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## Language Contact Issues in Central Europe<sup>1</sup>

**Abstrakt (Kontakty językowe w Europie Środkowej. Wybrane zagadnienia).** Artykuł stanowi przegląd najważniejszych zagadnień związanych z kontaktami językowymi w Europie Środkowej ze strukturalnego oraz społeczno-politycznego i historycznego punktu widzenia. Omówiono różne w swej naturze kontakty językowe, problemy praw językowych na poziomie krajowym i międzynarodowym oraz miejsce językowych praw człowieka w edukacji mniejszości (językowych i narodowych). Autor udowadnia, że polityka większości państw regionu wobec mniejszości jest trudna do zaakceptowania przez społeczność międzynarodową. Przywołane zostaną przykłady naruszenia językowych praw człowieka na Węgrzech i w innych krajach. Omówiony będzie również wpływ amerykańskiego ruchu English-Only na słowacką politykę językową, a także polityka językowa UE i jej rola w kontekście konfliktów językowych w regionie.

**Abstract.** The paper will review some of the fundamental issues related to language contact in Central Europe both from a structural point of view and from the socio-political and historical point of view. Various language contacts, the language rights issues, both national and international, and the linguistic-human-rights-in-education of minorities will be discussed in some detail. It will be shown that most if not all nation-states in the region pursue minority policies that are just about tolerated by the international community. Violations of Linguistic Human Rights in Hungary and other states will be discussed. The impact of the English-Only movement in the USA on Slovak language policy will be demonstrated. Finally, the European Union's language policy will be examined in relation to what impact it may have on the language strife in the region.

### 1. Introduction and demographics

In 1993, in his *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, Magocsi defined East Central Europe as the region between the eastern linguistic frontier of German- and

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<sup>1</sup> My lecture delivered in Poznań in 2011 and its written version here draw heavily on earlier presentations at the University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway in November 2008, and the University of Essex, UK, in June 2009.

Italian-speaking peoples on the west, and the political borders of the former Soviet Union on the east. Soon after the fall of the Iron Curtain, in 1991, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland formed an alliance called the Visegrád Group, which also became known as the Visegrad Four (V4) countries after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. These former member states of the Warsaw Pact are now members of NATO, and, on 1 May 2004, they became member states of the European Union. I agree with Wikipedia that Central Europe is a concept of shared history, in opposition to the East (the Ottoman Empire and Imperial Russia, Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam) and the West (France and Great Britain).

In this brief presentation I will use my research experience and data gathered in The Sociolinguistics of Hungarian Outside Hungary project (called RSS study hereafter, see Kontra 2005), which was generously funded by the Research Support Scheme in Prague in 1995–96, and I will also use a Linguistic Human Rights perspective, with special regard to education (see, for instance, Kontra et al. 1999; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

First, a brief historical, geographical and demographic overview of the region in the last century is in order. As is well known, following WW I, the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed and two-thirds of Hungary's territory and about one-third of her population were ceded to such newly created countries as Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, to an enlarged Rumania, and to Austria. During WW II, sizable lost territories were re-annexed by Hungary, only to lose them again as a result of the peace treaties concluding WW II. Until about the 1990s, it was rather characteristic of many people in the region to have held five or more citizenships without ever leaving their hometown.

What happened to the Hungarians who became citizens of foreign countries in 1920 was similar to what happened to the Spanish-speakers in what is today New Mexico in the USA: they “woke up one morning to find themselves citizens of the United States” (Marshall 1986: 40) when the US annexed New Mexico following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

The demographic consequences of the international borders drawn in 1920 without any regard to the ethnic composition of the people concerned can be summarized by the data in Tóth (2007): the number of Hungarians in the neighboring countries decreased from 3 million in 1920 to 2.4 million in 2000. However, the percentages of Hungarians vis-à-vis the majority nations' populations decreased even more, as is demonstrated by Table 1.

In the decade after the fall of communism in Central Europe, Hungarian minorities registered significant decreases in their numbers (Table 2). The losses are due to decreasing birth rates<sup>2</sup>, international migration (e.g. between 1990 and 2005, 270,000 Hungarians migrated into Hungary from the neighboring countries, Tóth 2007), forced assimilation and unenforced assimilation.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Szilágyi (2002: 76), since 1992 the natural decrease of Hungarians in Rumania has amounted to between 9 and 10 thousand people every year.

