra/Nyitra, where a group of dialectologists produced a comprehensive volume on Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects (Menyhárt et al., 2009).

In 2010, József Menyhárt and I (both of us natives of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region) started research aimed at mapping out the features of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz regional dialect of Hungarian. Our original goal was the compilation of a comprehensive regional dialect atlas including all possible research sites, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz dialects and their changes. Detailed digital recording of data is required for this kind of analysis: the audio recordings collected at the research sites are stored in an organized fashion, allowing for the creation of audio text collections, maps, audio atlases, and other research output. We planned and carried out the processes of Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz regional dialect data collection with the help of the Bihalbocs software (first used in Slovakia by us) in helpful consultation with Domokos Vékás and Fruzsina Sára Vargha.

The material collected with a 280 question dialectology questionnaire and a 50 question sociolinguistic questionnaire in the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz settlements constitutes the basis of our linguistic corpus. We worked with 10 speakers at each data collection site. We also collected recordings of texts and of minimal pairs for an acoustic phonetic investigation. The fieldwork was carried out with the assistance of Hungarian major students of the Faculty of Central European Studies, Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra/Nyitra.

The originally planned dialect atlas of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region is under compilation: data from 10 research sites (cf. Map 1 below) have been processed thus far, so currently we have almost 30 thousand pieces of data digitized.

The 10 research sites represent the entire Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region, bordered by the Danube and the Little Danube. Four settlements – Kostolná Gala/Egyházgelle, Bodíky/Bodak,

Map 1. Research sites of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region processed so far (with the names of research sites given in Hungarian)

Ohrady/Csallóközkürt, and Horné Mýto/Felsővámos – belong to the northern part of Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz (Upper Žitný ostrov/Felső-Csallóköz), and four others – Gabčíkovo/Bős, Pataš/Patas, Kľúcovec/Kulcsod, and Číčov/Csicsó – to the southern part (Lower Žitný ostrov/Alsó-Csallóköz). Vrbová nad Váhom/Vágfüzes in the Northern Danube subregion and Jelka/Jóka in the Matúšova zem/Mátyusföld subregion were included in the study as control sites.

DIGITIZED DIALECT ATLAS: MAPS

One of the goals of processing the language data is to create a digital dialect atlas which records regional dialect data in the code used by Hungarian dialectologists. An integrated database containing our data as well as that of other Hungarian dialectologists allows for a unified use and handling of all the data. Analysis is greatly aided by the formerly time consuming tasks (e.g. the plotting of the geographical distribution and frequency of use of sounds) being automatically done with the help of digital tools. Color coded pie charts can be generated to show the proportion of local variants in the whole. The only precondition is that data have to be entered into the system. The first level of coding is phonetic transcription which is detailed enough so no features of the originally pronounced forms are lost.

This technology appears in the papers that discuss some characteristic features of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz dialect, for instance, the sporadically occurring ö-pronunciation, the use of assimilative unrounded *a* before *á*, or the use of assimilative *o* after *á* (Menyhárt, 2012; Menyhárt and Presinszky, 2013; Presinszky, 2012). As an illustration, I want to discuss some maps of vowel shortening in the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz dialect based on an earlier paper (Presinszky, 2016a).

In that earlier paper I discussed the short vs. long pronunciation of high vowels in the responses of 100 speakers at the above mentioned 10 research sites, attempting to point out the geographical characteristics of this feature as affected by the social characteristics of the speakers, in 7 words (which was the total of the words included in the 280 question questionnaire for the investigation of this phenomenon). The high vowel under investigation occurs in the first, stressed syllable in each.

Map 2 provides the data on the total of the responses on the forms *szíve* "his/her/its heart" and *szívük* "their heart". In the map, the darker color indicates the standard variant with the long vowel, whereas the lighter color indicates the regional variant with the short vowel.
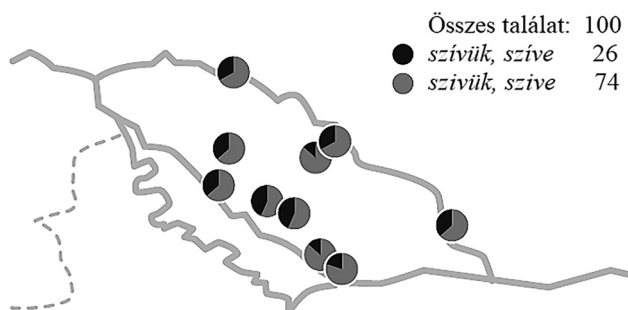
Map 2. The distribution of the variants of *szívük* and *szíve*

The coloring in the pie charts indicates the distribution of standard vs. regional forms in each research site.

As we can see, almost three-quarters of the respondents gave the regional variant. The standard variant was also provided at every settlement, but by less than one-third of the respondents at every place. We can conclude that the regional variant is frequently used everywhere.

In addition to providing the totals for settlements, Bihalbocs can also show variation by age, education, and gender. In Map 3, responses by young (*fiatal*), middle-aged (*középkorú*), and older (*idős*) respondents are summarized.

The results in Map 3 show that the standard variant is more widespread among young people than among the middle aged, and that the regional variant predominated among the elderly. These data show clearly that the use of regional variants increased with age.

The Bihalbocs software also allows the researcher to indegrate data with other databases. Map 4 shows the above discussed data from the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz dialect atlas, under preparation (*Csallóköz nyelvatlasz* "CsKA"), against corresponding data from the Hungarian dialect atlas (*A magyar nyelvjárások atlasza*, "MNyA").

Map 4 demonstrates that the regional, short vowel forms predominate in western, north-eastern, and Transylvanian dialect regions, whereas the standard, long vowel forms do in the
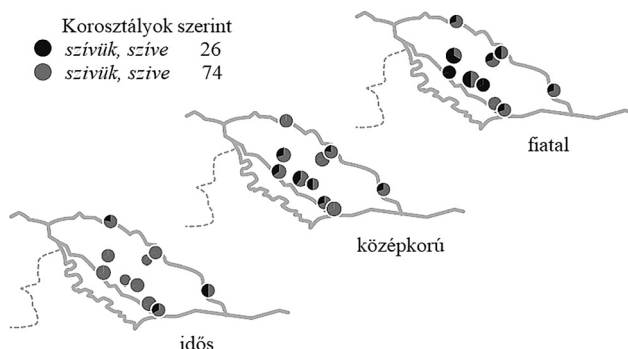
Map 3. The distribution of the variants of *szívük* and *szíve* by age (young = *fiatal*, middle-aged = *középkorú*, and older = *idős*)

Map 4. The distribution of the variants of *szívük* and *szíve* in MNyA and CsKA

central part of the language area. The places where both forms are used do not form a continuous area, and in the Slovakia Hungarian speaking region the standard variants predominate outside the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region, separated by a rather sharp boundary. In this feature, the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz regional dialect shows a similarity with the Central Transdanubia/Little Hungarian Plain region.

AUDIO DATA: ACOUSTIC PHONETIC ANALYSIS

A definite advantage of the Bihalbocs software is that the transcribed forms can be aligned with the audio files showing their pronunciation, and this connection between the two is kept in the database as well, allowing for the possibility of generating audio illustrated dialect atlas pages and of using the data for acoustic phonetic analysis (Vargha, 2011). As an illustration of the latter, I briefly discuss some examples from an earlier paper (Presinszky, 2016b) in which I studied the phenomenon of unrounded *å* pronunciation before *á*.

In the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz and Malý Žitný ostrov/Szigetköz dialect group, the Hungarian low back rounded <a> vowel is often pronounced unrounded and lower (traditionally marked in transcription as *à*) than in the standard when it precedes the long unrounded low mid vowel <á> in a word, e.g. as *màdár, kàpál* rather than *madár* "bird" and *kapál* "to hoe", respectively. This feature is phonologically conditioned and assimilative. According to the data of the Hungarian dialect atlas, MNyA, this feature was not general in Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz 60 years ago, however, the unrounded realizations of the vowel were as diverse then as they are now. If we examine the geographical distribution of this pronunciation today, we see that it occurs sporadically, not forming a continuous area. For instance, the realizations of the regional *hàtár* variant of *határ* "border" total about 10% of all responses, geographically found primarily in the northern and central research sites of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region.

To analyze the realizations of the vowel in question, I have selected two forms, *határ* "border" and *haza* "homeland" from the questionnaire used in Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz and analyzed their formant values in one word responses provided by 100 respondents. In the Hungarian phonetics literature, the first and second formant values (the values that determine vowel quality) of the vowel *á* are 200–300 Hz higher than those of the vowel *a* (Gósy, 2004, p. 115).

I hypothesized that the formant values of *a* in *határ* (in the position where it is prone to assimilation in the dialect) will be higher than those of the *a* in the first syllable of *haza*, regardless of whether the difference can be perceived by listeners or not. I also aimed to characterize in more detail the phonetic qualities of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz dialectal *à* sound with the help of the empirical data. For the analysis, I selected the recordings of the words *határ* and *haza* from every respondent's files and converted all of them into Praat to measure the formant values of the *a* sounds. I entered the measured first and second formant values (a total of 864 of them) into an Excel sheet. I categorized the respondents into two groups: those in whose speech the *a* in *határ* was audibly different vs. those in whose it was not. The analysis has shown that, except for two speakers, all respondents who produced unrounded *à* variants did so audibly. The data show that the unrounded *à* pronunciation produced unanimously increased F1 values: while in the case of the standard rounded *a* they were between 500 and 700 Hz, in the case of *à* they were between 700 and 800 Hz. F2 values did not demonstrate a clear difference, falling between 1,000 and 1,500 Hz.

A further analysis of the data was focused on comparing the F1 and F2 values of the pronunciations of the two words, *határ* and *haza*, in the speech of the respondents. It has revealed that the forms where an audible difference was produced by a speaker, the values of both F1 and F2 for the sound *a* were indeed higher in *határ* than in *haza*, with F1 being between 700 and 800 Hz in the former and 450–650 Hz in the latter.

The acoustic phonetic measurements of the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz data have empirically demonstrated the unrounded quality of the *a* sound in syllables preceding *á* as well as a more fronted pronunciation than that of the standard *a*.

REGIONAL DIALECTAL TEXTS: AUDIOBOOKS

During the data collection in Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz, regional dialectal speech of 10–15 minutes was also recorded with every respondent with the aim of observing continuous speech in a situation where speakers were not forced to radically change their speech since they were asked to talk about their favorite topics. Most respondents talked about their childhood, their family, their work, their hobbies, or folk customs. Such recordings can be organized, with the help of Bihalbocs, into audiobooks that reflect not only the characteristics of the regional dialect but also provide an insight into the diversity and ethnographic character of people's lives in the given region. The audiobook produced is effectively a multimedia collection of texts in transcribed phonetic as well as audio form. The first of such audiobooks were produced, starting in 2005, by the Geolinguistics Team at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, processing Hajdú and Kázmér's 1974 Hungarian collection of dialect texts, the result of which has been a series of 9 audiobooks published on CDs as well as in HTML format on the Internet.

I started processing the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz materials in 2017 with the aim of producing similar audiobooks. The audio files were processed in Bihalbocs in BXT format on a Macintosh computer, aligning the transcribed text files with the WAV audio files. Through the time markers in the text, the text files can be connected with the audio files with millisecond precision. Aligning starts from the audio file, the time markers mark the pauses in the speech as well as the beginning and end of an utterance. With the help of the time markers, the dialect data and any part of the text can be listened to at any time, without having to look up the original file and search it for the part one wants to check. The original audio form is available

even after the text is arranged in the database, and the original transcription can be modified and corrected (Vargha, 2007).

