

Multilingualism and Seasonal Migration: Linguistic Practices of Finnish House Owners in a German Minority Village in Southern Hungary

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine linguistic practices of Finnish second-home owners who spend seasonal time in the village of Geresdlak, a small settlement of 750 people, located in Southern Hungary, near the city of Pécs. Geresdlak is a multilingual community. The majority of its population belongs to the German minority of Hungary. The German settlers arrived in the territory in the second half of the 18th century (Erdődy n.d.). After the change of regime in the 1990s, first German citizens, and later in the 2000's Finnish citizens started to buy properties in the village with recreational aims. In the spring of 2016, there were 25 German, 1 Austrian and 25 Finnish houses out of the 353 inhabited residences of the village. A minority of the newcomers are settled permanently, while their majority stay in Geresdlak on a seasonal basis.

I have conducted a long-term sociolinguistic-ethnographic research in this village. My main objective was to answer the question how seasonal migration impacts the linguistic practices and ideologies of the village's population (for a comprehensive synopsis of the results see Pachné Heltai 2017). The focus of this present paper is on the Finnish newcomers: I am going to give examples of their multimodal linguistic practices. The aim of the analysis of everyday interactional situations is to highlight how the members of this multilingual community mobilize their competences in everyday life, and what kind of consequences their discursive practices might have on the linguistic make-up and social relations of the village. After describing the theoretical and methodological background of the paper, I will give an overview

of the community, which is followed by the analysis of concrete examples of linguistic practices.

2. Theoretical background: mobility and meaning-making

The mobility of people, such as seasonal migration, also means the mobility of their languages. Semiotic resources are constantly being mobilized in new contexts where they might get new meanings. It is clear that the use of Finnish resources has completely different consequences in the middle of Helsinki or on the streets of a small village in Hungary. While in the first case it is considered as the normal case, in the second case it is interpreted as something strange, rare or exotic. According to a sociolinguistic point of view, these different meanings and interpretations are not inherent parts of the Finnish linguistic forms themselves, but are constructions of the local participants, based on the actual local context. Although approaching meaning as a social construction has long been a foundation of sociolinguistics (see for example Gumperz – Hymes 1972), due to increasing mobility, transnationalism and digitalization the process and consequences of multilingual and multimodal communication and meaning-making in local contexts have become central issues for contemporary critical sociolinguistics (e.g. Blommaert 2010, Martin-Jones et al. 2012, Coupland 2016, Martin-Jones – Martin 2017).

Today it is strongly emphasized that the traditional linguistic terms based on monolingual ideologies seem to be more and more limited for examining people's linguistic practices (cf. for example Makoni – Pennycook 2007, Blommaert – Rampton 2011). In order to be able to describe the complexity of communication in the age of mobility and digitalization, new terminological suggestions are made (e.g. Blommaert 2010, Jørgensen et al. 2011, García 2009, for a summary see Pennycook 2016) which however don't remain without criticism (Pavlenko 2017). From these terminological considerations, I will actively use the terms *linguistic* and *semiotic resources* in this paper (cf. Blommaert 2010). This notion of *resources* instead of *languages* makes it possible to better highlight that communicating people do not use fix and bounded entities but their repertoires are mobile and constantly changing. During the analysis of multilingual practices, the use of the term *semiotic resources* helps to keep in mind that in the process of meaning-making not only the mere linguistic, but also other semiotic resources (such as visual signs, gestures, materials, genres etc.) play a significant role (cf. MODE 2012).