Table 1. The decrease of Hungarians in neighboring countries between 1921 and 2001 (absolute numbers and percentages)

	Number of Hungarians in 1921	Percent of total population in 1921	Number of Hungarians in 2001	Percent of total population in 2001
Slovakia	650,597	21.68	520,528	9.67
Rumania	1,423,459 <sup>3</sup>	9.96	1,431,807	6.60
Vojvodina, Serbia	371,006	24.2	290,207	14.3
Subcarpathia, Ukraine	111,052	18.1	166,700 <sup>4</sup>	13.4

Sources: Lanstyák & Szabó Mihály 2005: 49, Benő & Szilágyi 2005: 135, Kocsis & Kicošev 2004, Kocsis 2001

It is obvious that the demographic changes in what is today called the Carpathian Basin in Central Europe were caused by several factors such as deportations after WW II, forced assimilation and unenforced assimilation in the last century. The historical record of the past 90 years shows fairly systematic linguistic policies in Hungary's neighboring states. However, I do not in any way mean to suggest that the historical record in post-WW I Hungary is free of linguistic policies. Nevertheless, occasional accusations that post-WW I Hungary forcibly assimilated hundreds of thousands of Slovaks are abundantly false. Such accusations are made not only by politicians, but sometimes by linguists as well, a recent example is Ondrejovič (2009: 23).

Table 2. Hungarian national minorities in the neighboring countries in 1991 and 2001

Hungarians by nationality in	in 1991	in 2001	Decrease (1991 = 100%)
Slovakia	567 296	520 528	-8.2%
Ukraine	163 111 (in 1989)	156 600	-4%
Rumania	1 624 959 (in 1992)	1 434 377 (in 2002)	-11.73%
Serbia (Vojvodina)	339 491	290 207	-15.5%
Croatia	22 355	16 595	-25.8%
Slovenia	8 053	6 243	-22.5%
Hungarians by <i>Umgangssprache</i> <sup>5</sup>			
in Burgenland, Austria	4 973	4 704	-5.5%
in Oberwart/Felsőőr	1 514	1 044	-31%
in Austria	33 459	40 583	+21.29%

Source: Gyurgyik & Sebők 2003: 44, 64, 120, 140, 167, 200, 201, 216, 217, 222

<sup>3</sup> Data from 1930.

<sup>4</sup> Data from 1989.

<sup>5</sup> In Austria, the census uses *Umgangssprache*, the language used every day with family, relatives and friends (rather than mother tongue). For Burgenland and Oberwart the quoted figures show the number of Austrian citizens, but for Austria they show the combined numbers for citizens and foreigners.

2. Structural issues in the study of bilingual Hungarians in the neighboring countries

2.1. Pro-drop and number of source-language speakers

Our RSS study (see Kontra 2001a, 2005; Fenyvesi 2005) has revealed some interesting sociolinguistic consequences of language contact. One such consequence concerns the number of source-language speakers and its effect on the intensity of contact. Among the factors that increase intensity of contact and hence borrowing, Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 72) mention “many more source-language speakers than borrowing-language speakers.” In our study it has been shown that bilingual Hungarians who constitute a local minority in the settlements where they live systematically favor the contact-induced variants of variables vis-à-vis those who constitute a local majority. One of our stratifying variables was directly relevant to the speaker number issue: an equal number of local-minority subjects and local-majority subjects were selected; in local-minority settlements Hungarians constitute less than 30 percent of the population, whereas in local-majority settlements they comprise over 70 percent. Clearly, source-language influence is assumed to be greater among local-minority Hungarians.

The effect of this social variable was measured by analyzing 24 linguistic tasks/variables in four countries: Slovakia, Ukraine, Rumania and Yugoslavia (N = 536). On 16 out of the 24 tasks in our questionnaire study, statistically significant differences were found at the .05 or .01 level. Here is one such task which concerns the use of overt object pronouns in contact varieties of Hungarian. Hungarian is an object pro-drop language, but Serbian, Slovak, and Ukrainian are not. Consequently we hypothesized that Hungarians in contact with a Slavic language would prefer sentences with overt object pronouns more than monolingual Hungarians in Hungary. Thus we hypothesized that sentence (1b) will be preferred by bilingual Hungarians, and it will be preferred by local-minority Hungarians in a neighboring country more than local-majority Hungarians. Informants were instructed to choose the more natural sentence, i.e. (1a) or (1b).

