

A Sociolinguistic Study of Shifting Formalities

In Hungarian Urban Discourse

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The collapse of communism left its mark in the fragmented pieces of the Berlin Wall. It opened borders and introduced market economies. It restructured societies, even those unprepared for change. So it is no surprise that languages spoken by the people would be forever altered. As a sociolinguist, concerned with the study of language in its social context, I propose to examine an ongoing linguistic change related to issues of formality that has been taking place in Hungary since 1989.

Traditionally, notions of linguistic formality are closely connected to issues of solidarity, politeness, respect, status and hierarchies of all sorts including gender, age, social status and the like. Specifically, my study focuses on the linguistic shift in the complex marking of formality and informality in Hungarian, using a sociolinguistic analysis couched in a framework that considers both politics and economy.

My research is predicated on the notion that during the former regime of communism the public discourse required rigid expression of the formal hierarchies. However, since the early 1990s, with the advent of a more westernized economic structure, there appears to have been a shift from formal language use to a more informal discourse in the public sphere. Common or familiar discourse is winning significant popularity. I

hypothesize that this linguistic transformation is closely linked with globalization as well as the ongoing democratic changes taking place in Hungarian society.

Influenced by Cameron's (2000) work on the effects of globalization on the linguistic marketplace as well as the notion of 'synthetic personalization' (where genres of talk traditionally associated with the private domain have increasingly been appropriated to the public sphere) introduced by Fairclough (1989), I couple the linguistic transformations observed at the levels of formality among individuals with general trends of globalization. The sociolinguistic analysis offered will be couched in a political economy framework, as outlined by Gal (1987, 1989) and Irvine (1989). Using this framework, the linguistic interactions of local populations in Budapest are located within a larger political and economic structures of the Eastern European region, as well as in the global market. Thus, the key concepts within a Hungarian context (but in a comparative framework) addressed in my paper are (i) globalization and the marketplace (ii) political economy and language (iii) post-communist East-Europe, democratization and linguistic change in progress (iv) honorifics, kinship terminologies and pronominal addressing (v) in/directness (vi) language attitudes and (vii) language ideologies.

Present paper is a work in progress for my doctoral dissertation. It is a preliminary qualitative study, based on a dozen of sociolinguistics interviews conducted in Budapest, Hungary during 2001 and 2002 as well as the results of participant observation at a work setting, conducted in 2003 and 2004. Based on my interviews conducted insofar, my Budapest informants tend to attribute the observed ongoing linguistic change to a possible interplay of causes such as "Americanization," "new/fast culture," "globalization," "disappearing former political hierarchies," "open borders" and "the widespread use of those foreign languages (such as English)," where formalities are expressed less rigidly.

It is important to note, however, that although the effects and general tendencies of globalization are without question noticeable both on societal and linguistic levels, counter currents of anti-

global tones are present and there is still a definite thread of local traditional values and reminiscence of styles of the former years and they may have an influential effect on language as well. The simultaneous embracing and rejecting of the global influence is an interesting paradox and I hope that after the next phase of my research, which will include a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses as well as attitude tests, I will be able to shed some light on the how the global and the local interact, both in society and language.

Introduction

Globalization is an international, intercultural and interlingual phenomenon, but not a recent one. The process of "the crystallization of the entire world as a single place" (Robertson, 1987: 23) has taken various forms throughout history. Yet, a considerable amount of attention and emphasis is given to globalization these days. One reason for this may be that the level of communication technology has reached hitherto unknown height and speed. Today, the various processes of globalization are more accelerated and occur on multiple levels, connecting far-away geographical territories. Rapid change is the staple of the twenty-first century. Not only are economies traveling faster but also languages and language ideologies are rapidly following suit as well. The economies and languages of Eastern Europe are no exception.

During the past decade, the countries separated by the Iron Curtain from Western Europe became members of a reconfigured global economy. From behind their closed societies with insular walls a new scenario emerged: the local languages in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union had a gradual, but significant encounter with a rapidly spreading global English. As Krouglov (1996: 89) noted, "rarely has the pres-

ent-day sociolinguist had the opportunity to observe such a linguistic upheaval as that which is now occurring in Eastern Europe.” The collapse of communism not only left its mark in the fragmented pieces of the Berlin Wall but also opened borders and introduced market economies. With the collapse came restructured societies, even those unprepared for the change. So it is no surprise that languages spoken by the people in these regions would be forever altered.

A handful of linguistic studies have investigated situations around the world where political and socio-economic changes were accompanied by linguistic ones. In my dissertation research, I attempt to look at the sociolinguistic landscape in Hungary, since the country went through significant political shift during the past decade, marked by 1989, the official year of the change of the regime. For my work, Krouglov's (1996) study in Russia and the Ukraine

and Zhang's (2001) research in China are of particular relevance due to their similar political histories (i.e. the unifying thread of the legacy of former communism and the subsequent change of the regime to a more open market economy) that connect these regions to my own country, Hungary.

