

Tanulmány

Krisztina Fehér

Status-based preference of varieties in bidialectal kindergarteners: an experimental study

Abstract

This study investigates developing linguistic prestige of the standard/local varieties in bidialectal kindergarteners whose linguistic environment has a high level of interference between two varieties of different social prestige. To date, little is known about linguistic preferences of kindergarteners who are exposed to a wide range of speech forms on a continuum of the standard (high-status) variety and a local (low-status) dialect. Particularly the emergence of metalinguistic awareness of the prestige of the varieties in a highly interfering bidialectal environment is understudied. 77 Hungarian 5-7-year-olds participated in a VGT–MGT quantitative experiment along with a brief qualitative data collection. A significant preference for the high-status variety and an emerging metalinguistic awareness of the different prestige of two varieties have been found in bidialectal children as early as age 6.

Keywords: bidialectal kindergarteners, local dialect, metalinguistic awareness, standard variety, status-based preference

1 Introduction

Despite the fact that most children grow up in linguistically diverse environments, there are few studies on the development of linguistic preferences in bilingual children (Anisfeld & Lambert 1964), particularly in children before/around school admission (DeJesus et al. 2017). Even fewer publications have targeted bilingual/bidialectal young children who live in a linguistic environment where there is neither an “official language”/“lingua franca”–“local language” relation in bilingualism (Day 1980; Kinzler, Shutts & Spelke 2012), nor diglossia in bidialectism (Häcki Buhofer et al. 1994), but a high level of interference (continuum) between two or more languages/varieties in many speech domains (Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming). The development of quantitative preferences (manifested in the presence/degree of biases), as well as qualitative attitudes (manifested in metalinguistic comments on biases) towards language varieties are a somewhat open question in young children from a linguistic environment with a standard–regional dialect continuum of a high-status variety and a low-status dialect. This study makes a modest contribution to the field.

2 The development of a status-based linguistic preference in bidialectals

A dialect that is overtly considered as prestigious by a society is called “standard variety” in sociolinguistics: it has undergone standardization and codification (cf. Trudgill 1992: 12, 71). Though “standard variety” is a necessary and widely used term, one cannot specify it by a clear-cut definition. Adults with diverse backgrounds might consider different instances of a variable as part of a high-status variety. There is also variation in how high prestige is given to the respective dialect in a certain community, as well as in how hegemonic and stable the linguistic status of the respective variety is. However, it is a good predictor of a particular variant to have a high status if it occurs in writing, is spoken by educated native speakers, and is taught to foreigners. All other varieties, such as regional, ethnic etc. dialects, are usually referred to as non-standard varieties (cf. Trudgill 1992: 70–71).

As for the development of a status-based preference across age, around school admission monolinguals/monodialectals change their initial familiarity-based (in-group) biases (Kinzler, Dupoux & Spelke 2007) to the adult pattern of linguistic evaluation (Labov 1966): they usually show a robust status-based preference for the standard variety with overt prestige (“smarter”), in some cases along with loyalty-based (in-group) and/or solidarity-based (out-group) preferences for non-standard varieties with covert prestige (“nicer”) (Preston 1998). However, bidialectals with a standard–regional dialect continuum are “in between” two dialects, thus the “in-group”–“out-group” dichotomy cannot be applied to their reactions towards the wide range of varieties on the given continuum. In this respect, they are similar to bilinguals, though their “bidialectal mode” might lead to even more intensive code switching and code mixing than in the bilingual mode revealed by Grosjean (1998).

One can assume that bilingual/bidialectal children might consider language diversity as natural, so they might be less judgmental towards non-standard varieties than their monolingual/monodialectal peers. However, related findings on bilinguals are contradictory. For instance, Hawaiian kindergarteners preferred low-prestige Hawaiian Creole to high-prestige “standard” English, but this pattern of preference was already reversed by the first grade (Day, 1980). 5-11-year-old Xhosa–English bilinguals attending English schools preferred the lingua franca English to the vernacular Xhosa (Kinzler, Shutts & Spelke 2012). In contrast, 10-year-old Canadian bilingual schoolchildren appeared to be less judgmental in their evaluations towards differences between English and French than monolinguals (Anisfeld & Lambert 1964). Furthermore, 5-7-year-old American children attending a French immersion school demonstrated no preference between English and French speakers, and similarly, their bilingual Korean–American peers did not favor one of their languages over the other. However, both groups showed preference for American-accented English as opposed to French-accented English in the former group of participants, and to Korean-accented English in the latter one (DeJesus et al. 2017).

The pattern of language acquisition might also be as different in bidialectals and in monodialectals as observed in bilinguals compared to monolinguals: a temporary dip (U-shaped learning) is often reported in bilingual children’s language acquisition in general (see Bialystok et al. 2009: 90–92 for a review). Though bilinguals’/bidialectals’ preferences (if any) for a high-prestige language variety might emerge earlier because they have better conditions to learn which variety has a high status in their societies, it is crucial whether the higher degree of variation in their linguistic input boosts or impedes them in differentiating between the varieties of their linguistic environments, which is a prerequisite of preference. It has been suggested that infants’ discrimination abilities may correlate with the variability of the input

they are exposed to: a higher degree of variation leads to a temporary dip in their perceptual sensitivity to acoustic differences between varieties (Kitamura et al. 2006). Similarly, high variability of the linguistic input boosts (over)generalization in the formation of lexical representations during word learning (Singh 2008). However, the precise nature and interval of the U-shaped learning of cross-variety discrimination still has to be clarified (see Kaiser & Kasberger 2018: 447–450 for a review).

The distance between the social status of the given varieties might also matter a lot. The direction/degree of the developing preferences and the timing of the acquisition of sociolinguistic prestige of varieties appear to be highly context-dependent, often along with U-shaped learning of the linguistic prestige of varieties. Children living in diglossic Switzerland also preferred High German to the local Swiss-German dialect at the beginning of the school years, but after a short while, they favored their regional variety instead, in accordance with the adults' language attitudes (Häcki Buhofer et al. 1994). Austrian children, speaking "Umgangssprache", i.e. a variety of Austrian German between the poles of the Bavarian–Standard continuum, displayed no clear pattern of preferences before the age of 7, and expressed significant positive bias towards the standard variety of Austrian German between 7-9, but around 10 a decrease was observed in their preference (Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming).

Gender-related differences in the process of first language acquisition and in speech production of varieties have been reported in general. 2-5-year-old but not older girls consistently outperformed boys in multiple linguistic tasks (Bornstein, Hahn & Haynes 2004), 3-4-year-old girls appeared to be more advanced than boys in one of the subtests in discriminating dialects of British English (Jeffries 2019). Mothers used a higher proportion of non-standard variants to their sons compared to the variables produced to their daughters (Foulkes, Docherty & Watt 2005). Like adults (Milroy 1980; Trudgill 1972), 6- and 10-year-old Italian boys, as well as 10-11-year-old French boys with long-term local friends produced variants of the regional dialect more frequently than their female peers did (Barbu, Martin & Chevrot 2014; Cremona & Bates 1977). Interestingly, gender differences usually are not found in linguistic evaluations of young monolinguals/monodialectals (Cremona & Bates 1977). 3-6-year-old girls appeared to have somewhat more radical judgments on varieties than boys (Rosenthal 1977). Though a qualitative test on bidialectal adolescents' preferences has not revealed gender differences in the reactions towards varieties, during qualitative interviews on adolescents' attitudes male informants were more tolerant towards the local variety (Ladegaard 1998). We have little data on young bidialectals living with a standard–regional dialect continuum: a non-significantly stronger bias in girls in a quantitative test has been reported towards the high-prestige variety (Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming).

3 Aims and questions

The current research is part of a larger project on monolingual, bidialectal kindergarteners' and first graders' reactions to language varieties. This paper is an attempt to contribute to the field by investigating both the levels of (quantitative) preferences and (qualitative) attitudes in kindergarteners living with a standard–regional dialect continuum in which the poles of varieties represent a great distance in status. Possible differences across sexes indicating a gendered socialization of linguistic evaluation in young bidialectals are also of interest.

A population with an underrepresented language has been chosen: to date, there is no research targeting young children's reactions towards regional varieties of Hungarian. Among adults, the standard variety has a quite stable overt prestige throughout the Hungarian language area, while regional dialects are usually highly stigmatized with or without covert prestige (Kontra 2003). The present study investigated 5-7-year-olds: though in many cases from the international literature a preference for the high-status variety was registered in the first years of school in children (Day 1980; Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming), regarding style variables, it has been demonstrated that Hungarian adults have already transmitted some of their language ideologies to children before schooling (Szabó & Mátyus 2014).

