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Social Implications of Borrowings

British–American Parallels through Literature

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Abstract. The paper is focused on the sociolinguistic study of borrowings used in twenty-first century American literature to bring out their potential to translate status and high social position of characters. The study is aimed at proving that borrowings are socially charged and function in speech as indices of socially privileged layers of society. The study of modern British novels by Jeffrey Archer carried out earlier revealed four categories of borrowings, serving to represent upper-class characters: 1) terms, 2) a pair of synonymous words of Germanic and foreign origin, 3) U-class words, and 4) loan words used ironically. The study of American novels by Amor Towles *A Gentleman in Moscow* (2016) and *Rules of Civility* (2012) allows us to verify this classification and expand it by adding two more categories: 5) a pair of synonymous words of Germanic and foreign origin, like in group 2 but with switched social connotations, and 6) a pair of borrowings, one explaining the meaning of the other. The analysis has proved that borrowings in American, like in British literature, explicitly or implicitly translate the social status of a character. The question to answer is whether classes 5 and 6 have universal or culturally specific nature. Further research is therefore required to shed light on this very subtle use of borrowings in speech.

Keywords: borrowings, social functions of borrowings, sociolinguistic study, twenty-first-century American literature, upper-class speech representation

1. Introduction

Language and society are two correlates that reveal themselves through each other: language mirrors the ongoing processes in society, while the latter in its turn causes linguistic change. This correlation, reflected in dictionaries, manifests the development of society at large. The research of language in its relation to social factors, such as class, gender, age, as well as occupational and regional differences, has remained the focus of many scholars' publications (Taifel 1978, Edwards

1985, Turner 1987, Wodak 1989, Silverstein 2003, Agha 2007, Blommaert 2007, Bucholtz & Hall 2010, Coupland 2007, Joseph 2010, Ivushkina 2017, etc.).

This paper is aimed at studying the link between status and language, the high social position of a speaker, and the language he/she uses in speech. Although this interdependence has been studied from different perspectives in a number of publications (see Ross, Mitford et al. 1956; Lodge 1966; Labov 1972; Trudgill 1978, 1979; Leith 1983; Quirk & Widdowson 1985; Honey 1995; Crystal 2010; Ivushkina 1997, 2020), it has not received all the attention it deserves, as social differentiation intrinsic to our societies has not disappeared; what is more, it will stay around as long as our societies exist, most conspicuously revealing itself in the language. Therefore, the study of social and linguistic correlations remains relevant and is of theoretical and practical significance in the twenty-first century of unprecedented levels of technology, social change, and transformation of norms, values, and conceptions. The diachronic sociolinguistic research carried out on the material of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries' English literature (Ivushkina, 1997) brought to the fore several linguistic shibboleths that unambiguously indicate the high social position of a speaker, among which is the use of borrowings, primarily of Latin, Greek, and French origin. Four categories of borrowings used in literature for the social identification of an upper-class speaker were singled out in the recently published article "Literary words of foreign origin as social markers in Jeffrey Archer's novels" (Ivushkina, 2020). These categories range from the most conspicuous class of terms, which convey information about the educational and professional status of a character or the activity in which he/she is involved, to the most covert class of U-words (socially marked words of the upper-class speakers), requiring the background knowledge of a reader/listener and a different level of drawing inferences. Synonymous pairs of words, of a foreign and Germanic origin, used to socially identify the upper versus the middle or lower classes' characters correspondingly, are singled out in a separate group; discrete is the class of borrowings used in speech or narration ironically, often for creating a clash between subject matter and the style of narration. The latter category is often accompanied by French phrases or sentences enhancing this clash.

This paper is the continuation of the research aimed at extending the analysis to the American literature of the same time period in order to make parallels between British and American cultures and to determine the universal versus culturally specific functions of borrowings.

2. Methodology and material

The study of loan words in contemporary American literature upper-class speech portrayals and narration is approached from a sociolinguistic point of view.

Amor Towles, the author of the novels *Rules of Civility* (2011) and *A Gentleman in Moscow* (2016), is considered on a par with Jeffrey Archer, whose novels *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* (1976), and *The Prisoner of Birth* (2008) serve as the basis for comparison. The authors are graduates of elite universities and have rich experience in the upper echelons of society: Archer was member of the House of Commons for 6 years and of the House of Lords for more than 20 years, and Amor Towles worked in the sphere of education and later as a writer, which brought him world recognition. So, the upbringing and education of writers is of paramount significance, as writers should belong to the culture under analysis.

In order to verify the correlation between borrowings and the social status of the character and to identify universal and cultural differences in upper-class representation, 200 social contexts were selected from Amor Towles's novels, in which borrowings and their functions were determined and compared with those revealed in Jeffrey Archer's narratives. The comparative study of socially marked upper-class words in two cultures carried out before and based on the twenty-first-century literature (Ivushkina 2017, 2018, 2020) has already given us grounds to assert that they share a common linguistic code.

The quotation from the novel *A Gentleman in Moscow* (2016) is a good case in point where the narrator points out the common ground between two upper-class representatives from different cultures – a Russian count, Alexander Rostov, and Richard Vanderwhile, an American upper-class official from the US Department:

...these two would have felt like old friends had they met just hours before. To some degree, this was because *they were kindred spirits* – finding *ample evidence of common ground and cause for laughter in the midst of effortless conversation*; but it was almost certainly *a matter of upbringing*. Raised in grand homes in cosmopolitan cities, educated in the liberal arts, graced with idle hours, and exposed to the finest things, though the Count and the American had been born ten years and four thousand miles apart, *they had more in common with each other than they had with the majority of their own countrymen*.

This, of course, is why the grand hotels of the world's capitals all look alike. The plaza in New York, the Ritz in Paris, Claridge's in London, the Metropol in Moscow – built within fifteen years of each other, *they too were kindred spirits*, the first hotels in their cities with central heating, with hot water and telephones in the rooms, with international newspapers in the lobbies, international cuisine in the restaurants, and American bars off the lobby. These hotels were built for the likes of Richard Vanderwhile and Alexander Rostov, so that when they traveled to a foreign city, *they would find themselves very much at home and in the company of kin* [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 33)

The universality of social signs identifying a high social status of a character can also be supported by the thesis “The Speech of the English and Russian Aristocrats in the Literature of the Nineteenth Century” by Yulia Kwartovkina (2004), in which the author brought to light socially marked linguistic characteristics shared by the socially privileged classes of Great Britain and Russia. Among them, above and beyond, are loan words registered in modern dictionaries as formal or literary words (Kwartovkina 2004: 10) imparting “a bookish ‘flavour’, or character” to the speech of the nobility. The research enables us to make parallels between not only the British and the American but other cultures as well.

3. Analysis

The analysis of the borrowings is based on two novels by Amor Towles (787 pages), from which 200 social contexts were selected. These contexts discovered obvious regularities in the use of borrowings to imply the social status of a character, which are similar to those previously marked out in the British novels by Jeffrey Archer (648 pages). They will be analysed in the first place and then the newly revealed categories.

a) Class 1

Class 1 includes borrowings that are used as terms to designate realia, objects, and concepts of different time periods, as well as new phenomena emerging in the twenty-first century. They are easy to understand, as they are accurate and do not allow polysemy. According to Akhmanova (2019: n. p.), terms refer to the layer of the English vocabulary that is “deviating from the neutral upwards” and is aimed at the speaker with a certain level of upbringing, education, and erudition. Oftentimes, terms serve to indicate the speaker’s profession or a communication situation in which a character is involved. In any event, without education and learning, terms can be misread and lost upon the reader/listener, and for this reason, they are socially charged and serve to identify socially advanced layers of society. In the novels under analysis, there are a lot of terms belonging to different fields of human experience. In the following passage, the first term denotes an object of furniture, and the second names an object of art:

1) This *armoire*, we are prone to recall, is the very one in which we hid as a boy; and it was these silver *candelabra* that lined our table on Christmas Eve... [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 14)

The word *armoire* ‘a cupboard or wardrobe, typically one that is ornate or antique’ (LEXICO) came from Old French *armarie*. French was the language spoken by the elite in Great Britain: it has always been part of society language. The word *candelabra* ‘a large branched candlestick or holder for several candles or lamps’ (LEXICO) came from the Latin *candela* and refers to furniture articles or even to the field of art.

In the following extract, we find other loan words:

2) As the Count climbed into the chair, he offered a friendly nod to the heavyset fellow, then leaned back and let his eyes settle on that marvel of Yaroslav’s shop: his *cabinet*. Were one to ask Larousse to define the word *cabinet*, the acclaimed lexicographer might reply: A piece of furniture often adorned with decorative detail in which items may be stowed away from sight. A serviceable definition, no doubt – one that would encompass everything from a kitchen cupboard in the countryside to a *Chippendale in Buckingham Palace*. But Yaroslav’s *cabinet* would not fit so neatly into such a description, for having been made solely of nickel and glass it had been designed not to hide its contents, but to reveal them to the naked eye [emphasis added]. (Towles, 2016: 34)

The word *cabinet* ‘a cupboard with shelves or drawers for storing or displaying articles’ is of French origin (sixteenth century) (LEXICO). Count Rostov resorts to the French Dictionary *Larousse* not only to reveal the definition, origin, and functions of the cabinet but also to demonstrate how a typically French object was adapted to the Russian *Metropol’s* barber shop, which boasted “all French soaps wrapped in waxed papers”, “British lathers in ivory drums”, “Italian tonics”, etc., as well as Yaroslav’s unsurpassed professional skills as a barber on a par with professionals in the best hotels of the world. It only proves the fact that Russia always tried to keep up with European fashionable trends. France has always been a fashion-setter, a model to follow. The distinction made between the word *cabinet* and *Chippendale furniture*, the extremely expensive furniture designed by a well-recognized cabinet-maker Thomas Chippendale (eighteenth century) in the style of mid-Georgian, English Rococo, and Neoclassical styles, is socially charged and used to show a social spectrum of society.

The words *parabola* and *pendant* used in the extract below are from a different field:

3) Dangling at the bottom of the golden *parabola* was the *pendant* the Count had first observed at the Piazza, but it was neither a lucky charm nor locket. It was a passkey for the hotel [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 58)

Parabola, a Greek word *parabolē* ‘placing side by side, application’, which, via Latin assimilated into English, refers to the field of geometry, whereas the word *pendant*, applied to architectural decoration projecting downwards, came from Old French *pendere* and means literally ‘hanging’ (LEXICO).

The American novel describing the luxury of the best hotel in Moscow abounds in borrowings, which reflect the interior of the hotel such as balustrade, solstice, and many other objects of art denoted mainly by words of foreign etymology. Borrowings reveal the lifestyle of the Russian aristocrat in his past through social gatherings, events, and pastimes, the atmosphere and the interior of the rooms, as well as the inner world and values of the characters. Borrowings in Jeffrey Archers’ novels serve the same purpose but reveal a different life style – that of businessmen working in the oil industry, the banking system, law, medicine, etc.

b) Class 2

It includes two synonymous borrowings of a foreign and Germanic origin, which are juxtaposed in the context to socially differentiate between the upper versus the middle or lower classes’ characters correspondingly. The social function of this pair of words is conspicuous; the indexical nature of borrowings in this opposition comes to the fore and draws the reader’s attention. The following example serves to illustrate the point:

4) “Well done, Sofia”, he said.

Sofia looked directly at the Count for the first time since he’d come into the room.

“Are you *giving up*?”

“*I am conceding*”, said the Count.

“Is that the same as *giving up*?” [emphasis added]. (Towles 2017: 257)

The verb *to give up* of Germanic origin contrasted to the verb of French origin *to concede* (‘admit defeat in a match or contest’) is lost upon Sophia judging by her reaction and the attempt to find out the meaning of the strange word, which draws a line between the two characters in terms of their origin, age difference, education, and knowledge of foreign languages.

Another example taken from the novel *The Rules of Civility* demonstrates a social gap between the personages revealed in the main character’s attempt to clarify the meaning of the word *enlist*. A tall, blue-chinned bohemian, recalling half man, half jackal, whom Tinker met at the gathering, described as having “the working-class tone”, was curious to speak with a newcomer. The social difference between them is immediately revealed in the use of the verb ‘enlist’ of Dutch

origin (*inlijsten* ‘put on a list’, denoting enrolment into the army), which was lost upon Tinker Grey, an upper-class young man.

5) The jackal gave an abrupt laugh and looked at me like I was crazy.

– He *enlisted*.

– *Enlisted?*

–*Joined up*. His old outfit. The Thirteenth Field Artillery. Fort Bragg. Cumberland County.

In a bit of a stupor, I turned to go [emphasis added]. (Towles 2011: 290)

The verb ‘to join up’ of the Old French word *joinder* (from Latin *jungere* ‘to join’) makes an opposition to the verb *enlist*, which testifies to social differences between the characters by means of two words accepted in lower versus upper classes.

This category of borrowings may also include social contexts with only one member of an opposition, a loan word, while its Germanic counterpart is implied, like in the following example:

6) “Maybe so. But I am still her father. What would you have me do? *Abdicate* my responsibilities?”

“*Abdicate!*” replied Anna with a laugh. “Certainly not, *Your Highness*.”

The two had reached the point in the hallway where the door to the service stair was hidden in plain sight [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 404)

The verb ‘abdicate’ from Latin *abdicat-* ‘renounced’ is used in connection with the renouncement of a monarch’s throne. In the adduced context, it immediately endows the Count with the aura of grandeur and authority and creates a king’s entourage, which caused Anna’s ironic reaction in her calling the Count ‘Your Highness’. Although there is no synonymous counterpart in the text, the Germanic verbs ‘give up’ and ‘withdraw’ are implied and can easily replace the verb *abdicate* in this context.

A similar example is adduced below:

7) “Right”, he said. “How about some lunch? You *must be famished*. I think you will find the Piazza positively delightful [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 242)

A French counterpart, *famish*, of the Germanic adjective *hungry* is used in speech according to the status and education of the Count, for whom it was natural to resort to French in different situations, especially in a restaurant. Count Rostov once noticed in his thoughts – “...how fine almost any human endeavor can be

made to sound when expressed in the proper French...” (Towles 2016: 45). Loan words serve this purpose.

The fact that the origin of a word may cause misunderstanding at best or hostility at worst is illustrated by the following situation, in which loan words are perceived as antagonistic by the lower classes:

8) ...After all the buildup, it was a bit of an anticlimax, conceded the Count. But the objection being raised was not due to the phrase’s overall lack of verve; rather it was due to the word *facilitate*. Specifically, the verb had been accused of being so *tepid* and *prim* that it failed to do justice to the labors of the men in the room [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 68)

The verb *facilitate*, originated from the Latin *facilis* and borrowed from the French *faciliter* in the seventeenth century (Italian *facilitare*), caused the objection among the workers who took this word as inappropriate to characterize their labour. It sounded *tepid* and *prim*, two more adjectives of Latin origin – *tepidus*, from *tepere* ‘be warm’, and *primus* (Old French *prin*, Provençal *prim* ‘first’), which sounded alien and hostile to them. These examples suffice to illustrate how words, loan words in particular, can unite or, on the contrary, draw a line between people of different social strata.

The analysis shows that this category of synonymous words (a loan word – a word of Germanic origin) is used likewise in British and American as well as Russian literature to translate status through the knowledge of foreign languages, thus identifying socially different layers of society.

c) Class 3

This group of words is constituted by loan words representing upper-class culture in its various manifestations: occupation, pastime, values, principles, manners of speaking, and behaviour, which came with the chivalry of ancient times and are French by origin. These are socially charged words and concepts that evoke associations with the upper echelons of society. In the novels by Amor Towles, U-words found both in speech portrayals and the narrator’s speech serve to create social contexts and the social backgrounds of the characters. This statement can be illustrated with the following examples, where these words and phrases are italicized:

9) And it was in the Metropol.

Ever since its opening in 1905, the hotel’s suites and restaurants had been a gathering spot for *the glamorous, influential, and erudite; but the effortless*

elegance on display would not have existed without the services of the lower floor [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 33)

10) The Count took *pride* in wearing a *well-tailored jacket*; but he took greater *pride* in knowing that *a gentleman's presence was best announced by his bearing, his remarks, and his manners. Not by the cut of his coat* [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 37)

Apart from *glamour, effortless elegance, bearing, refined manners* (And all the time, the outward appearance so artfully maintained was that of a gentleman: well-mannered, well-spoken, well-dressed – well-honed (p. 242)), *superior demeanour, perfect poise, pride, glamour, glorious and grandiose, polite society since the age of chivalry* on which upper-class culture rests, there is also *the formality appropriate to his position, the voice of gentility, delicate conversations, sophistication, the etiquette, the terms of address, the most subtle chef de cuisine, elegant décor, well-tailored suit, and jacket*, which serve as “markers” in fiction and speech of socially privileged classes. These are only a few socially marked words we come across in the British, Russian, and American literature under analysis. The three cultures share the same “code” of upper-class representation in fiction and consequently in real life.

11) I suppose the rules of being a princess would begin with a *refinement of manners*. To that end, she would be taught how *to comport herself in society*; she would be taught *terms of address, table manners, posture...* [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 49)

12) [About the Count] Tall and thin, with a narrow head and *superior demeanor*, he looked *rather like a bishop* that had been plucked from a chessboard [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 39)

The comparison of the upper-class characters with priests or bishops is consistently made in American novels under analysis to highlight the posture of the representatives as one of their distinctive characteristics.

In the list of U-words are nouns, adjectives, and adverbs creating under- or overstatements so characteristic of the upper classes of society. Among the socially marked is the word *civilized*, which is often come across in different contexts underlying upper-class culture; this word was identified as a U-word in the works by Allan Ross, Nancy Mitford et al. (1956), as well as in Richard Buckle's work (1978) and later in Ivushkina (1997), and it has retained this social implication up to the present:

13) Then he had settled himself down on the couch to while away a *civilized hour* before it was time to dress for dinner [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 62)

14) Simply put, there was enough space to accommodate such a *civilized hour* [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 62)

15) Your *Excellency*, the Count reflected philosophically. Your *Eminence*, Your *Holiness*, Your *Highness*. Once upon a time, the use of such terms was a reliable indication that one was *in a civilized country*. But now, what with... [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 75)

The analysis proves that upper-class culture is built on common values, concepts, and notions, which are socially charged and shared by British, American, and Russian cultures. The lexical units reflecting this culture are indices of social identification.

d) Class 4

This class of words includes social contexts in which loan words are used ironically, usually in order to convey the narrator's attitude towards the characters or events. In such cases, the words used enantiosemiotically (in the opposite meanings) are followed by the reaction of the character or the situation itself, for example:

16) Across the way was a table occupied by two *stragglers* from the diplomatic corps who picked at their food while they awaited an era of diplomacy. Over there in the corner was a *spectacled denizen* of the second floor with four enormous documents spread across his table, comparing them word for word [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 39)

The ironic connotation is created by means of two words – *stragglers* and *denizen*, the first of Germanic origin denoting: 1. Something that grows or spreads irregularly or apart from others of its kind; 2. A person in a group who becomes separated from the others, typically because of moving more slowly; the second, *denizen*, is of Latin origin: Latin *de* ‘from’ + *intus* ‘within’) + *-ein* (from Latin *-aneus* ‘-aneous’) ‘a person, animal or plant’ – it was assimilated into the English language via the Old French *deinz* ‘within’ and has the connotation of a *formal* and *humorous* word (LEXICO). The clash between two different words is intensified by the word *spectacled*, which is also socially marked (Allan Ross 1956; Buckle 1978; Ivushkina 1997, 2017). The clash between the mission of

the diplomats (*awaited an era of diplomacy*) and their occupation (*picked at their food*) only adds to the translation of the narrator’s ironic attitude in their description. A *spectacled denizen* reminds of the plant spreading itself around – *with four enormous documents spreading across the table*.

Ironic is the following passage, in which the narrator witnesses the ardour, with which *damsels* were carried away sharing their emotions about “complications of their hearts”:

17) His refreshment in hand, the count would take a seat as close as possible to the little table in the corner where young ladies of fashion met each morning to review the previous evening’s intrigues. Mindful of their surroundings, the three *damsels* would initially speak in the hushed voices of gentility; but swept away by the currents of their own emotions, their voices would inevitably rise, such that by 11:15, even the most discreet enjoyer of a pastry would have no choice but to eavesdrop on the thousand-layered complications of their hearts [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 19–20)

The word *damsel* registered as an archaic and literary word with the meaning ‘a young unmarried woman’ (LEXICO) came from the Old French *dameisele*, *damisele*, based on the Latin *domina* ‘mistress’. In this context, the reader cannot but feel the ironic attitude of the Count towards three ladies, which finds its reflection in the hyperbole *the thousand-layered complications of their hearts*. Their *hushed voices of gentility*, replaced by the modulations of their voices and loudness, made everybody around eavesdrop on their chat.

The following example can also illustrate how irony can be created by means of a contrast or even a clash between two words of different origin:

18) “I was not unnerved”, the Count said, taking a step back. “My only point was that the back of the dress did not have to be cut quite as low”.

“You must admit that *her neck* is lovely.”

“That may be so. But the world needn’t be presented with every single one of her *vertebrae*” [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 405)

This passage demonstrates the underlying mechanism of irony created by synonymous words of a different nature: *neck*, Germanic and neutral, and *vertebrate*, Latin (early seventeenth century) and scientific – from *vertere* ‘to turn’, widely used in anatomy, medicine, etc. In the Count’s speech, it creates a clash between the insignificance of the subject matter, that is, dress fitting, and the style the Count used to demonstrate his disapproval, which causes a smile on the face of a reader.

This class of socially marked situations is common to both British and American (supposedly Russian) cultures. Loan words are used to create a clash between either styles or the situations different in their significance, thus rendering an ironic attitude of the speaker.

e) Class 5

In addition to the four classes singled out before in British literature, the American novels revealed the contexts with the reverse social connotations of Germanic versus loan words.

19) “To *the privy*...”

The Count looked up at the waiter and then at Sofia.

“Say no more, Martyn.”

The waiter bowed and excused himself.

“Sofia”, the Count suggested tentatively, “shall we visit *the ladies’ room*?”

[emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 247)

This pair of synonymous words demonstrates the opposite tendency – ‘the privy’ which came from French *prive* ‘private’ and earlier into French from Latin *privatus* ‘withdrawn from public life’ – acquired informal connotation. The meaning of the word (outside a house) may have influenced its social connotation. In dictionaries (LEXICO), it is registered as ‘a toilet located in a small shed outside a house or other building; an outhouse’. Interestingly, it is registered in this meaning in a plural form, the waiter Martin in the extract, however, uses the word in the singular. *Lady* (in *ladies’ room*) of Germanic origin denotes a woman of a superior social position, of noble birth; it acquired the social marking of a U-word long ago (Ross 1956, Buckle 1978, Ivushkina 2017) and is socially contrasted to the word *toilet*. As the analysis of literature shows, their social indexical nature has survived up to now.

There is another passage in the novel *A Gentleman in Moscow* in which the Count has a conversation with a colonel whom he immediately spotted as not belonging to the in-group though the position of the colonel presupposes a high status. The Count’s consideration “It is the business of a gentleman to distinguish between men of rank” finds its immediate confirmation in the dialogue that follows:

20) “Absolutely delicious”, he said, when he had taken his first bite.

The Count bowed his head to accept the compliment on Emily’s behalf.

The colonel gestured to the Count with the fork.

“You have a very interesting *file*, Alexander Ilyich.”

“I have a *file*?”

“I’m sorry. A terrible habit of speech. What I meant to say is that you have an interesting *background*”.

“Ah, yes. Well. Life has been generous to me in its variety” [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 208)

The noun *file* immediately suggested the origin and the occupation of the unknown colonel. The noun of French origin (from French *filer* ‘to string’, *fil* ‘a thread’, both from Latin *filum* ‘a thread’) makes reference to the documents on the table of an official and evokes social connotations other than those of an upper-class representative, in contrast with the word *background* of Germanic origin. The table manners of the colonel during the dinner proved him not to be part of the in-group and at the same time highlighted a complex of socially marked characteristics.

f) Class 6

A pair of two borrowings, or, with a French phrase, one explicating the other, can be singled out into a separate group to be revealed in the American novels:

21) Accepting this response as sufficient, if not ideal, the girl now furrowed her brow. She put another quadrant of fish in her mouth and chewed thoughtfully. Then she suddenly leaned forward.

“Have you been in a *duel*?”

“*An affair d’honneur?*” Count hesitated. “I suppose I have been in a duel of sorts...” [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 43)

The word *duel* originated from the Latin *duellum*, an archaic and literary form of *bellum* ‘war’, used in Medieval Latin with the meaning ‘combat between two persons’, partly influenced by *dualis* ‘of two’. The original sense was ‘single combat used to decide a judicial dispute’; the sense ‘contest to decide a point of honour’ dates from the early seventeenth century (LEXICO). The count resorted to the French phrase, as the word ‘duel’ has lost its primary meaning and is used these days as ‘a contest between two parties’.

The pair may include two loan words, one of which is to explain the meaning of the other, for example:

22) Having nodded favorably at the various items on the Count’s list, Nina looked up sharply at the last one.

“*Posture?* Is posture a *type of manners?*”

“Yes”, replied the Count, albeit a little tentatively, “it is. A *slouching*

posture tends to suggest a certain laziness of character, as well as a lack of interest in others. Whereas an *upright posture* can confirm a sense of self-possession, and a quality of engagement – both of which are befitting of a princess” [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 49)

The word *posture* came from the Latin *positura* ‘position’ via the French *postura* from the sixteenth century with the meaning ‘the position in which someone holds their body when standing or sitting’; being seldom used, it is often lost upon the speaker, especially upon a young girl, whereas the word *manner*, also of Latin origin, *manuaris*, from *manus* ‘hand’ with the meaning ‘polite and well-bred social behaviour’, is part of Nina’s language.

Both cases are indicative of the gap between the speakers, age differences in the first place, and definitely social differences, reflected verbally. This class of words, revealed only in the American novels, requires further examination to uncover the play of two borrowings functioning for social characterization.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the loan words in the American novels by Amor Towles has proved first of all that borrowings in the American literature, like in the British novels, perform the function of social identification. They serve as social indices translating information about the status, occupation, gender, and age differences of the characters. The representation of the Russian Count in the American novel supported by Kwartovkina’s thesis gives us the reason to believe that borrowings are socially charged in Russian culture too. The four classes of words singled out in the British novels have been proved relevant for social characterization in the American novels. In addition to the class of terms, the class of words used in pairs (a loan word and a Germanic word), the class of socially marked words (U-words), and the class of borrowings used ironically, the American novels demonstrated that social differences may be drawn by a pair of words of Germanic and foreign origin, like in class two, but with switched social connotations and by two loan words, one serving to explain the meaning of the other. The conclusion can also be drawn about the universal nature of borrowings serving as social indices in fiction/speech in other European cultures.

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How Culture-Specific Practices and Values May Influence International (Romanian–South Korean) Marriages

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Motto:

Marrying a foreigner is often a failed project
(Mohamed Elaskary, personal communication)

Abstract. The aim of my research study is to identify the barriers that cross-cultural and interracial couples are confronted with and the ways they try to overcome these potential obstacles in order for their marriage to work, with a focus on Romanian–Korean couples (Romanian wives and Korean husbands). At stake are many aspects pertaining to culture such as religious or ideological beliefs (Christianity vs. Confucianism), individualism vs. collectivism, egalitarian vs. non-egalitarian treatment of women, the language adopted by the spouses, family expectations, as well as the discrimination of bi-racial children.

The hypothesis underlying the study is that no matter how much the spouses love each other, any difference in values, practices, and behaviours can create problems. Derived from this hypothesis, the following research questions will be addressed in the study: (a) Which particular cultural issues may cause (more) frictions in international, interracial marriages? (b) What steps are taken and by which partner in order to solve the possible culturally triggered problems that appear in their relationship? (c) Are there any advantages to international, interracial marriages?

To provide answers to these questions, 7 Romanian–Korean couples have been subjected to a semi-structured interview. The information provided by the respondents has been analysed within the framework of “thematic analysis”, defined by Berelson (1952: 18) as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.

Keywords: international/interracial marriages, Romanian–Korean couples, Confucianism, cultural practices, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

Until the beginning of the 20th century, the Korean peninsula was isolated from the rest of the world and very homogeneous in terms of race. But as a consequence of South Korea's economic development on the one hand and of the modern era of globalization on the other, this situation has started to change: more and more foreigners are moving to South Korea to work, to study at prestigious universities, or to stay there for good. At the same time, due to factors such as a greater mobility of people in general, the South Koreans' desire to study abroad, the frequent business travels, as well as the development of the Internet, which enables people to join various dating sites, international marriages between South Koreans and foreigners are a growing phenomenon.

Many people who marry in the same culture and the same race must make adjustments as they learn to live with each other from year to year. But when two persons belonging to different cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, or social backgrounds decide to tie the knot, then they need to make additional adjustments in customs, lifestyle, religion, and attitudes in order to strengthen their relationship. This is a complicated matter, especially in those unions in which the husband is South Korean and the wife a Westerner. The problems may appear basically because the Korean society is a patriarchal one, very much influenced by Confucianism, which preaches submissiveness of women to men and to elderly persons. A woman's place in the Korean male-dominated society was in the home, her family being the primary focus. As a wife, she was supposed to obey her husband, to work hard to please her in-laws, and to bear a son. As a mother, a woman was burdened with all responsibilities for rearing children. So, a woman's life was totally governed by the family system. The roles of wives and husbands were clearly delimited. Despite some progress made by South Korea, in the sense that more and more women work outside their homes, combining their professional and family lives, a certain conservative attitude regarding women and marriage is still felt among the South Korean men (Hoare 2012).

In contrast to the South Korean culture, the Romanian one encourages gender equality and equity. Thus, married men and women could trade the roles they play in their families – it may happen that the wife is the breadwinner and the husband the babysitter –, and they are supposed to respect both pairs of in-laws equally, who, in their turn, will try to help the couple as much as they can. Moreover, from my personal experience, I could say that Romanian married women enjoy more liberty than their Korean peers. Consequently, when Romanian women marry South Korean men, a first cultural barrier they need to overcome is that of total submissiveness to their husbands.

Marrying a person of a different nationality sometimes means making “sacrifices”, adapting to a different culture, and negotiating different cultural

traditions like “the special occasions the family will celebrate, the religious upbringing of children, and the values the family will adopt” (Prentice 2020: 3). When two persons belonging to different cultures decide to form a family, they bring with them different types of “software of the mind” (Hofstede et al. 2010), which may at times be in contradiction. In order for the marriage to be successful, the spouses need to understand and respect each other, as well as to make compromises. Despite the obstacles they will encounter along their married life, the experience will teach them a lot, and they will get a lot in return. In my opinion, learning from each other’s culture makes life richer and fuller.

While intermarriages are more common today, this was not always the case. In fact, for a long time, interracial marriages were unacceptable in many parts of the world, including South Korea. It was only recently that South Korean people started choosing their marriage partner, and one of a different race for that matter, on their own, despite frequent manifestations of disapproval on behalf of the conservative society. From among the mixed marriages that took place in South Korea in the time span of 2018–2021, the majority were between South Korean men and foreign women, the latter coming mainly from other Asian countries like China, Thailand, Japan, Philippines, but also from the USA and Russia (Korean Statistical Information Service – kosis.kr, 2021). A very small percentage is represented by Romanian women married to South Korean men, some of these couples being the subjects of the present small-scale study. The general purpose of my research is to identify the problems (if any) these mixed-race couples have been confronted with, to what extent they are of a cultural nature, and what ways to overcome them the spouses have found.

The structure of the paper is as follows: section 2 offers a glimpse into *thematic analysis*, the theoretical framework within which the data collected from the Romanian–Korean¹ couples were analysed. Section 3 presents the research methodology, i.e. the interview as a data collection method, the research hypothesis, and the research questions. The recurring patterns encountered in the transcripts of the interviews are analysed along the themes established in terms of thematic content analysis in section 4. The last part of the paper comprises the conclusions and the answers to the research questions.

2. Thematic analysis

The approach I considered suitable for this study is *thematic analysis*, “a descriptive qualitative approach to data analysis” (Vaismoradi et al. 2013: 399), defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke 2006: 79). The aim of thematic analysis is “to

1 For the sake of simplicity, I will use the term “Korean” to refer to South Korean people.

examine narrative materials of life stories by breaking the text into relatively small units of content and submitting them to descriptive treatment” (Sparkes 2005 – quoted in Vaismoradi et al. 2013: 400). Unlike *content analysis*, to which it is very similar and which relies more on the interpretation of data, thematic analysis is more descriptive in nature. Qualitative description is valuable not only for the knowledge it imparts but also because it is a means of establishing meaning and of producing solid findings (Sandelowski 2010).

According to Vaismoradi et al. (2013: 399), the main characteristic features of thematic analysis are as follows:

Table 1. *The main characteristic features of thematic analysis according to Vaismoradi et al. (2013)*

Aims and concentrations	Analysing narrative materials of life stories
Philosophical background	Realist/essentialist and constructionist, factist perspective
Analysis process	Description and interpretation, both inductive and deductive, emphasizing context, integration of manifest and latent contents, drawing thematic map, non-linear analysis process, no peer checking

As De Santis and Noel Ugarizza (2000) contend, thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common threads in recorded communication, which extend across an entire interview or sets of interviews.

The data used by researchers in thematic analysis could be in the form of interviews or focus groups. For the current study, I have chosen to analyse recordings of in-depth interviews (or “content”) with mixed-race couples, which are representative for the investigated topic and which have “a clear historical time frame” (Baker 1994: 106), namely the 21st century. These transcribed recordings (or “texts”) are actually “written communicative materials which are intended to be read and understood by people other than the analysts (Krippendorff, 2004 – quoted in Cohen et al. 2018: 674).

The theoretical framework and research methodology (to be presented in the next section) were meant to enable me to offer an encompassing picture of the Romanian–Korean marriages, namely of the barriers they need to overcome and of the cultural differences they need to negotiate for the marriage to last.

3. Research methodology

In collecting the data for the study, I opted for the semi-structured interviews defined by McDonough & McDonough (1997: 183) as “interviews (...) that have a structured overall framework but allow for greater flexibility within that, for example in changing the order of the questions and for more extensive follow-up of the responses”. One of the greatest strengths of this research methodology is “the ability to ask questions that are meaningful to participants and to likewise receive responses in participants’ own words and native cognitive constructs. Of additional benefit (...) is the use of inductive probing (...) which allows the researcher to clarify expressions or meanings and further permits participants to tell their stories” (Guest et al. 2012: 12).

There were altogether 32 questions that the interviewees were kindly asked to provide answers to. The interview questions were, in general, the same for both the wives and the husbands, but there were also some gender-specific ones. Additionally, for the couples who had children, there were some questions related to mixed-race offspring. Out of the common questions, some were aimed at gaining socio-cultural information about the interviewees, while others focused on the cultural barriers my mixed-marriage couples could have been confronted with in their married life, being aware of the fact that each member may have had certain expectations, which differ significantly across cultures.

In all the international couples I interviewed, the wife was Romanian and the husband South Korean. Six of the couples were acquaintances of mine, an additional one being recommended to me by someone who knew about my small-scale study. Because of the pandemic, the interviews were conducted online, via the e-learning platform of Transilvania University of Braşov, my home university, in the time-span of December 2021 – January 2022. With some couples, the wives and husbands were interviewed separately; two couples (C2 and C4²) expressed their wish to be both present and to provide the answers in turn. The female subjects were interviewed in Romanian, whereas their Korean spouses were interviewed in English (H3, H5, H6, and H7), in Romanian (H2 and H4), and one in Korean (H1), with the help of his Korean-speaking wife. The duration of the interviews varied depending on the number of follow-up questions and also on the respondents’ desire to share as many details as possible. Thus, the shortest session was 45 minutes long (Couple 3), whereas the longest lasted 126 minutes (Couple 7). The next step was the transcription of the recordings. This was followed by breaking down the interview transcripts into smaller units of analysis, i.e. fragments/paragraphs, and ascribing them a name/theme. This is what Cohen et al. (2018) and Baker (1994) call *coding*, i.e. “the ascription of a category label to a piece of data, decided in advance or in response to the data that have been collected” (Cohen et al. 2018: 668).