As a sociolinguist, concerned with the study of language in its social context, in my dissertation, I propose to examine a synchronic linguistic behavior regarding formality and informality. I plan to conduct sociolinguistic research in order to find out whether there is any observable linguistic shift, and if formal language use is gradually being replaced with informal discourse. More specifically, I will look at those public settings in Budapest, where I can observe interactions between company employees (i.e. customer service providers) and their clients (i.e. customers).

Within the Hungarian context, I will build

on the study of Angelusz and Tardos (1995), who pointed out that in terms of formality, address forms and greetings are not only reflections of dyadic relationships in society but they are also influenced by the actual 'political constellation' of a region. As Angelusz and Tardos (Ibid.) noted already in the second half of the 1980s, in Hungary, there was a 'change of climate' when the monolithic political culture slowly started dissolving. They suggested 1987 to be an important dividing line and referred to this date as the 'already past – not yet here' formula. Angelusz and Tardos (1995: 40) also noted that the “actual socio-historical constellation was reflected in the general features of personal relations [since] the shift of the components of the societal relations began to be reflected in the address forms.

Influenced by Cameron's (2000) work on the effects of globalization on the linguistic marketplace as well as the notion of Fairclough's (1989) 'synthetic personalization' (where genres of talk traditionally associated with the private domain have increasingly been appropriated to the public sphere), I couple the linguistic transformations observed at the levels of formality among individuals with general trends of democracy and globalization. The sociolinguistic analysis offered will be couched in a political economy framework, as outlined by Gal (1987, 1989) and Irvine (1989). Using this framework, the linguistic interactions of local populations in Budapest will be located within a larger political and economic structures of the Eastern European region, as well as in the global market.

Research Overview

As I am very interested in sociopolitical and consequently linguistic changes in societies, in the summer of 2001, I returned to Budapest to conduct preliminary surveys

regarding native Budapestians' intuitions and thoughts about linguistic change in the city. Arriving in Budapest at Ferihegy Airport, I headed towards the passport control booth. A young border guard officer wearing a uniform greeted me and posed the following questions: Erika, hogy utaztál? ('How was your-SING-INF trip/flight?') and Meddig maradsz Magyarországon? ('How long are you-SING-INF staying in Hungary?'). The situation, without a question, was highly marked for formality due to the official setting, the gender difference, the hierarchy, and the lack of familiarity between the speakers. Yet, to my great surprise, I was greeted informally by my first name and both questions were given in the familiar form. On the road between the airport and the city center, I received further messages from the billboards: pleasant faces advertising various products looked at me from above, shouting informal messages all over in the air. Upon my arrival, after switching on the TV, more informal pronouns touched my ears, especially coming from the commercial channels.

My own personal observation coupled with the small sample of the preliminary surveys and the accompanying brief qualitative analysis limit generalizations about all the aspects of this linguistic change. I am, therefore, eager to find out more about the Hungarian case since the relevant academic literature I consulted indicated that this kind of linguistic shift from formality towards informality is well known in many places in the world where political changes - especially that of democratization - occurred in the society.

In/Formality and Metalinguistic Remarks

All the examples from the literature highlight not only the fact that the shift occurs on the palette of formality but one can see that the spectrum embraces many different corners and languages of the world. The formal-informal distinction has inspired many linguists but non-

linguists interested in the topic can have striking metalinguistic comments about it as well. For example, one of the informants from my preliminary surveys, had an interesting story to share concerning the formal-informal distinction and the length of young boys' pants. The analogy may be surprising but consider the following the passage:

ES And you told me an interesting story about how things used to be in the old days...

INF8 Yes, the story was about my father [...]. He was born in 1904 in Szatmár, Hungary, but this event happened in Pest [...] At that time it happened that when they were in fourth grade, their teacher used informal forms with them. Of course, they were all boys and they all wore short pants and when they switched to middle school level, i.e. fifth grade in September, [...] all the boys showed up wearing long pants and the very same teacher, who had used informal forms with them in June, started using formal forms with the kids. This was the rite de passage, well a liminal experience, that they had now become adults - as if they were having a bar mitzvah. [...] Well, [this liminal experience] has different forms in each culture and here this was it: going from informal to formal forms.

It seems to me that since the change of the regime of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Hungarians have gone through their own societal rite of passage. However, the direction is just the opposite this time: people are leaving their formal forms and long pants behind and, exchanging them for more informal forms and short pants. The question arises: Why such a trade? What is the hurry? Can it be the trick of fast approaching, fast-food capitalism? For more money, we get fewer goods? Including shorter pants...

I believe that the question is no longer about the length of our pants. It is more a question of the style – with a hint of globalization: rigid, tight, formal wear is out and baggy, comfortable, one-size-fits-all, informal pants are in. They are all over the place: we wear them in New York, in Barcelona or in the streets of Warsaw or Budapest. If our pants lost their tightness and rigidity, I pose the following question: What happened to the rigid system of formality in our language?

