

# Research at the Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Literary Science in Nitra

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## INTRODUCTION

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The present-day Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Literary Science at the Faculty of Central European Studies at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra was formed in 1960 under the name Department of Hungarian Language and Literature. It was established as the only independent department of the Hungarian Section of the Pedagogical Institute.<sup>1</sup> The existence and work of the department have been closely interrelated with the political and legal situation of Slovakia's Hungarians and its impact on Slovakia Hungarian teacher training. Since its formation, the Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Literary Science has seen Hungarian teacher training as one of its most important missions. In recent years, however, the range of programs offered by the Institute grew considerably, in an effort to meet societal demands, and some of its more prominent goals include the training of professionals of cultural life and public administration in their mother tongue (cf. <http://www.umjl.fss.ukf.sk/?lang=hu>).

Right from the outset, scholarly activities of the lecturers of the Institute have specialized in two fields: linguistics and literary studies. Research has focused on various aspects of bilingualism, as well as the language, culture, and literature of Slovakian Hungarians.

Literary scholarship at the department/institute has always included research on (Czecho) Slovakian Hungarian literature, augmented in the past two decades with topics of general literary scholarship. Literary scholars at the Institute specialize, among other topics, on popular literature (Krisztián Benyovszky (see e.g. 2016, 2019)), contemporary Hungarian literature (Anikó N. Tóth, 2013, 2020), including child and youth literature (Gabriella Petres Csizmadia, 2015), but research is also carried out on theoretical and historical aspects of minority Hungarian literature (Zsófia Bárczi, 2008, 2014), on the genres of autobiography (Gabriella Petres Csizmadia, 2014), the interconnectedness of gender and literature, and methodological aspects

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<sup>1</sup>The predecessors of today's university were the Pedagogical Institute, Pedagogical Faculty, then the Pedagogical College, and Pedagogical University. The latter was reorganized as the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra in 1996.

of teaching literature (Gabriella Brutovszky, Gabriella Petres Csizmadia, Anikó N. Tóth (N. Tóth, 2012)). Most recently added research topics include the bi- and multilingual aspects of trans-culturalism as manifested in the Central European literary context (cf. Petres Csizmadia, 2020; N. Tóth, 2020).

The linguists of the Institute specialize in Slovakian Hungarian dialectology (Anna Sándor, 2000, 2020; Károly Presinszky, 2008, 2016); onomastics (János Bauko, 2015, 2019); sociolinguistics and bilingualism (Gizella Szabó Mihály, Ildikó Vančo (Vančo, 2009, 2012)); as well as the linguistic landscape (János Bauko, 2018, 2019; Gizella Szabó Mihály; László Angyal, 2019, 2020), language rights (Gizella Szabó Mihály, 2009, 2011, 2017), cognitive linguistics and education (Gábor Nagy Tolcsvai, 2010, 2012, 2018), the pluri-centricity of the Hungarian language, and the theory and methodology of teaching Hungarian grammar (István Kozmács, 2018; Kozmács-Vančo, 2016, 2020; Ildikó Vančo, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2020).

This prolific publication activity – proven by internationally published monographs, textbooks, collections of research papers and numerous studies – speaks of the success of the broad variety of linguistic and literary research carried out at the Institute. The Nitra Hungarian department overcame the difficulties confronted in the past half a century and has become an internationally renowned centre for linguistic and literary scholarship through its training and research, as well as a valuable partner in international academic networks.

