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Some Communicative Strategies in Hungary

Abstract

The paper examines Hungarian communicative strategies on the basis of written responses to a semi-expert interview on communicative strategies (SICS), a questionnaire that was distributed to 40 Hungarian students of the University of Szeged, southern Hungary. The communicative strategies and contexts examined in the study included pronouns of address, conversational openings and closings, small talk and taboo topics, presenting an opinion, turning down an offer or invitation and expressing disagreement. Each of the examined contexts revealed complex patterns of language use (e.g. two V-forms of Hungarian pronominal address), which on the one hand were constrained by linguistic and social norms, on the other hand were subject to negotiation in context. Age, status and social distance proved to be primary contextual factors, still, they could be overwritten by other, more 'local' contextual parameters such as degree of friendship or affect, length of interpersonal context, a common goal or shared experience. The informants' assessments concerning appropriateness, frequency or typicality of particular communicative strategies threw light not only on contextual constraints but also on how they are linked to face-orientation and politeness in Hungarian.

Sommaire

L'article analyse des stratégies communicatives hongroises se basant sur les réponses donnés par écrit dans le cadre d'un «semi-expert interview on communicative strategies» (SICS), un questionnaire qui a été distribué à 40 étudiants hongrois de l'Université de Szeged, dans le sud de l'Hongrie. Les stratégies et les contextes communicatifs analysés comprenait les pronoms d'adresse, des ouvertures et des fermetures de conversation, du Small Talk, et des sujets tabous, la présentation d'une opinion, le déclin d'une offre ou d'une invitation et l'expression du désaccord. Chacun des contextes examinés a révélé des modèles complexes de l'usage de la langue (soit pour le vouvoiement deux termes d'adresse pronominale hongroise), qui, d'un côté, ont été restreints par des normes linguistiques et sociales qui, de l'autre côté, ont été sujet à la négociation dans le contexte. L'âge, le statut et la distance sociale se sont avérés comme des facteurs contextuelles primaires, mais ils pouvaient toujours être remplacés par des paramètres contextuels plus « locaux », tels que le degré d'amitié, la longueur du contexte interpersonnel, l'impression, un but commun ou l'expérience. Le jugement des personnes interrogées en ce qui concerne l'adéquation, la fréquence ou la récurrence de certaines stratégies communicatives n'ont pas seulement mis en lumière des contraintes contextuelles, mais aussi la manière dont elles sont reliées avec l'orientation vis-à-vis de l'interlocuteur et avec la politesse en hongrois.

Zusammenfassung

Der Aufsatz analysiert ungarische Gesprächsstrategien auf der Basis von geschriebenen Antworten auf ein "semi-expert interview on communicative strategies" (SICS), ein Fragebogen, der an 40 ungarische Studierende der Universität von Szeged im Süden Ungarns verteilt worden ist. Die analysierten Kommunikationsstrategien und -kontexte umfassten die Anredepronomen, Gesprächseröffnungen und -beendigungen, Small Talk, Tabuthemen, Meinungsäußerungen, Angebotsablehnungen und das Ausdrücken von Meinungsverschiedenheit. Jeder der untersuchten Kontexte hat komplexe Verwendungsweisen von Sprache aufgedeckt (z.B. zwei V-Formen unter den ungarischen Anredepronomen), welche einerseits durch sprachliche und soziale Normen bestimmt waren, andererseits um Kontext ausgehandelt werden konnten. Alter, Status und soziale Distanz erwiesen sich als die primären kontextuellen Faktoren; dennoch konnten sie von "lokalen" kontextuellen Parametern wie Grad der Freundschaft, Länge des interpersonalen Kontexts, Affekt oder gemeinsame Ziele und Erfahrungen überdeckt werden. Die Einschätzung der Informanten bezüglich Angemessenheit, Frequenz oder Typikalität bestimmter kommunikativer Strategien warf nicht nur auf kontextuelle Zwänge Licht, sondern auch darauf, wie diese mit Gesichtsorientierung und Höflichkeit im Ungarischen zusammenhängen.

0. Introduction

Although a lot has been published in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics, studies were often limited in scope, focusing on one or two types of speech acts or discourse strategies (cf. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The written semi-expert interview on communicative strategies (SICS) compiled by the editors of the present journal is an attempt, within the limitations of the questionnaire instrument, to essentially broaden the scope of researched phenomena within a single study both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Not only a wider spectrum of communicative linguistic behaviors can be examined but also participants' assessments of their own choices can be investigated across cultures and languages.

In the following, I will first present the information concerning the participants and the data-collecting procedure and then proceed to analyze the data according to the sections and tasks of the SICS interview.

1. The Participants and the Data-Collecting Procedure

There were 40 Hungarian university students participating in my study, 23 females and 9 males, the average age being 23. All of them were English majors at Szeged University, Hungary. The majority (87.5%) came from small and middle-size towns, 2 participants came from Budapest, the capital of Hungary, and 3 subjects came from small villages. The majority (87%) were born on the territory of contemporary Hungary (mainly on the Southern Great Plane and in Central Hungary, see Table 1 below) and 5 participating students came from the territories of Romania and Serbia, both countries with large Hungarian minorities. I have included their responses in my study, as Hungarians from outside Hungary are members of the multicultural community in Szeged. All the participants whose tests were included in the study declared that Hungarian was their mother tongue. Table 1 below summarizes the data concerning the participants' place of origin.

Participants' place of origin	No.	%
HUNGARY	35	87,5%
Southern Great Plain (<i>Dél-alföld</i>)	22	55%
Northern Great Plain (<i>Észak-alföld</i>)	3	7,5%
Southern Transdanubia (<i>Dél-Dunántúl</i>)	3	7,5%
Central Hungary (<i>Közép-Magyarország</i>)	6	15%
Central Transdanubia (<i>Közép-Dunántúl</i>)	1	2,5%
OUTSIDE HUNGARY	5	12,5%
Transylvania (<i>Székelyföld</i>), Romania	1	2,5%
Subotica, Vojvodina, (<i>Szabadka, Vajdaság</i>), Serbia	4	10%

Table 1

I distributed the SICS questionnaire personally and drew the students' attention to the instructions provided by the authors. Some students filled out the questionnaire in class; others took it home and brought it back some time later. Some tests had to be discarded as they were filled in incompletely or it turned out that the mother tongue of the participants was not Hungarian. The students varied in how detailed their responses were and how much they were able to provide metacomments on the examined contexts. Thus, while interpreting the findings reported in the following sections we should take under consideration that limitation of the data-collecting procedure.

2. Section A: Starting a Conversation

The data collected with help of the SICS questionnaire (task one, section A) allow me to focus mainly on Hungarian address pronouns, although the Hungarian system of address manifests itself also in second person verb forms, nominal address forms and in greetings (Reményi 1994: 85-86). Thus, the discussion below presents only one element of a complex system of linguistic means Hungarians use in addressing conversational partners.