In/Formality: Historical Background and Linguistic Variation

The marking of in/formality in language has been a significant area of sociolinguistics since the 1960s, beginning with the seminal work of Brown and Gilman (1972 [1960]). Since then, many other linguists have conducted research on the address forms of various languages, including Slobin (1963), Brown and Ford (1964 [1961]), Evans-Pritchard (1964 [1948]), Slobin et. al. (1968), Geertz (1972 [1960]), Ervin-Tripp (1972 [1969]), Friedrich (1972), Bates and Benigni (1975), Jonz (1975), Hollos (1975), Paulston (1975, 1984), Lambert and Tucker (1976), Nakhimovsky (1976), Kiefer (1977, 1980), Moles (1978), Mitchell (1979), Hill and Hill (1980), Fang and Heng (1983), Scotton and Zhu (1983), Kempf (1985), Bíró and Huszár (1985), Tolcsvai Nagy (1985), Errington (1985), Keshavarz (1988), Sólyom (1994), Terestyéni (1995), Angelusz and Tardos (1995), Krouglov (1996), Reményi (2001, 2002) and Zhang (2001).

Traditionally, notions of linguistic formality are closely connected to issues of solidarity, politeness, respect, and hierarchies of all sorts, including gender, age, social status and the like (cf. Brown and Lewinson, 1978). Most research in the field of in/formality, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, concen-

trated on the system of pronominal address forms. This system has been referred to as T/V (in my dissertation TU-VU is used), following the initial letters of the Latin *tu/vos* and French *tu/vous*. Subsequent studies, however, emphasized that it is indeed important to have a closer look at linguistic variation since not only can there be differences within society or, subgroups in a given society, but one can also encounter individual variations as well.

Linguistic Shift from Formality Towards Informality

Angelusz and Tardos (1995) conducted their research in a workplace setting. They used questionnaires for their study, looking at eight different forms of address (first name/nickname, uncle/aunt, family name, title/rank, comrade, name of job/occupation, colleague, sir/madam). The authors pointed out the connection between the changing address forms/greetings and the political happenings of the region. They observed that a basic tendency in the 1980s was the spreading of the use of informal first names and/or nicknames. Angelusz and Tardos distinguished between two structural dimensions of address forms in the second half of the 1980s: (i) formal versus informal forms (e.g. last names versus first names) and (ii) political party/movement style versus civic style (e.g. comrade' versus sir'). They also noted that new changes occurred within the political-civic style dimension, i.e. the political/movement style had begun to decrease and the civic style began to arise, although its usage was restricted to relatively rare usage.

Zhang (2001) described the changing economy and markets and their influence on language change of Chinese yuppies. She examined the use of four linguistic variables amongst the yuppies and compared the results to that of the use of the state profes-

sionals. Zhang found the Beijing Mandarin variants are used much less by the yuppies compared to the state professionals. Moreover, the yuppies adopted full tone features from the varieties of non-Mainland Mandarin. According to Zhang (2001: 163), “the state professionals are engaged in the Mainland Standard Mandarin linguistic market in which spoken Standard Mandarin does not constitute a valuable forms of symbolic capital ...” On the other hand, as Zhang (Ibid.) continues, the yuppies “participate in the newly merged Transnational Chinese linguistic market [where] a deterritorialized variety of Mandarin has become profit generating symbolic capital.”

Krouglov (1996) wrote about the transformation of the system of nominal address forms (especially the use of ‘comrade’) in Russian and Ukrainian. According to Krouglov (1996: 90), “the replacement of one sociopolitical system by another led to a noticeable shift in the use of address forms” as change of nominal forms, similarly to the change of pronouns, tend to reflect social, political and economic changes in a given society. Krouglov (1996: 105) concluded that

»revolutionary transformations in Eastern Europe led to a noticeable shift in address behavior [...] At the same time these processes have had specific features in each particular country and, therefore, languages have been changing their systems in various ways. Such factors as political stability, the speed and level of reforms, the period of communist dominance, national character, and independence (even nominal) are having a significant impact on present-day changes.«

Data Collection

In my dissertation, I propose to examine synchronic linguistic behavior regarding formality and informality. I plan to conduct research in order to find out whether there is any observable linguistic shift, specifically to see if formal language use is gradually being replaced by informal discourse. My research is to be conducted in Budapest, where I have identified two companies (with a possible addition of a third one) in which to carry out my research. I believe that these work places will serve to highlight the varying degrees of in/formality used. My focus is how language is used in the public sphere, more particularly how the employees of these companies (i.e. ‘the service providers’) communicate with their customers (i.e. ‘the clients’). These work places differ in the degree to which their styles of conduct are connected to the old (more traditional) regime as opposed to the newer (more westernized/democratized) economies. My hypothesis is that I would find more formal language used with clients at a place where there exist residues of the former traditional socio-political structure and, less formality at a place where there are newer forms of democratic structure and ideology.

Sites of Study

In order to get more accurate and consistent results, I have chosen companies characterized by similar profile and geographical location. These new companies are all travel agencies, which are ideal locations to observe employee-client interaction. The sites are all located in downtown Budapest and although their office design is quite different, the layout in all three offices is quite similar, providing ideal access to data collection for a fieldworker.

