

The possessive plural marker in the Burgenland dialect of Hungarian in Austria

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1. Introduction

1.1 Historical Background of Burgenland

Historically, Hungary has had a deep and complex relationship with Austria, including the period of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy (1867–1919). Before World War I, the province of Burgenland was Hungarian territory within Austria-Hungary, but in the aftermath of the war, the area, together with its Hungarian speakers, came under the rule of a newly independent Austria. However, a Hungarian minority still exists in the province, the members of which are bilingual in Hungarian and German (because the largest ethnic group in Burgenland is German and the national language of Austria is German). According to Austria's 2001 national census, there were 6,641 “speakers of Hungarian” in the province, or about 2.4% of its total population.¹ Hungarian speakers are mainly found in the town of Oberwart (Felsőőr in Hungarian) and the neighboring towns (Untervart/Alsóőr and Siget in der Wart/Őrisziget). The dialect has been surrounded by the German language, ie. the Indo-European languages. In other words, this Hungarian dialect of Oberwart (Felsőőr) and neighboring towns is a “language island” in the sea of different language family.

The Hungarian speaking population of Oberwart has been declining recently, as is evident from the census data shown in Table 1.

¹ <http://www3.umiz.at/de/index.php/ueberuns/ungarn-im-burgenland/demografie>

Year	Hungarian	German	Mixed	Croatian or other	Total
1880	2,701	999			3,700
1910	3,039		1,148		4,187
1920	3,138		965		4,103
1934	2,176	2,008			4,833
1939	1,482				
1951	1,603	2,854	577		4,713
1961	1,206	3,011	424	99	4,740
1964	1,934	2,726			
1971	1,486		4,175		5,661

Table 1. Number of speakers of each language in Oberwart (1880–1971)
(Gal 1979: 26)

In 1920, 76.5% of the total population of Oberwart spoke Hungarian, while only 26.3% did in 1971. This downward trend has continued in more recent times as well, as Table 2 shows:

Year	Hungarian	German	Croatian	Romany	Total
2001	1,169	4,889	233	84	6,696

Table 2. Number of speakers of each language in Oberwart
(National census in Austria, 2001)

The Hungarian speaking minority in Oberwart has already fallen to about 17.5% of the total population and can be expected to continue decreasing in proportion.

1.2. Bilingualism in Burgenland

As indicated above, the Oberwart Hungarian speakers are bilingual in Hungarian and German. They live in a German speaking environment and use German in public places, for example, when accessing government services, visiting German speaking doctors or shops, etc. Meanwhile, they speak Hungarian in more private environments, for instance, at home or with friends who are also Hungarian speakers. This kind of linguistic situation is called diglossia. In a diglossic environment, the language variants used in public and private are typically referred

to as High (H) and Low (L), respectively; in this case, German is H and Hungarian is L (Gal 1979).

A point to be noted in regard to this sociolinguistic situation is that the number of Hungarian speakers is in decline. The shift from a rural type of life to urban life is probably one of the main reasons for the decrease of the Hungarian speaking population in Burgenland. When someone moves to the city, he or she will typically have enough incentive to learn the dominant language used there. At the same time, monolingual Germans in Burgenland would find it very difficult to learn Hungarian even if they wanted to since it does not belong to the Indo-European language family. Furthermore, there is the problem of language prestige, as in Burgenland, Hungarian is the L. In these circumstances, it is only natural that younger Hungarians will tend to favor German as the more urban, career enhancing, and business facilitating language over the more “agrarian” and “poor” Hungarian (Romaine 1994: 52). The same kind of reasoning is often an important factor in selecting a spouse. In Oberwart, the term “exogamous marriage” essentially means a German speaker marrying a Hungarian Calvinist. There has been a marked increase in this kind of marriage in the post-war years, as Table 3 demonstrates:

Years	Percentage of Exogamous Marriages	Total Number of Calvinist Marriages
1896-1900	20	66
1901-1905	15	65
1906-1910	22	63
1911-1915	31	45
1916-1920	25	80
1921-1925	23	57
1926-1930	31	59
1931-1935	37	51
1936-1940	29	59
1941-1945	34	47
1946-1950	27	111
1951-1955	38	66
1956-1960	48	64
1961-1965	50	58

1966-1970	82	66
1971	79	14
1972	65	17

Table 3. Percentage of exogamous marriages of Calvinist Oberwarters
(Gal 1979: 52)

Naturally, this trend has additionally sped up the process of Hungarian native speakers moving away from its use.

