LANGUAGE ECOLOGY IN THE AUSTRALIAN STUDIES CURRICULUM

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Abstract: *The argument of this paper is that a course on language ecology can be a viable option in the Australian Studies curriculum. In the focus of the course devoted to this field is the ecology of language evolution where special attention is paid to the sociolinguistic environment in which a language has evolved, i.e., its external ecology, and to the nature of the coexistence of the units and principles of a linguistic system before and/or during the change, i.e., its internal ecology (Mufwene, 2001).*

Multicultural Australia is an excellent place to study language ecology, since a vast amount of non-English speaking migrants have settled in the country dating back to the arrival of the first settlers in 1886. Of these, many have transferred their native language to the Australian continent and continue its usage within familial and ethnic communities.

Key words: *language ecology, Australian Studies, language contact, Hungary and Australia*

Introduction

Although departments and institutions responsible for any English-related education at colleges and universities within Hungary display in their names "English" and/or "American" studies, during the last few decades Australian Studies courses have been gaining momentum at Hungary's major higher educational institutions. These programs are set to present Australia's versatile character in order that students gain a widespread understanding of this distant country, which is generally recognised at the level of stereotypes in Hungary. A wide selection of lectures and seminars are obtainable to students attending these universities ranging from linguistics and applied linguistics, through to history and civilisation; and film and literature courses (Forintos, 2011).

Aim of Paper

The argument of this paper is that a course on language ecology can be a viable option in the Australian studies curriculum. In the focus of the course devoted to this field is the ecology of language evolution where special attention is paid to the sociolinguistic environment in which a language has evolved, i.e., its external ecology, and to the nature of the coexistence of the units and principles of a linguistic system before and/or during the change, i.e., its internal ecology (Mufwene, 2001).

Multicultural Australia is an excellent place to study language ecology, since a vast amount of non-English speaking migrants have settled in the country dating back to the arrival of the first settlers in 1886. Of these, many have transferred their native language to the Australian continent and continue its usage within familial and ethnic communities. Among them there have been numerous Hungarian immigrants (cf. Forintos, 2008a). According to the census of 2006 in Australia there are 67,616 Australians of Hungarian descent, which equates to two percent of the entire population.

Aspects of Research

The aspects of analysis include typological and theoretical aspects of Hungarian in contact with Australian English as well as sociolinguistic research on members of the Hungarian community in Australia, with special focus on different domains of language use. As far as language contact research in Hungary is concerned, the varieties of Hungarian spoken in neighbouring countries and overseas have been the subject of research, about which Bartha (1999) gives an almost exhaustive summary (cf. Csernicskó, 1998; Fenyvesi, 1995; Göncz, 1999; Kontra, 1990; 1991, Lanstyák, 2000; Rot, 1991; Gal, 1979; Fenyvesi, 2005). The language contact of Australian Hungarian has been studied by Kovács (1996, 2001a, 2001b), Hatoss (2003, 2005) and Vászolyi (2003). This line of more sociolinguistically oriented research is complemented by the research of Forintos (2008b), which is concerned with both linguistic and sociolinguistic context of language contact.

Sociolinguistic Approach

Through the outcomes obtained by conducting a questionnaire survey, language usage of Hungarian community members in different domains can be studied. This analysis investigates the participants' language use within informal

encounters, in public sphere and in inner domains. The aim of the research is to provide valuable insight into the functions and status of the Hungarian language in different domains. These functions are important markers of language maintenance.

