

**NATION-BUILDING THROUGH LANGUAGE AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR MINORITIES: CASE STUDY OF HUNGARIANS
IN SLOVAKIA**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the processes of nation-building through language ideologies and policies and their implications on the status of the Hungarian minority in the Slovak Republic. It seeks to go beyond the simple notions of exclusion and assimilation and scrutinize further dimensions and constellations of such incidents. For this purpose, a theoretical model of language ideologies, policies and discourse is selected as a central structure. These are applied on the recent language dispute about a name change of a village in southern Slovakia. Subsequently, through analyzing existing language policies and actual use of Hungarian in the area of public administration, implications of linguistic way of nation-building are drawn. It is argued that although the Slovak state conceives its language policies rather restrictively, the members of Hungarian minority are currently able to build their own structures in public domain. The greater damage in the long run is, however, caused by the state indifference in supporting the usage of minority languages. This tendency reflects the monolingual establishment of a nation-state in which minority languages are treated as a threat to the existing order. Furthermore, this standard leads political authorities to perpetuate protection of the state language, on the one hand, and undermine the status of minority languages, on the other.

Key words Nation-building, language, linguistic minority, language policy, language discourse, public administration

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1 Introduction

In May 2014, several Central European countries marked the 10th anniversary of forming a part of the European Union. After a decade of membership, the mutual connections and interdependence of respective states have deepened in the political, economic and social sphere. The continuous processes of integration and globalization in the form of goods, services and populations moving across the state borders has been creating conditions favorable for intermingling of cultures, their values, ideologies, or languages. These constitute powerful pressures for accepting rising heterogeneity and complexity of the contemporary social world reaching beyond the state borders.

Yet, in many of these countries a notion of a homogenous national community consisting of people sharing one common historical experience, language and cultural tradition still persists. Though this congruence of state, nation and language is based on the ideas of ethnolinguistic nationalism stemming from the late 18th century philosophical legacy of Herder, Humboldt, Fichte and others, it turns out to be a vigorous paradigm also in the early years of three centuries later. The factor of language, thus, fulfills apart from its primary communicative function also an important role in constructing and delimiting a community of people symbolically conceived under one nation. This ideological concept stands in a sharp contrast especially to linguistically diverse territories of the Central European countries once being part of large multiethnic empires.

Notwithstanding all these contradictions, language policies as a part of nation-building efforts continue to promote one dominant language within state structure. Necessarily connected to these linguistic nationalizing initiatives are then the questions of their implications for minority groups inhabiting a particular state and seeking to maintain their own language. The usual consequences are explained as resulting in either exclusion or assimilation of

members of linguistic minorities, though, not enough scholarly attention is dedicated to further dimensions and constellations of such incidents. What does it mean for a minority group to experience exclusion - is it only a symbolical act, is it demonstrated on the level of participatory rights or resulting in social marginalization of its members? And does not inclusion necessarily take in the form of assimilation of a given linguistic minority? This thesis, therefore, seeks to examine particularities of such circumstances on the case of Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The research aims at answering a question: *in what ways does the language policy of the Slovak Republic in the last 20 years affect Hungarian minority's participation in procedures on the level of public administration?*

This examination of the case of Slovakia and Hungarian community inhabiting its territory represents, despite manifold existing studies analyzing the Slovak-Hungarian relations, an important contribution for several reasons. Firstly, public discourse in the name of the Slovak state language protection appears strongly perpetuated throughout the last years, and therefore might offer interesting interpretation of political environment supporting these tendencies. Secondly, Hungarian community represents the largest autochthonous minority group in Slovakia with considerably different mother tongue, and so its position bears specific features worth examining. Also, the area of public services and administration is considered highly relevant for the purpose of this study, since it, on the one hand, represents an essential channel of communication between the state and its inhabitants, and, on the other, constitutes an important sphere for indicating the level and nature of involvement of minority members in the state's functioning. This way, this thesis aspires at adding new dimensions to the understanding of implications of the nation-state model on the status of minorities.

I will argue that although the Slovak state conceives its language policies rather restrictively, the members of Hungarian minority are currently able to build their own structures and find the ways of engagement into public domain. Greater damage in the long run is,

however, caused by the state disinterest in supporting the usage of minority languages. As a result, minority communities lack the necessary resources and capacities to maintain and develop their languages adequately. This indifference of the state is a result of monolingual establishment of a nation-state in which minority languages are treated as a threat to the system. Furthermore, this paradigm forces political elites to constantly accentuate protection of the state language and undermine the status of minority languages through discursive strategies.

Regarding the limitations of this study, there are several points that need to be shortly addressed. Firstly, the analysis seeks to avoid the sole evaluation of the extent of efficiency in implementing the policies into practice by state institutions. Rather, the emphasis is on the discrepancies between the declared and actual status, and the reasons behind these tendencies. Also, this thesis does not aim at measuring the direct policy effect on the status of minorities, as this can't be easily disentangled from other factors stemming from historical, economic or sociocultural circumstances. Finally, although the state might be in several places presented as a single actor operating rather coherently, it is understood that it consists of a set of functions, persons and their decisions that are determined by manifold influences. However, this simplification is justified as the focus of the thesis is not on the processes of conceptualizing state policies and measures, but rather on their final forms and practical consequences.

Generally, my thesis draws on theoretical concepts of political science, sociology, sociolinguistics and international law representing an interdisciplinary approach in the field of nationalism. Following chapter aims at providing main scholarly approaches and debates framing the focus of this study. For this purpose, a theoretical model of language ideologies, policies and discourse is selected as a central structure. Next chapter offers a brief description of language legislation development and disputes that mark this process, outlining the background information necessary for further examination.

Subsequently, first subchapter of part 4 takes under scrutiny the political discourse around the recent case of a village in southern Slovakia that was denied a name change because of the alleged Hungarian origin of that name. Through this, status ascribed to given languages, and thus implicitly to their respective speakers, is identified. The language ideology emerging from this discourse is confirmed in further subchapter by analyzing the respective language policies. These include legal acts on use of the state language and minority languages, underlying conceptual documents of the Ministry of Culture and reports informing about the actual status of language usage. Findings of these analyses are thereafter confronted in the last subchapter of the analytical part with data about the use of the Hungarian language in the sphere of public administration.

2 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

2.1 Nation-building through language and its implications - literature review

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis examines the processes of nation-building through language ideologies and policies and their implications on the status of minorities in a given state. Before proceeding to analysis of the actual case of the state language and its relationship with Hungarian minority in Slovakia, it is inevitable to determine basic theoretical concepts, debates and approaches that frame this study.

The central model around which this study builds is that of a nation-building or more precisely a nation-state building. This can be defined as “ideal (or illusion) of national homogeneity [...] actively constructed by the state through range of 'nation-building' policies that encouraged the preferred national identity while suppressing any alternative identities” (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 62). Thus, creation of such homogeneous national community automatically implies the notions of inclusion and exclusion, that means a demarcation of those who are part of it and who are not. This particular implication of the nation-building efforts is a primary object of study in this thesis. It is, however, important to note that the focus is on the “newly nationalizing states”, thus the processes of nationalization within the framework of polities established in the post-communist Europe (Brubaker, 1996, p. 79-83).

The exclusionary nature of the nation-building should not be taken as obvious and self-evident. Whether projects of nation-building result in a marginalization of minority population or not depends, according to Kymlicka (2000), on a particular kind of this nation-building. It is therefore mistaken to think that the Western democracies do not engage in any kind of nation-building and are “ethnoculturally neutral” (2000, p. 185). All states are involved in a kind of nation-building through disseminating a single “societal culture” (2000, p. 185) using official language policies, centralization of political power, system of national education, immigration policies, etc. (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 62-63). What differentiates the West from the East in this case

is, as Kymlicka argues, what kind of nation-building it is and the extent to which it is liberal or illiberal (2000, p. 187). The scope of Kymlicka's study represents a basic framework for this thesis, as it offers a simple, yet comprehensive and timely, interpretation of how the processes of constructing a nation-state work and impact the status of minority members in a given state.

In order to narrow down the wide context of the nation-building model, the focus will be on one of the basic features that is used as a differentiating marker of various communities, and that is a language.

The role of language in the nation-building

Is language a fundamental principle around which a nation is organized or its role in the nation-building projects is not that crucial? The debate about the role of language in the process of building a nation has many theoretical perspectives and provides several interpretations.

Coming back to the modernist theorists of nationalism, they ascribe to language an important role in the processes of spreading of nationalism. Gellner in his foundational book *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) sees nations as a product of nationalist “awakening” that was partly determined by the newly-emerged needs for large-scale education for the masses. This role was to be taken over by the state institutions and one common language was thus inevitable for all the participants of this system to communicate efficiently. Similarly, according to Benedict Anderson (1983) and his constructivist concept of nation as an imagined community, new technologies of communication, especially newspapers and novels, required a common language that was usually derived from a particular spoken vernacular. This print-language then enabled creation of national consciousness and its widespread dissemination and thus represents a basic means of imagining a nation. Almost ten years later, Hobsbawm (1992) argues that language is a semi-artificial construct which did not constitute a criterion of nationhood directly, however became central to the modern definition of nationality indirectly through public

education, institutional and administrative mechanisms.

Building upon the language factor of these studies of nationalism, there has emerged a new field of political science dedicated to the notions of linguistic nationalism. Its studies can be divided into two basic groups differentiating in approach to language and its functions. First group is represented by authors such as Laitin, De Swaan or Gurr who analyze language through rational choice theory and approach it instrumentally as a matter of economic determinants. They examine language policies and choices as closely connected to practical economic benefits and do not interpret them as aspects of any group belonging. On the other hand, there is the so-called nation-building school of authors (Safran, Laponce, Von Busekist, etc.) claiming that language policies have wider implications and stressing especially “the symbolic aspect of language and its mobilization as an identity marker and as means of inclusion or exclusion into the national community” (Garcia, 2013, p. 116). The latter approach represents an important contribution to this thesis as it asserts the reciprocal relationship between state and language – a language offers a basis for political mobilization resulting in the creation of a nation-state and as soon as the state is established it uses national language with the aim of building a coherent national community. The processes that are going to be under the scrutiny in the given thesis are part of the latter.

