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FROM PHONETIC PERCEPTION TO LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

Reflections on the pronunciation of a Vojvodina Hungarian singer

Od fonetske percepcije do ideologija jezika

Razmišljanja o izgovoru mađarske pevačice iz Vojvodine

A fonetikai percepciótól a nyelvi ideológiáig

Elmélkedés egy vajdasági magyar énekesnő kiejtéséről

In the analysis I have demonstrated how the pronunciation of even just one word pronounced differently from the average Hungary Hungarian pronunciation can elicit strong responses in the audience and can make language ideologies surface. Since the study addresses an issue of a very popular female singer's pronunciation, the comments made under her videos on YouTube provide a lot of valuable data. Methodologically, such data collection is relevant and effective because subjects divulge their language attitudes and the language ideologies connected to them in a starkly honest manner amidst the anonymity of the indirect virtual space, which allows for hidden and implicit ideologies to surface as well.

Keywords: language ideologies, standard ideology, language attitudes, dialect, Vojvodina Hungarian

1. Language ideologies and how to identify them

There is very little information available on the language ideologies and opinions of what Preston calls “normal people”, i.e. non-linguists (Kontra 2005, 98) with regard to the Hungarian speech community, even though it would be

very important to have more insight into them, for reasons that Lanstyák (2011, 13–14; my translation) summarized as follows:

Identifying the language ideologies at work in the Hungarian speech community is an important and urgent task of Hungarian linguistics. As we know, just like language myths, language ideologies are deeply embedded in the culture of the community in question and have a profound effect on people's thinking regarding language, and through that, in turn, on their language behavior, and other people's interpretations of their language-related behavior. Since language change is the result of the change of language-related behavior, through influencing such behavior, language ideologies can cause language change as well as the course and rate of language change in progress.

The importance of language ideologies is similarly signaled by the fact that in the first chapter (“Cultural and ideological interpretations of language”) of the most recent comprehensive work on the Hungarian language, Tolcsvai Nagy (2017, 38–45) discusses the most widespread language ideologies. Still, little has been published on the ideology of lay speakers of Hungarian concerning varieties or sociolinguistic variables of Hungarian, due to the fact that research into these aspects of Hungarian remains scarce, with some papers by Lanstyák (2010 and 2011) and Bodó (2009, and 2014, on standard ideology) constituting exceptions.

Internationally, ample literature analyzes the interconnectedness of pronunciation and language ideologies, a recent example being, for instance, Karakaş (2017, 494–495), who demonstrates that many Turkish students equate “good English” with “correct and/or good pronunciation”. The present paper has a significantly different focus, since I analyze how Hungarian native speakers (most of them from Hungary) judge the pronunciation of another native speaker, who was born outside of Hungary.

I use the term language ideology in the same sense as Lanstyák (2011, 15–16; my translation) does: “More broadly, language ideologies are thoughts and systems of thoughts that serve to explain and justify facts and procedures in connection with language, language use, the situation of a language community, and/or the relationships between languages etc., regardless of whether they have any intention to ‘oppress’ or not.”

Identifying language ideologies that exist in speakers' minds is not at all an easy task, since it involves a finely tuned method of investigation: an interview planned in great detail, especially if we want to uncover implicit ideologies as well. Some language ideologies can be uncovered as a “side effect” of the investigation of language attitudes (as did the first study of Hungarian using the matched guise technique, Sándor et al. 1998), but not necessarily.

A third way of identifying speakers' language ideologies is, I believe, through the study of social interaction as part of natural everyday communication. Specifically, internet-based file-sharing systems can provide excellent sources of language data if they allow comments under videos of performers. Through analyzing comments and responding to them, one can initiate real dialogs and/or discussions involving several participants about language use issues of general interest.

The scientific value of data of this kind is clearly weakened by the fact that no social information is available on the person behind the username. Issues of language ideologies and social stratification cannot be investigated on the basis of data of this kind. However, the range of ideologies held by the people can be studied very effectively with this method. The data are completely reliable, since the users leaving the comments do not know at all at the time of commenting that they serve as subjects of a linguistic study, and this eliminates the effect of the interview situation from their comments. Arguing with each other, the users do not know that they provide data regarding their own language ideologies since their comments are intended to express their opinions and convince others. The data thus collected contain valuable, non-consciously provided metalinguistic information.

Since the users can formulate their opinions in the benevolently shrouded virtual space, these reflect the users' true views and opinions much better than do interviews recorded in somewhat unnatural circumstances where the interviewees' names and details are known to the researcher. This is also manifested in how the effect of the cooperative principle, politeness, the rules of social behavior, taboos, and political correctness is much more limited in the comments than, for instance, in a (socio)linguistic interview: users are more prone to insult each other, and even the linguist collecting the data has to get used to the sometimes very ungregarious, offensive, and occasionally ostracizing expression of views. Comments under YouTube videos show that anonymity provides the necessary security for people to share their true, unveiled opinions with others even when these opinions can be regarded as offensive and discriminative by others. In such a situation, when doing the data analysis, the researcher has to pay special attention to avoiding the trap of passing moral judgment on the users who provided the data.