The present issue provides representative samples of research carried out in the Institute. **Zsófia Bárczi**'s study, *Attempts at creating a new concept of literature: Hungarian literature in Slovakia between the two world wars*, discusses the inception and theoretical embeddedness of the concept of "Hungarian literature in Slovakia". The study aims to transform the geopolitical factors associated with identity into a constructed space through articulating the experience of intermediacy and reflecting on the "as-if" state of the intercultural existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia. **Anikó N. Tóth**'s paper, *Slovakian Hungarian prose in Slovakia after the change of regime in 1989*, showcases the achievements of Slovakian Hungarian prose in the past three decades and the changes in the literary institutional system brought about by the change of regime in 1989. **Gabriella Petres Csizmadia** deals with the transcultural literary-spatial position of contemporary Slovakia Hungarian prose in her paper *Transcultural Phenomena in Contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose*. For her study she selected works for interpretation from the representative writings of the last five years (Katarina Durica's *Szlovákul szeretni [Loving in Slovakian]*, Anikó N. Tóth's *Szabad ez a hely? [Is this Seat Free?]*, Pál Száz's *Fűje sarjad mezőknek [The Meadows Grow their Grass]*). Due to their diversity in genre, language and subject, these works provide a cross-section of contemporary Slovakian Hungarian prose. **Gábor Nagy Tolcsvai**'s study *Postcolonialism in Central Europe: A linguistic perspective* discusses historical developments in Central Europe in the post-1990 period as a specific instance of postcolonialism, particularly in the linguistic domain. The first part of the paper surveys the relevant literature, discussing the validity of the notion of postcolonialism for the given period in Central Europe, while the second part introduces general postcolonial features pertaining to the Hungarian speech community. These features are detailed first focussing on the developments in Hungary, then on the minority Hungarian communities outside Hungary.

**János Bauko** in his study *Minority language policy and bilingual name semiotic landscape in Slovakia* addresses the interrelated nature of Slovakia's minority language policy and the



bilingual name semiotic landscape; more specifically, the name semiotic landscape of communities of Slovakian Hungarians and the way Slovakia's laws regulating name use affect the visual display of proper nouns in the country. His paper seeks to answer the following questions: to what extent are minority language rights implemented in visual name use in communities of Slovakian Hungarians, whether Hungarian name usage is spreading, and to what extent do signage and name plates contain proper nouns in a Hungarian form. **Ildikó Vančo** in her article *The "they" vs. "we" distinction in Slovakian Hungarians' discourse* investigates how the notion of "we" occurs in the metalinguistic discourse of Hungarian speakers in Slovakia (with reference to Slovakian Hungarians and their Hungarian language use) in contrast to the notion of "they" (with reference to Hungarians living in Hungary and their Hungarian language use) in lay speakers' utterances referring to language. The study here referred to uses directed interviews and employs discourse analysis to provide insight into the use of "we" vs. "they" and their meanings in the Slovakian Hungarian variety. It also seeks to show how certain expressions become indexical in conceptualizations of identity and how the distinction of "we" vs. "they" is created by the language. In her paper on *The present and future of Hungarian regional dialects in Slovakia* **Anna Sándor** stresses the fact that the current language use of minority Hungarians is more regional, and the standard is spreading more slowly among them than in Hungary; however, it is a shared characteristic that is the kind of change that happens is convergence with the standard. **Károly Presinszky's** study *Digital methods in researching Slovakian Hungarian regional dialects* overviews the most recent digital methods used in Slovakian Hungarian dialectology. Slovakian Hungarian dialectology started out by using the most modern digital methods in 2010 at Nitra/Nyitra university, creating regional dialect databases. The present paper provides an overview of digital methods in dialectology and summarizes the results of the Nitra/Nyitra team so far, illustrating the diversity of digitized dialectological data. **István Kozmács** in his paper *A receding paradigm as a tool of language discrimination* demonstrates how a paradigm that almost completely receded became the tool of language stigmatization as a result of the actions of those with linguistic power, and shows, on the basis of a questionnaire based study, to what extent the *ik*-paradigm is present in the language use of 14–19-year-olds at the beginning of the 21st century. In their study *Comparative study of reading comprehension skills among Hungarian students in Hungary and Slovakia* **Ildikó Vančo** and **Viktória Gergely** present the results of a comparative study of reading comprehension skills of Hungarian students in Hungary and their counterparts living in Slovakia. A total of 240 survey respondents from the two countries and belonging to two age groups participated in this phase of research. Based on data analysis, the authors point out a difference between the reading habits of Hungarian students in Hungary vs. Hungarian students in Slovakia in the analysed age groups, and a significant difference between the results of the reading comprehension test in the groups of students from the two countries.

We hope that through the studies presented here, professionals dealing with Hungarian studies gain insight into the diverse but thorough and committed academic work of our Institute.

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