

Tanulmány

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Spaces of Multilingualism in Sándor Petőfi German Nationality Language Teaching Primary School of Nemesvámos

Abstract

Schoolscape research is considered to be a relatively new area within the linguistic landscape research compared to other areas. Linguists and professionals from varied fields, such as language pedagogy, have dealt with schoolscape research getting at interesting conclusions. Yet, it should be noted that the school's linguistic landscape can still be regarded as an unexplored territory. This paper focuses on aspects of multilingualism in the schoolscape. However, it also comprises far more than what can be seen, it is worth not just looking at it as a natural landscape. It is worth trying to hear by listening to students' narratives on their linguistic self-identity and look at the happenings of life that are not visible to the eyes. In addition to this, I find important to emphasise the processes that are apparent through a multilingual lens. The main aim of this paper is to investigate how multilingualism manifests itself in a German nationality language teaching primary school in Hungary, I will also try to get answers to the questions of why a German minority school was established in a settlement without significant German nationality at the present, whether it truly operates as a minority school in everyday life, and whether its appearance reflects this spirit.

Keywords: multilingualism, linguistic landscape, schoolscape, linguistic self-identity, nationality

1 Introduction

In this research paper, I have analysed the spaces of multilingualism in Sándor Petőfi German Nationality Language Teaching Primary School of Nemesvámos. In the first part of the paper, some main aspects and theoretical considerations of researching linguistic landscape, schoolscape and linguistic self-identity are given to shed light on research in this area, which is followed by summaries of fairly recent schoolscape studies throughout the world. Interestingly enough – even though in different contexts – similar dynamics can be detected in all of them.

In the practical part of this paper, the results are detailed and interpreted based on a 3-month-long observation through partaking as the school's English and German language teacher. I have made an effort to avoid subjectivity and prioritise objectivity and attempted to interpret the observations in Petőfi School keeping the underlying theory in mind. Moreover, an attempt was made into looking into six multilingual students' linguistic self-identities through

classroom interviews. This paper has aimed to examine the existence and characteristics of multilingualism at Petőfi School.

2 Literature review

2.1 Linguistic landscape (LL) and schoolscape

Languages employed communicate a sociolinguistic meaning and are the identifiers of a territory's identity, according to Bátyi et al. (2019). In addition, they highlight a fundamental distinction in linguistic landscaping between quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to them, a quantitative approach was defined as counting the number of signs, whereas qualitative research can range from selecting a sample of signs and drawing conclusions from them (Pavlenko 2009), through interviewing shop owners about the languages displayed (Malinowski 2009), to obtaining opinions from the community about the signs in their immediate surroundings (Shohamy & Ghazaleh-Mahajneh 2012). Additionally, they explain how different subfields of LL studies, such as cityscape, schoolscape, or cyberscape, have emerged as a result of the inclusion of more elements in the linguistic landscape. Bátyi et al. (2019) examined urban multilingualism in Veszprém, Hungary, focusing on public signs and language distribution in the main pedestrian street. With Veszprém selected as the European Capital of Culture for 2023, the study addressed the expected increase in foreign visitors and temporary international residents. The historical city centre had multilingual signs due to tourism, while the main shopping street (Kossuth Street) remained predominantly Hungarian. Top-down signs occasionally included English, but Hungarian was dominant. Minority languages were largely absent, indicating assimilation. Bottom-up signs were mostly Hungarian, neglecting the potential attractiveness of multilingualism for foreigners (Bátyi et al. 2019).

According to Szabó (2015), who cites Johnson (1980) and Brown (2012), inscriptions and cultural symbols displayed on the school's exteriors and walls serve as guides for choosing between various cultural and linguistic ideologies and values. The role of language in and outside of schools is precisely what linguistic landscape study began to look into a few decades ago, claims Vetter (2022). Schoolscapes, according to Vetter (2022), are the physical setting where texts and pictures “constitute, reproduce, and transform language ideologies” (Brown 2012: 79). She also discusses the investigation's educational goals, which mostly focus on enhancing language proficiency, critical literacy, or awareness.

