

# **The changing practice of Hungarian T-V use and its social acceptance**

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## **Abstract**

The present empirical research paper's goal is to investigate the dynamic character of the current T-V pronoun usage in Hungarian from both the production and perception sides, using a cognitive linguistic framework. Within the V-forms the study distinguishes two types of formal pronouns and the formal 'tetszik' (please)+infinitive construction to provide a comprehensive view of how the variants are used. A sample corpus of 207 advertisements was compiled, consisting of tabloid and a quality magazine advertisements, commercial and national TV and radio channels' ads. In the second part, 90 participants filled in a multiple choice questionnaire to examine the T-V preferences when initiating a request in five situations. 30 of the respondents participated in a think aloud interview where they shared their ideas about the situations and explained their choices. In this way, the procedure fostered to map their metapragmatic awareness. In addition, the interviewees shared their impressions and opinions on the use of T-V in Hungary today.

**Keywords:** Hungarian, T-V forms, pronouns, advertisement, request, metapragmatic awareness, metapragmatic judgement

## 1. Introduction

One of the most challenging social aspects of current Hungarian language use is the use of the informal or formal (T-V) pronominal system. Apart from a few situations, such as addressing the elderly or institutional discourse (doctor-patient or citizen-authority), there is no consensus in everyday Hungarian communication about who uses which form in which situation. We can talk about tendencies, but not about rules and norms that are binding for everyone and would guarantee successful communication. The choices of the speakers always reflect the dynamic construction of interpersonal relations. Culture as a self-constructing system operates through the continuous transformation of accumulated knowledge in the interplay between the communally transmitted and the personal, historically determined experiential space and horizon of expectations. Thus, during interactive and intersubjective communication, speakers, as members of communities, create and apply cultural factors that provide patterns for community behavior. A set of communally valid actions is constructed and symbolized in language (Tátrai–Tolcsvai Nagy 2012: 7). Participants manage their knowledge dynamically, adapting schematic knowledge to the actual speech situation, updating it during their production. Adaption does not refer to an objective, external speech situation, but to the creation of the speech situation, based on conventions, through negotiated operations (Tolcsvai 2012: 20). One of the principal ideas of cognitive linguistics (Langacker 1987, Lakoff 1987, Kemmer–Barlow 2000, Geeraerts–Cuyckens eds. 2007) is that linguistic structures are probabilistic, constructed by speakers on the basis of probabilistic patterns. The text produced and processed in the actual speech situation is emergent (Tolcsvai 2012: 28). T-V choice is a tool for shaping interpersonal relations, which is repeated from discourse to discourse. This choice uncovers the speakers' preferences regarding social distance and social relations between them: equality, subordination or superiority.

In the recent three decades following the fall of Communism in 1990, formal and informal language use has been going through fundamental changes in Hungary (Sólyom 2011; Kovács & Tánzos 2015; Domonkosi 2017). However, native speakers of Hungarian still experience uncertainty and a discursive dispute over which form to use to be sociopragmatically adequate. The problem lies in the absence of agreement on what counts as proper, indeed, speakers of Hungarian share contradictory experiences. In the same speech situation, the use of the T-form can be evaluated by different communicative partners of the same age and status in the opposite way, as rude or absolutely appropriate. For example, the V form can be expected by middle-aged women to receive respect or can be rejected as the sign of agism. Clashing individual expectations can lead to frustration and hinder the possibility of engaging in a pleasant conversation. In other cases, interlocutors easily adapt to the situation as the following personal experience illustrates.

A 45-year-old woman walks into the university café where a young man is behind the counter. Exactly at the same moment, though in different ways, the woman and the man are greeting each other.

Woman: *Jó napot!* (Good morning!) [formal greeting]

Man: *Szia!* (Hi!) [informal greeting]

Man: *Mit kér?* (What would YOU-SING-FORM like?) [formal greeting]

To initiate a polite conversation, the interlocutors chose between the formal or informal greeting forms, made linguistic choices, however, when the young man realized the mismatch, he adapted his linguistic behavior to the actual situation, switched to V-form which became explicit with the verb conjugation. The dynamics of adaptation (Verschueren 1999: 55–71) is a typical way of coping with situations like that.

But what governs the speakers' choice? It is affected by their age, authority, family background, education, place of residence, gender, peer effect, the media etc. (Reményi 1999), however, none of these factors makes the choices safely predictable. To map the complexity of this dynamism, the present chapter introduces empirical research that examines the current Hungarian use of T-V pronouns from both the perception and the production side. First, the T-V usage of the widely occurring advertising genre will be analyzed, since people are exposed to hundreds of ads each day. An advertising corpus was compiled of 200 written and spoken advertisements to investigate what T-V usage patterns an average Hungarian media consumer may encounter on a single day.

In terms of production, the T-V preference was examined in the speech act of request with the help of a questionnaire that was filled in by ninety participants from three age groups: a) young (18-35); b) middle aged (36-63); c) elderly (over 64). Finally, ten participants in these age groups were asked to think aloud while filling in the questionnaire, and consecutively their metapragmatic awareness and judgement about the Hungarian T-V usage were explored during a semi-structured interview. In sum, the aim of the article is to provide empirical evidence to confirm or refute the common perception that informal language use is increasing among adult Hungarian speakers and that formal language use is declining in both media and everyday communication. Therefore, the following four research questions will be addressed:

RQ1: What characterizes the usage of T-V pronouns in the Hungarian advertising corpus?

RQ2: How do native speakers of Hungarian reflect on the practice of using T-V in today's Hungarian TV, radio and print advertisements?

RQ3: What characterizes the usage of T-V pronouns by native speakers of Hungarian when formulating a request?

RQ4: How do native speakers of Hungarian reflect on their own and their communicative partners' T-V choices?

To answer the above-mentioned research questions, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research was designed. The research method included compiling a corpus of 207 advertisements, developing a questionnaire and an interview protocol. Each step of the empirical investigation from the design to the conducting of the research is described in the present paper. However, before we dive into the discussion of the details of the empirical investigation, the Hungarian pronoun system and the relevant research will be briefly introduced.

## **2. The Hungarian pronominal system**

Hungarian is a Finno-Ugric agglutinative language spoken by people living in Hungary, by ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries and in diasporas all around the world. Its linguistic isolation dates back to the Hungarian Conquest (9th century AD) which resulted in an internal development of its grammar but the sociocultural norms that are reflected in the linguistic politeness have been influenced by the cultural traditions of several European countries.

The Hungarian language distinguishes among first, second and third person pronouns in singular and plural, as Table 1 shows. In Hungarian none of the personal pronouns is gender-specific, the singular 3rd form, *ő* refers both to females and males. Unanimate objects, plants, animals are referred to by the demonstrative pronouns *ez/az* (this/that). Many languages in the world use second person plural pronouns for indicating formality such as *vous* in French, or *вы* in Russian, whereas the German *Sie*, and the Italian *Lei* uses the third person pronouns as formal forms in singular and plural versions. However, Hungarian has two additional pronouns for formal second person: singular *ön*, *maga*, and plural: *önök*, *maguk*. Both the

singular and the plural second person formal verb suffix (see Table 1) takes the third person informal verb suffix.

Table 1. The system of personal pronoun in Hungarian with the co-occurring verb conjugation

|        | Personal pronoun          | Verb agreement          |
|--------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sing.1 | <i>én</i> (I)             | <i>tanulok</i> (study)  |
| Sing.2 | <i>te</i> (you T-form)    | <i>tanulsz</i> (study)  |
|        | <i>ön</i> (you V-form)    | <i>tanul</i> (studies)  |
|        | <i>maga</i> (you V-form)  | <i>tanul</i> (studies)  |
| Sing.3 | <i>ő</i> (he/she)         | <i>tanul</i> (studies)  |
| Pl.1   | <i>mi</i> (we)            | <i>tanulunk</i> (study) |
| Pl.2   | <i>ti</i> (you T-form)    | <i>tanultok</i> (study) |
|        | <i>önök</i> (you V form)  | <i>tanulnak</i> (study) |
|        | <i>maguk</i> (you V form) | <i>tanulnak</i> (study) |
| Pl.3   | <i>ők</i> (they)          | <i>tanulnak</i> (study) |

Hungarian is a pro-drop language which means that personal pronouns are often elliptical, the verb ending in the appropriate number indicates the person. However, in contexts where the pronoun is emphatic or contrasted, it is always expressed overtly, in a preverbal focused position (Kenesei et al, 1998: 263). Omission is very common and neither leads to misunderstanding nor decreases the level of formality. All pronouns can be used in fourteen grammatical cases that are marked by suffixes (Korchmáros 2006: 283), for example, the relative ‘about you’ construction corresponds to *rólad* (T-form) / *önről* (V-form)/ *magáról* (V-form).