Comprehensive summary of the debates regarding the role of language in the processes of nation-building is provided by Wright (2000). She acknowledges varying functions of language in the context of nationalism that change according to circumstances and distributes the most significant theorists and their approaches accordingly. Firstly, language fulfills primarily the communication role that is essential for building modern democratic communities (Wright, 2000, p. 63). In this way language can stand out as a by-product of modernity (according to Wright, this approach is represented by Gellner, Anderson, Nairn) or as a basis of forming associations and cooperation (Deutsch, Habermas, Fishman, Bourdieu). Secondly,

language is considered as just one among many others features defining a national community and its usage is based on the choice of particular speakers (Renan, Smith, Armstrong, Barth, Greenfeld). Finally, there are theorists who treat language as an unimportant aspect with regards to nationalizing processes (Hobsbawm, Brass, Kedourie). Wright herself provides an interesting argument concerning the question of the role of language in the nation-building process. She treats language as one of the basic organizing principles of national communities created in the European nation-states that ensures a community of communication expected to correspond with a polity (2000, p. 69). In this way then, language is considered not only in its communication function but also as a symbolic marker of belonging to a certain community.

Language ideologies, policies and discourse

When considering the role language plays in the construction of a nation, it is important to note the widely accepted position among the sociolinguists that the language itself is a social construct that derives from political need, group or individual choice (Brumfit, 2006, p. 36). This happens predominantly through the process of language standardization executed by state institutions.

The comprehensive research in this field concentrates on the interplay of language ideologies underpinning the policies that once implemented interact with linguistic practices (Blommaert, 1999; Gal, & Woolard, 2001; Mar-Molinero, & Stevenson, 2009). Language ideology is defined as “cultural ideas, presumptions and presuppositions with which different social groups name, frame and evaluate linguistic practices” (Gal, 2006, p. 13). In the realm of nation-states, ideology that underlies and legitimize the processes of standardization is that of nationalism, specifically the isomorphism of language, state and nation (Kamusella, 2008, p. 57; May, 2012, p. 94) or in Gal's words “the Herderian ideology” of a monolingual nation (2006, p. 14-18). Thus, although language in its genuine nature is fluid and created through linguistic

practices in interactions of its speakers in a given time and place, the objective of nation-building projects is to specify it as a nameable, discrete and bounded property (Gal, 2006, p. 14) with definite number of speakers who are territorially concentrated within the state's boundaries and constitute coherent national community.

The process of standardization then puts a given “legitimate language” (Bourdieu in Gal, 2006, p. 17) into everyday practice through policies concerning mainly state education system, bureaucratic procedures in the state sector or/and wider public use of the language. These procedures are what Brubaker (1996, p. 106) denominates as nationalizing policies of states that already achieved their polity. In more detail, May (2012, p. 159-160) divides this process into legitimation and institutionalization of the chosen national language. While legitimation consists mainly of formal recognition of a particular language variety by the state, the latter phase seeks to incorporate the language within the state structures and institutions. In case of already established standard language, policies can still be widely used with the aim of its protection from “unfavorable influences”. As soon as a strong connection between a language and a particular group affiliation is established, protection based on the principles of language purism or prescriptivism becomes crucial (Edwards, 2009, p. 212).

Taking different perspective on policies, Stevenson and Carl in their book consider language policy not simply as a set of rules and measures, but rather as a “discourse on the rights, opportunities and obligations of individuals and groups in terms of personal and social development” (2010, p. 5). This is the so-called “discourse on language” which they define as (2010, p. 11):

a broad and inclusive perspective on ways in which ideas and beliefs about language permeate the social life of groups, communities and societies and how such ideas and beliefs are called upon to justify and legitimize actions that have consequences for people's opportunities and for their relationships with each other.

In terms of nation-building initiatives this kind of approach involves mainly discourse

on actions and procedures allowing or banning the minority language use in certain areas of state functioning or public life. Through this process a social meaning of language and its importance, as well as perceived status of linguistic minorities, are constructed and disseminated among the public. Based on this model, one part of the analysis in chapter 4 will be dedicated to the examination of discursive practices used in the recent dispute over a village name between the Hungarian-speaking inhabitants of the village community and the Slovak government representatives.

Language, power and minorities

As expressed by Chomsky (1979, in May, 2012, p. 4) “[q]uestions of language are basically questions of power”. Language policies through which the national language is standardized thus serve not only as means of securing an effective communication of a national community, but also for purposes of political control, ethnic homogenization, management of ethnic conflict or spread of civic attitudes (Safran, 2004, p. 4-8). The institutionalized language is aimed at creating a certain community of communication from which the members of linguistic minorities are excluded and their languages are suppressed or overcome (Wright, 2000, p. 69). Language and its standardization in the state framework are therefore closely connected to the issue of symbolic status and power of its speakers (Bourdieu, 1991).

These dimensions fall within the vast research field of language planning, particularly in the topic of status planning that together with corpus planning constitutes the substance of language planning (Edwards, 2009, p. 226). The aspect of status planning is extra-linguistic and social in its nature, as stated by Edwards, it reflects the reality that all linguistic theorems are based on the previous politically motivated decisions (2009, p. 226). In this way, it is the state and its representatives that determine through prescriptivist actions in the area of language use who is considered part of the national community and who is, on the other side, stigmatized. Or

as Gal (2006, p. 21) asserts “standardization creates not uniformity but more (and hierarchical) heterogeneity”.

This brings back the issue of nation-building implications for minority groups outlined in the beginning of this review. In this sense, Wright (2000, p. 3) identifies the possible spheres of inclusion and exclusion of linguistic minorities in the areas of access to knowledge (including education and mass media), employability (economic reasons for speaking a certain language), participation in the democratic process and active citizenship (contact with a state bureaucracy) without indicating deeper consequences of such situations. Similarly, Kymlicka (2007, p. 62) operates only on the level of exclusion and assimilation and does not elaborate on further details of these phenomena. More complex picture is provided by May (2011, p. 85) who claims:

Minority groups, and their languages and cultures, consequently tend to be excluded from 'national' recognition. At the same time, minority groups are also variously encouraged and/or coerced by the dominant ethnies to assimilate to 'national' norms. [...] If they resist, their attempts at maintaining a distinct identity are often labeled as a parochial and anti-national communalism. [...] If they acquiesce, and assimilate, minority groups may still face exclusion from the full benefits of a 'national' identity determined and delimited by the dominant ethnies.

Nonetheless, what remains unspecified in these studies is how, on the one hand, the exclusion is expressed and whether, on the other, the inclusion does not imply an acceptance of the dominant language. These nuances may represent a matter of maintenance or extinction of minorities' cultural particularities and overall linguistic diversity of a state. Therefore, the main aim of my thesis is to go beyond the inclusion-exclusion distinction and scrutinize the way language policies are constructed and interpreted in order to compare them with the examined linguistic practices of minorities.

Language and nation-building in the Slovak case study

For this purpose, the case study of the Slovak language policies and the standing of the Hungarian minority will be closely analyzed. The interconnections of language policies and minority rights in particular ways of the nation-building make out of Slovakia, as indicated in the studies discussed below, a highly interesting case study.

The paper of Nedelsky (2003) examined the relationship between illiberal nation-building in Kymlicka's sense (2000) and establishment of the Slovak state on the basis of the right to national self-determination. It concluded that in the early years of its independence Slovakia engaged in the illiberal nation-building based on the ethnic definition of the “state-forming nation” - the Slovaks (Nedelsky, 2003, p. 122). For minority members, this meant no guarantees for protection of their cultural and linguistic identity and rising pressures for assimilation. Moreover, they were accused of their potential disloyalty to the state, especially the Hungarian minority.

Providing interpretation of the more recent dynamics, Csergő presented on the case of Slovakia and Romania in her book *Talk of the Nation* (2007) that although the conflicts over language use persist and thus reflect the continuing significance of nationalism rhetoric, the majority and minority political actors actually contribute to the democratization of the given states. Similarly, the recent dissertation of Regelman (2012) argued that despite the institutional constraints and structures dominated by majority, the members of minorities – Russian-speakers in Estonia and Hungarians in Slovakia – are active in building the integrative structures and interactions with majorities.

These findings offer an interesting version of the reality that might be tested in the particular area of language use and minority rights in this thesis.

2.2. Methodology

Following the principle of triangulation in terms of methodologies used for the analytical part of the thesis, there are several different objects and methods selected for particular sections. This way, various dimensions and connections of the issue of language policies and their consequences for minority groups can be uncovered.

Firstly, in line with the aforementioned approach (Stevenson, & Carl, 2010) of treating language policies also as discourses on rights, obligations and opportunities of minority language speakers, the dispute over the name of the village of Tešedíkovo/Pered in southern Slovakia is analyzed by the means of discourse analysis. As objects of this examination the statements of relevant political representatives and institutions communicated through the written formal announcements and media articles are selected.

Secondly, based on the policy developments outlined in the background chapter the focus is on two policy documents conceptualized by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, the State Language Law and the Law on the Use of Minority Languages. These four records pose the basic building stones of the comprehensive language policy and therefore are considered highly suitable and relevant for a deeper scrutiny. Analysis of these documents aims at deconstructing underlying language ideology and the extent and ways of standardizing and protecting the state language. Additionally, two recent reports monitoring the actual state of enforcement of this language legislation are briefly reviewed.

