DISCOURSE PATTERNS OF COMMUNITY CONSTRUAL IN THE TEXT TYPE OF FUNERAL VALEDICTION

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Abstract

Funeral valediction is a special text type which helps the social-cognitive process of accepting and getting over a loved one's death. Primarily written by a cantor but based on the expectations of the community, each poem can be a realisation of a pattern of the text type including its features but integrating personal details of the deceased into it as well.

In this paper I show different ways of construing social networks, especially family relationships in three communities. I present the members of the community as participants in the discourse of the farewell ceremony and as characters in the scenes made accessible by the language expressions through 110 analysed poems collected systematically by folklorists from different regions (Csanytelek, Felsőnyék and Dél-Gömör). I use a complex methodology following a basic principle of pragmatics in which sociolinguistics can be fruitfully applied in functional cognitive linguistic research. The present study shows certain connections between the vantage point and the role within the family highlighting general patterns and characteristics of it in each community.

Keywords: funeral valediction, context-dependent vantage point, apostrophe, discourse patterns, community

1. Introduction

Death is an abstract concept and prominent event of the lifetime. It is not possible to share one's own physical experiences of it because of its nature. Hungarian culture has certain genres which pertain to this event, like funeral oration, lament, wake song and funeral valediction (Gyöngyössy 2010: 27). The present study treats funeral valediction as a text type and detects its general features in a schema-instantiation relation. Bearing in mind the rarity of this text type, first I will highlight its general features, then underline the importance of social networks in the content and the structure of the text and the importance of social networks in the production of each text (Section 2). After that I present why and how certain sociolinguistic aspects can be applied fruitfully in a basically functional cognitive linguistic research and how they can reinforce the relevant results of folkloristics of the text type and explain them in more detail. Then I introduce fundamental concepts of the investigation such as context-dependent vantage point and apostrophe (Section 3). Section 4 presents certain concrete instances of the possible discourse patterns, shows the results of a quantitative analysis of viewpoint, and analyses viewpoint shift in different text groups. Finally I summarise my work and suggest avenues for future investigation.

2. The text type of funeral valediction

Funeral valediction is an occasional poem recited before the burial. A poem is written by a village cantor in general but also based on the expectations of members of the community. The closest relatives of the deceased visit the cantor to discuss the contents of the funeral valediction and also pay for the poem (Bartha 1995 1: 7–10, Keszeg 2008: 313–314). These circumstances allow the text type of funeral valediction to be analysed as a way of representing social networks. By this text type the community itself is construed from a prominent point of the lifetime, after the event of someone's death. This is how funeral valediction helps the social-cognitive process of accepting and getting over a loved one's death (Bartha 1995: 130).

Poems have three conventionally defined structural and substantial parts. The introduction presents the deceased, along with his/her age and some main characteristics, sometimes the cause of death as well. Then the role of the deceased is detailed in the family and in the community. This has a very strict order, starting with the closest relatives and ending with friends and colleagues, with men usually mentioned before women, except those ones who took care of the deceased. The final verses give a blessing for the dead and for the family of the dead and call the attendees for the farewell (Kríza 1993: 16, Gyöngyössy 2010: 28–33).

The most relevant information about the social network of the deceased is construed and his role in the community is described in great detail. Naturally, each person is unique in a community but there are types of tasks, typical acts during the lifetime which belong to different parts of one's life. In a different approach: the role of the deceased also depends on her or his age in the community. The importance of young children has a smaller range. They do not take part in the everyday life of the larger community, they do not work but are still essential for the maintenance of the community. Thus the intensity of grief is deeper inside the family, the larger community are less involved in this mental and social happening. The loss of a member of the second generation is quite different from this because the role of adults is different. They are at the top of their mental and physical capacity, do most of the work, and raise children, hence they are missed not only by their close relatives but also by the larger community. It can be observed that their funeral valedictions contain an explicit request. A member of the family is asked to take care of the others, especially of children. Finally, while respect for elders is important, it is hard to escape the fact that the elderly person is not able to do as much as before, his physical and mental state is not as great as it used to be. The elderly person knows and accepts this himself, so death becomes less feared, the emphasis shifts from the fear of death to deliverance from earthly suffering (Kunt 1987: 91–100, Gyöngyössy 2010: 44–52).

