

POSTCOLONIAL LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

GÁBOR TOLCSVAI NAGY

Abstract

The present paper gives an overview of the linguistic situation in Central Europe. The investigation focuses on the features of language, in particular on the social, cultural and political power factors of the languages used in the region, and the relations between them. The linguistic situation is described in two historical periods: one is the Soviet colonial era between 1945 and 1990, the other one is the postcolonial period after 1990. The historical developments have had an elemental effect on the communication and linguistic systems of the region. The Soviet colonial rule introduced a hierarchical and centralised communication system with strict communist party control of ideology, ways of thinking and ways of talk, apparent everywhere from public opinion to the private sphere. Censorship was a powerful tool in the region. In 1990 the situation turned into its polar opposite in most cases. A heterarchical, decentralised communication system was built, with freedom of speech and human rights in general in focus. This radical change resulted in linguistic plurality, the acknowledgment of and reflections on variability in language, its functions for adequate conceptual construal, linguistic expression, individual and group identity.¹

Keywords: colonialism, Central Europe, communication system, heterarchy, hierarchy, language community, postcolonialism

1. Central Europe has had a special history during the 20th century. The future of the region was basically determined by the Paris peace treaties that followed world war I, with partly artificial borders that forced masses to flee to other countries, during and after world war II, too. In 1945 the whole region was occupied by the Soviet army and was placed under Soviet colonial rule, which ended in 1990. The countries and societies of the region were forced to introduce the Soviet communist system in every domain of life, controlled by the Soviet and the local communist parties. In 1990 Central Europe was freed from the Soviet occupation, and a postcolonial period began in its history. Ever since this historical turn, the region has had a double face. On the one hand, modernisation has been performed in a very fast, determined and effective fashion, bringing radical changes again in all aspects of life. On the other hand, the cultural and socialisation schemas of the previous era still live on and influence the ways of life in the region.

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¹ The paper includes sections taken over, partly in an abridged form, from Tolcsvai Nagy (in press).

Censorship was a powerful tool in the region. In 1990 the situation turned into its polar opposite in most cases. A heterarchical, decentralised communication system (see Luhmann 1998) was built, with freedom of speech and human rights in general in focus. This radical change resulted in linguistic plurality, the acknowledgment of and reflections on variability in language, its functions for adequate conceptual construal, linguistic expression, individual and group identity and the like. In this process the view of language as a simple tool to be used for control turned into one of language as the human capacity for joint actions and comprehension, with creativity and innovation related to conventions.

Central Europe is defined in the present paper as the region coextensive with the prevailing geographical, linguistic and state territories of Poland, the former East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the present Czech Republic and Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, and Slovenia (cf. Szűcs 1983, Szűcs–Hanák 1986, Kosáry 2003). In this sense, Central Europe is a region, formed by cultural cumulation, that is, through the rational, intelligible economic, political, cultural and communicative activities of communities, with communicative and cultural activities showing identical or similar features for prolonged periods (they are added and become conventionalised), and differing significantly from the communicative and cultural activities of the communities of neighbouring regions (from a general perspective, see Bas-sand and Hainard 1985, Lipp Hrsg. 1984, Győri-Szabó 2006).

2. The present study interprets the linguistic situation of Central Europe from 1945 to the millennium, with the help of the basic categories of colonialism and postcolonialism. The occupation of the region by the Soviet Union that lasted forty-five years was colonisation, with specific features. These features are partly the same as those of the relations between the western European states and their Asian and African colonies, and partly different. As a consequence, the linguistic aspects of colonialism and postcolonialism in Central Europe can be described with the canonical categories only in part; here the categories of the generalisations of the specific circumstances are used too. The present description has an essentially historical and linguistic perspective, not a political one. It is not a critical approach, it is a description written with objectivity in view with a perspective of a functional, us- age-based approach to language.

The basic features of Soviet colonialism in Central Europe are as follows (see Courtois et al. 1999, Romsics 2013).

A main feature is the control and leadership of the political, military, secret service, economic and cultural life either directly or indirectly by country leaders nominated and confirmed by the Soviet communist party, both on the highest and other important levels. On the other hand, Central European countries did not form a part of the Soviet Union in the sense of constitutional law, the head of the Soviet state or the communist party was not the head of the state or the communist party, say, in Czechoslovakia or Poland.

The society was (or was expected to be) transformed totally in line with the communist ideology. However, the occupiers did not become a large and formative part of the societies of the countries in question. They lived instead in closed communities and barracks (mostly because Soviet paranoia expected imagined enemies everywhere), they did not join forcibly the elites of the countries. Nevertheless, a new elite was created in the countries of Central Europe, along with the elimination of the earlier one (by forced emigration and exile, deportation within the country, forced declassing, having to hide one's social background, or execution following a show trial), directly from communists and working class people, or by the approval of 'converted' individuals and sympathisers.

The total control of society, transformation of thinking and world knowledge, and the brainwashing of individuals, according to the 'correct' ideas was another fundamental goal of this colonisation. The process of the transformation and total control of social structure and thinking was completed with an awareness of the supremacy of the Soviet colonisers and their local servants. This supremacy was presented as an ideological and moral status (see the self-evaluation of the communists: a communist is a "vanguard", "made of special material"). The drive for the colonisation was not a mission for civilisation, it was only a mere ideological commitment, the idea of the world revolution of the proletariat.

At the same time, the Us vs. Them relation was clearly present, with specific characteristics. No general inferiority complex became widespread as a reaction towards the colonisers. The societies of the occupied countries felt suppressed by the Soviet invaders and their local communist allies, after some years of early support mainly by working class groups and leftist intellectuals. Nevertheless, western ideological and cultural patterns were alive, though hidden.

Also, it was a striking difference between western colonisation in Asia and Africa and Soviet colonisation in Central Europe that there were no basic ethnic and traditional cultural differences between the Soviet occupiers and the suppressed nations.