Because displaying preference for one language variety over another requires the ability of differentiating between them, the research procedure usually begins with a discrimination test, and, in case of a positive result, it continues with a preference test (e.g. Rosenthal 1977). In the present study, however, the focus has been on the evaluational behavior, thus a discrimination task would have been carried out only if the findings of the preference test had required it. A positive result (i.e. a significant difference in reactions towards the two varieties, particularly when it is also corroborated by a non-significant difference in a control group) shows that children have both discrimination abilities and linguistic biases. A negative result (i.e. non-significant difference in reactions towards the varieties) needs further research as it indicates two possibilities. Either the kindergarteners are able to differentiate between the given varieties but they do not display any preference or they do not exhibit a bias because they cannot even perceive the differences between the two varieties.

The aim was to shed light on the following questions:

(Q-1) Do 5-7-year-olds living with varieties “in between” the standard (high-status) variety and the local (low-status) dialect show any preference for one of the varieties at the poles of the continuum?

(Q-2) To what extent and regarding what variables (if any) are they aware of their preferences?

(Q-3) Is there any sign of a gendered socialization of their linguistic evaluations?

4 The *í*-dialect of Hungarian and the attitudes towards it

My large field experience regarding a small town in Hajdúság in the Tisza dialectal region of Northeastern Hungary has drawn attention to the continuum between the standard variety and the local base dialect spoken there.¹ After a background field study (including participant observation, questionnaires and interviews with adults) had been conducted to ensure the eligibility of the given community, this place was chosen for the investigation.

Though there is variation observed in phonology, lexicon and morpho-syntax, when one compares the standard variety to the local base dialect, three vowel variables are the most characteristic: (e:), (o:) and (ø:). There is a systematic vowel height variation, such as standard [e:] ~ regional [i:] or [ei], standard [o:] ~ regional [ou] or [u:], and standard [ø:] ~ regional [øy] or [y:].

The occurrence of [i:] as a token of the (e:) variable is so distinctive/salient for the local variety that it is referred to as “*í*-dialect” (*szép*: standard [se:p] vs. regional [si:p] ‘beautiful’),

¹ On a personal note, I grew up and have lived there for almost 20 years. Though currently I am not a resident of that area, I still keep an everyday contact with the local community.

though there are also instances of [ei] diphthongs as tokens of the (e:) variable (*két:* standard [ke:t] vs. regional [keit] ‘blue’). Variation in rounded vowels is somewhat different. One can find [u:] as a token of (o:), and [y:] as a token of (ø:) (*asztaltól:* standard [ɒstɒlto:l] vs. regional [ɒstɒltu:l] ‘from the table’; *ő:* standard [ø:] vs. regional [y:] ‘he/she’), but the tokens of the (o:) and (ø:) variables usually occur as [ou] and [øy] closing diphthongs in the *i*-dialect (*jó:* standard [jo:] vs. regional [jou] ‘good’; *szőke:* standard [sø:kɛ] vs. regional [søykɛ] ‘blond’). The [o:] and the [ø:] in stems that show a standard [l] ~ non-standard [∅] variation (*volt* [volt] vs. *vót* [vo:t] ‘was’; *zöld* [zøld] vs. *zöd* [zø:d] ‘green’) also often occur as closing diphthongs without a following [l] in the *i*-dialect ([vout]; [zøyd]) and one can find short mid monophthongs followed by [l] in the standard variety ([volt]; [zøld]) (in detail see Imre 1972; Juhász 2001).

In small towns of Hajdúság, people are bidialectal to different extents: many of them are “in between” the poles of the standard–regional dialect continuum, producing a wide range of variation according to social, style and individual factors (Tukacs-Károlyi 1990), while there is mutual intelligibility among the varieties. To the best of my knowledge, to date, there is no systematic investigation of the present sociolinguistic distribution of the vowel variables in Hajdúság. As for linguistic biases, recently Hanyiszó (2012) has demonstrated that local adolescents show robust negative attitudes towards the *i*-variety.

Relying on the participant observation, questionnaires with 48 parents of kindergarteners and schoolchildren, as well as 7 interviews with schoolteachers I conducted prior to this study in the field,² the standard–regional dialect continuum also applies to the everyday linguistic environment of the local children, i.e. to their families, as well as their kindergartens or schools. The occurrence of local [i:] as a token of the (e:) variable appears to be more stigmatized and less used by adults in the local kindergartens and schools than the local variants of the (o:) and (ø:) variables. In the questionnaires the parent informants were aware of all the three vowel variables. They listed the regional vowel variants as the most characteristic features of the local dialect. They reported using them when talking to their children and in other contexts, as well. During the teacher interviews and the participant observation in the kindergartens, however, the local [i:] variant of the (e:) variable did not occur in either the speech of the teachers or that of the parents, while some local variants of the (o:) and (ø:) variables were produced. The background questionnaires and interviews also revealed linguistic insecurity in local parents and teachers: they displayed both overt prestige of the standard variety and covert prestige of the local dialect, as well as the conflict between them.

5 Methods

Indirect methods are able to access the language-based preferences that the informants do not even make explicit comments about. When Matched-Guise Technique (MGT) is applied (Lambert et al. 1960), pre-recorded stimuli representing two languages/varieties by the same speaker (unbeknownst to the candidates) are played, and the participants are asked to evaluate

² I will analyze the data of the background research in detail in another article. In the present study I will only utilize its findings to estimate the child participants’ linguistic environment. (Since then, I have conducted 74 further questionnaires with parents of local 5-9-year-olds, and their data corroborated the results of the previous field study.)

the speakers heard on rating scales. To test a greater variety of accents and to make the experiment come closer to natural conditions researchers often apply Verbal-Guise Technique (VGT) in which different voices are used in each stimulus set, though in this case they have difficulties of controlling and predicting the impact of the voice quality differences presented (Tajfel 1972). Nevertheless, MGT and VGT are still considered to be the most effective in accessing implicit linguistic preferences. One can also find a large variety of designing child-friendly adaptations of MGT/VGT and applying them to young children (e.g. Day 1980; DeJesus et al. 2017; Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming; Kinzler et al. 2012; Kinzler & DeJesus 2013; Rosenthal 1977).

To adjust to the age, experience and the range of interest of the participants I composed an animal tale and used characters of teachers as storytellers. Based on my background study, the local teachers' speech is "in between" the poles of the two varieties. Furthermore, teachers might also represent a social position of persons in between high-status professions and personal acquaintances for kindergarteners. I applied VGT: when kindergarteners had to judge storytellers, it might have sounded less natural for them to hear the same voice in different varieties, even if they remained unaware of this condition or there was a filler between the stimuli.

I tried to find as similar voices as possible, and I counterbalanced their appearances as standard- and local-accented speakers across conditions. To have even higher control over the possible impact of the voice qualities, I also designed a special, "reverse" MGT where the two guises were based on the difference of the two voice qualities, while the language variety used by the two speakers was the same. For the children assigned to the control group, the two voices were paired up in a way that both storytellers used either the standard or the local variety.

Nevertheless, the reverse MGT is not designed only for control in the quantitative VGT test, but also for providing a pair of conditions for a brief qualitative enquiry at the end of the experiment to gain data of the participants' metalinguistic awareness. By comparing the data from the VGT test conditions to the data from the only-local-variety guises in the reverse MGT, we are able to investigate whether there is any difference in attitudes towards the regional dialect when children have to comment on guises with a contrastive pair of the two varieties and on two local guises without contrast of varieties.

5.1 Participants

Children were recruited from public kindergartens in a small town in Hajdúság. Prior to the research, informed consent forms were sent to parents through the teachers. Only children with signed and returned forms took part in the experiment. 77 children at the age of 5-7 were available. They were mainly 6 years old ($N = 50$), only a few were 5 ($N = 11$) and 7 ($N = 16$) (mean age: $6;3 = 75$ months, range: 60–90 months).³ Both girls ($N = 44$) and boys ($N = 33$) were included in the sample. Only children living in a monolingual, bidialectal Hungarian environment with typical cognitive and linguistic development were recruited.