The farewell ceremony is the event of realising and accepting the fact that somebody is not a member of the community anymore, so this representation of the social network is prompted by the event of death. It allows one to analyse linguistic construals of the ceremonial way in which a member is removed from a community. Furthermore it motivates the analysis of the deceased in the texts and lets one observe his fictive viewpoint and compare it to the viewpoint of the real speaker. I analyse one of the methods of identity construal in the texts, the motif of community membership as it is portrayed in funeral valedictions, and the expressions of change in the community's social network.

3. Theoretical background

In view of the complexity of the questions and the characteristics of the text type, a multi-disciplinary background is required. Assumptions are the consequences of folkloristic results. Basically they are not about linguistic attributes of the text but they have aspects which can be analysed from a linguistic viewpoint. So linguistic analysis is able to highlight folkloristic statements from another point of view and make them into details (for a similar investigation see Baranyiné Kóczy 2014). A functional cognitive pragmatic perspective is adopted, which treats the cognitive, social and cultural embedment of these texts regarding language as a dynamic interaction, and supports the application of certain sociolinguistic aspects which can be fruitfully used in a fundamentally pragmatically framed investigation (Verschueren 1999: 6–8, Tátrai 2011: 17).

Gábor Simon (2012) proposes the possibility of a conceptual synthesis between sociolinguistics and functional linguistics. Although the relation between sociolinguistics and stylistics is more reflected and elaborated (see Eckert–Rickford 2001), the scope of these statements is not limited to stylistics. This study presents how social relations, patterns and networks interact with language usage in a specific text type and how they can be detected as discourse patterns (Verschueren 1999: 7). According to Coupland's concept of style and its relation to identity construals, discourse patterns can be analysed as a way in which the self creates his identity and recreates it from time to time as an individual in the society and indicates it to the others in language interactions (Coupland 2001: 202–204). Funeral valedictions can be analysed as conventional practises of identity from the perspective of a prominent event. Certain aspects of their territorial, cultural and cognitive embedment are made accessible by the analysis of one outstanding attribute of the text type. I analyse a pragmatically assigned phenomena in relation to identity construals.

There are questions thematised by the text type and the way in which these poems are created as well. The formation of a text is not a strictly individual or communal act. The members of the family order a poem for the deceased (and they also pay for it), so the cantor uses general schemas of funeral valediction while also adjusting the poem to some unique characteristics of the deceased. Consequently a strict distinction between the customer, the creator and the performer is not possible. Funeral valedictions function as community constructions. For this reason I present a particular phenomenon in relation with social networks, the analytic criteria are elaborated from this perspective. In addition, I also focus on finding similarities and differences among the texts from different territories and variability among three age groups.

In a communicative act the speaker – utilising language symbols which are perspectivized in nature – is able to produce linguistic constructions not only from his own first person singular point of view. For this reason it is necessary to distinguish between context-dependent vantage points and the speaker's perspective (Tátrai 2011: 29–35, Sinha 1999). The participant who is construed as speaker is not identical to the real speaker all the time in the analysed texts, the centre of referential orientation can shift to the deceased, a person who is not able to initiate a language interaction in the presence of the referential scene and the event in progress. Following Sanders and Spooren (1997), Tátrai (2011: 34) distinguishes between the referential centre that forms the basis of the situative grounding of the narrative's spatio-temporal and interpersonal relations, and the subject of consciousness that plays a fundamental role in providing access to the mental processes of participants. However, for the purposes of the present study, this distinction will not be crucial. The analysed phenomena are not citations, hence different components of the context-dependent vantage point shift together.

From a functional cognitive perspective, apostrophe is a discourse in which the speaker turns away from the real interpreter initiating interaction with another person or entity. The created apostrophic discourse and its framing utterance are parallel and simultaneous (Tátrai 2011: 58, 2012: 198, 2015: 107). A special type of it, fictional apostrophe can be observed and analysed in the text type of funeral valediction. The speaker starts linguistic interaction with entities and persons leaving out of consideration the barriers of linguistic cognition (Tátrai 2012: 199, 2015: 108–115). The addressees of the utterance can be entities such as a deceased person, God or death in a personified form, so they are construed as interpreters and the factual interpreters are become subsidiary participants.

