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Coping with Socially Sensitive Topics Discourse on Interethnic Marriages among Elderly Members of the Serbian Minority in Hungary

Abstract: Drawing on the field research conducted in the Serbian community in Szigetsép, Hungary, the paper examines interlocutors' oral discourse on interethnic marriages. Until the Second World War, the Serbs in Hungary, rural communities in particular, mainly practised endogamy. In the post-war era, however, they tended to be among the minority groups with the highest rate of exogamic marriages. Consequently, the interviewees established discourse links between "interethnic marriages", "loss of native language" and "fear of identity loss". The analytical focus is on the interlocutors' internal dialogism between the authoritative word of the ancestors and autobiographical assertions.

Keywords: anthropological linguistics, minority, authoritative discourse, ethnic identity, interethnic marriages, Serbs in Hungary

Introduction

The Ottoman conquests in the Balkans caused a continuous migration of Christians to the north, into the Hungarian, later Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian lands. Thus Serb migrations began in the fourteenth century and lasted until the end of the eighteenth century. The Serbs founded their settlements mainly in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, and subsequently organized themselves into a political community whose identity was based upon Serbian language maintenance and Orthodox Christianity. After the "Great Migration of the Serbs" in 1690 — when at least 37,000 families led by Patriarch Arsenije III Černojević moved to the Habsburg lands to escape Ottoman reprisals amidst the Holy League War — Emperor Leopold I granted some privileges to the Serbian people and their Church, including a limited cultural autonomy, in return for their service as border guards. The Metropolitanate of the Serbian Orthodox Church was thus established in the Habsburg Monarchy between 1691 and 1848, when it was proclaimed the Serbian Patriarchate of Karlovci.¹ Hence, the

¹ Initially, the seat of the Metropolitanate was in Szentendre (1691–1706), and later was moved to Krušedol (1708–1713) and eventually to Karlovci (1713–1848). In 1848, the Metropolitanate of Karlovci (Ser. *Karlovačka mitropolija*) was elevated to the rank of

migrants who came between the fourteenth and eighteenth century formed the core of what we call today the Serbian national minority in Hungary (cf. Forišković 1994).

Census data for the area of present-day Hungary show that the number of Serbian native speakers decreased throughout the twentieth century. Since 1980 the number of persons whose native language is Serbian and that of persons of Serbian nationality have been approximately the same and estimated at 5,000 to 10,000, which indicates a tight small minority (see Vékás 2005, 129). According to the last Hungarian census, conducted in 2001, the number of those who affiliated themselves with the Serbian minority in at least one of the four questions regarding ethnic identity — nationality, native language, cultural affiliation, and language spoken within family and with friends — was 7,350; yet, the number of persons who marked Serbian as their native language was 3,816 (*Population Census 2001*; Vékás, 2005). In addition to being small in number, the Serbs in Hungary are widely distributed throughout the country, notably in Budapest and its surroundings (along the Danube), along the Maros River, and in the County of Baranya. However scattered, these communities form a sort of socio-cultural and kinship network. Moreover, the Serbs in Hungary are officially recognized as a national minority and protected under the Hungarian Minority Laws.² Due to the Serbian community's long-standing presence in Hungary, its members consider themselves a historic, almost autochthonous, minority. There is in Hungary a notable architectural heritage created by the Serbs at the time of their rise in the eighteenth and even in the nineteenth century; moreover, they were a driving force for modern Serbian culture, which is still the foundation of the Serbian minority group's positive identity and feeling of pride (Prelić 2002; Davidov 1990; Vujičić 1997). Yet, the traditional sense of community belonging among the Serbs in Hungary has for centuries been based upon the following criteria: Orthodox Christianity,

patriarchate at the Serbian May Assembly in Karlovci, which was recognized by Emperor Franz Joseph II. The Patriarchate of Karlovci existed until 1920, when it merged with the Metropolitanate of Belgrade to form the Patriarchate of Serbia (cf. EP 2002, s.v. *Karlovačka mitropolija*).

² The cornerstone of minority rights protection in Hungary is the 1993 Law on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, which recognizes thirteen minorities: Armenian, Bulgarian, Croat, German, Greek, Polish, Romani, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serb, Slovak, Slovenian and Ukrainian. A prerequisite for recognition was the presence of a minority in Hungary for at least a century. All recognized minorities are entitled to establish their respective minority self-governments, which ensure a broad cultural autonomy and primarily deal with cultural and educational affairs (cf. Dobos 2007). For *Hungarian Minority Act LXXVII of 1993* see <http://www.ciemen.org/mercator/butlletins/49-18.htm>.

Serbian language maintenance, Serbian personal name, and ethno-confessional endogamy (Prelić 1999, 106).

After the Second World War the Hungarian minority groups faced tremendous changes in their social networks, which in turn spurred a shift in their attitude towards identity. The process was set in motion and boosted by the profound social changes which transformed Hungary, i.e. the establishment of a communist regime, forced industrialization, village-to-town migrations, etc. The changes opened the way to upward social mobility, which resulted in intensified population movement and interethnic communication. Magyar, as the official state language, became prerequisite for upward social mobility and social integration. As a result, ethnic minority communities experienced a rapid decline in the use of native vernaculars and an increase in interethnic marriages. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the Serbs in Hungary no longer base their ethnic identity solely upon traditional symbolic values. According to a recent sociolinguistic survey on the Hungarian ethno-linguistic minorities, most interviewed Serbs expressed their identity through their association with Serbian cultural, social and biological ancestry (73.2 percent), and only a small number, through their connection to the Serbian language (26.9 percent) (cf. Bartha & Borbély 2006).³ Furthermore, an anthropological survey demonstrated that the majority of Serbian respondents preferably chose a traditional custom called *slava* as the most significant identity marker;⁴ those considered as less important were Orthodox Christianity, other traditional customs, and the Serbian language.⁵ Yet, the biggest “surprise” of the latest 2001 Census concerns religious denomination: of 7,350 persons self-declared as belonging to the Serbian minority only 26 percent declared themselves as Orthodox Christian, and 36

³ The survey of Bartha and Borbély explores the role that language and ancestry play in ethnic identity construction among six Hungarian ethnic minorities: Germans, Slovaks, Serbs, Romanians, Roma, and Boyash (the ethnonym *Boyash* refers to the Romanian-speaking groups living for at least two centuries across South-East Europe; they share many cultural characteristics with the Roma, but usually refuse to be identified as such, and self-identifying instead as *Boyash*, *Romanians*, *Rudari*, *Koritari*, *Romanian/Valachian Gypsies*, etc. For more see Sikimić 2005).