To understand the relationship between meaning-making and social relations, I will use the concept of *indexicality* based on Silverstein (2003) and Eckert (2008), and the concept of *scale* according to Blommaert (2007). In his theory, Silverstein (2003) underlines the changeability of the meaning of linguistic elements, and for describing it, he uses the notion of *indexical order*. According to his considerations, a linguistic element with an indexical value (a social meaning), what he calls an *nth order*, is always a subject to processes of re-interpretations and can get the value of $n + 1^{\text{st}}$. These attached values are however not in a linear order, but they constantly overlap (cf. Eckert 2008: 463). According to Eckert (2008: 464), the emergence of a new indexical value is always the result of an ideological move. She calls the ideologically related meanings of an element *indexical field*. With the notion of *scale*, Blommaert (2007) points out that the mobility of people and their languages do not only mean a horizontal movement from context to context, but the context is always layered vertically, too, and different normative expectations prevail at the different levels of the context (in different interactional situations). Due to this complexity, even people with a multilingual repertoire can easily feel lost in new contexts if they have no access to the actually valued resources (Blommaert et al. 2005, Blommaert 2007).

To sum up, these considerations suggest that the social meaning of linguistic elements is changeable and it depends on the social relations of the actual context. Ideologies and power relations have a key role in the processes which determine the indexical value of the linguistic elements.

3. Methodological background: revealing the relationship between local factors and wider processes

The data analysed in this paper were collected during fieldwork sessions I have been conducting in the community since 2009. In order to answer my research question, I used sociolinguistic and ethnographic methods (see e.g. Blommaert – Jie 2010, Mallinson et al. 2013). Data collection was based on interviews involving around 150 participants, both local people and foreign house owners. The questions were grouped around the main topics of linguistic practices, subjective linguistic beliefs and interethnic relations. I was able to collect various types of data because I was engaged in the everyday life of the village during fieldwork: on the one hand as an observing participant, on the other hand as an active interpreter at various community events, and as a teacher of Finnish language at language courses organized in the village. I documented my experiences in various ways (such as fieldwork di-

ary, photos and recordings, and by collecting all kinds of documents connected to the village).

The various activities of fieldwork offered opportunities for metalinguistic conversations, and made both me and local participants more aware of linguistic issues (cf. Jones et al. 2000). Since members of the community were involved in my research through all these activities, data generating was a mutual process. In some cases the informants themselves made recordings, in other cases they spontaneously shared their metalinguistic reflections on their everyday experiences.

In order to investigate linguistic practices of the Finnish newcomers, I will use methods of discourse analysis and conversation analysis in my paper. I will interpret the trends suggested by the collected data in the light of broader social processes (Pietikäinen – Mäntynen 2009: 157), however, I will also pay attention to the role of the actual interactional structures (Laihonen 2008). My aim is to reveal crucial nexuses of local actors and circumstances and wider social processes (cf. Scollon – Scollon 2004). Firstly, I will give an overview of the community and highlight important discourses circulating in the community about the phenomena of seasonal migration. After this, I will describe the changing linguistic repertoires of the participants, and underline linguistic ideologies which determine the mobilization of their repertoires. Finally, I will analyse three concrete examples in order to examine the process of meaning-making.

4. Setting the context: seasonal migration of Nordic citizens to a rural multilingual community in Hungary

Buying a property in a foreign country with a recreational aim is not a new trend in the Finnish society. The most popular area for Finnish citizens has been the Spanish Costa del Sol since the 1960s, where around 15-20,000 Finns spend at least the winter period (Karisto – Leppälä 2008: 457). In Hungary, the most attractive areas for foreign house owners are Lake Balaton, the capital city Budapest, and the regions around the Romanian and Serbian borders (Kincses 2009). However, especially in the last two cases the motivations for buying a new property can be rather job or family oriented and less recreational.

Spending a longer period abroad with touristic aims is a phenomenon which is considered in the literature as a type of mobility between tourism and migration. Depending on the motivations, age and circumstances of the people and on the conceptual framework of the given research, among others

the terms *seasonal migration*, *retirement migration*, *lifestyle migration*, *residential tourism* and *second home tourism* are used to describe it (cf. Benson – O'Reilly 2009, 2016, Gustafson 2016, Williams – Hall 2000, Hall – Williams eds. 2002). In comparison to an average holiday tourist, seasonal migrants spend longer time in their own houses, visit their second homes regularly, and usually in the same period of the year. In Geresdlak, we can observe diverse forms of this kind of mobility. Some of the Finnish house owners can be categorized as classic retirement migrants who regularly arrive in the village and typically spend the spring and the fall months there. However others, who are still in an active age, visit their properties during their summer holidays and only spend a few weeks there. For the Finns, their house in Geresdlak can also serve as a temporary accommodation, from where the family can travel to the nearby located coasts of Croatia, for instance.

