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**THE IMPACT OF HUNGARIAN ON SLOVAK LANGUAGE USE  
IN BILINGUAL MILIEU**



This paper as an output of the sociolinguistic project EFOP-3.4.3-16-2016-00023 presents the outcomes of a field research of the relationship between language and thought under the impact of contacts of the Hungarian and Slovak language influenced by analogical grammatical transfer. We intend to present the contact of Hungarian and Slovak spoken by bilinguals with the methods of sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics. The interpretation is based on the theory of the analogy in language, contact and cognitive linguistics. The paper sets out to analyze morphological aspects of the variety and reflects on the relation of language, thought and culture in the two languages by comparing varieties of languages in bilingual milieu.

*Keywords:* bilingualism, interference, analogy, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, Hungarian language, Slovak language.

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## **1. Theoretical approach**

Focusing on the Slovak – Hungarian contact zone, it's worth analyzing the variability of the Hungarian and Slovak language influenced by analogical grammatical transfer. We intend to present the contact of Hungarian and Slovak spoken by bilinguals with the methods of sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics. The paper sets out to analyze morphological aspects of the variety and reflects on the relation of language, thought and culture in the two languages by comparing varieties of languages in bilingual milieu.

One of the challenges of cognitive linguistics is working with varieties of languages. Why do diversity and working with varieties of a language represent a challenge for cognitive linguistics? It is because the flexibility within a language and the alternatives of expression make the situation complicated when comparing languages. If “differences of shifting conceptual representations exist within a single language community“ [Pederson 2007, 1017], which variant shall be chosen? Dealing with the intralingual variability is not easy from a cognitive aspect, most cognitively oriented publications about Slovak [e.g. Kysel'ová – Ivanová 2013] or Hungarian chose the dominant, codified variety for analysis [e.g. Tolcsvai Nagy 2013 and 2017; Magyari 2015, 20–32 and 2016, 175–180; Ladányi 2017, 503–660; Hegedűs 2019]. Due to Paradis [2003, 173–192] and Drahotka-Szabó [2017, 209–226] regional, non-dominant variants of language are more difficult to deal with. The combination of the two aspects: cognitive linguistics and variation sociolinguistics is relatively rare, although in a bilingual community interference between languages is caused by analogical transfer. On analogy in Slovak and Hungarian language see: Dolník [2012, 236], Fehér [2013, 63–83], Flóris [2013, 99–113] and Ladányi [2007]. The relation of Slovak and Hungarian, mostly as an influence of the dominant Slovak on the varieties of Hungarian in Slovakia has been relatively well-researched [recently by Lanstyák 2013, 3–26, Lőrincz 2016, 60–78 and György 2019, 42 – 50]. The other side of the coin, how Hungarian “way of thinking” [Szilágyi N. 1996, 59] affects the use of Slovak has been studied mostly from a normative, educational aspect, e.g. Spáčilová [2016, 190–201] analysed mistakes of learners of Slovak in Hungary.

The dominant method of these researches is extralingual, tracking the social circumstances of the bilingual language situation [Dolník – Pilecky 2012, 3–30; Borbély 2015, 155–179]. The aim of this paper is to present an empirical testing of the cognitive transfer in a bilingual community, because the conceptualisation of reality in language is different, especially in case of bilinguals [Szilágyi N. 1996, 59; Kövecses – Benczes 2010, 157–158]. The grammatical categories of one's mother tongue influence the perception of other languages, as a result, category-explicitness may have correspondence with cognition [Albertazzi 2007, 63–79].

## **2. The hypothesis**

The hypothesis is that Hungarian-Slovak speakers who use Slovak as a dominant language due to social factors of language usage (school, administrative situation, family, work etc.) find translation easier and less strange than those with Hungarian dominance, because they have a stronger Slovak in their language repertoire.