⁴ The *slava* is the festivity honouring the patron saint of a family, a village or a church. *Slava* is a widespread tradition among the Serbs, but the custom can also be found among other Balkan Slavs, cf. SM, s.v. *slava*.

⁵ The respondents were asked the following: “When does a person cease being a Serb?” Almost 36 percent of the interviewed Serbs believed that “one would cease being a Serb” by abandoning *slava*, followed by the belief that “one would cease being a Serb” by not being baptized in an Orthodox church and by failing to observe Serbian and/or Orthodox Christian customs (22 percent each), and, finally, by losing the Serbian language (21 percent) (Prelić 2008, 195).

percent as Roman Catholic (cf. Tóth & Vékás 2005, 143; *Population Census 2001*).⁶ All things considered, it appears that, alongside other social changes, identity negotiations are taking place among the Serbs in Hungary.

This contribution, drawing upon the fieldwork carried out in the Serbian community of Szigetcsép near Budapest, will analyze the interlocutors' discourse on interethnic marriages, that is ideological constructions made in relation to interethnic marriages.

1. Interethnic marriages within the Serbian minority community

Marriage patterns among the Serbian rural population in Hungary have changed over the centuries. Orthodox Christian endogamy has been embraced and practised since the nineteenth century (e.g. marriages with Orthodox Bulgarians and Tzintzars). Marriages with Serbo-Croatian speaking Catholics in Hungary (e.g. Ratz, Bunjevac ethnic communities) have been practised since the mid-twentieth century. However, interethnic marriages with Magyars and Germans, either Catholic or Protestant, were generally rejected until the end of the Second World War (cf. Ilić 2008).

Nevertheless, since the Second World War the Serbs in Hungary have had one of the highest exogamy rates of all minority groups (cf. Tóth & Vékás 2006; *Population Census 2001*), mostly due to their small number, language barrier collapse, and intensified interethnic contacts.⁷ The Serbian Orthodox Church records show that the rate of interethnic marriages in Lórév (Ser. Lovra), a Serb-inhabited village on the Csepel Island, rose from 17.2 percent in the first half of the twentieth century to more than 45 percent in its second half (Prelić 1995, 99). The Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Karlovci records show that only 2 percent of all Serbian marriages in 1905 were interethnic in Pomáz (Ser. Pomaz), a town in the environs of Budapest; by 1974 the percent rose to 36.7 percent, and by 1996 to more than 45 percent. In Csobánka (Ser. Čobanac), a village near Budapest, there were no interethnic marriages within the Serbian community in 1905, and by 1996 almost 70 percent were interethnic. The same trend is observable in other Serbian communities in Hungary (cf. Prelić 1999, 106–107). Besides, according to a sociological survey conducted in 2003, more than 80 percent

⁶ These figures may be accounted for by possible Serbian minority sympathizers coming from Croatian, Ratz or Bunjevac Roman Catholic communities as well as from interethnic marriages, who could have declared an affiliation with the Serbian minority. Namely, the 2001 Census allowed respondents to give three responses to each of the four questions concerning aspects of ethnic identity (cf. Vékás 2005; Lastić 2005).

⁷ A sociological survey of interethnic marriages in the former Yugoslavia found that the smaller the group the higher the exogamy rate (Petrović 1985: 12).

of the children affiliated with the Serbian ethnic community in Hungary participate in some kind of minority education, but more than half of them come from interethnic marriages (Lastić 2005, 214). On the whole, interethnic marriages among the Serbs in Hungary are now a commonplace — an issue to cope with in everyday life.

An anthropological survey exploring the relationship between Serbian ethnic identity and attitudes has found a generational gap when it comes to marriage issues. Elderly Serbs in Hungary generally have a negative attitude towards interethnic marriages and reject the possibility of one's double ethnic identity (cf. Prelić 2008, 200–212). Furthermore, the respondents claim that exogamic marriages contributed to language shift and doubt the possibility of egalitarian bilingualism within an exogamic, especially Magyar-Serb, family (*ibid.*). On the other hand, Serbs tend to marry Magyars — 66.6 percent of all interethnic marriages are those with Magyars (cf. Tóth & Vékás 2006; *Population Census 2001*). Middle-aged Serbs still value ethnic endogamy more than exogamy, but generally have a tolerant attitude towards interethnic marriages (cf. Prelić 2008, 200–212). A tolerant attitude towards interethnic marriages prevails among the youngest generation of Serbs in Hungary. A striking result of the ideology of endogamy is voluntary celibacy, which is widespread among the elderly Serbs in Hungary, and can still be found even among younger generations. Still, nowadays even the oldest Serbs prefer ethnic exogamy to celibacy and to the prospect of having no offspring at all (*ibid.*).