This is the technique with which the Slovakia Hungarian dialect audiobook was made. It now has three volumes: the first using the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz materials, and the other two using Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects from the other two dialect regions. These audiobooks are freely available at the website of the Faculty of Central European Studies, Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra/Nyitra.[1]

The Slovakia Hungarian regional dialects are natural continuations of the Hungary Hungarian dialect regions. The Hungarian language area in the Carpathian Basin is divided into ten dialect regions by Kiss (2001, p. 264). Three of them extend into the territory of present-day Slovakia: (i) the Central Transdanubia and Little Hungarian Plain dialect (or Transdanubian dialect, by its earlier designation), (ii) the Palóc dialect, and (iii) the Northeastern dialect. The characteristics of these three dialect regions are described in the three volumes of the Slovakia Hungarian regional dialect audiobooks. Volume 1 contains texts primarily from the Žitný ostrov/Csallóköz region, from the following research sites: Gabčíkovo/Bős, Ohrady/Csallóközkürt, Ižop/Izsap, Kľúcovec/Kulcsod, Bodíky/Nagybodak, Topoľníky/Nyárasd, Vrbová nad Váhom/Vágfüzes, Trhová Hradská/Vásárút, and Žihárec/Zsigárd. Volume 2 contains texts from the very divided Palóc dialect from the following sites: Jelšovce/Nyitraegerszeg, Veľké Chyndice/Nagyhind (North-western Palóc dialect group), Tekovské Lužany/Nagysalló, Šarkan/Sárkányfalva (Western Palóc dialect group), Ipeľský Sokolec/Ipolyszakállos, Horné Turovce/Felsőtúr, Nenince/Lukanénye (the Ipeľ/Ipoly region Palóc dialect group), Šíd/Síd, Nová Bašta/Újbást (Central Palóc dialect group), Číž/Csíz, Včelince/Méhi (Eastern Palóc dialect group), and Veľká Ida/Nagyida (Hornád/Hernád region Palóc dialect group). Volume 3 documents the Ung subregion and the Upper Bodrogköz subregion of the Northeastern dialect region, through the following sites (from east to west): Veľké Slemence/Nagyszelmenc, Ptrukša/Szirénfalva, Čičarovce/Csicser, Boľ/Boly, Zatín/Zétény, and Oborín/Abara. The regional dialect texts were collected by the faculty and former and present-day students of the Nitra/Nyitra university, while the phonetic transcription of the texts and their alignment with the audio files was carried out by myself.

DIGITAL DIALECTOLOGY IN EDUCATION

With the present-day dialect texts being used as illustrations of the main dialects of Slovakia Hungarian, the three volumes of the Slovakia Hungarian regional dialect audiobooks provide an excellent opportunity for making teaching about dialects more diverse, interesting, and inter-active. The possible educational uses of the audiobooks were described in an earlier paper (Presinszky, 2018).

The points of connection between regional dialects and mother tongue education have been dealt with in a number of publications in recent years. A comprehensive treatment of the topic, including international insights, is provided in Kiss (2001), whereas Kontra (2003) discusses Hungarian and international examples illustrating the interconnectedness of language and school, of regional dialects and mother tongue education. It is necessary to discuss the regional

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[1] https://www.fss.ukf.sk/hu/tudomanyos-tevekenyseg/szlovakiai-magyar-nyelvjarasi-hangoskoenyv.

characteristics of present-day spoken Hungarian in the school, since most students – actually, in minority contexts the overwhelming majority of the students – speak a regional dialect as their vernacular; without a discussion of this fact, it is very difficult to fulfill the main goal of mother tongue education, i.e. the teaching of the standard. It is imperative that a valid picture of dialects is given in the classroom, since myths surrounding them are very widespread. Some of these myths are, for instance, that *the number of dialect speakers is low; Hungarians outside Hungary speak only regional dialects; regional dialects are debased versions of the standard; people who use regional dialects have low intelligence; regional dialects are sustained and used by peasants*; and *regional dialects preserve a "pure" state of the language*. In addition to destroying such myths, on a theoretical plane the implementation of additive mother tongue education would be the most important goal to achieve. Under such an approach, the vernaculars of the students and their relationship with them would be left intact, the students' repertoires would widen, and students would be able to use both the dialect and the standard, depending on what a given situation calls for, since choosing one or the other is completely appropriate, if fitting the situation at hand. Through using additive teaching strategies teachers do not weaken but strengthen their students' self-esteem. The standard can be taught successfully through a contrastive method based on the students' own dialect, according to Menyhárt et al. (2009, pp. 13–18), who devote a whole chapter to teaching about dialects at the university level. The authors believe that there are many theoretical issues that need to be clarified about the topic, especially regarding the minority language context. Devising practical methodological approaches would be especially pressing. The volume provides some specific contrastive tasks that can be used in teaching grammar at the primary and secondary school levels.

The above discussed audiobooks can also provide assistance to teaching, since they would allow students to browse through the texts and the aligned audio files with their mobile phones or tablets in class as well as to copy and edit parts of them. The audiobooks are used in tasks (see Presinszky, 2018) which point out dialect phenomena using the students' knowledge of grammar (phonology, morphology, and syntax) in the spirit of additive methods of teaching. They also point out differences between spoken and written language, as well as use reading tasks that illustrate the diverse content of texts, which can also be used as texts popularizing ethnography, cultural studies, and local history. These tasks have also been used successfully in my own university seminars on regional dialects at the Nitra/Nyitra university.

CONCLUSION

Recent research into Slovakia Hungarian dialects has utilized methods of digital dialectology and has produced unique outputs, assisting scholarly research and allowing for a wide distribution of research results. Research into dialects can be aided by digital methods at every stage, from the planning of the research and carrying out the data collection, transcription, and analysis, to the presentation of the research results. A great advantage of digital recordings is that they can be listened to an infinite number of times without getting worn or damaged, thereby also allowing for more precise transcription. Interactive output provides a possibility to learn about dialects interactively, which might attract more attention from people outside the linguistic profession. It is also greatly important that Slovakia Hungarian regional dialect research is carried out more or less in parallel with similar research in Hungary and other countries neighboring it, e.g. in

Romania (Gál and Hochbauer, 2011), which, in turn, allows for a comparative Carpathian Basin synchronic analysis of dialect phenomena. The Bihalbocs dialect software can integrate digitized language data and serve as the basis for a unified Hungarian dialect corpus.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

A receding paradigm as a tool of language discrimination

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ABSTRACT

The 1Sg forms of *ik*-verbs are identical in the definite and indefinite conjugations in Standard Hungarian. The use of nonstandard forms can evoke discrimination despite the fact that it has been well-known for a long time that by the 18th century the *ik*-paradigm survived only in some eastern and western dialects of the language (Simonyi, 1906a, p. 14; Brassai, 2011, p. 253; Benkő, 1992, p. 213). In the early 19th century the language revival movement revived the disappearing *ik*-conjugation (Révai, 1806) and made it part of the educated, literary, and later standard variety.

The present paper demonstrates how a paradigm that almost completely receded became the tool of language stigmatization as a result of the actions of those with linguistic power, and shows, on the basis of a questionnaire based study, to what extent the *ik*-paradigm is present in the language use of 14–19-year-olds at the beginning of the 21st century.

This paper addresses the issue, on the one hand, of how the use of the *ik*-conjugation of Hungarian can still be the measure of educated speech in Hungarian despite the fact that, according to historical linguistic evidence, this conjugation was no longer used in most of the Hungarian language area over 200 years ago. On the other hand, I aim to demonstrate, on the basis of a questionnaire based survey, that education is the most important factor in the continuing use of the conjugation (or the remnants of it).

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A RECEDING PARADIGM

In the verbal inflection of modern Hungarian, there are two conjugations: in one, the indefinite conjugation, all verbs can be conjugated. There are two paradigms within the indefinite conjugation, the *ik*-conjugation and the non-*ik*-conjugation. The other conjugation is the definite conjugation, which is limited to transitive verbs (regardless of whether they are *ik*-verbs or not). Intransitive verbs can also be conjugated along the definite conjugation when they express the extent of an action (cf. *Lefutotta a távot.* "S/He ran the whole distance.").

Before discussing the nature and problems of the *ik*-conjugation, it is important to point out some differences between the indefinite vs. definite conjugation. The difference in their use is that "a verb form conjugated for the indefinite conjugation can accept a landmark of various cases, and a sentence structure without an elaborated landmark is also possible" (Tolcsvai Nagy, 2015, p. 128). The compulsory object can be profiled depending on the speech situation, or deleted if both the speaker and the listener know, through their background knowledge or the context, what this deleted definite object is.

Ik-verbs are a class of Hungarian verbs that receive the *-ik* ending in the present tense third person singular (instead of the zero morpheme of the indefinite conjugation – cf. *ül* "s/he/it sits", *néz* "s/he/it watches", *fut* "s/he/it runs"): *esik* "s/he/it falls", *fázik* "s/he/it is cold", *eszik* "s/he/it eats", *iszik* "s/he/it drinks". The *-ik* suffix most likely developed from a mediopassive verb derivational suffix, which expressed events where the subject is a patient rather than an actor. Later, the suffix came to mark forms of transitive verbs that occurred without an overt object (cf. *Mit csinál? Eszik* "What is s/he/it doing?" "Eating")– or at least that is the direction in which the use of the suffix started to change in Ancient Hungarian times. After the separation of the indefinite and definite conjugations and the stabilization of the *-t* suffix as the marker of the accusative,[1] the function of the *-ik* derivational suffix did not stabilize as the marker of transitive verbs without an overt object., This resulted in the development of an incomplete paradigm for the *ik*-verbs: it occurs only in the present tense and only in the singular, but in all three moods (indicative, conditional, and imperative). In parallel with this, real active verbs became *ik*-verbs by the 17th century, while the verbs that used to be *ik*-verbs became non-*ik*-verbs, and many formerly non-*ik* mediopassive verbs became *ik*-verbs. As a result, the system of the *ik*-conjugation completely unraveled in modern Hungarian, with the following groups of *ik*-verbs being distinguished currently. The categorization is based on an ideal, with no regard to regional dialects (hence the statements that claim, for instance, that *alszik* "sleep" is a verb that is conjugated in the *ik*-paradigm in all of its forms):

1. **Regular, stable**: in the present tense, the person markers are *-m, -l,* and *-ik* in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd persons, respectively. Verbs that belong here are *tetszik* "like", *alszik* "sleep", *eszik* "eat", *iszik* "drink", *dolgozik* "work" etc.
2. **Vacillating**: their person marker in 1Sg can be *-m* or *-k,* in 2Sg *-l* or *-sz,* and only 3Sg has *-ik* unequivocally: for instance, *botlik* "trip": *botlok ~ botlom* "I trip", *botlasz* "you trip"; *ébredezik* "be waking up": *ébredezek ~ ébredezem* "I'm waking up"; *lakik* "reside": *lakok ~ lakom* "I reside", *laksz* "you reside", *lakik* "s/he resides"; *ugrik* "jump": *ugrok ~ ugrom* "I jump", *ugrasz* "you jump" etc.

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[1]In the Ancient Hungarian period objects did not bear case marking.

3. **Pseudo-*ik***: verbs that have person markers in the *ik*-paradigm only in 3Sg[2]: for instance *bújik* "hide": *bújok* "I hide", *bújsz* "you hide"; *folyik* "flow": *folyok* "I flow", *folysz* "you flow"; *illik* "fit": *illek* "I fit", *illesz* "you fit"; *megjelenik* "appear": *megjelenek* "I appear", *megjelensz* "you appear", *születik* "be born": *születek* "I am born", *születsz* "you are born" (Not all pseudo-ik verbs are used in 1Sg.) New *ik*-verbs derived from nouns also belong here: e.g., *biciklizik* "ride a bike", *mobilozik* "use a cell phone", *számítógépezik* "use a computer".

4. **Vacillating pseudo-*ik***: verbs that can be non-*ik* even in 3Sg, e.g.: *bomol/bomlik* "desintegrate", *tündököl/tündöklik* "coruscate" (Balázs, 2001, pp. 113–115).

