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Minorities in the digital space: Translanguaging practices of Vojvodina Hungarians online

This small-scale study aimed to gain insight into Vojvodina Hungarians' digital habits and digital language practices from a qualitative perspective as an extension to a previous study on the same topic (Kostic, 2024). Approached from a slightly different perspective, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method of data collection, conducted with some of the same participants as those in Kostic (2024). The Vojvodina Hungarian participants in the present study displayed differing life stories in relation to technology (cf. Lee, 2014), but with several noteworthy overlaps regarding their experience with the digital era, their language choices and factors affecting those, as well as their translanguaging. The results show that the participants are highly digitally oriented, often turning to the internet first to seek information and entertainment, to communicate and connect with others, or run errands digitally. Multilingual practices are common among the participants and are integral parts of their speech and written texts. Their language choices are often dependent on environmental, social, and frequently personal factors (including personally perceived skills and knowledge, intention of messages, membership, belonging, and identity), especially when it comes to translanguaging as an identity marker.

Keywords: digital language use, translanguaging, language choices, multilingualism, Hungarian minority

1. Introduction

Increasingly, scholarly interests are shifting towards analyzing and making sense of language use in combination with social life and identity, with the term 'translanguaging' attracting primary focus. Multilingualism and translanguaging support some of the same ideas, whereby the speaker transcends linguistic boundaries and uses multiple languages in communication regardless of their proficiency in those (Aleksić and García, 2022; Androutsopoulos, 2015). Multilingualism aims to erase the boundaries between languages that have been socio-politically constructed and separated, and, instead, views languages as interconnected complex systems (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Lee, 2016; Li, 2011). In this sense, translanguaging is "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283). Translanguaging also has a social dimension, where the choice to translanguage is often intentional and serves as an identity marker

(Androutsopoulos, 2015; Li, 2011). Due to monolingual ideologies that view languages in isolation and reject non-normative language use, multilingual communication has long been stigmatized, despite being an integral part of people's communicative practices worldwide (Aleksić and García, 2022). However, that is not to say that there have not been instances where multilingual practices have been recognised and initiatives made in favour of them. For one, the case of Yugoslavia's language education program, between the 1960s and 1980s, is a great example that Mandić and Rácz (2023) look into, which strived to support multilingualism considering Yugoslavia's multiethnic composition (Mandić and Rácz, 2023, p. 461) by introducing the LSE (language of the social environment, e.g. Hungarian in majority communities like Serbian in minority communities) as an optional second language class in schools in areas of Yugoslavia that had a diverse ethnolinguistic population. One of the most multilingual areas of Serbia is Vojvodina (Ferdinand and Komlosi, 2017; Trombitás and Szügyi, 2019), where one of the largest cities, Subotica, is home to as many as fourteen languages spoken as native tongues, many with an official status (Ferdinand and Komlosi, 2017; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2012; Trombitás and Szügyi, 2019). The aim behind introducing the LSE classes was to promote bilingualism among monolingual majority individuals, who would ideally also become bilinguals like most minorities in the territory of Yugoslavia. Mandić and Rácz (2023) have found that the ideology behind LSE views languages as resources for societal multilingualism and, at the same time, as a solid basis for national unity, and discussions about the reinstating of the subject began in the 2010s signaling just how vital educational, societal, and institutional support and community are.

The present small-scale study aims to gain insight into the online linguistic practices and translanguaging of Vojvodina Hungarians, focusing on a topic similar to that of Kostic (2024), which approached the same research questions using different data collection tools and methods. To approach some of these questions from a slightly different perspective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with some of the same participants who provided data for the previous study (Kostic, 2024). The present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. For what purpose and how do Vojvodina Hungarians use their language in digital spaces?
2. What factors influence the language use of Vojvodina Hungarians in digital spaces, particularly in terms of language choices and translanguaging?

Section 2 below provides an overview of previous literature on topics such as the intricacies of online language practices and the potential factors influencing them, the techno-biographical interview, as well as earlier studies on the digital presence of minority Hungarians, the importance of identity, and digital language habits.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Language, participation, and identity in the digital age

Digital language use is influenced by numerous factors. A very decisive factor that Kornai (2013, p. 1) describes is a language's digital vitality, "whereby a language increasingly acquires digital functions and prestige as its speakers increasingly acquire digital skills," which does not happen at the same rate for everyone. Additional factors such as age, occupation, and personal interests are also important. At the same time, active online participation, language choice, online communities, and websites one chooses to visit and be a part of are also closely related to identity. Two studies by Lee (2014) and Kelly-Holmes (2004) illustrate just how deeply interwoven these aspects are with one another.