2. *Szigetcsép: history and demography*

The village of Szigetcsép, where the fieldwork took place, is situated on the Csepel Island some thirty kilometres south of Budapest. The Serbs of Szigetcsép claim descent from the fourteenth–fifteenth century migrants, referred to in the origin narratives as the beginning of the community (cf. Ilić 2010). The historical sources support the oral tradition, according to which a small Serbian colony was established in the environs of Szigetcsép during the reign of King Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387–1437) (cf. Pesty [1864] 1984, 80–83). Moreover, the settlement ranks among the first documented cases of Serbian group migration to Hungary. The oral tradition is consistent with the historical records reporting that the Serbs had settled in the deserted village of Szigetcsép by the beginning of the eighteenth century, having abandoned their previous settlement flooded by the Danube (cf. Pesty [1864] 1984, 80–83; Ilić 2010). In the middle of the same century Szigetcsép was colonized by the Germans from Nuremberg and Wurtemberg (Pesty [1864] 1984, 80–83). Thus, apart from a few Magyar families, Germans and Serbs were two major ethnic groups in Szigetcsép until the

Second World War. However, in the 1920s the Szigetcsép Serbian community declined by 18 percent due to the Serbs' voluntary migration to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The migration came as a result of the Population Exchange Agreement between Hungary and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes — known under the term “optacija” in Serbian historiography (cf. Malović 2001 and 2010). The Serbs from Szigetcsép mainly settled in the village of Bački Brestovac in Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina (*ibid.*). Furthermore, as a result of the Potsdam Conference of 1945, almost half the German population was expelled from Hungary to Germany, which was occupied by the Allied powers (Apor 2004, 36); it is estimated that almost 500 Germans were driven out of Szigetcsép, and that more than 500 Magyars from different parts of Hungary and Slovakia were resettled instead (Ilić 2008). Consequently, the ethnic makeup of the village entirely changed.

Nowadays the village is inhabited by Magyars, Germans, and Serbs, alongside a few families of Orthodox Bulgarian origin who had for the most part become assimilated into the Serb population.⁸ Hence, Szigetcsép fully deserves to be called a “multicultural” village. In the post-WWII period, Magyars made up the majority of the village population, followed by the Germans; the Serbian community has seen a constant demographic decline, accounting for less than 5 percent of the total population since 1980 (cf. Table 1 below; *Population Census 2001*).

Table 1: Serbian minority in Szigetcsép according to the Hungarian State Censuses 1980–2001

Year	Total population	Serbian affiliation		Proportion (%)	
		Language	Nationality	Language	Nationality
1980	2,638	149	114	6.29	4.81
1990	2,184	127	103	5.82	4.72
2001	2,317	83	87	3.58	3.75

The Serbian community of Szigetcsép has been living for centuries within a dense and closed social network fostered by the common native language, common confession — Orthodox Christianity in contrast to neighbouring Catholicism and Protestantism — rural (agricultural) way of life,

⁸ The Bulgarians in Hungary are mainly descended from the so-called “Bulgarian gardeners”, i.e. labour migrants who migrated from Bulgaria to European countries in the late nineteenth and during the twentieth century (Ganeva-Raičeva 2004). Many of them settled in the already existing Serbian communities in Hungary, and for the most part became assimilated (Prelić 1995; Sikimić 2007).

traditional customs, endogamy, and kinship. Such a tight-knit social network system, as Milroy (1987, 136) suggests, has the capacity to impose a normative consensus on its members. The main consensus enduring over time have been: Serbian language maintenance and ethno-confessional endogamy.

The Serbian community of Szigetcsép is nowadays divided along generational lines as regards language maintenance and traditional endogamy. The present sociolinguistic situation may be described as the result of the language shift process that has begun after the Second World War following a period of nearly five centuries of language retention. The language shift encompasses three generations: from bilingualism with the obvious predominance of Serbian (generations born before the war), through bilingualism with the predominance of Magyar (generations born after the war), to Magyar monolingualism with terminal knowledge of Serbian (generations born after the 1980s). The native vernacular has thus lost the privilege, enjoyed for centuries, of being the only idiom spoken within the family.

The other important community issue concerns the traditional rule of endogamy, which has also changed over time. According to the Szigetcsép Serbian Orthodox church records, ethno-confessional endogamy predominated in 1896–1952 with 70 percent of all marriages being concluded between Serbian spouses born in Szigetcsép. This means that third cousin marriages were considered legal and widely practised. Besides, until the early 1950s, 83.1 percent of all marriages were concluded within the Serbian community in Hungary, and 97.6 percent between Orthodox Christians (cf. *Matica venčanih*). From the 1950s to the present, 55 percent of all marriages concluded in the Szigetcsép Serbian Orthodox church involve non-Orthodox spouses (cf. *Matica venčanih*). Given that many interethnic marriages were not concluded in the Szigetcsép Orthodox church, the exogamy rate may be presumed to be considerably higher. Accordingly, every single Serbian family in Szigetcsép is nowadays faced with interethnic marriages and a predomination of the Magyar language within its nuclear family setting.

3. Fieldwork

The fieldwork in Szigetcsép was conducted on two separate occasions, in 2001 and 2008, by a research team of the Institute for Balkan Studies.⁹ The age of the interviewees ranged from 19 (born in 1989) to 90 (born in 1911); still, 80 percent of all interviewees belonged to generations born between the two world wars (1919–1940).¹⁰ The interwar generations are marked by

⁹ The team led by Biljana Sikimić comprised Marija Vučković and myself.

¹⁰ During the fieldwork, twenty-eight individuals were interviewed, resulting in about 60 hours of audio and video material recorded. It encompassed more than 30 percent

several significant features: almost all completed the pre-war Serbian confessional primary school whose main language of instruction was Serbian; all of them are more or less balanced Magyar-Serbian bilinguals, whereas their children and grandchildren are terminal speakers of Serbian; almost 95 percent entered endogamous marriage, whereas most of their descendants concluded exogamous marriages. Accordingly, the interwar generations experienced a sharp change in their social network: their childhood and early youth was characterized by an ethnically closed, multiple and dense network; on the other hand, in their mature and senior years they have found themselves living in a constantly changing community marked by a high degree of language shift from native Serbian to predominant Magyar, as well as a predominance of exogamy.