Fishman introduces the concept of "sociolinguistic domains" to delineate the contexts of interaction into which social life is organised, and which have an impact on the language of interaction. Fishman (1972) defines domains as "institutional contexts and their congruent behavioural co-occurrences" (p. 441). The five domains of language behaviour for a community are: family/home, friendship, neighbourhood, work/employment and religion (cf. Fishman, 1972; Winford, 2003; Fenyvesi, 2005; Myers-Scotton, 2006). Winford (2003) states that "domains are abstract constructs, made up of constellation of participants' statuses and role relationships, locales or settings, and subject matter (topic)" (p. 111). Myers-Scotton (2006) is of the opinion that the way bilinguals allocate the languages in their repertoire reflects how stable their bilingualism is. She introduces the notion of allocation, which means that the choice of the languages on behalf of the speakers in different domains is an important marker in terms of language maintenance. However, she argues that domain analysis is not a theoretical model, and research results based on it are not explanations on their own, but a potential field of proposed explanations. Myers-Scotton's (2006) other concern is that bilingual situations generally cannot be regarded as entirely stable, and in the case of the minority community language use, when a shift is in progress, uniform language use is difficult to find in a given domain (p. 77). Csernicskó (2005) however argues that "the organizing principles behind language use according to domains of language use provide valuable insight into the functions and status of a given language and the relationship of the language within a bilingual or multilingual setting" (p. 108).

Pauwels (2008) asserts that "the ultimate survival of a language depends on intergenerational transfer" (pp. 730-731). She also adds that the habitual ways as to how parents, grandparents and other relatives use languages are determinative in laying the fundamental principles for the maintenance of a minority language among imminent generations. This is of significant importance particularly if members of a minority community are restricted in their use of the minority language in public domains due to sociopolitical or other environmental factors.

In what follows, the percentages of the results of the research carried out among Australian Hungarians are listed, based on a questionnaire (Forintos, 2009). The questionnaires were filled out in the autumn of 2007 and spring of 2008 by sixty people who were ready to reply to my request via the internet as well as my students' requests; consequently, the survey results do not reflect the language use of the entire Australian Hungarian community since they are not wholly

represented. The questionnaire is a slightly modified version of the questionnaire used in the sociolinguistics of the Hungarian Outside Hungary Project (see more at Fenyvesi, 2005). It was available both in Hungarian and English.

	Hungarian	**English**
Home/family	74%	28%
Friends	82%	88%
Neighbours	6%	100%
Neighbourhood	12%	97%
Religion, praying	88%	43%
Religion, church	70%	68%
Religion, Bible	74%	66%
Workplace	12%	92%
TV programs	37%	91%
Informal letter	85%	68%
Formal letter	24%	96%
Reading news, literature	64%	82%
Reading scholarly literature	34%	90%

The results of the survey exhibit – similarly to the findings of other researchers, (cf. Kovács, 2005, p. 329; Clyne, 1991, p. 67) – that the most important domain in language maintenance for Australian-Hungarians is the home. Both Hungarian and English are used with friends. Although Hungarians in Australia are settled in the major towns, they do not seem to have many opportunities to use Hungarian in the neighbourhood domain because they do not reside in larger concentrations within the towns (cf. Kovács, 2005, p. 324; Clyne, 1982, p. 151). Consequently almost exclusively English is the language of the neighbourhood domain for them. The domain of church and religion is varied. The inner domain of praying is dominated by the use of the Hungarian language and this dominance is also a characteristic of reading the Bible and other religious literature. They visit both Hungarian and English church services. The use of the Hungarian language is the least prominent at the workplace, where the majority language, being English, is preferred. The results show that it is only informal, private letters in which the Hungarian language is dominant; in all other cases the English language is preferred. As for reading the news, literature or scholarly literature it can be stated that the subjects involved in the survey choose the English language. However,

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mention must be made of the fact that a number of subjects also read Hungarian literature.