1a.	Tegnap	lát-ta-lak	a	tévé-ben.
	yesterday	see-PAST-1SG.2OBJ	the	TV-INE
	'I saw you on TV yesterday.'			
1b.	Tegnap	lát-ta-lak	téged	a tévé-ben.
	yesterday	see-PAST-1SG.2OBJ	you.SG.ACC	the TV-INE
	'I saw you on TV yesterday.'			
	(Possible models include, e.g., Slovak <i>Včera som videl v televízii teba</i> , and Serbian <i>Juče sam video tebe na televiziji</i> . The object pronouns are not underlined.)			

As Figure 1 demonstrates, 28 percent of the local-majority Hungarians abroad chose the nonstandard overt-object sentence as opposed to 38 percent of the local-minority Hungarians.

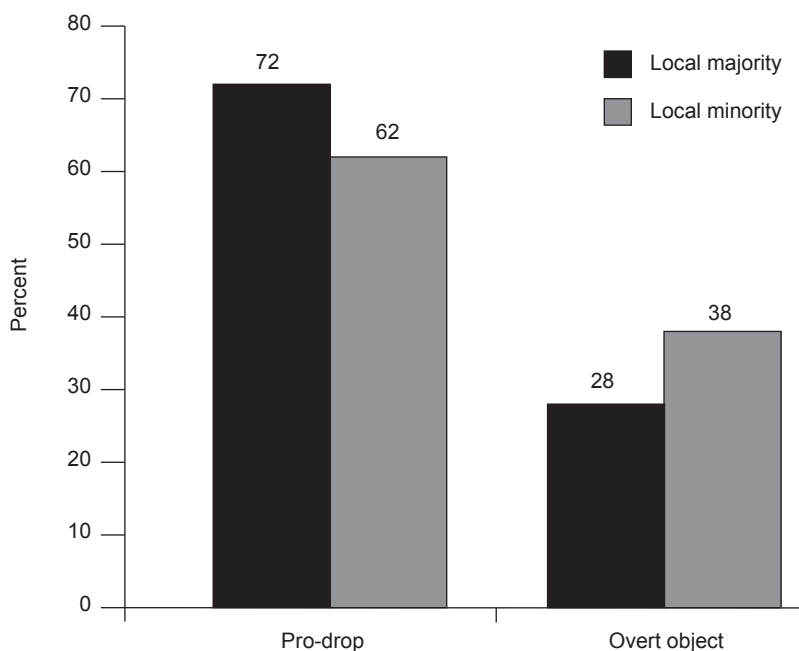


Fig. 1. The effect of source-language speaker number on borrowing-language speakers' grammatical judgments. Hungarians in Slovakia, Ukraine, Rumania and Yugoslavia, N = 536, Chi-square (df = 1) = 6.056,  $p < .05$

It is noteworthy that in all 16 cases where a statistically significant difference has been found, it is the local-minority subjects who favor the contact-induced variants. The 16 variable tokens include several instances of number concord, object pro-drop, analytic forms, a contact-induced diminutive noun and a contact-induced "feminine noun."<sup>6</sup> This finding gives solid empirical support to Thomason & Kaufman's factor "number of source-language speakers" as an important component of intensity of contact.

## 2.2. Language gaps as a consequence of non-balanced bilingualism

Needless to say, all contact varieties of Hungarian abound in loanwords, loan-forms, calques, semantic loans, phonetic/phonological, morphological and syntactic borrowing. These are often badly stigmatized by Hungarians in Hungary. When mi-

<sup>6</sup> Hungarian has no grammatical gender, hence nouns denoting professions are usually used generically, e.g. *fodrász* 'hairdresser, male or female'. The compound noun *fodrász+nő* 'hairdresser+woman' is typically used only when context requires sex specification. Slavic languages mark the gender of such nouns obligatorily, hence in contact varieties of Hungarian compound nouns with *-nő* are more frequently used. For instance, the sentence *Anyám egy középiskolában tanít, ő tehát ...* 'My mother teaches in a secondary school so she is a ...' was completed with *tanár+nő* 'teacher+woman' by 69 percent of the informants in Ukraine vs. 41 percent in Hungary (Csernicskó 1998: 281).

minority Hungarians use words or expressions borrowed from the majority languages Slovak, Ukrainian, Rumanian, Serbian etc, monolingual Hungarians in/from Hungary often make remarks on their “corrupt” Hungarian. This enhances the minority Hungarians’ linguistic insecurity, which is considerable anyway, due to the omnipresent Hungarian language ideology of purism.