The research began as an ethno-linguistic fieldwork using an ethno-linguistic questionnaire as a guideline for interviews.¹¹ Nonetheless, the interviewees' free comments and digressions were also recorded, which set the interviews in the context of everyday flow of narration (cf. Sikimić 2005a). At some point our research came closer to the American school of anthropological linguistics, which is "concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures" (Foley 1997, 3). As the interview questions concerned the distinctive linguistic, societal and cultural features of the local community, the discourse of both interviewers and interviewees may be described as ethnocentric. It is a manifestation of identity discourse, which, as Mladenova (2004, 107) argues, provides answers to questions such as: Who are we? What are we known for? What makes us proud to be...?

The approach may be criticized for focusing on the past and elderly interlocutors, and thus for inclining towards the so-called "pastoral tradition" which always "looks back, often nostalgically, and for moral guidance, to a lost but supposedly more pristine, rural, homogeneous, and authentic past" (Williams 1973 cit. Gal 1998, 317). The choice of elderly interlocutors, however, can be defended on the grounds that they were the only who displayed full and "stable" Serbian language competence. On the other hand, it may be criticized for an implicit assumption that only those Serbs who

of the Szigetcép population who had declared Serbian ethnicity and native language in the 2001 Census. The distribution of the interviewees by gender was: 68 percent (19) female, and 32 percent (9) male. The fieldwork was financially supported by the Serb Self-Government Budapest.

¹¹ Russian ethnolinguistics, established by Nikita Tolstoj in the second half of the twentieth century, is mostly concerned with local vernaculars, dialect vocabulary, and narratives on the traditional way of life (cf. Tolstoj 1989). The ethnolinguistic questionnaire for the Balkan Slavic-language area is provided in Plotnikova [1996] 2009.

are fully competent in Serbian can claim authenticity. Then again, linguists and other humanities scholars cannot and should not discard the concept of “authenticity” precisely because interviewees themselves construct and perpetuate this concept. Instead of discarding it, they should acknowledge that authenticity does not exist prior to the authenticating practices that create it. Namely, according to Bucholtz (2003, 400), we need to separate authenticity as an ideology from authentication as a social practice. Besides, questions concerning the past and past lifestyles may be criticized for clearly attempting to trigger nostalgic discourse. According to Boym (2001, 41–49), “restorative nostalgia” proposes to rebuild a lost home and to patch up memory gaps; it characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the anti-modern mythmaking of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths theories. Like Bucholtz (2003, 411), I also believe that instead of nostalgic approaches in modern humanities, we might have reflexive approaches which attend to the ways that language, history, and culture are mobilized via ideology to create structures of unequal power.

The field material therefore offers a perspective of one or two generations sharing the same historical memory, cultural concepts, and value system. The generation-based approach, as argued by many social theorists (e.g. Olick & Robinson 1998, 123), turns out to be exceptionally suitable for analyzing the points of intersection between individual and collective identities. In the transcription process, the “broad transcription” has been applied which is focused mainly on the spoken text, includes minimal contextual information, and for the most part omits paralingual characteristics of the speech act (cf. Lapadat 2000). Transcription conventions used in the text that follows are:

R	researcher
IL	interlocutor
IL ₁ , IL ₂	several interlocutors
...	short pause 3–5 sec.
---	part of the utterance is omitted in the transcription
-	signals that words are not fully verbalized, e.g. <i>to- told me</i>
()	paralinguistic information, e.g. (laughter), (sigh), (sobbing), etc.

4. *Discourse on interethnic marriages*

In the following analysis I shall apply the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981, 342). The ideological becoming of a human being is, in Bakhtin’s words, the process of selectively assimilating the words of others. Accordingly, there are two basic types of discourse that determine the very bases of one’s ideological interrelations with the world — “authoritative” and “internally persuasive”. The authoritative discourse is organically con-

nected with the past and backed up by an authority, e.g. religious, political, traditional, etc.; it is, so to speak, the word of the fathers whose authority was already acknowledged in the past. The authoritative word cannot be negotiated; it can be either fully accepted or rejected (*ibid.*). By contrast, internally persuasive discourse is open to all kinds of revisions and negotiations; it is not backed up by any authority at all, and frequently lacks even acknowledgement by society. Thus, the struggle and dialogic interrelationships of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses are what usually determine the history of individual ideological consciousness (*ibid.*). The communicative genre to be analyzed here is termed *dialogical utterance*, being made up of utterances by different speaking subjects (Bahtin [1953] 1980).¹² Retracing discursive links within dialogical utterances of the interlocutors from Szigetcsép, I shall focus on elements of the discursive arguments relating to the emergence of interethnic marriages.

4.1. Native language loss and interethnic marriages

As the dialogical utterance [1] demonstrates, the discursive link between native language loss and interethnic marriages seems to be a very straightforward one. After I praised the interlocutor's (IL) command of Serbian, IL spontaneously established a relationship between language maintenance and ethnic makeup of families (R: *How come that you speak Serbian so well?* IL: *Well, now, my parents were Serbs; my husband was a Serb, my children too* [1.2]) Following this line of argument, IL introduced a reference to her son's ethnically mixed family (*My daughter-in-law is half-Serbian; her father was a Serb, her mother a Swab, and she doesn't speak Serbian* [1.2]). The argument proceeded as IL referred to her daughter's endogamous family (*The daughters of my daughter, they are big now, L. is 19, I. is 16. They knew Serbian very well* [1.2]) Albeit IL used autobiographical references and propositions (e.g. *my grandson, my daughter-in-law*, etc.), the utterance in fact stems from an authoritative ideology, leading to a causal construction — "loss of native language due to interethnic marriage".