The methodological framework essential for these two parts of the analysis is the Wodak's study (2006) debating the linguistic methods that are used for analyzing language policies. Thus, the first part represents the field of law-making political procedures in the form of written laws and recommendations where mainly the methods of qualitative content and argumentation analysis will be used. The second part falls within the field of political executive and formation of public opinions through decisions, press releases and short speeches. Here the

specific three-dimensional approach of discourse analysis – consisting of investigating contents and topics, discursive strategies and linguistic means of the given discourse - is applied (Wodak, 2006, p. 178). These two sections together build one part of the analysis concerned with the processes how the state language is standardized, protected and interpreted.

Finally, in the light of preliminary findings of the language policy and discourse analyses, the last part of the study deals with the examination of consequences for the Hungarian minority. Attention is directed at linguistic practices in the area of public services and communication with administrative authorities. The data about these issues are collected through a set of expert interviews and review of existing empirical studies related to the use of Hungarian in the public sphere.

3 Background of the language issues in Slovakia

Slovak nationalism and language

Language has been recognized as a primary factor in the Slovak nation-building process of the 18th and 19th century by several scholars (Seton-Watson, 1977, p. 169; Pichler, 1994, p. 37; Kamusella, 2009, p. 522-567; Maxwell, 2009). After gaining independence in 1993, the unique position of the Slovak language in newly-established state was guaranteed in the Constitution. In this regard, Wright (2000, p. 52) argues that placing the Slovak language into the centre of independent Slovakia is a result of two major historical circumstances – on the one hand, memories of Magyarization in the second half of the 19th century and marginalization of Slovaks in socialist federal Czechoslovakia, on the other. Similarly, Daftary and Gál (2003, p. 39) suggest that the Slovak national identity has unfolded as a response to Hungarian and Czech culture and historical grievances that occurred during the periods of their coexistence in a common state formation.

Given the historical context, this chapter summarizes the major legislative acts and language-related conflicts in Slovakia from 1993 to present. Additionally, a brief description of the recent dispute of Tešedíkovo/Pered over the use of minority language in the sphere of geographical place names is provided in the end of this chapter. These summaries serve as a starting point for further analyses coming in the next chapter.

Language politics since 1993

Laws and policies adopted in the early years of the independent Slovakia reflect the development of a post-communist country experiencing political transformation along with strong nationalism (Harris, 2007, p. 45). These tendencies were heavily present especially during the Mečiar's governments (1992-1994 and 1994-1998) that adopted the Slovak constitution and some controversial laws concerning the state language and minority language

rights.

One of the most debated and controversial acts is the State Language Law from 1995. It stipulated particular spheres in which the Slovak language had to be used, such as official contact with state organs, official written records, all textbooks, periodicals, radio and television programs, contacts between health workers and patients, etc. (Nedelsky, 2003, p. 115). Failures to comply with the given provisions were fined. Furthermore, exams for the public administration officials to control their level of proficiency in Slovak were introduced (Groszkowski, & Bocian, 2009, p. 1).

The legal status of minority languages was not clearly determined until 1999 when the first Dzurinda government adopted the Law on the Use of Minority Languages. This act marked the period of Europeanization and growing integration efforts (Harris, 2007, p. 46). It guaranteed the use of minority languages in the public administration offices of municipalities where minority members constituted at least 20% of the total population. Nonetheless, there were many critics of this legal act considering it vaguely formulated and thus offering contradictory interpretations (Daftary, & Gál, 2003, p. 60). Overall, during this period Slovakia adopted several international agreements in regards to the protection of minority rights, among others the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages.

In 2001 the Ministry of Culture elaborated the so-called Conception on the Care of the State Language (*Koncepcia starostlivosti o štátny jazyk*) which was in February of that year approved by the Slovak government. It enlarged on the state language policy and its realization in the spheres of education, research, public administration, culture, army, media and others. Moreover, it called for reviving the activities of terminology commissions that should track and consolidate technical terminology and regulate the adoption of anglicisms. The main objectives developed in this document were later reflected in another material of the Ministry of Culture – Measures in the Sphere of State Language (*Opatrenia v oblasti štátneho jazyka*) adopted in

2007. This resolution stipulates the further details of state language use and provides recommendations in the particular areas.

Based on these official documents, the amendment of the 1995 State Language Law was developed and passed in March 2009. The law's provisions introduced the primacy of the Slovak language in public life and allowed minority language use only in municipalities where there was at least a 20% minority in the total population. Most controversies surrounding this law were triggered by the provisions over monitoring the compliance with the regulations and penalties which could reach 5,000 € (Groszkowski, & Bocian, 2009, p. 2). This enactment mirrors the shift of rhetoric that occurred with the rise of populism after the accession to EU and a new government (2006-2010) which consisted of the coalition of two nationalistic parties (SNS – Slovak National Party with the leader Slota, and HZDS – Movement for Democratic Slovakia with Mečiar as the head) and the party SMER with the new Prime Minister Fico. Also, it marked a period of sharp deterioration of Slovak-Hungarian interstate relations. The last modifications of the State Language Law occurred in 2011 as a result of an endeavor of the new government coalition (2010-2011). This amendment was considered a refinement of the modifications made in 2009, though it did not target several substantial issues, especially its legal relation to the Law on the Use of Minority Languages (Lajčáková, 2012, p. 46).

Similarly, the 1999 Law on the Use of Minority Languages underwent the processes of amendment in 2009 and 2011. The latest draft amendment proposed by the office of the Vice-chairman of the Government for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality was however significantly curtailed in the approval process (Lajčáková, 2012, p. 47). Moreover, shortly after the Fico government regained the power after the government collapse in October 2011, several substantial changes in the general minority protection framework occurred. The specialized governmental position of the Vice-chairman of the Government for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality was replaced by the Government Representative for

National Minorities who possesses significantly lower competences.

Detailed analysis of the two conceptual documents of the Ministry of Culture and the current versions of the State Language Law and the Law on the Use of Minority Languages follows in the first section of the next chapter.

Disputes over language use before 2013

Shortly after the establishment of the Slovak Republic, tensions and disputes related to language use emerged, especially in relation to the largest minority group and the use of the Hungarian language. As argued by Csérgő (2002) though, back in the federalist period of Czechoslovakia political divisions did not reflect the ethnic affiliations of respective political elites, but rather their different standpoints on the issue of desired institutional design of the Slovak unit. The situation changed with the independent Slovakia in 1993 and the subsequent debate about the nature of its statehood. As the path towards a unitary nation-state was eventually selected, the Hungarian minority happened to be excluded from building a new institutional framework of the state. The issue upon which the Slovak and Hungarian political representatives became "ethnically" divided most was that of language (Csérgő, 2002, p. 4).

One of the earliest language disputes regarded the use of the suffix *-ová* in feminine surnames, which affected mostly women of the Hungarian community.¹ This state interference into the private sphere of its inhabitants was substantiated by the need to protect the Slovak grammar (Nedelsky, 2003, p. 114). Furthermore, a conflict over the place-name signs and their language occurred.² This so-called "place-name sign and personal-name war" (Bauko, 2012, p. 14) was resolved by the adoption of Laws on Names in Birth Registers and Marriage Certificates and on the Use of Bilingual Signs during the Interim Moravčík Government in the

1 Feminine surnames in Hungarian have the same form as masculine, whereas in Slovak a female surname is created through adding the suffix *-ová* to the male form.

2 Detailed information regarding the place name signs is outlined in the next section about Tešedíkovo/Pered.

period of March-October 1994.

With the defeat of the authoritarian Mečiar government in 1998 and the initiation of integration process into the international and European structures, disputes over language use gradually diminished. The reemergence of language-related issues occurred in 2006 with the formation of a new government engaged in the radical nationalist rhetoric. This resulted in a number of conflicts reaching beyond the language issue per se, such as the double-citizenship dispute with the Hungarian government in 2010 or the controversy surrounding the ethnically motivated attack on Hedviga Malinová/Malina Hedvig in the town Nitra/Nyitra in 2006. One of the most significant language-related disputes concerned the question of the use of Hungarian geographical names in the textbooks for schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction throughout 2009.

Background of the Tešedíkovo/Pered dispute

In September 2013 a demand of a group of inhabitants in a small Slovak village Tešedíkovo to change its name to Pered was rejected by the Slovak government representatives. Although the population of the village decided about the name change in the referendum in March 2012, the official argument of the Terminology Commission of the Ministry of Interior Affairs that reviewed this claim was that the name Pered is of Hungarian origin which is against the Slovak legal order.

The population of Tešedíkovo village - consisting of 78% ethnic Hungarians³ - expressed its will in the referendum in March 2012 in favor of changing the village name to Pered. This is the historical name from the period before 1948 when the communist regime decided about the official renaming of several municipalities mostly in the south of the country.

³ From the total of 3,716 inhabitants of the village 2,910 claim the Hungarian nationality and 783 the Slovak nationality (Census 2011 Results, available at: <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=50355>).

