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ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<i>abl</i>	ablative
<i>acc</i>	accusative
<i>adess</i>	adessive
<i>adj</i>	adjective
<i>adv</i>	adverb
<i>all</i>	allative
<i>approx.</i>	approximately
C	consonant
<i>caus-fin</i>	causal-final
<i>cf.</i>	compare
<i>cond</i>	conditional
<i>dat</i>	dative
<i>def.</i>	(verb with) definite conjugation
<i>delat</i>	delative
<i>distrib</i>	distributive
<i>elat</i>	elative
<i>Eng.</i>	English
<i>ess-form</i>	essive-formal
<i>Fr.</i>	French
<i>gen</i>	genitive
<i>Germ.</i>	German
<i>ik</i>	<i>ik</i> -conjugation
<i>ill</i>	illative
<i>imper</i>	imperative
<i>imperf</i>	imperfect (= past tense)
<i>ind</i>	indicative
<i>indef.</i>	(verb with) indefinite conjugation
<i>iness</i>	inessive
<i>inf</i>	infinitive
<i>instr-comit</i>	instrumental-comitative
<i>interj</i>	interjection
<i>intr</i>	intransitive
<i>Ital.</i>	Italian
<i>n</i>	noun
<i>nom</i>	nominative
<i>num</i>	numeral
<i>obj.</i>	object
<i>part</i>	participle
<i>pl.</i>	plural
<i>pres</i>	present
<i>pron</i>	pronoun
<i>relative</i>	relative pronoun
<i>Russ.</i>	Russian

<i>sg.</i>	singular
<i>sociat</i>	sociative
<i>sublat</i>	sublative
<i>superess</i>	superessive
<i>tempor</i>	temporal
<i>terminat</i>	terminative
<i>tr</i>	transitive
<i>transl</i>	translative
<i>usu</i>	usually
<i>v</i>	verb
V	vowel
<i>vki(-)</i>	sb
<i>vmi(-)</i>	sth
/ /	phoneme
[]	phonetic transcription or translator's remark within brackets the symbol stands for brackets
~	free variation, alternation
/	(in the text) variants
	(in the tables of base types) unchanged part
→	inflected/derived form of the previous word
←	inflected/derived form of the following word
*	reconstructed form
∅	zero morpheme (form without suffixes)
<i>lō</i> ³²	index showing the base type (cf. pp 146–153)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The place of Hungarian

Hungarian is the official language of the Republic of Hungary. Outside Hungary, a considerable number of native speakers live in the neighbouring countries, in Western Europe, and overseas, mainly in the United States, Canada, and a smaller number of Hungarians can be found in Australia and South America. The total number of native speakers is 14-15 million, which puts Hungarian, out of the 3000-odd separate languages, into the fiftieth place in the world and the thirteenth in Europe.

languages
related to
Hungarian

Being one of the few European languages which do not belong to the Indo-European language family, Hungarian is not related genetically to any of the Germanic, Romance or Slavic languages. Its cognate languages cannot be found in the immediate vicinity. Of the languages of Europe, it is related to **Finnish** and **Estonian**, spoken in two independent states. With Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian, as well as other languages spoken largely in Russia, constituting the **Finno-Ugric** subgroup, the **Uralic language family** consists of Finno-Ugric and Samoyed languages, the latter being spoken mainly in Siberia.

Finno-Ugric
Uralic
language family

Over the course of time Hungarian has moved a long way away from its cognate languages. As a result of divergent development, it differs from the rest of the Finno-Ugric languages to such an extent that its native speakers are unable to understand any of the related languages without having studied them. Linguistics, however, has revealed the similarities which have been inherited from the remote past – throughout thousands of years – to serve as important marks, distinguishing present-day Finno-Ugric languages from those spoken in surrounding areas.

Cognate languages of Hungarian according to their degree of relatedness:

—————→
Hungarian *Vogul* Votyak Cheremis Lappish **Finnish** *Samoyed*
 Ostyak Zyryan Mordvin **Estonian**

1.2. Hungarian past and present

The core of Hungarian vocabulary is extremely **old**, being Uralic, Finno-Ugric or Ugric in origin. Examples of this are verbs denoting simple, basic activities (*van* be, *lesz* become/will be, *él* live, *hal* die, *eszik* eat, *iszik* drink, *jön* come, *megy* go, *néz* look, *kell* need, *tanul** learn), names of the parts of the body (*szem* eye, *száj* mouth, *kéz* hand, *szív* heart), words relating to objects and

diachronic
periods

* The 3rd person singular present tense form (eg. *tanul*) of Hungarian verbs is identical with the dictionary entry form. In the English rendering the latter form is used if the verb is given as an example, in its dictionary entry form.

