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## The intertwining of linguistic identity and ideology among Hungarian minority commuters from Vojvodina to Hungary

The present research aims to investigate the linguistic identity and ideology of a particular regional minority living in a multilingual context. The objective of this paper is to discover how the Hungarian minority community in the region of Vojvodina (in the Republic of Serbia) and the Hungarian variety spoken in Vojvodina is constituted on an everyday, practical, personal level. The study focuses on those Hungarians from Vojvodina who commute between Hungary and Serbia on a regular basis for the reason that commuters between two countries find themselves in a very complex, multifaceted and diverse linguistic and social space in which they constantly need to negotiate and renegotiate their identities not only towards the interlocutors, but for themselves as well. It will also be discussed how the language ideologies present in the community influence the language identity and attitudes of the Hungarian minority commuters towards the languages/varieties that they use on a daily basis, i.e. their vernacular (Contact Variety of Hungarian), standard Hungarian spoken in Hungary and Serbian, the state language in Serbia.

**Key words:** Hungarian minority commuters, Vojvodina, language identity and ideology, Standard Hungarian, Contact Variety of Hungarian.

### 1. Introduction

The present paper aims at the analysis of the linguistic identity as well as the relationship of linguistic identity and language ideology of Hungarian commuters from Vojvodina who live in a multilingual context. Vojvodina, the northern re-



gion of the Republic of Serbia has been culturally, linguistically, religiously diverse for centuries. Today the Hungarian minority forms the largest minority group in Vojvodina. As for their sociolinguistic situation, they face the need of acquiring the majority language spoken in the country (Serbian) in order to achieve socio-economic or educational advancement in their lives. Economic and war crisis resulted into the migration of thousands of Hungarians from Vojvodina, for instance, to Hungary, or generated a special situation in which Hungarians commute between the two countries on a regular basis as labor migrants. This research intends to analyze how identities are formed among Hungarian commuters from Vojvodina; how they relate their linguistic status in relation to the state languages of the two countries (Serbia and Hungary), what their opinions are about their vernacular and how they relate themselves to the languages they speak. This group of commuters was chosen as the subjects of the present research since their unique life situation as commuters between two countries, cultures and languages create a multilayered, complex context in which they face the need of adjusting to two different sets of social, economic and linguistic practices.

The establishment of identities, self-identification and their shaping through the ideologies found within the community is in the focus of the present paper. The specific normative, social practices that affect the role of language use as a marker of ethnic identity will also be touched upon to argue how individual, social or institutional level is something which we are constantly building and negotiating all our lives through our interactions with others since “the degree of variation between languages/varieties is often related to variation in ethnic identity, ethnic attitudes and ethnic behaviors (Fishman 1999: 153).

## **2. Literature review**

### ***2.1. Identity, language and group identity***

During the recent years numerous social scientists have dedicated more attention to the concept of identity and the ways individuals represent themselves in the social world. The notion of identity and its linguistic representations have not escaped the attention of sociolinguists, for the reason that identity is mediated and realized through language use.



Identities are not naturally and automatically given facts about individuals, but constructed by the individuals themselves. According to Davies and Harré (1999: 37) “identity is about the constant and ongoing positioning of individuals in interactions with others”, i.e. it is the negotiation of an individual’s relationship with the social environment through the application of verbal and non-verbal signs. Having moved away from the essentialist perspective, which regarded the notion of identity as a static, stable and non-developing concept, as the result of postmodern and poststructuralist influence, presently, the scientific discourse claims that identity is multidisciplinary, personalized and multi-layered. Current focus of identity research is on performativity and the process of the individuals’ identity constitution. It is claimed that identities are performed, played out in discourse (Butler 1997) which process is highly “conditioned by social interaction and social structure, it conditions at the same time social interaction and social structure” (Block 2006: 28).

Individuals often participate in multiple, overlapping, sometimes even conflicting communities. Various interactions require the representation of the self in different modes, the contextual and situational factors determine which identity should be performed in a particular moment and place. Identities are altered depending on the situation and changes within a particular situation or interactional event. The representation of the identity is a “self-conscious process that the individual performs, interprets and projects in dress, movements, actions and language” (Block 2006). It is performed and fulfilled on the basis of the multiple roles that the individuals associate themselves as well as their social interactions associate certain identities with the individual. The various identities that individuals perform are not of the same salience. Individuals are able to move in and out of identity categories on the basis of responses to specific situations, factors and demands. The management and alternation of identities are negotiated and redefined during the process of interaction in which the significance or the so-called hierarchy of identities is determined. The various, co-existing identities of the person are present at all times, however, their emphasis changes on the basis of the particular moment and situation that the individuals find themselves. Therefore, the fluctuation of the individual identities is also possible within one particular interaction as well depending on the preferred presentation of the self (Omoniyi 2006).