After the fall of communism and the creation of the Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia inhabitants of several towns and villages in the southern part of the Slovak territory decided to abandon the names introduced by the communist regime and revert back to historical names used before the year 1948. Some of them succeeded (e.g. village of Šafárikovo changed to Tornaľa, Čalovo to Veľký Meder or Sládečkovce to Močenok), others were denied this option – such as the town of Štúrovo seeking to change its name to Parkan. Similarly in this case, despite the successful referendum taking place in the town in 1991, the Slovak authorities rejected the name change without providing any solid legal or expert argument.⁴

Since the members of Hungarian minority constitute more than 20% of the whole population living in the Tešedíkovo village, the official name sign being in line with the minority language law is bilingual – that is in Slovak first and in the minority language below that. This has been however allowed for several municipalities, including Štúrovo, Sládkovičovo or Tešedíkovo, only recently because the names they were given 70 years ago were derived from the names of famous historical personalities (leader of the Slovak national revival in the 19th century and author of the Slovak language standard Ľudovít Štúr, romantic poet and publicist Andrej Sládkovič, Protestant pastor and founder of the agricultural vocational education in the historical Hungary Samuel Tešedík). The intention of the activists was however to replace the name Tešedíkovo with Pered, so its form would be the same in both languages. In an open letter to the government representatives in November 2013, they argue that several Slovak town and village names are either of German (Žilina, Pezinok, Kežmarok) or Hungarian origin (Tornaľa, Sap, Bučuháza) and that some of them have identical names in both Slovak and minority language (Bajka, Zalaba, Kalonda, Pozba).⁵ Therefore they consider the

4 Štúrovo môže opäť používať názov Párkány. (Štúrovo can again use the name Párkány). In: *Naše noviny – Štúrovo a okolie. A mi lapunk – Párkány és vidéke*. 5.8.2011. Available at: <http://sao.sturovo.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=328>.

5 The Pered Project II. In: *Dvojazyčné Južné Slovensko – Ketnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia*. Available at: <<http://www.ketnyelvu.info/sk/2013/11/07/the-pered-project-ii/>>.

government's decision mistaken and illegitimate.

Thus, presented dispute involves various contradictions and dynamics whose examination may reveal deeper context of language issues of the independent Slovak Republic. The analysis of the political discourse surrounding this case constitutes the subject of the following subchapter.

4 Analytical part - Case study of the Slovak language policies and their implications for the Hungarian minority

4.1 Discourse over the Tešedíkovo/Pered dispute

As indicated in the previous chapter, several language-related conflicts between the Slovak government and members of the Hungarian community have occurred since the independent Slovak state was established in 1993. The manner in which these disputes are presented and interpreted by the Slovak political elites has a tremendous effect on the way the state language and its role in the society is perceived. This political discourse further enters the wider public discourse through media and thus becomes more available and influential (Chudžíková, 2012, p. 131).

The aim of this subchapter is to analyze the overall debate surrounding the development of the case – from organizing the referendum in 2012 to the last reports in the first half of 2014. The particular focus is on the way this dispute was interpreted by the relevant actors, as well as on representations of the Hungarian community and perceived status of their mother tongue. This will uncover the discursive dimension of the language policies that will be then closely analyzed in the following subchapter.

Official decision-making

As already mentioned, the referendum in the Tešedíkovo village took place in March 2012, after which a formal proposal for a change of the name was submitted to the Ministry of Interior Affairs by the official village representatives. At that time, the Slovak information and press agency (SITA) already informed about the decision of Tešedíkovo inhabitants that would lead to the change of the village name to Pered.⁶ The report did not offer any doubts about the

⁶ Tešedíkovo premenujú na Pered, z Kolárova Gúta nebude. (Tešedíkovo will be renamed to Pered, Kolárovo will not become Gúta). In: *Portal of SITA Webnoviny.sk*, [12th March 2012]. Available at:

implementation of the referendum result into practice. However, a statement provided by the Tešedíkovo Mayor Gyula Borsányi implicitly indicated that the Hungarian element in this issue is considered very sensitive, since he stated that:

*It is mistakenly explained that it is a Hungarian name of the village, because in Hungarian it does not mean anything. It is the historical name of the village.*⁷

In the official procedure, the request was addressed by the Terminology Commission of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, after which the standpoint of the Ministry of Culture was required. Then the proposal was supposed to be reviewed by the Government that had to provide its approval. The issue, however, had not been resolved by the end of the year 2012. In August 2013 the Member of Parliament Árpád Érsek, a member of the Most-Híd party, interpellated for the case to the Minister of Culture Maďarič. At this time, the issue started to be heavily covered by the media which suddenly brought unofficial information about the rejection of the request. This was in media presented through statements of one of the Commission's members claiming that:

*Pered is labeled [sic] as the Hungarian name. And the name of a village must have the Slovak origin.*⁸

By referring to the origin of the name this statement triggered a heated discussion whether all the towns, villages or other geographical locations actually bear a name of purely Slovak origin. The quote itself is rather inconsistent, as it presents Pered as the name that is “labeled” as Hungarian, not of non-Slovak origin⁹, which would make it according to the

<<http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/tesedikovo-premenuju-na-pered-kolar/477233-clanok.html>>.

7 Tešedíkovo premenujú na Pered, z Kolárova Gúta nebude. (Tešedíkovo will be renamed to Pered, Kolárovo will not become Gúta). In: *Portal of SITA Webnoviny.sk*, [12th March 2012]. Available at: <<http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/tesedikovo-premenuju-na-pered-kolar/477233-clanok.html>>.

8 Tešedíkovo je stále Tešedíkovom, referendum na zmenu nestačí. (Tešedíkovo will remain Tešedíkovo, a referendum is not sufficient for its change) In: *SME daily*, [4th September 2013]. Available at: <<http://www.sme.sk/c/6923337/tesedikovo-je-stale-tesedikovom-referendum-na-zmenu-nestaci.html>>.

9 Which might be probably because of the fact that several sources point to the actual Slavic origin of the name Pered that had been associated with the village since 13th century and presumably derived from the name of one of the sons of the Great Moravian emperor Svatopluk.

second part of this claim unfit for the official name of a commune. Nonetheless, through this assertion an essential message was communicated that the Hungarian language is not appropriate and desirable for the purposes of the official sphere of the state, which is supposed to remain entirely Slovak.

After being reminded by the media representatives of the interpretation of the law that does not refer to the origin of the name, the Minister of Interior Affairs Kaliňák simply proclaimed that:

Names of communes have to be in the state language and the suggested name is Hungarian. From our point of view, it is the original historical Hungarian¹⁰ name and we do not think it is good to return to it, as well as Bratislava will not be renamed to Pozsony.¹¹

By this statement another dimension is added to the whole name issue. Here, Pered is interpreted as the “original historical Hungarian” name which seems to be, as it is implied by the Minister's quote, a greater obstacle for its current use than the etymological origin per se. The reference to the Hungarian version of Bratislava likewise brings connotations of the past that indicate the history of linguistic plurality of the Slovak territory, obviously an inconvenient fact for the Slovak state authorities. Also, when using “our point of view” and “we do not think” the Minister implies that the decision was made on the basis of the opinions of the competent figures and not on the legal interpretation of the existing legislation or any expert standpoints related to this issue. Moreover, he implicitly divides the actors of the dispute into “us” and “them” suggesting their uneven status and power.

At the end of September 2013 the Minister of Culture Maďarič responded to Érsek's

10 This word is in the Slovak version specified as *úhorský* which refers particularly to the period of historical Hungarian Empire (in Slovak *Uhorsko*) that differs from the denomination of the current Hungary, Hungarian – (*Maďarsko, maďarský*).

11 Pered je slovenský názov Tešedíkova, odkazuje opozícia vláde. (*Pered is the Slovak name for Tešedíkovo, the opposition let the government know*). In: *SME daily*, [18th October 2013]. Available at: <<http://www.sme.sk/c/6974681/pered-je-slovansky-nazov-tesedikova-odkazuje-opozicia-vlade.html#ixzz2kBvgoU8R>>.

interpellation in a letter stating that the expert standpoint of the Ministry of Culture was delivered during the meeting of the Terminology Commission already in January 2013. Although the content of this standpoint was not explicitly stated, it was understood that the name change would not have been supported from their side. The legal argumentation of the Minister was based on the interpretation of provisions specified in the Municipal Regulation Law and the State Language Law that stipulate an obligation to determine a name of a commune in the state language in accordance with the rules of Slovak orthography. Additionally, the Minister provided a rather ideological interpretation of these legal norms stating that:

[o]fficial name of a commune situated on the sovereign territory of an independent state is a society- and nation-wide matter that relates to all citizens of the state. Because of that, it is a common practice that it is the supreme state authorities that decide about the form of the commune names and have to consider justification and consequences resulting from a name change.¹²

Thus, the argumentation of the Minister in this statement is based on the authority of “sovereignty” and “independence” of the state and its “supreme” authorities that decide about important issues. Furthermore, he also resorts to the reference to a common sense that is supposed to legitimize the decision-making procedure and the decision itself. However, it is not explained by the Minister why the matter of official commune names possesses the “society- and nation-wide” importance. However, treating the issue of place names as the matter “related to all citizens of the state” whose change might have serious consequences that have to be taken into consideration by state authorities, he implicitly asserts the importance of the state language and its roles in nation-state building.

12 Odpoveď ministra kultúry Slovenskej republiky M. Maďariča na interpeláciu poslanca Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky Á.Érseka podanú 28. augusta 2013 vo veci stanoviska k názvu obce. (*Response of the Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic M. Maďarič to the interpellation of the Member of Parliament of the Slovak Republic Á.Érsek submitted on 28th August 2013 in relation to a standpoint to the place name*). [20th September 2013]. Available at: <<http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/Download.aspx?DocID=391679>>.

The official decision of the Terminology Commission of the Ministry of Interior Affairs to reject Pered as an official village name was finally announced on 15th October 2013. On the next day, the Slovak government adopted an official resolution disapproving of the proposed name change. In response, in December of that year a draft to amend the respective legislation in order to ensure the implementation of valid referendum results without a mandatory approval of the government was submitted for negotiation in the Parliamentary session. At the present state, the Slovak legislation does not provide any legal ground for local referendum results to be legally binding. Therefore, despite the successful referendum that took place in the village of Tešedíkovo in 2012, no state or municipality organs were obliged to recognize it. This way, the space for interpretation from the side of competent actors was wide and open to speculation. The proposal, however, did not get to the second reading in Parliament.

