

SENSE OF LOCAL IDENTITY, ATTITUDES TOWARD DIALECTS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING: THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN SERBIA

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ABSTRACT

A large body of academic literature (e.g. Fishman 1977, 1999; Giles and Johnson 1981; Romaine 2000, among others) claims that language is one of the most significant markers of ethnic identification and that it plays a crucial role not only in the external perception of an ethnic group by outsiders but also in the self-identification of an ethnic group. In a minority environment, sense of ethnic identity and language retention are connected very tightly, which is why it is of extreme importance to study attitudes towards the dialects of a language and value judgments about them. The paper presents the results of a research into attitudes toward dialects, conducted with approximately three hundred 5th and 8th grade pupils (age 12 and 15, respectively) attending school in Hungarian in two regions of Vojvodina, Serbia. It explores the subjects' local features of identity, given that the research was conducted in eight different localities. The results of the research serve as a sound basis for developing use-centered, functional-situational mother tongue education of Hungarian minority pupils living in Serbia, since the current curriculum completely disregards the language varieties of many Hungarian minority pupils brought up and living in rural areas, who acquire and use the dialect spoken in the family.

KEYWORDS: Dialect; identity; minority; language teaching.

1. Identity, local identity, language ideologies and language attitudes¹

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Every culture has its own unique patterns of behaviour (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Giles and Johnson 1981; Hofstede 1991, Avruch 1998, Ferraro 1998). It is these patterns of behaviour, roles that we acquire in the course of socialization via social interaction and that we subsequently apply to determine our own social role and the social role of others, to understand and to formulate our self-concept (Bartha 1999: 62). Or as Davies and Harré (1999: 37) formulate it, “identity is about the constant and ongoing positioning of individuals in interactions with others”. An individual’s sense of identity comprises their view of themselves in comparison with others and the opinion they believe other people may have about them (Greenfield 2009). Thus, our sense of identity, our self-concept develops in the course of socialization by acquiring the language, the custom, the traditions, the repertoire of social roles, attitudes and norms of the community we live in and belong to, or would like to belong to (Kovács Rác 2012b: 36–37, cf. Hofstede 1991, Spencer-Oatey 2012).

The sense of national identity manifests primarily in one’s adherence to cultural patterns, coupled by a high emotional load (cf. Gereben 1999: 77–78, Schmidt 2008). This enables the individual to categorize oneself into a group, to experience belonging to a group, to identify oneself with members of the group (Híres-László 2011: 281). However, individuals often participate in multiple, overlapping, sometimes even conflicting communities. Various interactions require the representation of the self in different modes, the contextual and situational factors determine which identity should be performed in a particular moment and place (Gábrity 2012: 627). In a minority setting, the process of identity construction is much more complex since the minority ethnic group is also faced with the majority group’s features of identity, as well as the difference between the two ethnic groups’ cultures and identities. This is why in the case of minority language communities, establishing and preserving national identity is of paramount importance and why it can be considered a shaping force (Kovács Rác 2012b: 37).

Gumperz (1986) points out that language use should be studied in its social use since language occurs in socially defined circumstances. Language use is inseparable from the social, political, moral and economic ideas attached to languages (or varieties) used in a community. Multilingual communities represent an even more complex environment than monolingual ones since individuals have to assume multiple and shifting identities. Community members continuously need to negotiate and renegotiate their membership to certain communities, and their choice of language also participates in the constitution and negotiation of identity (Bustamente-López 2008).

Multiple identities are indexed through the use of different linguistic varieties, styles or even different languages (Mendoza-Denton 2003). Since the language or language variety acquired in childhood and the positive attitude toward it are the defining factors of identity, language and attitudes toward it may also be considered to play an important role in preserving identity (Hires-Laszló 2011: 280).

One further concept that needs to be defined is language ideologies. Silverstein (1979) gives the following working definition of language ideologies: “any set[s] of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979: 193). For Rumsey (1990: 346), these are “shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world”, whereas Irvine and Gal (2000: 35) define them as “the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them”. Similarly, Gal (2002: 197) understands language ideologies as “culturally specific notions which participants and observers bring to language, the ideas they have about what language is good for, what linguistic differences mean about the speakers who use them, why there are linguistic differences at all”. In other words, language ideologies “are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices, just as pervaded with political and moral interests as other ideologies and shaped in a cultural setting” (Irvine 2012; cf. also Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; Woolard 1998; Gal 1998, 2006 a–b; Blommaert 2006). Language ideologies are thus studied in order to reveal how speakers’ beliefs and feelings about language are constructed from their experience as social actors in a political economic system, and how speakers’ often-partial awareness of the form and function of their semiotic resources is critically important (Kroskrity 2016). In this way, we also gain a clearer picture of social relations within a community, into the processes of power construction, maintenance and reproduction (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; Irvine and Gal 2000; Lanstyák 2009). As can be concluded on the basis of this passage and as pointed out by Sallabank (2013), language ideologies have been described and (re)defined numerous times and may be defined very broadly as ideas about language and about how communication works as a social process (Woolard 1998: 3), as socioculturally motivated ideas, perceptions and expectations of language, manifested in all sorts of language use (Blommaert 1999: 1) or simply as ideas which people just happen to have (Blommaert 1999: 10). Steger (2003: 93) claims that an ideology can be defined as a system of widely shared ideas, patterned beliefs, guiding norms

and values, and ideals accepted as truth by a particular group of people (Sallabank 2013: 75).