Various ways of community construction can be detected by analysing the phenomena of apostrophe and its organisation in the texts. This is a way in which social networks are made accessible in the presence of the farewell of the deceased recited by the cantor.

4. Analysed text groups

I analysed 110 poems from 3 different territories, Felsőnyék (Tolna county), Csanytelek (Csongrád county) and Dél-Gömör. Thanks to the systematic work of folklorists these collections of manuscripts of funeral valedictions are accessible from these areas. Each collection contains from 200 to 400 poems mostly produced in the 20th century, based on the original manuscripts of cantors. These manuscripts are mostly homogeneous in time (except Felsőnyék) and the poems can be related to certain cantors of these communities. I chose 30 poems from each collection, distinguishing 3 age groups (children, middle-aged and elderly people), thus there are 10 poems of each age group of each territory. Considering that the source from Felsőnyék spans a period of almost 100 years, it was reasonable to pay attention to the dimension of time and separate two text groups of these poems, one from the late 19th century and another from the middle of the 20th century.

I have marked the points at which there is a shift of the context-dependent vantage point in the poems, paying attention to the way in which each shift is construed, and counted the verses of the speaker of the real and the fictive discourse, the deceased and the cantor.

5. General and local discourse patterns

5. 1. General discourse patterns

Main types of discourse patterns are distinguished by the context-dependent vantage point construed in the texts because the referential scene can be perceived from this point. Two possible centres of the referential orientation can be observed in the analysed funeral valedictions, a real one who is identical with the speaker and a fictive one who is construed as speaker in the text. The real speaker is the cantor who recites the poem. The deceased appears as a first person singular speaker of the scene of joint attention, portraying himself as part of the referential scene. So the cantor and the deceased are those people who are construed as speakers but the real speaker is naturally the cantor during the whole poem. I detect the participants of the discourse comparing their roles in the referential scene, with respect to the position of the deceased in the construed fictive discourse.

When the point of reference shifts from the real speaker and the deceased is construed as a first person singular speaker, sometimes the shift is signalled by an explicit expression but not in each case. The following instances are from the first verses of two poems from Csanytelek. The cantor can be observed as the centre of referential orientation in (1) and the referential

scene makes accessible the event of the farewell of the deceased, so the phenomena of the shift are construed in the text. But the shift is possible without any metapragmatical references to this operation. Moreover a real speaker does not need to appear in the text to introduce a fictive one. Example (2) shows that the deceased can be construed as a first person singular speaker although not objectivised as in (1).

(1) De mielőtt tiszta lelke felszállva ég Urához,
     Utolsó végbúcsúban így szól atya s anyjához (CsT)
     ('But before his pure soul is fallen to the Lord of the sky
     In the last farewell he says to his father and mother')

(2) Fiatal szívemből kialudt az élet (CsT)
     ('Life has been extinguished in my young heart')

The discourse becomes fictive when the deceased is construed as a participant of it. The event of his death is addressed to him in (3) although all the relatives and the participants of the ceremony perceive the fact that he is not able to take part in a linguistic interaction. The apostrophic fictive and the real utterance are simultaneous. The real interpreters are those who bid farewell to the deceased but they are also construed in variable ways.

(3) Férfi korodnak delén, munka és gond között
     Lelked e porladó testből jobb hazába költözött (FNy)
     ('In the middle of your adulthood, among work and problems
     Your soul moved from your crumbling body to a better home')

The deceased is construed as a participant of the discourse in a fictive way, but he can also appear as a character of the referential scene. Example (4) presents the deceased in a referential scene in which the cantor is the speaker and the utterance is addressed for the members of the community. In these lines the community is construed in a holistic and homogeneous way even though the cantor is not the member of it. It can also be observed that he appears as a member of the community, for example in (5a) and (5b). The homogeneous community is construed as the interpreter of the discourse, the cantor speaks out from this group to this group in (5a). The deceased is a character of the referential scene of the second and the third line of this instance and the scene makes his farewell accessible. Example (5b) also represents the event of farewell and the deceased mentioned in third person singular is a character of the scene but the apostrophic fiction is created by the speaker's turning away. The addressee is the personified form of death and he is asked about details of the event of death. Al- though death is construed as an interpreter this way, the real discourse partner is also in the community in which the cantor takes part as well.