Simultaneously, IL developed an internally persuasive discourse which undermined the dominant traditional ideology. IL asserted that her daughter-in-law (of mixed Serbian and Swab origin) encouraged her to speak Serbian to the grandchildren, but IL was explicit that she had not pursued it, justifying her choice by her feeling that her grandsons were confused between two languages (e.g. *I saw it confused the children* [1.2]). Also, IL uttered that her granddaughters — even though they came from an endoga-

¹² The utterance is defined as a unit of speech interaction whose boundaries are marked by a change of speaking subject (Bahtin [1953] 1980).

mous Serbian marriage and learnt Serbian in their childhood — nowadays mostly switched to Magyar [1.2]. So the authoritative standpoint turns out to be contradicted by the autobiographical evidence. The whole utterance is marked by expressive evaluations (e.g. *It's sad, yes, it's a very sad thing for us. What can you do?! I should've pushed it, and now I regret*), falling and rising intonation expressing her sadness and desolation. However, contrary to the claims of IL, the reasons for abandoning the native language seem to be the lack of strategies for handling bilingualism within the nuclear family setting and within a society where a non-native language (Magyar) predominates and enjoys full legal status and prestige.

[1] (CS13, IL, female, born 1940 in Szigetcsép, secondary school, worked as a Magyar kindergarten teacher; the interview took place in her home in Szigetcsép)

[1.1] R.: How come that you speak Serbian so well!?

[1.2] IL: Well, now, my parents were Serbs, my husband was a Serb, my children too. My children nowadays unfortunately, and my small grandchildren. My daughter-in-law is half Serb; her father is a Serb, her mother a Swab, and she doesn't speak Serbian, nor do the children, but they attend lessons. P. recently recited a poem on Christmas; he walked with *vertep*.¹³ I taught him everything, but he doesn't understand what he's saying, it's sad, yes. He knows a hundred, two hundred words in Serbian, but I don't think that's enough. He doesn't know how to connect them, to put them in a sentence. It's a very sad thing for us. What can you do?! I thought, when they were born and started talking, that I would be able to talk with them in Serbian. And my daughter-in-law says: "Well, mother, now." But I saw it confused the children. I should've pushed it, and now I regret. The youngest is 4 now, the older is 8, and the middle one is 5. Boys. And daughters, the daughters of my daughter, they're big now, L. is 19, I. is 16. They knew Serbian very well, they attended the Serbian school until fourth

[1.1] R: A kako tako dobro govorite srpski?

[1.2] IL: Pa sad kažem, roditelji su Srbi, muž mi Srbin bio i deca mi. Deca mi sad već nažalost i mali unučad. Snaja mi poľa Srpkinja, otac joj je Srbin, mati joj je Švabica i ona ne govori srpski snaja a ni deca, ali idu na čas. P. je sad recitovo na Božić, išo je s vertepom. Sve sam ga ja naučila ali ne razume šta govori, to je žalosno da. Sad, ima on ne- nekih sto, dvesto s- s- reči što zna srpski, ali to mislim da je malo. Ne zna da i veže, ne zna da i stavi u rečenicu. To je vrlo žalosno nama. Šta se može?! Ja sam tako mišljela kad se oni porodili i počeli da govoru, da ću ja moći sa njima da razgovaram srpski. Ja sam, i snajka kaže: „Pa, majko, sad“. Ali vidla sam da buni to decu. Trebala sam ja to siliti već, sad već žalim. Sad je najmanji četiri godine, a stariji je osam a srednji je pet godina. Muškarci. A ćerke su, ćerkine ćerke su već velike, L. devetnaest godina, I. šesnaest. One su, vrlo lepo srpski govorile, do četir razreda su išle u srpsku školu. (tužno) Al i sad i one već mađaradu. Nažalost, u toj grupi de ona u razredu nema uopšte nijedno Srpče više --- I sa mnogom mađaradu. To je to je sad vrlo žalosno nama starima, jer već na toliko nas je sad malo. A i zet je Srbin i ćerka Srpkinja i one su obadve lepo govorile srpski. A ovdje, ovdje je sad već gotovo

¹³ The children ritual procession on Christmas Day.

grade. (Sadly:) Now even they mostly speak Magyar. Unfortunately, there are no Serbian children in their classroom --- They speak Magyar even with me! It's a very sad thing for us, the elderly, because not many of us are left. And my son-in-law and my daughter are Serbs, and both of them used to speak Serbian well. But it's over now (laughter), I'm the last who speaks Serbian. My son used to know, he speaks even now, but it's not easy for him. And I need to be careful with my words.

(smeh), poslednja što ja sad govorim. I sin mi vrlo lepo znava da govori, još i sad govori, ali mu većma ne ide tako. I ja treba da pazim da kako ću se izraziti.

4.2. *The loss of slava and interethnic marriages*

I shall now focus upon dialogical utterance [2]. After a long conversation about the *slava* — the celebration of the family patron saint's day which is popularly held to be one of the most distinctive Serbian identity features — I asked the interlocutor (IL) if she knew of any Serb who had abandoned *slava* [2.1]. IL spontaneously associated the loss of *slava* with interethnic marriages and exemplified it by impersonal sentences and generic references (e.g. *There are so many mixed marriages; If a woman married a Magyar, then she didn't observe slava. If a Serb took a Magyar woman, then maybe they'd observe slava, maybe*).¹⁴ “Null” or generic subjects were put in the conditional “if / then” clauses, thus indicating a close interdependence between the loss of *slava* and interethnic marriages. This conditional construction approximates a causal relationship based on the authority of tradition. In utterance [2], an echo is observable of the patriarchal view that in an interethnic marriage women are more likely than men to give up their ethnic identity.¹⁵

Subsequently, I asked if there was a belief that abandoning *slava* could bring misfortune upon the family [2.3], [2.5], [2.7]. IL strongly denied [2.4], [2.6], [2.8]. Thus, this dialogical utterance led me to the con-

¹⁴ Generic sentences as well as other generics refer to an entire class of entities (Mladenova 2003, 17); that is to say, they make statements about prototypic members of a category (Eckardt 2000, 237).