While on the whole, the binary T/V distinction of informal vs. formal forms of address applies to Hungarian and is known as *tegezés/magázás* (T-form usage/V-form usage), many Hungarian linguists (Deme 1999, Domonkosi 2002, Dömötör 2005, Szili 2007) prefer the term *tegezés/nemtegezés*, that is, the T-form/non-T-form usage for the simple reason that the Hungarian addressing system has two distinct V pronouns, the less formal *maga* and the more formal, polite and respectful *ön*, as well as the *tetszik*-construction¹, a V-pattern that signals distance and respect and in certain context may also display respectful intimacy. The usage of T/non-T forms is highly sensitive to contextual factors such as age and gender and shows some variability when used by Hungarians living outside the borders of present-day Hungary². The T/V distinction has always been in the focus of Hungarian linguists' attention³ and has been investigated from various perspectives, including its historical origin, on-going changes, politeness values and correctness of usage, particularly from the perspective of *nyelvművelés*⁴ or language cultivation.

In the following section I will present the findings concerning the usage of T-form *te* and V-forms *maga* and *ön*.

2.1. Formal and Informal Pronouns of Address in Hungarian: Data Analysis

All my participants identified *te*, *maga* and *ön* as Hungarian pronominal forms of address, *te* as the T-form, *maga* and *ön* as two V-forms respectively. The Hungarian T-form, *te* was characterized as informal, direct and close, to be used with friends, family members, classmates, colleagues, acquaintances and young, friendly university teachers. It was considered flattering when used to signal partnership and equality in status but it could easily become condescending when used in contexts requiring formal address.

The two V-forms, *maga* and *ön* were described as formal (*maga* less formal than *ön*) and as forms to be used in institutional, official or business situations. While *ön* was characterized as polite and respectful, the address pronoun *maga* was rendered as less polite, sometimes even disdainful, and having the potential of generating undue distance between S and H. Some

¹ As a main verb, *tetszik* takes a dative predicate:

Ez tetszik nekem.
This_{NOM} appeal/like_{3SG} me_{DAT 1SG}
'I like it'

As an auxiliary, *tetszik* (only 3 person, SG or PL) appears in polite V expressions:

Hogy tetszik lenni?
How like_{3SG} be_{INF}
'How are you?'

² Domonkosi (2002: 38) mentions earlier research according to which Hungarians in *Vajdaság* (Voivodina, Serbia), *Felvidék* (Upper Hungary, Slovakia) and *Erdély* (Transylvania, Romania) use *maga* more frequently than in Hungary.

³ Domonkosi (2002) provides a very thorough overview of the Hungarian literature on the Hungarian address forms and their usage.

⁴ A critical discussion of Hungarian language cultivation research in a broader sociolinguistic context of present-day Hungary is presented in Kontra (2006).

participants also commented that in its polite usage *maga* was more frequent and more typical of older people, and represented an older, more traditional language norm.

In the SICS interview the participants were also requested to choose proper forms of address in various contexts defined in terms of different social roles of S and H. Figure 1 and Table 2 summarize the results.

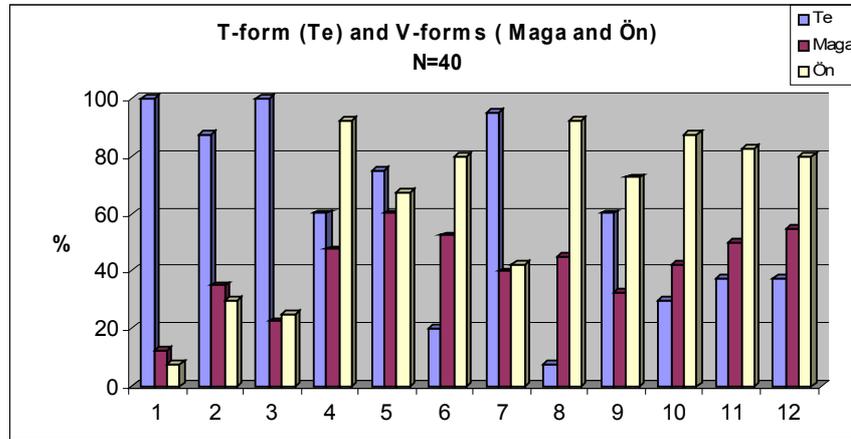


Figure 1

	TE	MAGA	ÖN
	%		
1.Children to parents	100	12.5	7.5
2. Children to older relatives	87.5	35	30
3. Colleagues at work	100	22.5	25
4. Employees to employer	60	47.5	92.5
5. Employer to employees	75	60	67.5
6. Pupils to teacher	20	52.5	80
7. Teacher to pupils	95	40	42.5
8. People to administration officials	7.5	45	92.5
9. Business partners among each other	60	32.5	72.5
10. Clerks to customers in a store	30	42.5	87.5
11. Customers to clerks in a store	37.5	50	82.5
12. People to strangers in the street	37.5	55	80

Table 2

As can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 2, the addressee's identity greatly determined the choice of address form. The informal pronoun *te* was most often chosen as an appropriate address term in the 'children to parents', 'children to older relatives' and 'colleagues at work' dyads.

All the participants chose *te* as an appropriate address form in the 'children to parents' context. Some students commented that using *maga* with parents was common in the past and now it is used mostly by the older generation, although it may vary from family to family. It was also mentioned that nominal forms of address such as *Anya* 'Mum' and *Apa* 'Dad' were more typical in that context.

The participants also selected informal *te* for the 'children to older relatives' situation, although formal address terms also appeared in that context. Some participants wrote that *maga* was used to more distant older relatives and was characteristic of rural areas. The informal *te* was more common with closer older relatives and was used by young children.

The respondents generally observed that the closeness of relationship determined the address choice and that nominal forms of address were very common in that context.

The informal *te* was also very commonly selected as an address term in the ‘colleagues at work’ setting. My subjects claimed that in that context the choice of address forms mostly depended on the nature of interpersonal relationship although hierarchy and local workplace norms of address usage were also important. Another factor that emerged was age, although the participants’ opinions differed on that issue. Some claimed that age hardly mattered, while others wrote it was of great importance: *te* was appropriate among same-age colleagues, while where there was age difference, younger persons were expected to use *maga* or *ön* when addressing their older colleagues. It was also of importance how long colleagues had worked together and had known one another and whether they both had agreed on mutual, reciprocal T-form usage or not.

The ‘employees to employer’ situation displayed strong preference for the formal and respectful *ön*, although *te* and *maga* were also used. The participants mentioned several contextual factors such as the nature of relationship, degree of friendship, workplace hierarchy and how long the interactants had worked together. Age functioned in a similar manner as among colleagues. The informal *te* was said to occur if the employee and the employer happened to be friends and when they both agreed to use the reciprocal *te*.

Interestingly, the ‘employer to employees’ situation did not display strong preference for any of the address forms, that is, *ön*, *maga* and *te* were almost equally expected. The participants referred to the nature of relationship as the main factor, and mentioned age, workplace hierarchy, mutual agreement and other situational components that had emerged in the ‘employees to employer’ context as well. Some remarked that nowadays the T-form was becoming more and more frequent but if an employer respected his/her employee s/he would use V-forms of address.

