

## **Ambivalent Attitudes to Regional Dialects in Hungary: Investigating Students and Teachers**

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### **Abstract**

The paper presents two connecting studies on the linguistic mentality of the Hungarian society to regional dialects. The focus of the study is to find an explanation of the problem that Hungarians learn to respect diversity, although, misbeliefs and standard-based culture usually lead to debates in communication or even to linguisticism. The main hypotheses are: white-collar-to-be students cannot apply what they learnt about dialects, therefore, many corrections are motivated by regionalisms of which they are not aware, and it is all rooted in problems of teacher training and practice related to language variability. 548 university students 170 teachers in middle and high schools were asked in questionnaires about their language attitudes and everyday experiences and practice. The results highlighted: while tolerant attitudes are represented theoretically, standard-based practice suggests negative lessons about dialects.

### **Keywords**

Dialects, language attitudes, language awareness, public education, sociodialectology

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## Introduction

Having been a centralised country for decades, regional varieties of Hungarian were expelled from school in order to teach the only official and prestigious Standard. However, the latest version of the National Curriculum was inspired by sociolinguistic approach and warns to tolerate regionalisms as traditional worth, stigmatization of regiolects (as ‘bad languages’, cf. Hudson, 2004) is still typical in the linguistic mentality of the Hungarian speech community. Teachers of public education have not got considerable and useful help to explain basic information on language variability for many decades, neither during their studies and trainings, nor in the text-books they use at school (in details see below). As Richard Hudson worded on the similar situation of education in the United Kingdom: „In the UK at least, most teachers learned very little about language during their own education, either at school or at university, so it seems unrealistic to suggest that they should be teaching (and doing) linguistics in the classroom. How can they teach a subject that they don’t know?” (Hudson, 2004, no page number). Due to this problem, among most members of the Hungarian society, and even some non-sociolinguist linguists (cf. Kiss, 2015), the term *dialect* evokes the picture of old village-ladies with scarf on their head, driving chickens in their garden, or workers in the vineyard, maybe Transylvanian Hungarian boys and girls in traditional folk costume dancing csárdás. Due to the low level of language awareness most Hungarians know nothing about the variability of languages and the diversity of their mother tongue, therefore, they know nothing about the dialect background of themselves and of other people. It leads to numerous, although unnecessary debates in everyday communication and restrains to undertake regional identity and to behave tolerant in real. The main purpose of this study is to prove the existence and the actuality of the problem by analyzing numerous data. The paper presents the results of two empirical research studies that were conducted by the author from 2015 to 2018.

At first the paper investigates language attitudes of Hungarian university students to regional dialects. In particular, present paper seeks to address the following questions: Which kind of misbeliefs they have on language variability? Which kind of features of their language use have already been corrected and/or laughed at? Do they have negative experiences due to their mother tongue dialect among native speakers? Who have already corrected their language use? What do they correct in other people’s language use and why? The second study that is presented in this paper investigates teachers’ knowledge and attitudes to regional dialects and their everyday practice in public education. This part of the paper aims at answering the following questions: What do Hungarian teachers think about regional dialects and dialect speakers? How do they handle a student with dialect background? Do they teach the topic of language variability at all? Which kind of help they got for it during their training?

The hypothesis that is tested in the first half of the paper is that most respondents represent tolerant attitudes to the variegation of language use as they learnt at school according to the National Curriculum but answering other questions brings to light that all these theoretical attitudes cannot be applied in everyday communication. Another hypothesis is that many corrections are motivated by regionalisms of which they are not aware, like they

are not aware of their own regionalisms as well. Numerous personal stories suggest that students usually earn many negative experiences due to their mother tongue. By analysing answers of a vast number of participants, the paper provides responsible data not only on questions of perceptual dialectology but also on regional dialect features of the language use of well-educated youngsters. Therefore, this study provides an important opportunity to advance the understanding of mechanisms of linguistic mentality and can also confute the myth that regional dialects can only be observed in the speech of low-educated, older village-people.

The hypothesis that is tested in the second half of the paper is that most teachers in Hungary believe the same myths of dialects as other members of the society; therefore, the main stereotypes that were mentioned above are also represented by them at school. Another hypothesis is that most teachers present positive attitudes to dialects theoretically but many language forms they correct in their students' language use have regional background in real. Discovering their language attitudes and teaching practices provides an explanation for the results of the first study.