In addition to the two formal personal pronouns mentioned above and the option to omit the personal pronoun, the formality can be expressed in a fourth way with the “*tetszik*” + infinitive construction (Table 2). The word “*tetszik*” (Sing) and its plural pair, “*tetszenek*”, which means

“please someone”, indicate a higher degree of respect used by young children for adults and by adults usually for the elderly, especially women.

Table 2. The four possibilities to use V-forms in Hungarian

|   | Second person singular      | Second person plural          | Meaning                       | Example   |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | <i>ön</i>                   | <i>önök</i>                   | Formal ‘you’                  | <i>Ön Budapesten lakik?</i><br>Do YOU-SING-FORM live in Budapest?             |
| 2 | <i>maga</i>                 | <i>maguk</i>                  | Formal ‘you’                  | <i>Maga Budapesten lakik?</i><br>Do YOU-SING-FORM live in Budapest?           |
| 3 | elliptical pronoun          | elliptical pronoun            | Formal ‘you’                  | <i>(Ø) Budapesten lakik?</i><br>Do (YOU-SING-FORM) live in Budapest?          |
| 4 | <i>tetszik + infinitive</i> | <i>tetszenek + infinitive</i> | Super respectful formal ‘you’ | <i>Budapesten tetszik lakni?</i><br>Do (YOU-SING-FORM/RESP) live in Budapest? |

### 3. The changes in the T-V use in Hungarian

#### 3.1. The evolution of T/V use

The forms and the use of the Hungarian pronoun system have undergone fundamental changes during history. Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century only the informal pronoun existed and was used in Hungarian regardless of age, social status, and gender. Then, by the end of the Middle Hungarian age (1526–1772), due to complex social and cultural transformations, there was a need to indicate more sophisticated politeness forms towards people with higher social status (Kiss-Pusztai 2003). The formal address form was gradually developing. At first, the so-called polite informal style spread where the informal ‘you’ (*te*) was complemented with a polite address form, e.g. *te Kegyelmed* (you honorable, Sing), *ti Nagyságotok* (you Greatness, Pl), however, the verb form had to be agreed either with the third person singular or with the third person plural. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the formal

personal pronoun of the Hungarian language ‘*maga*’ (Sing), ‘*maguk*’ (Pl) started to spread. The form developed from the reflexive pronoun which was also used without the reflexive function and referred to the speaker only (D. Máтай 1999: 456). However, from the beginning of its usage it did not enjoy general acceptance (Zolnai 1897: 165; Sinor 1974: 545–52 cited in Domonkosi 2010). A few decades later, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new formal, more official third person pronoun ‘*ön*’ and its plural counterpart *önök* were created (Grétsy–Kovalovszky 1985: 88) and spread as an alternative to *maga*, *maguk*. This duplicated system of *maga-maguk*, *ön-önök* indicates various degrees of formality as well as style and register. We must note that in certain Hungarian dialects the ‘*ön*’ pronoun is not used (Kiss 1995: 274).

Finally, the construction of ‘*tetszik*+infinitive’ as the fourth option of formality has been used since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Domonkosi 2010) and even today by the young or by adults’ language when they address elderly people, especially women who are not young. Let us illustrate this with a typical situation in which the speaker offers his or her seat on public transportation in a polite way:

(1) *Le tesszik ülni?* (Would YOU-SING-FORM/RESP like to sit down?)

Research on ‘*tetszik*’ showed that it has been widely used by Hungarian doctors when talking to their patients even if they were not old to build a positive face, while patients avoided using the structure of ‘*tetszik*’ to reduce social distance (Domonkosi–Kuna 2015: 52). Respondents evaluated the ‘*tetszik*’ structure as intimate, kind, although somewhat unusual in the V-form.

### 3.2. The spreading of the T-form in Hungarian culture

In the previous section, we could see the paradigm shift in the Hungarian language after the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The pendulum swung gradually from informal to formal language use, due to

complex sociocultural changes after the Ottoman occupation (1526–1686), during the Austrian (Habsburg) rule, which increased the need for language to reflect differences in rank. In the last thirty years, in Hungary, however, the opposite tendency has become apparent especially among young people similarly to other cultures, such as French (Bouissac 2019), Swedish (Levshina 2017) Polish, German, (Koutny 2009), Finnish (Isosävi–Vecsernyés 2022). In Hungarian, T-V forms can be expressed by a wide range of elements, such as greetings, address forms, personal and possessive pronouns, and verb conjugation. Prior to the 1990s, traditionally, in Hungarian culture, the T-form was used between people who already knew each other, informality conveyed familiarity, solidarity, and/or intimacy.

Nevertheless, the spreading of the informal style started gradually even before 1990. The first study that drew attention to this trend was published in 1981 by Guskova and further elaborated by Angelusz and Tardos (1995). Certainly, the profound socioeconomic transformations in the 1990s from socialism to capitalism brought along the weakening of strong social hierarchy and fostered the rapid spread of the new global culture (House & Kádár 2020). Multicultural companies implemented their company culture, which often required of their employees to use the T-form, although it was not always welcomed. The Hungarian workplaces used very different patterns of language use side by side. Reményi (1999) in her research compared the T/V use of a university department, a company, and a hospital. It was found that the informal language use was preferred at the department, which is an example for solidarity-oriented group norm (Brow–Gilman 1960); at the company the T-usage was in the minority, and educational and rank differences among employees were still important. Finally, the hospital followed the status-oriented group norm where the T-usage represented the majority, the difference of rank had the strongest effect preceding the difference in gender and the frequency of routine contact. In families, the spreading of the T-

form is also inevitable. Dömötör (2005: 304) found that by now 90% of the children address their grandparents by the T-form, even if the parents still use the V-form with their parents. She also noted that the V-form preference was slightly higher in villages than in the city. Therefore, the place of residents still counts as a sociological variable in empirical investigations.

Among adults, the T-V form usage in Hungarian is reciprocal. Non-reciprocal usage is common only between children and adults. If used for adults, it is considered as serious impoliteness, and an offense that emphasizes the inferiority of the communicative partner. Let's scrutinizing on this topic in a cross-cultural context. Koutny (2004) examined and compared T and V address forms and greetings in Hungarian, Polish, American English, French, and German. Following Wardhaugh (1992), she claims that in these languages the reciprocal V is traditionally considered as the expression of politeness and the reciprocal T that of solidarity. Koutny highlights the fact that it is power, solidarity, social position (profession, culture, prestige, rank), age, gender, and the level of acquaintance of the interlocutors (from intimate to public) that determine what form to be used. Furthermore, the choice also depends on the situation and personality (2004: 7–8). With regards to cultural differences, the reciprocal use of T-forms between young teachers and students is becoming more common at Hungarian universities (Domonkosi 2021), however, this is not the case in Poland, since hierarchy seems to be more important than solidarity. Hierarchy is often reinforced by the frequent use of titles (honorifics) in Poland, which is an obvious sign of respect.

#### **4. Snapshot of the use and perception of T-V in Hungarian advertising today**

In this section, we first look at the T-V use of ads on the national and on the most popular commercial TV and radio, and in the two most popular magazines of Hungary. Then, the

evaluation on the T-V use of advertisements will be mapped into three age groups: young, middle-aged and elderly through questionnaires and interviews.

In Hungary, the media law differentiates among public service commercial TV and community TV channels and radio stations. According to Balázs (2000: 6), these differ in terms of elevated and non-elevated media norms. The language of the commercial media is reported as easy-going, uproarious and employs slang words, more irony, language games, and tends to promote the T-form (Balázs 2017; Bańcerowski 1998: 2004). The language of advertising is, on the one hand, indicative of the specific linguaculture, the copywriters adjust the vocabulary, the grammar and style to the current mainstream socio-pragmatic practices, and, on the other hand, advertisements can form and construct these practices and foster the evolution of a new norm. Ads are created to be eye-catching due to the design and were louder for decades to attract attention before the Calm Act was passed in Hungary in 2013 (WEB1). The actual effect of advertising language on private language use is difficult to measure (Sayers 2014, Foulkes—Docherty 1999), studies concentrate more on the effect of language use on consumption or consumer choices (Cruz—Leonhardt 2016; Hsuan—Yi 2020; Packard et al. 2018). Still, the systematic study of any of the linguistic features of advertising contributes to the deeper understanding of the linguistic input the native speakers experience.

