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Hungarian as an Endangered Language in Austria with Special Regard to Burgenland Province

On the timeliness of the issue of endangered languages

According to data published by UNESCO, of the world's 6,000 languages 52 percent have fewer than 10,000 speakers, 28 percent fewer 1,000, and 10 percent fewer 100. 83 percent of the languages are spoken within individual countries and their future depends on the policies of a given government. It is also to note that 49 percent of the world's population speaks one of the ten major languages (English, Spanish, German, French, Arabic, Chinese, etc.)

The issue of endangered languages is not a new phenomenon, yet, it can always be considered timely. Although several languages became extinct in the course of history (Sumerian, Hittite etc.), their decay has never been so dramatic as today. There is no chance to turn the tide, although UNESCO believes that, with good intent, even endangered languages can be saved. There are examples to prove this, though negative examples are far more numerous.

Only eight elderly people spoke the *Ainu* language, also used on the island of Hokkaido, in the late 1980s. With the assistance it has received since, it has been saved from extinction. Irish Gaelic, a Celtic language, was also saved by effective official language policy. Since Irish-language exam has been made a prerequisite of receiving a diploma, the proportion of the population that can speak it increased from 3 to 11 percent.

What is an endangered language?

The category of endangered languages includes languages that have fewer and older speakers of lower social status and esteem, are not taught as a mother-tongue at school, and their domain of use, prestige, and state assistance are diminishing.

Various theories have been elaborated on endangered languages:

Dorian (1980) points out three features of language death:

- (a) fewer speakers,
- (b) fewer domains of use,
- (c) structural simplification.

Krauss (1992) compares languages to endangered biological species and defines three categories:

- 1) *moribund*: languages no longer being learned as mother-tongue by children;

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- 2) *endangered*: languages which, though now still being learned by children, will – if the present conditions continue – cease to be learned by children during the coming century;
- 3) *safe*: languages with official state support and very large numbers of speakers (e.g.: English, Spanish, German, French, Arabic, Chinese, etc.).

Fishman uses an eight-stage scale, with the most threatened languages being at stage one: these are used only by socially isolated, old people. Stage two refers to a group that is socially integrated but is beyond child-bearing age, and, at stage three, there are those who master the language only orally, with no literacy.

What can we do to save endangered languages?

This question inspires several further questions and raises numerous problems: Should moribund languages be saved? Should the smallest languages, those with fewer than 100 speakers be saved? Is it necessary to artificially intervene in the life cycle of a language?

Certain researchers, like **Edwards** (1985:86), believe that we should do nothing but accept changes in language use (even extinctions) as normal. Languages are born, others become extinct. According to others, especially in the case of a moribund language, it is important to document the language and record as much data as possible. This is the opinion of **Sarah Gudschinsky** (1974) who worked with the last known speaker of Ofaié¹, and gathered valuable information for linguistics. According to her, it is necessary to gather as much information as possible on moribund languages in order to safeguard linguistic diversity for posterity, expand our knowledge on languages and, last but not least, promote the idea of western philosophies that knowledge in itself is valuable.

Considering the various options, it is necessary to attempt to save the languages and develop programmes for the revival of languages. It should be therefore a priority for science and researchers to document the endangered languages and try to save them or slow down the extinction process. This, to a great extent, depends on the attitude of the individual states and the extent of financial resources available for language salvage. Furthermore, it also depends on the hard work of enthusiastic researchers and the development of effective programmes in harmony with the individual local circumstances. These intervention programmes have to take into consideration the causes of language extinction: the anti-minority policy of a state, which leads to assimilation sooner or later; migration; natural disasters; economic assimilation, etc. It is generally accepted that not only the number of speakers but also their low social status determines the future of a language and turn it into an endangered language. If the social status of its speakers is lower than that of the speakers of the majority language, the prestige of their mother tongue also diminishes. One also has to remember that in the competition of opposing languages the speakers of the surviving language will have more and better social and economic opportunities.

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Struggle to prevent the extinction of languages

Around the world, several organisations and research groups work to save languages. ICHEL, FEL and TERRALINGUA are among the most important ones.