For the ‘pupils to teacher’ context, not surprisingly, the participants most often selected the formal and respectful *ön*, then *maga*, while there were hardly any instances of the informal *te*. Some participants commented that *te* was possible when the teacher was very young and the addressor was a university student. It was also mentioned that in the pupil-teacher interaction nominal address forms were very common, like *tanárnő/tanár úr* ‘teacher_{Fem}/Mr teacher’.

In the ‘teacher to pupils’ dyad the most commonly chosen address form was *te*. Still, many subjects commented that *te* was used mainly in primary and secondary schools while at the university teachers used the formal *maga*. Also, the teacher’s age was a factor: young university teachers addressed their students with *te*, while older teachers used *maga* or *ön*.

In the ‘people to administration officials’ situation the use of *ön* was strongly recommended, *maga* was less frequent, and *te* was almost absent. There was only one comment added to this context and it said that informal use of pronouns might happen when participants were less than 30 years of age.

As for the ‘people to administration officials’ setting, *ön* and then *maga* were the participants’ primary choices, the informal *te* option being almost completely ignored. There was just one remark made: when addressors were under 30 it was more usual to opt for informal address.

According to my participants, all three address forms were appropriate for business partners, *ön* and *te* being more frequent than *maga*. It was often mentioned that the choice of address form depended on how friendly the relationship was and on how long business partners had

known one another (*te* was used when they knew each other for a long time, *ön* when only briefly). Age was just as important: younger business partners used *ön* to the older ones and *te* was used to same-age partners and as a result of mutual agreement.

The participants selected *ön* as the most appropriate address pronoun for the 'clerks to customers in a store' context. Many subjects commented that the choice of address in that setting depended on age: young clerks used informal address terms, in particular to same-age young customers, while older clerks preferred *ön*. It was also observed that now in many places clerks were officially required to use *ön* when addressing their customers.

In the 'customers to clerks in a store' dyad the pattern appeared to be similar. The prevalent choice was *ön* and the main contextual factor was age. Young customers would use T-forms to young clerks, and V-forms (mainly *ön*) to older clerks. Young age was defined as being 20 to 30 years of age. It was also mentioned that using *ön* was a matter of formality and proper form.

The last context examined in that section of the SICS questionnaire was how to address strangers in the street. The greatest number of participants selected *ön*, although *maga* and *te* were also frequent choices. The major factor that informed the participants' choices was again age. Young strangers (20 to 30 years of age) could be addressed with the informal *te* while adults should receive either of the V-forms, *ön* or *maga*.

2.2. Answering the Telephone

Telephone conversations constitute a distinct type of communicative behavior that is subject both to technological and social constraints. In telephone conversation studies special attention has been paid to telephone openings as they display a number of structural features⁵ (Schegloff 1979, 1986), which are subject to cross-cultural variation (Sifianou 1989, Houtkoop-Steenstra 1993). The SICS questionnaire examines the second turn of conversational openings, the recipient's response to the caller's summons (the telephone ring). The recipient's response is examined in two settings: at home and at work.

2.2.1. How Hungarians Answer the Telephone at Home

The participants provided 71 examples of telephone responses when answering the telephone at home, which represent three patterns:

Answer form (+ Answer form)

This was the most common response pattern (46.5% of all responses) in the data. Altogether there were three expressions that functioned as answer forms: *Halló?; Igen? 'Yes?'; Tessék! 'Please!'*, used individually or combined. There were two ways in which the participants combined the answer forms: *Halló, tessék!* 'Hallo, please!' and *Igen, tessék!* 'Yes, please!' No other combination patterns were provided.

Answer form + Family Name apartment

In this pattern (24.5% of all responses) the answer form was followed by the noun phrase consisting of self-identification (a family name) and the word 'apartment'. The most common

⁵ Schegloff (1986) proposed four core opening sequences: summons-answer, identification/recognition, greetings, and "how are you" or initial inquiries sequence. Actual telephone openings often do not strictly follow that pattern and do not contain all its elements.

answer form was *Halló*, as in *Halló, Nagy lakás!* 'Hallo, Nagy apartment!'. The remaining answer forms, *Tessék, Szabó lakás!* 'Please, Szabó apartment!' and *Igen? Kovács lakás.* 'Yes? Kovács apartment.' were less frequent.

There were two examples where two answer forms were used: *Halló, tessék, Nagy lakás.* 'Hallo, please! Nagy apartment' and *Igen, tessék, Szabó lakás.* 'Yes, please. Szabó apartment'. There was just one instance where self-identification was used without an answer form: *Bíró lakás!* 'Bíró apartment'.

Answer form + Recipient's Full Name

This pattern (28.2% of all responses) consisted of an answer form and the recipient's full name as self-identification, e.g. *Tessék, Szabó Andrea.* 'Please, Szabó Andrea.', sometimes extended to *Tessék, Szabó Andrea vagyok!* 'Please, Szabó Andrea (I) am!'. The most frequent answer form was *Tessék!* 'Please!', *Halló* was used much less and there was only one instance of *Igen* 'Yes'.

2.2.2. How Hungarians Answer the Telephone at Work

The responses to that part of the questionnaire displayed more complex patterns. The participants provided 50 examples and used five different components. According to the frequency of their occurrence these are: institution's name (86%), answer form (56%), 'Can I help you' sequence (56%), recipient's full name (38%), and greetings (22%).

The elements were combined, the majority of the examples using three different components. The answer forms, which were almost exclusively used in this context, were *Halló* and *Tessék!* 'Please!', there were just three instances of *Igen* 'Yes'. The Hungarian version of the 'Can I help you' sequence was *Miben segíthetek?* (literally: 'In what can I help you?') and the greeting form was *Jó napot kívánok!* 'I wish you a good day'.

Many component combinations or patterns emerged. In order to systematize them I divided the examples into two main groups: those, which contained the 'Can I help you' sequence, and those, which did not. The 'Can I help you' sequence is an element that is explicitly oriented to the institutional character of the response, as it is absent from telephone openings at home, and it displays institutional etiquette and politeness. It was interesting to observe that it co-occurred with another politeness strategy—greetings, which were almost completely absent from the group of responses that did not contain the 'Can I help you' sequence.

2.2.2.1. Responses Containing the 'Can I help you' Sequence

The 'Can I help you' group (56%, 28 examples out of 50) represented a rich repertoire of different patterns. Nine responses in this set contained greetings and had the following structures:

Greetings + institution's name + 'Can I help you?' (4 examples)

Jó napot kívánok, XY ügyfélszolgálat, miben segíthetek?

'I wish you a good day, XY customers' service, can I help you?'

Greetings + 'Can I help you?' (2 examples)

Jó napot kívánok, miben segíthetek?

'I wish you a good day, how can I help you?'

(Answer form) + greetings + institution's name + recipient's full name + 'Can I help you?' (3 examples)

(Halló), Jó napot kívánok, XY vállalat, Kovács Tímea vagyok, miben segíthetek?

(Hallo), I wish you a good day, XY Company, I am Kovács Timea, can I help you?

The patterns with the ‘Can I help you?’ sequence but without greetings were the following:
Institution’s name + recipient’s full name + ‘Can I help you?’ (6 examples)

XY vállalat, Szabó Andrea (vagyok), miben segíthetek?