The study of language ideologies among Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin has recently gained a lot of ground (Gal 2002, 2008, 2016; Laihonon 2009; 2010, 2011; Lanstyák 2009, 2010, 2011). So much so that language ideologies and language attitudes were the topics that received most attention at the 16th Hungarian Sociolinguistics Conference (cf. Hires-László 2011), the quadrennial conference which brings together Hungarian sociolinguists. In the Hungarian literature, linguistic ideologies are understood as “(a system of) thoughts whose purpose is to explain and verify facts regarding the functioning of a language, the relations holding between languages or language varieties, linguistic differences, and differences between speakers. In a broader sense, any language-related set of beliefs can be considered as language ideologies” (Jánk 2014; cf. Gábrity 2013).

Unlike the term “language ideology”, which comes out of the tradition of linguistic anthropology, the term “language attitudes” is from sociolinguistics. It refers to a speaker’s subjective opinion held about a particular language or dialect, which reflects their language preference and their positive or negative opinions about the language or language variety (Kiss 1995: 135). Language attitudes can thus be defined as “any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reaction toward different language varieties or speakers” (Ryan and Giles 1982: 7). Garrett et al. (2003: 12, as cited in Sallabank 2013) argue that attitudes to language underpin all manner of sociolinguistic and social psychological phenomena: for example, the group stereotypes by which we judge other individuals, how we position ourselves within social groups, how we relate to individuals and groups other than our own. Language attitudes have been proven a key factor in language maintenance (Baker 1992) and ethnolinguistic vitality (Williamson 1991). Minority groups may adopt a language attitude about their own language, the majority language, cultural pluralism, bilingualism, linguistic purism (Borbély 2001: 30), but also about the language varieties of the mother tongue (Kovács Rác 2011b: 11). The language preference and the value judgements of an individual are also influenced by the degree of prestige attached to a particular language or language variety, its status. If the minority language is accorded with a certain level of prestige, attitudes toward it as the mother tongue will also be favourable. The same holds true of attitudes toward language varieties and the prestige particular language varieties may enjoy (Kovács Rác 2012b: 41).

In a minority, i.e. bilingual setting, identity goes hand in hand with the willingness to retain the mother tongue. Majority language proficiency is essential for successful intercultural communication with the majority nationals and with people from other ethnic groups in the majority culture. However, parents' attitudes towards the minority mother tongue survival, the language of communication among family members, and language of the media for children are some of the factors that are associated with minority language survival – and even these often fail to guarantee the survival of a minority language. The results of research conducted by Rancz (2011) point to significant changes in issues relating to the identity of the Hungarian ethnic minority in today's modern information society. Namely, the identity, language use and language attitudes of the minority language community she studied have a dual nature. On the one hand, the researcher witnessed a strong sense of identity in the language community she studied, which was accompanied by the need to keep, safeguard and salvage their language variety and also by a positive attitude toward it. On the other hand, however, she also found that the young generation was locally rootless and tended to identify with other values, as a consequence of which Rancz (2011) also notes a change in their attitude toward their language variety. Such a conclusion is also supported by recent research into the attitudes of secondary school pupils in Vojvodina, who have shown a change of attitudes toward their language variety, which has resulted in a significant loss of dialect (cf. Rajsli 2004).

Language ideologies and attitudes are clearly interrelated and their definitions are often overlapping (cf. Baker 1992). Baker (1992: 14) notes that the difference between ideology and attitude is partly about different traditions of research, theory and expression, particularly between sociology and social psychology. However, Austin and Sallabank (2014: 5) note that ideologies and beliefs can be seen as points on a continuum (though there seems to be no consensus as to where each comes, or what constitutes the continuum) or as manifestations of overall predispositions. Beliefs are often treated as overt manifestations of implicit ideologies, or as the stated articulation of a (perhaps partial) recognition of an underlying ideology.

2. The linguistic constellation of Hungarian

In this section, we give a brief overview of historical and sociolinguistic issues related to Hungarian. For a millennium prior to World War I, since the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin (the area surrounded by the

Alps and the Carpathian mountains), historical Hungary extended over the entire central Danubian Basin, with a largely multilingual and multiethnic population. Following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Peace Treaty of Trianon in 1920, Hungary lost a large portion of its territory to neighbouring countries including Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Austria (Kontra 2006: 1811). As a consequence, millions of Hungarians found themselves outside of the political borders of Hungary and have been living in bilingual or multilingual settings ever since. Their language use and the growing sociolinguistic and linguistic effects of bilingualism were never studied empirically, or even merely systematically until the fall of communism since under the four decades of communism after World War II the study or sometimes even the mention of Hungarian minorities was taboo. In the years since the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, sociolinguistic and linguistic information about Hungarians outside Hungary has become increasingly more available (Fenyvesi 2005; Csernicskó and Fenyvesi 2012: 1–2).

Regarding the sociolinguistic issues of Hungarian, Lanstyák (1995, as cited in Kontra 2006) has demonstrated that Hungarian is a pluricentric language, with its dominant centre in Hungary and at least four other important centres in Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia. Ethnic Hungarians who live in these four countries (as well as in Croatia, Slovenia and Austria) “are autochthonous inhabitants of the region” (Marác 2016).