2 C stands for *couple*, H for *husband*, and W for *wife*.

According to Saldaña (2009) (quoted in Guest et al. 2012: 59), a theme is “a *phrase or sentence* that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it *means*” (emphasis in original). Some of the themes to be analysed in section 4 of the paper were pre-determined by the analytical objectives of the study. Thus, the theme tagged *acceptance/rejection by in-laws* was based on the answers provided by the spouses to questions such as: “Q5: *When did you meet your in-laws, before or after the wedding? Please tell me how you met them, what impression they made on you?* Q6: *How did your in-laws / your spouse’s relatives treat you? Please tell me what actions/behaviours impressed you.* Q7: *Do you think that your in-laws’ attitude towards you has changed after some years since you got married? If so, in what way has it changed?*” Other themes emerged while re-reading the interview transcripts, when I came across words/phrases that occurred frequently both throughout and across them. Thus, no mention of adopting the Korean husband’s surname was made in the interview, but five of the female respondents in the study mentioned it, so I considered it a theme worth investigating.

All in all, the categories/themes I have obtained are: *acceptance/rejection by in-laws, dealing with prejudice, attitudes to bi-racial children, dealing with conflict, and making adjustments*. Within the latter category, further subcategories/themes were identified, “thereby creating a hierarchy of subordination and superordination, in effect creating a tree diagram of codes” (Cohen et al. 2018: 669). Thus, the subordinate themes of the aforementioned category would be: sharing activities, adopting the spouse’s religion, adopting the husband’s surname, and learning each other’s language. The final step in using *thematic analysis* as a research method is the analysis of the identified themes.

In any research study based on interviews, a key aspect is to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. As Cohen et al. (2018: 129) explain, “[t]he essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity.” All the respondents in the interviews were promised complete anonymity. Thus, instead of using their real names, I employed codes for identifying them (“to keep the information on individuals separate from access to them” – Cohen et al. 2018: 130). Along this idea, each couple that contributed with information related to their marriage was coded as C1, C2..... C7 (C stands for “couple”, while the number accompanying it indicates the order in which the couples were interviewed). In each couple, I have employed W for the wife and H for the husband, each initial being accompanied by the number corresponding to their order of interviewing (W1...W7, H1....H7). Apart from that, other aspects of their socio-demographic background, which I considered relevant for the analysis, were simplified so that the identity of the informants should not be revealed: instead of using the exact birth date, I opted for their age. Moreover, when considering their professions, I made use of a general term rather than a very specific syntagm (e.g. *teacher* rather than

language/geography teacher), while when it came to their place of residence, only the name of the country was mentioned, but not the city. This means that even if I can identify the respondents from the information given, I “will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected” (Cohen et al. 2018: 130). *Table 2* below contains detailed information about my informants.

Table 2. *Socio-demographic data concerning the informants*

Couple indicator	Place of residence	Length of marriage	Ages		Professions
C1	South Korea & Romania	25 yrs	W1 H1	53 65	Multiple jobs Engineer
C2	Romania	10 yrs	W2 H2	46 46	Bank clerk Professor
C3	Canada	5 yrs	W3 H4	30 30	IT specialist IT specialist
C4	Romania	2 yrs	W4 H4	29 30	Physician Salesman
C5	South Korea	3 yrs	W5 H5	30 30	Teacher Musician
C6	Romania	7 yrs	W6 H6	32 39	Social assistant YouTube
C7	South Korea	6 yrs	W7 H7	51 48	Teacher Teacher

The working hypothesis is that even in marriages between people from the same culture, race, and religion problems may appear; but when it comes to mixed-race/international marriages, the cultural differences may add to the problems and may lead to marriage failure. Derived from that, the following research questions have been formulated:

(a) Which particular cultural issues may cause (more) frictions in international, interracial marriages?

(b) What steps are taken and by which partner in order to solve the possible culturally triggered problems that appear in their relationship?

(c) Which are the advantages and disadvantages of interracial marriages?

4. Data analysis

The themes identified in the interview transcripts will be analysed in turn in what follows.

4.1. Acceptance/rejection by the in-laws

One problem any couple, irrespective of whether it is international or not, may face is that of getting their families' consent to marry. According to some scholars (Clark 2000, Tudor 2015, de Mente 2017), in current South Korea, plenty of marriages are arranged or semi-arranged³ by the parents, as the Koreans consider that marriage is not just the union between a man and a woman, it is the union of two families. Consequently, the Korean parents' disapproval of marriage may be a barrier, especially when it comes to interracial or multi-ethnic couples, most of these parents not fancying the idea of having a foreigner as a daughter-/son-in law.

As it emerged from the interviews, some of the Korean men introduced their would-be-brides to their parents via *Skype* or *WhatsApp* way before taking them in person to Korea because they needed to make sure that their parents would like them / approve of them. Koreans would never bring a non-suitor to the family. The future relationship between the Romanian brides and their Korean in-laws depended to a great extent on their first encounter.

From among the 7 interviewed couples, two of them did not care about asking for the approval of their families to get married; it is the case of Couple 1, because H1 had already been married before and was raising two daughters on his own, and Couple 7, who got married quite late in their lives. H7 acknowledged with laughter that when he brought his then-fiancée to meet his immediate family members,

(1) they were just so happy to see her because I was already like 40-something years old and they almost gave up. Well, I almost gave up, too. She brought a lot of happiness to our family. [H7]

W2 confessed that before visiting her future in-laws in South Korea, she communicated with them via *Skype*. Her husband confessed that his parents fell in love with her at first sight. This encouraged him to take his fiancée to South Korea:

(2) I met them at the airport; they were all smiling happily. They triggered in me a state of well-being, which I cannot describe in words. I realized that despite the fact that I didn't know them, they were close to me, close to my soul. [W2]

It is also true that before getting married, H2 told his wife that his "parents may not agree with the marriage, and then we will have problems; we cannot marry, and neither can we continue our relationship".

3 "The semi-arranged marriage usually involves parental permission for an 'introduction' by a matchmaker, who carefully appraises the backgrounds of the prospective bride and bridegroom, leading to a so-called 'love' period before marriage" (Shin 1987: 261).

A similar positive experience was recounted by W3, whose in-laws had welcomed her in their family before she married her Korean husband. On the other hand, W4, who had also met her in-laws before marriage, acknowledged the fact that initially they were not very happy with the idea of having a foreign daughter-in-law, “maybe out of fear of not knowing much about the culture” she came from. She mentioned that when she first visited South Korea, it was not her parents-in-law who waited for her and her fiancé at the airport but the latter’s grandmother. This may have caused a bit of disappointment in her heart, but it was quickly dissipated by the big hug she received from the elderly lady, given the fact that Koreans are non-haptic persons. Thus, by using a more Western gesture to welcome her grandson’s fiancée, the Korean grandmother acknowledged her acceptance of the relationship. The fact that W4 could speak a bit of Korean and fluent English helped her communicate with her fiancé’s parents, brother, and other relatives, making them change their reticent attitude so much so that on the couple’s departure to Romania, even W4’s future father-in-law hugged her.

From among the Romanian wives, the only one who confessed having felt unwelcomed by her in-laws was W1. She is also the one who has been married the longest (25 years). She met her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law only when she accompanied her husband to South Korea after their marriage in Romania. Her husband somewhat misled her by saying that his country could offer her “civilization and modernity” but failed to tell her anything about family relationships and the wife’s submissiveness to the husband and to his family members. From the very start of her stay with her in-laws (as it was customary in South Korea), she felt rejected by them. Not only did her Korean family members treat her like a servant, but they also made her life a hell by instigating both W1’s husband and her stepdaughters to ignore her. And rather than trying to teach W1 some of their traditions, they would find fault with her for everything, as the fragment below illustrates:

(3) One day I ate alone some kimchi⁴ soup in-between the meals because I was hungry. On seeing me, my sister-in-law started shouting like crazy that there won’t be any food left, and how do I dare to eat alone, without asking for permission. After some time, I understood that men eat the best food, women the leftovers and only after the men have filled their stomach. Apparently this is the old-age tradition. (...) They also taught the girls to ignore me, not to talk to me. The youngest daughter would cover her eyes every time I wanted to talk to her. [W1]

For all the couples in the study, it seems that the Romanian parents of the brides did not express any opposition to the mixed marriage, even if they could not freely

4 Kimchi is a traditional Korean dish made of spicy pickled cabbage.

and easily communicate with the Korean young men. H7 both recounts his first encounter with his in-laws and describes his relationship with them at present:

(4) Our marriage was in November, and in summer, in August the same year, we went together to Romania. So that was the plan. I stayed with her family and that was the time when I met my in-laws for the first time. Well, they were happy people. (...) They welcomed me, obviously, but the problem was, without my wife, I couldn't connect, I couldn't talk to anybody, because they didn't speak English, I didn't speak Romanian. (...) And before our departure, back to Korea, I talked to her father, I want to marry your daughter, and he said <yes, yes, yes>. (...) Every time [I go to Romania] they are very nice, and they always try to make me feel comfortable, and they make sure that I am well fed. I would say that the relationship I have with my in-laws is very, very good. [H7]

H3 also has good memories related to his first encounter with his wife's parents, which, he says, was very interesting and beautiful, as he could not expect her parents to be open to him, a foreigner and, moreover, an Asian. He also mentions that after they got married, his in-laws made him feel like a family member and offered him their hospitality.

But as the marriage progressed, some frictions appeared between some of the Romanian parents and their sons-in-law, which were mainly caused by cultural differences. Thus, H6 originally had a good relationship with his Romanian in-laws until his family moved from South Korea to Romania, where they live at the moment with his mother-in-law. He is not at all happy with this cohabitation, especially because his wife comes from a large family. And, as it is customary in Romania, on various occasions, such as someone's birthday or religious holidays, all members of the family come to celebrate the event at their mother's place, which puts some pressure on W6, as she has to help her mother with the preparations for the event. H6 is also dissatisfied because he thinks that his wife dedicates too much of her time to her parents and her siblings rather than to her nuclear family.

H2 also experienced some initial disagreements with his mother-in-law, which he accounted for in terms of cultural differences:

(5) In the beginning, there was a kind of conflict, a cultural conflict between my mother-in-law and me. In Korea, as you know, the relationship between the son-in-law and the mother-in-law is not as good as it is in Romania, it is a very cold one. Because of this, I had some arguments with my mother-in-law, although I shouldn't have argued with her, but at present we have a good relationship. She takes good care of me all the time. But now I got a

grasp of the Romanian culture. There are no more problems. I understand her, and she understands me. [H2]

H1, who met his wife while he was working as a young engineer in Romania, mentioned the warm reception he had received from W1's parents before he got married. They accommodated, fed, and clothed him when he was broke because the company he was working for had not paid his salary and daily allowance. He also stated that W1's parents accepted him as their son-in-law without any kind of racial discrimination. His father-in-law would often invite him to drink beer together downtown. But on his sporadic visits to Romania after the marriage, H1 started being criticized by his father-in-law. "He said I didn't do anything in the house, but I would retort that I brought the money, which I assumed was enough. But in Romania things are different: men work both at home and in their work places." What H1's confession highlights is that in South Korea men are the breadwinners, and they do not care much about doing anything apart from earning the money for the family. In Romania, many husbands help their wives with the house chores and with the raising of the children, especially because most of the Romanian wives, unlike their Korean peers, have jobs, and it is very natural for couples to share some of the domestic activities like raising children, doing house chores, and cooking. According to the statistics provided by *Eurostat* in 2017, 55% of the Romanian male population is involved in raising children and 41% in cooking and house chores (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/womenmen_2017/ro_ro/images/pdf/WomenMenEurope-DigitalPublication-2017_ro.pdf?lang=ro).

4.2. Dealing with prejudice

Mixed-race couples, more than same-race international couples, stand out due to the different physical features. In more conservative cultures, such as the Korean and the Romanian ones, this could lead to various forms of discrimination. Most of the couples I have interviewed confessed having experienced some sort of negative behaviour both on the part of their co-nationals and from the people of their spouses' culture. The most traumatic experience was that of Couple 3 in Romania, which determined them to leave the country and move to a place where multiculturalism has had a longer history. Both H3 and W3 recounted an event that left them with a bitter taste:

(6) Overall, there were more bad experiences than good ones. To start with the bad experience, we went to S [name of a place in Romania] on a trip and we got a taxi from the train station and the taxi driver started making mean jokes; he asked her why does she meet Asian guys and why foreigners steal

our girls. (...) I could feel a lot of negativity whenever I was in the street with her. When I was alone, I didn't care much because they were just laughing at me... But when I was with her, some gypsies were poking my body or, in the elevator, making fun of my language. (...) In Korea, it was kind of opposite: when she was with me, people would not show any negativity, but I heard that when she went out alone, it was a bit rough. Some people tried to pick her up or get her (phone) number, grabbing her wrist. [H3]

(7) In the most fortunate cases, they would simply pass by and turn their heads, to have a better look at us, but there were also situations in which they shouted at us *chinchong*, *chinchin*, things like this. We had a worse incident: there was a group of teenagers who started making all kinds of inappropriate comments, and I replied to them, not nicely, but I replied. This led to physical conflict, and we had to call the police. Actually, this happening made us leave Romania. [W3]

Another respondent (W1), who lived most of her married life in South Korea, recounted how at the beginning of their marriage, while she was walking one day arm-in-arm with her husband, a Korean man separated them saying that “the husband should walk in front of his wife, not side by side with her”, this attitude being the result of the deeply ingrained Confucian conviction that women are not equal to men in any respect. Another blow came when W1 started taking her stepdaughter to school. A few days after the beginning of the school year, the child's schoolmates started laughing at her stepmom, whom they considered an “alien” on the grounds of her white skin, blond hair, and blue eyes, which were in stark contrast with the Asian features. Moreover, when W1 eventually got a job in a Korean company, her co-workers would call her “alien” and “prostitute” and even went on strike because they did not want a foreigner to be paid the same salary as they received. Interestingly, in a time span of more than 20 years, W1 hoped that the attitude of the Koreans towards foreigners would have changed for the better, but much to her surprise, her eldest stepdaughter, now a young adult on the point of marriage, has problems with her fiancé's mother, who does not want her as a daughter-in-law because of the fact that her stepmother is a foreigner and Caucasian. She would even address the young woman as “that foreigner's daughter”.

Couple 4 also mentioned some unpleasant situations they experienced in Romania because of their different physical features. Thus, W4 mentioned that “[t]he Romanians look at us not only with curiosity but sometimes also with malice or even with a certain degree of aggressiveness.” She continued saying that sometimes the Romanian people also verbalized their feelings, especially towards H4. “An elderly couple said in a mocking manner that he is Chinese and that he found himself a Romanian girl.”

On a more positive note, H7 stated that as far as his family is concerned, they have not experienced any kind of negative attitude either on behalf of the Romanian people or from his co-nationals. As he revealed:

(8) in Korea, there is very little negative emotion towards foreigners. Large cities in Korea are pretty international. It's because this English that we have to learn – like that's the social pressure, you know, since they are very little. Because of that, since many years ago, we started having teachers from the States, from Australia, New Zealand, those native-speaking teachers, as well as international business in Korea. We see a lot of foreigners here. So, this is not really something new, like a different hair colour or skin colour. To me, this is nothing to be worried about. [H7]

H7 also contends that Koreans would not have a negative attitude towards mixed-race couples, as the country has accepted people coming from various corners of the world. A possible explanation for this opinion, which differs from that of the other informants, could be the fact that he spent a long period of time in the States, a multi-ethnic and multi-racial country, where people do not care much about mixed-race couples. My personal opinion is that South Koreans may be less conservative in this respect than they used to be half a century ago, due to the phenomenon of globalization. Their openness to foreigners could be determined by each and every Korean's personal experience with people from other countries, as well as by their level of education.

4.3. Attitudes to mixed-race children

In an article published in 2008, Lee (2008: 56) mentioned the fact that “mixed-race people in Korea are regarded as an aberration or a regrettable phenomenon” or a “national embarrassment” (Demick 2014) due to the fact that especially during and after WWII, most of the mixed-race children were considered to be the result of the union between prostitutes servicing US troops or between American GIs and poor war brides. This is why even nowadays, when the number of interracial marriages has grown, children of mixed heritage are very often referred to by the derogatory terms *damunhwa*⁵ ‘mongrel’ or ‘halfies’ even if they are born and raised in South Korea. Despite the economic and technological progress of the country and its exposure to the Western values, this long-standing prejudice is still present among many Koreans who are keen on keeping their society pure in terms of race.

As Demick (2014: n. p.) stated, in South Korea, “biracial men cannot join the army, which makes them ineligible for many jobs and benefits”. This could be one reason (not clearly stated in the interview) why C6 decided to leave South

5 *Damunhwa* is a derogatory label and evokes low socio-economic status (Kim & Kim 2015).

Korea and move to Romania after their first child – a son – was born. Another reason could be the fact that the Koreans still discriminate and have “prejudices against migrant women and their children who do not look or speak like ‘pure Koreans’” (Park 2017: 67).

W6 confessed that:

(9) The main reason why we left Korea was the child, because we do not want – especially my husband does not want – to send him there to kindergarten and to school (...). We left because of the child, because multi-cultural children – I have sensed that myself – are marginalized, and we didn’t want this to happen to our son. In Korea, whenever I went to the park with him, no Korean child would play with him. (...) He was 2 years old at that time, and we would often go to playgrounds, but nobody would play with him. [W6]

Couple 2 also has a child (a beautiful daughter), who is at the moment protected against a negative attitude/discrimination on behalf of her Romanian peers by being enrolled in a private school. As the child’s mother stated:

(10) This is the reason why we have chosen a private school for her, a school where we could manage [all possible problems] with the teachers, because everywhere there are persons who pass judgments without thinking first. (...) So far, she has not experienced any negative attitude. They may appear in the future, but before the evil things may touch her, she will be older and she will be able to control the situation. She will undoubtedly be the target of “hateism”, but this will make her even stronger, and she will learn to manage it herself. [W2]

The same fear of having their child discriminated against or even bullied on grounds of being bi-racial may have weighed heavily on C3’s decision to move from Romania to Canada. This decision was also fuelled by H3’s dissatisfaction with his Romanian colleagues, who would make fun of him because of his grammatical or lexical mistakes in using Romanian, as well as by the idea that the new country would offer them better job opportunities than Romania. Here is what he stated:

(11) There were many reasons [for leaving Romania], but mainly thinking of our future child (name mentioned), I felt it was gonna be harsh for her because of the fact that she was mixed. [H3]

According to the statements made by my interviewees, it seems that mixedness poses serious problems in mono-racial countries like Korea and Romania. The

pressures on mixed children could be quite intense. Such children may not be easily accepted as members of a society that defines itself as mono-racial. Despite this, I tend to agree with W2 in believing that for all the hardships “halfies”⁶ may experience, they will become stronger and richer, as they will be bilingual and bicultural human beings.

4.4. Making adjustments

4.4.1. Sharing various activities

It is a well-documented fact (Clark 2000, Kohls 2001, Yu & Clark 1987) that in South Korea men are supposed to support the family financially while women to take good care of the house and children, very few male spouses getting involved in the raising of their children or in sharing the house chores. A typical example of such a husband is H1, who acknowledged the fact that his confrontations with his father-in-law were triggered by the latter’s reproaches that H1 did not do anything in or around the house, like most of the Romanian husbands. H1 could not understand this attitude, as “in Korea husbands are supposed to work and earn money, everything else being in the charge of their wives”.

A rather similar attitude is adopted by H5, also residing in South Korea, who is not as much dominated by the Confucian philosophy concerning the roles of wives and husbands as H1, but who, nevertheless, does not do much in the house. As his wife acknowledged, “[t]ruly speaking, he is not a big fan of house chores. For the moment, he is responsible of earning the money. Sometimes, he takes out the garbage, some other times he helps me with the dishes, or drives me to the shopping mall, lest I should carry the shopping bags.”

H7 used to help his wife too, “more than the traditional Korean husbands, but less and less lately”, as his spouse confessed. From among the house chores, he does the dishes (which he claims he does better than his wife), sometimes the cleaning of the house, and he also cooks now and then. H7 also mentioned that, as far as he knew, there are “more and more men who take care of the house well, doing the house chores”, something that would have been unconceivable in the Korean society of the 20th century.

The interviewed Korean husbands who are much younger than H1 or H7 and who left Korea, being exposed to the Romanian or a Western culture, tended to help their wives both in the domestic activities and in the raising of their children. H3, for example, mentioned the fact that after he had got married, he tried hard to prove himself to his in-laws.

6 *Halfie* refers to a person with two different racial backgrounds.

(12) I started working; I proved myself, my abilities, my capabilities. I could see my father-in-law would trust me more. (...) I did what I could do to support W3 [he uses his wife's name], doing together chores, preparing meals. [H3]

For the sake of his baby, H3 also agreed to be on paternal leave from work for 2 or 3 years, not at all feeling that his ego would suffer if his wife were the breadwinner during this time. In South Korea, the cases of paternity leave are rather scarce in comparison with other developed countries. According to Kim (2021: 375), the Korean “male employees who took parental leave in 2020 represented 11.2% of all parental leave takers”, while in Romania the trend for fathers taking paternal leave has been on the rise in the past 2 years (Popescu 2021), slightly exceeding their South Korean peers (in 2020, 12.7% of the Romanian fathers chose to take paternal leave, while in 2021 the percentage rose to 13.4%, according to: <https://panorama.ro/concediu-parental-romania-mama-tata/>).

An equal contribution to the raising of the children and the house chores was also mentioned by W6, who stated: “He cooks, I do the cleaning, and we both take care of the children.” W4 confessed that she and her husband cook together, but that her husband is more frequently involved in doing the dishes than she is.

A nice confession made jointly by Couple 2 shows that they are equally involved in everything that takes place in their home. W2 stated that they do together most of the house chores after they return from their work places. When W2 is involved in the house chores, her husband spends time with their daughter, “playing video games, traditional Korean games, and teaching her the Korean language”. The change in attitude of the Korean men in terms of their responsibilities is nicely captured in H2's confession:

(13) In Korea, it is assumed that if I, the husband, bring in the money, then you, the wife, have to do everything related to the household. But in our case [referring to himself and his wife], both my wife and myself are employed. Consequently, there is no such thing as “my role” and “your role”. There is no such division! Today, I have more time, and I will do most of the work, and tomorrow, my wife may have more time, and then she will take over the house chores. [H2]

H7 also disagrees with the old-fashioned Korean idea that “the man is the person working outside and the woman the person working inside, taking care of everything at home”. A possible explanation for these more advanced views concerning the sharing of the house chores and also an equal involvement in bringing up children could come from my male respondents' exposure to the Western values: four of them live abroad, while three in South Korea. It appears

that the long period of time spent in the United States contributed to H7's perception of the roles of the spouses in the nuclear family.

With two of the interviewed couples, the conviction that both the wives and the husbands will share all private activities proved to be a source of tensions, especially because the deeply rooted beliefs concerning gender roles were at odds with the cultural expectations. As the Korean society is a patriarchal one, where men have more privileges than women, especially when it comes to private activities, it was not at all surprising to find out that the Romanian wives vented their frustration at this state of affairs. Below is W3's confession:

(14) From what I have seen in Romania, after you get married, you go to any social event as a couple, you have family friends; you do no longer have your own friends who[m] you go to meet alone. Somehow, the two circles of friends merge, and you partake [in] the social activities and gatherings as a couple. I have the feeling that in the Korean culture things are completely different. Even after marriage, a person keeps his/her circle of friends for himself/herself. Now that we have moved to X [name of the city in Canada], he joined a Korean community; it's an online community, so he communicates with its members mainly online. But when it came to meeting the members in person, he went alone to make their acquaintance, so I kind of felt left aside (sad laughter). And this thing started bothering me now because I would like us to go together to such gatherings, to develop a circle of common friends. I think this is a cultural difference, yes. [W3]

And despite the fact that W3 did tell her husband about her disappointment of being left behind when he went to meet his Korean friends, he responded that he got her point but that "there are also the other persons (i.e. the Koreans) who[m] he needs to consider" (H3). This comes to demonstrate how deeply loyalty to one's compatriots had been ingrained in the Koreans' socialization practices and value systems.

4.4.2. Adopting the spouse's religion

Most of the couples had to navigate their different cultural heritage in planning their weddings, bringing together the grooms' Asian background with the brides' Christian religion so as to make both families feel content. Some couples (C1, C4) opted for a Western-style wedding with church service. In order to satisfy the Korean families, some of the interviewed couples also organized a small Korean ceremony (but not necessarily with all the traditional elements – like the traditional bowing in front of the in-laws, a ritual called *pyebaek*).

Faith and religious practice were the central elements that brought one particular couple together (C6). Both the woman and the man had embraced the same religion, and they belonged to the same (international) church, which has a Facebook account. Seeing him on this platform, W6 sent him a friend request, which he accepted, and this is how their love story began.

In other two couples, one of the spouses adopted the other's religion in order to show their love for their partners and their commitment to their union, being aware that this might be a tremendous help in navigating the "the hurdles of dating cross-culturally and interracially" (Coquet-Mokoko 2020: 155). Thus, H4, an atheist before marriage, agreed to embrace Orthodox Christianity⁷ for the sake of his wife, who is a devoted Christian. In the case of Couple 2, it was the wife who adopted Catholicism, her husband's faith.

4.4.3. *Adopting the husband's Korean surname*

Despite the fact that in Korea married women do not adopt their husband's names,⁸ five out of the seven Romanian wives decided to take their husband's family names, as it is customary in the Romanian culture. I think that they have taken this decision first and foremost for their (future) children, as in the Romanian culture, if the parents have different surnames on the child's birth certificate, this may lead to the assumption that the child was born out of wedlock. On the other hand, the woman herself may experience a hostile attitude on behalf of her co-nationals, even more so if the name of her child's father is foreign. Just like the Korean society, the Romanian one is still very traditional and conservative as compared to other cultures. A second plausible reason for the change of name could be the women's desire to be one in faith, in spirit, and in name with their husbands.

Two of the female interviewees (W5 and W7), both residing in South Korea, decided to go with the Korean tradition, that of preserving their maiden names, despite the fact that they are difficult to pronounce by the Koreans. One of them made, nevertheless, a compromise in that she started writing her name in *Hangeul*, the Korean alphabet.

4.4.4. *Learning each other's language*

The process of adapting to the spouse's culture may also involve learning each other's mother tongue. W1 is a fluent speaker of Korean, which she learned by

7 In the Orthodox religion, in order to be married in church, you first have to be baptized. So, H4 had to go through both the "ordeal" of being baptized and that of being married in church, two ceremonies that he did not really understand and that, for him, were way too long.

8 Since times immemorial, Koreans have considered bloodlines of great importance. Thus, they assumed that the surname inherited from one's own father should not change from birth until death. One other reason is that women are never considered part of their husband's families.

living and working in South Korea for 25 years. Her husband, on the other hand, can utter only a couple of Romanian words. W3 had been fond of the Korean culture, as she was keen on watching K-dramas and TV shows, which helped her become aware of the Korean social norms. After she met her husband, she also started learning the language for the sake of being able to communicate with her future in-laws. As she recounts:

(15) Before we got married, I went to South Korea to visit him. He was working, so I was kind of left alone with his parents. And I had to communicate with them somehow. I had tried to learn more Korean, but I can't say I have reached a conversational level. I also used English or non-verbal elements, whereas other times I would tell them: 'Let me look for the translation!' and I would use Google translate. [W3]

If religion united the members of C6, it was the love of each other's language and the desire to speak it better that brought W4 and H4 together. They met via the *Hello Talk* application and tried to help each other in their endeavour. After they got married, as well as before, they used both languages in the family. The same love for languages was the starting point of C5's relationship. They were both students in Korea, where she was studying Korean while he Romanian. In the interview, W5 confessed that "[o]ur meeting was arranged, actually for an exchange – I was to teach him Romanian, and he was to teach me Korean." And their love for the other's language also made them embrace the culture in which the language is spoken, so she very often wears a *hanbok*,⁹ while he proudly shows the Romanian traditional man's shirt.¹⁰

4.4.5. Dealing with conflict

No marriage, not even one between partners belonging to the same race, culture, and religious faith, is all milk and honey. But the sources of conflict may multiply when it comes to international, interracial marriages. What is important is for the spouses to identify the source of the conflicts and to try to find a solution out of the disturbing situation. When asked about who makes the first step towards reconciliation, the answers provided by the interviewees differed.

(16) It's interesting because we have different approaches when it comes to reconciliation after an argument. He prefers to take time, alone, to sort

9 *Hanbok* is the typical Korean woman's traditional costume made up by a short blouse and a long, pleated skirt.

10 The Romanian "peasant shirt" is made of white cotton or linen fabric, and it is richly embroidered.

his emotions [out], to calm down. I am his total opposite; I like to express my emotions immediately and to move on. Maybe I am the one to make the first step because I have this mechanism which makes me speak out about what I feel. [W3]

The same idea is expressed by W7:

(17) Both of us are making this step, but somehow, lately I have the feeling that I am doing it more often, cause I am a Christian at the same time, and I follow the slogan “show some grace”. [W7]

W7 is also the one who provides a reason for the Korean husbands’ desire to be left alone after an argument. She mentioned the fact that from an early age men are taught to hide their inner feelings like frustration, disappointment, or excitement. This makes it very hard for a Romanian person to understand what the problem is about and to solve it immediately.

And despite this tendency of Korean men to let the problem roll over for some time because of fear of being seen as weak if they admit they were in the wrong, one Korean husband (H2) confessed instantly and smilingly that it is he who tries to make up with his wife after an argument. Immediately, his wife confirmed that “he tries to make her laugh, and off is the sorrow”.

One thing worth a mention at the end of this part of the paper is the gratitude expressed by two of the interviewees for having been invited to participate in this small-scale project. W2 and W7 confessed that it was by answering the questions in the interview that they came to realize the cultural differences in their families and the need to pay more attention to them and fight for minimizing them.

5. Conclusions

As the world economy continues to develop, there will be an even greater amount of contact between nations. Thus, the number of mixed-race/international marriages will no doubt rise as well. After all, love does not respect national, racial, or religious boundaries. But people who commit themselves to mixed-race marriages should listen to the advice given by others who have already learned some lessons from their own experience.

The themes that have emerged from the interviews and that have been analysed in the present article indicate that some of the cultural issues that may cause problems in international mixed-race marriages relate not only to the physical features of the spouses (one Caucasian, the other Asian) that may lead to being discriminated against both in their own countries and in their spouse’s

homeland, but they are more deeply rooted in the mindsets of the partners. One such factor could be the different gender roles: while in the Korean society women are expected to be more submissive to men, being to a great extent financially dependent on them, in the Romanian culture, women and men may both have jobs and will expect their spouses to be partners in the literal sense of the word: they need to complement each other, to have (almost) the same degree of involvement in the house chores as well as in the upbringing of their children. When the opinions concerning gender roles differ, problems may emerge, but they can be dealt with on the basis of an open dialogue. Also stemming from the divergent mindsets, another cause of friction identified in the analysis was the Korean men's practice of socializing with other Korean men, whether in South Korea or abroad, where they could find a small Korean minority. Their Romanian wives, who assume that once they got married, their circles of friends would merge, do not seem to be very happy when left behind at home. They feel that they are ignored/overlooked.

With respect to RQ2 (What steps are taken by the spouses to solve the problems?), the most frequently emerging measure was that of discussing the problem with the partner, expressing one's own opinion with respect to it, and trying to find a compromise which could satisfy both of them. In extreme situations, as was the case of W1, talking with her husband about the cultural hurdles she had to overcome in South Korea did not work. Thus, she resumed to fighting on her own to solve her problems: she left her mother-in-law's place, she found herself a job and a place where to live with only her nuclear family, and, in the long run, when her in-laws realized that all W1 wanted was the well-being of her husband and of his two daughters, they slowly adopted a different attitude, so now that the couple has moved to Romania after 25 years of living in South Korea, they often speak over the phone. From among the Romanian women married to Korean men, I think that W1 had the hardest experience of all, and this could be because of the fact that she married a longer time ago than the others, when inter-racial marriages were not accepted by the Korean society. She confessed having participated in a TV show (*Candid camera*) in South Korea, where Korean parents were presented foreign suitors for their children. The majority would not accept the idea of having a foreign daughter-/son-in-law, and the extremist ones would often disown their children on such grounds. Within a time span of 25 years, the Koreans' opinion concerning mixed marriages seems to have changed, but not totally.

As far as the last research question is concerned, the data have shown that there are some more disadvantages than advantages of interracial marriages. In terms of the former, we have seen that mixed couples have to face prejudices and sometimes a hostile attitude, both in South Korea and in Romania. The interviewees who are already parents mentioned their children's marginalization

by some members of the Korean society and possibly by the Romanian people, too. When it comes to the advantages, for these interracial families, “the process of give and take while bringing together different cultural practices has enabled them to create a blending of traditions that recognises the different heritages the two families have brought together” (Prentice 2020: 5). Even W1, the one who was initially rejected by her husband’s family, acknowledged the fact that in time, as her relationships with her in-laws have improved, her nuclear family would often spend the Korean traditional holidays together with her husband’s relatives, obeying all the rituals and sharing the traditional food prepared by her mother-in-law. Now that C1 has moved to Romania, it is H1 who appreciates most of the Romanian traditions and the celebrations accompanying them. On the other hand, W5 acknowledges that, as at home she and her husband spoke both Korean and Romanian, her marriage has contributed to her higher proficiency in the Korean language, while her husband considerably improved his Romanian. Couple 7 mentioned the fact that in their South Korean home, they celebrate both the Romanian traditions and the Korean ones, each spouse showing appreciation for the other’s culture.

Coming back to my motto, *marrying a foreigner is an often failed project*, I would not put it as strongly as my friend, Mohamed Elaskary, as some of the couples in the study have enjoyed long marriages (Couple 1 – 25 years, Couple 2 – 10 years). It is also true that at the time I finished writing the present article, much to my surprise, the youngest couple had decided to go separate ways. In what concerns such international marriages, I would rather agree with Coquet-Mokoko, who stated that “[b]uilding a couple while having to navigate the racial and cultural parameters specific to each country remains a complex task” (2020: 156).

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Political Discourse and Oppression – Influences on the Mentality and Culture of the Soviet Man

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Abstract. The culture and mentality of a nation is formed in a process of interaction between individual and environment, and, consequently, its behaviour can be influenced by the changes of the social and physical environment. Politics is one factor in this process, as it uses power to control people's thinking and behaviour through various instruments and techniques, and in this way, it can be regarded as a governmental extension on human actions. Using an imagological approach, the article's purpose is to highlight that oppression, along with political discourse, shaped the mindset of the Soviet people. Also, the regime attempted to shape Soviet society in order to achieve the image desired. The Soviet political apparatus was based on oppression, the technique of repetition, and the role models highlighted by the regime. All the measures taken influenced the mentality of the Soviet people and, implicitly, led it to a transformation and, later, an adaptation because people had to comply with all the rules, laws, and measures taken by the Communist Party. This will be analysed in the first book published in Romania by Vasile Ernu, *Născut în URSS* [Born in the USSR], and in two works by Svetlana Alexievich, namely *The Unwomanly Face of War* and *Chernobyl Prayer*. By analysing these works, the reader learns how a society, its culture and mentality can be influenced by the social and physical environment. The three works present the transition from fiction to the non-fiction category, portraying authentic experiences and depicting the tangible impacts on people.