Postcolonialism – in its widely shared interpretation – developed as a critical academic study of specific political and cultural circumstances in countries and regions colonised earlier by western powers, freed from this state some time after world war II, and suffering from the aftermath of the previous era (cf. Said 1975, Bhabha 1990, Spivak 1990, 1999). In the present study, postcolonialism is a basically non-critical term used for the objective naming of the historical situation with a process-like character: Central Europe has existed in the postcolonial state for twenty-five years after being freed from the Soviet occupation and the communist rule in 1990.

After 1990 the military occupation of the region came to an end. The countries became independent of the Soviet party, the direct and indirect Soviet control stopped.

The communist elite ceased to exist, it partly transformed and adjusted itself to the new conditions. New elites arose. One is the economic elite, based on primary capital accumulation, in a relatively short period of 'wild capitalism', usually without much intellectual background, coming from various social groups. Another one is the cultural elite, combining the remnants of the historical middle classes and intelligentsia, the non-Stalinist moderate leftists, and the liberal, conservative and nationalist groups that emerged recently.

The social structure changed slowly into a network, with different parts of it guided by diverse ideologies and values. The socialisation patterns of the periods before 1945 or 1990 seem to be active as well as the western European ones at the millennium.

Because no elite or population of the colonisers stayed in the earlier colonies after 1990 (in Central Europe, unlike in the Baltic states), the societies as complete units consider themselves freed from the Soviet rule. On the other hand, certain groups still feel the need to adjust themselves to external power centres at the state and social levels, while other groups take national independence as the default case, the starting point that was achieved with struggles and must be preserved, in cultural and linguistic respects, too.

The Us vs. Them relation of the colonial age almost disappeared. Instead, a fresh one became important in the region, the comprehension and application of western patterns and schemas, including successes and frustrations.

The knowledge about language as well as language use shows postcolonial markers, at the level of community, group and the individual as well: language became part of the

ideological and power struggles, while the proliferation of language variants in public communication may cause uncertainty.

It can be stated that the situation in Central Europe at the millennium is postcolonial. Postcolonial – due to the backwardness originating in the forty-five years of colonial suppression and imposing a heavy socio-psychological burden on the region. Democracy, freedom and the responsibility for actions and creativity were introduced very fast, in a top-down manner, not allowing enough time for the processes of internalisation.

3. Central Europe as a region as defined above was put under Soviet political, military and economic rule in 1945. The Soviet Union introduced the total communist (Bolshevik) dictatorship in the occupied Central European countries. This situation had its consequences and developments in everyday life and culture, in linguistic communication and language policy as well.

One of the main factors in a community's self-maintenance, autopoiesis and self-reflection is the native language. Language communities as well as speech communities take this as a natural, default setting, since a person is born into one such community, s/he acquires the language/variety of this community as her/his vernacular (or dialect, see Halliday 1968), s/he construes her/his utterances in this variety, closely related to her/his conceptualising, cognitive operations. Language maps knowledge about the world that is based on experiences in a perspectivised way. Phenomena may be processed in various ways, thus, our knowledge about the world and its linguistic mappings have culture specific features in addition to universal cognitive and linguistic schemas.

Communication is essential for the communities' maintenance and normal functioning, in all ages and settings. A community operates its long term linguistic norm system with minor modifications and innovations, in order to secure good results in its everyday activities. Violent changes in this communication system or changes preventing its functioning endanger the existence of a community in its foundations.

The destruction of the language and communication system yields the destruction of the community. One of the main factors of the colonial situation following 1945 was the coarse intervention, the significant change in the languages and communication systems in Central Europe. The basic outcomes of this process are as follows. Certainly, there were some differences between the states of the region, but the main ideological trends and political actions were controlled by the Soviet Union.

The military enclosure of the individual states by the Iron Curtain both physically and in a symbolic sense, particularly in the 1950s, blocked the societies in question almost hermetically from chances of natural everyday linguistic contacts and the reception of innovations.

One of the main goals was the homogenisation of society, on the basis of the Marxist idea of the class society and the Stalinist notion of class war. with respect to language, this development, directed from above, from the communist party centre

- regarded the language of the majority as the one state or official language,
- neglected other languages of minority ethnic groups spoken in the given state,
- supported the standard version of the given state language, with a levelling ideal of education, also centrally controlled.

The general education programs run centrally by the party propagated the centrally defined cultural values, including linguistic knowledge and made them a conscious part of the popularised knowledge. Thus, censored knowledge was spread in a highly homogeneous way

among people of different social statuses, while the cultural goods banned by the censors remained simply unknown to the majority.

The political and ideological intention to homogenise society was connected with overt or covert nationalism that was meant to be realised in linguistic homogenisation, among other things. That was the case in those states like Romania and Czechoslovakia where large ethnic (national) minorities lived. The communist ideology, being international on the publicly presented surface, but nationalistic in practice and not asserted as such in public, manifested itself in the extreme discrimination of minority language use in all domains of communication and at all levels. Such domains were state politics, public administration, jurisdiction, media and public information, workplace communication (note that all firms were nationalised and headed by a local party secretary besides the director), education, healthcare, the army, and also spontaneous public communication (e.g. in the street, on public transport, in movies, theatres, and restaurants).

As a result of the homogenisation efforts, people were forced to speak one variety of the state language, unified in its semantics and pragmatics: this meant that people had no choice but use the words related to social life with the meanings defined centrally, repeat the same clausal and idiomatic constructions used by the political leaders, not to deviate from the central ideological line, thus not risking punishment (whether formal or informal) for a joke or a critical note.

