

The pronunciation of the Hungarian (bVn) variable

A sociolinguistic case study in the South of Hungary

“Jelige: Labovatory”

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Abstract

The idea behind finding reason to why people alter their speech in certain cases and why not in others stems from the sociolinguist William Labov, who studied the New York City accent, specifically the usage of the (r) variable. His findings showed that the main facilitator to one's style-shifting is the amount of attention paid to one's own speech, which many scholars argued against, stating that there are other factors contributing to style-shifting. This phenomenon of altering one's speech not only happens in the English language, but in others, like Hungarian too. There can be multiple variables examined that are similar to the New York City (r), however, the present paper focuses specifically on the Hungarian (bVn) variable, which has two variants, the formal [bVn] and the informal [bV]. This variable was chosen because the [bV] variant has a similar stigmatization to (r)-dropping in New York City. The present paper aims to investigate whether attention to speech is still a relevant factor in style-shifting nowadays, through the Hungarian (bVn) variable. Moreover, it also aims to inspect whether the level of acquaintance between people is a relevant factor when it comes to style-shifting. Method triangulation is used and empirical data is gathered in the South of Hungary. The first methodological component is a rapid and anonymous survey, following the one conducted by Labov in New York City, with 100 respondents, while the second component involves sociolinguistic interviews with 30 people. Data from the rapid and anonymous survey show that the majority of people use the informal [bV] variant when less attention is paid, and the more formal [bVn] variant when more attention is paid to their own speech. The interviews, aiming to find evidence for the influencing factor of the level of acquaintance, prove that natural speech is highly different to reading aloud, thus more informative about the usage of the (bVn) variable. The results show the following correlation: the higher level of acquaintance there is, the higher the occurrence of the [bV] variant. From the data collected in both methodological components, it can be concluded that attention to speech is a relevant and strong factor in style-shifting as well as the level of acquaintance; moreover, there is not a hierarchy between these two factors, but an equally explicit correlation.

Absztrakt

William Labov szociolingvistától származik az az ötlet, hogy azt vizsgáljuk, hogy az emberek miért változtatják meg a beszédüket bizonyos esetekben, és miért nem változtatják azt más esetekben. Ő a New York-i akcentust tanulmányozta, különösen az (r) változó használatát. Eredményei azt mutatták, hogy az egyén stílusváltásának legfőbb elősegítője a saját beszédére fordított figyelem mértéke. Számos tudós érvelt ez ellen, azt hangsúlyozva, hogy más tényezők is hozzájárulnak az egyén stílusváltásához. A beszédmódváltás jelensége nemcsak az angol nyelvben fordul elő, hanem más nyelvekben, például a magyarban is. Több olyan változót is vizsgálhatunk, amely a New York-i (r)-hez hasonló, jelen dolgozat azonban a magyar (bVn) változóra koncentrál. Ennek két változata van, a formális [bVn] és az informális [bV]. Azért választottuk ezt a változót, mert a [bV] változat hasonlóan stigmatizált, mint a New Yorkban vizsgált (r) változó. Jelen dolgozat célja a (bVn) változón keresztül a magyar nyelvben a stílusváltás vizsgálata arra nézve, hogy releváns tényező-e manapság a beszédre való odafigyelés. Továbbá a jelen dolgozat azt is vizsgálni kívánja, hogy az emberek közötti ismertségi szint releváns tényező-e a stílusváltás során. A trianguláció módszere kerül alkalmazásra, és az adatokat a Dél-Alföldön szociolingvisztikai terepkutatással gyűjtöttük. Az első módszertani komponens egy gyors és anonim felmérés, amely Labov New Yorkban végzett felmérésén alapul, és 100 válaszadóval készült, míg a második komponens szociolingvisztikai interjút tartalmaz 30 fővel. A gyors és anonim felmérés adatai azt mutatják, hogy az emberek többsége az informális [bV] változatot használja, amikor kevésbé figyel a beszédére, és a formálisabb [bVn] változatot, amikor nagyobb figyelmet fordít rá. Az interjúk, amelyek célja az ismeretségi szint hatásának vizsgálata, azt bizonyítják, hogy a természetes beszéd jelentősen eltér a hangos olvasástól, így az a komponens, ahol ez a természetes beszédmód előfordul, a leginkább árulkodó a (bVn) változó használatáról. Az eredmények a következő összefüggésre mutatnak rá: minél szorosabb a kapcsolat, illetve minél magasabb az ismeretségi szint a kérdező és a kérdezett között, annál nagyobb a [bV] változat előfordulása. A két komponensben gyűjtött adatokból arra lehet következtetni, hogy a beszédre való odafigyelés releváns tényezője a stílusváltásnak, csakúgy, mint az ismeretségi szintje, anélkül, hogy e két tényező között hierarchia lenne.

1. Introduction

According to Labov (1966), people alter their speech based on their level of concentration, meaning that when more attention is paid to someone's own speech, it is more formal, compared to when less attention is paid to it. It has been criticized on several occasions by different scholars and it was conducted several decades ago in the US, so the aim of the present investigation is to put Labov (1966)'s theory to the test in a contemporary Hungarian context.