We claim that manifestation of variability in grammaticalised categories is a result of cognitive analogy in Hungarian – Slovak relation. Analogic thinking of bilingual speakers and mix of the images of the world in languages of contact situation result in variability of language in the studied contact area.

Duranti [1997, 174] and Wierzbicka [2014, 420–426] refer about the relevancy of morphology from a cognitive aspect. In this paper we measure the influence of Hungarian grammar on Slovak and the degree of strangeness or convergence of grammaticalised categories of both languages in one area, Central Europe [under the definition of Newerkla 2014, 11–27; Bláha 2015, 147–152 and 2018, 15–25; Januška 2020, 341–350]. The Slovak term *cudzost'* used and explained by Dolník [2015, 13–172], Faragulová [2016, 14–25] and Dobřík [2018] is translated here as *strangeness*. Hegedűs [2012, 219] described the feeling of strangeness during learning a second language, the strangeness of the cultures has been analysed by Šenkár [2018, 43].

### 3. The sociolinguistic questionnaire and the methods

The sociolinguistic field work as a method answering the above questions is based on the recommendations of Pederson [2007, 1024–1027]:

- Recent language use has to be proven;
- Testing the sociocultural environment is needed;
- The researcher should select a domain: e.g. universals of conceptual categorization and focus on the research by topic: grammaticalised domains of shape, number, space, time [Pederson 2007, 1018];
- Drager [2018, 83–84] confirms that translation is a useful method in a comparative work when combining cognitive and sociolinguistic aspects.

As a part of the sociolinguistic project (EFOP-3.4.3-16-2016-00023) 288 questionnaires were filled in South Slovakia's bilingual area in small or medium size towns and villages from Dunajská Streda / Dunaszardahely to Veľké Kapušany / Nagykapos but not in the Hungarian communities of Bratislava / Pozsony or Košice / Kassa, because these cities represent strong Slovak dominant type of language situation. The detailed results of the regional comparing are published by Tóth [2019, 30]. The age of the respondents was significant only from one aspect: age of 20 – 70 was preferred, because it was not the aim of the survey to check the efficiency of Slovak education in schools with Hungarian language of teaching in Slovakia. [On sustainable minority education see Ďurkovičová – Kentoš 2020, 49–56.] Another reason is that this age group was already confronted with more types of language situation, such as levels of education, workplace and official, administrative situations.

The first part of the questionnaires contained questions about the social background of the language use of the respondents from two aspects: where he/she learned Slovak (family / school / work / other) and a self-evaluation of the dominant language in some situations (domains) of language use (family / work and school / friends / official situations). Official situation and school type of bilingualism are remarkable. Family, school, administrative sphere and work are the most important places where respondents got in touch with Slovak, friends and other factors are marginal. Combination of more than 3 factors is also rare. In the use of Slovak the official situations are dominant, often combined with Slovak language use at workplaces. Generally, we can conclude that Slovak is not dominant in family or friend sphere of use, even if it was learnt already in the family. This short preview of the extralingual factors served the division of the questionnaires into two groups: Slovak dominant (SD) bilinguals (n=162 questionnaires) and Hungarian dominant (HD) bilinguals (n=126 questionnaires), who had learned Slovak at school and used it in official situations. Details on the dominant language of bilingual speakers in South Slovakia were published by Tóth [2019].

The most important data collection was in part two, where the task of the respondents was the translation of Hungarian expressions into Slovak. The basis of this interlingual cognitive transfer was the exemplification material of two Hungarian-Slovak comparative monographs in morphosyntax [Misadová 2011, 18–129 and Tóth 2017, 50–241]. It was measured, how strange are grammatical structures reflected by translating. The 122 units to be translated by the respondents were chosen on the base of grammatical symmetry and asymmetry in both languages, the questions were randomised the grades of difficulty were not recognisable for the respondents. The examples to be translated were chosen from morphosyntactically grammaticalised cognitive domains of the language, e.g. possession, gradation, number marking, negation, gender, case marking. These domains are described as grammatical categories by Hegedűs [2010, 201–228] in Hungarian, Kačala [2014] in Slovak and Tóth [2018, 16–23] comparative. The translation was a written task, but not given as “homework”, the field worker had to be always present at filling the survey avoiding help of other persons, handbooks or internet.