In Hungarian advertising industry, IKEA was the first international company in Hungary in the 1990 that used the T-form with customers, however, not without criticism. This case generated a public discussion on the appropriateness of the T-form and uncovered the underlying fear in many people that informality in the press would lead to the loss of respect. However, it is important to note that despite the informal catalogues and IKEA billboards when customers went to the store, the shop assistants did not automatically address them with

the T-form in face-to-face interactions. Finally, this pioneering use of the T-form served as an example for advertisers and promoted the T-trend.

The use of pronouns in advertising is strategic. The second person singular creates the illusion of direct communication between the advertiser and the audience; thus, it has a strong fatic function. Cook considers pronouns as “one of the most distinctive features in advertising” and highlights that ‘you’ is a striking characteristic of the genre (2001: 157). This is even more true in Hungarian, which by default hardly uses a personal pronoun, since the verbal suffix expresses the person and the number. Thus, when the communicators utter the second person personal pronoun either with T or V-form, they are addressing the interlocutor(s) emphatically, putting pressure on them to respond. As for ads, the audience is offered and asked to try and buy various products and services. The use of the informal second person singular pronoun is even stronger, since it implies a friendly tone and even intimacy, while the second person plural creates a fictional group that is a common persuasive strategy known as the minimal group paradigm (Tajfel 1970).

Advertisements belong to strategic discourse type, copywriters and marketing experts make conscious decisions on the language use, the syntax, and vocabulary including pronoun choice of the texts. In case the advertisement is a translation, the text needs cultural adaptation to achieve efficacy. This adaptation may include the replacement of T or V pronouns (House–Kádár 2020; Cui–Zhao 2014; Zhao 2006). The following section aims at examining the T-V use of the ads in the Hungarian media and to explore how native speakers evaluate the current use.

#### 4.1. T-V use of ads in the Hungarian sample corpus

To compile the Hungarian sample advertisement corpus, three small subcorpora were built. (1) An issue (71 ads) from Hungary's two most read weekly magazines (WEB2) were analyzed. One quality and one tabloid magazine were selected in order to represent the stylistic variations, i.e., media norm noted by literature. (2) Similarly, 95 television advertisements were recorded from the main quality news channel M1 (Hungarian television), and RTL Klub, the most popular commercial channel; (3) 41 radio ads were collected from the most popular public Kossuth Radio and the most popular commercial channel, the Retro Radio. Television and radio ads were recorded during the most popular time slots measured by media analysts.

#### *4.1.1. T-V use of the ads in the Hungarian weekly magazines*

*Nők Lapja* (meaning Women's Magazine) with its 141.217 subscribers is the most popular and oldest quality magazine written for general readership and covers a wide range of topics. The second most read magazine is the *Kiskegyed* tabloid with its 123.660 subscribers. The ads in both magazines show a variety of products from health care products to travel ads.

The results in Table 3 indicate that V-forms outnumber the T-forms in both magazines; however, the avoidance strategy (35) is just as frequent as the T and V forms altogether. There isn't a second-person verbal suffix or personal pronoun in the case of avoidances, since the communicator used structures that didn't directly address the readers in the second person. Instead, first person plural (inclusive we) was used, or the ad only contained facts, images of the product or service without any directive speech act. A new category, called Mixed was also identified, since in one of the ads both T- and V-forms were found as Example (2) illustrates.

(2) Ragyogjon a mosolya! (...) Napi 15 perc és a mosolyod ragyogni fog.  
 Your (FORM) smile should shine! (...) 15 minutes a day and your (INF) smile will shine.

Table 3. The use of T-V in ads in two Hungarian magazines

|                                       | <b>V-form</b>                       | <b>T-forms</b> | <b>Mixed</b> | <b>Avoidance</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|
| Nők Lapja, November 30, 2022 (52 ads) | 15                                  | 7              | 1            | 29               |
| Pronoun                               | 4 formal second person pronoun 'ön' | -              | -            | -                |
| Kiskegyed, January 17, 2023 (19 ads)  | 10                                  | 3              | -            | 6                |
| Pronoun                               | 1 formal second person pronoun 'ön' | -              | -            | -                |

#### 4.1.2. T-V use of Hungarian television and radio ads

According to the Nielsen information measurement company's survey, between April and June 2022, Hungarians spent an average of 4 hours 41 minutes in front of screens. 21% of the screening time was composed of commercials and trailers, an average Hungarian viewer saw 133 ads a day that lasted for 33 minutes. Since the majority of Hungarians watch television mostly in the evenings, especially on Saturdays between 19:00-21:30 (WEB3), the data was collected on Saturday during this timeslot. On the commercial TV channel commercial blocks were shown every twenty minutes.

Table 4. The use of T-V in ads broadcasted in two Hungarian television channels

|                                     | <b>V-form</b>                       | <b>T-forms</b>  | <b>Mixed</b> | <b>Avoidance</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------|------------------|
| M1, 22 January, 2023 (27 ads)       | 13                                  | 10  | 1            | 3                |
| Pronoun                             | 3 formal second person pronoun 'ön' | -   | -            | -                |
| RTL Klub, January 23, 2023 (68 ads) | 19                                  | 35  | 1            | 13               |
| Pronoun                             | 1 formal second person pronoun 'ön' | 3 ( <i>tiéd</i> (your), <i>téged</i> (youACC), <i>neked</i> (to you)) | -            | -                |

The data revealed that the T-forms were used more frequently than V-forms in the commercial channel RTL Klub, while the V-forms were more frequent in the M1 national channel. Two examples were found for the mixed category. As Example (3) shows the actual ad used the T-form, however, in the end, the compulsory fixed text was added, which has been prescribed in health support products in Hungary. It warns the audience to read the leaflet and consult their physician to avoid risks and side effects. As for the overt pronoun use, only 7 ads out of the 95 contained overt pronouns, the remaining ads omitted them.

(3) *Számíthatsz a Tantum Verde-re. (...) Kockázatokról és mellékhatásokról olvassa el a betegtájékoztatót vagy kérdezze meg kezelőorvosát, gyógyszerészét!* (M1/11)

You can count on Tantum Verde. (...) Read the leaflet about the risks and side effects or ask your doctor or pharmacist!

According to the representative survey of the National Media and Infocommunications Agency (NMHH), 65% of the Hungarians listen to the radio on a daily basis, while 93% on a weekly basis. Data was collected during the most frequent time slot, between 7:00-9:00 am.

Table 5. The use of T-V in ads broadcasted in two Hungarian radio channels

|   | <b>V-form</b>                       | <b>T-forms</b>   | <b>Mixed</b> | <b>Avoidance</b> |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Kossuth radio, 26 January, 2023 (7 ads) | 5                                   | 1                | -            | 1                |
| Pronoun                                 | 4 formal second person pronoun 'ön' | -                | -            | -                |
| Retro Radio January 25, 2023 (34 ads)   | 18                                  | 8                | 3            | 5                |
| Pronoun                                 | 7 formal second person pronoun 'ön' | 1 ('ránk' on us) | -            | -                |

In radio data, the V-forms preceded the T-forms in both public and commercial channels, 6 avoidances and 3 mixed cases were found. This small corpus displayed a relatively high number of formal second person pronoun 'ön' (11). Address forms also indicate the level of formality. In one of the Retro Radio ads, the speaker addressed the audience by the formal

‘Ladies and Gentlemen!’ greeting, but then in the text used the T-form. Due to this mismatch, the ad was categorized as mixed.

(4) *Hölgyeim és Uraim! (...) Ránk számíthatok!*  
Ladies and gentlemen! (...) You (INF) can count on us! (Retro Radio)

With regard to the type of product and the use of T-V, it was striking to notice the inconsistency. Within ten minutes, one vacuum cleaner ad used the T-form, while the other brand used the V-form. Therefore, I examined the product most frequently advertised in the data, the health support products. Of the 46 products (some of them were repeatedly advertised), 61% used the V-form, 15% the T-form, and 24% avoided T-V address forms. For grocery chain ads or beauty products, the corpus did not prove large enough to draw conclusions. The V preference in health care products may be attributed to the fact that communication in healthcare is still V-governed.

[Figure 1. The T-V use of ads of a Hungarian quality magazine, the national TV and the national radio ]

Figure (1) indicates that the audience of all three media can experience more V-forms than T-forms. It was also found that in magazine ads the avoidance strategy was the most frequent one. A larger corpus should be built, including more TV and radio channels to understand the relationship between T-V preference, political attitudes and the age of the target audience.