An important consequence of the forced minority bilingualism of Hungarians in the neighboring countries, one that is rarely discussed, let alone investigated in sociolinguistic fashion, is what Lanstyák calls *language lapses* and *language gaps* (see Lanstyák & Szabó Mihály 2005: 65). The former denote cases when a speaker is temporarily unable to recall a word or a grammatical structure s/he is otherwise familiar with. By the latter, Lanstyák means cases when a required word or structure is not part of the speaker’s linguistic system at all. These phenomena contribute a great deal to bilingual Hungarians’ linguistic insecurity and may lead to register attrition. For instance, Hungarians in Rumania often find it hard or impossible to write an official letter in Hungarian since they have hardly any opportunity to write them in their mother tongue. Language gaps have also become evident recently to Hungarian school teachers in Slovakia, who find it difficult to write class registers and school reports in Hungarian now that it has become legally possible. Earlier this was not a problem because in Czechoslovak times whatever Hungarian was used in school documents was officially translated from Slovak and digressions were not allowed, even if the translations smacked of calquing. What Lanstyák has called our attention to is that extensive research into lapses and gaps is an important prerequisite for what Szilágyi (2008) calls *linguistic rehabilitation* for minority Hungarians, that is, language planning efforts to stop and reverse the effects of register attrition.

### 3. An ideological issue: Hungarian as a pluricentric language

Hungarian language ideology is based on the assumed utmost importance of language cultivation as a prerequisite of the survival of the nation. With a slight overgeneralization it can be said that issues of Hungarian bilingualism and multilingualism were not discussed, let alone researched, by Hungarian linguists before the fall of communism.<sup>7</sup> When the divergences between Hungarian used in Hungary and in the neighboring countries began to be discussed in the 1990s, a fierce “linguistic war” broke out among Hungarian linguists (see Kontra 1997; Kontra & Saly 1998). The old guard would deny almost any differences between monolingual and bilingual Hungarians’ language use. True, linguistic research into the consequences of World War I for Hungarians was taboo in communist Hungary. However, when the taboo was lifted after 1990, the old guard among Hungarian linguists acted as if WW I had no linguistic consequences whatsoever. Soon after Michael Clyne published his book on pluricentric languages (Clyne 1992), Lanstyák, a Hungarian linguist in Slovakia,

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<sup>7</sup> For a notable exception see Arany (1939–1940).

in 1995 published a pioneering analysis of Hungarian as a pluricentric language. His paper was vehemently opposed by the old guard in and outside Hungary, but none of the opponents carried out any research to prove him wrong. Meanwhile, the RSS research project conducted in Hungary and her neighboring countries (save Croatia) has produced a large quantity of good sociolinguistic data and analyses, all of which make unquestionable the case for Hungarian as a pluricentric language in the sense introduced by Clyne.

After about a decade the ideologically driven “linguistic war” came to an end. In 2002 the Hungarian linguistics professor Sándor N. Szilágyi (Cluj/Kolozsvár, Rumania) gave a paper in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, in which he recognized Hungarian as a pluricentric language and he also proposed that the periodization of the history of Hungarian should be revised: the *modern Hungarian period* should end in 1918, and the period following WWI should be regarded as the *latest period* (*legújabb kor* in Hungarian) because it is since the end of WWI that Hungarian has been spoken as a native language not only in Hungary but in several other states as well (see Szilágyi 2008).

#### 4. The language policy situation

Before the accession of Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia to the EU in 2004, and of Rumania in 2007, there were naïve hopes that EU membership would change the language rights situation of Hungarian minorities at least in the EU member states. Such hopes have now evaporated. As a prominent Hungarian intellectual in Slovakia, Péter Hunčík said at a conference in Nové Zámky/Ľersekújvár on 5 March 2011:

In the European Union there are strict and obligatory rules about the size, color etc. of cucumbers, but there are only recommendations concerning national minorities. EU officials ask questions like: Do you have Hungarian schools in Slovakia? Do you have Hungarian policemen? Is the Hungarian party part of the ruling coalition? When the answers (yes) are heard, EU officials are satisfied and lean back as they think things in Slovakia are normal, they are not any different from the situation in their own (west European) countries. What the EU does not notice or recognize is that (a) there is gerrymandering in Slovakia, whose sole purpose is to deprive Hungarians, 10 percent of the citizens of Slovakia, of certain political, cultural, and economic rights, and (b) Slovak policies, language policy included, cause fear and anxiety among Hungarians, but such fear and anxiety is perfectly tolerated by the European Union.