¹⁵ A sociological survey on interethnic marriages in the former Yugoslavia revealed a higher proportion of exogamy among men than among women within the conservative traditional ethnic communities, such as Serbian, Turkish, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Romanian, and Albanian, with the exception of the Italian group (Petrović 1985, 80). Also, an ethnological survey on interethnic marriages in Bulgaria demonstrated that women from minority groups hardly ever marry outside their ethnic group, see Pašova 2004: 183. Vučković (2004) argues that, in a traditional environment, women are more likely than men to abandon their native language within an interethnic marriage.

clusion that the fear of losing *slava* had nothing to do anymore with the ancient, pagan, fear of damnation, but rather with the fear of identity loss; as shown above, this is confirmed by the recent anthropological survey (see Prelić 2008, esp. n. 4). Hence utterance [2] indicates that negative attitudes to interethnic marriages among elderly Serbs in Hungary are grounded in the fear of identity loss.

[2] (CS7, IL, female, born 1937 in Szigetcsép, lives in Budapest; secondary school; the interview took place at her work place in Budapest)

[2.1] R: Was there anyone in Szigetcsép who abandoned *slava*? Who stopped observing it?

[2.2] IL: Now, listen ... there are so many mixed marriages. Look, where there are mixed marriages, then there (quietly:) it's not certain that everyone observes their own *slava*. Most of all when a woman married a Magyar, she [by definition] did not observe *slava*. If a Serb took a Magyar woman, then maybe they observed *slava*, maybe. As people were mixing with one another there, and mixed marriages, it so happened that they didn't observe *slava*. There are families that don't observe *slava*, and not just one!

[2.3] R: Have you perhaps heard it said that when one abandons *slava*, that it's not good for one's family?

[2.4] IL: If you ask me, no.

[2.5] R: That things went wrong for one's own family when one abandoned *slava*?

[2.6] IL: Well, I don't believe that such a thing happened there. If you ask me, it's just a story.

[2.7] R: Well, we're interested in old stories. So, it doesn't matter if you don't believe it yourself, if you have just heard that someone.

[2.8] IL: I haven't heard of it. I have to tell you that I haven't heard of it.

[2.1] R: A je l' bilo kod vas u Čipu da je neko ostavio slavu? Da je prekinuo da slavi?

[2.2] IL: Sad, slušajte ... jako mlogo ima mešani brakova. Pazte, tamo gde su mešani brakovi, tamo (tiho) nije sigurno da svaki drži svoju slavu. Ponajviše ako se ženska udala za Mađara, ondak ona već nije tako držala slavu. Ako je Srbin uzeo Mađaricu, možda su držali slavu, možda. A pošto se mešo tamo narod i mešovite brakovi, dogodilo se da nisu držali slavu. Ima take porodice koje ne drže slavu, ne jedna!

[2.3] R: A je l' se pričalo možda da kad neko ostavi slavu, da to ne valja za njegovu porodicu?

[2.4] IL: Po meni se ne.

[2.5] R: Da je nekome krenulo nešto loše kad je ostavio slavu?

[2.6] IL: Pa ja ne verujem da se to tamo dogodilo. Po meni, to je priča.

[2.7] R: A dobro, nas interesuju te stare priče. Tako da ako vi ne verujete nema veze, ako ste čuli da je neko.

[2.8] IL: Ja nisam čula. Treba da vam kažem da ja nisam čula.

4.3. Demographic decline and interethnic marriages

My analysis will now proceed to dialogical utterance [3], which also favours the traditional endogamy rule by using yet another causal construction — “demographic decline due to interethnic marriages”. As the previous examples illustrate, the contradiction between traditionalist authoritative

and internally persuasive (autobiographic) discourses generated a specific internal dialogicity. Utterance [3] was preceded by a dialogue on competence in Serbian which prompted the interlocutors to construct a deictic “then/now” opposition. The deictics *then* and *now* proved to be very productive in generating a discourse of nostalgia for the “good, old days” among the traditional communities facing a language shift (cf. Tsitsipis 1998 and 2004; Hill 1998; Petrović 2009). This memory management foregrounds the word of tradition and, as argued by Tsitsipis (2004, 578), allows the traditionalist authoritative discourse to surface. Hence, the past culture is represented as a totality, in which socio-cultural activities and language index each other, whereas the present culture is portrayed as corrupted and fragmented (cf. Tsitsipis 2003, 550). Furthermore, the past is looked at with nostalgia, while the present deserves criticism and scepticism. In this discursive order, orientation towards the future is absent.

Considering the Szigetcsép Serbs’ discourse, the deictic term *then* is related to the set of propositions, such as “there were much more Serbs in the village”, “the Serbs spoke a much purer Serbian language”, “there were no marriages with Magyars and Germans”, etc. By contrast, the deictic term *now* is related to the following propositions: “there are not many Serbs left in the village”, “the Serbs speak either corrupted Serbian or they do not speak the language at all”, “there are too many mixed marriages”, “Serbs are dying out”, etc. These two sets of propositions are often juxtaposed so as to correspond (all *then* propositions or all *now* propositions) or contrast one another (any combination of *then* and *now* propositions).