INTRODUCTION

Pre-Hungarian phenomena found in the animate and inanimate world (*fa* tree, *hal* fish, *víz* water, *tó* lake, *hó* snow, *ég* sky, *kő* stone, *hold* moon), words of spatial and temporal orientation (*alatt* under, *mögött* behind), as well as numerals (*kettő* two, *négy* four, *száz* hundred) and pronouns (*ki* who, *mi* what, *ez* this, *az* that, *én* I, *te* you [sg., T form], *ő* he/she/it) etc. The basics of the grammatical system also go back to this prehistoric age, which is sometimes referred to as the **Pre-Hungarian period**.

Proto-Hungarian It was not until the middle of the first millennium BC that the Hungarians separated from the ancestors of the Voguls and Ostyaks; thus, we can postulate that Hungarian, as a separate language, emerged approximately 2500 years ago. The Hungarians are believed to have reached the Carpathian Basin in AD 895 after a long migration from Western Siberia and the Urals. This first period of the history of Hungarian, as a separate language, lasting until the Hungarian conquest, is referred to as the **Proto-Hungarian period** by historical linguists. The most radical changes in the Hungarian sound system took place in this period.

Hungarian conquest

Pre-conquest vocabulary included old items of **Iranian, Alan, Persian** origin (*tej* milk, *tíz* ten; *asszony* woman, *híd* bridge; *vár* castle, *vám* customs), but the words of **Turkic** origin (*búza* wheat, *bor* wine, *szőlő* grapes, *homok* sand, *szék* chair, *szél* wind, *betű* letter [of the alphabet], *ír* write), borrowed during the migrations, suggest the exertion of a more powerful influence. It is due to the presence of these lexical items that the vocabulary of Hungarian can be distinguished from that of the other languages spoken in Europe. The anthropological, cultural and linguistic influences of the above-mentioned peoples have left their indelible mark on the Hungarians.

Old Hungarian

Christianity and written form

The succeeding diachronic period, the **Old Hungarian period**, is generally dated from the Hungarian conquest to 1526. The beginning of this period saw the settlement of the Hungarians, the foundation of the state by King St Stephen, the conversion to Christianity and the emergence of a written form. The first written record of Hungarian, the *Halotti Beszéd* (Funeral Oration), and the first poem written in Hungarian, the *Ómagyar Mária Siralom* (Old Hungarian Mary's Lament), were committed to paper in the Old Hungarian period.

Loan words of a more recent origin were borrowed from well-known European languages. It was the **Slavic** languages that exercised the most profound influence on Hungarian in this period (*király* king, *megye* county, *pap* priest, *apáca* nun, *kovács* blacksmith, *széna* hay, *kasza* scythe, *csuka* pike, *német* German, *beszéd* speech), since the conquered territory was populated by a large number of Slavs. During the reign of the kings of the House of Árpád the influence of the Church was noticeable, with several **Latin** words finding their way into the vernaculars (*templom* church, *mise* [religious] service, *iskola* school, *juss* share [n], *tégla* brick, *március* March). Some German influence (*püspök* bishop, *csap* tap [n]) can also be detected in the Middle Ages.

The first handwritten Hungarian codices date from the subsequent stages of the Old Hungarian period, which saw the language reach its present-day stage of development. The kingdom of Hungary became more powerful during the reign of the kings of the House of Anjou and King Matthias; in fact, it was in

this period that the country developed into a European state. It was as a result of this that it was able to resist the ever intensifying attacks of the Osmanli Turks until the early 16th century. Most of our words of **French** (*szekrény* cupboard, *kilincs* door-handle) and **Italian** (*füge* fig, *spanyol* Spanish) origin date back to this time.

But the battle of Mohács in 1526 proved to be a decisive turning-point in the history of Hungary. As a consequence of the fateful defeat by the Turks, the country was split up into three parts: the southern and central parts – together with the capital, Buda – coming under Turkish occupation, the western and northern parts coming under Habsburg rule, with only Transylvania and the surrounding regions retaining their relative independence. The influence of **German** increased (*pék* baker, *gép* machine, *bognár* wheelwright, *herceg* prince/duke, *cukor* sugar, *papír* paper). However, surprisingly, the Turkish (**Osmanli-Turk**) influence (*kávé* coffee, *papucs* slippers) was not as strong as would be expected, owing to the rapid depopulation of the parts of the country occupied by the Turks. This period witnessed the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the spread of printing, the Protestant and Catholic translations of the complete Bible, contributing to the emergence of regional centres of standard Hungarian. In fact even today this dismemberment of the country makes itself felt through the cultural and dialectal differences in evidence between the various regions.

the battle of
Mohács

Middle Hungarian

Reformation and
Counter-
Reformation

After a 150-year long Turkish rule the struggle for the unification and independence of the country intensified. Rákóczi's insurrection in favour of independence was suppressed by the Austrians. The period lasting from the battle of Mohács till the end of the 18th century is called the **Middle Hungarian period** in linguistic literature. From the point of view of phonology and morphology, there is no considerable difference between the Hungarian of this period and modern Hungarian.