To sum up after analyzing all the relevant statements of the competent public figures, the interpretation of the Tešedíkovo-Pered dispute they provide in public is that the official naming of a village in any other language than Slovak is not acceptable. In the end, it is not relevant what the origin of the name is, because the issue is not of a linguistic nature and what belongs to the lexicon of the state language is always under the competence of another state institution and hence could be easily amended in case of willingness shown from the side of political elites. This dispute, however, clearly demonstrates that the problem does not lie primarily in the conflicting interpretations of the respective state legislation. The official decision is underlaid by the efforts to protect the state language and strictly determine the ways it is used in the public sphere. This way, the Slovak language is attributed a high prestige and importance, whereas on the other hand Hungarian is perceived as an undesirable element, which leads to its further stigmatization.

This uneven status given to the majority and minority language accounts for a condition

of language conflict as described by May (2011, p. 160). This situation might be regarded as a result of the processes of legitimation and institutionalization of a particular language which in reality collides with the actual language practices. The act of legitimation usually involves the formal recognition by the state of a language variety which in case of Slovakia is demonstrated by provisions stipulated in the Constitution and the State Language Law. More importantly, through state institutionalization the language is granted its exclusive use in a wide range of social interactions, cultural and linguistic contexts. These processes then lead to the “preferential treatment of the dominant language by the state and within civil society, and the related stigmatization of other varieties” (May, 2011, p. 161). And that is particularly what has been demonstrated in the Tešedíkovo/Pered case.

By strictly adhering to the use of a single language in all the domains of the state and life of its inhabitants, the “dogma of linguistic homogeneity” (Stevenson, 2005) is maintained. Thus, by allowing the use of a Hungarian name, or only the one perceived as being Hungarian, this paradigm would be significantly disrupted. The continuous discourse in regards to the importance of the state language is reflected in a widely-popular attitude “when in Slovakia, speak Slovak” (Kontra, 1999, p. 87). This concept, however, interferes with the presence of numerous linguistic minorities living within the Slovak territory.

Indeed, the debate around the Tešedíkovo/Pered dispute constitutes only one part of the larger public discourse about the status of the state language and its protection, on the one hand, and rights of the national minorities to maintain their mother tongue, on the other. In order to unveil the underlying presumptions of framing these conflicting concepts, a complex analysis of the Slovak language policies is the theme of the following subchapter.

4.2 Analysis of language policies

As introduced in the previous chapter, the language politics of the independent Slovak Republic consists legally of laws on state language and minority languages, and official documents of the Ministry of Culture providing further details and interpretation of the provisions of the laws. All these materials are supposed to create the starting point of a coherent strategy towards the language situation in Slovakia.

Through the analysis of the selected legislative documents the aim of this subchapter is to uncover underlying language ideology, definition of a national community and offered argumentation for the protection of the state language. Furthermore, based on these findings I strive for predicting the consequences of the language politics for members of linguistic minorities in the given state framework. The particular focus is on the representation of linguistic minorities and their language rights in the domains of public administration, official communication and usage of minority language names.

Constitution 1992

Briefly touching upon the references to the state language and linguistic minorities in the Slovak Constitution, two relevant articles are found. Firstly, article 6 stipulates that Slovak is the only state language on the territory of Slovakia and that conditions of the use of other languages in the official contact are to be specified by the respective law.

Secondly, in article 34 there is a guarantee for citizens who are members of national minorities or ethnic groups to receive or disseminate information in their mother tongue. Furthermore, these inhabitants are guaranteed, along with the “right of acquiring the state language”, rights for education and official communication in their language. The following section however accentuates that the execution of these rights cannot lead to “the threat of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic, and to the discrimination of other

populations”.

The way these articles are formulated indicates that although minorities may use their languages in several spheres of life, realization of their rights is limited by higher values of state security and interests of the majority. Furthermore, the last provision implicitly suggests that activities of minority members might be of a hostile and dangerous character. This distinction of the Slovak majority from other citizens of the state is reinforced already in the preamble of the Constitution which starts by: “We, the Slovak nation, ...”. In the process of the 1992 constitution-making, the version starting with: “We, the citizens of Slovakia, ...” was rejected by Parliament (Nedelsky, 2003, p. 109).

Conception on the Care of the State Language 2001

This document offers an official interpretation and argumentation of the state in regards to the status and functions of the state language, role of the state in its regulation and tools for its protection. By identifying the main themes and their underlying arguments, I seek to determine the language ideology of this particular policy and its implicit assumptions in relation to the minorities.

According to the Conception, continuous language politics has a significant place in the definition of national and state interests. This position is explained by the special status given to the state language that represents an essential identification marker of the nation. Moreover, in this interpretation language bears several crucial functions that make it an important resource in the hands of the state. Besides its primary communicative function, it is considered a main tool for maintaining and deepening the political and social integration of citizens. Secondly, state language is recognized as a vital medium of the internal stability of the state in the social, cultural and political spheres. In this sense then, using a language other than the state one might be understood as an act of undermining state stability and integrity. Also, given the integrating

function of the state language, it implies that the inevitable condition for minority language speakers to be integrated into the state is to possess a substantial command of the state language. Although, to some extent this naturally might be necessary, it can easily lead to assimilation pressures. It also assumes that there could not be an integration of all state citizens without using one common language.

Throughout the whole document there are several references to the importance of the protection of the state language and the crucial role of the state and its institutions in this process. Apart from the above-mentioned functions of the state language, argumentation for the need for its protection built upon the alleged support from most of the population or the assumption that by elevating the language culture per se a higher level of scholarship and overall culture is automatically achieved (p. 1). When it comes to the area of minority languages, the document argues that the details of their use are regulated in accordance with all the international obligations of the Slovak Republic. Likewise, it accentuates that the protection and support of minority languages shall not be conducted at the expense of the state language.

In a separate section of the document regarding the sphere of public administration state language maintenance was supposed to be directed especially at the official forms, requests and petitions used in the regional, district or local offices. These measures are considered very important, since these official documents are “often incomprehensible to citizens” (p. 11). What is meant by this reference is not clearly stated, nevertheless it is most likely targeted at the places of southern Slovakia where the Hungarian-speaking population is territorially concentrated. Connected to the issue of communal administration there were reported problems with distinguishing between the name (*názov*) and the labelling (*označenie*) of a commune. Whereas the name was supposed to be only in the state language, the so-called labelling was intended for minority languages in municipalities where minority members constitute at least 20% of the total population. There was an obligation to use the official name in mass media,

official communication with state institutions or local governance, while the space given to the minority language labelling is probably only on the place sign. Thus the status of the languages was clearly not identical. Furthermore, for the purpose of protecting the state language in this field there should have been established the so-called Nomenclature Commissions located at the district offices.

Overall, this documents imposed several prescriptivist or even purist elements into the usage of the state language. The argumentation underlying these measures is based on the assumptions that “despite the continuous European integration, the national language does not cease to be an exceptional phenomenon for European nations” (p. 14), and thus the state language needs to be protected and systematically supported by state authorities, local governance bodies and public institutions.

Measures in the Sphere of State Language 2007

This document building conceptually on the previous one reacted to the reportedly insufficient implementation of the 1995 state language law. The violations were found in the area of advertisements, mass media, school practice, public administration, geographical naming, legal documents, translations of the European Union legislation, etc. It was acknowledged that the information about incidents of non-compliance with the law was gathered at the Ministry of Culture based mostly on the reports of the citizens. This way, similarly to the previous document, the legitimacy for the whole strategy is drawn upon the alleged support from the wide public.

Reacting to these practices, a comprehensive set of recommendations in particular areas was introduced. These consisted mainly of propositions for various forms of examination of theoretical and practical command of the Slovak language among state employees and other civil servants. Moreover, regular trainings and courses on the language culture and the state

language law should have been imposed not only in the central government bodies, but also on the level of local government and self-governance. In this sense, the remedy aimed not only at those Slovaks not proficient in the state language, but predominantly at the minorities that were eligible to use their language in the municipalities where they reached minimum 20% of total inhabitants. Hence, while on the one hand state employees were able to communicate with other members of their community in a common language, they were required to master the state language on both the theoretical and practical levels. Although, a certain proficiency of the state language is surely inevitable, these requirements could eventually hinder the chances of minority involvement in public administration.

Additionally, the document reiterated the importance of linguistically proper names of the communes. Here, the role of the Permanent Nomenclature Commission of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and its expert opinions were accentuated. Likewise in the issue of street names and other public places, the communes should have required a standpoint of a professional who would review the language features of suggested names. In the end, as regulated by the Municipal Regulation Law (1990), it is the state government that decides about the final name of a commune. Thus, it can be concluded that the state control over the naming of villages and towns was greatly regulated by this official document.

Notwithstanding the fact that this material together with the previous one constitutes the framework of a minor legal force, they introduce the main directions of the overall state language policy and its desired objectives. Furthermore, they were used as a basis for drafting the 2009 amendment of the 1995 State Language Law. What follows in the next sections is the analysis of this legal act.

State Language Law 1995, amend. 2009, 2011

The State Language Law starts with the preamble declaring that:

the Slovak language is the most important feature of the individuality of the Slovak nation, the most precious value of its cultural heritage and expression of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, and the universal communication means of its citizens, which ensures their freedom and equality in dignity and rights on the territory of the Slovak Republic.

As the segment illustrates, Slovak is considered a distinctive identity marker and a central characteristic in constructing the Slovak nation and its “individuality”. This concept implies a crucial requirement for being a member of the national community in the form of the state language proficiency. Furthermore, the element of language is directly linked to the sovereignty of the Slovak state and equality of its citizens, which assigns several versatile functions to it.

