

Theme of the thesis for the doctor's degree (PhD)

**Communicative Citizenship – Social Positioning and
its Dynamics in the Discourse around the Deliberate
Release of GMOs in Hungary**

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1. The aim of the dissertation, defining the topic

As social beings people see others and are seen by others not only as individuals but also as members of social groups. This affiliation highly contributes to the forming of their identity. There are several ways to express and to solve this identity: appearance, colour of the skin, face, hair and hairstyle, outfit, behaviour and last but not least the language in several aspects. Speaking Hungarian possibly means that the person comes from Hungary concerning his nationality. The use of a language let us draw other conclusions: a person's origin may be deduced from his possible dialect, the use of jargon can reflect his belonging to a given social strata or group, eventually his age, gender etc.

My dissertation and the research it rests on root in the PARADYS¹ project which was an international research on the basis of the assignment of the European Nations' Committee, between 2001-2004 in 6 states of the UN / Germany, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Eire, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy / and in Hungary which was before its joining to the EU. The tasks of the research consortium were to compare and analyse the decision processes with special regard to the quality and quantity of social involvement in the above mentioned countries. On behalf of comparability the research concentrated on regulations of the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms and on the related procedures of their licensing. Applying linguistic and sociological concepts and tools the research tried to find answers to how and in what extent citizens can get opportunities to participate in the decision making process.

The *communicative citizenship* is regarded in my conception as a social position in some administrative conditioning process– in our case the licensing of a gene technological procedure. Its essence is a *determined social role, that is to say the perception of being a citizen*. This role is evolving during a particular progress and includes the participants' views about others and themselves. In other words, the category of citizenship is interpreted in this participative process as an activated social role showing up in the social positioning of the interested participants and the parties concerned².

¹*Participation and the Dynamics of Social Positioning – the Case of Biotechnology. Images of the Self and Others in Decision-making Procedures.*

²Cf. Bora/Hausendorf 2004, 2006; Iványi et al. 2004, 2006, 2010; Iványi/Marinecz 2007a and 2007b.

The aim of my dissertation is the reconstruction of the social positions and of their correlation to each other within the communication around the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms in Hungary, and hereby the demonstration of the realisation of the ‘communicative citizenship’ in Hungarian conditions.

The structure of my dissertation follows the process of the research:

- ☐ The dominant theoretical foreground assumptions are sketched in Chapter 2, with special regard to social positioning. The starting point of my research is the basic supposition according to which social positioning is a communicative problem that has to be solved more or less intentionally during conversations. That is, social positioning has a communicative feature; the participants are creating it during their conversations.
- ☐ Chapter 3 introduces the applied methods. In fact, my basic supposition is the restriction of the ethnomethodological axiom according to which the doers create the reality through their interaction (cf: Garfinkel, 1967); that means that the social positions created by the participants of the communication as well as its process, the social positioning can be reconstructed with the help of the methods of conversation analysis.
- ☐ In the largest part of my dissertation, in Chapter 4, I introduce the empirical investigation. From the analysis of the texts of the relevant law and the available conversations and interviews I reconstruct the relevant social positions in the process of licensing the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms.
- ☐ In Chapter 5 I examine the dynamics of social positions, namely their relations to each other from different points of view: within a text (intratextual view) and in the correlations of the texts involved, among the parts of the discourse (transtextual view).
- ☐ Finally, in Chapter 6 I summarize the conclusions about the realized ‘communicative citizenship’ in Hungarian conditions according to the analysed linguistic material.

2. Applied methods

In the centre of my dissertation there are the ways how the social category of citizenship, the role of the citizen evolves during the communicative actions. I am trying to answer this question with the help of *the analysis of the sociological background of the decision making process, on the other hand, with the analysis of the available linguistic corpus and their possible conclusions.*

For associating the persons with certain social groups we have several different linguistic tools, with the help of which affiliation can be supported and organised communicatively. The *process of supporting and organising affiliation is called social categorisation.* We regard social categorisation as a communicative task or ‘problem’ that the participants face in conversation. (cf: Sacks 1992)

As we examine the social categorisation in a certain situation with a controlled background (in our case it is the process of decision making – licensing of deliberate release of genetically modified organisms), it turns up that beyond the common categorisation but on the basis of it, the relevant social positions of the given situation are also outlined in the speakers’ pictures of others and themselves; these include the roles in the particular situation and the related ideas, expectations and attitudes. The relevant social positions just as the social categories evolve and form in the process of the communication. The positioning theory and the notion of social positioning promoted by Rom Harré and Luk van Langenhove (1999) have become the topic of several researches of socio-linguistics and socio-psychology. In point of my dissertation Alfons Bora’s and Heiko Hausendorf’s access is the most determining. According to this:

- the participation of the public and the social positioning are interpreted as a connection between the citizens and the government;
- the concept of ‘citizen’ includes beside nationality and citizenship the participation in decision making process, the right to being informed, the right to actions within the given legal regulation;
- there is an overall connection between citizenship and communication: the citizenship evolves as a communicative achievement in the process of verbal and non-verbal interaction.