The LL and in particular the schoolscape, or the landscape inside schools, represent rich literate environments that support children in developing functional literacy and numeracy skills, according to Vetter (2022) about investigations within or initiated by educational institutions. The question highlighted in relation to multilingualism is how the current multilingual resources are displayed in the school- and landscape. Three key tenets are mentioned that are common to general LL research: signs are multimodal and should not be reduced to texts alone; understanding the LL necessitates interacting with local agents; and active interaction with variety in the LL has the ability to alter. Vetter (2022) concludes that the results brought about by the three lines of investigation, i.e., inside institutions, outside institutions and pedagogy, they will be ordered alongside three perspectives that place the

children at the centre, i.e., how children react to the LL, how they create the LL and how they engage with the LL.

The starting point of Tódor's (2019) research principles and methods in connection with schoolscape is observation, which – according to her – means documenting the linguistic landscape visible in the school's environment. There are three main aspects within this view, which are the linguistic respects of visual language use, the sociocultural characteristics of the linguistic landscape and the contents and educational functions of the linguistic landscape.

In this respect, conversation as a method is becoming increasingly common in socio- and psycholinguistic research. The stories of one's walk of life, the speakers' opinions about themselves, convictions and value judgements are all stories belonging to the linguistic self-identity. Furthermore, it seems relevant to mention here Rogers' (in Cole-Cole 2003) definition, according to which, by self-identity we mean the interpretation of a person's individual experiences.

2.2 Summaries of (fairly) recent schoolscape studies

Studies on the subject of elements of schoolscape have been conducted in Hungarian nationality schools – although their number is quite small –, and in Hungarian minority schools across the border, mainly in Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. Without claiming to be exhaustive, I would like to give as examples the research results of Borbála Pachné Heltai, Eszter Gergye and Tamás Péter Szabó in Hungarian minority schools, and of Petteri Laihonen and Erika Mária Tódor, and Enikő Biró in Hungarian minority schools in Romania.

The research of Borbála Pachné Heltai provides a comprehensive picture of the linguistic ideology that school posters, which apparently serve as decoration, demonstrate within the school community, as they also influence the linguistic behaviour of the members of the community. She divided the written inscriptions and illustrations appearing on the school walls into three large groups: auxiliary materials supporting language learning, visual tools belonging to the cultural sphere of the given nationality, and elements that present language as a tool for shaping social relations (Pachné 2020).

In another study, Eszter Gergye examined several Hungarian institutions (Ghandi Gymnasium, Konrád Ignác General School in Kétújfalu, and Fekete Láng Tanoda in Komló) where Beás is present as a minority language. In her research, she came to the conclusion that the linguistic landscape elements are present in the institution in very different ways, and the effect they have (acceptance, appreciation of the language) is clearly positive (Gergye 2020).

In the spring of 2013, Tamás Péter Szabó conducted a collection and research project in four Budapest schools, which not only included an examination of the school landscape, but also included student interviews, and the study was born from a comparison of these. In his conclusion, he highlights that the institutions examined are fundamentally diverse in terms of the appearance of linguistic elements, but the dominance of the majority culture is noticeable (Szabó 2015).

Laihonen and Tódor (2015) examined the evolution of the schoolscape in a Hungarian-speaking village in Romania, highlighting its role in shaping local identity and cultural narratives. Initially used by the Ceausescu regime to promote a Romanian identity, the schoolscape underwent significant changes after 1989, reflecting the community's aspirations. This process, termed "rehungarization", involved replacing symbols of the previous regime

with Szekler traditions and Catholic Church imagery. Despite Romania's EU accession, there's little indication of EU influence in the schoolscape. The focus is on promoting Hungarian identity, although the Szekler dialect is not prominently featured. The study contrasts the local cultural identity with the globalised influences on youth, noting the absence of global pop culture representations in the schoolscape (Laihonen & Tódor 2015).

Biró (2016) explored the relationship between schoolscape elements and language ideologies, focusing on how signage reflects language preferences and policies. Her paper discusses the influence of both top-down (institutional) and bottom-up (teacher and student) factors on language displays in schools, particularly in the context of Hungarian-medium schools in Romania. Biró (2016) notes that “top-down public language displays in the school clearly support the Romanian language, while bottom-up displays show the dominance of Hungarian in the signs” (Biró 2016: 119). She concludes that “schoolscapes in Szeklerland outline a multilingual environment (Hungarian-Romanian-English)” (Biró 2016: 119). Furthermore, the study reveals variations in language representation, with Romanian language teaching often lacking communicative approaches, while English is prominently displayed, reflecting globalisation trends. The paper suggests that further research is needed to understand how language ideologies are shaped within school environments (Biró 2016).

