On the enregisterment of Szekler. Communicational stereotypes recreated in the sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* by Open Stage

A case study¹

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ABSTRACT

The article aims at unfolding the key linguistic aspects of nowadays' stereotypical Szekler-representations through a case study on a satirical representation of regional communicative practices in the locally well-known sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* ('Right, Magdi?') by Open Stage. The research is mainly centred around the concept of enregisterment, thus the work is meant to be a contribution to the scarce literature on the enregisterment of Szekler (and Hungarian dialects in general) and on regional communicative practices. After providing a brief overview of the key areas and aspects along which the Szekler dialect has been enregistered so far in public discourse and in linguistics, the article tries to capture the main attributes which create the authentic Szekler voice for Hungarian speakers through analyzing the plot, the characterological figures and the linguistic repertoire conveyed by the sketch, as well as the online reactions to it given by viewers. Besides examining the most prominent phonological/phonetic, lexical and grammatical phenomena construed as characteristic to Szekler, the article also touches upon some regional conversational features depicted through stylization by the sketch.

Keywords: enregisterment, regionalisms, communicative stereotypes, Szekler, parody

- 1 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the article and Edith Kádár for their insightful comments on previous versions of this paper. Special thanks are due to Bálint Huszthy for his helpful suggestions related to my remarks on the phonological/phonetic aspects of Szekler featured in the literature and in the sketch. All remaining errors are, of course, solely my own.

1. Introduction

This article aims at unfolding the key linguistic features of nowadays' stereotypical Szekler-representations through a case study on a satirical representation of regional communicational practices in the locally well-known sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* ('Right, Magdi?') by the comedy group Open Stage.² The research is mainly centred around the concept of *enregisterment*, i.e., the process "through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms" (Agha 2003: 231), thus the analysis is meant to be a contribution to the scarce literature on the enregisterment of Szekler (and Hungarian dialects in general) and to regional communicative practices.

My work is inspired by two main factors. First of all, I have known and enjoyed the sketch since I first watched it in 2013, which of course is not a scientifically legitimate reason for analyzing it, it only makes the work fun for the author. Even at first sight, I felt that in its own parodistic way the sketch captures and magnifies some commonly shared stereotypical views on Szekler communicational practices, and I kept wondering about an adequate framework that could be suitable not only for grasping these stereotypes and how they make their way into social media, but also for explaining them through a linguistically sensible approach. The second factor is that precedent has already been set for such type of research, as Szabó & Bodó (2020) discuss the enregisterment of Szekler in social media based on the analysis of another parody, a video series entitled *Székely nyelvköze* ('Szekler language course'). The article tries to capture the main attributes which create the authentic Szekler voice for Hungarian speakers through analyzing both the contents of the parodistic mock-language courses and the online reactions to them given by viewers. The authors conclude that the enregisterment of the Szekler speech mode in that particular video series is mainly based on the lexical and phonetic level, and to some extent on the genres of anecdotal discourse and swearing, which are stereotypically associated with Szeklers. The focus on the lexical and phonetic level in the analysis given by Szabó & Bodó (2020) is not surprising, as they dealt with a series of mock-language courses which lack real conversational sequences and mostly consist of assigning Szekler expressions and phrases to pictures of different objects and phenomena.

- 2 I will cite the title of the sketch in its original form given by the authors, as it is written at the end of the TV version of the sketch. As far as its meaning is concerned, in my opinion, 'Right, Magdi?' is the most contextually adequate, but still approximate translation.

Before proceeding to read the article, the reader should by all means watch the sketch itself, available at full length on the video-sharing platform YouTube. Throughout the article, any reference to the sketch will be done based on the full TV version accessible at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INnwxpboe1A&t=632s&ab_channel=raymondqueneau (30/09/2021).

In my analysis of the sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* I will touch upon these aspects as well, as they constitute a very important basis for creating an authentic Szekler voice; additionally, I will outline some specific grammatical and conversational practices which are also part of stereotypical representations of Szekler speech. I believe that a brief pragmatic analysis of the interactions depicted by the sketch provides a more well-rounded illustration of the semiotic (i.e., linguistic and non-linguistic communicative) repertoire stereotypically assigned to Szekler, which on the other hand may bring us closer to capturing Hungarian speakers' stereotypical images of Szekler. These stereotypes and the values attached to them, in their turn, are a strong influence on speakers' attitudes towards this dialect, and perhaps even towards other nonstandard varieties of Hungarian. In the following pages, I will adopt most of the points of the discussion touched by Szabó & Bodó (2020), as I consider them to be required for a meaningful discourse on the topic.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2. provides a general background related to the concept of enregisterment, including some observations on the social and linguistic ramifications of enregistering different varieties of a language; section 3. then moves on to briefly presenting the key areas and aspects along which the Szekler dialect has been enregistered so far in public discourse and in linguistics; section 4. gives some essential information on the sketch, presenting the plot, the characterological profiles of the personae created in it, the main features of the parodistically depicted speech events, and the reception of the sketch; after which section 5. presents an overview of the most noteworthy aspects and characteristics of the stylized linguistic repertoire construed as Szekler: I will briefly examine the phonological/phonetic, lexical, grammatical and conversational/pragmatic aspects of creating authentic Szekler figures through parody in this specific communicative context; finally, section 6. summarizes the main observations and conclusions drawn in the article.

2. Enregisterment and its relevance

As Sándor (2016), Bodó (2017), Szabó & Bodó (2020) and many others point it out, nowadays' general and Hungarian sociolinguistics debates the legitimacy of the concept of dialects and sociolects presented and widely regarded as autonomous, stable, easily isolatable entities. The impact of these constructions on everyday speakers must be taken into consideration, as it influences their attitudes and linguistic behaviour. This is why recent sociolinguistic studies have taken an interest in everyday speakers' delimitation and concepts of different varieties of their language, which is strongly influenced by their (most often second hand) knowledge of the classifications and representations that have the most publicity in the given community. In Hungarian context, Bodó (2017), for example, investigates, among others, the representations of dialects

in Hungarian digital media, and finds that in the discourse surrounding the representations created by the dialect project of the Transylvanian online magazine *Transindex*, the concepts of language variation are strongly determined by the traditional constructions of autonomous, isolated and static varieties, which often lead to the amplification of their perception as being marginalized speech modes.³

The phenomenon of enregisterment has become a key concept in the discussion about the representations and perception of language varieties. Based on Agha (2003, 2005), whom I already quoted in the introduction, processes of enregisterment are processes through which specific patterns of language use become socially recognized by a language community as indexing different speaker attributes.⁴ As Agha (2005: 57) explains it, this technical term is derived from the verb *to register* ‘recognize, record’, while the noun *register* denotes the result of this process, i.e. “a social regularity of recognition whereby linguistic (and accompanying nonlinguistic) signs come to be recognized as indexing pragmatic features of interpersonal role (persona) and relationship”. Agha (2005) argues that these registers are not to be considered static constructions within a language, as they are reflexive models of language use disseminated and recreated through communicative processes, which means that they are constantly subject to changes. Thus, large-scale processes of changes in registers are brought about by micro-level instances of interactional register use.

Another important aspect of enregisterment is the fact that enregistered varieties of language tend to be stereotypically correlated with the speakers who convey them through their communicative activities. As Szabó & Bodó (2020) emphasize it, these activities do not need to be especially mediatized instances of communication, since enregisterment may also be carried out by speakers in everyday situations, for example by the stylization of the speech modes or of certain speakers channelling the registers in question. Agha (2005) labels the speakers who are perceived as authentically conveying these registers as *characterological figures*.

The concept of *voice* is related to how utterances index typifiable speaking personae along different social categories like gender, class, profession, etc., and it is also an important notion in the discussions of enregisterment phenomena (cf. Agha 2005). According to Agha (2005), these voices convey registers that are familiar to specific subsets of language users. This familiarity ranges from the capability of recognition to

3 These constructions have their roots in traditional sociolinguistics, but the most important and efficient agents circulating them are the institutions of education which use them almost unanimously in the context of a strongly prescriptivist approach. I will briefly elaborate on this issue in Section 3.

4 The most notable aspects of these processes are elaborately presented by Agha (2003) who analyses in detail the case of the enregisterment of a widely known and prestigious phonolexical register of spoken British English, the so-called Received Pronunciation. Most of the observations exhibited in this section are taken from Agha (2003 and 2005).

the capability of using the register in question and it is strongly related to the degree of speakers' value assignment to the register.⁵ The group of speakers acquainted with a register may be conceived as its *social domain* (cf. Agha 2005).

Agha (2005: 46–47) presents some examples of registers and samples of their stereotypical speech repertoires. Besides demonstrating some focal repertoire contrasts and the matching metapragmatic stereotypes of gender registers in two Native American languages, Koasati and Lakhota, and sampling the lexical and stylistic repertoire of the Pentagon military register (Militarese), the author gives examples of distinct syntactic repertoires considered as indexing the register of sports announcer talk in English.

- (1) Three aspects of register organization: Repertoires, Social Range and Social Domain (Agha 2005: 47, Table 8 [highlights in the original])
 - a) characteristics of **repertoires**:
 - *Repertoire size*: number of forms;
 - *Grammatical range*: number of form-classes in which forms occur;
 - *Semiotic range*: types of linguistic & non-linguistic signs that appropriately co-occur in use
 - b) stereotypes of indexical effectiveness, typically exhibiting a **social range**
 - *Stereotypes* of speaker/actor kind; of enactable relationship (e.g., deference, intimacy); of appropriateness to specific social occasions and scenarios of use
 - c) **Social domain(s)** of user
 - categories of persons that can recognize (at least some of) the register's forms/indexical effects
 - categories of persons fully competent in the use of the register

The parameters in (1) above constitute the main aspects of register organization. The author also emphasizes that the identifiability of registers by linguists depends on the language users' metapragmatic ability to discriminate linguistic forms across register boundaries and to assign pragmatic values to them. This practice of metapragmatic typification must be an ability shared by at least a subset of speakers in order to establish the existence of a register, and it is subject to constant change provoked by changes in the respective population's composition and knowledge. As the scheme cited in (1) shows, any register must be considered a reflexive model of language use that associates a range of notable semiotic characteristics to a social range, i.e., to stereotypical speakers, relationships and occasions/scenarios of use. Additionally, as (1c) shows, these models of language use are usually only available to a subset of the population, i.e., to a social domain consisting of speakers

5 As the author puts it: "Encounters with registers are encounters with characterological figures stereotypically linked to speech repertoires (and associated signs) by a population of users. Language users typify such figures in social-characterological terms when they say that a particular form of speech marks the speaker as masculine or feminine, as high or low-caste, as a lawyer, doctor, priest, shaman, and so on" (Agha 2005: 45).

who have the ability of recognition and those who have the ability of production as well (cf. Agha 2003, 2005).

