

The theses of the PhD dissertation

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**Dialects, spoken language and spontaneous attempts to standardisation in the language
use of 18th century Szeged scribes**

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1. The aims, theoretical and methodological background of the dissertation

In this dissertation I use a group of late Middle Hungarian written records as primary source (Bratinka–Szigeti: 1991), and an unpublished archival record as a control source. The common feature of the two lies in their origin, i.e. they were both written and preserved in Szeged. My aim is to describe the characteristics of 18th century administrative language use on the basis of these two documents.

I describe the language used by the scribes from more than one aspects (using my own linguistic competence): firstly, I examine whether local dialectal traits are apparent (which of them are and in what proportion); secondly, what is the relationship of scribal language to certain phenomena of spoken language which are present in the language uses of orality independent of dialectal areas; thirdly, what contact influence Latin had on Hungarian administrative language use. I attempt to determine the 18th century Szeged variant of the scribal norm in this three-aspect framework: local dialect, spoken language, and Latin administrative written language. My starting assumption was that if the co-ordinates of the texts' language use can be determined in this framework, then I will be able to describe this particular language use in more detail.

I have chosen the sources so as to make the primary corpus represent a high-prestige variant of scribal language use, while the control source should belong to a lower layer. My aim was to ensure that I will not be making general statements about the Szeged scribal language on the basis of only one record, but will be able to show its stratification: to show how the position of any particular variant use in the above three-aspect framework is dependent e.g. on the scribe's proficiency in administrative language, or his practice in writing. Thus we will be able to see the differences which characterise the relationship of the language of the sources to the Szeged dialect, to spoken language, and to Latin official-administrative language use.

The analysis of the linguistic variables makes it clear that the language of such scribal texts (and the norms regulating their production) differs for a greater or lesser extent from the characteristics one would expect in a 18th century variant of the Szeged dialect. I conclude from this that scribes did not always aspire to a faithful record of the spoken word, but their practice was determined by certain rules and behaviour patterns connected to their social class, the linguistic register, and written language use. These patterns and the opinions concerning dialectal phenomena did not form a system of norms; we should rather think of an unstructured set of user regulations which did not allow certain dialectal phenomena to penetrate the scribe's written text. What the scribes had in mind was rather what linguistic forms were *not* to be used in preparing a written document; they had a less clear picture of what forms they were supposed to use. Their activity, therefore, included the sifting of dialectal and spoken language forms from the document. This process is an instance of spontaneous standardisation. Those taking part in it do not necessarily apply the same criteria in evaluating linguistic forms, since there is no explicit norm for such an activity. Scribal practice, however, tends to direct their

language use towards the same standards, because scribes could sense the provincial nature of certain phonological or morphological phenomena more or less clearly. They were doubtless helped in this by their knowledge of the traditions connected to written language, their competence in other dialects and in the official register. This process of spontaneous standardisation (which can only be understood diachronically) must have played a considerable role in determining the behaviour patterns connected to written language and the language use in question. It cannot be accidental that the written language of the sources do not exhibit a normative use of the so called '*ő-zés*' (a dialectal phenomenon where a rounded labial [ø] sound, written as *ő*, appears in the position of unrounded [e]), or the marking of the deleted *-l*. The spontaneous nature of the process is evidenced by the facts that it has no definite controller and no definite declared aim. The aim of the individual is to employ a language use which, according to his knowledge, is compatible with the system of traditions and conventions connected to written language use and the scribal register.

Analysing the relationship of the spoken and written linguistic phenomena I also compare the present acceptance and evaluation of some dialectal or spoken language forms with those of the 18th century. The result of this comparison is that in some cases we can see a traceable continuity in the evaluation of certain dialectal phenomena, from the 18th century up to the present elite language use. To find out the causes of the disuse of some particular forms of language (e.g. the deletion of *-l*) we have to go back to much earlier times.