ICHEL (International Clearing House for Endangered Languages) was set up as part of the Asian and Pacific Linguistic Department operating under the Inter-cultural Studies Institute of the University of Tokyo. Its objective is to conduct research on endangered languages around the world and especially in the Asian and Pacific region. Its members do field research and collect, analyse, and convert to electronic format already published and unpublished materials (texts, dictionaries, phonetic materials). They regard the storage of linguistic data in a format (html) accessible to all as their most important task. Their newsletter provides information of their work. ICHEL plays an important role in the coordination of activities¹ and joins forces with every organisation that shares its objectives²

The ICHEL database currently contains the following:

- I The UNESCO "Red Book on Endangered Languages"³
- I Corpuses of various languages (texts, fieldwork notes, recordings, etc.),
- I text editors,
- I fonts necessary for printing texts of various languages.

FEL (The Foundation for Endangered Languages) has a more popular aims: it supports and assists the documentation, safeguarding and promotion of languages, and seeks to raise awareness of the endangered languages through all channels and media. It aims at supporting the use of endangered languages in all contexts (at home, in education, in the media, and in social, cultural and economic life). The organisation monitors linguistic policies and policy decisions, and seeks to influence the appropriate authorities where necessary. It provides not only financial assistance to the documentation of endangered languages but also facilities for training and the publication of results. It collects information on the endangered languages and disseminates it as widely as possible.

TERRALINGUA is an organisation that works for the conservation of linguistic and biocultural diversity. It aims at preserving all forms of the world's linguistic diversity, irrespective of their political, demographic, or linguistic status.

¹ ICHEL has joined forces in the dissemination of knowledge on endangered languages with a worldwide network of endangered languages, which operates under the leadership of Dr. T. Matthew Ciolek at the computer centre of the Research School of Asian and Pacific Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia.

² Linguistic Society of Japan, Linguistic Society of America, German Linguistic Society, etc.

³ "Red Book on Endangered Languages"

The “Red Book”

The Project on Endangered Languages was adopted as a UNESCO Project in 1993. The “Red Book on Endangered Languages” is a comprehensive work that includes every activity related to endangered languages. It is a common project ran with the participation of the various research centres all around the world. Currently, it contains information on numerous languages: on Asia and Pacific languages⁴ (compiled by S. A. Wurm and S. Tsuchida), African languages⁵ (by B. Heine and M. Brenzinger), South American languages⁶, (by Mily Crevels and Willem Adelaar), Northeast Asian languages⁷ (by Juha Janhunen and Tapani Salminen), and European languages (Tapani Salminen). Data can be retrieved through the individual research centres, e.g. the data on the endangered languages of Europe are stored in Finland.⁸

The Red Book identifies six categories of languages.⁹

1. **extinct languages** (other than ancient ones): *Gothic, Dalmatian, Cornish, Manx Gaelic, etc.*
2. **nearly extinct languages** with maximally tens of speakers, all elderly: *Judeo-Crimean Tatar, etc.*
3. **seriously endangered languages** with a more substantial number of speakers but practically without children among them: *Vepsian, Leonese, Yiddish, etc.*
4. **endangered languages** with some children speakers at least in part of their range but decreasingly so: *Burgenland Croatian, Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, etc.*
5. **potentially endangered languages** with a large number of children speakers but without an official or prestigious status: *Corsican, Lombard, etc.*
6. **not endangered languages** with safe transmission of language to new generations: *Croatian, Slovenian, Slovak, Hungarian, German, French, etc.*

On the initiative of Stephen Wurm, Australian professor of Hungarian origin, Tapani Salminen was asked in December 1993 to compile the European section of the UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages. The researcher classified the 94 languages in Europe into three groups.