As we can see, in the *ik*-conjugation the person marker for 1Sg in all three moods is the ancient VxSg1 -*m*, a suffix that is used in non-ik paradigms only in the definite conjugation (cf. *várok valakit* "I'm waiting for somebody" ~ *várom őt* "I'm waiting for her/him"). We can also see that, regardless of the vowel of the verb stem, the vowel of the conditional and imperative 3Sg suffix is *é*, a nonharmonic vowel (cf. *laknék ~ rakna*). In Table 1, forms that are normatively expected of users to this day are marked with bold and italic. Forms whose use has receded to the extent that they occur only in very refined and somewhat archaic speech are marked in all caps and italic. Forms whose use is considered a mistake in today's *ik*-paradigm is marked in bold. We can state that most speakers (including the participants of the survey discussed below) conjugate *ik*-verbs analogously to non-ik verbs in the indefinite conjugation (Table 2):

From the full paradigm of the *ik*-verbs, the 1Sg and 3Sg indicative forms are used today, and we can find more forms conjugated in the *ik*-paradigm in the imperative than in the conditional. The survey results discussed below will lend support what Horváth and Reményi (1990)

Table 1. *Ik*-paradigm vs. non-*ik* paradigm (*eszik* "eat", *tesz* "put", *lakik* "reside", and *rak* "place")

	Indicative		Conditional		Imperative	
	Ik	non-*ik*	*ik*	non-*ik*	*ik*	non-*ik*
1Sg	*ESZEM*	teszek	*ENNÉM*	tennék	*EGYEM*	tegyek
2Sg	*ESZEL*	teszel	ennél	tennél	egyél	tegyél
3Sg	*ESZIK*	tesz	*ENNÉK*	tenne	*EGYÉK*	tegyen
1Sg	*LAKOM*	rakok	*LAKNÁM*	raknék	*LAKJAM*	rakjak
2Sg	*LAKOL*	raksz	laknál	raknál	lakjál	rakjál
3Sg	*LAKIK*	rak	*LAKNÉK*	rakna	*LAKJÉK*	rakjon

[2]No detailed description of the *ik*-conjugation or the change of person markers can be provided in this paper. The only remark I want to make here is that the -*l* or -*sz* marker of 2Sg depends on the stem-final consonant rather than the type of conjugation: -*l* is used after spirants, and -*sz* is used after all other consonants, cf. *alsz-om, alsz-ol*, but there is vacillation in *ébredez-ek ~ ébredez-em, ébredez-el*, pseudo-ik (due to the lack of *mászom*) *mász-ok, mász-ol*. (See also Table 1.) A summary of the history of the *ik*-conjugation can be found in Hungarian in MNyTNy 1992: 213–224. The first account of the history of the ik-conjugation, still influential today, was provided by Simonyi (1906a), who demonstrated through many examples how *ik*- and non-*ik* conjugations were blended.

Table 2. The indefinite conjugation of *ik*-verbs (*eszik* "eat", *tesz* "put", *lakik* "reside", and *rak* "place")

	Indicative	Conditional	Imperative
1Sg	eszek ∼ teszek	ennék ∼ tennék	egyek ∼ tegyek
2Sg	eszel ∼ teszel	ennél ∼ tennél	egyél ∼ tegyél
3Sg	eszik ∼ tesz	enne ∼ tenne	egyen ∼ tegyen
1Sg	lakok ∼ rakok	laknék ∼ raknék	lakjak ∼ rakjak
2Sg	laksz ∼ raksz	laknál ∼ raknál	lakjál ∼ rakjál
3Sg	lakik ∼ rak	lakna ∼ rakna	lakjon ∼ rakjon

indicated in a small quantitative study, namely that 70.5% of the indicative forms, 55% of the 3Sg imperative forms, and only 1% of the conditional forms were used in the *ik*-paradigm. As Horváth and Reményi (1990, p. 18) state, "no speaker said, in the first person singular, *Ha nem lenne semmi ennivaló itthon, akkor én se **enném** semmit.* 'If there were no food at home, I would not eat anything either.' In third person singular only one speaker, judging from their comments, most likely a teacher who attempts to be very conscious about their speech, said *Ha adnál neki, Pista is **ennék** a gulyásból.* 'If you gave him some, Pista would eat some goulash'.)"

LANGUAGE POWERS-THAT-BE AND EDUCATION

Many works concerning the Hungarian language and its description contain opinions and judgments about other people's speech.[3] In the past, writing a grammar constituted a type of norm, as it does in the present, when it is part of a norm-producing process, which inherently carries value judgments. Sebestyén and Szathmári (1969, p. 113) states the following (my translation):

> "Writing a grammar is a normative activity independent of the intention of the author, in both the past and the present, since in the complicated web of the language, given the relationship of varieties clinging to each other, it is often not clear whether something is subordinated or coordinated."

As far as *ik*-verbs are concerned, Simonyi (1906a) stated that the revival of the *ik*-conjugation is due to school education and the imitation of the literary language. His question from 1906 is still valid: "to what extent was the school or literature right in reviving the old conjugation, demanding everyone to conform?" (Simonyi 1906a, p. 1). The latter issue is especially crucial: linguists and literary scholars revived a paradigm that was no longer used by speakers and imbued it with the prestige of being correct Hungarian.

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[3]Cf. "In speech there are many ugly, improper forms which are due to the fact that nobody looks for the characters of words and cannot compare them to other languages or sayings in other languages, but everyone speaks the same way as they learned to speak as babies, they will speak like that in their old age; and because of that this beautiful and wise language became ugly and peasant-like. Geleji, 1645" (= Simonyi, 1906b, p. 5).

Simonyi (1906a) discussed the issue in detail and in a way that is still valid. In connection with the revival of the *ik*-conjugation, he writes that Miklós Révai's proposal about the revival of the *ik*-conjugation was met with the support of the learned people of the time who worked in the language revival movement. The new paradigm became widely used in fiction in a few decades, and its use became the expectation in schools (Simonyi, 1906a, p. 51). Révai himself wrote that it is the job of the school to stabilize the forms he considered mistakes (e.g., *eszek* instead of *eszem*) (Bánóczi, 1879, p. 352, the Latin original in Révai, 1806, p. 938–939).

The attempts on the part of Révai and his followers to revive the *ik*-conjugation met the criteria of subordination (see below), even though the leading figure of the Hungarian language revival, Ferenc Kazinczy did not use the *ik*-conjugation regularly before he learned about Révai's proposal, and even Révai himself freely used non-*ik* forms in his poetry. Kazinczy's followers assigned such prestige to the *ik*-conjugation that "they saw mistakes and lack of knowledge in every error made in the *ik*-conjugation, and persecuted the offenders with strong criticism and epigrams, shouting mocking comments at speakers in county assemblies to annoy them" (Simonyi, 1906a, p. 52).

In the same paper Somonyi (1906a) writes that *ik*-conjugation forms occurred in regional dialects at the turn of the 19th century only in the indicative 3rd person forms, while other forms of the conjugation were used only at the periphery of the Hungarian language area (Brassai, 2011, p. 253; Benkő, 1992, p. 213; Simonyi, 1906a, pp. 41–44). In an earlier paper, he already concluded that reviving the *ik*-conjugation was a mistake, since "it produced a useless difference between the school's literary language and the language of most of the Hungarian people" (Simonyi, 1903, p. 9). So, Simonyi considered the forced use of the ik-conjugation in Hungarian an unnecessary burden, stating that it is schools that contribute the most to the survival of the once receding paradigm (Simonyi, 1903, p. 88).

It is not an overstatement, then, to say that the way (cf. Melich, 1908, 9–12) and his followers elevated the *ik*-conjugation to the level of the prestige variety and strengthened its position in education meets the criteria of subordination, in the terminology of Lippi-Green (2012, p. 70):

"Language is mystified.
You can never hope to comprehend the difficulties and complexities of your mother tongue without expert guidance.

Authority is claimed.
We are the experts. Talk like me/us. We know what we are doing because we have studied language, because we write well.

Misinformation is generated.
That usage you are so attached to is inaccurate. The variant I prefer is superior on historical, esthetic, or logical grounds.

Targeted languages are trivialized.
Look how cute, how homey, how funny.

Conformers are held up as positive examples.
See what you can accomplish if you only try, how far you can get if you see the light.

Non-conformers are vilified or marginalized.
See how willfully stupid, arrogant, unknowing, uninformed and/or deviant these speakers are.

Explicit promises are made.
   Employers will take you seriously; doors will open.

Threats are made.
   No one important will take you seriously; doors will close."

This approach looks at the connection between varieties and their speakers from the perspective of the ideology of power. As Tolcsvai Nagy (2017, p. 40, my translation) says, "[h]ere the direct intention to subordinate is primary, that is, what arguments, ways, and means the representatives of an ideology try to control other social groups or entire societies and language communities in areas of language use and language interpretation". In agreement with Tolcsvai Nagy, who claims that "[t]he discriminative use of the standard comes from the user, not the variety", we witness, in the revival of the *ik*-conjugation and its placement in the standard, how the users of a high (later standard) variety elevate a paradigm which no longer exists in most of the language area and whose use can be made into an expectation to serve as the basis of discrimination. Education contributes to the maintenance of the nonexistent paradigm in that it selects one possible variant (e.g., *eszem*) and prohibits another (e.g., *eszek*), or at least deems it erroneous and incorrect. Kontra (2005, p. 188) holds the view that in education usually "those things are emphasized which are more difficult to use and to learn, which are used by the elite".

While we have data in the linguistics literature regarding the receding of the *ik*-conjugation, sources propagating language cultivation nevertheless make statements such as the following, in response to a reader's question regarding the use of *ik*-verbs:

> "*Ik*-verbs [. . .] do not have a definite vs. indefinite conjugation, they only have one conjugation, the *ik*-conjugation. [. . .] In everyday speech, informal, and unofficial situations the non-*ik* conjugation is acceptable, so *Eszek egy kiflit* 'I eat a croissant' cannot be objected to very much if it is uttered in a cafeteria or kitchen, or we can say *Pesten lakok* 'I live in Pest' in a friendly conversation, but in a public, official situation and in writing such forms are incorrect and to be avoided. So, if you want to **speak really correctly and in a refined way**,[4] you should use the forms *lakom, eszem, alszom*." Source: https://e-nyelv.hu/2009-08-14/ikes-es-targyas-ragozas/, the website of the Hungarian Language Service Office.[5]

In addition to the fact that the text incorrectly claims that *ik*-verbs do not have both indefinite and definite conjugations (when in fact they do), it is not difficult to identify the perspective under which the "really correct" form is also branded refined.

The handbooks of language cultivation that are in use in Hungary today differ from each other regarding the issue of the use of the *ik*-conjugation only in the extent of their stigmatization.

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[4]Emphasis mine.

[5]The website states: "Professional background: Magyar Nyelvstratégiai Kutatócsoport [Research Group on Hungarian Language Strategy] (2000–), Magyar Szemiotikai Társaság [Hungarian Semiotics Society] (1991–), Médiaértés Egyesület [Media Understanding Society] (2014–). Cooperating partners: Anyanyelvápolók Szövetsége [Association for Mother Tongue Protection] (1989/2006–), Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága [International Society for the Hungarian Language and Culture] (1970/2012–).

The handbook of language cultivation (*Nyelvművelő kézikönyv*) is the most permissive of the variants (Grétsy and Kovalovszky, 1983, p. 1,013; my translation):

"the *ik*-conjugation lost its peculiar role during the natural development of language, and the intrusion of non-*ik* forms does not cause problems, on the contrary, to some extent it makes utterances more unambiguous. The natural and almost necessary decline of the *ik*-conjugation has been happening for a long time; attempts to thwart this process are in vain, as examples demonstrate, and they are also unnecessary. We have to be understanding and patient while the current mixed state, from which stylistic choices can be made, develop into unity."

In contrast, the authors of the concise dictionary of language cultivation (*Nyelvművelő kéziszótár*) consider it important to differentiate stylistically between the variants (Grétsy and Kemény, 2005, p. 258; my translation):

"the correct use of the ik-conjugation can be required only in the indicative of the pure and stable *ik*-verbs. [. . .] The grammaticality judgment of even educated speakers becomes uncertain when it comes to the use of *ik*- and non-*ik* verbs. But it is important to bear in mind the differential stylistic value of the pairs of forms resulting from the decline of the *ik* system of forms"

The dictionary of Hungarian language correctness (*Magyar nyelvhelyességi lexikon*, Balázs, 2001, p. 113) states that "the *ik*-conjugation can be expected in full only in the present tense use of pure, correct, and stable *ik*-verbs", however, adding that "preserving and using the *-m* person marking suffix is important in the indicative present 1Sg forms of **pure verbs** (sic!), because the non-*ik*-conjugation **strongly suggests 'inferior'**[6] use".

