



The (bVn) variable in the speech of five and ten-year-old Hungarian children

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The study of child language variation has become more central in sociolinguistic research recently. Numerous studies present evidence for sex and style differentiation in the speech of children (Chambers 2003, Reid 1978, Romaine 1984). However, child language variation has not gained much attention in Hungary so far, there are only few studies investigating sociolinguistic differences in the speech of children. This paper investigates how five and ten-year-old children use the (bVn) sociolinguistic variable in Hungarian. My aim is to study if there is differentiation in the use of this variable concerning gender, residence and age.

Methodology

In standard written Hungarian variable (bVn) marks the the inessive case denoting location inside a place. The variable has two variants: the standard [bVn] and the non-standard [bV]. 40 informants (aged 5 and 10) from two settlements (a town: Szeged, and a village: Mindszent) took part in the study. The task was picture description. Each child was recorded for 20–30 minutes, 20 hours all together.

Hypotheses

- 1) In situations where the interlocutor is more standard than the informant, girls use the standard variants more often than boys.
- 2) In town, the level of standardness will be higher than in village.
- 3) Ten-year-olds use the standard variants more often than five-year-olds.
- 4) Gender differentiation will be higher among the ten-year-old group.

Results

According to the result there are differences in the use of (bVn) variable in the studied groups concerning age, gender and location. As for gender differences, the five-year-olds girls use the standard variant in 71.48%, while the boys use it 41.57%. However, the gender difference is much lower in the other age group: only 14.45%. As for residence, there is almost 20% difference between the two groups. The data verifies the first and the second hypotheses, but falsifies the latter two.

References:

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