Keywords: mentality, culture, the Soviet citizen, politics, Vasile Ernu, Svetlana Alexievich

1. Introduction

When one says “culture”, one may address two conceptual clusters. Frederik Tygstrup states that the concept of culture comprises two distinct yet interconnected meanings. The first pertains to the field of anthropology, encompassing the ways

of life, customs, relationships, and interactions of a particular group of people (Tygstrup 2020: 155). The second relates to artistic production, which confines both human experiences and the modes or structures of perceiving and understanding the world. Moreover, it is directly linked to geographical space. Culture could not be described as completely abiding due to the fact that it can be shaped by numerous factors like geography, history, economics, and politics. Another term that is of interest in this study, as a consequence of its connection of culture, is mentality, which represents the mental attitude, beliefs, and values that characterize a society. Along with culture, mentality can be influenced by certain factors, and politics can again be mentioned as a consequence of its impact on the frame of mind of a society. As one will observe during this study, politics governs people's way of thinking and behaviour through some techniques and instruments. Both terms – culture and mentality – are the keywords when one discusses the way of living, social norms, behaviours, and the shared beliefs of a specific group, and narrative is among the things that can formulate a discourse about society.

The attention in this study will be focused on three books, *Născut în URSS* [Born in the USSR] (2006) by Vasile Ernu and *Chernobyl Prayer* (2016) and *The Unwomanly Face of War* (2017) by Svetlana Alexievich. Vasile Ernu, originally from Soviet Bessarabia, settled in Bucharest, wrote essays, chronicles, novels, and various commentaries on subjects enclosing literature, politics, and social life. Ernu is a distinguished writer as a consequence of his way of making literature, namely his ambitious and polemic subjects. Svetlana Alexievich, who is known as an eminent Belarusian journalist and writer, is also connected to Russia and Ukraine. She was born in Ukraine, grew up in Belarus, and wrote her books in Russian; in this way, she is a writer of all these three nations. Besides her recognition as a valuable writer, she is an interesting personality because of her love of and solidarity with people. Alexievich, through all the voices that were not heard and were lost throughout time, depicts an entire history, but also the destiny of a country – Russia. I had these two authors in mind on account of their elaborated topics, but also because their approach to Soviet culture and mentality. Through the authentic experiences, the reader is enabled to see the effects of politics on mentality, behaviour, and culture. In the books, there is not just a story presented about the Soviet people; their writing involves biography and autobiography, and it goes beyond fictional representation, also including the transition to non-fictional literature.

2. The impact of politics on culture and mentality

By using an imagological approach, I will present how culture and mentality can be influenced by politics, but also, I will underline that some books can depict the

life, culture, and mentality of a specific group or society. According to Luminița-Mihaela Iacob, imagology deals with the study of the perception of nations, including the way they represent each other and how they imagine themselves. I have chosen this approach as a consequence of my interest in analysing the Soviet society, how they perceived themselves, how their mentality and culture was shaped by different factors, but also, how books managed to represent this specific society. The two authors mentioned previously introduce the reader to the Soviet culture, presenting people's way of seeing and understanding the world, but, at the same time, their books portray how some transformations in their culture and mentality were produced as a result of the changes in their social and physical environment (Iacob 1996: 40). People changed the image of the state, of themselves, but also their habits and behaviour, all these being the effects of oppression. Due to the fact that the image of a society represents part of social representations (Chiciudean & Halic 2008), these literary creations can help one mentally portray Soviet society through the images created from perceptual foundations.

2.1. *On Stories*

In the book *On Stories* (2002), Richard Kearney pleads for the contribution of stories in understanding the world, but he also reveals the way in which narrative could provide a form of individual and collective identity. For Kearney, the act of telling stories is related to people's need for unity, but, at the same time, they serve as documents that provide information about different subjects, including the description of societies, cultures, and mentalities. From this perspective, we can consider that literature could be regarded as a reflection of culture or, at least, as a tool used by readers to get in touch with the culture and mentality of others. Narrative, as the author explains, manages "to *humanise* time by transforming it from an impersonal passing of fragmented moments into a pattern, a plot, a *mythos*" (Kearney 2002: 4).¹ In some cases, literature gives a chronological order so that we can comprehend the succession of the events, portraying, at the same time, the everyday life of a specific group and its attitudes towards different events.

The individual is a social creature who cannot live outside the different relations created in society, but also, it is important to take into account the social and physical environment. Dmitry Mikheyev states that "[m]an is in a state of permanent interaction with the environment, both physical and social. This interaction involves the changing of both the person and the environment [...] Interaction with the environment starts with orientation in it. Man's orientation involves perceptions of himself as both a physical and a psychological entity" (Mikheyev 1987: 497). Both people and society are interconnected: people

¹ Emphasis in the original.

influence society, and society influences people. The individual can identify himself through his position in society and through his interactions with others. Each person was raised with a specific set of rules and values belonging to the culture of that area. As it was presented earlier, politics is one factor that can shape the environment, and as a result, it affects society and its culture and mentality. Some of the ways through which they are influenced by politics are the following: laws, propaganda, education, and social norms. An influential period when politics shaped the mindset and the way of living of society was during the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. All three works depict different periods when politics had an impact on society.

2.2. Born in the USSR

Născut în URSS [Born in the USSR], built up of several short texts, drafts “a kind of archaeology of everyday life in the Soviet Union” (Ernu 2006: 8).² They can be read as vignettes, partly essays, partly narratives, trying to portray the culture and mentality of the Soviet citizen. Ernu introduces topics that are directly linked to the daily life of Soviet citizens, and some that are worth mentioning are education, youth culture, hobbies, clothes, propaganda, consumption, politics, and so on. Through this collection of short texts, the author enumerates several national stereotypes of the Soviet society, giving examples or offering his personal experience so that the reader can comprehend the mindset and habits of that society. Each text can be read as a stand-alone text, but they make a puzzle – as the author mentions on the first pages –, and if the reader combines all the pieces, s/he will be able to obtain the image of a common Soviet citizen. A fundamental detail about the present work is subjectivity – all information is passed through the personal filter of the author. Readers are meeting only his personal perspective on the topics, or, in other words, a “self-image” (Iacob 1996: 40), implying in this way the image created by the author about the society he was part of. As a consequence, all the characteristics and features introduced by Ernu represent, in fact, auto-stereotypes. Besides being presented from the author’s point of view, education, youth culture, hobbies, and so on are observed and analysed through his personal filter; no second opinion is implied.

There should be mentioned the connection between politics and memory due to the fact that the regime mastered what people remembered. Alexievich stated that “our memory is far from an ideal instrument. It is not only arbitrary and capricious, it is also chained to time, like a dog” (2017: 22). By using the word “time”, she is referring to *Zeitgeist* because people tend to be influenced by it. Through propaganda, the Communist Party was constantly promoting some information, an act that can be called the technique of repetition. This topic

2 The translations from Romanian are made by the author throughout the article (A. I. A.).

was also developed in my Master's Degree thesis (Arsene 2022: 64–65), where I indicated that, according to Gabriel A. Radvansky (2017), a piece of information that has been heard repetitively by an individual will be more straightforwardly remembered than something heard or seen just once.

One of the texts is entitled “Reclamă versus Propagandă în URSS” [Advertisement versus Propaganda in the USSR] (Ernu 2006: 77), in which the author relates that the Communist Party had monopolized them, and thus each advertisement had to be approved of by the Party. The advertisements started to appear all over the Soviet Union, and they were promoting different ideas such as the relation with the enemy, rejection of capitalism, encouraging people to be volunteers in the Soviet Army or to enrol in the Communist Party. The author outlines the strong images with simple phrases from the advertisements; the reason for this simplicity was that all the citizens should be able to understand the message. Also, he describes them as Soviet propaganda advertisements, confirming that these campaigns were created to achieve some political aims. Through the advertisements, the regime tried to transfer a set of messages to society.

In accordance with the advertisements, there should be mentioned the concept of the “effect model”, which leads to the idea that through mass media audiences can receive some messages. As a consequence, these messages can have a significant impact on the way people think and behave. Thomas C. O’Guinn states that advertising was initially not regarded as a way of communicating something; the “effects model” had never before included social consciousness of any type. According to this theory, social actors – media, individuals, cultural influences, institutions, governments, communities – matter at least as much as the communication message itself. Since advertising was a form of mass communication, it was expected to have an impact on people (O’Guinn 2001: 186). The advertisements portray people that are good citizens, are volunteers in the Soviet Army, are enrolling in the Communist Party, and so on. The aim of those advertisements was to present some “role models” and to encourage people to do the same things portrayed there. There were highlighted some personality traits and characteristics that the regime expected to be present in all the citizens. In this way, politics manipulates people through the discourse, and all those advertisements were, in fact, one of the measures taken by the regime to introduce certain principles and values in the mindset of people – being implied here the transformation from advertisements to propaganda.

On the one hand, the Soviet man was excessively exposed to certain principles and values promoted by the Communist Party; on the other hand, people’s access to information and culture from outside the Soviet Union was converted into a Soviet replica. This aspect can be spotted in Ernu’s book. The first example is Buratino, known by every Soviet citizen, a copy of the Italian Pinocchio. This cartoon character was “adapted and retold in a Soviet manner” (Ernu 2006: 26)

and became one of the cult figures of the Soviet society. Another such character is Max Otto von Stirlitz, who is a replica of the American James Bond. Stirlitz was a hero for the Soviets, and what makes a difference between him and James Bond is that he was not considered a fictional character but a real one. The Soviet spy, besides the fact that he was intelligent, handsome, and funny, served the country, and due to this reason, he could be a model to follow in the real life.

By using these two examples, I return to the notion of “self-image”, referring to its three levels of understanding. According to Chiciudean and Haliuc, the first level relates to an intuitive image of a society about itself – for example, the image represented by Ernu în *Născut în URSS* [Born in the USSR]. The second is linked to the self-image retrieved from the foreigners and progressively appropriated as the only truth one can say about that particular society – but this aspect is not the focus of this study –, and the third one pertains to the image that a society wants to create and communicate about itself. For the last level, one can take into account the example with the advertisements and with the two fictional characters – Buratino and Stirlitz (Chiciudean & Haliuc 2008: 11). As I mentioned earlier, the stories of the two characters were retold in a “Soviet manner”, and thus some of their traits were connected to the image of the ideal Soviet citizen. Both of them were good citizens who loved their homeland and who were behaving in accordance with the values promoted by the Communist Party. The regime had in mind a certain image of the Soviet citizen and the Soviet society, and through the advertisements, the fictional characters, and the rules, they were trying to implement a specific discipline and way of life. It was expected from all the citizens to be “good” citizens, to have faith in the regime, and to respect all the norms and rules implemented by it. All those measures were implemented so that the Soviet society should reflect those images.

Culture and information were not only locally converted but, in some cases, also denied. Politics exercised its power over both of them through censorship. Therefore, the control over information was used to promote the communist ideology. In the article “The Roles of the Censor: New Perspectives on Censorship in Nineteenth-Century Russia”, Zavlunov and Zubkov define censorship as an idea, a practice, an act, a goal, and an end result. Therefore, censorship encompasses “self-censorship (conscious and subconscious), on the one extreme, and total external social control that suppresses (in whole or in part) or directs a creative endeavour, on the other. In the latter form, censorship is closely connected to all kinds of authority and power that manifest themselves through state institutions” (Zavlunov & Zubkov 2020: 1). Furthermore, the activities performed by the censor imply a deep involvement in literary and artistic matters; it is not reduced only to a simple set of rules. The censor has to pay attention to the form and content of the texts, but also to disseminate the works and to have complex interactions with the different participants in the creation (Zavlunov & Zubkov 2020: 2).

Mass media and the entire public discourse were monitored, so any criticism of the regime or ideas that contradicted the rules and values encouraged by the Communist Party were censored, and in such manner, they tried to suppress the dissent. According to Samantha Sherry, the instrument of the Soviet censorship apparatus was the Main Administration of Literature and Publishing – abbreviated Glavit –, and its responsibility was to set norms and to implement censorship over all the printed items (Sherry 2015: 45–46). The arts were also included here: literature, fine art, cinema, and circus. The period when censorship had the most power was under the leadership of Stalin. Several important Russian works were censored and even banned due to their promotion of dissenting ideas through literature. The writers were persecuted, faced exile, imprisonment, or even execution. Some of the most important authors politically oppressed were Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy, Boris Pilnyak,³ Mikhail Bulgakov, and Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn.

In addition to the aspiration to maintain control over information, the Communist Party wanted to suppress the dissent. Media and all the narrative forms – articles, novels, drama, poetry – were thoroughly analysed due to the fact that they could incite protests or rebellions, but also, through the dissenting voices, they could promote opposition movements or alternative political ideology. Through the process of analysis and dissection, the Communist Party could eliminate the negative images and ideas about the state, and, at the same time, it could portray an ideal image. Media and all forms of art, as well as advertisements, were transformed into propaganda and created a system of messages that had the aim of transferring to society the characteristics and traits of an ideal Soviet citizen, but also to create the image of the state as a perfect state.

After Stalin's death and Nikita Khrushchev's assumption of power, there followed a period when the apparatus that controlled information diminished. This period was generally described as "the thaw", and Ernu states: "the Soviet culture was unleashed in an exemplary manner" (Ernu 2006: 162). Those events were regarded by people with hope because they implied a re-discussion of the principles of socialism. Some literary texts were reprinted, and people were offered access to some banned authors such as Sergei Yesenin, Anna Akhmatova,⁴ Mikhail Zoshchenko,⁵ and Mikhail Bulgakov. Furthermore, Alexander Solzhenitsyn's book, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, was published (Ernu 2006: 162). The Communist Party made people reach a sense of disbelief bound up with the cultural freedom offered. It was a paradox on account of the restrictions that appeared during this period of supposed freedom. Ernu notes: "the taste of freedom is only felt when strong enough restrictions

3 Boris Pilnyak was a Soviet writer of novels and stories, prominent in the 1920s.

4 Anna Akhmatova was one of the most significant poets of the 20th century.

5 Mikhail Zoshchenko was a Soviet satirist and writer.

appear” (Ernu 2006: 163), and after a short time the limitation of liberty showed up. On one side, it was offered the liberty to express, to create, and to criticize the regime, but, on the other side, politics tried to control this process, and some books were banned.

Sherry provides an explanation for the paradoxical measures taken by the regime after Stalin’s death: “the Khrushchev period was characterized by ‘Glavlit’s shrinking authority,’ as its responsibility for censorship practices was transferred away from official censors towards editors and editorial boards, facilitating a move from a system of external censorship to one predominantly characterised by editorial or self-censorship” (Sherry 2015: 47). Thus, we get in touch with the migration from censorship to self-censorship. In the Stalinist period, people were exposed to specific actions – political persecutions, arrests, purges, and so on –, and as an effect of the repression and control over the media and all printed materials, people engaged in self-censorship. It created a culture of fear owing to the fact that people preferred to remove from the texts the parts that looked potentially problematic to avoid the punishment of the authorities.

2.3. *The Unwomanly Face of War*

In Svetlana Alexievich’s book, *The Unwomanly Face of War* (Alexievich 2017), there are three chapters entitled “From the discussion with the censor”, and the author describes how self-censorship made the book’s publication more difficult. This book was finished in 1983, but it was not published until 1985, as she faced many obstacles. The author had encountered problems in publishing the book because she wrote about “trifles” instead of the “Great Victory”, and even in the first pages, she mentioned that it had been already two years since she was rejected by the editors (Alexievich 2017). The reason was that she chose to write about one face of the Second World War which was not known to the wide world until then – a war full of horror, without an emphasis on the Communist Party and having in view a Soviet woman who was portrayed as an “animal” rather than a saint. She was accused that she promoted ideas which did not belong to the Communist Party because she decided to show the misery of the war and the harshness through which the victory was gained. She should have written about the “History of the Victory” rather than the small things experienced by women. All they wanted was heroism and great deeds, not the simple and terrifying stories of the common people. Another matter she was accused of was that she told a “lie” due to the fact that she had not described the heroes of the war and had not presented the Soviet woman as a heroic one but as a usual one who had passed through harsh times.

Furthermore, women were not allowed to mention that they were on the front, but in the first instance, it was not even stated. One of the witnesses declared that

it took several years for an article written by Vera Tkacenko to be published in the newspaper *Pravda*, stating that women joined the Second World War (Alexievich 2017: 108). Afterwards, the fact that women were at war was not a highlighted subject. After the war, few people talked about women who were on the front and how they felt, and even fewer mentioned that they lived alone and that they did not make it in life. The reason for this is that the Soviets had in mind a certain portrait of the woman, and after the war, not only did they think that women had in their mind an inappropriate image of the war but also that they were not real women.

Marginalization, according to Bradley T. Cullen, can have political effects at both micro and macro scales (Cullen 2000: 216). Thus, Soviet women who took part in the Second World War were marginalized because their stories were in contradiction with the image created by the regime about the “Great Victory” and “The Great Patriotic War”. Not only that their credibility diminished, but they were also avoided by other people and, what is more, forgotten. In the case of women who went to war, the concept of “alterity” can be mentioned – alongside “marginalization” – because those women were seen as “others”, they were not the same pure and saint Soviet women; they were different. Through the book, several men are mentioned who said that they would not marry a woman who went to war because it changed her, and she did not remain the same saintly and pure Soviet woman. Even the women themselves observed that they were different; however, for them, it was not about a change but more like a habit that they were trying to get rid of. As a consequence, many of them were afraid to talk about the war or their experiences.

The examples mentioned above represent just one face of self-censorship; the other one is related to common people and how their way of life and behaviour was affected, how they managed to limit themselves. As it was stated at the beginning of this study, each society has its own culture and mentality, which are strongly connected to the environment, and Mikheyev describes this as follows: “Mentality is formed in a process of interaction between an individual and the environment, during which both change. All participants – the individual, the physical and social environments – should be considered as active players” (Mikheyev 1987: 499). Politics and all the techniques and instruments used – rules, laws, censorship, marginalization, and so on – had an impact not only on the mentality of the Soviets but also on their culture because one of the effects on people was the establishment of a culture of fear. Alexievich depicts this very well in both *The Unwomanly Face of War* and *Chernobyl Prayer*. In an interview for BBC Newsnight (2016), Alexievich referred to her works as “novels in voices”, the reason being that she mainly used the method of close interrogation. First of all, Alexievich started as a journalist, her specialization being the interview. Hence, the hundreds of interviews merged into collections of oral histories. By using the points of view of different people of different ages, she shows several individual

perspectives, which are different from the perspective of grand history. In *The Unwomanly Face of War*, the author states that she writes a history of feelings and that she does research on individuals of a specific time who went through specific experiences (Alexievich 2017: 16). Therefore, the testimonies gathered by the author are not just real stories told by people, but they also display how politics and the culture of fear led to a change in their way of thinking.

Some people were covered by fear and preferred to hide the truth or their true feelings about the events, while others were led by an engineered communist mindset. In *The Unwomanly Face of War*, one of the testimonies depicts both types. The author relates that she went to the house of a couple who had married during the war. Alexievich asked the husband to let his wife speak; he accepted but told her to tell the story without tears and without trifles. After the man left, the woman whispered that the night before, she and her husband studied “The History of the Great Patriotic War” because he was afraid that the woman would say something inappropriate (Alexievich 2017: 20). The man represents the individual who was led by a specific set of rules and values implemented by the Communist Party. He had a specific vision and version of “The Great Patriotic War” and “The Great Victory” – contrary to the woman, who possessed a different perspective upon the events and the terrific deeds done to win the war. Even though the woman did not share the same ideas as her husband, she was led by fear, and thus she had some reservations about telling the whole truth. Alexievich states that inside the soul of an individual there are two types of truth: “*two truths that live in the same human being: one’s own truth driven underground, and the common one, filled with the spirit of the time. The smell of newspapers. The first was rarely able to resist the massive onslaught of the second*” (Alexievich 2017: 100).⁶ Moreover, she explains how women, when surrounded by more “spectators”, were less sincere because self-censorship was playing its part, making them speak according to what the regime wanted them to present. In the presence of others, women were describing the general truth, but when they were alone with Alexievich, they were revealing the personal truth.

In *The Unwomanly Face of War*, Alexievich depicts the culture of fear through the testimonies gathered from the women who went to war. The engineered communist mindset is present too, but in *Chernobyl Prayer* it is more highlighted, and readers also encounter the phenomenon of misinformation. *Chernobyl Prayer* also comprises a collection of oral testimonies gathered by Alexievich, but the difference from *The Unwomanly Face of War* is that the book also incorporates testimonies from male sources. Related to the Chernobyl disaster, Ion Valer Xenofontov – who was a University Lecturer at the State University of Moldova – reports that all information was kept secret, initially being claimed to be only a trivial accident. After Sweden and Finland had monitored the station,

6 Emphasis in the original.

the Kremlin had to admit it (Alexievich 2017: 152–155). One of the witnesses mentioned the words of the leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who said “there was nothing to worry about, comrades, everything was under control. There had been a fire, just an ordinary fire. Nothing that unusual. The people living there were getting on with their work” (Alexievich 2016: 173). Political discourse and censorship were again becoming instruments of oppression and were accompanied by misinformation and even the destruction of information. In this particular case, the leader wanted to shape and control people’s perceptions of the Chernobyl disaster. Furthermore, those who were witnessing the event were not allowed to divulge details about it because they could influence public opinion and could damage the image created by the regime of Chernobyl. The problem with misinformation was not only caused by the regime, which was trying to hide the details, but also by the newspapers through the invented stories they were presenting to society. Through the testimonies, people managed to talk about the disaster and revealed their personal perspective on the events and their experiences. The witnesses were asked to sign papers stating that they would not disclose the information and that they were not allowed to film or register. If one decided to divulge details, he was at risk of losing his job, party card, scientific title or to be prosecuted – which led to fear and self-censorship. As in the case of women from *The Unwomanly Face of War*, some people became afraid to talk about their experiences.

One of those interviewed relates that he was working at Chernobyl, and he had to take the employees there. He explains that they had a device that measured how many roentgens each had, but the number was a military secret. After a while, he was trying to find the documents correlating with his duty there, but with no results: “Though I tried. Made requests through the appropriate channels. I got three answers, which I’ve kept. First answer: the documents were destroyed upon expiry of the three-year statutory storage period. Second answer: the documents were destroyed during the post-perestroika downsizing of the army when units were disbanded. Third answer: the documents were destroyed because they were radioactive. Or maybe they were destroyed so nobody would ever know the truth?” (Alexievich 2016: 89).

Another man relates that when his wife called and he explained that he had just come out from near the reactor, the call ended, the discussion was interrupted by the KGB (Alexievich 2016: 187). Several testimonies report that the phone calls were monitored, the cause being the avoidance of the distribution of information about Chernobyl. All those fragile details about the disaster were censored, hidden, or destroyed because they could reveal an image that was not correlated with what the regime wanted to present.

Even though some witnesses described their fear of the regime and its injustice, others relate that people were not so scared and that they were not

forced to engage in tasks such as working at Chernobyl, concealing information, or removing the contaminated soil. Some of the testimonies managed to portray the national character of the Soviet man, an individual who has no fear, who is used to work hard and to be obedient but also whose values and mentality were shaped by the engineered mindset of the Communist Party. A teacher relates that the school asked them to come with shovels to remove the contaminated soil, and besides two young teachers, all of them accepted without objecting. He explained that inside them there abode the obedience and duty for their country (Alexievich 2016: 171). A chemical engineer who was working at Chernobyl relates that the employees were not afraid: “There was no whingeing. If this job had to be done, someone had to do it. The Motherland had called, commanded. That’s the way we are” (Alexievich 2016: 184). Thus, not only the culture of fear shaped the mentality, beliefs, and behaviours of the Soviet man but also their faith in the Communist Party and in all the values encouraged by it. These people were communists, and all of them were raised with a specific party discipline. They were led by this mindset, were “contaminated”, using the words of one of the witnesses. The political discourse and, implicitly, oppression and its various methods changed the way of thinking of the Soviet people and introduced certain principles and values that affected their behaviour.

3. Conclusions

As a conclusion, the Communist Party had overused its power over society, and censorship was one of the instruments used to control information. In the first place, one can perceive censorship as a direct action on people’s discourses because they were not allowed to talk about some subjects, were forbidden to divulge details, or were not capable of publishing some texts because of the topics covered. But I have also introduced the self-censorship, and, through it, I tried to highlight the fact that this can be a governmental extension on human actions. One aspect is related to fear: people were afraid to speak due to the consequences, implying in this way the implementation of a culture of fear.

The other aspect is connected to the culture and mentality of that society, the obedience and the faith in the party being part of their nature, and thus people did what they were told to do without protest or thinking about it. The Soviets’ behaviour was an effect of the technique of repetition of political discourse due to the fact that all the traits and characteristics were implemented in their culture and mentality through the messages transmitted through media, advertisements, and all the printed items. Moreover, by using those specific techniques and instruments, the regime managed to create and to implement an ideal image of the Soviet citizen and of the state.

Culture and mentality are two interconnected concepts, and both of them are linked to the social and physical environment. Politics plays a central role in shaping the environment, and, as a consequence, society is affected and changed. Mikheyev mentions two crucial concepts, namely adaptation and transformation (Mikheyev 1987). Therefore, in this process, when the environment is transforming, society should adapt and behave according to that transformation. As we have seen in this study, literature can be the key that opens the door to the culture and mentality of a specific society. Literary texts depict human experiences, but also perspectives on seeing and understanding the world. The two authors discussed managed to show how the regime implemented an engineered communist mindset that changed the culture and mentality of the Soviet society. On the one hand, Vasile Ernu portrays the culture of the common man who lived in the USSR, highlighting the influence of the Communist Party upon the way of seeing and understanding the world. On the other hand, Svetlana Alexievich shows – through the hundreds of interviews taken – how the regime used its powerful techniques and instruments to control information. In this way, a governmental extension on human actions can be observed as a result of the “contamination” of people’s consciousness through political discourse and oppression.

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Deprecatory Ethnonyms: The Case of *Bozgor*

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Abstract. In this study, we wish to debate upon some aspects regarding the lexical and semantic implications of ethnonyms. We aim to analyse the origin and semantics of one of two lexemes used by Romanians to refer to Hungarians: *bozgor*. Besides a meta-analysis of the term (its emergence, meaning), we also refer to archaic usages and meanings (*buzguroi*, *bozga*, *bozga*, *bâzga*, etc.). We discard previous theories regarding the meaning and origin of the lexeme. *Bozgor* is a word that is considered an instance of verbal abuse, mockery, or insult, which displays a significant amount of collectively formed, pejorative connotation. Our hypothesis is that it comes from the Hungarian *bodza*, in its archaic form and meaning ('border forest'). *Bozgor* in its earlier versions came to designate, through semantic extension, 'inhabitant of the border forest', 'Hungarian'. The associative meanings which led to the emergence of its present pejorative status (as an ethnic slur) appeared later. The roots we analyse in the article all share a common denominator of meaning and all have led to a large number of words related to the semantic field of forest both in Romanian and in Hungarian.

Keywords: *bozgor*, ethnic slur, etymology, meaning, Romanian, Hungarian

1. *Bozgor* as an ethnic slur

Negative stereotypes about other ethnic groups or ethnic prejudices are imaginary scenarios about the "other", materialized in a cliché, which, out of convenience is applied to a person or a group of people in an erratic way. Our constant strives to order and to structure the surrounding reality into categories, classes accentuate and foster this type of representation of differences. The causes and origins of these representations, recorded in numerous forms of expression (everyday life, folklore, literature, history, art, media, etc.), as well as prejudices and stereotypical forms of relationship between neighbouring ethnic groups, are varied and go beyond the scopes of this study. What we aim here is to present some aspects of Romanians' hetero-stereotypes or hetero-images related to Hungarians.

In the collective memory of Romanians, Hungarians are represented in various ways and under numerous denominations, most of which are ethnic slurs (cf. Adam-Vlasin 2017, Adam 2015). Following a previous study on the ethnic slur *boanghen*, we attempt to approach one of the most widespread dysphemetic ethnic names used by Romanians to label Hungarians, i.e. *bozgor*. Due to the fact that the term spread as a slur for Hungarians, especially in the last decades of the communist era, it is possible that it was fostered by communist nationalism promoted by Ceaușescu, which contributed largely to the emergence and proliferation of negative stereotypical representations (though the official propaganda kept highlighting the common goals of all friendly socialist states). The harmful influence of negative stereotypes, of prejudices and superstitions about the other, the negative perception about others and otherness may conduce people to inappropriate behaviour and catalyze intolerant mentality towards proximal ethnic groups. In the spirit of mutual, inter-ethnic tolerance and aiming to reduce the amount of hate speech impregnated with racism, xenophobia, chauvinism towards the other, we wish to take a look at the semantics and origin of the ethnic slur *bozgor* in order to make speakers aware of the semantic and pragmatic implications of this linguistic unit. Ethnic slurs always bring about face threatening and face loss, therefore their usage should be reduced as much as possible. Romanin (2022) discusses the reflection of the features of the “we”–“other” dichotomy in the Balkan model of the world. The author gives a brief review of the historical, cultural, and geopolitical specificities of the Balkan-Carpathian region which influenced the local peoples’ ideas about strangers; some traditional mythological beliefs of the Balkanians related to the conceptual field of “otherness” are also presented. He concludes that the prototypical Balkan alien is someone who *speaks differently* and *behaves differently*.

2. Theories regarding the meaning of *bozgor*

In the *Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language* (hereinafter referred to as DEX), the meaning of *bozgor* is that of Hungarian.¹ It is also suggested that it is used in a pejorative, derogatory way,² and the meaning of the word is assumed (probably wrongly, DEX suggests) to be in Hungarian ‘person without a country’, ‘stateless’. In Hungarian, it is supposed to come from Slavic or Romanian.³ The idea that the ethnic slur *bozgor* stands for ‘Hungarian’ and that it should be linked to the Hungarian word for ‘stateless’, ‘person without a homeland’, or it is used as an insult to the Hungarians in Romania, is reinforced but not explained by Herling and Ghentulescu (2020: 61).

1 According to DOOM 3 (2021).

2 Cf. Volceanov 2007.

3 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/bozgor>.

The etymology, the meaning but also the pejorative aspect of *bozgor* are still a matter of debate among specialists. However, numerous theories have emerged, and most of them seem to be rather speculations or folk etymologies.

Brubaker (2006: 307) derives the name *bozgor* from the Moldavian Csángó dialectal pronunciation of *bocskor* meaning ‘sandal’, ‘kind of moccasin’, ‘Opincapanak’, or traditional peasant shoe worn in Southeastern Europe. The explanation is not logical, as the aforementioned type of shoe was usually worn by Romanian peasants and not by Hungarians, therefore *bozgor* as a denominator of a piece of clothing would not work as an exonym given by Romanians to Hungarians. This etymology is based on the sheer phonological similarity of the two terms.

The Hungarian linguist Sándor Szilágyi N. (2003: 713–717) suggests that *bozgor* is a combination of the Hungarian slur *ba(s)zd meg* (‘f* you’) and the Romanian word for *Hungarian*, namely *ungur*. Szilágyi hitherto admits that his intention was to help people acknowledge the idea of conflicts arising from misunderstandings. And if people understand this, it might be easier to get them abandon ethnic slurs, and thus words like ‘Oláhs’ and ‘Bozgor’ would become obsolete archaisms, he argues. There are at least two arguments against this otherwise appealing theory:

1. there is no explanation for the phonetic changes and the shift from *b*d meg +or* to *bozgor* (syncope and apocope in *b*d* and aphaeresis in *meg* and the contraction of *ungur* to the suffix *-or*). The word was not listed in any of the dictionaries up to the 2000s, which does not mean that it did not exist; rather, it means that it was not widely used, or it had another form. However, so many changes are not very likely to occur within one single linguistic item over a timespan of a century;⁴

2. the f* word is mentioned only once in Romanian publications, under the form of *bassama* in Şăineanu (1929: 56), unequivocally using the *Vous* pronoun in the inflection of the verb (in the past, *Vous* pronouns and *Vous*-pronoun-related conjugations were far more widespread in Hungarian language, even in familiar and non-formal contexts; the *Tu* pronoun forms started to spread only in the late second half of the twentieth century. Szilágyi’s explanation, however, would be validated only on the *Tu* pronominal usage.

Tánczos (2012: 130) simply mentions the fact that the Csángó community faces the slur *bozgor*⁵ when Romanians do not understand them. This clearly

4 Given that in an 1895 study entitled *Porecelele la români* [Nicknames given by Romanians] Ion-Aureliu Candrea states that *boanghen* is the only nickname given by Romanians from all historic regions to Hungarians, and the first official attestation of the word in a dictionary is in 2007 (Volceanov).

5 *Bozgor* = homeless, stateless. The Romanians mocked us saying: you are bozgor, for being Hungarian. If they get mad at us, they even call us bozgor. They call us that because they do not understand the Hungarian language, and then they say: you speak bozgor (see Tánczos 2012).

shows that *bozgor* is not only an exonym, i.e. an external ethnonym, but also a glottonym, the name of the language which “sounds bad”.⁶

Szilágyi (2003) also discards the other explanation, according to which *bozgor* is a nickname of Slavic origin – *bez* ‘without(i)’ and *gora* ‘mountain’, or *gorod* ‘city’ –, and therefore *bozgor* would mean ‘without mountains/cities’. He states that this explanation is illogical because it does not consider the nature of linguistic processes, as a good ethnic slur should be witty and playful, and not so nonsensical as ‘mountainless’ or ‘townless’. The explanation sounds reasonable provided that *bozgor* was meant to be an ethnic slur from the very beginning, which might not be the case. Very often ethnic names turn into ethnic slurs after a period of time (always due to external, historical factors).⁷ Nevertheless, we also discard this etymology, as it is not linguistically verifiable (*gorod* has given in Romanian *-grad*, not *-gor*, as in *bozgor*).

Table 1. Synopsis of theories regarding the meaning and etymology of *bozgor*

Source	Meaning/etymology
DEX	Hungarian, pejorative, derogatory term, etymology probably wrongly ‘man without a country’, ‘stateless’
Herling and Ghentulescu (2020)	‘Hungarian’, an insult, it should be linked to the Hungarian word for ‘stateless’, ‘man without a homeland’
Tánczos (2012)	language which ‘sounds bad’, Csángó dialect
Brubaker (2006)	from the Moldavian Csángó dialectal pronunciation of <i>bocskor</i> meaning ‘sandal’, ‘kind of moccasin’, ‘Opinca-opanak’
Szilágyi N. (2003)	a combination of the Hungarian slur ‘f* you’ and ‘ungur’ ‘Hungarian’

3. Other etymological pathways

Another pathway that could be followed and verified would be the verb *a boscorodi*, meaning ‘to mutter an incantation’, ‘to speak like a witch’. Ioniță (2002) acknowledges that the nickname *bozgor*, attributed to the Hungarians, is not listed in the dictionaries. He concludes that the Romanians misunderstood the speech of Hungarians, which is why he thinks that *bozgor* comes from *a boscorodi* ‘to speak

6 As *bozgor*, *bangyin*, *madármelv*, *lónyelv* / *bozgor*, *bangyin*, *language of birds*, *language of horses* are all pejorative glottonyms used by Romanians to refer to Hungarian language (Iancu 2021: 162). Very often, the language used by the others is perceived as “foreign-speaking”, “bad-speaking/-sounding” or “nonsense-speaking”.

7 *Oláh*/Romanian was not an ethnic slur at the beginning.

nonsense, to grumble’, a contrast word with the consonant group -sc-, which became -zg in *bozgor*.⁸ Therefore, *bozgor* would come from *boscorodi*, ‘to grumble, mutter’, as the Hungarian language is incomprehensible for Romanian speakers.