Despite the scholarly argumentation and consensus regarding the decline of the *ik*-conjugation, school education and language cultivation keep it alive today. Gál's, 2020 survey of Hungarian language use among Hungary Hungarian and Slovakia Hungarian high school students in 2017 included five questions regarding *ik*-verbs in its questionnaire. It did so partly because the same questions were used in the study (Lanstyák and Szabómihály, 1997) she used for comparison in her investigation of language change. Two questions focused on 1Sg imperative forms, two questions on 1Sg indicative forms, and one on the hypercorrect *ik*-conjugated form of a non-*ik* verb. The survey, completed by 279 subjects in Hungary and 540 subjects in Slovakia and done by Gál (2020), presents the following picture.

Two questions of the questionnaire required the 1Sg imperative forms of *ik*-verbs, while another questions required the indefinite conjugation present tense 1Sg form of a non-*ik* verb (one that speakers often conjugate, in a hypercorrect way, as if it were an *ik*-verb).

For the respondents, one extreme solution[7] was to provide the expected *ik*-forms of all four *ik*-verbs and the standard form of the non-*ik* verb as well. In this case, the regular *ik*-conjugation was used: that is, the *ik*-conjugation imperative 1Sg forms of *ik*-verbs, *viselkedjék* of *viselkedik* "behave" and *egyék* of *eszik* "eat"; the *ik*-conjugation form of the *ik*-verbs in present tense 1Sg, *alszom* of *alszik* "sleep" and *elkésem* of *elkésik* "be late"; and a regular non-*ik* form of a non-*ik* verb, *edzek* of *edz* "train". The other extreme among the responses was to provide no standard *ik*-form, that is, to not conjugate the verb "correctly" (= in the standard version). In such a case,

[6]My emphasis.

[7]At one end of the scale, which can be deduced from the answers.

a respondent did not use the *ik*-conjugation at all, and the form they provided for *edz* was not hypercorrect (not *edzem*, but *edzek*).

An overview of the data shows the following:

(a) Not all respondents (114 of them, 13.9%, $N = 819$) provided the expected ik- or non-ik conjugated forms in their answers. They provided the following:

  i. either another form of the given verb or another verb entirely (for instance, *faljon*, of *fal* 'devour', instead of *egyék/egyen* 'eat'),

  ii. or a form which was ungrammatical in the context (e.g., *edz* 'he is training' instead of *edzek* 'I am training').

Of the Hungary respondents, 27 (9.7%, $N = 279$), and of the Slovakia respondents, 87 (16.2%, $N = 540$) did not provide an interpretableresponse as far as the use of the *ik*-conjugation is concerned. This is a considerable proportion, which I do not seek to find an explanation for in this paper.

(b) None of the respondents from either Hungary or Slovakia used the *ik*-conjugation consistently.

(c) 9 (3.2%, $N = 279$) of the Hungary respondents and 21 (3.8%, $N = 540$) of the Slovakia respondents conjugated imperative forms in a non-*ik* way and indicative forms in the *ik*-way (3.6%, $N = 819$).

(d) Most of both the Hungary and Slovakia Hungarian respondents gave forms that contained no *ik*-conjugation at all: 159 (58.9%, $N = 279$) and 217 (44.5%, $N = 540$), respectively. Of all respondents, 45.9% ($N = 819$) responded in such a way. A lower proportion of NN-KKK[8] responses among the Slovakia respondents is due to the fact that they used the hypercorrect *edzem* form in 23.8% of the cases (while the Hungary respondents did so only in 9.6% of the cases).

(e) Further results are as follows, as summarized in Table 3:

  i. Slovakia Hungarian respondents used considerably more hypercorrect forms (using the *ik*-conjugation when the indefinite conjugation should be the standard form) [1].

  ii. A similarly low proportion of both groups of respondents used imperative *ik*-forms ([2]).

  iii. Only 8.9% of the Hungary respondents and 14.0% of the Slovakia respondents used the standard forms of both present tense ik-verbs ([3]).

  iv. Slovakia respondents used the standard form of at least one of the present tense ik-verbs (by 12%) ([4]).

Based on this, we can state the following:

1. The *ik*-conjugation is nonexistent for almost half of the respondents in the case of the verbs tested in the questionnaire, whereas for the other half it is a paradigm that exists only in traces.

2. This survey demonstrates that the imperative 1Sg *ik*-form is the least known: only 19, or 2.3% of the respondents ($N = 819$) used it.

3. Most respondents used no inflected forms in the *ik*-conjugation.

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[8]Neither form has *ik*-conjugation.

Table 3. The use of the *ik*-conjugation (2017)

		HU	SK
[1]	*edzeM*	9.6	23.8
[2]	*viselkedJÉK* or *egyÉK*	6.6	6.9
[3]	both *ik*-verbs in present 1Sg -*M*	8.9	14.0
[4]	at least one *ik*-conjugation present 1Sg -*M*	34.0	46.2

Table 4. *Ik*-verbs in HNSR

	MNSZV 1988	HU 1997	SK 1997	HU 2017[a]	SK 2017[a]
Elkésem	29.5	17.2	35.6	8.6	16.3
elkések	70.5	82.8	64.1	88.2	76.4
Egyék	19.9	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.0
Egyen	80.1	100.0	99.6	99.6	98.6

[a] Where totals do not add up to 100%, subjects provided unexpected (e.g., *el fogok késni*) or ungrammatical (*elkésni*) forms.

4. Slovakia Hungarian respondents used the 1Sg -*m* ik-conjugation suffix more than the respondents from Hungary, even in the case of non-*ik* verbs.

An earlier study from 1988 (HNSR[9]), and the study serving as a model for the current study (Lanstyák–Szentmihályi 1997) examined the use of the *ik*-conjugation. All three studies used the following two fill-in questions. The results are summarized in Table 4.

The comparison demonstrates that the imperative *ik*-form is no longer used by the respondents, and that the present tense 1Sg *ik*-form receded considerably among respondents in Hungary, while it is retained among respondents in Slovakia. We can also see that Slovakia Hungarian respondents used the 1Sg -*m* suffix more than the Hungary Hungarian respondents, in both studies. This is due to the teaching of Hungarian in schools and the stigmatization of the regional vernacular variety. The stigmatization of the speakers' variety by others forces them to strive to produce the variety which is regarded as correct by those holding the linguistic power. This results in the more frequent use of the investigated inflection on the one hand, and hypercorrection on the other, and the "extent of hypercorrection [. . .] is always proportionate with linguistic insecurity, whereas linguistic insecurity results predominantly from normativity and prescriptivism" (Sándor, 2001, p. 248). Sándor remarks in a note that considering some form of speech incorrect also entails judgment of students' personalities.[10]

Teaching Hungarian in Slovakia schools that use Hungarian as the language of instruction demonstrates strong standardizing ideology and prescriptive intentions centered around

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[9]Hungarian National Sociolinguistic Research, http://www.nytud.hu/depts/socio/index.html.

[10]The phenomenon is overviewed and analyzed in detail by Jánk (2019).

language cultivation. Meanwhile, students do not actually encounter the standard Hungarian variety in their language use (Vančo, 2017a, 2017b, 2019). This feature of education results in the inflections of the *ik*-conjugation being used in higher proportions. At the same time, as the results of the study discussed above show, the *ik*-conjugation does not exist in the Slovakia Hungarian vernacular of the students. This is also supported by data regarding regional dialects, since forms of the *ik*-conjugation were not found in Slovakia Hungarian research sites.[11]

The form *viselkedjék,* that is, the imperative 3Sg form of *viselkedik* "behave", which was produced minimally by Slovakia Hungarian respondents, is part of some regional dialects to this day,[12] but very few people used it. The reason for this may be that the non-*ik* variant (*viselkedjen*) of *viselkedjék* is not stigmatized, and therefore no effort has to be made to use the *ik*-form. Alternatively, it can also be avoided if considered regional dialectal (for more on this issue, see, for instance, Pléh and Bodor, 2001).

Based on the above, I can state that those holding linguistic power (writers, language cultivators, and the school) sustain, to this day, and regard as the measure of educated and "correct" speech the use of the *ik*-conjugation, despite the fact that the *ik*-paradigm was already no longer in use in a considerable part of the Hungarian language area 200 years ago. The results of the discussed questionnaire-based survey demonstrate, on the one hand, that of the forms of the *ik*-conjugation, only 1Sg forms are used, and on the other hand, that it is education that helps maintain the *ik*-conjugation (or rather its partial use), thereby keeping minority Hungarian speakers in Slovakia – who do not even have access to the standard variety of Hungarian – in linguistic insecurity and forcing them to hypercorrect, while these speakers say that "in my opinion, we regard the *-m* ending as more elegant, and we use it when we intend to speak "elegantly"" (János Gál, Zsére, personal communication).

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[11](cf. *iszom~iszok* http://www.bihalbocs.hu/mnyarmnya/munkaterk/iszom1.html; *innám~innék* http://www.bihalbocs.hu/mnyarmnya/munkaterk/innam_innek.html *aludjam~aludjak* http://www.bihalbocs.hu/mnyarmnya/munkaterk/aludjam_aludjak.html.

[12]*aludjék~aludjon* http://www.bihalbocs.hu/mnyarmnya/munkaterk/aludjek_aludjon.html.

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

A comparative study of reading comprehension skills among Hungarian students in Hungary and Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to map the reading comprehension skills of the primary school students in Hungary and Slovakia and to see what differences there are in the reading habits, self-assessment and actual performance in reading comprehension between the two groups.

A total of 240 survey respondents from the two countries and belonging to two age groups participated in this phase of research. The survey consisted of two parts. The first part was a self-completed questionnaire consisting of 23 questions, in which the students' sociological background, language use, reading habits, and subjective opinions related to the assessment of reading comprehension skills were assessed. The second part was a reading comprehension test, which consisted of three sets of texts and questions adapted to the cognitive abilities of the two age groups.

An analysis of the answers shows that there is no significant difference between the self-evaluation of students in the two countries regarding their reading comprehension skills. There is however a difference between the reading habits of Hungarian students in Hungary vs. in Slovakia in both age groups, and a significant difference between the results of the reading comprehension test in the groups of students from the two countries.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is among the most important areas of native language competence; it is one of the most essential pillars of today's society and a tool that can be regarded as the intellectual capital of society. Modern information-centered society requires citizens to effectively interpret various texts. Reading comprehension skills play a fundamental role in learning and are a prerequisite for any further learning and knowledge acquisition. Poor reading comprehension skills also have a negative impact on prosperity in different areas of life.

For these reasons, reading comprehension skills of students and adults are regularly measured by international surveys, with Hungary and Slovakia also participating. The two most significant international surveys conducted in regular cycles measuring students' reading comprehension skills are PIRLS (*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)* and PISA (*Programme for International Student Assessment*). PIRLS assesses reading comprehension skills of fourth graders every five years. The results of the latest PIRLS survey conducted in 2016 show that the average performance of students in Hungary (544 points) was higher than the performance of students in Slovakia (535 points), and the performance of students in both countries was higher than the average international performance on PIRLS (500 points). Hungarian students' scores are higher and Slovak scores are lower than the average performance of EU countries (540 points) and the OECD average (541 points) (IEA). PISA assesses students' performance in three-year cycles. Based on the latest PISA results for 2018, the average reading comprehension score of Hungarian students is higher (476 points) than that of Slovak students (458 points), but the reading comprehension performance of students in both countries is significantly below the OECD average of 487 points (OECD, 2019, p. 17). The country results of these international surveys include, but do not specifically address, the results of national minorities living in the country. The largest minority group in Slovakia are Hungarians, and this minority has an extensive network of primary and secondary language schools using Hungarian as a language of instruction. Based on the available data, we can find out how many schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction in Slovakia participated in PIRLS, but the publicly available PIRLS and PISA databases do not provide data on the specific number and performance of minority students in particular.