With regard to gerrymandering, *The Oslo Recommendations Regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note* (1998: 29) say that “States should not seek to avoid their obligations by changing the demographic reality of a region. Specifically, Article 16 of the **Framework Convention** engages States to refrain from measures which might arbitrarily alter the proportion of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities with the objective of restricting the rights of these minorities. Such measures could consist of [...] arbitrary redrawing of administrative borders and census manipulation.” The current administrative



districts in Slovakia have been drawn in a North to South fashion, in order to restrict the language rights of the Hungarians, who are concentrated West to East, along the Hungarian–Slovak border. The Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia has followed suit: since 2008 the dioceses have been changed North to South, in order to weaken Hungarian Roman Catholics, see Figure 2.



Fig. 2. Roman Catholic dioceses in Slovakia since 14 February 2008. Source: Menyhárt 2009: 269

As we in Central Europe know all too well, there are many ways to hierarchize languages and their speakers. One of the many ways to oppress a linguistic minority is to use their place names such that the names sever the connection between the local minority and their history. It was exactly this that Slovak politicians tried to do before the law on place names was passed in 1994. One attempt to cleanse historical Hungarian place names in Slovakia is illustrated by allowing a Hungarian transliteration of the Slovak name (e.g. Slovak *Dunajská Streda* transliterated into Hungarian *Dunajszká Sztreda*). Another attempt is to allow the Hungarian calque of the Slovak name (*Dunajská Streda* → *Dunaszerda*). Neither transliteration, nor calquing yields the traditional Hungarian name, which is *Dunaszerdahely*. Since one of the prerequisites for Slovakia's admission to the Council of Europe was her observance of minority rights concerning place names, the 1994 law allows traditional Hungarian city-, town-, and village-limit signs where at least 20 percent of the local population is constituted by ethnic Hungarians (see Kontra 1996). Nevertheless, the same technique of transliteration that was not allowed by the 1994 place name law is used in the Hungarian populated parts of Southern Slovakia today. For instance, the town whose Slovak name is *Bánska Bystrica* has always been called *Besztercebánya* in Hungarian. Consequently, *Bánkobysrická ulica* should properly translate into *Besztercebányai utca*, not the transliterated *Bánska Bystrica-i utca*. The street-sign in Figure 3 demonstrates that old





Fig. 3. A street-sign in Nové Zámky/Érsekújvár, Slovakia in 2011

attempts to use transliteration to sever the connection between Hungarians and their history are alive and kicking.<sup>8</sup>

Without further details and examples, I would venture the following conclusion: the language rights problems in the V4 countries have not lessened, but migrated from Central Europe to the European Union as a consequence of EU enlargement.

## 5. Educational issues

### 5.1. The medium of instruction

In Hungary, the worst cases of linguistic genocide in education (for the term see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) affect the Gypsies and the Deaf. In the mid-1990s sociologist Kemény (1996) found that the strongest stratifying factor for young male Gypsies was their mother tongue: 23 percent of those Gypsies whose mother tongue was Hungarian did not complete 8 years of school, but 42 percent of those with Boyash (an archaic dialect of Rumanian) as their mother tongue, and 48 percent of those whose

<sup>8</sup> For a pertinent analysis of Hungarian place names in Subcarpathia, Ukraine see Beregszászi (1995–1996). In the volume edited by Fenyvesi (2005) place names are discussed on pp. 38, 72, 144, 233, 239, 240, 294 and 296.

mother tongue was Gypsy/Romani did not complete 8 years of school. Given the extremely strong correlation between educational achievement and employability, one cannot avoid the conclusion that current Hungarian educational policy causes lifelong unemployment for many Hungarian Gypsies. Discrimination based on the medium of instruction affects the children of over 48,000 Gypsies (those who claimed in the last two censuses that their mother tongue was not Hungarian). Because there are hardly any Romani- or Boyash-speaking kindergarten or school teachers in Hungary, these children are forced to undergo language shift, making them victims of linguistic genocide in education (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