Kontra (2006) points out that the Hungarian language community in Hungary is rather normatively oriented and there is a rather strong tradition of stigmatizing nonstandard dialects and of glorifying standard Hungarian as codified by *purists*. “Standard (literary) Hungarian is held up as the ideal variety to use in nearly all speech situations by hopefully all members of the nation, and nonstandard varieties are regarded as a form of careless and/or uneducated speech which may hinder mutual intelligibility” (Kontra 2006: 1812). There are several important differences between the standard variety and the dialects of Hungarian. Gal (2008) stresses that the dialects of Hungarian are geographically conditioned, whereas the spoken and written standard variety² is the common language of the whole Hungarian linguistic

² As Auer (2005) stresses, much like elsewhere in Europe, the emerging spoken standard differs from the written standard, sometimes considerably since structures which may be possible in writing/reading do not always survive such a transfer to orality (e.g. in syntax). Once the written standard is established, it quickly becomes more conservative than the spoken standard due to the fact that literacy and codification restrict the amount and the speed of innovations in

community (cf. A. Jászó 2004: 54). Standard Hungarian has both a written and a spoken variety, while the dialects mostly exist only in a spoken form. In formal speech situations, the standard variety of Hungarian is used mostly (but not exclusively), whereas in informal situations, speakers of the Hungarian community use dialects and the regional standard variety of the language alike. The regional standard variety of Hungarian is a (mostly) spoken variety, a version of the standard variety enriched by dialectal elements, reflecting a rather sophisticated use of language. Its written form contains dialectal elements. This is the language variety which members of the Hungarian minority living in the Carpathian Basin use in formal situations (cf. Wacha 1991: 138). Hungarians living beyond the borders of the motherland mainly use their native tongue in familial situations only, since in more formal situations the language of the majority is used (Serbian in the case of Vojvodina). In practice, this means that the Hungarian minority living in the Carpathian Basin has fewer and fewer opportunities to use standard Hungarian. In familial situations, it is mostly the dialect acquired in childhood that is used, less frequently the regional standard. The use of the dialect in informal/familial situations is further encouraged by the fact that the Hungarian minority in the Carpathian Basin mostly lives in rural areas and the dialect is the variety used most frequently in such areas in various informal communication situations but very often in formal situations, too. The acquisition of the standard, on the other hand, largely happens in an institutional setting. Most native Hungarian children are exposed to standard Hungarian only once they start school. The Hungarian-language media only partly convey to them the standard variety given that both the media from Hungary and the local (Vojvodinian) media in Hungarian abound in slang elements.

In other words, the primary variety of the mother tongue children in Vojvodina are exposed to is not standard Hungarian but the variety used in their immediate environment (which, in turn, depends on the expectations the environment has of the child, cf. Kovács Rác 2011a–b). Standard Hungarian is however the prestige variety of the language, its command and use provides access to high positions in the workforce and social mobility, it suggests the entailment of prestige, high level of education and high social status and its use triggers positive social and economic evaluations of its speakers (cf. Kovács Rác 2011b; Milroy 2001). The standard variety is also codified by a complex set of linguistic norms, which prescribe the correct use of both writ-

the written standard. The spoken standard will develop much faster, particularly when it is closely related to the vernacular of a certain region (for Hungarian, cf. Kontra 1994).

ten and spoken language. Printed materials are published in the standard variety, and it is standard Hungarian that is taught at schools in the Carpathian Basin. It is also the variety of Hungarian typically and most frequently used in public communication (cf. Kovács Rác 2011b). Thus, the prevalence of the standard variety is determined by social factors (cf. Kiss 1995: 58–85). On the other hand, the various (nonstandard) dialects of Hungarian enjoy a covert prestige among the members of the Hungarian linguistic community, even though most of them are stigmatized since they are associated with rural, uneducated use of language (cf. Kiss 1995).

3. Attitudes toward language dialects among Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin

Hungarians living as an ethnic minority in the Carpathian Basin acquire in their childhood a dialect, i.e. a regional variety of the language. This regional variety of Hungarian is the variety they know best and use commonly in everyday situations. Given that the official language of the state (the majority language) is used in all formal situations, the use of Hungarian in such a minority setting reduces to communication among family members (Kovács Rác 2011a–b), as a consequence of which the dialect becomes the dominant variety used in native language communication (Kiss 2001: 194). This is the reason why in the case of Hungarian speakers living in a minority setting, attitudes toward the mother tongue are in effect attitudes toward a dialect of the mother tongue. Thus, a positive attitude toward the dialect may play a crucial role in mother tongue retention (cf. Kiss 2001: 251–252; Péntek 2003: 33; Kovács Rác 2014d: 100; Kovács Rác 2015: 119), despite the fact that a mostly negative attitude toward their dialects has recently been found to prevail among Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin (Kiss 1995: 137; Szabó 2010: 295; Kovács Rác 2012a: 27).

Regarding the opinions and attitudes Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin have had toward their dialects, the following four periods may be distinguished:

- (a) At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century though there were people who spoke the standard variety even in rural areas and literary Hungarian started being taught at schools, speakers of dialects did not pay a lot of attention to this and did not acquire either the standard variety or the literary language.