A. 77 autochthonous European languages, including:

- a. 25 Finno-Ugrian (Uralic): *Lappish languages: South, Ume, North, Lule, Pite, Inari, Skolt, Kola, Ter, Kildin, Akkala, ...etc.*

⁴ www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/Redbook/AsiaPacific/index/html

⁵ www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/Redbook/Africa/index/html

⁶ www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/Redbook/SAmerica/SA_index.cgi

⁷ www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/nasia_index.html

⁸ www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_index.html

⁹ Data source: www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_report.html

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- b. 43 Indo-European: *Rusyn, Frisian, Gothic, Gaelic, ...etc.*
- c. six Turkic languages: *Chuvash, Bashkir, Karaim, Crimean Tatar, Nogai, Gagauz*
- d. Kalmyk
- e. Cypriot Arabic
- f. Basque

B. Eight other languages confined to Europe:

- a. Romani
- b. 7 Jewish languages

C. Nine diaspora dialects¹⁰: Burgenland Croatian, Molise Croatian, Caucasian Turkmen, Pontic Greek, Italiot Greek, Arbëreshe Albanian, Arvanitaka Albanian, etc.

Naturally, it is not by chance that the languages of the European section of the Red Book are presented in detail. Let us proceed now to the structure of the Red Book, and see what data the researchers compiled on the world's languages before drawing their conclusions.

The data gathered on the languages were condensed into seven points. The first three contain general information: variations, geographical location, relationships. Point 4 includes (should include) the most important information. This reveals the categorisation of the examined language (*extinct, nearly extinct, seriously endangered, endangered, potentially endangered, not endangered languages*).

Although the questions would, in theory, cover every important data, it is unfortunate that we do not have every piece of information for most of the languages, that is, the "data sheets" are not filled out.¹¹ The data sources are not indicated accurately either.

Below is the data format of the Red Book, revealing the questions that the researchers asked. The footnote presents the information compiled by Salminen on Burgenland Croatian¹²:

¹⁰ The languages in groups A and B are not differentiated in the index, while those in C (diaspora dialects) are only marked or numbered in the county indices if they have exclusive language users in a given country.

¹¹ It is to note that these data also come from the home page that stores the data of endangered languages in Europe: www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_report.html

¹² Burgenland Croatian

1. Variant(s):
2. Geographical location: *Austria: Burgenland*
3. Relationships: *a diaspora dialect of Croatian/South Slavonic/Indo-European*
4. Present state of the language: *ENDANGERED*
 - (a) children speakers: probably a number of children learn the language, but they are not likely to become active users

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The data format of the Red Book:

Name of language:

- 1) **Variant(s):**
- 2) **Geographical location:**
- 3) **Relationships:** (isolated, in distant relationship with known language/languages, in close relationship with known language/languages, dialect, etc.)
- 4) **Present state of the language:**
 - a) children speakers:
 - b) mean age of youngest speakers:
 - c) distribution by sex:
 - d) total number of speakers, members of the ethnic group:
 - e) degree of speakers' competence:
- 5) **Sources:**
 - i) information (about the language):
 - ii) published and unpublished material (of the language):
 - iii) competent scholar(s) and institution(s):
- 6) **Remarks:**
- 7) **Compiler:**

State of affairs in Austria

In the UNESCO Red Book's country index the following languages are listed under Austria: Hungarian, Czech, Slovene, Burgenland Croatian, Alemannic (incl. Swiss German in Vorarlberg), Bavarian (incl. Austrian German), and Romani. (The language of the Slovaks, who were also recognised as an autochthonous minority, is not included even though Professor Salminen gathered the data in 1993.)

From among these, Burgenland Croatian and Romani are categorised as endangered. After having read the information in the Red Book, the question occurred automatically: why Burgenland Croatian is an endangered language and why Burgenland Hungarian is not? Although it is well-known that the Croatian ethnic group has been representing its interests more resolutely and, together with

- (b) mean age of youngest speakers: –
- (c) distribution by sex: –
- (d) total number of speakers, members of the ethnic group: *in the 1970s, approx. 28,000 speakers, now probably much less.*
- (e) degree of speakers' competence: not known exactly, but varies among areas, and, presumably, among age groups.
5. Sources: –
 - (i) information (about the language): –
 - (ii) published and unpublished material (of the language): *a little*
 - (iii) competent scholar(s) and institution(s): –
6. Remarks: *Burgenland Croatian is said to differ extensively from Croatian proper, intelligibility being difficult.*
7. Compiler: Tapani Salminen, Helsinki, 31 Dec. 1993

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the Slovenes, communicating its problems better than the other autochthonous minorities, this probably cannot in itself answer the question above.