### Literature Review

The Hungarian language area (that is not equal to the territory of present-day Hungary since 1920) has ten main dialect regions that also divide into many smaller dialect groups. With the exception of the Moldavian dialect region that is all spoken in the territory of Romania (as well as two other regions that are closer to the contemporary border), Hungarian dialects do not differ to a great extent from each other, therefore, the number of understanding problems is minimal (cf. MDial). Although structural and pragmatic factors of dialect use are continuously changing (cf. Hegedűs, 2005; Kiss, 2017; for recent results cf. e.g., Guttman & Molnár, 2007; Hajba, 2012; Czetter et al., 2016; Kontra et al., 2016; Bodó & Fazakas, 2018), numerous regional language forms can also be observed among young speakers (cf. Guttman, 1995; Koós 2017; Parapatics, 2016). A considerable number of studies on Hungarian dialects in a dimensional view of language (Juhász, 2002) draws attention to historical priority and outstanding variegation of regional dialects (Hegedűs, 2016; Kiss, 2017), emphasizes their own rules, logic and complexity that make them independent language systems that are also correct in the light of their own language norm (Péntek, 2015). These facts are all represented in the National Curriculum of Hungary, however, general stigmatization of Hungarian dialects among native speakers will not change until language awareness of the speech community is not developed, until actual and science-based information of the diversity of the national language cannot be learnt in a convincing and clear way during public education. As Nagy (2004) worded: „Misbeliefs and stereotypes must be ruined at school, in society and sometimes also in science community in order to terminate discrimination and ignorance related to dialect speakers definitely” (Nagy, 2004, p. 105). A recent study (Jánk, 2018) reported that students with dialect background are discriminated by their teachers in the evaluation process through public education (for Hungarian examples of linguisticism see e.g., Kontra, 2006).

Literature of Norwegian dialects suggests: the more centralized and dictatorial is/was a society the more common is to think hierarchic in language use (Trudgill, 2008). Røynealand (2009) suggests that the prestige of provinces and a growing self-esteem of provincial population could lead to positive attitudes to dialects in Norway. However, counterexample of the neighbouring Denmark and Sweden is mentioned where a better economy is not coupled with respecting regional dialects (see also Akselberg, 2005). The key of the difference lies, among others, in different methods of public education. Norway has two official national languages: Bokmål and Nynorsk. Nynorsk is a minority dialect that is spoken by 15% of the population (cf. e.g., Trudgill, 2008). Where Nynorsk is spoken as a mother tongue, pupils must be trained to bidialectal literacy: teachers must respect their dialect and Bokmål is added as a second dialect in public education. Previous research findings not only in linguistics but also in psychology and neurobiology have indicated that bidialectism can bear the same advantages in cognitive development as bilingualisms (e.g., Antoniou et al., 2014; Antoniou & Katsos, 2017; Kirk et al., 2014; Ross & Melinger, 2016; Vangsnæs et al., 2017; Hazen, 2001). No previous study has investigated advantages of bidialectism among the Hungarian speech community, and present paper does not engage with this question as well, although evidence on the topic is needed.

It is a well-known fact that language attitudes have undeniable effect on spread or retreat of language forms and variations, and also on linguistic judgements: when somebody, using a form that is or seems incorrect is regarded low-educated and/or illiterate (for Hungarian examples cf. Kiss, 1995). The presented characteristic of the Hungarian linguistic mentality leads to the retreat of regional dialects, although they bear covert prestige (Labov, 1966) due to their special functions of representing local identity and granting comfort in language use for their native speakers. In simpler words: regional dialect is the language of home. As Labov (1964) found: the wider social network the speakers have and the more integrated they are in their groups, the more likely they accommodate to the pronunciation of the partners, even at the age of 5 (although the accommodation is rarely perfect, cf. Wagner et al., 2013). Even after attending public education for many years, a typical Hungarian speaker always looks for the one and only correct form that, living in a “standard language culture” (Milroy, 1999), equals to Standard Hungarian in every situation and context (on the effects of public education on language and dialect use see also Kiss, 1989; Kinzler & DeJesus, 2013).

In this prescriptive viewpoint everything seems incorrect that differs from Standard, and regional dialects are considered lower-order, even beside so-called “glocalizational” processes of nowadays (cf. Meyrowitz, 2005). Some typical sentences from everyday life: “What a destruction of illusions when you see a nice lady then she tells something like a peasant!”; “Where does this terrible dialect come from? Since we are in Hungary, can’t you sing in Hungarian? The songs are unbearable with this »áá« phonemes!”. Positive attitudes to regional dialects connected to calm and happy provincial life of peasants are still connected to the lower level of education at the same time (Kiss, 2017). What is not yet clear is the type of youngsters’ language attitudes to regional dialects and the impact of public and higher education on developing language awareness in present topic.

As a secondary grammar school teacher of Hungarian as a mother tongue for 10 years in a dialect region the author could earn hundreds of data (objective and subjective) of the everyday language use of her students, even examples of their dialect features and data on consequences of their dialect background. The main hypotheses of present study were motivated by 1) the experiences of her students who left their hometown to attend universities or begin their adult life in bigger cities and had to bear negative comments and behaviour due to their dialect speech and 2) by her own experiences among other teachers who present ambivalence between their attitudes and practice related to dialects.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design***

In the first part of the study languages attitudes to regional dialects among Hungarian university students are investigated. For this study both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in present study. Quantitative data were collected by using an online survey in Hungarian. The main reason of using the method of the online questionnaire was to be able to reach vast number of students of different universities in the country at the same intervallum. In addition, a Google Survey can be filled even on their smartphones that is an important advantage while collecting data from the members of the so-called Generation Z (also known as iGen or the Centennials) (cf. e.g., Seemiller&Grace, 2019). The survey was edited personally by the author in Autumn 2017 and was shared among Hungarian students of Hungarian universities. The participants must have been full time bachelor or master students with an active status who study in a different city where they were socialized. The reasons of choosing the sample can be read in the next sub-chapter.