The introductory resolution of the law indicates that Slovak is the state language on the territory of the Slovak Republic and that it takes precedence over other languages used within the given territory. The law establishes the conditions of the state language use in official communication, geographical names, education system, public sphere, military, proceedings, etc. Particularly examining the first two issues, the law binds all the state organs, local self-government institutions, state employees, police officers, and all the citizens to use the state language in their official communication. Exemptions guaranteed to persons belonging to a national minority are stipulated in a separate regulation, which is the Law on the use of minority languages.

Law on the Use of Minority Languages 1999, amend. 2011

The 2011 amendments to this law ensured several extensions of minority language rights to the members of recognized national minorities. These were however recommended by the Council of Europe in order to harmonize the Slovak legal framework of minority protection

with the obligations of international law. One of the most important changes concerned the modification of the quorum necessary for the application of the right to use the minority language in official communication from 20% to 15%. However, this proportion of minority members in the total population of a given commune has to be attained in two censuses in a row. Since this legislation became effective in 2011, this condition can be performed in practice in 2021 at the earliest. In the meantime, the threshold of 20% is practically still in force and the provisions granting minority rights are applied only on the list of communes introduced by the Government regulation in 1999.¹³ This crucial condition therefore markedly complicates the application and territorial scope of the given law. Moreover, the eligibility of given municipalities with a substantial minority community is subject to the approval of the state.

Similarly in the issue of place names, all the municipalities that are allowed to mark the beginning and the end of their commune or buildings of the public administration institutions in the minority language have to be present in the list of the Government regulation. The exact wording of the non-Slovak versions of place names were added to this regulation only in 2012. In case of the communal inhabitants' dissatisfaction with the place name in a minority language, there is a possibility to organize a referendum. However, this right is not guaranteed in relation to the place name in the state language. In this sense then, the legal norm has limited applicability and flexibility to the changing demographic conditions.

What remains highly problematic is also the relationship of the state language law to the law on the use of minority languages. On the one hand, the first refers to the second when it comes to the regulation of the minority language usage. On the other, the state language law also clearly stipulates the precedence of the state language over all the other languages. This unclear delimitation might easily lead to situations when existing minority language rights will

¹³ The regulation states currently 512 municipalities where Hungarian is allowed to be spoken, 18 with Ukrainian to be used, 68 with Ruthenian, 55 of Romanian and 1 with the German language.

be constrained by minor modifications of the current state language law (Lajčáková, 2012, p. 48). In regards to these two legal acts, the Ministry of Culture and the Government Office are obliged to monitor their implementation in practice and report to the Government every two years. Thus, the final part of this subchapter briefly reviews two recent reports on the status of realization of both legislations.

Report on the Status of the State Language Usage in the Territory of Slovakia 2012

The very introduction of the report underlines the primacy of the Slovak language over all other languages used in the state territory because of its several significant functions. One of the most important is the state-integrating (*štátnointegratívna*) function that treats the state language “as a single communication means connecting and unifying all the citizens of our state” (p. 3). As stated further “[c]ommand of the state language [...] removes language barriers among the state citizens and helps them in social integration within the given state unit” (p. 3). Thus, the state language is considered as the main tool of all inhabitants' involvement into state functioning.

In general, the report declares an unsatisfactory condition of state language usage in several domains of the public life. Therefore a need for more comprehensive language trainings for state employees and testing of the state language command in the recruiting process is reiterated. Moreover, the report shortly addresses the issue of state language use on ethnically mixed territories. It states that since there is no complex analysis of the situation on the level of local state organs in these areas, the monitoring process relies mostly on the complaints of citizens sent to the Ministry of Culture. These concerned incidents mainly from the municipalities where Hungarian is used, such as denial of the right for information in the state language, insufficient command of the state language on the side of public administration employees or rising pressure for mastering Hungarian when applying for a job in the private

sphere. In the end, it is accentuated that similar problems were not found in areas with different minority languages (Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Romani or German). This way, the use of the state language in the southern part of Slovakia is framed as being threatened by the Hungarian community and Slovak speakers as forced to adopt the minority language.

Report on the Status of the Minority Languages Usage in the Territory of Slovakia 2012

This report elaborated by the Government Office addresses mainly the description of the existing legislative framework and changes that occurred during 2010 to 2012. This period recorded substantial modifications to the state structure of general minority protection and internal legislation concerning the use of minority languages, which reflects the change of the government in the first half of 2012. The report also provides an overview of the measures aimed at the improvement of the implementation of the minority languages usage law. These were taken by the Office of the Vice-chairman of the Government for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality that was, however, canceled by the new government. Unlike the report on the state language, it does not rely in its argumentation on citizens' suggestions or personal experience.

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis of the Slovak language policies uncovered several important findings. Firstly, the way in which the state language is standardized relies heavily on the nationalist ideology that creates the formula one nation = one national language = state language. Its protection therefore stems from the belief that language is one of the highest values of the nation that needs to be preserved in order to maintain the national identity of a given community. Hence, those who are not proficient in the language may simply be excluded from this community of communication. Furthermore, there are frequent arguments drawing on the alleged wishes of citizens themselves and their complaints about the

unsatisfactory level of state language protection. These notions are then embraced in the legal and institutional measures of a prescriptivist nature that are imposed in wide domains of public life.

This conception of the state language conflicts with the rights of linguistic minorities for maintaining their mother tongue. In cases of granting some language rights in legislation, their application in practice is further restricted and subjected to the state control. Moreover, as the common state language is conceived in these legislative acts as a tool of integration of all citizens, it creates considerable assimilation pressures on minority communities. Strict requirements for an adequate command of the state language proposed in the area of public administration employment might constitute another impediment for minority members to effectively participate in the management of the state affairs.

A specific position of the Hungarian minority is illustrated in several extracts of the analyzed official documents. It is assumed that in a number of municipalities of southern Slovakia, where the Hungarian community represents the majority, the language practices lead to a situation when the Slovak speakers are denied their right for receiving information in the state language. These representations might be served by the political elites in order to justify the restrictive measures and unfriendly rhetoric, and thus create a myth of a disloyal Hungarian community whose members are unwilling to learn the state language. On the other hand, it might point to the actual realities and problems of coexistence in this particular area. In the final subchapter, these specific circumstances are comprehensively examined.

4.3 Implications for Hungarian language use in the area of public administration

Findings from the previous subchapters indicate that there is an unbalanced status between the Slovak and Hungarian language determined by the hostile political discourse and restrictive legislation based on the ideology of monolingual nation-state in Slovakia. Strong protection of the state language and prescriptivist legal and institutional arrangements stand in the conflict with the actual linguistic practices of inhabitants living within the Slovak territory. Nonetheless, these state declarations and measures might have indistinct consequences for every-day life of Hungarian community populating Slovakia. Therefore, the aim of this final analysis is to uncover the ways in which the Slovak language politics interferes and affects the extent of involvement of the Hungarian minority in management of the state. The object of examination are data collected through expert interviews, statistical data of the government and existing empirical research in relation to the actual use of the Hungarian language in the sphere of public administration.

Main underlying queries that are present throughout the whole analysis are following – are the members of Hungarian minority pushed to use predominantly Slovak because of the obligations resulting from the Slovak language policies? Or are they resisting the pressures to adopt the state language which leads to the lack of their engagement in the state affairs? Also, in case of lack of opportunities, do they actively build their own structures to operate bilingually or are they enclosed in their own linguistic community?

The analysis starts with outlining the actual demographic trends of Hungarian community inhabiting Slovakia and recent surveys capturing their subjective views on the issue of minority language rights, linguistic practices and language shift. Afterwards, the central focus is on the relationship between the Slovak language policies and involvement of the Hungarian minority members in the organs of central and local state administration and on the level of self-governance (under which belongs also the issue of place names).

Statistical data about the language use

In the first place, by generally examining the persons who register themselves as being of Hungarian nationality in the official census, it is apparent that the numbers are slowly diminishing (Table 1). However, the number of Slovak nationals shows similar decreasing tendency over the last 20 years, and therefore it is necessary to scrutinize further data particularly in relation to the use of language.

Table 1 *Selected demographic indicators*

	1991	2001	2011
Total population	5,274,335	5,379,455	5,397,036
Hungarian national-ity	567.296	520.528	458.467
Percentage	10.8	9.7	8.5
Hungarian as mother tongue	-	572.929	508.714
Hungarian as mostly used at home	-	-	472.212
Hungarian as mostly used in public	-	-	391.577

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2014).

According to the results from the last two censuses, the quantity of persons regarding Hungarian as their mother tongue shrank over ten years around 64,000. Also, there is a substantial number of those who consider Hungarian as their mother tongue, but do not register as being of Hungarian nationality. In the most recent census in 2011, the data about the language mostly used at home and in public (meaning schools and workplaces) were collected for the first time. These, on the one hand, show that inhabitants mostly using Hungarian at home exceed those of Hungarian nationality. On the other, there is significantly lower proportion of those speaking Hungarian in public places when compared to the ones using Hungarian at home, or even to those with Hungarian as the mother tongue. This may to a certain degree indicate the unfavorable position of Hungarian-speakers, but may also largely account for cases of bilingual users who were not able to select the single option.

Analyzing the comprehensive statistical data, Gyurgyík (2008, p. 191) found out that there has been an ongoing assimilation of Hungarians living within the Slovak territory in two directions – in form of a change of nationality either to Slovak or Romani. Moreover, he concluded that even though there are some natural demographic losses, this situation is mostly caused by the minority politics of the state. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the potential deficiency of statistical data on the state-wide scale such as inflexibility of options on the census sheets or amount of unanswered items, the information might be rather distorted.

Perceptions of the language situation

Changing perspective from statistical data to results of the questionnaires and surveys, the subjective view of certain groups of Hungarian community members and Slovaks inhabiting linguistically mixed areas on the language-related issues can be outlined. These were mostly done in the period after the major amendments of the State Language Law in 2011, which triggered many discussions at that time.