To begin with, in a 2014 study, through techno-biographical interviews and recordings of social media browsing done by her participants, Lee (2014) examined the situated online language practices and online identities of Cantonese and English bilingual undergraduates in Hong Kong. By focusing on habits related to internet and daily technology use, she uncovered how her participants utilized many online resources to convey personalized messages, posts, and content, which all played a crucial part in identity play. As Lee puts it, techno-biography is a "life story in relation to technologies" (2014, p. 94), where participants share their own stories, as they experience technology both in the present and the past (Ching and Vigdor, 2005; Lee, 2014). Lee (2014) concludes that, although there ought to be overlaps, people's experience with technology is still very individual, which is also true for linguistic habits that heavily depend on not only context but also the audience one wishes to address and communicate with.

Apart from status updating, commenting, post creation, sharing photos, and creating a profile online (Kelly-Holmes, 2004; Lee, 2014), the availability of all sorts of linguistic and technological resources (keyboards, different input languages, creative spelling, mixing styles and spoken languages, special characters and symbols from other languages one might not even speak) are key elements when it comes to building and expressing one's identity online (Androutsopulous, 2007; Lee, 2014; Tagg and Seargeant, 2012; Vaisman, 2011). Due to the situatedness of identity, studying the identity practices and lived experiences of internet users online requires a context-conscious approach (Lee, 2014).

Another study, by Kelly-Holmes (2004), looked at students' internet practices from multiple countries (Italy, Macedonia, Indonesia, Poland, France, and Tanzania), and discovered that the choice to use English over one's first language on the internet was not as prevalent as one would think, considering the overwhelming English content present in the online space. The few cases in which English was chosen over the L1 included situations where the respondents were from countries (for example, Macedonia, which had recently gained

independence at the time) that lacked the financial means to establish and maintain websites in their own respective majority languages. In combination with language choice, identity is another factor to consider when it comes to digital media consumption and content creation. Identity is understood to be fluid, "like masks that can be worn and taken off in different contexts of social interaction" (Lee, 2014, p. 91, commenting on Goffman, 1990[1959]). This understanding applies whether the interaction occurs online or offline. Very often, these "masks" are worn intentionally with specific aims behind them, such as emphasizing inclusivity, showing support, or even strengthening one's community online when it might not be possible to do so in person (Lee, 2014; Molyneaux et al., 2014; O'Carroll, 2013). What we can establish from the studies above is that with the help of various textual, linguistic, typographical, and visual resources and tools, users can creatively convey personalized messages and shape their own identities as they wish in the digital space.

2.2. Translanguaging and multilingualism in minority communities

As opposed to code-switching, translanguaging and multilingualism understand languages as interconnected systems instead of separate linguistic systems (named languages) with clear boundaries (García and Otheguy, 2019; Otheguy et al., 2015). Very often, Second Language Acquisition studies as well as classroom environments foreground dominant language varieties, whereby an idealized native speaker model is promoted (Cenoz and Gorter, 2017, 2019), due to the monolingual bias, a socio-political byproduct. An increasing number of scholars have started criticizing these traditional views and approaches, and are shifting their focus on exploring multilingual communities, where instead of looking at people's competence in languages, they are instead making sense of speakers' 'multilingual repertoires' (Cenoz and Gorter 2017, 2019) as a whole interconnected system. These more contemporary perspectives aim to provide a nuanced understanding of a person's spoken languages, encompassing both linguistic and semiotic resources, regardless of the individual's level of proficiency in those languages. This approach differs from viewing languages in isolation or identifying weaknesses in one's repertoire. For these reasons, translanguaging as a conscious practice is promoted, as it not only allows the speaker to fully utilize all of their linguistic, pragmatic, and semiotic language knowledge, but also gives them an opportunity to cultivate and portray their desired identities, which is especially prevalent in minority settings (Cenoz and Gorter, 2017, 2019). While translanguaging promotes and fosters the use of minority languages and in a way challenges language hierarchies by viewing a person's spoken languages as equals regardless of their hierarchical position in a particular context, scholars have also been raising concerns about the potential adverse effects that the promotion of translanguaging could bring about if social contexts and power dynamics between the languages and the speakers are not

taken into careful consideration. For minority languages to survive and thrive, there is a need for supportive communities and places where the use of the minority language becomes necessary. This is especially important to establish in pedagogical institutions (Cenoz and Gorter, 2017, 2019; García and Otheguy, 2019; Otheguy et al., 2015), as they play a crucial role in developing speakers' awareness of the necessity for their minority languages (Cenoz and Gorter, 2017, 2019). Many studies have shown that minorities can use the internet to their advantage and further strengthen their ties with their community, but also enrich and even strengthen their identities and language use in creative and novel ways, whether it is by translanguaging or mixing languages (Jongbloed-Faber et al., 2016; Lee, 2014; Lynn et al., 2015). While the latter two have received criticism for resulting in weakened language varieties, the experiences shared by individuals from these groups are encouraging and show the desire to actively participate in online content creation, activities, and communication (Pauwels, 2016; Tagg, 2015). Belmar and Glass (2019, p. 5) argue that the once traditional language communities have been deeply affected by communication technology, as it "forces us to re-contextualize languages, especially […] minority languages," due to the fact that the internet provides a space for everyone regardless of one's mother tongue, geographical location, or social position.

