

The problems and advantages of looking at Hungarian as a pluricentric language

Although there are a number of publications available on certain aspects of describing Hungarian as a pluricentric language, no fundamental research has been devoted to the general arguments for and against looking at this language as a pluricentric one in the first place. This is what this paper sets out to investigate: the pros and cons of treating Hungarian as a pluricentric language. Accordingly, the fundamental – but by no means simple – question that forms the basis of this study is whether Hungarian qualifies as a pluricentric language or not. To decide this question, numerous aspects need to be taken into consideration, including the official status of the different (dominant and non-dominant) varieties of Hungarian, the linguistic distance among these varieties, the number of their speakers, their influence on one another, the acceptance of pluricentricity by the given speech community, its relevance in identity formation, etc.

One of the main reasons why the status of Hungarian as a pluricentric language is questioned from time to time is that the official recognition is completely lacking in the case of most of its non-dominant varieties. Even though this would be one of the most basic criteria for a language to be regarded as pluricentric, most scholars still look at Hungarian as a pluricentric language, since there are far more arguments that support its pluricentric view, and the lack of its official recognition is due to political reasons in most of the regions. Various issues related to this basic problem are addressed in this paper, with the fundamental aim always being the detection of reasons for the problems that arise.

Furthermore, the possible existence of different levels of pluricentricity is also investigated in the case of Hungarian, as well as the overwhelmingly exonormative models of codification that can be observed with respect to its non-dominant varieties. The latter is treated as part of the rather monocentric approach that is characteristic of Hungarian speech communities in general. Part of this paper also aims at finding the reasons for this monocentric dominance and suggesting ways to do away with it.

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