To ensure the bidialectal linguistic background of the local children, prior to the recruitment I made participant observation each time I arrived at the kindergartens and met

³ In the case of 16 participants only the years are known (five 5-year-olds, ten 6-year-olds and one 7-year-old), the data for the months are missing. The mean age and the age range were calculated based on the data of 61 (80%) participants.

some of the teachers and parents. I also administered sociolinguistic questionnaires with 14 volunteering parents of the potential child participants. During the experiments, the children were asked to listen rather than talk. When they talked for a very short period of time, forms of the local dialect did not occur in their speech production, except the possessive suffix at the end of the word [bɛsɛ:ɟ:ɛ] (*beszédje*) ‘her/his speech’ as opposed to the standard [bɛsɛ:dɛ] (*beszéde*). However, in the background questionnaires, besides their perceptual experiences of the regional variety at home and in the kindergarten, some parents reported that the local dialect occurs in their children’s speech too. They gave examples as follows: the *i*-form of *kenyér* (‘bread’: [kɛɲi:r] vs. standard [kɛɲɛ:r]) (Participant 1), the closing diphthongs/long monophthongs without a following [l] in *volt* and *bolt* (‘was’ and ‘shop’: [vout]/[vo:t] and [bout]/[bo:t] vs. standard [volt] and [bolt]) (Participant 22), the long vowel in *csirke* (‘chicken’: [ʃi:rkɛ] vs. standard [ʃirkɛ]) (Participant 4), and the use of *tengeri* (‘corn’: [tɛŋgɛri]), i.e. a lexical regional variant of the standard *kukorica* ([kukoritʃ]) (Participant 4).

5.2 Materials

Each participant heard two short audio recordings from loudspeakers. There were two identical closed cardboard boxes placed on the table. Each contained stickers and had a label on the top with the name of a female kindergarten teacher used as a character in the experiment (**Figure 1**). Participants were watching drawings of two kindergarten teachers on a screen. The images were identical except for their coloring (**Figure 2**).



Figure 1: Experimental materials: boxes

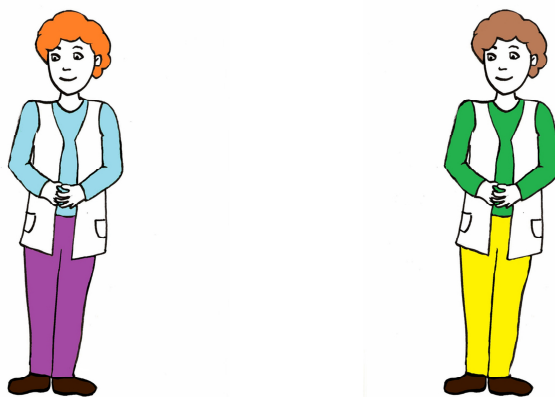


Figure 2: Experimental materials: images

Since the first run was intended to be a pilot study, at that time responses given by the participants ($N = 39$) were recorded only as written notes on a checklist including comments. In the second run ($N = 38$) written notes and audio files were made. Children's responses were audio-recorded to be able to make exact orthographic/phonetic transcriptions of them to verify the accuracy of the written notes afterwards and to obtain additional information (if any) on the children's linguistic awareness (explicit comments on variables) or speech (use of the local dialect). Data were analyzed in CogStat 1.9.0 (Krajcsi 2020).

5.3 Stimuli

Four versions of the tale represented the standard and the local varieties (each variety twice, produced by two female speakers). Knowing that in the region many intermediate varieties of the standard–regional continuum are spoken, as a starting point, I used two extreme varieties as stimuli. Doing so enabled to artificially move from the participants' everyday “in-between” linguistic position so as to make it possible to measure their reactions towards the two components of their linguistic environment separately. The recordings of the standard variety were meant to represent the variety spoken in the media, and the recordings of the regional variety a very conservative speaker of the *í*-dialect (**Table 1**).

Standard variety of Hungarian	<i>í</i> -variety of Hungarian
IPA transcript	
<p>[v go:jɒ e:f ɒ be:ko e:ser vɒlt hɒl nem vɒlt e:lt e:ser e:j go:jɒ e:f e:j be:ko ɒ nɔj go:jɒ mindi:g i:f tɔbre tɔrtot:ɒ mɔga:t ɒ ki:z be:ka:na:l nem vɒltɔk jo: bɔra:tok ɒz erdɔ: se:li ki:f tɔ:na:l lɔktɔk e:jma:ʃtu:l gondɔf ta:vɔlʃa:grɒ de ɒ go:jɒ e:ser me:giʃ ɔs:etɔla:lkozot: ɒ be:ka:vɒl ɒ be:ko ke:rlelte ɒ go:ja:t hɔd mutɔf:ɒm me:g nekɛd hoj e:n i:f vɔjɔk o:jɒn yjeʃ min te ɒ go:jɒ le:pɛt: e:j:et hos:u: la:ba:vɒl e:f ɔst ke:rdeste tɔ:le nɒ utɔle:rs e:ngem e:r:ɛ ɒ be:ko ɔk:ora:t ugrot: hoj me:g le i:f elɔ:ste ɔ:t ɒ go:jɒ ɔst montɒ nɒ jo: jo: de</p>	<p>[v goujɒ me:g ɒ bi:ko e:ts:er vout hun nem vout i:lt e:ts:er e:j goujɒ me:g e:j bi:ko ɒ nɔj goujɒ mindi:g i:f tɔbre tɔrtot:ɒ mɔga:t ɒ ki:z bi:ka:na:l nem voutɔk jou bɔra:tok ɒz erdɔy si:li ki:f touna:l lɔktɔk e:jma:ʃtu:l gondɔf ta:vɔlʃa:grɒ de ɒ goujɒ e:ts:er meigiʃ ɔs:etɔna:lkozot: ɒ bi:ka:vɒl ɒ bi:ko ki:rlelte ɒ gouja:t hɔj mutɔf:ɒm me:g neikɛd hoj ein i:f vɔjɔk o:jɒn yjeʃ min te ɒ goujɒ li:pɛt: e:j:et hos:u: la:ba:vɒl ost ɒs ki:rdeste ty:l:ɛ nɒ utouli:rs eingemet e:r:ɛ ɒ bi:ko ɔk:ora:t ugrot: hoj meig le i:f elɔyste y:tet ɒ goujɒ ɔsontɒ nɒ jou jou de kelepɛlni u:ʃ:ɛ</p>

Standard variety of Hungarian	í-variety of Hungarian
kelepelni u: e fem tuts: ojn hngofon mint e :n e :f v o l o :bon v be :k v e:j:a:ltla:n nem tudot kelepe:lni visont vn:a:l hngofob:ng kuruc:olt nemfok v to : k o r o :ke de ma:r v z eg e :s erd o : iz zenget to :le v g o :jv er:e fok v z :rt if me:g ijka:b ra:keste v z o:tv v z erd o : l o k o :ji min tuj:a:k hoc hv ijen_nvj v hngzvov v g o :jv e:f v be :k megint verfepeznek	tudol ojn hngofon mint ein ei f v o l ou b v v bi :k e:j:a:ltla:n nem tudot kelepe:lni visont vn:a:l hngofob:ng kuruc:olt nemfok v to u k o r o :ke de ma:n v z eg i :s erd oy iz zenget ty :le v goujv er:e fok v z i:r if me ig ijka:b ra:keste v z outv v z erd oy l o k ou ji min tuj:a:k hoc hv ijen_nvj v hngzvov v goujv meg v bi :k megin verfepeznek

English (literal) translation

The stork and the frog

Once upon a time, there lived a stork and a frog. The big stork always thought he was better than the little frog; they were not good friends. They lived by a small lake on the edge of the forest, at a safe distance from each other. But nevertheless, one day the stork met the frog. The frog pleaded with the stork: let me show you that I'm just as clever as you! The stork took one step with his long legs, and said: go on then, can you keep up with me? At this, the frog took such a great leap that he overtook the bird. The stork said: okay, okay, but you still can't rattle as loudly as I can! And he was right. The frog couldn't make a rattling sound at all, but he did croak at the top of his voice. Not only the lakeshore, but the whole forest rang with the sound. At this, the stork started up again even louder than before. Ever since then, everyone who lives in the forest knows that if they hear such a racket as this, the stork and the frog are competing again.

Table 1: Stimuli used in the experiment. Underlined bold letters show vowel variation, regular bold letters refer to any other kind of variation. In the phonetic transcription the IPA symbol of linking, indicating the absence of a break between two words, was applied only in the cases when the coarticulation led to a long consonant instead of a geminate.