1.3. Phonetics in the Burgenland Dialect

The greatest phonetic difference between the Burgenland dialect and Standard Hungarian is that the Burgenland dialect distinguishes between narrow [ë] and wide [e]. Figure 1 shows the vowel inventory of the Burgenland dialect.

Vowels				
Short				
		Rounded		
front	<i>i</i> [i]	<i>ü</i> [y]	<i>u</i> [u]	back
	<i>ë</i> [ə]	<i>ö</i> [ø]	<i>o</i> [o]	
	<i>e</i> [ɛ]	<i>a</i> [ʌ]		
Long				
		Rounded		
front	<i>í</i> [i:]	<i>ü</i> [y]	<i>ú</i> [u:]	back
	<i>ië</i> [iə]	<i>üö</i> [yø]	<i>uo</i> [uo]	
			<i>á</i> [a]	

Figure 1. Vowels in the Burgenland dialect of Hungarian
(Gal 1979: 80)

For example, the indefinite article is *ë/ëdzs*, and the definite is *e/ez*.² Moreover, in terms of consonants, the Hungarians in Burgenland pronounce *cs* [tʃ] / *dzs* [dʒ] instead of *ty* [c] / *gy* [j].

² The former precede words beginning with a consonant, and the latter precede words beginning with a vowel.

- (1) *ėdzs asszom męg ě liány*
 a woman and a girl
 (egy asszony meg egy lány)³
 ‘a woman and a girl’

(Imre 1973: 11)

- (2) a. *Hun e dzserėk?*
 where the child
 (Hol van a gyerek?)
 ‘Where is the child?’
- b. *Mėk-harap e kucsa!*
 PERF-bite the dog
 (Megharap a kutya!)
 ‘The dog will bite you!’

(Imre 1973: 21)

The sounds of *ty* [c] / *gy* [j] of Standard Hungarian are very characteristic, at least the German language does not have the sounds. The phenomenon might be result of the language contact between the Hungarian and the German.

2. Possessive plural

The Hungarian possessive is marked for singular and plural. The markers are added to the possessed noun as suffixes. In the next examples, the Standard Hungarian *gyerek* ‘child’ is the possessee. The possessive singular is exemplified in (3), and the possessive plural in (4).

- (3) a. *a Péter gyerek-e*
 the Peter child-POSS
 ‘Peter’s child’
- b. *a gyerek-em*
 the child-POSS.1SG
 ‘my child’

³ The sentence in parenthesis is Standard Hungarian. (The same is done in the following examples).

- (4) a. *a Péter gyerek-e-i*
 the Peter child-POSS-PL.3SG
 ‘Peter’s children’
- b. *a gyerek-e-i-m*
 the child-POSS-PL-1SG
 ‘my children’.

2.1. Earlier studies on the possessive plural in the Burgenland dialect

In research on the Burgenland dialect, the major earlier studies are by Imre (1971a, 1973). These studies deal with the dialect as spoken in Oberwart/Felsőőr in South Burgenland. The Burgenland dialect is included in the western dialect group of Hungarian (Imre 1971b, Kiss 2001). However, we can find differences between it and Standard Hungarian not only in phonetics and the lexicon but also in some grammatical points, including the possessive plural marker.

Below, I present Table 4 comparing possessive plural forms in Standard Hungarian and the Burgenland dialect (i.e. the Oberwart dialect in Burgenland). The data of the Burgenland dialect is cited from Imre (1971a, 1973) in this table.

	Standard	Burgenland	Standard	Burgenland	Standard	Burgenland
	<i>gyerek</i> ‘child’		<i>lúd</i> ‘goose’		<i>tehén</i> ‘cow’	
1SG	<i>gyerekeim</i>	<i>dzserékēmiēk</i>	<i>lúdjaim</i>	<i>ludamiēk</i>	<i>teheneim</i>	<i>tehenēmiēk</i>
2SG	<i>gyerekeid</i>	<i>dzserékēdiēk</i>	<i>lúdjaid</i>	<i>ludadiēk</i>	<i>teheneid</i>	<i>tehenēdiēk</i>
3SG	<i>gyerekei</i>	<i>dzserékeji</i>	<i>lúdjai</i>	<i>luddzsaji</i>	<i>tehenei</i>	<i>tehenyeji</i>
1PL	<i>gyerekeink</i>	<i>dzserékünkēk</i>	<i>lúdjaink</i>	<i>ludankiēk</i>	<i>teheneink</i>	<i>tehenünkēk</i>
2PL	<i>gyerekeitek</i>	<i>dzserékētēkiēk</i>	<i>lúdjaitok</i>	<i>ludatokiēk</i>	<i>teheneitek</i>	<i>tehenētēkiēk</i>
3PL	<i>gyerekeik</i>	<i>dzserékcsēkiēk</i>	<i>lúdjaik</i>	<i>luddzsokiēk</i>	<i>teheneik</i>	<i>tehenyēkiēk</i>