Identity is performed, enacted and embodied through a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic means (De Fina 2006). Speakers construct their identities by careful choice of the appropriate linguistic features that will convey the specific so-



cial information that identifies them as part of a particular speech community. According to Tabouret-Keller (1998), language offers the possibility to create a means of identification and expression of identity. The use of a particular language, variety, lexis, pronunciation or grammar indeed signals and manifests our identities, i.e. identities are linguistically performed. The use (or non-use) of certain linguistic forms, items, variables convey social information of the speaker. A single utterance can reveal a lot about its user, such as nationality (or ethnicity), social background, social class, social intent (superior versus inferior positioning, friendly or hostile approach). Multiple identities are indexed through the use of different linguistic varieties, styles or even different languages (Mendoza-Denton 2003). The salience of a specific language use is contextually constructed, situationally motivated and achieved, i.e. shifting identities in talk means accommodating to the requirements and demands of a particular situation and the application of the most appropriate linguistic forms of the social interaction. So speakers have associated a particular type of linguistic behavior with a particular community (Sebba, Wootton 1998).

For such reasons as elaborated above researchers emphasize the role of language in the expression of affiliation or disaffiliation with certain groups, so language use serves as an instrument to protect collective identity and group cohesion. Belonging to a particular group or community often means the adoption of its linguistic conventions and patterns (Thornborrow 1999). “Language has served as a building block of nations” and the “emphasis on common language can lead to collective” identity (Safran 1999: 77) since it helps to establish as well as maintain the collective cultural consciousness. “Groups, whether formal or informal, are aware of and cannot ignore the boundary-marking function of language” which indeed serves “to make group affiliation, to reveal permitted or forbidden boundaries to exclude or include, etc.” (Tabouret-Keller 1998: 321). Individuals who wish to signal (or non-signal) their membership of a particular group adopt the patterns of linguistic behavior that resemble the group with which they aim to be identified with. Whether “consciously or unconsciously, speakers use speech to signal their sense of themselves as belonging to a group A and being different from group B” (Cameron 1995: 15).

## ***2.2. Linguistic identity construction in multilingual contexts***

Gumperz (1986) claims language use should be studied in its social use for the reason that language occurs in socially defined circumstances, i.e. a language or



variety chosen (or not chosen) in a particular situation, context or interaction bears significance. Language use is inseparable from the social, political, moral and economic ideas attached to languages (or varieties) used in a community. Multilingual communities in comparison to monolingual ones form an even more complex environment and social space in which individuals assume multiple and shifting identities. Community members continuously need to negotiate and renegotiate their membership to certain communities, which is performed through language use. While monolingual speakers have only one language to communicate the various facets of their identities, in a multilingual community there is a wider linguistic repertoire to perform identities, i.e. language choice also participates in the constitution and negotiation of identity (Bustamente-López 2008). According to Bourdieu (1991), the value of a particular linguistic variety originates from its capability to ensure access to desired positions in the labor market or social mobility, i.e. power asymmetries that exist between co-existing ethnicities is reflected in the prestige and evaluation of the languages/varieties they speak. The group that is in control of the material wealth and resources validates and legitimates the values of its culture and language as well. In this way, the language/variety spoken by the majority group becomes the norm (Singh 1999). Whether when, where, with whom, under what circumstances is a language/variety used in an appropriate context will be determined on the basis of the language ideology that the community shares, which is highly affected by the power relations of the community. To understand the appropriateness of using one language/variety or linguistic form instead of another is rooted in the language ideologies of the community and most often reflects the power relations within the community (Baquedano-López, Kattan 2007). Language ideology is a “set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979: 193) as well as it represents “the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group” (Kroskrity 2004: 501). The ideologies of the ethnic majority groups become established as norms, and it is able to build and divide nations.