[Figure 2. The T-V use of ads in a Hungarian tabloid magazine, commercial TV (RTL Club) and commercial radio (Retro Radio)]

Figure 2. shows that the audience could experience V dominance in magazine and radio ads, whereas RTL Klub broadcasted ads with a preference for the T-form. This is the only case in

the data where the T-forms outnumber the V-forms. If we compare the T-V use of this particular TV channel in the given time period, we can see that the T-V use is balanced (46 vs 47). As for the pronoun use, the data only contained ‘te’ (INFyou) or ‘ön’ (FORMyou) but no occurrences were found for ‘maga’ (FORM you) or the super respectful formal ‘*tetszik+infinitive*’ construction. No cumulative data was created for the six media because it would display only an average percentage overshadowing individual preference. The audience usually neither reads tabloid and quality papers at the same time nor switches back and forth between Kossuth Radio and Retro Radio.

#### 4.2. The evaluation of the current T-V use of Hungarian advertisements in the three age groups

A questionnaire was administered to 90 participants to map their T-V use when formulating a request and also asked what their opinion was regarding the current T-V usage of Hungarian ads (Table 6). Radio ads are especially pervasive, since in Hungarian shopping malls, restaurants, hairdressers’ salons, cafés, taxis the radio is very often on. 17 out of the 90 respondents either did not provide an answer or indicated that they did not read, watch, or listen to ads or simply were not interested in ads. These answers were listed in the first column (I have no opinion). The data was further enriched by ten respondents from each age group who were interviewed. Their ideas fostered a deeper understanding and a more precise assessment of the question.

Table (6) The evaluation of the current T-V form usage of Hungarian ads (90 respondents)

|       | I have no opinion | I do not mind the T-forms in ads. | I’m getting used to the T-forms but not always like it. | I do not like/hate when ads use the T-form. |
|-------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 18-35 | 7                 | 14                                | 7   | 2   |
| 36-63 | 5                 | 6                                 | 9   | 10  |

|         |   |   |   |    |
|---------|---|---|---|----|
| over 64 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 18 |
|---------|---|---|---|----|

Young people did not express a strong aversion to T-form ads, whereas more than half of the middle-aged respondents disprefer T-form use in ads. The most obvious resistance against the T-forms was articulated by the seniors. In their written and spoken responses they admitted that the T-form is disturbing, disrespectful, hick, impolite, and irritating. A female respondent (72) noted that “Ads do not make me young even when they talk to me in an informal way.” The seniors’ data suggests that the V-form for them is a sign of respect and politeness, while for the young it is rather neutral and does not imply intimacy. The results are in line with the literature stating that the stylistic value of T-form has been changed (Tolcsvai 1996: 156). This disparate appreciation of the T-V form use is not simply a Hungarian story. When the Deutsche Bahn suddenly switched from V to T forms in German, 30% of the respondents perceived this practice as a violation of social distancing (Truan 2022).

During the interviews, several respondents from all three age groups mentioned with a negative overtone that they were surprised to see that banks in Hungary started to address the potential partners with the T-form. While checking the six most popular banks in Hungary, a strong inconsistency was noticed in their communication. On their websites mainly the T form was used, but when I called the banks as a test, the assistants all greeted me in a formal way and used the V-form without knowing who I was. A similar inconsistency was found when in the email I was sent last year by one of the banks I belong to addressed me randomly in a formal and informal way as well.

In conclusion, the present sample data revealed V-preference in Hungarian ads with the exception of a commercial TV channel. Inconsistency was found regarding which product was advertised in the V-form except for health support products. Finally, the higher the age of the respondents, the less the T-form was preferred.

## **5. Empirical research of T-V choice in Hungarian in requests**

For the present research only one speech act, request was chosen to examine the second person T-V form use. I chose requests, since in this speech situation the speaker must initiate the conversation; second, requests commonly occur in everyday life; third, requests are expected to elicit variations of T-V choice according to the weight of the favor.

To gain a deeper understanding of the metapragmatic awareness of the speakers, ten respondents from the three age groups were asked to fill in the questionnaire using a think-aloud protocol (TAP), which is a popular qualitative research method. The advantage of the TAP is that there is no specific instruction given to the respondents about what topics or difficulties they should talk about (Ericsson—Simon 1984). Furthermore, answering the questionnaire and commenting on the questions and options at the same time fosters the researcher to understand the motivations or doubts about the choices they make, what values, style, emotions they attribute to the T-V forms in that particular context. Thus, this concurrent verbalization reveals how consciously interlocutors use the language.

### **5.1. Developing the questionnaire and the interview protocol**

The questionnaire was designed to map the T-V preferences of respondents in five different situations. Altogether 1350 choices were made. They were asked to initiate a conversation by uttering a request to an unknown, young (18-35), middle-aged (36-63) and senior (over 64) person. To ensure content validity for the questionnaire items and for the interview protocol, a group interview was conducted relating to the topic of the T-V use in Hungarian. The participants were five graduate students; their ages ranged from 20-30. The group interview generated ideas to formulate both the situations of the questionnaire and the interview questions.

The first part of the questionnaire asked about independent sociological variables such as age, gender, education (primary/secondary/higher) and place of residence. The second part contained five situations (see Appendix 1) that were followed by only one question enquiring about how respondents appreciated the current T-V use of advertisements as discussed above.

In Situation 1, respondents had to ask an unknown person for information about the place of the departure of the train at the train station. Four options were offered, one in the T-form, one in the V-form where the formal personal pronoun was omitted, one with the super respectful ‘*tetszik+infinitive*’ construction, and an open-ended item ‘I can’t decide because ...’.

In Situation 2, a face-threatening request had to be carried out by the respondents, asking a fellow passenger to move over their oversized suitcase that occupies the reserved seat. Here, besides the usual T, V, V/*tetszik+inf* options, the fourth one offered a neutral utterance that allowed to avoid making a choice and use neither T nor V-form by saying ‘*Elnézést, odébb lehetne tenni ezt a bőröndöt?*’ ‘Would it be possible to move away the suitcase?’

Situation 3 took place in a large store where respondents had to ask for a pair of pants in a larger size. Here, the avoidance option was also provided: ‘*Elnézést, van ebből egy nagyobb méret?*’ ‘Excuse me, is there a larger size?’.

Situation 4 aimed at scrutinizing the use of the second person pronoun choice, offering six options (Table 7). The fictional situation was placed in a fast-food restaurant where the respondents had to find out if the person in front of them was waiting in line or just looking at the menu. There were four V constructions that cover the full repertoire of the Hungarian formal address forms: 1. formal second person pronoun ‘*ön*’; 2. ‘*tetszik+infinitive*’ construction; 3. omitted formal second person pronoun; 4. formal second person pronoun ‘*maga*’; 5. informal second person pronoun ‘*te*’; 6. omitted informal second person pronoun.

Table 7. Pronoun options in Situation 4.

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Őn ide vár?</i>        | Are YOU-SING-FORM waiting here?        |
| 2. <i>Ide tetszik várni?</i> | Are (YOU)-SING-FORM/RESP waiting here? |
| 3. <i>Ide vár?</i>           | Are (YOU)-SING-FORM waiting here?      |
| 4. <i>Maga ide vár?</i>      | Are YOU-SING-FORM waiting here?        |
| 5. <i>Te ide vársz?</i>      | Are YOU-SING-INFORM waiting here?      |
| 6. <i>Ide vársz?</i>         | Are (YOU)-SING-INFORM waiting here?    |

Finally, in Situation 5, respondents had to ask a favor from a person standing right in front of them at the cashier at the grocery store if they are allowed to go before because they are in a hurry.

## 5.2. Participants

90 native speakers of Hungarians living in Hungary filled in the questionnaire, the age groups were divided according to the research tradition 18-35 (average 25); 36-63 (average 45); over 64 (average 70). With regard to educational background, the data is not representative, the number of respondents with primary school certificates are underrepresented (2%), respondents with college degree are overrepresented (64,4%). Ten respondents from each age group participated in the think aloud protocol and were interviewed consecutively either personally or through Zoom. All interviews were recorded. The length of the interviews varied from 20 to 60 minutes.

## 5.3. Results and discussion of the questionnaires, the think aloud protocols and the interviews

This section first presents the findings of the questionnaire data. It should be noted that respondents had the possibility to circle more than one option. This methodological decision was made after the group interview, in which participants admitted that they had the preference for multiple answers.