The basic method of my dissertation is that I borrow the term linguistic variable from sociolinguistics and make it a central point of the investigation. In other words, I pay particular attention to variation in a particular linguistic phenomenon, and I draw my conclusions from the quantitative changes of linguistic variables. I chose the linguistic variables on the basis of the aims of the research. Thus I disregarded lexical changes, as it would not have helped significantly in answering the main research questions. Moreover, the size of the dissertation also limited the scope of the examination. As for the methodology of the research, I would like to mention some more terms in addition to 'linguistic variable'. My main methodological aim is to use as much as possible from the results of modern sociolinguistic research. There is, however, no question of the mechanic copying of modern sociolinguistic methodology, as that was mainly used in synchronic description, and to prove useful in this dissertation I had to transform it so that it would be applicable for the description of historical sources and past language use. However, I still think that using the term 'linguistic variable' as a central notion of the thesis is very useful. Using other terms in the research, such as prestige, stigma, hypercorrection, elite variant, normativity, linguistic attitude is argued by Romaine's theory of uniformity (1982). With this research I would also like to illustrate that the terms and methods of sociolinguistics are very well applicable to research in (Hungarian) historical linguistics, aiming at examining the spread of linguistic phenomena and the factors which determine the process of spread into different language variants. This

methodological stance is not without precedence, but it has not been widely applied either. The research done in this field was mainly concerned with the connections of the early scribal norm and different dialects, and thus focus mainly on phonetics, or partly on morphology: e.g. Deme (1959), Papp (1961), Abaffy (1965). The common feature of these publications is that they try to define the scribal norm as opposed to dialectal language uses, and they pay little attention to linguistic variants other than the dialects.

2. The description of the language use of the sources

In the description of scribal language use, first I would like to summarise the main results of the research into the vowel structure in the text of the official documents. I describe the vowel structure of the record with the quantitative analysis of particular vowel variants that I chose to get the most precise picture of the language use of Szeged scribes. Knowing the characteristics of Hungarian dialects, from the possible vowel correlations I take into account the traits of labiality, tongue-height, and length. As the palatal-velar correlations are quite rare in the vowel set of Hungarian dialects, I did not find it necessary to consider this aspect in my description. The description of the correlations is not of the same depth, as these features vary in being valid for differentiation between the different Hungarian dialects and also between other language uses. Thus I put the most emphasis on the feature of labiality, and the least on length correlation.

What I was looking for in the records were the typical features of the Szeged dialect. The emblematic peculiarity of this dialect in the first third of the 18th century is still the 'ő-zés'; I deal with the phenomenon of $\ddot{e} \sim \ddot{o}$ variation in great length. My main interest is in the intensity of the labial 'ő-zés' in the written language use I examined, and what conclusions this allows concerning the scribal norm and the connected user attitude. Examining the phenomena I tried to elucidate the occurrences of \ddot{o} sounds showing various frequency in different phonetic positions, while I described a model for the spread of the 'ő-ző' (forms with 'ő-zés') word form variants in the linguistic area. The 'ő-zés' that appears in the written sources shows a completely different feature from the dialectal standard; that is, the scribes intentionally avoid the 'ő-ző' word forms. Thus we can conclude that the 'ő-zés' does not count as normative in their language use. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that we can find occurrences of sporadic hypercorrection in the records, i.e. sometimes \ddot{e} is written instead of the non-dialectal \ddot{o} . Besides the 'ő-zés' I examine the instances of labialized vowels on other variant pairs, such as $i \sim \ddot{u}$, $\acute{i} \sim \ddot{ü}$, and also on $\acute{e} \sim \ddot{o}$. However, these do not show characteristic distribution in Hungarian dialects.

The correlations in tongue-height again give distinctive features for the separation of Hungarian dialects. I pay most attention to the distribution of the $u \sim o$ and $\ddot{u} \sim \ddot{o}$ pairs, as their quantity in some Hungarian dialects and other language uses shows significant differences. These variants exhibit various distributions in different

morphological positions, so I do not give the sum of their number, but – conforming to the Hungarian academic tradition – I describe each according to their relevant morphological positions. Other variants I examine concerning tongue-height are $\hat{u} \sim \hat{o}$, $\hat{u} \sim \hat{\delta}$, $o \sim a$, $i \sim \hat{e}$, $i \sim \hat{e}$ and $i \sim \hat{e}$. The results show that in the records the low vowels of the Szeged dialect appear in a much greater proportion than the labial ones – which means that the former is closer to the scribal norm than the latter, and there is no discernible tendency of the deliberate avoidance of this form. This leads us to the conclusion that in this respect the language use of the city and the scribal norm is closer to each other than in labialization. It was surprising to see that the proportion of high vowel variants in ablative inflectional suffixes was almost 100%, as the spread of lower variants had already started two centuries ago. We can also see a puzzling sporadic tendency of 'i-zés' (pronouncing high i in the position of the lower \hat{e}) and 'a-zás' (pronouncing high o in the position of the lower a) in the Szeged dialect.