(4)   Egy jó idős asszony nyugszik előttetek (DG)
         ('A good old lady is resting in front of you')

(5a) Szomoruan zeng ma közöttünk az ének:
     Mert egy új lakója mitőlünk az égnek
     Távozik el bucsut vesz – elszál mint a madár (FNy)
     ('A sad song resounds among us today

Because a new resident of the sky is going away,
says goodbye to us – flying away as a bird')

(5b) Miért vitted el őt tőlünk kegyetlen zord halál (DG)
('Why did you bring her from us, cruel grim death')

The presented instances show how the cantor is construed as a centre of referential orienta-
tion and as an speaker and how addressees are not only the participants of the ceremony but
also fictive entities like the deceased or personified death. This way the real interpreters
become secondary participants of the discourse, so even though they hear the utterance they
are not the construed as participants of it.

Analysing the construed role of the deceased highlights some more details of community
construction in the texts. As it was mentioned before, the deceased is construed as a first
person singular speaker of the texts, so the context-dependent vantage point shifts to him.
Although he can be the centre of referential orientation through the whole text, the shift does
happen, interpreters have to perceive this position of the deceased. In example (6) the inter-
preters are members of the community in smaller groups, relatives at first, then neighbours
and finally all the participants. (The importance of their order is detailed in section 2.) So the
community is not only construed in a homogeneous and holistic way, its relevant members
are elaborated in scenes like this and also appear as addressees of the discourse. The relatives
of the deceased are also mentioned as individuals. Example (7) presents how the deceased
turns to his godmother as an speaker. The godmother becomes the interpreter in the
construed discourse. In (8) three relatives are construed with a second person plural form,
although mentioned separately, too. This way the wife and the two children are addressees
representing the small family and become interpreters of the fictive utterance of the
deceased. So a referential scene is construed in (6), (7) and (8) in which the relevant
participants of the farewell ceremony are elaborated and involved in a linguistic interaction
with the deceased.

(6) Összes rokonaim s a kedves szomszédok
     S mindazok kik itt-e temetésen vagytok,
     Isten mind veletek mert én már elmegyek (CsT)
     ('All of my relatives and my dear neighbours
     And all of those who are here at this funeral
     Goodbye to you because I'm going away')

(7) Sebestyén Mária kedves +anyám
     Feléd is búcsúra nyílik már kihűlt szám (CsT)
     ('Mária Sebestyén my dear godmother
     my cold mouth is opening to you for saying goodbye')

(8) Távozás van írva az én koporsómra
     Feleségem s 2 gyermekem jöjjetek egy szóra (DG)
     ('Farewell is written on my coffin,
     My wife and my two children, come here for a word')

It is clear that the deceased does not turn to the cantor, neither can he be construed as a member
of the community. Beyond these quite understandable phenomena, some exceptions can be ob-

served. In (9), the deceased and his wife are construed together by first person plural affixes, and also by a first person plural pronoun (*mi* 'we'). So the deceased is not a member of a group but in a marriage and scenes like this represent the process of farewell or refer to a past event.

(9) Eddig tartott boldog frigyünk mely ma véget ére;
Édes jó nőm nem válunk el mi azért örökre! (FNy)
('Our happy marriage has come this far, and come to an end today
My dear wife we aren't separated for ever')

Although the deceased is a fictive speaker, the apostrophic turn away is also possible from his position. He is able to initiate a discourse with real participants of his farewell and other fictive entities like god or personified death, as it can be observed in (10).

(10) Kioltá éltemet a halál hideg keze (FNy)
('The cold hand of death extinguished my life')

The construal of the deceased as an interpreter or an speaker is a way to represent the presence of the farewell ceremony and to show social networks in the community in details with regard to their complexity, to the hierarchy among the members from the point of the deceased. After the qualitative analysis of these general discourse patterns in the funeral valedictions, some local territorial schemas are presented and reinforced by a quantitative analysis.