- (b) The period between the two World Wars is characterised by a conflict between speakers of various dialects of Hungarian and speakers of standard Hungarian. This conflict was rather bitter until the late 20th century but has largely been resolved by now, though signs of it can still be seen occasionally. Namely, the 20th century is the period when attitudes toward the language varieties spoken in the cities and in the countryside became sharply contrasted among Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin, since the standard variety came to be the dominant variety among the urban population, who dismissed the rural dialects. Speakers of rural dialects, on the other hand, identified standard Hungarian with the immoral lifestyle of urban areas.
 - (c) The third period in the development of attitudes toward dialects of Hungarian spans the fifth decade of the 20th century when, as a result of the communist ideology, the Hungarian peasantry lost their lands and with it their social status and prestige. Former farmers migrated to the cities, where they made an effort to learn standard Hungarian since their dialects were treated with contempt. Thus, it was in this period that the dialects were significantly suppressed by the standard variety.
 - (d) Since the 1990s a more favourable attitude towards dialects has prevailed among the Hungarian population in the Carpathian Basin. In addition to their own regional language variety, the members of the Hungarian language community have also mastered standard Hungarian and have learnt to use the language variety appropriate to a given situation.
4. The relationship between attitudes toward dialects and sense of local identity in the Hungarian-speaking community and among elementary school pupils

The native village or native town is the key factor determining one's sense of identity. Local attachment is the feeling of being attached to the town or village where one was born (Híres-László 2011: 283). As Kiss (1996: 138–151) claims, native residents of a town or village are most likely to hold a positive attitude toward their dialects. Previous research (Bindorffer 2007; Gábrity Molnár 2008; Lazar and Marinković 2003; Gábrity 2013) has also shown that Hungarians living in countries other than Hungary tend to identify with their motherland and their birthplace or the settlement they lived in for an ex-

tended period of time, therefore Hungarians living in a minority setting have a sense of local identity (Sándor 2001: 87–95; Danczi 2009: 71–80; Lakatos 2005: 97–104; Lakatos 2011: 274–279; Lukács 2007: 85; Kovács Rác 2014c: 38–40). At the same time, this sense of local identity also represents detachment from the majority ethnicity, motivated by a specific, additional feature it may have (Murányi-Szoboszlai 2000: 30).

The sense of local identity of Hungarians living in Vojvodina, Serbia is evidenced by the fact that previous research participants (Mirnics and Nacsá 2011; Badis 2008; Gábrity Molnár 2008) identified themselves as Vojvodinian Hungarians and also by the fact that they primarily identified with the world of their town or village, its language, the customs that represent a part of their everyday life and their physical environment. A noticeable change has taken place lately in the sense of identity of Vojvodinian Hungarians in that, compared to the previous decades, they have adopted a much more favourable attitude toward their cultural assets, especially their mother tongue, which points to the sharpening of their sense of national and cultural belonging (Gábrity Molnár 2008).

In light of the above mentioned issues, the present paper reports on a research project the aim of which was to explore the attitudes toward dialects among 5th and 8th grade Hungarian pupils in Vojvodina, Serbia. To the best of our knowledge, there have so far been no similar studies conducted with elementary school pupils. The strong relationship holding between language and local identity served as the starting point of the research. Another fact the research also relied heavily on is that speakers of various dialects attend school in Hungarian, but their mother tongue education is subtractive in nature because the pupils are exposed to the standard variety and the literary variety of the language only (cf. Beregszászi 2012: 15) and yet they do not acquire either variety by the time they leave school. As a result of this, pupils only have limited competence in the given codes, which in practice amounts to their inability to distinguish between spoken dialects of Hungarian and the spoken or written standard variety given that they fail to acquire the latter in the course of their education. Thus, within everyday conversation, they constantly alternate between a dialect of Hungarian and the standard variety and the majority cannot switch codes either in formal or informal contexts of interaction (Rajšli 2004; Rajšli 2011).

In addition to studying speakers' attitudes to dialects, the present research also examines other attitudes which may influence the use of a dialect, including the prestige a particular dialect may (be felt to) enjoy, its covert prestige or stigmatization (Kovács Rác 2012c, 2014b). All these may have a

profound influence on one's sense of identity. Previous research conducted with adult speakers of Hungarian (Kovács Rácz 2011b) has established that the local variety spoken in certain settlements meets the communication needs of its speakers. What is more, the community is (only) familiar with the local, predominantly dialectal variety of the language and expects the communication to take place in this variety. Its speakers see the variety they use as a linguistic asset, their dialect marks their local identity, i.e. their sense of belonging to the community (Kovács Rácz 2011b: 47–119, 2012b: 38). Since, as pointed out above, the dialect is the primary variety of the mother tongue for both Hungarian-speaking adults in Vojvodina and the overwhelming majority of children, this is the variety they identify with, the variety others identify them with and the variety they use most often. A dialect is, thus, a symbol of a community's sense of belonging and of the sense of local identity (Kiss 2001: 47; Kovács Rácz 2011a: 106–107, 2012b: 39–40, 2014a: 47). This is the reason why we found it important to explore not only how attitudes toward dialects relate to the informants' place of residence but also whether the children who participated in the research have had any negative experience due to their dialects and whether they have been exposed to negative attitudes or stigmatization of their dialects.

Among the members of the Hungarian ethnic minority living in the Carpathian Basin the weakening of attitudes toward the mother tongue equals the weakening of the sense of identity and boosts the assimilation process. Due to this, we find it extremely important to address the above mentioned issues of prestige and stigmatization in the context of Hungarian dialects spoken in Vojvodina.