The centralising language policy used censorship as a fundamental instrument (cf. Schöpflin 1983, Thom 1989, Bourdieu 1991). Censorship controlling the public is an evident effort to break the free spirit and to prevent the self-creation (self-maintenance) of the individual and the community. Moreover, it has further significant linguistic consequences. Censorship suppresses or calls off some of the main functions of language. One such function is mediation of the flow of information. Another one is conceptual innovation that depends partly on linguistic innovation. By the process of innovation people always reflect on the already known in one human domain, for the sake and in the hope of improvement. The suppression of linguistic innovation by censorship results in the suppression of creativity; prevention of the spreading of linguistic innovations obstructs the spreading of knowledge and leads to the material and intellectual damage of the community (state or society).

Censorship was directed primarily inwards, but also outwards, in relation to other states and countries. The central control and censorship defined those entities (e.g. books, newspapers, ideas and innovations, words, works of art) that were allowed to go across the border and those that were banned from coming in, and, on the other hand, what may go out even to the neighbouring 'sister' countries within the region. The censors and other party officials were fully aware of the fact that, for instance, a new loanword entails the learning of a new concept, the pretensions to possess new things, and considered such "western effects" harmful and dangerous to the political system.

Censorship in the countries of the region turned slowly and as a result of different measures into 'self-censorship'. From a later period, mainly in the 1970s and 1980s, it was not necessary to supervise all public messages by the central party officials, because the reliable state officials and adherents of the political system did the controlling at every level.

Another result of the homogenisation efforts was that the social, ethnic and linguistic distinctions became stiff and sharp bordered, based on emotional attributions and the asymmetric counterconcepts (cf. Koselleck 2004). The system of asymmetric counterconcepts is created between the representatives of communities, powers, and ideas that are at odds with each other or are distinguished from each other although they are in close contact. In this

dichotomous interpretation, the “we”, the home value community represent the positive pole, while the “they”, “those”, i.e. the aliens, represent the negative pole. One group may form an opinion about another one; this group may name and evaluate it. These opinions, evaluations, namings and addresses may imply the appreciation of the other, but, in contrast, they may be condemnatory, disdainful, too. “The simple use of “we” and “you” establishes a boundary and is in this respect a condition of possibility determining a capacity to act. But a “we” group can become a politically effective and active unity only through concepts which are more than just simple names of typifications. [...] In the sense used here, a concept does not merely denote such an agency, it marks and creates the unity. The concept is not merely a sign for, but also a factor in, political or social groupings. [...] An acting agency might, therefore, define itself as a *polis*, people, party, *Stand*, society, church, or state without preventing those excluded from the agency from conceiving of themselves in turn as a *polis*, people, and so on. Such general and concrete concepts can be used on an equal basis and can be founded upon mutuality. It is certainly true, however, that historical agencies tend to establish their singularity by means of general concepts, claiming them as their own. [...] In such cases, a given group makes an exclusive claim to generality, applying a linguistically universal concept to itself alone and rejecting all comparison. This kind of self-definition provokes counterconcepts which discriminate against those who have been defined as the “other”” (Koselleck 2004: 155–156).

The system of asymmetric counterconcepts developed totally during the 1950s throughout the whole Central European region, based on earlier collective conceptualisations, mainly by folk attributions. The process was helped by the formal and informal actions and communication of the local ruling communist party. That was both the result of earlier and the origin of later hostilities between the ruling social strata and the rest of society, or between the majority population speaking the state language and the ethnic and linguistic minorities.

The linguistic homogenisation efforts between 1945 and 1990 deprived the ethnic and linguistic minorities of using their native languages in public administration, jurisdiction, education and healthcare in many countries in the region (mainly in Czechoslovakia, Romania, partly in Yugoslavia, and certainly in the Soviet Union). The formal or informal hindrances to prevent minority native language use in public were everyday practice. Linguistic and social homogenisation was part of the larger process aimed at the elimination of smaller local communities, regardless of ethnic origin. This process was supported by the argument of the extension of the presumed equality, although the main reason for this was the more effective ideological control of social groups. Private associations of any kind were banned or reorganised under strict political control. The elimination of local communities resulted in the weakening of language varieties, again helping the destruction of local communication networks and the disturbance of the traditional ways of conceptualisation and construal.

The homogenisation process hinders the useful bilingualism of the minorities, i.e. the fluent, functional working of everyday communication in a bilingual environment. Since the representatives of the communist homogenisation do not want to accept the minorities’ right to have their mother tongue, they interpret proficiency in the state language and its use by minorities as a legal question and a demonstration of accepting the general rules of the society as a whole. Within the complex frame of the international communist ideology and state nationalism, minorities are expected to learn and use the state language, meanwhile its acquisition and modest use was (and is in many cases even today) not ensured. This discriminating situation of the minorities elicits, through its socio-psychological consequences,

resistance to the compulsory learning of the majority state language. Also, the absolutisation of the majority state language narrows the prestige domains: the prestige of the minority languages becomes low. Practical existential opportunities become less accessible, too: school education and authentic knowledge acquisition, profession and job opportunities are all tied to knowledge of the state language, while these existential goals are increasingly difficult to reach.

One basic feature of the colonial situation is the manipulation of long term concepts maintained by communities and cultures. The ruling party in each Central European country centrally controlled the ideologically fundamental concepts as part of the practice run by the communist dictatorship. One manifestation of this control was the abandonment of long-standing concepts and the introduction of new ones with newly coined or reinterpreted words and expressions. Language had a basic role in this development.

To take one transparent example, when the concept and word *mayor* was simply banned in the countries in question, and the expression *president of the council* introduced instead, seemingly a plain change happened (see the entries e.g. in Juhász et al. 1972, or Schubert–Hellmann 1968). Actually, the political power completed a highly complex change. As a part of it, the concept of *mayor* was eliminated, that is, the notion, the conceptual domain according to which a settlement as a community elects its leader in a democratic process from among contesting candidates based on a knowledge of these candidates; the winner carries out her/his program autonomously with the endorsement of the municipal representatives forming the municipal board. Instead of this conceptual and semantic frame, the new expression, *president of the council* is the component of a frame or the label for the creation of a frame whereby the leader of a settlement is singled out by the only political organisation, the communist party, no other candidates are to be nominated freely, and the leader voted under pressure this way executes the instructions that come from above, from the party centre, the ministries and the upper levels of the public administration. The council, i.e. the local unit of public administration is the managing board of the settlement, with members nominated by the single party, a political and administrative unit in the dependency hierarchy totally controlled from above. Thus, the change in linguistic naming mapped and prescribed the corresponding political and social change and its newly created and settled content. Children learned already this new concept and the expression denoting it, while they did not know about the former one, the change and the opposition.