5.2. Local patterns related to the viewpoint of the deceased

Discourse patterns vary with the age groups of the deceased in the texts under study. The ratio of utterances by real vs fictive speakers correlates with age groups, and shows general as well as local patterns. The following diagrams highlight the notable presence of the fictive viewpoint in the analysed texts. The horizontal axis represents different age groups, and the extension of the viewpoint of the deceased is illustrated by the vertical axis with the proportion of this viewpoint compared to the length of a text. (It is measured in verses because verse boundaries coincide with the point of shift in general.)
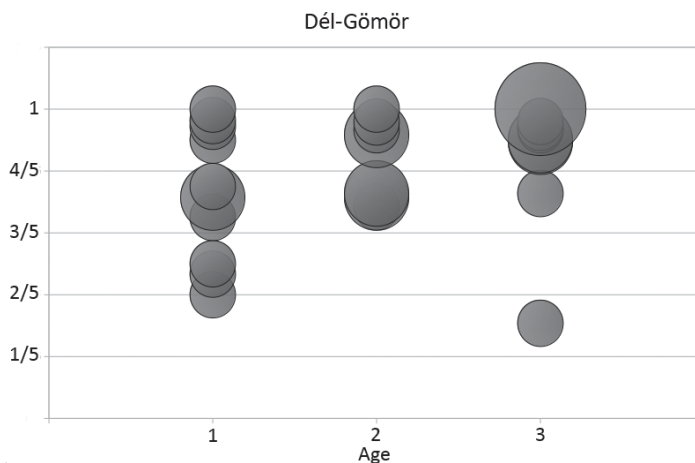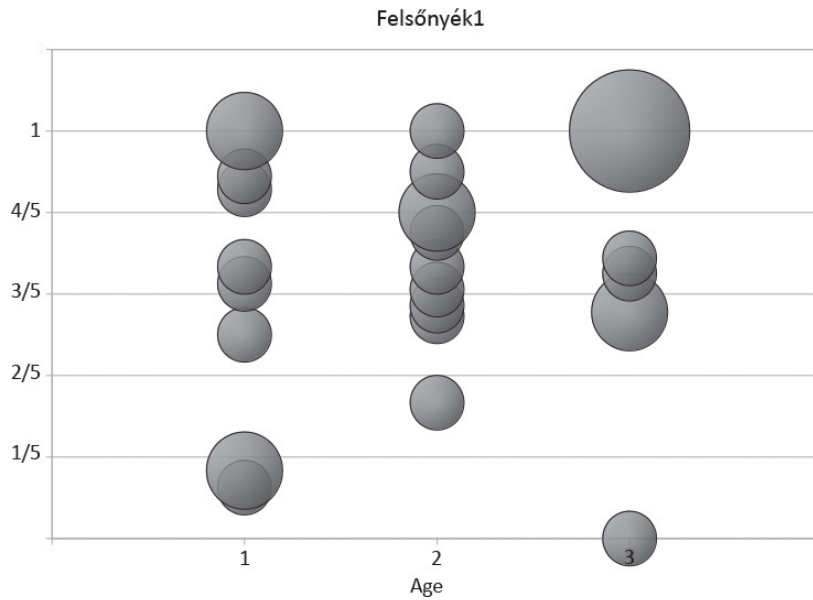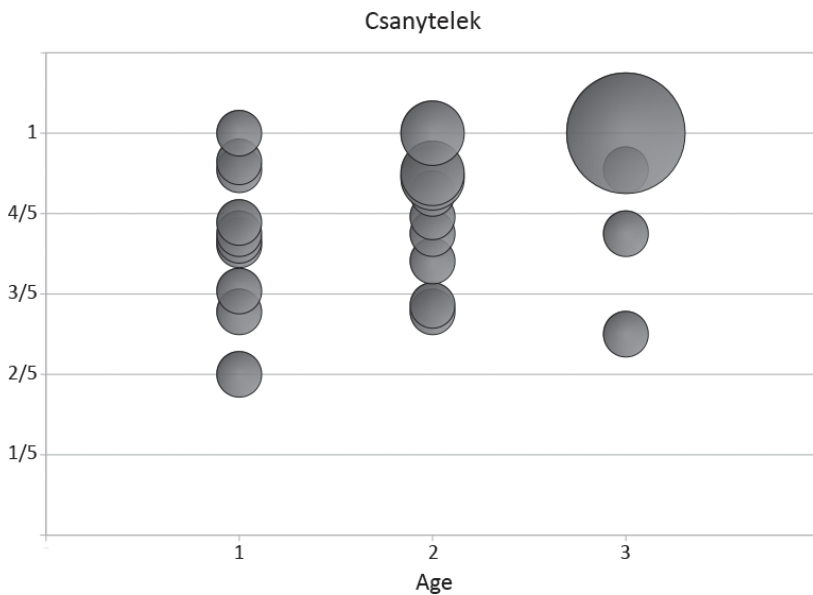