The negotiation and construction of minority linguistic identities are formed from two conflicting directions, on the one hand, the majority society exerts pressure upon the minority nation to use the language of the majority in order to succeed in their social lives, but on the other hand, their loyalty to their family and minority nation pushes the minority to maintain their mother tongue. Consequently, there is often tension between acculturation to the majority expectations and norms (culturally and linguistically) and the maintenance of individual



ethnic identity. For bilingual ethnic minorities the use of linguistic features deriving from language contact often serves as a means of self-identification. It helps to establish the “we-code” (code of the minority) in opposition with the “they-code” (code of the majority), i.e. linguistic features are applied to form in-group and out-group distinction. This might easily give rise to feelings of inferiority or exclusion from the dominant group who speak a different language/variety, however, at the same time, it also generates feeling of familiarity, recognition among those who use the same variety (Tabouret-Keller 1998).

To recapitulate, identity is a multidimensional, context-dependent and discursive concept. To various contexts and situations the use of various linguistic features are likely to be attached that are highly influenced by the communities’ as well as speakers’ language ideologies, attitudes and communicative goals.

### ***2.3. The Hungarian minority in Vojvodina, their ethnic identification and sociolinguistic background***

#### *2.3.1. The Hungarian minority in Vojvodina and their ethnic identification*

Vojvodina is situated in the northern part of the Republic of Serbia. According to the census of 2002, the territory (21,506 km<sup>2</sup>) of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is inhabited by 2,031,992 citizens, among whom the following nationalities are represented: Serbians (1,321,807), Hungarians (290,207), Slovaks (56,637), Croats (56,546), Bunyevatzes (19,766), Yugoslavs (49,881), Montenegrins (35,513), Romanians (30,419), Roma (29,057), Ruthenians (15,626), Macedonians (11,785) and Ukrainians (4,635). According to the census of 2002, 76.86 percent of the Hungarians live in the region called Bačka, 21.67 percent in Banat, and 1.45 percent in Srem. Their presence is the most dense in the northern part of Vojvodina, namely, in North Bačka and North Banat (Gábrity Molnár 2008b).

Regarding the identity of Hungarians in Vojvodina, the Média 2007 and Kárpát-Panel (2007) representative empirical studies conducted among 1417 and 380 Hungarians in Vojvodina respectively show that the Hungarians in Vojvodina consider themselves, in the first place “Vojvodinian Hungarians” (49 percent), in the second place “Vojvodinians” (24 percent) and only in the third place Hungarians (16 percent) (Gábrity Molnár 2008a). These current data coincide with the conclusions drawn by Göncz (1999) regarding the identity of the



Hungarians in Vojvodina that their identification with and attachment to the region is still very strong.

### 2.3.2. *Vojvodina Hungarians from a linguistic aspect in Serbia and Hungary*

Currently, the official language of the Republic of Serbia is Serbian according to the law on the official and public language use (1991). The act considerably reduces the possible language domains of minority languages as the use of Serbian is more welcome in official and public places, the Cyrillic writing is preferred in comparison with the Latin one and the possibility to use minority languages in official domains became only an alternative decision of the municipalities (Papp 1992; Molnár Csikós 1993).

According to Göncz (1999), the function of minority languages is in close relationship with their status in a country. The political, social and economic evaluation of a minority language encourages or discourages its use, acquisition and also the political, social and economic status of its speakers. Today, in Vojvodina the Serbian language has the privilege of being used in all domains, including formal (court, offices, educational institutions, parliament, literature, press and media, health care, etc.) and informal (family, friends, etc.) domains, while the use of Hungarian is rather reduced exclusively to informal domains. The mastery of the majority language ensures social and economic success, but the sole knowledge of Hungarian does not guarantee its speakers to gain economic prosperity. As a result of the narrow language use and its status, minorities are encouraged to acquire the majority language which is of higher prestige and try to get along with it in official domains.

The source of mother tongue acquisition of Hungarians in Vojvodina is the family domain. The Contact Variety of Hungarian spoken in Vojvodina becomes their vernacular with the support and mediation of parents, grandparents and friends, while the majority language is mostly learnt through the mediation of formal education. If the language of instruction is Hungarian Serbian is taught as a so-called non-mother tongue language, i.e. as a second language, usually in the form of two language classes per a week. However, the language mastery of Serbian is not the decision of the Hungarian minorities, but a must. The level and quality of instruction does not enable Hungarian minority pupils to achieve a high level of Serbian language competence. Meanwhile, the restricted and nar-



row possibility of Hungarian language use yields that the Hungarians in Vojvodina do not have the opportunity to acquire all linguistic registers and repertoires of their mother tongue. Generally, the use of the standard variety of Hungarian is restricted, as the use of the majority language is privileged in official situations and the minorities are indirectly forced to acquire the majority language to successfully get along in official domains. In sum, Hungarians in Vojvodina are folk bilinguals since the acquisition of the two languages is a requirement only for the minorities, it is folk bilingualism as the acquisition of the state language is a must. The majority of Hungarians in Vojvodina are dominant bilinguals, as their mastery of the mother tongue is more successful in comparison to the majority language, but the state language is also acquired to a certain extent (Göncz 1999; Göncz and Vörös 2005).