The main domain of communication and medium for the manipulation of concepts and words expressing them were public administration, the party units, the workplace, education, commerce, propaganda and adult education, always organised from above, by the central authorities. Among the important thematic domains one finds politics, social structure, public administration, official human contacts, community and social life and customs (e.g. the system of addressing), and religion. Partly as the result of these developments, generations grew up between 1945 and 1990 in Central Europe without any knowledge of religious concepts, for instance.

The manipulation outlined here is based on the cognitive principle that the meanings of linguistic expressions form a system of encyclopaedic concepts based on experience closely related to world knowledge (see Chapter 3.1.). The linguistic system and its use in this sense are extremely large for the individual and the community, although limited qualitatively for memory and mental reasons. The individuals' and the communities' knowledge about the world may be formed by education and propaganda, i.e. by manipulation: certain concepts and words may be banned or stigmatised, mostly in dictatorships, forcing populations to

change their worldviews. without linguistic expressions even the entities do not exist, or entities denoted by stigmatised words become taboo, being unutterable. Thus, concepts qualified as non-existent or taboo cannot be discussed; this results in the severe restriction of freedom and human creativity.

It is particularly interesting from a sociolinguistic perspective that the linguistic bases of the conceptual and linguistic manipulation in the region were almost exclusively the standard variety. The reasons for this are manifold. The standard variety provided the necessary level of linguistic unity throughout the whole state territory for the mediation of the ideological contents in every social and linguistic group and the desired efficiency of the propaganda, albeit not all native speakers were familiar with the standard varieties of the language in the region. At the same time, this role of the standard eroded its own social status and prestige, since it became increasingly evident that the manipulative publications came from the centres, and the overt lies were all formed on the standard regarded as the perfect variety.

The linguistic manipulation, the intentional and artificial changes in the coherent world knowledge were completed with the contribution of other factors. This development was sustained by the centrally forced industrialisation and urbanisation. Masses were compelled to move to towns, e.g. fleeing from the forced founding of co-operative farms, the arbitrary compelling of independent farmers into them, or because they were hounded for their social, primarily middle class origin. The persecuted social groups were forced into anonymity: they hid themselves by linguistic, behavioral and clothing ways, mingled with the grey and ever growing poorer urban crowd. Cultural levelling up caused the overshadowing of many language varieties, mainly a colloquial standard of the middle classes and the rural dialectal vernaculars, often manifested in the open stigmatisation of these varieties. Individual and community identification by linguistic and behavioral expression was not possible, and, according to the central party ideology, it was not even necessary, since the linguistic mapping of the communist ideology controlling all domains of everyday life was completed in one uniform way, and deviations from this line counted as ideological deviation and were, thus, condemned. On the other hand, the homogenisation intention and the notion of social equality demanded linguistic homogeneity, for the party ideology.

4. The region of Central Europe became free from the Soviet colonial rule in 1990. The establishment of liberal societies (of the western European and American type) has been completed gradually, through different methods, under the circumstances of postcolonialism (see Ekiert and Hanson 2003, Romsics 2013, Valuch 2015).

The change of regime in 1990 left language in general and the languages spoken in the region, and even the communities using these languages and their relation to these languages, largely untouched. Still, the fundamental political and social transformation radically modified the relation to language, even if the subject and the predicate have been agreed in the same conventional grammatical structures in the Czech, Romanian, and Hungarian languages, for instance. It is just that point where the inherent togetherness of the language system and the linguistic functions, the diverse schemas of usage present themselves – not only in practice, but as a consequence, in the description, too.

One main reason for the change in the relation to language was the introduction of freedom for speech and human rights in general. These rights were enacted in the countries of the region immediately in 1990 with prompt and substantial effects, i.e. every citizen could make the best of this opportunity, and many of them did, of course.

The overall introduction of human rights has had liberating consequences in every respect. Free talk and free language use became a basic condition of communication in public and private scenes as well.

A lively, open and discussing discursive order was being formed, or more precisely: the basic political and legal conditions were provided for this discursive culture. The historical and cultural dispositions of the populations living in the period as participants in the historical moment made the absolute success possible only to a restricted extent, since the circumstances of the given situation and the dispositions of the participants affected the realisation. Nevertheless, the possibility of open and effective participation in the affairs of the community became part of the conscious and intuitive knowledge of people gradually. Still, there are people who fear the consequences of their public statements, and others would use censorship in certain situations. These are, at least partly, the social psychological remnants of the communist era.

The radical change in 1990 was a historical moment for the creation of democracy in the region. One of the main events and fundamental experiences of this development was the cathartic moment of declaring truth: truth can be stated, language has regained its human and moral content, i.e. the warranty of its functioning. And this could be experienced by all those present and participating actively or passively in the historical process.

In what follows, the restructured communication systems of Central European countries, with the general features in focus of the postcolonial situation will be discussed in more detail. Other domains, like (i) the level of linguistic performance, the affinity toward or the lack of linguistic and conceptual creativity, (ii) the uses and effects of e-communication, (iii) the role of rhetoric in public communication, (iv) language ideologies in the cultural and political domains, and (v) external linguistic and cultural contacts, orientation towards prestige centres, are detailed in Tolcsvai Nagy (in press). All these domains show heavy postcolonial effects in all Central European countries.