There is a substantial representation of opinions stating that there are actually no conflicts in language use of communities living in the southern Slovakia and that it is only politicians creating rules to manage the non-existing problems. The survey executed among 711 high-school students and their teachers¹⁴ demonstrated that 84% of respondents possessed this standpoint (Dolník, & Pilecký, 2012, p. 24). Similarly, results of a questionnaire conducted among the mayors and state officers of the municipalities with certain proportion of Hungarians¹⁵ showed that 64% of them believed that there are no problems in the area of

14 Out of these there were 293 of the Slovak, 413 of the Hungarian and 5 of the unknown nationality, all of them living in the linguistically mixed municipalities of the southern Slovakia.

15 This study (conducted in 2010) selected 530 municipalities where there was at least 10% of the inhabitants who registered as being of Hungarian nationality in the census of 2001. Thus, in comparison with the government regulation stating the list of municipalities with at least 20% of minority community based on the census of 1991, there is around 20 municipalities more.

language use (Mrva, & Szilvássy, 2013, p. 54). On the other hand, the same study has found out that approximately 10% of the respondents had no specific knowledge about the provisions of laws granting the use of minority language in public sphere (2013, p. 38). Thus, although inhabitants of the linguistically mixed areas do not feel particularly affected by the language legislation, their perceptions might be influenced by various important factors they are not aware of. Nonetheless, it would suggest that the bilingual system of communication is naturally created and involves all the speakers of both Slovak and Hungarian community, and no language legislation affects this co-existence.

On the other hand, empirical studies indicate that there might be no interest of the persons claiming the Hungarian nationality to speak and learn the Slovak language. This trend is alarming especially among the young generation – almost half of the respondents¹⁶ reported the experience that persons of the Hungarian nationality have often problems to communicate in Slovak, even more of them (68% in average) acknowledged that there is no interest in that language from the side of native Hungarian-speakers (Dolník, & Pilecký, 2012, p. 11-12). This lack of proficiency and interest in Slovak may signal the separative tendencies of the Hungarian community that might be caused by its non-acceptance of the dominant language or simply because of the shortage of opportunities to use it.

Overall, given the statistical data and questionnaire results in regard to the language practices of Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia there can be found signs of linguistic assimilation and simultaneously deficiency of the Slovak language command, as well as existence of the bilingual patterns resistant to the language policies. In what ways these tendencies operate in the sphere of public administration follows in the next sections.

¹⁶ Particularly 55% of the Slovak students and 40% of the Hungarian ones, in average 48% out of all.

Central and local state organs

After adopting the Municipal Regulation Law in 1990 a dual model of public administration divided into state and territorial self-governance level was established in Slovakia. State administration is executed on the level of central, regional and local organs, whereas territorial self-governance organization works by means of regional and municipality offices. Following section scrutinizes the use of language in the area of state administration on both central and local stage.

The network of central organs of the state administration consists of 13 ministries and 10 offices (such as Government Office, National security office, Public procurement office, Statistical office, etc.) in which the Slovak state language is the only language of written procedures and oral communication with no possibility to use any minority languages. Moreover, as declared in the Reports on the Status of the State Language Usage from 2012 and 2014, there are higher demands towards the employees of the central state organs in regard to their proficiency of the standard Slovak language because they “participate in the preparation and creation of society-wide important documents [...] whose level of language has to meet the most stringent criteria” (2014, p. 5). Also, a great emphasis in these reports is put upon the regular re-education activities for all the state employees in relation to the state language. Although it is certainly necessary to ensure the sufficient standard of the language in official documents, the extent of measures might possibly restrict engagement of Hungarian minority members in state organs. However, the Report on the Status of the State Language Usage from 2014 states that despite all the recommendations the majority of offices have not introduced any tests as a part of recruitment processes (p. 2). Additionally, trainings of the state language proficiency have been conducted minimally and attended only by 13% of all the state organs employees (2014, p. 2). This demonstrates that despite the strong declaratory status of the state language in legislation and discourse, implementation of the protection measures is very low.

Concerning the issue of providing information to the inhabitants by means of webpages, all the central state organs are besides Slovak available only in English. Not even the Office of the Government representative for national minorities that falls under the auspices of the Government Office offers information on its internet domain in any of the minority languages. Hence, accessing substantial data or legal documents of the central state organs requires from all the Slovak inhabitants a sufficient level of the state language.

On the level of local state offices (such as unemployment offices, land registry offices, environmental offices, etc.) the law already allows usage of minority languages in municipalities that reach required proportion of minority members on their total population. As discussed in the subchapter 4.2, several changes of legislation in recent years caused that despite the fact that the law currently stipulates the 15% limit, the eligible municipalities are still selected based on the 20% threshold. Moreover, delimitation of the required limit draws on the numbers of people who registered as being of Hungarian nationality in the census of 1991. Thus, although the law was formally amended to meet recommendations of the Committee of Ministers regarding the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages¹⁷, in practice nothing has changed in the list of eligible municipalities stated in a regulation document which is subjected to an approval of the government.

Furthermore, the application of this right being limited to local state offices and municipality offices on the level of towns and villages is criticized as well (Szarka, 2011). In this way, it excludes several thousand persons speaking Hungarian who constitute the declared limit but only when merged on the level of regions. In addition, this matter is closely related to the sensitive issue of defining administrative units and their boundaries on the state territory. In Slovakia, the administrative reform in 1996 established the system based on the north-south

17 The most recent Recommendation adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30th January 2013 is available here: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/Recommendations/SlovakiaCMRec3_en.pdf>.

principle dividing the areas with Hungarian community in different regions. This led to substantial reduction of their proportion also on the level of municipalities where the required threshold for granting minority language rights is assessed (Wolchik, 1997, p. 223; Daftary, & Gál, 2003, p. 41).

The complete list of local state offices eligible to use minority languages published on the webpage of the Office of the Government representative for national minorities involves 124 offices, out of which there is 120 of those where Hungarian is used and 4 using the Ruthenian language.¹⁸ In November 2012 the Government Office (2012) conducted a review of language practices in all these offices by means of a questionnaire¹⁹. Results show that approximately three-quarters of the offices' buildings are labeled besides the state language also with the minority language. Likewise, an obligation to provide to clients a document informing about the possibilities of the use of minority language in official communication is fulfilled for 77%. However, only 7% of the offices acknowledged that they have all the necessary official forms and documents available in both state and minority language. This reality shows that most local authorities struggle with written materials and lack the capacities for offering their services simultaneously in Slovak and Hungarian.

Self-governance offices

As already mentioned, the Law on the Use of Minority Languages enables municipalities with a certain proportion of minority members to use their language in the official communication. Since on the level of self-governance the local organs manage certain competences on their own and are composed of local inhabitants, a greater flexibility in

18 Detailed list of all the eligible offices is available at: <<http://www.narodnostnemensiny.gov.sk/8455/uplany-zoznam-uradov-kde-sa-pouziva-jazyk-mensiny-v-pisomnom-uradnom-styku/>>.

19 The data are not divided according to the minority language, though as there are almost entirely offices where Hungarian is used, except 4 municipalities with Ruthenian, the results can be admittedly interpreted in relation to the Hungarian language only.

selecting a communication language is expected. This communication has several distinct dimensions that are analyzed in the following paragraphs.

The most recent questionnaire of the Government Office (2012, appendix 1) about the use of minority languages by the local offices of self-governance was conducted in 2011. In relation to 512 municipalities where Hungarian is allowed to be used according to the government regulation, there is only 144 of these using this language in the agenda of the office. On the other hand, most of them (314) acknowledged that negotiations of the municipal councils go on in the minority language or combined with the state language. Lastly, less than one third of the offices provides the obligatory information to their clients about the possibilities of the use of Hungarian. Very similar trends are observable, though in a smaller scale, also in the case of offices with other minority languages (Ruthenian, Romani, and Ukrainian) which signals that the insufficient application of the law is a systematic problem.

Results of a questionnaire done in 2010 among the mayors and clerks of the municipality offices with substantial proportion of Hungarian minority show that in case of oral communication with clients Hungarian is used in 88% of offices (Mrva, & Szilvássy, 2013, p. 45). Mostly, the choice of a language of communication depends on the language with which a client initiate the contact with an office clerk – meaning that in these areas most of the clients are Hungarian-speakers, but also that clerks are able to speak both languages. The situation is completely different in the written communication by means of official filings, forms, requests and other documents. 70% of offices use these materials only in Slovak, around 30% in both languages and less than 2% predominantly in Hungarian (Mrva, & Szilvássy, 2013, p. 46). This reality reflects the problem with the terminological vocabulary of Hungarian-speakers in Slovakia – since they have no practice of using the official forms in their mother tongue, they prefer an easier option of not changing their habits and undergo the procedure in the state language (Lanstyák, 2010, p 47; Szarka, 2011; Orosz, 2012, p. 154).

Similarly, when it comes to internal communication of an office, most of the documentation is prepared in the Slovak language, but during negotiations of the municipality council Hungarian or bilingualism is dominant. Also, the language of informing inhabitants depends on its form and medium as well – office announcements or signage is usually in both languages, but majority of the municipality regulations, election information, tax forms or other pre-printed text is available only in Slovak (Mrva, & Szilvássy, 2013, p. 50). It is usually argued that there are no financial or time resources to translate all the documents from the state to the minority language.

Therefore, when evaluating the use of the minority language in self-governance offices it is necessary to differentiate between the spoken and written contact. Whereas there are no problems with using Hungarian in the first one, in case of written procedures the Slovak language is basically used because of necessity. Thus, although the state guarantees the right of usage of minority languages in certain municipalities, it does not take any action in relation to an effective implementation of this right. This way it transfers the responsibility of introducing supportive measures onto the particular municipality offices that are mostly without necessary financial or capacitive means. Also, the functionality of the minority language is limited by lacking administrative, legal or economic lexicon of its speakers (Szarka, 2011).