Geographic location

Out of the ethnic groups considered autochthonous in Austria (Slovene, Slovak, Croatian, Hungarian, and Roma), Burgenland Croats (16,283) and Hungarians (6,641) are the most numerous in Burgenland. The name of the Croats expressly refers to this. As regards the geographic location of the two groups, they predominantly live in Burgenland and Vienna but in inverse proportion: there are more Hungarians (15,435) in Vienna than Croats (2,456).

The members of Hungarian enclaves were settled in Burgenland by the kings of the 11th and 12th centuries for border guard duty. They formed an outer linguistic enclave as early as the 16th century and the use of German loans was relatively high in their communication.

Apart from a few diaspora communities in Northern Burgenland¹³, Burgenland Hungarians live in two main enclaves today: in Felsőpulya (Oberpullendorf) in Central Burgenland and in three villages located about 40 kilometres far from it in Southern Burgenland: Felsőőr (Oberwart), Alsóőr (Unterwart), and Órisziget (Siget in der Wart). The descendants of the former border guards could retain the privileges of the lower nobility up to the 19th century and their Hungarian identity is in strong connection to these former patents of nobility.

To a lesser extent, there is a “pro-Hungarian” population as well. They usually originated from German-speaking Austrian middle-class families and became Hungarians at the turn of the 20th century because they attended Hungarian schools and, in their eyes, Hungarian embodied middle-class culture.

The Hungarians who live mostly in Vienna and surroundings and at the provincial capitals, emigrated or fled to Austrian territory in various periods. They arrived in significant numbers after World War II and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, but it must not be forgotten that Hungarians have been living in Vienna in considerable numbers since the times of the Monarchy. Although today generally the emigrants of 1956 come into one’s mind when Viennese Hungarians are mentioned, it was due to the earlier presence of Hungarians, back during the times of the Monarchy, that their community was accepted as an autochthonous ethnic group in Austria.

The Croats migrated from Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slovenia to the eastern territories of the former Western Hungary and Lower Austria between 1533 and 1584 because of the Ottoman advance and the resettlement plans of Austrian and Hungarian landlords. Today their majority lives in the following villages: *Kelénpatak (Klingendorf)*, *Darázsfalu (Trausdorf)*, *Mosonújfalu (Neudorf)*, *Füles (Nikitsch)*, *Szabadbáránd (Grosswarasdorf)*, *Oszlop (Oslip)*, *Cinfalva (Siegendorf)*, *Zárány*

¹³ The remaining Hungarian inhabitants of eight former manors. They have nearly completely assimilated because, for them, Hungarian was the language of the servants.

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(Zagersdorf), Frankafalva-Alsópusya (Frankenau-Unterpullendorf), Csajta (Schachendorf), Csém (Schandorf), Bándolon (Weiden bei Rechnitz). (The list is not complete.)

Their language, Gradiste Croatian, reflects the 16th-century archaic state of the language and forms a linguistic enclave. Burgenland Croats use this regional language that evolved over the centuries at schools and in the media as well. The written version of Croatian regional language evolved during the age of the Counter-Reformation and the Baroque.

The media plays a great role in the efforts aiming at modernising the language; the Burgenland Croatian dictionary had the same aim. Its first volume was published in 1982 and today there are plans to compile various specialty dictionaries.

Political and legal situation

The political background always has to be considered in a research on the tragic situation of minority languages, and the events of the 20th century did bring about truly dangerous turns in the life of minority languages. The first significant political transformation in the life of the Hungarian minority in Burgenland came about with the Trianon Peace Treaty that brought an end to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and, with the redrawn borders, brought Burgenland under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Austria. Burgenland's autochthonous Hungarians found themselves in a minority situation, while, for the Croats of the same areas, minority life was not a novelty at all. The Hungarian intellectuals of the area fled to the mother country. The Hungarian minority had no representation in the Austrian Parliament for decades and its interests were always relegated into the background.

The "philosophy of the ethnically and linguistically homogeneous nation-state" prevailed: German was the country's official language even though the country was multinational and multilingual. Minority rights, granted in theory, could not be attained in practice, due usually to financial problems.