Until 9 November 2009, when the law on Hungarian Sign Language was passed in the Hungarian parliament, the Deaf in Hungary also suffered severe violations of their right to mother-tongue-medium education. The use of Hungarian Sign Language (HSL) was discouraged and often banned in schools for the Deaf (Muzsnai 1999; Kontra 2001b). According to the Hungarian National Curriculum (in force since March 2005, see Kontra 2009: 25) “the teaching of Hungarian Sign Language [was] desirable for all pupils from the seventh grade on”, i.e. for those over 12 or 13 years of age. Congenital Deaf children could thus be deprived of learning HSL, what’s more: of learning *any* human language, since HSL is the only language accessible to them. It is no accident that only one percent of the Deaf in Hungary hold a college or university degree.

## 5.2. Remarks on the role of force

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 502) maintains that a universal covenant of Linguistic Human Rights should guarantee, among other things, that “any change of mother tongue is voluntary (includes knowledge of the long-term consequences), not imposed.” When contrasting the linguistic genocide & linguistic imperialism vs. language death & liberalist modernization paradigms/theories, she says that the former “sees in most cases language shift as enforced” and the latter “sees language shift as voluntary, based on cost-benefit analysis by speaker[s]” (2000: 371). Proponents of the language death approach do not necessarily deny the role of agents in language shift, for instance, Mufwene (2002: 175) states that “languages have no lives that are independent of their speakers. Therefore, languages do not kill languages; their own speakers do, in giving them up, although they themselves are victims of the changes in the socio-economic ecologies in which they evolve.” While I agree that some cases of language shift may be caused by speakers voluntarily giving up their language, in other cases speakers are forced to give up their mother tongue. I believe it is important to identify the role of force in every single case of language shift for two main reasons. First, voluntary language shift is a human right, but enforced shift is a violation of the human right of minorities to exist and reproduce themselves as separate groups (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000: 123). Second, any explanation of the causes of language shift is bound to fail if the role of force is not considered adequately. I will illustrate voluntary and enforced shift by examples.

### 5.2.1. Natural assimilation: The case of Dlhá nad Váhom/Vághosszúfalu in Slovakia

When a child has no choice between education through the medium of his/her mother tongue and education through the medium of the dominant (state) language, and if education is made accessible to him/her only through the latter, s/he is subjected to linguistic genocide. If, on the other hand, a child's parents have a choice and decide to send their child to a majority-language school, we have a case of voluntary language shift. Voluntary language shift might be called a "natural" process in as much as it is not caused by force exercised by a dominant social group. Although examples of forced assimilation abound in the Carpathian Basin, there are certainly a number of cases where force plays little or no role, where assimilation is voluntary, hence unobjectionable from a human rights point of view.

The Hungarian sociologist in Slovakia Tóth (2003) has described just such a case of "natural" assimilation on the Hungarian–Slovak ethnic periphery in Southern Slovakia. Dlhá nad Váhom/Vághosszúfalu is a centuries-old Hungarian village with about 1000 inhabitants. In the last 2 or 3 decades the ethnic composition of the village has been changing so that by about the year 2000, 75 percent of the residents spoke Hungarian as their mother tongue and 25 percent spoke Slovak. One indicator of the changes in language use patterns is that before the 1980s it was unthinkable that a Slovak-speaking bride or a person who settled down in the village and spoke another language should not immediately learn Hungarian. Today the obligation to learn the other language has changed radically: if a Slovak-speaking bride marries into a big Hungarian-speaking family, it is the family who adjust themselves to the bride linguistically. Mixed and Slovak marriages are almost as numerous as Hungarian marriages. Choice of the medium of instruction is significantly different from the ethnic proportions in the village: while Hungarian L1 speakers outnumber Slovak speakers 3 to 1, only 61% of the Hungarian children go to Hungarian-language schools.

The village has a Hungarian school and a Slovak school for the 6 to 10 years old and a kindergarten. In the year 2000 an unheard of thing happened: a proportion of the Hungarian parents requested that a Slovak class should be started in the Hungarian kindergarten.

Tóth's study revealed a number of factors in this natural assimilation: mixed marriages, aging Hungarians, commuting to work outside the village etc. But one factor, which seems to be predicting very rapid language shift, became evident only when the researcher analyzed the age and ethnicity of every single household in the village.