One major difference between Labov (1966) and the present study is that while Labov (1966) was looking at the (r) variable in New York City, this one investigates the use of the Hungarian inessive ending (bVn). It is similar to the (r) variable studied by Labov (1966), because the [bVn] variable is proven to have a similar stigmatization (Kontra 1998) in the Hungarian-speaking world. To provide some context to Labov (1966)'s study, it is crucial to understand that while contemporary General American standard English is rhotic, the New York City accent traditionally is non-rhotic, meaning that while the *r* is pronounced in postvocalic positions in standard General American, it is mostly dropped in the New York City accent. When someone uses a non-rhotic accent in the United States today, meaning that they drop the *r* in a postvocalic position, it is deeply stigmatized, even though non-rhoticity is an integral part of the accent used in New York (Meyerhoff 2006, Wardhaugh 2006). Thus, r-dropping is a great indicator of social class, since it stereotypically belongs to working class speech (Labov 1966).

As mentioned above, the similarity between the Hungarian (bVn) variable and the (r) variable in New York City is in their stigmatization. The Hungarian inessive (bVn) variable has a variant answering the question *Where?* with the meaning *in something*. This is the variant [bVn]. The other variant is [bV]. When written, there is a noticeable difference between the two, for example, *A boltban vagyok*. [I am in the store] or *Bemegyek a boltba*. [I am going into the store]. Through the use of either one, a grammatical difference, consequently a difference in meaning occurs. In contrast, in spoken language there are instances when the [bV] variant is used in both occasions, thus making the aforementioned distinction disappear. Nonetheless, by dropping the *n*, thus using the non-standard variant, people, similarly to the non-rhotic New York City accent, can be judged negatively and associated with a lesser degree of education or affluence.

I became interested in this topic, on the one hand, to gain more recent data comparable to Labov (1966)'s findings. On the other hand, as a future teacher, I wanted to

dive into this field because it is important to know possible reasons that can stand behind speech alteration. Moreover, the literature on the inessive ending (bVn) is mainly based on textual analyses of historical Hungarian texts with conclusions to present-day language use. Also, even the more recent studies are mainly based on data gathered not so recently. Consequently, new empirical research seems to be necessary.

My hypothesis is that the level of concentration plays a role in altering one's speech, however, there should be more than one factor contributing to it. Thus, I hypothesize that the level of acquaintance of the speakers is another factor that has a significant role in speech alteration.

The first section of this paper is a literature review that starts with Labov's theory and findings, followed by others that criticized him or added to his framework other important factors that influence speech alteration. Moreover, this section also includes literature on the Hungarian inessive ending (bVn). Then comes a methodology section discussing the two methodological components of the research. The following section is about the analysis of the data collected and a discussion on the findings. Finally, a number of conclusions are drawn from the findings of the investigation, and possible future avenues for further research, as well as some limitations of the present project are highlighted.

2. Literature review

2.1. Labovian theory and its critiques

Labov (1966)'s New York City social dialect survey was based on the principle of triangulation, which is a method in which at least two tests, which are independent of each other, are used in order to corroborate the findings of the research (Meyerhoff 2006). Using triangulation is advantageous because if the results from every test lead to the same conclusions, it strengthens the reliability of the entire research. In the case of the survey conducted by Labov on New York City speech, triangulation is realized through the utilization of two methods. Prior to conducting sociolinguistic interviews, he also carried out what he called "rapid and anonymous surveys" (cf. Meyerhoff, 2006: 35), in three department stores in New York City. These were places with a plethora of people to ask questions to and conduct the rapid and anonymous survey within a relatively short amount of time. According to Labov (1966, 1984), this method enables the researcher to create and record what he calls "casual and anonymous speech events" (Labov 1984: 45). These speech events, being the most natural ways of speaking, thus giving real insight into how a language works, are extremely conclusive for sociolinguists when conducting any type of sociolinguistic research.

In order to encounter these speech events, the researcher has to minimize the observer's paradox by making the interviews appear as natural as possible (Labov 1972). The observer's paradox was defined by Labov as follows: “the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation” (Labov 1972: 209).

Labov's method included the following: “The interviewer approached the informant in the role of a customer asking for directions to a particular department” (Labov 1984: 45). The interviewer in this case was Labov himself, who asked questions in such a way that the elicited answers contained the expression *fourth floor*, then he asked the question again, waiting for the repetition of the answer. After this, he noted down some important data concerning, for instance, the respondent's age, gender, the store the worker was in, and the answers he got (Labov 1966).

Eliciting answers containing the expression *fourth floor* was crucial, as he was studying the use of the (r) variable. The choice of this variable was also significant. The accent used in New York City is strongly stereotyped, and its r-lessness is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. The r-lessness, a.k.a. non-rhoticity “[...] means that unless an orthographic ‘r’ occurs before a vowel, it is not pronounced as a constricted ‘r’” (Meyerhoff 2006: 29). This characteristic of the New York accent is even despised by some New Yorkers themselves, even if they and/or their friends and families use an r-less accent (Meyerhoff 2006). Due to this solidly negative stereotype concerning the (r) variable in New York, Labov (1966) hypothesized that when speakers pay attention to their speech (e.g., because they have been asked to repeat their answer), they use the more standard form, meaning that less r-dropping happens. In contrast, when less attention is paid to one's own speech, r-dropping is more likely to happen. In the New York study he basically confirmed the above hypothesis, and went on to conclude that the attention one pays to one's own speech determines how that person uses the different variables, and which variants are used. (Labov 1966: 84). This, generally speaking, means that one's style is determined by one's degree of attention paid to their speech.

Following Labov's groundbreaking findings, numerous other researchers suggested that there must be other factors related to style shifting in one's speech and using different varieties while speaking (cf. Abu Baha 2014). As Devyani (2018:1) puts it, it became evident that, rather than only focusing on the single factor of attention to speech, an openness to “the interplay of cognitive and interactional effects in style variation” has to characterize scholars' mindset in this field. For instance, according to Wardhaugh (2006: 51) “[...] the kind of

occasion; the various social, age, and other differences that exist between the participants; the particular task that is involved, e.g., writing or speaking; the emotional involvement of one or more of the participants, etc.”