Table 4. Contrast between Standard Hungarian and Burgenland dialect possessive plurals

2.2. Observed data

As seen in Table 4, the possessive plural marker *-iék* is used by Hungarian speakers in Burgenland. In the next example, (5), the two speakers are Hungarians who live in Unterwart/Alsóór, which is adjacent to Oberwart.

- (5) a. *Hogy valaki mond-ja, hogy van kettő vagy három?*
 how someone say-3SG.DEF that to be two or three
 ‘How does someone say that you have two or three [children]?’
- b. *Van gyerek-em-iék?*
 to be child-POSS.1SG-PL
 ‘I have children?’

To form the possessive plural of the Burgenland dialect, the special marker *-iék* is added to the possessive singular (e.g. *dzserék-em* ‘my child’ + *-iék*). Therefore, *-iék* can be called a plural marker. Evidently, it is very different from the possessive plural in Standard Hungarian, *-i*, which was shown in (4).

3. What is *-iék*? Comparison with the Standard Hungarian *-ék*

As Imre (1971a, 1973) describes and as seen in Table 1, speakers of the Oberwart dialect in Burgenland add *-iék* to create the possessive plural form. Here, I point out that *-iék* in the Burgenland dialect as pronounced in Unterwart corresponds to the associative plural marker *-ék* in Standard Hungarian (see Section 3.1).

3.1. Associative plural in Standard Hungarian

In Hungarian, we find two types of plural. One is the ordinary or additive plural, and the other is the associative plural, meaning noun *X* and his or her family, friends, or associates. (The associative plural also exists in other languages; see 6a below.) As noted above, the marker for the associative plural is *-ék*⁴; it can be added only to human nouns (6), not to non-human animate or inanimate nouns (7).

⁴ In Hungarian, the associative plural is called *heterogén többség* or *heterogén többes szám*, meaning ‘heterogeneous plural(ity).’ The suffix *-ék* can be analyzed as the third person singular possessive marker *-é* ‘one’s’ plus the additive plural *-k*. However, nowadays, Hungarians do not recognize the relationship of this form to its original meaning (Balogh 2000: 185).

- b. *Micimackó-ék*
 Winnie.the.Pooh-ASSOC.PL
 ‘Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends’

In principle, the associative plural is used with human nouns, as mentioned above. Corbett (2000) accounts for the structure of plurals in Hungarian using the concept of the Animacy Hierarchy (Silverstein 1976) (see Figure 2).

	1 >	2 >	3 >	kin >	human >	animate >	inanimate
range of plural			■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■
range of associative plural	■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■		

Figure 2. Associative plurals in Hungarian
 (Corbett 2000: 104)

3.3. Associative plural in the Burgenland dialect

In this section, I present examples of the associative plural in the Burgenland dialect of Hungarian to which Imre (1973) referred. In (9) through (13), the associative plural marker is used as a typical case, i.e. the meaning is ‘X and his/her family, friends, or associates’.

- (9) *Itt aluo, e Szabuo Lajos-iék-ná má*
 here below the Szabó Lajos-ASSOC.PL-ADE already

kü-csap-ott e Pinka.
 out-overflow-PST.3SG the Pinka.River

(Itt alul, a Szabó Lajoséknál már kicsapott a Pinka.)

‘Here below, the Pinka River has overflowed at Lajos Szabó’s house.’⁵

- (10) *Be-jár-t e pap-iék-ho is.*
 in-come-PAST.3SG the priest-ASSOC.PL-ALL too

(Bejárt a papékhoz is.)

‘S/He regularly visited the priest’s house, too.’

⁵ *Szabó* is a family name, and *Lajos* is a first name in Hungarian.