2.3 Commonalities and differences

The studies focus on language use, signage, and broader language ideologies within educational settings in various geographical locations. This diversity implies different cultural, political and linguistic contexts. While all of them discuss language use within school environments, they focus on different languages depending on the region and context. For example, some emphasise national languages, while others discuss minority languages, or languages of global significance like English. The studies highlight diverse linguistic policies and attitudes towards language use in educational settings, ranging from promotion to neglect. The researchers observe power relations between languages, often reflected in the dominance of certain languages in official communications or signage.

The studies reveal variations in how cultural or national identity is expressed through language use within schools, influenced by historical, political, and social factors specific to each context, with certain languages being promoted or marginalised based on cultural and political contexts. Globalisation trends influence language representation within schools, often with an emphasis on English, however, some prioritise the preservation of local languages and cultural identities. Many studies highlight the presence of multiple languages within school environments, reflecting linguistic diversity and sometimes tensions between different linguistic communities, albeit the dynamics of multilingualism differ across contexts, with some schools promoting multilingual signage and practices, while others demonstrate linguistic dominance or neglect of minority languages. The dominance of a majority language can manifest itself not only in a given school landscape where the minority language is completely absent, but also when posters, signs, etc. written in the minority language use a smaller font size.

There is a consistent observation of differences between top-down (institutional) and bottom-up (teacher and student) language displays, indicating varying language preferences and policies, teaching content, cultural values and national identity. There are different pedagogical

approaches related to language teaching and learning, and the level of student participation in shaping the linguistic landscape varies, with some studies emphasising active involvement in creating multilingual signage, while others focus more on top-down institutional displays. Each context presents distinct challenges and opportunities related to linguistic diversity, language awareness, integration and inclusion within educational settings.

3 Background of the research

In order to understand the attitude of Hungarian minority schools towards the minority language, or the attitude of Hungarian minority schools across the border towards the Hungarian language, it is important to be aware of the regulations that have affected the assessment and use of Hungarian and minority languages from the end of the 18th century until the present day. In order to be able to interpret the school landscape of the German minority school I examined and the opinions of the students, in addition to the above, it is necessary to know the history of the German minority in Hungary.

3.1 Ethnical school policy in Hungary

The ethnic composition of Hungary's population was constantly changing throughout the centuries. While, for example, at the end of the 15th century, 70-80% of the population was Hungarian, at the end of the 18th century this proportion had fallen to below 40%. After a while, it became necessary to regulate areas such as education. The progressive Ratio Educationis introduced in 1777 stipulated that all residents of the country should be provided with mother tongue education. The language decree introduced by Joseph II in 1784, which made German the official language in the Habsburg Empire, including Hungary, was a step backwards in comparison. It is no coincidence that the decree was revoked by the monarch in 1790. From then on, however, the Hungarian language became more prominent, as the II. Ratio Educationis of 1806 stipulated that the curriculum should be learned in Hungarian in addition to the mother tongue. This was obviously disadvantageous for the nationalities. And as problematic as making German the state language was for the Hungarians, so was the 1844 decree that made Hungarian the official language for the nationalities. In the middle of the 19th century, a strong process of making ethnicities more similar to Hungarians took place, which was temporarily halted by Eötvös's Act XXXVIII. of 1868. This law stated that every community had the right to education in its mother tongue, but the practice continued, and after a while it even intensified and culminated in the Lex Apponyi. According to this, teachers must strengthen the belonging to the Hungarian political nation in children, no matter what their mother tongue is (Kállai 2023, Bellér 2006).

The Treaty of Trianon could have even been a catalyst for the integration of nationalities into Hungarians, as the proportion of nationalities in the mother country fell below 10% due to the annexed territories. In fact, however, the nationalities were in a better position than before, partly because the peace treaty established the rights of the nationalities, and partly because many Hungarians stranded outside the border (Kállai 2023).

Although the Bethlen government's decree of 1923 guaranteed the use of the mother tongue in education for the nationalities, after the World War the German nationality was subjected to

severe discrimination, intimidation, and many of them were deported on the basis of the principle of collective guilt. Fewer and fewer people declared themselves to be of German nationality, and the use of the language was limited to the older generation, while the younger ones – for their own protection – were not taught the German language. Within the framework of the national education reorganised after 1945, only 25 primary schools taught standard German, which led to stigmatisation of speakers of the dialect (Erb 2024).

