

**Ildikó Vančo, Rudolf Muhr, István Kozmács, Máté Huber (Eds.):  
Hungarian as a Pluricentric Language in Language and  
Literature**

(Berlin, Peter Lang International Academic Publishers. 2020. 290 p.)

The book provides an exhaustive overview of the complex situation of Hungarian in the spectrum of European pluricentric languages in terms of contacts and conflicts. The book's editors are well-known researchers approaching minority languages and pluricentricity from a sociolinguistic point of view. The authors of the different chapters are from five countries (Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia, and Slovenia) where Hungarian is either a national or a recognised minority language, and the 19 papers in the volume were presented at the 6th International Conference on the Pluricentricity of the Hungarian Language, held in 2018 at the University of Nitra, Slovakia. The scope of this edition touches upon several, though not exclusive problems, manifested in the countries where Hungarian is a non-dominant variety presenting empirical and practical works that unquestionably establish the status of Hungarian in the branch of pluricentric languages. The volume is timely because the field is receiving increasing attention and interest from researchers, and in the case of Hungarian, there is as yet no comprehensive work integrating all areas of pluricentricity.

It is important to note, however, that the pluricentricity of the Hungarian language is debated by some scholars. In the history of the Hungarian language, the period between 1772 and 1920 was signalled by language unification (as a result of the language reform), and the period after 1920 until now can be characterized by language divergence (*különfejlődés*) (Bátyi and Ferenc, 2020). The Treaty of Trianon (1920) was signed after WWI when speakers of the Hungarian language were separated by political borders; therefore, divergent measures took place in the use of the language in these territories. Hungarian is the dominant language in Hungary, while non-dominant varieties are spoken in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine (Huber and Molnár, 2015), which makes it pluricentric. However, according to some authors (Tolcsvai Nagy, 2017), divergence is not necessarily associated with pluricentrism, as in the cases of the German or the English languages, but refers to the specificity of the language in different regions. Another argument is that despite a century of being torn apart by borders, the Hungarian language has maintained its unity in diversity, and the continuous linguistic divergence demonstrates the language's adaptability to the new environment (Szilágyi 2002). On the other hand, linguists have shown a permanent interest in investigating the pluricentricity of the Hungarian language for three decades now.

The volume contains 19 studies written by 20 scholars, who investigate some critical aspects of the subject, including the issues of characterisation of pluricentric languages (pp. 17- 62), essential problematic areas of inquiry that

have been raised by Hungarian as a non-dominant variety (pp. 65- 138), regional language use and varieties (pp. 141- 194) issues raised by language education (pp. 197- 231) and finally pluricentricism in literature (pp. 235- 283).

There are five chapters in the book. The first chapter contains three studies that lay the foundations for the whole concept of linguistic pluricentrism. The first paper by Máté Huber provides a detailed insight into the history and progress of the nature of the pluricentricity of Hungarian. The author challenges the question of unity in countries where Hungarian minorities can be found and states that in Western European countries, the term "nationality" refers to belonging to a particular nation, not an ethnic group. The following paper (Miklós Kontra) underlines how the study of linguistic rights and linguistic human rights is missing from the study of non-dominant varieties, except for Ukraine and Romania, where several studies have dealt with the topic (Kontra et al., 1999). The final paper in the chapter by Ildikó Vančo presents empirical data on linguistic and national identity bias. The study takes an in-depth look at the role of language use in identity formation in the lives of university students in Slovakia. She shows that many speakers of Slovakia Hungarian consider their variety as their own and part of expressing their identity.

In the second chapter, five papers examine the conflicts that complicate the language use rights and habits of Hungarian speakers in non-dominant Hungarian-speaking areas. The first paper in this section (Réka Máté and István Cserniczkó) describes the obstacles in the development of patronymics (family names) of Hungarian speakers in Ukraine. It is important to point out that there are six possible married name forms in the Hungarian system, and only three of these six variations can be legally registered in Transcarpathia. János Baukó's paper reports on a similar phenomenon. He looks at the broad complexity of personal name usage in Slovakia and argues that the use of personal names can be influenced by the communicative situation, depending on the participants in the conversation. The use of proper names in the bilingual Hungarian-Slovak context differs from the Hungary Hungarian forms in that the use is related to the social context due to a high rate of language contact. This phenomenon can be observed not only with personal names but also with hypocoristics and nicknames. The next three papers deal with terms, administrative terminology, and toponyms. The first paper by Gizella Szabómihály reveals the depths of the development of Hungarian toponyms and their continuous changes since the end of the 19th century in Slovakia. Szabómihály's paper explores the conflicts and issues, such as false GPS data, caused by the multiple standardisations in the names of Hungarian towns and villages in the country. The author strongly supports an official commission to standardise geographical nomenclature in both countries.