- (11) *Mi a Böcskör-iék-je má esztendő-t át*
 we the Böcskör-ASSOC.PL-INST already year-ACC over
összö-segit-ennünk.
 together-help-1PL
 (Mi a Böcskörékkal már esztendőt át összesegítünk.)
 ‘We have already been helping the Böcskör family for over a year’
- (12) *Ha volna hel-ék e zsup-nak, e szomszéd-iék*
 if to be-COND space-PL the thatch-DAT the neighbor-ASSOC.PL
së szuomáz-ná-ják e rozs-ot.
 not not.bind-COND-3PL.DEF the rye-ACC
 (Ha volna helyek a zsupnak, a szomszédék se szalmáznák a rozsot.)
 ‘If there are spaces for the thatch, the neighbors should bind rye into sheaves.’
- (13) *Valami vidiki firfi mēn-d be e Fülöp-iék-ho.*
 some country man go-PAST into the Fülöp-ASSOC.PL-ALL
 (Valami vidéki férfi ment be a Fülöpékhez.)
 ‘Some country man went into Philips’ house.’
- In (14) through (16), we can find the associative plural with the possessive marker. It appears that the meanings are the possessive plural.
- (14) *Fizet-nek rōndössen e tē árēndás-od-iék?*
 pay-3PL correctly the you leaseholder-POSS.2SG-ASSOC.PL
Ez ennyiēm-ek-je uannyi gond van!
 the mine-POSS.1SG-INST so worry to be
 (Fizetnek rendesen a te árēndásodék? Ez enyémekkel annyi gond van!)
 ‘Do your leaseholders pay on time? There are so many problems with mine!’
- (15) *Ha je-dzsü-nek ez unoká-m-iék, ë*
 if away-come-3PL the grandchild-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL a
sütis pogácsa nēm is elég.
 baking scone not too enough
- Mijelüöt je-mēn-t-ék, je-dzsü-jj-eték!
 before away-come-PAST-2PL away-come-IMP-2PL

(Ha eljönnek ez unokámék, egy sütés pogácsa nem is elég. - Mielőtt elmentetek, eljőjjetek!)

‘When my grandchildren visit, one ovenful of scones is not enough. Before you leave, you should visit me!’

- (16) *Ez innep-ék-re haza-dzsü-nek e*
 the holiday-PL-SUB home-come-3PL the
fi-jam-iék is.
 son-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL too

(Ez ünnepekre hazajönnek a fiamék is.)

‘Also, my sons come home for the holidays.’

However, in (17), the expression *apádiék* ‘your fathers’ might not have a plural possessive meaning. Generally, a person has one father. Consequently, the meaning has to be associative.

- (17) *Apá-d-iék miég nincsen-nek itthon?*
 father-POSS.2SG-ASSOC.PL yet not-PL at home
 (Apádék még nincsenek itthon?)

‘Are your father and associates not at home yet?’

4. Data of the Burgenland dialect

As seen above, the associative plural *-ék* can be added to human nouns but not to non-human animate or inanimate nouns. In my fieldwork, I collected data to see whether this concept applies to the Burgenland dialect or not. These data are presented in Table 5.

	Word	Standard	Burgenland
Person		<i>Péter-ék</i>	<i>Ernő-iék</i>
Kin	<i>anya</i> ‘mother’	<i>anyám-ék</i>	<i>anyám-iék</i>
Human	<i>barát</i> ‘friend’	<i>barátom-ék</i>	<i>barátom-iék</i>
Animate	<i>kutya</i> ‘dog’	* <i>kutyá-ék</i>	<i>kutyám-iék</i>
Inanimate	<i>szemüveg</i> ‘glasses’	* <i>szemüveg-ék</i>	<i>szemüvegem-iék</i>

Table 5. Associative plurals in Standard Hungarian and the Burgenland Dialect

Imre (1973) shows examples in which the associative plural can be added or not to non-human animate or inanimate nouns.

- (18) *E fűd-em-iék, műta áréndá-ba van-nak,*
 the land-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL since lease-INE to be-PL
egissze je-guazosu-t-ak.
 entirely PERF-be.weedy-PAST-3PL
 (A földemék, amióta áréndában vannak, egészen elgazosultak.)
 ‘Since my lands were leased they got completely weedy.’
- (19) *E vatkörti egissze je-vásluo-t-a e*
 the wild.pear completely away-wear-PAST-3SG.DEF the
fog-am-iék-at.
 tooth-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL-ACC
 (A vadkörte egészen elvászalta a fogamékat.)
 ‘The wild pear has worn away my teeth completely.’
- (20) *E burgëndi-m-iék má ojjanak,*
 the mangel.wurzel-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL already such
hom mők kē tűp-nyi űk-et.
 that PERF must tear-INF they-ACC
 (A burgendimék már olyanok, hogy meg kell tűpni űket.)
 ‘My mangel-wurzels are already such that they have to be torn.’
- (21) *Lĕ-szánt-ott-ad má e torruo-d-iék-at?*
 down-plow-PAST-2SG.DEF already the stubble-POSS.2SG-ASSOC.PL-ACC
 (Leszántottad már a torrúdekát?)
 ‘Have you already plowed your stubbles?’
- (22) *Aziĕr e pápistá-k-nak izs van-nak szĕp*
 therefore the papist-PL-DAT too to be-PL beautiful
inĕk-csĕk-iĕk.
 song-POSS.3PL-ASSOC.PL
 (Azĕrt a pápistáknak ĩgy vannak szĕp ĕnekeikĕk.)
 ‘Therefore, the papists have their beautiful songs.’