Data collected in this way allow for qualitative analysis only, but not for quantitative analysis that would require looking for correlations with independent variables. But they can be highly suitable for mapping out what kind of language ideologies are shared by speakers of the same speech community.

2. The artist: Magdolna Rúzsza

The singer whose pronunciation is analyzed here, Magdolna Rúzsza, was born into an ethnic Hungarian family and grew up in the village of Мали Иђош/Mali Iđoš (in Serbian; Kishegyes in Hungarian) in Serbia. The village is in the province of Vojvodina, a part of present-day Serbia that used to be a part of Hungary and became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1920, as a result of the Treaty of Trianon. The village today has a population of almost 5 thousand people, 87% of whom profess to be Hungarian (<https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kishegyes>). It is about 70 kilometers from the border of Hungary.

3. The topic

A few years ago an interesting debate occurred on YouTube, continuing to this day, regarding Magdolna Rúzsza's Hungarian pronunciation in her song *Szerelem* ["Love"] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydPwn3Hpn80>; below, this page is the source of all unmarked comments; the date of access is July 2, 2020). The debate addresses the following issues:

- (i) whether the singer pronounces standard *e* (phonetically [ɛ]) vowels in the Hungarian word *szerelem* "love" or not? If the answer to this question is *no*, because the comment is made by a user whose phonetic perception is supported by such a view, then
- (ii) is the nonstandard pronunciation of the word an advantage or disadvantage from the perspective of the artistic performance?
- (iii) if the user regards it an advantage, why is that?
- (iv) if they regard it a disadvantage, why do they do so? and do they think the artist should modify her pronunciation?

It is important to add that, in addition to everyday users, a music critic using the name *R.T.Is.Rock* also noticed and qualified Magdolna Rúzsza's nonstandard pronunciation in this song. His comment is not exactly complimentary regarding the whole song and the artist, but from the perspective of the present paper only his statement about the artist's pronunciation is relevant. The statement, *fura kiejtés*, "strange pronunciation", is a thinly veiled reproach which, however, fits seamlessly into the train of thought qualifying the artistic performance as worthless in every respect and using only negative qualifiers as building blocks (in bold in 1, my emphasis):

- (1) "Ezen tucatárúk népes táborát erősíti Rúzsza Magdolna is. **Fura kiejtés, magyarul szövegek és még egy lenyúzott bőr a szerelem teteméről, amit már annyira leamortizáltak, hogy már csak a felhasználhatatlan részek maradtak.**"

“Magdolna Rúzsza is strengthening the populous group of shoddy goods. Strange pronunciation, badly constructed texts, and one more case of flogging of the already dead horse of love, which has been so overtaxed that there are only unusable bits remaining on it” (https://falszoveg.blog.hu/2013/05/09/szarelem_ruzsamagdianyus).

A popular Hungarian tabloid, *Bors*, also wrote about how this artist’s Hungarian, which is her native language, “is not good enough”: the paper printed an article titled “Magdi Rúzsza will sing the national anthem for half a million forints” about her rates and Hungarian pronunciation, using information supplied by “an informant who wished to remain unnamed” (my emphasis below):

- (2) “– *Magdi kiejtésével voltak bajok, az e betűt néha á-nak hallani a szájából, ezért amikor a megrendelő meghallotta az első felvételt, újat rendelt. Az énektechnikájával persze nem volt semmi gond, igazán szépen hangzik tőle a himnuszunk – mondja a Borsnak egy neve elhallgatását kérő informátor.*”

“*There were problems with Magdi’s pronunciation, the letter e sometimes sounds like á in her usage, so when the client heard the first recording, they ordered another one. There were no problems with her singing technique, our national anthem sounds really nice in her rendition, said an informant who wished to remain unnamed to Bors*” (<http://www.borsonline.hu/celeb/rusza-magdi-felmillioert-enekli-el-a-himnuszt/54679>).

The first line of the quotation is of interest to this study because it refers to the same pronunciation characteristic of the singer which triggered the lively debate after the song *Szerelem* [“Love”] was posted on YouTube. In the standard pronunciation of the word *szerelem* [“love”] the first two syllables contain the lower mid front unrounded [ɛ] vowel, while the last syllable a raised variant of the same vowel [ɛ̝]. In my observation, in the singer’s pronunciation, all three vowels are lowered compared to the standard pronunciation.

4. *Different observations – different ideologies*

In this section, I will discuss the various types of attitudes and ideologies expressed by speakers by grouping users’ comments under the umbrellas of general opinions which are given in quotes as the headings of the subsections.