The think aloud protocols were recorded as part of the interview to save time. The 30 interviewees, while discussing their choices with me, often kept talking about issues that were listed in the interview protocol, so only a few additional questions had to be asked. This qualitative data explores the metapragmatic awareness and uncovers the motivation and value judgements of the speakers when choosing between T-V forms and when comprehending and evaluating an utterance.

Table (8) How the young address the young

|  | T-form    | Avoidance | V-form   | V/tetszik |
|--|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 25        | -         | 9        | 1         |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 22        | 3         | 6        |           |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | 13        | 15        | 5        | 1         |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast-food restaurant   | 23        | -         | 9        |           |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 26        | -         | 7        |           |
|  | 109 (66%) | 18 (11%)  | 38 (23%) |           |

Total number of choices: 165

Data shows (Table 8) that young people had a preference (66%) for T-form in the 5 situations when addressing unknown people of their age. However, think aloud data revealed that the age range 18-35 used in present research (and generally in the literature) is too wide, a 20-year-old respondent may prefer using the V-form with someone over 30. The interviewees noted that their choice of the T-V form is based on their judgment, which is formed on the basis of the outfit and as they called it the ‘style’ of the person they intend to address. More formal clothing triggers V-form usage.

When talking to middle-aged people, the young (Table 9) tend to opt for the V-form (83%), even the super respectful ‘*tetszik*+infinitive’ construction was found in 10 occurrences.

Table (9) How young people address middle-aged people

|  | T-form   | Avoidance | V-form    | V/tetszik |
|--|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station |          | -         | 26        | 4         |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 2        | 4         | 26        | -         |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | -        | 21        | 14        | -         |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast food restaurant   | 1        | -         | 30        | 4         |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 0        | -         | 29        | 2         |
|  | 3 (1,8%) | 25 (15%)  | 135 (83%) |           |

Total number of choices: 163

Table 10 below indicates that the young never addressed seniors with a T-form, V-form constituted 85% of the total addresses, and it is striking to see that the use of the super respectful ‘*tetszik*+infinitive’ is represented more than half of the formal forms (55%).

Table (10) How the young address the seniors

|  | T-form | Avoidance | V-form    | V/tetszik |
|--|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 0      | -         | 10        | 22        |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 0      | 7         | 12        | 13        |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | 0      | 18        | 12        | 5         |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast food restaurant   | 0      | -         | 15        | 20        |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 0      | -         | 16        | 18        |
|  | 0%     | 25 (15%)  | 142 (85%) |           |

Total number of choices: 167

Figure (3) demonstrates a strong tendency of T-preference towards their generation, and a strong V-preference towards anyone older than them. The data supported a previous study of

Domonkosi (2021, p.16) that for this generation the order of preference for the formal second person is (1) avoidance, (2) ‘*ön*’ formal pronoun, (3) *tetszik* and (4) *maga* formal pronoun.

[Figure (3) The T-V use of the young respondents (18-35) in requests]

Turning to the answers to the middle-aged respondents, the data (Table 11) revealed that 53% of the respondents opted for the V-form towards the young, however, there is a significant number who used the T-form.

Table (11) How the middle-aged address the young

|  | T-form   | Avoidance | V-form   | V/tetszik |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 16       | -         | 17       |           |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 13       | 3         | 16       |           |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | 0        | 11        | 19       | 1         |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast-food restaurant   | 19       | -         | 14       | 0         |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 13       | -         | 17       | 0         |
|  | 61 (38%) | 14 (8%)   | 84 (53%) |           |

Total number of choices: 159

The middle-aged respondents preferred the V-form (84%) when they referred to people in their age group (Table 12), although the interviewees made controversial remarks about this case. Some admitted that if the age difference is about fifteen years or more, they are not inclined to use the T-form but someone of the same age as they are, it would not be a problem. Others clearly stated that they would never use the T-form with someone they do not know. A male interviewee (51) noted “I really do not like this current T-trend, people think they are cool and friendly, if they use the T-form with everyone”.

Table (12) How the middle-aged address their own age

|  | T-form  | Avoidance | V-form    | V/tetszik |
|--|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 1       | -         | 28        |           |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 1       | 4         | 27        |           |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | 2       | 11        | 21        |           |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast-food restaurant   | 4       |           | 28        | 1         |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 2       |           | 28        | 2         |
|  | 10 (6%) | 15 (9%)   | 135 (84%) |           |

Total number of choices: 160

Table 13 illustrates how the middle-aged address the seniors. The results clearly demonstrate that respondents never used the T-form with this generation, 94% chose the V-form, of which 37% used the ‘*tetszik+infinitive*’ construction. Many interviewees noted that they would only use this super respectful form if the communicative partner were a female.

Table (13) How the middle-aged address the seniors

|  | T-form | Avoidance | V-form    | V/tetszik |
|--|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 0      | -         | 30        | 15        |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 0      | 7         | 19        | 6         |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | 0      | 10        | 14        | 6         |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast-food restaurant   | 0      |           | 18        | 14        |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 0      |           | 16        | 15        |
|  | 0      | 17 (6%)   | 153 (94%) |           |

Total number of choices: 163

Figure 4 summarizes the T-V preference of the middle-aged respondents who do use T-form with unknown young people, and with middle-aged ones, though to a lesser extent.

[Figure (4) The T-V use of the middle-aged respondents (18-35)]

Finally, the seniors' answers will be reviewed. Data shows in Table 14 that 72% prefer the V-form when talking to the young and 14% use the informal one. Interestingly, the construction with '*tetszik+inf*' constituted 10% of the V-forms. This finding represents a generational gap in the expectations of the young and the seniors. According to the interview data, the young reserve the '*tetszik+inf*' construction exclusively to the elderly (both male and female), whereas the seniors sometimes address them with this form. When I raised this issue with senior interviewees, they argued that they preferred to treat young women with respect as they were taught. The opposite situation can also be observed in the data. There are seniors who address the young with the T-form, since they "could be my grandchildren". Also, in Situation 4 that takes place in a fast-food restaurant, one of the female interviewees said, "I use the T-form because it is not an elegant restaurant".

Table (14) How the seniors address the young

|  | T-form   | Avoidance | V-form    | V/ <i>tetszik</i> |
|--|----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 3        |           | 25        | 3                 |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 3        | 8         | 15        | 1                 |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | -        | 13        | 17        | 1                 |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast-food restaurant   | 9        |           | 23        | 3                 |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 7        |           | 19        | 3                 |
|  | 22 (14%) | 21 (14%)  | 110 (72%) |                   |

Total number of choices: 153

Seniors turn to the middle-aged (Table 15) with a similar practice: the V-form is preferred (83%) out of which the ‘*tetszik+inf*’ construction constitutes 13%. Turning to the middle-aged by T-form is less frequent (3%) and interviewees noted that this would be possible only with females.

Table (15) How the seniors address the middle-aged

|  | T-form | Avoidance | V-form    | V/ <i>tetszik</i> |
|--|--------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 2      | -         | 25        | 5                 |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 2      | 10        | 17        | 0                 |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | 1      | 11        | 17        | 2                 |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast-food restaurant   | 0      | -         | 17        | 5                 |
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead                      | 0      | -         | 25        | 5                 |
|  | 5 (3%) | 21 (13%)  | 131 (83%) |                   |

Total number of choices: 156

Finally, seniors address their age (Table 16) primarily with the V-form (92%). Only one participant (72) admitted that the V-form is too ‘cold’ for her, thus she only uses the T-form with everyone regardless of age or gender.

Table (16) How the seniors address their age

|  | T-form | Avoidance | V-form | V/ <i>tetszik</i> |
|--|--------|-----------|--------|-------------------|
| Sit1 Asking for information at the train station | 0      | -         | 15     | 17                |
| Sit2 Asking the luggage to be put away           | 1      | 8         | 14     | 10                |
| Sit3 Asking a shop assistant                     | 0      | 9         | 14     | 9                 |
| Sit4 Asking for info in a fast food restaurant   | 0      | -         | 19     | 14                |

|                             |        |          |           |    |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------|-----------|----|
| Sit5 Asking for going ahead | 0      | -        | 20        | 13 |
|                             | 1 0,6% | 17 (11%) | 145 (92%) |    |

Total number of choices: 158

[Figure (5) The T-V use of the senior respondents (over 64)]

In general, as Figure 5 illustrates, the seniors prefer the V-form and use the T-form rather with the young.