4.1. Problem of the form

In the Burgenland dialect, not only the associative plural (*-iëk*) but also the possessive singular (*-m* ‘my ...s’) is attached to all nouns except proper nouns (PERSON in Table 5). However, see (23).

- (23) a. *anyá-m-iëk*
 mother-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL
 ‘my mothers’ (= mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and so on)
 OR
 ‘my mother and her family, friends, or associates’
- b. *?anyá-i-m-iëk*
 mother- PL-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL

Generally, a person has only one *anya* ‘mother.’ The additive meaning of *anyá-m-iëk* is contradictory. For this reason, the meaning of (23a) has to be a special one or associative.

Additionally, my consultants⁶ said that the form with the possessive singular and associative plural is more natural than the one with the possessive plural (23b). However, the plural form *anyáim-iëk* is conceivable. Because speakers use the standard form *anyáim* in public space, and the associative plural *-iëk* can be added to it, the result of contact with Standard Hungarian means that *anyáim-iëk* might be used.

4.2. Applicability to non-humans

As seen in Table 5 above, *-iëk* can be used not only with human nouns but also non-human nouns. In this case, the meaning must be one of possession, as in (24).

- (24) a. *macská-m-iëk*
 cat-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL
 ‘my cats’
- b. *cipő-m-iëk*
 shoe-POSS.1SG-ASSOC.PL
 ‘my shoes’

⁶ Three Hungarian speaking interviewees in Oberwart, two in Unterwart; one in his 20s, the others in their 50s and older. The young Hungarian speaker said that the associative marker can be attached only to human nouns, as in Standard Hungarian.

Noun	Possessive	Associative Plural	Meaning	Examples
Human		<i>-iĕk</i>	Associative	(9)-(13)
	POSS	<i>-iĕk</i>	Additive or Associative	(14)-(16), (23)
Non-Human		<i>-iĕk</i>	Additive	—
	POSS	<i>-iĕk</i>	Plural Possessive	(18)-(22), (24)

Table 6. The uses and meaning of *-iĕk* in the Burgenland dialect

5. Conclusion

This analysis has examined the possessive plural marker *-iĕk* in the Burgenland dialect of Hungarian as spoken in Oberwart and Unterwart, Austria, and showed that it has different meanings from the ordinary possessive plural marker used in Standard Hungarian, namely, that *-iĕk* is also used as an associative plural marker. In Standard Hungarian, the associative plural marker is *-ék*, and it can be attached only to human nouns, not (other) animate or inanimate nouns. By contrast, *-iĕk* in Burgenland dialect can be added to non-human nouns if the meaning is one of “possession.” However, in this case, the meaning is not associative but an ordinary plural. Since the associative plural needs a focal element, non-human nouns with *-iĕk* cannot take an associative meaning. However, proper nouns with *-iĕk* have to be interpreted with the associative meaning. Finally, I have summarized the uses and meanings of *-iĕk* in the Burgenland dialect. The results of previous discussions clearly show that *-iĕk* is not only a plural possessive marker but also an associative plural marker. However, the forms are affected by certain criteria.

Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ACC	accusative
ADE	adessive
ALL	allative
ASSOC	associative
COND	conditional
DAT	dative
DEF	definite conjugation

IMP	imperative
INE	inessive
INF	infinitive
INST	instrumental
PERF	perfective
PST	past
POSS	possessive
PL	plural
SG	singular
SUB	sublative
TER	terminative

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⁷ Ungarisches Medien- und Informationszentrum (UMIZ) / Magyar Média és Információs Központ (<http://www3.umiz.at/de/>)

⁸ The official name of the project is Project for Building an International Network of Collaborative Research on Endangered Linguistic Diversity
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