Having been a high-school teacher for a decade and a lecturer at a university for seven years (both in a dialect region), considerable amount of additional, qualitative data was collected by passive observing. This method resulted random data that are not analysed in present study; their function was to help sentencing hypotheses and to check reliability of vast number of survey data that had another kind of risks. In the second part of the study language attitudes and practice of Hungarian teachers related to dialects are investigated. Everyday experiences of many years as a lecturer at a university, that were proved by the first study, suggested that Hungarian students leave public education with a low level of dialect awareness in general, however, tolerating language diversity is taught for them, theoretically. Searching for the explanation of this ambivalence, attitudes and everyday school practice of teachers in public education were also examined. Although, for investigating language attitudes indirect data collecting methods are usually used, like e.g., matched guise technique, present part of the paper uses the method of paper-based questionnaire. The main reason for applying this quantitative method was to be able to collect a considerable number of data by reaching participants from different places of the country and from different types of educational institutions from middle school to vocational and secondary grammar school. To win a teacher as a participant for a research is usually hard in Hungary because they got

used to be on the questioning and not on the answering side. In fact, due to some governmental changes just before data collecting has begun, participants were afraid of being controlled and of the misbelief that their answers will have an effect on their professional progress; some uncomfortable situations were experienced when some of them refused to be asked. Considering these problems paper-based questionnaire was the most useable method that could be filled anytime not only anonymously but also in a faceless way. The printed surveys were sent by the author to a contact person in each school who sent them back after filling it. The self-made questionnaire, just like the other one for Theme One, contained a sentence that the research aims to investigate and describe reality and does not evaluate answers as good or bad ones.

### *Data collection and analysis*

The reasons of choosing the sample of the university students were as follows: 1) Main part of the subjects took the school-leaving exam one or only a couple of years ago that included a comprehension exam of Hungarian Grammar, therefore, their answers provide information on the linguistic view of public education and on the content of mother tongue education as well. (91.4% of the participants was under the age of 25.) 2) Attending a university is the first time to move to another milieu for most people that is much more heterogeneous, even linguistically. The most complex change is moving to the capital from the province that means new (linguistic) experiences either of the capital population or of the migrant population from other regions as a melting pot. Also, many dialect-based differences can be experienced while studying in the same region and meeting students from other regions. 3) Full time students with an active status spend most of their time among their schoolmates in a place that differs from their hometown which is a main factor of the present study. Corresponding students and students with passive status usually not have (and need) the opportunity for living like this, although, it is not impossible. 4) Investigating Hungarian students' attitudes of universities in Hungary was also important to avoid answers related to transborder contact phenomena and to majority languages of the neighbouring countries (e.g., Romanian contact phenomena in Hungarian universities of Transylvania in Romania). Nota bene: Present study can and should be followed by investigating language attitudes of Hungarian university students in the neighbouring countries to Hungarian dialects with a modified questionnaire. 5) Participants of the study are future white-collar employees of the Hungarian society. Mapping their language behaviour and attitudes are essential while planning developmental strategies on language awareness and modification of the National Curriculum. 6) Observing and analysing reports on their own regionalisms that they (still) use every day provide important additional data to confute the myths of illiterate dialects speakers.

Members of the target group could be reached easily by sharing the online survey in social media. After getting shared and shared, it reached 548 subjects by "snowball-effect" in less than a week. Optionally given comments at the end of the survey also proves outstanding interest in the topic: "Linguistic discrimination is an existing phenomenon, it's important to discuss"; "instead of listening to each other's words (we could learn synonyms

and observe different speech styles, intonation) we laugh at each other, even if the other speaks in a more correct, only different way. So, this is what is disappointing”; “it’s the first survey I’ve filled because I’m interested in the topic”; “Should you have some specific and/or further questions I’m delighted to answer”; “Thank you for having the chance to fill it [...] I’m very curious what will the analyse show. I hope I won’t be so sad”. It was also optional for the participants to give their e-mail address if they are interested in the results: this field was filled by 123 respondents (cf. Labov, 1982 on the principle of error correction and the principle of debt incurred).

The location of the universities where the respondents study shows colourful results. All well-known universities of Hungary are represented; answers were given from 23 different institutions. Half of them are located in the capital, but every part of the country is represented from the West to the East, from the South to the North. All the 19 counties of Hungary appear as homeland of the subjects before attending a university, most respondents are from Veszprém county (18.4%) and Budapest (8.8%; the territory of Pest county outside the capital was another option that was chosen by 8%). 5,1% came from the neighbouring countries (3.3% of them from Slovakia, 25% from Serbia, 17.8% from Ukraine, 10.7% from Romania, 1 respondent from Austria and 1 from outside of the Carpathian Basin). 42.5% of the subjects moved to the city of the university from a small town, 27.9% from a village, 22.4% from a bigger city and 7.1% of them moved from Budapest to another (smaller) city to study. One person would have added the option of “farm.”

The participants were asked how far they study from their hometown. Although, it is not relevant in connection with the borders of the dialect regions and with the isoglosses of the dialect phenomena without detailed information, it can be relevant in general, e.g., the closer the two places to each other the more often they can visit their hometown which is an important factor in the change of language use. 23.5% of the respondents’ studies less than 50 kilometres far from their hometown, 61.7% of them between 50 and 200 kilometres from their hometown and 15% of them study more far than 200 kilometers. Another factor is also relevant in the present investigation: in which kind of accommodation do the participants live. Nearly half of them live in a dormitory, 31.2% of them in an apartment (rented or own), 19.9% travels every day between home and the university.