In contrast to Szabómihály's paper, Attila Benő explains the complexity of developing a uniform nomenclature by presenting the terminological difficulties of Hungarian language design in Romania. Examples of terms which are used in

the fields of education, healthcare, ranks of police, administrative texts, etc., are presented in the chapter to support the claim that, in many cases, equivalents from the other language (Romanian or Hungarian) simply do not exist; thus neologisms have been invented. Similar to Benő's paper, Károly Presinszky reports the same difficulties, but at the level of administrative texts in the case of Slovakia Hungarian. He also highlights the profound impact of spoken language in the utterances of local authorities. Non-standard expressions appear less in written documents, thanks to the consistent use of uniform terminology, which has increased in the Slovak offices surveyed.

The third chapter contains four papers that look closely at smaller non-dominant varieties of the Hungarian language and its local varieties. The first paper by Anna Kolláth reports on a local variety used in Prekmurje, Slovenia. The scope of Kolláth's paper focuses on the crucial feature of education that keeps the language alive, highlighting the significance of the sixty-year-old bilingual education that has seen generations grow up. The subsequent study (Réka Sólyom) examines the phenomena of language contact in electronic media in Serbia. Sólyom studied the language use of Magyar Szó, an online daily newspaper from 2018. Anna Sándor investigates the Hungarian language use of 26 villages in the Nitra linguistic island, Slovakia. Her paper emphasises the symbolic significance of this vernacular language heritage, which can be characterised by archaisms, and as a medium of the rich folk heritage, and therefore expresses profound concern for the future of this variety as it is threatened in many aspects. Szilvia Rási's research was based on a survey of 100 inhabitants of a Hungarian settlement in Slovakia who speak a phonetically distinct dialect of Hungarian, the Palóc language. The study aimed to disprove three hypotheses about this dialect. Contrary to Sándor's observation, it has been shown that the speakers of this dialect are not so ashamed of this variety, and they are aware that their use of the language is different from the standard; thus, they are committed to preserving the Hungarian language.

In chapter four, three papers discuss the effects of pluricentrism in public education based on empirical data and large-scale research. Edit Kádár's study examines the impacts on language teaching after the introduction of the new competence-centred curriculum in Romanian secondary education from 2017 onwards. She notes that this new approach to language teaching is also manifested in teaching strategies, methods, and learning materials. Therefore, she examines the changes in attitudes towards the non-dominant variety of Hungarian in the new curricula. István Jánk supports the previous thesis of linguistic discrimination in the pedagogical evaluation of teachers by conducting a large-scale attitude survey among teachers of Hungarian in four countries where non-dominant varieties are taught. His study aims to demonstrate and uncover the causes of lower prestige particularly from the perspective of pluricentricity, and to unfold the definitive role of language discrimination. The final section of the research

reveals that linguistic disadvantage has a highly negative effect on academic success. István Kozmács and Ildikó Vančo looked into textbooks published in Hungary and found that these books ignored the existence of other, non-standard varieties of Hungarian. In contrast to previous studies, authors explored whether the pluricentricity of the Hungarian language appears in any form in Hungarian textbooks at all. The outcome shows that in primary and secondary education, some information is provided about the existence of non-dominant varieties, but only to a certain extent.

In the fifth and final chapter, four papers review the impact of pluricentrism on literature. This chapter's most significant point is that the issue has not yet been addressed; the 6th International Conference on the Pluricentricity of the Hungarian Language, held in 2018 at the University of Nitra, Slovakia, provided the space to explore this aspect.

Works of fourteen authors were analysed by Zoltán Németh in which pluricentric language can be observed at the level of poetics, promoting transculturalism. The author provides a thorough overview of the historical background of the development of Hungarian pluricentricity in Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, and Ukraine and introduces the transcultural phenomenon through literary works. In the following two papers, the authors focus on the effects of language contact in two novels. These novels carry many of the markers that can only be created in a multilingual environment, including code-switching and loanwords that describe a linguistically and culturally colourful environment. These elements mentioned above occur naturally in novels and the everyday lives of multilingual speakers. In her novel analyses, Gabriella Mádi nicely presents the elements of code-switching from characters' point of view. Alongside Mádi's study, Anikó N. Tóth shows how distant a non-dominant variety can be from the language used in the mother country. The author examines elements that do not impede comprehension, such as lexical, morphological, and syntactic differences, but also points out the difference between the local language and the language of power in a literary context, drawing attention to the unequal mixing of variants. Gabriella Petres Csizmadia analyses the language used in the unique writing of Pál Szász. The book's main thread is the 20<sup>th</sup>-century life stories of Hungarians living in Slovakia, whose lives are influenced by transcendent elements. Petres Csizmadia aims to support studies in this field that have argued that language use is a symbol of regional identity.

The whole book is written in an easy-to-understand language, albeit in a highly academic style, yet it is easy to follow the thread as it is written and organised in a natural, self-explanatory way. The five-chapter organisation helps the reader find information on each topic in the respective chapters without having to deduct its whereabouts. This organization also makes it simple to navigate between topics.

Overall, the publication is useful literature for both researchers and teachers interested in the field, making the book a valuable resource for teachers who are willing to go beyond the difficulties of the compulsory curriculum and add an extra dimension to their own and their students' knowledge that, given the subject matter of the book, should be compulsory in Hungarian public education.

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