Giles (1973) was one of the first representatives of this new perspective, disagreeing with Labov’s findings that speech is altered solely on the basis of the level of concentration that a speaker has on his/her speech. Instead, he focused on intraspeaker variation. Intraspeaker variation concerns, according to Meyerhoff (2006: 17), “differences in the way a single person speaks at different times, or with different interlocutors, or even within a sentence.” Meyerhoff also emphasizes the importance of intraspeaker variation by stating that it is “a necessary corollary of inherent variability in grammars” (Meyerhoff 2006: 17). For instance, there can be differences in style based on where someone talks with somebody else, be it at home, at a restaurant, or at work.

Furthermore, Giles (1973) suggests that, apart from intraspeaker variation, interpersonal factors also need to be taken into consideration as possible reasons for speech alteration. To be more precise, intrapersonal variation also has its own interpersonal factors that determine how a given person uses language in a given situation, based on his/her conversation partners. In connection with the studies that Labov conducted, Giles (1973) argued that there might be other possible explanations, other than attention, for instance, the context the speakers were in. Thus, he described style as attention to other people’s speech (Giles 1973), as opposed to Labov (1966)’s concept of style as attention to one’s own speech.

Following Giles (1973)’s shift to a conceptualization of style as attention to others rather than attention to one’s own speech, Bell (1984) also wanted to look further than Labov’s theories on attention. He claimed the following: “Style is essentially speakers’ response to their audience” (Bell 1984: 145). He called this audience design, meaning that “[s]peakers are designing their style for their audience” (Bell 1984: 197). What this means is that while speaking, apart from the speaker themselves, there are certain audience roles to be categorized as follows: “addressee,” “auditor,” “overhearer,” and “eavesdropper” (Bell 1984: 192). The addressee is the person who is “ratified”, “known” (Bell 1984: 159) and whom the speech is addressed to. The auditor is who is around, ratified, and the speaker knows about them but they are not the target of the speech. The overhearer is someone that is “not ratified” (Bell 1984: 159), but whose presence is recognized by the speaker. Finally, the eavesdropper is someone who hears the speech but is not noticed by the speaker. These roles can be put into “concentric circles” (Bell 1984: 160) and they all influence the speaker’s speech, but as the circle expands, the influence lessens (Bell 1984: 159-160).

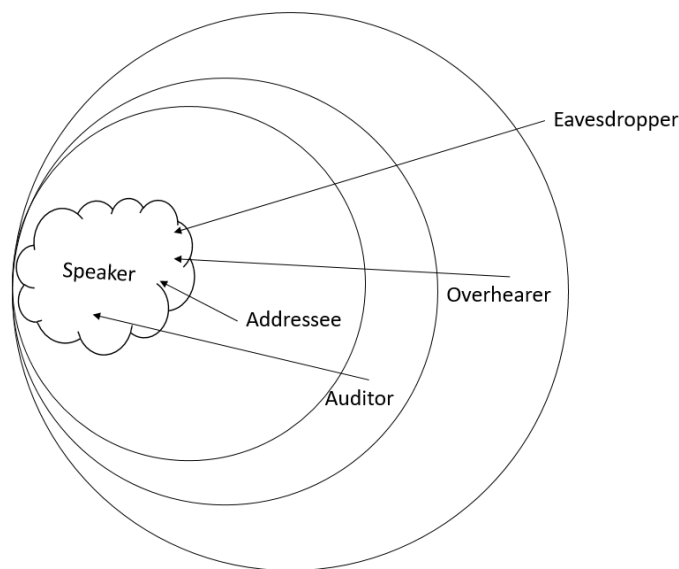


Figure 1. Bell's audience design. Figure made by myself, based on Hay et al. (1999) and Meyerhoff (2006:43).

Another important factor that Bell highlights is that these roles are determined and viewed from the perspective of the speaker (Bell 1984, 2001). This means that whenever the addresser changes the addressee, his/her whole speech can change because of that. Because, “[...] at all levels of language variability, people are responding primarily to other people” (Bell 1984: 197), which further strengthens Giles (1973)’s conceptual shift from viewing style as attention to one’s own speech to style as attention to others.

Furthermore, Coupland was also among the scholars in the 1970s and 1980s who were displeased with the Labovian theory that the amount of attention paid to one’s own speech is what determines stylistic variation (Coupland 2001). He conducted a study at a Cardiff travel agency on style-shifting (Coupland 1980), in which he found that style-shifting “can be a dynamic resource for a speaker, not necessarily the automatic correlate of contextual features” (Coupland 1980: 1). He acknowledges that his study in Cardiff might not be enough to draw general conclusions from, but the data and conclusions are valuable guidelines for further investigations concerning “[...] firstly, the formal features of style-boundaries and secondly, interactional motivations for style-shifting” (Coupland, 1980: 12).

Coupland (1980)’s contribution might also be important from a methodological perspective, since he made sure he only started his investigation when the participant got used to the audio recorder and thus Coupland managed to minimize, or to some extent eliminate, the aforementioned problem of the observer’s paradox.