Contactlinguistic Approach – written corpus

An alternative possibility of study is to investigate how the written language of the Hungarian community (L1) functions outside its traditional setting in central Europe, in an environment where another language (L2) is used (English in Australia). This is an intraregional language contact situation where Hungarian immigrants live among the English-speaking population of Australia. The two languages involved are genealogically non-related and structural-typologically non-identical languages. The focal point of the study in this particular case is the examination of one version of the written language of the above mentioned language community with special regard to the patterns that emerge out of language contact situations. The study employs the machine-readable corpus of written language samples taken from the only weekly published newspaper – entitled *Hungarian Life* (*Magyar Élet*) – of the Hungarian ethnic community in Australia. The corpus is made up of the advertisements found in the 98 issues of *Hungarian Life* published in 2000 and 2001. The number of words of the advertisements found in the 98 issues of the chosen newspaper is 96.351, (100%), only 4 percent of which is written in English, (3781 words). Obviously they have been excluded from the corpus. Both intralingual and interlingual linguistic manifestations are studied (Forintos, 2008b). This research was carried out to study the lexical contact phenomena in which Standard Hungarian (SH) and Australian Hungarian (AuH) differ, e.g., what lexical items are present in AuH that are not part of SH in order to categorize them. Standard Hungarian is represented by the Hungarian National Corpus (HNC) created by the Department of Corpus Linguistics of the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences under the supervision of Váradi (2002; see also Sass, 2009). HNC includes 187.6 million words. It is divided into five subcorpora by regional language variants; and into five subcorpora by text genres also: press, literature, science, official and personal. (http://corpus.nytud.hu/mnsz/index_eng.html - last visited July 26, 2012)

The author's coding scheme creates simplified information for easier comprehension of the research. It can be interpreted in the following sequence: 2000 (year of publication)/1 (the issue number)/1 (the page on which the manifestation was viewed for the first time)/1 (the number of occurrences of the very same manifestations).

Intralingual lexical features

Intralingual lexical features found in the AuH corpus are classified into the following categories: (i) native creations, (ii) semantic extensions, (iii) collocations, and (iv) contaminations. The linguistic features belonging to this group are called "intralingual deviations" by Kontra (1990, p. 97). As for their motivation, Kontra is of the opinion that they came into existence due to language attrition in case of the first generation immigrants, and imperfect language learning in the case of those belonging to the second generation. He (Kontra, 1990, pp. 97-98) enumerates a few examples either with or without context. The examples are not classified into any linguistic groups, and no linguistic explanation for their existence is provided. Internally-motivated language change is discounted as a possible source of changes in Fenyvesi's (1995) study because she is of the opinion that the investigated dialect has existed for only about a hundred years, which is a very short period for extensive internally-motivated changes.

In the following, an attempt is made to present – with the help of some examples – the linguistic features that are different from SH and cannot be attributed to the influence of Australian English, by classifying them into different groups created for this study. The new coinages categorised into the group called 'native creations,' e.g., *fejmosó* (… fodrászüzletbe) *(2000/27/20/3)* (shampooer); (vs. SH hajmosó) are created similarly to the so-called native creations that are attributed to the influence of AuE. At the same time, they differ due to the fact that they do not denote foreign concepts. Occasionally, they refer to phenomena and concepts that were part of Hungarian culture, and consequently, part of SH when the older generations of the Hungarian community in Australia resided in Hungary, (approximately 50-60 years ago) before immigrating to Australia. Intralingual 'semantic extensions,' e.g., *lakásfoglalással (2001/43/21/1)* (flatoccupying-INS); (vs. SH szállásfoglalás) are similar to loanshifts in the sense that the morphemic composition of them is entirely native on the one hand; and they undergo extension of their meanings on the other. Their meaning, however, does not derive from a donor language. And there are 'collocations,' e.g., *díjtalan vonalon (2000/6/6/1)* (toll free line-SUP); (vs. SH díjtalan hívás; ingyenesen hívható szám) found in the corpus. Firth (cited in Lewis 2000, p. 48) described collocation as "the company words keep their relationships with other words" or "the way words combine in predictable ways." One of the rarer word-formation processes of SH is the so-called 'contamination,' e.g., *símezők (2000/22/19/2)* (skifield-PL); (vs. SH sípálya – hómező), which is a combination of synonymous word forms where the beginning of one word is contracted with the end of another, for instance, *csokor* (bunch of flowers) + *bokréta* (bouquet) = *csokréta* (nosegay). The new word created as a

consequence of contamination is supposed to be synonymous with the original words involved (Keszler, 2000).

