

Regional Dialect Use in School and Teachers in Southeast Hungary¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper is part of a larger ongoing research project titled *Patterns of Language Regard in the City of Szeged, Hungary and Its Vicinity: A Study in Perceptual Dialectology*. The data were collected in the research site in southeastern Hungary, in Szeged, Hódmezővásárhely, and Balástya, through sociolinguistic interviews with ten teachers at each site. The paper focuses on one aspect of the relationship between regional dialect and education: teachers' attitudes toward the use of regional dialects during classroom interaction. The central question is how primary and lower secondary school teachers perceive the role of dialectal speech—both their own and their students'—in formal classroom settings. Attitudes toward regional dialects—whether negative or tolerant—do not vary significantly according to the location of the school (village, town, or city), but reflect the individual teachers' personalities. Some tolerate their students' regional dialect while others correct non-standard language use.

Keywords: perceptual dialectology, Szeged dialect, teachers' attitudes towards regional dialect

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1. Introduction

1.1. About the Hungarian Language Community

Speakers whose native language is Hungarian live “within the culture of the standard,” as Milroy (1999) describes it. This means that within the Hungarian language community, as described by Milroy (1999), the standardization has many consequences, such as the following: the standard language variety has the highest prestige, while non-standard varieties are undervalued; speakers believe in absolute correctness; and their linguistic views are shaped by the ideology of standardism. Analyzing the internal relations of the Hungarian language community, Kontra (2018a, 2018b) demonstrates that most native speakers of Hungarian consider the codified standard variety to be superior and more valuable than other varieties.

The spread and maintenance of the linguistic ideology of standardism are reinforced through channels such as education, mass media, and popular science. As Kontra (2019, 85) points out, even literacy (reading and writing) education in the Hungarian school contributes to promoting the superiority of the codified standard. This is further supported by the fact that Hungarian regional language varieties have not developed a significant tradition of writing, and for Hungarian speakers today, written language use essentially equates to the use of the standard variety.

Sándor (2018) reviews the role of public education in disseminating doctrines about the superiority of the standard. An important observation about the social diffusion of views regarding various linguistic forms is that strong and categorical value judgments and stereotypes are attached to particular varieties within the community—and that these stereotypes present in native language classes influence students’ attitudes.

Education has an extremely important role in spreading standard ideology and the standard variety of the Hungarian language within the Hungarian speech community. For many decades, one of the fundamental goals of native language teacher training has been to prepare them to teach the standard language and to teach in the standard variety. Thus, native-language teachers working in public education have played a significant role in disseminating the ideology of linguistic standardism (Sándor 2014, 388–432; Parapatics 2020b; Jánk 2021). Therefore, an absolutized interpretation of linguistic correctness permeates public thinking on a wide scale.

1.2. Language Perception Formation and School

A key part of an individual’s linguistic socialization is the formation of personal patterns in evaluating and relating to linguistic variability and individual varieties—this process occurs alongside language acquisition. From the moment a mother first corrects her child’s speech based on her own internalized linguistic norms—effectively obeying societal

expectations—the development of this personal system of linguistic attitudes begins.

Besides the family, the school becomes a defining arena for this process, especially primary education, which can have a decisive impact during the first school years. This is because students, at the age when they begin schooling, are in a sensitive phase of linguistic socialization, and because the teacher represents social authority and mediates society's expectations regarding language use, as well. The system of norms communicated both openly and subtly through education includes socially expected views on language use. These encompass how students should relate to linguistic variability in general and to specific varieties and forms.

A relevant question is whether language ideologies, that may threaten the linguistic diversity and that are brought by students from their family environments, appear in compulsory native language education. Among these ideologies, linguistic homogenism and its closely related counterpart, standardism, must be mentioned (Lanstyák 2011). When examining teachers' linguistic views, we do not claim that students adopt them unchanged—but many studies show that the dominant native language ideologies in public education leave long-lasting marks on generational thinking.