Additionally, Coupland explains a different point of view from the Labovian “two-dimensional model of sociolinguistic variation” (2001: 186). He claims that style should be more focused on the individual and views style-shifting as something that can have a role in projecting the identities of individuals (Coupland 2001, 2007). This approach is commonly referred to as speaker design (cf. Meyerhoff 2006, Cutillas-Espinosa et al. 2010). There are significant differences between audience design (Bell 1984) and this new approach. For example, the types of incentives or goals given to the speaker and which are anticipated to induce variation. Moreover, “[s]peaker design is also compatible with style-shifting where there is no independent evidence of a change in the speaker's attention to their speech or their audience” (Meyerhoff 2006: 44). In short, this approach to style shifting might serve as an explanation as to why people alter their speech when there is no change in the attention of the speaker, which Labov (1966, 1984) thought to be the main explanation for it.

2.2 The Hungarian (bVn) variable

According to Kontra (1998: 9) “The Hungarian inessive variable (bVn) has two variants: [bVn] and [bV]. The latter one is slightly stigmatized”. As explained earlier, the [bVn] variant means *in something* (i.e., *it answers the question Where?*), whereas the [bV] variant means *into something* (answering the question *Where to?*). However, the distinction between the meaning of these two only seems to be relevant in written language. In spoken Hungarian, especially in informal speech, the [bV] variant seems to take the place of [bVn], even when responding to the question *Where?* Furthermore, on the inessive (bVn) variable Trudgill (1997: 71) notes the following:

Those variables that show a style stratification in a speech community, different variants of them are used in different situations. [...] Similarly, using the Hungarian (inessive-ban/-ben) variable in -ba/-be form is more common in informal than in formal style. [my translation]

In contrast with Trudgill, who attributes the *n*-deletion to various reasons, Kontra (1998) and Németh (2004) state that the *n*-deletion in -ban/-ben is due to morphological reasons. Németh further explains this, adding that even if the *n* is deleted, “this does not prevent the formation of a regular word-final suffix” (2004: 103).

In writing there is a significant difference between the meaning of the two variants of the inessive (bVn) variable, whereas in speaking, the difference between the two variants is far less significant, thus the non-standard [bV] variant usually takes the place of the standard [bVn] variant. Examining the inessive (bVn) variable in Hungarian language monuments, Németh (2008: 103) makes the following statement:

Linguistic changes thus oscillate between orality and literacy, changes are in a causal relationship with each other. As a result of the opposite changes, the use of spoken and written language is finally separated. However, neither of these two media is strong enough to have a decisive influence on the other forms of existence of language. Thus, both media maintain their characteristic forms, which is why this very stable, constant alternation develops. [my translation]

This means that the alternation of the standard and nonstandard variant of the (bVn) variable has been a long-existing and constant phenomenon in the Hungarian language for six centuries, according to Németh (2008). Moreover, it has also been noted by Németh (2004, 2008) that the (bVn) variable is not the only one that has constantly altering variants; it happens with others too, such as the presence or absence of the (l) variable in *bolt* [shop] and that of the final *t* in *azért* [so that].

Mátyus (2011) analyzed previously gathered data, of the Budapest Sociolinguistic Interview-2 corpus, on the usage of the inessive (bVn) variable and the appearance of its standard and non-standard variants in different employment groups. He analyzed the occurrence of inessive [bVn] in spoken language. It was done with the intention to find connections between the usage of the two variants, [bV] and [bVn], and different employment groups.

She confirmed Kontra (1998)'s claim that the standard [bVn] variant is generally less frequently used than the nonstandard [bV] variant, however, the nonstandard variant is disparaged. Furthermore, Mátyus (2010)'s findings also go to show that the Labovian theory seems to be still relevant in a contemporary Hungarian context, meaning that attention to speech is a major facilitator in altering one's speech.

Based on the above, the present study is aimed to observe two things. First, whether new interview data would show - based on Labov (1966), and in accordance with Mátyus (2010) - that the attention to speech is indeed key in style shifting in the case of the Hungarian inessive [bVn] variable. Second, based on Giles (1973) and Bell (1984)'s claims, it also focuses on whether the level of acquaintance plays a role in the participants altering their speech, especially with a variable that has a stigmatized variant.

3. Methodology

Similarly to Labov (1966), methodological triangulation was applied in the present investigation as well, meaning that a rapid and anonymous survey was conducted as well as sociolinguistic interviews.

3.1 Rapid and anonymous survey

The first component of the investigation was conducted similarly to Labov (1966)'s rapid and anonymous survey, which he carried out in three New York City department stores. The aim was to conduct a parallel investigation to his, in order to obtain comparable results and test Labov (1966)'s theory in a Hungarian country town.

The investigation took place in Kiskunfélegyháza, Bács-Kiskun county, in the south of Hungary. This town does not have any large department stores, like the ones that featured in Labov (1966)'s experiment. Instead, the data collection was carried out in 100 stores, smaller and bigger ones as well, which can be found in the town. Some examples include Lidl, Goods Market, a pharmacy, Dm, and several smaller shops.

The method used was the same as Labov (1966)'s, for the reasons mentioned above. The rapid and anonymous survey was carried out the exact same way as Labov did it in his study, however, it was done with the Hungarian inessive suffix (bVn). Questions were asked to the workers like *Merre találok a tésztaszűrőt?* [Where can I find the pasta strainer?] or *Merre találok önöknél a gázgyújtót?* [Where can I find the gas lighter?]. These were asked with the intention to test out how many people opt for the non-standard variant like *boltba* [in the store], *sorba* [in the row], leaving out the *n* sound for the first time, but produce the standard variant when asked again, like *boltban* [in the store], *sorban* [in the row]. If Labov (1966)'s theory holds true for this context as well, and attention to one's own speech is the main factor for style shifting, then in this case, first, people would use word forms like *Spar-ba*, *kisboltba* [in Spar, in the corner shop] etc., first, leaving out the *n* sound. However, when

they are asked to repeat what they have said, they will use the standard suffix, pronouncing the *n* sound, like *Sparban*, *kisboltban*.