4.1. “*There is nothing strange about her pronunciation*”

Many of the total of over one thousand comments to Magdolna Rúzsza’s clip of *Szerelem* [“Love”] on YouTube qualify her pronunciation. Some of these

do not observe any idiolectal or nonstandard pronunciation of the vowels in *szerelem* and, thus, only respond to comments that do, as does the user *Martina Irmes*¹ in (3):

- (3) “*Nekem nagyon bejön ez a kiejtés! :D mondjuk eddig fel sem tűnt, amíg itt nem olvastam... én csak a hangját hallom, ami leverne egy csomó külföldi világsztárt is.! :)*”²

“I like this pronunciation a lot! :D actually I didn’t even notice it until I read the comments here... I only hear her voice, which would put to shame lots of international stars.! :)”

Another user, *Csilla Szabó*, similarly does not hear anything special, but she reflects on the (nonlinguistic, but language ideology related) idea that there are two kinds of Hungarians: Hungary Hungarians and Hungarians from countries neighboring Hungary. Her comment makes it clear that she does not identify with the opinion that there are two kinds of Hungarians:

- (4) “*Hát Én Mo-i magyar vagyok, ha már így szét »kell« választani, de a szerelmet szerelemnek hallom... Csupa e-vel!!!! És gyönyörű hanggal...*”

“Well, I’m a Hungary Hungarian, if you ‘must’ differentiate, but I hear love as love... With *e*’s all over!!!! And a beautiful voice...”

Making a comparison with their own dialect, user *TheBurn0227* states that there is nothing peculiar in the singer’s pronunciation. In an interesting (and contestable) statement, they say that *Magdolna Rúzsá*’s pronunciation is the same as that of the locals of *Hódmezővásárhely*, a town in Southern Hungary. With pride over their dialect, whose most distinctive feature is the use of *ö* vowels [ø] in place of *e*’s [ɛ] in numerous words, they refer to speaking without such *ö*’s or raised *e*’s as “bleating” (using a common characterization of such speech by dialect speakers):

- (5) “*Semmi furcsa nincs a kiejtésében. Mi Hódmezővásárhelyen is így beszélünk, Délvidék sem másabb. Inkább beszéljek így egy életre... mint mekegve.*”

“There is nothing strange in her pronunciation. We in *Hódmezővásárhely* speak like this also, and *Vojvodina* is no different. I’d much rather speak like this all my life... than bleat.”

¹ Usernames are given in italics throughout this paper. A user’s gender is inferred, whenever possible, from their username: e.g. *Martina Irmes* is presumed to be a female. Whenever no gender can be inferred (e.g. see *TheBurn0227* below), the user is referred to with singular *they*.

² Comments are quoted in their original orthographical and typographical form.

4.2. “It is truly different than standard pronunciation”

4.2.1. “It is nonstandard, but that’s OK”

A great number of the users who left comments express their view that Magdolna Rúzsza does not pronounce the vowels in *szerelem* [“love”] as is customary. A user like this is *Krisztián Horváth*, who perceives, together with many other users, the singer’s lowered *e*’s as the Hungarian vowel *á* [a:]. This user does not explicitly qualify the singer’s pronunciation. The discourse marker *amúgy* “anyway”, which introduces the clause which sums up his opinion, has the meaning “however, otherwise” in this context and expresses an implicit evaluation in its pragmatics, assessing the singer’s pronunciation as undoubtedly strange and clearly not positive. The emoji :D at the end of his first sentence also implies an implicit qualifier, possibly suggesting that he considers Magdolna Rúzsza’s pronunciation funny.

- (6) “Csak én hallom, hogy minden »e« betű helyett MINTHA »á«-t mondana? :D Szárálám... szárálám, szárálám, szárálám. :D Amúgy nem rossz!”
 “Am I the only one who seems to hear AS IF she pronounces an *á* instead of every letter *e*? :D Szárálám... szárálám, szárálám, szárálám. :D Anyway, not bad.”

Rúzsza’s pronunciation is also regarded to be strange by the user *Hanna Bergmann*, whose implicit opinions we can get some indications of. However, the second sentence of her comment suggests that even though the artistic performance has a slight flaw (namely, the strange pronunciation of the *e*’s), the artist’s wonderful voice compensates for that completely:

- (7) “Tényleg furcsán hangzik, ahogy azt mondja, »szerelem«. De olyan szép hangja van, hogy észre sem vesszük.”
 “The way she says »szerelem« is indeed strange. But her voice is so beautiful that you don’t notice that.”

Similarly, *eeniko* finds the artist’s pronunciation of the word *szerelem* strange, as *szárelem*. Her attitude to the nonstandard pronunciation is positive rather than negative, as signaled by the qualification *édes* [“sweet”], although this label can also express a little condescension. Her *Imádom!!!!!!* [“I love it!!!!!!”], with the multiple exclamation marks and expression of infatuation, however, reflects a clearly positive (emotional) reaction. This comment does not touch on opinions or ideologies, only an emotionally based evaluation:

- (8) “Édes, ahogy mondja: szárelem, szárelem :) Imádom!!!!!!”
 “It’s sweet how she says *szárelem*, *szárelem* :) I love it!!!!!!”

User *Ysu73*'s comment indicates sophistication regarding linguistic issues and provides a fairly precise observation regarding the distance of the singer's dialectal pronunciation from the standard:

(9) “[...] úgy látszik, a fülem rossz, mert én bizony nem hallom, hogy »szárálám«-ot énekelne. Szerelem, szerelem, egy icipicit nyíltabb e-vel, de nem á-val. Ízléses, gyönyörű.”