’XY Company, (I am) Szabó Andrea, can I help you?’

Answer form + institution’s name + ‘Can I help you?’ (5 examples)

Tessék/Halló, XY vállalat, miben segíthetek?

’Please/Hallo, ’XY Company, can I help you?’

Institution’s name + ‘Can I help you?’ (4 examples)

Megyei Kórház, miben segíthetek?

’County Hospital, can I help you?’

Answer form + institution’s name + recipient’s full name + ‘Can I help you?’
 (2 examples)

Tessék/Halló, XY ügyfélszolgálat, Szabó Andrea (vagyok), miben segíthetek?

’Please/ Hallo, XY Customers’ service, (I am) Szabó Andrea, can I help you?’

Answer form + recipient’s full name + ‘Can I help you?’ (2 examples)

Tessék, Barna Imre vagyok, miben segíthetek?

’Please, I am Barna Imre, can I help you?’

2.2.2.2. Responses Not Containing the ‘Can I help you?’ Sequence

In my data there were 22 examples (44%) that did not contain the ‘Can I help you’ sequence. The patterns were the following:

Answer form + institution’s name (8 examples)

Halló/Tessék, XY Kft.

’Hallo/Please, XY Company’

Institution’s name + answer form *tessék* (6 examples)

Megyei Kórház, tessék!

County Hospital, please!

Institution’s name (+ recipient’s full name) (5 examples)

Marketing Iroda (Magyar Attila).

’Marketing Office (Magyar Attila).’

Answer form + greetings (2 examples)

Halló, Jó napot kívánok.

’Hallo, I wish you a good day’

Answer form + answer form (1 example)

Igen, tessék.

’Yes, please’

Although the participants did not comment on these patterns, the responses containing the ‘Can I help you’ sequence can be considered both more ‘professional’ and, at least formally, more polite. Naturally, the absence of the ‘Can I help you’ sequence does not automatically mean that such a response is impolite or rude. Still, the institution’s name + answer form *tessék* pattern, e.g. *Megyei Kórház, tessék!* may sound quite overbearing as the post-positioned *tessék* functions less as an answer to the summons and more as a firm request to provide an account of the reason for calling. The participants’ own assessments would be the most relevant source of information on that issue.

3. Section B: Keeping up a Conversation

3.1. Situations in Which Small Talk Is Common

In their responses to that part of the SICS questionnaire the Hungarian participants mentioned a number of contexts where small talk was likely to occur. The most frequent sites and places, mentioned by almost every respondent, were those related to waiting, the most frequent being waiting rooms at the doctor's office or in other public institutions, and waiting lines in shops and stores, where people could engage in small talk with other shoppers (but not with the personnel). There were some participants for whom a typical site of small talk was the hairdresser's. Very many respondents mentioned public transport, mainly trains, buses and bus stops. Yet another place that was referred to quite a few times was a university corridor, where students engaged in small talk before exams or while waiting for their classes.

Some participants commented that in Hungary it was neither expected nor typical of strangers to engage in small talk, the exception being older people, in particular older women, who were said to frequently initiate small talk, for instance at a bus stop or on a train. Engaging in small talk very much depended on a situation, in particular on whether the persons involved shared any common experience or problem. For instance, small talk was likely to occur when people waiting in line or in an office had to wait longer than expected, or when a person was a regular customer or visitor to the place. Otherwise people would not be interested in other people's affairs and small talk among strangers would be avoided. On the other hand, small talk was expected among acquaintances in the majority of contexts, and it felt awkward if it did not happen.

3.2. Situations in Which Small Talk Is Not Common

From the SICS list my participants selected mainly public toilets and elevators as places where small talk was to be avoided. Many other places were also mentioned such as churches, public libraries, banks, theatres, cinemas, museums and the teacher's office, when students were waiting for their turn to sign their indexes. Small talk was also unwelcome during certain public events or activities, such as concerts, funerals, seminars, lectures, national ceremonies or law court trials. My participants also commented that people usually kept silent in places where they stayed only for a short while and were among strangers.

The ambivalent nature of remaining silent in the presence of others was also addressed. For instance, remaining silent in an elevator often felt awkward. People remained silent and avoided small talk when they were in a crowd, with little or no space around them, e.g. when there were no seats on public transport and passengers had to stand close next to each other. It was also observed that small talk was to be avoided when the other person was noticeably busy, for instance when s/he was listening to music, watching a film, taking notes in class. In such situations it was not awkward to refrain from talking. Small talk should also be avoided when it created inconvenience, for instance, while at the post office, a person should not engage in a conversation with an office clerk while other people were standing in a line behind him/her. Finally, it was observed that small talk used to be avoided during a meal but nowadays it was not the case any more.

3.3. Common Small Talk Topics

My participants selected a number of small talk topics from the SICS list that could be addressed when talking to strangers, the most frequent being weather, recent political events,

general complaints about politics and politicians, traveling experiences and sports and hobbies. American entertainment industry and general praise of domestic politics and politicians were rarely selected and recent scientific news and foreign interlocutor's language competence were mentioned as hardly possible.

The participants added quite a few new small talk topics to the SICS list. By far the most common among them was a group of 'complaint' topics, such as complaints about health care, public transport, weather, politics, standards of living or the condition of Hungarian economy. Quite a few participants also mentioned that everyday annoyances, grievances and wrongs that people suffered could readily be small talk topics. A number of participants further mentioned family, children and friends as well as recent events from family life. Individual participants also added sport (also in the form of a complaint, for instance about Hungarian football), current TV shows, local and world news, school, memories from the past (typical of the older generation), music, economic situation, prices and poverty, all that depending on a situation and shared experiences (for instance, a particular topic would emerge while traveling or waiting at the doctor's office).

3.4. Taboo Topics

The participants selected three topics from the list, which they considered taboo: (1) money, earnings and S's financial situation, (2) religion, and (3) politics, political views and convictions. Other taboo topics were sex life and sexuality; bodily things and bodily fluids; private, personal topics concerning one's life, problems or preferences; death; divorce; alcoholism (in the family); racism and ethnic and minority conflicts; any views that were not generally accepted. It was also mentioned that among friends and relatives there were no topics that would be strongly taboo.

3.5. Amount of Small Talk

The responses to that part of the SICS questionnaire do not lead to clear conclusions as the participants were divided almost half to half between choosing the first (more small talk in private conversation than in a business conversation) and the second (less small talk in private conversation than in a business conversation) option, very few respondents selecting the third possibility (do as much small talk in private as in business). There were only three comments added but they did not throw light on the participants' motivations. One person commented that in a private conversation it was required to ask about the other person's well-being before making a request, another person wrote that the presence of small talk before requests and offers depended on how well the persons knew each other and the third respondent simply admitted that he had no idea how to respond as he lacked the experience.

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the participants assumed there was a difference between a private and a business conversation concerning the amount of small talk used as a mitigating or facilitating device prior to requests or offers, but did not have a clear idea what the difference was. Taking under the consideration the fact that my participants were students and only few of them worked at the same time as teachers, it seems they lacked the life experience to provide reliable answers to that part of the questionnaire.