The dialectal profile of the stimuli was reviewed by the speakers. To represent both types of the three characteristic vowel variations (that of rounded and unrounded long vowels) and to do so in a balanced way as much as possible, the main characters in the tale were chosen to be a frog (*béka*) and a stork (*gólya*): standard [be:kɒ] and [go:jɒ] vs. regional [bi:kɒ] and [goujɒ] (**Table 2**).

	(e:) variable	(o:) variable	(ø:) variable
Standard variety	[e:] (25/15):	[o:] (22/9):	[ø:] (7/4):
(token/type):	[be:kɒ] 'frog'; [e:n]	[go:jɒ] 'stork';	[erdø:] 'forest'; [ø:t]
examples	'I'	[ɛjma:fto:l] 'from one another'	'him'
Regional variety	[i:] (17/10):	[ou] (21/8):	[øy] (4/2):
(token/type):	[bi:kɒ] 'frog'	[goujɒ] 'stork'	[erdøy] 'forest'
example	[ei] (8/5):	[u:] (1/1):	[y:] (3/2):
	[ein] 'I'	[ɛjma:ftu:l] 'from one another'	[y:tət] 'him'

Table 2: Typical vowel height variation in the stimuli

The vowel variation between the recordings of the varieties was ~20%. This percentage mainly comes from the (e:), (o:) and (ø:) variables. Nevertheless, it is higher than usual. In everyday conversations the vowels of these variables occur usually half as often as in the present stimuli altogether. In a corpus of Hungarian poems, the relative frequency of

occurrence of /e:/ (7.58%), /o:/ (1.91%) and /ø:/ (1.56%) is only 11.05% (Lotz 1952). In a corpus of spontaneous speech in the standard variety, it is just a bit higher, 12.24% (/e:/ = 7.74%; /o:/ = 2.25%; /ø:/ = 2.25%) (Szende 1973). In both corpora [e:] tokens outnumber [o:] and [ø:] tokens by more than 3:1, while in the stimulus of the standard variety the frequency of [e:] (25 tokens) and that of [o:] and [ø:] taken together (29 tokens) are more or less equal.

5.4 Procedure

Instead of inviting young children to a laboratory they might not be so comfortable with, the experiment was conducted in their everyday environment, i.e. in a kindergarten. It was administered during kindergarten hours when each participant was taken into a separate room to complete the task. The experiment was framed as a “game” to them, and took around five minutes. I was the sole instructor and I used the standard variety.

After a brief introductory session, children were presented with the task individually, but each in the same way. They were told that there are two kindergarten teachers, while I pointed at each teacher on the screen, and named one after the other. The teacher on the left side of the screen was always called *Kati néni* (‘Cathie’) and the one on the right *Zsuzsi néni* (‘Susie’).⁴ Their two kinds of coloring varied pseudo-randomly. I asked the participants to identify the teachers by their names pointing at them one-by-one on the screen again. Then I told each child that both teachers sent them a present placed inside the closed boxes, but they can pick only one of the presents. I told the participants that both teachers were going to tell them the same tale, one after the other, and they should listen carefully and pay attention to be able to decide whose present they would like to pick. The children did not know what the presents were and that both boxes had the same set of stickers inside. After the children were introduced to the kindergarten teachers on the screen, participants watched only the drawing of the teacher who was assigned to the version of the audio recording being played at that time. When kindergarteners chose between them, the images of both teachers were presented to them again. Each participant heard the pair of texts only once without exceptions.

Children were randomly assigned to either the test group ($N = 37$) or the control group ($N = 40$).⁵ There were four VGT conditions in the former, and four reverse MGT conditions in the latter (**Table 3**). In the VGT test group (in Conditions I, II, V and VI), the children were presented with one audio recording of both varieties each in a counterbalanced order. In Conditions I and V the audio recording of the standard variety was played first, while in Conditions II and VI the regional dialect. The conditions were also counterbalanced according to which voice was assigned to which variety. In Conditions I and VI the standard variety was performed by Voice A and the regional dialect was produced by Voice B, while in Conditions II and V it was the other way round. In the reverse MGT control group (in Conditions III, IV, VII and VIII) participants were presented with both voices in different orders but using the same language variety. Voice A was heard first in Conditions III and IV, while Voice B in Conditions VII and VIII. The standard variety was played in Conditions III and VII, and the regional dialect in Conditions IV and VIII.

⁴ In Hungarian kindergartens the polite form of address is to call the teachers by their first names and add *néni* ‘~aunt’ or *bácsi* ‘~uncle’.

⁵ Three children had to be excluded from the test group. Two were missing from the kindergarten on the day of the experiment, and one was not interested in the task.

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Group (Method)	Condition	Stimuli			Participants						
		Order	Voice	Variety	Sex		Age			Total	
					Girls	Boys	5ys	6ys	7ys		
Test (VGT)	I	1	A	Standard	5	5	0	8	2	10	20
		2	B	Regional							
	II	1	A	Regional	6	4	2	7	1	10	
		2	B	Standard							
Control (Reverse MGT)	III	1	A	Standard	6	4	3	3	4	10	20
		2	B	Standard							
	IV	1	A	Regional	6	4	1	7	2	10	
		2	B	Regional							
Test (VGT)	V	1	B	Standard	6	3	3	4	2	9	17
		2	A	Regional							
	VI	1	B	Regional	4	4	0	6	0	8	
		2	A	Standard							
Control (Reverse MGT)	VII	1	B	Standard	5	5	2	5	3	10	20
		2	A	Standard							
	VIII	1	B	Regional	6	4	0	8	2	10	
		2	A	Regional							
					44	33	11	50	16	77	Total

Table 3: Conditions and participants assigned to them

In order to control for random choices, as well as to be able to measure the degree of preference, I enquired about the children's preferences through a series of questions. After listening to the recordings, each child was asked the same seven questions, partially following Rosenthal's study (1977) (**Table 4**). Question 7 ("Who would you like to get the present from?") applied a forced-choice method: "Both" as an answer was not accepted. As for the other questions, there were some cases when children gave "Both"/"Neither" responses. Similarly to Rosenthal (1977: 52–53), I added an extra "why" question. This was intended to be a short qualitative enquiry about the reasons for children's choices to reveal whether they have verbally expressed attitudes too.

English translation of the questions

1. Which teacher do you think knows the best tales?
2. Which teacher would you rather play with?
3. Who tells the tale in a more beautiful way?
4. Which teacher do you think has better toys?
5. Whose voice did you like more?
6. Which teacher would you like to tell you tales again?
7. Who would you like to get the present from?
- +1. Why did you choose her?

Table 4: Questions in the experiment

After the task, each child opened the box and chose a sticker. Children were rewarded in the same way, regardless of their answers or choices. Children sometimes interrupted the experimental protocol by talking about unrelated topics. It also happened that they did not reply to a question or, on the contrary, they not only did respond, but added interesting comments to the study. In all these cases I guided the participants according to principles of the “modules and network” method applied in semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews for adults (Labov 1981: 12–14).

6 Results

The quantitative data showed preference for the standard variety over the local dialect as early as around the age of 6 among monolingual, bidialectal Hungarian children without differences across sexes. This applies to the experimental situation when the stimuli represented the poles of the standard–regional continuum in female teachers’ speech in a kindergarten setting, and the instructions were given in the standard variety. Qualitative evidence of an emerging metalinguistic awareness of the prestige of the varieties has also been found in this situation.

6.1 Quantitative data

One third of the participants exclusively voted for the standard variety, i.e. seven times out of seven (**Figure 3**). Regarding the total of seven questions I considered the individual numbers of choices of a given language variety as quantities for the degree of preference in percentages (the numbers of “Both”/“Neither” responses were also included in the percentages). Based on a Shapiro–Wilk test (W), then a Wilcoxon test (T), the monolingual, bidialectal Hungarian children studied ($N = 37$) significantly preferred ($W = 0.83$, $p < 0.001$; $T = 150$, $p = 0.004$) the standard variety ($M = 66.795\%$, $SD = 33.222\%$) to their local dialect ($M = 28.572\%$, $SD = 34.195\%$) (**Figure 4**).

