



Language in the Service of Education. Educational Terminology Database of the Carpathian Basin

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The systematization and harmonization of terminology related to educational domains has long been a crucial requirement for the development of Hungarian-language professional communication, particularly within the multilingual and regionally diverse educational environments of the Carpathian Basin. Establishing a unified conceptual framework facilitates professional collaboration while also supporting linguistic standardization, quality assurance in education, and institutionalized knowledge transfer. The educational terminology database initiated by the Termini Hungarian Language Research Network (*Termini Magyar Nyelvi Kutatóhálózat*) aims to collect and organize key terms used in public and higher education, taking into account their regional variations and specific usage patterns. This paper outlines the project's context, methodological foundations, and stages of development.

Digitalization has emerged as one of the defining phenomena of the 21st century, exerting a profound influence on the field of linguistics. Digital tools provide unprecedented opportunities for the construction of linguistic databases, the execution of large-scale comparative studies, and the efficient analysis of extensive language data collections. Within this framework, a research initiative supported by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (*Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, MTA*) and coordinated by the HUN-REN Research Centre for Linguistics (*HUN-REN Nyelvtudományi Kutatóközpont*) has established the terminology database subproject of the Termini Hungarian Language Research Network. This project seeks to collect, systematize, and harmonize the terminology of various domains of Hungarian language use across the Carpathian Basin, with particular emphasis

on the field of education and the regionally specific linguistic characteristics of this multilingual area.

The Termini Hungarian Language Research Network is a transnational organization operating across several countries of the Carpathian Basin, focusing on Hungarian linguistic research in regions beyond the borders of Hungary. The network comprises research centres located in countries with significant Hungarian minority populations, each responsible for conducting and coordinating local research activities. These centres include Szabó T. Attila Linguistic Institute (Romania/Cluj-Napoca, Sfântu Gheorghe), Gramma Language Office (Slovakia/Samorín), Hodinka Antal Centre for Linguistic Research (Ukraine/Berehove), Verbi Language Research Workshop (Serbia/Subotica), Imre Samu Linguistic Institute (Ausztria/Unterwart), and Glotta Linguistic Institute (Croatia/Osijek).

In the beginning, the subproject leader was Szilvia Szoták, who appointed the heads of the Termini Hungarian Language Research Network's foreign research stations as coordinators. They were subsequently responsible for involving the project members. Currently, 28 specialists¹ from eight countries are participating in the subproject, giving it both national and international dimensions. For this reason, work is conducted online, with regular large-group meetings as well as smaller, region-specific sessions, as effective communication among members and proper task allocation are essential.

The project builds on previous research into language policy and terminology within the Hungarian-speaking area (Benő–Péntek, eds. 2011). Over the past decades, numerous professional discussions have taken place regarding the development of Hungarian terminology, particularly to support language use in minority Hungarian communities. Earlier work of the Research Network (e.g. Benő et al. 2003, Benő–Fazekas–Sárosi 2009, Fazekas–Tódor 2015; cf. Fóris–Bölcskei 2019: 155), notably the *Termini Hungarian–Hungarian Dictionary*, highlighted that the standardization of educational terminology is fundamentally important for improving both specialized communication and the quality of education.

The forthcoming educational terminology database will serve several key functions, providing significant support for Hungarian-language education. One of its most important roles is the standardization of specialized terminology. The precise definition and harmonization of terms and concepts used in educational fields is particularly crucial in multilingual and regionally diverse linguistic environments. This not only helps prevent misunderstandings but

1 Participants in the project – Austria: Zsuzsanna Sági, Mária Tóth, Szilvia Szoták; Croatia: Ana Lehocki-Samardžić, Nándor Csapó, Sonja Đelatović; Romania: Attila Benő, Krisztina Sófalvi, Krisztina Sárosi-Márdirosz, Boglárka Orsolya Domokos, János Péntek, Borbála Zsemlyei; Serbia: Éva Vukov Raffai, Emese Rajslí, Éva Dudás; Slovakia: Veronika Dančo Jakab, Éva Zilahí, Hajnalka Avar; Slovenia: Anna Kolláth, Annamária Gróf, Péter Gaál; Ukraine: István Cserniczkó, Kornélia Hires László, Krisztián Váradi, György Lengyel; Hungary: Dóra Mária Tamás, Andrea Faludi, Márta Fischer.

also creates a unified basis across different specialized language variants. A notable challenge is that the meaning of certain terms can vary significantly by region: for example, in Hungary, *gimnázium* refers to secondary education (grades 9–12), whereas in Transylvania the same term refers to the upper grades of primary school (grades 5–8).

In the first phase of the project, the focus was on the organization and development of terminology related to public education. This was a priority, as this field is particularly complex and diverse across Hungarian-speaking regions of the Carpathian Basin.

One of the fundamental reference points for the collection and development of terms was Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education, which defines the conceptual framework, institutional system, and legal regulation of public education in Hungary. This law contains numerous key concepts that served as starting points for building the database from a terminological perspective. Based on the legislation, the basic concepts used in public education could be outlined such as *kerettanterv* ‘framework curriculum’, *gimnázium* ‘secondary school’, *szakközépiskola* ‘vocational secondary school’, *kollégium* ‘dormitory’, *munkafüzet* ‘workbook’, *tankerület* ‘school district’, and so on. These terms formed the framework for the first phase of the work, as a precise understanding of Hungarian legal and educational terminology was essential for conducting comparative studies of the equivalents used by Hungarian communities abroad.