Finally, as an important attribute of processes of enregisterment, the role of different authorities and institutions must also be mentioned: “Institutional processes of various kinds frequently seek to stabilize features of registers—their repertoires, indexical stereotypes, the social domain of users—by codifying their normative values or restricting access to them; yet registers frequently change in their defining features through communicative activities that mediate their social existence” (Agha 2005: 47).

3. The enregisterment of Szekler

Before turning to the discussion of our sketch, this section briefly presents the key areas and aspects along which Szekler has been enregistered so far in public discourse and in linguistics. I will not even try to provide an adequate picture of all the relevant representations of Szekler culture and language in art, literature, ethnography, linguistics, sociology, commercial advertisements, the new genres brought about by the spread of digital media, the music and film industry, etc., as I do not possess the vast knowledge needed for such an endeavour, not to mention the lack of space.⁶ However, I think that such a thorough grounding is not necessarily needed for our purposes here, and it will suffice to mention the most important and publicly accessible areas of previous enregisterment processes of the dialect itself, which are literature, linguistics, some genres of digital media, and, perhaps above all, the institutions of education and other prescriptivist platforms.

One of the most creative, productive and publicly known areas of the enregisterment of Szekler is literature. Balázs (2015) gives an inventory of previous works featuring strong Szekler characters that use some version of the dialect. Based on the author’s discussion, the most representative instances of Szekler literature have been Áron Tamási’s *Ábel* trilogy (1932–1935) which portrays the main character, Ábel Szakállas as an abstract, Szekler folk-tale hero; József Nyírő’s works, especially the novel *Uz Bence* (1933), which to this day is advertised as embodying through its main character, Bence Uz, the alpine shepherd, the essence of the long-standing stereotypes related to Szekler aptness, archness, and generally the Szekler mentality and attitude; the collections of Szekler anecdotes (*Kilenc kéve hány kalangya?* ‘~Nine sheaves, how many hay piles?’ (1982) edited by Zsolt Szabó and Gabriella Vöő, and *Sáska sógor*

6 For some grounding information on the historic and ethnographic aspects often cited as the most important components of Szekler identity, see the corresponding article in the 4th volume of the *Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon* (mainly the one entitled *székelyek* ‘Szeklers’, and the others listed under it containing the adjective *székely*); Hermann (2010), entitled *Székely identitás* ‘Szekler identity’, and the main references given by these articles.

‘~Cousin Sáska’ (1985) by Gabriella Vöö and Lajos Imreh jr.); Attila Sántha’s Szekler poems, which use a gibberish-like, hyperbolized, over-stylized version of the dialect with lots of mock-words, almost to the point of unintelligibility (Balázs calls this specific style ‘Szekler nonsense’), especially the cycle entitled *Gajdó Máris borzalmas élete, melyet csak székelylel lehet elbeszélni* ‘Máris Gajdó’s awful life, which can only be told in Szekler’ (1996); János Dénes Orbán’s Szekler poems, partly inspired by Sántha’s work, e.g. *A zákhányos csuda* ‘~The slodgy marvel’ (2000); the “Szekler literary anthology” entitled *Iszkiri a guruzsmás berbécslől* ‘~Escape from the quacker ram’ by Attila György, Vince Fekete, János Dénes Orbán and Attila Sántha (2010); and Sándor Muszka’s short story book *Sanyi bá – székelylel egypercesek* ‘Uncle Sandy – Szekler short stories’, in which the author uses the rhetoric of hyperbolism and the fragmented style of everyday speech while building on the stereotypes related to Szekler people, thus creating a character who is “a bit cunning, humorous, somewhat imbecile and vulgar, apt, and above all, magniloquent” (approximate translation mine, cf. Balázs 2015: 240). In addition to these authors, some of dramatist Csaba Székely’s works, e.g., the critically acclaimed 2015 play *Vitéz Mihály*, also create stereotypical Szekler characters that are worth looking into.

The works enumerated above and the discussions occurring about their characters’ speech modes qualify as instances of enregisterment due to the more or less stylized versions of Szekler language and conversational stereotypes portrayed by the authors.⁷ Most of them,

7 Another area of enregisterment closely related to literature is Hungarian film industry, or better put, a small segment of it. The plot and location of Hungarian movies produced between the two world wars were often set in Transylvania (either in the subregion of Kalotaszeg, or in Szekler subregions), a region already annexed by Romania at that time. In most cases this was due to the fact that the movies themselves were adaptations of literary works signed by Transylvanian authors. The movies *Torockói menyasszony* (‘Torockó bride’, directed by Márton Keleti; 1937), *Uz Bence* (‘Bence Uz’, directed by József Csepregy; 1938), *Gyimesi vadvirág* (‘Gyimes wildflower’, directed by Ákos Ráthonyi; 1939), *Erdélyi kastély* (‘Transylvanian castle’, directed by Félix Podmaniczky; 1940), *Leányvásár* (‘Maiden fair’, directed by Félix Podmaniczky; 1941), *Emberek a havason* (‘People of the mountains’, directed by István Szóts; 1942), *Kalotaszegi madonna* (‘Kalotaszeg madonna’, directed by Endre Rodriguez; 1943) are the most representative creations of this phenomenon. The popularity of the Transylvanian setting was not accidental, as after signing the Treaty of Trianon, Hungarian cultural politics had a strongly revisionist character when it came to the annexed territories. Most of these movies—with the exception of the critically acclaimed drama *Emberek a havason*—are romantic comedies featuring well-known clichés and popular actors of the period. However, even though they have Transylvanian settings, the linguistic specificities of the regions in question were never depicted by the movies: the characters of these movies speak a somewhat folksy vernacular which deviates from the phonetic and lexical characteristics of then standard Hungarian to a relatively small degree. Thus, some of these movies should be considered parts of the enregisterment process of Szekler in a different way than the rest of the works discussed in this section: they claim to feature authentic regional characters, but they do

even the most recent ones, are available to the audiences in Hungary as well, and Muszka's *Sanyi bá* has a CD version too, which provides an audible presentation of the particular linguistic style of the short stories.⁸ Regarding Muszka's work, another important aspect should be emphasized. Muszka himself is not only a writer, but also a public persona and frequent performer of his own works, and as such, he constitutes a powerful agent of enregisterment in two ways: first of all, he creates an audible voice of the fictive characterological figure Sanyi bá, through which his audience can observe the phonetic and prosodic characteristics of the repertoire in question in a way other than through the author's practice of heterography in the written version, i.e., the use of spelling different from standard usage in order to more realistically depict a non-standard type of pronunciation (cf. Blommaert 2008, cited by Szabó & Bodó 2020: 47);⁹ and secondly, in the interviews given by him on different programmes and at various events, through the use of

not strive to achieve this authenticity on the level of language use, this way they create fictive regional registers, either distorting the viewers' perception of the featured varieties, or leaving them untouched. For that matter, these observations also hold in the case of the 1993 movie adaptation of Tamási's *Ábel a rengetegben* (translated as *Ábel alone*, directed by Sándor Mihályfy), which does not feature much of the Szekler linguistic repertoire either. A further analysis of these movies would lead to a better sense of their standards and techniques of linguistic authenticity. (Special thanks are due to Ernő Csongor Kiss for drawing my attention to these movies and for sharing his insight on their artistic and linguistic characteristics.)

- 8 The audio version is also available on the video-sharing platform YouTube, and—although it would be interesting to assess its reception on this platform, especially the explicit or implicit evaluations regarding the authenticity of the portrayed register—as of 30/09/2021, it only has 772 views and 0 comments: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKJSILc4Zvo&ab_channel=Mih%C3%A1lyT%C3%B3
- 9 In the coverage of one of his performances of *Sanyi bá* given at a book release in Csíkszereda (RO: Miercurea Ciuc), published in the online magazine *Székelyhon* ('Szeklerland'), the journalist appraises Muszka's performance and quotes Attila György's book review, which presents some commonly shared attitudes towards the work: "*Eloolvasván e könyvet részben könnyesre nevettem magam, másrészt annyira jólesett nekem a székely egypercesek varázsa, mint a csángó embereknek a pap beszéde. Ha valaki azt hiszi, hogy a stand up comedy amerikai találmány, erősen ajánlom, vegye kezébe Muszka Sándor könyvét. Meg fog változni a véleménye! Ez a székely felállós nyeletlenkedés sokkal üdőbb, néha vaskosabb, de mindenképpen szellemesebb és bölcsőbb, és ráadásul a miénk*" (Reading this book, on the one hand, I laughed myself to tears, and on the other hand, the magic of the Szekler short stories touched me as much as the priest's words touch Csángó people. To those who think that standup comedy is an American invention, I strongly advise to pick up Sándor Muszka's book. It will change your opinion! These Szekler standup stunts are much more refreshing, and sometimes heavier, but by all means wittier and wiser, furthermore, it is ours. – Translation mine.) (cf. Iochom 2013).

his Szekler vernacular, he himself becomes a non-fictional characterological figure.¹⁰

Turning to the field of linguistics, as Szabó & Bodó (2020: 40–41) point it out, the observations made by linguists also qualify as parts of the enregisterment process of Szekler, even though in their original forms they are available to a much smaller social domain. The traditional linguistic literature on Hungarian dialects mostly presents some phonological, morphological and lexical features as prominent characteristics of this variety.¹¹ The so-called Szekler dialect region is traditionally located on the territory of Hargita (RO: Harghita), Kovászna (RO: Covasna) and the Eastern part of Maros (RO: Mureş) county, and according to the most well-known Hungarian dialectology handbook, it has seven main subgroups with somewhat different features.¹²

Juhász (2001: 302–307) gives separate accounts of the phonological and morphological features present in most or part of the varieties of the dialect.¹³ The most noteworthy phenomena on the level of phonology and phonetics are argued to be, among others, the presence of the short closed /e/ phoneme (in the place of /ɛ/) which is missing from the standard phonological system of Hungarian (where /e:/ is always long); the more open realizations of the vowel /ɛ/ > [æ]; the closer realizations of standard /ɒ/ > [ɔ]; the velar realizations of standard /a:/ > [ʌ]; and in some subregions the high frequency of mid-palatal labialization (i.e., /ɛ/ > [œ]).¹⁴ At the morphological level, the handbook enumerates some

10 Just to mention one of these instances, Muszka had an appearance as a guest of the Romanian public television's Hungarian programme entitled *Erdélyi Figyelő* ('Transylvanian observer'), where, besides reading out some sequences of his book, he addressed the host's questions related to his work in a witty and entertaining manner, in this communicative context using a "died down" version of his own Szekler vernacular, i.e., a repertoire featuring characteristics of the regional standard as well. The programme was broadcasted live on television, and it is also available on YouTube. As of 30/09/2021, the online version has 6891 views and 0 comments: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5c9KQEaWq7I&ab_channel=ErdelyiFigyelo (30/09/2021).