5. Teaching Hungarian as the mother tongue in the context of the Hungarian ethnic minority living in the Carpathian Basin

Due to the fact that Hungarians living as an ethnic minority in the Carpathian Basin speak a regional variety of Hungarian (Kovács Rácz 2012b), it is of paramount importance to develop an educational strategy that takes into consideration the spoken dialects of the language and supports the use of Hungarian in cross-border communities, on all levels of communication (Kovács Rácz 2012a: 30). Speakers of dialects and regional varieties should be encouraged to use their mother tongue. Unfortunately, the Hungarian ethnic minority still receives a grammar-centred education in literary Hungarian or in the standard variety, which completely disregards the real use of language

(cf. Beregszászi 2012; Kovács Rác 2012a). This approach to education has proven ineffective since it fails to equip pupils with the knowledge needed to recognize the features of their regional language varieties. Furthermore, such an approach investigates language phenomena in comparison with the norms of the standard variety and disregards the fact that by the time they start school, Hungarian speaking children have already acquired a dialect as their mother tongue. This (spoken) dialect is often stigmatized by educators, it is judged incorrect and its use is considered to be a sign of lack of education. This is the reason why we deem it necessary to rethink the methods and approaches to teaching Hungarian as a mother tongue in a minority context by switching from such a subtractive approach to an additive approach. We find this latter approach much more appropriate since it takes into account linguistic diversity, it provides pupils with linguistic knowledge that they can effectively apply in everyday situations and puts emphasis on communication rather than on grammar (Beregszászi 2012; Kovács Rác 2012a, et seq.).

In order to develop an effective method to aid mother tongue retention it is necessary to first gain a comprehensive picture of the current situation. To this end, in addition to exploring and describing the regional varieties of Hungarian, it is also necessary to conduct research into speakers' attitudes toward the dialects of Hungarian spoken in the Carpathian Basin. Based on this research and building on it we can develop an efficient strategy for teaching the mother tongue, which will result in functional-situational bilingualism. Schoolteachers should "foster the pupils' awareness of their dialect, should point out the functional differences between the dialect acquired in the family and the norm of the educated standard variety and raise the pupils' awareness of achieving functional-situational bilingualism" (Lukács 2009: 337; Kovács Rác 2014b: 280). As Trudgill (1975) notes, numerous examples from various parts of Europe prove that institutional education can successfully combine regional varieties of a language with the standard variety and the literary variety (cf. also the educational strategies of Germans in Switzerland in Sieber and Sitta 1986, 1994; Szabó 2000, 2003, 2004, 2010; see also Andersson 2000 for Swedish; Omdal 2000 for Norwegian, et seq.).

6. Research methodology

In this paper, we present those parts of a larger research into language attitudes which might prove to be a useful starting point for developing an additive curriculum for Hungarian as the mother tongue in Vojvodina. In relation

to 5th and 8th grade pupils studying in Hungarian in Vojvodina, the survey included questions concerning (a) the conceptual features of a dialect; (b) how they feel about their own spoken dialect; (c) whether they have been stigmatized due to their spoken dialect. In addition to this, the possible prestige or covert prestige of particular dialects is also addressed. All the questions in the survey concern the place of residence of our informants, therefore focus is always on the relation holding between local identity and dialect.

The research method used in this study was a survey and the research instrument was a questionnaire in Hungarian. The research was conducted in several primary schools in Vojvodina, administered in written form during one regular school class (45 minutes). The participants in this research were 290 Hungarian-speaking 5th and 8th grade pupils who live in Vojvodina. Even though the type of questionnaire used in this research is relatively easy to administer, the number of participants was strictly limited by the initial permission secured from officials at the schools where the research was conducted. Several reasons governed our choice of 5th and 8th grade pupils as research participants (rather than adults or children of other ages). Firstly, the language attitudes of these two age groups so far remain unexplored among Hungarian pupils in Vojvodina. Secondly, we wanted to find out to what extent children of these two age groups have developed awareness of (aspects of) their attitudes toward the variety of Hungarian they use. Thirdly, we expected to see a larger difference between the responses of these two age groups than, for example, between the responses of pupils of two consecutive grades.

Since our aim was to explore the language attitudes of 12 and 15-year old pupils, the questions in the survey were closed-ended. Previous research into language attitudes (Kovács Rác 2011b; 2012a) has shown that pupils' responses to open-ended questions are often incomplete, they find it much more strenuous to provide an answer to such questions, and furthermore, even adult research participants are often reluctant to word their opinions. Developing awareness of one's dialect and of one's attitudes toward it is a very complex task for schoolchildren given that the surveyed age groups have never dealt with issues relating to language attitudes. They are so used to their own vernacular variety of Hungarian that they are completely unaware of its properties. On the other hand, it is only in 8th grade that pupils are formally but very briefly and superficially introduced to the varieties of

Hungarian. These facts also justify the choice of closed-ended questions for the survey rather than open-ended ones.