Studies that were particularly conducted in Serbia have mainly focused on topics like the impact of digital media (Đerčan et al., 2020; Pásztor-Kicsi, 2012, 2016), digital media consumption (Pásztor-Kicsi, 2016), attitudes towards different varieties of languages in the region (Kovacs Rac and Halupka-Rešetar, 2018; Kovács Rácz, 2012), and the multilingual situation and environment (Balla et al., 2012; Pilipenko, 2016).

One study focused on the impact of English language media and the internet on the language use and identity of Vojvodina Hungarians (Pásztor-Kicsi, 2016). According to Pásztor-Kicsi (2016), digital media did not appear to have a significant impact on the respondents' attitudes towards their spoken varieties or English. Regarding the Vojvodina Hungarians' attitudes towards different varieties of Hungarian in the region, including Hungary (Jánk and Rási, 2023; Kovacs Rac and Halupka-Rešetar, 2018; Kovács Rácz, 2012), the collected data reveal similar trends. While it was noted that participants occasionally experience negative attitudes or discrimination against regional varieties (Jánk and Rási, 2023; Pásztor-Kicsi, 2016), the vast majority of respondents reported having neutral or positive attitudes towards their own spoken variety and the standard Hungary Hungarian. The above studies inquired about language attitudes in younger individuals, such as 5th- to 8th-grade students (Kovacs Rac and Halupka-Rešetar, 2018) and university students (Pásztor-Kicsi, 2016), as well as older individuals (Jánk and Rási, 2023).

In a 2011 research project, *Mozaik2011*, Szabó et al. (2013) found drastically different stances towards the importance of national belonging, identity, and the

value of one's mother tongue among minority Hungarians living outside of Hungary. As opposed to the Hungarian minority in Austria, the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina (who often face financial difficulties and linguistic and social discrimination) find their identity and mother tongue to be of utmost importance in community building and cultural, ethnic, and linguistic preservation, especially in online settings. Within the same set of studies (*Mozaik2011* in Szabó et al., 2013), Galácz and Ságvári (2013) examined how the internet influenced the lives, language use, international and intranational connections, and identities of minority Hungarian youth living outside Hungary in the neighboring regions. Their results revealed that already at the beginning of the 2010s, young people were undoubtedly using the internet and social media and often expressed positive attitudes towards multilingualism for the expanding possibilities it can bring about. The participants also discussed the importance of knowing their country's dominant language, particularly for educational and economic reasons. Interestingly, a minority of young Hungarian people expressed a variety of opinions regarding the practice of language mixing online, as some found it distressing and confusing when they did not understand the language and expressions being used. Their respondents had extensive experience with digital media, and global, international, and primarily English influences were also observed in terms of language choices and content consumption (Galácz and Ságvári, 2013). With somewhat similar findings to Galácz and Ságvári's (2013), in a recent paper on the digital and linguistic practices of Vojvodina Hungarians (Kostic, 2024), the results uncovered that multilingual language practices are an integral part of their daily lives (see also Mandić and Rácz, 2023), both online as well as offline, however, Hungarian and English are in most cases and contexts preferred over Serbian most probably due to the participants' low confidence in their Serbian knowledge and their own perceived language skills.

Research to date on Vojvodina Hungarians thus illustrates how the use of digital platforms, experience with digital media, language attitudes, and identity all affect and constantly shape one another. Although Vojvodina Hungarians continue to face challenges such as linguistic and social discrimination, they nevertheless express their desire to prioritize the preservation of their language and culture, which is especially taking place more and more often in online settings. These findings also highlight the importance of considering factors such as language choice, digital literacy, and cultural identity in understanding the experiences of minority language communities in the digital age.

3. Methodology
3.1. Data collection and analysis
The present small-scale study invited Vojvodina Hungarians of all ages, genders, and occupations to share their stories and experiences through semi-structured interviews. The participants who took part in the study were 12 Vojvodina Hungarians from the same group of participants who filled in the questionnaire reported by Kostic (2024). The interview data were analyzed individually, and emergent themes were established. The questions and sections of the questionnaire (Kostic, 2024) were adapted to the interview format, where the questions served solely as a guide during the 30-to 40-minute interview sessions. The participant selection process was random, as the questionnaire from Kostic (2024) was shared on Facebook and other social media platforms, including Instagram and Reddit. Anyone could complete the questionnaire and indicate at the end whether they wished to participate in an additional interview with similar discussion topics. Those who decided to give interviews were asked to leave a contact email or a link to their Facebook or Instagram page, where they were later contacted to arrange an online interview session via Facebook Messenger or an Instagram call. The only criterion was that the participants were from Vojvodina and spoke Hungarian as their mother tongue. Considering that the questionnaire was shared on multiple platforms, including various Facebook groups, it was not unlikely that the participants would not know the researcher personally, but in the end, none of the 12 participants were familiar with them. They also did not have any contact with the other participants, as each interview was done separately and at different times. The interviews were recorded with the participants' prior consent for easier analysis later on, but were subsequently deleted once the recordings were transcribed.