This investigation is a small-scale one with a hundred respondents. The shop assistants I asked were from various age groups, from people in their twenties to people in their fifties. All the answers, and some basic background information, like the place of the interview, as well as the approximate age and the gender of the respondents, were noted down right after the conversation. The compiled data was later organized into a table in a digital form in order for it to be analyzable.

3.2 Interviews

The aim of the second component of the investigation was to find other factors, besides the degree of attention paid to one's own speech, that could possibly have an effect on speech alteration, especially focusing on the level of acquaintance. My expectation was that the relationship, i.e., the level of acquaintance, has a significant role in speech alteration. The interviews were the tools to test whether this factor or the Labov's (1966) suggestion about attention to speech is more crucial.

In order to test the aforementioned theory, sociolinguistic interviews were conducted. These interviews differed in two aspects from the traditionally used sociolinguistic ones, which, according to Wardhaugh (2006: 161) usually consist of four parts: casual conversation, an interview situation, reading aloud a longer text, and reading aloud words or word-pairs.

The first and most significant dissimilarity from the usual sociolinguistic interview was in the components. The interviews conducted in the present study had three parts. All of the participants were interviewed using the same interview outline. First, the participants were accommodated to the situation of being in an interview through a video call. As suggested by Coupland (1980) small ice-breaker conversations were held as a warm-up. These were not noted down as part of the investigation, but served the sole purpose of putting the interviewees at ease, thus reducing the effect of the observer's paradox. When the ice-breaker part was done, the respondents were asked to perform four tasks, gradually decreasing the controlled nature of the interview. First, they were invited to read out a scientific text about pedagogy, then to read aloud some riddles (for the texts, see the Appendices 1 and 2). After that, they had to tell at least three childhood stories which are remarkable for them for any reason. This was followed by a casual talking part where their speech was also monitored. In the end, however, the last two parts almost always turned out to be so blurred that I decided to consider them as one single section, ultimately making the interviews three-component ones.

Thus, the present interview structure is very focused, which is best seen in terms of its components. Unlike the traditional sociolinguistic interview, the interviewees are not given so many tasks; instead, the interviews are more compact, and the tasks can be categorized more clearly as reading aloud and having a conversation. It was intentionally designed because this way the study can strongly focus on the main questions, i.e. whether the attention to speech is the primary facilitator and whether the level of acquaintance has a significant role in style shifting.

The second difference was that the interviews were conducted through online video calls. Even though the interviewer may take every possible step to perfect the quality of the conversations, the main downside of these types of interviews can be the poor Internet connection on the side of the interviewees. This can slightly hinder the effectiveness and can also distort the results to a small degree. Nevertheless, an obvious practical advantage of the online video calls is that interviewees can take part in them from the comfort of their own homes. Thus, it can be another tool for alleviating the stress caused by the whole interview situation, consequently lessening the observer's paradox.

Altogether thirty people took part in the interviews in a one-on-one fashion. In order for a better understanding of the role of the level of acquaintance, the thirty people were divided into three groups, with ten people in each. The three groups were differentiated by the level of acquaintance to the interviewer. Group 1 was the closest category, the family, Group 2 was close friends, and Group 3 was acquaintances with the least connections with the interviewer of all the groups.

Intentionally, nothing was recorded so as to minimize the observer's paradox as much as possible. For this reason, specifically only the (bVn) variable was in focus, because it was manageable to only pay attention to that while also conducting the interviews at the same time. The interviewer had a piece of paper with two columns, one with the standard pronunciation using the *n* and one with the non-standard one, meaning that the final *n* sound is dropped. Moreover, it also had divided sections for each task type. Each time either of the two variants appeared in the speech of the interviewee, it was marked on the sheet (see Appendix 3). Later the data obtained from all thirty people were digitized and analyzed.

4. Discussion

4.1 Rapid and anonymous surveys

The survey involved a hundred people with answers providing useful data. Originally, more than a hundred shop assistants were asked, however, unfortunately, some of them gave no answers, but simply led the interviewee to the products without saying anything. These were unfortunate situations and a great realization at the same time, on the basis of which it became clear that the questions needed to be slightly changed, and in many cases, the questions were trying to ask for products that the workers could not show because the items could not be found in the store, and they had to recommend another place to find them in, for instance.

In 67 cases everything went according to Labov (1966)'s scenario. The respondents used the non-standard variant first, dropping the final *n* sound. For the second time, they changed it, and opted for the standard variant [bVn], articulating their answers slightly more. Although the majority of the answers can be fitted into the attention-to-speech model (Labov 1966), in 33 cases the workers did not alter their speech this way. These answers can be categorized into two groups: those who used the standard variant throughout the entire conversation (11 people) and those who used the non-standard variant both for the first and for the second time (22 people).

My hypothesis seemed to be partially proved by this investigation and the findings. Based on the answers collected, I conclude that Labov (1966)'s theory partly holds true for this particular Hungarian context as well, because attention to speech did matter in most of the cases. Upon being asked for a second time, the majority of the people switched to the standard variant, articulating the *n*. Although these people were from various age groups, both men and women, because of the limited number of participants, the findings cannot be considered generalizable.