“[...] it seems that my ears are no good, since I don't hear her singing »szárálám«. *Szerelem, szerelem*, with a slightly lowered *e*, but not an *á*. It's tasteful and beautiful.”

A user commenting in the forum of news provider Index qualifies Rúza's pronunciation as funny, which suggests that such pronunciation is likely strange and unusual for them, and therefore comical, but there is nothing in their comment that would suggest that the user openly degrades or considers it irritating. At the same time, the user uses the word *akcentus* [“accent”] to refer to the singer's pronunciation variant, the use of which in Hungarian may signal that they do not consider it standard. However, they also state that the reservations voiced in connection with the performance have nothing to do with the singer's lowered pronunciations of *e* vowels:

(10) “*Szerintem vicces a kiejtése. Nekem ugyan nem jön be, de elsősorban a zenéje miatt, az akcentus ritkán zavar.*”

“I think her pronunciation is funny. I don't like her, but primarily because of her music, the accent doesn't bother me much.” (https://forum.index.hu/Article/showArticle?na_start=152&na_step=30&t=9155061&na_order=)

4.2.2. “Nonstandard, and that's annoying”

Users who evaluate the pronunciation of the word *szerelem* in the video negatively usually express trenchant opinions and rely very strongly on their speech perception skills and value judgments: they are not ready to modify their stance in the debate. It seems that they constitute a minority point of view, at least on this site. It is important to analyze these opinions from the perspective of the extent to which they represent a dismissive attitude, and, even more importantly, to see what language ideologies they use to support their confident opinions. It is through this latter point (and through the analysis of opposing opinions) that we can investigate the language ideologies that exist in the minds of “normal people”, or everyday speakers, in their true forms, as spontaneously provided data. The first comment along these lines that I want to quote is from the user *Rita Major*:

- (11) “Szárálám... =D *Mindent agyonüt ez a kiejtés. Lehet szólni az ízes beszédről, de ez zenében nagyon fülsértő. Szerintem persze, ettől még másnak lehet más a véleménye.*”

“Szárálám... =D This pronunciation kills it all. Sure, there is colorful speech, but in music it really hurts your ears. But of course others might be of a different opinion.”

For this user, then, this pronunciation “really hurts your ears”. This qualification suggests that the singer’s pronunciation has a strongly dissonant and striking characteristic. This is an interesting statement, especially in light of the fact that other users (e.g. *Martina Irmes*, above) did not even notice that the singer did not pronounce the *e*’s in the word *szerelem* in the standard fashion. Such great differences in phonetic perception may be explained by the dialect specific characteristics of the perceptual base of the native language (cf. Gósy 2005, 122–125): for the speaker of one dialect, a particular variant of a speech sound – for instance, a sound that is lowered or raised compared to the standard variant – may be familiar, while for a speaker of another, the same speech sound may be foreign.

The comment “in music it really hurts your ears” is also worthy of attention: it reflects the idea that in a musical performance the singer can only use the standard variety, regardless of their “colorful speech”. This is essentially the general language ideology that Lanstyák (2011, 23–25) calls language homogenism, but if we take his definitions, we can call this an instance of language deficitism, which Lanstyák’s (2011, 47) defines as “the conviction that nonstandard varieties are unfit for linguistic reasons to fulfil certain linguistic functions, that is, they are inferior to the standard both socially and linguistically.” So, according to the user making this comment, a singer can only use the standard variety when performing. Curiously, the user was not asked about what the case is then with singers using African American Vernacular English, rappers, or singers singing with an Irish accent.

A similar ideology is manifested in the comment by *Tímea Rab*, who, however, goes further and identifies the nonstandard pronunciation of the *e*’s as a “pronunciation error”:

- (12) “*Tényleg gyönyörűen énekel, csak egy énekesnek le kell szoknia a kiejtési hibákat.*” (*sic!*)

“She really sings marvelously, but a singer has to get rid of pronunciation errors.”

Language homogenism and language deficitism are the ideologies manifested in this comment. The user making the comment believes almost that the singer

can use only one Hungarian language, and for this, they have to “get rid of pronunciation errors”.

The user calling themselves *crest hun* represents the often heard heavy handed ideology that can be labeled as “in Hungary, speak Hungary Hungarian”. This ideology is fairly widespread among Hungary Hungarians and involves the idea that whoever lives in Hungary has to acquire and use “the” Hungary Hungarian variety, no matter which part of the Carpathian Basin they come from, and should stop using their own vernacular variety of Hungarian in the Hungary Hungarian context. This means that it is a good idea for them to cover up their vernacular and renounce it in Hungary, because that is what the speech community (actually, only a part of it) expects them to do. What the reason could be for such a requirement does not emerge from the comment at all:

- (13) *Kiejtés de vagy oda, Rúzsza Magdi jónéhány éve Magyarországon él és járható volt beszédtechnika órákra, hogy az eredeti mellett az ittenit is elsajátíthassa, és énekléseikor ezt a tanultat alkalmazza. Nem szégyen az. Ha már vállalta hogy itt él (mert Szerbiában valamiért nem kellett mint énekesnő), akkor ennyit megtehetett volna. Kicsit kevesebb flanc, egzotikus utazás kellene csak hogy ideje is maradjon az órákra a fellépései mellett.*

Regardless of pronunciation, Magdi Rúzsza has been living in Hungary for many years and could have taken speech technique lessons in order to acquire Hungary Hungarian pronunciation in addition to her original one so she could use it while singing. There is no shame in that. If she made the decision to live here (for some reason she was not needed as a singer in Serbia), she could have done this much. A little less frill and exotic travel is what she should do just to have time to take lessons in addition to performing.