Hungarian studies provide many convincing examples: Ludányi (2017, 2019), analyzing letters sent to the major Language Consulting Service in the country, concluded that most writers believe in the supremacy of the standard language. Szabó (2012), in a study with primary school children, demonstrated how central rules—and pseudo-rules—are in their understanding of language, likely due to rule-centered language teaching. Our previous study, the Szeged Sociolinguistic Interview (Kontra, Németh, and Sinkovics 2016), shows that informants over sixty express linguistic beliefs about correctness that they encountered decades ago in the norm-enforcing native language classes of the 1950s and 1960s.

1.3. The Situation of Hungarian Regional Dialects in the Early 21st Century

In his summary assessment of the current spread and status of Hungarian dialects, Kiss (2017, 200) notes that “most members of the Hungarian language community still come from dialectal backgrounds, and thus their language use carries more or fewer regional features.” He believes that the accelerated change in Hungarian regional dialects began in the mid-20th century. This process is noticeable mainly in two ways: first, the contexts for regional dialect use are shrinking; second, regional features are diminishing, with change generally moving toward the standard.

Regarding geographical coverage, regional dialects no longer cover the entire language area—spatial retreat is clearly noticeable. Kiss (2017) also highlights important functional changes: the former primary functions of regional dialects—as tools of communication and

carriers of culture—have diminished somewhat, while their role as social symbols has come to the foreground.

It is important to note that Hungarian native speakers living in countries neighboring Hungary show a stronger dialectal influence in their communication. Many of them have a vernacular that is a local dialect, and they do not even speak the standard variety of Hungarian. The stronger presence of regional dialects is also indicated by the fact that among Hungarians living beyond the border, the language of education and church services is not free from regional influences either (Péntek 2002).

2. The Study

2.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Before addressing the research questions of this study, it is necessary to present the theoretical-conceptual framework within which we discuss the topic. One of the key concepts of our investigation is *language regard*. We use this term in the sense described by Preston (2018): it is an umbrella term used in folk linguistics that encompasses the views, knowledge, beliefs, ideologies, and attitudes of everyday (i.e., non-linguist) speakers about language—in summary, everything that determines how language appears in the mental perspective of non-linguist speakers.

It is important to emphasize that linguistic beliefs do not need to align with scientifically proven facts or theories, because their influence on language use is not determined by this alignment, but rather by the fact that—regardless of scientific validation—they exist in the speaker's consciousness. Therefore, language superstitions or beliefs can be just as influential in shaping an individual's linguistic behavior as the body of knowledge accumulated by academic disciplines.

Preston (2017) emphasizes that it is not possible to create a comprehensive theory to explain linguistic variation and change if we ignore the linguistic beliefs of speakers. Accepting this and building upon it from a sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological perspective, we believe that one significant and determining cause of changes in language use is the transformation of thinking about language, i.e., the change in language regard. For this reason, we consider it crucial—in terms of mapping the direction, dynamics, and expected outcomes of ongoing linguistic changes—to be able to describe the changes in society's beliefs and mentality regarding language.

2.2. Main Research Questions

In this study, we examine the role that education might play in the above-described changes affecting Hungarian dialects, particularly through the way it shapes the linguistic beliefs of younger generations. We are also interested in the extent to which education contributes to

the continued societal pressure on dialect speakers to conform to the standard language variety.

The relationship between dialect and education is a vast area with extensive literature: most recently addressed in a monograph by Parapatics (2020a), and in case studies by Németh (2020, 2024a, 2024b). Fehér (2024) empirically demonstrated the metalinguistic awareness of bidialectal preschool children.

From this broad problem area, we focus on one subtopic: the use of regional dialects during classroom instruction, more specifically, the teachers' views on this issue. The central research question is: according to the interviewed primary and lower secondary school teachers, to what extent can regional dialectal speech play a role during classroom instruction, including both teachers' and students' speech? We consider this question crucial in terms of the role of education, because formal classroom speech situations can legitimize certain language varieties while discriminating against others. This is where younger students encounter which varieties are considered socially acceptable in formal contexts.

Students' beliefs related to this may be shaped by many factors, both explicitly and implicitly. Explicit influencing factors can include teacher intervention: negatively evaluating or correcting a student's speech (based on linguistic or social norms), or the teacher correcting their own speech (possibly with explanation). Implicit influence can stem from the teacher's chosen mode of speaking or from which non-standard forms they leave uncorrected in student responses.