Nearly half of the questionnaires were filled by students of humanities and teacher training. The remaining 53.7% of the subjects is attending programmes of agricultural, law, public administration, economics, IT, technology, art, medical and healthcare studies, sport, social and natural sciences. (List of the options was edited according to the Hungarian official university admission application website: <https://www.felvi.hu>.) 62% studies at bachelor level, 13% at master level, 25% in undivided teacher training. Three-quarter of the participants are female. Summing up the results of the personal background data: the sample is not only numerous but also stratified enough to conclude valid inferences.

For investigating teachers’ attitudes a self-made questionnaire was designed. It was filled by 170 Hungarian teachers in the country between 2015 and 2017. The respondents were not only teachers of Hungarian Grammar and Literature (57 = 33.5%) but of every other subject as well. 92 respondents teach students at the age of 7–14 in middle schools and 78 respondents at the age of 14–18 in secondary grammar schools and vocational schools.

Nearly a quarter of the questionnaires (36) were got from Budapest and 79% (134) from the other parts of the country: from cities, like Pécs (South Transdanubium), from smaller towns, like Sárvár (West Transdanubium) and also from villages, like Kisnána (North-East Hungary).

Most of the questions were closed (e.g., “Do you teach the topic of dialects? If yes, why? You can choose more: It is not presented in the text-book. / Children never meets this phenomenon in real life so I think it’s unnecessary. / We don’t have time for it. / Other topics are much more important in preparing for secondary grammar school admission exam or for school-leaving exam. / Other reasons”) but some answers were to be given by own words (e.g., “What do you call a dialect?”, “What do you think about it?”, “How and what do you teach about the topic of dialects?”). Every closed question asked examples and own experiences, and the last one gave space for other comments. The reliability of the answers was also controlled by the author’s experiences as secondary grammar school teacher of Hungarian Grammar and Literature subject during the time of data collecting. All the data were processed to tables in Microsoft Excel and analyzed by the author.

## Findings

Numerous factors allow numerous investigations of correlations. Since analysing all correlations could fill an own monograph, present study provides overall results that test the hypotheses mentioned on language myths and stereotypes of dialect speech and low-level language awareness of youngsters. Nearly half of the responding university students reported they had already been corrected since they live in another town. Dialect pronunciation was corrected for 13.3% of all participants, dialect words for 34.1%, and 15.1% were warned to grammatical “mistakes” (more than one option could be chosen). Those who indicated “yes” for this question were also asked to give examples that happened to them in order to filter out those who were not corrected due to regionalisms (the number of this kind of cases was trace). Some examples of being corrected are presented in three categories as follows. At first, original answers in Hungarian are cited with original orthography. Punctuation was refilled where it was needed for interpretation; linguistic data are highlighted by italics. After an own translation of the examples is given in English, forms of Hungarian Standard are added in brackets if possible.

1) Pronunciation: „Néha nem ejtem ki az «*l*» betűt, ezt javítják ki néha” ‘Sometimes I don’t articulate letter «*l*», it is corrected sometimes’; *vót* ‘it was’ (voltage); “*Hűtttttttő, repüllllllő, essssső*” ‘Fridge, plane, rain’ (hűtő, repülő, eső); *kinyullott* ‘it craned’ (kinyúlt); “az *a* hang időnként átcsúszik egy furcsa *a* hanggá” ‘(*a* phoneme sometimes slips through into a strange *a* phoneme’; *zsemle* ‘bagel’ (zsemle); “*Posta* szót hosszú *ó*-val ejtem” ‘I pronounce the word *posta* (‘post office’) with long *ó* (posta); “nem *banyas*, hanem *hányas*” ‘It’s not *banyas* (‘how much’) but *hányas*’ (hányas); “*borít*/*burít*; *törülkőző*/*türülkőző*; *furigázni*/*furikázni*” ‘to empty, towel, tootle along’ (borít, törülkőző, furikázni). According to the whole list many unique dialect phonemes and dialect features like dropping out with stretching, intervocalic stretching, shortening vowels and using *ö* instead of *e* were corrected in pronunciation of participants (cf. MDial.). Two suggestive comments are also cited: “rengeteg időt töltöttem