Although the meaning of the new coinages can be detected from the context, they cannot be considered elements of SH as they are not included in the Hungarian National Corpus.

Interlingual linguistic manifestations

Interlingual linguistic manifestations can be regarded as lexical borrowings, which must be seen as one aspect of a creative process of lexical change under contact. They build on both native and foreign resources. The results of the linguistic interference of language contact on the level of lexis of the receptor-language are manifested in the form of lexical borrowing of different kinds but mainly borrowings modelled on the donor language and native creations. The process of borrowing can be very selective, adopting a foreign form but assigning it a new meaning, or adopting a foreign meaning or concept and assigning it to a native form. Many of the outcomes of lexical borrowing involve created terms that have no counterpart in their donor language. Some of these innovations may be created out of donor materials; others may be created out of native materials, still other creations are blends of native and foreign items (Winford, 2003, pp. 29-59). Winford (2003) subdivides lexical borrowings into two categories, e.g., "there are *loanword*s, in which all or part of the morphemic composition of the loan derives from the external source language" (p. 43). In other words, the most general term "loanword" refers to the total morphemic importation of single or compound words. These elements show no morphological substitutions, but they do show degrees of phonological substitutions. "Loanwords may be divided into two categories: 'pure loanwords,'" (Winford, 2003, p. 43), e.g., *Drive (2000/1/13/98)* (SH (erdei) út, fasor) and "loanblends" (Winford, 2003, p. 43). Some cases that appear to belong in this category involve phonological adjustment of a native word on the model of a foreign one, without change in the content. It is difficult to say, however, whether these are really cases of phonological adjustment of the native word as distinct from importation (imitation) of the foreign counterpart, (e.g., *Registrált agent* (registered agent) *(2000/33/20/2).* Loanblends are combinations of L1 material with L2 material, i.e., they involve the transfer of part of the foreign model and the reproduction of the rest (importation of a foreign morpheme combined with substitution of a native one). Examples of such "hybrids" include (a) 'derivational blends,' i.e., imported stem + native affix, e.g., *Armyban* (2000/36/24/1) (army-INE) or native stem + imported affix (no example found in the corpus) and (b) 'compound blends,' i.e., imported stem + native stem, e.g., *csirkeragout*

(chickenragout) *(2001/4/3/10)*. Loanblends – and many other products are not strictly speech borrowings, but innovations that have no counterparts in the source language. And, "there are *loanshift*s," (also called *loan meaning*s)

> in which the morphemic composition of the item is entirely native, though its meaning derives at least in part from the donor language. Each of these categories can be further subdivided, according to the types of importation and substitution involved. (Winford, 2003, p. 43)

Loanshifts do not actually include surface-level alien morphemes but instead influence L1 material. They can be divided into the following subtypes: intermittently a native word may undergo extension of its meaning on the model of a foreign counterpart. These are cases of "extensions" or "semantic loans." For example, Hungarian *direkt (2000/1/13/98)* originally *directly, straight; on purpose, wilfully, intentionally, deliberately* was extended to mean *direct/through bus, non-stop bus*, on the model of English *direct*. Winfords (2003) states that "loanshifts may take the form of 'pure loan translations' or calques in which the foreign model is replicated exactly by native words" (p. 43), for example *hivatalos órák (2000/12/7/1)* 'office hours'; (vs. SH félfogadás, fogadóóra, munkaidő). According to Winford (2003) "creative word formation involving imported items is another by-product of lexical borrowing, which Haugen includes in his category of 'native creations'" (p. 44). "Pure native creations" means innovative use of native words to express foreign concepts, e.g., *hétvégi magyar iskolákban* (weekend Hungarian schools-PL-INE) *(2001/20/7/2)*. "Hybrid creations" are blends of native and foreign morphemes to express foreign concepts, e.g., *professional férfi (2000/1/20/2)* 'professional man'; (vs. SH ~ szakmával rendelkező/szakképzett férfi). Winford (2003) with his classification above expanded Haugen's category of "native creations" to include a third subcategory ("creations using only foreign morphemes") which was not included in Haugen's classification (pp. 42-43).