11 The research on sentence level grammatical features is vastly underrepresented in the literature, most probably due to methodological difficulties in the domain of data collection.

12 For more information on some further varieties of this dialect differentiated by traditional Hungarian dialectology, cf. Juhász (2001), Péntek & Benő (2020), etc.; for a more recent, dialectometric approach, see Vargha (2017).

13 Some of these characteristics are documented in other regional varieties of Hungarian as well, therefore they are not to be taken as features exclusively specific to Szekler.

14 The intonational patterns characteristic to Szekler, although very prominent and specific to this dialect, constitute another vastly underrepresented research area in Hungarian linguistics, with very few works on the topic, Bálint Csűry being the only linguist who provided detailed observations on the intonation patterns specific to the northeastern and Szekler varieties of Hungarian. In their groundbreaking study, Huszthy & Sándor (2021) set out a new and promising direction for this research: the inquiry of Szekler intonation patterns using the methods of laboratory phonology. Based on a case study done with Szekler informants, the

specific affixes like the markers of the allative (*-ni* ‘to’; *Erzsi-ni megyünk*, standard *Erzsi-hez megyünk* ‘we are going to Erzsi’s’), the adessive (*-nitt* ‘at’; *Erzsi-nitt vagyunk*, standard *Erzsin-nél vagyunk* ‘we are at Erzsi’s’), and the ablative (*-nUl* ‘from’; *Erzsi-nül jövünk*, standard *Erzsi-től jövünk* ‘we are coming from Erzsi’s’); some archaic tense markers that are no longer present in other varieties of Hungarian, with the exception of the so-called Csángó dialect, like the preterite or perfective past *-á* mainly used to refer to the recent past (*most harangoz-á-nak*, standard *most harangoz-t-ak* ‘they have just chimed the bells’), the plusquamperfect marked by the construction *V-t + volt* (*kér-t volt*, standard *kér-t* ‘he/she had asked’), and the imperfective past usually used to refer to the recent past, marked by the construction *V-t + vala* (*tegnap jár-t vala itt*, standard *tegnap jár-t itt* ‘he/she was here yesterday’); and mentions some morpho-phonological phenomena as well, like the derivation pattern of diminutive constructions formed with the suffix *-cska* (*szoba* ‘room’ + *-cska*: *szobacska*, standard *szobácska*), and some others (cf. Juhász 2001: 302–307).

The lexical repertoire of Szekler has been captured by idioticons, i.e., regional dictionaries, providing lexical inventories of a dialect or multiple dialects, and some shorter glossaries. The most important dictionaries are János Kriza’s *Erdélyi tájszótár* (‘Transylvanian dialect dictionary’, first published as a dictionary in 1940, and most recently republished in 2019); József Szinnyei’s *Magyar tájszótár* (‘Hungarian dialect dictionary’, first published between 1893–1901); *Új magyar tájszótár* by Éva B. Lőrinczy and Ferenc Hosszú (‘New Hungarian dialect dictionary’, published through an extended period of time, with the first volume released in 1979, and the last one in 2010); and the most recent one, *Nagy magyar tájszótár* by Gábor Kiss (‘Great Hungarian dialect dictionary’, published in 2019). In addition to these monumental works, Attila Sántha’s non-professional dictionaries *Székely szótár* (‘Szekler dictionary’, 2004) and its extended version *Bűhnagy székely szótár* (‘Hugeous Szekler dictionary’, 2018) provide a more concise but recent and well-advertised collection of Szekler words and expressions.

As far as the pragmatic research on specific conversational patterns is concerned, the situation is quite different. The only work that I know of addressing Szekler conversational peculiarities is Biró (1997). After

authors conclude that the specificity of unmarked Szekler intonation patterns is the following: while standard Hungarian and most dialects are characterized by an immediate fall of tone after the prominent stressed syllable of any intonational phrase, Szekler intonation patterns show extended sequences of high tone syllables after the first prominent high tone syllable, with a later, sudden drop in pitch. In the case of emphatic speech, the extreme alternation of high and low tone sequences produces even more salient intonation patterns. Huszthy & Sándor (2021) also point out that, unlike other phonetic, phonological, lexical and grammatical features, this specific intonation pattern seems to be uniformly characteristic to all varieties of Szekler and it is a persistent feature of Szeklers’ vernaculars, as—based on the authors’ informal observations—these intonation patterns are the last to change in cases of dialect or language loss.

making several anthropological observations on Szekler humour regarding recurrent humorous scenarios, the process of socialization and some specific types of everyday verbal aggression construed as humorous, in one of the chapters of his book, suggestively entitled *On the issue of the Szekler "devious turn of mind"*, Biró (1997: 71–96) discusses the long-standing ethnic stereotype related to the wittiness of Szekler people, and among others applies a linguistic approach to the conversational symptoms of this wittiness. Based on the analysis of some humorous communicative events, he argues that the events of conversational teasing, for example, always tend to create a sense of ‘us versus her/him/them’ which from the first moment of the interaction puts the target in a defeated position due to the hierarchical incongruity of the situation (the majority of the group, arbitrarily claimed to be represented by the actual teaser, generally an older person vs. one person or a small portion of the group, the target, generally (much) younger than the teaser). Regarding the structure of the key utterances constituting the punch lines of different humorous speech events (both in the cases of teasing and in the inoffensive cases of everyday witticisms), the author concludes that they tend to be formed by two sequences: an introductory part implicitly setting the illocutionary force of the utterance as a speech act of authoritative declaration (even the simple discourse marker *no* ‘~now then, well’ can have this function in these contexts), and a sequence giving the actual propositional content, which tends to implicitly or explicitly negate an impossible state of affairs, and through this negation presupposes that the occurrence of said state of affairs is possible, thus discursively creating a parallel universe in which what is negated is possible. The examples in (2) below are meant to give some substance to the author’s conclusions presented here.

- (2) a. [In an overcrowded bus a group of five middle-aged men loudly discuss everyday topics. At one of the stations, a younger man from the same village manages to get on the bus, however, he barely makes it past the door, and has to stand on tiptoe wedged between the bus door and the back of a seat. He greets the five men, and they exchange a couple of words. After a while, the main speaker of the group addresses the young man loudly, but in a familiar tone:]

Hát te Karcsi, mét nem ülsz le? Ne állj annyit! ‘Now then, Karcsi, why don’t you sit down? Don’t stand for so long!’

- b. [In the winter dawn, four men stand in silence around the pig they have just slaughtered, well-content with their work. The oldest man of the group says, almost as if he would be talking to himself:]

No, e se fut messze! ‘Well, this won’t run far!’ (cf. Biró 1997: 73–74)

Biró (1997: 81–85) argues that the sequence *mét nem ülsz le? Ne állj annyit!* ‘why don’t you sit down? Don’t stand for so long!’ in (2a) presupposes that Karcsi would be able to take a seat if he wanted to, even though it is clear in the given circumstances that this is not the case, while the sequence *e se fut messze!* ‘this won’t run far’ in (2b), by the use

of the adverb *messze* ‘far’ presupposes that the slaughtered pig could well be able to run away. According to the author, by creating the possible universes where Karcsi could take a seat and where the dead pig could run, the speakers shift the background of reference of these utterances, thus producing additional components of meaning and a so-called communicational impasse. The utterances themselves could be adequate with both backgrounds, but the propositions implied by these negations are obviously contradicted by actual reality, and they cannot even be denied as they are not explicitly phrased in the utterances. This shift of dimensions usually occurs instantly, it is the reason why these punchlines are interpreted as humorous, and, according to Biró, this conversational practice constitutes the core symptom of the mentality often captured as a “devious turn of mind” (cf. Biró 1997: 71–96).

Even though they are not widely known by the population, the linguistic works mentioned above (and several other similar works) are all contributions to the enregisterment of Szekler in the scientific community, moreover, many of their observations are echoed to some extent in Hungarian first-language education by Hungarian language and literature textbooks and by teachers. Thus, a portion of these representations make their way into public knowledge, usually integrated into the framework of prescriptivism.

The next important area is the vast field of digital media. Transylvanian online magazines like *Székelyhon* ‘Szeklerland’ or *Transindex* are highly productive platforms of constant enregisterment, as, on the one hand, they often report on people’s observations related to the register, and on the other hand, they facilitate reflexive discussions on the Szekler dialect. Two of these instances are the already mentioned dialect project of *Transindex* and the Szekler dictionary publicized by the same portal, entitled *A székelyek szavai és kifejezései* ‘The words and expressions of Szeklers’ and managed by Attila Sántha, in which readers are asked to contribute to an online glossary by sending Szekler expressions.¹⁵

Video-sharing platforms like YouTube constitute another productive area widely available to the public, where several representations of Szekler are channelled and open to discussion. Some of the most publicly known representations are the numerous sketches, stand-up comedy performances and music videos signed by the comedy group *Open Stage*, one of which is the sketch to be analysed in this paper; Nándor Jakab-Benke’s mock-language courses entitled *Székely nyelvlecke* ‘Szekler language course’, analysed by Szabó & Bodó (2020); the sketch series of the comedy group *Csíkszentgyörgyi Székely Góbék* ‘Szekler wangers from Csíkszentgyörgy’; some recorded performances of the comedy group *Szomszédnéni Produkciós Iroda* ‘Neighbour lady production

15 To get a feel of the contents shared within the confines of this dictionary project, see the relevant page on Transindex: <https://szekelymagyar.transindex.ro/> (30/09/2021); for more on the Szekler issue of the dialect project, see: <https://eletmod.transindex.ro/?cikk=15966> (30/09/2021) and the analysis provided by Bodó (2017).

agency', like the one entitled *Székely–magyar csajozós szótár* 'Szekler–Hungarian dictionary for picking up girls'; the videos of a recently emerged young vlogger by the pseudonym *Mr Originality/Csabika*, who even has a video series entitled *Székely vs. Magyar – Hogyan mondja?* 'Szekler vs. Hungarian – How do they say it?' (in which he gives a contrastive comparison of his version of standard Hungarian and Szekler, both represented in a stylized, satirical manner through stereotypical characters: a Szekler figure and one meant to represent a stereotypical speaker from Budapest), etc. These videos are usually humorous, they give satiric representations of different Szekler characters, and they facilitate lively discussions related to their specific topics and to the authenticity of the representations of the Szekler dialect.¹⁶

The online representations mentioned above, and the several others to be found on different social media platforms, have an immense impact on everyday users' stereotypical concepts of Szekler as they possess the most extensive social domain. These items contribute to the spread of awareness about Szekler culture and language use with an unprecedented effectivity, and they all deserve reflection in order to get a better sense of nowadays' ongoing enregisterment processes of Szekler.

