

# Summary

## The Hungarian Language in Romania (in Transylvania)

Hungarian linguists, especially researchers belonging to the linguistic school of Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, have always paid great attention to diachronic and synchronic research concerning the linguistic contact phenomena between Hungarian and Romanian. Generations of researchers have studied both facets of the reciprocal influence: the influence of Hungarian on Romanian, as well as that of Romanian on Hungarian. However, this body of research remained within the constraints of the traditional paradigm, being limited to the recording and interpretation of strictly linguistic phenomena, without analyzing them in their broader social context, and without integrating them into the study of the dynamics of intralinguistic processes. The paradigm that offers the best theoretical and methodological basis for a relevant interdisciplinary interpretation is sociolinguistics.

Before the fall of Communism, no serious sociolinguistic research was carried out concerning the Hungarian national minorities in Hungary's neighboring countries. In 1998 a series was launched under the title *The Hungarian Language in the Carpathian Basin at the End of the 20th Century*, which covers the Hungarians of Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Yugoslavia (Serbia), Croatia, Slovenia and Austria. The present volume is the sixth in the series. The two authors are professors of Hungarian linguistics at Babeş–Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár. The principal investigator of the research, conducted in eight countries, was Miklós Kontra, whilst the sub-project in Transylvania was conducted under the guidance of János Péntek and Sándor N. Szilágyi.

Adopting the guidelines in Hans Goebel et al., eds., *Contact Linguistics*, Vol. 2 (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), the authors present detailed analyses of the social, historical, economic, cultural and political factors shaping the use of Hungarian, the minority language with the largest number of speakers in Romania. The book focuses almost exclusively on Transylvania because over 99% of the Hungarians of Romania live in that region.

This book relies on fieldwork data gathered in 1996 from 216 respondents in Romania and 107 in Hungary. Complementing that research are data from another project, *Demography, Social Stratification, Language Use*, conducted in 2009 by sociologists in the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár.

Given the fact that the results of the original research are only being published after more than two decades, the authors had to consider all that has happened in the new millennium: the recent linguistic processes that have taken place in the context of Hungarian–Romanian bilingualism, as well as those that have occurred within Hungarian–Hungarian relations in the Carpathian Basin. Various issues of Hungarian–Romanian bilingualism have also been dealt with in a number of PhD dissertations written at Babeş–Bolyai University. In addition to linguists, a number of ethnographers and cultural anthropologists have also published widely on Hungarian–Romanian linguistic and cultural contacts. Mention should also be made of the research publications by members of the Szabó T. Attila Linguistic Institute (Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár), a member of the network of six Hungarian linguistic research groups in Hungary’s adjacent countries. The study of minority languages obviously requires a multidisciplinary approach, the authors have therefore also surveyed the relevant literature in sociology, history, demography and legal studies.

The structure and contents of this book were adapted to match those published earlier on Hungarian in Ukraine (1998), Serbia (1999), Slovakia (2000), Austria and Slovenia (2012), and Croatia (2016). The first chapter presents the history over a millennium of the Hungarian community and its relationship with other peoples and languages in Transylvania until the 20th century. After that it presents the radical change which occurred after the union of Transylvania with the Romanian state following World War I, which resulted in a change of the status of Hungarian from dominant state language to one subordinated to the official state language of Romania.

The second chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the demographic situation of the region: the demographic processes and percentages, followed by the presentation of the regional distribution of the community, the typical areas and settlements where they live, their economic and cultural characteristics, the stability of their identity and the processes of assimilation. According to the data collected in the last census (2011), 1 227 623 persons (6.1% of the population of the country) declared themselves as Hungarian

by ethnicity, out of whom 1 216 666 (91.1%) live in Transylvania. Hungarians constitute 17.9% of the population of Transylvania. Regarding the language, 1 259 914 people (6.3% of the population) declared that their mother tongue is Hungarian, out of whom 1 248 623 live in Transylvania (18.4% of the population of this region). Thus, although Hungarians constitute only 6-7% of the entire population of Romania, because they are concentrated in Transylvania, where their proportion is close to 20%, from a language ecological point of view they are a significant minority in Transylvania, Romania.

In Romania, Hungarian is the second most used language after the official state language, both on a national and on a regional level. It is also the only minority language which has more mother tongue speakers than the number of people who declared themselves as being of Hungarian ethnicity. However, statistical data show that in the period after 1990 all the minority languages spoken in Transylvania have lost mother tongue speakers both in absolute numbers and in percentage terms vis-à-vis Romanian speakers.

In the next chapter we find the presentation of the varieties of Hungarian spoken in Transylvania: the relationship between the standard spoken in Hungary and the regional standard spoken in Transylvania, the regional varieties (subdialects, enclaves and linguistic islands represented on a map), as well as the most important functional registers (colloquial, professional, literary and public language). The analysis of these varieties shows that the Hungarian spoken in Transylvania is maintaining its functional integrity, and also the fact that, compared to the previous period, since 1990 the divergent processes of distancing and isolation have turned into convergent processes, both in terms of internal varieties and in terms of the other areas where Hungarian is spoken.