The specific interpretation of social positioning ensues from the above mentioned suppositions:

Finally, we assume that the communicative achievement of citizenship can be best described in terms of social positioning between and among those participating in a concrete procedure, because communicatively achieved citizenship emerges as a relevant position in the participatory discourse itself. (Hausendorf/Bora 2006: 86)

The slots opened by the text of the law can be filled with content in certain participatory actions; the participants of these actions realize in the course of communication certain participatory concepts.

In my research I focus on one of the main characteristics of social positioning, on its dynamics. It refers to the fact, that the participatory process itself influences the social positions which emerged communicatively and for this reason they are continuously changing. I interpret the dynamics of social positions primarily as a relationship, evolving between social positions.

According also to the principles and methodology of discourse linguistics (cf. Spitzmüller/Warnke 2011), in order to reveal the participation of the public and to reconstruct the relevant social positions, the analysis has to be extended over the boundaries of certain texts. In this respect conversations also reckon as texts, just as newspaper articles, books, posters and websites do. I regard all of the thematically related written and oral texts involved in the analysis as the ‘Hungarian GMO Discourse’.

A significant part of it includes linguistic data, interviews, round-table discussions and a talk-show, for their processing I apply the tools and methods of conversation analysis.

The linguistic conversation analysis, following the ethno-methodological tradition, sets out from the supposition that *the order of society is not pre-given but develops as a result of the participants’ interaction in communication and by communication*. According to this the affiliation is also regarded as a communicative achievement and has to be examined in the course of its emerging. Conversation analysis is only interested in those aspects of belonging that are constructed in and by communication.

Corresponding to the ethnomethodological traditions these conversations are authentic and are not manipulated, their recordings have been transcribed. The transcriptions were made within the GAT transcriptional system (cf. Selting et al 1998), which fixes prosodic features, overlapping, breaks, sudden stops, etc and also records para- and non-verbal

phenomena. The sequential analysis reveals those methods and regularities with the help of which people get into interaction and develop social reality and order.

I consider social positioning a communicative task, ‘problem’ which the participants of the conversation face during the act of communication. I want to reconstruct with the help of my study *how the concerned ones solve this problem, how they construct the social affiliation relevant for them in a given communicative situation*, if categorizing or positioning themselves, their partners or others not present.

For this purpose I apply a 3-level model introduced by Hausendorf (2010). The tasks which have to be solved during interaction are on the top level. At this level we explore and reconstruct the communicative requirements that are important in the communicative establishment of the affiliation. The middle level is for the tools that can be applied for solving specific tasks. At this level the specification and the reconstruction of the applied procedures and methods for accomplishing the conditions can be carried out. The forms of the linguistic representation of the specific tools are at the lowest level. At this level we identify and reconstruct the different possibilities through which the communicative tasks and the tools adopted show up on the linguistic surface of communication.

The three levels compose an organic whole, a task does not exist without tools and forms, there is no tool without tasks and forms, forms cannot be imagined without tools and tasks.

In connection with social positioning three communicative tasks can be differentiated, each of them can be solved with the help of a limited number of tools, and their linguistic representative forms are theoretically infinite:

- **Assignment** is the communicative task when persons are described as adherents of a social group. In this case affiliation can be expressed by showing, emphasizing or indicating clearly which group the person belongs to, accentuation, classification, typifying, generalization etc. can also be tools. The possible expressive forms appearing on the surface of communication are very varied so I just mention some of them: focus relations, group names, diminutives, demonstrative pronouns, first and second person plural, etc.

magyar kutató (.) voltam=meg még mindig annak is tartom magam
(111)

I have always been a Hungarian researcher=and I still consider myself as being one

The speaker describes himself as one of the Hungarian researchers; at the moment of speaking this affiliation is the most significant for him. The communicative task of assignment is solved by expressing affiliation in the form of a verbal-nominal predicate.

- **Ascribing** as a communicative task means that affiliation is endowed with group specific features or behaviours. The tools, which the tasks can be solved with, are alluding to group specific features and behaviours, their exemplification or explicit denomination, these appearing on the surface, to just some of them, by irony, prosody, narratives, portraits, parables, metaphors, etc.

mert a a forgalmazók megkerestek minket egy olyan kérdéssel
hogy foglaljon a bizottság állást abban (282-283)

*because the vendors contacted us with a request that the
committee should take stand on...*

The speaker identifies himself with the committee (we=committee), the personal pronoun used in the first person plural suggests the assignment to the group, on the other hand, it qualifies the committee, it suggests that taking stand is one of the group specific actions of the committee. Ascribing occurs in this case in the form of a final clause.