To answer the research question, we posed the following questions during structured sociolinguistic interviews:

Can the teacher speak in regional dialect during the lesson?

Is it the teacher's task to correct a student's regional dialect?

Is it the teacher's task to contribute to the preservation of regional dialects?

Is it the teacher's task to promote the spread of the standard language?

We do not find it necessary to formulate hypotheses regarding the central research question and the expected responses to the interview questions, as our investigation is explicitly exploratory in nature.

2.3. Data Collection and Corpus

The study presented in this paper is part of a larger ongoing research project titled *Patterns of Language Regard in the City of Szeged, Hungary and Its Vicinity: A Study in Perceptual Dialectology*. The research is being conducted in southern Hungary, specifically in the so-called Southern Great Plain dialect region, within the Szeged-area dialect group.² Fieldwork is taking place in three settlements of different sizes within the dialect area: the largest is Szeged, a regional city (158,000 inhabitants); the second is Hódmezővásárhely, a town about 25 km

2 On the classification of Hungarian dialects, see Juhász 2001.

from Szeged (42,000 inhabitants); the third is Balástya, a village about 20 km from Szeged (3,200 inhabitants) (see Figure 1. below).

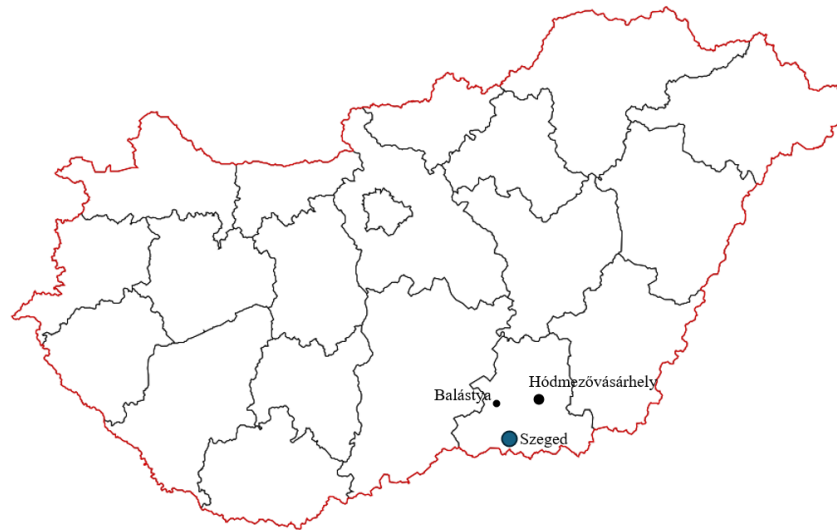


Figure 1. The research sites in Southeast Hungary

The central question of our research is: What happens to students' language regard from the start of primary school to the end of the eighth grade? We aim to explore this mainly in terms of what kind of views students hold regarding dialectal speech (which for many is their vernacular variety) and regarding its speakers, and how they perceive the standard language variety and those who speak it.

After a multi-week observation period, data collection began in a selected primary school in each settlement: we conducted structured sociolinguistic interviews focused on linguistic beliefs with both first- and eighth-grade students and their lower and upper-grade teachers. In each location, 8 first-grade students (ages 6–7), 8 eighth-grade students (ages 13–15), and 5 lower-grade and 5 upper-grade teachers were interviewed. We also interviewed 8 people each from the students' parents' and grandparents' generations per location, totaling 126 individual interviews.

Alongside modules with guided conversation, the interviews also aimed to uncover implicit cognitive content related to language through various tests and the use of the matched-guise technique (Kontra, Németh and Sinkovics 2016). The structured sociolinguistic interviews with teachers lasted on average 1 to 1.5 hours.³

This paper analyzes the data from the 30 teacher interviews in terms of how they responded to the questions outlined above. When relevant, we also include excerpts from parts of the interviews not directly linked to the targeted section but closely related to the subject. Of the 30

3 For a more detailed description of the research, see Berente et al. 2023.

interviewees, 15 teach in lower primary and 15 in upper primary grades, with each settlement represented by ten teachers. The teachers form a heterogeneous group in terms of both their formal qualifications and the subjects they actually teach.