The Finns described Geresdlak in the interviews as an attractive destination. For them the village is both a central and a peripheral place at the same time. It is a peaceful and quiet little settlement, however, it is a local and global centre (cf. Pietikäinen – Kelly-Holmes 2013), too: from Geresdlak the house owners can easily reach the city of Pécs for example, which is a cultural and administrative centre of the region, and at the same time they can easily reach the whole Central European area. Good climate and low prices were also often mentioned as important motivation factors for buying a property in the village. Besides these external arguments, an internal one appeared in the interviews, too: the Finns feel welcome in Hungary thanks to the open-minded and helpful local community.

Although the Finns described a positive and vital picture of the village, in the discourses of the local participants Geresdlak often appeared as a multiple periphery. The main reasons for the locals' more pessimistic view are the lack of workplaces both in the village and in the broader region, and, in close connection with it, the dramatically aging population. Among other reasons, the majority of local people have a positive attitude towards the newcomers due to the high number of empty houses. They not only modify the visual landscape of the village by renovating the old properties, but, to a certain degree, they support the community in a financial sense, too, by using local services, for instance. However the majority of the Finns highlighted that they don't want to change the atmosphere of the settlement, which they labelled as authentic, and they try to integrate into the local lifestyle (in more detail see Heltai 2014). It also means that they are interested in the community events, and it fosters the – already active – cultural life of the village.

Despite the positive experiences, a tense question occurs in the locals' discourses regarding seasonal migration, too, and that is about its future trends. Namely, if later the Finns stop buying houses and the younger generation of the Finnish families will not be interested in maintaining their second homes in Hungary (just as it is a trend in the case of the German house owners), it may negatively affect the attitudes of the local inhabitants towards the future and the attractiveness of their own community.

5. The diversity of linguistic repertoires

Most of the population in Geresdlak is of German descent. Although today all the generations of ethnic Germans living in the village use Hungarian as their primary means of communication (similarly to other settlements with a German ethnic community, see for example Erb 2010), different German varieties are still part of the individuals' repertoire. The main factors that determine the frequency and manner of mobilization of German resources by the speakers are age, the linguistic repertoire of the spouse, the way of maintaining contact with relatives, if any, in Germany, possible employment in German-speaking countries, media consumption habits, tourism habits and interethnic relations within the settlement. The linguistic repertoire of people is very heterogeneous and there is a great variability within generations, too. However, it can be said as a general statement that the older people are, the more likely they use resources that can be linked to a local German variety developed from the varieties the first settlers had brought, and that they learned during their primary socialization in the family and the broader community.

Similarly, the younger people are, the more likely they use resources that can be linked to standard German or to varieties spoken in German-speaking countries nowadays, and that they acquired in school or in German-speaking countries. In the local elementary school of the village, children learn German as a foreign language.

The village also has a population with Hungarian descent. The number of Hungarians has increased after the Second World War, due to settlement and mixed marriages. Whether locals of Hungarian descent have knowledge in any German varieties or not, depends on their individual life experience. Besides, there is also a Gypsy community in the village.¹ Most Gypsies who

¹ Since this community forms a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous group (resources linked to both Romani and Boyash are used in the village), in my paper I prefer the

live in the village now moved there after the change of regime. Their own minority varieties are used in less and less contexts, too, primarily within the narrow family circle. In some mixed families, resources of Croatian varieties are mobilized to a certain degree, too.