- The communicative task of **evaluation** means the indication of subjective attitudes, opinions related to affiliation and can be performed by indicating the attitude, introducing it demonstratively or explicit stating, which can be identified in the form of attributes, imprecations, prosody, metaphors, etc.

valószínűleg Ezért nem szeretnek minket az engedélykérők (116)

probably that's why the applicants don't like us

The evaluation is indirect because it expresses others' attitude to the group the speaker represents himself; a negative portrait is performed from others' point of view. In this case an explicit statement at the level of tools corresponds to the task of evaluation and it is realised in form of a verb expressing emotions.

mert:,=ö: (-) hát valószínűleg izé:, hogy mondják az illet?
szóval a (.) hátukon a púp vagyunk (.) azzal hogy
mindenfélüket előírunk nekik; (118-120)

*because=er..., well probably whatsit, how to say it? well, we
are pain in the neck, with us prescribing all sorts of things*

The evaluation of the own group appears in the form of a metaphor indicating attitude. Besides, the example also contains an assignment (the conjugation of the verbs in first person plural shows the speaker's affiliation who, in this case, assigns himself as a member of the environmentalists; and also qualifying shows up, which suggests a group specific behaviour: they prescribe everything to the persons applying for licence.

3. Results

The first phase of the research consisted of the data collection. Part of the corpus is written material (articles, dissertations and last but not least the regulations and laws in the procedure of licensing the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms). On the other hand recordings of conversations in this topic were made (lectures, debates, interviews), then these were committed to writing according to the conventions of conversation analysis. In the next step the exhaustive linguistic analysis of the available materials was accomplished; afterwards, on the basis of them, I reconstructed the significant social positions. The last step in my research was the analysis of the dynamics of social positioning, the relation of the reconstructed positions to each other within a conversation and in the whole discourse.

The analysis of the law's text³ along the tasks of assigning, ascribing and evaluating revealed the following social positions:

- the legislator
- the administrator/the authority
- the organized protester
- the scientific researcher
- the applicant
- the public

On the basis of the analysis of the oral data it can be stated that within the Hungarian decision making process, more exactly in the discourse around the licensing procedure of deliberate release of genetically modified organisms, these positions are evolving, filling

³Law XXVII, 1998, gene technological actions and its modifications

up with content. The citizens, the position of the public shows up in more subtle forms, it can be differentiated in the forms of the concerned individuals and the local people.

As far as concerning the dynamics of the social positions, that is, their relations to each other, I examined it in more approaches: on the one hand within a text according to the traditions of conversation analysis (intratextual analysis), on the other hand in the whole discourse and its coherence (transtextual analysis).

3.1 Intratextual analysis

3.1.1 Sequential interactivity – the dimension of sequential dynamics

In conversations the participants sketch, elaborate and agree mutually on the social positions. The social positions are forming and changing turn by turn. The basic form of the dynamics of the social positions can be grasped in its sequentiality.

3.1.2 Transit among social positions in self presentations

A speaker can represent more social positions within one conversation. During the analysis the transit can be observed, that is, how a speaker switches over from one position to another. Moreover it can be stated that the transit among relevant social positions cannot be avoided, even if the speaker tries this deliberately.

3.2 Transtextual relatedness

3.2.1 The dimension of dynamical transtextual interactivity

From the analysed data I reconstructed social positions as sets of expectations; in their comparison we can find overlappings, moreover, outstanding contradictions as well. Both cases are suitable for further conclusions

3.2.2 The dimension of thematic, transtextual overlapping

In the thematic comparison of the examined materials, overlappings and contradictions appear in referring to the involved social positions and the characteristic attitudes connected to them. In some cases the contradictions emerge between the features in self-presentations and those appearing in the others' views of the given position.

3.2.3 Alternating between social positions in different social contexts

As I pointed out earlier, positioning cannot be avoided, not even deliberately. At the same time it is obvious that positioning is determined to a great extent by the given social context. The same person can position himself in different positions throughout different conversations and social situations.

My researches have proved that the participants of the licensing procedure during communication clearly use the social categories, the above mentioned communicative tasks, tools and forms can be reconstructed.

As for the relation of the positions to each other, beside correspondences several contradictions can be traced. The most outstanding positioning conflict is perhaps the one between the citizens and the other positions; while the citizens –though ignorant and uninformed – show themselves interested and concerned, according to the other positions, even to the organised protesters, namely to the environmentalists, they are described as being uninterested, reckless, they are considered irrelevant and ignorable in participating in the decision making process.

The results of my researches lead to the conclusion that this positioning conflict which is rooted in the law itself, is one of the most severe difficulties for developing communicative citizenship in Hungary, for the public participation in the decision making process.

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List of publications related to the dissertation

Foreign language international book chapter(s) (3)

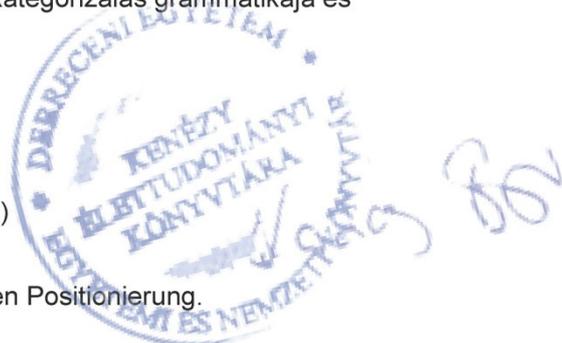
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