Based on the idea that Hungarians were called *baskir*, *baskor*, *basquort* in many Arabic and Persian written sources in the ninth century (including, among others, variants of the ethnic name of the Bashkirs (i.e. *bāshjird*, *bashjird*, *bājghird*), the idea that *bozgor* might spring from *bashkir* has emerged.⁹ Among these old sources: Al-Masudi (Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali al-Mas’udi), Al-Istakhri (Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi al-Istakhri), Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Abd ar-Rahim al-Garnati l-Andaluzi, but also the Arab scholar and geographer Ibn Said al-Magribi (Ali ibn Musa ibn Said al-Maghribi) (1213–1286), author of *Kitab bast al-ard fi ‘t-t ul wa-l-‘ard / The Map of the Length and Breadth of the Earth*, who divides the inhabitants of Hungary into two peoples, namely: 1. Bashkiri (Bashghird), who are presented as Turkic-speaking Muslims settled south of the Danube, and 2. Hungarians (Hunqar). The Arab historian and geographer Abu-l-Fida al-Hamawi (1273–1331), in his work *Takvim al-buldan / Sketch of Countries*, writes that the Bashkiri of Hungary lived on the banks of the Danube, in the vicinity of the Germanic people.¹⁰ Nevertheless, this etymology is considered an unscientific version or folk etymology by Romanin (2022: 114); however, it reflects the way Romanians’ conceptual picture of the world represents Hungarians as “aliens”, “strangers from outside Europe”, “people from the vast plains of Central Asia”.

N. A. Baskakov (1984), in his article *On the Origin of The Ethnonym Bashkir* states that the origin of the ethnonym Bashkirs must be associated with the ancient history of the tribes that participated in the formation of both the Bashkir and the Bulgar peoples. The overwhelming majority of ethnographers and linguists admit that the Bashkirs, whose nationality was formed from the Kypchak tribe under the significant influence of the Bulgar and Ugric substrates, certainly were in close genetic ties with the Hunno-Bulgar tribe of the Ogurs ~ Ugurs ~ Ugrians, known in the east of the Turkic steppe under the name Oguz (oγur ~ oγuz – the same name, phonetically different according to the law of rotacism-zetacism). In other words, the ethnonyms Bashkirs and Magyars had a common origin. The identity of the ethnonyms badžgyrt and madžγur ~ madžγar is also confirmed by later studies of this problem, considers the scientist.

8 Bogrea (1926) makes an analysis of *Boscorodesc* (Sl. Bozkorodity, attested in medieval chronicles).

9 Especially on some forums and platforms that are not dedicated to scientific debate, participants tend to reiterate this idea for the sole purpose of demonstrating that *bozgor* is not a slur but an ethnonym.

10 For further information regarding the subject, see the writings of the following Hungarians researchers: Ármín Vámbéry, András Róna-Tas, Tibor Tóth, Gyula Németh, Zoltán Gombocz, István Vásáry, Gyula László, etc.

The Turkish scientist Osman Karatay, in his *Macarlar. Kökler Ve Türkler / Hungarians. Roots and Turks*, (2020) demonstrates that in Turkey, Hungarians were called *bashkir/bashkur* for a very long time, and the name *Macar* emerged late. The researcher highlights that it is almost hardly possible to encounter the ethnic name *Magyar/Macar* in the east of Volga in the early medieval texts. The name does not appear even long after Hungarians – who denominate themselves ‘Magyars’ – have migrated to the Carpathian Basin. On the contrary, the word *Bashkir*, which is believed to be the equivalent word for referring to the same group, has been frequently used. It is also usually used for referring to peoples in Central Europe. This *synonymous* usage of the names Magyar and *Bashkir* has long attracted attention and gave birth to many studies. The word *Onogur*, which stems from the ethnonym *Hungar*, used by outsiders for the Magyars, was used in some previous sources synonymously with the name *Bulgar* to the west of Volga, whereas the *Bashkirs* in the east never had such a name. Bulgars and Bashkirs in the Volga basin were carefully separated from each other.

An argument for the acceptance of this synonymy between the lexeme *Hungarian* and *bashkor, bashkir* might be a genetic research and study published in *Scientific Reports* (Post et. al 2019), which has concluded that a group of Bashkirs are the closest kin to the Hungarian Árpád dynasty. However, if *bozgor* (ethnic slur) had come from *bashkir* (ethnonym), it would have been a loan word, borrowed by Romanians and Turkish people alike, would have been listed in dictionaries, and would have yielded derivatives. It would not simply have emerged in the second half of the 20th century almost *ex nihilo* as an ethnic slur. Pejoration might have taken place, but the word itself would have entered at least some dictionaries. What is more, the ethnonym *bashkir* applied to Hungarians might be explained by the fact that Turks have always substantiated the Asian origin of Hungarians, and the lexeme *bozkir* means ‘steppe’ in present-day Turkish as well, therefore this exonym could mean ‘people of the steppe’, ‘people coming from the steppe’.

According to *A magyar nyelv szótára / Dictionary of the Hungarian language* (1862), the Hungarian verbs *bozog, bozsog* are synonyms of *mozog*, meaning ‘move’. The same series of synonym (*bozsog, mozog, mcorog, nyüzsög*) are listed by Sántha (2004) and in George Barițiu’s *Dicționarîu unguurescu–romanescu* [Romanian–Hungarian Dictionary] (1869), where he states that *bozog* means *se mișcă* ‘move’. Though this etymon (*bozgor* = *bozog/move* + suffix *-or*) is rather unlikely, the amount of meaning it suggests ‘those who are on the move all the time’ reminds us of another ethnonym for Hungarians, used a lot in Moldova, *csángó/csángál, csatangol*, i.e. ‘wander’, ‘loiter’.

Table 2. Synopsis of other possible etymologies we have analysed

Sources	Form	Meaning
Ioniță (2002)	<i>a boscorodi</i>	‘to grumble’, ‘to mutter’, ‘to speak like a witch’ (as the Hungarian language is incomprehensible for Romanian speakers)
Medieval Muslim sources, Turkish and Russian sources (Baskakov 1984, Karatay 2020)	<i>Bashkir</i>	‘people of the steppe’
The form is listed by Sántha (2004) and George Barițiu (1869), though the link with bozgor is not present.	<i>bozog,</i> <i>bozsog,</i> <i>mozog</i>	‘move’, ‘those who are on the move all the time’

4. A new hypothesis: Ro. *Bozgor* and Hu. *Bodza* and their old forms and meanings

In Scriban’s 1921 volume *Etimologii/Etymologies*, an archaic lexeme emerges – *buzguroi* –, which designates ‘a monster to scare children’. Scriban considers it of Hungarian origin, similar to *mozgor* ‘kind of little bear’. In another volume, the same author explains *buzguroi* as a dialectal term specific to Moldova and meaning ‘fairy-tale monster’, springing from the Hungarian *borzogatni* ‘to frighten’ (Scriban 1923: 277).

DEX provides two definitions of *buzguroi*. The first set of definition for *buzguroi* confirms it as a regional term for ‘big rat’ and as a figurative meaning for ‘a person who wakes up early’. This first set of definitions is based on Coteanu (2010). The second entry defines *buzguróï* and *guguróï* as synonyms (having as their etymons *borz*, *boarza*, and *gogoriță*), designating ‘a monster that scares children’. This second definition in DEX is based on Scriban (1939). This latter suggests the alternative version of *buzguroi* as *borz*, *boarză*, defined as an adjective of Hungarian origin (*borz*, *bursuc* ‘badger’, but also *borzogatni* / *a înfiora*, meaning ‘frightful (monster)’, ‘shaggy’, ‘very ugly (person)’ and ‘gadfly’. The contamination of *buzguroi*, *borz* and *borzas*, *borzos* is mentioned in DEX as well, which also quotes the name of the Cumani leader, Borz, as one of the most well-known referents of *borz*.¹¹

Also, DEX lists *bâzgán bâzgar*, *bâzgor*, *bâzgorie*, *bâzguroi*, *buzguroi* as designating ‘the name of a monster’. Seche–Seche (2002) mention, on the same note, the series of synonyms *bâzgar*, *bărzăun*, *bândar*, *bonzar*, *bânzar*, *bongar*,

11 BORZ n. cuman, după N. Iorga, citînd Borzul șef cuman la 1211 [BORZ n. Cuman, after N. Iorga, citing Borzul as Cuman chief in 1211].

bongoi, *bozgoi*. They question the onomatopoeic status of *bărzăun* ‘humble-bee’, ‘hornet’, stating that the first thing that calls into question the conditioning link between the form and the meaning of the onomatopoeic word is onomatopoeic synonymy: the existence of numerous onomatopoeic synonyms, sometimes different or slightly different from each other from a formal point of view, shows that they can have the same meaning associated with several forms (Seche–Seche 1958: 185–186). This, of course, would not be possible if the sounds of the onomatopoeic word were strictly determined by its meaning.

Buzguroi appears to be linked to the forms *bozga*, *bazga*, which have long been used as proper names as well (Bazga, Bozga, Bozgă, Bozgan, Buzga, Buzgan, Buzgar, Buzgariu, Buzgaru, Buzgău, Buzgure, Buzgurescu, Bozga leading through metathesis to Bogza).¹² According to DEX, *bazga* covers the following meanings:

- Basga, Bazga, Bozgan, Băzgan – dating back to 1780 as family names; Băzguleștii as a toponym;
- Bazgă under the form of Bîzgan as a nickname meaning ‘bumpkin’, ‘redneck’ in the Oltenia region (cf. Constantinescu 1963);
- Bazgă (approximate meaning, deduced from context) 1. flame. 2 (fig.) the fire of hell;
- Bazgă under the form of *băzgă* as a nickname for Transylvanians.

Today, *Bazga* is the name of a village in the region inhabited by Csángós, near Bacău. Iorgu Iordan (1983: 77) emphasizes that Bozga as a proper name is derived from *bozgoi* through back formation, by eliminating the last syllable, which seems to be an augmenting suffix. The meaning of *bozgoi*, he states, is similar to *bărzăun*, defined by DEX as ‘humble-bee’. *Bazga* is further listed under the variant *băzgar*, with a long series of synonyms according to DEX (*bărzăun*, *gărgăun*, *băzgăun*, *băzgăun*, *băzălău*, *bondar*, etc.) All these forms mean a ‘large buzzing insect with a venomous needle, genus of large, shiny black, yellow-striped wasps (*Vespa crabro*)’ on the one hand or ‘humble-bee’ and ‘an extremely conceited person’ on the other.

Therefore, we can conclude that there is a semantic and etymological connection between *bazga* as a nickname of the people of Transylvania, *băzgan* as a nickname for ‘churl’, *bărzăun* as a ‘jobless and homeless person’,¹³ and *buzguroi* as a ‘mythological figure referring to a very scary person or monster’.

12 Bârlea (1909) lists the following proper names based on bozga: Bosga, Bozga, Bozgoiu, Bozgou, Bozgo, Bozgan (in a document dating from 1782 and in the journal *Neamul Romănesc*, 1909 (IV(106–107))); Iorga (1906: 287) quotes a private letter from Hunedoara from 1715 where Buzgure is listed as a proper name.

Bozga is also an old Hungarian family name (cf. <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Kempelen-kempelen-bela-magyar-nemes-csaladok-1/2-kotet-19FA/bozga-2E4E/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJib3pnYSJ9>).

Murádin (2014) lists the following Hungarian family names of Romanian origin: Bándár ~ Bondár (< Bonder), Bongyán (< Bondean Bozga (< Bozga).

13 <https://dexonline.ro/text/barzaun>.

In *Dicționarul limbii române* [Dictionary of Romanian language] (1910), we can find the following lexemes that are linked to our research:

- *bosorcoi* meaning ‘ghost’, synonym with *buzguroi*;
- *Bozga* (*Bozga* + *an*), *bosgan*, and *bosga* synonyms with *bărzăun* ‘humble-bee’;
- *Bozgonete* (*bozgoane*, variant of *boscoană*) ‘charms of all kinds’ + suffix;
- *Buzgure*, possibly a translation of the Hungarian *buzgó* ‘zealous’ + the suffix -ur;
- *Borzaș*, a translation of the Hungarian words ‘borz’, ‘borzas’ meaning ‘tousled’;
- *Burzău*, synonym with *bărzăun*, connected semantically to *borzoi* and *bărzoia* ‘to be puffed up’.¹⁴

In *Dicționarul limbii române* [Dictionary of Romanian language] (1913), we can find the following lexemes that are linked to our research:

– *Bâjbâi* ‘to produce the characteristic sound of bees when they fly, to buzz’ linked to *bozgoiu*, a verb that means ‘to utter (from the mouth) inarticulate or poorly articulated sounds, to mumble, to grumble’;

– *Bângoiu* synonym of *bongoiu*, *bânzar*, *bărzăun*, *bondar*, *bonzar*, *bânzoiu* (used in Moldova, Bucovina) and *bânzoiu*, *bonda* (used in ‘Ungaria’, i.e. the Hungary of those times, presently Romania’s Transylvanian region), meaning ‘humble-bee’ but also ‘hideous man’.¹⁵

– *bânzoi*, *bânzăi*, *bondar* ‘humble-bee’.

In Pușcariu–Rădulescu–Pogoneanu (1911), *bâzgăun* is listed as a synonym of *gărgăun* ‘hornet’ and as a fusion of *gărgăun* and *bărzăun* (or perhaps *bâzgoiu*, *bozgoiu*).

Micul dicționar academic edited by Ion Coteanu (2010) defines *bărzăun* (with the variants *barzaon*, *bărzăune*, *bărnăuz*, *bărdă*, *băndăon*, *bândaon*, *băndăoi*, *bândăon*, *bondar*, *bățan*, *bâzgan*, *bânzar*, *bonzar*, *bonzăroiu*, *bombar*, *bumbar*, *bundar*, *bunzar*, *bongar*, *bongoiu*, *bozgoiu*) as ‘a species of hymenopteran, with a thick, hairy body, living in small colonies, which honeycombs in the ground and produces a very characteristic sound with a cord from its respiratory organ’, but also as ‘man of nothing’, ‘vagabond’, ‘thug’, ‘scoundrel’, and ‘man without any occupation’. This 2010 dictionary lists a pejorative meaning of this lexeme, signalled much earlier by Iorgu Iordan, who states in his dictionary of Romanian family names (1983: 56) that the proper name *Bărdăune*, based on *Bărzăune*, carries the meaning ‘tramp’, ‘scoundrel’, ‘vagabond’.

Teaha Teofil (1959) in his *Glosar regional Oradea* [Regional Glossary Oradea Region] lists *bongău*, *bozgăriu*, *bozgoiu*, *bongoi*, but also the verbs *bongăie*, *a bongani*, *a bornoi*, *a bîzîi* meaning ‘buzzing’.

14 It might be connected with the Hungarian word *berzenkedik* ‘fidgeting, ruffling its feathers’.

15 în Ungaria... se zice bânzoiu unui om care are o căutătură inholbată și fioroasă, care vorbește arțagos, îndesat și [este] nesimpatic [in Hungary... they say *bânzoiu* to a man who has a lumpy and fierce look, who speaks stilted, stout and [is] antipathetic.] *Dicționarul limbii române* (1913: 488).

Buzguroi, which in our view is a form of *bozgor*, has the variants *bâzgar*, *bozgar*, *buzgor*, *buzgur*, *bâzgăroi*, *băzgăun*, *bărzăun*, *bozgoi*, *bozgon*, *bazga*, *bozga*, which are synonyms found in different sources, some of them being clearly allotted a Hungarian etymology, most often linking the form to etymons like ‘borz’ (Ro. *bursuc*, En. badger), ‘borzolni’ (Ro. *burzului*, En. dishevel). As nicknames for Transylvanians and/or Hungarians from Transylvania, these lexemes fit into the context of hetero-images Romanians have nurtured over the centuries about Hungarians (see Bogrea 1925): not very tall and rather well-built and ill-tempered, angry, haughty, but also withdrawn, isolated.

Cruceană, Ion (1961) seems to confirm our findings in his *Glosar regional – Regiunea Argeş* [Regional Glossary – Argeş Region], where he provides a semantic description for *bâzgan*, which echoes our hypothesis that *bâzgan*, *buzgan*, *buzguroi*, and all the other versions which precede *bozgor* carry the meaning ‘man from the mountain areas’, ‘man from the mountain forests’.¹⁶

Stati (2011) mentions in his *Dictionary* the forms *bozgoroi* meaning ‘phantom’ (Ro. *nălucă*), *borza* meaning ‘imaginary being’, ‘creature’, *borsocae* meaning ‘ghost’, and *bongăzoi* meaning ‘man bearing gifts’, which approaches his definition of *bongăzoi* to Cruceană’s definition of *bâzgan* or *buzguroi* – ‘man who brings goods’.

What is more, Stati’s entries and their semantic features suggest that there could be a link between *bozgoroi*, *borza*, *borsocae* (*bosorcaie* from Hungarian *boszorkány* ‘witch’, ‘sorceress’), and *bongăzoi*. A variant which carries the meanings ‘phantom’, ‘spirit’, ‘spectre’, ‘devil’, ‘monster’, ‘shadow’, and ‘mirage’ has been spotted in Şăineanu (1891: 430) as *băzdăganie*, which is listed by DEX under the form *băzdăganie* (from Old Slavic *bezdyhanĭnŭ*).

Taking into account the semantic and phonological issues that are involved in this series of synonyms, we assume that they all spring from a probably very old word which survived mainly in toponyms, anthroponyms, and in the names of mythological figures. Given the fact that the names were not given *ex nihilo* and each and every name had had a meaning by the time it was introduced in the language, we assume that the semantic aspects are difficult to determine not because we deal with semantic voids but rather because words undergo formal and semantic shifts which are not always attested in written sources.

We assume that the etymon of *buzguroi*, *bâzguroi*, *bâzgă*, *bazgă*, *bozgoi*, *bongoi*, which fostered the spread of *bozgor*, also used as *buzgor*, must have been a root, most probably *boz, *bos, *bas, or *baz,¹⁷ which fathered the emergence of words

16 *Bîzgan* = om de la munte, care vine la şes cu diverse bunuri pentru a le schimba pe cereale [*bîzgan* = man from the mountain, who comes to the plateau with various goods to exchange for grain].

17 This method is fruitful in Vasile Bogrea’s opinion as well, who writes in his *Etimologii. Articole mărunte / Etymologies. Short Articles* (1926: 332) that in order to find the etymons of Romanian words of probable Hungarian origin, it is very useful to start from reconstructed radicals,

like *bursuc* (from Hungarian *borz*), but also *bărzăun*, designating the name of an insect living in the woods.¹⁸

We have analysed the Hungarian words which are based on the roots *boz and *bos and which belong to the area of language usage that Hungarians and Romanians have shared over the centuries. What is striking is the high number of words that are based on this root and which (once subjected to a semantic feature analysis) display a common denominator of meaning [+ connected with the woods, forest].¹⁹

We can list a long series of very old words meaning ‘forest’ or ‘grove’ such as *bozót*, *bozont*, *borzont*, *bokor*, *baksa*, *bongor*, *bongoros*, *bungur*, *bunguros* (Kriza 1926, Sántha 2004²⁰), *boz*, *bozja*, *bozza*, *bodza*, *boza* (Czuczor–Fogarasi 1862, Zolnai 1906),²¹ *bozja* (Németh 1990: 160), and *buzja* (Kiss 2012). It is obvious that these Hungarian common nouns have turned into proper nouns as well,²² especially toponyms, and a lot of Romanian toponyms outside or at the border of the Carpathians do have a Hungarian etymon (e.g. *Băile Buziaș Buzjásfürdő*, meaning ‘place where Sambucus trees grow’; cf. Kiss 2012: 52).

Bozga is part of the Hungarian word-stock, too, as a toponym but also a common noun meaning ‘dry twigs’, ‘sedge’, ‘branch’, ‘wood’. Szinnyeï (1893) identifies *bozga* as a Hungarian word attested in 1839 meaning ‘dry twig’, ‘heather’. *Bozlán* means ‘branch with leaves broken off and dried on the ground’ (Tinta könyvkiadó 2012), while *bozont* carries the archaic meaning of ‘thick forest’, ‘scrub’.²³

Considering what Ștef (2021: 58)²⁴ has added to the semantic associations of one of the synonyms of *bărzăun*, i.e. *bonzar*, also used as *bunzar*, namely that it is used as a nickname for the people living in Bârsana and Sălișteea de Sus,²⁵ we have

otherwise in the spirit of the Hungarian language.

- 18 Jerney (1851) mentions the village name Bazga in Moldova, stating that the name does not mean anything at the time he writes. Nevertheless, he mentions that the word itself could be found in the Cumani culture, quoting a letter dated 1423 and signed by Sigismund, the monarch of Hungary, in which he makes reference to a Cumani site, namely the place or lodging of Buzgan.
- 19 The root *boz in the sense of wood, mountainous and wooden area is testified by toponyms like Bozânta Mare [Bozinta Mare, Bozânta-Mare] Nagybozinta, Óbozinta, Újbozonta, Oláhbozinta, Oláhbozonta; Bozytha, Bozincha, Buzytha, Bozontha, Bozonta, Bosonta, Bozinta Bóz, Bózfalva, Bózgyalakuta, Bodzafalva, Bozeni, Székelybós, Bós, Bozeș, Bózes, Bozos; Bosendorf, Bogesch, Boziaș Borzás, Bozyas, Magyarborzás, Borzás, Buzias, Buzău, Bodzavásár – many of them being situated in areas which once belonged to the *indago*, *gyepű* regions. Cf. arcanum.com/en/online-kiadvanyok/ErdelyHelysegnevTar-erdely-bansag-es-partium-tortenet-es-kozigazgatasi-helysegnevtara-1/telepulesek-1C9/b-29A/boz-486/.
- 20 <https://szekelymagyar.transindex.ro/>.
- 21 <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-magyar-nyelv-szotara-czuczorfogarasi-55BEC/b-57DFC/boz-595A2/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJib3oifQ>.
- 22 https://szabo.adatbank.ro/b.php?x_=1.
- 23 <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-magyar-nyelv-ertelmezo-szotara-1BE8B/b-1EF8E/bozont-219D7/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJCb3pvbnQifQ>.
- 24 In a dictionary which lists the vocabulary items of people from the Maramureș region.
- 25 *Bonzari*, *poreclă pentru locuitorii din Bârsana* [nickname for the inhabitants of Bârsana].

attempted to find the connections between *bonzar* (we assume to be a synonym of *bozgor*) and *bârsan*, inhabitant of the Bârsa region / *Țara Bârsei*. What connects *bărzăun*, *bonzar*, *bunzar* to *bârsa*, *borza*, *barca(ság)*? What can explain this link between a word used in Maramureș (northern Romania) and the central region of the country? What affective meanings can be associated with *bărzăun*, and what semantic atoms have survived in the language use of the northern people who are not in direct geographical contact with or in the proximity of the *Bârsans*, as Maramureș does not adjoin the Bârsa region? What connects *borz(a)* to *bârs(a)* and to *boz(ga)*, *bunzar*, *bonzar*, or *bărzăun*?

The explanation might lie in the old history of the two regions, the fact that they were equally part of the *indago* region right after the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin. Let us take a look at the etymology of *borza*, also used as *bodza*, as the early Hungarian name of present-day *Țara Bârsei* was *Borzaföld / Land of Borza*. Gombocz (1908: 20) enumerates a long list of forms for *bodza*: *boz*, *boza*, *hossa*, *borza*, *barza*, *bozda*, *bojza*, *horzag*, *borzang*, *borzing*, *borsuk*, and *borzfa*, each form being a word of old Turkic origin, as he states, referring not only to *Sambucus* but also to *Taxus baccata*,²⁶ a species of evergreens much more common in *Barcaság / Țara Bârsei* in the times of the Hungarians' movement to Pannonia than today. Likewise, Vörös (2008) makes a long list including the versions *bodza*, *buzfa*, *bozzanak*, *Borzag*, *Borzang*, *botcza*, *barza*, *bojza*, *borzeg*, *borzing*, *bazza*, *bocca*, *bójza*, *bojzik*, *bojzing*, *borzáng*, *borzég*, *burzá*, *baddza*, *bojza*, *bozza*, *borzék*, *bozia*, *bozÿa*, *bossÿa*, *borzing*, *barzafa*, *bocfa*, *bodzfa*, *bódzfa*, *bocfa*, *bóczfa*, *bócfa*, *bójzafa*, *borzafa*, *boszfa*, *bozafa*, *bozdafa*, *bozzafa*, etc. Therefore, we consider that one of the early versions of the lexeme *bodza* inspired the name of the river and region called *Barcaság* in Hungarian, *Țara Bârsei* in Romanian.

What is more, *bodza* contributed to another toponym in Romania, the region and town of Buzău, in Hungarian *Bodza(vásár)*, and the names of smaller villages, such as *Bodzaforduló (Întorsura Buzăului)*, *Bodzavám (Vama Buzăului)*, *Szitabodza (Sita Buzăului)*. The name of the river which gave its name to the town, *Buzău*, *Bodza*, is considered to be of Greek origin by Romanians but of Turkic origin by Hungarians. The alternative forms *bodza*, *borza* have both been attested: *Bodzamező*, *Magyarborzás* (Henkey, 2002). The forms *boz*, *boza* were borrowed by Romanians as well, as shown by Constantin Giurăscu (1942), who makes a presentation of a map dated 1700 made by Constantin Cantacuzino, which displays the mountains called *Montes Bozei (Munții Buzăului)*.

There is a physical, geographical connection between the neighbouring regions *Țara Bârsei* and Buzău, namely that the River Buzău (which gave its name to the town, to many villages, and the county itself) originates in *Țara Bârsei*, being the only river stream which flows out of the region, crossing the Carpathians towards

26 *Tiszafa* in Hungarian, also called *boklyó*, *bacca* (cf. *Erdészeti Lapok* 1889. (28(4)). *Bacca* and *Bachca* are entries in *Codex Cumanicus*, with the meaning garden.

Moldova. The names of both may stem from a common root, *bodza*, which we are trying to analyse against the background of finding the etymology of *bozgor*. Marienescu (1909: 6) highlights that the old Romanian names of the River (and region) *Buzău* were *Bozau*, *Bosau*, and the names of the region *Bârsa* was *Borza*, *Burza*, *Boza*, *Bosa*.

Hungarian language displays a large number of words of Turkic origin. Ármin Vámbéry, one of the leading Turkologists, considers that *bozót*, *bozontos* are also of Turkic origin in Hungarian (1914: 142). Péter Juhász in his *Erdély vízneveinek rétegei és népeinek betelepülése* [The Layers of the Hydronyms of Transylvania and the Settlement of Its Peoples] states that the early name of *Barcaság*, i.e. *Borzaföld*, is based on the name of a river, *Bursa* (cf. the forms *borza* in Gombocz 1908 and *burza* in Vörös 2008), which is of Turkic origin (Juhász 2020: 32). The first certified attestation of the word is from 1211,²⁷ when the variant *Bursa* is used, which is, according to Zsolt Székely (2011), of Kipçhak (i.e. Turkic) origin, and not a Slavic one.²⁸

Kiss (2006: 3–19) shows that the first traces of Hungarian settlers in *Barcaság* date back to the 11th century, and the name *Bursa* (first attested in 1211) is considered to be of old Turkic origin by many (Rásonyi 1979: 147, László & Rásonyi 2004: 276, Szentpétery 1923: 84, Kniezsa 1943: 32), who discard the Slavic origin due to phonetic reasons. Țara Bârsei neighbours Buzău County and incorporates a region called in Hungarian *Erdővidék* ‘Land of Forests’. Linguistically, these regions share the fact that many of their toponyms are related to ‘forest’ or ‘border forest’ (Hu. *határerdő*, *gyepűerdő*). The Hungarian name *Barcaság* is based on *borza*, *burza* turned *barca* and the suffix *-ság* (the original meaning of *-ság/-ség* is ‘hill, mound’, which leads through extension of meaning to ‘mass of’, ‘bunch of’ (cf. Kiss–Gerstner–Hegedűs 2013)). This would suggest that *Barcaság* as a name could have meant *gyepűerdő*, *határerdő*, i.e. ‘woodland’, ‘forest area on the edge of a border’, or ‘mountain/hill covered with border forest’. Therefore, the lexeme, *borza*, *burza* (which led to Hu. *Barca-*, Ro. *Bârsa*) might have meant not only ‘Sambucus-covered areas’ but also ‘forest-covered mountainous border areas’.

The region called today *Țara Bârsei* by Romanians and *Barcaság* (*Borzaföld*) by Hungarians was part of the *indago* / *gyepű* in Hungarian, which designated a strip of land, of natural landmarks suitable for defining the border, constituted

27 Cf. Degen (1915) the name *Barcaság* had 11 variants in the Middle Ages: 1211 – terra Borza; 1216 – terra quae Borza nuncupatur; 1218 – terra de Burza; 1222 – Bursa; 1222 – Terra Burza (in the charter in which Endre II reintroduced the Barony to the Teutonic Knights); 1223 – terra, quae dicitur Boza; 1223 – terra Boze; (1224 – with the Pope, thus also 1225, 1226); 1231 – Terra Börze (in papal charter); 1232 – Terra Burze (King Béla’s diploma); 1373 – Borza; 1385 – Burcya; 1349 – Terra Barza; 1484 – Terra et distrietus Barcza; 1240–1385 – the Latin name for the region is *Burcia*.

28 https://www.academia.edu/1103723/Gondolatok_a_sz%C3%A9kely_k%C3%A9rd%C3%A9s_marg%C3%B3j%C3%A1ra.

by impassable forests, mountains, and swamps. Țara Bârsei was part of this indago strip that Hungarians marched through during the conquest. At the turn of the millennium, around the Arpadian conquest, Țara Bârsei was therefore a *gyepű* land, an *indago*, a border which protected the newly occupied country. Linguistically, the referent *indago* or *gyepű* was tightly linked to the semantic components ‘mountainous area’, ‘forested area’, ‘isolated area’, ‘difficult to pass’. Attila Szabó T’s *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár IV* provides linguistic chunks which prove that *gyepű* has always been used with the sense of ‘border’, while *bangó* and a lot of words have been built upon the root *bo-*, *bu-*, *ba-* with the meaning of ‘wood’.²⁹ The term *gyepű* itself carries the following meanings (Czirbusz 1919: 13): ‘border forests’ (Hu. *határerdő*), river borders (*vlaga*), and ‘ban’ led borders (*Banat* in Romanian, *Bánság* in Hungarian).

Bărbulescu (1936: 13) highlights that in a Romanian text written in Maramureș in 1342, the male name *Borzan* represents, in fact, *Bârsan*, a piece of information which sustains our hypothesis regarding the perfect synonymy between the lexeme *borza* (or *bodza*, *borza*, *burza*, *borzang*, and all the other forms that have been recorded in Hungarian) and *bârsa*, the Romanian name for *Barcaság*.

The semantic connection between the words we are analysing and the idea of ‘forest’, ‘border forest’ is confirmed by some entries in Stati (2011): *apărătură* meaning ‘protection’, ‘border’ and *pădure* ‘woods’ are perfect synonyms, designating therefore ‘forest’. The lexeme *bârsan* is defined in Stati (2011) as *cel care păzește hotarul* ‘the one who is the guardian of borders’. The associative meaning of ‘monster’, ‘scary person’ also emerges in *bârsă*, defined as *ființă închipuită* ‘imaginary being’, ‘unearthly creature’.

It is still to be analysed whether there is a connection with the Hungarian word *börzsöny*, which means ‘a mountainous area’ (attested in the 13th century as Bersen), with *bérc*, which means ‘peak’ or ‘mountain’ and with *bercel*, which means ‘shrubby, wooden area’ (Kristó–Makk–Szegfű 1973), or with *borda*, an old, dialectal word for ‘mountain’, ‘height’.³⁰ In Czuczor–Fogarasi (1862: 777) we find

29 It would be interesting to analyse the way in which the words *gyepű/indago* and *gyepűelve* / the region beyond the *indago* have penetrated and fostered word creation into Romanian, as did *Erdély* through its early forms *Erdewelwe*, *Erdöelve* or *Erdeel*, *Erdöel*, as quoted by Pascu (s. a.: 480). *Prisaca* is the Romanian name for *indago*, *gyepű* (see Drăganu 1938: *priseci* (ung. *gyepű*, lat. *indagines*, *ardău păzitor de pădure*, *nu poate fi derivat în mod in excepționabil decât, direct ori indirect (prin limba maternă) din ung. ardó < erdő < erdő-ovó „custos silvarum”, slujbaș care făcea parte din sistemul de întărituri, așa numitele gyepű (rom. priseei, lat. indagines) făcute la hotare {vég} de câtră regii arpadieni ai Ungariei ‘priseci’ (ung. gyepű, Lat. indagines, forest keeper; it can only be derived, directly or indirectly (through the mother tongue), from the Hungarian *ardó < erdő < erdő-ovó “custos silvarum”, a servant who was part of the system of fortifications, the so-called gyepű (Rom. priseci, Lat. indagines) made on the borders {vég} by the Arpadian kings of Hungary*). We believe that *prisaca*, the Romanian word for ‘border forest’, comes from the German lexeme *Preuswald* ‘border forest’, most probably after 1211, when the Hungarian king brought the Teutonic Knights into Țara Bârsei.*

30 <https://www.c3.hu/~magyarnyelv/01-3/kissl.htm>.

boz- as a root from which the words *bozót*, *bozótos*, *bozont*, *bozontos*, *boslan* came and which all mean ‘wood’. August Scriban (1923) in his *Lista ungurizmelor limbii românești / List of Romanian Words of Hungarian Origin* also mentions *berc*, *bârc* meaning *pădure deasă* ‘dense forest’, springing from Hungarian *berek* ‘grove’. The semantic contamination between ‘mountain’ and ‘forest’, which seems to emerge from these examples, is present in the Romanian language as well, as Șăineanu (1887: 161–162) demonstrates how *codru*, *pădure* ‘forest’ used to mean in the Middle Ages *munte* ‘mountain’, whereas *baltă* ‘swampy area’ and ‘wetland’ used to mean *pădure* ‘forest’.

Therefore, we can conclude that *bozgor* is part of a series of synonyms which display several meanings such as ‘monster or creature/people of the woods’, ‘Transylvanian’, ‘person from Bârsa/Barcaság’, ‘badger, i.e. animal of the woods’, ‘humble/bee, i.e. insect which lives only in the woods’, ‘man who comes down the mountain’, ‘scoundrel, unworthy person’, ‘homeless’. The series contains lexemes which refer to geographical names such as Țara Bârsei and Buzău, which originate in the Hungarian *bodza*, presently used solely with the meaning ‘elder’.

All in all, these words related to *bozgor* share the semantic feature of ‘connected with the forest’ or ‘connected with the mountains covered by forests’. All these words have been allotted a Hungarian origin, which we thus assume is the lexeme *bodza*, also known as *borza*, *burza* (cf. Kelemen 1942: 293–294). *Bodza/borza* have been considered of Turkic origin – creatures living in the forests have always been perceived as scary –, but also of Slavic origin, a debate which has not been concluded yet. The data do not clearly evince whether the Hungarian word originally had a *-u* or an *-o* sound (Bába 2008). Kniezsa (1935) finds that *bodza* functioned in the old Hungarian language as a kind of *nomen collectivum*, being a perfect synonym of *bozót* in the sense of ‘forest’.