nagyszüleimmel és rám ragadtak régies kiejtésű szavak. se a kiejtésük, se a használatuk nem volt megfelelő iskolai körülmények között (elsősorban középiskola alatt szóltak meg miatta)” ‘I spent lots of time with my grandparents and word with an archaic pronunciation were stick on me. neither their articulation nor their usage were not suitable at school (I was scandalized due to them primarily at high school)’; “szlovák nyelvű ismerőseim szokták kijavítani a ragozásom, vagy megszólják a kiejtésem/szóhasználatom (ha szlovákul beszélek), magyar nyelvű ismerőseim megszólják a falusi kiejtésem (ha magyarul beszélek)” ‘my Slovakian speaking acquaintances used to correct my inflexion or they scandalize my pronunciation/words (if I speak Slovakian), my Hungarian speaking acquaintances scandalize my provincial pronunciation (if I speak Hungarian)’. 2) Syntax: “*e* kötőszó rossz használata” ‘bad use of *w* conjunction’; “Alapvetően nem használtam az «*az*» szót, helyette csak annyit mondtam hogy «*a*»” ‘Basically I didn’t use the word «*az*», I only said «*a*» instead of it’; *aztat* ‘that one’ (*azt*); *tányérat* ‘plate in accusative’ (*tányért*); *rajt* ‘on it’ (*rajta*); “A *fogy* nem ikes ige” ‘Fogy (‘to lose weight’ or ‘run out’) is not a verb with *-iké*’; “*Motrot, lazsna*k szavakra néztek furán, és elmondták, hogy azt nem így kell mondani” ‘They look strange on the words *motrot* (‘motor in accusative’), *lazsna*k (‘canvas’) and I was told they shouldn’t be told this way’ (*motort*, *vászon*); *jöszöke* ‘you all come’ (*jöttök*); *pecál* ‘he/she is fishing’ (*pecázik*); *folyott* ‘it flowed’ (*folyt*); *jó fog lenni* ‘it is going to be good’ (*jó less*); *innák* ‘I’d like to drink’ (*innék*); “Kijelentő mód helyett felszólító módot használtam. (Suksük) De figyelek rá, ha Magyarországon vagyok, tudom «helyesen» is használni a kijelentő módot. Régebben «magyartalanabb» volt a kifejezés módom. De sok oda figyeléssel, belső kontrollálással, sikerül másképp beszélnem-gondolkodnom” ‘I used imperative mood instead of declarative. (Suksük) But I pay attention to it, when I’m in Hungary, I can use declarative «correctly». Long ago my form of expression was more «incorrect». But with many considerations, with inner control I succeed to speak-think in another way’.

3) Words: „Sok szót nem ismernek amit én használok, pl. *furik, tesznye, cserba*” ‘Many words are unknown that I use, e.g., *furik* (‘barrow’), *tesznye* (‘ugly’), *cserba* (‘chippy’) (*talicska*, *csúnya*, *csorba*); „Sajnos a környezetemben sokan nem ismerik azokat a szavakat, melyeket én egy-egy hétkévi esemény elmesélésekor használok, így magyarázkodom kell (ilyen pl. a *stelázi*, a *vájling*, a *pucok*, illetve a *mácsik*)” ‘Unfortunately many people around me don’t know the words I use to tell a story of a weekend event, so I have to explain myself (like e.g., *stelázi* ‘staging’, *vájling* ‘bigger dish’, *pucok* ‘mole’ or *mácsik* ‘pastry’) (*polc*, *tál*, *vakond*, *metélt tészta*); “Nem értették mit jelent az, hogy *edzsanázok*. Sokszor parasztosan beszélek” ‘They didn’t understand what does *edzsanázok* (‘I go away’) mean. I often speak with a broad accent’ (*elmegyek*); *lánygyerek* ‘girl’ (*lány*); *vánkos* ‘pillow’ (*párna*); *patika* ‘sneakers’ (*tornacipő*); *örökíró* ‘biro’ (*golyóstoll*); *tixó* ‘sellotape’ (*cellux*); *gömb fagyi* ‘cream scoop’ (*gombóc fagyi*); “Építészkaron a *faragó-hegyező* kérdés örök vitákat szül” ‘at faculty of architecture the question of *farrago* or *hegyező* (‘sharpener’) produces eternal quarrels’. The long list shows that most corrections are motivated by using a word that is unknown by the partner.

The participants were also asked whether they have already laughed at due to their speech since they study in another town. However, this question is in a tight connection with the previous one it was asked to inveigle more experiences from the memories of the respondents. While nearly every second subjects have already been corrected, not everybody

has been laughed at as well. 8% were laughed at due to dialect speech, 2.7% due to grammar features and 17.5% because of dialect words. Some typical sentences: „Baranyában a kiejtésem miatt azt hitte valaki, hogy határon túli magyar vagyok” ‘In Baranya county somebody thought that I’m transborder Hungarian by my accent’. “Azt a szót használtam, hogy «*vásik*» és nem tudták, hogy létezik ilyen és ezért kinevettek” ‘I used that word «*vásik*» (‘wear out’) and they didn’t know it is existing and they laughed at me’. Some other typical examples from those who have never been laughed at: “Engem nem, jól ismerem a standard magyart” ‘I wasn’t, I know Standard Hungarian well’; “Csak ritkán, akkor is Budapesten, először kinevetnek, aztán megkérdezik honnan érkeztem” ‘Rarely I was, when I am, it is in Budapest, at first they laugh at me then they ask where do I come from’.