As a consequence of the narrow domains of language use, Hungarians in Vojvodina do not have the opportunity to practice the standard variety of their mother tongue (except in the educational institutions that they attend), therefore, the non-standard variety is more often used as the speakers of Hungarian in Vojvodina rarely face the need of standard language use in their everyday lives. The variety of Vojvodina bears the features of dialect varieties and lexical borrowings and code-switching are very frequent, and interference as a result of language contact are likely to arise (Kiss 1994). The restricted domain of language use and the preference of the standard variety spoken in Hungary may easily result language insecurity among speakers and the phenomenon of hyper-correction (Lanstyák and Szabómihály 1997). As the two languages are in constant contact with each other the inference between them is unavoidable, which might influence all fields of language. Constant and intensive contact between two languages might bring about changes in the phonological or morphological systems of the languages, enrich or narrow their lexicons, and also result in variations in the pragmatics of language use. Some crucial research has already reported on the recognizable influence of Serbian on the Hungarian variety spoken in Vojvodina (Molnár Csikós 1989; Andrić 1995; Göncz and Vörös 1999).

Sáandor et al. (1998) investigated language attitudes towards Vojvodina Hungarian in Szeged and Budapest. The research applied the matched-guise technique in which the same person spoke in both varieties of Hungarian in two identical, but separate spontaneous, naturally occurring, face-to-face situations. The informants' (in Budapest as well as in Szeged) evaluations proved to show higher preference for Standard Hungarian, and the same speaker received lower evaluations when using the Contact Variety of Hungarian (used in Vojvodina),



the speaker was valued less positively. However, difference between the ratings of the respondents in the capital and the town near the border of Serbia can be detected. The informants of Szeged did not rate the speaker of the variety of Vojvodina Hungarian as negatively as the respondents of Budapest, most probably as a result of the geographical proximity of the regions, which probably resulted deeper familiarity with the variety spoken outside the border of Hungary.

The research of Hungarians living outside Hungary (carried out in 1996) that covered six countries (Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia) in which Hungarian minorities were asked to report where the “most beautiful” Hungarian is spoken. The informants of Vojvodina considered that it is Budapest where the “most beautiful” Hungarian is spoken (31.9%) and their own region received the third place in ranking. The Hungarians in Vojvodina proved to have the highest evaluation towards their own variety in comparison to the other five regions outside the borders of Hungary where the respondents evaluated their own varieties even lower than the informants from Vojvodina (Göncz 1999).

#### **2.4. *Research frame***

The present research forms a segment of a wider joint research project titled ‘Integrating (trans)national migrants in transition states’, in the cooperation of the University of Bern (Department of Geography), Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Geographical Research Institute as well as Centre for Regional Studies), University of Novi Sad (Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management) and the Scientific Association for Hungarology Research (Subotica).

The aim of the project is to investigate the relationship between different groups and the disposition to conflict in an ethnically mixed environment with a special focus on the transnational networks and spaces of the migrants, the various ways they are constructed and utilized. For the researchers of the project, the Hungarian-Serbian border region is in the focus of attention. The research project has proposed the investigation of migration, cross-border relations between Hungary and Serbian from various aspects, such as social, economic, geographical, political and linguistic ones. The project aims to reveal how and what kind of relations, conditions does the migration process affect the everyday lives of the communities that are related to migration or cross-border relations in a region.



### **3. Methodology**

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study to obtain more information than the data that are usually collected through survey questions. As a means of research data collection semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen for the reason that they are capable of providing greater depth in issues of identity, beliefs, attitude and experiences than achieved by other methods. At the same time they are flexible enough to enable the researcher to analyze and explore the subject from various aspects. This method of data collection also has its disadvantages, for instance, it is less representative and the amount of data is smaller. However, it is important to bear in mind that narratives are structured and structuring genres that shape and construct the stories that are told and the self-presentation that they involve, therefore narratives are rich sources for identity work and its analysis.