During translation, a parallel task of the respondents was a self-evaluation of strangeness, where one of the following values was possible to choose:

- A: same logic in both languages, calqued like in a mirror
- B: some thinking needed at translation, different construction of grammar
- C: totally strange, problematic to express in the other language

The aim of the above three categories of self-evaluation was the detecting of the cognitive background of the confrontation of Slovak and Hungarian, but this method can cause a weakness of the study, because respondents are of course not linguists or translators and can misunderstand the above scale. However this level of subjectivity can yet be tolerated in sociolinguistic methodology, therefore the questionnaire had a sufficient reliability. These three levels of strangeness were used for checking the HD / SD categorization [for more details see Tóth 2019, 31].

The most important part of this research is the control of the sociolinguistic data with the help of a cognitive process, the translation. Changing lexical and grammatical units to those of another language make the respondents feel the strangeness of the structures. The hypothesis was that the self-confidence of the translation fortifies the distribution to HD / SD, so more A responses should be in SD category questionnaires and more C answers in the HD category.

#### 4. The cognitive impact of Hungarian on Slovak

Although the answers of the respondents contained several creative lexical solutions of the translated units, (e.g. *szájkosár nélkül* 'without muzzle': *bez košíka na hubu / bez náhubku / bez ohubka / bez ústny košiar / bez košíka na papuľu / bez obojku / bez náustku*; *féllábú* 'one legged': *invalid /kalika / kripel / chromý / postihnutý / amputovaný / polnožný*; *szuper akció* 'great action / discount': *super akcia / super zľava / výborná akcia / dobrá akcia / skvelá akcia / vynikajúce podujatie / výhodná akcia / super ponuka / super zábava* [see Simon 2010, 705–720]) the analysis of the research outputs does not focus on lexical transfer [Huťková 2011, 91–105] lexical synonymy or interlingual polysemy of the translated units, because grammaticalised cognitive domains show deeper structures of analogical thinking resulting variability.

##### 4.1. Evaluating strangeness

The first step of the evaluation of the translated units was the measuring of the degree of strangeness.

##### 4.1.1. Degree of strangeness in the SD group (of 162 evaluated questionnaires):

A (same analogy): *domy – házak* 'houses' (additive morpheme), *senki sem tud semmit – nikto nevie nič* 'NEGwho NEGknows nothing' (multiple negation) and analytic form:

SD		HD
157	<i>lila kabát</i> 'purple coat'	120
2	<i>fialový kabát</i>	1
1	<i>fialová bunda</i>	0
1	<i>failový / purpurový kabát</i>	0
1	<i>lila kabát</i>	0
1	<i>kabát</i>	0
0	<i>fialovi kabát</i>	4
0	∅	1

Tab. 1

B (some difference): *két fiú – dvaja chlapci* 'two boys' (animacy), *közeleg a nyári szünet – blízia sa letné prázdniny* 'the summer vacation is coming' (pluralia tantum) and suppletion:

SD		HD
117	<i>jó – jobb</i> 'good – better'	112
28	<i>dobry – lepší</i>	7
8	<i>dobré – lepšie</i>	3
3	<i>dobre – lepšie</i>	0
2	<i>lepší</i>	0
1	<i>dobre</i>	0
1	<i>dobré – lepší</i>	0

1	<i>lepši – lepšie</i>	0
1	<i>dobře – najlepšie</i>	1
1	<i>dobrý – lepšie</i>	1
0	<i>dobrý</i>	2

Tab. 2.