3. Results

We interviewed 30 teachers, of whom 7 do not speak the regional (or any other local) dialect according to their own account (3 in Balástya, 1 in Hódmezővásárhely and 3 in Szeged), so they do not use the regional dialect in class or with colleagues. Six teachers could speak the regional dialect but do not use it in class. (Please note that these are self-reported data.)⁴

As for the question “Can dialect be used in school?”, it may seem strange or weird to ask teachers such a question, but Hungarian language culture, as mentioned, is highly normative and standard-oriented. For a long time (not uncommon to this day), the main principle in teacher training, especially in elementary teacher training, was that the teacher should speak the standard language and expect the pupils and students to do the same. Numerous observations and surveys show that teachers stigmatize students who speak the regional dialect, classifying their speech as incorrect, making comments like “It is not correct”, “It does not exist in Hungarian” etc. (cf. Sándor 2014, 420–422). The general expectation is that the teacher should behave and speak in an exemplary manner.

All teachers answered that a teacher could speak in regional dialect in class. However, one of them immediately changed her opinion. She (from Balástya, a village) clearly objected to the teacher speaking in regional dialect: “I think they can speak dialect, but (.) but it would bother me, or I don’t like it. So, I don’t want to go to a class where the teacher speaks the regional dialect, or if I am a teacher, I don’t want to speak the regional dialect when I teach anything.”⁵ Later in the interview, she also explained that she would be bothered if her children’s teacher spoke in dialect: “Because we don’t read or write like that”,⁶ which is in line with standard language ideology (cf. Kontra 2019, 85).

Several teachers mentioned certain aspects of the teacher’s speech. Namely, five of them (all of them teachers in grades 1 to 4) add that it is advisable to avoid the use of regional dialect in Hungarian lessons because of the literary texts and the reading and writing lessons. Two teachers also mention the problem that if the teacher or the student

4 We do not have thirty answers for all questions because sometimes the question was not asked or was not answered, or the respondent moved on to another topic.

5 „Szerintem beszélhet, de (.) de engem zavarna, vagy én nem szeretném. Tehát én olyan órára se szeretnék menni, ahol tájszólással beszél a tanár, illetve hogyha én vagyok tanár, én se szeretnék úgy beszélni, hogy tájszólásban tanítok bármit is.”

6 „Mer<t> nem úgy írunk, nem úgy olvasunk”

comes from a different dialect area, the teacher's speech may be strange, and some of them mention problems of comprehension. Nevertheless, there are no such big differences between Hungarian dialects that it would cause difficulties of comprehension (as in Germany or Italy).

Four of them point out that the teacher should transmit the standard norm because it is the expectation, e.g. "We are officially supposed to represent standard language, right?"⁷. Another teacher⁸ also refers to some kind of external expectation:

T We are obviously expected to communicate according to standard language norms.

FW Do you think it's expected?

T I think so.

FW Who expects it?

T uhm well uhm I guess the educational authority. [laughing] Don't they?⁹

She mentions some kind of external expectations but uses an indefinite (general) subject. The fieldworker therefore asks for the subject, and after some hesitation and an expression of her own uncertainty (uhm I guess), she clarifies her answer, and the educational authority is named the right agent, which is shown by the question tag following her own statement (cf. in more details Németh 2024a).

The National Core Curriculum does not cover how a teacher should speak. The role of the teachers is described as follows: "Teachers are an indispensable part of successful mother tongue and literary education. Their behavior, their commitment to the profession, their personal examples are in themselves a model for their pupils" (NCC 2020, 300). In other parts, it adds that the teachers are free to choose their pedagogical methods (NCC 2020, 301).

Two teachers of Hungarian language and literature also mention that not all dialects can be eliminated in adulthood which means one cannot switch to standard without an accent. Some do not focus on expectations but on the credibility of the teacher. Three of them felt that there was no issue if the teacher speaks the regional dialect because it is part of the teacher's personality and credibility: "So it is best if the teacher is part of the local community, so the children are from here, s/he knows the locals, their habits, their way of speaking, so they should

7 „nekünk ugye hivatalosan úgymond a köznyelvet kéne képviselni”

8 Since there is only one small school in Balástya, we have not provided any information about the teachers' ages or the subjects they teach in order to preserve anonymity.