Our research aims to provide a detailed overview of reading habits and to compare reading comprehension skills between Hungarian primary school students in Hungary vs. in Slovakia. The two populations attend a different number of Hungarian language and literature classes during their education. In addition, the Hungarian population in Hungary is monolingual, while the Hungarian students in Slovakia are characterized by different degrees of bilingualism in addition to their dominance of the Hungarian language. In other words, the linguistic environment of the Hungarian students in Hungary is monolingual Hungarian, while that of the Hungarian students in Slovakia is bilingual Hungarian and Slovak.

In this regard, the following research questions are addressed via our survey:

1. Is there a difference between the reading habits and reading comprehension skills based on subjective self-assessment of Hungarian students in Hungary vs. Slovakia?
2. Is there a significant difference between reading comprehension performance of Hungarian students in Hungary vs. Slovakia?

The results reported below are based on data from our pilot study. In our survey, we tested 10% of the fourth and seventh grade Hungarian students in Slovakia. The full survey and the creation of the database have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

Our pilot study assessed the reading comprehension skills of a group each of Hungarian primary school pupils in Hungary and in Slovakia. The sample was selected based on purposive sampling, following the strategy of choosing respondents from the two countries and two age groups (fourth vs. seventh grade students). All the respondents attended public primary schools. Students in Hungary were all monolingual, while those in Slovakia were Hungarian-dominant students living in a Hungarian-majority region and attending primary schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction. The obtained data and their relationship were evaluated by statistical methods, using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 statistical software package.

The survey is part of a comprehensive study. In its current phase the total number of survey respondents is 240: 120 from Hungary, with 80 fourth graders and 40 seventh graders, and 120 from Slovakia, with 44 fourth graders and 76 seventh graders. The number of respondents was calculated on the basis of the number of students in the given grades of the selected schools. Table 1 below summarizes the distribution of the respondents in the survey.

The study was a comparative cross-sectional survey conducted in May 2019, anonymously, and the students did not know about it before participating. The questionnaires were coded with numbers so that the data for each respondent could be traced. The survey consisted of two parts. The first part was a self-completed sociological questionnaire with 23 questions in which we assessed the respondents' social backgrounds, language use, reading habits, and their self-assessment of reading comprehension.

The questionnaire was immediately followed by a reading comprehension test that we designed to assess students' actual reading comprehension skills. The reading comprehension tests consisted of three texts and questions related to them. The same age groups received the same tests in both countries. The structure of the reading comprehension tests of the two age groups was similar: each test contained 3 different types of text as well as questions adapted to the cognitive abilities of each of the age groups. The tests of the fourth graders were dominated

Table 1. The distribution of the respondents

	4th Grade	7th Grade	Total
HU	80	40	120
SK	44	76	120
Total	124	116	240

by closed multiple choice questions, while the tests of the seventh graders mainly consisted of open-ended questions. Students were given an average of 90 minutes to complete the questionnaire and the tests in their Hungarian language classes. We were present in the classrooms throughout the survey, thus ensuring the authenticity of the data obtained.

As far as the memory load, the respondents worked continuously with the texts when answering the questions. During the survey, we specifically asked them not to answer questions from memory but to use the texts and to keep working with them. The answers obtained from the comprehension tests were evaluated by scoring: each correctly answered question earned one point, in order to allow us to process the data statistically. Answers were given one point only if they were completely correct.

Social characteristics of respondents

The 240-person survey involved 120 Hungarian students from Hungary and 120 from Slovakia. Despite the random sample, the gender distribution was balanced in the two groups: 53% of the Hungary Hungarian respondents and 47% of the Slovakia Hungarian respondents were boys, while 48 and 52% of the respondents were girls, respectively. 80 Hungary Hungarian and 44 Slovakia Hungarian respondents from the fourth grade participated in the survey; and 40 Hungary Hungarian and 76 Slovakia Hungarian respondents from the seventh grade participated.

Regarding the place of residence, the distribution of the respondents in the two countries differs more substantially: almost twice as many respondents in Hungary were from towns than in Slovakia (towns: 62% in Hungary, 35% in Slovakia; villages: 38% in Hungary, 65% in Hungary). In terms of parents' level of education, the difference between the examined populations is also considerable: in the Hungary Hungarian group 31% of the participants' parents have completed higher education and 14% only secondary education, while in Slovakia, 14% of the parents have completed tertiary education and 35% only secondary education. The data obtained are based on students' self-reports. In both groups, the number of students who did not know the educational level of their parents is surprisingly high (43% in Hungary, and 34% in Slovakia). In addition to education, we also asked what the parents' occupations were. Since a certain job can be filled with people of various educational qualifications, it was not possible to gain more insight into our data with the help of this question. However, it can be assumed based on the indicated occupations that, overall, the majority of parents in the examined groups have completed secondary education.

Students' attitudes toward reading and reading comprehension skills according to their self-reports

As part of the sociological questionnaire, we asked students about their own reading habits, about their parents' reading habits, about the extent to which they tend to finish a book they start to read, and also about their self-evaluation of reading comprehension skills.

Based on the data, in Table 2, it can be concluded that significant differences can be observed between the reading habits of students from the two countries. Only a fraction of overall respondents in Hungary (2%) and some respondents in Slovakia (12%) never read books.

Countering the general belief that children today do not read, most students in both groups are daily readers, and there is also a significant number who read books each week. Two thirds of the respondents from Hungary and more than half of the respondents from Slovakia are regular readers.

Table 2. Reading habits of respondents, in percentages

	4th Grade		7th Grade		Total	
	HU (*N* = 80)	**SK** (*N* = 44)	**HU** (*N* = 40)	**SK** (*N* = 76)	**HU** (*N* = 120)	**SK** (*N* = 120)
Never read books	0	11	5	13	2	12
Read books daily	70	39	51	62	61	51
Read books 1-2 times per week	21	27	22	3	21	15
Read books 1-2 times per month	1	5	7	11	4	8
Read books less often	8	18	15	11	12	14

There is also a difference between students' book borrowing habits. While in Hungary, more than two-thirds (67%) of all students borrow books regularly, less than one-third (27%) of them in Slovakia do so.

As far as the parents' reading habits are concerned, the parents of the respondents in Hungary read more often than those in Slovakia.

Table 3 below summarizes data on book borrowing habits and the parental reading habits.

Significantly fewer respondents from Slovakia than from Hungary regularly borrow books, and parents who read daily are also proportionally fewer in Slovakia. This may also partly explain the differences in the students' reading habits, as noted above.

We asked students how often they see their parents read. The results show that half of the Hungary Hungarian students see both their mothers (56%) and fathers (44%) read on a daily basis, while proportionally fewer students from Slovakia see their parents read: less than half of the Slovakia Hungarian students see their mothers (43%) and less than a third see their fathers (28%) read daily.

Another question we asked was whether the students finish their books they start to read. Based on Table 4 below, we can state that twice as many respondents in Hungary (43%) always finish a book than in Slovakia (20%), and half as many students in Hungary (7%) never finish a book as in Slovakia (18%).

One of the most important questions of the questionnaire was the students' self-assessment of reading comprehension: students were given several statements that they were asked to evaluate on a 4-point Likert scale. Table 5 below summarizes students' self-reported comprehension skills by statement and by country.

Table 3. Book borrowing habits and parental reading habits, in percentages

	4th Grade		7th Grade	
	HU (*N* = 80)	**SK (*N* = 44)**	**HU (*N* = 40)**	**SK (*N* = 76)**
Regularly borrow books	81	22	41	30
Mother reads daily	71	44	41	42
Father reads daily	64	20	24	36

Table 4. Finishing a book, in percentages

	4th Grade		7th Grade		Total	
	HU ($N = 80$)	SK ($N = 44$)	HU ($N = 40$)	HU ($N = 76$)	SK ($N = 120$)	HU ($N = 120$)
Always	44	10	41	26	43	20
Sometimes	51	71	49	56	50	61
Never	5	19	10	18	7	18

Table 5. Fourth graders' reading skills based on their self-evaluation, in percentages

4th grade HU $N = 80$ SK $N = 44$		Totally agree	Partially agree	Partially disagree	Totally disagree
Reading is easy; I understand everything I read.	HU	53	41	6	0
	SK	59	24	7	10
I have problems with understanding if there are difficult or unknown words in the text.	HU	29	21	17	33
	SK	42	18	20	20
I have problems with understanding if there are long sentences in the text.	HU	9	15	13	63
	SK	18	21	11	50
I have problems with understanding if I do not understand the topic that the text is about.	HU	32	14	19	35
	SK	44	17	17	22
Pictures help me understand the text.	HU	40	26	12	22
	SK	42	37	3	18
Post-text questions help me understand the text.	HU	17	24	30	29
	SK	46	23	10	21
Understanding the text is a problem; I am not good at it.	HU	9	5	13	73
	SK	13	10	18	59

The obtained data show that there is not a considerable difference between the reading comprehension skills based on the respondents' self-evaluation among the two groups. Most of the respondents in both groups (94% in Hungary, and 83% in Slovakia) agree (fully or partly) with the statement that reading is easy for them and they understand everything they read.

Reversing the question ("Understanding the text is a problem, I am not good at it."), we received similar answers: the vast majority of students (86% in Hungary, and 76% in Slovakia) state that reading comprehension does not cause any problem for them. However, the answers we received indicate a higher degree of confidence in the Hungary Hungarian group. The picture is further nuanced by the responses to further statements about the nature of comprehension. The answers to

the question about the difficulties caused by unknown words show that half of the fourth graders' group from Hungary, and 60% of the same group from Slovakia, recognize that difficult expressions or foreign words cause them problems. They also recognize that comprehension is difficult when they have little prior knowledge of the topic of the text (46% in Hungary, and 61% in Slovakia).

Similar but less confident self-esteem is exhibited in seventh graders' responses regarding their reading comprehension. Two-thirds of the seventh graders in Hungary and Slovakia fully or partially agreed with the statement that "Reading is easy; I understand everything I read". Half of the group from Hungary and two-thirds of the group from Slovakia have difficulties with difficult or unknown terms, and 42% of the group from Hungary and 59% of the group from Slovakia (all those giving fully or partially agreeing answers) encounter problems when they have little prior knowledge of the text (See Table 6).

In the rest of the study, by analyzing the results of our comprehension tests, we compare the respondents' actual reading comprehension results achieved in the test with the reading comprehension skills as estimated by the respondents.

The results of the reading comprehension tests by age groups

The reading comprehension tests of the study included three texts in both age groups. In the first part, the respondents received a continuous narrative text of 2,500 characters each. The second

Table 6. Seventh graders' reading skills based on self-evaluation, in percentages

7th grade HU *N* = 40 SK *N* = 76		Totally agree	Partially agree	Partially disagree	Totally disagree
Reading is easy; I understand everything I read.	HU	30	47	20	3
	SK	55	22	15	8
I have problems with understanding if there are difficult or unknown words in the text.	HU	32	20	26	22
	SK	46	24	10	20
I have problems with understanding if there are long sentences in the text.	HU	10	17	13	60
	SK	18	18	15	49
I have problems with understanding if I do not understand the topic that the text is about.	HU	22	20	30	28
	SK	31	28	6	35
Pictures help me understand the text.	HU	56	22	15	7
	SK	58	16	9	17
Post-text questions help me understand the text.	HU	28	41	13	18
	SK	44	18	5	33
Understanding the text is a problem; I am not good at it.	HU	10	8	25	57
	SK	13	11	23	53

part was a 1,500-character, continuous, expository-type text, and the third was a combined informative-type, short text of 500 characters in total, which included illustrations and tables. The three texts of the reading comprehension test included a total of 26 questions in the fourth grade and 21 questions in the seventh grade.

Differences between the results of students in Hungary vs. Slovakia in both age groups can be observed in all three texts of comprehension tests. Since the simple averaging does not reflect actual differences in group performance, the data obtained were subjected to detailed statistical analysis. An Independent Sample T-test was used to determine whether the results obtained were systematic or random, and a Leven test was used to evaluate the equality of variants. In the case where the P-value reached a significance level of less than 0.05 for the Leven test, statistical significance was evaluated by the Mann–Whitney test. Each statistical test was evaluated using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 statistical software package.

The fourth graders' reading comprehension test results

Below we analyze the reading comprehension test results of 80 Hungarian students in Hungary and 44 in Slovakia. The maximum score for the fourth graders' reading comprehension test was 38 points. Observing the students' performance on all three texts, students in Hungary completed the test with a 63% success rate on average, while that of the students in Slovakia was 50%.