As for the 33 exceptions, especially the 22 respondents that used the non-standard variant in their first answer and in their second answer too, these data are also rather telling, because a huge similarity is to be observed among these participants. Interestingly enough, in the cases when people used the non-standard variants and left out the *n* sound in the first answer and in the second one too, 14 out of the 22 respondents were all acquaintances of mine, even if not particularly close ones. This implies that the level of acquaintance, or as Giles (1973) put it, interpersonal features can indeed have an important effect on someone's speech, pronunciation, and style. Thus, it can be argued that the findings of the present study justify Giles (1973)'s proposition about style as attention to other people and their speech.

Moreover, Bell (1984)'s concept of audience design can also contribute to a comprehensive explanation as to why so many people switched to the standard form for the

second time. Because, as mentioned previously, according to Bell “[...] at all levels of language variability, people are responding primarily to other people” (Bell 1984: 197). The rapid and anonymous surveys were all conducted in public places, the stores, so the workers might have altered their speech because they knew there were other people around, whom Bell (1984) calls overhearers and eavesdroppers. As a result, the workers were probably using the standard for the second time not only because of the increased attention they were paying to their speech, but also because they were speaking a little bit louder and in a more articulated manner, which could indicate that they knew that other people might be able to hear their answers in the stores besides me. In other words, again, the present findings seem to strengthen the position that apart from the attention to one’s own speech, other (mostly interpersonal) factors seem to influence style to a great extent as well (cf. Giles, 1973 and Bell, 1984).

Furthermore, to provide the above argument with even more support, it is worthy of mentioning that one of the exceptions happened in a small shop where there was only me and the shop assistant, and he knew about that. In accordance with Bell (1984)'s audience design model, the shop assistant here did not alter his speech because he did not have anticipated overhearers around him, and he did not have a reason to switch to the standard.

4.2 Interviews

The following part of the investigation, the sociolinguistic interviews, concentrated on the level of acquaintance, which was a significant common feature in the exceptional findings of the rapid and anonymous survey (see above). The question here was whether there is a differentiation in style based on the level of acquaintance the speaker has with the listener, in accordance with Giles (1973) and Bell (1984)’s suggestions.

The collected data was organized in an Excel file and an average was calculated from every occasion where the non-standard [bV] variant appeared. This was systematically conducted with every interview component, in each group. From these an average percentage of appearance of the [bV] variant was calculated. These percentages can be seen in the following table.

Acquaintances		
1.	reading, formal	13%
2.	reading, jokes	37,5%
3.	story, conversation	44,67%
Close friends		
1.	reading, formal	10%
2.	reading, jokes	18,75%
3.	story, conversation	49,33%
Family		
1.	reading, formal	17,5%
2.	reading, jokes	29,13%
3.	story, conversation	56,67%

Table 1. The occurrence of the [bV] variant.

4.2.1 Attention to speech

Based on the conducted interviews, the percentages in Table 1 show proof that Labov (1966, 1984)'s theory on attention to speech is a relevant factor. Looking at every group and component, it can be seen that the appearance of the non-standard [bV] variant is in correlation with the amount of attention that needs to be paid in each component of the interview. The less attention is paid, the more times the informal variant is used, thus, the third component has the most instances of [bV]. In that regard, the present findings confirm Labov's theory in a Hungarian context, namely that attention to our speech is indeed a huge factor in determining whether we alter our speech.

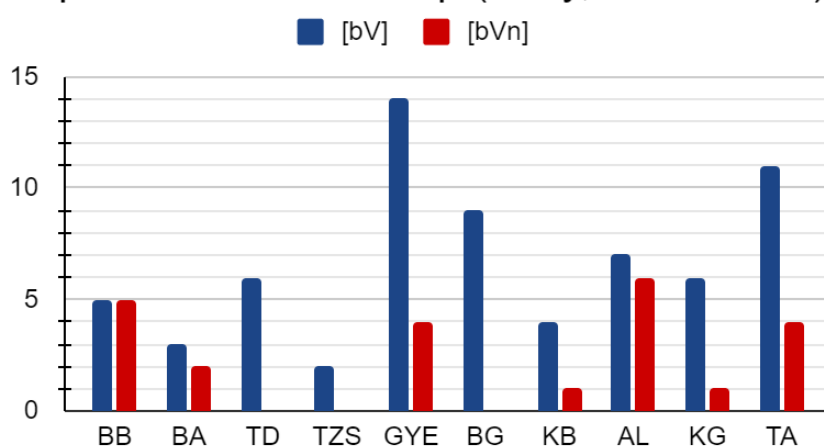
Moreover, based on the audience design model by Bell (1984), it is also possible that the participants expected some overhearers while they were reading aloud. So, the reason why they used the standard variant is because they did not want to seem less educated or did not want to feel embarrassed if someone heard them besides the interviewer. However, this explanation is not a very convincing one, because it would dictate that the participants use the [bVn] variant each and every time when the presence of an overhearer is expected. The collected data clearly shows that people used both variants throughout. Thus, the more probable explanation seems to be offered by Labov (1966, 1984)'s theory of attention to speech.

The observer's paradox is not an explanation for the participants using the standard variant while reading. The reasoning for that is also that if this had been the case, then the participants would have used the standard variants throughout the whole interview. Also, similarly to Coupland (1980)'s study, the participants were accommodated to the situation of being in an interview through a video call with the help of the small icebreaker conversations mentioned above.