9 „T ...tőlünk nyilván elvárják, hogy a köznyelvi normák szerint kommunikáljunk. FW Gondolod, hogy elvárják?

T Én úgy gondolom.

FW Ki várja el?

T ööö hát ööö gondolom az oktatásügy. [nevet] Nem?”

be part of it, in order to be able to interact with parents and children.”¹⁰ This means that a teacher can interact more effectively with pupils and their parents if he or she knows them and their local speech patterns. Her teaching practice is in accordance with her views, as she uses the regional dialect in class.¹¹

Some teachers use the regional variant when telling a story, or when they have to discipline pupils: “but there are also situations when I have to shake things up a bit on purpose, so in a situation that motivates or solves a situation or solves a disciplinary situation, I start to use the regional dialect”.¹² Or another: “But they know it, it’s a scolding for sure. When I’m using the Szeged dialect, there’s trouble there.”¹³ In other words, it is so unusual for pupils to hear a teacher speaking a regional dialect (in Szeged) that the use of it can also have an attention-grabbing function. Some also said that they only use it during recess or on field trips with their pupils, in other words, during extracurricular activities.¹⁴

Although, all of our respondents think that teachers can speak in regional dialect in class, many of them do not actually speak it. So, we should ask the question: why do most of them avoid regional dialects in class? Many explain it by the role of the teacher, by perceived expectations. A teacher from Balástya who can speak the local dialect, does not use it in class: “Because I think it’s a kind of [...] obviously there’s a role when you go into a classroom, you have to stand out there, there’s a way of presenting yourself.”¹⁵ However, he is permissive towards his colleague, because he thinks she can speak: “Well, ‘cause ‘cause she is herself in the classroom, it is very important for a teacher in its profession to give itself to the children, because they are so receptive to the fact that if they see a mock or false pose that I am in, they will never be able to accept me. And they don’t accept what I say, whatever subject we’re talking about”.¹⁶ This is in contrast with his own example (see below), because he said previously that he spoke differently in his

10 „Tehát az a legjobb, ha része a helyi társadalomnak az a tanár, tehát a gyerekek is idevalók, ismeri az embereket, a szokásaikat, a beszédmodorukat, hát része kell, hogy legyen, hogy tudjon együttműködni a szülővel és a gyerekekkel.”

11 Her views and attitudes are analysed in Németh 2024b.

12 „de olyan is van, hogy direkt egy kicsit föl kell rázni valamit, tehát egy kicsit ilyen motiváló vagy ilyen helyzeteket megoldó vagy fegyelmi helyzeteket megoldó szituációban azért előjön az, hogy én elkezdek ő-zni”.

13 „De azt azt tudják, hogy az tuti, hogy szidás. Amikor én már ő-zök, akkor már ott baj van.”

14 It is important to note that this is based on self-report, and we have not been able to verify these answers.

15 „Mert szerintem ez egy ilyen [...] nyilván van egy szerep, amikor bemész egy osztályba, hogy oda ki kell állni, ott van egy megjelenési formád.”

16 „Hát mer mer ugye az, hogy ő önmagát adja az órán, ugye a tanárnak az nagyon fontos a hivatásában, hogy önmagammat tudjam kifelé adni a gyerekeknek, mer ők arra vevők, hogy- hogyha látják, hogy egy mű- ál- meg egy póz amibe én vagyok, akkor soha nem fognak tudni elfogadni sem, és amiket mondok sem úgy fogadják el, akármilyen tárgyról beszélünk.”

role as a teacher than he does at home. The possibility that he himself could be a teacher using his own regional dialect does not seem to occur to his mind.¹⁷ Others have also suggested that being a teacher is a role, and they do not speak regional dialect with parents during office hours or parent-teacher meetings.

We asked not only about the teachers' regional dialect speech but also about those of the students. The question was whether it was the teacher's job to correct regional dialect features. All 30 teachers said that it was clearly not their job and that they do not correct them, as a regional dialect is not an imperfection. Four of them added that they would indicate in written work that pupils should write according to the standard.