For some of the questions in the questionnaire, a list of several possible mutually non-exclusive answers is given. The choice of the questions and the options listed is the result of careful consideration and it has been validated during a pilot study, in which similar open-ended questions were asked. In view of the vernacular of Hungarian used in Vojvodina, we find it extremely important to stress that the options listed for each of these questions are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary and that they are all based on the results of the pilot study (we did not find it justified to exclude any of the frequently occurring responses provided by the research participants in the pilot study). However, the fact that the participants in this study were allowed to circle more than one of the answers listed (which was clearly indicated in the questionnaire for questions Q1–3) did affect the total number of responses for each of these questions, making it larger than the actual number of participants ($N=290$). Yet, it was not possible to test more than one language attitude within a question, as the pilot study has shown that not every participant circled more than one of the options listed. In addition to the aforementioned type of closed-ended questions, the survey also includes two questions in which the answers listed are mutually exclusive and so the participants could only circle one of the options provided (Q4–5).

Contrary to our initial expectations, no difference was noted between the responses of the two age groups of research participants, therefore the results of the research are given in sum (with no reference to the age of the participants). The analysis of the data is presented in the following way: we first give the question and the list of possible answers (as printed in the questionnaire). This is followed by a tabular presentation of the number of responses obtained for each option. Next, on the basis of the total number of responses, a pie chart is used to show the percentile distribution of the responses (the number of which is occasionally larger than the total number of research participants, as pointed out above), after which the results are interpreted and discussed.

The issues reported on in this paper form part of a larger study aimed at exploring attitudes towards dialects of Hungarian in Vojvodina. There remain numerous interesting issues which due to space limitations cannot be addressed in this paper.

7. Results and discussion

7.1. How Hungarian-speaking elementary school pupils describe and define dialects

In Q1, the respondents were asked to express their opinion regarding the conceptual features of the dialect used in their place of residence by circling the statements that best describe it. Characteristic tokens were added in some cases to ensure that the participants fully understand the options listed. The closed-ended question offered the following four options:

Q1. *In your opinion, what are the features of the dialect of Hungarian used in the town or village where you live? Please circle the response(s) you agree with.*

- (a) The dialect is the language pupils use to read and write at school. Such words are e.g. *zöld* ‘green’, *szőlő* ‘grapes’, *kell* ‘need’, *szappan* ‘soap’, *föld* ‘ground, soil’, *gyom* ‘weed’.
- (b) The dialect is the language nearly everybody speaks in the settlement, the language we learnt from our parents or grandparents. We do not read or write in this language, we only use it in speaking, e.g. *zöld*, *szöllő*, *köll*, *szappany*, *föld*, *paré*, et seq.³
- (c) The dialect is the language we know best and like most because we are used to it and the language we use most often.
- (e) The dialect of my place of residence differs from the Hungarian spoken in other towns or villages.

Since the respondents were free to choose more than one answer (as pointed out in Section 6), the total number of responses is larger than the number of respondents and is distributed as shown in Table 1 below:

³ The lexemes listed here are regional/dialectal varieties of the lexemes listed above in (a).

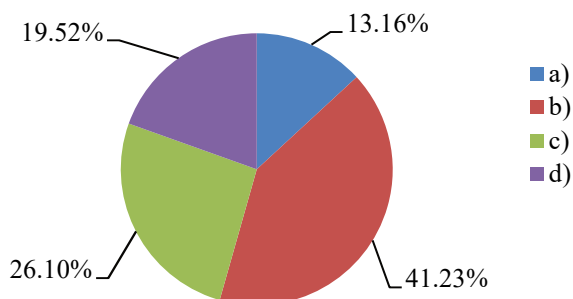


Figure 1. Respondents' opinions concerning the dialect of their place of residence (total sample). (Colour online.)

Table 1. The distribution of responses regarding the respondents' opinions of the dialect of their place of residence.

Options	a)	b)	c)	d)	Total
Number of responses	60	188	119	89	456

Response (b) was the one that was most often opted for by the research participants (41.23%), i.e. that the dialect is the language nearly everybody speaks in the settlement, the language they learnt from their parents or grandparents. The next most frequently occurring response was (c), i.e. that the participants knew and liked their dialect most because that is the variety they are used to and that they use most frequently. Option (d), that differences can be noted between the dialects of different settlements, was circled on 19.52% of the questionnaires, while the least frequently chosen option was (a), in only 13.16% of the cases.

The results obtained were rather surprising, especially the high percentage of (a) responses, since this sentence provides the wrong characterization of dialects. The lexemes from the standard variety, listed under (a) were meant to reveal this. However, a total of 13.16% of the respondents nevertheless (also) chose this option.

7.2. Place of residence and attitude toward dialects among Hungarian-speaking elementary school pupils in a minority context

As mentioned above, in the present research we explored the relationship holding between attitudes toward dialects and local identity relative to the respondents' place of residence, since these factors represent key aspects of the identity of Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin. The question aimed at exploring this addressed the respondents' attitudes toward the frequency of usage of their dialect as well as the extent to which others' opinions influence the respondents' attitudes. Once again, the list of options is based on the responses of participants obtained in the pilot study (including the response *I am not interested in dialects* listed under (c) below). The closed-ended question offered the following options:

Q2. *What is your opinion of the dialect of Hungarian used in your place of residence? Please circle the response(s) you agree with.*

- (a) I like it very much, I do not feel embarrassed by it and use it often in public.
- (b) I like it but I do not use it often because I think that I might be judged.
- (c) I am not interested in dialects.
- (d) I don't know, I haven't thought about this.
- (e) Other opinion.

Table 2. The distribution of responses
regarding the respondents' opinions concerning their dialects.