In the total of seven questions, girls preferred the standard variety a bit more ($N = 21$; $M = 68.027\%$, $SD = 33.547\%$; Shapiro–Wilk test: $W = 0.846$, $p = 0.004$) than boys ($N = 16$; $M = 65.178\%$, $SD = 32.720\%$; Shapiro–Wilk test: $W = 0.876$, $p = 0.033$), though there was no significant difference found in overall choices across sexes according to the Levene test ($W = 0.0254$, $p = 0.874$), followed by the Mann–Whitney test ($U = 158$, $p = 0.766$) (**Figure 5**). Girls and boys evaluated the regional variety in the same way ($M = 28.572$ for both sexes, $SD = 34.432$ for females and $SD = 33.882$ for males; Shapiro–Wilk test: $W = 0.789$, $p < 0.001$ for females and $W = 0.795$, $p = 0.002$ for males); Levene test: $W = 0.000933$, $p = 0.976$; Mann–Whitney test: $U = 168$, $p = 0.987$) (**Figure 6**).

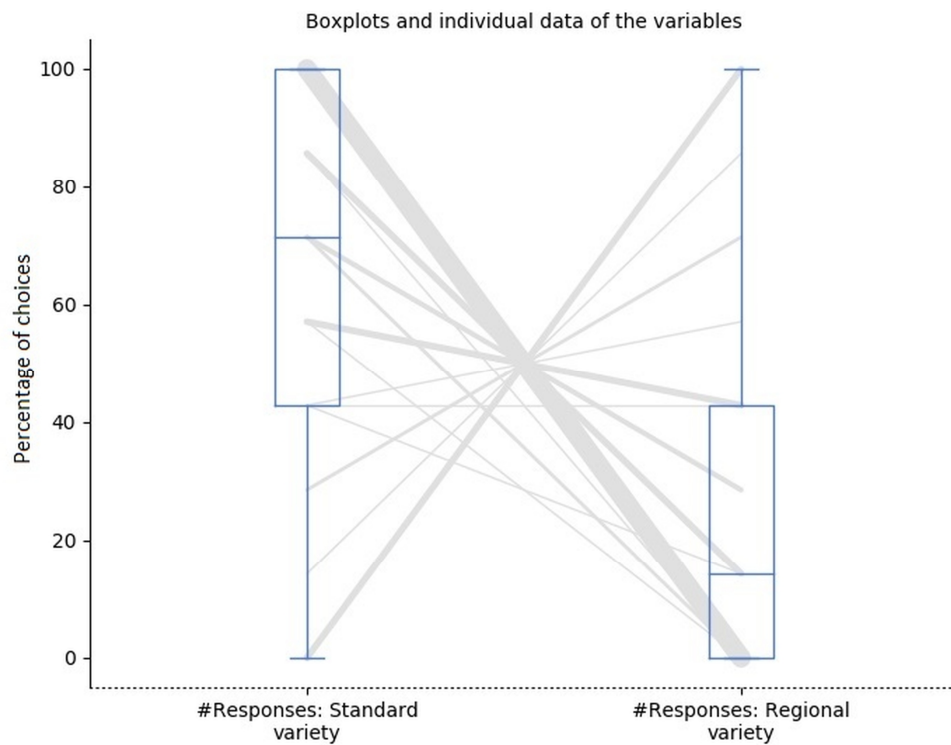


Figure 3: Individual choice percentages of a given language variety out of 7 trials ($N = 37$): the thickest line displays 12 individuals out of 37.

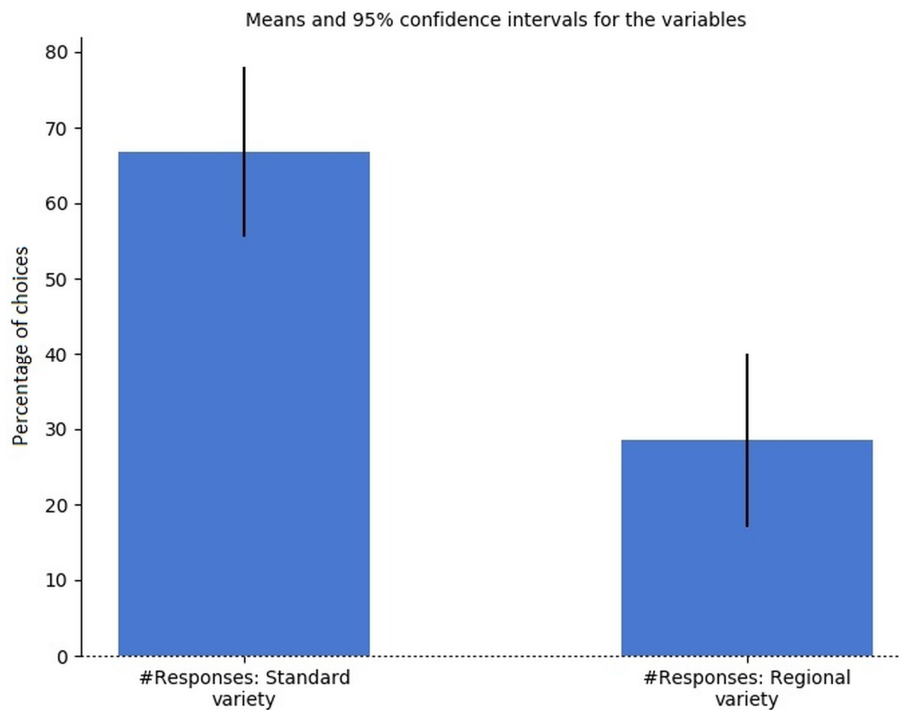


Figure 4: Mean choice percentages of a given language variety out of 7 trials ($N = 37$)

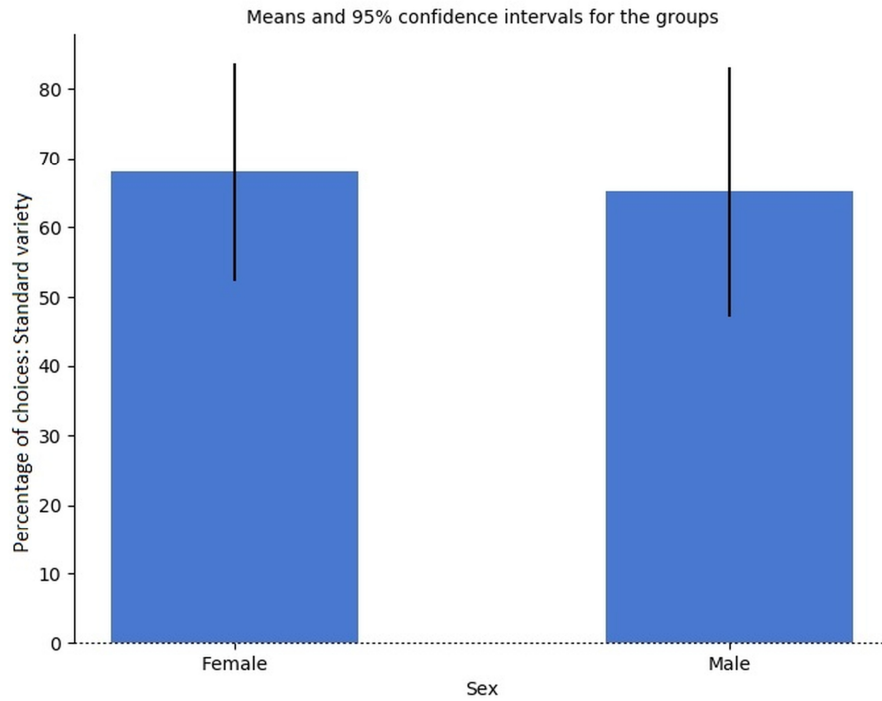


Figure 5: Mean choice percentages of the standard variety out of 7 trials across sexes ($N_F=21$, $N_M=16$)