In utterance [3], the reference to the community’s demographic decline was introduced by constructing a deictic frame of temporal reference “then/now” in which the past is sharply contrasted to the present (*Back then, at least we were quite a few. We were 365 souls [3.1]; And now, 60, if as many [3.3]*). The reference to the demographic decline is associated with interethnic marriages and a notion of authenticity. Consequently, the interlocutors employed an authentication strategy to value endogamy and a depreciation strategy to denigrate exogamy. Thus, only descendants from endogamous marriages or those born of such marriages were granted authenticity, whereas persons engaged in interethnic marriages were depreciated and denied authenticity. This was achieved by using a pair of opposing adjectives with strong evaluative connotations — *pure* and *mixed* — to refer to endogamous and exogamous marriages respectively, and by using generic sentences with indefinite, generic subjects. (IL₂: *Pure, pure! Those who are not Magyar women or men.* IL₁: *Mixed.* R: *But those of you who are pure.* IL₂: *90 percent is all ... mixed [3.5–8]*). In that way, the interlocutors backed up the traditional rule of endogamy and developed an authoritative discourse.

The expressive high point was reached in an exclamatory utterance with autobiographic reference — *Even my son took a Magyar woman!* [3.8]. With this utterance IL₂ switched to internally persuasive discourse. Also, it was only then that the interlocutor used an autobiographic reference (*my son*), while maintaining generic semantics when referring to his daughter-in-law (*a Magyar woman*). This utterance is related to the preceding section by the adverb *even* (Ser. *još*) — used as an intensive to indicate an unexpected occurrence. Threatened by this sudden autobiographical reference, the traditionalist authoritative discourse was eventually “saved” by a self-deprecating utterance (*So, who am I to judge others* [3.11]). Hence, the authoritative ideology was, on the one hand, supported [3.1–8], and, on the other hand, it was subverted within internally persuasive discourse (e.g. *Even my son ...* [3.8]).

[3] (CS₃₁, IL₁, male, born 1924 in Szigetcsép; IL₂, male, born 1933 in Szigetcsép; both completed primary education and are engaged in agriculture; the interview took place at the local Serb cultural centre)

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|--|--|
| [3.1] IL ₁ : Back then, at least there were quite a few of us. We were 365 souls. | [3.1] IL ₁ : Prije nas je bilo bar. Bilo nas tri stotine šezdeset i pet duša. |
| [3.2] R: And now, how many of you are left? | [3.2] R: A koliko vas sad ima? |
| [3.3] IL ₁ : And now, 60, if as many. | [3.3] IL ₁ : A sad, šezdeset, ako ima. |
| [3.4] R.: Are you sure? | [3.4] R: Jeste sigurni? |
| [3.5] IL ₂ : Pure, pure! Those who are not Magyar women or men. | [3.5] IL ₂ : Čisto, čisto! Samo ne onaj što je Mađarica il Mađar. |
| [3.6] IL ₁ : Mixed. | [3.6] IL ₁ : Mešano. |
| [3.7] R: Mixed. But those of you who are pure. | [3.7] R: Mešano. Nego ovo da ste čisti. |
| [3.8] IL ₂ : Ninety percent is all .. mixed. | [3.8] IL ₂ : Devedeset procenata je sve .. mešano. |
| [3.9] R: Ah. | [3.9] R: Aha. |
| [3.10] IL ₂ : Even my .. son took a Magyar woman! | [3.10] IL ₂ : Još i moj .. sin uzeo Mađaricu! |
| [3.11] R: Ah. | [3.11] R: Aha. |
| [3.12] IL ₁ : Well, all. | [3.12] IL ₁ : Pa sve. |
| [3.13] IL ₂ : So, who am I to judge others! | [3.13] IL ₂ : Onda ja ne znam kazati na drugoga! |
| [3.14] R: Yes, I see. | [3.14] R: Da, razumem. |

4.4. Endogamy vs. personal experiences

Finally, I shall analyze utterance [4], made by a woman married to a Magyar. The utterance was preceded by a conversation between myself, as a researcher, and IL, an interlocutor, about the traditional Szigetcsép wedding, where

IL gave an explicitly negative evaluation of exogamy.¹⁶ This was surprising, given that I had learnt at the beginning of the interview that her own marriage with a Magyar man was a good one. Towards the end of our interview I posed a personal question concerning her marriage, expecting her to resolve the contradiction between what she had said and her autobiographic experience [4.1].

Her reply was structured as a “list of excuses”. I can think of two possible explanations for that: firstly, IL may have viewed me not just as a collocutor, but rather as a representative of a broader Serbian audience in the “motherland”, and thus she felt compelled to explain why she had “failed” to maintain the traditional practice of endogamy; and secondly, she entertained this internal dialogue in the attempt to resolve the obvious contradiction between the authoritative word of ancestors she was raised with and her personal life story. The utterance was structured around two narratives of personal experience,¹⁷ one relating to her first love, the other to her mother’s marriage. Both narratives topicalized unhappy endogamous relationships and served the same strategy, which is justifying her choice to marry a Magyar.

The complicating action in the first narrative retraced the following set of events: “she was in love with a Serb”, “the Serb deceived her”, “she decided not to marry a person she would not love”, “she married a Magyar”. The evaluative section referred to her decision (*I said I would never marry anyone. Because the man I loved deceived me. Also, the same happened to my mother, she married, well, I said, I won't marry a man I don't love. I'd rather not marry, I won't marry* [4.6]). Heightened expressiveness was achieved by repetition. The first narrative already introduced a reference to her mother’s unhappy marriage. The resolution section — which generally answers the question “How did it all end?” — referred to communist factories which intensified interethnic contacts [4.8]. However, the resolution came with reluctance and it was articulated only after I intervened with a question (*And? Then...?* [4.7]). Hence, her interethnic marriage, which was the point of the whole narrative, was only implied. In this case, reluctance and implication are indicators of the interlocutor’s embarrassment and possible trauma.

¹⁶ A detailed description of the traditional Serbian wedding in Szigetcsép based upon the narratives of IL is given in Ilić 2003.

¹⁷ Narrative, as defined by Labov & Waletzky ([1967] 2003, 74), is a method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) occurred. The structure of a fully developed narrative, according to Labov and Waletzky, contains six components: abstract (What is the story about?); orientation (Who, where, when and why?); complicating action (What happened?); evaluation (Why is this story worth telling?); resolution (How did it all end?); and coda (That’s it?).