The Finnish people settling in the village usually have a multilingual repertoire, too. When the Finns and the local people communicate with each other, they mainly mobilize varieties linked to German. However, not each of the Finnish newcomers has an active German competence, and many of them speak languages that have high prestige on a global scale (cf. Blommaert 2007), but have no market value in the local context (such as English or Swedish). For this reason, several of the Finnish newcomers start to learn languages, and their decisions are influenced by their beliefs about the different languages and the indexical meaning related to them. According to their arguments, while German resources can be mobilized on a higher level, too (for example when they travel as tourists to the surrounding countries), in the local context the knowledge of Hungarian resources enables them to construct the feeling of authenticity (cf. Coupland 2003) and belonging to the community. Both informal and formal language learning activities are typical. In the former case, everyday contacts to locals create domains for acquiring and practising languages. The Finns have the closest connections to those people who take care about their properties and gardens while they are not in the village, but they also get in contact with locals at various community events and in the public spaces of the village, such as the shop, the canteen or the pub. Formal language learning is more typical in the first period following the purchase of the property. Some of the newcomers have visited a language course in Finland or started to expand their competencies on their own in Finland or during their visits in their second homes with the help of different language learning materials (language books, dictionaries, audio materials, internet sites etc).

The everyday contacts offer opportunities for the local inhabitants, too, to use their German knowledge in new contexts and with new interlocutors. Those locals of German descent who have active relationship to the foreigners, experience again the value of their German linguistic resources on a local level, and they acquire pieces of the Finnish language, too.

6. Examples of linguistic practices

broader expression *Gypsy* instead of *Roma*, following the term usage of earlier works written about Gypsy communities in Hungary (see for example Bartha – Hámori 2011).

In the followings, I will analyse three examples of everyday linguistic practices in Geresdlak. These examples show how the participants mobilize their linguistic knowledge in different contexts, how they construct the meaning in the actual situations, and how their complex semiotic work (cf. Dlaske 2015) might impact the linguistic make-up of the village.

The first example is a description of a short oral conversation. This interactional situation is a typical case of new language use domains created by the changing social environment of the village: the conversation took place between a middle-aged Finnish and a local woman from Geresdlak while they were waiting with their husbands for the waiter in a restaurant. The conversation was videorecorded by the Finnish participant with her mobile phone. The topic of the conversation is the kindergarten system in Hungary, and it starts with a question of the Finnish interlocutor.

Participant 1 (Finnish, woman): *Wie alt ist Kinder, wann sie kann zu Kindergarten gehen?* [‘How old are children when they can go to kindergarten?’]

Participant 2 (Local, woman): *3 Jahre.* [‘3 years old.’]

Participant 1: *Aber wann sie sind jüngere? Sie sind zu Hause dann.* [‘But when they are younger? They are at home then.’]

Participant 2: *Sie sind zu Hause. Ja.* [‘They are at home. Yes.’]

Participant 1: *So Mutter ist zu Hause. Bis Kinder ist drei Jahre.* [‘So the mother is at home. Until children are three years old.’]

Participant 2: *Ja. Jaja. Hier ist keine · wie sagt man das bölsöde? Wo die Kleine gehen. · Weil hier machen die Kindergarten nicht mit pelenka. Die Kleine brauchen noch... (the record interrupts)* [‘Yes. Yes-yes. Here there is no · how to say *bölsöde* ‘nursery’? Where the little ones go · Because here the kindergartens don’t make with *pelenka* ‘diaper’. The little ones still need...’]

This short conversation is an example for German dominated communication between the Finns and the locals. Both of the participants have an active competence in German, and both of them use non-standard forms of the language, for example the word order of their sentences, or the agreement of the subject and predicate does not follow the standard variety. It is important to notice that the two participants mutually help each other to create the content by either repeating or summarizing the previous information they got from the other. At the end of the conversation, when the local participant tries to explain more about the culturally bounded family practices, she mo-

bilizes Hungarian expressions as well. In the first case she explicitly indicates the reason of it: she would like to find the expression in German and asks for her interlocutors help (Here there is no · how to say *bölcsöde* ‘nursery’). In the second case she more automatically uses the Hungarian resource during her explanation.