5. The communication systems of societies and states show typical historical instantiations (cf. Luhmann 1998: 312ff). One basic type is the hierarchic communication order. This system is centralised, with control and influence being directed from top to bottom, and the information sent from the centre usually spreading successfully through to the destination, the audience which it is aimed at.

Another one is the heterarchic communication order. This system is shared, decentralised, has a network structure, and the contacts hinge upon the spatial–temporal conditions of the situation.

The geographical diversity of printing, and the complexity of the contents pushed centralised communication systems towards heterarchy, mainly in modern times. Still, at the same time, the continuous development of message forwarding resulted in the opposite trend of integration. The communities, or in a wider realisation, the societies created and spread the public nature of discourse, i.e. the widespread and simultaneous learning and discussion of new information. Thus, communication is detached from its direct spatial conditions and becomes a dynamic acting system maintaining much of the developments in social life. The simultaneity of current knowledge of events and affairs in a community, in a society formed what we know as public opinion.

The modernised European society and language community in the twenty-first century is a community built as a network of speech communities and individuals in a dynamic,

self-creating, i.e. autopoietic and self-reflexive style (cf. Luhmann 1998, from another perspective see Jackson ed. 2014).

The network structure can be pointed out in an earlier traditional community type, too. The essence of societies and language communities at the millennium is the relatively balanced but continuously evolving inner structuring and external contacts, less present in historically earlier societies or just taking other shapes.

The inner structure of a network style communication system is based on

- (i) the existence of numerous elements, speech communities and individuals in particular,
- (ii) the interplay or interaction of these elements, and
- (iii) the dynamic, discursive social semantics (more widely, construal through language use in varieties) and pluralistic public opinion.

The speech community is a community that is structured by frequent linguistic intercourse between members. That frequency of use causes the joint forming and use of similar or identical linguistic structures, including semantic interpretations and linguistic and conceptual perspectivisation and categorisation of the mental contents in focus (Gumperz 1968). The family, friends, the inhabitants of the village, the local part of town, the kindergarten and school (school class), the members of a profession, a workplace, a hobby group, the congregation, etc. all form speech communities, because their everyday communication results in joint registers within the complete language system including usage.

Individuals are members of various speech communities, firstly that of the family, obviously. During the process of socialisation, the individual joins other speech communities and learns their varieties, while s/he adds her/his own specific linguistic features if accepted. It is the general competence of humans that they can adjust themselves to another community with enculturation processes when joining it, and also, they can add to the norm system of that community. In the current situations, the relations are much more complex and the variability of the registers used by an individual is greater.

The network system of a language community functions as a dynamic and open structure. This system is self-creative (autopoietic) in the sense that it changes continuously: new contacts evolve, new speech communities arise from one day to the other. These dynamics and this openness are also initiated and supported by electronic communication. People form communities just by occasional meetings or through the internet, agree on how to define and create the language variant and meaning they use, using ways of communication and joint actions impossible ten or fifteen years ago.

It is well known that a wider system of discourses functions upon the network system characterised above. This system of discourses has a cultural basis. Discourse in this sense is a cultural activity in a community, whereby the participants focus on and talk about a certain topic (or related topics), even through historical periods (see Foucault 1971). Discourses are, for instance, on abortion, capital punishment, metaphor, environmental protection, in Central Europe on the legal responsibility and legal prosecution of communist leaders, etc. Convergent and divergent views are confronted within a discourse, although the discourse order determines – as Foucault points out –, by the leading personalities of the discourse, the topic(s), the ideologies and views, the language (style) used for those who intend to participate in a discourse. The discourses in this sense form larger intellectual networks.

5.1. These general characteristics have some particular postcolonial specification in Central Europe.

One of the first political decisions completed by the communists in Central Europe after 1945 was to put social and state communication under strict central ideological supervision. The measure of this totality altered in the countries and also in certain periods, still, the party control remained in service until 1990 in the whole region. This control was, for instance, extremely severe during the 1950s in the whole region, looser in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, in the 1980s in Hungary, and much stricter in the DDR and Romania than in Poland or Hungary during the last two decades.

This hierarchic communication system was changed formally to a modernised heterarchic one within a strikingly short period of one month, in 1990.

One basic change was the transformation of public discourse. The instinctive distrust felt when talking to strangers or principals faded in general, at least with respect to the commitment to the central ideology required earlier throughout society. Certainly, many social and institutional dependencies kept on functioning. In any case, the legal and structural conditions of the overall system took a shape that was unlike the previous one:

- any kind of communication from diverse sources, including that of the state and public administration became subject to independent control and discussion,
- any communication of local scope (e.g. information and statements by and in settlements and districts, bureaus, firms and other workplaces, schools, institutions) was rendered independent from the direct control and practice of the central government organisations and other (e.g. political party) headquarters,
- informal talk among family members, friends, colleagues and acquaintances was freed from the fear of informing (i.e. report on the subjects' views and acts by spies), organised and maintained by the secret police until the last minute of the collapsing regime, and also from its constraining power on linguistic expression.

The Central European countries needed much more time for the transition of the social structure than for the changes in politics and economy. Within this historical process, the new rights and forms of communication affected generations and social groups in different ways. Although it seems a matter of fact that younger generations adopt innovations more easily and faster than the older ones, it should be stressed that people socialised during the years of the communist rule, i.e. the older generations in 1990, could cope with the new ways of thinking and acting more slowly and with only more mental efforts than their counterparts in western Europe. Mental and social flexibility played a great role here. The general change into effective and expedient ways of talk was also quick and hard to cope with for many social groups.

This drawback comes from the retarded and then sudden and quick process of modernisation that occurred during a four decade period before 1990 in western Europe. Since the transition period was too short and the nature of the outcome itself at the end of the transition was totally in opposition to the social and communications patterns people got used to, the adjustment proved to be hard for the middle generations and the elderly.