The perspectives of two teachers are worth highlighting. One of them said: "There are sometimes words, that slip out, I hear them right away, and I correct them right away."¹⁸ He explains why he does not use the regional dialect at school this way: "there I am a teacher, my role there is to be a teacher".¹⁹ On the subject of correcting regional dialect use, he said: "I don't think it's my job, but I do correct it, but it's not very common."²⁰ In other words, it is not known how often this happens, nor it is known why a dialect feature is being corrected. A few sentences later, he adds that he does not correct the pupils: "Because I would be hurting the child's identity a little bit."²¹ When he makes this important argument referring to the children's identity, it contradicts his earlier claim that he sometimes corrects the pupils. But this may be related to the fact that as a teacher he consciously avoids the use of regional dialect, even though he tolerates the usage of other colleagues ("I think it's fine for her to speak like that."²²), he assesses quite differently in his own case.

In the context of using the standard language and regional dialect, we also asked whether it was the teacher's task to ensure the survival of the regional dialect. Most of them argued that it is the teacher's task, for example, not to criticize or correct the students' speech or to encourage them to use the regional dialect. Some are hesitant, for example because they believe it is a kind of tradition-keeping, and that may not be a teacher's task. Others interpreted the question as a mandatory task, and they are not aware of such a task. Three teachers (from the three research locations) say that it is not (yet) a task because pupils are familiar with the regional dialect, and they use it. Only one of them reflects on her

17 See more details in Németh 2024b.

18 „Egy-egy szó van, mikor kicsúszik, és úgy csúszik ki, azt egyből hallom, de egyből kijavítom.”

19 „ott én tanár vagyok, ott nekem az a szerepem, hogy tanár vagyok”.

20 „szerintem nem feladatom ez, de ki szoktam javítani, de nem nagyon szokott ilyen lenni.”

21 „Azért mert valahol az identitását sérteném meg ezzel egy picikét a gyerekeknek.”

22 „Szerintem nyugodtan beszéljen így.”

own classroom speech when she says that the teachers are discouraging the use of the regional dialect when they do not use it in class.

Most of the teachers do not correct their students' use of regional dialects, and many of them feel it is their duty to do something to preserve dialects. However, this positive attitude is modified by comments made in other parts of the interviews. A teacher in Szeged says that regional dialect is beautiful: "Because I consider dialect to be the jewel and ornament of our language, and I would be sorry if it were to disappear from our language because it makes our language beautiful."²³ However, a few sentences later, in response to the question what disturbs her in speech, she mentions examples, such as *csináli*, *mondi* (the verb suffix is different from standard Hungarian: *csinálja* 's/he does sth', *mondja* 's/he says sth'). The suffix is a bit archaic but a typical feature of the Szeged dialect, i.e. she does not know the dialect suffix, so she does not attribute the grammatical differences to the regional dialect. Some teachers correct traditional dialectal forms such as *mén* (standard Hungarian *megy* 's/he goes') or the personal pronoun *ű* [y:] (standard Hungarian *ő* [ø:] 's/he').

The latter view demonstrates what is also evident in other interviews, namely that there are non-standard phenomena that are acceptable if speakers identify them as regional dialectal features, but if they do not, they are associated with less education and are treated as an educational and social marker. One teacher reflects on this dilemma: "but there are a lot of words that I don't really know if they are dialectal or just used by more uneducated people."²⁴ Since non-standard items and grammatical errors are invariably corrected by teachers, it can be difficult for pupils to decide whether a linguistic phenomenon is a regional dialect feature or a grammatical error (from a prescriptive point of view). A similar observation has been documented by Winifred Davies (2006) in Germany: teachers were consistent in their positive assessment of the standard, but only relatively stable of what specific language forms counted as standard, and there were very large differences between teachers in terms of tolerance (Davies 2006, 485-486).

Another key question explored in the study was whether teachers viewed the promotion of standard Hungarian as part of their professional responsibility, particularly in relation to regional dialects. Two respondents answered that promoting standard Hungarian is not their task, but it could be; two others rejected the idea that promoting standard Hungarian fell within their duty, and one said that the teacher should illustrate the standard but not promote it. As one of them summarized it starting with a rhetorical question: "But why promote it? Because then you are already doing something against the existence

23 „Mert én a tájszólást a nyelvünk ékének, díszének tartom, és sajnálnám, ha kikopna a nyelvünk, mert ettől szép a nyelvünk.”