C (totally strange): *kenyeret sütő pék – pékár, ktorý pečie chlieb* 'baker baking a bread' (gerund), *Itt épülne fel a kórház – tu by sa postavila nová nemocnica* 'the new hospital would be built here' (passive) and (genitive plural above 5):

SD		HD
137	<i>öt szív / pat' srdc</i>	96
7	<i>pat' srdce</i>	13
6	<i>pat' s'rc / pat' srd</i>	1
5	<i>pat' srdcov</i>	8
5	<i>pat' srdcia</i>	5
2	<i>pat' srdci</i>	0
0	Ø	3

Tab. 3.

In Slovak and other Slavic languages there is a formal distinction between a smaller amount of plural (2 to 4) and above 5, which is a matter of strangeness that's why HD bilinguals use more non-standard variants.

#### 4.1.2. Degree of strangeness in the HD group (total 126):

A: negation and additive plural as in SD, adverbial and attributive constructions (*szép versek – penké básne*), coordination;

B: prepositional constructs with case, different use of copula verb *a ház magas – dom je vysoký* 'the house is high', verbal aspect, suppletion;

C: possessive adjective, different rection.

A partial summary from the aspect of strangeness is that iconic, transparent structures, which are logical in both languages are considered to be "light" for bilingual speakers at their self-evaluation [Ladányi 2007, 29–34; Haspelmath 2008, 1–33; Mošat'ová 2010, 11–65].

#### 4.2. Cognitive analogy in some grammaticalised categories

The translation showed an impact of Hungarian on the Slovak formulations, causing differences in the formulation of some grammaticalised categories. Here are some examples of deviation from the dominant variety of Slovak in constructions expressing possessive, gender and number. Even after excluding the lexical varieties, at the evaluation of the grammatical data, a lot of correlations had to be observed, e. g.: *5 perc múlva kimegyek fáért.* 'in five minutes I go for wood' has these combinations of possible interference:

*za / o 5 minút* (preposition)

+

*pôjdem / idem* (verbal aspect)

+

*za / po / pre drevo / strom* (rection and animate / inanimate)

The analysis had to be processed by choosing the analogic interlingual grammatical transfer from multiple dimensions of translated varieties.

**4.2.1. Possessive constructions** show a big variability even from an intralingual aspect [on Slovak see Szabó Mihályová 2010, 287–292; Chomová 2011; Kačala 2018, on Hungarian see Ladányi 2008, 522–534; Alberti – Farkas 2016, 111–125]. The sociolinguistic research of cognitive analogy in bilingual language use results a high amount of varieties, too:



SD	<i>bátyám háza</i> ‘(the) house of my brother’	HD
91	<i>bratov dom</i>	74
43	<i>dom môjho brata</i>	26
	<i>dom môjho brata (bratov dom)</i>	1
7	<i>dom môjho staršieho brata</i>	8
6	<i>strýkov dom</i>	5
3	<i>dom strýka</i>	0
2	<i>dom staršieho brata</i>	0
2	<i>môjho brata dom</i>	0
2	<i>ujov dom</i>	3
1	<i>dom môjho strýka</i>	0
1	<i>bratov domov</i>	0
1	<i>byt môjho brata</i>	0
1	<i>dom bratranca</i>	0
1	<i>nevestinec</i>	0
0	<i>bratovi dom / dom bratovi</i>	5
0	<i>môj bratov dom</i>	1
0	Ø	3

Tab. 4.

The above examples show that genitive form with personal pronoun *dom môjho brata* ‘house of my brother’ is alternating with the possessive genitive form when the possessor is a person *bratov dom* ‘brother’s house’. A possessive construction combined with animacy resulted more frequent presence of the possessive adjective *otcova láska*, 50 both in SD and HD group in relation with the adverbial construction *otcovská láska*, which has been used 105 times by SD bilinguals and 68 times by the HD ones.