Based on the results of the Independent Samples T-Test, at a significance level of $P < 0.05$, it can be stated that the group of fourth graders in Hungary performed significantly better than the group in Slovakia on all three parts of the test.

Table 7 below summarizes the detailed statistical results of the students' reading comprehension test by each text type.

The fourth-grade students in Hungary performed outstandingly well in answering the questions of the expository text, and they had more correct answers in all three parts than the students in Slovakia. The average performance of the fourth graders in Slovakia indicates that the reading comprehension skills of the examined group are weaker, regardless of the text type. The best performing Hungary Hungarian students achieved 85% of the points that could be obtained, while the best performing Slovakia Hungarian students achieved only 70% of the maximum points.

Both groups showed the weakest performance in answering the narrative part; none of the respondents achieved the maximum score. In the group in Slovakia, even those who achieved the best and the weakest results performed worse than their Hungarian contemporaries. The maximum performance of the Hungary Hungarian respondents in the case of the narrative text was 11 points out of a maximum of 13 (85% performance), with two students achieving this score, while the lowest score was 3 points (2 students). Three of the respondents in Slovakia scored the highest in that group, 9 points (69% performance), and one student did not achieve any points at all. The maximum 9 points achieved by students in Slovakia were achieved by 18 students from the sample in Hungary. For more detailed analysis, the sample was divided into four equal parts, or quartiles. A significant difference between the two groups is indicated by the fact that while the first quartile of students in Hungary was 6 points, the third quartile of students in Slovakia was 7 points.

The most common score (mode) for all three texts was higher in the group from Hungary. The respondents were the most successful in answering the questions concerning the third, informative text, with the average result of the students from Hungary being 75% of the total score, which is where most of them reached 100% of the points. In the case of this task, the

Table 7. Fourth graders' reading comprehension test results

N = 80 (HU), N = 44 (SK)	Narrative text				Expository text				Informational text			
	HU		SK		HU		SK		HU		SK	
Maximum score	13				14				11			
Median (overall score in %)	7	54%	5	38%	9	64%	8	57%	8,5	77%	7	63%
Mode (students in %)	7	24%	5	25%	11	20%	8	20%	9	24%	7	25%
Mode as a percentage of the total score	54%		38%		78%		57%		82%		63%	
Average	7.03		5.41		9.27		7.36		8.27		6.95	
Average as a percentage of the total score	54%		41%		66%		52%		75%		48%	
First quartile	6		4		8		6		7		5.25	
Third quartile	9		7		11		9		10		9	
Dispersion	8		10		11		11		7		11	
Standard deviation	1.81		2.19		2.07		2.29		1.84		2.46	
Most points achieved (as a percentage of the total score)	11 (85%)		9 (69%)		14 (100%)		12 (86%)		11 (100%)		11 (100%)	
Students with a maximum score (as a percentage of students)	–		–		1 (1.3%)		–		9 (11.2%)		3 (6.8%)	
Fewest points achieved (as a percentage of the total score)	3 (23%)		0		3 (21%)		1 (0.7%)		4 (36%)		1 (9%)	
Students with a minimum score	2		1		1		1		2		1	
Number of students below the minimum score of the HU group	–		4 (9%)		–		2 (4.5)		–		3 (7%)	

performance of respondents from Slovakia was the most heterogeneous: in their case, both the dispersion (scale of points obtained) and the standard deviation (average deviation from the mean) were the greatest.

An important difference between the two groups is that in the case of all three texts, at least some students from Slovakia earned the absolute minimum of the points that could be obtained. In addition, in the case of all three texts there were students from Slovakia who performed below the minimum score of students from Hungary.

The seventh graders' reading comprehension test results

The number of respondents in the seventh grade was 40 in Hungary and 76 in Slovakia. In the reading comprehension tests, students could score a maximum of 35 points in total. Overall, the performance of students on the tests was 49% in Hungary and 40% in Slovakia. Based on a statistical analysis, at a significance level of $P < 0.05$, the group from Hungary performed significantly better on the first and third texts. The performance of both surveyed populations follows a similar pattern: the third task was the most difficult for them and the second one the easiest. Respondents in Hungary achieved better results by 11 percentage points for the third text, by 8 percentage points for the second text, and by 12 percentage points for the first text. The average result of the respondents in Slovakia does not reach 50% for any text.

Table 8 below illustrates the detailed statistical results of the students' comprehension test by each text type.

Table 8. Seventh graders' reading comprehension test results

N = 40 (HU), N = 76 (SK)	Narrative text		Expository text		Informational text	
	HU	SK	HU	SK	HU	SK
Maximum score	14		9		12	
Median	8	5,5	5	4	5	4
Median as a percentage of the total score	57%	39%	55%	44%	42%	33%
Mode (students in %)	8	7	6	5	6	4
Mode as a percentage of the total score	57%	50%	67%	55%	50%	33%
Average	7.25	5.62	4.88	4.14	5.10	3.88
Average as a percentage of the total score	52%	40%	54%	46%	43%	32%
First quartile	5.25	3	4	2.25	3.25	2
Third quartile	9	8	6	5.75	6.75	5
Dispersion	14	12	9	9	12	
Standard deviation	3.19	2.91	1.74	2.43	2.41	1.97
Most points achieved (as a percentage of the total score)	14 (100%)	12 (86%)	9 (100%)	9 (100%)	11 (92%)	10 (83%)
Students with a maximum score (as a percentage of students)	1 (2.5%)	0	1 (2.5%)	2 (2.6%)	0	0
Fewest points achieved (as a percentage of the total score)	1 (7.1%)	0	1 (11.0%)	0	1 (8.3%)	0
Students with a minimum score	1 (2.5%)	2 (2.6%)	1 (2.5%)	7 (10.8%)	3 (7.5%)	2 (2.6)

The third task, containing a combined type of text, proved to be the most difficult for the respondents from Slovakia, and none of the students reached the maximum score. The difficulty of the task is indicated by the fact that for this task the group average is the lowest as a percentage of the total score, the median value is the lowest (50% of students scored as many points or less), and the mode – the highest frequency in the line – is also the lowest for the third text. The second, expository text proved to be the easiest for some seventh graders in Slovakia, where most of the 100% results were obtained; however, the lowest score (9%) was obtained for this task as well. We can also see that in the case of the first task the performance of the respondents was the most heterogeneous: the dispersion and the standard deviation were the greatest in both groups.

A significant difference between the two groups is that among the students from Slovakia, in all three texts there is a result where only the minimum number of points was achieved; in addition, a significant percentage of the students from Slovakia performed below the minimum score of students from Hungary.

CONCLUSION

The investigation discussed in the present paper is a pilot study in which we have used a comparative cross-sectional survey to arrive at a clearer a picture of the reading habits as well as differences between the self-assessment and the actual performance in reading comprehension of a group of Hungarian students from Hungary and from Slovakia.

In text comprehension, the Hungary Hungarian group has demonstrated significantly better reading comprehension among the fourth and the seventh graders. The weaker reading comprehension of the Slovakia groups has been indicated not only by the lower group average but also by the fact that more students did not achieve the results of the worst-performing respondents of the corresponding group from Hungary. The standard deviation of the results of the fourth graders in Hungary is smaller in the case of all three texts than the standard deviation of the results of the Slovakia group, which indicates a more balanced reading comprehension performance of the former group.

The average comprehension performance of seventh graders lags behind the average performance of the fourth graders' group in both group averages, and the difficulty of accurately interpreting more demanding texts chosen for seventh graders is well illustrated by the greater standard deviation of performance. While the fourth-grade groups performed more evenly, the seventh graders showed strong stratification in reading comprehension, and this finding applies to both the Hungary and Slovakia Hungarian groups. This shows that education does not help those with poorer reading comprehension to catch up, and that there is a growing gap in performance between those who perform well and those who perform poorly.

Analyzing the students' performance by text types, it is clear that the interpretation of the narrative text proved to be the most difficult for both age groups; more precisely, it was the interpretation of the implicit information in the text that presented the most challenges. However, the better reading comprehension of the groups from Hungary was also reflected in the higher proportion of correct answers to the questions about the narrative texts.

The reading comprehension data were compared with students' self-evaluation of their own comprehension. Both the Hungary group and the Slovakia group—as well as two thirds of both

age groups—consider their own comprehension to be good, with reading comprehension not causing them any problems in their own estimation. However, the actual comprehension performance of the groups shows that students do not recognize problems in their reading comprehension. This fact is worrying for the older age group, as children aged 13–14 come across many more texts as well as more difficult texts than the lower grade age group. Most members of the studied group do not recognize that the interpretation of texts and working with the text can cause problems. An analysis of further judgments about reading comprehension provides nuance for the statements made so far: half of the students recognize that foreign expressions or texts dealing with an unknown topic can cause them problems. The data on the analyzed statements indicate the need for teachers to process texts in many ways and in detail with students in class, to pay special attention to the interpretation of words and phrases unfamiliar to students, and to develop cognitive schemas.

The answers to the questions on reading habits show – based on the overall results of the students – that the home environment affects the quality of reading comprehension, both negatively and positively. The group from Hungary displays more positive reading habits: they read more often overall and more of the respondents finish their books than do their peers in Slovakia. The reading patterns of respondents from Hungary at home are also more favorable than those of respondents from Slovakia: the former see their parents read more often than the latter. Positive reading habits can partly explain the achievement of groups from Hungary in reading comprehension.

The present analysis is based on data from the pilot part of a comprehensive study. The data so far, with the help of a detailed statistical analysis, have made it possible to obtain a detailed picture of the text comprehension of the two age groups living in the two countries and the factors influencing their comprehension.

Further research is needed to prove, clarify, or possibly refute the outlined trends. However, the results so far demonstrate the need to examine the reading comprehension skills of the two age groups in a comprehensive way, taking many factors into account, in order to present a continuing emphasis on the importance of reading comprehension and also to achieve actual development with an accurate diagnosis.

1. The 4-point Likert scale does not allow for neutral responses, and our goal with using it was to get the students to take a position.
2. In the case of the second text, due to the low statistical significance of the Leven test ($P <$ 0.05), the obtained data had to be evaluated using the Mann-Whitney test. Based on this, it can be stated that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups of seventh grade students in the second part of the reading comprehension test.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

The use of Hungarian as a minority language in municipal offices in Southern Slovakia

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

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ABSTRACT

The present paper investigates the bilingualism of municipal offices of Hungarian dominant settlements in Southern Slovakia, focusing on communication in these offices in relation to the relevant legal regulations, specifically on the language of signage outside and inside the offices, the language choice of oral and written communication in administration, and the language of official means of communication. Throughout the paper, the author points out issues that make the practical application of legal regulations difficult, and comments on the basic conditions of the asserting minority language rights.

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LEGAL REGULATION OF THE USE OF MINORITY LANGUAGES IN SLOVAKIA

According to the 1995 Law on the state language, still in effect, the language of all official language use in Slovakia is Slovak. Staff in administrative institutions are required to use the state language in all oral and written communication with members of the public, who, in turn, are required to submit all written requests in Slovak as well. Signage posted by administrative institutions can only include text in a language other than the state language if it is the translation of the original Slovak text and if it is placed below the original (cf. Zákon č., 270/1995. Z.z. Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky z 15. novembra 1995 o štátnom jazyku Slovenskej republiky). After the law came into effect, Slovakia Hungarian political parties and movements, social and cultural institutions as well as international organizations, politicians and linguists protested widely against the law which severely limits the use of minority languages, as a result of which the Slovak government, which was carrying out accession negotiations with the EU at the time, and the Slovak parliament promised that a law regulating minority language use would be passed in the near future as well. The ruling political powers, however, did not follow up on their promise, and, thus, the issue of a law regulating minority language use was raised again only after a change of government in 1998. After meeting with heated debates and being modified several times in the preparation period, the law was finally passed on July 10, 1999, and came into effect on September 1 the same year.