The second part of the utterance was triggered by my question about the reactions of her family and friends to her interethnic marriage. This section was constructed as a form of direct speech — a citation from her mother's speech. This direct speech served to justify her choice. It also included a personal experience narrative relating to her mother's marriage with a Serb — the interlocutor's father — which turned out to be unhappy.

Albeit primarily autobiographical, utterance [4] was actually based on an interplay between authoritative discourse, which only acknowledged endogamy, and internally persuasive discourse, embodied in two personal experience narratives that involved an implicit criticism of the traditional rule of endogamy.

[4] (CS₂, IL, female, born 1936 in Szigetcsép, lives in Szigetcsép; primary school; the interview took place at the local Serb cultural centre)

[4.1] R.: And how come that you married a Magyar if it was forbidden?

[4.2] IL: Well, like that, it was forbidden, because I was deceived by a Serb.

[4.3] R: How come?

[4.4] IL: Well, I fell so deeply in love with him, and he found (quietly:) a Magyar woman besides me.

[4.5] R.: He did?

[4.6] IL: He did, he did. And I found out and I said ... that's enough. So, I was still young, about 18, 19, I said I would never marry anyone. Because the one I loved deceived me. Also, you see, the same happened to my mum, she married, and so I said, I won't marry a man I don't love. I'd rather not marry. I won't marry. And then, somehow, I always, in every boy, looked for something I'd found and loved in my first love, and, I don't know. I said (quietly), I won't marry a man I don't love.

[4.7] R: And? Then?

[4.8] IL: And then, you see, those factories were built, and, I don't know, we mixed with Magyars. And then, you see.

[4.9] R.: Were your friends, mother, and father against it?

[4.10] IL: No, they weren't. Indeed, my mum said, My daughter, she says, I'll give you, she says, not to another vil-

[4.1] R: A kako ste se vi udali za Mađara kad je to bilo zabranjeno?

[4.2] IL: Pa tako, što je ovaj zabranjeno bilo, jer sam se ja u jednog Srbina varala.

[4.3] R: Kako to?

[4.4] IL: Pa tako što. Ja sam ga jako zavolela. A on je našao pokraj mene jednu drugu (tihu) Mađaricu.

[4.5] R: On je našao?

[4.6] IL: Jeste, jeste. I tako da ja sam to doznala i kazala sam da ... dosta je bilo. Tako sam, onda dok sam mlada bila, tako osamnjest, devetnjest godina, kazala sam da se ja neću ni udati nikad. Jel u koga sam volela, tu sam se varala. Jel pošto, eto ti, mama tako prošla, udala se, pa reko, ja se neću udati koga neću voleti. Bolje se neću udati. Neću se udati. I onda sam nešto, u svakim dečkima nešto tražila što sam u prvim ljubezniku opazila i zavolela, i šta ti ja znamem. Ja sam kazala (tihu): „Ja se neću udati za onog koga neću voleti.“

[4.7] R: I? Onda ste?

[4.8] IL: I onda su, eto ti, nastale je li te fabrike, i šta ti ja znamem. Većma smo se mešali sa Mađarima. I onda tako, eto ti.

[4.9] R: Jesu vam se bunili drugovi, drugarice, majka, otac?

[4.10] IL: Ne, nisu. Jeste, moja mama kazala, Čeri moja, kaže, ne, kaže, u drugo selo, nego u drugu državu ću tebe dati,

lage, but to another country, she says, and you'll just write to me, she says, that you're very well. Then, I'll be well too. I married in my own village, and I went to my mother every day to cry alone, she says. I wouldn't like to live to see that. So I won't, she says, meddle in your life. You'll manage everything yourself, and I won't press you, she says.

kaže, i toliko da mi napišeš, kaže, da si jako dobro. Onda će biti i meni dobro. Ja sam se udala u svoje selo, pa sam svaki dan išla majki da plačem sama, kaže. Ja to ne bi volela da dočekam. Tako da, ja se, kaže, u tvoj život mešati neću. Ti ćeš sama, kaže, srediti, al ja te naterati neću, kaže.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been twofold: firstly, it presents some basic information about interethnic marriages among the Serbs in Hungary, which is a relatively recent social phenomenon in the Serbian rural communities; secondly, it attempts to understand how authoritative discourse operates within a small tight-knit traditional community faced with radical social changes. It seeks to shed some light on the strategies employed to reinforce the authoritative discourse of tradition threatened by social change. Hence, my focus is on elements of discursive arguments, notably causal constructions and evaluations, generated with reference to the emergence of interethnic marriages.

The paper is based on the fieldwork carried out in the small Serbian community of Szigetcsép in the environs of Budapest, whose social network has been undergoing a thorough change since the Second World War and who have faced an increase in interethnic marriages. As the ties binding a traditional community together have weakened, the authoritative traditional ideology and its discourse persist in a somewhat disaggregated form among the elder members of the community. The elderly Serbs have therefore produced a discourse which juxtaposes different (ideological) perspectives, that of authoritative tradition and that of individual choices. Consequently, they have created causal constructions connecting interethnic marriages with the community's loss of Serbian identity and demographic decline. In that way, the elderly community members express, implicitly or explicitly, a negative evaluation of interethnic marriages. Nonetheless, all autobiographical references indicate that not even the oldest Serbs of Szigetcsép — although self-declared proponents of the authoritative endogamous tradition — fully follow the traditional rules in their personal lives.

In view of the currently very high exogamic rate among the Serbs in Hungary, it is likely that the community members can no longer claim authenticity on the basis of endogamy. Therefore, learning how to cope with interethnic marriages in everyday life is a matter of the community's surviv-

al. It means, above all, developing strategies to deal with biligualism within the nuclear family, and discarding illusions about “pure” identities.

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