This example illustrates that seasonal migration creates new domains for the use of German resources, which otherwise play a smaller and smaller role in everyday life. Since the Finnish interlocutors typically acquired German language in institutional contexts, these new domains foster the use of resources which are closer to the standard German and less close to the varieties used in the village earlier. This dialogue also shows that through conversations in which the participants mutually help each other by creatively and freely combining the resources of languages, local people can experience the value of their multilingual repertoire. It might modify their ideologies about the usefulness of multilingual competences, and can have the result that they evaluate their own knowledge more positively.

The second example is a short multilingual text written by a Finnish house owner as a birthday message to his local acquaintance on a social media site. It is an example of linguistic practices of the Finns when they mobilize various resources.



‘Happy Birthday!!! Happy birthday!! Happy Christmas time!! P. and O. Finland! Everything is good, the video of the school is very good, the Santa Claus is here in the school and came from Finland, from Korvatunturi!’

The message begins with the birthday wish in two languages. The spelling of the Hungarian version relies on the Finnish pronunciation (*boldok* in the standard Hungarian form is *boldog*) and on the Finnish orthography (*szyletesnapot* in the standard form is *születésnapot*). It is followed by the birthday wish in Finnish. Then the text continues with a Finnish sentence (*Hyvää joulunaikaa* ‘Happy Christmas time’). In the second part of the message, we read resources linked to Finnish (e.g. *joulupukki* ‘Santa Claus’),

German (*ales ist gud* ‘everything is good’, *joulupukki ist hier* ‘Santa Claus is here’), Hungarian (*iskolas, iskola* ‘school’), and we can even associate (cf. Jørgensen et al. 2011) to English (*Finland, gud* ‘good’). The German resources are not spelled in a standard way either. In this hybrid second part, the writer of the text firstly indicates his own and his wife’s name and country, and then he reports about a video, which he saw and found really interesting and was about the visit of the Finnish Santa Claus from Korvatunturi (the village of Santa Claus in Finland) in the school of Geresdlak. The addressee of this multilingual message is a local middle-aged man, who is a central persona in the community, he is not of German descent, but knows basic expressions both in German and Finnish. He even participated in the Finnish language courses.

The whole message can be characterised as diverse, hybrid and fragmented. The text also implicates that the repertoire of the Finnish participant contains pieces of all these languages (cf. Blommaert 2010), and by creatively mobilizing his resources he invents an actual, context-bounded, however, interpretable and meaningful variety.

The use of Hungarian resources demonstrates the connection of the Finnish house owner to the local community, and his openness to the local culture: he has even learned basic expressions in Hungarian. The use of Finnish might have a double function. On the one hand, it offers a possibility to share his own culture with the locals. On the other hand, with the use of Finnish he can reach a broader audience on the social media site: his Finnish friends can read and identify the topic of the message, too. Furthermore, by sharing the information according to which the Finnish Santa Claus visited Geresdlak he can construct a positive picture about the village of his second home for his Finnish acquaintances.

It is clear that someone who doesn’t know the linguistic-cultural context of Geresdlak would not interpret this message in the same way as local people, who are used to this local multilingualism and also know about the particular event (the visit of Santa Claus). This example illustrates that the meaning of these linguistic resources emerge from the actual online and offline participants and context, and the inter-relations between them (Leppänen – Kytölä 2017). The resources have different indexical fields (Eckert 2008) in the different contexts.

The third example is a photo I took at the annual festival of the village in 2016. The festival is a one-day-long gastronomic and cultural event. In the morning, the focus is on the cooking competition: teams from the village, the broader region or even from abroad prepare steam dumplings, which is a dish

of German origin and is popular and well-known in Hungary, especially in German minority communities. During the day, numerous choirs, dance groups and bands perform their shows on the stage, while the festival guests can walk around and taste the prepared delicacies of the teams. In the evening, the festival ends with concerts and a ball. The day of the festival also offers an opportunity to popularize the village's other attractions (see Pachné Heltai 2016), such as the local handicraft exhibitions where visitors can learn about the former lifestyle, dresses and habits of the German population of the village. Although the organization of the festival evokes tensions in the community, too, it may be said that the commodification of the local cultural resources is successful. While the festival was first organized in 2006 as a small local event, it has become a regionally known cultural program by 2016, which has attracted 6000 visitors to the small settlement.