The structure as well as the ideology connected to the three fieldwork sites represent a continuum that is reflected in the pseudonyms I gave them: Old Travel, Transition Travel and New Travel. For my research, I will choose two primary field sites of study and one back-up company. Based on availability of and access to these agencies, I will pick two of them for comparison (Old Travel and Transition Travel or, Old Travel and New Travel or, Transition Travel and New Travel) in order to look at the variation in/formality is present in each particular environment.

Research Techniques

One of the main shortcomings of the earlier researches was the use of one research technique exclusively, mainly that of questionnaires. Survey questionnaires might not specify all the criteria one needs for a comprehensive sociolinguistic research. I find it important to go beyond the exclusive use of questionnaires and in addition to them I plan to conduct in-depth sociolinguistic interviews as well as carry out ethnography in order to get better results.

I will use Labov's (1972) traditional sociolinguistic interview framework as a starting point. The topics I plan to explore will broadly fall into two categories: (i) non-linguistic (subject's age, childhood, schooling, etc.) and (ii) linguistic (in/formal language use in Budapest, public discourse during different eras, people's opinion about language change, etc.) My intention is to interview people from both sides, i.e. company employees as well as the customers they serve. In addition, I will interview randomly chosen locals in Budapest. The interviews provide important sociocultural data about the subjects and their community, which inform the researcher about external or

social constraints on language variation and change. At the same time, the sociolinguistic interviews will provide me with samples of the subjects' informal language use and with information about their language attitudes and ideology.

Another problem with many of the earlier studies on in/formality was that informants reported about their native intuition exclusively, which is quite controversial in sociolinguistics since self-reporting may not reflect the actual language usage of the speaker. In addition, questionnaires were many times distributed to speakers of a language outside of their native environment, usually to immigrants or foreign students, residing in the United States. My research strictly focuses on urban Budapest speech and my informants will be exclusively Budapest inhabitants. This is important because I will be concentrating on a population that is in its local environment. Thus, contextualizing the speakers and their speech as it is happening will be given importance.

Similarly to Paulston (1975, 1984), I will supplement and verify my interview and questionnaire results by ethnography, frequently used in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (cf. Milroy, 1987). I plan to spend at least three months at each companies and conduct participant observation, taking detailed notes at the sites. The follow-up segments after ethnography will be interviews and questionnaires.

Thus, the methodology for my research will include a combination of well-tested techniques for eliciting sociolinguistic information, incorporating sociolinguistic interviews, participant observation as well as questionnaires. I firmly believe that the combination of these complimentary methods will enhance the validity of my analysis.

Social Variables

In Hungarian, similarly to other languages where in/formality is marked, age plays a crucial role in the conversations, thus one of the social variables I will look at is *age*. Based on my preliminary interviews and observations, middle age women have a rather negative attitude about the change, especially in those situations where they are addressed with informal forms by younger people.

In my research, in addition to age, I will also concentrate on the *sex* of the speakers, using the traditional binary category of female (F) and male (M) opposition.

I have added a new social variable of *familiarity* (F) or, in other words, frequency of contact between the employees and the customers. Based on informal conversations with the employees of one of the companies, I have been suggested using 4-tier scale (zero to three), with the following distinctions:

0 = UNKNOWN CLIENT, NEVER MET BEFORE

1 = SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR FACE; MET THE CUSTOMER ONCE OR TWICE

2 = RECOGNIZABLE CLIENT; COMES TO THE OFFICE APPROXIMATELY ONCE A MONTH (R)

3 = WEEKLY VISITS TO THE COMPANY; REGULAR CUSTOMER (W)

I find it very crucial to add this social variable in order to get the important nuances of the actual situation. For example, a client may use T with the employee (although based on her/his age and sex, formal V would be expected). If I were to look at the familiarity variable, I may realize that the actual T-usage in the above situation is due to the fact that the client is a weekly customer; hence the informal tone. This way, I immediately avoid early generalizations and/or speculations such as the possible spreading of T-usage due to external factors.

In my analysis, I will also code the company profile, having a three-way distinction between Old Travel (O), Transition Travel (T) and New Travel (N) as well as mark the social position/role of the informants, distinguishing between Service providers (S) and Clients (C).

Linguistic Variables

In/formality can be expressed through various means in different languages: morphologically, lexically, syntactically using verbal and nominal suffixes, employing different greetings or pronominal address forms, embracing particular styles, etc. Some languages use fewer linguistic devices for the expression of degrees of formality (e.g. English), others employ a very complicated system (e.g. Javanese). Hungarian is among those languages that employ a rich system for the expression of formalities.

In Hungarian, formality goes beyond the use of pronouns. Even though pronouns are rudimentary parts of the Hungarian formality system, one must provide an analysis of an extended linguistic repertoire. The linguistic variables I have chosen for my research include the following five lexical and morpho-syntactic features: (i) *greetings*; (ii) *pronominal address*; (iii) *nominal address*; (iv) *verbal marking* and (v) *nominal possessive marking*.