The root of *bodza* used to be a Hungarian anthroponym in very old texts, as we find in Jakubovich and Pais in their 1929 *Ó-magyar olvasókönyv* [Old Hungarian Texts] (*Boza* attested in 1237, *Buze* attested in 1418, most often featuring in contexts related to forests).³¹

Based on the semantics of the words we have analysed so far (*buzguroi*, *bazga*, *bozga*, *bărzăun*, *bonzar*, *bunzar*, *bongoi*, *bozgoi*, *boza*, *bodza*, *burza*, *burza*, *Bârsa*, *Barcaság*, *Buzău*, etc.) and given the fact that they all seem to be connected with the semantic feature ‘forest’ or forested mountain’ and the lexeme *bodza* and the roots *boz-*, *baz-*, *buz-*, we hypothesise that the solutions for the probable etymology of *bodza*, which thus led to the creation of *bozgor* (with all its previously mentioned variants), might be one of the following:

1. A Turkic root which might have led to the emergence of the Romanian *bazga*, *bâzga*, *buzgure*, *buzguroi*, *bozgor*, and all the other versions, probably

31 Such as “In silva Zeles [...], villa Bozais [Boza]” (Jakubovich & Pais 1929).

through old Hungarian mediation.³² This root might be the Proto-Turkic *bük having the following meanings: ‘wood’, ‘forest’, ‘hill’, ‘meadow’, ‘valley between mountains’, which gave later in Ottoman Turkish: bük ‘thicket at the waterside’ or Russian: 1. лес, 2. холм, 3. луг, 4. долина, между rop / 1. forest, 2. hill, 3. meadow, 4. valley between mountains;³³

2. A Slavic word for tree. It could be ‘pine tree’, as, according to Bényei (2012: 82), the lexeme *bor* is a dialectal term for pine in Russian, perhaps Proto-Slavic *боръ. бор (though Hungarian toponyms of Slavic origin can be found mainly in the northern and southern parts of the Carpathian Basin, not necessarily in the regions we have subjected to analysis to spot the etymon of *bozgor*). An argument could be that in Hungarian there are several words for a species of pine called Juniperus: *borsika*, *bors*, *borsfa*, *borsfenyő*, and *boróka*, all of Slavic origin, based on bor(s)-. What is more, in Seklerland, the pine tree is also called *bojt* and the pine forest *bojtos*.³⁴ Also, there is a phonetic similarity between *boz-*, *buz-* (Hu. *bodza*, *borza*, *burza*, *bursa* and Ro. *bozga*, *bozgor*, *bâzga*, *buzguroi*) and the archaic versions of the Hungarian *lucfenyő* ‘spruce’, namely *búsfenyő*, *bucsfenyő* (cf. Vörös 2008). It could also be a Slavic word which equally meant Sambucus or elder (Hu. *bodza*) and beech (Hu. *bükk*) in the past, as these species could be found together with pine trees in the *indago* regions of Țara Bârsei.

Cooper (2010) has shown that the early Slavs called *beech* (Fagus) and *elder* (Sambucus) with the same word *baz-* or *buz-*, as Indo-European speakers used to treat the two genera (Fagus and Sambucus) as referents of a single term.³⁵

32 The solutions have been selected from a database which collects roots of words of Turkic etymology. <https://starlingdb.org/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=config&morpho=0&basename=%5Cdata%5Calt%5Cturcet&first=341>.

33 Though other roots might also be considered: Proto-Turkic *bAř meaning: ‘stranger, foreign’, Proto-Turkic *bAřik (read bazk, bazg) meaning: 1. ‘thick, stout’; 2. ‘a stubby man’; Proto-Turkic *bAřik meaning ‘unclear silhouette’, *boř meaning ‘free, empty’, Proto-Turkic *bögür meaning ‘mountain slope’.

34 <https://szekelymagyar.transindex.ro/?betu=j>.

35 Cooper (2010) states, “The elder is Sambucus, in Russian *buzina* or *sambuk*, especially the common elder *S. nigra*, *buzina černaja*. *Sambuk* is a bookish borrowing from Latin *sambucus* with the same sense (Vasmer 1976–80: s.v. *sambuk*), while *buzina*, or in dialect *buz(a)*, *boz* (see Dal’ 1912–1914: s.v. *buzina*), has cognates in other Slavonic languages, including Ukrainian *boz* (genitive *bozu*, *bzu*), *buzyna*, Bulgarian бѣз, Serbo-Croat *baz*, *baz(d)a*, *zova* (< *bzova*), Slovene *bez*, *bezeg*, Czech *bez* (genitive *bezu*, *bza*, *bzu*), *bezinka*, Slovak *baza*, *bazina*, Polish *bez* (genitive *bzu*), Lower Sorbian *bez*, *baz*, and Upper Sorbian *bóz* ‘lilac’. The word is considered to be related to Latin *fāgus* ‘beech’, Greek *fēgós*, Doric Greek *fāgós* ‘oak’, Old Icelandic *bók*, Old High German *buohha* ‘beech’, Gothic *bōka* ‘letter’, which are traced, in view of Kurdish *bûz* ‘elm’, Icelandic *beyki* ‘beech forest’, *beykir* ‘cooper’, back to a stem with a diphthong, Indo-European *bhāug- : *bheug- : *bhāg- : *bhug-; cf. also Lithuanian *bukas* ‘elder’, borrowed from Belarusian *buk* ‘beech’ (see Vasmer 1976–80, Černyx 1994: s.v. *buzina*). The Common Slavonic was *bъzъ < *bъzo. In Russian, one would expect b(o)zina (cf. dialectal *boz* alongside

According to Béneyi (2012: 62), the toponym *Büked* is based on the common names *boz*, *boza*, or *bozda*, which proves the polisemy of *bodza* in Hungarian as well, meaning *beech tree* but also *elder tree* (or, as we have seen in Kniezsa (1935), *bodza* carries the meaning ‘forest’).³⁶

We believe that the primary meaning of the word built upon the Turkic root **bük*³⁷ could have been that of ‘forest’ (especially taking into account the semantics of the name of Transylvania in all languages, i.e. land beyond the forest), through extension of meaning ‘people of the forests / forested mountains’. On the other hand, the fact that many tree names have changed the object that they signify over time might explain why a Hungarian lexeme like *bodza* would help the creation of toponyms in the *indago* region. Everyone believes that these names mean *elder*, but in fact they might as well signify ‘beech’ or ‘forest’, ‘border forest’. We will focus on this issue in a forthcoming study.

Furthermore, words like *bozga*, *bozgoi*, *bongoi*, *bâzgar*, *buzguroi*, and *bozgor* (etymologically linked to Hu. *borza*, *bodza*, *burza*, *bozga*, *borzang*, *bozza*, *boza*, *buz*, *buzya*, etc.) may have carried first the cognitive meaning ‘Transylvanian’, ‘Hungarian’, ‘people of the border forests’, ‘people of the (beech/pine) forests in the Bârsa region or *indago* regions (including Bârsa and Buzău)’, and later they developed associative meanings like the pejorative meaning the ethnic slur *bozgor* carries today.

All these considerations make us reinterpret the meaning which is allotted to *bazga* in its very first known attestation, namely in Gaster’s 1884 *Colinde, cântece populare și cântece de stea inedite* [Carols, Folk Songs and Original Christmas Songs]. *Bazga* is spotted in a text as *Bazga di foc să va aprinde* ‘Bazga will burst into flames’. DEX provides an approximate meaning, inferred from the context, when saying that it means: 1. Flame. 2 (fig.) The fire of hell.³⁸ Taking into account the common denominator of meaning that connects all the names associated with *bazga* [+ related to the forest], we would say that in this folk song and elsewhere the meaning of *bazga* is ‘wood’, ‘tree’, ‘forest’, ‘bush’, ‘shrub’, ‘grove’.

This also reinforces the idea that *bazga*, *bozga*, *bâzgar*, *buzguroi*, *bozgoroi* as versions of *bozgor* most probably had a simple cognitive meaning related to

buz). The occurrence of elder only in the south of Russia and the Caucasus makes one think of an early borrowing into Common Slavonic from an Iranian source.”

36 The early forms of ‘beech’ in Hungarian were *buk*, later *bük*, *bükk*, but the toponyms it has created suggest a wider variation (for instance, *Bokon*, *Bukon*, *Biken* and later *Bokon* for the mountains called *Bakony*). <http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/sc/sc16/101-137.pdf>.

37 The root is listed in Khabibullina, Z.; Rakhimova, E.; Tulumbayev, V. & Yagafarova, G. (2020) as follows: “the word ‘*bük*’ denoting ‘forest, grove’ is recorded in the Old Turkic Dictionary in the meaning of the ‘forest’: *Ol bük örtätti* ‘he ordered to set the forest on fire’” (Nadelyaev 1969, p.: 131, i.e. Nadelyaev, V. M. 1969). *Drevnetyurkskij slovar* [Old Turkic dictionary]. L.: Nauka). The root might also explain Hungarian words like *bükk* ‘beech’, or toponyms like *Bükszád*, *Bük*, *Bükkösd*, *Bukovinka* > *Beregbükkös*, *Bukovje* > *Nemes-bükkösd*.

38 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie-md2/bazga>.

‘people of the border forest / forested mountain’, ‘people living in the border forests of the *indago*’. It is known that in Romanian mythology, the creatures living in the forests have always been perceived as scary (see *Muma Pădurii, Fata Pădurii, Vâlva Pădurii, Ielele*), therefore the meanings of ‘monster’, ‘ugly person’, and ‘frightful person’ are perfectly plausible associative meanings which might have emerged later.

The meaning of ‘homeless’ or ‘person without a place’ is also present and explicable, especially if taking into account the representations steady people of the valleys might have had about the guardians of the *indago*, who were on the move or who perhaps went down every now and then to exchange goods. Affective meanings always depend on the representations people have about the Other, the Foreigner, the Unknown, the Unfamiliar.

Table 3. *Synopsis of some early forms and synonyms of bozgor*

Sources	Forms, variants, synonyms	Meanings
DEX	<i>Buzguroi</i> synonyms: <i>gugurói, borz, boarza</i> , and <i>gogoriță</i> , meaning ‘a monster that scares children’; other synonyms: <i>bâzgán, bâzgar, bâzgor, bâzgorie, bâzguroi</i> , meaning ‘the name of a monster’	1. regional term for ‘big rat’ and 2. figurative meaning: ‘a person who wakes up early’
Dicționarul limbii române [Dictionary of Romanian Language] (1910)	<i>Buzguroi</i> , synonym with <i>bosorcoi, Bozga, bosgan, and bosga</i> , synonym with <i>bărzăun, burzău</i>	‘ghost’ ‘humble-bee’ ‘to be puffed up’
Pușcariu–Rădulescu-Pogoneanu (1911)	<i>Bâzgăun</i> with the forms <i>gărgăun, bărzăun, bâzgoiu, bozgoiu</i>	‘hornet’
Dicționarul limbii române [Dictionary of Romanian Language] (1913)	<i>Bângoiu</i> synonym of <i>bongoiu, bânzar, bărzăun, bondar, bonzar, bânzoiu</i> (used in Moldova, Bucovina) and <i>bânzoiu, bondar</i> (used in Transylvania)	‘humble-bee’ ‘hideous man’
Scriban (1921)	<i>buzguroi</i>	‘a monster to scare children’, Hungarian origin

Sources	Forms, variants, synonyms	Meanings
Scriban (1923)	<i>buzguroi</i>	dialectal term specific to Moldova and meaning 'fairy-tale monster', from the Hungarian <i>borzongatni</i> 'to frighten'
Scriban (1939)	<i>Buzguroi</i>	alternative version of <i>borz</i> , <i>boarză</i> , an adjective of Hungarian origin (<i>borz</i> , <i>bursuc</i> 'badger', but also <i>borzogatni</i> / <i>a înfiora</i> meaning 'frightful (monster)', 'shaggy', 'very ugly (person)' and 'gadfly')
Seche–Seche (1958, 2002)	<i>Buzguroi</i> synonyms: <i>bâzgar</i> , <i>bărzăun</i> , <i>bândar</i> , <i>bonzar</i> , <i>bânzar</i> , <i>bongar</i> , <i>bongoi bozgoi</i>	'humble-bee'
Constantinescu (1963), Bârlea (1909), Iorga (1906), Murádin (2014), Iordan (1983), DEX	<i>Bazga</i> , <i>bozga</i> , <i>bâzgar</i> , synonyms of <i>bâzgan</i> , <i>bozgoi</i> , <i>bărzăun</i> Proper names: <i>Bazga</i> , <i>Bozga</i> , <i>Bozgă</i> , <i>Bozgan</i> , <i>Buzga</i> , <i>Buzgan</i> , <i>Buzgar</i> , <i>Buzgariu</i> , <i>Buzgaru</i> , <i>Buzgău</i> , <i>Buzgure</i> , <i>Buzgurescu</i> , <i>Bozga</i> , <i>Bogza</i>	'humble-bee' 'an extremely conceited person' nickname for Transylvanians, nickname meaning 'bumpkin', 'redneck' 'jobless and homeless person'
Teaha (1959)	<i>bongău</i> , <i>bozgăriu</i> , <i>bozgoiu</i> , <i>bongoi</i> , but also the verbs <i>bongăie</i> , <i>a bongani</i> , <i>a bornoi</i> , <i>a bîzii</i>	'buzzing'
Cruceană (1961)	<i>Bâzgan</i> , <i>buzgan</i> , <i>buzguroi</i>	'man from the mountain areas', 'man from the mountain forests' 'man who brings goods'
Coteanu (2010)	<i>Bărzăun</i> <i>barzaon</i> , <i>bârzăune</i> , <i>bărnăuz</i> , <i>bârdă</i> , <i>băndăon</i> , <i>bândaon</i> , <i>bândăoi</i> , <i>bândăon</i> , <i>bondar</i> , <i>bâțan</i> , <i>bâzgan</i> , <i>bânzar</i> , <i>bonzar</i> , <i>bonzăroiu</i> , <i>bombar</i> , <i>bumbar</i> , <i>bundar</i> , <i>bunzar</i> , <i>bongar</i> , <i>bongoiu</i> , <i>bozgoiu</i>	'humble-bee' 'man of nothing', 'vagabond', 'thug', 'scoundrel', and 'man without any occupation' (see also Iordan 1983)

Sources	Forms, variants, synonyms	Meanings
Stati (2011)	<i>Bozgoroi</i> <i>Borza</i> <i>bongăzoi</i>	‘phantom’ ‘imaginary being’, ‘creature’ ‘man bearing gifts’
Ștef (2021)	<i>bărzăun, bonzar, bunzar</i>	nickname for the people living in Bârsana and Sălișteea de Sus

5. Conclusions

The lexeme *bozgor* was attested in this form in 1934 (for instance, in the newspaper *Új Kelet*, as a proper name, but see also the other occurrences), and then a gap followed. It was in use in oral communication in the 1970s–1980s as a pejorative exonym used by Romanians to refer to Hungarians, and it was widely used in the 1990s in similar contexts and situations. However, under this form, it was listed in none of the dictionaries before the 2000s, when it was listed in Volceanov (2007). Parekh, B. (2006) highlights that there are three main characteristics of hate speech: a constant, almost obsessive reference to a certain individual or a community, with the obvious purpose of defamation; the allotment of a set of negative character or behavioral traits, viewed with disgust by other members of society; exclusion of the targeted individual or community.

Bozgor as a dysphemic exonym is a symptom of such disparaging stereotypes in the Romanians’ collective unconscious, but both Romanians and Hungarians should acknowledge that such terms belong to typical instances of face attack acts.

In this study, we have attempted to track the origins and semantics of this highly debated and debatable ethnic slur, and we have reached the conclusion that, although it is very difficult to find it in dictionaries, variants of *bozgor* have been listed in the 19th- and 20th-century dictionaries and scientific or non-scientific writings. Earlier versions of *bozgor* include *bâzgor, buzgor, buzguroi bărzăun, borză, bârsan, bâzgan*, etc. No matter the associative meanings they carry, these words all share a common denominator of meaning, ‘forest’ or ‘being, creature living in the forest’ (the humming bees and badgers also live only in forests, to mention some of the cognitive meanings we have analysed).

Through extension of meaning, this primary meaning has extended quite far to refer to animal names, monsters, mean people, etc. Another common feature shared by many of these versions is that of ‘nickname given to Transylvanians’, but the pejorative meaning ‘scoundrel’ or ‘homeless’ can also be spotted. Therefore, we believe that primarily *bozgor* must have designated ‘Hungarian from Transylvania’, ‘people of Transylvania’, (‘land beyond the forest’),

‘Hungarians’, ‘mountaineers’, or ‘people of the border forests’, but the insulting meanings ‘monster’, ‘ghost’, ‘creature/person that should be avoided’, or even ‘person without a homeland’ have also come to the fore.

Ethnic slurs are linguistic tools of discrimination, stigmatization, and prejudicial thinking, and *bozgor* is not an exception. Language is not immutable; no matter how long it takes for a word to transform, changes still occur. The shift from *bazga*, *bozga*, *buzguroi* to *bozgor* is a perfect example of formal and semantic mutability (not to mention that the phonetic shifts *ă/â-u-o* are attested by Haşdeu (1880) as usual phonetic phenomena in Moldova).

We do not agree with Eгры (2011: 367), who says that there is no evidence for *bozgor* in the 19th century and its origin can be attributed only to the twentieth century. *Bozgor* spread widely in the second half of the 20th century, restricting or narrowing its meaning only to ‘abominable Hungarian’, but early and slightly different versions of *bozgor* can be found much earlier (aside from connected family names and toponyms). Ghibănescu (1892) records the form *bozgorodenie*, but his explanation is faulty (*născătoare de Dumnezeu* ‘mother of God’), as the lexeme obviously contains the morpheme *vdenie* of Slavic origin, meaning ‘sight of’, ‘vision of’. If we accept the meaning ‘monster’, ‘creature’, ‘spectre’, ‘ghost’ for *bozgor*, then *bozgorodenie* might stand for ‘see a ghost’, ‘see someone frightening’ or even ‘necromancy’. This interpretation might be sustained by what Loşonţi (2007: 34) shows, namely that *boroscodenie* meaning ‘indecent attitude’, ‘bad speech’ is a variant (resulting by metathesis) of *boscorodenie* meaning ‘swearing’ ‘cursing’ ‘conjuration’, ‘magic spell’, ‘incantation’.³⁹

Our hypothesis is that we deal with a series of words which stem from the Hungarian *bodza* in its archaic forms, carrying, through metonymic extension, the meaning ‘forest’ or ‘mountain covered with forest’. Semantic contamination between ‘forest’ and ‘mountain’, ‘forest’ and ‘names of trees’ was also widespread in the Middle Ages. Complex lexical and semantic processes have shaped the form and meaning of *bozgor*. Despite all the theories which state that the meaning of *bozgor* is too opaque, the nuances of ‘homeless’, ‘stateless’, ‘unknown’, ‘other’, ‘frightening’, and ‘foreigner’ are present, underlying the denigrative, belittling, and offensive capacities of the word. *Bozgor* is an ethnic slur, or ethnophaulism (Mullen-Leader 2005), which is used to refer to outgroups in hate speech, and therefore its usage is unrecommended. However, further research in the linguistic aspects of this lexeme is more than welcome to correct or to detail and nuance our findings.

39 In this case, we deal with the contamination with *bosorcă*, *bosorcoi* from Hu *boszorkány*, a word of Proto-Turkic origin; cf. <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-etimologiai-szotar-F14D3/b-F1794/boszorkany-F1983/>.

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Intercultural Communication in Tourism Enterprises of Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. The paper analyses intercultural communication problems in tourism enterprises of Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden. It gives an overview of intercultural theories and their application to the characteristics of employees in three countries. The methodology includes both primary and secondary types of research: analysis of scientific literature and qualitative research. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted in three countries. The results show cultural peculiarities typical to each country and provide possible solutions to intercultural problems. The research aims to examine intercultural communication problems in tourism and hospitality enterprises and to identify types of strategies and actions required to develop intercultural communicative competence and to solve intercultural communication problems. The article provides company profiles, describes intercultural difficulties encountered and the designed employee-assessment questionnaire. The research findings may be of interest to tourism industry representatives and higher education institution stakeholders, including academic personnel and students who study intercultural communication as an important discipline in the tourism faculty.

Keywords: intercultural communication, intercultural communicative competence, cultural dimensions, tourism and hospitality enterprises, COVID-19 pandemic

1. Introduction

Businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry are inherently connected with intercultural communication through the work of employees who may have different cultural backgrounds and may experience “intercultural encounters” (Houman & Flammia 2011, Tutunea 2021) with foreign customers or clients visiting a foreign country for different purposes and periods of time, including

Erasmus and full-time international students, work commuters, tourists, immigrants, expatriates, seasonal guests, and others. As Koc, for example, claims, tourism and hospitality businesses may be called “people businesses” because representatives of diverse cultures and countries meet, and these encounters happen among service providers and customers (Koc 2021: 175).

Intercultural encounters (Tutunea 2021: 44) include sharing language and culture, where “culture is the result of the communication within the community”. However, intercultural communication may sometimes be partially obstructed, or communicators may have mutual misinterpretations and misunderstandings based on intercultural communicative competence deficiency or lack of intercultural awareness.

This obstruction can be especially aggravated by “external influences” such as the COVID-19 pandemic that has a negative effect on different business sectors, especially on the travel and tourism industries (Abiose & Patrick 2022: 9). Keeping this in mind, the aim of the present study was to look at intercultural encounters in 12 tourism and hospitality enterprises of Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden during the COVID-19 pandemic and to design a questionnaire on the basis of the problems and obstacles noticed in the intercultural communication that may assist in the intercultural training of the personnel in the tourism sector in order to develop their intercultural communicative competence or to become more aware interculturally.

The paper presents the theoretical framework including reflections on intercultural communicative competence, intercultural communication model, and cultural dimensions by Hofstede (1984, 1991, 2001, 2011), Lewis (2018, 2019, 2021), and Hall (1976, 1990). The empirical part discusses the results of findings from 12 interviewed companies. The next part is devoted to the development of the questionnaire and, finally, conclusions drawn from the study of intercultural encounters will be presented.

2. Literature review

2.1. Intercultural communicative competence

Intercultural communicative competence in the business context can be defined as the ability of employees to mobilize their skills, knowledge, behaviour, and values in order to deal with intercultural situations that are unfamiliar or problematic (Matveev 2017: 8). This means that tourism and hospitality industry employees have to possess knowledge of different cultures, possible differences in behaviour, be able to assess and adapt to those differences as well as interpret values that may differ from those of their own cultural group.

Lustig and Koester (2013) described the following components of intercultural communicative competence: contextuality, appropriateness and effectiveness, knowledge, motivation, and actions. Intercultural communicative competence is contextual and includes relational and situational contexts. Behaviour is regarded as appropriate when “suitable given expectations are generated by a given culture” and effective when it “leads to the achievement of desired outcome” (Koster 2013: 67). Knowledge comprises understanding of “norms of appropriateness” in that particular culture, whereas motivation includes “emotional associations” (ibid.) such as feelings and intentions. Actions, in their turn, are related to performance. An actor may possess the necessary information in the cultural context and may have motivation and feeling but may lack skills to achieve the necessary outcomes.

Intercultural communicative competence in the tourism and hospitality industry has been studied by an array of researchers recently, including the following: Leclerc and Martin (2004), who researched communication competences of tour guides; Koc (2021), who investigated the measurement ability of self-report scales and tests on intercultural communicative competence (awareness) by tourism and hospitality employees; Tutunea (2021), who determined the relationship between intercultural communicative competence and virtual exchanges; Liu, Liu, and King (2022), whose research showed “different insights about attitudes, behaviours, language and affective communication” in the intercultural communication context.

The present article focuses on the concept of intercultural communicative competence in the context of tourism and hospitality industry enterprises, as its awareness is an inherent part of the working environment of tourism and hospitality industry employees who have intercultural encounters on a daily basis.

2.2. Intercultural communication model

Berardo and Dearnorff in turn suggested that “intercultural communicative competence is a process” that evolves during life, and there is no final end to this developmental process. The process implies the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of intercultural communicative competence. The authors also consider that intercultural communicative competence requires “awareness of the context” in which communication happens (Berardo & Dearnorff 2012: 47).

The model developed by Dearnorff (2006, in Berardo & Dearnorff 2012: 46) clearly shows processes that occur with an individual in the course of communication (interaction) in an intercultural context. It demonstrates processes that take place in the formation of intercultural communicative competence. The following five components are needed for successful communication in the intercultural context: attitude, knowledge, skills,

external and internal outcomes. All the processes are mutually interconnected and interdependent: attitudes (respecting other people's values, being open or tolerant) develop knowledge. An individual obtains deep cultural knowledge and possesses cultural self-awareness. Knowledge correlates with skills such as being able to listen, observe, evaluate, analyse, and others. Knowledge and skills lead to outcomes, inner processes (internal outcomes) such as becoming adaptable, flexible, or emphatic and external processes (external outcome), that is, the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately and to behave appropriately in different intercultural situations.

So, to succeed in intercultural communication, tourism and hospitality industry employees might need to possess suitable attitudes and feelings towards clients or customers belonging to other cultures, which may include being respectful, flexible, non-judgemental and tolerant, being able to analyse and to listen to the other party.

Berardo and Deardorff suggest using this model to train people and to help them better understand the development of intercultural communicative competence. The author of the present article considers that the constituent elements of the model can be applicable for training tourism and hospitality industry personnel too (Berardo & Deardorff 2012: 48).

2.3. Cultural dimensions by Hall, Hofstede, and Lewis

The present research aims to study cases of intercultural encounters in the tourism and hospitality industry in three countries. Key researchers in the field of intercultural communication who structured the knowledge about cultures and developed cultural dimensions that can serve for the empirical analysis of cultures in the context of countries were Hall (1976, 1990), Hofstede (1984, 1991, 2001, 2011), and Lewis (2018, 2019, 2021).

Hall claimed that high-context communication implies not only words but also, for example, silence and body language, which can have more context or implication. High-context communication is less direct, implicit, whereas low-context communication relies more on words, on what has been said and is more explicit. Therefore, representatives of two different poles of this continuum may experience intercultural misunderstandings based on the misinterpretation of each other – of what was or was not said explicitly (Hall 1976: 19).

Another dimensional continuum was developed by Hofstede (2011), who described cultures on the basis of such virtues as gender, hierarchy, identity, and truth. The dimension of gender divides cultures into masculine and feminine, where representatives of the masculine group are characterized by such traits as orientation on work, achievements, and competitiveness, and feminine cultures, in their turn, highlight such virtues as care, family-orientedness, and harmony.

The dimension of hierarchy groups cultures into high-power and low-power categories, with people or organizations that are more autocratic, possessing more vertical management style belonging to the former and more egalitarian with more horizontal style of management belonging to the latter.

Identity is the dimension that describes the approach of people towards a group or an individual, where preference for work, collaboration, and support of a group is more characteristic of collectivistic cultures, whereas individualistic cultures may be described by the preference of an individual to prioritize his/her individual achievements at work or in life.

The dimension of truth is connected with the level of uncertainty, dividing people into high and low-uncertainty avoidance cultures based on people's ability to adapt or tolerate vulnerable or unpredictable situations. People with low-uncertainty avoidance are more confident about unpredictable situations, whereas high-uncertainty people are more dependent on law and obedience and as a result have more stress in the "face of an unknown future" (Hofstede 2011: 8).

Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) developed country dimension index, which rated countries according to the above-mentioned dimensions: Power Distance Index (PDI), Index of Individualism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity score (MAS). Having analysed Hofstede's findings on the countries under scrutiny – Sweden, Latvia, and Lithuania –, it was discovered that Sweden is considered to be the most egalitarian (PDI 40) (2010: 54) among the three countries observed in the present article. Latvia (PDI 44) and Lithuania (PDI 42) are situated somewhere in the middle of 57 countries studied by Hofstede et al. (2010). We can observe that Lithuania (IDV 60) has the lowest rank among the three countries (more tendency to be collectivistic), and Latvia and Sweden have a higher rank, being more "individualistic". According to Hofstede, Latvia and Sweden are considered countries with high feminine scores (both ranking 76 and 72). Lithuania was ranked 70-71 (Hofstede et al 2010: 143).

Lewis (2018), in his turn, divided cultures into three categories: linear-active, multi-active, and reactive. The present study gives examples of multi-active and linear-active representatives. According to the researcher (2018), multi-active people are usually "people-oriented, loquacious interrelators" (Lewis 2018: 27) who do many things at a time, whereas linear-active people fulfil one thing at a moment and value planning, organization, structure, and facts. Lewis (2018) focused on how people of one or the other category process/gather information. Representatives of the linear-active group rely mostly on facts and data; multi-actives prefer face-to-face encounters and dialogues. He described the way representatives use communication patterns and their listening habits. In Lewis's opinion, multi-active people are more dialogue-oriented, while linear-active are data-oriented people.

The present research considers all the theories mentioned above in the empirical part to describe intercultural peculiarities in the enterprises of Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden.

3. Methodology

3.1. Aim

The aim of the paper was to identify intercultural problems in tourism and hospitality enterprises in order to determine areas of intercultural communicative competence of employees that require enhancement, to work out a questionnaire for employees' self-assessment of intercultural communicative competence, and to decide what techniques and solutions may be applicable to develop an intercultural training course for employees. The present study examined intercultural communication problems both in internal and external communication in tourism enterprises in three countries.

The research questions were: What intercultural problems did companies in the tourism and hospitality sector in Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden experience during the COVID-19 pandemic? What types of strategies and actions should be employed by tourism businesses to enhance employees' intercultural communicative competence?

The research type was qualitative research with the analysis of semi-structured interviews carried out in 12 tourism enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

3.2. Research process

The twelve respondent enterprises represented the main sectors of tourism and hospitality industry: travel and tourism, accommodation, and food and beverage. Five interviews were carried out in Latvia with a tour operator (LV1), a guest house (LV2), a tourism information point (LV3), a travel agency (LV4), and a student hostel (LV5) using the Cisco Webex platform. Lithuania was represented by 4 tourism companies: a guest house (LT1), a tour operator (LT2), a tourism and culture information centre (LT3), and a food and beverage services unit (LT4); the interviews were conducted face to face. Three companies from Sweden were interviewed over the telephone and via the Zoom platform. The companies included a bed and breakfast hotel (SE1), a hotel and a restaurant business (SE2), and a cultural trainer and influencer (SE3). The countries were assigned a two-letter country code in accordance with Eurostat Statistics: LV– Latvia,

LT – Lithuania, SE – Sweden and were numbered 1–5 accordingly: LV1, LV2, LV3, LV4, LV5, LT1, LT2, LT3, LT4, SE1, SE2, SE3.

The informants were all top managers or owners of small-sized enterprises, starting from a one-man business to a company with up to 30 employees. The analysis of the empirical data was carried out on the basis of the theories of intercultural communicative competence, intercultural communication model, and models by Hofstede (1984, 1991, 2001, 2011), Lewis (2018, 2019, 2021), and Hall (1976, 1990). The table below gives summarized data about the studied enterprises, information about the types of business in the tourism and hospitality industry, customer base, and the countries represented by customers.

Table 1. *Types of enterprises surveyed and their customer base (developed by the author)*

Coding of enterprises	Type of business in the tourism and hospitality industry	Countries of customers	Types of customers
LV1	Travel and tourism	LV, LT, BG, TR, UK	Business people and sports fans.
LV2	Accommodation	Scandinavian countries, DE, LV, LT, EE	Students, international travellers, walk-in guests.
LV3	Travel and tourism	LV – 99% LT – 1%	Small senior groups, families, nature and well-being lovers, cultural heritage, and active recreation lovers.
LV4	Travel and tourism	ES, IT, UK, NL, CH, DE, PT, AU, US, SG, MY, ID, etc.	B2B: tour operators, agencies, and end-users: tourists.
LV5	Accommodation	LV, IN, LK, PK, UZ, UA, RU, BY, LT; short-term Erasmus students (DE, FR, DK, etc.)	Local and foreign full-time students (BA, MA, and PhD), Erasmus students, performing groups, conference attendees, solo travellers.
LT1	Accommodation	LT, LV, EE, RU, UA	Commuters for work, tourists for a weekend, couples, families, sportsmen.
LT2	Travel and tourism	US, UK, DE	Cruise ship tourists, families.

Coding of enterprises	Type of business in the tourism and hospitality industry	Countries of customers	Types of customers
LT3	Travel and tourism	LT, DE, LV, RU, BY, UA	Cruise ship tourists: solo travellers and families.
LT4	Food and beverage	LT, DE, PL	Seasonal guests and off-season locals, tourists.
SE1	Accommodation	SE, DE, NL, BE, US, DK	General tourists, visitors of family members in the area, people looking up their ancestry, adventure seekers.
SE2	Accommodation and food and beverage	SE, DE, other EU countries and countries of Asia	Tourists, university students, local people.
SE3	Travel and tourism	SE, etc.	Exchange students, workers, immigrants, expatriates, embassies.

The research process consisted of the following stages: collection of data, organization, coding and data analysis, and description. The findings provide examples illustrating intercultural problems observed in the enterprises. All the experts were interviewed following the principles of confidentiality, the rules of respect, and ethics.

4. Findings

The results of the analysis of interviews with company representatives may be divided into three subcategories: (1) intercultural differences and misunderstandings encountered in communication with foreign clients and employees who have different cultural backgrounds, (2) language problems / language barriers encountered in the enterprises, and (3) the effect of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality enterprises in three countries and the possible intercultural reasons of it.

The first subcategory of findings includes intercultural problems noticed in 12 enterprises and provides examples from interviews with the respondents from the companies.

4.1. Intercultural differences and misunderstandings

The analysis showed a variety of intercultural differences in behaviour both among employees with different cultural backgrounds (internal communication) and with foreign clients (external communication) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

(1) “We have signs on the doors, informing how many clients are allowed inside and that they have to wear a mask. And yes, the receptionist is the one that explains it to clients” (LV2).

Example 1 demonstrates the behaviour of an obedient linear-active culture that is data-oriented and who accepted changes regarding COVID-19 and used signs to inform their clientele.

(2) Q: “How did you manage force majeure situations when clients were out of control, something unpleasant happened, or there was some disturbance (drunk customers, customers who misbehaved)”?

A: “<...> we have the panic button. Also, we sometimes call the police if there is disturbance”.

This example shows law obedience of linear-active people who trust state institutions like the police and rely on their professional help (LV2).

(3) “<...> she wanted to show who the boss is <...> everyone should sit together and talk about what could be done better and what can be changed. <...> I have written emails asking questions or asking for suggestions and I have received nothing back <...> lack of feedback and communication barrier with the direct manager” (LV3).

Example 3 demonstrates a manager with a high-power distance approach of business management and an employee from a more horizontal style that is characteristic to low-power distance. A masculine style of behaviour by the boss and a feminine style by the employee can be seen. This difference in perception of management style resulted in misunderstandings and even a conflict between the manager and the employee.

(4) “Many people [in a rural area] do not see the necessity for a separate municipality Tourism Point because this money could have gone towards schools or other needs. In the end, the opening of Tourism Information Point wasn’t natural and needed” (LV3).

The above example shows short-term orientation (Hofstede’s dimension) of people in the rural area. Inhabitants preferred building schools or other amenities that were needed for current needs rather than opening a tourism information centre that could pay back only later and the returns on investment would not be immediate.

(5) “We did not travel to visit customers. Prior to COVID-19, it was common practice. It has been replaced by video conferences. No, <name> I will not set up the video call. It is enough. If there is something new, call me, but

let us agree we will meet face to face when it is allowed, but do not torture me with video calls” (LV4).

The present example shows that communication with customers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Latvian enterprises happened online in most cases; the respondent stated that he felt comfortable using video conferences (characteristic of a linear-active culture), whereas customers from abroad insisted on the use of the telephone or a face-to-face offline meeting in the worst case – means of communication that are more private and common to dialogue-oriented multi-active people.

(6) “Especially in Russia, tour leaders sometimes do not feel having enough authority to make decisions. It is a common practice that when something goes wrong with a client, it is fine, and you do not need directors’ orders to, for example, order a sparkling water to guests’ room” (LV4).

This example demonstrates internal intercultural communication misunderstandings between a manager and employees – a horizontal style of communication by the managing director (low-power distance), who expected more initiative from employees from another country accustomed to a more autocratic style of company management that is characteristic of high-power distance cultures.

(7) “With end-customers, we have become more attentive and stricter over the years. For example, when people travel, they often forget things like glasses, medicine, cameras, jackets, shoes, whatever, and up to some moment they just wrote to us ‘I forgot ..., can you send?’, and we would send... however, now...” (LV4).

This is an example of linear-activeness and data-orientedness (Lewis’s model) of company representatives in a Latvian enterprise: the way communication with customers belonging to different cultures happens in the company when some problems occur. A solution found by the company concerning communication with end-customers was “detailed instructions provided to customers about everything in a written form”.

(8) “People from Uzbekistan, e.g., prefer to communicate face to face. We try to contact them electronically (due to COVID-19 restrictions). They will not always get the result they want, and not because we do not answer them, but because they do not want to understand the answer, such as some rules or regulations... They feel like it has to be the way they want it, not the way it is” (LV5).