Like the questionnaire itself in Kostic (2024), the interview was divided into several sections, each covering a different discussion topic. All the interview questions used during the interviews are listed in the Appendix below. The interviews were conducted using the same set of questions. They were semi-structured in nature, providing participants with more freedom and opportunity to express their attitudinal standpoints, share their digital and linguistic habits (Appendix, sections *B* and *C*), and their overall experience with language use and social media in the Vojvodina Hungarian setting (Appendix, section *D*). The second section (Appendix, Section *B*) in particular covered their history with digital devices, the internet, and social media by incorporating Lee's (2014) techno-biographical approach.

3.2. Participants

The 12 participants who gave interviews represented diverse backgrounds, ages, and had varying digital habits. All interviewees were given random names for easier identification within the present study and to also ensure their anonymity. In an earlier study (Kostic, 2024), six age groups were established (under 18, 18–25, 26–35, 36–45, 46–55, and over 55) to more easily distinguish any potential differences regarding digital habits, shared experiences, and linguistic habits. Since there were no participants under the age of 18, the other five age groups will be considered from this point on. The first section of the interview (Appendix, *A. Background information*) uncovered that there were 4 participants within the age categories under 18 and in the 18–25 range, another four individuals in the 26–35 and 36–45 ranges, and four more individuals within the 46–55 and over 55 age groups.

The youngest participants included Dávid, Dorina, Dorottya, and Dániel, all of whom were between the ages of 18 and 25. They were all had similar digital habits in terms of active online participation, all attended university and were in the following fields: Dávid was studying education at the University of Szeged, Dorina was studying art also at the University of Szeged, while Dorottya was studying IT at the same university, and lastly, Dániel was studying biology at the University of Novi Sad. Another four participants (Emese, Erika, Éva, and Endre) who gave interviews belong to the second two age groups (26–35 and 36–45). They were working full-time in Vojvodina, Serbia, with Emese being in her third year of IT at the University of Novi Sad. Erika had a high school diploma and was working as a sales assistant at the time of the interview in Horgos, Éva had a bachelor's degree in business and administration, and was working at an administrative office in Subotica. In contrast, Endre held a master's degree in psychology and worked as a psychologist in Novi Sad. The last four participants (age groups: 46–55 and over 55) were Luca who had a high school diploma and was working as a nail technician in Novi Sad, Levente, who finished vocational school and was a car mechanic in Kikinda, Liza, who attained her master's degree in education at the University of Novi Sad and was a high school teacher in Zrenjanin, and Leon, who had a PhD and was a retired private investigator in Subotica.

All of the interviewees are ethnically Hungarian, speak Hungarian as an L1, and some also speak Serbian well (Leon, Liza, Endre, Erika, Éva, Emese, Endre, and Dániel), and six of them (Dániel, Dávid, Dorottya, Dorina, Emese, and Endre) speak English as an additional language they learned either at school or through the internet. They all share the same mother tongue (Hungarian) and own at least two digital devices, mainly smartphones, smart TVs, and a PC or a laptop. They also shared that they have constant internet access and spend up to 5-6 hours on the internet on a daily basis, during which they consume all sorts of social media (mainly Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram). They tend to communicate (mostly

using Viber and Facebook Messenger) and look up information on the internet much more frequently nowadays as opposed to 10-15 years ago, when their primary sources of information were television, radio, newspaper, or seeking information directly from other people.

4. Results and Discussion

The present section is divided into three subsections, each addressing a distinct research question, and the results and observations from the interviews have been categorized accordingly.

4.1. The Vojvodina Hungarians' digital language use

Two sections in the interview (see Appendix, sections *B. Linguistic habits, attitudes, and spoken languages,* and *D. Online communities in Vojvodina*) focused on gathering detailed responses, anecdotes, and examples to answer the first research question, which focuses on the linguistic habits of the Vojvodina Hungarians in digital spaces. As mentioned above in Section 3.2, most participants speak Serbian and English well, having learned these languages either at home from their families and friends, or in school. They mentioned additionally that they often switched between Serbian and Hungarian (younger individuals also often mentioned English too) in their day-to-day conversations depending on the type of the situation, the intended message they wished to convey, and often the power relations among interlocutors, which tended to also extend to online communicative settings especially in private messages taking place on Instagram, Viber, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger mainly.