Greetings

In Hungarian, similarly to present-day English, the difference between various degrees of formality can be expressed by greeting forms as well as address terms. Basic informal greetings include the following informal expressions: *Szia!* ('Hi./Bye.' SING), *Sziasztok!* ('Hi./Bye.' PLU), *Szervusz!* or *Szerbusz!* ('Hello./Good-bye.' SING), *Szervusztok!* or *Szerbusztok!* ('Hello./Good-bye.' PLU), *Viszlát!* ('Bye.' SING/PLU). Some of the basic formal greetings are: *Csókolom!* ('Hello./Good-bye. SING) or *Kezét/Kezét csókolom!* (lit. I kiss your hand! SING), *Viszontlátásra!*/*Viszlát!* ('Good-bye./Bye.' SING/PLU), *Jó reggelt (kívánok)!* ('Good morning.' SING/PLU), *Jó napot (kívánok)!* ('Hello./Good day./Good afternoon.' SING/PLU), *Jó estét (kívánok)!* ('Good evening.' SING/PLU), *Jó éjszakát (kívánok)!* ('Good night.' SING/PLU). Note that *Viszlát!* ('Bye.') is the shortened

form for *Viszontlátásra!* ('Good-bye.') and can be used for both formal and informal farewell.

Pronominal Address

Present day Standard English has lost a distinction between expressing formality and informality in its pronoun system. As Table 1 shows, in Hungarian, the distinction between expressing formality and informality in the pronoun system still exists (cf. Sólyom and Rounds, 2002).

Table 1. Hungarian Pronouns

	Singular		Plural	
First person	<i>én</i>	I	<i>mi</i>	we
Second person	<i>te</i>	you (familiar)	<i>ti</i>	you (familiar)
Third person	<i>ő</i>	he, she	<i>ők</i>	they
<i>Őn</i>		YOU (more formal) ⁹⁴	<i>Önök</i>	YOU (more formal)
<i>Maga</i>		YOU (less formal)	<i>Maguk</i>	YOU (less formal)

While many languages employ second person plural pronouns for the expression of the formality such as *vous* in French (in contrast with the second person singular *tu*), Hungarian, similar to the Italian *Lei* or German *Sie*, uses third person pronouns as

formal forms: *Őn-Önök, Maga-Maguk*⁹⁵. Hungarian has a total of six lexical items that all correspond to *you* in English, indicating various degrees of formality as well as style and register. It should also be added that Hungarian is a pro-drop language, i.e. personal pronouns may be omitted (unless they are in focus position) as seen in the examples below⁹⁶.

(*Té*) *meddig maradsz Magyarországon?*
 ('How long are you-SING-INF staying in Hungary?')
 (*Ti*) *meddig maradtok Magyarországon?*
 ('How long are you-PL-INF staying in Hungary?')
 (*Őn/Maga*) *meddig marad Magyarországon?*
 ('How long are YOU-SING-FORM staying in Hungary?')
 (*Önök/Maguk*) *meddig maradnak Magyarországon?*
 ('How long are YOU-PL-FORM staying in Hungary?')

Note that overt pronouns are not seen as more formal than their pro-drop counterparts. In terms of verbal morphology, the verb has the same degree of variability as the pronoun, as seen in the above examples. In addition to the use of pronouns, two additional lexical items (singular *tetszik* and plural *tetszenek* 'pleases someone') can be inserted in Hungarian sentences to express a yet another type of formality, usually that of higher degree of respect (especially towards elder people) and used with *Őn* or *Önök*, respectively. Consider the above examples in a slightly altered fashion with the use of *tetszik*:

94 Note that whenever English glosses are provided, I will use capitalized forms of YOU to indicate formality that is otherwise not overtly marked in English.

95 Note that the degree of formality and respect is many times reflected in the orthography by the capital initial letters of these pronouns, although variation does occur in writing.

96 See for instance Ignác Romsics, *Magyar Története a XX Században [Hungary in the Twentieth Century]* (Budapest: Corvina, 1999). The most thorough critiques of "totalitarianism" in Hungarian historiography to date are Michael Burawoy and János Lukács, *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: Chicago University press, 1995) and Mark Pittaway's recent work, such as his "The Social Limits of State Control: Time, the Industrial Wage Relation and Social Identity in Stalinist Hungary, 1948-1953" (*Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol.12, No.3, pp.271-301, September 1999) and "The Social Limits of State Control Revisited: Industrial Workers and Socialist Dictatorship in Hungary, 1948-1958" (conference paper for "Munkástörténet – munkásantropológia újabb eredményei" held at ELTE Tanárképző Fiskolai Kar, Budapest, 4-6 February 2002).

(*Ön*) *meddig tetszik maradni Magyarországon?*
 ('How long are YOU-SING-FORM/RESP staying in Hungary?')
 (*Önök*) *meddig tetszenek maradni Magyarországon?*
 ('How long are YOU-PL-FORM/RESP staying in Hungary?')