For this reason, data come from a collection of 7 interviews prepared by Hungarian-Serbian bilingual interviewers who were trained for the data collection. The interviewees were Hungarian minority speakers who were born in Vojvodina (Subotica and Senta) and currently commute between Hungary and Serbia on a regular basis (every day, every week, every second week, or every month). The sample includes two female and five male participants with ages ranging between 24 and 59. All speakers were bilingual speakers (or multilingual speakers by being competent in English, German or Russian).

### **4. Data analysis and discussion**

#### ***4.1. How does multilingualism come about?***

Each interviewee considered their mother tongue to be Hungarian. They were raised in Hungarian families and the participants received their primary and secondary education in Hungarian either in Senta or Subotica. The analysis of the data indicates that individuals identify themselves as native speakers of Hungarian, but they also report upon their competence in other languages. The second language that the subjects mentioned is Serbian, the state language of the Republic of Serbia. Whereas, the research participants differed in their third language competence, to be specific, the frequency of their third language use, its level of competence, and the time and context of acquisition was also different in each case. However, all the subjects considered their third (or fourth) lan-



guage acquisition (English, German or Russian) to be motivated by professional and economic advancement. In order to ensure their advancement in professional life they had to live up to the expectations if they did not wish to stagnate or fall behind in their carrier development. For the commuters who work in Hungary the knowledge of English and Serbian (that they brought from their residence in Serbia) resulted advancement. A migrant who formerly started working in Serbia, but changed his workplace to Hungary, retrospectively reported (in the third extract) that in order to ensure his developing position in his workplace, he had to speak the state language, i.e. Serbian on advanced level.

- (1) *'I speak Hungarian on a mother tongue level, mmm... Serbian, well Serbian quite... I make myself understand, maybe a bit better....no, I speak Serbian on a high level, too. I read newspapers and it is not a problem to ask anything or chat in Serbian with anybody, mmm... beside Serbian English too, I speak English too, this language not on a high level, but rather the professional language... language is my strength since we are often forced to communicate with the foreign partners in English at the company and mmm... we write English documents in English, so we have to speak English on an appropriate level too.'* (28-year-old male, IT specialist, commutes since 2002)
- (2) *'Well we said so that I speak Serbian, I could say, on a mother tongue level. Croatian is very similar to Serbian, so I understand that too, but I don't speak it, but it would be only a question of practice. Then I learned German in the secondary grammar school for three years, and in those times I travelled there [Germany] a lot, so I learned it quite well. Well, we could say I speak it on a medium level and English, I have a diploma of it, through my employment agency I went on a course on B2 level.'* (52-year-old female, factory worker, commutes since 2007)
- (3) *'The... besides this I speak and write in Serbian too. So, what I can say is that for a certain time as a provincial labor inspector mmm... I had to master Serbian on a high level, because I had to dictate various reports, to write them.'* (57-year-old male, mechanical engineer, commutes since 2003)
- (4) *'... currently I also have to communicate with German colleagues and I can do so in German or English mostly.'* (26-year-old male, IT specialist, commutes since 2003)



## 4.2. Advantages of multilingualism

The research participants take pride in being bilinguals or multilinguals, see its advantages and practical benefits on a daily basis. None of the interviewees listed any disadvantages of speaking more languages in any spheres of their lives. The advantages the participants mostly mentioned were the following. Knowing more than one language yields benefits on the labor market, some interviewees reported that by speaking Hungarian and Serbian they enjoyed advantages when applying for a job. The interviewees also gave account upon feeling socially richer by knowing two cultures, their successful communication abroad and mentioned the future possibility of migrating to Western countries or education in a foreign language abroad due to their knowledge of English or German. The participants said they expected their children to become multilinguals, besides having Hungarian as their mother tongue.