The following table shows the case how respondents dealt with the lack of *habeo*-verb in Hungarian:

SD	<i>háza van</i> ‘(he/she) has a house’	HD
105	<i>má dom</i>	113
11	<i>vlastní dom</i>	4
3	<i>vlastní / má dom</i>	5
2	<i>dom má</i>	1
2	<i>má svoj dom</i>	1
1	<i>má dom / je majiteľom domu</i>	0
1	<i>má dom – vlastní si dom</i>	0
1	<i>mám dom</i>	0
0	<i>má vlastný dom</i>	2
1	<i>vlastní dom / byt</i>	0

Tab. 5.

Both Hungarian and Slovak has more alternatives to express possession with dative or genitive as seen in the examples of Buzássyová [1980, 261–280]: *Nevypi mi kávu*. ‘\*Don’t drink the coffee for me’ vs. *Nevypi moju kávu*. ‘Don’t drink my coffee’. These variants are not under the impact of Hungarian, both are standard. In Slovak, we have a word order possession – possessor, in Hungarian reverse. 113 of the SD respondents and 79 of the HD group used the dominant standard Slovak variant *okno domu* ‘window of the house’ without cognitive transfer from Hungarian. The Slovak possessive adjective used for animate possessor has the same word order as in Hungarian, that is the reason why *domovo /-é okno* ‘\*house’s window’ was used in 9 HD and 4 SD solutions, which differs from standard. An alternative with prepositional construction *okno na dome* ‘window on the house’ had a relatively high frequency (SD: 25 HD: 19), this may be a way out when the translator is not sure. The *habeo* verb was used only in one case: *dom má okno* ‘the house has a window’.



**4.2.2. Number** is a category connected to reality, the way of thinking of speakers and the reflections of reality can be different in languages. Contrary to Slovak pluralia tantum, Hungarian prefers singularity [Schreierová 2018, 187; Hegedűs 2019, 320, 526–527], pairs of things and paired organs represent one unity, e. g. Slovak *jednonohý* 'one legged' ↔ Hungarian *féllábú* '\*half legged'. This unit had more varieties than the average, only 76 of the SD and 64 of the HD respondents translated *jednonohý*, the dominant Slovak variant, Hungarian influenced the cognition of one third of them and used a contact variant, *polnohý*. Besides these solutions, we found constructions with 'without' *bez nohy / beznohý / bez jendej nohy* and with the *habeo* verb *má / nemá nohu* in a smaller amount, under 10 each.

The dominant Slovak variant of *kétØ fiúØ* 'two boys' is *dvaja chlapci* in Slovak, marking plural and animacy in one morpheme, while Hungarian is analytic. An analogic transfer of inanimate from Hungarian occurred in 3 SD and 15 HD answers, using the numeral form *dva*, which can be considered as a relatively significant interlingual analogy. We found 6 HD and 1 SD solution with the female form *dve*, which shows a combined interaction of gender, number and animacy, which is a total strangeness for Hungarians in the Slovak language. Another illustrative example of number marking results, where *dve* marks neutr. *dva* is for mask. and *dvoje* stands for pluralia tantum:

SD	<i>két gereblye</i> 'two rakes'	HD
117	<i>dve hrable</i>	95
12	<i>dva hrable</i>	6
10	<i>dvoje hrable</i>	8
8	<i>dvoje hrablí</i>	6
3	Ø	6
3	<i>2 hrable</i>	0
1	<i>hrable</i>	0
1	<i>dve motýle</i>	0
1	<i>dva rýle</i>	1
1	<i>modré hrable</i>	0
1	<i>dve hrabky</i>	0
1	<i>dve hrablia</i>	1
1	<i>dvi hrabli</i>	0
1	<i>dve</i>	1
0	<i>dva hrablí</i>	1
0	<i>dve rebríky</i>	1

Tab. 6.

**4.2.3. Gender as a nominal classifier** is an abstract category in Slovak, bilingual speakers of non-generic Hungarian deal with this strangeness, in an average of 10% of the responses we found masculine forms even if the person was a woman, e. g. *Júlia párttag* 'J. is a member of a party' – *Júlia je člen* (mask.) / *členka* (fem.) *strany*.