4. Section C: Being Nice in a Conversation

In this section of the SICS interview the participants were asked two questions: how they would typically present their opinion on a topic and whether they would assume that the

invitation or the offer they received was sincere or merely a politeness phrase.

4.1. Presenting Your Opinion

In their responses to that question, the greatest number of participants (75%) selected option 2, that is, first you give your opinion, and then you give reasons related to the issue itself. Commenting on that option some participants wrote that it was a frequent way of presenting one's opinion and that giving reasons showed your opinion was well grounded. Option 1 (first you give your opinion then you give reasons, citing other persons) was also quite often chosen (42.5%), although there was a remark that citing others gave an impression as if S wanted to present others' opinion as his or her own. Options 4, 5, 6 and 7 were selected by roughly 30% of the participants each. Least favored was option 3 (first you give background information citing others and then you present your opinion) as it was selected only by 17% of the respondents. Some participants did not choose any option but merely gave their comments. There were three participants who in the 'other means' part of this section expressed their view that one could express his or her opinion without giving any reasons at all or would give reasons only when necessary.

In their assessments some participants wrote that all the patterns of giving arguments were possible, it all depended on how well S knew the topic and how well educated or polished s/he was. Options 3 and 4, where S's opinion was preceded by background information or by citing others, were associated with the university or scientific debates. A similar comment was made about option 7 (first you present diverse opinions and argumentations and then you say your own opinion). On the other hand, options 1 and 2 were more typical of 'general' debates' or discussions with friends or relatives.

4.2. Assessing an Invitation or an Offer

In their answers, 72.5% of the participants considered invitations and offers as sincere. Only 17.5% of the respondents assumed they were just polite phrases. Many participants commented that it depended on who made an offer or an invitation and on the relationship between the persons: if it was a close friend then most probably the invitation was sincere, if it was a stranger or an official person then it was uncertain how to take it. The linguistic form, a tone of voice and non-verbal signs were also very important. If an invitation or an offer came spontaneously then it was sincere, if S hesitated then it was out of politeness or necessity. One participant (who chose option 1) wrote that there should be 'no kidding' about such matters. Another person commented that if one did not want to help the other, s/he should not offer or invite. An interesting remark was made by a Hungarian female from Romania: in her opinion a Hungarian in Hungary invited someone only when s/he really wanted, while a Hungarian from Transylvania invited also because it was a correct thing to do.

5. Section D: Getting Around Very Uncomfortable Topics

In this section of the questionnaire the participants were asked how to say 'no' in a polite way on two different occasions: when turning down an invitation or an offer and when disagreeing with someone else's opinion.

5.1. How to Turn Down an Offer

Refusals have received a lot of attention in sociopragmatic and cross-cultural research. Empirical studies have demonstrated that language users developed a rich repertoire of strategies to cope with the face-threatening potential of refusals.

Beebe/Takahashi/Uliss-Weltz (1990), the study that is the major contribution to the research on refusals, classified refusal strategies into

- (1) direct refusals, in the form of performative expressions such as ‘I refuse’, non-performative direct refusals or expressions of negative willingness, (‘No, ...’; ‘I can’t’; ‘I won’t’; ‘I don’t think so’),
- (2) indirect refusals, such as statements of regret (‘I’m sorry’), excuses, reasons or explanations (‘I have a headache’), statements of an alternative, promises of future acceptance, avoidance strategies (e.g. a postponement ‘I’ll think about it’) and many others, and
- (3) adjuncts to refusals, such as a statement of positive opinion or feeling (‘I’d love to’), a statement of empathy, an expression of gratitude or appreciation and pause fillers (‘well’, ‘uhm’).

In real-life refusals the strategies did not occur in isolation but were combined, the choice depending on a context.

Szili (2004) examined Hungarian refusals with the help of a discourse completion test on a sample of 220 Hungarian adults and secondary school students, using Beebe’s coding system. She found that direct, performative refusal was generally avoided; the most common strategies were non-performative refusals, excuses and expressions of regret, although other strategies also occurred in more specific contexts.

Applying Beebe’s coding categories to eight refusal strategies listed in the SICS questionnaire we can say that they exemplify the category of a direct, non-performative refusal (‘No, I don’t feel like going there/doing X’) and two types of indirect strategies: excuses, varying in the degree of explicitness or vagueness, and avoidance strategies (‘I don’t know yet, I’ll let you know’; ‘I will have to think about it’). Below I discuss the participants’ choices and assessments concerning the refusal strategies in the SICS questionnaire.

A direct phrase that means “No, I don’t feel like going there/doing X”

Half of the participants (50%) selected this direct, non-performative expression of refusal. Many respondents commented it was used informally, among close friends, relatives and intimates. Many also claimed that it was rare, being limited to close relationships only. Among Hungarian examples the most common was the following utterance type: (*Nem*), (*most*) *nincs kedvem*. ‘(No), (now) I don’t feel like it’. Two participants combined it with an apology or statement of regret, e.g. *Nem, ne haragudj, de ehhez most nincs kedvem*. ‘No, I’m sorry, but I don’t feel like doing it now’, which supports Szili’s (2004) findings.

A vague excuse like “No, I don’t have time” or “No, I have something else to do”

Very many participants (75%) selected a vague excuse as a form of refusal. The majority commented it was used very frequently. Two participants commented that this strategy was used with strangers rather than with friends. Some claimed that an apology should be added to make a vague excuse polite. Typical examples were the following: *Nincs időm/Nem érek rá*. ‘I don’t have time’ and *Más dolgom van*. ‘I have something else to do’, also with an additional apology: *Ne haragudj, de más dolgom van*. ‘I’m sorry but I have something else to do’.

A phrase like “(I don’t know yet) I’ll let you know”, though you will surely not contact the person again.

The postponement strategy was very popular among my participants as 78% chose it as a way of turning down an offer or an invitation. Most of the respondents claimed it was frequent or very frequent. One participant commented that it was used when S wanted to imply that H should not call S again. Another person argued that S should call the inviter back, even if s/he planned to turn down his/her invitation or offer. There were many examples provided, the frequently recurring expression being *Még nem tudom*. ‘I don’t know yet’, almost always combined with another postponement strategy, for instance: *Még nem tudom, később még kereslek/de majd jelentkezem*. ‘I don’t know yet, I will call you later/but I will call on you later’.

A phrase like “I will have to think about it” though you won’t surely contact the person again.

This type of postponement strategy was chosen by fewer participants (58%); still, many subjects commented that it occurred very frequently. The examples were the following: *Még gondolkodom rajta*. ‘I am still thinking about it’, *Még át kell gondolnom*. ‘I will still have to think about it’, *Majd meglátom* ‘I will see’. One participant provided a longer response that additionally contained a statement of positive opinion or feeling: *Nagyon szeretnék ott lenni, de nem biztos*. ‘I would love to be there but it is not certain’.

A concrete brief and true excuse (if there is one)

A concrete and true excuse, an indirect way of turning down an invitation or an offer, was selected by 55% of respondents. Many of them wrote that this strategy was used very frequently although there were some who claimed it was rare. Interestingly, there were also remarks that the addressee should be a close friend or a relative. One of the participants wrote that this strategy was typical of friends as it would be a burden for strangers with whom we would rather use a vague excuse.