The 12 participants regularly use Hungarian on the internet, very often in combination with Serbian and English, while the younger ones also tend to combine all three languages when communicating. When asked about their knowledge, their perceived skills, and attitudes towards the three languages, the participants generally tended to say positive things regarding the languages, however, a few individuals mentioned that they were not too comfortable speaking Serbian (Dorina, Dorottya, Dávid) for more extended periods nor reading Serbian Cyrillic, or English (Leon, Liza, Endre, Erika, Éva, Emese, and Dániel) also due to their low proficiency in the language or their lack of knowledge of the language. Several participants expressed that they were proud of being a Vojvodina Hungarian and many were also fond of the Vojvodina Hungarian variety due to the "colourfulness of the language" (Éva) and also for the "uniqueness of its vocabulary" (Levente), which many agree is more creative and likeable than most Hungary Hungarian varieties, especially the standard (Leon, Dorina, Dániel, and Éva). Almost all participants mentioned that they frequently use Serbian words and expressions in their Hungarian speech, which they attribute to a lack of knowledge of adequate Hungarian words. Éva and Leon also stated that it is much easier to speak this way than to try to find the adequate

Hungarian words, as it would only cause more misunderstandings during conversations, considering that most people are already accustomed to Serbian, English, and even Croatian terms.

Section *D* (see Appendix) of the interviews also revealed that participants regularly visit Vojvodina Hungarian Facebook groups to share or read about fellow Vojvodina Hungarians' experiences and to connect with people who share similar views. Their experiences in these groups vary between positive and neutral, however, both Dániel and Emese mentioned that they often saw posts and comment sections in some larger Hungarian Facebook groups (group orientations frequently include cooking and baking, marketplaces, and travel) where minority Hungarians, not only from Vojvodina but all around Hungary's outside and inside borders, are corrected and ridiculed for their language use, choice of vocabulary, and even sometimes for their origins usually by majority Hungarians from Hungary. Dániel also mentioned that these acts of discrimination are occasionally present in Vojvodina Hungarian Facebook groups, but to him, they are seemingly much less frequent (similar findings in: Jánk and Rási, 2023; Pásztor-Kicsi, 2016).

Lastly, to address the second research question regarding the factors that affect their language choices in digital settings, the participants generally mentioned the same things as Kostic (2024). The third section (Appendix, section *C. Digital habits and language use online*) in the interviews that focused on digital habits and general language use tendencies online unveiled that, generally, those who spoke languages other than Hungarian well (i.e. mainly English and Serbian), consumed content and communicated in those languages on a regular basis. Most frequently, their own language choices depend on the language they saw in comments or online content, but the type or topic of the content was also often the most decisive factor. The 12 participants also mentioned that there are situations, where they intentionally switch between languages or choose another language than that of the comments, posts, or content, to express their linguistic, national, and cultural identities (see also Androutsopoulos, 2015; Li, 2011) and simultaneously indicate their ties to Vojvodina Hungarians, Serbia, or even the Balkan. Similarly to online settings, translanguaging and switching between the languages one speaks are also integral to the face-to-face conversations of Vojvodina Hungarians (cf. Aleksić and García, 2022; Mandić and Rácz, 2023). As Emese states, it very often happens that conversations take place in two or sometimes even three languages at once:

> "Here in Vojvodina, it's quite an everyday thing that sometimes we speak Hungarian, sometimes we speak Serbian, but there are occasions where we continuously use both of the languages, and it really depends on what way of speaking is easier. The other day I was at the market and started speaking in Serbian out of habit. Considering that there are more Serbs, we sometimes tend to carry out whole conversation in Serbian even with people we don't know are Hungarians, but that's okay, this is what we are

used to it and there's nothing wrong with that. But there have also been times when I spoke Serbian with someone I knew was a Serb, and they answered me back in Hungarian, and the whole conversation went on like that." **(Quote 1, Emese)**

As she explains, this can happen out of habit (starting conversations in Serbian due to it being the majority language), or because it is easier for interlocutors to communicate in such multilingual ways. However, it also very frequently happens due to people's desire to show respect for the other person's mother tongue. Being able to communicate digitally facilitates the maintenance of familial, work-related, and other connections, surpassing physical obstacles. Another critical function that digital spaces serve for the Vojvodina Hungarians is providing access to a wide range of information, from the local and more personal to the global level.

4.2. The Vojvodina Hungarian way of translanguaging

The participants also often found themselves not only switching between languages in conversations, both online and offline, but also intentionally translanguaging to signal their belonging to specific communities (cf. Cenoz and Gorter, 2017, 2019). In the following, three figures contain translanguaging examples that Dorina and Dániel shared with me at the end of the interview. Figures 1, 2, and 4 below are examples of conversations that took place on Facebook Messenger, while Figure 3 is a public post Dorina posted in the *Magyarországon tanuló vajdasági diákok* "Vojvodina Hungarian students studying in Hungary" Facebook group. All of the figures display the screenshots in their original form, along with English translations next to them and * indicating the language each message was written in (* for English, ** for Hungarian, and *** for Serbian). The Facebook post (Figure 3), as well as most of the messages, were written in Hungarian, with the exception of the first and last messages in Figure 1, which were written in a combination of English and Hungarian. Figure 4's messages are in Hungarian and Serbian. In contrast, the conversation in Figure 2 took place in all three languages (Hungarian, Serbian, and English). Two Messenger conversations were on the topic of planning an in-person meetup among friends in Figure 1, and among old classmates from high school in Figure 2, the Facebook post was written in relation to education and degree accreditation, and Figure 4's series of messages were responses discussing what it is like to be a Vojvodina Hungarian and being able to understand inside jokes, and what it means to the commenters to share a common language, culture, and lived experience with fellow Vojvodina Hungarians.