Even though its name suggests that this law regulates the language rights of minorities, its Article 1 clearly limits these rights in official communication, allowing for the use of the minority languages in only some administrative offices of only those settlements where the proportion of minority population was at least 20% in the latest census. The most important details of the regulations are found in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 2, securing the right to use minority languages in writing in settlements that meet the above criteria. According to the regulations, clients of municipal offices who belong to a minority group can submit their petitions to administrative offices in the minority language, will receive a response in the minority language as well as the state language and, if specifically requested, will be given certain statements in the minority language (cf. Zákon č., 184/1999 Z.z. Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky z 10. júla 1999 o používaní jazykov národnostných menšín).

The law offers privileges primarily to the largest minority group of the country, the Hungarians, however, both linguistic studies carried out at municipal offices of Hungarian dominant settlements and biannual reports by the government testify to the fact that neither administrative organizations nor minority individuals use their rights of minority language use to the desired degree (cf. Správa o stave používania jazykov národnostných menšín na území Slovenskej republiky za obdobie rokov, 2015–2016; Správa o stave používania jazykov národnostných menšín na území Slovenskej republiky za obdobie rokov, 2017–2018; Csiffári, 2010, 2012; Gazdíková, 2014; Hájos, 2012; Istók, 2012, 2014; Kiss, 2015; Misad, 1998, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2019; Menyhárt, 2002; Szabómihály, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Takács, 2018a, 2018b).

The present paper, partly based on my own research and partly drawing on undergraduate and master's theses supervised by me at the Department of Hungarian and written on the bilingualism of administrative offices, investigates how bilingualism is implemented in practice in municipal offices of settlements in Southern Slovakia. Empirical research for this paper was

done in the following settlements:[1] Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely, Kostolné Kračany/Egyházkarcsa, Vydrany/Hodos, Kráľovičové Kračany/Királyfiakarcsa, Zlaté Klasy/Nagymagyar, Veľký Meder/Nagymegyer, Šamorín/Somorja, Jahodná/Pozsonyeperjes (District Dunajská Streda); Jelka/Jóka (District Galanta); Gemerská Panica/Gömörpanyit, Gemer/Sajógömör, Tornaľa/Tornalja (District Rimavská Sotoba).[2]

MINORITY LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN THE STUDIED MUNICIPAL OFFICES

The linguistic investigations were carried out, in each case, with a focus on the regulations regarding the use of minority languages between members of the public and the administrative offices, specifically, in signage inside and outside the municipal offices, the language choice of oral and written communication in administration, and the language of official means of communication.

Language choice in signage

Paragraph 5, Article 2 of the law on minority language use states that if the proportion of minority population at a settlement is at least 20%, according to the latest census data, its administrative institutions mark the name of the institution at the entrance to the building also in the minority language, whereas paragraph 4 requires that administrative offices of such settlements post important information (especially health related information or information that is aimed at protecting the population) in the minority language as well.

As the first step of the empirical research, I inspected the signage outside and inside municipal offices. Signage outside was typically written information with the name of the municipal institution and office hours found on the outside wall of its building. Signage inside included information boards, notices, and nameplates on or near office doors. When inspecting signage, I paid attention to whether there were any format or content related differences between the Slovak and Hungarian parts of text in bilingual signage.

Outside signage. All the municipal buildings investigated have signage outside of them in two languages indicating the name of the administrative office that operates inside. The Hungarian designation is found next to or below the Slovak one, with the arrangement clearly indicating the subordinated relationship of the minority language also sanctioned by the language law. It appears to be a widely used practice to omit the name of the settlement either from both the Slovak and Hungarian designation of the office or from the Hungarian designation. A likely reason for this is that the relevant law does not state that the name of the settlement has to be given in the minority language, however, regulation issued by the ministry of the interior states that the minority language designation of an administrative office is to be given in the state language (cf. Fazekas and Hunčík, 2005, pp. 52–53). It seems that the studied municipalities choose to omit the name of the settlement rather than give it in the state language only, e.g.: *OBECNÝ ÚRAD – KÖZSÉGI HIVATAL* "Village Office", *MESTSKÝ ÚRAD – VÁROSI*

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[1]Throughout this paper, names of settlements are given in their official Slovak names first and traditional Hungarian names second, separated by slashes.

[2]I am grateful to Henrietta Takács, PhD student in linguistics, for her help in collecting the theses and summarizing their findings relevant for this paper.

HIVATAL "Town Office", *RADNICA – VÁROSHÁZA* "Town Hall"; *OBECNÝ ÚRAD KRÁĽOVIČOVÉ KRAČANY – KÖZSÉGI HIVATAL* "Village Office" with the name office given in these examples in Slovak first and Hungarian second, with the name of the village in the last example given in Slovak but not in Hungarian.[3] The majority language signage usually does not differ from minority language signage in font, font size, and coloring of letters, but in some cases the majority language designation is given in a separate plaque, in blue lettering against a white background, whereas the minority language designation is given in a smaller size plaque, in black lettering against a white background, *OBECNÝ ÚRAD KOSTOLNÉ KRAČANY* "Village Office, Kostolné Kračany" in Slovak, and below it *KÖZSÉGI HIVATAL* "Village Office" in Hungarian (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 24–28, 2012, pp. 45–46; Gazdíková, 2014, pp. 21–23; Hájos, 2012, pp. 31–33; Istók, 2012, pp. 23–24, 2014, pp. 36–40, 52–52; Kiss, 2015, pp. 27–29; Laihonen, 2012, p. 37; Misad, 2014, pp. 244–245, 2016, pp. 59–60, 2019, pp. 25–26) (Figs. 1 and 2).

It is often the case that the local municipality building also houses one or more other administrative offices besides the mayor's office. The names of these offices are almost always placed by the front door, done in the same lettering in both the majority and minority language, e.g. *MATRIČNÝ ÚRAD – ANYAKÖNYVI HIVATAL* "Registry office" [first in Slovak then in Hungarian]. In smaller settlements other institutions are also sometimes housed in the

Fig. 1. Outside signage, Dunajska Streda/Dunaszerdahely. (Photograph by Henrietta Takács)

Fig. 2. Outside signage, Gemerská Panica/Gömörpanyit. (Photograph by Béla Istók)

[3]The examples provided in the text are given in the form as they appeared in signage.

municipality building. On the signage indicating their names, it is often the case that the Hungarian designation is given first, and the Slovak one second, e.g. *KÖNYVTÁR – KNIŽNICA* "Library", *NYUGDÍJAS KLUB – KLUB DÔCHODCOV* "Pensioners' Club" (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 24–28, 2012, pp. 45–46; Gazdíková, 2014, pp. 21–23; Hájos, 2012, pp. 31–33; Kiss, 2015, pp. 27–29; Misad, 2014, p. 245, 2016, p. 61, 2019, p. 27).

The signage indicating the office hours of municipal offices is linguistically very varied. Most is bilingual in both the main part and the names of the days, e.g. *Stránkové dni* Sl. "Days open" – *Ügyfélfogadás* or *Félfogadás* Hu. "Opening times", *Stránkové hodiny* "Opening hours" – *Fogadási órák* or *Fogadóórák* Hu. "Opening hours", and *Pondelok – Hétfő* "Monday" [Slovak and Hungarian], *Utorok – Kedd* "Tuesday" [Slovak and Hungarian], and *Streda – Szerda* "Wednesday" [Slovak and Hungarian] etc. Sometimes, only the main part is bilingual, and the names of days are only given in Slovak, e.g. *Stránkové dni – Ügyfélfogadás/Félfogadás* "Opening times" [Slovak and Hungarian], but *Pondelok* Sl. "Monday", *Utorok* Sl. "Tuesday", and *Streda* Sl. "Wednesday" etc. There are also examples of names of days given in full in Slovak, with the Hungarian equivalents after or below them in abbreviated form, e.g. *Pondelok* Sl. "Monday" – *Hé* from Hu. *hétfő* "Monday", *Utorok* Sl. "Tuesday" – *Ke* from Hu. *kedd* "Tuesday", *Streda* Sl. "Wednesday" – *Sze* from Hu. *szerda* "Wednesday" etc. In such signage, parts of text in different languages do not differ in font, font size, or coloring of letters. The Hungarian text is often placed under rather than next to the Slovak text (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 24–28, 2012, pp. 45–46; Gazdíková, 2014, pp. 21–23; Hájos, 2012, pp. 31–33; Istók, 2012, pp. 23–24, 2014, pp. 36–40; Kiss, 2015, pp. 27–29; Misad, 1998, p. 48, 2014, pp. 245–246, 2019, p. 27).

Signage inside. Investigated signage placed inside municipality office buildings is similar in its designations of the various administrative units: it has been found to be always bilingual, with the majority language text always preceding the minority language text, e.g. *Odbor stavebný/ Stavebný odbor – Építésügyi főosztály/Építésügyi osztály/Építési szakosztály* "Building Department" [first in Slovak, then in Hungarian], *Odbor školstva/Školský odbor – Oktatásügyi főosztály/ Oktatásügyi osztály/Oktatási osztály/Iskolaügyi osztály* "Education Department" [first in Slovak, then in Hungarian], *Evidencia obyvateľstva – Lakossági nyilvántartás* "Population Registration" [first in Slovak, then in Hungarian]. Differences are to be found in the placement and formatting of the various parts of the text: Hungarian equivalents are sometimes placed next to, other times below the Slovak text, with the two occasionally being of the same font and font size, other times the Hungarian text is smaller and/or of a different font (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 31–32, 2012, pp. 50–53; Gazdíková, 2014, pp. 21–23; Hájos, 2012, pp. 31–33; Istók, 2012, pp. 23–24, 2014, pp. 36–40; Kiss, 2015, pp. 27–29; Misad, 1998, pp. 48–49, 2014, p. 246, 2019, p. 27).

There is a lot of variability in the name us of administrative staff in offices. In name plates placed on or next to the doors of offices, names of staff are usually given in a unified way, in what is usually referred to as the "Indo-European order", even when the staff member's name is officially registered as a Hungarian name, e.g. *Karol Csiba, Klára Kisová, Miroslav Pőthe, Alžbeta Szabóová, László Mezei, Piroska Horváth* etc. The municipal offices of some settlements give names registered in their Slovak form following the Indo-European order, and the names registered in their Hungarian form following the Hungarian order, e.g. *Ladislav Balódi, Katarína Kázmérová,* but *Czucz Etelka, Hodosi Erika, Szabó Mária* etc. Name plates almost always indicate the position filled by the person whose name appears on it, and in such cases the position is indicated in two languages, typically listing the Slovak designation first, e.g.

matrikárka – anyakönyvvezető "registrar" [in Slovak first, and in Hungarian second], *vedúci hospodárskej správy – gazdasági részleg vezetője* "head of economy section" [in Slovak first, and in Hungarian second], *vedúca obecnej knižnice – könyvtáros* "librarian" [in Slovak first, and in Hungarian second], *vedúca odboru – szakosztály vezetője* "head of department" [in Slovak first, and in Hungarian second] etc. Rarely but it does occur that the minority language designation is listed first, *polgármester – starosta obce* "mayor" [in Hungarian first, and in Slovak second], *referens – referentka* "clerk" [in Hungarian first, and in Slovak second], *könyvelő – účtovníčka* "bookkeeper" [in Hungarian first, and in Slovak second] (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 31–32, 2012, pp. 50–53; Gazdíková, 2014, pp. 21–23; Hájos, 2012, pp. 31–33; Istók, 2012, pp. 23–24, 2014, pp. 36–40; Kiss, 2015, pp. 27–29; Misad, 1998, p. 49, 2014, p. 246, 2019, p. 28) (Figs. 3 and 4).

Language choice in oral communication in municipal offices

Paragraph 1 of Article 2 of the law on minority language use states that, if people belonging to a minority group constitute 20% or more of the population of a settlement, the minority language can be used in official communication at the settlement. At the same time, Paragraph 1 of Article 7 of the same law requires administrative institutions and their staff to obligatorily use the state language in official communication, and the minority language can be used only as defined by this law and other laws, even though the administrative staff are not required to know the minority language according to regulations.

In this study, the focus has been primarily on language choice in oral communication between the staff of municipal offices and clients, and secondarily between members of staff.