A positive turn was brought about by the change of regime in 1989 and the decades that followed, when the rights of nationalities were enshrined in law and efforts were made to uphold them. The Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of Nationalities and Ethnical Minorities, and later the Act CLXXIX of 2011 on the Rights of Nationalities recognised 13 ethnic groups, and, among other things, it stated that it is the right of an individual who considers him- or herself a minority to learn his mother tongue. However, the establishment of national schools, including German national schools, did not start immediately, and several decades passed without any meaningful German nationality education. Two generations grew up without using German as their mother tongue, and this resulted in the German nationality education of the 2000s functioning more like foreign language education (Kállai 2023). However, it is important to note that learning the mother tongue is essential for individuals who identify themselves as a nationality, and schools play an important role in this.

If we look at the current situation of the German language and nationality, it is clear that thanks to the effective language teaching in schools in recent decades, a generation has grown up who speak standard German almost at a native level; they are called the *standard generation*. Nowadays, dialect clubs and German-language drama circles are being established in more and more settlements with Swabian ties, and poetry and prose competitions are being organized and educational trails are being created. Schools and community spaces (cultural centres, foundations) take over the family's task of introducing young people with German ancestors to the German language and customs (Erb 2024).

3.2 The history of German ethnicity

The situation of the German nationality is unique in Hungary because they do not form a closed unit like other nationalities, as they did not arrive in Hungary all at once, in one mass, but continuously over a thousand years. This is why assimilation is much more noticeable in their culture, language and customs. This, and especially the events of the 20th century, resulted in a specific development pattern for the German nationality, the revival of which has been observed since the change of regime (Bellér 2006).

The ancestors of the Germans, the Bavarians and the Franks, appeared in the Carpathian Basin around the 8th–9th centuries, but they arrived in significant numbers only in the 11th century (Bellér 2006). At that time, German knights, priests and peasants arrived in the country with King Stephen's Bavarian wife. After the Tatar invasion and the expulsion of the Turks, German-speaking populations were settled in the depopulated areas in the 12th–13th and then in the 17th–18th centuries (Seewann 2013). The kings of Hungary tried to win over the incoming German settlers with various privileges in order to make them help fight against attacks from abroad, such as the Czechs (Bellér 2006).

Initially, the Germans who arrived in the country worked in the economy, mainly in agriculture, and then, thanks to the specific inheritance system, they began to play an important

role in other areas of life, and chose the profession of priest, teacher, or doctor (Seewann 2013). Also, and more and more people joined the guilds (Bellér 2006).

In the peasant communities, the Germans and Hungarians were able to live together very well, because they respected and accepted each other's different outlook on life and customs. In some areas, it became customary for Hungarian children to be sent to the Swabians and the Swabians to the Hungarians to learn their language. Although both ethnic groups tried to preserve their own culture, after a while the mixing of cultures in the "field of folk costumes, furniture and other furnishings, and folk poetry", and the development of common customs was inevitable (Seewann 2013: 87).

This harmony was broken by the effort to create a nation-state and to ethnically unify the Hungarian nationalities in the early 19th century (Bellér 2006), the result of which was, for example, that "between 1867 and 1910, 90% of the German schools in Hungary" (Seewann 2013: 88) disappeared. The Saxons were the only German community that strongly adhered to their German nationality and maintained a developed school network and cultural institutions. The Lutheran pastor Stephan Ludwig Roth played a leading role in this (Romsics 2017).

Hungarian national policy was fundamentally based on discrimination and oppression, which the Hungarian Germans wanted to oppose first with the help of Germany and then the German Empire. After a while the Empire wanted to use the Germans living in Hungarian territory (and Eastern Europe) as a tool for its own purposes ("living space" theory). The assumption that the Hungarian Germans collaborated with the German Empire resulted in the collective persecution and discrimination of the German-speaking population after the defeat of World War II. It is no coincidence that the number of citizens who declared themselves German decreased significantly in the second half of the 20th century (Seewann 2013).

According to the 2022 census data, there are 143,000 German nationals in Hungary (1.7% of the total population),¹ while in 1920, there were 550,000 native German speakers living in the country, which was almost 7% of the total population.