To begin with, the screenshot Dorina shared with me (Figure 1) was a conversation between her and her university friend, who also spoke English well.

Figure 1. Dorina's (Person B) private messages on Facebook Messenger with her university friend.
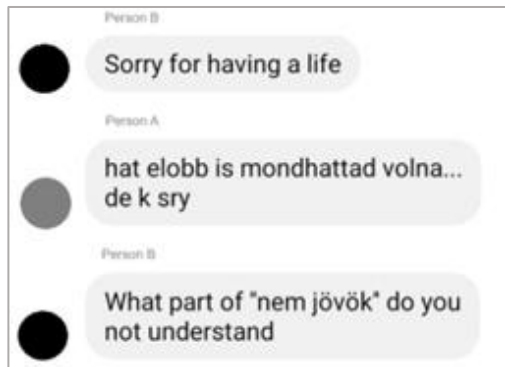
Translation: (underlined parts are written in Hungarian in the original)
Person B: *Sorry for having a life*
Person A: *Well, you could have told me earlier, but ok sorry [for saying anything]*
Person B: *What part of I am not coming do you not understand*

Dorina also emphasized that they usually converse in this manner in person, too, as it is much more entertaining and often easier to express themselves through translanguaging rather than speaking only one language. Additionally, Dorina and Dániel also mentioned that their language choices and translanguaging often depend on the topic of their conversations, but it usually comes naturally (see also Aleksić and García, 2022), and they do not pay too much attention to it.

Like Dorina's example, in Figure 2 below, we can see that Dániel's too includes instances of translanguaging from multiple people involved in the Messenger group conversation, where words like the Serbian *vikendica* "holiday home" or the English expression 'sooner or later' is used. Notably, quite a few Serbian words (and some Hungarianized Serbian words) were also uttered during the interviews, such as the Hungarianized *centárba* "to the [city] center" from Serbian *centar* "city center," and the Serbian *firma* "firm."

Figure 2. Dániel's (Person B) private messages on Facebook Messenger with a group of old high school peers planning a reunion.

Translation: (underlined parts are written in Serbian in the original)
Person A: *But who has a holiday home?* ☹
Person B: *We will find out soon* ☺
Person C: *Sooner or later*
We could rent Rage (bar/pub) in Ada
Person B: *Is that a holiday home?*
Person C: *It's where my birthday was at*
Person D: *Where can you BBQ there?*

On the other hand, Dorina mentioned that there are certain situations and topics where she has to pay attention to her writing and choice of words:

"I think it is much more interesting and special if a person knows how to mix multiple languages into their speech [instead of just speaking in one language]. Personally, I often tend to combine Serbian words into my speech intentionally, especially when I'm in an environment where I want to bring attention to myself or my origins, and honestly, it's the same with English too. On the internet, specifically on TikTok, I often mix English with Hungarian, but also Serbian because since TikTok became famous, for some reason the Balkans have become very cool and we have to enjoy and take advantage of this position/privilege. But of course, it's not always like that, if it's a serious topic I'm much more careful with what I write and in what language I am writing." **(Quote 2, Dorina)**

Although Messenger messages are also written language, they are typically rapid responses that resemble spoken language, which makes them distinct from public Facebook posts, such as Dorina's in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Dorina's public Facebook post in the Magyarországon tanuló vajdasági diákok "Vojvodina Hungarian students studying in Hungary" Facebook group.
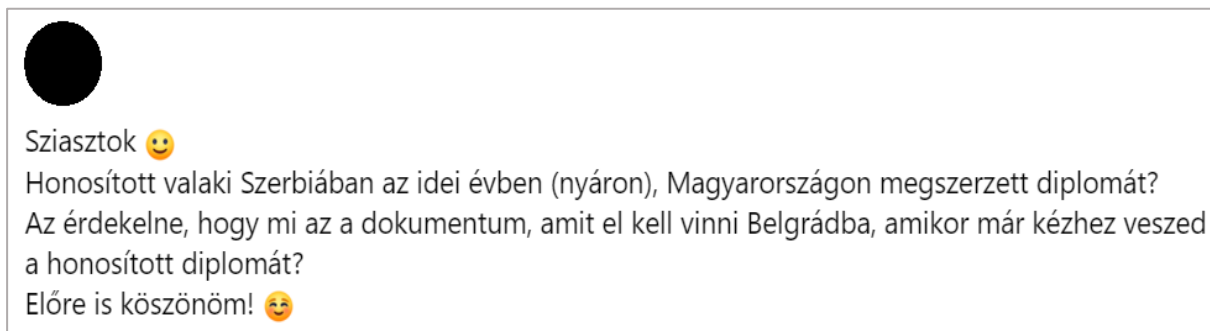
Translation: *Hello everyone!* 😊 *Has anyone accredited their degree that they obtained in Hungary this summer in Serbia? I am wondering which document I need to take with me to Belgrade when picking up my accredited degree. Thank you in advance!* 😊