The questionnaire contained a situation (Sit 4) that elicited the pronoun preference in all potential forms. I was interested in how many respondents would choose the request with an explicit personal pronoun, if they had the chance grammatically. Figure (5) illustrates that this situation elicited the highest number of choices (291) of the 90 respondents compared to the other situations. This supports the finding of the initial group interview where respondents found more than one option appropriate in a particular situation. According to the interview data, participants frequently hesitated about whether or not to use the personal pronoun and when they were asked if they felt any difference between the two forms, contradictory answers were given. Some said that saying the personal pronoun makes the request too pushy and rude, creates unnecessary distance, while others said that it makes the request polite and clear. Among the options, I also offered the ‘maga’ (FORM you) option, which has been an unpreferred form. Still, it was chosen in six answers. Most of the respondents used the explicit formal ‘ön’ (FORM you), however, this was closely followed by its omitted pair (Table 17).

Figure (6) Distribution of the six T-V options in Situation 4

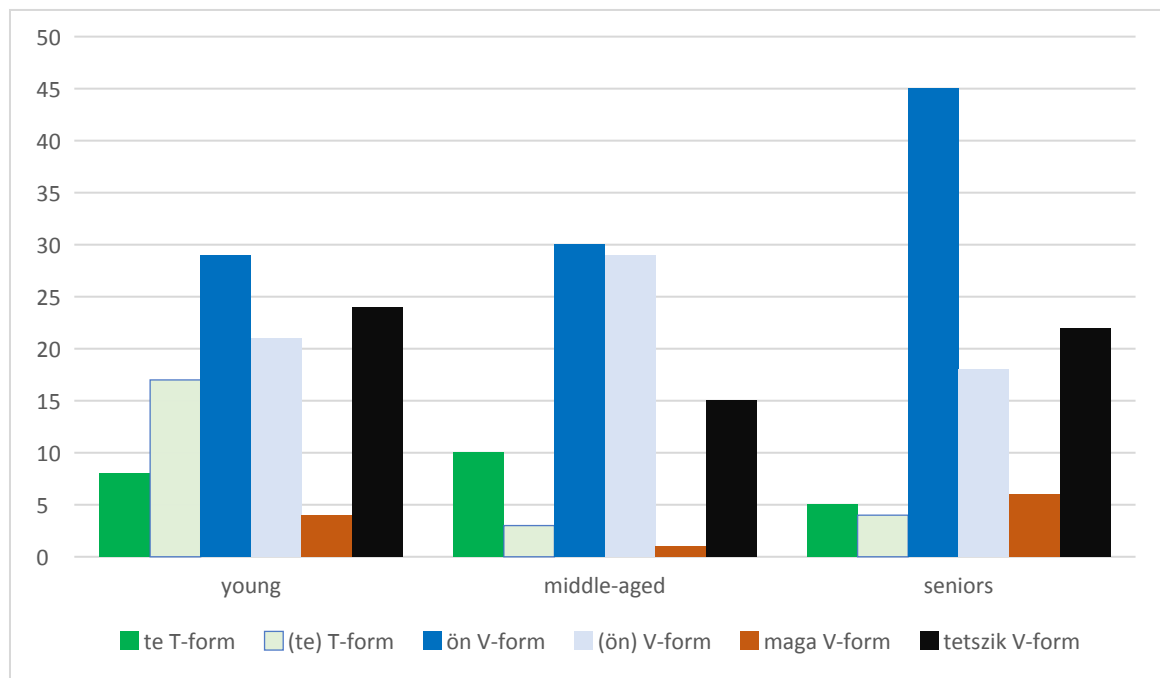


Table 17 Quantitative results of the pronoun use in Situation 4.

|                                   | The young | The middle aged | The seniors |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| 'te' informal second person       | 8         | 10              | 5           |
| omitted informal second person    | 17        | 3               | 4           |
| 'ön' formal second person         | 29        | 30              | 45          |
| omitted 'ön' formal second person | 21        | 29              | 18          |
| 'maga' formal second person       | 4         | 1               | 6           |
| 'tetszik+inf' formal construction | 24        | 15              | 22          |

Total choice: 291

Finally, the avoidance strategy was compared in the three subcorpora. According to the data, the use of this option is relevant, the young chose avoidance in 13,7 %, the middle-aged 9,5%, and the seniors 12,6%.

After the completion of the think aloud protocol, the interviewees were asked about what they thought about the current practice of T-V language use of the Hungarians in general. Furthermore, the interview protocols attempted to elicit whether respondents could formulate any rules on when to use the T-V forms.

Some young interviewees admitted that “the formal language is *overcomplicated* and intricate”. In general, they do not mind if the informal forms are spreading. One of them argued that “Hungarians should regard English as an example where people can be polite even without formal forms”. Young respondents have a preference in general for T-forms, since it means intimacy for them. “You can feel you are *closer* to the person, if you can use the informal”. Another interviewee said that “The current practice is changing, my generation prefers the informal forms, but many people do not even know exactly when to use the formal”. Others simply appreciate the value of formal language use and argue that “if I use the formal, I speak more consciously what and how I say things”.

Young interviewees admitted that they usually decide on the T-V form upon entering the place after estimating its style and looking at the staff. These two factors construct the actual situational context that governs their choice. Many interviewees in the data mentioned that the *age* factor is the most challenging issue. There is no agreement as to from what age someone whom they have never met before should be addressed by the V-form. And in fact, when we meet an unknown person, we don't know their age anyway. The young interviewees reported on the practice of making a sudden decision in the situation: “I look at the man and decide which form to use (appearance, behavior)”. Many of them added that the same people could be addressed either with the T or the V form depending on where they meet them. When years were asked, they mentioned 35-40 as the upper limit for using the T-form.

The preferences of the young are crucial to observe, since they actively shape, formulate, and pass on habits that might be a widespread common practice in the coming decades especially in social media. This means that a new norm in casual register is likely to emerge. However, the question is whether the current young generation will retain their preference for the T-form when they are middle-aged or older.

Elderly people's opinion revealed several aspects of the fading tradition and the taken-for-granted politeness rules and norms of the post-war Hungarian language community. Every participant of this generation realized the change, however, reacted differently. Some of them felt puzzled: "I do not like this informality (for example, billboards). It hurts me and I'm afraid that respect is fading.", "I do not understand this world.", "If formal use fades away, the language will be poorer." "If someone uses the T-form, tend to criticise more". Others accepted the change with more or less reservation: "It's a strange situation. I don't think it is proper, but I accept it.", "It does not impolite to me." Only one respondent shared her preference for the T-form: "it is simpler. I don't mind the change". The interviewees over 64 agreed that informal language indicates a level of *intimacy*, and it is not automatic, on the contrary, it has to be achieved. "We used to speak in formal ways, and when we turned to informal, it indicated the change in the relationship.", "If he uses the informal, he should at least get to know me", "turning to informal was a sign of trust." A woman over 80 admitted that "before my husband proposed me, we used the formal". It is obvious from the interviews that the respondents built their expectations on a former stable Hungarian politeness rule that required the use of formal forms among people approximately the same age at the first meeting or even for a longer period of time. Switching to informal was allowed to be initiated by females to males or by the older male to the younger, moreover, it was implemented through a social rite called drinking *pertu* ('drink for informal') when people clinked their glasses and then on used the informal. For the seniors, the use of V-forms refers to a distanced, aloof relationship and expresses respect as a tool of denoting esteem towards a person who is positioned or ranked higher by the addresser or who is much older. "In stores we always used formal, no matter how old the assistant was", "every parent used the formal between each other in school meetings".

Interviewees from three generations reported on the non-reciprocal style between the teacher and the younger students. Teachers who possess power use the T-form to students usually until 14 or 16 years, while students are required to use the V form as a sign of respect. Only two young interviewees admitted that T-form was used in their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades.

The interviewees' attitudes towards the linguistic realization of the formal form by the personal pronouns *ön/maga* and the *tetszik+inf* construction reflected the most diverse results and supports Domonkosi's findings (2002). 27 of the 30 respondents stated that *ön* is the most polite form. The majority of the interviewees from the generations tend to avoid *maga* and are characterized by words such as: *offensive, pejorative, hard-nosed, implicate aggression, rural, superior, attacks the listener, old-fashioned*. One respondent noted that the *maga* form is neutral and used commonly in the Vojvodina dialect among ethnic Hungarians in Serbia. The senior group did not report on such a negative connotation of the word. Finally, the evaluation of the *tetszik+inf* also proved to be diverse, some respondents never use it, others regarded it as very polite and use it often with elderly people. Seniors, since they constitute the target group to whom the utterances with *tetszik* are addressed, appreciated the form.