Diagram 1

Felsőnyék1

Diagram 2

Csanytelek

Diagram 3

The first person singular viewpoint of the elderly (deceased) prevails in all of the text groups but the largest divergence among territories also can be seen in this age group. The proportion of the first person singular viewpoint is the lowest in the age group of children within

the generally high rate of the fictive speaker. The share of first person singular utterances of the deceased is the highest in Csanytelek. This is the most homogeneous in the age group of middle-aged persons, particularly in the texts from Dél-Gömör.

We cannot leave out of consideration the length of each poem. The largest variety is observed in the poems from Csanytelek, with the texts measuring 4 to 30 verses. In Dél-Gömör and Felsőnyék, poems are 7 to 25 verses long (but the more recent texts from Felsőnyék are completely different, generally four-verse-long poems). It is clear that the length of a poem and the proportions of the real and the fictive speaker affects the presence of those general patterns which are detailed in Section 5.1. The analysis of these effects is not the topic of this study but it is visible that different construals of the community depend on the centre of referential orientation.

The organisation of viewpoint shift also demonstrates the existence of local schemas. The cantor is the centre of referential orientation at the beginning of a poem and the viewpoint shifts to the deceased in the second part of the poem or the cantor's viewpoint appears during the first person singular utterance of the deceased in Dél-Gömör, then shifts back to the viewpoint of the deceased. The viewpoint of the real speaker can also be observed in the opening verses of the texts from Felsőnyék but his viewpoint also exists as a frame in these poems, the cantor is the centre of the referential orientation at the beginning and in the end while the deceased is construed as speaker during the farewell. Poems from Csanytelek show a wider variety in the organisation of viewpoint shifts. The viewpoint of the cantor may prevail in the first verses of the text (as in Felsőnyék and Dél-Gömör) and during the construed utterance of the deceased, the viewpoint can shift to the cantor then back to him (similarly to what we find in Dél-Gömör). A single exception of a more complex pattern can also be seen in a poem from Csanytelek. The cantor is the centre of referential orientation at the beginning then the viewpoint shifts to the deceased and shifts to the cantor and it happens again, so the shift in viewpoint occurs more times than generally. There is another exceptional instance in this text group: the viewpoint belongs to a family member, the mother of the deceased although for only one verse. While the instances just mentioned are not frequent in the texts from Csanytelek, they highlight clear territorial differences in the variety of viewpoint shifts in the texts.

Dél-Gömör	cantor → deceased deceased → cantor → deceased
Felsőnyék	cantor → deceased cantor → deceased → cantor
Csanytelek	cantor → deceased deceased → cantor → deceased deceased → cantor cantor → deceased → cantor → deceased → cantor (exception)