Language choice in the communication between municipal staff and clients. In the offices under investigation, the language chosen for communication between office staff and clients is

Fig. 3. Nameplate, Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely. (Photograph by Henrietta Takács)

Fig. 4. Information board, Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely. (Photograph by Henrietta Takács)

the client's mother tongue or chosen language. In smaller settlements, municipal staff typically know everyone in the population by name, and, thus, they also know whose mother tongue is what language. When they meet a client they do not know, they typically greet them both in Slovak and Hungarian, and take the language of the response as their cue as to which language to continue in. Municipal staff follow the same strategy in larger settlements as well. No client speaking only Hungarian was ever assigned to a staff member who did not speak Hungarian at any municipal office during the entire fieldwork of the present study.

Members of the public contacting the municipal office by phone are typically greeted by staff in two languages, either with greeting expressions (Slovak *Prosím!* followed by Hungarian *Tessék!*) or with place designations like *Samospráva – Önkormányzati hivatal* "Municipal office!" [first in Slovak, then in Hungarian] or *Mestský úrad/Obecný úrad – Önkormányzati hivatal/ Városháza/Községháza* "Town Hall/Municipal office" [first in Slovak, then in Hungarian], and then choice of language is decided by the caller. Rarely, it happens that the staff member answering the call responds only in Slovak, e.g. *Mestský úrad Tornaľa* Sl. "Municipal office, Tornaľa". According to self-report, the subjects of the present study[4] respond first in Slovak, then in Hungarian even in settlements where the local majority are Hungarians, considering this order to be the one they should adhere to due to the fact that regulations regarding to the language of official communication prescribe the primacy of the Slovak language, and because they live and work in Slovakia, where the majority language is Slovak (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 22–23, 2012, pp. 56–58; Gazdíková, 2014, pp. 27–28; Istók, 2012, p. 25; Kiss, 2015, pp. 29–30; Misad, 1998, pp. 49–50, 2019, pp. 29–30; Menyhárt, 2002, pp. 37–38; Takács, 2018a, pp. 136–137, 2018b, pp. 9–10, 2019, pp. 103–104).

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[4]That is, municipal staff who assisted the researcher during the investigation.

Language choice in the communication among municipal staff. An overwhelming majority (92.7%) of the staff of the municipal offices studied professed to be native speakers of Hungarian, but those whose native language is Slovak were also bilingual without exception, who said that carrying out communication with clients in Hungarian did not constitute any problems for them. Staff members typically use both Hungarian and Slovak in communication with each other, choosing the language depending on the situation: when speaking about personal matters, native speakers of Slovak typically accommodate to the numerically dominant Hungarian speakers, asking for clarifications if they do not understand something. In cases like this, the conversation sometimes continues in Slovak, or, in a case of receptive bilingualism, sometimes all involved carry on in their own native language. Staff members communicative about official matters in both the majority and minority languages among each other, but because many minority language native speaker staff members are not familiar with administrative terminology in Hungarian, they also often choose Slovak to discuss official matters. It is also sometimes the case that staff members who are native speakers of Hungarian but who completed their primary and secondary education in schools using Slovak as the language of instruction communicate about work matters in Slovak among each other (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 29–30, 2012, pp. 56–58; Gazdíková, 2014, pp. 27–28; Istók, 2012, p. 25; Kiss, 2015, pp. 29–30; Misad, 1998, pp. 49–50, 2019, pp. 30–31; Menyhárt, 2002, pp. 37–38; Takács, 2018a, pp. 136–137, 2019, pp. 104–106).

Language choice in the meetings of city councils. Paragraph 1 of Article 3 of the law states that a local municipal body can hold its meetings in the minority language if all participants agree to do this.

In the municipalities studied the members of the city council hold their meetings typically in Hungarian, although sometimes mayors open meetings in both languages or in Slovak even when there is nobody present who speak or understand only Slovak. When an official who speaks only Slovak is present at a city council meeting, the meeting is conducted in Slovak. When open city council meetings are attended by both Hungarian and Slovak members of the local population, they are greeted in both languages, the agenda of the meeting is read out by the mayor or other member of the local government also in both, and official reports are also given in both, etc. Members of the population can address their questions or comments to the officials present in their own native language, and the officials respond in the same language. Occasionally, when an official does not speak the minority language, they request for the question or comment and the response to be translated into the majority language, and in such cases the responding member of the city council repeats both the question and the response in Slovak (cf. Csiffári, 2010, p. 30, p. 58, 2012, p. 58; Istók, 2012, p. 25; Misad, 2019, p. 31; Takács, 2019, pp. 106–108).

Language choice in the written communication of municipal offices

Paragraph 3 of Article 2 of the law on minority language use states that, in settlements where members of the minority constitute 20% or more of the local population, members of the minority group can submit their petitions addressed to the local municipal office in the minority language, which is required to respond to such petitions in both the state language and the minority language.

In studying the written communication of municipal offices, I investigated the communication of offices with the local population, other offices in their jurisdiction, as well as the language of the forms used by the municipality.

Fig. 5. Municipal webpage, Šamorín/Somorja. (Photograph by Henrietta Takács)

Language choice in the written communication between municipal offices and their clients. Members of the Hungarian minority tend to submit monolingual Slovak petitions to the local governments investigated.[5] According to the staff of self-government offices, minority clients usually believe that petitions written in the majority language enjoy priority in processing, so even clients whose Slovak proficiency is not very high prefer to ask somebody (a staff member, a family member, a neighbor or a friend) to help write their petitions in Slovak rather than write it in Hungarian.

The municipal offices under investigation respond to clients' petitions that are written in Hungarian typically in both Slovak and Hungarian. The Slovak language response usually enjoys primacy over the Hungarian one, but some offices provide the Slovak language text below the Hungarian one. Rarely, it does happen that a petition in Hungarian receives a solely Hungarian language response from the municipal office. The administrative staff included in the study believe that a bilingual response to a monolingual Hungarian petition is justified, partly because if the client is not satisfied with the action taken by the municipal office and decides to appeal to a higher self-government authority, the local self-government can defend the adequacy of the

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[5]The results of the study show that the number of Hungarian petitions increased by 8.7% in towns and only by 1.9% in villages since the law on minority language use came into effect (cf. Takács, 2019, pp. 110–111).

action with the Slovak language response, and partly because, in case of disagreement over interpretation, the state language text is regarded as legally authoritative.

According to the subjects, other written documents, which are not regarded as official (such as notices and invitations sent to members of the public etc.), are written in the language decided on by the mayor or the city council. Texts of this sort investigated as part of the present study were typically bilingual, and rarely monolingual in Hungarian (cf. Misad, 2019, pp. 31–32; Takács, 2018a, pp. 138–139, 2019, pp. 109–110).

Language choice in the written communication between municipal offices. Municipal offices use different strategies of language choice in their communications with institutions within vs. outside their jurisdiction. To institutions of the former type – e.g. preschools and primary schools using Hungarian as a language of instruction – they send bilingual letters in all cases, in accordance with the law, in which the state language text is found first, whereas they correspond typically in Hungarian with local minority cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations. According to the subjects, this is so because the correspondence between the local self-government and institutions within its jurisdiction is open to other higher authorities (such as, for instance, relevant ministries or county self-governments), whereas correspondence between them and Slovakia Hungarian cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations concerns only the corresponding parties (cf. Misad, 2019, p. 32, Takács, 2019, p. 111).

The language(s) of forms. Paragraph 6 of Article 2 of the law states that a local self-government office is to offer any forms used by them in the minority language at the request of a member of the public.

Despite these regulations, many municipal offices do not provide bilingual forms for minority clients, and most municipal staff are not familiar with sample bilingual Slovak–Hungarian texts that were prepared by the Gramma Language Office for municipal offices of Hungarian dominant settlements in Slovakia, and they do not use the bilingual sample petitions either which are electronically available for free at the website onkormanyzas.sk.[6] Most office staff that were asked as part of the data collection for the present paper were of the opinion that it is unnecessary to prepare or use bilingual forms since Hungarian native speaker clients understand Slovak forms, or if they do not (which practically does not happen), staff members assist clients in filling out state language forms (cf. Csiffári, 2010, pp. 30–31, 2012, pp. 57–58; Gazdíková, 2014, p. 28; Istók, 2012, p. 26; Kiss, 2015, pp. 30–38; Misad, 2019, pp. 32–33; Takács, 2018a, pp. 139–143, 2019, pp. 111–113).

Language choice in municipal communication

The language choice of local municipal offices in their means of communication is regulated by Articles 3 and 5 of the law on the state language (cf. The use of the state language in official communication; The use of the state language in means of mass communication, and at cultural and public events). Regulations prescribe the use of the state language in every relevant domain

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[6]The website of Pro Civis Polgári Társulás makes available 173 bilingual Slovak–Hungarian text samples at present which can assist staff of administrative offices and Hungarian native speaker clients in their minority language communication in the offices if they want to exercise their right to do so.

and allow for the use of minority languages only very rarely, in line with special regulations of laws.

Language choice in municipal webpages. All studied municipal offices have websites, 71% of which are bilingual in Slovak and Hungarian, or trilingual in Slovak, Hungarian, and English, with the rest being monolingual in Slovak. Minority language versions of websites, however, typically follow majority language versions only in their structure: identical content in the two versions was found in a single case only. Some of the studied Hungarian language websites contain only basic information: the name and history of the settlement, the name and orga-nogram of the municipal office, and information on office hours. Detailed Hungarian language information (e.g. regarding decisions concerning the population, minutes of city council meetings in the minority language etc.) was found only in about one-fifth of the municipal offices (cf. Neszméri, n.d.; Misad, 2019, p. 33; Takács, 2018a, p. 143).

Language choice in municipal newspapers. About 90% of the studied municipalities publishes a newspaper, newsletters, or other media publication. These typically monthly publications are, without exception, bilingual, containing articles written primarily in Hungarian. Only two studied publications contained an equal number of articles in Hungarian and in Slovak. Ac-cording to staff informally interviewed for this paper, articles are typically written in Hungarian and then translated into Slovak by the author, the editor, or, rarely, by a staff member whose Slovak proficiency is high. Advertisements published in these publications appear in the lan-guage requested by the advertiser (cf. Istók, 2012, p. 27, Misad, 2019, p. 34) (Fig. 5).

Language choice in municipal television. Of the studied municipal offices, two operate tele-vision stations. Both broadcast Hungarian and Slovak language news and advertisements, with the video materials being the same in the majority vs. minority language programs. In their use of Hungarian in programming, municipal offices follow Article 5 of the law on the state lan-guage in providing state language subtitling (cf. Istók, 2012, p. 28, Misad, 2019, p. 35).

Language choice in public address systems. Municipal offices of small settlements still use public address systems as a means of providing information to the population. Announcements are typically made in such systems in both languages, with the primacy of Slovak: only one studied municipal office was headed by a mayor who requests that announcements be made in Hungarian first, in view of its speakers constituting a majority locally. Information and an-nouncements read out through the public address system are typically written in Hungarian and then translated into Slovak by a staff member tasked with this. It happens only rarely that announcements are written on the basis of the state language sample texts available on the internet and then translated into Hungarian. The content of the majority vs. minority language texts is usually the same (cf. Gazdíková, 2014, p. 30; Istók, 2012, p. 27; Misad, 2019, p. 35).

CONCLUSION

The present paper has investigated the bilingualism of municipal offices of Hungarian dominant settlements in Southern Slovakia, focusing on the language choice of signage, oral and written communication between staff and clients, and of the means of communication used by the

municipal offices. The results show that bilingualism is most dominant in the oral communi-
cation between staff and clients and in outside signage and is most limited in written
communication between staff and clients. The fact that the bilingualism of the studied municipal
offices reflects only partly the proportion of minority population in the settlement is due most
likely to two main reasons. The first one is that inadequate information is provided for minority
language native speaker clients: they do not receive clear information on how and to what extent
they can use their mother tongue in official communication with the administrative offices. And
second, there is a lack of preparedness for minority language in this domain, since, due to the
several decade long Slovak monolingualism of official communications, neither municipal staff,
nor minority clients are familiar with administrative terminology, official style, and the linguistic
characteristics of text types of official communication in Hungarian.

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