Regarding **metapragmatic awareness**, it was striking to see how often interviewees admitted during the think aloud procedure that they were not sure what option would be the best, as a middle-aged (46) interviewee said "I cannot explain why I chose this, I just feel this is the best option". Furthermore, the interview data revealed several inconsistencies between the interviewees' opinion and their actual choices. Although one of the senior respondents (77) stated that "I only use the T-form with those I know", she chose the T-form in Situation 4 when speaking to an unknown young person.

After scrutinizing the results, we might propose the question of what causes the change? One possible answer is that it is part of a complex cultural change. Language is a surface sign of a culture (Hall 1976), it reflects the value system of a current culture triggered by the

social-historical changes. New conversational patterns emerge when a core value (e.g. hierarchy, modesty) in a culture starts to change, to weaken, strengthen or even disappear. Non-compliance with the original norm is no longer associated with stigmatization or discrimination but becomes an alternative form of expression in a variety of linguistic schemes. Gradually the new communicative practice will be conventionalized and will count as an adequate successful action in a given situation.

In light of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2005), the shift from formal towards informal can be explained by measuring the Power distance index (PDI) in Hungary, which plays a determinative role in governing social relationships. PDI is connected to the distribution of power in society, which influences company culture, education, teacher-student and parent-child relationships, among others. PDI of societies were evaluated on a scale between low or high by Hofstede. Hungary's PDI is currently rather low (46 out of 100), implying that hierarchy is becoming less dominant, equality is strengthening, which is reflected in language use. The shift towards small power distance in Hungary is in large part due to the effect of the fast globalization after 1990, the arrival of international companies in Hungary, and their T preference in corporate culture has accelerated language change, as mentioned earlier. Finally, the popularity of the cult of youth an ultimate value of the Anglo-American and European countries also favors the spread for the T form. Using the T form to address someone suggests that they are young.

This study has potential limitations. A larger media corpus should be built to investigate the use of the T-V forms, and it would be important to include genres other than advertising, such as interviews, talk shows, and political debates. Additionally, the data that yielded the total of 90 Hungarian native speakers resulted in a limited sample size for drawing broad and representative conclusions regarding the T-V preference of the Hungarian community. More data is needed from respondents with elementary education. Finally, respondents were only

asked to react in situations of making a request, but other speech acts were not observed. Due to these reasons, the research can only present partial results, however, its findings seem to support the initial hypothesis about the spreading of the T-form.

## **6. Conclusion**

The present study attempted to understand the dynamism of the T-V form use in Hungarian language from two angles. First, the perception perspective observed what T-V use listeners are exposed to, what type of address forms and pronouns have been applied in the advertising discourse. The analysis revealed that the corpus contained more V-forms than T-forms. Only the commercial TV channel ads displayed T-form preference. Inconsistencies have been found regarding the advertised product and the co-occurring T-V form. Furthermore, even within one ad sometimes both the T and the V-forms were used. Avoidance strategies were also presented in a significant number. Second, 90 respondents were asked to share their opinion about the T-V use of the ads. The data revealed that the elderly respondents do not appreciate the ads in T-forms, whereas the young have no reservations about it. Third, the paper aimed at exploring the T-V choices of the young, middle-aged, and the senior respondents when they formulate a request. A questionnaire was administered consisting of five situations. The results indicate that the young prefer using T-form with their age and use the V-form with those who are older than them. With seniors they preferred using the super respectful '*tetszik*+infinitive' construction. The middle-aged generation tended to use the T-form with the young and although to a lesser extent with the middle-aged respondents. Seniors addressed the young in multiple ways, with the super respectful '*tetszik*', with the regular V-form and with T-forms as well. However, with their own generation, they preferred using the V-form. Finally, the research tried to map the metapragmatic awareness of the language users, therefore 30 respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaire with a think

aloud protocol and consecutively share their opinion about the T-V use in Hungarian language in general. The think aloud data demonstrated that native speakers of Hungarian have difficulties explaining why certain forms are chosen for a particular situation, however, they possess strong emotions regarding specific ways of expressing V-forms, such as ‘*tetszik+inf*’ or ‘*maga*’ (you FORM). As for the evaluation of the change, the younger generation is mostly positive about it, but the respondents from the elderly generation reported concerns and fear of losing respect. A crucial finding was the realization that using the T-form does not indicate a closer relationship (friendship) with the communicative partners anymore. Among young people, up to the age of 35, familiarity is not a prerequisite to use the T-form when they meet face to face. Also, the T-form is preferred in social media communication, in comments and blogs.

The interviews also revealed that making an appropriate linguistic choice is challenging, and diverse forms co-exist. Therefore, there is a strong need for flexibility to be able to discursively co-construct and negotiate the forms.

The complexity of speakers’ choice to use formal, informal forms, or avoidance strategies is only partially understood by the existing study. Further studies are needed to receive a more comprehensive picture of the current situation of the T-V pronoun use in various other contexts.

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WEB1

Are Commercials Louder Than Regular Programming?

<https://physicianshearingservices.com/are-commercials-louder-than-regular-programming/>

<https://www.voices.com/blog/loud-commercials/>

(Access: December 30, 2022)

WEB2

[https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magyarorsz%C3%A1gi\\_id%C5%91szaki\\_lapok\\_list%C3%A1ja#Orsz%C3%A1gos\\_napilapok](https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magyarorsz%C3%A1gi_id%C5%91szaki_lapok_list%C3%A1ja#Orsz%C3%A1gos_napilapok) (Access: January, 19, 2023)

WEB3

KSH survey, [https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/pdf/kult\\_szokasok.pdf](https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/pdf/kult_szokasok.pdf)  
(Access: December 30, 2022)

## Appendixes

### Appendix 1 The questionnaire

#### ***Kedves Kitöltő!***

*Kutatásomban a kérésekben használt tegezés-nemtegezést vizsgálom. Kérem, olvassa el az alábbi szituációkat és válassza ki, melyik mondatot használná leginkább. Akár több mondatot is megjelölhet!*

*Köszönöm szépen a segítségét!*

*Árvey Anett*

Az Ön kora:

Iskolai végzettség: általános iskola/érettségi/egyetem

#### **1. Szituáció (információkérés)**

Utolsó pillanatban ér ki a vasútállomásra, a kijelző tábla elromlott, ezért biztonságképpen megkérdez egy ismeretlen utast, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC. Milyen formában tenné fel a kérdést?

MIT MONDANA?

a) Egy fiatalnak, akit kb. 18-35 évesnek gondol.

1. Elnézést, nem tudja, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
2. Elnézést, nem tetszik tudni, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
3. Szia! Nem tudod, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
4. Nem tudom eldönteni a leírás alapján, mert .....

b) Egy középkorúnak, akit kb. 36-65 évesnek gondol.

1. Elnézést, nem tudja, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
2. Elnézést, nem tetszik tudni, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
3. Szia! Nem tudod, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
4. Nem tudom eldönteni a leírás alapján, mert .....

c) Egy idősebb embernek, akit kb. 65 év fölöttinek gondol.

1. Elnézést, nem tudja, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
2. Elnézést, nem tetszik tudni, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
3. Szia! Nem tudod, hogy honnan indul a soproni IC?
4. Nem tudom eldönteni a leírás alapján, mert .....

## 2. Szituáció (a hallgatótól erőfeszítést követelő kérdés)

A zsúfolt vonatra felszállva próbál leülni a helyére, ahova a helyjegye szól, de egy nagy bőrönd akadályozza az útját. Hogy kérné meg utastársát, hogy tegye odébb a bőröndöt?

MIT MONDANA?

a) Egy fiatalnak, akit kb. 18-35 évesnek gondol.

1. Elnézést, odébb tudnád tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
2. Elnézést, odébb tudná tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
3. Elnézést, odébb tetszik tudni tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
4. Elnézést, odébb lehetne tenni ezt a bőröndöt?

b) Egy középkorúnak, akit kb. 36-65 évesnek gondol.

1. Elnézést, odébb tudnád tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
2. Elnézést, odébb tudná tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
3. Elnézést, odébb tetszik tudni tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
4. Elnézést, odébb lehetne tenni ezt a bőröndöt?

c) Egy idősebb embernek, akit kb. 65 év fölöttinek gondol.