A concrete brief and invented excuse (if there is no concrete and true excuse)

This option was selected only by 30% of the participants and as to its frequency, the assessments were rather divergent: there were those who commented it was used very frequently, but there were others who claimed it was rare. One person mentioned that it was used with strangers.

A concrete long and true excuse (if there is one)

Roughly 25% of the subjects selected a long and true excuse, as a way of turning down an invitation or an offer and the prevailing comment was that it occurred rarely. One participant commented it was typical of talkative people only. No examples were provided.

A concrete long and invented excuse (if there is no concrete and true excuse)

This option was selected by very few participants (15%) and the recurring comment was that it was rare or very rare. No examples were provided. One participant commented that, just as in the case of a concrete, long and true excuse, it was typical of talkative people only.

Other means

There were four participants who provided their own examples. They all used combined strategies and all the examples contained elements that were oriented to H’s positive face needs (Brown/Levinson 1987). The first example, which according to the participant represented a frequent refusal type in the participant’s experience, was the following: *Most nem, köszönöm, inkább majd legközelebb*. ‘Not now, thank you, perhaps next time’. The strategies used were a direct refusal (non-performative), expression of gratitude and a vague promise of future acceptance, which could also be interpreted as an avoidance strategy. The

next example, *Jó lenne, de sajnos nem megy*. 'It would be nice, but now unfortunately it cannot happen', consisted of a statement of positive feelings, an expression of regret (syntactically embedded) and a direct, non-performative refusal. The third, incomplete example, *Szeretnék, de* 'I'd like to but ...' began with a statement of positive feelings, the conjunction *de* 'but' projecting some other strategy (for instance excuse) that would invalidate the interpretation of 'I'd like to' as an acceptance. Finally, the fourth example was provided in English: *I wish I could come and didn't have so much to do. Maybe next time*. Just like in the previous examples, the strategies included a statement of positive feelings, excuse and a vague promise of future acceptance, which could also be interpreted as an avoidance strategy.

Some participants also commented on contextual parameters of refusals. Thus, the form of a refusal depended on the nature of relationship and on how 'big' the rejection was (which partly depended on the 'weightiness' of an invitation or an offer). If it was something unimportant then a short answer was fine. One person wrote that a direct refusal was in itself impolite and it was necessary to mention a reason (true or invented) why an invitation could not be accepted in order to make a refusal weaker. Another person argued that people were quite unlikely to say things like 'Sorry, I don't want to go, I'm not in the mood', even in situations where the answer had to be given immediately. In such cases interlocutors would rather make the acceptance of an invitation or an offer dependent on their partner's plans or job-related commitments.

Summing up, the participants' comments suggest that Hungarian refusals require more than one strategy, need face-work and are strongly dependent on multifaceted contextual parameters.

5.2. Disagreeing with Someone Else

Disagreements, just as refusals, are considered face-threatening (Brown/Levinson 1987: 70) and potentially impolite. They depend for their content and structure on the previous conversational turn and often display features of conversational 'dispreferred' seconds.

Pomerantz's (1992) major study on agreements and disagreements with assessments demonstrated that disagreements were structurally complex, mitigated and delayed as "conversants orient to their disagreeing with one another as uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, risking threat, insult, or offence" (Pomerantz 1992: 77). A typical turn shape for disagreements (when agreements were invited or expected) incorporated a number of delay devices such as repair initiators ('no talk' or silence, hesitations, requests for clarification, partial repeats), 'oh' or 'well' prefaces and agreement tokens ('Yes but'), all of them postponing disagreement components within a turn.

Georgakopoulou (2001) examined Greek disagreements in informal conversations between young people and found that in her data disagreements did not have the structure of prefaces and/or delays followed by an overt disagreement (as was the case in the Pomerantz's data) but were systematically implied and indirectly managed with the help of rhetorical strategies or persuasive, argumentative devices (Georgakopoulou 2001: 1881-1896) such as (a) specific turn-initial markers like 'let me tell you something', (b) stories used as analogies for the debated issues, and (c) questions repeating the previous turn or exploring possible outcomes or consequences of stated premises. Georgakopoulou concluded that the form of disagreements could not be explained by such *a priori* concepts like politeness or formality but that it was shaped by contextual exigencies such as the participants' close-knit relations, the activity type, interactional goals and the local norms of argumentation which, in the case of her Greek data, favored a collaborative perspective-building (Georgakopoulou 2001:

1881). Thus, disagreements as highly culture-specific are best studied in their natural surroundings.

The SICS task asked the participants to choose from a number of verbal and non-verbal strategies that could potentially function as conventionalized means of expressing S's disagreement with someone else's opinion. Among the verbal strategies, there were two direct and unmitigated ones, a direct "No" and a phrase like "(No), I disagree", "(No), I have a different opinion" and a number of indirect strategies that in the context of situation could imply that S was of a different opinion than the other participant. Below I review the responses of my Hungarian subjects to the provided options.

A direct 'No'

A direct 'No' was chosen by roughly 25% of the participants. The examples provided to illustrate how to say 'No' directly in Hungarian were the following: *Nem így van!* 'This is not like that', *Ez nem igaz!* 'It's not true' and *Nincs iagazad!* 'You are not right'. Many respondents commented that a direct 'No' was rare and more typical of informal contexts; some added it was impolite, rough and unpolished. One of the responding students stated that although we might say 'no' directly, we usually tended to explain why. On the whole, it seems that a plain 'No' was not considered to be the best option to express disagreement with another person's opinion and its occurrence was subject to contextual constraints.

Never the word 'No'

Only 8% of the participants selected this option. There were some who speculated on the benefits of using 'No'. One of the respondents commented that there were instances when it was better to express your opinion without beating round the bush, although two participants constrained it more to personal relationships. Another person explained that saying the word 'No' should not be avoided by all means, as it made the answer clear and unambiguous. Still, if we wanted to be polite we needed to explain or give reasons why we said "No".

A phrase like '(No), I disagree', '(No), I have a different opinion'

The option including the performative verb 'to disagree' and an explicit statement of difference of opinion was quite a popular choice, favored by 60% of the participants. Still, the assessments of the frequency of that option were divergent. Some claimed that this type of disagreement occurred frequently; others stated just the opposite – that it was rare. There were comments that such forms of disagreement were typical of formal situations, like a lecture or a seminar, and that they were used by very direct people or in equal relationships. Only two persons called this option acceptable and polite. Among the Hungarian examples provided by the participants, the most common were *Nem értek (veled) egyet.* 'I disagree (with you)' and *Más véleményem van.* 'I have a different opinion'.

A phrase like 'I think you have to think about this again'

This type of disagreement is indirect and it implies that the opinion expressed by the other person is problematic, for some reason not acceptable, and in need of revision and correction. Roughly 23% of the participants selected this option and their assessments were quite unanimous: this form of disagreement was rare and not typical. Some added it sounded chiding, like teaching the other his lesson, and it was offensive. Hungarian examples were provided, e.g. *Ezt gondold még át.* 'Think it over', *Ezt még át kellene gondolnod.* 'You still should think it over' and the systematic absence of the 'I think' component made these expressions of disagreement quite direct, if not peremptory.