The ideologies of the majority and minority languages explicitly or implicitly define linguistic processes that occur within their domain. The majority ideology of the enforcement of the dominance of the official language was constant throughout the last century and has resulted in the accelerated assimilation of minorities. Similarly, the perseverance shown by the Hungarian language community when trying to secure a fair status for their language in order to maintain it, has also been a constant. These problems are dealt with in chapter 4: the aspiration of Hungarians regarding linguistic rights and the use of existing rights, the right to having traditional personal names and place names, the right to use the mother tongue

in education, culture, religious life, health care, economy and commerce, as well as in the mass media.

In chapter 5, we see the presentation and analysis of the primary areas of usage of Hungarian (education, science, culture, media, religion) – on the one hand, from the point of view of guaranteed freedom of speech using the mother tongue, and on the other hand, from the point of view of use restricted by the linguisticism and discriminative policies of the state. Because socialization in the family and in institutions has a decisive role in the maintenance and transmission of a language through the generations, the authors have paid great attention to mother-tongue-medium education.

The Hungarian language community in Transylvania is bilingual at the present time, although not to the same degree in every region. Bilingualism and the issue of the level of language skills are considered in chapter 6. The following issues are discussed: How the majority speakers relate to the bilingualism of the minority speakers, whether high-level language skills in both languages are facilitated or hindered by the educational system, to what extent bilingualism is reciprocal and symmetrical, and what role could subtractive bilingualism play in the assimilation processes.

The presence of linguistic interference and linguistic contact phenomena (the most evident being loanwords) are natural features of bilingual speakers' language use. Language contact in Transylvania has always been present in the history of the peoples who have lived there, especially in the history of Hungarians and Romanians. These linguistic contacts were always reciprocal, but not symmetrical: in the previous spontaneous processes, the direction and extent of the interference were determined by cultural differences, whilst in the 20th century the dominance of the official language is what gradually became the decisive factor. Given that we are looking at the influence between two typologically different languages, one being predominantly agglutinative and the other inflectional, the analysis of the elements and processes of linguistic contact (on a lexical, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic level) is of particular interest. All these topics are discussed in chapter 7, which shows in detail the differences and similarities between the contact variety and the metropolitan Hungarian used in Hungary. In 1996, through a questionnaire, various kinds of data were gathered for 13 sociolinguistic variables. Statistically significant differences are shown by some grammaticality judgments, for instance, when respondents had to judge one of two sentences as "more natural", the sen-

tence with the analytic phrase *tagsági díj* ‘membership fee’ vs. the compound *tagdíj* ‘membership fee’ was judged “more natural” by 63.7% of the respondents in Romania vs. 28.6% of the respondents in Hungary. When in a written sentence-completion task respondents were to complete *Anyám egy középiskolában tanít, ő tehát ...* ‘My mother teaches in a high school so she is a(n) ...’, 83.4% of the respondents in Romania wrote the word *tanárnő* ‘female teacher’ vs. the metropolitan standard Hungarian *tanár* ‘teacher, male or female’. The redundant *tanárnő* was only used by 41% of the Hungarian respondents in Hungary. In other words, due to the influence of the contact language Romanian, statistically significant ( $p < 0,001$ ) differences have come about in the use of generic nouns denoting professions.

However, in several cases no divergence can be demonstrated between the contact dialect and Hungarian in Hungary. For instance, when respondents had to complete in writing the sentence *Ha Péter rosszul váloga... meg a barátait, pórul jár* ‘If Peter chooses his friends badly, he’ll soon be discomfited’, 8.6% of the respondents in Romania used the severely stigmatized non-standard form *válogassa* (vs. standard Hungarian *válogatja*) while 4% of the respondents in Hungary did so – a difference that is not statistically significant.

The book ends with a summative chapter which highlights the current (judicial, political and sociological) status of Hungarian in Romania, the legitimate aspirations of its speakers regarding linguistic rights and education, and the consequences of bilingualism. The possibility and chances of conscious intervention in the spontaneous (socio)linguistic processes are also considered: how far these could alleviate demographic regression and assimilation, divergence phenomena and language gaps, the external devaluation of Hungarian, and the sometimes negative attitude of its own speakers towards it. In the judgment of the authors, the future will be determined by the direction and final result of these processes, and by the vitality and competitive potential of the language community – not primarily by the inevitability of these events, but by the awareness and cohesion of the community.

Two appendices are provided: a facsimile of the questionnaire used in the 1996 fieldwork, and 59 crosstabs of grammatical and lexical variables comparing the responses of the Romania-Hungarian sample with those of the metropolitan Hungarian sample.