Options	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	No response	Total
Number of responses	152	31	44	51	21	1	300

The total number of responses obtained for this question is 300, which suggests that the overwhelming majority of respondents circled only one of the options offered. The response that recurred most often in the questionnaire in

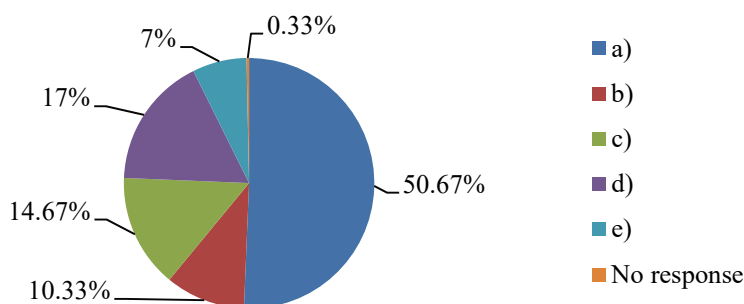


Figure 2. Respondents' opinions concerning their dialects (total sample).
(Colour online.)

answer to this question was (a) (50.67% of the total responses), therefore we may conclude that approximately half of the respondents claimed to like the dialect spoken in their place of residence, not to feel embarrassed by it and to use it often in public. Another 17% of the total responses indicated that the pupils who took part in this survey had not thought about this issue. As many as 14.67% of the responses suggested that the respondents were not interested in dialects. Adding up the percentages of the latter two answers, we arrive at the proportion of nearly one third of the responses (31.67%) showing an indifferent attitude of the research participants toward this topic. Only 10.33% of the pupils (also) stated that they liked their dialect but used it rarely due to fear of being judged. Such an attitude conveys the covert prestige of the dialect. One of the respondents provided no answer to this question, which accounts for 0.33% of the total sample. Response (e) was opted for in 7% of the questionnaires, i.e. a relatively small number of respondents had a different opinion about their dialect from the ones listed in options (a)–(d).

7.3. The relationship between spoken language and local identity in the opinion of Hungarian pupils in Vojvodina

Regarding the issue of local identity, in addition to the above mentioned, the survey also contained a question in which attachment to one's birthplace and what one is used to was associated with the spoken nature of the dialect.

Once again, the options listed were based on the responses received in the pilot study conducted earlier. We hoped that by listing the various options we would make it easier for the research participants to express their opinions. The respondents could choose more than one of the three options listed below the following closed-ended question:

Q3. *When we speak in our dialect we do so because... (Please circle the response(s) you agree with.)*

- (a) in this way we express our love for the town or village where we live.
- (b) we are used to the dialect.
- (c) I do not use the dialect.

An anonymous reviewer of the paper wonders how option (c) is relevant to the above question and whether the option to select more than one of three answers to this question might devalue the results. We feel that this is not the case because *I do not use the dialect* is an answer that occurred rather frequently among the answers obtained in the pilot research. What is more, we feel that it should also be taken into consideration that Hungarian pupils in Vojvodina who attend school with Hungarian as the language of instruction and who live in rural areas get used to the dialect spoken in their place of residence to such an extent that they fail to recognize that it is a dialect since everyone in their town or village speaks this regional variety. Thus, in most cases, such pupils are completely unaware of the fact that they speak the local dialect.

Similarly to Q1–2, since the respondents were free to choose more than one answer, the total number of responses does not correspond to the number of respondents and is distributed as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The distribution of responses regarding the relationship between spoken language and local identity.

Options	a)	b)	c)	No response	Total
Number of responses	67	200	32	1	300

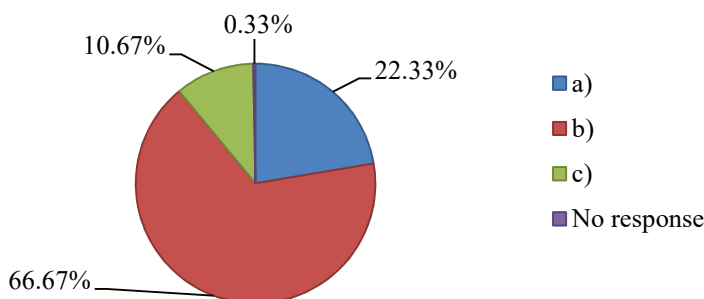


Figure 3. The relationship between spoken language and local identity (total sample). (Colour online.)

Approximately two thirds of the respondents (66.67% of the responses, the total number of which is almost the same as the number of research participants) claimed to use their dialect because that is the language variety they are used to. Another 22.33% of the responses suggested that speaking in their dialect was a sign of the respondents' love for the town or village where they live. Response (c) had a low frequency (10.67%), indicating that there were rather few pupils who do not use (speak) their dialect. However, this result is rather subjective, similarly to the above results. Namely, sociolinguistic research (Sándor 2001; Rajsli 2004; Lakatos 2005; Lukács 2007; Danczi 2009; Kovács Rácz 2015) points to the conclusion that the percentage of Hungarian-minority pupils who live in the Carpathian Basin and do not speak the dialect typical of the region is insignificant (if there are such pupils at all). Such a conclusion is also supported by interviews conducted with university students, Hungarian students' bachelor's degree papers, as well as the literature in the field of sociolinguistics (Lanstyák 1995, 1998), according to which ethnic minority Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin are more inclined towards the regional varieties than the standard variety of their mother tongue, since they only occasionally use the latter. In addition, the standard variety also shows the effects of language contact (Kiss 1995: 194, 2001: 193–195) with several Slavic languages, which is why Hungarian is often considered a polycentric language (Lanstyák 1995). The frequency of use of a regional variety (which is always based on a dialect) is explained by the use of a minority language within the family and its limited use in public places and in formal speech (Lanstyák 1998; Beregszászi 2012).