- (5) *'I don't know, I think it is important that if, if, if you can talk to someone in his/her mother tongue, even if not on a high level, then he/she will welcome you kindly, he/she will chat with you with more pleasure.'* (28-year-old male, IT specialist, commutes since 2002)
- (6) *'Well, mmm... from a business aspect I definitely had advantage from speaking Serbian, because well mmm... business partners from Serbia contacted me in Hungary, with whom I could speak and then we could do business.'* (59-year-old male, electric engineer, commutes since 1991)
- (7) *'Serbian language, that in Hungary is not needed that much, we speak Serbian, if we don't want the Transylvanians [Transylvanian Hungarians] or the Hungarians to understand us, among each other, we Vojvodinians...'* (52-year-old female, factory worker, commutes since 2007)

The following extracts indicate the advantages of multilingualism from three different aspects. In the first one, the interviewee reports upon the personal and social benefits of speaking more languages. To be specific, according to the participant's opinion, by speaking the mother tongue of one's interlocutor, they are more likely to welcome the speaker, their intentions and their message than a speaker who does not speak the interlocutor's mother tongue. The participant counts on more hostility and openness from the interlocutor's side as a result of contacting them in their mother tongue. The second extract gives account of financial benefits as a result of being able to speak and negotiate with the business



partners, so the Serbian language knowledge widened the possible repertoire of business clients which lead to financial success as well. Finally, in the third extract the practical approach can be noticed. Namely, the exclusion of a group who does not speak that language in order to prevent them from hearing something or to successfully share a message giving it out to the surrounding people. The use of the Serbian language in a Hungarian environment absolutely served the purpose.

### 4.3. *Language ideology*

#### 4.3.1. *Ideologies and attitudes related to Hungarian language (Hungarian spoken in Vojvodina and Hungary)*

As for the ideologies concerning the Hungarian language, three tendencies can be observed. According to the first view, there is only one Hungarian language within which several dialects exist regardless of its geographical location, in other words regardless of on which side of the border Hungarian is spoken, it is still the same language. Although differences can be detectable between the dialects, still it makes up one common language. This view is represented in the following two interview extracts.

- (8) Interviewer: *'When you are in Hungary, do you or did you have any communicational difficulties?'*

Interviewee: *'No. Obviously I can make myself understood, since Hungarian is my mother tongue.'* (26-year-old male, IT specialist, commutes since 2003)

- (9) Interviewee: *'There is only one Hungarian, there is no difference. There is no Vojvodina Hungarian, people speak differently in various regions of Hungary too, but it is still the same [language]. Here too. So, even if we say a few words differently it is not a new language. Vojvodina Hungarian as such does not exist.'*

Interviewer: *'But there are differences between various slangs [varieties] in Vojvodina Hungarian that...'*



Interviewee: *'There are slangs [varieties/slangs] everywhere, so we can say that there is Hungarian spoken in Szeged, Budapest, Sopron or Nyírség or elsewhere, but it will be the same [language]. I'm telling you, even if a few words are differently used, it doesn't mean it is something different.'* (26-year-old male, IT specialist, commutes since 2003)

The second view shows a greater affection towards the variety spoken in Vojvodina, which means that they notice as well as make a distinction between the two varieties spoken on both sides of the border. Preference for one's mother tongue is a natural and common phenomenon.

- (10) *'Vojvodina Hungarian is more beautiful for me, since I live here, and I am a Hungarian from Vojvodina.'* (41-year-old female, entrepreneur, year of commuting could not be defined by the commuter)
- (11) *'.... well, we... I deliberately, I even say that I made an effort to keep certain things from my Vojvodina accent, from the pronunciation of 'é' in Senta, and ... anyway I didn't take over the dialect spoken around Győr,... so even today people notice that I'm not from there or not from Szeged, or even that I'm not even from Hungary, but well I don't mind.'* (59-year-old male, electric engineer, commutes since 1991)

According to the third view, the variety spoken in Vojvodina is devaluated. To be specific, they considered their vernacular to be less correct, less expressive, filled with borrowings from Serbian language and a mixture of Serbian and Hungarian. While Hungarian spoken in Hungary is more sophisticated, contains only correct words, its expressive, less archaic, correct and "more Hungarian", i.e. linguistically pure. These views are reflected in the following three examples from the interviews.

- (12) *'...ever since I'm here [in Hungary], so to say, I took over the correct words used here [in Hungary]'* (24-years-old male, unemployed, commutes since 2007)
- (13) *'One needs to pay attention to it, because unnoticeably Serbian or foreign phrases leak into our speech, but this should not be allowed, in my opinion. If we speak Hungarian, then we shall speak Hungarian, if Serbian, then Serbian...'* (52-year-old female, factory worker, commutes since 2007)



- (14) *'Well, mmm... surely that mmm... let's say mmm... the truth is that in the Hungarian language use in Hungary certain things are, how shall I put it, expressed more sophisticatedly, while here in Vojvodina, how shall I put it, in a more simple way.'* (59-year-old male, electric engineer, commutes since 1991)

#### 4.3.2. Ideologies and attitudes related to Serbian

The interview extracts in the following section intends to demonstrate what influence the language ideology of the majority society has on the Hungarian minority from Vojvodina, they perceive the power relations between their mother tongue and the state language.