No explicitly Croatian and Hungarian parties are known today but there are minority representatives in the ranks of the parties (e.g. several Croatian politicians among the Greens). BMKE (Cultural Association of Hungarians in Burgenland), the first civil organisation among the ethnic Hungarians recognised by the Austrian Parliament, was established in 1968. The Croatian Cultural Association (HKD) of Burgenland was founded in Vienna much earlier, in 1934.

Minorities have crossed the former ideological limits and reoriented politically. The Information Centre of Austrian Minorities was set up during this process in the early 1980s and has become a coordinator of political activities.

Considering the legislation in effect, it can be established that the same documents concern the Croats and the Hungarians.¹⁴ There is one important excep-

¹⁴ *Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain, (1920/303), Articles 66–69*

Federal Constitution (1930/1), Article 8, amended by 2000/68, Article 8

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tion, which, however, meant an advantage for the Croats and disadvantage for the Hungarians: the State Treaty of 1955, (1955/152), Articles 6–7 regulated the rights of the Croats and the Slovenes but ignored other ethnic groups. The official authorities reject the requests and demands of the Hungarian ethnic group exactly with reference to these articles that do not enumerate the Hungarians among the autochthonous minorities. Furthermore, the financial assistance that Article 7 guaranteed to the Croats has not been available to Hungarians.

It was only 21 years later that the *1976 Law on Ethnic Groups (1976/396)* named the Hungarian and Czech minorities as ethnic groups, and recommended to them to set up their own ethnic group councils. The Hungarian ethnic group council was set up first in 1979. However, this law does not mention any right to actual contributions; it only refers to the possibility of submitting proposals: “the ethnic councillors may submit proposals for the improvement of their situation...”¹⁵ The provisions and deficiencies of this Law significantly reinforced minority identity in the 1980s.

Naturally, there is a huge gap between legal possibilities and the realities of everyday life, but this study does not plan to touch upon that in detail. Yet, practice proves that there is no state or local self-government that offers minority rights on a plate. They can be asserted under the influence of internal pressure (a minority is ready to fight for its rights), or under external, international pressure. This external pressure became manifest after 1989 once again. The opening of borders led to an increased interest in minority languages. Especially the takeover of conservative and other governments of expressly national orientation in the Central and Eastern European countries made an impact on Austrian minority policy. The Slovene organisations formed their ethnic group council in 1989. In 1992, the Viennese Hungarians were also recognised as a part of the Hungarian ethnic group. In the-

State Treaty of 1955, (1955/152), Articles 6–7

Education Act for Minorities in Burgenland (BGBl. Nr. 641/1994), Article 1

1976 Law on Ethnic Groups (1976/396), enacted on 7 July

Federal Government Decree on the Establishment of Ethnic Group Councils (1977/38), (1993/895)

Federal Government Decree on the Use of the Croatian Language at Public Offices (1991/6)

Topography Decree in Burgenland (2000/170)

Decree on Hungarian as an Official Language (2000/229)

Decree on the Dues of Ethnic Group Council Members 1979, 2002

Education Act for Minorities in Burgenland (1998/136)

Act on Kindergartens in Burgenland (1990/7).

¹⁵ Excerpt of a 1979 speech of Kreisky. “...the ethnic council is not a society of home folks or fellow countrymen, but indicates people who have been living in the territory of Austria; this is the Hungarian ethnic group.” In.: *Örségi füzetek*, p. 14.

At first 8, today 16 people can represent the interests of the Hungarians; there are four government party, four ecclesiastic and 8 other representatives (members of civil societies). Eight come from among Viennese, eight from among Burgenland Hungarians. The Ethnic Group Council, set up in 1999 after a two-year pause, is headed by Ernő Kulman, mayor of Felsőpulya. The Ethnic Group Council is essential for the Hungarians because, as an organisation, it is in contact with the Chancellor’s Office that decides on the financial assistance of minorities.