The examination of vowel-length had to be carried out only in a rather limited scope. The basic cause of this is that the scribe does not distinguish either the short δ and long \hat{o} or the short \hat{u} and long \hat{u} , so I had to exclude this trait from the scope of the research. On the basis of the data provided by the record I can conclude that vowel lengthening before liquids is represented in a specific form in the corpus, so I paid particular attention to it. As this phenomenon is very frequent, I restricted my research only to vowel lengthening before $-l$. The result shows that the written records do not have a close connection with spoken language: the deletion of l is hardly ever marked, and the marked lengthening of vowels before l does not show a close connection with the historical linguistic data either.

I chose the consonant features for examination on the basis of the discrepancies the Szeged and Szeged area dialect shows with today's standard. This gives the basis of the analysis of the dialect of the records, the dialect of Szeged, and the scribal norm. The problem I had to face throughout the examination was the elucidation of the relationship between spoken language and phonetic notation. The study of the phonetic notation uncovered the fact that there is a well-marked difference between each scribe's practice of writing, and thus their idea of the norm.

From the consonant features of the Szeged and Szeged area dialect I extend the scope of the study to cover the phenomena of depalatalization and palatalization (this is the so-called 'n-ezés' and 'ny-ezés', i.e., pronouncing depalatalized n instead of the palatal ny and vice versa), the high range of full assimilations, the deletion of l , the lengthening of intervocalic vowels, and the deletion of the terminal $-t$ in the control source. As the Szeged area dialect and the text of the record do not show significant alteration in other consonant features I did not examine the following quantitative changes: affrication, assimilation of voice, or the qualitative changes of intrusive sounds and reduced sounds.

The tendency of depalatal 'n-ezés', also attested in Tápé, is discernible in the magistrate records, but in a quite uneven distribution. The notes of the last hand contain the most data of the features of the dialect; however, we find a few counter-examples

too. The tendency of palatal 'ny-ezés' can also be found in this part of the record, but just sporadically. These two dialectal features are rather dominant in the final part of the record, but much less in the part written by hand A. The control source shows the same range for the depalatalization tendency, and also has sporadic evidence for palatalization of nasals (as does the primary source).

The phenomenon of the Szeged dialect's wider use of full assimilation is also evident in the last part of the record, proving Végh (1971) right in his data of the Tápé dialect. The *r/ > ll* assimilation is exceptionally significant in this group of data. In connection with the phenomenon of full assimilation, more widely used than the standard, the parts of the primary source not written by hand A are closely similar to the control source. The deletion of *l* appears more evenly distributed in the magistrate record; it seems that this phenomenon of spoken language did not make it to written language variants, and thus was not accepted by the scribal norm. The primary source shows that scribes found marking the deletion of *l* inconsistent with the register. However, the less educated scribe of the control source produced more instances of the deletion of *l*.

A unique characteristic of the language of the control source is the numerous attested cases of deletion of post-consonantal final *-t*; this is unattested in the magistrate record. I also tried to consider whether a connection can be supposed between the evaluation of this phenomenon in the 1717-23 period and today's judgement. My conclusion is that the 18th century and the contemporary stances are not unrelated.

The last consonant feature I examine is the gemination of intervocalic consonants, especially the gemination of *s* and its use in written language, which I examined only in the primary source. I studied the different morphological positions of geminated *s* sounds, and the result shows that this phenomenon is quite frequent in scribal language use. Thus its evaluation is not the same as that of the above mentioned features. This fact could also be related to today's attitude to the phenomenon, i.e. the gemination of intervocalic *s* is only "moderately stigmatised" (Sándor-Langman-Pléh: 1998). There is an additional difference from other consonant features, namely that the distribution of dialectal phenomena is quite even in the corpus. At the same time the occurrence of geminated *s* sounds is not so evenly distributed in different phonetic positions: while the proportion of *s* gemination before the *-n* inflectional suffix is 100% in the written records, the occurrence of geminated *ss* before the *-bb* suffix shows significant oscillation.

