

source: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maghiarii_din_Rom%C3%A2nia

Minority language skill among dominant language speakers

Most Hungarian native speakers (more than 97%) also identify themselves as ethnic Hungarian, meaning that language is an important boundary constructing element between the Romanian majority and the Hungarian minority. The Hungarian language skill of the non-Hungarians is low, only a negligible proportion (around 1.5%) of the non-Hungarian population in Romania speaks Hungarian.

This means that non-Hungarians are not interested to learning the language, and that Hungarian *as a* foreign language is not perceived as an asset by non-Hungarians in the labor market.

Patterns of language use in different domains

According to István Horváth around 1) 25% of Hungarians are monolingual Hungarians, who use almost only Hungarian in all domains, 2) 40-45% are unassimilated bilinguals, who use Hungarian in their private domain, but in official domains they use Romanian to some extent, 3) around 20% are assimilated bilinguals, who use both languages in their private domains and use almost exclusively Romanian in their official encounters and 4) around 10% are fully assimilated, who use Romanian regularly or exclusively in every domain of life. In their case language change seems imminent.

Language use and employability

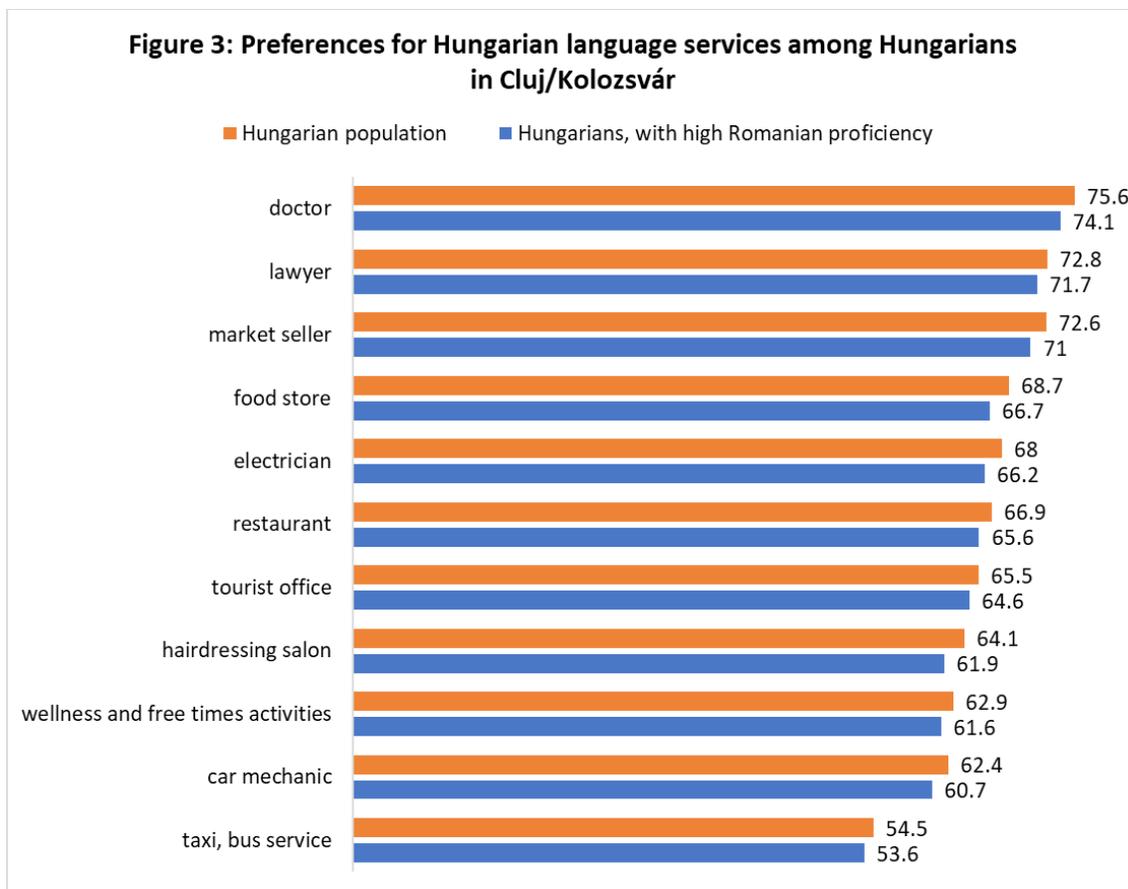
There are around 200 municipalities where Hungarians live in a majority, however there is no data on the language proficiency of Romanians in these settlements. More than half of Hungarian speakers live in these settlements and one third of them live in municipalities, where they are in dominant position (see Table 2). In these cases, Hungarian language is dominantly used in all domains of daily life.

In other words, the knowledge of Hungarian in these cases represents an asset on the labor market. However, the settlements with this kind of Hungarian representation represent only 17% of the 1181 settlements where Hungarians live. Also, none of the major cities in Romania has a Hungarian majority, as the largest urban settlement where Hungarians make up the majority is Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy), with approximately 54,000 inhabitants.

Table 2. Distribution of Hungarian-speakers in Transylvania by proportion of Hungarian native speakers in administrative units (2011 census)

Proportion of Hungarian native speakers in administrative unit	Num admini ur
No Hungarian speaking population	1
Between 0.01 – 10%	6
Between 10.01 – 20%	6
Between 20.01 – 30%	6
Between 30.01 – 40%	6
Between 40.01 – 50%	6
Between 50.01 – 60%	6
Between 60.01 – 70%	6
Between 70.01 – 80%	6
Between 80.01 – 90%	6
Between 90.01 – 100%	6

Although most non-Hungarians do not speak Hungarian, the need for Hungarian language proficiency among non-Hungarians could be legitimated by several researches. First, according to a research conducted by the *Igen tessék! (Yes, please)* movement, an organization which promotes Hungarian language use in business in Cluj/Kolozsvár, most Hungarians, even if they have a good Romanian language proficiency would prefer Hungarian language services in all domains (see Figure 3).



source: *Igen, tessék (2016)*

These findings are extremely important, because in Cluj/Kolozsvár only 16% of the population is Hungarians, therefore the use of Hungarian is less possible than in settlements with Hungarian majority. Also, they had shown that half of Hungarians, if they need to choose between a service that is offered in Hungarian and one that is offered in Romanian, would choose the former one.²

Similar findings are articulated by sociologist Zsombor Csata, who argues that a growing number of Hungarian language speakers look for jobs where the linguistic environment is Hungarian and Hungarian entrepreneurs and company owners look for Hungarian speaking workforce. In other words, the knowledge of Hungarian language in regions where Hungarian is dominant would be an asset for the whole population.³

² See Talpas, Botond – Bethlendi, András: *Igen, tessék*. Korunk, 2016 május.

³ Csata, Zsombor: Economy and ethnicity in Transylvania. In: Kiss, Tamás – Székely, István Gergő – Toró, Tibor – Bárdi, Nándor – Horváth, István: *Unequal accommodation. Hungarians in Transylvania*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018