Instrumental is used in Slovak for solving the collision of singular and plural, resp. two genders [Kačala 2014, 54]. This translation task showed the biggest variability, e.g. the sentences *Kassa metropolisz* 'Košice is a metropolitan city' (because the Slovak name of the city Košice is feminine and plural, but the name of the city in Hungarian is not in plural) and *Katinka sikeres sportoló* 'Katinka is a successful sportswoman' (because there is no gender in Hungarian).

Only a few respondents (3 of the SD and 5 of the HD group) used the high prestige standard instrumental construction, most of them translated the feminine *šporovkyňa*, only 2 of the SD and 5 of the HD group wrote *športovec*, which is a generalised masculine version under the impact of Hungarian.

## 5. Conclusion

The methods of sociolinguistics and cognitive contrastive analysis used in this study discovered some aspects the interrelation of variability, cognition and bilingualism in the compared languages. Interlingual analogy is an "error" from a normative aspect, but it is a natural manifestation of the influence of different linguistic images of worlds, which has consequences on translation and language teaching. The number of



zero answers is under 5%, which shows an active knowledge of both languages, but a typical analogic transfer occurred even at Slovak dominant bilinguals filling this questionnaire: the contact variant of ‘travels by bus’ \**cestuje s autobusom* ‘\*travels with bus’ has a high representation 47 of 162, while 115 translated the dominant standard variant *cestuje autobusom*. The biggest degree of variation was caused by overlapping grammatical categories, which are strange from the aspect of the other language, and the respondents had to concentrate on more of them: gender + number, number + animacy or possession + animacy.

The outputs of the analysis of the questionnaires show a big degree (90 – 95%) of use of the dominant variant of Slovak of the studied constructions in both groups of bilingual speakers (Hungarian dominant and Slovak dominant). This fact is in correlation with the high representation of school type of bilingualism. The first part of the questionnaire showed that the place of Slovak language acquisition is mostly the school, which has a normative effect resulting in unification. This is strengthened by high percent of Slovak language use in administrative situations and the high prestige of the standardised variety of Slovak, described by Dolník [2010, 166–181 and 235–244].

Both Hungarian and Slovak language have a great diversity in minority milieu and “this is changing ... synchronically and diachronically in the regions” [Šenkár 2019, 260] – e.g. in South Slovakia inhabited dominantly by Hungarians. Thus, the study resulted that we cannot specify a defined language variety of Slovak in South Slovakia, only individual differentiation under the cognitive impact of Hungarian. The analogical transfer of Hungarian grammatical categories in the translation process is detectable in both groups of the bilinguals, with no significant correlation with the dominant language.

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## ВЛИЯНИЕ ВЕНГЕРСКОГО ЯЗЫКА НА ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СЛОВАЦКОГО В БИЛИНГВАЛЬНОЙ СРЕДЕ

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Данная работа, являясь результатом проекта Language in the City, рассматривает мультимодальную семиосферу лингвистических ландшафтов Словакии, и в сравнительном аспекте представляет данные полевых исследований о взаимосвязи между языком и мышлением при контактах венгерского и словацкого языков, вызванные аналогичной грамматической интерференцией (грант № EFOP-3.4.3-16-2016-00023). Мы намерены представить взаимосвязь между венгерским и словацким языками, на которых говорят билингвы, с помощью методов социолингвистики и когнитивной лингвистики. Интерпретация основана на теории аналогии в языке, контактной и когнитивной лингвистике. В статье ставится задача проанализировать морфологические аспекты многообразия и поразмышлять о взаимосвязи языка, мышления и культуры в двух языках путем сравнения вариаций языков в двуязычной среде.

**Ключевые слова:** билингвизм, интерференция, аналогия, социолингвистика, когнитивная лингвистика, венгерский язык, словацкий язык.

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