Reading between the lines of this comment we realize that the representative of the “in Hungary, speak Hungary Hungarian” ideology considers it their moral duty to conform in their language use and, really, to practice self-repudiation: they essentially dismiss the singer from a moral perspective, for not spending her free time taking speech technique lessons instead of relaxing. In their eyes, the regional Vojvodina pronunciation is some kind of deficit of language use, which has to be overcome through relentless learning by somebody who wants to become successful in Hungary or perhaps just to live here (cf. “If she made the decision to live here”). We can interpret this also like if somebody takes it upon themselves to live in Hungary, they also take it upon themselves to learn to speak like the natives of Hungary and start speaking like that. The user’s opinion shows that they believe that anybody can easily give up the phonetic characteristics of their vernacular if they take enough private classes.

The following comment is also defined by the ideology of “in Hungary, speak Hungary Hungarian”, but user *G Man Official* who made it has an even more forceful opinion regarding the singer’s “sin”. The most surprising detail about it is that the user defines himself as a “Subcarpathia Hungarian kid” rather than a Hungary Hungarian:

- (14) “SZARALAM, SZARALAM, SZARALAM,,,,,,,,,KÁRPÁTALJAI MAGYAR GYEREK VAGYOK „MAGDIKÁM -----TE PEDIG VAJDASÁGI, DE TANÚLJ MEG HELYESEN MAGYARUL BESZÉLNI,,,,,KÖSZÖNJÜK A HATÁRON KÍVÜL ÉLŐ MAGYARSÁG NEVÉBEN IS”

“Szaralam, szaralam, szaralam,,,,,,,,, I’m a Subcarpathia Hungarian kid, Magdi – and you are from Vojvodina, but you should learn to speak Hungarian correctly,,,,,,,,, Thank you on behalf of Hungarians outside Hungary”

This user’s views are considerably more disparaging than the previously discussed ones, requiring the singer to speak “correct” Hungarian. The language ideology underlying this expectation is “in Hungary, speak Hungary Hungarian”, supplemented by specifically regarding all language use that does not conform to the (imagined) Hungary Hungarian variety as incorrect: pronouncing *e*’s lowered compared to the standard pronunciation is, thus, “incorrect”. The most shocking aspect of the comment is that even though the user is a Hungarian originally from outside Hungary, he is more intolerant towards a speaker of a variety of Hungarian from outside Hungary than the users who are Hungary Hungarians, identifying with the “in Hungary, speak Hungary Hungarian” ideology completely. There is also an implicit moral aspect to his comment with which he deprecates the singer: the closing formula, “Thank you on behalf of Hungarians outside Hungary”, appears to suggest that the singer’s “sin” of pronunciation brings shame to all Hungarians outside Hungary, which the singer should rectify as soon as possible by “learning to speak Hungarian”. The comment left by *G Man Official*, from Subcarpathia, expresses extreme confidence and authoritative loudness: he gives his comment in caps lock throughout, as if trying to shout everybody.

4.2.3. “Nonstandard, and that’s a positive value”

4.2.3.1. “I like it because I’m also from Vojvodina”

The singer’s pronunciation is identified correctly as Vojvodina accent by users who are themselves from Vojvodina and speak a variety of Hungarian close to that of Mali Idoš/Kishegyes as their vernacular. For them, this pronunciation is not “strange” or “funny” but familiar and common, since *e* vowels that are different from the standard are elements of the perceptual base of their native dialect. This opinion is voiced by the user *Kovács Korina*:

- (15) *Mennyien írják hogy „szárálám”-et hallanak. Mi, Vajdaságiak igenis büszkék vagyunk Magdira, mert megmaradt ez az akcentusa. Bármennyire is mondjátok, Ti vérbeli magyarok, hogy a ti énekesnőtök és nem erős „e”-t hallatok a „szerelem” szóban. :) Ja és szerintem nem sokan tudják, de Magdi még a Középiskolát is itt fejezte, Szabadkán. :) Üdv vajdasági magyarok! :)*

So many people write that they hear “szárálám”. We, Vojvodina Hungarians, are actually proud of Magdi for retaining her accent. No matter how forcefully You, true blooded Hungarians, say that she is your singer and that you don’t hear strong e’s in the word “szerelem”. :) Oh and maybe not many people know that Magdi graduated from high school here in Subotica/Szabadka. :) Regards, Vojvodina Hungarians! :)