Finally, if we compare the proportion of the occurrence of dialectal phenomena in the vowel and consonant paradigms, we can conclude that the various consonant features fell under different value judgements, thus their appearance in the written records in as uneven as in the case of the vowels. The notation of the deletion of *l* is as stigmatised by scribal language use as the 'ő-zés' before suffixes. Another similarity of the two dialectal phenomena is that we find much more instances of both in the last part of the magistrate

record, and there are more instances in the control source written by the less educated scribe, than in the whole length of the magistrate record.

The description of phonological alterations in written texts has always been favoured over the study of morphological alterations. Thus gathering and analysing data in this field is much more difficult, as there is no elaborate methodology available. Another disadvantage of the lack of such studies is that the results of the analysis of only two records will fall in a vacuum in diachronic description: there is no chance of comparing the results with records from earlier or later times. This was the problem I had to face during the study of the double accusative appearing on demonstrative pronouns. Fortunately with the study of the distribution of inessive and illative variables, I was not in such an unfavourable situation, as there is a thorough quantitative research carried out on a great late Old Hungarian linguistic corpus (Korompay: 1992). As for the present distribution and value judgement of these variables, we can also conclude that there is no thorough research done in the field of synchronic description of different styles, registers, or dialects. Thus we are not supplied with sufficient data on the present spread of each variable and the connected attitude, which means that it is very difficult to study the process of spread and evaluation of the diachronic phenomenon; not even if we limit the scope of the research to the register of the scribal norm.

The description of morphological variables begins with the study of the occurrence of illative and inessive suffixes in the records. It stands to reason why I chose to study these two suffixes together: their use is largely influenced by one another, but I consider them as two different variables. The written form of the suffixes in the records proves that the register of the magistrate record did not allow free alternation in the inessive and illative cases, and often uses even a hypercorrect illative suffix with a terminal *-n*. However, the control source contains much evidence for the inessive suffix without the terminal *-n*, and very few instances for the hypercorrect form. Thus the differentiation between the two suffixes deviates from the standard in the language use of both scribes, but in a different direction. I also tried to locate the spread and evaluation of the alternation of these suffixes in the diachronic line up to the present, which lead to the conclusion that there is a certain continuity in the process of the alternative use of these variables. The result might prove that the alternation is quite stable; thus it is not the sign of a language change in progress.

The third morphological variable I examine is the use of the double accusative on demonstrative and personal pronouns. Previous research concerning of the language use of scribes neglected the study of this phenomenon, and there was no exact quantitative research done on its present spread or evaluation either. This is the reason why study in a diachronic perspective cannot be fully carried out. The distribution of the variants clearly shows that the scribal language use did not have either a tradition or a strict norm concerning the use of double accusative which could have turned the unstable variation to a clearly marked tendency.

The two records also show significant differences in the morphological variation of the past form of Pl. 3, indefinite conjugation. In the primary source we find more instances of the *-nak/-nek* suffixes in the verbal paradigm, in the past tense formed with the suffix *-t*, while in the control source the original *-k* suffix is dominant.

I discuss three syntactic phenomena. In the use of the first one, the number agreement of adjectival phrases, the two sources seem to be quite close to each other, while in the use of the other two they again show significant differences. The examination of the number agreement of adjectival phrases uncovered that the use of plural nouns after numerical adjectives, especially nouns denoting measurement and monetary units, is a typical feature of scribal language use. The majority of the data for this phenomenon comes from the use of the phrase with the noun *forintok* (forints), which occurs most in the law court documents when imposing fines. It is clearly observable that the use of plural nouns after all the three types of adjectives, especially after definite numerals, was much more common in the magistrates record. The most probable explanation of this phenomenon is the bilingualism of the record and the Latin education of the magistrate scribes, whereas the scribe of the law court record was not subjected to the contact effect of Latin.

The second examined syntactic phenomenon, the unjustified use of the conditional in subordinate clauses, can only be found in the magistrate record, written by the more educated scribe. It seems that this phenomenon occurs only in written language, and more specifically in the highest register, and not even there exclusively. Most frequently this could be found in time clauses and subordinated object clauses, and has a specific meaning: by using the conditional the speaker expresses doubt about the course of the action.

For the third syntactic phenomenon, the use of the *-nd* suffix to express future, there are only a few instances, exclusively in the primary source. These examples and their context explain the fact that this future form was considered archaic even in the 18th century scribal language use. It is very probable that they were only copied with the text of the oaths, thus these are the remains of an earlier state of language.

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