Also, it generated tensions between the young and the older generations. The gap that emerged quite quickly in the linguistic forms and content of politeness show clearly the radical change, comprehended only with difficulties, even with total disapproval, completed

with higher intensity than in western Europe. Knowledge of linguistic behaviour and of varieties of politeness usual in western European culture was very low, proficiency in German, French or English too, so when the cultural barriers ceased to be, influential forms and behaviours were introduced in intercultural contacts, though in translations, i.e. in interpreted and adjusted ways.

This general – but not tragic – opposition was amplified by electronic communication, learnt by the young quickly and with pleasure, while many people followed developments of the computer and internet suspiciously – almost everyone was banned from computers (and copy machines) in Central Europe until 1990 for censorship reasons.

The general features of communication changed in every important domain: private conversation, public talk, institutional and office interaction. It was the main trend that linguistic communication became fast, concentrated, economic, expedient, adequate for the situation and the goal of the speaker, intended to be effective. Great variability and creativity in this complex world of actions also started to have functions. This course was completed in sharp contrast to the ways of talking, public and official in particular, characteristic of the communication system before 1990. This latter was pursued under the pressure of the compulsory ideology and censorship of the communist era, in order to avoid falling under the suspicion of acting against the “working class power”. But this kind of talk, having features like euphemism, circumlocution, impersonality, and the desemantisation of political clichés, tried to diminish and hide responsibility, at least at the level of linguistic expression.

5.2. Another fundamental factor of the historical change was the development of speech communities, individual and group networks.

The communication system was interpreted by social and ideological terms during the forty-five years before 1990. This means that, on the one hand, the tripartite idealised social stratification was imposed upon the communication system, with a generalised hierarchy of the settlement structure of the countries: the capital, towns, and villages. On the other hand, in a strictly close relation to the condition mentioned above, the centralised state communication always profiled and emphasised the ideological background of the messages, connected to the social status of the addressees.

This imagined but ideologically supported world changed into a network system of communication in Central Europe that is shaped by dynamic changes, and the basic factor in the nature of the network is that it became open and self-creative. In this respect communication systems in Central European countries have developed similarly to those in the western world – with, however, some postcolonial with features, too.

The prototypical communication system (as one per country or language community) of the region is open, compared to the earlier periods. It is open because it is not bounded, and it is open

- (i) to new interlocutors,
- (ii) to new speech communities or new forms of communication communities to receive them as organic units created by members of the system,
- (iii) for new ways of linguistic communication, for the construal of new linguistic structures and the re-interpretation of existing ones,
- (iii) for self-reflection, self-interpretation.

The prototypical communication system is self-creative, because

- (i) in its ways of functioning it is not controlled from external political or ideological power sources,
- (ii) the dynamics of its inner development is directed by its own regularities, formed by the participants themselves,
- (iii) it evolves by continuous innovations in communication methods, ways of talk, types of interpersonal and intersubjective contacts.

The communication system run before 1990 was grounded in a static, one-way hierarchical communication model, whereby the active speaker sends her/his message to the passive hearer. The latter has to comprehend the content of the message as it was meant by the speaker, since this message can be interpreted only in the same way.

After 1990, a radically different view of communication was gradually introduced. This communication system is based on the tripartite schema of joint attention focusing and meaning construction (see Tomasello 1999, Tátrai 2011). This kind of communication dominates linguistic interactions to an increasing extent in the region. This means that speaker and hearer (both interpreted as roles at a given moment) participate actively in the course of talking. The speaker directs her/his own attention at something which s/he expresses by the construal of meaningful linguistic structures that directs the hearer's attention to the same entity, and s/he makes an effort to comprehend what the speaker construed and said. They join in understanding the discourse uttered by the speaker in a given situation. The speaker initialises the interaction, but they go through it together, in joint actions.

This way of communication is a relatively balanced one with respect to the interlocutors: as a principle that was moulded first in practice and makes communication an adequate factor in communities preferring participation.

Certainly, the communication system characterised above is still being developed, with varieties in the region. It is not introduced as a ready-made way of talk by licence, but something that is gradually elaborated in practice and reflection.

Also, the network of cultural discourses (in Foucault's sense) was transformed. During the colonial rule, discourses were constrained in number, themes and spreading, and directed from the party centre as efficiently as possible. After 1990, discourses started to develop freely in all respects. However, as a postcolonial feature, the order of these discourses, i.e. the inner control of the topics, the participants and the variety used prove to be stricter, more centralised with signs of intolerance in many cases, compared to the western practice. This feature, partly an element of the heritage from the dictatorial socialisation, has clear linguistic mappings, for instance, in the strong stigmatisation of words, expressions, and as a consequence concepts from all sides of the participants, in the high frequency of superficial and simplified argumentation and manipulation, or in the sheer rhetoric aim of direct effect and stylistic vulgarity.

Some of the observable and identifiable factors are analysed briefly below. These are as follows: new types of speech communities as a result of the self-creative nature of the communication system, the re-interpretation of traditional varieties (local dialects and standard, their acceptance and stigmatisation), the new system of community semantics.

5.3. The transformation of the communication system in the Central European region took place not as a development by a given schema, whereby the participants have a clear knowledge of where and how to go. Instead, speakers find their ways in joint experiences and de-

cisions, during real time linguistic interactions. This did not mean that the interlocutors adjusted themselves to preconditions or newly given principles, but they re-formed some features of the discourse space and the interlocutors, i.e. themselves, too.

For a long time in European modernity, there were some prototypical social and cultural groups that belonged to basic types of language varieties, i.e. those who spoke regional or local dialects and those who spoke the standard. In the Central European region these two types dominated the linguistic communication system (and its scientific description) during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. As a result of the lower level of urbanisation and the high proportion of the population living in villages (in traditional village communities) and working in agriculture, the role of local dialects was more important in the region than urban dialects, as compared to western Europe. Certainly, there were and are divergences from this average, e.g. the Czech territories had a higher level of urbanisation than others (Poland, Hungary or Romania). The German settlements in Transylvania, and northern parts of the historical Hungary lived in closed towns for centuries, and used traditional dialects that slowly diverged from the German originals and the German standard.