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same year, following the dismantling of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak ethnic group council was set up. The official recognition of the Roma and Sinti minority as an ethnic group in 1993 came as a surprise. Following this, the relative peaceful coexistence of this minority only lasted until the 1994-95 bomb attempts.¹⁶

Social characteristics

The social changes characteristic of the 20th century and especially of the post-war years – industrialisation, centralization, the development of mass communications, etc. – speeded up the assimilation of linguistic minorities in Burgenland as well. Although, as regards religion, the Hungarian population of the villages of Burgenland belong to various denominations (Alsóőr and Felsőpulya are Catholic, Felsőőr is Calvinist, Órisziget is Lutheran, the Croats are Catholic), they are on the same level as regards their social position. The farmers (who appreciated work and lower nobility) and the intellectuals (civil servants, lawyers, teachers...) mostly belonged to the Hungarian minority, while the bourgeois, money-centred industrialists and businessmen were mainly German speakers. The Hungarians despised the Germans, the Germans despised the Hungarians. (Cf. Susan Gal 1979.) Usually neither the different denominations nor the different ethnic groups intermarried. (The author's data gathered in Pulya has revealed that, in case of marriage, parents accepted another ethnicity more easily than a different denomination.) The intellectuals fled to Hungary after the Trianon Peace Treaty and Germans filled their places. The farms went bankrupt during the post-WWII competition. With the disintegration of the farming communities that preserved tradition, the majority of Hungarians found themselves closer to the state language. They made their living either in some factory farther away or, after studies, in an office job. German became the language of everyday communication and Hungarian became restricted to family use. At the same time, families often thought that, for the sake of the children, they had to lay an emphasis on German, or did not feel it important any more to pass on the Hungarian language to their children. With commuting and the decay of traditions, the number of mixed marriages grew, which also led to language change and assimilation.

The life course of the Croatian ethnic group was similar: they too found themselves in a new country after the Trianon Peace Treaty. Formerly, the Hungarian cities of Sopron, Győr, and Szombathely were considered important administrative centres for Croats too, since young Croatian teachers and priests often studied there and Croatian-language papers and textbooks were printed in these cities. After the disintegration of the farms, many Croats made their living in Vienna, which also contributed to assimilation.

¹⁶ In 1994, a bomb attempt was directed against the bilingual school in Klagenfurt, and several minority representatives received letter bombs. The bomb attempts in Croatian village Stinacz in Burgenland and the Roma group of Oberwart – there were four casualties in the latter – revealed new, so far unknown types of aggressive attacks against minorities.

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Croatians were faster to recognise that they had to fight for their minority rights even though, in theory, those were guaranteed by law. As it was mentioned above, the 1955 State Treaty did in fact provide a legal framework for that. Societies and individuals were fighting for the survival of the Croatian language and culture, but achieved their results not exactly with the help of politicians. Their societies were recognised as the representatives of the minority in political issues. These civil organisations¹⁷ – they are more numerous with more active and varied activities, more up-to-date and informative home pages than the organisations of the Burgenland Hungarians – issue various publications, preserve and gather folklore traditions, organise cultural and scientific programmes and language courses for children and adults, realise minority rights and organise Croatian entertainment. Although the figures of the 2001 census indicate that there were more ethnic Hungarians than the Croatians, on a national scale they received less state assistance. However, as it was mentioned, the first Hungarian civil organisation in Burgenland was set up in 1968; by then, Croatian civil life had been able to claim significant achievements.

Today, Croatian is an official language in six districts of Burgenland and, following the Topography Decree of 2000, 47 bilingual place-name signs were placed out. Under the same law, 4 bilingual Hungarian-German signs could also be set up. Today Gradiste Croatian is the ecclesiastic language of the Bishopric of Kismarton.

Austrian public TV channel ORF's Burgenland studio has been running a Croatian office since 1978. It broadcasts a 50-minute programme in Croatian from Monday to Saturday and a 30-minute one on Sunday. The same office includes the Hungarian editors who write the Hungarian-language news for ORF and edit and prepare the Hungarian radio and TV programmes. ORF broadcasts six times a year the 30-minute "Adj Isten magyarok" programme and four times the trilingual "Servus-Zdravo-Szia".

Croatian daily *Hrvatske Novine* was first issued in Győr in 1910, then moved to Vienna and finally to Kismarton. The bishopric publishes the religious Croatian periodical *Glasnik*. Further important Croatian publications are *PUT* and *Novi Glas*, and there exist some local papers as well. The most significant ethnic Hungarian publication is *Őrség* (published occasionally). Other publications are: *Hírhozó* (Messenger) and *Őrvidéki Hírek* (Burgenland News).