16 Nándor Jakab-Benke's language courses are available on his channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IQ6I1NMe7Y&list=PLwWb1a5AU6HpVuMpKlafnKO8b3-AaHOQq&ab_channel=N%C3%A1ndorJakab-Benke (30/09/2021), the first part of the video series has almost 200,000 views; for more on the videos and their reception, see Szabó & Bodó (2020).

The sketches, music videos and stand-up comedy performances signed by Open Stage are also available on YouTube, and they can be found through active search, as they are scattered all over the platform, the comedy group not having a channel of their own. The hit song of *Open Stage* is without a doubt the one entitled *Aranka Szeretlek* 'Aranka, I love you' with 11,254,379 views, over 46,000 likes and over 2,800 dislikes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUZppD_Zd0s&ab_channel=schtibor (30/09/2021).

The sketch series of the group *Csíksszentgyörgyi Székely Góbék* is available on the group's channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3NjH32Ch5gqwey2Bif0pDg> (30/09/2021); the most viewed video of the series is the one entitled *Hónaptól kapható a Székely Vacina... Kéne csináljunk mű es va-egy lejit...* (sic!) 'The Szekler vaccine will be available from tomorrow on... It's time we make some money', which, as of 30/09/2021, has 184,132 views and over 2400 likes.

The videos of the comedy group *Szomszédnéni Produkciós Iroda* are available on the group's channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/szomszedneni/videos> (30/09/2021); their most viewed video featuring stereotypes related to Szeklers is the one entitled *Székely–magyar csajozós szótár* 'Szekler–Hungarian dictionary for picking up girls', which, as of 30/09/2021, has over 2,337,000 views and over 21,000 likes.

The videos of *Mr Originality/Csabika* are available on his channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCsU0OH3hrepwaLDfhCqImA> (30/09/2021); his most viewed video is the third episode of the series *Székely vs. Magyar – Hogyan mondja?* 'Szekler vs. Hungarian – How do they say it?' with 196,012 views and over 6,800 likes.

Finally, in order to create a proper context for the observations on the enregisterment of Szekler in the analysis to follow, a brief presentation of the status of dialects in the Hungarian speaking population must also be given. It is a long-standing observation, that the status of Hungarian dialects and all non-standard varieties is to a high degree governed by the viewpoint of the prescriptivist movement, channelled by the institutions of education and the other platforms used by prescriptivist activists, i.e., articles, TV and radio programmes and their counterparts available on digital media platforms (cf., Sándor 2016). I do not have the space to accurately elaborate on the complex history and mechanisms of Hungarian prescriptivism, however, in the remainder of this section I will depict the essential components of the status of dialects within the population, with some remarks specific to Szekler.

Similarly to the case of many other populations and languages, the instructions imposed by Hungarian prescriptivists can be summarized in the following way: speakers should strive to elevate their speech modes making them as close as possible to standard Hungarian, which is the apotheosis of linguistic value, the most “adequate”, “logical”, “educated”, “clean” and “beautiful” way of speaking Hungarian in any context. This type of approach, of course, completely ignores the essential features of languages and their use, as it does not take into consideration the fact that languages exist through the use of several regional, professional and other social variants, the choice of which is always context dependent and usually signals important pragmatic parameters (i.e., speakers’ actual intentions, the level of familiarity, and generally the social distance among the participants of different speech events). In order to achieve the required level of elevation, speakers are advised to omit the phonetic, lexical and grammatical characteristics of their vernaculars, and when they do not speak according to these instructions, they are too often subjects to ridicule by teachers, other authoritative figures, and fellow speakers in general. For more on Hungarian prescriptivism and the high level of linguisticism in the Hungarian population, see, for example, Kontra (2006) and Sándor (2016).

As Kontra (2006), Sándor (2016) and many others emphasize it, in the Hungarian language culture, the prescriptivist approach is by far much more publicized than the observations made by linguists, and the most important and effective channel for these principles is education. In Romania as well, the institutions of public education are partial to prescriptivism in more than one way: on the one hand, there is a long-standing tradition among teachers of Hungarian language and literature by which the overwhelming majority of them tend to constantly instruct pupils, in an implicit or explicit way, to avoid non-standard variants, labelling them as mistakes of speech, regardless of the

contents of the textbooks they use in class;¹⁷ and on the other hand, as argued by Kádár (2017, 2019), the textbooks themselves do not counteract this approach either, to say the least. Based on her analysis of the Hungarian language and literature textbooks used in primary and secondary education in Romania, Kádár (2017, 2019) concludes that these textbooks tend to create a *standard vs. deviance* framework while discussing linguistic phenomena, the key principle of which being that standard Hungarian is a much more valuable variety than any other variety of this language, not primarily because of its functions, but because of its linguistic qualities as well, thus, any deviation from it equals to decay and deviance. The instances when they present dialectal specificities in a positive, almost nostalgic way, assigning positive cultural and aesthetic values to them, tend to be discussions based on sequences taken from literary works (most often with a Szekler setting, portraying some characteristics of the repertoire of Szekler). However, the regional communicative practices depicted in these works are usually presented as belonging to the past or being isolated products of folksy creativity, rather than everyday communicational practices of hundreds of thousands of speakers. The author also emphasizes that schools constitute the primary, practically only official medium of acquiring knowledge about the varieties of Hungarian (or language as such, for that matter), this way education has a determining impact on the linguistic attitude and (linguicist or tolerant) behaviour of the whole population, one generation at a time (cf. Kádár 2017: 11).

These observations are crucial to our discussion as well: non-standard varieties, with no exception to Szekler, are often regarded as less adequate registers by the main and most authoritative sources of language knowledge, thus—even if they have strong emotional connections and cultural appreciation towards their Szekler vernaculars—speakers have the warning about non-standard language use standing in the way of their professional and social successes engrained in their consciousness from a very young age.

The situation of Szekler, however, is not as withering as that of other non-standard varieties. Although the impact of the prescriptivist agenda is undeniable, other enregisterment processes, like those previously discussed in this section, have managed to assign positive values to the register of Szekler, both locally and regarding the whole language region. Szabó & Bodó (2020: 40–41) draw attention to the fact that Szekler regional varieties have an exceptionally positive assessment among

17 I do not possess an account of this generalization based on hard data, however, I stand by it based on the many reports given by over 1,000 students of BBU's Faculty of Letters during the last 14 years, practically unanimously reinforcing the legitimacy of this observation each year when asked about their school experience regarding the presence of prescriptivism in their primary and secondary education. Additionally—even though there seem to be some changes in teachers' attitudes, as in the recent years more and more students report on experiencing less linguicist or non-prescriptive approaches as well—practically anyone who has frequented school in Romania seems to be aware of the phenomenon.

speakers. Benő (2011) reports on the results of two language attitude studies made in 1996 and 2009, which show that both the informants from Hungary and the Transylvanian informants declared to think that Hungarian is spoken in the most beautiful way in Transylvania.¹⁸ This phenomenon is noted by multiple studies on the assessment of regional varieties of Hungarian; Péntek (1999, 2001, etc.) and Péntek & Benő (2020) make multiple observations on the fact that there is a conflicting duality in local speakers' assessment of their own vernaculars: they tend to give a symbolic appraisal of most of these varieties, but at the same time they often refer to these same vernaculars and the Hungarian language itself as constituting an additional burden for them when it comes to their children's schooling, as attending Hungarian language and literature classes and exams are often regarded as additional efforts only made by Hungarian pupils in Romania.

In conclusion, the linguistic repertoire of Szekler has a controversial evaluation among Hungarian speakers: there is a prevailing attitude dominated by strong positive values assigned to the register by local and non-local speakers, which is reinforced every time recognized agents of enregisterment produce positive, or rather enjoyable representations of Szekler, but at the same time, due to the enregisterment processes adopting the prescriptivist approach, there is a somewhat depreciative attitude towards the use of this dialect as well.

4. The sketch and its reception

This section aims at providing some essential information on the sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* and some required preliminary steps to the examination of the linguistic repertoire to follow in the next section, by presenting the plot, the characterological profiles of the personae created in the sketch, the main features of the parodistically depicted speech events and the reception of the sketch. As the sketch is full of cultural and linguistic specificities that are practically untranslatable to those outside of the register's social domain (i.e., readers who are not familiar with Szekler communicational practices), it is paramount to give a proper outline of all the key features that viewers who are to some degree insiders are automatically receptive to.

The authors of the sketch are the actors László Zsolt Lung and Attila Kozma, who together form the comedy group Open Stage, which has been active with these members since 2002. Their first big success was the 2007 single and music video entitled *Aranka szeretlek* 'Aranka, I love you', which is also a parody and, as I already mentioned, it is their most

18 In the 1996 study, 80%, while in the 2009 study 74,8% of Transylvanian informants expressed this opinion, and the fact that the rate of informants giving this same evaluation is the highest among those from the Szekler region (84,2%) also shows that in theory Szekler is highly valued among local speakers (cf. Benő 2011).

viewed video. The TV version of the sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* ‘~Right, Magdi?’ was first released in 2013 and it has been available since then on the video-sharing platform YouTube, along with three other quick audio versions.¹⁹ At the time this article is written, the TV version has 455,024 views and 88 comments.