The present example shows the difference in preference of communication style by people of different cultures, e.g. those who prefer to be contacted in a written form, via email or SMS (linear-active, data-oriented people) and those who prefer face-to-face contact (dialogue-oriented, multi-active people), as well as the difference between high- and low-context cultures.

(9) “European Erasmus students are too communicative. Especially now, during the pandemic, we had to put up signs that they were not allowed to stay together in common public areas and have fun all the time. There were even cases where students from the non-quarantine area had come to the quarantine area and had parties with dances, games, and so on” (LV5).

This can be an example of law-obedient employees who came across more frivolous students, who are more short-term-oriented and demonstrate characteristics of a low-uncertainty avoidance culture (Hofstede’s dimensions).

(10) “<...> communication and transmission of information normally takes place orally, the information is passed to the administrator by phone, employees pass information to managers by phone <...> we have meetings at lunch every two weeks [before COVID-19] and now once a month. <...> we order something and discuss current issues while eating <...> the employees know that if a problem arises before 9 p.m., they can call the Commercial Director, and after 9 p.m. they can call me” (LT1).

The present example shows that employees in LT enterprises prefer face-to-face contact, telephone calls, and direct conversations, which can be a peculiarity of an individual belonging to a multi-active, dialogue-oriented, high-context culture who prefers contacting in person.

(11) An informant of LT4 stressed the importance of cooperation with other businesses, for example, TIC, whereas a company in Latvia, e.g., emphasized that they tried to cooperate with some companies, but they did not succeed: “I don’t have a team; in most cases, I’m completely on my own” (LV3). The present example shows traits of collectivistic culture (LT4) and the characteristics of individualistic representatives (LV3).

(12) “Another problem she had was people expecting to have their own bathroom despite all printed information on websites and flyers stating that there were shared bathrooms” (SE1).

The above example demonstrates that the information to clients was provided in a written form, whereas clients expected the information to be passed verbally too (intercultural difference based on the difference between data and dialogue-oriented people, according to Lewis’s model). However, when asked what measures the organization takes to reduce communication problems in the organization, the owner replied “she was very clear and upfront with her communication”. It is possible that the informant was not conscious of these intercultural differences.

4.2. Language barriers

The analysis of interviews revealed another category of intercultural problems related to the use of state and foreign languages among employees of different ethnic origin and with foreign customers in all three countries that could create miscommunication and misunderstandings among employees and with clients. The analysis showed that 10 out of 12 companies had problems connected with language barriers in communication and an insufficient language knowledge of employees.

(1) “We always try to adapt to our clients <...> if our client speaks to us in Russian, we will respond in Russian. Of course, we initiate conversations in Latvian, but we also try to adapt to the language they are speaking to us” (LV1).

(2) “There are employees who are non-native speakers. She [an employee] understands Latvian, but she is Russian. Other employees do not understand Russian, and we communicate only in Latvian, so there is a challenge” (LV2).

(3) “Most of the people are native Russian speakers, and do not speak English at all, or if they do, it is at a very basic level” (LV3).

(4) “All Russian-speaking employees understand something in Latvian, but it is not easy. It is not that they do not understand anything at all” (LV5).

(5) “Language barrier, especially with English-speaking clients. It is difficult to understand customers coming from India. <...> difficult to understand what is said” (LV5).

(6) “Russian-speaking staff belong to the group of people who expect that everyone understands them. Very often they use body language to express themselves and explain their needs when there is a language barrier between them” (LV5).

(7) “There is a language barrier, a young person does not speak Russian, and an older person does not speak English ...” (LT1).

(7) “A problem with the use of English that can lead to such problems as, e.g., style mistakes, switching to informal communication, etc.” (LT2).

(8) “Another challenge is the foreign languages spoken by employees” (LT3).

(9) “The problem of the Russian language because it is no longer known by younger generations” (LT4).

(10) “The owner used the situation as a challenge, the immigrant workers had a chance to learn Swedish, whereas she practised English” (SE1).

(11) “There are communication barriers due to language between guests and staff, which in turn causes generational issues, as the older clientele sometimes do not want to wait and end up leaving” (SE2).

(12) “Older Swedish generations have language issues, as they have not been taught in English, and they think it is not important to learn it, and people should learn Swedish instead” (SE2).

The examples showed barriers and communication problems connected with languages among Latvian and Russian-speaking employees in Latvia (LV1, LV2, LV3, LV5), the use of English by employees in Latvia (LV5), the use of Russian (LT1, LT4) and English and other foreign languages (LT2, LT3), the use of Swedish and English by employees in Swedish companies (SE1, SE2).

4.3. The effect of COVID-19

The survey was carried out during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, so, accordingly, it was essential to discover to what extent intercultural differences discovered in the companies could affect communication with foreign clients and the development of businesses under scrutiny in the circumstances of lockdown or business slow-down. Below are the answers of informants concerning the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on business in 12 enterprises.

(1) “The company manager was forced to lay off all of the employees during the COVID time” (LV1).

(2) “There used to be 5 workers before the COVID-19 pandemic; only 2 employees left when the pandemic started” (LV2).

(3) “The COVID-19 pandemic had immense influence on the work of TIC since all events were closed [cancelled] and only nature tourism was blooming. At the moment of the interview, the business was operated remotely” (LV3).

(4) “Communication with customers during the COVID-19 pandemic mostly happened online” (LV4).

(5) “All external communication is currently being done electronically and by telephone” (LV5).

(6) “The company preferred old style of communication and did not switch to new forms of communication” (LT1).

(7) “<...> the company had come to a complete standstill... No cruise sails only to the Baltic countries at the moment when the COVID-19 pandemic was taking place. This situation is not only in Lithuania but also in the surrounding countries. The self-isolation requirements also contributed to the aggravation of the situation” (LT2).

(8) “Both internal and external communication in the company took place remotely, mostly online”. Live communication did not happen. However, the company noticed a beneficial side of it – ‘there is more time, and we can focus more on one person’” (LT3).

(9) “A large number of foreigners were automatically removed. The Lithuanian audience [customer base] that used to fly out cheaply is here now. It’s a slightly different audience [customer base] in Nida now” (LT4).

(10) “Unfortunately, the company closed in 2020 due to COVID-19, but they provided answers to interview questions” (SE1).

(11) “COVID-19 had a positive impact on business with record-breaking sales; however, the clientele has shifted to more local persons” (SE2).

(12) “COVID-19 situation was beneficial for the company – I managed to attract more contacts, had more interest from different companies. This year was the best year ever and I received <...> higher grades on my training performance than that of the previous 2 years” (SE3).

Having analysed examples of subcategory 3, it became evident that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative effect on both internal and external communication in 10 enterprises out of 12, including all Latvian and Lithuanian enterprises and one enterprise in Sweden (SE1). The differences that were noticed included (1) shift from face-to-face contact to online contact with employees and clients, (2) loss of clients, (3) redundancy of staff, and even (4) business closure. As a matter of fact, it was discovered that the COVID-19 situation was beneficial for business in two cases (SE2, SE3). It became clear that employees who worked online with clients before the pandemic, such as SE3, who provided training services online, as well as the travel company (SE2), who offered more services to local tourists in Sweden where there was no lockdown initiated at the governmental level, experienced growth of their business during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, all other companies were forced either to adapt to the new conditions or even close. Those companies who got used to only one style of communication, e.g. face-to-face contact, lost some part of their clientele, as well as some companies who used mostly written signs or online communication to inform clients instead of verbal contact also experienced either loss of clients or dissatisfaction with contact via the Internet.

5. Practical implications and recommendations

Having analysed answers provided by the informants, it became evident that they were not always aware of the cultural differences of their clients and colleagues and could not explain the reasons of other people’s behaviours and the reasons for conflicts with them. So, based on the analysis of the interviews (Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden) and revealing various intercultural problems in the organizations where employees are in contact with each other and with foreign clients, the author worked out an Employee Self-assessment Questionnaire that may be used in an intercultural training course for tourism and hospitality industry personnel in order to raise their intercultural communicative competence. The questionnaire may be applicable for employees in regard to themselves, their colleagues, and foreign clients. It might help employees to better evaluate themselves and others, as well as to perceive the problems encountered from a different angle, understanding that differences noticed in the communication

with other people are not negative things, misbehaviours, or negligence but rather challenges that stem from the differences in values, attitudes, perceptions, styles of behaviour, and communication styles. Answers to these questions could help to analyse both internal communication in their companies and external intercultural communication as well as to adapt to changing circumstances, for example, such as an epidemic or a pandemic.

Table 2. *Employee Self-assessment Questionnaire (developed by the author)*

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1. Are you aware of cultural differences while being in contact with people from other cultures at your working place?

 2. What communication style do you use with your colleagues – face-to-face or distant? What modes/channels of communication do you prefer?

 3. What communication style do you use with your clients – face-to-face or distant? What modes/channels of communication do you prefer? How to make sure that clients preferring another communication style than yours are approached/informed?

 4. What is the importance of competition in your company?

 5. Are you aware of cultural differences while being in contact with the clients with other cultural backgrounds?

 6. How do you assess your foreign language competence? Does your language knowledge correspond to the requirements of your working place? What can be done to improve your language skills in case needed?

Questions based on the dimensions by Lewis, Hofstede, and Hall

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7. Do you prefer working in a team or individually (collectivism vs individualism)? What style of working is more applicable in your company?

 8. How would you characterize your organization? Are hierarchy, status, and authoritarian style more important, or do people prefer a democratic leadership style (high-power distance vs low-power distance)? How do you work with people having another style?

 9. Does your company strictly obey rules, prefer structured leadership, or are you more flexible with rules, prefer more democratic style (high-uncertainty avoidance vs low-uncertainty avoidance)? How do you work with people having another style?

 10. Does your company prefer assertive style of behaviour, value achievement, autocratic style, or do you value caring behaviour, prefer participative leadership (masculinity vs femininity)? How do you work with people having another style?

 11. What style of communication is more preferable in your company? Which one is more important: clear and direct verbal communication (low-context people) or indirect communication with messages being understood from the context (high-context people)?

6. Conclusions

The present article addressed intercultural encounters in internal and external communication of tourism and hospitality industry enterprises from three countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the analysis of the interviews conducted among representatives of companies, it was possible to distinguish intercultural problems that local staff have while being in contact with foreign clients and inside the company.

It was concluded that intercultural problems are experienced by the personnel of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, a situation which leads to language barriers both in the company and in dealing with foreign clients in all three countries studied in the present research.

The personnel are sometimes unaware of the reasons for differences in behaviour or attitudes of the colleagues or foreign clients that can be connected with cultural differences based on dimensions such as hierarchy, identity, truth, or gender; which can be noticed, however, are, e.g., manner of communication, choice of form (face-to-face or distant) and channels of communication (telephone, WhatsApp, or e-mail), preference of horizontal or vertical style of management, or differences in processing and gathering information, e.g., linear-activeness or multi-activeness, data-orientedness, or dialogue-orientedness of people.

External circumstances influenced by COVID-19 forced companies in the tourism and hospitality sector to change their communication style, e.g. switch from face-to-face to online communication with their employees and foreign clients or to introduce the system of signs to inform clients. However, the analysis of the research data showed that not all of the company representatives as well and not all of the clients were able to change their communication style, partially due to intercultural differences.

It can be concluded that the personnel can sometimes lack cultural self-awareness and do not always possess the necessary intercultural communicative competence, which can be enhanced by providing intercultural training such as language courses, cultural simulations, intercultural games, or case studies by discussing and simulating typical intercultural situations. This can be particularly essential considering the possible repetition of external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, that can have a negative impact on tourism and hospitality sector businesses.

7. Limitations

Some limitations can be observed in the present research. Initially, the project focused on intergenerational studies and not on studies of intercultural communication, so it limited the researcher in the amount of surveyed data and can affect the generalization of the study.

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The Language of Authenticity in Hungarian–Hungarian Encounters

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Abstract. The study of authenticity in sociolinguistics has questioned the notion of the authentic speaker or previous interpretations of place, and it rather focuses on how the social functioning of authenticity is “mediated by and expressed through language” (Lacoste et al. 2014: 4) in different socio-cultural contexts. In linguistic ethnography, the researcher’s positionality also becomes subject to analysis, especially when this has a direct influence on the data obtained. Through the excerpts from interviews conducted at a festival, I aim to discuss the sociolinguistic features of authenticity in the context of the Hungarian–Hungarian encounters. Moreover, the cultural values attributed to the different ways of speaking the Hungarian language are also articulated in these interviews.

Keywords: authenticity, linguistic, ethnography, socio-cultural values, Transylvania, Hungarian–Hungarian encounters

1. Introduction

The relevance of authenticity for sociolinguistics has been gaining ground mostly in the last two decades (Bucholtz 2003; Coupland 2003, 2010; Blommaert–Varis 2011; Lacoste et al. 2014) through exploring the social functioning of authenticity and its relation to language. While in dialectological research the image of the authentic speaker has always been central, the new mobilities paradigm (Britain 2016) challenges this sedentarist perspective that was based on the ideology of “linguistic isolationism” (Bucholtz 2003: 404). This ideology saw access to the most genuine form of a language through the most authentic speaker, who “belongs to a well-defined, static, and relatively homogenous social grouping that is closed to the outside” (ibid). Britain’s mobilities paradigm aims to question the sedentarist and bounded notion of place seen as “the locus of identity” (Cresswell 2011: 551). In this sense, authenticity is closely linked to locality, yet when

discussed in the context of language revitalization, authenticity is interpreted on the axis of past and present (or a desired future) “along values such as naturalness, originality, purity and genuineness” (Bodó–Fazakas 2018: 2). This understanding becomes relevant to this paper when a cultural and natural setting is strongly associated with a set of values linked to the past.

Transylvania has long been seen as a place of national authenticity from the perspective of Hungary, and according to one of the dominant discourses in this regard, Transylvania is essentially “more Hungarian” than any region of Hungary, as the ancient and authentic Hungarian culture is preserved there (Feischmidt 2005). In this sense, Transylvania is also often linked to a less modern and idealized rural setting populated by a society that prioritizes community and closeness to nature, following an orientalist approach that ultimately results in an image of inferiority (Feischmidt 2005: 7). These discourses envision Transylvania, more precisely Szeklerland,¹ as ethnically and linguistically homogenous. When it comes to the Hungarian language spoken in Transylvania, based on the results of the Sociolinguistics of Hungarian Outside Hungary project from the mid-1990s, led by Miklós Kontra, the majority of Hungarians living in Transylvania (75.9%) consider the Hungarian spoken there “the most beautiful”. Hungarian respondents from Hungary were more divided in this question, as only 18.6% of them think that Transylvania is the place of the most beautifully spoken Hungarian (Péntek–Benő 2020: 408). This phenomenon can be further observed in the attitudes of later generations of Hungarians living in Transylvania, as they conceptualize their mother tongue and the dialect spoken by them along “their linguistic and cultural loyalties” (Fazakas 2014: 353).

The data presented in this paper result from a linguistic ethnographic research conducted at a festival organized in Transylvania, Romania, with the intent of bringing together Hungarians from Hungary and Hungarians living as an ethnic minority in Romania. When I asked the festival participants about how they recognize where other participants are from, the unanimous answer was “based on their speech”, and thus, instead of *what* was said, *how* it was said became a marker of social identity (Woolard 2016: 22). When discussing the differences between the Hungarian spoken in Hungary and in Transylvania, discourses around authenticity and values were prevalent, while the cultural changes reflected in language were associated with cultural loss (Bucholtz 2003: 400).

1 A historic and ethnographic area composed of the Hungarian-majority counties of Romania (Harghita, Covasna, and parts of Mureş County).

2. The context

The Bálványos Free Summer University and Student Camp (colloquially known and hereinafter referred to as Tuszványos) is an annually organized 5-day-long event in Transylvania, Romania. The first edition of the summer university was held in 1990 with the intent of bringing together in the context of an intellectual workshop Hungarians from Hungary, Hungarians from Romania, and Romanians to start a dialogue that was much needed after the fall of the communist regime. During the more than past three decades, the festival constantly grew larger in the programmes covered, becoming aimed at a wider public. However, the participation of Romanians became insignificant, as there are no events for a Romanian audience with the majority of programmes being in Hungarian – with the exception of a few English-speaking invited lecturers. The festival includes lectures and round-table discussions with well-known politicians, public figures, and specialists mostly from Hungary and Transylvania. It also offers various activities for children and families, cultural events, and concerts at the end of each day. According to their official website, the festival attracts 30,000 visitors every year.

Choosing Transylvania as the location of the event is, on the one hand, probably a conscious decision of the organizers due to the significant Hungarian minority living in Romania. On the other hand, as discussed in the Introduction, Transylvania has a special significance in the construction of discourses around national authenticity. This is also emphasized by the prominent public figures of the festival in the documentary created for the 30th edition. László Tőkés, a Hungarian politician from Romania, states in the documentary that the location itself represents an “ancestral site” determining “a fundamental way of thinking”. In this sense, the space becomes “naturalized” as the site of “ancestral, original, and untouched nature” (Feischmidt 2014: 22), while an intellectual and habitual feature is also attached to it by implying the existence of a “fundamental”, i.e. an original and authentic way of thinking. Another key figure, a former member of the organizing team of the festival and a returning guest as a culture commissioner of the Hungarian government, Szilárd Demeter, thinks of Tuszványos as the “forum for nation unification”, where, through a “national narrative”, the different Hungarians can tell each other who they are. The national narrative is also strengthened by the yearly mottos of the festival: *What belongs together, comes together* (2011), *Tuszványos is the centre of the world* (2012), *Our time* (2013), *From stories to history* (2014), *A place to stand* (2017), *Some things are eternal* (2022), to cite but a few.

3. Methodology and data

This paper relies on data collected on the 31st edition of Tusványos held between 19 and 23 July 2022. During the fieldwork, I conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with a total number of 51 participants, where we mostly discussed their connection to the festival and the linguistic encounters that take place there. As the festival is aimed at a wide audience, I tried to engage with people of all age groups and of different sociolinguistic backgrounds. Although I assured all participants of their anonymity, and the interviews were only recorded with the written consent of those involved, due to the nature of the field, I found it important to outline a few additional ethical guidelines. One of these was that I did not approach participants who were surrounded by children, as I did not intend to collect data from minors, and their exclusion from the recorded material would have proven difficult. Another consideration was not to conduct interviews with people who were showing signs of being under the influence, as the validity of their consent could be questioned.

In order to gain a more complex understanding of the festival, I also applied the method of participant observation by taking part in different activities, attending lectures and roundtable discussions, and carrying out unrecorded conversations with different actors of the festival. Moreover, ethnographic shadowing was also among the methods; in this case, I “explored” the camp together with “veteran” participants, more precisely, two older ladies from Hungary, who attended the festival for the 13th time. As it was my first time at the event, I asked them to be my tour guides.

In presenting the data in the analytical section, I differentiate between festival participants as Hungarians from Hungary and Hungarians from Transylvania, although this categorization may not be applied to the entirety of the data. One of the reasons is that the festival welcomes all Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin, while there are lecturers with a non-Hungarian background or even Romanian participants visiting the festival. By choosing Transylvania as a place of belonging instead of naming the country of provenience as Romania when talking about Hungarians from Transylvania, I intend to showcase the dominant discourses regarding the self-identification of the Hungarian minority living in Romania.

A critical reflection on the researcher’s own subjectivity (Bucholtz et al. 2023) has become imperative in doing linguistic ethnography, where facing up to the partiality of the researchers’ interpretations is expected (Rampton et al. 2015: 16), as “there is no ‘view from nowhere’, no gaze that is not positioned” (Irvine–Gal 2000: 36). I was born and raised in the bilingual Transylvanian town of Târgu-Mureş, where I attended school and two BA programmes in Hungarian, as my first language is also Hungarian. While most of my socialization happened in Hungarian, since the ethnic composition of the town is somewhat balanced (54.83% Romanians, 41.81%

Hungarians),² I have been in close contact with the Romanian language and culture from an early age. Although my hometown is often considered to be the capital of Szeklerland, I do not identify as a Szekler, and none of the Szekler dialects are part of my language repertoire. Moreover, I do not nurture bitter feelings for being part of an ethnic minority. At the time of the fieldwork, I was a PhD student of the Doctoral School of Linguistics at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Hungary.

Introducing oneself at a festival, however, has its own challenges. Firstly, the nature of the field made it sometimes impossible to provide people with enough information about myself, as they would not follow a three-sentence monologue about myself, my studies, and the aim of my research because there were other people, music, and events taking place around us. Secondly, not everything that I prepared to say was enough as a point of reference for some. I was asked what ELTE stands for, whether they needed a pen for the “questionnaire”, or warned that I would get a poor grade if I talked to them because they did not know much, and oftentimes I had to remind the interviewees that the recording is not for the TV or radio but for a “university project”. Bearing all these in mind, after some time, I decided not to tell them everything I previously intended to. As a result, I did not always specify that I am a student at a university in Hungary while also being from Romania. In the following, I will discuss how my own positionality perceived based on the way I speak shaped my access to discourses around authenticity.

4. Analysis

I chose to discuss the following excerpts as a starting point of my analysis because they illustrate some unforeseen challenges I had to face. Becoming a festival participant myself, *how* I talked also differentiated me from those coming from Transylvania, as they assumed that I was from Hungary. I argue that this restricted to a certain extent or at least influenced my access to information: when I asked participants from Transylvania to describe how Hungarians from Hungary speak, they were often hesitant to disclose their thoughts while sharing hidden smiles with each other and taking a long time to formulate their arguments. This was probably due to the fact that they did not want to directly criticize how Hungarians from Hungary speak.

Excerpt 1 is from an interview conducted with a local performer of the festival. As he has been a key figure of Tusványos night-time parties for decades, I thought he could provide me with an insight to how festival participants coming from Hungary or Transylvania party, yet he immediately identified speech as the distinctive feature.

2 According to the 2021 census: <https://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-rpl-2021/rezultate-definitive/> (last accessed on: 17 August 2023).

Excerpt 1

BB: s meg lehet mondani, hogy ki magyarországi, ha nem mutatkozik be, hogy Magyarországról jött?

P38: hát, beszéd alapján

BB: mhm, hogy beszélnek a magyarországiak?

P38: többek között akárcsak te

BB: and is it possible to tell if someone is from Hungary if they don't introduce themselves as someone coming from Hungary?

R38: well, based on their speech

BB: mhm, how do those from Hungary speak?

R38: for instance, just like you

When asked to describe the way Hungarians from Hungary speak, his response was that they speak just like I did. After this, I told him that he was wrong because I am from Târgu-Mureş. In a face-saving attempt, he contradicted what he said a moment before and told me that he knew that I was from Mureş County because I was speaking that way. As I did not intend to challenge his position in this conversation, I did not confront him but carried on with the conversation. This example showcases how someone, who in other parts of the interview gave detailed opinions, chose to only characterize the speech of Hungarians from Hungary by identifying it with mine. Assuming that the person who is addressing him is personally involved in the question, he did not elaborate on his answer. This presupposition regarding my identity limited my access to an elaborated discussion of how the Hungarian spoken in Hungary is perceived by Hungarians in Transylvania.

During the fieldwork, there were interviews I subsequently decided not to use, as the participants were seemingly feeling uncomfortable with their voices being recorded, although they did not ask me to delete them. At the time of conducting the interview, which includes the following excerpt, I thought that I would not make use of this piece of data either, as the female member of the elderly couple I was talking with was resistant to sharing too much information and was constantly scolding his husband because, in her opinion, he was touching upon sensitive topics (e.g. the rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania). When the husband was telling me about the different ways of speaking Hungarian in the very different villages of Transylvania, and he also named some of them, his wife (P32) once again advised him not to mention Barót, a small Transylvanian town, as I would not be familiar with it anyway.

Excerpt 2

P32: Barótot úgysem tudja a hölgy, hogy mi az, s mi az

BB: dehogynem, hát én Marosvásárhelyen nőttem fel

P32: *igen?*

BB: *igen, igen, úgyhogy nagyon ismerem itt a környéket*

P32: *na (nevet)*

P32: the lady doesn't know Barót, what it is

BB: I do know, I grew up in Târgu-Mureș

P32: really?

BB: yes, yes, so I am pretty familiar with the region

P32: well (laughs)

To her surprise, I responded that I know about the town, as I grew up in Târgu-Mureș. From this moment, her attitude towards the whole discussion shifted, as she became more open. After I switched off the recorder, we kept on talking for several minutes, and she shared with me that there was a girl in their village who asked them to complete a questionnaire for a university project. When I told her that I also work at a Hungarian university from Transylvania, she showed even more confidence and assured me of her appreciation of those who “stay at home” and do important work “here” (i.e. Transylvania). In this case, despite of initially assuming that I am from Hungary based on my speech, revealing that I am also from Transylvania resulted in trust and a more open conversation, and thus had a positive impact on my access to the field.

These two excerpts do not represent isolated cases in which festival participants from Romania assumed that I am from Hungary, as I had several similar interactions with local economic actors, organizers, and other interviewees. In turn, in the encounters with Hungarians from Hungary, although it never emerged as a topic of discussion, it was implied by the interviewees that I was from Hungary. This became obvious in instances when, for example, streets of Budapest were mentioned as points of reference, or when they talked about Hungary as our shared country of origin. Thus, I argue that the way I was perceived by others based on how I spoke shaped my access to the discourses around authenticity, as the participants from Transylvania assumed that I could be offended if they shared what they actually thought about how Hungarian is spoken in Hungary. On the other hand, I believe that this is also the reason why I got more direct answers from festival attendees coming from Hungary.

4.1. Sociolinguistic features of authenticity

As the way people speak can be an indicator of where they come from, there were other hints that helped me navigate the situations when I was trying to make contact with people from diverse backgrounds. Seeing two young women who were consuming beverages that are only available in Hungary was one such clue.

When I started talking to them, they shared with me that, on the one hand, they came to the festival because of how affordable Tuszványos was and because of the political programmes they could attend and that, on the other hand, they also appreciated the people and culture of Transylvania.

Excerpt 3

BB: s miben más a beszéd?

P16: hát, ez a jellegzetes gyönyörű tájszólás, azért vannak külön/

P17: hangsúlyok, szóhasználat

P16: a hangsúly, igen, azért szóhasználatban is (...) szeretjük, szeretjük hallgatni

BB: and how is the speech different?

P16: well, there is this characteristic beautiful dialect, they have different

P17: intonations, vocabulary

P16: the intonation, yes, and vocabulary, too (...) we like, we like listening to it

P16 and P17 were among the many people who immediately identified differences in intonation and vocabulary when it came to how they recognize the particularities of the Hungarian spoken in Transylvania – by saying that they “like listening to it” instead of engaging with it, while a certain distance is also implied, where those from Hungary manifest what Britain (2017), in an academic context, calls dialectological gaze as they assume an outsider position and the role of the “listening subject” (Inoue 2003). A little later in the conversation, they also said that this is the only place where they can eat *pityókás házi kenyér*, that is, ‘artisan potato bread’, yet they used the non-standard Hungarian word for ‘potato’ *pityóka*, characteristic of certain dialects in Transylvania (Murádin 1975). Thus, bread and the local dialect become cultural goods that can be consumed by those who come here.

A similar distancing attitude could be observed during the ethnographic shadowing. As mentioned before, I asked two “veteran” participants from Hungary to guide me through the locations of the festival. We passed two young men who were jokingly greeting each other with “Dicsértessék”, that is, the Hungarian short form of the Catholic salutation “Praised be Jesus Christ”. One of the participants from Hungary exclaimed “jaj, de aranyos, ahogy egymásnak köszönnek” (‘oh, it is so cute how they greet each other’). By pointing this out, it becomes obvious that this form of greeting is unusual for these participants from Hungary and find it characteristic of the region without considering that there might be something else, i.e. irony involved. This is also supported by them later explaining that they love Transylvania because everyone is kind and people greet each other regardless

of having a pre-existing relationship. By calling them “cute”, once again an outsider’s gaze can be observed. The use of the “Dicsértessék” form of greeting among younger generations, however, can probably be attributed to a Hungarian meme. Tibi atya [Father Tibi] is portrayed as a priest living in a rural setting, who shares his life lessons that are very often centred around drinking; every time he raises his glass, he says “Dicsértessék”. Glózer argues that using this “traditional greeting form” allows Tibi atya fans to express their loyalty and commitment to the community around it (2017: 47). Thus, this difference becomes rather age-related.

The event that attracts the most visitors takes place on the final day of the festival when the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán participates in a roundtable discussion on the main stage. Many attend this event wearing clothes or accessories with national or political symbols and messages. A young man listened to this roundtable discussion wearing the Kingdom of Hungary’s flag that includes the coats of arms of the territories which were once part of the Kingdom of Hungary; this coat of arms has not been officially used after World War I. A few hours later, I had the chance to talk with him. I found out that he is a returning festival participant from Hungary, who comes to Tusványos because of “Transylvania and its magic” and to feel “the national togetherness”. He is looking forward to making connections not only with other festival participants but also with the locals, from whom he can learn a lot.

Excerpt 4

P34: mit tudunk az egyes székelyemberektől, a helyiektől megtanulni, a bölcs mondásokat, az ízes beszédet, azt a más, kicsit másabb gondolatvilágot, ami nálunk, csúnyán mondom, anyaországban, otthon, hogy azt a más szemléletmódot, a sokszor egyszerűbb, de százszázszor, milliószor bölcsőbb és észszerűbb gondolatmenetet használja az ember.

P34: what we can learn from the Szekler people, the locals, [are] the words of wisdom, the savoury speech, that different, a little different way of thinking [than] the one that we have, if I put it ugly, in the motherland, at home, a different vision, which is sometimes more simple but one hundred thousand, a million times wiser and more rational way of thinking, the one used here.

In Excerpt 4, the speech of the locals is differentiated from the young man’s own way of speaking as being “savoury”; the Hungarian word *ízes* also allows for a strong sensory and gastronomic association (cf. the example of the *pityókás házi kenyér*). This particular adjective is often used to describe the way Hungarian is spoken in Transylvania throughout the data both by Hungarians from Hungary and by Hungarians from Transylvania. This argument is also in line with the changing

role dialects have, as they are no longer seen as the mere geographical indicators of one's mother-tongue origin but also ascribe the particular cultural values to those speaking them (Silverstein 2014: 183). In this case, this different way of speaking implies a whole set of values that make the Hungarians living in Transylvania, referred to as Szeklers by the festival participant, unique. Simplicity, wisdom, and rational thinking are among the virtues associated with the authentic world, a genuine way of living, which should be learned by those who do not live in the region. Moreover, it is implied that Hungarians from Hungary with a different vision do not possess these values strongly linked to authenticity.

The following excerpt is from a conversation with two female participants in their thirties, who were chatting under a tree while their husbands were listening to the roundtable discussion with the Hungarian Prime Minister. When I asked them about where they came from, it turned out that they were from my hometown, so I tried to use that as a common point. Yet, when we discussed the differences in the way Hungarians from Hungary and those from Transylvania speak, I realized that I approached them with an address form that, according to them, is characteristic of Hungarians from Hungary, as I myself used the informal second person.

Excerpt 6

P31: igen, ami így fura náluk, hogy ők minden- mindenkit tegeznek

BB: aha

P31: igen, például, csak egy példa, Balatonon a fiatalok, tehát most egy idős vagy egy-egy fiatalabb koro-, tehát úgy köszönnek, hogy helló, nem magáz vagy nem, tehát mindenkit tegeznek, igen

BB: és itt meg nem

P31: itt meg nem, itt meg nem. hát itt ma is, mikor a karkötőt váltottuk ki, tehát egy fiatal csaj, tehát nálam fiatalabb volt és jó napot, úgy köszönt (...)

BB: mhm, nem érdekelte, hogy fesztiválon van

P31: nem, abszolút nem

P30: talán több a tisztelet

P31: jó napot, jó napot, igen, de mondjuk, egy magyarországi ő egyből helló, miben segíthetek? mit szeretnél? tehát én ezt- ezt figyeltem meg

BB: mhm

P30: valóban ez egy nagy különbség

P31: igen, igen

BB: hogy akkor több a tisztelet itt, azt mondtad? itt Erdélyben?

P31: szerintem igen

P30: igen, mert először meghagyják ezt a tiszteletet, hogy úgymond kiegyezzünk, hogy tegeződjünk, légy szíves

- P31: yes, and what is odd about them, that they use the informal second person
- BB: mhm
- P31: yes, for example, just one example, at [Lake] Balaton, the youngsters, so now an older or a younger age-, so they greet you with hello, no formal greeting or no, so everyone uses the informal, yes
- BB: and here this is not the case
- P31: here it is not, here it is not. well, here also today, when we were getting our bracelet, so a young girl, so she was younger than me, and good morning, that is what she said
- (...)
- BB: mhm, she did not care about being at a festival
- P31: no, absolutely not
- P30: there might be more respect
- P31: good morning, good morning, but let's say someone from Hungary immediately goes hello, how can I help? what do you want? this is what I have observed
- BB: mhm
- P30: this is indeed a big difference
- P31: yes, yes
- BB: so there is more respect here, you said? here in Transylvania?
- P31: I do think so
- P30: yes, because they keep this respect, that we like to agree that from now on we are on a first-name basis, please

As seen in this excerpt, differences in intonation or vocabulary were not the only linguistic features identified, but socio-pragmatic aspects also came to the fore, as language reveals aspects of the speaker's culture (Lee 2020). The two women mentioned two instances of people meeting for the first time and greeting each other. The first example was an encounter at Lake Balaton in Hungary, where regardless of the age of the interlocutors, everyone uses the informal second person. The counterexample was the interaction they had had that morning when at the festival entrance they were addressed formally despite of the informal setting. Thus, showing respect to a person unknown to us through language is considered to be a cultural value, as the contrary is seen to be "odd" and even rude. This can once again be connected to wider discourses about the right way of conduct associated with a probably more conservative culture, where differences in age demand respect, and going on a first-name basis with someone is a rite of passage in the relationship, resulting from mutual agreement.

When I sat around a table with a group of childhood friends from several Transylvanian towns, who now come back to the festival to keep their friendship

alive, we discussed the different ways Hungarians speak. Instead of sharing his own thoughts, one of the participants chose to quote his co-worker who is originally from Hungary, but currently they work at the same office in Transylvania.

Excerpt 5

P13: azt mondta, hogy figyelj, azt mondta, én most hiába, hogy onnan való vagyok, én azt mondom, hogy ahogy ti beszéltek, ti a törzsgyökeres magyar nyelvet beszélitek, a miénk Magyarországon, mivel nyugatabbra vagyunk, és oda húzódunk mind, a nyugati példákat vesszük, a miénk az már olyan fé- fészliftes, azt mondja (nevet), tehát már nem az a törzsgyökeres

P13: he said, look, he said, it doesn't matter that I come from there, I am telling you that the way you speak [in Transylvania], you speak the deep-rooted Hungarian language, ours in Hungary, since it is closer to the West, and we adjust to that, and we take Western examples, ours is already face-lifted, he says (laughs), so it is no longer the deep-rooted one

By choosing to use the words of someone from Hungary, P13 decided to distance himself from the responsibility of judging one's language while sharing strong criticism at the same time. The Hungarian spoken in Transylvania is seen as the "deep-rooted" version of the language, while the one spoken in Hungary is "face-lifted". This argument evokes an East–West divide, in which the East preserves the authentic, while Western examples deflect one from being original, presuming that face-lifting is the contrary of this. This discourse was also reflected in the *Tusványos 30* documentary, when László Tőkés said that the way of thinking set out by the festival is necessary, as Europe and its nationalities are "struggling with an identity crisis". In this sense, Tusványos and its "ancestral site" are the opposite of what a sense of Europeanness would imply. Wodak argues that political unions (e.g. the European Union) promising a sort of unity threaten national uniqueness and thus lead to the rise of nationalist movements, in which identities are defined on the basis of nationality, religion, and ethnicity (2015: 109).