Following Trianon, Croatian and Hungarian language education worked until the beginnings of National Socialism but no total prohibition came subsequently

¹⁷ Major organisations: Kultúregyesület Nagybáránd (KUGA, Cultural Society in Nagybáránd), Burgenlandi Horvát Kultúregyesület (Croatian Cultural Society in Burgenland), Horvát Kulturális és Dokumentációs Intézet (Croatian Cultural and Documentation Institute), Horvát Sajtóegyesület (Croatian Press Society), Pannon Intézet (Pannon Institute), Tambura Csoportok (Tambura Groups), etc.

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either. Today the Education Act for Minorities in Burgenland provides guarantees for bilingual education and its several variants. The Act also allows monolingual classes, in which case the state language has to be taught in six hours per week. However, no such class exists in Burgenland. Bilingual education is possible in most of the settlements, which basically means that the children of various linguistic competences study their mother tongue as a foreign language in four hours per week. Differentiated education is not possible because of the low number of applicants. Hungarian can be taught as a foreign language at a facultative course in any school (1-2 hours per week)¹⁸ if there are at least five applicants. Unfortunately, there is no exact data on the number of children who were studying Hungarian or Croatian in 2003 but, according to estimates, about 6–700 children were studying in Hungarian.

Demographic data

Table 1.

The population of Burgenland in numbers from 1920 up to the present:

	Total population	German	Hungarian	Croatian	Other
1920	294,849	221,185	24,867	44,753	4,044
1923	286,179	226,995	15,254	42,011	1,919
1934	299,447	241,326	10,442	40,500	7,179
1951	276,139	239,687	5,251	30,599	599
1961	271,001	235,491	5,642	28,126	1,742
1971	272,119	241,254	5,673	24,526	666
1981	269,771	245,369	4,147	18,762	1,493
1991	263,092	237,516	6,763	19,109	1,494
2001	277,569	242,458	6,641*	16,283	12,187

*4407 Austrians, with 3,274 born in Austria (1,937 are foreigners)

Table 2.

**Figures of the 2001 census
(only Austrian citizens are included!):**

	Croatian	Roma	Slovene	Slovak	Czech	Hungarian
In Austria	19,374	4,348	17,953	3,343	11,035	25,884
In Burgenland	16,245	263	70	108	189	4,704
In Vienna	2,456	1,806	2,396	4,741	7,769	15,435

¹⁸ The following data are worth a thought: a teacher of Northern Burgenland has been teaching Hungarian in 22 hours per week, commuting between 9 settlements.

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The 2001 census had a surprising outcome: according to it, the Hungarian was the largest, officially recognised ethnic group in Austria. The officially published figures have revealed that there were 40,583 who could speak Hungarian (as well). It is due to the complex and inconsistent assessment system of the statistical office that this number does not necessarily represent the actual situation. The system distinguishes between Austrian citizens and foreigners, but it also counts those who have a permanent address. In the case of the Croatians, this is the first time that Gradiste (Burgenland) Croatians and Croatians are counted separately. When a person indicated both, it was then decided arbitrarily, based on one's place of birth, whether that person counted as a Burgenland Croatian or not.

Table 3 indicates that, apart from Burgenland and Vorarlberg, the number of those who use Hungarian has increased in every Austrian province. As compared with 1991 (33,459), the significant growth is due to the fact that the welfare migrants of the 1980s were granted citizenship in the meanwhile. (One has to live in Austria continuously for 10 years in order receive citizenship.) Beyond group 1 (19th century Hungarians) and group 2 (Hungarians emigrated after 1956), a third group appears, especially in Vienna, as a result of recent historical events: the group of Hungarians from the former Yugoslavia, the historic Upper Hungary, and Transylvania, who have been settling in Austria since the 1980s.

Table 3.