Linguistic resources play an important role at the festival in two different ways. On the one hand, they have a mere functional role. The main code of the event is Hungarian since this is the language most of the visitors understand. However, German- and Finnish-speaking guests participate in the event, too (the foreigners living in the village and guests from the Austrian and Finnish sister settlements of Geresdlak), and important parts of the day (for example the opening speeches) are regularly translated to German and sometimes also to Finnish (in these cases I usually do the Finnish interpretation). These translations, however, have a more symbolic role, too. The use of German resources increases the authenticity of the event, and the use of Finnish makes it more exotic. Authenticity and exoticness are values that tourists usually look for (cf. Heller 2014, Heller et al. 2014). Multilingual resources are an important capital which can be commodified in order to make the festival more unique and attractive for visitors. Linguistic and semiotic resources linked to the German language and culture also appear in the physical space of the festival (for example visitors can see old tapestries with German texts as part of the decoration).

This photo is also an example of diverse linguistic resources appearing in the physical space. Each participating team has its own table and stove where they prepare and later serve the steam dumplings. Usually good friends, colleagues or



neighbours get together to form a team, and they express their identity through a humorous team name, a uniform and the carefully designed tableware. Some of the Finnish house owners also regularly participate in the competition and prepare a different Finnish speciality each year. In the picture above, we can see their menu and name in 2016. While their name is written in standard Finnish (*Suomalaiset Soppakokit* ‘Finnish soupchefs’), the menu mobilizes resources linked to Hungarian, however its orthography (e.g. *lasacs* would be in a standard form *lazac* ‘salmon’) and fragmentariness (*feher vagy teljeski* would be in a standard form *fehér vagy teljeskiőrlésű* ‘white or whole grain’ and a noun is also missing) show that it is a linguistic product of somebody who might be a learner of the language. The multilingual resources, especially the fragmented and nonstandard use of Hungarian, awake the interest of tourists, who don’t know why a group of Finns participates in a festival organized in a small settlement in Hungary, and in this way linguistic resources become tools for commodification. The linguistic resources have a communicative function, too: they share important information, however, through the common work of the participants (the Finns and the tourists) their indexical fields get modified in the actual context of the festival, and the linguistic elements get new meanings. In this special space and time (together with other semiotic and linguistic resources such as the Finnish flag on the table or the multilingual oral conversations visitors can hear at the Finns’ table) they express uniqueness and curiosity (cf. Heller 2010, Karjalainen 2015).

7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to present linguistic practices of Finnish house owners who spend seasonal time in a German minority village located in Southern Hungary. This community is an illustrative example of today’s mobility, which results in increasing multilingualism and in the revaluation of linguistic resources. Although today the primarily used language in the village is undoubtedly Hungarian, the changing social environment modifies the linguistic-cultural make-up of the village to some extent. It happens through the common semiotic work of participants getting in contact in different situations.

The presence of the Finnish (and German) newcomers offers possibilities for locals, who are in an active contact with them, to mobilize German resources. The successful commodification practices of the community also create new roles for the minority language and culture. These trends might

have a positive impact on people's linguistic ideologies, and thus, on the long term, on the maintenance of multilingual communication.

The examples also show that formal and informal language learning extend people's linguistic repertoire. The use of different resources give the participants opportunities to form their social role and relations, and by doing so they continuously construct new values of linguistic resources. However, it is important to notice that it also works inversely: the varieties and the speakers of the varieties which are not visible in these new domains and do not participate in these practices might easily get more and more undervalued and peripheral. These examples from Geresdlak point out the social nature of language: a shift in the social environment brings with itself new linguistic practices, and new practices modify the social context.

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