There are 427 building plots in Dlhá nad Váhom/Vághosszúfalu, and 330 houses, of which 278 are inhabited. In nearly 39% of the inhabited houses grandparents or parents live alone (i.e. without their descendants). Houses owned by (a) Hungarian grandparent(s) or parent(s) outnumber those owned by Slovaks 9 to 1. A considerable part of the village's houses and building plots are for sale and this tendency is expected to grow in future. As the village is on the ethnic periphery, the houses are typically bought by residents of the nearby rather rich and primarily Slovak-speaking town Šal'a/Vágselye. "Considering present market prices, writes Tóth (2003: 131),

this could provoke an earthquake-like wave of incoming population into the village” because the heirs of the houses will sell them for the highest prices and without regard to who the purchaser should be. According to Tóth (2003: 132) this means “that the eventual settlers would take exclusively the place of the Hungarian-speaking population.” Thus market forces alone may well drive rapid language shift in a village that has been Hungarian throughout many a century.

### **5.2.2. Forced assimilation: the case of Pusztaottlaka, Hungary**

One of the 13 national and ethnic minorities recognized by the 1993 Hungarian Law on Minorities is the Rumanian minority, which is undergoing rapid language shift (see Borbély 2002). When on January 22, 2007 the Rumanian elementary school in Pusztaottlaka, Békés County was closed down, the local government cited lack of funds and the small number of pupils (fewer than 15) as the reasons for the termination of mother-tongue-medium education for Rumanians in the village. This act goes directly against Recommendation 2 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the application of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages by Hungary, namely that Hungarian authorities should “improve the financial situation of minority language education and increase the stability of resourcing” (Application, p. 43).

## **5.3. Linguistic Genocide in Education**

I start this section with a quote from Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 316), who says that the definition of linguistic genocide which most states in the UN were prepared to accept in 1948 was

Any deliberate act committed with intent to destroy the language [...] of a national, racial or religious group [...] such as (1) Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group.

Now let us look at some patterns of educational discrimination in Central Europe!

### **5.3.1. Patterns of educational discrimination**

As Gal (2008: 221) noted, “Control over the reproduction of the national language throughout a state’s territory becomes a key sign of the state’s sovereignty, as well as the justification and legitimation of the state’s political power in the name of the nation.” Education is a key battleground between majority nations and minorities. Or, as Christiansen (2006: 32) notes, “Schools play an important role in reproducing unequal power relations.” Educational discrimination comes in many forms and shapes in the Carpathian Basin.

In a democratic state where education is made accessible to all citizens without any discrimination, one would expect to find no difference in educational achievement levels among the majority and the minorities. If a national minority constitutes,

Table 3. Differences in educational achievement in Rumania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine (census data from 2001 and 2002).

	Rumania		Slovakia		Serbia		Ukraine	
	Total	Hungarians	Total	Hungarians	Total	Hungarians	Total	Hungarians
	[%]							
Elementary school	47.7	49.3	26.4	36.3	41.3	53.9	31.5	40
College/University	10	7.8	9.8	5.4	9.4	6.1	12.4	5.2

Source: Csete et al. 2010: 129

say, 10 percent of the population of a State, we would expect that 10 percent of all the university-educated citizens belong to this minority. When we compare the educational achievement levels of minority Hungarians vs. majority Rumanians, Slovaks, Serbs, and Ukrainians, the effects of educational discrimination are unmistakable (see Table 3).

### 5.3.2. Linguistic Genocide in Education in Ukraine

A blatant attempt to commit linguistic genocide in education (cf. Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) comes from Ukraine. In that country the number of L1 speakers of Russian is about half of the number of L1 speakers of Ukrainian, and Ukrainian politicians are serious about promoting Ukrainian at the expense of other languages. Their target is Russian with its many millions of speakers, but the new laws and regulations also affect the tiny (156,000 strong) Hungarian national minority. On 26 May 2008 education minister Ivan Vakarchuk issued a ministerial decree to improve the teaching of Ukrainian in 2008 through 2011 (see <http://www.mon.gov.ua>). As of September 2008, in the fifth grades of nationality-language-medium schools, the history of Ukraine was to be taught bilingually (in the mother tongue and in Ukrainian), but in the sixth grades, as of September 2009, it was to be taught in Ukrainian only. In the sixth grades Geography was to be taught bilingually, as was Mathematics in the seventh grades, but in the next year those subjects were only to be taught in Ukrainian. Without any further details quoted, it can be seen that Ukraine has chosen to implement a transitional bilingual program whose aim is forced linguistic assimilation of all citizens with a mother tongue different than Ukrainian. Also in 2008 Ukrainian language and literature was made a part of the joint school-leaving and university entrance exam but the exam requirements were the same for L1 and L2 speakers. One consequence of this was that 29.58% of Hungarians failed in the joint exam while the national failing rate was only 8.38% (Csernicskó 2008: 169). Another consequence of this language-in-education policy is that the number of Hungarian parents choosing Ukrainian-medium schools has multiplied.<sup>9</sup> One Ukrainian official cynically commented that it is natural