Nominal Address

Address terms include first names (*Anna* 'Ann'), last names (*Kovács* 'Smith'), titles (*úr* 'Mr.'), ranks (*főnök* 'boss'), professional positions (*kolléga* 'colleague') or various combinations of these such as *tanár úr* (teacher + Mr.), *professzor úr* (Professor + Mr.), *Kovács elvtárs* (last name + comrade), *Nagy úr* (last name + Mr.), etc. A noteworthy phenomenon in Hungarian, that it is possible to combine an informal greeting with a formal nominal expression such as *Szia, főnök úr!* ('Hi, Mr. Boss.') or a formal greeting with an informal address form as in *Jó napot, Katika!* ('Good morning, Katie.').

Verbal Marking

In Hungarian, formality marking invokes sharp morphological and syntactic differences. Hungarian is a highly inflected language and displays a variety of inflectional and derivational affixes. In Hungarian, both the nominal declension as well as verbal conjugation are heavily affected by the choice of formal versus informal structures.

The infinitive of Hungarian verbs ends in *-ni* (as in *maradni* 'to stay'). This *-ni* ending is attached to the verb stem. In Hungarian, the verb is marked for both number and person of the subject. The rich system of Hungarian agreement further exhibits two main sets of conjugation: indefinite and definite. The indefinite verbal conjugation of the verb *maradni* 'to stay' given in Table 2.

Table 2. The indefinite verb conjugation of *maradni* 'to stay'

	Singular		Plural	
First person	<i>én</i>	<i>maradok</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>maradunk</i>
Second person	<i>te</i>	<i>maradsz</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>maradtok</i>
Third person	<i>ő/Ön/Maga</i>	<i>marad—</i>	<i>ők/Önök/Maguk</i>	<i>maradnak</i>

As seen in Table 2, in Hungarian verbs conjugate by adding affixes to the root, which is identical with the third person singular form, i.e. it has a zero morpheme ending in the third person singular. It should be added, however, that since vowel harmony is a crucial part of Hungarian phonology, the affixes come in front and back, rounded and unrounded variants, following the harmony rules as in Table 3.

Table 3. Affixes of present tense indefinite verbal paradigm

		Back	Front	Front
		Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
Singular				
First person	<i>én</i>	<i>-ok</i>	<i>-ek</i>	<i>-ök</i>
Second person	<i>te</i>	<i>-sz</i>	<i>-sz</i>	<i>-sz</i>
Third person	<i>ő/Ön/Maga</i>	—	—	—
Plural				
First person	<i>mi</i>	<i>-unk</i>	<i>-ünk</i>	<i>-ünk</i>
Second person	<i>ti</i>	<i>-tok</i>	<i>-tek</i>	<i>-tök</i>
Third person	<i>ők/Önök/Maguk-nak</i>	<i>-nek</i>	<i>-nek</i>	<i>-nek</i>

Because the system of inflectional affixes is so rich in Hungarian, there is no need to for the subject (which many times is the pronoun itself) to be overtly present. Moreover, it is possible to express the person number agreement, including the

degree of formality, with one-word sentences as it can be seen in the following examples:

- (9) *Maradsz?* ('Are you-SING-INF staying?')
- (10) *Maradtok?* ('Are you-PL-INF staying?')
- (11) *Marad?* ('Are YOU-SING-FORM staying?')
- (12) *Maradnak?* ('Are YOU-PL-FORM staying?')

The morpho-syntactic considerations related to the expression of formality concern another set of paradigm in Hungarian, that of the definite conjugation as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The definite verb conjugation of *kérni* 'to ask for, would like, want'

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First person	<i>én</i>	<i>kérem</i>
	<i>mi</i>	<i>kérjük</i>
Second person	<i>te</i>	<i>kéred</i>
	<i>ti</i>	<i>kéritek</i>
Third person	<i>ő/Őn/Maga</i>	<i>kéri</i>
	<i>ők/Őnök/Maguk</i>	<i>kérik</i>

The definite conjugation is used if the sentence contains a definite direct object. As in the indefinite verb conjugation, affixes come in front and back, rounded and unrounded, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Affixes of present tense definite verbal paradigm

	Back Rounded	Front Unrounded	Front Rounded
Singular			
First person			
	<i>én</i>	<i>-om</i>	<i>-em</i>
Second person			
	<i>te</i>	<i>-od</i>	<i>-ed</i>
Third person			
	<i>ő/Őn/Maga</i>	<i>-ja</i>	<i>-i</i>
Plural			
First person			
	<i>mi</i>	<i>-juk</i>	<i>-jük</i>
Second person			
	<i>ti</i>	<i>-játok</i>	<i>-itek</i>
Third person			
	<i>ők/Őnök/Maguk</i>	<i>-ják</i>	<i>-ik</i>

Again, due to the highly inflective nature of the Hungarian language, pronouns often are dropped and context makes it clear how many and which person is talked about and what type of formality is expressed by a given utterance. Consider the following examples:

- (13) *Kéred az újságot?* ('Do you-SING-INF want the newspaper?')
- (14) *Kéritek az újságot?* ('Do you-PL-INF want the newspaper?')
- (15) *Kéri az újságot?* ('Do YOU-SING-FORM want the newspaper?')
- (16) *Kérik az újságot?* ('Do YOU-PL-FORM want the newspaper?')