1. Elnézést, odébb tudnád tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
2. Elnézést, odébb tudná tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
3. Elnézést, odébb tetszik tudni tenni ezt a bőröndöt?
4. Elnézést, odébb lehetne tenni ezt a bőröndöt?

### 3. Szituáció (kérés semleges helyzetben)

Egy ruhaboltban nem találja a választott nadrág méretét, ezért segítséget kér a női eladótól.

#### MIT MONDANA?

a) Egy fiatal női eladónak, akit kb. 18-35 évesnek gondol.

1. Jó napot! Tudna ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
2. Jó napot! Tetszik tudni ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
3. Szia! Tudnál ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
4. Elnézést, van ebből nagyobb méret?

b) Egy középkorú női eladónak, akit kb. 36-65 évesnek gondol.

1. Jó napot! Tudna ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
2. Jó napot! Tetszik tudni ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
3. Szia! Tudnál ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
4. Elnézést, van ebből nagyobb méret?

c) Egy idősebb női eladónak, akit kb. 65 év fölöttinek gondol.

1. Jó napot! Tudna ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
2. Jó napot! Tetszik tudni ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
3. Szia! Tudnál ebből egy nagyobb méretet adni?
4. Elnézést, van ebből nagyobb méret?

#### 4. Szituáció (információ kérés)

Egy gyorsétteremben/büfében rendelni szeretne, de nem egyértelmű, hogy az Ön előtt álló ember csak nézegeti a kínálatot vagy a pénztári sorban áll. Mit mondana?

MIT MONDANA?

a) Egy fiatalnak, akit kb. 18-35 évesnek gondol.

1. Ön ide vár?
2. Ide tetszik várni?
3. Ide vár?
4. Maga ide vár?
5. Te ide vársz?
6. Ide vársz?

b) Egy középkorúnak, akit kb. 36-65 évesnek gondol.

1. Ön ide vár?
2. Ide tetszik várni?
3. Ide vár?
4. Maga ide vár?
5. Te ide vársz?
6. Ide vársz?

c) Egy idősebb embernek, akit kb. 65 év fölöttinek gondol.

1. Ön ide vár?
2. Ide tetszik várni?
3. Ide vár?
4. Maga ide vár?
5. Te ide vársz?
6. Ide vársz?

## 5. Szituáció (engedély- és szívességgkérés)

Hosszú sor van az élelmiszerbolt pénztáránál, és Ön előtt a sorban egy vevő egy megrakott, nagy bevásárlókocsival áll, viszont Ön csak egy liter tejet szeretne venni, Mivel szorítja az idő, megkéri az előtte állót, hogy engedje maga elé.

### MIT MONDANA?

a) Egy fiatalnak, akit kb. 18-35 évesnek gondol.

1. Megengedné, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.
2. Meg tetszik engedi, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.
3. Megengedné, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.

b) Egy középkorúnak, akit kb. 36-65 évesnek gondol.

1. Megengedné, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.
2. Meg tetszik engedi, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.
3. Megengedné, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.

c) Egy idősebb embernek, akit kb. 65 év fölöttinek gondol.

1. Megengedné, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.
2. Meg tetszik engedi, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.
3. Megengedné, hogy ezt gyorsan kifizessem, mert nagyon sietek.

Dear Respondent,

In my research, I am examining the use of formal and informal language in requests. Please read the situations below and select which sentence you would most likely use. You may select more than one sentence!

Thank you very much for your help!

Anett Árvay

Your age:

Education: primary school/high school/university

**Situation 1. (request for information)**

You arrive at the train station at the last minute, but the display board is out of order, so to be on the safe side, you ask a passenger you have never seen before where the IC train to Sopron departs from. How would you formulate the question?

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

- a) To a young person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 18 and 35 years old.
  - 1. Excuse me, don't you know (/YOU/-SING-FORM) where the Sopron IC departs?
  - 2. Excuse me, don't you know (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) where the Sopron IC departs?
  - 3. Hi! don't you know (/YOU/-INFORM) where the Sopron IC departs?
  - 4. I can't decide based on the description because .....
  
- b) To a middle-aged person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 36 and 65 years old.
  - 1. Excuse me, don't you know (/YOU/-SING-FORM) where the Sopron IC departs?
  - 2. Excuse me, don't you know (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) where the Sopron IC departs?
  - 3. Hi! don't you know (/YOU/-INFORM) where the Sopron IC departs?
  - 4. I can't decide based on the description because .....
  
- c) To an elderly person whom you consider to be aged over 65.
  - 1. Excuse me, don't you know (/YOU/-SING-FORM) where the Sopron IC departs?
  - 2. Excuse me, don't you know (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) where the Sopron IC departs?

3. Hi! don't you know (/YOU/-INFORM) where the Sopron IC departs?
  4. I can't decide based on the description because .....
- 1.

## Situation 2. (a request requiring effort from the listener)

You board a crowded train and try to sit down in the seat indicated on your ticket, but a large suitcase is blocking your way. How would you ask your fellow passenger to move the suitcase?

### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

a) To a young person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 18 and 35 years old.

1. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) move this suitcase?
2. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-FORM) move this suitcase?
3. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) move this suitcase?
4. Excuse me, would it be possible to move this suitcase?

b) To a middle-aged person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 36 and 65 years old.

1. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) move this suitcase?
2. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-FORM) move this suitcase?
3. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) move this suitcase?
4. Excuse me, would it be possible to move this suitcase?

c) To an elderly person whom you consider to be aged over 65.

1. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) move this suitcase?
2. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-FORM) move this suitcase?
3. Excuse me, would you (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) move this suitcase?
4. Excuse me, would it be possible to move this suitcase?

### Situation 3 (request in neutral situation)

You cannot find the size of the pants you want in a clothing store, so you ask the saleswoman for help.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

a) To a young person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 18 and 35 years old.

1. Good morning! Could you give me (/YOU/-SING-FORM) a larger size of this?
2. Good morning! Could you give me (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) a larger size of this?
3. Hi! Could you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) give me a larger size of this?
4. Excuse me, is there a larger size of this?

b) To a middle-aged person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 36 and 65 years old.

1. Good morning! Could you give me (/YOU/-SING-FORM) a larger size of this?
2. Good morning! Could you give me (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) a larger size of this?
3. Hi! Could you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) give me a larger size of this?
4. Excuse me, is there a larger size of this?

c) To an elderly person whom you consider to be aged over 65.

1. Good morning! Could you give me (/YOU/-SING-FORM) a larger size of this?
2. Good morning! Could you give me (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) a larger size of this?
3. Hi! Could you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) give me a larger size of this?
4. Excuse me, is there a larger size of this?

#### Situation 4 (request for information)

You want to order at a fast food restaurant/snack bar, but it is not clear whether the person in front of you is just looking at the menu or standing in line to pay. What would you say?

#### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

a) To a young person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 18 and 35 years old.

1. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM) waiting here?
2. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM/RESP) waiting here?
3. Are you (/YOU/-SING-FORM) waiting here?
4. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM) waiting here?
5. Are you (YOU-SING-INFORM) waiting here?
6. Are you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) waiting here?

b) To a middle-aged person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 36 and 65 years old.

1. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM) waiting here?
2. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM/RESP) waiting here?
3. Are you (/YOU/-SING-FORM) waiting here?
4. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM) waiting here?
5. Are you (YOU-SING-INFORM) waiting here?
6. Are you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) waiting here?

c) To an elderly person whom you consider to be aged over 65.

1. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM) waiting here?
2. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM/RESP) waiting here?
3. Are you (/YOU/-SING-FORM) waiting here?
4. Are you (YOU-SING-FORM) waiting here?
5. Are you (YOU-SING-INFORM) waiting here?
6. Are you (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) waiting here?

### Situation 5. (request for permission and favors)

There is a long line at the grocery store checkout, and the person in front of you has a large shopping cart full of groceries, but you only want to buy a liter of milk. Since you are in a hurry, you ask the person in front of you to let you go ahead of them.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- a) To a young person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 18 and 35 years old.
  1. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-FORM) me to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  2. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) me to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  3. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  
- b) To a middle-aged person whom you consider to be aged approximately between 36 and 65 years old.
  1. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-FORM) me to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  2. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) me to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  3. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  
- c) To an elderly person whom you consider to be aged over 65.
  1. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-FORM) me to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  2. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-FORM/RESP) me to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.
  3. Would you allow (/YOU/-SING-INFORM) to pay for this quickly because I'm in a hurry.