5. Conclusions

The sociolinguistic study of authenticity in a context that primarily communicates national unity, while also pointing out that the participants of the dialogue are Hungarians who live in different places, reveals discourses of linguistic and cultural differences. In addressing the ways in which festival participants evaluated the speech of others, I found myself in the position of being evaluated

as well, which, I argue, has shaped my access to discourses on authenticity. For instance, when it was presumed that I was a Hungarian from Hungary, one of the festival participants decided not to detail the way Hungarian is used in Hungary. On another occasion, the realization that I eventually also came from Transylvania helped in building more trust.

In the interviews conducted with Hungarians from Hungary, it seems that there is an outsider's gaze in relation to both the Hungarian language used in Transylvania and to the lifestyle imagined to be characteristic of the region. According to them, a set of moral values is also reflected in how the “simple” Szekler people live their lives, alluding to the orientalist discourse mentioned in the literature (Feischmidt 2005). One of the linguistic features identified by the festivalgoers that differentiates Hungarians from Hungary and those from Transylvania is that the latter use the *vous* form with strangers as a sign of respect, which is associated with a more conservative and less globalized attitude. The discourses around authenticity also highlighted that the geographical positioning of Transylvania and Hungary reproduce an East–West divide in terms of the socio-cultural values that become articulated through how the Hungarian language is spoken.

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Diasporic Imagination and Chronotopes

Language Ideologies in Two Hungarian Diasporic Groups in Catalonia¹

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Abstract. The ways diasporic groups emerge and diasporic identities are constructed have recently become important research topics in sociolinguistics. However, these works have not paid sufficient attention to the spatial-temporal configurations of diasporic imaginations. In this article, I intend to shed light on the ways differing diasporic imaginations are inscribed on what kind of language-related diasporic activities are created by the diasporic subjects. To answer this question, I draw on the data of an ethnographically informed critical sociolinguistic study of diasporization among Hungarians in Catalonia that I conducted between 2018 and 2022. In the analysis, I compare the chronotopic figures appearing in the life journey narratives of Hungarians in Catalonia with the ways the ideal diasporic subject was imagined in the activities of two salient diasporic organizations. The article points to the fact that diasporic imaginations do not only contain moral guidelines on how diasporic subjects should behave, but they are also determined by the time and the space diasporic subjects inhabit.

Keywords: diasporization, diasporic imagination, Hungarians in Catalonia, critical sociolinguistics, chronotope

1. Introduction

“Össze kell hangolódni, nem csak egy nyelvet beszélni” (‘You have to adapt to each other, not just speak the same language’) – said wisely Dénes once, who was one

¹ The article is based on my doctoral thesis entitled *A Critical Sociolinguistic Study of Diasporization among Hungarians in Catalonia*. The thesis has obligatorily been uploaded to the following database by the doctoral school of the Open University of Catalonia: <https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/687700>.

of the key participants of my ethnographically informed critical sociolinguistic study on diasporization among Hungarians in Catalonia. His witty comment referred to how stratified the Hungarian population in Catalonia was in terms of motivations and solidarity to each other. Although it would be tempting to speak about Hungarians in Catalonia as one single and unified diasporic community, the analysis in this article rather sheds light on the fact that even small diasporic groups can differ in their diasporic imaginations and language ideologies.

The reason for quoting Dénes's words here is that the research applied collaborative research methodologies (Fluehr-Lobban 2008, Lexander & Androutsopoulos 2021) along with an ethnographic perspective (Blommaert & Dong 2010, Heller 2011) in order to address the emic viewpoints of the interested parties (see also Bodó et al. 2022). More precisely, the key participants, Hungarians in Catalonia who showed willingness to collaborate in the research for a longer term, were invited into the research process by formulating their own questions on what they would be interested in discussing with and about other Hungarians in Catalonia (see Szabó ms.). These questions then became the basis for the discussions between the researcher and the key participants during the fieldwork. In one of these monthly gatherings, when Dénes's question was talked over on the motivations of other Hungarians in moving to Catalonia, certain participants had very different perceptions (diasporic imaginations) of how diasporic subjects should behave and how they should relate to either the homeland or the host society. In this article, I focus on how these differing diasporic imaginations are connected to the language-related diasporic activities created in the past. To capture this, I will examine the history of two diasporic organizations of Hungarians in Catalonia, namely *Katalán-Magyar Kulturális Egyesület* ([Catalan-Hungarian Cultural Association]; hereinafter: KMKE) and *Aranyalma Kör* ([Golden Apple Circle]; hereinafter: AK), by drawing on document analysis and two individual interviews conducted during the ethnographically informed fieldwork I did between 2018 and 2022.

The article is organized as follows. In the next section, I discuss how the sociolinguistic processes of diasporization can be studied with an approach called "thinking diaspora from below" proposed by Rosa and Trivedi (2017) and argue that this approach can be potentially combined with seeing the diasporic experience as chronotopically organized (Cohen 2019). After presenting the methods of data generation and data analysis drawing on the principles of ethnographic critical sociolinguistics (Heller et al. 2018), in the analytical section I compare the chronotopic figures appearing in the life journey narratives of Hungarians in Catalonia with the ways how the ideal diasporic subject was imagined in the activities of two salient and aforementioned diasporic organizations. The article ends with a discussion of the empirical findings claiming that there are unresolvable ideological tensions between the diasporic imaginations of the two examined organizations deriving from their different diasporic and migratory experiences in time and space.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

This study draws on an approach that does not see diaspora as a well-defined and stable entity of a scattered émigré community with a certain language (variety) characteristic only to that diaspora. As Canagarajah and Silberstein (2012: 82) put it, “once we stop treating diaspora as bounded, territorialized, static, and homogeneous, we begin to appreciate the role language and discourse play in its construction”. Therefore, I rather put the emphasis on the processes in which diasporic groups come to existence through the narration of common experiences and the construction of language ideologies among diasporic subjects from the same imagined homeland.

These processes are called diasporization here. By this term, I refer to the specific ways in which the diasporic is being linguistically and discursively constructed by the “claimed” members of the diaspora, as Brubaker (2005) put it. Rosa and Trivedi (2017) propose “thinking diaspora from below”, a grassroots approach in order “to track the dynamic, situated processes through which diasporic identities are constructed, enacted, and transformed” (Rosa & Trivedi 2017: 337). This way, sociolinguistics has the potential to show how diasporic identities and linguistic practices shape each other and how new language ideologies emerge through their dynamic interaction (see Sankaran 2020). Within this “thinking diaspora from below” approach, in this article, I rely on the concept of diasporic imagination, i.e. the ways diasporic subjects envisage how one should behave linguistically and socially in order to perform polycentric diasporic identities and create commonalities with other members of the diaspora or the nation (Karimzad & Catedral 2021). Combining diasporic imagination with a language ideologies perspective (Fazakas 2022, Szabó 2022) allows us to see the diasporic as characteristically dynamic and hybrid (Albury & Schluter 2021).

To adequately address diasporic imagination among Hungarians in Catalonia, I draw on the term of *chronotope*, rediscovered lately in linguistics (see Creese & Blackledge 2020, Karimzad & Catedral 2021), coined in the translations of the work of the Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). In Lyons and Tagg’s words, *chronotopes* are “the socially conditioned configurations of time and space, which reflect and determine the historical, biographical, and social relations within a given interactive context” (Lyons & Tagg 2019: 658).

Although mainly used in literary studies, *chronotopes* do not merely determine genres but images of the self and certain character developments as well (Woolard 2013). Understandably, linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics also discovered the concept recently due to its potential to explain social and linguistic relations. In Jan Blommaert’s words, *chronotopes* “invoke and enable a plot structure, characters or identities, and social and political worlds in which actions become dialogically meaningful, evaluated, and understandable in specific

ways” (Blommaert 2015: 109). The main reason for applying the concept here lies in the capability to shed light on the ways narrators, diasporic subjects in this case, do complex identity work and ideological work with references to time and space. De Fina (2016) identifies three important aspects of Bakhtin’s theory that provide an impetus for this analysis, from which the first one is the connection between chronotopes and ideologies. However, there is a line of research in Hungarian sociolinguistics that labels certain language ideological settings (such as language nonformalism; see Lanstyák 2017, 2023). In this work, I rather draw on Gal and Irvine’s (2019) approach emphasizing the constant ideological work of interactants. This approach acknowledges that language ideologies are not predefined but dynamically change in interaction from time to time and from space to space. The analysis and the excerpts in this article will also point out the diasporic subjects’ endeavour to fit a complex web of social expectations, normativities, and ideological settings that may differ in time and space.

3. Methods

This article draws on the findings of my ethnographically informed critical sociolinguistic study of diasporization among Hungarians in Catalonia (Szabó 2023), a diasporic group which started to be visible in terms of numbers after Hungary’s accession to the European Union (2004) and the Schengen Agreement (2007; see Csányi 2018) but had organizations way before these historical events. The research took place between 2018 and 2022, during which I spent a total of 2.5 years of fieldwork in Catalonia, an autonomous community in the northern part of Spain with two official languages, Castilian and Catalan. Fieldwork here means multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork that involved many activities aiming data generation within the complex social interrelations on the field (Barabás 2022). Another specific feature of the fieldwork was the constant alternating between the online and the offline space due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Fazakas & Barabás 2020) in order to keep in touch with the participants. The data generation methods consisted of participant observation, individual interviewing, online focus groups, monthly discussions with the key participants, language portraits, language diaries, and document analysis. The whole dataset of the research consisted of over 75 hours of audio recordings and 200 pages of fieldnotes.

This amount of data from various sources required unified principles to be able to deliver reliable analyses. To be able to capture the sociolinguistic dynamics through various data, Heller and colleagues (2018) propose a 4-step methodology that I heavily relied on. These four steps are mapping, tracing, connecting, and claiming. Mapping, or categorizing, is the activity of organizing the data (or elements in the data) systematically according to the rationale of

the research. This categorization can involve people, resources, activities, space, time, material objects, and so on. Tracing is the analytical activity in which the researcher follows the categories defined during the step of mapping. Connecting is the “informed explanation for what we have mapped and traced in the two previous interrelated steps of the analytical processes” (Heller et al. 2018: 114). Claiming, as the last step, is articulating what the other three steps allowed us to argue in relation to the research questions.

In this paper, I present the results of a sub-study which draws on the narratives of research participants on how Hungarian-related organizations and activities emerged and the documents available about the history of these organizations. This combination helped to fully discover “the historical body” and “the discourses in place” (Scollon & Scollon 2004) on the diasporization processes of Hungarians in Catalonia. Starting from the collaborative work with key participants, the aim of this sub-project was to show how different sub-groups exist among Hungarians in Catalonia in terms of space, time, moralities, and language ideologies; to achieve this goal, these categories were mapped, traced, and connected to each other during the analysis.

In this study, I did not treat interviews as neutral encounters but as situated events (Laihonen 2008; also inspired by oral history studies – see Ritchie 2015) in which the participants intend to construct certain self-images. This means that such interviews might be perfect for examining diasporization: not because what is said should necessarily be taken for granted but, on the contrary, because the diasporic subject will explicitly speak about how one should behave or how things should be, i.e. their diasporic imagination. This can potentially shed light on how the diasporic group under study is stratified along different language ideologies (cf. Bartha 2005).

4. Analysis

In the forthcoming analysis, I intend to explain one ideological axis in detail that created the experience of dissimilarity among Hungarians in Catalonia. This ideological axis is the way language is imagined as part of a diasporic project. To demonstrate that, I present the brief history of KMKE and AK, which were two relevant diasporic organizations of Hungarians in Catalonia in the past, and the recollections of the members of these two organizations. To understand the main ideological differences between these two groups, we first have to clarify how the ideal diasporic subject was imagined by the research participants. In another study (Szabó, in prep.), I identified five chronotopic figures in the narratives of the diasporic subjects.

By chronotopic figures, I refer to the self-ascribed identity categories of the participants that are connected to times, spaces, and moral positionings (see also Park 2021). These five chronotopic figures are the *integrálódott* ‘integrated’, the *nomád* ‘nomad’, the *kicsit távolabb élő magyar* ‘Hungarian who lives a bit further’, the *gyökértelen* ‘rootless’, and the *segítő* ‘supporting person’ (the wordings are recurrent categories from the data, articulated by the research participants themselves). While all are important in the contemporary context, in this article I focus only on two of them. These are the *integrálódott* and the *kicsit távolabb élő Magyar*, which are significant in the history of KMKE and AK. The *integrálódott* belongs to an earlier experience of migration when displacement was mostly understood as a single and irrevocable decision. For the *integrálódott*, the morally acceptable behaviour is to adjust to the local milieu as promptly as possible, which in this case means affiliation with the Catalan-speaking part of the society.

By contrasts, the figure of the *kicsit távolabb élő magyar* perceives the distances and the boundaries between the homeland and the host-land but sees them easily penetrable due to the European free movement. The *kicsit távolabb* ‘a bit further’ refers to Hungary’s proximity to other places in Europe. For the *kicsit távolabb élő magyar*, the presence in Catalonia might not necessarily be permanent, therefore they invest more in the (re)creation of emotional bond with the homeland and the Hungarian language. To point to this relation between ideologies, diasporic imaginations, and chronotopic positions, I will show excerpts from documents and two interviews with one former leading member of each organization, Hilda and Tamás (pseudonyms).

4.1. “Patriotic feelings” and the KMKE

In this section, I explore how the members of the KMKE imagined the ideal diasporic behaviour. For this purpose, I first provide an overview of the brief history of this association, drawing on the few available written sources (Baló 2011; Brachfeld Latzkó 1990; Mikes 1991, 2001) and the accounts some members gave me in interviews. The aim of this association was mainly the cultural mediation between the Hungarian and the Catalan elites by Hungarians with extended social capital in Catalonia. Thus, I argue that the ideal for the association was the chronotopic figure of the *integrálódott*, who had easily adjusted to the Catalan society, more precisely, the Catalan middle class. At the end of this section, I also shed light on how maintaining such an organization became difficult in the mid-2000s because newcomers came with new demands about how the local Hungarian community should function.

KMKE was officially established on 23 April 1987. The date is also symbolic: Saint George’s Day (Sant Jordi) is an important cultural event in Catalonia since the early 20th century. The founders of this association were Pere Joaquin

Brachfeld Montaña, Jaime Rodrigo de Larrucea, and Péter Brachfeld Latzkó. The latter person became the first president of the association and the main organizer of its events. He was still remembered as a beloved and extraordinary person by the former members during my fieldwork, some of which I interviewed. The respect towards him was expressed by referring to him as *Péter bácsi*, which is an informal but respectful way of addressing someone in Hungarian (*bácsi* could be translated as ‘uncle’, but it does not necessarily imply a family relationship).

In an early report published in a Hungarian journal, Brachfeld Latzkó (1990: 65) claimed that KMKE had around 200 members, but “a Barcelonában és Katalóniában élő magyarok száma alig éri el a 40-et, vagy 50-et” (‘the number of Hungarians living in Barcelona and Catalonia hardly reaches 40 or 50’). Its members were predominantly married couples where generally only one of the spouses was Hungarian, but the membership also included other local cultural actors too. In an interview, another prominent person of the club told me that the highest number of members they could reach at the end of the 1990s was 400, out of which approximately 100-140 were Hungarians. That might be the reason why the members referred to the association as *Barcelonai Katalán-Magyar Kulturális és Baráti Egyesület* ‘Catalan-Hungarian Cultural Friendship Association of Barcelona’ in their articles written in Hungarian (cf. Brachfeld Latzkó 1990; Mikes 1991, 2001), which was not the officially registered name of the organization but somehow (consciously or unconsciously) differentiated them from other Hungarian-related diasporic clubs around the globe. Their early activity “úttörőnek és hézgapótlónak tekinthető” (‘can be considered as pioneering and a niche’), as Brachfeld Latzkó (1990: 65) put it, because it was the first initiative to unite Hungarians and the lovers of Hungarian culture in Catalonia – and probably in the whole country.

Drawing on the aforementioned written sources (Baló 2011; Brachfeld Latzkó 1990; Mikes 1991, 2001) and the stories told to me in interviews and informal conversations, I would argue that KMKE’s role in cultural diplomacy could also be considered unique in comparison with other Hungarian émigré communities. Instead of focusing on the nostalgic reconstructions of the idealized images and habits of the homeland, this association was looking for the possibilities to create and maintain contacts and cultural bonds between the elites of the sending and the host societies. More precisely, most of their programmes were based on mediating high culture such as book launches of contemporary Hungarian books and their Spanish translations, lectures on historical and cultural topics, fine art exhibitions, and film screenings. Mikes (2001) argues that KMKE had multiple objectives since its inception: to create a community of Hungarian individuals living in Barcelona, to introduce Hungarian culture and history to Catalans, and to organize the teaching of Hungarian language at the university level – unfortunately, the success of this last objective was only ephemeral (see Mikes 1991).

These aims might be best understood in terms of two factors. The first is a geopolitical one: in the late 1980s, Catalonia was still a fairly young autonomous community amongst the preparation of the Olympic Games in Barcelona, while Hungary was also expected to start its democratic transition soon. According to my interviews with some early members, the Catalan elite displayed a great interest in following the political events of Hungary at that time. Hungary was seen as exemplary in gaining independence from oppression, namely from the influence of the Soviet Union. Thus, in the years of the regime change and the first free elections (1989–1990), the members of KMKE wrote reports and reviews for the local press (see Mikes 2001: 35). Official international relations started to revitalize between Spain and Hungary at the time, and the General Consulate of Hungary in Barcelona also came into existence in 1992. Although KMKE remained independent from the consulate, some of their events were organized together.

Besides the mutual interests the elites of the two nations expressed, KMKE embodied something close to the moral position of the figure of the *integrálódott* ‘integrated’. Integration in this case referred precisely to the integration by émigré Hungarians into the Catalan (upper-)middle class and cultural elite. This was a direct consequence of the migratory profiles of the members.

As stated above by Brachfeld Latzkó (1990), these Hungarians were mostly married into Catalan families, and they had arrived in Catalonia for marital reasons. In this sense, their life journey differed from most of the diasporic narratives I had access to. Most of my participants were neither displaced from their country of origin for political reasons nor did they emigrate for the hope of a better life and economic prosperity. Thanks to their local ties, these people had been able to promptly gain social capital in Catalonia. In this sense, they did not need the support of other Hungarians locally. On the contrary, the expected behaviour of the *integrálódott* diasporic subject was to utilize its social capital for creating connections between the host culture and the cultural elites back in Hungary.

The social network of the association was fairly extensive. For instance, the inaugural meeting elected Jordi Maragall i Noble as honorary president, who was a lawyer and a politician, at that time a senator for Barcelona province. In addition, the writer Josep Maria Castellet became the honorary vice-president. Castellet was the chief editor of the publishing house Edicions 62, which published Hungarian authors’ works translated to Catalan. The local social capital mobilized by Brachfeld Latzkó can also be traced in the venues of the events: most of them were organized in the auditorium of the Ateneu Barcelonès, which is still an important and traditional organization of the Catalan intelligentsia in the heart of Barcelona. From the 1990s, the cultural activities of KMKE remained important. Just to mention a few of them: a Hungarian-language almanac on Catalonia was published in 1992. In 2000, a roundtable was organized on Hungarian literature with special attention to poetry with both Hungarian and Catalan participants.

In 2001 and 2002, a series of 14 lectures on Hungarian geography, history, music, and other disciplines was supported by UNESCO (for more details, see Baló 2011, Mikes 2001). However, after Brachfeld Latzkó died in 2003, the frequency of the events organized by the Association decreased significantly.

Some of his followers remained active in propagating the maintenance of Hungarian and Catalan cultural bonds. Drawing on Mikes's words, the task of the Association was "nemcsak a magyarság összetartása, hanem ezen jóval túlmenően Magyarország, a magyar művelődés és a magyar történelem megismertetése és megszerettetése az egyébként is érdeklődő katalán közönséggel" ('not only to bring Hungarians together but, beyond that, to promote Hungary, Hungarian culture, and Hungarian history to Catalan audiences who have already demonstrated their interest'; Mikes 2001). However, from the 2000s, a generational conflict emerged, which was labelled *a nagy szakadás* 'the great rupture' in one of my interviews. As the number of Hungarian migrants in the region started to increase, their interests started to change as well.

The composition of the Hungarian population in Catalonia diversified in terms of socioeconomic status, education, and profession. For instance, a demand emerged for a group of people to organize weekend school-like activities for the children of the newcomers.

The excerpt below is from an interview with one of the members of KMKE. It serves as an explanation to why this generational conflict was seen as a "great rupture" by the elders. According to Hilda's narrative, new Hungarians, who arrived in Catalonia around the millennium, had a different set of values than the one she and her generation had.

Excerpt 1

Hilda: azok a fiatalok, akik már nem is fiatalok, akik csinálják ezt az egyesületet, egy a probléma velük, hogy csak gyerekfoglalkozásokat készítenek, és csak a magyar magnak. tehát egyszerűen fel sem merül bennük, hogy mást is lehetne csinálni, esetlegesen lehetne előadásokat csinálni, kulturális kiállításokat csinálni @. csak gyerekprogramok vannak, ami nagyon jó, hogy van, nagyon jó, de hát ez mondjuk egy- egy akkora- ez ténylegesen csak a magyar- a fiatal magyar házaspárokat érdekli, és az összes többit nem (#laugh). tehát ő ez nagyon jó, de szerintem mást is kellene csinálniuk, de mind amikor mondtuk ezt a (#delete: male name), meg én is ő egy-két embernek, akkor nem érdekelt a dolog őket. tehát szerintem ez a hazafias érzelmek, amik voltak bennünk, az szerintem- most már mindenki nagyon európai, és mindenki nagyon világpolgár, és szerintem ezek az érzelmek szerintem nincsenek meg az emberekben. és szóval akkor még itt lehetett magyarul beszélni sokat, hetente voltak rendezvényeink, és havonta egy előadás, s havonta egy koncert

Hilda: the youngsters, who are not young anymore, who do this [other] association, there is one problem with them that they only do activities for children and only for the Hungarian core. they don't even think to do something else, perhaps doing lectures, doing cultural exhibitions @. there are only activities for children, which is very good that it exists, but it let's say a- a- such- it factually only interests Hungarian- young Hungarian couples, and no one else (#laugh). so ehm this is very good, but I think they should do something else too, but when we told this both (#delete: male name), and I to ehm one-two people, they were not interested in the thing. so I think the patriotic feelings we had I think- now everyone is very European, everyone is very cosmopolitan, and I think people don't have these feelings. and so back then it was possible to speak Hungarian a lot, we had events every week, a lecture every month, and a concert every month

The way Hilda was speaking about the role of such activities differed from the mainstream discourse on language maintenance in the diaspora (see Hatoss 2020). Organizing and participating in educational programmes specialized for the children of emigrants is usually treated as the most essential thing one could do for the transmission of the language and culture. Hilda, however, found this programme too limited, alleging there was only a low number of people who could be addressed. Her narrative indexically linked patriotic feelings to certain types of activities that were aimed at local people to familiarize them with Hungarian high culture. This is also connected to the figure of the *integrálódott* and the chronotopically salient moral position behind it. Hilda pointed out the morally acceptable choices in the past (from her point of view) and judged others' past and present choices both in the narrated event and in the event of speaking from the moral position that was opposed to Europeaness and cosmopolitanism.

According to other reports (Baló 2011, Mikes 2001), she might have exaggerated the frequency of the events organized by KMKE, but what is more important is that these events were attributed to speaking Hungarian and patriotic feelings, while the activities for Hungarian-origin children were not.

This interview excerpt is a good example of how the expectations towards the social practices of other speakers work and how a different diasporic experience might emerge at a particular historical moment. Hilda represents the older generation, who perceived that something had inevitably changed in the way they had experienced what being Hungarian in Catalonia meant. From the overview of the history of KMKE, we can see that its activities were extremely important in the milieu of the 1980s and 1990s. However, the Hungarian newcomers from the early 2000s were gradually bringing in new understandings and new priorities (switching the ideal of the *integrálódott*), such as living in the Europe of free

movement, maintaining the opportunity of moving back to Hungary, and teaching Hungarian for the second generation. In the next section, I show how the increase in the number of Hungarians in Catalonia had consequences for the development of another Hungarian diasporic group.

4.2. “A good idea to gather” and the AK

By comparing the narratives and life trajectories of the research participants, it seems clear that the motivations of the population newly arrived during the 2000s differed from the ideal of the *integrálódott* represented in the way of looking at the morally acceptable means of the diasporic as prompt adjustment to the Catalan society. These new people were “infected” with the idea of free movement in Europe. This does not necessarily mean that this population remained fully and consistently unintegrated. It just means that they had other preferences compared to the previous generations, such as creating closer bonds with the homeland and contemporary Hungarian culture. The chronotopic ideal of the people who started to engage in new Hungarian-speaking activities from the second part of the 2000s could be best described with the label *kicsit távolabb élő magyar* ‘Hungarian who lives a bit further’. As Hilda also observed in Excerpt 1, the new Hungarian population did not consider mediating Hungarian high culture for the Catalan audience to be the most important activity they could do. The needs of the community have changed in terms of the contacts with the homeland as their opportunities for frequent visits became feasible. The new needs and the opportunities required new solutions in organizing Hungarians in Catalonia.

From the second part of the 2000s, a new group was formed of people in their 30s with families. The name they used for this group was *Aranyalma Kör*, which is indicative of their main interest. *Aranyalma* ‘golden apple’ is a motif that frequently appears in Hungarian folklore, especially in folktales, while *Kör* (literally meaning ‘circle’) refers to a group of people sharing the same interests. The intention was clear: to organize events where language, folk culture, and other sorts of knowledge associated with nationality can be shared and transmitted to younger generations. Their meetups were mostly party-like gatherings of families where a few parents prepared some activities for the children, although in some cases, artists from Hungary, such as singers and storytellers, were also invited. However, AK never became a formally registered club or association, as the organizers did not feel the need to do so. They did not apply for any financial aid either from Catalan cultural organizations or Hungarian ones.

The group members financed each of their gatherings, which usually meant only the costs of food and the rent of a venue. The invited guests were accommodated in the homes of the members.

The organizers estimated that they were in contact with around a hundred families. Tamás, who was there from the beginning, recalled this period in the interview as follows.

Excerpt 2

Tamás: emlékeim szerint olyan száz család volt a levelezőlistánkon, tehát lélekben száz családdal tartottuk a kapcsolatot, de persze a foglalkozásokra, az összejövetelekre ő ennél kevesebben jöttek, de ő így is népes társaság alakult ő ő jött össze. [...] még az Aranyalma előtt ő a konzulátusnak volt egy ő évi legalább egyszeri rendszeresen össz- összejövetele. ezt úgy hívtuk, a legalább egyszerit, a Mikulás ő rendezvény, ő ahol lehetett találkozni itt élő magyarokkal. tulajdonképpen az Aranyalma is félig-meddig ezekből a Mikulás-rendezvényekből nőtt ki, és próbálta őket rendszeressé tenni nem évente egyszer-kétszeri találkozóval, hanem legalább havi egyszeri találkozóval. [...] mondta a (#delete: female name), hogy ezek a dánok, a dán anyák ő havonta rendeznek ő ugyanott ebbe a műteremben összejöveteleket, ahol énekelnek, mesélnek, jól érzik magukat, beszélgetnek, ő gyerekekkel foglalkoznak. és mondta a (#delete: female name), hogy ha a dánok meg tudják csinálni, akkor mi miért ne tudnánk megcsinálni? úgyhogy ez- szerintem ez ha már nem én vagyok az ötletgazda, de van egy ilyen jó ötlet, akkor ez tökéletes ő ő leírja az én hozzáállásomat, hogy ha itt él szétszórva egy magyar közösség, ha van egy jó ötlet, amivel össze lehet őket fogni, akkor miért ne tudnánk ezt megcsinálni? ő és- és- és ő hát ez adott erőt meg ez- ez adott lelkesedést számomra abban, hogy- vagy ahhoz, hogy ebben részt vegyek, és- és a- közreműködjek abba, hogy ebből legyen valami. tehát ha a dánok tudják, akkor tuti, hogy mi is meg tudjuk csinálni, és végül meg is csináltuk, és nagyon jól éreztük magunkat, és nagyon jó rendezvényeket szerveztünk

Tamás: according to my memories, there were like a hundred families on our mailing list, so we maintained the contact with a hundred families in spirit, but of course to the activities, to the gatherings ehm fewer of them came, but ehm there was still a large bunch [of people] ehm ehm who came together. [...] before the Aranyalma ehm the consulate had one ehm per year at least one regular gath- gathering. we called it, at least one of them, the Santa Claus ehm event, ehm where one could meet other Hungarians living here. Actually Aranyalma also grew out from this Santa Claus event more or less, and tried to make it more regular than having only one or two gatherings per year, but at least one gathering per month. [...] (#delete: female name) told us that these Danish, the Danish mothers ehm organize a gathering per month ehm in this art studio where they sing, they tell stories, feel good, talk, ehm do activities for children. and (#delete: female

name) said if the Danish can do it, why couldn't we do it? so this- I think if I'm not the mastermind behind it, but there is a good idea, then this perfectly ehm ehm describes my attitude, if a Hungarian community lives here scattered, if there's a good idea to gather them, why couldn't we do it? ehm and- and- and ehm well this gave me strength and this- this gave me enthusiasm in that- or for that to participate in this and- and to- contribute to make it a thing. so if the Danish can do it, then it's sure that we can also do it, and finally we could do it, and had a great time, and we organized very good events

The organizers of AK created a mailing list through which they advertised their events to the interested people. As Tamás outlined, the events had two main inspirations. The General Consulate of Hungary had already organized an event every year in which they somehow reconstructed the Hungarian tradition of the Santa Claus party where children receive gifts on the name-day of Saint Nicholas (6 December). Tamás and his fellows aimed to make such happenings more frequent for their children. Interestingly, the other inspiration came from another diasporic group. Back then, a Hungarian woman was working in an art studio which was rented for an event every month by Danish people for educational and socialization purposes; thus, this woman suggested to her fellow Hungarians that they should do something similar.

For KMKE, impetus was given by Catalan cultural bodies, while AK was rather influenced by Hungarians and the interaction with other foreign populations. The figure described as *kicsit távolabb élő magyar* 'Hungarian who lives a bit further' sees its life in less eschatological terms than the *integrálódott*. On the one hand, when integration is mentioned, it is always chronotopized as a unidimensional process between cultures from which there is no return. On the other hand, the chronotope represented by the one "who lives a bit further" is more complex in terms of the myriad opportunities for the future, and thus, it also holds the possibility of settling in a less permanent way.

Following this line, it might seem that a certain concept of nationality operates as the driving force for the social organization of diasporic communities. However, it is important to emphasize that the diasporic picture is more complex than one's mere understanding of nationality. This is especially true for the activities of the AK, as the members' diasporic imagination referred to a fluid and mobile notion of one's national and ethnic belonging. For them, (re)creating closer bonds with the homeland was not necessarily only a nationalistic move, rather one that also supports multicultural belonging. For instance, András, one of the other leaders of the AK, said, "szerintem Magyarországról nem értik, hogy mi a kétnyelvűség az egész- vagy soknyelvűség, sok kultúrához tartozás, és azér egy olyan- olyan- ilyen béna magyar kultúrát próbálnak nyomtatni, ami nekünk nem releváns" ('I think

[they who are] in Hungary do not understand what bilingualism is, the whole- or plurilingualism, belonging to multiple cultures, and thus they try to push that-that- this lame Hungarian culture which is not relevant for us’).

These different experiences of diasporization clearly stem from the socio-technical contexts; travel and digital connectivity have also become more accessible. Tamás and his fellows considered contacts with Hungary not only in terms of cultural mediation but also in terms of actual life choices. They wanted their children to be familiarized with experiences of Hungarian heritage, which might then also result in temporary or even permanent stay in the home country as they anticipate that maybe they or their children will continue moving from one place to another.

5. Conclusions

In this article, I compared the language ideological embeddedness of two diasporic groups among Hungarians in Catalonia in the context of diasporic imaginations. The data came from an ethnographically informed critical sociolinguistic study of diasporization for which I conducted fieldwork between 2018 and 2022 (Szabó 2023). The sub-study I summarized was about the ways diasporic groups emerged in the brief history of Hungarian presence in Catalonia (see also Szabó, in prep). The theoretical concept I applied was chronotope, the spatio-temporal frameworks that indicate moral and language ideological positions in the narratives (Blommaert 2015, Karimzad & Catedral 2021). In the analysis, I showed excerpts from documents and two individual interviews.

The first such group I studied was the *Katalán-Magyar Kulturális Egyesület* (KMKE). Their activity might be easily understood in line with the chronotope of integration; the members were upper-middle-class people who intended to contribute to the mediation between Catalan and Hungarian high culture. In these terms, the members merged the symbolic capital they brought with themselves from one place with the cultural and social capital obtained at the other place that certainly defined the way they imagined an ideal behaviour of the newcomers.

As the number of Hungarians in Catalonia significantly increased after the turn of the millennium, their experiences also diversified. The second diasporic group, the *Aranyalma Kör* (AK) was made up of people who saw themselves as Hungarians who lived a bit further in the sense that they arrived in a new geopolitical era that also characterized the way they looked at their mobility. That was imagined in the context of a European free movement, which also implied the possibility of returning or maintaining a life drawing on two localities. Thus, their activities were focusing more on the second generation; they mostly organized events for families where their children could meet with modern Hungarian culture.

Going back to the initial thought of Dénes in the introduction of this article, speaking the same language was not considered sufficient for Hungarians in Catalonia in the times when the number of this population started to rise in the first decade of the 2000s. But they could not adapt to each other either due to certain language ideological conflicts over different diasporic imaginations. This article showed that these imaginations do not only contain moral guidelines on how diasporic subjects should behave, but they are also determined by the time and the space diasporic subjects inhabit.

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Between Two Worlds

The Representation of Refugees in the Short Stories of Anna Vörös

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Abstract. Anna Vörös's collection of short stories, *Vadoma* (2022), offers a completely novel perspective on refugees in contemporary Hungarian literature. The collection focuses on Vadoma, a young refugee girl of Syrian origin, who is the first-person narrator of most of the short stories. The reader can follow the young girl's path from Aleppo to Budapest as she faces dilemmas and problems. The main issue of our hero is the fact that she is stuck between two worlds, as her old life and city of origin do not exist anymore, but Budapest has yet to become her home. Her mother tongue and words are no longer enough to express her experiences, but she has not learnt a new language yet. Mariangelo Pallodino's concept of "islandment", which refers to landing without arrival, expresses Vadoma's situation perfectly. The present study examines whether Anna Vörös's short stories can be read in the context of refugee literature, and it looks at how the figure of the refugee appears in them. Special attention is paid to the themes of cultures, religions, languages, and the in-betweenness of identities.

Keywords: refugee literature, Anna Vörös, islandment, language, identity, in-betweenness

Introduction

The migrant crisis of recent years is not a dominant theme in contemporary Hungarian literature, but it has been turning up more often. Most of the texts

are written from the perspective of Western culture and are heavily imbued with stereotypes. The depicted refugees seldom have a voice. This is not highly striking because Hungary is a transit country; there are other destinations for refugees. Anna Vörös's first collection of short stories, *Vadoma* (2022), is a refreshing exception. It paints a much nuanced picture of the refugee crisis. The precise distinction between different racial groups of refugees is quite a new element in contemporary Hungarian literature, but this is not the only peculiarity of the book.

Vadoma is the I-narrator of most of the short stories; she is a young girl from Aleppo, who crossed the sea to dock on the shores of Europe. After several refugee camps, she arrived in Budapest, in a dormitory, where she tried to fit into Hungarian society. She learns Hungarian, makes friends, and gets acquainted with the differences between the Muslim and Christian cultures. Three timelines meet in the short stories – the past in Aleppo (right before and during the Syrian civil war), the present in Budapest, and the missing future of the refugee characters. Anna Vörös describes everything based on her experiences as a volunteer in refugee camps, altogether avoiding stereotypes. It is worth emphasizing that the author volunteered in refugee camps in Turkey, Greece, and Egypt, so she has a wide range of knowledge of refugees, their motivations, and their circumstances. These experiences and the knowledge accumulated in the volume of Anna Vörös guarantee that the reader feels *Vadoma*'s thoughts, doubts, and emotions are genuine. Her insider view makes her capable of grasping the essence of the refugee crisis, avoiding didactics.