In general, the two basic speech community types dominated most of the Central European region until the millennium, although in a gradually weakening and changing fashion. At least one-third evolved and joined the two, transforming the social and cultural background of language.

One basic type is the peasant speech community. Rural people belong here, farm labourers, farmers, craftsmen. They live in villages, where all the members of the population are aborigines, they are acquainted with each other, usually speak the same dialect as their vernacular, supported by their everyday talk, and have similar cultural customs. Important factors are as follows:

- the cumulative culture of these communities is based on traditions, i.e. the replicative, repetitive nature of the schemas, including linguistic ones, when participating in interactions; this means, among other things, that the linguistic markers of local dialects are maintained despite growing influences from other language varieties,
- the individual belongs basically to one social group, also as a speech community, this group is the village; this is the social, linguistic and intellectual, emotional domain where the individual forms and experiences directly her/his identity, e.g. when s/he gets into contact with others whose identity rests also on the same cultural and linguistic knowledge,
- the individual of these communities usually has an awareness of the wider relations, with reflexive and self-reflexive knowledge on locality,
- the communities of this type have strong regional contacts (in the sense of local region), for instance by marriages, local fairs or markets, church, regional centres of commerce, public administration, health care (the latter ones rather since the 1950s or 1960s), while cultural and linguistic contacts with remote centres, the global national or even European communities are rare and loose.

Another basic speech community type is the one that speaks the standard or a variety close to the standard. Intellectuals, educated people, many of the urban citizens, also those who speak dialects close to the standard belong here. The populations of these groups come from all parts of a society and language community. Some of them have the standard as their vernacular, others have learned it at a certain stage of socialisation, as an addition to the

knowledge of other varieties, primarily the vernacular (see e.g. Chambers 1995). Important factors include the following:

- the cumulative culture of these communities is based on the maintenance and improvement of the codified language variety, the standard, closely related to other domains of education; moderate innovations are accepted and supported; the standard is maintained independently of the geographical and cultural position of and other varieties known by the speakers,
- the maintenance and improvement of the standard takes place in a relatively dynamic network system, but partly also by an institutional (academic) network for codification,
- the standard variety is part of the elite culture, spoken by those who have the standard as their vernacular, also by many highly educated people and by most of the middle classes,
- the standard is usually not a specific variety of any geographical region, though its use is a significant feature of the communication in larger cities and cultural centres, the capitals,
- the communities and individuals speaking the standard have a high degree of awareness of this variety, as well as being self-aware, i.e. they define themselves and their linguistic and cultural environment deliberately.

A third basic speech community type evolved gradually in Central Europe. This development started in the 1960s, when teenagers and people in their twenties formed a generation that grew up after the WWII. These generations did not automatically believe in the communist ideal and ideology, saw the false directions in social life, and realised that language in public communication is badly manipulated. Since all direct reactions of this perception were impossible, indirect methods were employed, with vivid fantasy and innovative force. Among these methods were the extended use of irony, grotesque, slang and urban popular lexicon, vulgarity, not only in spontaneous conversation among teenagers, but in literature, films and the theatre, too. The official reaction was completely and rigorously refusing, albeit the process could not be stopped.

At the historical moment of the regime change, and in the decades that followed it, new generations developed a communication culture that accepted these relatively fresh ways of talk step by step. Around 1990 this process seemed to explode as this urban popular way of talk invaded the media, followed by commercial communication, interactions between strangers, and discourses on grave, even tragic topics, too.

The third prototypical group of communities and individuals is the one where people speak popular, i.e. urban folk varieties. This type has the following features:

- the cumulative culture of these communities is based on the radical transformation of traditions, i.e. it is innovative, non-replicative as much as possible; this means, among other things, that the linguistic markers of speakers are the new expressions, meaning structures, and ways of construal,
- the sources of linguistic creativity come from all kinds of varieties, including foreign languages, to construe adequate linguistic expressions for a given state of affairs at the moment of the interaction, and individual creativity and fantasy have a great role,
- the individual belongs basically to several social groups, also to speech communities, this is the individual's personal social and communication network, the self-identity is given by the system of the vernacular and the other learned and created varieties,
- the innovative varieties are created and used in situations with momentary, local validity,

- language contacts, i.e. contacts with others who use language in the same innovative way, is based on personal mobility, migration, travel and electronic communication, irrespective of the interlocutor's cultural and linguistic knowledge,
- these communities have become relatively independent of real spatial and temporal conditions through the use of the internet,
- the individual belonging to these communities usually has an awareness of the wider relations, with a reflexive and self-reflexive look at the universal factors of current language use.

5.4. Although the societies were transformed from above artificially after 1945 in the Central European region, and another non-organic but basically expected and approved change took place in and after 1990, the system of language varieties was modified in a slower way. The status of the standard variety and its relation to the other varieties has been a central issue for the societies and language communities in the region.

Generally speaking, the standard variety was adopted and adapted by the communist leaders. Most of them were of lower middle class or upper working class origin, speaking an urban dialect. In the countryside, in villages the local communist party secretary had the local dialect as his/her vernacular.

The standard, regarded as the perfect and comprehensible variant of the language for everyone, was used to mediate all information and propaganda. It was left out of the direct class war, the social and ideological, also cultural transformation of the society, concerning language's formal (phonological, morphological and syntactic) norms. Nevertheless, the use of stigmatised non-standard forms by the new political elite showed a lack of education for most standard users, while these middle class groups were forced to hide their standard usage in many cases.

On the other hand, the codified variety could be used as a tool for social homogenisation, at least indirectly. Interestingly and ironically enough, this trend met the intention of traditional academic linguistics, which declared the historical unification of language. In reality the unification of the language community was thought to end in one variety, the standard, as a teleological development on the long run. Although Marrism in the Soviet Union declared at the end of the 1940s that all social classes have their variety, this idea was soon dismissed by the party.