Table 1: The organisation of viewpoint shifts in the texts

5.3. The temporal dimension of variation: recent poems from Felsőnyék
The original reason for treating recent poems from Felsőnyék as a separate group was the wide spectrum of texts on the time scale but it also received independent motivation from the study of linguistic features of the texts. The differences of this text group are visible in all

points of the analysis. Even age groups can be distinguished in a different way, it is not pos-
sible to separate three age groups but rather only two in recent poems of Felsőnyék. The
farewell of the deceased has two schemas in these texts, one for young ones and another for
elderly persons. These are used for all members of the community, so each schema does not
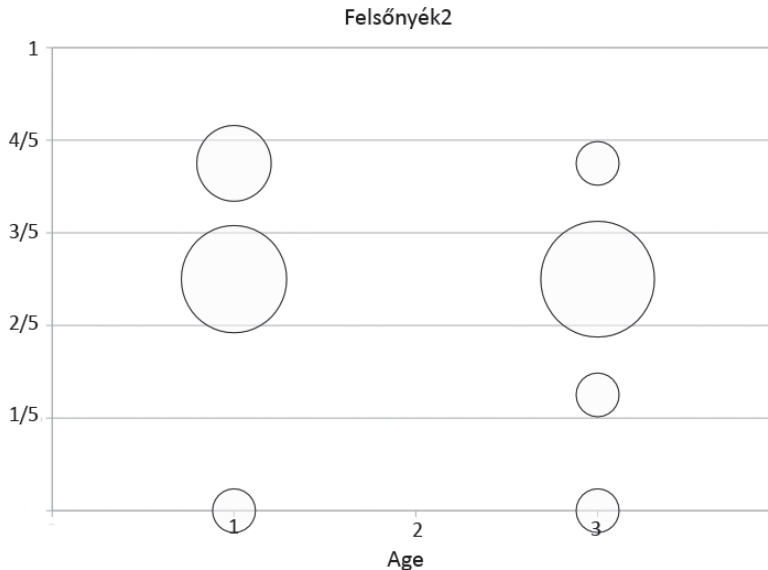belong to a certain age group as strictly as it was able to observe in the analysed three text
groups.

Diagram 4

Diagram 4 represents the share of utterances from the viewpoint of the deceased in these
texts, indicating essential differences from the other territories and from the earlier texts in
the same area. Generally the deceased does not dominate as a centre of referential orientation
in these four-verse-long poems. The emphasis shifts from a fictive point of view to a real one,
from the deceased to the cantor. Here the fictive speaker is not prevalent, the real utterance
is more dominant than in the three other text groups. Thus the change of discourse patterns
and the evolution of a text type cannot be left out of consideration. Although the change of
text types is beyond the scope of this study, the detected attributes of the material from
Felsőnyék open the possibility of analysing the evolution of schema-instantiation relations.

6. Summary

This paper has presented different discourse patterns, different representations of the com-
munity through an analysis of the context-dependent vantage point of funeral valedictions.
The investigation applied certain aspects of sociolinguistics to the study of a fundamentally
pragmatic issue. Drawing on the results of fokloristics and research on the linguistic rep-
resentation of identity, I aimed to offer a complex view of the analysed phenomena with the
potential of wide-ranging future application of the results.

Social networks are construed in diverse ways in the text type. The fact that the deceased is not a member of community any more is elaborated in the farewell. Most of the referential scenes make accessible the community without the deceased in such a way that he is able to talk about it himself. The investigation of the viewpoint of the fictive and the real speaker highlighted that the relevant construed parts of the social networks depend on the centre of referential orientation. Moreover social networks are construed in relation with and from the viewpoint of the deceased in the presented instances. The farewell is relevant from this viewpoint and this is why and how the community is detailed from this position.

The analysis of certain aspects of the context-dependent vantage point points to the existence of general and local patterns in the texts. Beyond the general schemas detailed in section 5.1., territorial variability may also be observed (Section 5.2). Local patterns can be detected in relation to their organisation in the texts and the distinguished age groups. Although the similarities and territorial differences are clear across the text groups, temporal characteristics of the texts cannot be left out of consideration and changes in the conventions of the text type can also be captured in this way.

Although this study is the first step of a wider and more detailed investigation, fundamental discourse patterns and their relation to the prominent event are already clear. The long-term aim of the current work is to establish a multidisciplinary methodology which can be fruitfully applied in functional pragmatic research. By adopting new aspects of sociolinguistic analysis, the work offers a possible way of examining identity construal in language use.

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