It is also important to consider the category of the persons who correct or laugh at the subjects. Most notation of many options were given to the category of schoolmates (40.5%), then of roommates (28.1%). 17 participants earned this kind of experience by his/her professor during a lecture or a consultation, 5 students were also corrected on an exam or in a test paper. Some students marked the option of strangers (17 persons), during official routine (4) or at the supermarket, canteen, restaurant, bar etc. (8). They were also asked whether it bothers them or not. The answers on a linear scale were categorised into two groups: those who marked 1–3 and those who marked 4–5 (where 1 equals to the least and 5 equals to the most). Correction bothers 18.1% of them and laughing bothers 24.8%. Some options were given for how they react after getting corrected or laughed at. 29 students were ashamed, 14 never use a form since it was corrected and further 59 subjects indicated they try to get out of it, although they are still mistaken sometimes. 12 participants stated they taught the correct form to their family as well. This mechanism can be illustrated by the following citation: „Én kisebb (3 éves) koromig éltem Erdélyben és a nyelvhasználatom miatt inkább óvodás és elemista koromból vannak negatív emlékeim. Elég hamar alkalmazkodtam az itteni beszédhez és már régóta nem hallatszik a tájszólás, amit pedig nagyon szeretek” ‘I lived in Transylvania until I got 3 years old and I have negative memories due to my language use from the time of pre- and middle school. I could accommodate soon enough to the speech of this place and my dialect speech that I love very much cannot be heard long ago’. 87 students indicated they still use corrected forms because they still think them correct. 30 participants state they could persuade others of their right.

In light of results so far mentioned it is important to examine dialect awareness of the subjects: Are they aware of having a regional dialect background? Do they think of their corrected language form as a representation of their homeland? The participants were asked: Are you a dialect speaker? The answers were also had to be given on a linear scale where 1 is equal to the least and 5 is equal to the most. 43.4% of the respondents marked the number 1, 28.5% number 2 and 19% number 3. Only 9.1% indicated number 4 (31 students) and 5 (19 students). These results reveal the lack or the lower level of the participants’ language awareness related to language variability.

Another important information is whether they have already corrected the language use of their partners, and which type of forms bothers them most. The sample is divided into two equal parts in this question exactly. The vast number of examples shows that a prescriptive viewpoint is followed in language behaviour of youngsters that is illustrated here

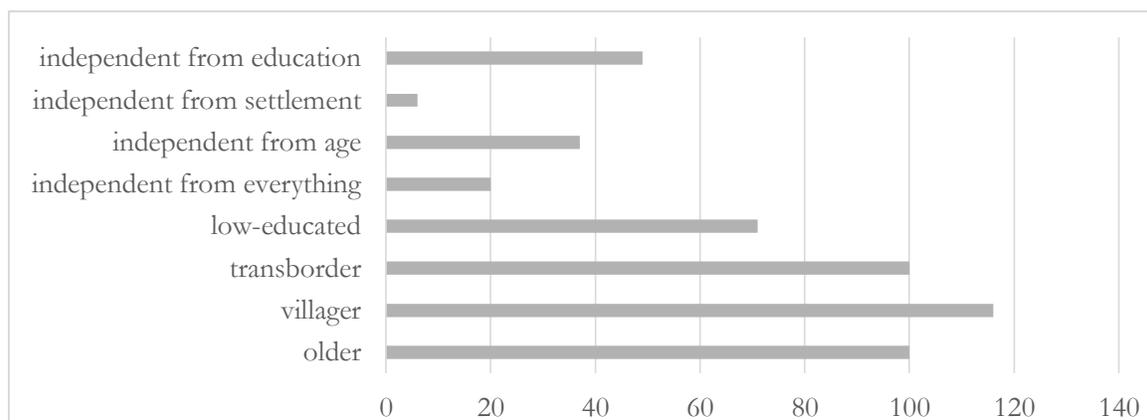
by some typical sentences (see also the above mentioned examples of similar regionalisms as being corrected): “Édesanyám gyakran mondja, hogy «vót» és idegesít, mert minden mást a sztenderd nyelvhasználat szerint mond, ezért gyakran kijavítom” ‘My mother often says «vót» (‘it was’) and it’s annoying because she says every other thing according to the Standard, so I often correct her’ (vot); “«az» névelő használatára hívtam fel a figyelmét annak, aki csak «a»-t használt előtte” ‘I drew attention to the use of the article «az» for the one who only used «a» so far’; “Az *innák* és a hasonló «*nák*» os szavakat mindig kijavítom «*nék*» re. Szerintem így helyes és sokkal jobban is hangzik” ‘I always correct *innák* (‘I would drink’) and similar words with «*nák*» to «*nék*». I think it is the correct form and also sounds better’ (innék); “Nagyapám magyar tanár volt, mindig kijavított, ha valamit rosszul mondtunk. Pl. nincs olyan, hogy «*kell legyen*», csak «*kell, hogy legyen*» vagy «*kell lennie*» és hasonló!” ‘My grandfather was a teacher of Hungarian, he always corrected me if we said something wrong. E.g., there is no «*kell legyen*» (‘it must be’) only «*kell, hogy legyen*» or «*kell lennie*». “Mamámat kioktattam, hogy a *ma az ma*, nem *máma*” ‘I indoctrinated my grandma that *ma* (‘today’) is *ma* and not *máma*’; “Vas megyében minden *TÁSKA*, a nylon zacskótól, a szatyron és hátizsákon át minden. Ez helytelen és az agyamra megy” ‘In Vas county everything is *TÁSKA* (‘bag’) from nylon sac through pouch and backpack to everything. It is incorrect and it hacks me off’. The following ambivalent sentence as another example sums up the results on the low level of dialect awareness: “Engem a helytelen nyelvhasználat egy kicsit zavar. A tájszólás és más ízes beszédek nem zavarnak, sőt tetszenek. Az nem minősül a szememben hibának ha valaki «*kell*» helyett «*köll*»-t mond, vagy «*itthon*» helyett «*itthol*»-t. A struktúra a lényeg” ‘Incorrect language use bothers me a bit. Dialect speech and other nice accents don’t bother me, thus I like them. I don’t see as a mistake if somebody says «*köll*» instead of «*kell*» or «*itthol*» instead of «*itthon*». Structure is the point’. Contradiction between the cited examples and answers to the next question is not already surprising.