As with the present tense, Hungarian has both definite and indefinite conjugation for the past tense. Consider the following sample sentences that incorporate the past tense of the verb *utazni* 'to travel' and exhibit various forms of formality:

- (17) *(Te) hogy utaztál?* ('How was your-SING-INF trip/flight?')
 (18) *(Ti) hogy utaztatok?* ('How was your-PL-INF trip/flight?')
 (19) *(Ön) hogy utazott?* ('How was YOUR-SING-FORM trip/flight?')
 (20) *(Önök) hogy utaztak?* ('How was YOUR-PL-FORM trip/flight?')

- (21) *Milyen volt az útja?* ('How was YOUR-SING-FORM trip?')
 (22) *Milyen volt az utad?* ('How was your-SING-INF trip?')

I believe that the five social variables (age, sex, familiarity, company profile, social role) and the five linguistic variables (i.e. greetings, pronominal address, nominal address, verbal marking, nominal possessive marking) I have chosen for my research will provide a solid base for a comprehensive analysis of in/formality in Hungarian.

Nominal Possessive Marking

In addition to the complex relationship between formality and the verbal repertoire, the nominal paradigm is also affected by the choice of formal versus informal modes of speech. In my research, I will concentrate on the nominal possessive marking as my last linguistic variable. Consider the following nouns with possessive endings in Table 7.

Table 7. Possessive endings of nouns

	definite article	possessive pronoun	possessed noun endings
Singular			
my	(a(z))	(én)	-m
our	(a)	(te)	-d
his/her/its	(a(z))	(ő/Ön/Maga)	-ja/-je
Plural			
our	(a)	(mi)	-nk
your	(a)	(ti)	-tok/-tek/tök
their	(a(z))	(ő/Önök/Maguk)	-juk/-jük

Examples of possessive constructions that contain the (possessed) noun *út* 'trip, road' with contrasting formality and informality are given in Examples (21) and (22). Note that the (possessor) pronouns may be omitted from the sentences.

Preliminary Findings

Up until today, I conducted a dozen sociolinguistics interviews and spoke more informally with many other Budapest natives (of different ages and sexes) in order to test the validity of my native speaker intuition. The main purpose of my preliminary investigation was to find answers to the following questions: (i) Are other native Budapest speakers also aware of the change in progress I seem to have been noticing? (ii) If so, how long have they been noticing the change? (iii) What exactly have they been noticing? (iv) What do they think the reasons may be for this change? (v) What attitudes do they have concerning the change? (vi) Do they have any predictions for the future as for the disappearance of formal forms in Hungarian? The results of these pilot interviews are of these interviews are presented below in the form of a brief qualitative summary.

As for the recent changes in the Hungarian language concerning the use of different degrees of familiarity, all of my informants were cognizant of the shift from formal to informal language use. Budapest locals have been noticing this shift in many instances of their daily public life. Most of them referred to the past five to ten years, some mentioned

that the shift had started back in the mid or late 1980s. Consider the following responses:

INF1 [...] What I noticed...I personally like using formal VU forms but no one lets me do this. So, many times I met older ladies and men and people in general who, well, after a few minutes of conversation told me that they would rather switch to informal TU forms. **So, what I've been noticing is that this [linguistic system] is transforming. Or, people don't like to use the formal VU forms.**

INF2 Well, we live in Budapest, I have rare experiences with the situation in the countryside. **In Budapest, everybody uses informal forms, it doesn't really matter whether you go to the grocery store or to the drugstore or to teach your classes.** I use informal forms myself, I use these informal forms reciprocally with everyone who uses informal forms with me.

INF4 In my opinion, much more people use informal forms.

ES In your opinion, since when has it been the case in Budapest?

INF4 **Based on my situation, I can say that I have been increasingly noticing this [change] during the past 10 years. Moreover, I even make mistake with formal forms. So, I start using the formal forms with a person and after a while [in the conversation], I cannot use the formal forms any more. Or, I just make a mistake and simply switch into informal TU with them. [...]**

Based on my interviews conducted thus far, my Budapest informants tend to attribute the observed this linguistic shift to a possible interplay of various causes, most of them related to one aspect of the

effects of general tendencies of globalization. Consider six (i-iv) of the most frequently referred causes for the ongoing linguistic change:

**“AMERICANIZATION
/WESTERNIZATION”**

ES And what do you think the reason is for this change? According to you why this change has been going on?

INF2 Maybe we're getting Americanized??

INF9 Well, on the one hand, the message of using informal forms as a natural thing is pouring out on us from television and various other media. Well...surely, there is a bunch of American movies and foreign films, where informal forms are used right from the very start and everyone is on informal terms with everyone else, so this seems very natural...