A phrase like 'I think we have to think about this again'

Only 13% of the respondents selected this option and the majority of those who commented

on it considered it rare, formal, not typical, and even offensive. No Hungarian examples were provided.

A phrase like ‘Yes, I see what you mean, but I think that ...’

This pattern contains elements that postpone or delay the expression of disagreements, such as the token agreement ‘Yes’ and the empathic ‘I see what you mean’, which displays politeness and considerateness towards others. It was the most favored option of all—70% of the respondents selected this pattern and the majority of the participants commented that it was a very frequent, polite or even very polite way of expressing disagreement, used in close and equal relationships, with friends and relatives. One participant wrote that accepting the opinion of the other person (probably having in mind the ‘I see what you mean’ component) signaled tolerance and should be appreciated. There were quite a few Hungarian examples of this pattern, like *Értem, mire gondolsz/ amit mondasz, de én úgy gondolom/ szerintem ...* ‘I understand what you think/what you are saying but I think/in my opinion ...’. It is important to observe that in the Hungarian examples the initial ‘Yes’ token was absent.

A phrase like ‘Yes, I see what you mean but wouldn’t you also think that ...’

About 48% of the participants selected this option. There were very many comments; most of them assessing the response type as frequent or very frequent (although there were some who claimed it was rare) and one person commented it was polite because it offered the other person an opportunity to express his/her views. Altogether, three examples were provided, the pattern being: *Értem, mire gondolsz, de nem gondolod, hogy ...* ‘I understand what you mean but don’t you think that ...’. Again, the initial token ‘Yes’ was missing.

People just say nothing at all and remain silent.

As Jaworski (1993: 34) observes, silence is a component of many communicative situations and a tool of communicative expression. It can be used to convey disapproval, to signal conflict but also to signal politeness by being indirect or leaving options. In sum, “it does both good and bad in communication” (Jaworski 1993: 24). The participants also reflected on the ambiguous nature of silence in interaction. Roughly 37% of the participants marked this option in the questionnaire but none of them claimed it was a polite way of disagreeing with the other person’s view. There was little consensus concerning the frequency of this strategy – more people claimed that silence as disagreement was rare, but there were some who claimed it was frequent or even very frequent. Some respondents mentioned that silence as disagreement was impolite or rude, should not be used with close friends or relatives but is possible with complete strangers. A few longer accounts, explanations or commentaries were provided, according to which responding with silence to other person’s opinion meant that:

- S (who uses silence) considers H’s contribution worthless and not deserving a commentary; such silence is uncomfortable for H
- S shows negligence and lack of considerateness for H
- S considers H too stubborn to be persuaded
- S does not want to offend H and wants to avoid conflict
- S lacks self-confidence
- S wants to remain an outsider to the situation
- S does not want to share his/her opinion with H

Summing up, it appears that for my Hungarian respondents saying nothing was a response that was very rich in implicit meanings and often ambiguous.

People just shake their heads.

Shaking head, a non-verbal expression of disagreement, was selected by 30% of the participants and the most common remark was that it was rare or occurred only sometimes. A couple of respondents mentioned it was impolite or even impermissible to use. One

participant wrote that it could be used when S disagreed very much with the other's opinion but had no opportunity to express it verbally. To sum, shaking one's head was not a polite way of expressing one's disagreement.

People just smile

This option was selected by 43% of the respondents, but again, it was considered rare and not polite. A couple of comments evaluated it as a possible, even frequent response in informal situations but others considered it impolite or highly improper, implying arrogance and conveying the message that S did not even assume that his/her conversational partner could be right. Summing up, smiling as a strategy to express disagreement was not considered appropriate.

People just make a disapproving look.

35% of the participants marked this option in their questionnaires. Many agreed that a disapproving look would occur with strangers in informal situations and not with close acquaintances, and that it was impolite, arrogant and meant a complete rejection. Concerning frequency, more participants claimed it occurred only sometimes or rarely but there were few who claimed it was quite frequent.

Other means

In this part of the questionnaire the participants provided their examples and added various comments. One person wrote that if the topic was politics it was better not to express one's disagreement in order to avoid a potential argument. Another respondent commented that expressing disagreement depended on a situation and power relations, for instance, an employee would not oppose their employer but remain silent. As for other means to express disagreement, someone mentioned a shrug combined with the facial expression meaning 'I don't want to argue with you now'. There were also some verbal examples provided, all of them containing face-saving and mitigating components such as a token agreement: *Igen, de jó lenne ...* 'Yes, but it would be good ...', an expression of appreciation: *Jó ötlet, de szerintem az is fontos, hogy ...* 'A good idea but I think it is also important to ...', or hedges like *talán* 'perhaps'.

6. Section E: Ending a Conversation

6.1. Ending a Conversation in Hungarian

Due to the turn-taking mechanism conversational closings involve at least four turns of discourse and consist of the preclosings and the terminal exchange sequences (Schegloff/Sacks 1973). As conversational endings are face-sensitive, there are many politeness strategies that emerge in the preclosing section, for instance expressions of appreciation 'It was nice talking to you' or excuses, for instance 'I really have to go'.

The SICS questionnaire offers some of those options. The expression 'Ok, good-bye now' is a turn of the terminal exchange while the remaining expressions belong to the pre-closing sequence, that is, the participants would need yet another sequence to terminate their conversation.

Below I present my participants' responses to the options provided in the questionnaire.

A simple 'Ok, good-bye now'

About 25% of my participants selected this option, some assessing it as frequent in informal situations with friends, while others claiming they would never use it. One person observed

that people usually gave a reason why they had to leave. The Hungarian version of this expression was *Na jó/OK, (akkor) szia!* 'Good/OK, good-bye (then)'.

A phrase like 'I want to go now'

This phrase was very negatively evaluated. Only 10% selected it and very many respondents claimed they would never use it, as it was impolite. Still, one person wrote it was used sometimes with parents and another added it could be used in a very informal situation. The only example that was provided, *Mennem kell!* 'I have to go', was not the exact counterpart of the English gloss provided in the SICS questionnaire.

A phrase like 'I have to go now, I have something else to do'

Very many respondents (75%) chose this option although some of them found the 'I have something else to do' component impolite and suggested it should be preceded with an apology. Still, many assessed the phrase as typical, informal and to be used with friends. The Hungarian counterpart as provided by the subjects was *(Most) menmem kell, annyi/más/sok dolgom van.* 'I must go (now), I have so many/different/a lot of things to do'.

A phrase like 'It's already late now'

About half of the subjects (53.5 %) chose this phrase; some participants assessed it as informal and there were some who claimed it was rare. There were quite a few examples provided, like *Már későre jár!* 'It's already getting late!' *Hú, már ennyi az idő?* 'Oh, is it so late?' *Hogy elszaladt az idő!* 'The time has passed so quickly!'. It is important to observe that the examples were not merely neutral statements of fact but expressed an emotion of surprise, which increased the mitigating potential of these expressions.