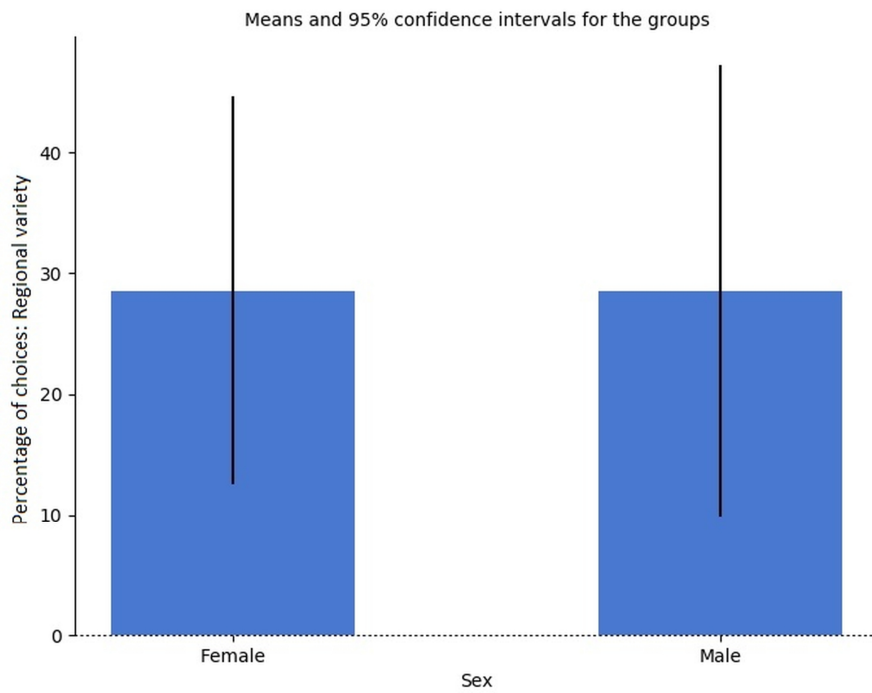


Figure 6: Mean choice percentages of the regional variety out of 7 trials across sexes ($N_F=21$, $N_M=16$)

By applying Wilcoxon (T), as well as paired t -tests (t), significant preference for the standard variety has been found in two test conditions, while there was no condition found with significant preference for the regional dialect (see the statistics in **Table 5**). Accordingly, in the total of seven trials, in Condition I ($T = 4.5$, $p = 0.019$) and in Condition V ($T = 6.5$, $p = 0.050$) in which they heard the regional variety later, they showed significant preference for the standard variety. Participants showed preference for the standard variety under the level of significance in Condition II ($t(9) = 1.7$, $p = 0.122$) in which it was presented as the second audio recording. In Condition VI ($t(7) = -0.266$, $p = 0.798$), children favored the first-played recording, i.e. the regional dialect, though under the significance level. (Kruskal–Wallis test across conditions for the standard variety: $\chi^2(3, N = 37) = 5.17$, $p = 0.160$, and for the regional variety: $\chi^2(3, N = 37) = 7.2$, $p = 0.066$.)

Test condition (Number of participants)	Variety	M (%)	SD (%)	W (p)	T (p)/ t (p)
I ($N = 10$)	Standard	72.857	25.111	0.801	$T = 4.5$
	Regional	17.143	26.953	($p = 0.015^*$)	($p = 0.019^*$)
II ($N = 10$)	Standard	64.286	31.460	0.903	$t(9) = 1.7$
	Regional	30.001	30.270	($p = 0.239$)	($p = 0.122$)
V ($N = 9$)	Standard	80.951	31.587	0.64	$T = 6.5$
	Regional	17.461	32.141	($p < 0.001^{***}$)	($p = 0.050^*$)
VI ($N = 8$)	Standard	46.427	35.535	0.926	$t(7) = -0.266$
	Regional	53.573	35.535	($p = 0.483$)	($p = 0.798$)

Table 5: Language variety choices by test conditions (W : Shapiro–Wilk test; T : Wilcoxon test; t : paired t -test). Significance level: ‘*’ ≤ 0.05 , ‘**’ ≤ 0.01 , ‘***’ ≤ 0.001 .

The above diversity across the test conditions reflected the potential effect of the playing order. Running a Wilcoxon test (T), effect of the playing order on the choices was under the level of significance in both groups ($T = 218$, $p = 0.066$ in the test group; $T = 299$, $p = 0.132$ in the control group) (see the statistics in **Table 6**); correlation between choosing the first-played tale and choosing the standard variety was not significant (Pearson’s correlation: $r(35) = 0.039$, $p = 0.818$; Spearman’s rank-order correlation: $r_s(35) = 0.133$, $p = 0.433$).

Group (Number of participants)	Playing order	M (%)	SD (%)	W (p)	T (p)
Test ($N = 37$)	First	59.074	36.559	0.857	218
	Second	36.294	37.517	($p < 0.001^{***}$)	($p = 0.066$)
Control ($N = 40$)	Second	41.071	33.834	0.9	299
				($p = 0.002^{**}$)	($p = 0.132$)

Table 6: Choices according to the playing order by groups (W : Shapiro–Wilk test; T : Wilcoxon test). Significance level: ‘*’ ≤ 0.05 , ‘**’ ≤ 0.01 , ‘***’ ≤ 0.001 .

One can have doubts about whether the sums of the choices of an individual could be considered as the manifestations of the degree of their preferences. However, regarding either the first (immediate and most instinctive) response alone, or only the last (present-taking) choice representing the stake of the game, the results do not change (Friedman test: $\chi^2(6, N = 31) = 9.86, p = 0.131$ for preferring the standard variety across questions). Nevertheless, non-significantly, at the group level, the present-taking choice (Question 7) was at the top of the rank of questions displaying preference of the standard variety (**Table 7**). The main “present-taking” choice showed the closest match with the responses to Question 5 (“more beautiful voice”) ($\chi^2(4, N = 37) = 27.068, p < 0.001$) and the second closest with Question 4 (“having better toys”) ($\chi^2(4, N = 37) = 25.476, p < 0.001$) (see all the tests in **Table 8**).

Standard variety Questions ↓	%	Regional variety %	Questions ↑
1. Q7 (present-taking)	73.0	24.3	6. Q7 (present-taking)
2. Q6 (telling tales again)	73.0	24.3	5. Q6 (telling tales again) Q5 (voice)
3. Q5 (voice)	70.3	27.0	4. Q1 (knowing the best tales)
4. Q1 (knowing the best tales)	67.6	29.7	3. Q4 (having better toys)
5. Q4 (having better toys) Q3 (telling tales beautifully)	64.9	32.4	2. Q3 (telling tales beautifully)
6. Q2 (playing with)	51.4	40.5	1. Q2 (playing with)

Table 7: Rank order of questions per language variety choices at the group level. Deviation from the 100% total comes from the rare “Both” or “Neither” responses.

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Question pairs		φ_c	$\chi^2 (4, N = 37)$	p
Q1	Q2	0.385	10.988	= 0.027*
	Q3	0.599	26.517	< 0.001***
	Q4	0.499	18.450	= 0.001***
	Q5	0.370	10.132	= 0.038*
	Q6	0.462	15.787	= 0.003**
	Q7	0.365	9.867	= 0.043*
	Q2	Q3	0.537	21.324
Q4		0.337	8.424	= 0.077
Q5		0.466	16.089	= 0.003**
Q6		0.495	18.147	= 0.001***
Q7		0.428	13.531	= 0.009**
Q3	Q4	0.181	2.418	= 0.659
	Q5	0.596	26.327	< 0.001***
	Q6	0.441	14.389	= 0.006**
	Q7	0.486	17.472	= 0.002**
Q4	Q5	0.257	4.883	= 0.300
	Q6	0.246	4.464	= 0.347
	Q7	0.587	25.476	< 0.001***
Q5	Q6	0.699	36.168	< 0.001***
	Q7	0.605	27.068	< 0.001***
Q6	Q7	0.399	11.775	= 0.019**

Table 8: Relation of preferences within each pair of questions (φ_c : Cramér's V measure of association; χ^2 : Pearson's Chi-square test). It is calculated based on three types of the given responses to each questions, i.e. standard variety, regional variety, both/neither. Significance level: '*' ≤ 0.05 , '**' ≤ 0.01 , '***' ≤ 0.001 .

Running a Shapiro–Wilk test (W), then a Wilcoxon test (T) there was no significant difference found based on the voice qualities either in the control group ($N = 40$; $M = 55.357\%$, $SD = 34.580\%$ for Voice A, $M = 43.214\%$, $SD = 34.328\%$ for Voice B; $W = 0.904$, $p = 0.002$; $T = 322$, $p = 0.236$) (**Figure 7**) or in the test group ($N = 37$; $M = 42.085\%$, $SD = 37.274\%$ for Voice A, $M = 53.282\%$, $SD = 39.389\%$ for Voice B; $W = 0.865$, $p < 0.001$; $T = 277$, $p = 0.373$) (**Figure 8**).