This comment manifests societal ideologies which are further away from language ideologies and are only indirectly connected to them. One such ideology is the juxtaposition of “true blooded Hungarians” and Vojvodina Hungarians (or, more broadly, Hungarians from countries neighboring Hungary). The user’s address form *You, true blooded Hungarians*, without quotation marks but clearly with an ironic intent, is telling in the sense that it indicates that she knows the view that Hungary Hungarians consider only themselves to be “true” Hungarians, but she does not identify with this. Providing an analysis of this societal ideology is beyond the goals of a linguistic study such as the present one, but it is necessary to state that this ideology is amply sustained by variable evaluations of state varieties of Hungarian by members of the Hungarian speech community. The positive attitude of the user is expressed by the way she greets only Vojvodina Hungarians in the end of her comment. Another user, *Tamás Channelje* (“Tamás’s channel”) comments as a Vojvodina native, not making a secret of the fact that he likes the song because it is sung by a singer from Vojvodina:

- (16) *“ÓÓÓ ne már... én is Vajdasági vagyok, és ez a dal nekem is nagyon (teccik XD) és akit zavarja az hogy :szárálám, amit kitaláltak kritizálásnak, AZ NE NÉZZE MEG . Ó most mit kell teleírni csupa rosszal ezt jó kis zenét ? :(DE AZÉRT HAJRÁ !! :) Ment a like :D”*

“Oh no... I’m also from Vojvodina, and I like this song a lot XD and whoever is bothered by *szárálám*, which you target with your criticism, SHOULD NOT WATCH IT. Why do you have to fill all the space with all the nasty stuff to this great music? :(BUT I’M STILL FOR IT !! :) I sent my like :D”

4.2.3.2. “I’m not from Vojvodina, but every dialect is valuable”

In *Ottó Tóth’s* argumentation we can see that pronunciation that differs from the Hungary standard one is a positive value, which he supports with reference to the ideology of linguistic pluralism:

- (17) *“Nincs itt semmiféle zárt ‘e’ hang, meg ‘szárálám’, hanem, egyszerűen vajdasági akcentus, amivel nekem semmi bajom sincs, sőt, színesíti a magyar nyelvet”*
“There is no raised *e* sound or *szárálám* here, only the Vojvodina accent, which I have no problem with whatsoever, on the contrary, it makes the Hungarian language more colorful”

“It makes the language more colorful.” Proponents of this widespread ideology consider linguistic and dialectal diversity a basic characteristic of language, evaluate it positively, and support it, preferring (interlinguistic, intralinguistic, outer and inner linguistic) variation over linguistic unity”, according to Lanstyák (2011, 55). Similarly, linguistic pluralism appears in the comment of a linguistically more informed user, *Kompetens* (“competent”):

- (18) *Ruzsa Magdi magyar többségű vidéken nőtt fel, nem akcentusról van szó, csupán nem a ‘mekegős’ pesti ‘e’ betűket használja. Akinek nyelvtan órán elmagyarázták, az tudhatja, hogy amíg nyelvünkben nem sorvadt le ilyen egysíkúvá az ‘e’ betűk ejtése, addig sokkal változatosabb volt a beszédünk, és ez Hála Istennek még nem veszett ki mindenünnen. Magdi dalát is színesíti, nem levon, hozzáad, hozzáad, hozzáad tesz.*

Magdi Ruzsa grew up in a region that had a local Hungarian majority, this is not an accent, she is just not using the bleating Budapest *e* sounds. You might have heard this explained in your Hungarian grammar class that our speech was much more varied until the pronunciation of the letters *e* got to be so unified it decayed, but thank God this hasn’t got lost everywhere yet. It makes Magdi’s song more colorful, it doesn’t take away from it, it adds to it, it makes it unique.

Ysu is also a similarly linguistically sophisticated user who gives a positive judgment of the singer’s pronunciation of *szerelem* on esthetic rather than ideological grounds. Linguistic pluralism is not alien from them either, as is made clear in the first statement of the comment that refers to dialects (part of this comment was already quoted above):

- (19) *“Imádom a tájszólásokat, annó foglalkoztam nyelvjárási szövegek lejegyzésével, de úgy látszik, a fülem rossz, mert én bizony nem hallom, hogy »szárálám«-ot énekelne. Szerelem, szerelem, egy icipicit nyíltabb e-vel, de nem á-val. Ízléses, gyönyörű.”*

“I love dialects, at one point I did a lot of transcribing of dialectal texts, but it seems that my ears are no good, since I don’t hear her singing ‘szárálám’. *Szerelem, szerelem*, with a slightly lowered *e*, but not an *á*. It’s tasteful and beautiful.”