A short description of the plot would be the following: Ferenc, the comedian (Attila Kozma) goes to an office (that, based on the context and the discussion in the scenes, seems like an office of a local agency of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania) to register a private company. Upon arrival, he enters office 24, where he presents the cause of his visit to clerk Veca (László Zsolt Lung) in a calm, almost cheerful, optimistic manner, after which he is curtly sent back and forth between three offices by clerks Veca and Magdi (Attila Kozma). Each time he enters or reenters an office, he has to explain again and again what administrative problem he wants to resolve. After Veca sends him to the boss’s empty office, he has no other option than to go back to her office, where he is offered a seat to wait for the boss. While Ferenc is waiting, Veca, completely ignoring Ferenc’s presence, initiates a discussion with Magdi in the neighbouring office about preparing a meal, which becomes a session of mutual bragging between the two women. Then Veca suddenly acknowledges Ferenc’s presence and asks him again, in an impatient, authoritative manner, why he is there. After three more rounds of explanation, and a threatening appearance of the security guard (László Zsolt Lung), Ferenc who has totally lost his patience by now, explains for the seventh time what he wants, and Veca, still disapproving of the comedian’s goals, finally gives him some templates of the official documents needed, and tells him to take them to another building, the mayor’s office, casually summoning him to do her a personal favour on his way. On his way out, Ferenc bumps into Robi (László Zsolt Lung), the aggressive and demanding young man who turns out to be one of his fans, and hardly manages to get away from him. A Romani businessman (Attila Kozma) enters Veca’s office and resolves his official issue within minutes by bribing her. In the final scene, Ferenc comes back with the documentation Veca had asked for. While browsing through the documents, Veca starts enumerating missing documents she never mentioned before in a dispraising and reprehensive manner, shouting *Ezek hol vannak?* ‘Where are those?’, which then is echoed by all characters, except for Ferenc, in the form

19 I will not separately analyze these versions; however, I will take their comments into consideration when discussing the aspects viewers seem to be the most receptive to. The quick audio versions are the following: *Open Stage Ugy-e Magdi* – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koRh-jDLjfM&t=113s&ab_channel=digital151515 (30/09/2021), with 51,173 views and 13 comments; *Open Stage Székelylend – Ugy-e Magdi?* – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOB789goKQ4&t=67s&ab_channel=lorihompoth (30/09/2021), with 70,481 views and 16 comments; and *Open Stage Ugy-e Magdi* – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWalXzuE-4s&t=28s&ab_channel=robicika12 (30/09/2021), with 12,196 views and 1 comment.

of four cuts in video sequences. In the final moments of the sketch the pictures of Magdi, Veca, Robi and the businessman come on with a readout caption at the bottom of the screen inviting viewers to send their responses to the question *Ezek hol vannak?* 'Where are those?' via text messages by next Easter. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly present the characterological figures created in the sketch with general remarks about the speech modes featured by each of these characters.

The character Ferenc, played by Attila Kozma, could be labelled as a stereotypical figure of the educated Szekler young man who falls victim to an overcomplicated bureaucratic system and its representatives, the rudely authoritative clerks whom he is compelled to entrust with the official process of establishing a private company. He starts off with a cheerful and polite approach and conveys the stylized repertoire of the regional substandard variety of Szekler, usually spoken in non-familiar situations. Due to the context of discussing official affairs, this repertoire contains characteristics of the official terminology, the most prominent being the resort to Romanian loan words and instances of code-switching, as local speakers generally do not possess a Hungarian version of this register. As he becomes more and more overwhelmed by the two clerks' uncomprehending and dismissive attitude, his speech mode shifts to a more personal and emotional register, also signalled by growth in speed and volume, thus we witness a more regionally flavoured vernacular peeking through the basic setting of dispassionate communication. Besides this shift in manner, another scene where we witness a more familiar, although still defensive speech mode, is when he addresses Robi's questions, remarks and demands.

The characters of clerks Veca (played by László Zsolt Lung), Magdi and Amál (both played by Attila Kozma) show some differences as well, however, they could all be labelled as stereotypical figures of the inconsiderate, abusive, lazy and witless middle-aged bureaucratic worker. Veca has the most prolonged sequences of conversations with other characters. From the first moment of interaction with Ferenc, she takes a familiar but condescending and disrespectful tone, and keeps it up until the last interaction. Through her speech, she conveys a stylized repertoire of a Szekler vernacular with frequent lexical borrowings, code-switchings and some specific regionalisms on all levels of communication. A similar repertoire is conveyed by Magdi and Amál as well. Magdi's most prominent role in the scenes is echoing or reinforcing in a strongly stylized Szekler vernacular some of Veca's assertions when she utters the recurring question *Ugye, Magdi?* 'Right, Magdi?'. The chief clerk of the office, Amál, is only portrayed in a short scene where Veca calls her to tell her that a stubborn client wants to establish a private firm. During their call, we find out that, although she claims to be in a meeting with members of the directorate, she is at home avoiding work. As it will be shown later, these characters seem to be perceived by viewers as authentic representations of bureaucratic workers in the Szekler region or generally in Romania.

Another characterological figure created in the sketch is Robi (played by László Zsolt Lung) who has a conversation with Ferenc at the entrance of the office building. This character embodies the threatening figure of the young, aggressive Szekler man who uses his physical strength and loudness to intimidate anyone who crosses his path and welcomes any opportunity to have a free drink. Through his speech, he conveys a stylized repertoire of Szekler, enriched through an overly emphatic speech mode, full of bantering and threatening sequences.

The character of the Romani businessman (played by Attila Kozma) is a stereotypical representation of the witty and spirited middle-aged Romani man who strives to avoid the traps of the bureaucratic system using a combination of entreating, flattery and bribery. Accordingly, his register of speech contains some phonetic, lexical and conversational characteristics stereotypically assigned to this type of figure. The last character to be mentioned is the faceless announcer (played by Attila Kozma) who reads the appeal to the fictive viewers of the programme in another stylized speech mode, the one stereotypically assigned to speakers of the Transylvanian Plain, e.g., those living in Kolozsvár (RO: Cluj-Napoca). Three main characteristics of this register are represented in a stylized way in the short audio sequence: the specific phonetic/phonologic profile and the intonational pattern characteristic to this dialect (often labelled as ‘Romanian accent’ by everyday speakers) and the use of Romanian loanwords.

Due to the characteristics discussed in this section, the sketch obviously belongs to the genre of parody. According to Dentith’s (2002: 37) broad definition, “any cultural practice which makes a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice” is an instance of parody. One of the potential key functions of parody is that of being an act of criticism through capturing some aspects of the parodied cultural practice and exaggerating them to ludicrous effect (cf. Dentith 2002: 32). So, what exactly is parodied in the sketch, and why is it funny? In order to answer these questions and create an overview of the main interactions in the sketch, we have to take a closer look at the key features of the fictive speech events that take place in the sketch. I will present these features along the lines of Hymes’ (1974) SPEAKING model which I consider appropriate for a proper discussion on our subject. I will concentrate on the main line of interactions among the two clerks and Ferenc.

The Setting and Scene of the speech event depicted by the sketch is quite formal: on an average day in 2013 (as shown by the label on a folder on one of the clerks’ desks), an ordinary citizen visits an official institution in order to take all the steps needed to establish a private company. This type of setting and scene determines the expectations related to the Norms of interaction and all other aspects of the Hymesian model, however, most of these aspects turn out not to match the setting/scene in the sketch. This mismatch, on the other hand, creates a shift in the cultural definition of the speech event,

revealing an alternative cultural practice claimed to be specific to the Szekler/Romanian setting.

The Participants of the speech events taking place in the office building are Ferenc, Veka and Magdi. Each of them takes the role of speaker/hearer at one point or another in the course of the communicative events, additionally, whenever two of the three participants are having a conversation, the third one is also part of the audience, either silently witnessing the conversation (e.g., when the two women talk to each other through the open doors and halls of the building, Ferenc has no other option than to overhear what is talked about), or becoming speakers themselves with or without being addressed by the previous speaker (this is the case whenever Veka talks to Ferenc, and stops to shout *Ugye, Magdi?* ‘Right, Magdi?’ to Magdi in the neighbouring office for her actual utterance to be reinforced, or when Magdi echoes Veka’s demands without being asked; e.g., [Veka, 0:26] *Azt nem itt csinálják, azt a 12-es irodába csinálják. Ugye, Magdi?* ‘We don’t do that here, that is done in office 12. Right, Magdi?’; [Veka, 2:58] *Jó napot kívánok, miben segíthetek!?* ‘Good day! How can I help you?’ [Magdi, 3:00] *Igen, igen, mondja má’ meg Vacacskának, hogy mit akar!?* ‘Yeah, yeah, tell Veka already what you want!’, etc.). This practice of ganging up against the client deepens the sense of power incongruity between Ferenc and the clerks, constantly putting the former in an even more overpowering position.

The Ends of the communicative events are different than ideally expected in these types of situations, additionally, the personal goals of the participants also differ from each other to a considerable degree. According to idealistic expectations of this setting/scene, the general purpose of these offices and their workers is to resolve official issues in a practical, sensible and respectful manner, however, in this case, this purpose is not served, and based on the events depicted by the sketch, the participants have opposing personal goals. Ferenc’s goal is to officially establish a private company with the help of the clerks, while the clerks’ goal is not to be bothered and to avoid work as much as possible. This intention is made clear by multiple aspects, like the disrespectful, annoyed tone taken by the clerks throughout the sketch whenever they are asked for help; Veka’s demand for Ferenc to wait until she finishes her coffee [3:03 – 3:18]; or the fact that both Magdi and Amál are shown avoiding work (Magdi plays computer games in her office, and Amál is engaged in a self-care routine in her bathroom while claiming to be in a business meeting).

The Act Sequence of the event is made up by Ferenc’s directive speech act of requesting help, the first couple of times delivered in a polite and cheerful demeanour, which is followed by the clerks’ multiple refusals to be helpful, and by demands related to the official steps to be followed, as well as Veka’s personal request for Ferenc to take a sack of rotten potatoes to one of her colleagues in the mayor’s office and bring a bottle of milk on his way back. The sequence ends with the expressive

speech act of disappreciation and rejection towards the documentation brought by Ferenc.