	1991	2001	Change between 1991 and 2001
Burgenland	6,763	6,641	-122
foreigner	4,973	4,704	-269
native	1,790	1,937	147
Vienna	13,519	15,436	1,917
foreigner	8,930	10,686	1,756
native	4,589	4,749	160
Lower-Austria	5,440	8,083	2,643
foreigner	2,389	4,790	2,401
native	3,051	3,293	242
Styria	1,863	3,115	1,252
foreigner	836	1,652	816
native	1,027	1,463	436
Upper-Austria	3,218	3,849	631
foreigner	1,182	2,344	1,162
native	2,036	1,505	-531
Carinthia	490	738	248
foreigner	247	313	66
native	490	425	-65

7 MINORITIES RESEARCH

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	1991	2001	Change between 1991 and 2001
Salzburg	793	1,095	302
foreigner	432	551	119
native	361	544	183
Tirol	671	956	285
foreigner	347	469	122
native	342	487	145
Vorarlberg	702	671	-31
foreigner	302	375	73
native	400	296	-104
Austria	33,459	40,583	7,124
foreigner	19,638	25,884	6,246
native	13,821	14,699	878

Why is Hungarian an Endangered Language in Burgenland?

The first measure of the endangered status of a minority or a language is its population or the number of its speakers: Burgenland Hungarians (Austrian citizens) are in 4,704, the Croats in 16,245.

Although there are children speakers who use the language at least in their private sphere, they use it increasingly less and they are not likely to become active users since their linguistic competence is low. In the 2001/2002 school year 660 children studied Hungarian in Burgenland. About 20 percent of them study it in bilingual schools in 4 hours per week, the others in less than that. Although data is only available partially, it is possible to draw conclusions about linguistic competence. In 2000, in the kindergarten of Felsőpulya, 75–80 out of 110 children attended Hungarian classes with 90 percent of them being German speakers: Austrian children or the children of Hungarian parents who did not speak Hungarian any more.

The prestige of Hungarian is lower than that of the state language and, for the majority of the people it does not entail any economic and social advantages. Naturally, some make their living by speaking Hungarian, but people in general need German to earn a livelihood. Positive changes have occurred since 1989 because with the borders being open again, new economic opportunities presented themselves and it was in the interest of German-speaking Austrians and Hungarians, who had forgotten their mother tongue, to speak Hungarian again.

The present education of the language in Austria is unfit to ensure the survival of languages. The linguistic competence of the children, who study Hungarian as a foreign language, cannot be high with only 1–4 hours of lessons per week. The children who start taking Hungarian in this system arrive at a basic level by the time of the matriculation examination. (No relative bilateral treaties have been signed between Hungary and Austria in this respect, so there is no external pressure that could encourage changes.)

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Neither the Educational Act (it is not in the interest of Austrian language policy) nor the Hungarian minority has formulated it what the objectives of minority education should be. There are no proper textbooks, and the existing ones cannot be used in differentiated education. There are no teacher's books and the central curricula do not follow the children's actual knowledge. The work of the teachers is not coordinated either. Besides, the teachers who teach Hungarian have no training in Hungarology, and they would need the help of the mother country in this respect.

Although the Educational Act would make monolingual education possible, it seems there is no demand for that. Among the autochthonous Hungarians in Burgenland hardly any literary or other Hungarian-language publication is published.¹⁹ The area of language use has narrowed down to four villages with mainly elderly speakers.

Finally, let us consider whether Burgenland Hungarian has been documented or not. The renowned linguist born in Felsőőr, Samu Imre, described its main features in his *Felsőőri Tájszótár* (Felsőőr Dialect Dictionary) (1973). Susan Gal conducted research in Felsőőr in 1974–75 and wrote several fundamental works that have become reference points to Hungarian linguistics. Although one cannot dispute her conclusion about the termination of the process of language change in Burgenland, it has to be pointed out that, since then – in the last moment – positive changes have also taken place in that language area. With common effort, Burgenland Hungarian could be saved from extinction, since languages can live as long as people can speak them.

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¹⁹ Exceptions: In February 2001, a music CD appeared entitled "Wir singen ungarisch", with kindergarten children singing Hungarian songs under the direction of Viola Karal and Katalin Kóger. They are also authors of a trilingual (German, Hungarian, Croatian) songbook for children published in 2002.

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