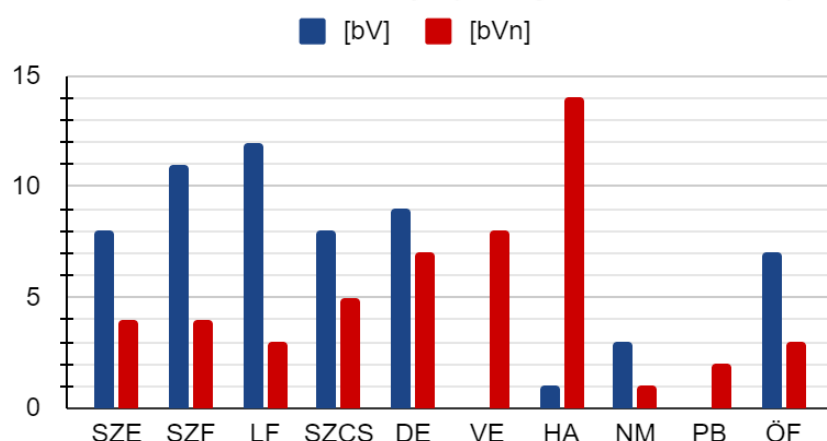
4.2.2 The acquaintance factor

Regarding the influence of the level of acquaintance, the results are slightly more complicated. Although at first sight, there does not seem to be an explicit correlation in the percentages, as it is the case with the previously discussed level of attention, there is some evidence that shows how the level of acquaintance has a role in style shifting.

Acquaintances: 3. comp.(story, casual talk)



Close friends: 3. comp.(story, casual talk)



Family: 3. comp.(story, casual talk)

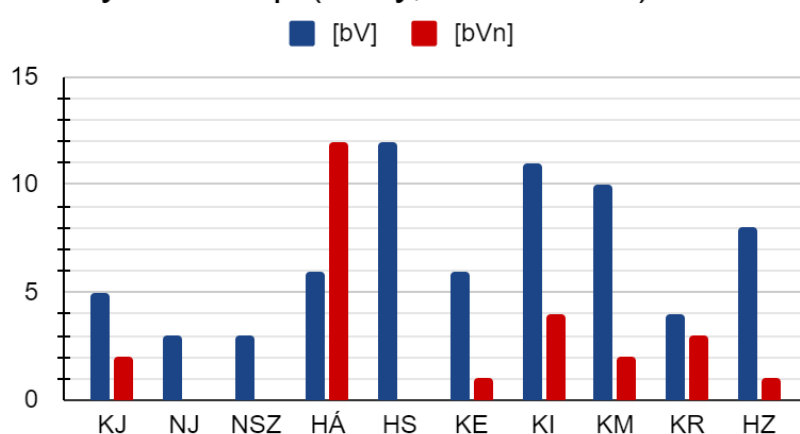


Figure 2. The results of the third component of the interview in each group of participants.

The third component, where the naturally occurring speech is in the focus, is different to the previous two components, where opposingly, there is no natural speech in reading aloud. Because of this, the third component is what can give a better understanding on style-shifting through the occurrence of the non-standard [bV].

Consequently, the results shown in Table 1 about the third component in each group were further analyzed. These results were made into three diagrams, one diagram for each group (acquaintances, close friends, family). In each diagram the horizontal axis shows the individual participants, 10 people in each group, and the vertical axis is the number of occurrences of [bV] vs. [bVn].

It can be seen in the diagrams (Figure 2) as well as in the percentages (Table 1) that the higher the level of acquaintance between the interviewer and the interviewee, the lesser the occurrence of the [bVn] variant, while the occurrence of the [bV] variant increases conversely, showing that the level of acquaintance is a factor that does have a role in the process of style shifting.

Based on these results discussed above, the claims of Giles (1973) and Bell (1984 and 2001) – among others – that interpersonal factors do in fact have a significant impact on style- shifting are confirmed in this case as well.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been found that the level of attention paid to one's own speech is a main, however, not the only one factor when it comes to style-shifting.

My hypothesis has been that the level of concentration has a role in altering one's speech, however, there should be more than one factor contributing to it. Thus, the level of acquaintance of the speakers is a possible factor that has a significant role in speech alteration. As mentioned above, it has been partially proven. Based on the present study, both the rapid and anonymous survey and the interviews show, with a few exceptions, that attention to speech as well as level of acquaintance have an influence on style shifting. Thus, Labov (1966, 1984) and those with opposing ideas to him and his theory on attention to speech, such as Giles (1973) and others, are equally proven to be relevant, regarding the findings of the present study.

The investigation had some limitations to it. First of all, in order to minimize the observer's paradox, the interviews were not recorded. This is a limitation in the sense that replaying the conversations was not an option, so it is possible that a certain number of instances of either standard or non-standard pronunciation have been missed. Another limitation to this study was that the rapid and anonymous survey was conducted only in one town, thus the data gathered cannot be generalized to the entire Hungarian-speaking world, though, in this sense, there is an improvement in the interviews. Even if they were not involving the entire country, they were conducted in the South of Hungary.

Furthermore, in order to gain a more general picture concerning the role of attention to speech, as well as the level of acquaintance in a Hungarian context, other variables should be investigated in future studies. For instance, the Hungarian (t) variable in *miért-miér* [why] or *mert-mer* [because of], or the L-deletion in words like *bolt-bót* [shop] or *volt-vót*

[was/were]. The reason behind this is because according to Asztalos (2001) as well as Németh (2004 and 2008) they work similarly to the (bVn) variable studied in the present investigation.

Moreover, other additions and alterations could be made regarding future avenues of research. The age groups of the participants could be widened, involving people of different ages and from different parts of the country, not only from one region and specifically one town, in order to get a more adequate picture and to obtain representative data.