As far as the Key of the speech events is concerned, there is an obvious discrepancy in the tone applied by the participants. Ferenc conveys a calm and patient, official Key, which, due to the growing tension between him and the clerks, changes to a more emphatic, nervous and personal tone through time. Contrary to Ferenc, the two clerks take a more colloquial, personal and condescending tone throughout the communicative events presented in the sketch: either they talk down to Ferenc using a personal tone, or they talk to each other about the domestic topic of preparing the Easter lamb in a hilariously hyperbolized Szekler vernacular. All these characteristics are reinforced by the body language of the participants as well.

The Instrumentalities used in the sketch will be analysed in more detail in Section 5. The most important features to be highlighted here are that the method of communication is speaking, and the applied register is a stylized version of Szekler with some elements of bureaucratic terminology, mostly evoked by Romanian loanwords and instances of code-switching. This aspect of the speech event also contradicts the general expectation of using a formal register.

The Norms of interaction generally assigned to this Setting/Scene regulate the practices related to speech volume, taking turns in speaking, physical movement, eye contact, etc. The interactions depicted by the sketch mostly deviate from these norms: due to their annoying mindset and their constant scolding acts, as well as the fact that they talk to each other through the open doors of their offices, both clerks apply a high speech volume; they often ignore Ferenc's presence through the refusal of making eye contact and of granting him the opportunity to speak or be heard, and they convey a strong body language also signalling their discontent.

The Genre usually adopted in this type of communicative event is that of formal conversation, which in our case often turns into one-sided scolding and ridicule.

Based on the above overview of the plot, its characters and the Hymesian aspects of the communicative events, the following observations can be made. Through the method of stylization and hyperbolism, the sketch creates a strong discrepancy between the set of expectations regarding the unfolding of such types of speech events (on the level of the participants' dynamics, the goals of the participants, the sequence of speech acts performed by the participants, the key of the speech events, the registers conveyed by the speakers, the norms of interaction pertaining to speech volume, to the right to speak and be heard, to eye contact and body language) and what actually happens in the sketch. The discrepancies brought about in this hyperbolic manner constitute an act of criticism through humour, as the sketch highlights and exaggerates to ludicrous effect a cultural practice much condemned by the community. The sketch is primarily a parody of the overcomplicated bureaucratic

system and the often demeaning behaviour of its representatives in Romania, and its specific regional flavour that is in effect in the Szekler region of the country. The parody of this system and its workers, on the other hand, is interwoven with and enriched by the satirical representation of Szekler communicative practices and temperament. The stylization of Szekler vernaculars conveyed by the characters simultaneously constitutes a sublevel of the discrepancy between the formal setting and the familiar manner in which these communicative interactions unfold, and a source of humour in itself.

The phenomenon of laughing at certain vernaculars is not an undocumented issue in the literature, and it raises some questions regarding the proper context and audience, as well as the matter of entitlement. As Jonsson et al. (2020) point it out, the identity of the parodist and the parodied are decisive factors determining the outcome of these jokes and whether they are construed as offensive.²⁰ In our case, the question of who is entitled to imitate Szeklers' voice without sounding disparaging should also be addressed. The two members of the comedy group Open Stage are also members of the community which they treat comically in their sketch through parodying their vernaculars. Additionally, the primary targets ridiculed in the sketch are stereotypical representatives of the bureaucratic system, who embody everything that is wrong with this system; the communicative registers depicted in the sketch constitute one of the many ways they deviate from the norms and expectations generally assigned to the formal setting of the plot, and are means of creating a personal and familiar, thus authentic voice for them. All these factors contribute to the sketch being perceived as non-offensive by those who possess Szekler vernaculars, which is also reflected to some degree by the comments given by viewers.

Before moving on to the analysis of the linguistic repertoire conveyed by the characters, in the remainder of this section I will reflect on the reception and after-life of the sketch, mainly on the aspects traceable through the viewers' comments. I reviewed a total number of 118 comments assigned to the TV version (88 comments) and the three audio versions of the sketch (30 comments) available on the video-sharing platform YouTube. Based on this review, six main categories of comments are identifiable: expressions of general appraisal of the sketch and the two actors; comments reflecting on the authenticity of the figures and plot capturing all that is wrong with the bureaucratic system depicted by the sketch; comments providing quotes and reflections on the communicative practices depicted by the sketch; comments giving explanations for those who are not familiar with the Romanian bureaucratic terminology; comments highlighting minor dramaturgic inconsistencies in the sketch; and one comment related to the after-life

20 Jonsson et al. (2020) discuss satirical representations of the so-called 'Rinkeby' Swedish, a contemporary urban vernacular, which, according to the authors, has been turned into an 'icon of ethnic otherness, associated with an aggressively sexist and homophobic masculinity' due to its parodies in Swedish media.

of the sketch. I provide a small sample of the categories relevant to our topic in (3–6) below, omitting the comments only praising the actors and the ones highlighting small dramaturgical inconsistencies.

- (3) a. Komolyan, gyomoridegem lett ettől a jelenettől, annyira élethű! ‘Honestly, I got a stomach ache from this scene, it’s so realistic!’
b. Tapostam már végig ezt az utat! A tejet meg a krumplit leszámítva szóról szórágy történik! :) ‘I’ve been down this road! Apart from the milk and the potatoes, it literally happens like this!’
c. Ez a valós romanía. ‘This is the real Romania’
d. ÜGYINTÉZÉS SZÉKELYFÖLDÖN (BÜRÖKRÁCIA) – “had fejlődjön a zóna”! ‘Administration in the Szekler region (bureaucracy) – let the region evolve!’
e. ... nagyon jó. A csíkszeredai cégbíróság-ra rá lehet ismerni azonnal. Minden évben átélem ezt, de ilyen jól csak Kozma Attilának képesek összegezni és “továbbadni”... Gratulálok. ‘Very good. The registry court from Csíksereda can instantly be recognized. I experience this each year, but only Attila Kozma’s group can summarize and transmit it this well... Congrats.’
f. Don’t worry Szekely people. This is normal bearuacracy shit in Romanía. Don’t feel discriminated. Money buys everything around there.
g. Ez egyáltalán nem vicces ‘This is not funny at all’
- (4) a. meg tetszik e várni, amíg kihörpötyölöm a kávé-t ‘Could you wait while I’m sipping up my coffee?’
b. nyihabaaaa szerusszzööő :D :D ‘neigh’ ‘hello’ (SH.²¹ szervusz from Lat. servus, heterographically captured regional version, pronounced with an epenthetic schwa in the sketch [9:15])’
c. Cse sze pe vagy ecserepecsere....parsana Fizica....Contrakt Csivil ‘[gibberish imitating Romanian acronyms]... [Ro. natural person, captured through Hungarian heterography]... [Ro. civil law contract, captured through Hungarian heterography]’
d. Ne féjjé ha nem vagy hibás! Ezen behugyoztam!:) ‘Don’t be afraid if you’re not at fault! I wet myself laughing at this!’
e. 03:49 után elkezdki hadarni xD háááááááááhbbbbbhhhhhbbbb ‘After 03:49 he starts gabbling, haha’
f. Nagyon vicces mondjuk a székeleyk alapból röhejesek s örvendek stb ‘It’s very funny, actually Szeklars are fundamentally ridiculous, and I’m glad, etc.’
- (5) a. faktúra – számla „, chitanta (kitánca) -- nyugta, -- intreprindere individuala -- egyéni vállalkozás, szecsecsce, satöbbi: rövidítések. [‘Ro. factură, captured through Hungarian heterography] – invoice, [Ro. chitanță, also captured through Hungarian heterography in brackets] – receipt, [Ro. întreprindere individuală] – private company, [heterographic imitation of Romanian acronyms], etc.: abbreviations.’
b. [Reply to (5a):] Kösz szépen ‘Thanks a lot’
c. ezek után ne menjetek ügyintézni fiúk :DDD a határon túliaknak le kellene fordítsátok :))) ‘~After all these, don’t go to offices, guys. You should translate it to those outside the borders.’
- (6) a múltkor bementem a bankba. Már 10 percre vártam, amikor is az előttem lévő bácsinak a papírjaival valami gubanc lett.. A hölgy készségesen magyarázta, hogy

21 The abbreviation *SH.* stands for standard Hungarian, and it marks versions generally construed as belonging to Hungarian standard.

mi történhetett és hogy megkéri szépen a bácsit, hogy jöjjön vissza később és hozza magával a ...blabla... a végén meg átkiáltott a munkatársához, a másik asztalhoz: – Ugye Magdi? Rég röhögtem ilyen jól! :)) ‘I went to the bank the other day. I had been waiting for 10 minutes when something turned out to be wrong with the documents of the old man in front of me. The lady accommodatingly explained what could have happened, and asked him to come back later and bring the ...blabla... then at the end she shouted over to her colleague at the next desk: Right, Magdi? It’s been a while since I laughed that hard!’

The comments like those cited above show that the audience is most receptive to the image of the twisted bureaucratic system created by the sketch and the stylized Szekler communicative practices conveyed by its characters. The reactions evaluating the authenticity of the scene depicted by the sketch are either reflecting on the viewers’ perception of these cultural practices being specific to the Szekler region of the country (e.g., (3d-e)) or to the whole country (e.g. (3c, f)). This difference in perception is most probably due to the viewers’ previous experience: those who are unfamiliar with the Szekler setting, tend to recognize a wider pattern characteristic to the whole country, while those who are familiar with it either reinforce the authenticity on a local level, or go further and remark that these practices are not Szekler-specific at all. Comments like that in (3g) also constitute positive evaluations regarding the authenticity of the depicted interactions through the act of reflexive *unlaughter*, i.e., the absence of laughter where it is expected (cf. Billig 2005: 192, cited by Jonsson et al. 2020), which is meant to signal the commenter’s condemnatory attitude towards these practices.