Options	Attractive	Unattractive	No response	Total
Number of responses	224	64	2	290

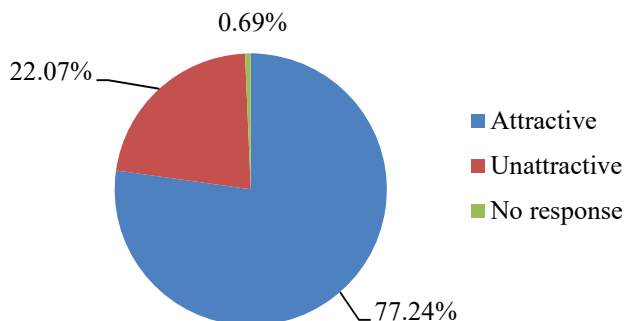


Figure 4. Respondents' value judgement of the dialect spoken in their place of residence (total sample). (Colour online.)

As the above figure illustrates, as many as 77.24% of the respondents consider the dialect spoken in their place of residence attractive, whereas 22.07% of them claimed that they found it unattractive.

7.5. Others' negative value judgements about a dialect

In addition to the points discussed above, the survey used in this research to explore value judgements of dialects also contained a novel aspect. Namely, one of the criteria Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) uses to define the mother tongue (which extends in this study to the definition of a variety, i.e. a dialect) is attitudes. This basically refers not only to the language the person identifies oneself with but also the language that other people identify the person with, as well as their value judgements about that language or dialect (Kovács Rácz 2011b). If their attitude is negative, this means that they consider the dialect stigmatized.

Previous research (cf. Kontra 2006 and references cited therein) has shown that the various dialectal varieties of Hungarian used throughout the Carpathian Basin were stigmatized until very recently. This is the reason why we were interested in learning whether the research participants had experienced being stigmatized due to the variety of Hungarian they speak. The closed-ended question used to explore this issue and the two mutually exclu-

sive options offered (based on the results obtained in the pilot research) are listed below.

Q5. *Have you ever been laughed at, commented upon or criticized because of your dialect or use of language?*

(a) Yes (b) No

Table 5. The distribution of responses regarding respondents' negative attitudes toward their dialects.

Options	Yes	No	No response	Total
Number of responses	108	180	2	290

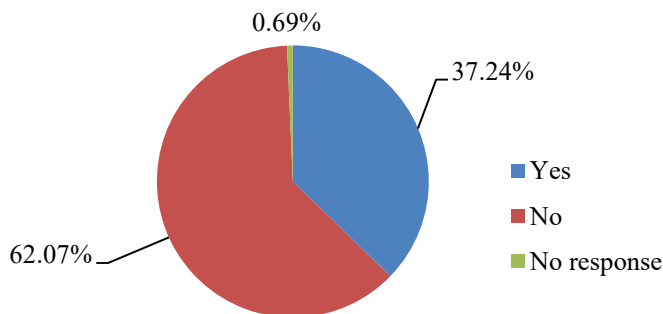


Figure 5. Negative attitudes toward dialects (total sample). (Colour online.)

A total of 37.24% of the respondents reported having been stigmatized in some way because of their dialect or use of language. In spite of this, as many as 77.24% considered their dialect attractive.

A large majority of the elementary school pupils who took part in this research (62.07%) stated that they had never been laughed at, commented upon or criticized because of their dialect or use of language. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that young children usually attend school in their

place of residence, they travel less frequently and are thus rarely exposed to language varieties spoken in other towns and villages.

8. Concluding remarks

The results of the present research point to the conclusion that 5th and 8th grade Hungarian pupils who live in Vojvodina have a positive attitude toward the dialect of their place of residence, they find it attractive and even though some of them have encountered other people's negative attitudes toward their dialects, they nevertheless hold a positive opinion of them.

What the research also stresses is the dire need to adopt an additive approach to mother tongue education, not only in the context of Hungarian pupils living and studying in Vojvodina but also in the educational context of Hungarian ethnic minority pupils living elsewhere in the Carpathian Basin. Kontra (2015) points out that traditional language cultivators and almost all school teachers are engaged in trying to change the speechways of about two in three Hungarians in Hungary, and more in the neighboring countries, where Hungarians speak contact dialects different from the monolingual varieties in Hungary. This language-based social discrimination pertaining to Hungarian speech communities can be changed if teacher education is reformed so that additive language pedagogy supplants the all-pervasive subtractive pedagogy (in which standard Hungarian is taught at the cost of, rather than in addition to, the pupils' own language varieties). The results presented above indicate that many pupils are not aware what dialects are (Q1) but that most of them like the variety of language they use and that they mostly use it because they are used to it. In such a constellation, it seems attainable to provide an institutional mother tongue education which successfully combines regional varieties of Hungarian with the standard variety. We find such an approach much more appropriate since it takes into account linguistic diversity, it provides pupils with linguistic knowledge that they can effectively apply in everyday situations and puts emphasis on communication rather than on grammar (Beregszászi 2012; Kovács Rác 2012a, et seq).

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