The aforementioned legislative framework not only facilitated the collection of Hungarian terminology within Hungary but also provided a basis for identifying and interpreting regional variations. For example, it allowed the alignment of a given Hungarian term with its equivalents used in different regions – whose meanings sometimes differ –, making it particularly important to establish precise definitions and create definitional contexts.

Moreover, including linguistic elements that reflect local specificities (e.g. *tanfelügyelőség* ‘school inspectorate’, *záradék* ‘endorsement/clause’, *osztatlan osztály* ‘combined class’) in the educational terminology database is crucial for several reasons. Different Hungarian-language regions of the Carpathian Basin have developed distinct language varieties, which carry significant cultural and historical value. Additionally, region-specific linguistic data allow the terms used in a given area to better align with the local educational system. As the educational system, curriculum, and legal framework may differ across countries or regions, it is important that the database also reflects local particularities, thereby providing teachers, students, and other professionals with insight into the educational terminology used in different regions.

In 2025, the development of the educational terminology database entered a new phase: the project team is focusing on collecting and organizing terms related to higher education. The current phase aims to contribute to the further

harmonization of educational terminology by accurately, consistently, and region-specifically documenting the Hungarian-language higher education lexicon.

During the development of higher education terminology, the project team pays particular attention to the precise definition of terms, their placement in natural textual contexts, and the recording of their equivalents in different language varieties – primarily the Hungarian standard and local variants (e.g. Transylvanian, Vojvodinian). Each term is accompanied by a clear and professionally grounded definition that delineates its meaning. The definition is supplemented by a so-called definitional context, consisting of example sentences or excerpts from natural texts, which illustrate the term in actual usage. In addition, target-language equivalents are recorded to show how the concept appears across different language varieties. Terms are further classified into various categories, taking into account the educational level, type of institution, field of study, or functional context to which they belong.

The development of higher education terminology is an extremely complex task, as it encompasses not only institutional concepts (e.g. *egyetem* ‘university’, *óraadó oktató* ‘adjunct lecturer’, *kar* ‘faculty’, *tanszék* ‘department’) but also academic concepts (e.g. *kreditrendszer* ‘credit system’, *szakirányú továbbképzés* ‘specialized postgraduate programmes’, *Bologna-rendszer* ‘Bologna system’) as well as administrative and legal terms (e.g. *akkreditáció* ‘accreditation’, *tandíjmentesség* ‘tuition exemption’, *ösztöndíj* ‘scholarship’). Regional differences are also prominent in this context: for instance, while the final examination at the end of the undergraduate cycle is called *záróvizsga* ‘final exam’ in some regions, in others (e.g. Transylvania) the term *licenzvizsga* is still used, which differs not only in name but also in its legal and institutional meaning compared to the practice in Hungary.

The aim of the current phase is to clearly represent these differences in the database, thereby supporting professional communication and educational mobility. The organization and interpretation of terms is of crucial importance not only from a linguistic perspective but also from educational theory and sociolinguistic viewpoints.

Thus, the subproject is not only a key tool for the harmonization of educational terminology but also a symbolic step in strengthening the Hungarian-language community in the digital space. Our goal is to enhance the competitiveness of the Hungarian language while supporting the preservation of cultural and linguistic identity. Consequently, the forthcoming educational terminology database is not merely a linguistic resource but a bridge connecting knowledge, culture, and language.

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Appendix

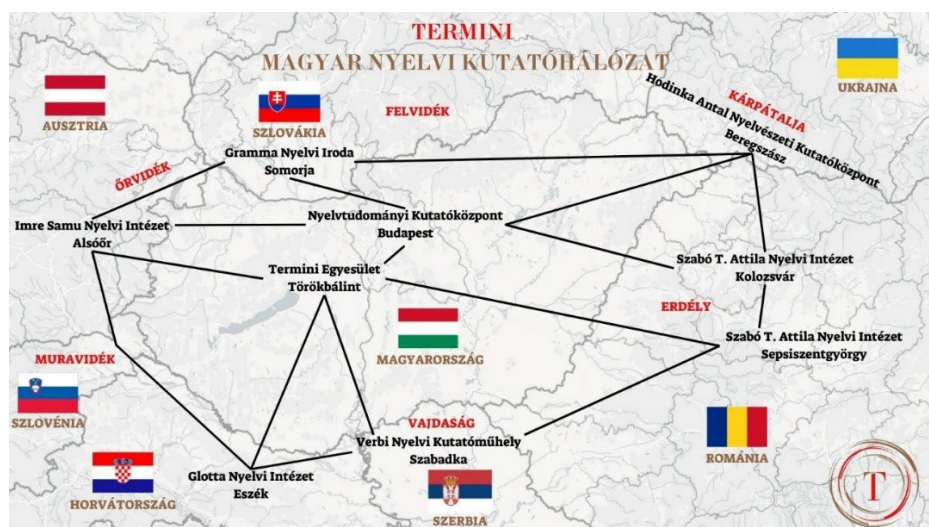


Figure 1. Map of the foreign research stations of the Termini Hungarian Language Research Network [created by Krisztián Váradi, 2024]