<sup>9</sup> It is estimated that 20 to 30 per cent of Hungarian school children go to majority language schools in Rumania and Slovakia. For instance, according to recent reports from Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely, a town with 79% Hungarians and 15% Slovaks (population 23,500), in 2008, of the 780 kindergarten children 402 went to Slovak and 378 to Hungarian kindergartens (See Csökken a magyar ovisok száma).

Table 4. Data on the nationality, mother tongue, and media of instruction in selected national communities in Ukraine (based on Csernicskó 2008: 166)

Nationality	Number	Percentage within the population of Ukraine	Mother tongue and nationality the same (percent)	Those who study in mother-tongue-medium schools	
				Number	Percentage within all school population
Ukrainian	37 541 693	77.82	85.16	4 379 675	75.05
Russian	8 334 141	17.28	95.92	1 394 331	23.89
Belorussian	275 763	0.57	19.79	–	–
Crimean Tatar	248 193	0.51	92.01	5 945	0.10
Hungarian	156 566	0.32	95.44	20 229	0.35
Rumanian	150 989	0.31	91.74	27 471	0.47
Polish	144 130	0.30	12.95	1 404	0.02

that people do not wish to carry the extra burden of studying through Hungarian, they try to succeed in Ukraine in Ukrainian rather than make their own life difficult by also studying Hungarian language and culture (Szahan szerint). The introduction of Ukrainian only higher education, if successfully implemented, will deliver further blows to Hungarians as well as other national minorities.

The lethal consequences of such language policy can be predicted on the basis of the dramatic correlations shown by Csernicskó (2008: 166) between linguistic identity, language maintenance and the medium of instruction in Ukraine (Table 4). It is evident from the data that those communities which have no mother-tongue-medium schools have undergone considerable language shift. For instance, Belorussians are the most numerous minority after Russians but they have no mother-tongue-medium schools and only 19.79 percent of them claim the same mother tongue as nationality. Similarly, very few Poles go to mother-tongue-medium schools and less than 13 percent of them claim the same mother tongue as nationality. In contrast, Rumanians, Hungarians and Crimean Tatars go to mother-tongue-medium schools and also maintain their languages.

#### 5.4. The right to learn an L2 as an L2

As I mentioned above, in 2008 Ukrainian language and literature was made a part of the joint school-leaving and university entrance exam, but the exam requirements were the same for L1 and L2 speakers. One consequence of this was that 29.58% of Hungarians failed in the joint exam while the national failing rate was only 8.38% (Csernicskó 2008: 169). From a language pedagogy point of view, what happens in Ukraine (and many other states), is the denial of the right to learn an L2 as an L2. From a language policy point of view, the false argument is advanced that the principle of non-discrimination requires that all citizens of the state are taught in the same



language and are tested with the same tests. Obviously, in such an arrangement the minority child does not have equal access to education. In the famous *Lau v. Nichols* case<sup>10</sup> in 1974 in the USA, Mr. Justice Douglas, who delivered the opinion of the US Supreme Court, noted that “there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively fore-closed from any meaningful education” (p. 566) [...] In asserting that “there is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequals”, the Court mandated that various kinds of affirmative steps are required to provide non-English speaking students access to the education to which they are entitled.<sup>11</sup> This equal treatment of unequals has been successfully challenged by Hungarian politicians in Rumania, who have recently achieved a modification of the education law to the effect that the state language Rumanian should be taught to Hungarians not as an L1 but as their L2, from special teaching materials and with special methods. This is a small step in the right direction: in the elimination of the equal linguistic treatment of unequals.

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<sup>10</sup> The case involved Chinese-speaking children of Chinese-speaking immigrants in San Francisco, who were placed in English-medium education, with effectively no provision of any teaching through the medium of Chinese.

<sup>11</sup> See Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010: 22.



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