In another comment, the same user argues with another user, revealing more about their interpretation of linguistic pluralism: in this frame, the dialect is a value to be preserved, however, a contact variety originating from a bilingual situation dominated by the majority language is negatively rated, as we can read between the lines: “*Nem szerb akcentussal beszél, hanem dél-dunántúli tájéjtéssel*” – “She doesn’t speak with a Serbian accent but a southern Transdanubian one”. Linguistic pluralism has strictly defined boundaries for this user. On the other hand, their views also include that they regard the singer’s pronunciation as an open acceptance of her place of birth, as a moral stance: for them, the singer’s locally rooted pronunciation is an act interpretable along the moral dimension. This kind of ideology, where the way the mother tongue is used is regarded as a moral issue, seems to be quite widespread in the Hungarian speech community. Its roots lie in the past of the Hungarian language: a several centuries’ long subordinate position and low status of the language may have played a role in the development and spread of this ideology:

- (20) *És miért lenne szégyellnivaló, ha őrzi a szülőföldjének a gazdag ejtésvilágát? Nem szerb akcentussal beszél, hanem dél-dunántúli magyar tájéjtéssel (és mind itt a dalban, mind az interjúkban annak egy nagyon-nagyon enyhe változatával). Miért lenne jobb a pesti? Mert mindenki úgy énekel? Miért jobb úgy csinálni, mint mások, csak azért, hogy úgy csináljon valaki, mint mások? Tiszteletet ad a magyarságnak, ha háttérbe szorítja azt a beszédmódot, amit a határon túli magyarok vérrel és könnyel őriznek az eltűnéstől? Ő az, aki jött, ahonnan jött, és ezt mindig is felvállalta. Képviseli a magyarságot és a határon túli magyarságot is. Az ejtésében benne van a magyarok évszázados történelme. Emellett karakter és egyéniség, és senkit sem bánt azzal, hogy így beszél, így énekel. És érdekes, a közönsége ezt megérti, elfogadja és szereti. Így szereti.*

And why should it be shameful that she is preserving the rich pronunciation of her birthplace? She doesn’t speak with a Serbian accent but a southern Transdanubian one (and a very, very mild version of it, too, both here in the song and in interviews). Why would the Budapest pronunciation be better? Because everybody uses it to sing? Why is it better to do something as others do it, just so you do something like the others? Would she pay respect to Hungarians if she pushed into the background the way of speaking that Hungarians in neighboring countries try to preserve from oblivion, shedding their blood and their tears? She came from wherever she did, and has never denied it. She represents Hungarians in general and Hungarians from neighboring countries too. The Hungarians’ many centuries’ long history is there in her pronunciation. And in addition,

she is quite a character and a unique personality, and she never offends anybody by speaking and singing like this. And interestingly her audience understands and accepts this. They like her.

Linguistic pluralism appears in *Lajos Veres's* comment, which contains an argument (or rather linguistic opinion) which is very frequently used these days in support of pluralism, namely, the uniqueness of Transylvanian varieties of Hungarian:

- (21) *“Menj Bácskába, mindenki így beszél. Imádok ott lenni. És Erdélyben nem élvezed azokat a szavakat, amiket utoljára Benedek Elek meséiben olvastál?”*
 “Go to Bácska, everybody speaks like this. I love being there. And in Transylvania, don’t you enjoy the words that you last read in Elek Benedek’s stories?”

The comment made by user *Ki-van-ott* (“Who is there?”) is also based on the ideology of pluralism. As a linguistically sophisticated user, they self-stigmatize themselves when they rate their own speech negatively for containing only one realization of *e*. According to them, this is exactly why Vojvodina speech can be regarded as the positive polar opposite of Budapest speech:

- (22) *Nem bántom MAGAMAT, s nem is RÚGOK MAGAMBA, de itt, mi, budapestiek (az idősebb svábok kivételével) bizony mekegünk, csak egyféle ,e’ hangot ejtünk. Vidékre menve áll csak helyre a normális nyelvi egyensúly, változón, esetleg mindhárom e-hangunkka, mert bizony jelentésmegkülönböztető szerepe is van pl a közismert ? „mentek” vagy mentek kiejtése..... Na nem rögtön, és tájanként is változón...!*

I won’t put MYSELF down, and I won’t BELITTLE MYSELF, but here in Budapest we bleat, with the exception of older people of Swabian origin, we only pronounce one kind of *e*’s. The normal linguistic balance is only restored when we venture outside of Budapest, with variation, perhaps even with all three of our *e* sounds, because it can even make a difference in meaning, e.g. the well-known ? pronunciation difference *mentek* [‘you all go’] or *mentek* [‘I save’]... Not immediately, and variably by region...

A very different, non-linguistic ideology is used in *Attila Molnár's* argumentation, who refers to people of the same ethnicity and mother tongue as *siblings*. In this framing, it is an act committed against a sibling and, thus, a morally condemnable act, if one criticizes the pronunciation of another Hungarian, for instance, a Vojvodina Hungarian. This kind of argumentation is emotion-based and judgmental from a moral point of view, so looking for a language ideology here is futile:

- (23) *“Nagyon hülye az az ember, aki a magyar testvérét csak amiatt alázza, hogy tájszólásban énekel! Lehetne ez fordítva is,” kedves hozzászólók! Magdi nagy énekesnő, én baranyai vagyok és fülemnek kellemes a kiejtése, szeretem!”*
“Somebody who is humiliating their own Hungarian sibling just for singing in dialect is really dumb! You could do it the other way around, too, ‘dear commenting users’! Magdi is a great singer, I’m from Baranya county, and I like listening to her pronunciation, I like it!”