It was only from the 1770s onwards – in the Enlightenment and Reform Age, which coincide with the beginning of the **New Hungarian period** in diachronic studies – that further movements to achieve national independence and foster a transformation into bourgeois society could develop. From the point of view of language, the most significant event of the period was the **language reform**, ie attempts at developing a standardized national language and a modern literary Hungarian. It was in this period that the relationship between Hungarian and the other Finno-Ugric languages was discovered.

New Hungarian

Ferenc Kazinczy became the leading figure of 19th century language reform. After his death, Károly Kisfaludy took over as the most influential personality in the literary world. Reform eventually gained the upper hand over tradition owing to the efforts of such greats of Hungarian literature as Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, Ferenc Kölcsey, Mihály Vörösmarty, Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, Mór Jókai, Kálmán Mikszáth. The deliberate use of newly invented words and constructions and the acceptance of dialect words in works of literature led to the birth of a standardized Hungarian. Despite the fact that several attempts were made to stop the influx of foreign words in the various stages of language reform, further borrowings did take place and a large number of **international loanwords** (*rádió* radio, *magnetofon* tape-recorder, *energia* energy, *atom* and

language reform

contemporary
Hungarian

INTRODUCTION

constructions coined through analogies from foreign languages can be found in Hungarian. The latest loanwords are of **English** origin (*dzsessz* jazz, *futball* football, *gól* goal, *csekk* cheque). Numerous terms relating to technology and science, mostly from American English, have entered contemporary Hungarian (*komputer* computer, *szoftver* software) and are continuing to do so.

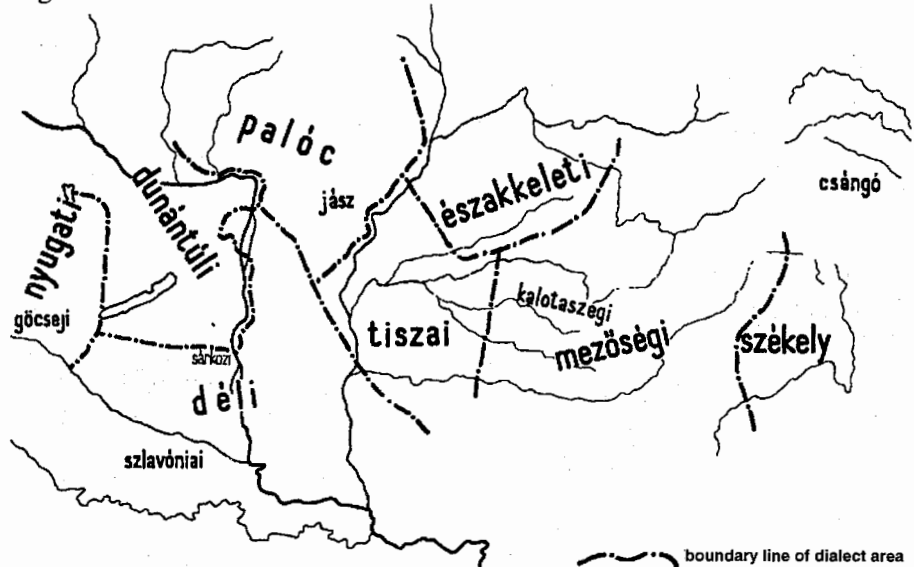
dialectal
difference

In the meantime Hungarian vernacular and folk-poetry continued to be enriched. Different dialects of present-day Hungarian do exist, but the differences are not so great as to pose a threat to mutual intelligibility. The dialects spoken in Hungary today differ to a lesser degree from one another, as well as from the standard variety, than those spoken by Hungarians who found themselves outside Hungary, as a result of the Peace Treaty of Trianon, signed in 1920: the Palóc people of Felvidék (a region in the south of present Slovakia), the Hungarians of Vajdaság (a region in the north of Serbia) and Slavonia, the Székelys of Transylvania, the Csángós of Moldavia, of whom the latter's dialect shows the greatest differences. The Hungarian dialects spoken in Romania make use of many **Romanian** words, only some of which enjoy general currency in colloquial Hungarian (*áfonya* cranberry, *pulya* child).