All in all, the state legislation formally acknowledges the right of minority members to use their language, but in practice the state renounces any commitments to create conditions favorable for its application. This can be seen also in the way of formulating provisions of the law on the use of minority languages in relation to communication in municipality offices - a duty of using the state language is accentuated while additional use of the minority language is presented only as a right. Also, despite an explicit assertion that a municipality office and its clerks are not obliged to master given language, it is at the same time their obligation to secure the terms of its usage.

Place names – Tešedíkovo/Pered dispute

Visual use of the minority language in public spaces represents the most noticeable and psychologically very considerable area of linguistic minority rights (Orosz, 2012, p. 122). Apart from the private labeling that is guided by its own rules, it is the state that regulates the use of most of the publicly visible signs including place names, road signs or various public announcements. In case of Slovakia, the basic recourse of the legal prescriptions in relation to the signs in minority languages is the declared precedence of the state language. Besides this, there are couple of other circumstances signaling the problematic treatment of minority language rights in the area of public signs.

Firstly, bilingual place name signs can be located only in the communes that are listed in the government regulation on condition of containing the 20% proportion of minority members on the total population. As already mentioned, these data are still based on the census results from 1991 which might be, on the one hand, interpreted as an effort of the government not to deprive those municipalities where in the last 20 years this share declined of their right for bilingual signs (Orosz, 2012, p. 130). On the other hand, it puts several communes which were created after 1991 or whose minority communities expanded in an unfavorable position. Moreover, the delimitation of the necessary percentage is based on the statistical factor of nationality which, as could be seen at the beginning of this subchapter, is significantly lower when compared to the number of persons treating Hungarian as their mother tongue or speaking it most commonly at home.

However, as found out in the questionnaire among the mayors of municipalities eligible to use the bilingual place name signs, there is 6% of these where the place name sign in Hungarian is missing (Mrva, & Szilvássy, 2013, p. 38). Furthermore, other types of public signs (welcoming sign when entering a commune, municipality office sign or street names) are minimally placed in the minority language. This again opens the question of available capacities

and responsibilities of the state, on the one hand, and given municipalities, on the other.

Finally, the design of the place name signs that is in detail prescribed in the legislation has also been the target of vast criticism, as expressed by Sloboda (2009, p. 184):

[s]ignificantly smaller size, colour differentiation, and the positioning “below”, which creates symbolic hierarchy, seem to be motivated by the Slovak anxiety about Hungarian inhabitants' possible disloyalty to the young Slovak state and the possibility of southern Slovakia's secession.

Indeed, this need to emphasize hierarchy and different status is observable in the official documents in relation to the Hungarian minority, as well as in the politicians' statements in the case of Tešedíkovo/Pered. This way, the nature of the given dispute and also the way it was managed by the state authorities seem to be fitting into the framework of “reducing the observable evidence of otherness [...] and re-asserting the authority of the majority through the sole legitimacy of 'its' language” (Stevenson, 2005, p. 13). In this view, the presence of minorities and their claims for more extensive language rights become problematic as soon as they challenge the declared homogeneity and superiority of the “state-forming nation” and the dominance of its language.

Nevertheless, representatives of the Hungarian community living in Slovakia are capable of creating capacities for the use of their language in the public domain. There are several civic movements organizing initiatives for requesting or even laying bilingual signs for place names, traffic signs, public announcements, railway stations tables or commercial visual advertisements. However, when anonymous activists of one of such movements located a bilingual traffic sign near the town Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely on their own expenses, the state authorities removed it within the 48 hours (Orosz, 2012, p. 140). Thus, despite the fact that geographical names in minority languages are obligatory for certain municipalities to be used on the place names marking the beginning and end of a commune, this does not apply to the traffic signs on roads and railway in these areas. This way, the right for utilizing place names

in the minority language is considerably restricted to rather declarative issue of labeling the locations of living, but is not applicable for practical purposes of the traffic functioning.

Thus, the sphere of place names and public institutions constitutes a substantial area of demonstrating state's ownership through language and so marking its linguistic territoriality (Csergő, 2009, p. 6). Although decisions and procedures of the state elites in the Tešedíkovó/Pered case interfere with the right of its citizens for participating at the administration of the public affairs and right of the municipality to govern itself, the consequences for the Hungarian minority in this issue are to a greater extent demonstrated on the symbolical level. Indeed, restrictions and unwillingness of the state authorities are there to suggest that the Hungarian language has lower status than the state language, which might further limits the possibilities of its speakers within the state structures.

In conclusion, the analysis of practices in relation to language use in the offices of public administration offers several important findings. Firstly, language policy as stipulated in the respective laws and regulations is weakly implemented into practice. This, on the one hand, points to the inefficient state apparatus and its executive bodies and, on the other, implies that the whole nature of forming provisions of the language legislation does not encounter with the language practices naturally operating among the population.

In this regard, it is important to differentiate between policies protecting the state language and those regulations fostering the use of minority languages. In the latter, additionally to granting the right for minorities to use their language under very restricted conditions, the state also shows a significant lack of interest in ensuring the effective application of this right in practice. In case of the state language legislation and its implementation, the findings indicate a sharp discrepancy between the legal provisions and political discourse, on the one hand, and measures introduced into life, on the other. Additionally, whereas the state language is assigned

several important functions, Hungarian as a minority language is perceived only as a part of identity of minority members with purely sentimental value (May, 2011, p. 147). Then, majority population is not expected to be interested in this language and it is the sole obligation of minority members to learn the state language and integrate into majority society (Stevenson, 2005, p. 12).

This way, the consequences of language policies on the status of Hungarian minority have various dimensions. In contact with central state organs, the Slovak language is inevitable for accessing information, promoting own interests or working as a state employee. On the level of local offices, either state or municipality ones, bilingualism is a natural phenomenon predominantly in oral communication. However, this does not apply to written procedures where insufficient capacities can't guarantee the use of applications, forms and other documents in minority language. Nevertheless, Hungarian community is able to create public space for its language along with the state language in the area of place name signs, and thus support bilingual environment.

5 Conclusion

Summarizing the findings of each analytical subchapter, a comprehensive picture of the studied topic can be outlined. Firstly, as seen in the political discourse around the name change of Tešedíkovo/Pered village, the Slovak language is attributed a high significance and prestige. This greatly contrasts with a status given to Hungarian as a minority language that is not supposed to be used in the public space. These tendencies point to an existence of the “dogma of linguistic homogeneity” that is perpetuated through discursive strategies of respective actors. Secondly, the analysis of relevant language policies reveals deeper features of this ideology. The predominant image of the state language provided in these documents is that of a tool for integration of all citizens of the state, which opens the space for considerable assimilation pressures. On the other hand, conditions of using minority languages in public areas are determined rather restrictively. Also, analyzed reports of the current language usage present the situation in linguistically mixed areas of Slovakia as posing a threat to Slovak speakers living there, and implicitly to the overall state sovereignty. Finally, through reviewing practices of offices on the level of state central and local organs, as well as self-governance local institutions, previous findings of discourse and policy analyses were confronted with reality. Revealed circumstances indicate that neither provisions on the use of state language neither those granting the right of minority language use are efficiently implemented.

Thus, with respect to given objective of this thesis, several important conclusions can be drawn. Existing legislation on the use of state and minority languages in Slovakia is characterized by its restrictive nature. Whereas the state language is supposed to be predominant on most occasions, space for using Hungarian language is limited by demographic factors and state approbation. Nevertheless, members of the Hungarian community are able to generate to certain extent opportunities for using their language, especially in the spoken communication of local offices and in the sphere of public signs. Yet, it must be acknowledged that this is due

to its size, existence of its political representation, territorial concentration and other specific factors, and so other minority groups in Slovakia (Ruthenian, Romani or Ukrainian) do not possess such possibilities.

However, far reaching consequences for the status of minority languages might be brought about by the lack of state interest in their support. Thus, although the state formally recognizes a right of minorities to preserve their languages, it does not manifest any initiative for its actual enforcement. As a result, Hungarian community struggles with promoting its language, not being able to secure favorable conditions of its use by itself. This is demonstrated mostly in a shortage of bilingual forms in offices, legal regulations or other documents in municipalities where Hungarian is allowed to be used in official contact. The indifference of state authorities in this issue reflects adherence to the standard of monolingual order that stands in the center of the Slovak nation-state. As a consequence, minority languages are considered a menace to the system rather than a universal value. Then also, knowledge of these languages or claims of linguistic minorities for more rights are interpreted as efforts of destabilizing the existing monolingual state establishment.

Closely related to this is also a tendency of political elites to engage in discourse stigmatizing the Hungarian language, and so not accepting its use in official interactions and wider social context. This could be observed on the example of Tešedíkovo/Pered dispute where the argumentation of competent state actors was based on strict rejection of “Hungarian origin” of the place name, regardless of divergent legal interpretations provided by the opponents. Thus, it seems that the symbolical exclusion of language created on the declaratory level plays in this instance a more important role in maintaining the monolingual system than the actual measures aimed at preserving it through protection of the state language.

Drawing wider implications of these findings, it can be deduced that in case when language forms the central axis of building a nation and a monolingual order of a state is created,

there emerge several destabilizing features. Existence of linguistic minorities within the territory of such state is interpreted by its authorities as a problem. In return, since minority languages are inherently perceived as inferior and unnecessary, their speakers feel stigmatized and threatened by the state's efforts of homogenization. This creates a vicious circle of securitization reflecting in majority-minority relations. Thus, given the diverse character of the social world combined with the strengthening effects of migration and globalization, this paradigm is in the long term not sustainable.

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