24 „de van egy csomó olyan szó, amiről én nem tudom igazán, hogy az most nyelvjárási vagy csak éppen tanulatlanabb emberek használják.”

of local characteristics.”²⁵ Only a small minority—five out of thirty teachers—believe that standard Hungarian should not be promoted over regional dialects which is to say, only five subscribe to the concept of additive bidialectism, a concept that values both the regional dialects and the standard variety as complementary rather than hierarchical. In contrast, a majority affirmed that they should promote standard Hungarian, and some of them called it “correct speech”. This framing implicitly positioned regional dialects as linguistically “incorrect” or subordinate, despite of the fact that most of the participants simultaneously acknowledged the cultural value of dialects as traditions worth preserving. The tension here is striking: while regional varieties were romanticized as a heritage, standard Hungarian was framed as the pragmatic, rule-governed variety essential for formal communication and social mobility. Several teachers further emphasized that promoting “correct speech” extended beyond mere usage of the standard variety; it also required adherence to prescriptive grammatical and orthographic norms.

As for the standard language, language variation and varieties, the latest National Core Curriculum (NCC 2020) is theoretically modern, aligning with contemporary pedagogical and sociolinguistic theories. It emphasizes language awareness, the relationship between language and identity, and linguistic diversity (cf. Jánk 2024, 222). It requires appropriate language use in different situations, but does not require the use of standard language, only in writing.²⁶ However, there is an exception: “Students’ language expressions should follow the grammatical and orthographic rules of correct Hungarian.”²⁷ (NCC 2020, 301). However, further regulations of the curricula adhere prescriptive views. As Parapatics (2024, 193–194) pointed out, the official guidelines for the Hungarian school leaving exam disregard students’ dialectal backgrounds, privileging the standard language and penalizing dialectal features, thus implicitly undermining linguistic diversity. The question remains whether teaching practice aligns with this requirement. The thirty interviews conducted with teachers reveal a picture very similar to that described by Andrea Parapatics. Based on her experience in public education, she observed that most teachers hold a positive attitude toward regional dialects—or at least what they perceive as such—and strive to foster students’ respect for them. However, in practice, many tend to adopt a standard-centered approach (Parapatics 2020a, 69).

Finally, it should also be noted that many teachers—regardless of whether they support the dialect—report correcting linguistic errors

25 „De hát miért terjessze? Mert akkor már ellene tesz annak, hogy a helyi sajátosságok meglegyenek.”

26 The same can be stated for the previous version of National Core Curriculum [2012] (Parapatics 2020b: 60).

27 „A tanulók nyelvi megnyilatkozásai megfeleljenek a magyar nyelvhelyesség, illetve helyesírás szabályainak.”

in students' speech (following prescriptive rules). The results reveal an ideological gap: despite teachers' awareness of the symbolic value of dialects, their conception of linguistic authority is still deeply rooted in standard Hungarian, mirroring larger social hierarchies viewing standardization as legitimate.

4. Conclusions

In our sample of respondents, attitudes towards regional dialects, whether they are negative or tolerant, do not appear to be dependent on the research site, i.e. whether the teacher teaches in a village, a town or a city. This may be due to the small sample size of 30, the fact that some teachers commute from other cities (e.g. from Szeged), or similarities in their higher education backgrounds. Therefore, it seems unpredictable whether a student may encounter a teacher who respects their vernacular or another one who corrects the regional dialect features and insists on using the standard. Consequently, it can happen that one teacher constantly corrects non-standard language use, while another is tolerant of non-standard variants.

Davies reported similar results in her survey of teachers in Germany, where she also found large individual differences (Davies 2001, 2006). In Austria, however, the degree to which the standard is demanded over local variations varies by region and by the type of school (Buchner-Elspaß 2018). It must be noted, however, that teachers' attitudes toward non-standard varieties vary from country to country (cf. Walsh 2021).

Since in our research we also interviewed parents and grandparents about the same topics, dialect and standard usage in school, and teacher talk, we plan to compare their expectations with what we have presented in this study about teachers.

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