The most noticeable dialectal differences are of a phonetic nature. The differences between dialectal *e* or *a* sounds and their standard counterparts, the presence or absence of diphthongs, the functional load of particular vowel phonemes (eg. *ö*, *i*) are all characteristic of dialects. As far as consonants are concerned, traces of the palatalized *l* are still to be found in spelling (*ly*). There are differences in the phonetic realization of case suffixes and personal suffixes attached to verbs, but the greatest differences can be found between standard and dialect vocabulary. That is to say the most conspicuous peculiarities of dialects are considered to be the dialect words.

The map below will serve to show the geographical dispersion of present-day Hungarian dialects:

dialect
areas



(*csángó* = Csángó [Moldavian] dialect, *déli* = southern, *dunántúli* = Transdanubian, *északkeleti* = north-eastern, *göcseji* = Göcsej dialect, *jász* = Jász dialect,

kalotaszegi = Kalotaszeg dialect, *mezőszéki* = Mezőség dialect, *nyugati* = western, *palóci* = Palóc [northern] dialect, *sárvézei* = Sárvéz dialect, *székelyi* = Székely [Transylvanian] dialect, *szlavóniai* = Slavonian, *tiszaei* = Tisza dialect).

The literary norm is standardized, but shows the strong influence of the spoken language of the capital city, Budapest. In some places regional varieties are especially colourful, displaying local vernacular traits.

standard
Hungarian

1.3. Hungarian as a foreign language

Foreigners tend to regard Hungarian as an exotic language. Speakers of Indo-European languages will find striking features, both from acoustic and typological points of view.

acoustics

Acoustically, Hungarian can easily be distinguished from most of the other European languages. Its characteristics include stressed initial syllables; vowel harmony, with the result that words are clearly distinct; and lack of correlation between the length of vowels and stress, since Hungarians are able to produce short vowels in stressed syllables and, vice versa, long vowels in unstressed syllables. In view of the above characteristics, of the languages spoken in Europe, Hungarian bears a resemblance only to Finnish, and not to the Indo-European languages. Palatalized consonants occur in Hungarian, but the language lacks diphthongs and reduced vowels.

articulation

Native speakers of Germanic languages sometimes find it difficult to pronounce relatively soft (unaspirated) plosives, those of Slavic languages encounter difficulties in the case of hard (non-palatalized) consonants preceding front vowels, whereas long vowels occurring in unstressed syllables present problems for Italians. The pronunciation of the peculiar Hungarian *a* sound also puts many non-native speakers to the test.

typology

agglutination

Typologically, Hungarian belongs to the agglutinative languages, which means that grammatical relationships are expressed by inflections attached to the base: the word form *szeretlek* I love you, for example, conveys three meanings *én* I (subject) – *szeret* love (action) – *téged* you (object) or *házamban* in my house: *ház* house (possession) – *enyém* mine (possessor) – *benne* in it (place). Hungarian lacks grammatical genders. Articles and premodifiers do not inflect. Typologically, Hungarian bears the closest resemblance to Finnish, and generally Finno-Ugric (Uralic) languages, as well as Turkic languages.

abundance
of suffixes

Owing to the accumulation of suffixes, Hungarian words often appear to be rather lengthy; numerous inflectional and derivational suffixes can be attached to the base. Obviously, this does have advantages: word forms and expressions in Hungarian are capable of expressing subtle shades of meaning; they are exact because the basic meaning of the word is well-defined. The morphology of Hungarian is characterized by versatility, Hungarian is characterized by an abundance of case suffixes and variant forms of bases, as well as a three-way opposition of local case suffixes (*hol?* where, in what place, *honnnan?* from where, *hova?* where, to what place). At the same time, there are not many

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tenses, and the language lacks the verb *habeo*, the Hungarian equivalent of the English *to have*. In many cases, the singular form is used when a plural meaning is expressed. From the point of view of word order, Hungarian belongs to the SOV (Subject – Object – Verb) languages.

prosody Hungarian is characterized by versatility, being suitable for classical and accentual versification alike. Like most of the languages of the world, it can also be used in the field of law, public administration, journalism and modern sciences. It is not only in Hungary that foreigners can make themselves understood by speaking Hungarian; the language can be used especially in the Carpathian Basin and in many parts of the world, where Hungarians happen to have settled.

For this reason Hungarian, as a foreign language, could make not only a fascinating target of linguistic research, but also a useful companion for the tourist!