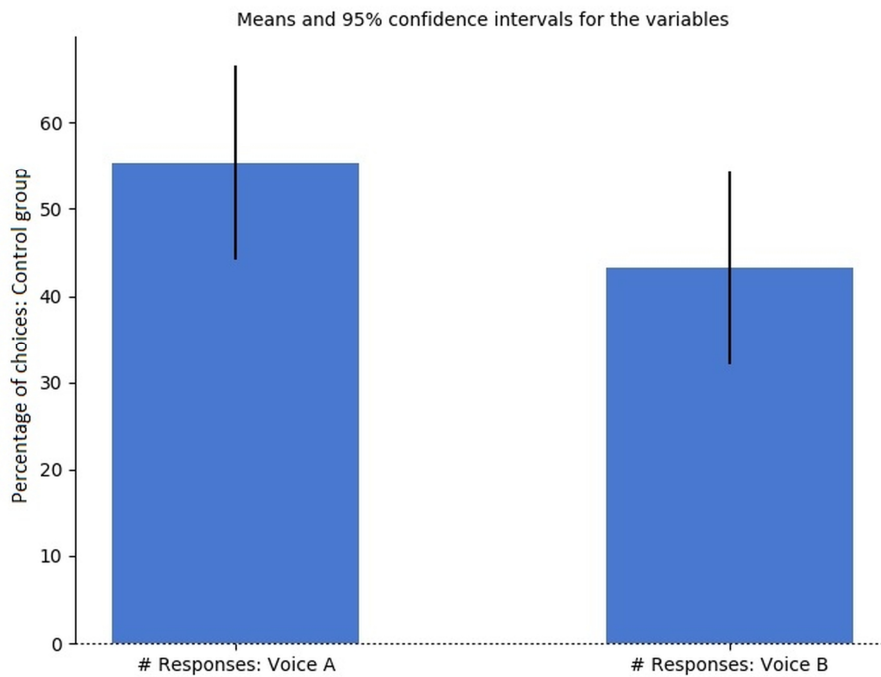


Figure 7: Mean choice percentages of a given voice out of 7 trials in the control group ($N = 40$)

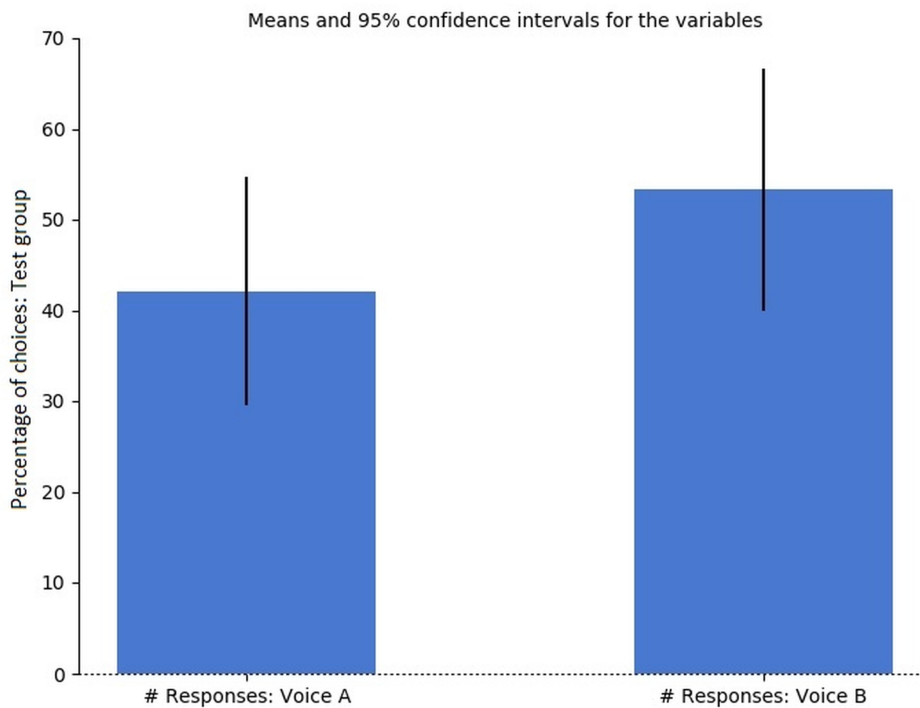


Figure 8: Mean choice percentages of a given voice out of 7 trials in the test group ($N = 37$)

6.2 Qualitative data

Some signs of the Hungarian monolingual, bidialectal kindergarteners' emerging meta-linguistic awareness of the status-based prestige of the standard variety have been found in the given experimental situation. Out of the 57 potential participants (of the test group, and also of the control group being presented with two regional guises), only 4 children (three from the test group, and one from the control group) provided me with language-related explanations for their choices, however, their responses show clear negative attitude towards the regional variety (Table 9).

Number	Condition (Group)	Age	Sex	Response
12	IV (Control)	6 ⁶	Girl	“The <i>hun</i> , that is not beautiful.”; → “Neither of them speaks beautifully, because the <i>hun</i> , the <u><i>vóna</i></u> , those are not beautiful.”; → “I heard many things [in the tales] which were not beautiful.”; → “I know it on my own, because once my mother told me that earlier I used to speak in a more beautiful way. Since then I have known this.”
13	V (Test)	6;11	Girl	“Her [pointing at one of the teachers] voice was more beautiful, and * <u>she's</u> [i.e. <i>her</i> ; pointing at the other] voice was bad.”; → She said <i>bika</i> , and she [pointing at the first one again] said it in a beautiful way.”
25	I (Test)	6;4	Boy	“The other kindergarten teacher said things like <i>bika</i> . I did not like her.”
72	I (Test)	5;9	Girl	“One of them messed it up. She said (?) <u><i>bika/birka</i></u> .”

Table 9: English translation of the language-related responses to the “why” question. Arrows mark further questions coming from me, underlined words are discussed in the next section, and an asterisk indicates a non-grammatical child language form of a lexeme.

7 Discussion

This research applied a child-friendly VGT–MGT method along with a brief enquiry to investigate linguistic preferences and language attitudes of 5-7-year-old bidialectal kindergarteners from an environment with a standard–regional dialect continuum. The goal was to find evidence (if any) for linguistic evaluation of varieties (Q-1), awareness of varieties/evaluations (Q-2), and gendered socialization of evaluation (Q-3).

7.1 Linguistic evaluation of varieties (Q-1)

A significant preference for the standard variety has been found in bidialectal children as early as age 6 in the experimental situation. However, one cannot infer from this fact whether a wide range of variation on a dialect continuum boosts/impedes the acquisition of the sociolinguistic status of varieties. It is hard to relate the results to previous research due to differences in participants' educational facilities, age, linguistic background, as well as due to diverse methodology applied. The above results might not indicate the first signs of the

⁶ Only the years are known, the data for the months is missing.

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occurrence of a status-based preference in Hungarian kindergarteners. The current results cannot specify the shape of their learning of social prestige across age, either. To determine the beginning and the phases of the process further research on younger/older children is needed in the same community and with the same methodology. Yet, one can make some assumptions when trying to interpret the current results in the light of previous findings.

A status-based bias was found as early as age 5 in bilinguals with languages used in separate domains according to their different prestige (Kinzler, Shutts & Spelke 2012). Participants lived in a multilingual environment in Cape Town where local languages such as Xhosa were spoken at home, and English served as a lingua franca. Without a significant difference across age, 5-11-year-olds preferred high-status English to low-status Xhosa, contrary to the fact that their first language was Xhosa, and they were instructed by a Xhosa-speaking experimenter in a Xhosa-speaking home environment. All of them attended English schools, their peers, however, who did not, expressed a preference for Xhosa speakers.

There is evidence that even preschoolers might develop a status-based preference: in an early study both Caucasian and African-American 3-6-year-olds ascribed lower social status to African-American English than to “standard” American English (Rosenthal 1977). Yet, the African-American vernacular variety of English is an ethnic dialect being associated also with racial features that might increase the saliency of distinctive sociolinguistic variables for young L1 learners. We already know that 11-month-old infants in multilingual and multiethnic Vancouver already had language-related expectations regarding speaker ethnicity (May, Baron & Werker 2019). Recently, it also has been demonstrated that even 3-4-year-old French children evaluated standard variants higher than non-standard forms when they were asked to tell which puppet spoke correctly (Barbu et al. 2013). However, “correctness” is only one (standard-biased) factor in developing a preference. Furthermore, the above linguistic behavior only applied to participants with a high socio-economic background. One should also take into consideration the fact that in France children from the age of 3 attend nursery schools that are far more formal than in other countries, and so they are closer to elementary schools than elsewhere.