Simon Béla’s comment expresses deep empathy for those who can embrace their mother tongue only as a minority speaker in a country where another language is official. His comment reflects understanding towards those experiencing hurdles in their mother tongue acquisition and use as minorities. The user is aiming to be rational, arguing that minority Hungarian speakers have very different chances to use their mother tongue than do majority Hungarians in Hungary:

- (24) *Azoknak, akik a művésznő kiejtését kifogásolják, azt ajánlom, hogy képzeljék el, hogy kisebbségben nőttek fel, egy olyan országban, ahol a többségben lévők cseppet sem toleránsak a kisebbségekkel és azoknak az az anyanyelvi jogaikkal szemben. És akkor rögtön megértik, hogy nem meg megkövezni kellene a művésznőt a kiejtéséért, hanem csodálni azért, hogy ilyen szépen tud magyarul.*

I suggest that those who have objections against the artist’s pronunciation should imagine that they grew up as minority speakers, in a country where the majority are not tolerant at all towards the minority speakers and their rights of native language use. And then they will immediately understand that they shouldn’t be giving flak to the artist for her pronunciation but, instead, marvel at her for speaking Hungarian so well.

5. Conclusion

In the analysis presented in this paper I have demonstrated how the pronunciation of even just one word pronounced differently from the average Hungary Hungarian pronunciation can elicit strong responses in the audience and can make language ideologies surface. Since this study addresses an issue of a very popular female singer’s pronunciation, the comments made under her videos on YouTube provide a lot of valuable data. Methodologically, such data collection is relevant and effective because subjects divulge their language attitudes and the language ideologies connected to them in a starkly honest manner amidst the anonymity of the indirect virtual space, which allows for hidden and implicit ideologies to surface as well.

The comments show that there are considerable differences in the way the singer's pronunciation is perceived by native speakers of Hungarian. Her pronunciation is confidently identified by speakers who are also from Vojvodina, and who relate to it positively in their judgments. Other users exhibit considerable differences in their perception of Magdi Rúzsa's *e* sounds.

In the comments of those who find the singer's pronunciation unusual and strange, language ideologies surface easily, e.g. those of language homogenism and deficitism, but also primarily the ideology that can be summarized as "in Hungary, speak Hungary Hungarian" for want of a better designation. The historical basis for this language ideology is the Treaty of Trianon of 1920, which fragmented the people who formed a unified nation until then. As a result, only a part of the Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin have been living in Hungary, with the other Hungarians living as ethnic and linguistic minorities in the countries neighboring Hungary. The comments reveal that this ideology is pervasive not only among Hungary Hungarians but also among Hungarians from neighboring counties.

The ideology of linguistic pluralism is, however, very much alive among other users who comment on the nonstandard nature of the singer's pronunciation: many of them express positive attitudes to the singer's pronunciation, unusual in the Hungary Hungarian context, and regard it as a value worthy of preservation.

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Mikloš NEMET

OD FONETSKE PERCEPCIJE DO IDEOLOGIJA JEZIKA

Razmišljanja o izgovoru mađarske pevačice iz Vojvodine

Nakon sprovedenog istraživanja i analize ukazao sam na činjenicu kako samo jedna jedina reč koja je izgovorena drugačije od prosečnog mađarskog izgovora može izazvati snažne reakcije publike i dovesti na površinu određene jezičke ideologije. Budući da se studija bavi pitanjem akcenta veoma popularne pevačice u Mađarskoj, komentari napisani ispod njenih video klipova na Jutjub kanalu pružaju mnogo dragocenih podataka za istraživanje. Metodološki, takvo prikupljanje podataka jeste relevantno i efikasno jer komentari otkrivaju jezičke stavove i jezičke ideologije na krajnje iskren način u anonimnom i indirektnom virtuelnom prostoru, što omogućava da i skrivene i implicitne ideologije izbiju na površinu.

Ključne reči: jezičke ideologije, standardna ideologija, jezički stavovi, dijalekt, vojvođanski mađarski jezik

NÉMETH Miklós

A FONETIKAI PERCEPCIÓTÓL A NYELVI IDEOLÓGIÁKIG

Elmélkedés egy vajdasági magyar énekesnő kiejtéséről

Az elemzés során bemutattam, hogy akár csak egyetlen szó nemsztenderd ejtése erőteljes válaszokat képes kiváltani a hallgatóságból, és felszínre tudja juttatni a nyelvi ideológiákat. Mivel a tanulmány egy nagyon népszerű énekesnő kiejtésének problematikájával foglalkozik, a YouTube-on a videó alatt tett megjegyzések számos értékes adatot szolgáltatnak. Módszertanilag az ilyen adatgyűjtés azért releváns és hatékony, mert az alanyok a közvetett virtuális tér anonimitása közepette kifejezetten őszintén árulják el nyelvi attitűdjeiket és a hozzájuk kapcsolódó nyelvi ideológiákat, ami rejtett és implicit ideológiák felszínre kerülését is lehetővé teszi.

Kulcsszavak: nyelvi ideológiák, standard ideológia, nyelvi attitűdök, nyelvjárás, vajdasági magyar nyelv

IRODALOM, HATÁRTUDOMÁNYOK