Comments like those in (4-5) evoke characteristics of the semiotic repertoire conveyed in the sketch, evaluating them as funny, therefore salient. These types of comments tend to reflect on peculiarities on the phonetic (cf. (4b, c, e)), morphological (cf. (4a)), lexical (cf. (4b-c), (5a, c)) and conversational level (cf. (4a, b, d)), or constitute general evaluations of Szekler speech patterns and temperament (cf. (4f)). Additionally, comments like (5a-c) acknowledge the fact that speakers outside Romania cannot possibly understand what is talked about in certain sequences. Finally, (6) shares a story regarding the after-life of the sketch, and it shows that it has become a point of reference among its audience.²²

In conclusion, the sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* exaggerates to ludicrous effect a cultural practice much condemned by the community, thus it is an act of social criticism achieved through parodistic humour. It is primarily a parody of the overcomplicated and demeaning bureaucratic system that is in effect in the Szekler region and generally in Romania. The parody of this system is interwoven with the satirical representation of Szekler communicative practices on all levels of language use, which in this case may be construed as representing a sublevel of the discrepancy between the formal setting and the familiar speech mode of these

22 Another piece of anecdotal information I consider representative of the after-life of the sketch is that I myself experienced many allusions to it or its main punch lines by random speakers in everyday communicative situations in the last 8 years.

communicative interactions. Moreover, the stylized representation of the semiotic repertoire assigned to Szekler is a source of humour in itself, and—together with the evaluative discussions about these communicative practices—it is part of nowadays' enregisterment processes of Szekler. The online reactions to the sketch given by its viewers seem to reinforce these observations as well.

5. Parodistically highlighted “Szeklerisms” in the sketch

This section gives an overview of the most noteworthy aspects and characteristics of the stylized linguistic/conversational repertoire construed as Szekler in the sketch. I will briefly examine the phonological/phonetic, lexical, grammatical and conversational/pragmatic aspects of creating authentic Szekler figures through parody in this specific communicative context. The sketch is far too long and much too difficult to be transcribed here, therefore I will occasionally provide the time frames where the discussed features are present in the TV version, and only show some selected sequences when I consider them essential.

One of the most prominent features of the conversational sequences depicted by the sketch is how they sound. As in the case of any audible speech event, all other features are constantly conveyed through these sound patterns, and in our sketch, due to their stylized execution, these sound patterns themselves are means of creating a humorous effect and a recognizable component of the semiotic repertoire assigned to Szekler. The **phonologic/phonetic level** of the stylized Szekler repertoire highlights some specific features of this variety and its speakers. Based on my review of the sketch, the most salient phenomena captured through stylization are the following: the use of some phonemes characteristic to certain varieties of Szekler, all over the recording (that of the short closed /e/ phoneme, the more open realizations of the vowel /ɛ/ > [æ], and the velar realizations of standard /a:/ > [ʌ]); the frequent presence of schwa epenthesis (which is featured in most of Magdi's utterances [2:19, 5:18, 7:01, 7:53, 8:38, 14:07] in a hyperbolized manner, and it is also detectable in Veca's [3:50], Robi's [9:15] and Amál's [14:13] speech, as well as Ferenc's speech when he switches to a more emphatic pattern [8:52] – this feature is highlighted by some of the viewers' comments as well, e.g., in (4b) above); the specific pace and intonation patterns of emphatic speech characterized by a rapid pace and extreme alternations of high and low tone sequences, present in most parts of the recording (e.g., [1:35-1:37], [7:50-7:54], etc.); and the heavy Szekler “accent”, i.e., the prominently Szekler sound patterns, characteristic to the instances of Romanian code-switching (e.g., [0:25], [4:31-4:33], [5:00-5:05], etc.), which, among others, recreate stereotypes regarding Szeklers' way of speaking Romanian.

The **lexical level** of the evoked repertoire also shows some peculiarities, especially in the sequences where characters convey a more familiar

key. The most prominent lexical features are the use of some regional lexical units and the frequent use of Romanian loanwords and instances of lexical borrowing. The table in (7) below shows the most prominent lexical features of the characters' speech.

(7) Prominent lexical units in the sketch

a. Regional lexical units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>bé</i> (SH. <i>be</i>, 'in') • <i>reám</i> (SH. <i>rám</i>, 'on/off me'), <i>reád</i> (SH. <i>rád</i>, 'on/off you') • <i>es</i> (SH. <i>is</i>, 'also') • <i>ilyent</i> (SH. <i>ilyet</i>, such-ACC 'something like this'), <i>ilyensmi</i> (SH. <i>ilyesmi</i>, 'such things') • <i>ler</i> (from Ge. Röhre, SH. <i>sütő</i>, 'oven') • <i>szalmapityókás</i> (SH. <i>sültburgonyás</i>, <i>sültkrumplis</i>, 'with fried potatoes') • <i>elmecseríti a hangját</i> ('make one's voice sound like drunken singing', from Szekler <i>mecsereg</i> 'sings in a drunken voice') • <i>szerusz</i> (SH. <i>szervusz</i> from Lat. <i>servus</i>, 'hello')
b. Romanian loanwords and instances of lexical borrowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>faktúra</i> (noun, Ro. <i>factură</i>, SH. <i>számla</i>, 'invoice'), <i>faktúráz</i> (verb, SH. <i>számláz</i>, 'invoice') • <i>kitánca</i> (noun, Ro. <i>chitanță</i>, SH. <i>nyugta</i>, 'receipt') • <i>kontrakt csivil</i> (nominal phrase, Ro. <i>contract civil</i>, translated in Transylvanian media as <i>civil szerződés</i>, 'civil code contract') • <i>doszár</i> (noun, Ro. <i>dosar</i>, SH. <i>dosszié</i>, 'folder, dossier') • <i>lestampiláz</i> (verb, Ro. <i>ștampilă</i> 'seal', SH. <i>lepecsétel</i>, 'enseal') • <i>buletin</i> (noun, Ro. <i>buletin</i>, SH. <i>személyi igazolvány</i>, 'identity card') • <i>intreprindere individuală</i> (nominal phrase, Ro. <i>intreprindere individuală</i>, SH. <i>magáncég</i>, 'private company') • <i>perszana fizika</i> (nominal phrase, Ro. <i>persoană fizică</i>, SH. <i>természetes személy</i>, 'natural person')
c. Fictive Romanian expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ro. <i>departamentul de solificicare</i> 'department of...' • Ro. <i>certificat de recesionare</i> '...certificate' • Ro. <i>certificat de semancificat</i> '...certificate' • Ro. <i>cartomesticat</i> • Ro. <i>lidomesticat</i>

The examples in (7a) are different types of regional lexical units characteristic, but not necessarily specific to Szekler: some of them are archaic versions of today's standard Hungarian lexemes, characteristic to multiple regional varieties of Hungarian (cf. *bé*; *reám*; *reád*; *es*; *ilyensmi*; *ler*), and others are regional expressions specific to Szekler (cf. *pityóka*, which is a trade-mark Szekler expression; *elmecseríti a hangját*), or regional expressions characteristic to the whole Transylvanian region (cf. the greeting *szerusz*, however, its pronunciation with an epenthetic schwa is specific to Szekler). The Romanian loanwords and instances of lexical borrowing exemplified in (7b) are also regionalisms characteristic to the formal repertoire used by Szekler speakers in this communicative context, even though they are not specific to Szekler. The use of gibberish-like fictive Romanian expressions, like those in (7c), constitute another method of creating a recognizable lexical repertoire. The

discursive function of these latter expressions is that of emphasizing the overcomplicated nature of Romanian bureaucracy and the difficulties speakers are put through due to the obscurity of the official documents, often perceived as bureaucratic nonsense by speakers, however, this aspect is only detectable for those who speak Romanian as well.

The most noteworthy phenomena on the **grammatical level** of the stylized repertoire are demonstrated in (8) below.

(8) Prominent grammatical phenomena in the sketch

a. Morphological and morpho-phonological patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Veca-cska</i> ([Veca-DIM], SH. <i>Vecá-cska</i>) • <i>ada-ja</i> ([tax-3SG.POSS], SH. <i>adó-ja</i> ‘its/your sales tax’) • <i>ki-hörp-ötyöl-öm</i> ([out-sip-ITER-1SG.TR], SH. <i>~elkortyolgotom</i> ‘I sip up’) • <i>Hallga-ssuk</i>, (<i>a sok hülye ember hogy mondja</i>) ([listen-1PL.TR], SH. <i>hallgat-juk</i> ‘we are listening to (how the dumb people talk)’)
b. Syntactic patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ez mi ez?</i> ([this what this], SH. <i>mi ez?</i> ‘what is this?’) • <i>...tud-om, ki az maga</i> ([know-1SG.TR who that you], SH. <i>tudom, ki maga</i> [know-1SG.TR who you], ‘I know who you are’)

The examples in (8a) evoke morphological peculiarities characteristic to Szekler: the construction *Vecacska*, for example, shows the derivation pattern of diminutive constructions formed with the suffix *-cska* (where the last vowel of the root is not affected by the derivation, contrary to standard Hungarian, where the derived forms of roots ending in /o/ feature the sound /a:/); the construction *kihörpötyölöm* features a regional iterative suffix; and the construction *hallgassuk* is an instance of the non-standard inflexion pattern labelled as *süksükölés* ‘the use of the ending *-suk/-sük* in declarative sentences’ in the Hungarian prescriptive literature, which is detectable in non-standard varieties all over the Hungarian speaking region, and it is a frequent inflexion pattern characteristic to Szekler speakers as well. Additionally, (8b) highlights two sentence-level constructions characteristic to Szekler, both showing the practice of doubling demonstrative pronouns (this phenomenon may be due to speakers’ perception of the constructions *mi az/ez* ‘what is that/this’ and *ki az/ez* ‘who is that/this’ as compact units equivalent to the use of the bare interrogative pronouns *mi* ‘what’ and *ki* ‘who’).

In addition to the phonologic/phonetic, lexical and grammatical aspects of the register stylized in the sketch, as a final step, the most prominent phenomena on the level of **conversational/pragmatic features** should also be briefly examined. In the remainder of this section, I will highlight some sequences that give rise to metapragmatic typification on the conversational level by recreating stereotypes regarding Szeklers’ delivery of different conversational strategies.

(9) Conversation between Veca and Magdi [2:12–2:57]

V: *Magdika! Ti a húsvéti bárányt hogy szoktátok csinálni!?* ‘Magdi! How do you usually prepare the Easter lamb!?’

M: *Jaj, hát az nem olyan bonyolult. Hát én egyszer belétöltöm a tyúkot.* ‘Oh, it’s not that complicated. Well, first I stuff it with chicken.’

V: *Jaj, azt én is úgy szoktam. Csak én egyszer a tyúkba belé szoktam tölteni a libát.* ‘Oh, I do it like that too. But I first stuff the chicken with goose-flesh.’