- (15) *'Well I also speak Serbian, in my opinion on a quite good level, foreign languages those not... What I learnt in school was German, but that is very minimal.'* (41-year-old female, entrepreneur, year of commuting could not be defined by the commuter)

As extract (15) shows the interviewee does not even consider Serbian a foreign language (in the Hungarian language context non-mother tongues are called foreign languages, regardless of its geographical location), i.e. it is taken for granted that inhabitants of Serbia are expected to speak Serbian even if that is not their mother tongue.

- (16) *'We mostly use Hungarian, but amongst us there are Serbs too, so we have to speak Serbian with them, which of course does not cause any problems.'* (24-years-old male, unemployed, commutes since 2007)

Extract (16) indicates the social relationship between Hungarian and Serbian spoken in Vojvodina. When a Serbian speaker is present in the company who does not speak Hungarian the Hungarian speakers who know Serbian are expected to switch to Serbian even if they are in majority. It is taken for granted that in such situations the language of communication is the state language, which indicates that the community does not expect the majority speakers to have any knowledge of minority languages.

- (17) *'A lot of Serbian speakers know Hungarian at official places too, but I rather speak Serbian to them, because I, if I speak better than they then*



*we rather speak Serbian.*' (52-year-old female, factory worker, commutes since 2007)

## 5. Conclusion

The present paper aimed to investigate the linguistic identification of the Hungarian regional minority of Vojvodina in a multilingual context. The subjects of the research were Hungarians who were born in Vojvodina, but currently live and/or work in Hungary. It was investigated how the languages spoken by the research participants are related to each other, what the background of their acquisition is and in which domains they use them. The social space and domains in which the languages are used seem to reflect the social and economic relationship between the languages, to be specific, Hungarian is used in private spheres (with family and friends) in the Vojvodina context, Serbian in public spheres, official and educational domains, while English or German at workplaces and in business. In the context of Hungary the Hungarian migrants/commuters from Vojvodina view their linguistic position diversely. To be specific, the research subjects express their personal affiliation towards their vernacular, but at the same time they consider their mother tongue to be less valuable, less expressive in comparison to Hungarian spoken in Hungary and influenced by Serbian which is negatively viewed. The language ideology of the community proves to have a significant influence on the self-identification process of the Hungarian minority. The normative linguistic ideologies mediated and determined by the majority society shape the linguistic ideologies and attitudes of the minority nation as well. As a result they consider the knowledge of the state language to be a must and regard their vernacular to be inferior in relation to the state languages spoken in Serbia and Hungary.

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**PROŽIMANJE LINGVISTIČKOG IDENTITETA I IDEOLOGIJE MEĐU POGRANIČNIM  
RADNICIMA PRIPADNICIMA MAĐARSKE MANJINE**

U središtu ovog rada je istraživanje lingvističkog identiteta i ideologije određene regionalne manjine koja živi u višejezičnoj sredini. Cilj rada je utvrditi na koji se način mađarska manjina u Vojvodini (u Republici Srbiji) i varijanta mađarskog jezika kojom govore konstituira na svakodnevnoj praktičnoj i osobnoj razini. Istraživanje se bavi Mađarima iz Vojvodine koji redovito putuju u pograničnim području između dvije države. Oni se nalaze u vrlo složenom i raznorodnom lingvističkom i društvenom prostoru u kojem stalno moraju iznova pregovarati i iznositi svoj identitet ne samo prema sugovornicima, već i prema sebi. Također se raspravlja i o načinima na koji jezične ideologije prisutne u društvu utječu na jezični identiteti stavove pograničnih radnika pripadnika mađarske manjine prema jezicima ili varijantama koje svakodnevno koriste, npr. prema svom vernakularu (kontaktna varijanta mađarskog), standardnom mađarskom jeziku kakav se govori u Mađarskoj, te službenom srpskom u Srbiji.

**Ključne riječi:** pogranični radnici pripadnici mađarske manjine; Vojvodina; lingvistički identitet i ideologija; standardni mađarski; kontaktna varijanta mađarskog.