However, the standard variety was deprived of its social and cultural origins. In the cultural policy of the central political powers of the region, it was not any more the linguistic and cultural medium and result of the development of the middle classes and the nation, but the medium and mark of the rise of the working class. At the same time, middle class people and those aware of the cultural and historical role of the standard in the development of the language community and the nation, and also as the ideal, perfect completion of the national language, considered language, national language in particular, to be one of the domains where traditional universal and national values can be rescued from the destructive forces of the communist rule.

Nevertheless, the picture is yet more complex. The historical process is one of suppression, stigmatisation and counteractions.

Traditional linguistics predicted the death of local dialects for inner, linguistic reasons, from the 1940s for three or four decades. As mentioned, those committed to the linguistic theoretical framework based on neo-grammatical and structural ideas were convinced that the general direction of historical language development will result in the unification of varieties within one language, for structural and cultural reasons. This idea caused, among

other things, the stigmatisation of traditional local, i.e. rural dialects, along with the later developments of urban popular varieties. These varieties were declared unsuitable for the complex communication forms and conceptualisation ways (i.e. ways of grammatically and stylistically adequate expression). This view of language showed parallels with the dominant political ideology and underpinned, though unintentionally, the political stigmatisation of the peasantry and the middle classes. Also, forced social transformation from above as a method was supported indirectly through it.

Certainly, there were differences between the national traditions of linguistics in relation to the standard variety in the Central European region. While Hungarian linguistics was committed to the view of a secondary role of dialects, Czech linguists, the Prague School in particular, demonstrated the multifunctional nature of language mapped in varieties. And this prevalent view had nothing to do with contemporary ideas of formal theories, sociolinguistic and pragmatic investigations in international linguistics from the 1950s.

After 1990, the social status of the varieties changed strongly. The absolute value and role of the standard became undermined, even stigmatised in some cases, while others were rehabilitated, in the course of democratisation and pluralisation. For many speakers and linguists, the standard variety is treated as a source of linguistic suppression and stigmatisation (linguicism), as a variant that is imposed artificially on the language community and society to maintain the power of the elite.

The functions of the traditional rural dialects and the recent urban dialects increased and their prestige rose. Also, a number of these varieties became a definite and overt factor in the formation and demonstration of the identity and identification of individuals and groups. Thus, the hierarchic system of language varieties with the standard in the centre and the dialects on the periphery turned into a heterarchic network system whereby the varieties are interpreted by their complex functions for the adequacy of their construal performance, their originality and identity power (see e.g. Kontra ed. 2003).

5.5. Every society, language community and state develops and maintains a kind of social semantics. This social semantics comprises the ways of seeing and construing things in language, the conventionalised meanings of linguistic expressions. Meaning construction is a crucial factor for community members to join in comprehending the world and the part of it they belong to.

Before 1990, social semantics was controlled and directed by the centre of the communist parties, and in the general questions, by the Soviet communist party. Meaning was taken as a rule about how to use a word or an expression, and this rule was given to the population as an a priori law, i.e. something that is beyond the user's will and control, beyond discussion and critique. This kind of social semantics collapsed by the late 1980s.

After 1990, the social nature of meaning has changed. The realisation that meaning as the semantic content of a linguistic expression is partially conventional but is always object to joint meaning construction, prevailed. In other words, interlocutors join in the comprehension of what the speaker said, they agree on the meaning of the discourse in dialogic processes in discussions.

As a consequence, dictionaries began to give meaning definitions in accordance with the everyday use, i.e. joint meaning construction. In contrast with the censored dictionary (see page 57–58), the 2003 new edition of the Hungarian academic dictionary gives realistic semantic accounts of certain concepts and their linguistic expressions of public administration (see Pusztai ed. 2003).

6. The present paper has given an overview of the linguistic situation in Central Europe, how the historical developments have influenced language, language use, community formation and individual action, and also, in the opposite direction, how language, communication and language communities have affected politics and ideology, after world war II, and more specifically after 1990 in Central Europe. The investigation focused on the features of language, in particular on the social, cultural and political power factors of the languages used in the region, and the relations between them.

The colonial and postcolonial situation in Central Europe resembles the situation in African and Asian (post)colonies, but also differs from it. During the years of the Soviet colonial rule, the states of Central Europe did not form a part of the Soviet Union in the legal sense, there was no Soviet (i.e. mainly Russian) elite settled in the region. Still, the cultural effect on communication and language was strong enough. A centralised hierarchic communication system was introduced with strict censorship, with control on social semantics, and meaning was defined in the ideological centre. Linguistic homogenisation was a relevant goal; it resulted in the levelling of linguistic performance and creativity, with innovation fading, and free identification and reflection, self-reflection on language use and joint action being severely constrained.

In 1990 the situation turned into its opposite in most cases. A heterarchical, decentralised communication system was built, with freedom of speech and human rights in general in focus. The region has been subject to diverse cultural effects on communication and language, mainly from the western world. These effects are manifested in various ways according to cultural and ideological differences. A decentralised heterarchical network communication system has been developed with general democratic control, whose basic features include dialogue, discussion about social semantics, and meaning (i.e. the content of utterances, primarily in public communication) not defined in one ideological centre. Linguistic heterogenisation is the current practice with reflections: the radical change has resulted in the acknowledgment of and reflections on variability in language, its functions for adequate conceptual construal, linguistic expression, individual and group identity and the like. In this process the view of language as a simple tool to be used for control has been replaced by the interpretation of language as the human capacity for joint acts and comprehension, with creativity and innovation challenging conventions, whereby creativity and innovation are appreciated, free identification and reflection, self-reflection on language use and joint action are supported, certainly in varieties and with critical opposing views, too.

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Tolcsvai Nagy,
Gábor Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
Department of Modern Hungarian Linguistics
tngghu@hotmail.com