M: *Jaj, igen, igen, de én aztán úgy szoktam csinálni, hogy először a libába belé szoktam tenni a pácolt tehenet, haha!* ‘Oh, yeah, yeah, but then I usually prepare it by first stuffing the goose with salt beef, haha!’

V: *Jaj, azt én is úgy szoktam. Csak én a pácolt tehenet előtte meg szoktam tölteni jó csülkös, szalmapityókás fasírttal.* ‘Oh, I do the same. But first I stuff the salt beef with meatloaf made with trotters and fried potatoes.’

M: *Igen, igen, azt én is így szoktam csinálni. Csak én az egészet, mielőtt betenném a lerbe, belé szoktam tűnni az egészet így egy fazék töltöttkáposztába. Hát úgy a finom!* ‘Yeah, yeah, I do it the same way. But first, before putting it in the oven, I usually wrap the whole thing into a pot of stuffed cabbage rolls. It’s tastier like that!’

V: *Jaj, igen, igen, igen, igen. Csak én ilyenkor az egészet le szoktam önteni zsírral.* ‘Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But I first pour lard on the whole thing.’

The conversation in (9) above is an instance of casual conversation on a domestic topic, which is a genre known to all viewers of the sketch. The two characters talk about preparing the Easter lamb, and as they do so, they try to outbid each other regarding their cooking skills: as they take turns, they take what the other one previously claimed for granted, and make more and more ridiculous and obviously false assertions about the steps they take while cooking this meal, thus the conversation becomes a session of mutual bragging. The sequence is governed by the two women’s defensive facework: whatever a speaker says is exceeded by the hearer when her turn comes, and this discursive practice may be construed as a method of the participants saving their own positive faces by sustaining their image of being unbeatable masters of cooking.²³ This very image would be ruined if one of them even implicitly admitted not to know or practice the cooking techniques mentioned by the other. This type of facework is, of course, not specific to Szekler speakers (or any community), however, it recreates the stereotypes regarding Szeklers’ pride and tenacity on the discursive level, in a hyperbolized and humorous manner; additionally, through the phonetic, lexical and grammatical patterns of the sequence and the topic itself (cooking a meal with as much meat as possible, which alludes to traditional Szekler cuisine), the authors present this conversation as being an example of authentic Szekler speech.

The main conversation between Veka and Ferenc [2:58–9:01] is one on official matters, and it is dominated by the power incongruity between the two parties: Veka and Magdi are constantly exploiting the fact that in this context they are superior to Ferenc in status, as they hold the key to his successful resolution of the administrative issue he came to address. As shown by the comments presented in the previous section, this type of speech event with its power dynamics is probably known to most viewers of the sketch, which means that the situation

23 For a classical model of facework, see the politeness theory presented by Brown & Levinson (1987).

itself is recognizable to viewers from Romania and Hungary as well. What it does in the case of viewers outside the social domain of Szekler (and Romanian) as a register, is that through its hyperbolized nature it provides an image of the ‘Szekler way’ of this type of conversation. The most noteworthy pragmatic feature of the sequence is the asymmetry regarding protective facework. While Ferenc conveys an emphatic but still non-offensive approach, Veca and Magdi casually implement one face-threatening act after the other, and take this to the level of bullying.

(10) Sequences of the polylogue among Veca, Magdi and Ferenc [00:05–9:03]

a. Veca and Ferenc [2:58–3:23]

V: *Jó napot kívánok, miben segíthetek?* ‘Good day! How can I help you?’

M: *Igen, igen, mondja má’ meg Vecácskának, hogy mit akar!* ‘Yeah, yeah, tell Veca already what you want!’

F: *Hmm, jó, csókolum, én azért jöttem, mert...* ‘Ok, hello, I came because...’

V: *Bocsánat! Meg tetszik-e várni, míg kihörpötyölöm a kávéét?* ‘Excuse me! Will you wait while I’m sipping up my coffee?’ [drinks from her cup]

F [after waiting a second]: *Na, hát azért jöttem, mert szeretnék, hogy mondjam, legálisan dolgozni...* ‘Well, so, I came because I’d like to, how do I say it, work legally...’

V: *Meg tetszik-e várni, míg kihörpötyölöm a kávémat?* ‘Will you wait while I’m sipping up my coffee?’ [loudly sips her coffee]

F: *Nyugodtan, tessék, nyugodtan. Csak tetszett mondani, hogy mondjam, s akkor...* ‘Of course, take your time, of course. You just said that I should tell you, so I...’

V [raises her voice in an annoyed tone]: *Na, tessék mondani, hogy mit tetszik akarni! Hát hogyha azt mondtam, hogy mondja, akkor mondja!* ‘Well, go ahead, tell me what you want! If I told you to say it, then say it already!’

b. Veca and Amál on the telephone [6:33–6:52]

V: *Halló!* ‘Hello!’

A: *Halló?!* ‘Hello?!’

V: *Szerusz, Amál!* ‘Hello, Amál!’

A: *Mondjad, Vecácska, mondjad!* ‘Go ahead, Veca, go ahead!’

V: *Na, figyelj csak, itt van az a bohóc abból a bohócegyüttesből. Na, igen, igen, az a kövér, amelyik mindig elferdíti a hangját, s csúfolkodik velünk.* ‘So, look, one of those clowns from that clown group is here. Yeah, yeah, the fat one, which always distorts his voice and makes fun of us.’

A: *Mit akar?* ‘What does he want?’

V: *Hát azért jött, me’ ezt le is akarja faktúrázni.* ‘Well, he came because he wants to invoice it as well.’

The sequences in (10a-b) show some instances of face-threatening acts, which are characteristic of the whole conversation as well. The sequence in (10a) demonstrates the authoritative and highly threatening speech mode conveyed by Veca throughout her interactions with Ferenc: she asks Ferenc what he came for, then interrupts him two times demanding to wait until she finishes her coffee, then urges him to speed up and tell her the cause of his visit, this way she establishes herself again and again as an unpredictable figure of power, and Ferenc as an incapable,

subordinate figure. Through this technique, the character reinforces her negative face by implying that she accepts no imposition on her preferred daily routines, and simultaneously damages her victim's positive and negative face by ignoring his rightful needs and exposing him to her constant orders. The sequence in (10b) is taken from the telephone conversation between Veca and her boss, Amál, and shows how Veca's speech is highly offensive and ignorant towards Ferenc when she talks to someone else, and he is a silent part of the audience. She, again, uses the strategy labelled as bald on-record by Brown & Levinson (1987), through which she damages his positive face by describing him and his art in an insulting and demeaning way, even though she knows that he can hear every word of her telephone conversation. The discursive function of these pragmatic features is to recreate the stereotypy regarding some bureaucratic workers' ignorant, rude and instinctively selfish demeanour as one of the main characteristics of the Romanian bureaucratic system, however, they also recreate cultural stereotypes related to the bluntness of Szekler people.

Finally, another scene worth highlighting is the one depicting the interaction between Robi and Ferenc [9:04–11:07], which is another conversation dominated by power incongruity, however, this incongruity is not based on official status, but on physical power and loudness. The two participants share some sociological features, they are both men, they are of the same approximate age, and they interact in a casual setting. Robi's character embodies the threatening figure of the aggressive young man who uses his physical strength and loudness to intimidate anyone who crosses his path.

(11) Sequence of the conversation between Robi and Ferenc [10:29–10:51]

R [after shouting at Ferenc and threatening him with physical violence]: *Fizess egy sört, te!* 'Buy me a beer, yo!'

F: *Mi?! Nem fizetek én neked egy sört, én kell menjek, nekem dolgom van!* 'What?! I'm not buying you a beer, I have to go, I have things to take care of!'

R [shouting]: *Fizess egy sört, te! Nagyképű! Na, tessék, a nagy sztárok. Nem fizet nekem egy sört. Bohóc! Puputeve bohóc!* [hits Ferenc's camel costume on his head] *Sztár vagyunk, mi!? Sztárok vagyunk!? Jól van, na!* [scares him by threatening to hit him] *Ne, ne félj, ha nem vagy hibás!* 'Buy me a beer, yo! How self-important! Here we go, the big star! Doesn't buy me a beer. Clown! Camel clown! We are stars, right!? Are we stars!? Ok, all right! Don't be afraid if you're not at fault!'

The short sequence in (11) shows some face-threatening acts, both on the conversational level (through instances of verbal aggression in the form of scolding, which damages Ferenc's positive face, and through ordering him to buy Robi a beer, which damages Ferenc's negative face) and literally (through acts of physical aggression). This type of interaction and its figures are also manifestations of universally known stereotypical figures, and what the sketch does, is that it depicts their

‘Szekler version’ by showing an overly emphatic and verbally aggressive speech mode conveyed through all aspects of the communicative repertoire used by the character. All these conversational patterns, together with the other linguistic features discussed in this section, contribute to the stylized typification of varieties of Szekler speech modes.

In conclusion, the short analysis provided in this section shows that the speech events depicted by the sketch portray a recognizable linguistic repertoire construed as authentically Szekler. The phenomena listed under the different aspects of this repertoire are not all specific to Szekler, however, through their regional characteristics and their simultaneous use, they all contribute to recreating a register that facilitates metapragmatic stereotypes related to Szekler speech and speakers.

6. Summary, conclusions

The article reflected on the key linguistic features of nowadays’ stereotypical Szekler-representations through a case study on a satirical representation of regional communicative practices in the sketch *Úgy-e, Magdi?* (‘Right, Magdi?’) by Open Stage. The study was mainly centred around the concept of enregisterment, and it discussed the methods by which different agents of enregisterment create representations of the semiotic repertoire stereotypically assigned to Szekler.

After providing a brief overview of the key areas and aspects along which Szekler has been enregistered so far in public discourse and in linguistics, the article attempted to capture the main attributes which create the authentic Szekler voice for Hungarian speakers through analyzing the plot, the characterological figures and the linguistic repertoire conveyed by the sketch, as well as the online reactions to it given by viewers. Section 5. examined the most prominent phonological/phonetic, lexical, grammatical and conversational phenomena construed as Szekler, and concluded that—in its own parodistic way—the sketch highlights some stereotypical, thus recognizable features on all these levels of the stylized linguistic repertoire conveyed by the characters, which is why it should be considered as an instance of the enregisterment of Szekler. These types of enregisterment processes, based on such enjoyable and memorable Szekler characterological figures and humour, are strong factors in Szekler maintaining a mostly favourable image and remaining well branded, noted and appreciated throughout its social domain.

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