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Appendix 1

The text used in the first component of the interview

A szociális viselkedés fejlesztésének problémái

Napjainkra igen elterjedt az a gondolat, miszerint a szociális viselkedés fejlesztésével minél korábban, lehetőleg már kisiskoláskorban intézményesen kellene foglalkozni. A szocializáció egyik kiemelt helyszíne az iskola, ahol számtalan szociális hatás éri a gyerekeket, a kortárs közeg nagyon sok lehetőséget kínál a különböző szociális ismeretek, képességek, készségek elsajátítására, gyakorlására.

Annak ellenére, hogy a Nemzeti alaptanterv (továbbiakban NAT) és a helyi pedagógiai programok (továbbiakban program) kiemelten kezelik a szociális kompetencia – a szociális ismeretek, képességek, készségek, motívumok rendszerének – fejlesztését, az iskolában nagyon sok esetben ez csak a pedagógiai tevékenység melléktermékeként jelenik meg. A feladat nem megfelelő iskolai ellátását bizonyítják a gyerekek körében növekvő számban megjelenő pszichés betegségek, devianciák, interperszonális problémák, melyek mindegyike visszavezethető a szociális kompetencia fejletlenségére is [...].

A különböző készség- és képességfejlesztő programok közül csak igen kevés tekinthető az iskolai oktató-nevelő munka szerves részének. A fejlesztéssel kapcsolatos elgondolások – arra alapozva, hogy a kognitív és a szociális fejlesztés szorosan összetartozó területek az oktatásban – egyre jobban hangsúlyozzák, hogy ezt a kapcsolatot a hazai közoktatásnak a jelenleginél jóval nagyobb mértékben kellene kihasználnia. Kutatások eredményei is bizonyították, hogy a kognitív irányú fejlesztések kedvező hatással vannak a gyerekek szociális képességeire, készségeire és fordítva [...].

Forrás:

Kasik, László. 2006. Együttműködés és versengés. *Új pedagógiai szemle* 56(2). 3-11.

English translation:

Problems in the development of social behavior

Nowadays, there is a widespread idea that the development of social behavior should be addressed institutionally as early as possible, preferably at an early school age. One of the most important places of socialization is the school, where the children have innumerable social influences. The contemporary environment offers a lot of opportunities to acquire and practice various social knowledge, abilities and skills.

Despite the fact that the National Core Curriculum (hereinafter NAT) and the local pedagogical programs (hereinafter the program) give priority to the development of social competence - the system of social knowledge, abilities, skills, motives - in many cases it is only a by-product of pedagogical activity at school. Inadequate schooling for the task is evidenced by the increasing number of mental illnesses, deviances and interpersonal problems among children, all of which can be traced back to the underdevelopment of social competence [...].

Of the various skills and competency development programs, very few can be considered an integral part of school instructional work. Development-related ideas, based on the fact that cognitive and social development are closely related areas in education, increasingly emphasize that this connection should be used to a much greater extent than at present in Hungarian public education. Research has also shown that cognitive development has a positive effect on children's social abilities and skills [...].

Source:

Kasik, László. 2006. Együttműködés és versengés. *Új pedagógiai szemle* 56(2). 3-11.

Appendix 2

The jokes used in the second component of the interview

Kaméleon a kályhában

- Mit csinál a kaméleon a kályhában?
- Beleolvad a környezetébe...

Öt év gyakorlat

A cég igazgatója behívja az újonnan felvett munkatársat:

- Már megbocsásson, de Ön az önéletrajzában azt állította, hogy öt év szakmai gyakorlata van, viszont most a tudomásomra jutott, hogy ez az első munkahelye!
- Elnézést főnök, de az álláshirdetésben azt írták, jó képzelőerővel rendelkező alkalmazottat keresnek...

Szomszédasszony

- Mondja, szomszédasszony! Maga egészen addig égeti a lámpát az előszobában, amíg a férje haza nem jön a kocsmából?
- Igen muszáj, mert a múltkor is a sötétben a nagy tükörhöz vágtam a gyúródeszkát.

Fizetésemelés

- Tegnap végre bementem a főnökhöz és nagyon határozottan fizetésemelést kértem.
- És hogy sikerült megegyezni?
- Kompromisszumos megoldás született...
- ???
- A fizetésem nem emelkedik, én meg cserében maradhatok.

Források:

<https://www.viccesviccek.hu>

<http://www.topviccek.hu/vicckategoria/Orvos?page=1#ixzz6ozgtrn2I>

<http://www.topviccek.hu/vicckategoria/Kocsmas?page=2#ixzz6ozdC8UpP>

English translation:

Chameleon on the stove

- What is the chameleon doing on the stove?
- It blends in ...

Five years of work experience

The director of the company invites the newly hired employee:

- I'm sorry, but you said in your resume that you have five years of work experience, but now it has come to my notice that this is your first job!
- I'm sorry, boss, but it was written in the job ad that they're looking for an employee with good imagination ...

Neighbour

- Tell me, neighbor! Do you leave the light on in the hallway until your husband comes home from the pub?
- Yes, because I threw the kneading board to the big mirror in the dark last time.

Pay raise

- I finally went to the boss yesterday and asked for a pay rise very confidently.
- And how did you reach an agreement?
- A compromise solution was reached ...
- ???
- My salary won't increase, and I can stay in return.

Sources:

<https://www.viccesviccek.hu>

<http://www.topviccek.hu/vicckategoria/Orvos?page=1#ixzz6ozgtrn2I>

<http://www.topviccek.hu/vicckategoria/Kocsma?page=2#ixzz6ozdC8UpP>

Appendix 3

The marking sheet used over the course of the entire interview

1. **ba/be** **ban/ben**

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2. **ba/be** **ban/ben**

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3. **ba/be** **ban/ben**

--	--

Name of the interviewee