

The present and future of Hungarian regional dialects in Slovakia

Anna Sándor* 

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Nitra, 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.

KEYWORDS

Hungarian dialects in Slovakia, changes, functions, attitudes

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

* Corresponding author. E-mail: sandor.dol.anna@gmail.com

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

¹Imre (1971, pp. 368–370) classified the Váhovca/Vága, Velké Chyndice/Nagyhind, Čučma/Csucsom, and Bidovce/Magyarbód Palóc dialects as dialect islands. Recent investigations in Velké 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.



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

²Among 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: Výchapy Opatovce/Vicsápapáti, Jelšovce/Nyitraegerszeg, Bádice/Béd and Mechenice/Menyhe in the north, and Paňa/Nemespann and Vinodol/Nyitraaszőlös in the south.

³Slovakia’s statistics consider those settlements to be ethnically 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

⁴In 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/>.

⁵Slovakia'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. Szabó Mihály, 2011, p. 23).

⁶Vicsápapáti is called Výčapy Opatovce in Slovak language.

⁷All 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 *l*'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 (*téngéri szőlő*>*ribizli* “currant”, *istenkörti*>*gTMlTMgonyTM* “bramble”, *evetke*>*mókus* “squirrel”), or a form closer to the standard (*búhTM*>*bóhTM* “flea” [cf. standard *bolha*], *kinyér*>*kényír* “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 though changes 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 *kényír*. In places where the form *kinyér* was common in the past, today the form *kényír* 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 Výchapy 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 phytolegendárium* (“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 Marad⁸ 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 shortTM and the rounded long #

⁸Marad means “to stay” in Hungarian.

⁹This 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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¹⁰Relevant 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-erezem-vagy-a-buszkesegyet-magyarsagom-miatt>).



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