If we take a closer look at the text in Figure 3, we can see that it is carefully constructed and written in a much more formal way than her messages in Figure 1 above. However, it is also noteworthy that this is an entirely monolingual post, where she highlighted that she also paid special attention to write the Hungarian name of Belgrade, *Belgrád*, as opposed to the Serbian *Beograd,* which she usually tends to use when referring to the capital city, even when speaking and writing Hungarian.

Lastly, Figure 4 below is a screenshot Dániel provided, which was a series of messages reacting to a message from another Vojvodina Hungarian within a larger Vojvodina Hungarian Messenger group chat. The message they were reacting to

was a humorous short text written in Hungarian by Dániel (the first message in blue in Figure 4), filled with Serbian borrowed words and expressions that elicited mixed responses. Despite the original message being written in Hungarian, the people responding, including Dániel (Person A in Figure 4), sometimes chose to reply in Serbian and instead combine Hungarian words and expressions into their comments. Dániel clarified that his linguistic choices were deliberate when writing his responses and were intended to signal that those who spoke both Hungarian and Serbian could easily understand one another, even if the messages contained translanguaging.

Similar reasons were mentioned by Éva and Leon, who talked about communication with other Vojvodina Hungarians in face-to-face situations. Dániel's translanguaging instances included the use of the Serbian word *ljudi* "people," the Hungarianized version of the Serbian *gužva* "crowded," the Hungarianized version of *granica* "border," the Hungarianized version of *svercer* "smuggler of goods," the Hungarianized version of the Serbian *buvljak* "flea market," and the Hungarianized version of the Serbian *vikend* "weekend." In this conversation on Facebook Messenger, four out of five individuals expressed that they regularly engage in translanguaging, while Person E and, to some extent, Person B expressed their disagreement with this way of speaking. As we can see, Person D and later Dániel (Person A) too decided to mix in Serbian when responding to Person E's and Person B's messages, which Dániel was meant to signal that he does not necessarily differentiate between his two spoken languages here, and instead, views both as equal and equally important.

Figure 4. A series of messages reacting to a message from another Vojvodina Hungarian within a larger Vojvodina Hungarian Messenger group chat shared by Dániel (Person A).

Translation: (underlined parts are written in Serbian in the original)

Person A: *People, there is such a crowd here at the border that I have never seen so many [goods] smuggles before... the Hungarians will have a reason to come to the flea market this weekend* 🤣 👍

Person B: *Oh, what nonsense*

Person C: *What's wrong with it?! We also speak like that at home, only the other way around!!! We weave Hungarian words into our Croatian mother tongue. I am proud of this!!!!*

Person D: *Now that's real Hungarian speech* 😜 *oof, I'm going to go the flea market then tomorrow* 👍 *thanks for the information*

Person E: *what are you talking about here, this doesn't look like anything*

Person A: *So what? It's not like you didn't understand what I wrote | Come on, man*

Person D: *Please, don't act like you don't actually speak like that in reality | Well f*ck, that's how it is | The more languages you speak, the more you're worth – that's what my grandpa used to say. | I wish you a nice day! (original: German)*

As mentioned above, these Figures include messages mainly in Hungarian with occasional English and Serbian words that have been intentionally integrated into the messages. Aside from Dániel (see quote four below) and Dorina (see quote two above), Dorottya also shared a few reasons why she intentionally chooses to engage in translanguaging, in these messages, particularly, as well as in general, online or offline:

> "We constantly mix together multiple languages when talking with my Vojvodina Hungarian girl friends. The funniest thing is that we can easily understand one another even if our messages are a mix of Hungarian, English, and Serbian words in the group chat or when we talk on Facetime." **(Quote 3, Dorottya)**

While Dániel did mention that he uses words and expressions from Serbian and English (and rarely from German too) in cases where he cannot recall the word or phrase he is looking for, there are also various situations where he intentionally switches to English and/or Serbian when he intends to get across a message with underlying meaning often to signal particular aspects of his identity, whether that is his national, linguistic, or shared cultural identity:

"It often happens that I can't recall a word or a term [in Hungarian], and that is the reason I say it in Serbian, sometimes also in English, but that really depends on who I'm talking to. If I know that the person doesn't know or speak English or Serbian, I try not to throw in words into my speech in that language, but sometimes I can't help it and they slip out. However, I also have specific moments when I do it fully consciously. This actually happened at a football match in Hungary, when the Serbs were playing against the Hungarians and I was cheering for Serbia, because I am proud of my origins. Vojvodina is different from Hungary, the mentality is completely different, it's more relaxed and I feel much more at home here."
(Quote 4, Dániel)

Dorina also engages in translanguaging when she intentionally draws others' attention to her cultural and national identity, as well as her close ties to Serbia and the Balkans, which she especially highlights when commenting under videos on TikTok, where the audience is mixed. However, the participants are also aware and careful when it comes to translanguaging, as they recognize that it is still considered by many to be informal speech or text and tend to avoid it in more serious situations, especially when conversing with older individuals in positions of power (see Figure 3 above).