Schooling and literacy in the prestigious variety/language appear to be important in developing a status-based bias in a linguistic environment in which two varieties/languages with different social evaluations are used by the same community in separate domains. When instructed in the standard variety used in school, 6-year-olds in southern Italy showed a preference for the high-prestige variety over the local dialect only on three out of eight items presented to them (Cremona & Bates 1977). They were first-graders having attended school only for a few weeks and they had been exposed almost exclusively to the local Valmontonese dialect at home. However, an increasing level of a status-based preference was also found across age. By the third grade children from southern Italy favored the standard variety over the local dialect at close to the 100% level (Cremona & Bates 1977). The effect of schooling seems to be significant also in a creole continuum with decreolization-in-progress such as in Hawaii in the 1970s: kindergarteners from Honolulu evaluated the low-prestige Hawaiian Creole higher than the standardized English, while first-graders already expressed a status-based preference (Day 1980).

Participants in the current study had another kind of linguistic environment, and reacted differently. Living in a highly interfering bidialectism, Hungarian children significantly preferred the standard variety to the local dialect even before school admission. Interestingly, they did so at a younger age than bidialectals with a standard–regional dialect continuum in

Austria: a clear pattern of a status-based preference has been found in the latter population only after the age of 7 (Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming). Yet, it is not obvious how to interpret the age-graded difference between the two sets of data.

First, in my field study the estimation and the will of using the standard variety have been reported by the informants far more often than in the regions studied by Kaiser & Kasberger (forthcoming). This indicates a dissimilarity between the standard varieties of Austrian German and Hungarian, as well as between their given regional counterparts in their speech domains and in their social status. The overt prestige of the Hungarian standard might have a higher salience than that of the Austrian German standard variety. Second, though both studies targeted bidialectal children living with a standard–regional dialect continuum by presenting a pair of stimuli from the poles of a given continuum, due to the difference in their durations (2 sentences vs. 1 minute) the number of tokens/types used in the current study highly exceeded the numbers presented in Kaiser & Kasberger (forthcoming). This disparity might favor Hungarian children to perceive sociolinguistic variables in the stimuli. Third, the professions (teacher/doctor) assigned to the speakers might also have an impact on the results. It is hard to speculate whether this factor increases or decreases the age-difference in the presence of the status-based preference in Hungarian and in Austrian children. Finally, while Austrian children were tested by experimenters using either the local dialect or the standard Austrian German, in accordance with the variety spoken by each participant (Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming), Hungarian kindergarteners were instructed in the standard variety. It is known that the language/variety of testing might have an impact on the results (Price, Fluck & Giles 1983; Hay, Drager & Warren 2010). Bidialectals in both studies were in a linguistic position “in between” the standard and the local base varieties, yet, not completely in the same position on the continuum. One cannot predict whether changing the varieties might have altered the degree of the status-based preference in any of the two experimental studies.

7.2 Awareness of varieties/evaluations (Q-2)

An emerging metalinguistic awareness of the varieties and their evaluations has been found in bidialectal children as early as age 6 in the experimental situation. Considering that only a few participants provided verbal explanations for their choices, in the case of the bidialectal kindergarteners studied, the age of 5-7 is most likely the beginning of their verbally expressed awareness of the prestige of varieties in their environment. Not surprisingly, the development of the linguistic preferences (manifested in quantitative data) definitely preceded that of the metalinguistic awareness (manifested in qualitative data). Since we do not know how younger participants would already display significant preference for the standard variety in the same quantitative test, at this point we cannot determine the time gap between the two.

The kindergarteners’ arguments in their explanations were built on a cognitively easy contrast of attributes, i.e. on the dichotomy of “beautiful–ugly/bad”, referring to voice qualities, exclusively. The quantitative data seem to corroborate this. The fact that the main “present-taking” choice showed the closest match with the responses to Question 5 (“more beautiful voice”) and the second closest with Question 4 (“having better toys”) also points to the same interpretation: they understood the task (i.e. they wanted presents from the person who had better toys), and to them linguistic prestige was manifested as a “better quality” of voice.

In accordance with the quantitative results, the qualitative data in Conditions I and V, in which participants heard the local variety followed by the standard one, differed from those in Conditions II and VI, in which the regional dialect was presented first. Only children assigned to Conditions I and V displayed significant preference for the standard variety in the quantitative test, and provided language-based comments in the qualitative enquiry.

There were differences across groups in the perceived variables. Though further research is needed to determine whether it is coincidental or tendential, in the present investigation, exposure to the contrast between the two varieties in the test group and exposure to the local variety twice in the regional guises of the control group did not appear to favor the perception of each variable in an equal way.

As for the contrastive exposure of varieties in the test group, the children were aware of one of the most characteristic features, i.e. the (e:) variable, though the higher frequencies of this variable presented in the stimuli compared to other variables also might have some impact on the results. Participants 13, 25, 72 seemed to stigmatize the word *bika* [bi:kø], though it is not clear if Participant 72 heard *bika* or *birka* [bi:rkø] ‘sheep’. This might reflect the findings of my background field study, i.e. the local [i:] variant of the (e:) variable seems to be more stigmatized than the local variants of the (o:) and (ø:).

As for the exclusive and double exposure to the local variety in the control group, Participant 12 did not react to the (e:) variable, but to two variables placed also in quite salient positions in the stimuli. She identified and stigmatized the regional *hun* [hun] (‘where’) that occurred at the beginning as a part of the well-known initial formula of tales. She also mentioned and negatively evaluated a regional form of the verb ‘be’, i.e. *vóna* ([vo:nø]; cf. standard [volnø] ‘would be’), that did not occur in the stimuli. Instead, three other tokens of different conjugational forms of the given verb showing a standard [l] ~ regional [ø] variation with closing diphthongs and without a following [l] were presented in each guise: two of them in the initial formula ([vout]), and one at the end of the second sentence ([voutøk]). Nevertheless, Participant 12 considered the word *vóna* as a token she had heard. This indicates that, even though she herself did not pronounce a closing diphthong, she might associate the given word with tokens of the same lexeme and other words containing the characteristic local diphthong of the (o:) variable with which she had been presented many times in the stimuli.

There were only few language-based explanations to the “why” questions, but interestingly, the comments were quite developed. The response of Participant 13 indicates that the pejorative attitude towards a local variety could show up even in a less-advanced stage of L1 acquisition. She stigmatized the local dialect, even though she used an overgeneralized child-language form (**őnek*) of the irregular 3sg dative pronoun (*neki*) (as if she said **she’s* instead of *her*, the possessive pronoun in English). Participant 12, assigned to the control group listening only to local-accented stimuli, demonstrated a quite developed linguistic awareness. She associated the regional *vóna* (‘would be’) with the variety she had heard, and evaluated it as “ugly”, even though only similar tokens had occurred in the stimuli. She also considered parental intervention as an impact on her attitude.

7.3 Gendered socialization of evaluation (Q-3)

There was no significant difference found across sexes in the experimental situation. In accordance with the findings in Austrian bidialectal 3-10-year-olds (Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming), no significant gender-related differences in Hungarian 5-7-year-old bidialectals

have been found. Gendered linguistic evaluation, usually observed in adolescents and adults (Barbu et al. 2014; Trudgill 1972), might show up later. It cannot be revealed whether the gender of the speakers in the experiment had any effect on the evaluation of the standard variety. One could hardly speculate about the direction of a possible effect, either. 9-10-year-old Austrian bidialectal children had higher status-based linguistic expectations towards a male than to a female doctor (Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming), while adolescents and adults usually show the reverse pattern (for a review see Kaiser & Kasberger, forthcoming).

7.4 Further research

This study is the initial part of a larger project with the aim to widen the scope of the research by applying stimuli in between the poles of the dialect continuum, characters of other age/gender/profession, diverse settings, and a local-accented instructor. Determining the relation between the development of the children's linguistic biases, as well as their abilities to differentiate dialects are also goals of the project. A further longitudinal study might reveal the occurrence of a status-based bias before the age of 5-7 or any posited change in the first year of school.

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Conflict of interest statement

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Krisztina Fehér
 University of Debrecen
 Department of Hungarian Linguistics
 HU-4032 Egyetem tér 1.,
 Debrecen, Hungary
 feher.krisztina@arts.unideb.hu