Summary

The number of intralingual features found in the AuH corpus is 53, resulting in only 0,05 per cent of the entire corpus. Although the occurrence of intralingual features is very low, they are worth studying to see what levels of language are involved. Whether the creation of these features contributes to the decline of the language or it means the development of it, it is hard to decide. Supposedly, they are created to avoid using the English language and thus they contribute to the maintenance of the Hungarian language in Australia.

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The number of features resulting mainly from the influence of Australian English is exactly 338, which makes only 0,365 per cent of the entire corpus. It can be stated that the occurrence of lexical borrowings is relatively low compared to the whole number of words found in the entire AuH corpus. This low percentage of lexical borrowings proves that the language contact situation of the Hungarians in Australia can be considered a language maintenance situation rather than a language death situation.

Contactlinguistic approach – spoken corpus

An alternative approach within the field of contactlinguistics is the study of spoken language used by a member of the Hungarian ethnic community in Australia. The corpus of the research currently referred to is a tape-recorded interview of approximately 60 minutes conducted in July, 2010 with a thirty-year old woman of Australian birth with both parents of Hungarian descent. The parents settled in Australia during adulthood as first-generation Hungarians. The interviewee was born in Australia, so she is a second-generation Hungarian in Australia having had her education at primary, secondary and tertiary level in English. She learnt and she speaks Hungarian almost exclusively in the family and with wider family members living in Hungary via the phone. She has never attended any Sunday schools or any Hungarian courses, which has greatly contributed to the fact that she can only speak Hungarian, but she is unable to read and write in the language.

The interview was carried out by a colleague and the topic was generally the lifestyle of Australians in Australia and it included 3,345 of her words. As for the method applied during the research, the linguistic manifestations were collected manually. During the research, when studying the interlingual linguistic manifestations, the Winfordian (2003) classification was followed. In order to be able to decide on the exact meanings of the Hungarian and the English words dictionaries were consulted.

The behaviour of the Australian English native words followed by Hungarian suffixes, i.e., loanblends were also studied. These blends are of two types: some of them follow the native Hungarian rule(s) of vowel harmony, while others seem to contradict the rules of one of their components. In trying to explain these problematic cases, reference is made to whether the speaker makes her Hungarian suffix vowel choice on the basis of the pronunciation or the spelling of the English words (Forintos & Szentgyörgyi, 2012).

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Summary

With regard to the research, it can be stated that the 3345-word corpus contains 73 interlingual linguistic manifestations, which is approximately 2% of the entire corpus. It cannot be considered a high percentage of course, but with the exception of the compound blends and native creations, examples for all the other classes can be found in the corpus, which means that the influence of the English language on the Hungarian can be identified in the speech of one representative of the Hungarian community in Australia.

As for the morpho-phonological behaviour of the derivational blends, we can claim that most of them follow the pattern of native Hungarian words, while there are a few that behave exceptionally, a pattern most likely to be due to the influence of the final silent letter <E> in the spelling of these words. Whether or not this is really an effect of the spelling is to be ascertained in a follow-up study on a much larger sample.

Conclusion

I am of the opinion that the research fields described above under the aegis of language ecology studies can greatly contribute to the better understanding of particular aspects of Australia basically because they highlight possible areas for individual research for the students participating in the courses. Consequently, students are offered supervision for degree thesis writing, both at BA and MA levels, as it has occurred on numerous occasions. Mention must be made of the fact that during the past few decades even some PhD dissertations have been defended successfully in this field.

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