(ii) “FAST FOOD CULTURE”

INF5 As with many other things, what comes to my mind is simplification, i.e. people try to simplify everything, relationships, food, fast, they try to make everything less complicated...

ES Earlier you mentioned that this way is more comfortable.

INF5 Yes, more comfortable.

(iii) “YOUTH CULTURE, POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE”

INF1 But I think this is age...

ES Is it related to age?

INF1 Yes, it has to do with age.

ES In what respect?

INF1 Well, young people try to be buddy-buddies and I am sure this is the American or English/British style, i.e. it is very informal, friendly...

ES What do you mean by young people? Which age group do you refer to?

INF1 Well, people in their 20s, 30s.

- ES [...] *What do you think the causes are for the shift towards informal language use in recent years in Hungary?*
- INF8 Well, looking at the west, everything, the youth, the power of young people, youth culture, I think it is due to everything.
- (iv) **“LACKING MANNERS/EDUCATION”**
- INF9 Sociological, societal [reasons]...a certain degree of lacking culture the television...In the television...Well, the best example is when...the interviewer addresses the interviewee using informal forms. This, this...well should I say that I am just about to faint [whenever I hear this].
- ES You said that the reasons could be sociological, cultural...What else did you mention?
- INF9 **Edu...well, educational...**
- ES *Education...*
- INF9 **Lack of education.**
- INF7 [...] But the other reason is that the country has become quite rude, lacking manners.
- ES What do you mean that ‘the country has become quite rude, lacking manners’?
- INF7 Well, I don’t know...that people’s sense of morals has become immature.
- ES So, then you think that according to you, using formal versus informal forms is related to someone’s morals and cultural intelligence?
- INF7 Well, I think it has a lot to do with good manners and the consequence of the lack or vacuum of good manners may be the very extent to which the informal usage is spreading.
- (v) **“DISAPPEARING FORMER POLITICAL HIERARCHIES, DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS, EGALITARIANISM”**
- INF3 I think, I hope that one of the reasons is the development of democracy, i.e. practically the decrease of authoritarianism, and thus having a freer, more liberal mode of communication. I hope this is the only reason. But there is a simplifying nature to it as well, i.e. there is not as much difference as there should be between people based on knowledge or quality of life and that is why everything merges.
- (vi) **“THE WIDESPREAD USE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES WHERE FORMALITIES ARE EXPRESSED LESS RIGIDLY”**
- ES And based on your opinion, do you have anything else to add as to what other reasons might be there that informal usage is spreading so?
- INF6 Well, one of the contributing factors may be that more and more people speak other languages. For example, more and more people speak English and it is a bit more accepted these days that well. English does not have these expressions of formality and people would like to look like them [i.e. English speakers] and they want to import this usage from the West.
- INF4 And since I spend a lot of time with people whose mother tongue is Hebrew or people who speak English and, in neither of these languages is there a differentiation in the use of formal VU and informal TU characteristic... In my opinion, those Hungarian people who use foreign languages frequently where

there is no TU-VU distinction, they don't like to use formal forms in Hungarian either. [...]

(vii) **“CHANGING POLITICS/ECONOMY, EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE SECTOR”**

INF3 Well, it has many reasons. **One is that the business sphere, the private business sphere is different from the state sector. In the state business sphere there was a time when this [i.e. using TU] was not permissible. The employee could not use reciprocal TU with the customer. These days there is no such condition, everything is quite spontaneous. [...]**

informal language use. Although I am yet to conduct attitude tests in the form of questionnaires, it appears from my interviews that people have strong reactions to this change. While the younger generation is more neutral, older people, especially women, find this shift rude, irritating and unacceptable. Of course, the small sample of the preliminary interviews and the accompanying qualitative analysis limits generalizations about all the aspects of this linguistic change.

On the other hand, however, my ethnography does not seem to support my original hypothesis insofar. The qualitative analysis of my participant observation of the past months do not point into a new direction, where common or familiar discourse is winning popularity. This poses an intriguing contradiction for my research.

In sum, this linguistic transformation from formal to informal discourse may be closely linked with globalization as well as the ongoing democratic changes taking place in Hungarian society. Although the effects and general tendencies of globalization are without question noticeable both on societal and linguistic levels, countercurrents of anti-global tones are also present and there is still a definite thread of local traditional values and reminiscence of styles of the former years. They may have an influential effect on language as well. The simultaneous embracing and rejecting of the global influence is an interesting paradox and I hope that in my dissertation, I will also be able to shed light on the how the global and the local interact, both in society and language.

Conclusion

I believe the use of in/formality is at a crossroad in present-day Hungarian urban discourse, in the speech of Budapest natives in particular. In my dissertation research, I plan to look at several synchronic aspects of a possible language shift. I hope that my study will add to our understanding of linguistic change.

The results of the preliminary interviewees (both with customers and service providers) seems to support my original hypothesis, i.e. with the advent of a more westernized economic structure, in the post-1989 Budapest public discourse, there appears to have been a shift from formal to a more

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