A phrase like 'I don't want to bother you any longer'

This phrase was very often selected (72.5%) and a number of participants commented that it was frequently used, informal, typical, polite or even over-polite. Many examples were provided, the common pattern being *Nem (is) akarlak (tovább) feltartani/ zavarni.* 'I don't (even) want to hold you up /disturb you (any longer)'.

A phrase like 'We've already talked for too long'

This phrase was rarely chosen (10%) and there was one remark that it was used when talking to a teacher or an elderly person. The Hungarian example was *Már így is túl sokáig beszélünk.* 'We have talked for too long anyway'.

Say what they have to do now (if there really is something)

Many participants (70%) selected this option and characterized it as informal and frequent. The participants provided a few examples, for instance *(Sajnos) most menmem kell (a gyerekért).* '(Unfortunately) I have to go (to fetch my child)'.

Invent a reason

37.5 % of the subjects opted for this strategy. Some of them claimed it was rare, others wrote it was frequent and typical. Some participant commented that it was used in situations that were difficult and that an invented reason functioned as a white lie in order to avoid hurting the other person. The only provided example was the following: *Ne haragudj, de most menmem kell.* 'I'm sorry but I have to go now'.

Other means

The participants provided many examples of how they would end a conversation. All of them contained face-oriented strategies, such as an expression of hope or wish for a future meeting with H and a wish of something pleasant or good for H, as in *Na jól van, jó legyél, akkor*

majd holnap találkozunk. 'OK then, be good, we'll see each other tomorrow then'; *Majd beszélünk, hívjál majd.* 'We will talk later, call me then'; *Na, jól van, akkor sok sikert ...hez/ jó szórakozást ...hez.* 'OK then, I wish you a lot of success in .../have a lot of fun ... ing'. One participant commented that in formal situations mostly the rank decided who should initiate a conversational ending and let the other person go.

6.2 How Others React to Attempts to End a Conversation

The final issue was whether the other person would immediately let S go or whether they would try and persuade him/her first. Interestingly, the difference between the two choices was not very big as 57.5% selected the first option and 47.5% chose the second.

Concerning the first option, some participants claimed that it occurred with friends who understood why S had to go or when the other participant also wanted to take leave. Some examples of letting the other off the hook were provided, for instance *Persze, menj csak, nekem is mennem kell.* 'Sure, off you go, I also have to go', or *Hát, rendben, akkor majd találkozunk.* 'Well, all right, so we will meet some time later'.

The second option was explicitly linked with politeness. The participants wrote that it was used because of politeness, to show good manners and to demonstrate that we enjoyed the other person's company. Many participants stated that it depended on a situation and on the relationship between the parties (age, sex, degree of familiarity, being in a hurry, etc.). There were also some examples of what to say when we wanted to make the other stay, for instance *Biztos, hogy már menned kell?* 'Are you sure that you have to go?' *Ó, van még idő.* 'Oh, there is still time'.

7. Summary of Findings

A brief summary of the main findings may be useful in order to get an overall picture of what can be known at that stage about Hungarian communicative style.

Section A: Starting a Conversation demonstrated that Hungarian T/non-T system of address is, on the one hand, highly sensitive to and determined by multiple contextual factors, such as age or degree of familiarity, on the other hand, it almost always can be subject to negotiation between interactants. Although the participants did not explicitly comment on the difference between two V-forms, *maga* and *ön*, it was *ön* that was assessed as polite and much more often selected in contexts requiring politeness. These findings support earlier research on two V-forms in Hungarian. Responses to telephone calls displayed a wide range of available patterns, the workplace responses being more complex and more explicitly oriented to the requirements of politeness. Although further research is needed, the 'Can I help you' phrase in institutional telephone calls most probably emerged only after the change of political regime in Hungary and its use can be limited to certain types of institutions.

The analysis of **Section B: Keeping Up a Conversation** showed that small talk was most common in situations related to waiting and traveling on public transport, in other words, it happened in such places or during such events where strangers were engaged in some common activity or experience. The fact that very many places and events were mentioned where small talk was not expected is complementary with the remarks in the data that in Hungary it is not most typical of strangers to engage in small talk. It seems that in case of strangers keeping distance is often expected and the distinction between familiar and unfamiliar participants is important for Hungarian speakers. It is interesting to observe that both the list of common small talk topics and the list of taboo topics are very rich in content,

with some overlap in topics concerning politics. Further research in that area may be useful to explore such issues as cultural values or attitudes.

The responses to **Section C: Being Nice in a Conversation** revealed that in Hungarian presenting your opinion most often follows a simple argumentative pattern: ‘first you give your opinion, and then you give reasons related to the issue’ although the participants were quite aware of the importance of various contextual factors. Also, the vast majority of the participants claimed that in Hungarian an invitation or an offer were uttered and interpreted as sincere and not merely polite.

In **Section D: Getting Around Very Uncomfortable Topics**, many SICS refusal patterns were selected with high frequency, with the exception of long and invented excuses. In the participants’ comments the most often mentioned factors were social distance (friends vs. strangers) and the perceived politeness of given strategies. Some participants added politeness elements to their responses, such as an apology or thanks. As for disagreements, an abrupt ‘No’ was rarely chosen and was assessed as quite impolite, although a direct disagreement (e.g. ‘I disagree’) was evaluated as acceptable. Implicit disagreements, such as ‘I think you have to think about this again’, were rarely selected and they were assessed as not typical of Hungarian speakers. Also, remaining silent was considered too ambivalent and impolite. It seems that politeness, facework or indirectness were more expected or required in case of refusals, while disagreements were expected to be performed more directly.

Responses to **Section E: Ending a Conversation** showed that when saying good bye longer and face-oriented formulas were preferred to short, abrupt ones. It seems that the most authentic closing formulas were given in the ‘other means’ part of the task. My Hungarian participants found it equally appropriate to let their interlocutor go and to try to persuade him/her to stay, although both choices were context-bound and only the second option was linked to politeness.

8. Concluding Remarks

The study of Hungarian communicative style with the help of a written semi-expert interview on communicative strategies (SICS) has provided interesting insights into the participants’ choices, preferences and motivations. On the one hand, it was possible to identify those communicative strategies that were most preferred in particular contexts; on the other hand, it appeared there were hardly any communicative strategies that were rendered as absolutely impossible.

There was often no perfect agreement among the participants concerning the usage of particular communicative strategies, which supports the view that linguistic communities are not homogeneous and that speakers have their own idiosyncratic norms of usage. Still, it may have partly resulted from little contextual information in the SICS questionnaire: different participants ‘filled in’ the missing context differently and activated different contextual constraints.

The participants’ responses as well as their metacomments and assessments displayed the importance of external norms and demonstrated that age, status and social distance were powerful factors constraining linguistic choices. Still, the norms could often be subject to negotiation, in particular when other interpersonal dimensions were evoked such as affect, degree of friendship, length of contact or sharing a common goal. Also, the examples provided by the participants demonstrated very strongly the need for and the importance of face-oriented strategies and politeness. To sum, linguistic choices were systematically adapted

to communicative needs of participants in context.

Further research that would target different social groups and use natural data would be needed to verify the results of the present study.

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first version received 3 September 2008
revised version received 17 October 2008