The anecdotes and examples (Figures 1 through 4) Dániel, Dorottya, and Dorina mention above all tell us is that their language choices and choice to engage in translanguaging are deeply rooted in and depend on their 'memberships' in specific communities or often online groups (see also Androutsopoulos, 2015; Lee, 2014). The type of consumed content and content created, and even their own beliefs about their spoken languages, as well as their confidence in those, are all additional building blocks of one's online identity (see also Lee 2014, 2016), which are carefully and intentionally curated, whether online or in face-to-face situations. Similarly to previous studies researching translanguaging and exploring the ways in which its promotion could yield positive effects especially in minority settings (Cenoz and Gorter 2017, 2019), the participants in the present study have expressed that translanguaging is something very unique to them, as they are able to understand one another on a deeper level and discuss topics that necessitate the use of all of their spoken languages for mutual understanding and effective communication. The necessity for translanguaging in such instances is something that strengthens their membership in the Vojvodina Hungarian community, where the fact that they share the same languages, a mixture of

cultures, and lived experiences with fellow Vojvodina Hungarians is something to be valued and cherished. This provides great grounds for a supportive community, where the use of their Hungarian minority language (whether through translanguaging or not) becomes a necessity, especially for discussing various topics that might not be possible without the use of Vojvodina Hungarian. Considering that Hungarian is their first language and the language they have the richest repertoire of, it is very well possible that group communication would not take place effectively if this crucial condition was not met (cf. Cenoz and Gorter, 2017, 2019).

5. Conclusion

This small-scale study has examined the digital habits and language use practices of Vojvodina Hungarians, with a specific focus on translanguaging. To explore the topic, semi-structured interviews were conducted with some of the same participants from Kostic (2024), and the findings showed that the Vojvodina Hungarian interviewees had very individual yet overlapping "life stories in relation to technology" (Lee, 2014, p. 94) as well as linguistic choices and linguistic habits in general. Although the present study is not generalizable due to its limited number of participants, the qualitative approach allowed for more detailed and individualized data collection and analysis. The findings revealed a high level of digital integration in the daily lives of the Vojvodina Hungarian participants, with a substantial amount of time spent online and a diverse range of online activities, including social media use, information seeking, communication, and various online errands. The findings also highlight the crucial role of digital platforms in maintaining social connections within the Vojvodina Hungarian community, which also fosters and provides multimodal platforms for intentional translanguaging. The internet also serves as a primary source of information for news, culture, and community-relevant information.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the multilingual nature of their communication, with frequent intentional as well as unintentional translanguaging between their spoken languages of Hungarian, Serbian, (and sometimes Croatian) and English. Their spoken and written interactions are characteristic of multilingual speech, where translanguaging plays a significant role in shaping their online identities and often occurs to facilitate more efficient communication and convey their message across as easily and effectively as possible. Their language choices are influenced by a combination of contextual, social, and personal factors, consistent with the findings of previous studies on similar topics (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Lee, 2014).

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Appendix: Interview Questions

A. Background information (age, gender, place of birth, current place (settlement) of residence, occupation, spoken languages, mother tongue, nationality)

B. Linguistic habits, attitudes, and spoken languages

- Do you use Serbian/English in your daily life, and have you encountered situations where knowledge of Serbian/English is important? Do you feel pressure to become proficient in Serbian/English? If so, for what reasons?

- How would you describe your relationship with Hungarian, Serbian, and English?

- How do you feel about mixing languages in conversations (online and face-to-face)? Is it common among people you know? Can you share some examples of situations where you or others mix languages in conversation?

- Are there specific situations where you prefer one language over another? Why?

C. Digital habits and language use online

- What languages do you primarily use when communicating online? Do you find it easier to express yourself in one language over another on social media? For what reasons?

- Are there any challenges or benefits you associate with using multiple languages digitally?

- Can you describe what your internet habits and device usage used to look like 10-15-20 years ago when the internet was a novelty in our region? What about nowadays, how and what for do you use the internet and your devices?

- How frequently do you consume and create digital media, such as news articles, videos, photos, or even podcasts? Are there specific social media sources that you trust or rely on more than others? If so, for what reasons?

D. Online communities in Vojvodina

- How do you experience the digital space as a Vojvodina Hungarian? Have you encountered discrimination or challenges related to your national and/or linguistic identity online?

- Are there online communities or resources that have helped you connect with your cultural or linguistic heritage? Is it important to you to preserve and promote the use of the Hungarian language in this region?