The reader follows the title character's path from Syria to Hungary. The main "scenes" of displacement appear during her journey, and they include home, sea crossings, borders, and refugee camps. Out of these sites, the analysis focuses foremost on the sea crossing, which already is a liminal space in itself, but it also has a very complex meaning. It serves as an excellent symbol for the position of the main character, who is between two worlds, as she left her home but cannot arrive to her new home. The refugee camp plays a similar role. Mariangelo Palladino's 'islandment', a term this study deals with in detail, is useful in the analysis of both of these places. The study also considers whether the collection can be read as refugee literature, the philological questions and reception of the short stories, as well as the protagonist's difficulties in integrating, touching upon the issues of identity, language, and religion.

Anna Vörös's *Vadoma* as refugee literature

Although fleeing has been part of humanity since the beginning of times, the 20th and 21st centuries have seen greater migration than any previous eras. In his essay, "Reflections on Exile", Edward Said highlights that "Modern Western

culture is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, refugees” (Said 2000: 173). Sercan Hamza Bağlama calls the 21st century the era of the refugee crisis and observes that examples of contemporary refugee literature “mostly provide a realistic snapshot of the nature of a refugee ‘crisis’ and thematize the process of victimization and dehumanization experienced by internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers fleeing the civil war in Syria or elsewhere in the Middle East or the Global South” (Bağlama 2020: 632). Fatemeh Pourjafari and Abdolali Vahidpour use the term of migrant literature. According to them, it “implies that subject matter will be about migration and the culture and tradition of the host nation”. They state that although migration experiences and adaptation are the main themes in this kind of literature, it can be “very diverse, either thematically or structurally” (Fatemeh & Abdolali 2014: 680).

Literature written by and about refugees can be considered refugee literature (Gallien 2018: 723). Anna Bernard emphasizes three genres of refugee literature: poetry, verbatim theatre, and graphic narrative (Bernard 2020: 66–67). Literary works “provide an alternative site for refugees’ claims for recognition and justice, a site where such claims might be received with openness rather than suspicion, and where the reader might be willing to act as an ally rather than a judge” (Bernard 2020: 67). Arthur Rose discusses refugee writings in the context of the exile memoir (Rose 2020: 55–57).

Anna Vörös’s collection of short stories, *Vadoma*, examines the story of a refugee girl, so it can be read as refugee literature that is about refugees. The texts are about the once peaceful everyday life and holidays in Syria, the destruction of war, the escape of the hero, as well as attempts of integration in Hungary. The characteristic topoi of refugee literature, such as the border, walls, papers, or water (Stan 2017: 797), all appear in the short stories. Although they were not written in one of the genres mentioned by Bernard, like poems, the short stories are brief and can be written in a short amount of time, and, similarly to verbatim theatre, they are based on the experiences of refugees, even though they were not written by a refugee. Remembering and forgetting, or the memoir, is also relevant in the stories. Although *Vadoma* would like to forget, she is continually remembering the stories of her past, and her memories weave through the narrative of the present.

The genealogy and reception of *Vadoma*

The short stories of Anna Vörös can be read in journals since 2016, but once arranged as a collection, we can observe a number of differences between the collection and the journal publication. The previous third-person narrator has been changed in almost all cases to a first-person one, and thus the narration becomes a lot more personal. Furthermore, the previously more didactic

passages are left out of the collection. In some instances, the titles were changed – for example, instead of “Vadoma szédül” [Vadoma is dizzy], “Szédül” [Dizzy] becomes the new title used in the collection. In the case of “Sátorverés” [Putting up a tent], we encounter “Vadoma találkozik Faresh-sel” [Vadoma meets Faresh]. The short story “Vadoma meglátogat” [Vadoma visits me] ends up in the collection with significant changes, as its central plot, the news, discussing events in Aleppo, becomes part of the short story “Hírek” [News]. The texts of the *Zempléni Múzsza* are told from the perspective of a Westerner, but the collection reflects Vadoma’s perspective. In the former text, the I-narrator, whom Vadoma visits, does not know how to behave with Vadoma and looks at her helplessly while she stares, mesmerized, at the news about her hometown, before breaking down in tears. This scene reminds the reader of Luc Boltanski’s (1999) concept of distant suffering. In the short story collection “Hírek” [News], Vadoma visits her dorm roommate’s family in Szentendre, and the news do not affect her nearly as much as they do in the other text. According to her, six months before, she could not have handled watching the images, but they no longer cause her pain, in fact, they seem distant to her. Instead, the short story focuses on the differences between the two cultures. The first-person narrator discusses greeting forms, the differences between the scents of eastern and European homes, and the fact that in Syria under no circumstances can women smoke in public. For this reason, when Vadoma accepts a cigarette from her roommate’s father, she gets out of the habits of her previous life. It would have been unimaginable to light up in front of other people at home, so this scene could not have played out in front of her father or other men in Syria. It is not only the act of smoking but also the cigarette itself that serves as a reminder of the difference between the two worlds. Because tobacco manufacturers vary their products according to the given region’s or country’s market and taste, it is not surprising that the Hungarian cigarette irritates Vadoma’s throat in a different way, and her palate experiences the bitterness differently as well.

Anna Gács reads *Vadoma* in a transcultural narrative context, drawing attention to the issue of cultural appropriation regarding the short stories. Although the author, Anna Vörös, a member of the dominant culture, represents the perspective of a minority culture, that of the Muslim refugee, she manages to do so without cultural appropriation. Gács stresses that the collection aims to serve multiple purposes in actual Hungarian society, as it can simultaneously be considered fiction, an awareness-spreading work, a memoir, a work dissecting transcultural awareness, and anti-discourse (Gács 2023: 105). Csaba Károlyi also considers this to be the most valuable characteristic of the collection. According to Károlyi, certain information communicated by the characters in the stories are not meant to serve literary prose but rather informative purposes, yet the author manages to successfully interweave these parts into the text.

Károlyi considers the works of the collection to be serious literary work while dismissing the more lyrical parts (Károlyi 2023). Anna Gács, on the other hand, considers Vadoma's visions and associations the strongest part of the lyrical prose language. In her opinion, sections with the explanations are less inventive, but she accepts their necessity. Gács considers characterization as the collection's weakness, as, according to her, neither Vadoma nor her dorm roommate are individualized characters. To Gács, both seem to be the stereotypical representatives of their own groups. She draws attention, however, to the "Glosszárium" [Glossary], found in the collection after the short stories. This is no ordinary explanation of words but rather the author's own record of development in which she presents her own personal experiences to the reader (Gács 2023: 106–108).

Arriving without arrival

The aquatic migration routes into Europe lead through the Mediterranean – overloaded flimsy boats are visual symbols of the migration crisis in the media, and frequent shipwrecks fan the flames. The Italian fishermen's catch often contains dead bodies, and some Italian beaches are covered with human remains again and again. In the light of all this, it is not surprising that the Mediterranean Sea is an accentuated topic in refugee studies.

Hakim Abderrezak interprets the Mediterranean in three ways. Firstly, as a sieve, "as a netted entity that allows a select few through while preventing most others from making it to the other side" (Abderrezak 2020: 376). Secondly, he examines the sea crossings related to the Arab Spring. Thirdly, he uses the neologism the 'Mediterranean seametry' "to capture the oxymoronic nature of the sea in which liquidity has become synonymous with immobility precipitated by preposterous and rigid policies that have transformed a sea into a cemetery" (Abderrezak 2020: 373). As cemeteries are set up on the outskirts of the city, seametry also appears on the borders of Europe. But it is not an open and public space like other cemeteries, "the Global South 'visitor' can only be admitted if dead". Seametry is not a general cemetery because most of the victims in it are Muslims, so it makes changes in traditional Muslim burial practices (Abderrezak 2020: 383–384).

The relationship of death and sea is also an inspiration for artists. For example, David Farrier draws attention to Nikolaj Larsen's group of sculptures called *End of Dreams* which commemorates "the thousands of people who die crossing the Mediterranean". The artworks made from concrete canvas symbolize dead bodies, and they are covered with barnacles and other marine organisms. The composition's aim is to highlight how the stories of refugees "are subsumed by other, more powerful narratives – forms of discursive violence, which reduce refugees to mere 'bodies of water', in concert with forms of structural violence" (Farrier 2020: 353).

Portrayals like this focus attention on the zoopolitical and biopolitical aspects of the migration crisis. Joseph Pugliese examines the process wherein human asylum seekers become non-humans in the Western attitude towards them and the language used to describe them. His very expressive example for this phenomenon is the case of two dead Roma girls in Torregaveta. The bodies of the girls washed up on the beach, and holidaymakers continued their vacation beside their covered dead bodies, which were treated as beach litter. “The corpses of these two young Roma girls delineate border zones of the dead. – states Pugliese – In their death, they stake out littoral death zones that mark the line of division between the human and the non-human, between the dead worthy of commemoration and mourning and the dead who are, rather, a nuisance or a form of pollution that needs to be dealt with” (Pugliese 2020: 358–359).

Pugliese refers to the systematic humiliation of refugees, too. For example, the refugee camp in Calais is called Jungle, but the fences constructed on national borders against migrants also testify to animal treatment, “they emblematised the EU’s sovereign exercise of zoopolitical violence” (Pugliese 2020: 365–366, 368).

All these motifs appear in the short stories of Anna Vörös. Vadoma recalls her sea crossing travelling on a crowded tram in the short story entitled “Emléketörés” [Memory Hack]. Of particular importance in the description are bodies stretched against each other, fear, vulnerability, stormy waves, the taste of salt, unbearable sunlight...

We can also find Hakim Abderrezak’s concepts in the text such as the sea as sieve and seametry. Vadoma wonders how and why someone survives this perilous journey, but she shows the dehumanizing treatment of refugees as well:

It’s hard to decide who receives Allah’s mercy, whose life is worth what, whose is worth enough to be swallowed by the surf, only for the bloated body to be found later, with disgust, no one daring to touch it. And who reaches the shore to be screamed at, to be dragged, to have what clothing remains yanked off, and they don’t care that we collapse unconscious on one another, they push the whole miserable group to move on, to give up our place to other wretched beings who’ve been thrown to shore by the sea. Dead or alive, it doesn’t matter by then. (Vörös 2022: 11–12)¹

1 The translations from Hungarian literature are my own throughout the article. “Nehéz eldönteni, kinek kegyelmez Allah, kinek mennyire értékes az élete, kié annyi, hogy csak elnyeljük a tajtékok, és később undorodva találják meg a felpuffadt testét, amihez már senki sem mer hozzáérni. És ki ér partot, hogy ott üvöltösek vele, letépjék a maradék ruháját, ahogy rángatják, és nem érdekli őket, hogy ájultan rogyunk egymásra, taszigálják az egész nyomorult csoportot, hogy haladjunk, adjuk át a helyünket más szerencsétleneknek, akiket kidob a tenger, holtan vagy élve, akkor már nem számít.” (Vörös 2022: 11–12)

She recalls the deaths as well. A woman fell out of the boat; they could not save her. They watched for a long time as her body was tossed by the waves. The sight of orange life jackets looming from the sea below also testifies to more dead bodies. The passengers were pressed even further together to stay alive.

The sea was not just a sieve but a killing device. Those who drank sea water died, and the corpses began to stink, so they had to be thrown out of the boat. The description of the dead floating on the waves contrasts with the dehumanizing attitude demonstrated by Pugliese. The reason of the poetic, idyllic phrasing and the endowing of the dead bodies with living qualities is the inner point of view of the I-narrator. She shares their fate; she could be one of them:

They lay with spread arms and legs on top of the froth, as if they had swum too far while playing a game, and were bobbing with the waves while they collected their strength to swim back to shore, listening to the noise of the gulls and the beachgoers. They allowed their bodies to cool, their faces to stay hot. They tried to listen to the heartbeat of the immense mass of water beneath them. They seemed light. (Vörös 2022: 11)²

In contrast, the I-narrator characterizes the living with the dead:

I closed my eyes and thought that when they'd find us, they'd send us back to where we came from, but we won't have a human face by then, it'll be peeling from the salt and from exhaustion, salt streams will be pouring off our bodies, we'll flay the sea off of our bodies in pieces, we'll barely have the strength to roll out of this boat to the bare ground, the terrifyingly cold, dead ground. (Vörös 2022: 11)³

Vadoma finds it difficult to escape from the trauma of the sea crossing. She does not want to remember the sea, the taste of the salt, the pain, and the emptiness. She does not want to be a refugee, she wants to be saved, she wants to finally arrive somewhere.

The question of arrival is more difficult than we think. The landfall unfortunately does not evidently mean arrival. Mariangela Palladino deals with

2 "Széttárt karokkal meg lábakkal feküdtek a habok tetején, mintha csak túl messzire úsztak volna be játék közben, és amíg elég erőt gyűjtöttek a kiúszáshoz, ringatták magukat, és hallgatták a sirályok meg a fürdőzők zsviváját. Engedték, hogy testük lehűljön, az arcuk viszont forró maradjon. Próbálták meghallani az alattuk lévő irdatlan víztömeg szívverését. Könnyűnek látszottak." (Vörös 2022: 11)

3 "Behunytam a szemem, és arra gondoltam, hogy amikor megtalálnak minket, visszaküldenek, menjünk, ahonnan elvergődtünk, de addigra már nem lesz emberi arcunk, mállani fog a sótól és a fáradtságtól, sópatakok fognak ömleni rólunk, darabokban hámozzuk magunkról a tengert, és annyi erőnk lesz csak, hogy kivágódjunk ebből a csónakból a csupasz földre, az ijesztően hideg, halott földre." (Vörös 2022: 11)

this topic in depth. Her notion, ‘islandment’, which integrates the words island and encampment, summarizes the contradictory interpretations of reaching the shores of Europe, interrogates and problematizes the rhetoric of hospitality in the migration discourse:

Islandment is a lived situation; it is arrival without an end to the journey; it signifies detention, and the double incarceration on the island by both the fences of the camp and the sea; islandment is inhabiting a liminal space in Europe but not quite so, neither geographically nor legally; it is a discursive category to defamiliarise the sea and reconfigure it as a destination. I place the notion of islandment amid a body of scholarship – especially in cultural theory and social studies – on islands as carceral spaces, on encampment, and the rhetoric of reception and hospitality surrounding immigration today. (Palladino 2020: 395)

Palladino’s concept points out the phenomenon of institutional hospitability, the inhospitable reception of refugees as unwanted guests, and the trespasses of authorities. The fences of refugee camps are indicative of imprisonment. The island and the refugee camp are also liminal spaces, as the sea, the migrants cannot break out or escape. They are just waiting there in the hope of arrival.

The problematicity of reaching the shores, the feeling of arriving without arrival can be found in “Vadoma”, too. The short story “Menni, menni, menni” [Go, go, go] describes the young girl’s landfall. She had not imagined that moment before, and she did not know what to do. It was impossible to act like normal people, get up, get out of the boat, and walk past to the nearest shop to buy some beverages and bread. The passengers walked towards the volunteer’s tent with blank looks, hesitantly.

Life jacket mountains are closely associated with the visual representation of landing. We can see them in the media representations of the migrant crisis, but they also appear in Sally El Hosaini’s film *The Swimmers* (2022), which is based on the true story of the Mardini sisters. Vadoma also notices the piles of life jackets on the shores:

The horizon is lost in the fog, one can’t decide where the surface of the water ends and the sky begins. [...] Life jackets, split cans, banana peels litter the shore. [...] To the left, several steps away, two shabby boats pierce the sand. A third is tipped on its side, half sunk, it moved rhythmically in and out of the water, as if it were still trying to land. (Vörös 2022: 14)⁴

4 “A horizont ködbe veszett, nem lehet eldönteni, hol ér véget a vízfelszín és hol kezdődik az ég. [...] A parton szétdobálva mentőmellények, felhasított konzervdobozok, banánhéjak. [...] Balra, jó pár lépésnyire két ütött-kopott csónak fúródott a homokba. Egy harmadik az oldalára

In addition to external circumstances, it is also important to pay attention to internal events and feelings. Vadoma concentrated on getting up without help, and after she succeeded in getting out of the boat, she sat in the sand. She did not want to be one of the others. Her thoughts are consistent with the dilemmas of Parvati Nair's informant, Samir, who asks himself every day "Is this why I crossed the sea? Is this why I kissed death?" (Nair 2020: 420):

How could this be called arrival, this dark grey sandy, cold shore, which I think might have been Greece, I was too embarrassed to ask. It's not over yet, and this sentence, which had calmed me and given me strength before because, yes, we can go on, there's a where to, look forward, there's always a new country, new cities, there'd be new people, who'd give me new names, which I'd learn to respond to, with time, I'll forget them, I'll find new favourite roads to follow, which will take me to my new home, I can learn however many trades, then I'll pack and move on anyway, and all these possibilities, all these maybes and evens crushed my shoulder with a force I hadn't known before. (Vörös 2022: 16)⁵

Imprisoned by the refugee camps

We find detailed descriptions of refugee camps in Anna Vörös's short stories. These camps, a number of which are visited by the protagonist, can remind the reader of prisons, due to their barbed wire barriers, or of summer camps thanks to volunteers leading various music-related activities. The camps cannot be located exactly, but the texts tell us that Vadoma resided in a number of them. Their inclusion in the stories allows the author to make use of and share her own authentic experiences as a volunteer with the readers; moreover, we can familiarize ourselves with the fates of a number of other refugees from the faceless crowd.

Alongside Vadoma, the reader has an opportunity to meet Faresh, a nine-year-old Afghani boy who tells people he is twenty-eight years old. He is the only minor in the camp without a chaperone. Although he cannot read or write, he has

dőlt, félig elsüllyedve, ritmikusan hol előrébb, hol hátrább sodródott a vízben, mintha még megpróbálna kikötni." (Vörös 2022: 14)

- 5 "Hogy lehetett volna ezt megérkezésnek nevezni, ezt a sötétszürke homokos, rideg partot, amiről úgy gondoltam, Görögország lehet, de szégyelltem megkérdezni. Még nincs vége, és ez a mondat, ami korábban megnyugtatót, erőt adott, hogy igen, még lehet tovább, még van hova, előre néztek, mindig akad új ország, új városok, lesznek új emberek, akik új neveket aggatnak rám, amikre idővel megtanulok hallgatni, majd elfelejtem őket, találni fogok kedvenc útvonalakat, amik majd az új otthonomba visznek, tanulhatok akárhány szakmát, aztán összecsomagolok és továbbálllok úgyis, és ez a sok lehetőség, ez a sok talán, és akár eddig ismeretlen erővel préselte össze a vállam." (Vörös 2022: 16)

a trade servicing hookahs, being an expert in them, despite not possessing any papers about these skills or any papers at all.

In another camp, Vadoma witnesses another minor refugee, Amidi, being taken away by social workers from a children's home. The boy spent a few days under the rubble of their house after it had been bombed. He was the only one to survive the bombing, but only because bricks were needed to build a bunker, so a few days after the bombing his body was uncovered. These traumatic experiences left him with deep scars, and whenever he hears a plane passing overhead, he crouches to hide under a table.

The short story "Asfiya" is set in a house in Athens, where a Pakistani refugee girl is playing with a Greek volunteer's daughter. They braid their black and blond locks together. The Pakistani girl does not consider herself pretty at all, so she does not understand why the Greek girl would want black hair like she has. Vadoma watches these events, but in the original short story that appeared in the journal, it is a volunteer, not unlike the author had been once, filling in the role of the I-narrator. Vadoma looks at the frail Pakistani girl and wonders how she was able to walk so much in her colourful dress and wooden slippers.

We also meet the Syrian family willing to accept Faresh in their tent but only if they are allowed certain privileges such as moving into the transit zone. Vadoma talks with an old man who disapproves of the volunteer girls and believes they would be a bad influence on the refugee girls.

Much is written about the judgement of the volunteers. At first, Vadoma cannot understand how they might help if they do not bring food. For her, it is strange that the adults and children should dance and sing together in a circle and that those outside the circle take photos of them. She does not value the endless singing and repetitive dancing, but eventually she joins the dance when she realizes that dancing or sitting around by oneself with one's thoughts both amount to the same result, since "this is how those that despair can be happy" (Vörös 2022: 45). She realizes when talking to the others that everyone laughs at the volunteers behind their backs, the children imitate them at night, but the refugees are all still glad to see them even if singing the same song over and over again can become rather tedious.

The difficulties of integration

Just as landing or arriving in the camps cannot be called arrival, Vadoma's residence in Budapest is also temporary. Even though she attempts to acquaint herself with Hungarian culture and language, and Christianity, Hungary is not the final destination for her; as Anna Gács emphasizes, it is merely a "random stop on the road to nowhere" (Gács 2023: 109). According to Vadoma, Hungary

and Budapest are of minor significance in comparison with Syria and Aleppo. Although she does not like Budapest and would not return there, sometimes she still considers it a decent place, where she has all she needs and where she can plan ahead.

The I-narrator of “Emléketörés” [Memory Hack] is constantly positioning herself during a tram ride. She finds her way more easily in the Hungarian capital than most tourists, even if, just like the other foreigners, she struggles to pronounce the stops’ names. She is still new in the city, is learning where everything is, and is acquainting herself with the capital. We find out that she is a Muslim woman, a refugee. Getting off the tramway, she sits on a bench occupied by a homeless person, similarly to whom she is also a marginal figure without a home.

“In the first place, we don’t like to be called ‘refugees’”, Hanna Arendt writes in her essay *We Refugees* (Arendt 2007: 264). The identification with or as a refugee is problematic in Anna Vörös’s collection as well. Instead of the respect enjoyed by Syrians in the past, the I-narrator finds it insufferable that people consider her to be a pitiful refugee. This is explored in the short story “Bizonyítványosztás” [Handing out report cards]. In “Menni, menni, menni” [Go, go, go], we read that, upon reaching the shore, Vadoma refuses to be part of the refugee community; she does not want to belong there and appear to be a victim. Being in Hungary and the blue stamp that legalizes her presence there do not make her happy either; she feels instead as if something were pricking the sole of her foot, as explored in the short story “Vadomára új ruhát szabnak” [They tailor a new dress for Vadoma].

The term functions as a curse word in the story titled “Amal”. Vadoma meets Amal, who is her age, in one of the refugee camps. Amal is from an affluent family, but the differences between social classes are erased when fleeing, and the rich and the poor are all simply refugees. The girl confides in Vadoma and tells her she has fallen in love with a Hungarian volunteer, but the boy does not reciprocate her feelings. She believes Dávid could fall in love with her if she did not wear a hijab or if she were not just a refugee:

... if only I weren’t a.

Amal couldn’t say the word. It’s the biggest curse word. You don’t say that about yourself, I said quietly.

If I weren’t just a refugee. (Vörös 2022: 42)

Only the word “migrant” is a stronger insult. In “Bizonyítványosztás” [Handing out report cards], not only the theme of pity for refugees is present but so is fear. “Don’t go over there, Bence, that’s a migrant. Come, let’s sit here instead. Look at her staring at us. Your bag’s zipped shut, right?” (Vörös 2022: 106).⁶ It is not

6 “Ne menjél oda Bence, az egy migráns. Gyere, üljünk inkább ide. Nézd, hogy bámul minket. Ugye be van cipzározva a táskád?” (Vörös 2022: 106).

revealed who warns the pupil, but it does not matter. Regardless of the warning, the boy approaches the girl multiple times and shows her his report card.

Vadoma builds a good rapport with her dorm roommate. The extremely open and interested Hungarian girl introduces Vadoma to Hungarian culture, and it is she who guides Vadoma to talk and to remember. Her naivety and lack of knowledge about Syria and the eastern world is reflected in the learning process of the I-narrator explored in “Glosszárium” [Glossary]. Although Vadoma is the I-narrator of most of the stories, this position is filled by the roommate in some of the texts, and the perspectives change within certain stories. The titles of the texts are obviously given by the roommate, as Csaba Károlyi also points out (Károlyi 2023).

Vadoma is especially interested in questions of religion. She has an almost child-like curiosity and wants to learn about nativity scenes from her roommate after she sees them everywhere around Christmas time. She reads a lot about Christianity, following the prophet Mohamed’s will. She realizes that she is alone in her interest, others do not concern themselves with this topic; she notices that it is embarrassing when she asks people about their favourite saint or which saint they were named after and why. This momentum also highlights the cultural differences between the two worlds and worldviews.

It is inevitable that the problem of language should be mentioned when discussing integration. In the stories of the collection, we encounter, on the one hand, the relationship to one’s mother tongue, fear of losing one’s mother tongue, and, on the other hand, expressing the lived traumas and the lack of language to process them. A returning characteristic of Vadoma’s is that she does not speak much, if she speaks at all. This is consistent with the central claim of literary trauma theory, which “asserts that trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity” (Balaev 2008: 149). Although she is no longer certain that it makes sense to speak the language of a dying country, she still conjugates Arabic verbs almost obsessively so that she does not forget her native language.

She also insists on wearing a hijab. Although she would like to take it off at times and thus to shed the patterns of behaviour she has brought with her from home, she resists: “if only I could take off the hijab, I could get lost in the crowd. But without the veil, I’d feel like I was naked on the street. I don’t want to be naked” (Vörös 2022: 118). In certain situations, she leaves the habits of home behind, like when she accepts the cigarette from her roommate’s father, but she cannot identify with the lifestyle or the values of the West. She does not understand, for example, how parents can let the volunteer girls go to the camps alone.

Vadoma is unable to secede from her home and past, but she is also unable to arrive at her new life finally, neither on the shores of Greece nor in Budapest. The feeling of islandment follows her during her journey. She is locked between two worlds, two languages. Her old words are inadequate to express her feelings,

but she could not acquire a new language yet. She knows that she cannot return to her home country and city, Aleppo – after the war, it will not be the same as before the crisis. She has to construct her new identity because her nation's reputation was destroyed with Syria.

Love my country just because it's mine? I'd rather live, most of all, survive. There's a city, far away, my home city, which won't wait for me, I'm afraid, because by the time I return, Syria might not exist at all. They won't even find it, only a burnt, stinky pile of ashes will be left of it. Eventually, the war will end, and I still won't go home because I won't be able to. (Vörös 2022: 47)⁷

Summary

Anna Vörös's collection of short stories, *Vadoma*, fits into the international trends of refugee literature and, thus far, it is unique in its attempt to portray not only the Western gaze but also the sentiments and motivations of refugees, giving voice to this marginalized group. In contrast with the generalizations and xenophobic representations present in the media as a reflection of current Hungarian politics, Anna Vörös places emphasis on individual stories, attempts to give nuance to the protagonist, evading the use of stereotypes and didacticism. Due to insights into the details of Hungarian and Syrian culture and worldviews, as well as the Christian and Muslim religions, the collection is important for its informative as well as literary value.

The stories paint a nuanced picture of the important scenes of fleeing, crossing the sea, and the time spent waiting in refugee camps. Mariangelo Palladino's term "islandment" serves as an excellent basis for the interpretation of *Vadoma*, as the term is not only relevant to crossing the sea, landfall, or spending time in refugee camps, but it is also useful in the examination of *Vadoma*'s time in Budapest. Arriving somewhere is not considered to be "arrival", spending time there is temporary, which is the reason *Vadoma* finds herself floating between two worlds, languages, religions, and identities.

7 "Szeressem a hazámat csak azért, mert az enyém? Inkább élni akarok, és főleg túlélni. Van az a város, messze, a szülővárosom, ami nem vár meg, attól tartok, mert lehet, hogy mire visszamegyek, addigra Szíria egyáltalán nem lesz. Meg sem találják majd, valami kiégett, kormos és büdös földhalom marad belőle. Egyszer vége lesz a háborúnak, és még mindig nem fogok hazamenni, mert nem leszek rá képes." (Vörös 2022: 47)

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The Lexicon of the Hungarian Culture in Transylvania

Benő Attila & Péntek János (eds). 2022.

Erdélyi magyar kulturális szótár.

Sfântu Gheorghe: Anyanyelvápolók Erdélyi Szövetsége.

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1. A curiosity among dictionaries: The cultural dictionary

The genre of cultural dictionary is closely linked to István Bart, who – with his *Angol kulturális szótár* [English Cultural Dictionary] – tried to gather those elements of the British culture which are unknown to foreigners. Thus, this unusual dictionary gives an overview of such notions, phenomena, and objects, (linguistic) commonplaces or superstitions, as well as little rhymes, fairy-tale figures, proverbs, and famous quotations that all English people know and use, which, however, for foreigners might seem puzzling or enigmatic. So, what István Bart did was to come up with a cultural tour guide for those not familiar with the British culture. In this respect, the cultural dictionary differs from traditional mono- or multilingual dictionaries because its main purpose is not to convert any linguistic knowledge or to make an inventory of a given language's vocabulary but to give a short definition of cultural elements to readers unfamiliar with the source language.

Attila Benő and János Péntek – based on the idea and model of István Bart's cultural dictionary – thought that Transylvania has an extremely rich cultural heritage which should be made accessible to a larger audience. And that is how the first cultural dictionary was born: Attila Benő, János Péntek (eds): *Román–magyar kulturális szótár* [Romanian–Hungarian Cultural Dictionary]. Sfântu

Gheorghe: Anyanyelvápolók Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2009. The main purpose of this first dictionary was to give an image to Hungarians living in Hungary about the defining elements of Romanian culture. The second volume, Attila Benő, János Péntek (eds): *Dicționar cultural maghiar–român* [Hungarian–Romanian Cultural Dictionary]. Sfântu Gheorghe: Anyanyelvápolók Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2013, makes the elements of Hungarian culture in Transylvania accessible to the Romanian audience. And as Transylvania is a multicultural space, it was also necessary to do the same with the elements of German culture, and that is how the third dictionary was published: András F. Balogh (ed.): *Német–magyar kulturális szótár* [German–Hungarian cultural dictionary]. Sfântu Gheorghe: Anyanyelvápolók Erdélyi Szövetsége, 2017.

2. The *Erdélyi magyar kulturális szótár* [Transylvanian Hungarian Cultural Dictionary]

As it can be seen from the introductory lines, the *Erdélyi magyar kulturális szótár* is the fourth volume in a series aimed at presenting the Transylvanian culture from various aspects to different audiences. This volume was made for a Hungarian audience, for Hungarians who – visiting Transylvania – would like to have a deeper knowledge of the past and present of this multicultural space, but it is also useful, for example, for Romanian students who are already speaking Hungarian, as well as their teachers.

However, a natural question arises when holding the dictionary: nowadays, when all information is easily accessible, why is this volume necessary? János Péntek – at the presentation of the dictionary on 18 August 2023 – said that “amnesia is present everywhere. We tend to celebrate a lot, but there are also many things that we forget.” And that is why this dictionary is important. When gathering material, the editors of the volume had a very broad definition of culture in mind, and therefore the dictionary presents a colourful image of Transylvania. It contains the material and spiritual elements with symbolic value of popular and elite culture: e.g. Csaba királyfi [Prince Csaba] is the legendary hero of Szeklers, considered to be the ancestor of this ethnic group, cserge (thick woollen blanket mainly used as bed cover by Romanians in the Maramureş region, by Szeklers and Csángós), Háromszék táncegyüttes ([Háromszék Folk Dance Ensemble] founded in 1990 in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Rom. Sfântu Gheorghe) with the aim of preserving the authentic Transylvanian folk music and dance), kalotaszegi legényes (a traditional folk dance, which is danced only by men from the region of Kalotaszeg (Rom. Călata)), folkloric-cultural regions (e.g. Gyergyószék – the region of Gyergyó (Rom. Gheorgheni), Bánság (Rom. Banat – a historical-geographic region in the south-eastern part of the Carpathian Basin),

etc.), cities and villages (e.g. Gyergyószárhegy (Rom. Lăzarea, a village in Harghita County, famous for its Lázár Castle where Gábor Bethlen spent his early years), Homoródfürdő (Rom. Băile Homorod, famous for its mineral waters, as well as for its baths), etc.), important geographic sites (e.g. Gyilkos-tó (Rom. Lacul Roșu), Gyimesek (Rom. Munții Ghimeș), etc.), monuments (e.g. Mátyás Király szobra (the Matthias Corvinus monument is located in the centre of Kolozsvár (Rom. Cluj-Napoca); it was conceived by János Fadrusz and inaugurated in 1902), Mátyás király szülőháza (the Matthias Corvinus House is one of the oldest buildings in Kolozsvár, and that is where Matthias Corvinus was born on 23 February 1443), etc.), cultural and educational institutions (e.g. Csángó Néprajzi Múzeum [Csángó Ethnographical Museum], Zăbala, founded by prof. Ferenc Pozsony; Ady Endre Elméleti Líceum [Ady Endre High School] in Nagyvárad (Rom. Oradea); Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület (Rom. Asociația Muzeului Ardelean) – the Association was established in 1859 with the aim of gathering and preserving the values of Transylvania and of supporting scientific research. The Association is still one of the most important scientific organizations in Transylvania), etc.), important personalities of the Hungarian culture (e.g. Áron Gábor (a famous soldier of the Hungarian Civic Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–49, known as cannon caster), János Fadrusz (most famous for the Matthias Corvinus monument), etc.), as well as elements of traditional Transylvanian gastronomy (e.g. *halcsorba füstölt pisztrángból* [a special soup made of smoked trout with vegetables and herbs], *kolozsvári káposzta* [a layered cabbage dish made with sour cabbage, minced pork, rice, and onion], etc.). This kind of dictionary avoids including famous people who are still alive; however, the editors made a few exceptions in the case of emblematic artists or scientists who received high recognition for their work or who play a major part in the cultural or public life of Transylvania (e.g. Gyula Dávid (an emblematic figure of the 20th century, literary historian, editor, translator), Béla Markó (important writer and politician), etc.). It is also obvious that when dealing with such vast material, there might be some elements that were left out or some that do not seem to fit in the dictionary, but the editors accepted the challenge and take responsibility for everything. Therefore, the list of entry-words was done based on the personal knowledge of the editors on the one hand and on easily accessible printed or online sources such as *Romániai magyar irodalmi lexikon* [Lexicon of Hungarian Literature in Romania] or *Magyar néprajzi lexikon* [Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon] on the other.

When asked at the presentation of the volume on 18 August 2023 if there is demand for such dictionaries in the world of the Internet, János Péntek answered that one cannot find everything online, and sometimes the information is inaccurate. In the case of this dictionary, professionals of given domains helped the work of the editors by writing the definitions of the entry-words belonging to their expertise (the art historian Attila Weisz made important contributions, as

well as József Kötő, who presented the history of Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár, and also Katalin Ágnes Bartha, Zsolt Karácsony, Boglárka Németh, and Krisztina Sárosi-Márdirosz). One entry-word belongs to Magdolna Csomortáni, and another one to Attila Sántha.

The structure of the dictionary is reader-centred, as the short introduction is immediately followed by the entry-words in alphabetic order, the first being Endre Ady (one of the greatest Hungarian poets of the 20th century) and the last one the Zsoboki Nemzetközi Képzőművészeti Alkotó- és Fotótábor. The philological accuracy – apart from the professionally formed entry-word descriptions – is ensured by the list of works used as the source of the dictionary, as well as by an index containing all the entry-words with the page numbers where they are mentioned. For example, *Babeş–Bolyai Tudományegyetem* [Babeş–Bolyai University] is mentioned on pages 14, 21, 41, 51, 59, 80, 81, 91, 104, 121, 133, 140, 154, 155, 180, and 228. The index is followed by the *Contents* and also by the list of cultural dictionaries that were published in this series.

3. Future endeavours

The editors think that as Transylvania is so rich in cultural traditions, it would be important to continue with the series of cultural dictionaries. They plan to publish a dictionary on the Transylvanian Roma culture and one on the Jewish culture. In order to make these dictionaries available for a larger audience, it would be important to translate all publications into English as well.