A well-known question of Hungarian studies in perceptual dialectology was asked in the followings: Where is the most beautiful version of Hungarian spoken? Similar answers to results that were found by previous studies (for the first and classic one in Hungarian cf. Imre, 1963) were expected and given: in Transylvania, in Highland, in Subcarpathia, in Palócland (all of them are behind the contemporary borders) which answers seek for the romantic lusciousness of language. Of course, the own region of the respondents was mentioned as well (as a county) “because nothing sounds strange for me there”, as a subject explained. The other answers were: in cities, in the province, in bigger provincial cities, in Budapest and in Hungary which answers presuppose only one correct norm. A considerable number of answers proclaims sociolinguistic viewpoint and tolerance of language variation theoretically while all these students also corrected regionalisms in their partners’ (maybe other participants’) language use, as they stated at previous points of the survey, that are rated as incorrect forms (see also the above cited sentence that differentiates tolerated dialect speech from grammatical “mistakes” of structure). Some other examples: “It is independent from location: there are people everywhere who pay attention to language use and there are people who don’t”; “of course, it cannot be adjudged because mother tongue and the use of it is the most beautiful for everyone, it can be an old village lady in Bakony or a high-stepper dude in Budapest”; “Everybody has a «dialect speech», but we can only perceive each

other's"; "I don't regard any variation of language at a higher level"; "Everybody speaks Hungarian in a nice way who is aware of grammar rules and use them correctly and express his/her message elaborately. I regard it independent from area".

The results of the second investigation among teachers provided one explanation to the ambivalence of youngsters' attitudes. Although, each responding teachers answered that dialects are worth for being promoted as a national tradition and they all suggest and teach respecting it, they do not know what to respect particularly. A sociolinguistic viewpoint was written in every questionnaire as it should be presented according to the National Curriculum but answering other questions (e.g., "Are you a dialect speaker?"; "How do you react when your student uses a dialect phenomenon?"; "Who do you think a dialect speaker is?") showed the real lack of knowledge and awareness. 134 of them answered that they don't have a dialect background and 144 answered the same in connection with their students' language use. Figure 1 shows that a considerable part of the participant connects the stereotypical characters of dialect speakers, and only 20 teachers of the 170 know that using regional language forms does not depend on age, on education or on the type of the settlement, while most respondents complained about stigmatization of dialect speakers as low-educated members of the society.

**Figure 1.** *Stereotypes of Hungarian teachers on dialect speakers (n = 170)*



This kind of attitude leads to the everyday practice when dialect speech is corrected as an incorrect form of "the" Hungarian language without being aware of its background. Due to this linguistic mentality, all positive attitudes to dialects and tolerant language behavior remain theoretical in text-books and the National Curriculum, in connection with an imagined traditional, archive form of Hungarian. Some typical examples are cited from the respondents in the followings: "It is a regional variation of language in which pronunciation, word stock and grammar differs from the norm" (Budapest, male, 38, teacher of Hungarian); "It doesn't disturb me personally, but if speech can hardly be understood due to it, I would correct it" (Budapest, female, 26, teacher of Maths and Physics); "If the dialect speech is not disturbing, I don't think it has to be corrected" (Middle Transdanubium,

female, 36, teacher of English); “It doesn’t have to be corrected but it can be left” (North-East Hungary, female, 34, teacher of P.E.); “...it has to be corrected for the sake of reaching the mother tongue level” (Middle Hungary, female, 52, teacher at middle school); “It depends on its type. There are some that are nice, especially in a play or a song” (Budapest, female, 35, teacher of Maths, Music, P.E.); “Dialect speech is interesting. It only has to be corrected if the child speaks a very archaic language but in case of mixing phonemes it is not necessary” (Middle Transdanubium, female, 36, teacher of middle school); “Hungary has regions where dialects are spoken. [...] They can also speak Hungarian properly if they want but in their homeland, they speak this way with pleasure that is, in my opinion, beautiful” (Middle Hungary, female, 48, teacher of middle school); and some more examples for ambivalent attitudes: “It is not ugly but it has to be corrected” (Middle Hungary, female, 39, teacher of middle school) and later the same respondent: “They [dialect speakers] should be proud of it!”; “Dialect speech is nice and has to be preserved. Unfortunately, most dialect speakers are discriminated. Dialect speech is identified with lower level of intelligence, speakers may be mocked” (Middle Hungary, female, 41, teacher of English) and later the same respondent chose the category of the lowest level of education for the question who is a dialect speaker (illustrated in Figure 1). In contrast only 3 of 32 who answered the question “How do you react when your student uses a dialect form?” answered that they (would) correct it and 20 of them answered they have positive attitudes to it (the remaining 9 thinks neutrally).

One third of the respondents are teachers of Hungarian as mother tongue (it is called Hungarian Grammar and Literature). 60% of them (34 out of 57) answered they teach the topic of dialects within their subject. 40% of them highlighted they do not have time for it because other topics are more important. The admission process to secondary grammar school from middle school and the school leaving exam at the age of 18 asks for other knowledge and competences. The oral part of the school leaving exam can include topics on dialects but since the topics are chosen by the own teacher of the students it is usually missing from the list. A higher level of school leaving exam that is needed for some university training programs includes topics that are chosen centrally but the topic of language variability is also overshadowed there in general (cf. the website of the Hungarian Office for Education: <https://www.oktatas.hu/koznevelés/erettségi/>). One of the respondents even cannot remember whether she learnt about the topic at the university or not. Dialectology and Sociolinguistics have been compulsory courses in Hungarian as a first language teacher training program for decades at Hungarian universities and Sociolinguistics, that emerged Dialectology course in most universities, is still present in contemporary trainings (cf. Kiss, 2009, 2015). Also, more and more publications help in learning teaching material and methods related to the topic (cf. e.g., Guttman, 1995, 1999; Pletl, 1997; Kiss, 2000; MDial.; Boda, 2011; for recent practical literature that could not have been used yet by the respondents at the time of data collecting see Cs. Nagy & N. Császai, 2015; Szentgyörgyi, 2015; Koós, 2017, Parapatics, 2018b, for the latest one that recommends digital communication technologies for teaching the topic see Parapatics, 2019). Most respondents of the present study have forgettable memories of their Dialectology course. Some examples: “It was a boring and unnecessary lecture. Although, I was interested in the topic” (female,

34); “It was theoretical with less opportunities for observing” (graduated at Szegeed University, male, 37); “It was boring, I didn’t go on a fieldwork, I wrote a theoretical paper instead of it” (male, 38) (for similar opinions of Hungarian as a First Language university students see Kiss, 2009). Another study reported that some official text-books for public education also included misbeliefs and stereotypes related to Hungarian dialects (Streli, 2009).

### **Discussion**

According to the results hypotheses of both studies were proved. Most answers suggest that Hungarian students of Hungarian universities get familiar with sociolinguistic viewpoint during their years of public education and were trained to positive attitudes to variations of language, as a requirement of the National Curriculum of Hungary; however, this mentality could not be applied in practical communication. It is one thing they learnt at school about dialects and another one how they handle them in real life without being trained enough. It is proved again: language awareness of Hungarian society has to be developed to be able to change former one-norm attitude and prescriptive viewpoint of language use (see also e.g., Heltainé Nagy, 2004; MDial). A significant part of the participants has been corrected and also a large group used to correct their partners due to regionalisms without being aware of it. By collecting living examples of being corrected or laughed at due to regional features of language the study presented that using regionalisms, even being aware of it or not, is not equal to being low-educated and old by all means.

The hypotheses of teachers’ stereotypes about dialects were proved by data of 170 respondents of present study. While only 12% of them answered that dialect background is independent from age, settlement and education, categories of advanced age (59%), transborder (59%) and villager (68%) lifestyle reached significantly higher marking (more than one category could be chosen). The results are similar to the findings of the latest Hungarian studies in this topic (e.g., Heltainé Nagy, 2004; Kiss, 2009; Jánk, 2018). Although, each respondent sees dialects as national treasures that is worth preserving and should be used proudly, even if it is corrected as a bad form of language. Most participants cannot differentiate consequences of regional variability and incorrect grammar, and nearly two thirds of the responding teachers of Hungarian as a first language do not teach this topic at school. However, more and more new pieces of literature help them now in teaching actual facts on dialects (see above), teachers who graduated many decades ago cannot change easily.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Results of the two studies provide an explanation to negative mentality of the Hungarian society to dialect speech and to the ambivalence between theory and practice when a person thinks about or faces a dialect speaker. Attitudes and behaviour cannot be taught in a theoretical way without setting an example. Teachers in Hungary follow the rules of the National Curriculum and place the same demands on their students; therefore, a tolerant and open-minded way of thinking could be acquainted during public education. But

teachers who have inaccurate or any knowledge about the variability of language can only perceive and evaluate regional language forms (not only phonemes but also syntactic features and word stock) as mistakes. Numerous corrections of a student's language use are in contrast with the expectation of respecting language diversity and even with the theory of language variability.

Most students can only learn about "the correct" form of language use: the one and only Standard, therefore, they will suggest numerous corrections as adults while listening to people from another dialect regions or they have to bear to be corrected due to it. According to the findings of the above mentioned international researches of the bidialectal advantages it would be very important to prove the existence of it among Hungarian speakers as well. But without being aware of dialectal background and without differentiating it in different situations, without learning style-shifting between the mother tongue dialect and the Standard, Hungarian youngsters can only live their dialect as a disadvantage (see also Guttman, 1999; Péntek, 2015; Koós, 2017; Parapatics, 2018a) and benefits cannot be realized, therefore, cannot be investigated and proved.

The main lesson of the two connecting studies is as follows: dialect awareness of the Hungarian speech community should be developed but it has to be started among teachers. Because neither European nor consistent Hungarian identity can be mentioned until regional identity, that concerns millions of Hungarians, is not appreciated enough.

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