It is also clear from the historical overview of the German nationality that – although there are settlements where the German nationality is organised into blocks – the German nationality in Hungary is very diverse and has embarked on the path of assimilation at several points. This is why it is important to organise the preservation of their culture, language, and customs from above, as it is a great example of the Sándor Petőfi German Nationality Language Teaching Primary School of Nemesvámos.

3.3 The German population in Nemesvámos

The total population of Nemesvámos, according to the 2022 census data, is 2,927 people, of which 44 people (1.5%) identify as German.² This ratio corresponds to the national average. Since Nemesvámos is a relatively small settlement, it is worth looking at the proportion of the German population in the surrounding settlements, such as Veszprémfajsz and Tótvázsony. There is a relatively high percentage of Germans living in Veszprémfajsz, with 16.2% of the population declaring themselves German,³ while in Tótvázsony it is 11.1%.⁴ However, in the

¹ <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/eredmenyek/vegleges-adatok/kiadvany/>

² <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/eredmenyek/vizualizaciok/a-telepulesek-legfontosabb-adatai/?ter=02194>

³ <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/eredmenyek/vizualizaciok/a-telepulesek-legfontosabb-adatai/?ter=21430>

⁴ <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/eredmenyek/vizualizaciok/a-telepulesek-legfontosabb-adatai/?ter=02714>

nearby city of Veszprém, this proportion is 1.7%.⁵ This suggests that assimilation efforts have had and continue to have less impact in the villages, and that traditions have been better preserved due to their relative isolation.

The low proportion of the German population in Nemesvámos can also be explained by what I have already discussed in the historical overview: the intimidation due to the deportation and discrimination of the German population may have triggered self-protective reactions, which may have led to the hiding and denial of German roots. This, of course, does not explain why the proportion of people of German nationality is higher in the surrounding settlements.

The village's website does not indicate that there are any nationality programs in the village. The Sándor Petőfi German Nationality Language Teaching Primary School of Nemesvámos has had German nationality education since September 2005 along with the general curriculum according to which, German is also taught as a foreign language. The institution strives not only to teach the students the German language, but also to acquaint them with the customs related to the culture, to provide them with the opportunity to meet other German-speaking communities, and to preserve their traditions.

In terms of language, they focus on speaking and understanding it, which is helped by a language lab that was established 15 years ago. In terms of preserving traditions, they visit other settlements where the preservation of memories and customs is much more intense than in Nemesvámos, but in the school's dance group they have the opportunity to learn German dances and songs.

Despite the relatively low proportion of German nationals in Nemesvámos, especially compared to the data of the surrounding settlements, the existence of a German national school could be the first step in reviving the German language, culture and tradition.

4 Method

The roughly 3-month-long investigation of the schoolscape lasted from 15 December 2022 until 15 March 2023. During this period, I as a teacher of English and German working at Petőfi School took photos in connection with the school's multilingualism. Apart from a few excerpts from its website, I concentrated on what could be seen inside the school. This was followed by a qualitative analysis of the schoolscape.

I analysed the schoolscape with the help of photos and documents, based on widely accepted theoretical assumptions of linguistic landscape research, which I completed with an analysis of a classroom interview of six 11-12-year-old Hungarian students who can express themselves in speech in both German and English. Three questions seemed relevant to my research from Tódor's (2015) three main aspects, and they also served as a base of my investigation:

1. How does regional identity appear in the visual linguistic landscape?
2. How do foreign languages appear (English and in general curriculum classes German)?
3. Through what kind of materials is educational content introduced?

⁵ <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/eredmenyek/vizualizaciok/a-telepulesek-legfontosabb-adatai/?ter=11767>

Hypothesis: Despite being a German nationality language teaching primary school, multilingualism is mostly confined to foreign language teaching.

5 Discussion

5.1 How does regional identity appear in the visual linguistic landscape?

On the first floor of the school, there is a notice board where we can usually find pictures and texts that are relevant in terms of traditions and historical facts about Hungary's population of German origin. Throughout the 3-month-long observation period, Christmas decoration was replaced by a historical theme in January. On the notice board, students could read and see pictures in black and white about what happened on 19 January several decades ago; a day when the expulsion of Hungarian Germans began (Photo 1.). The use of colours, or more precisely, the lack of them, has an important symbolic value, as it draws attention to a tragic period for the Germans, during which thousands of innocent people were deported and the lives of those who remained were made impossible for decades.

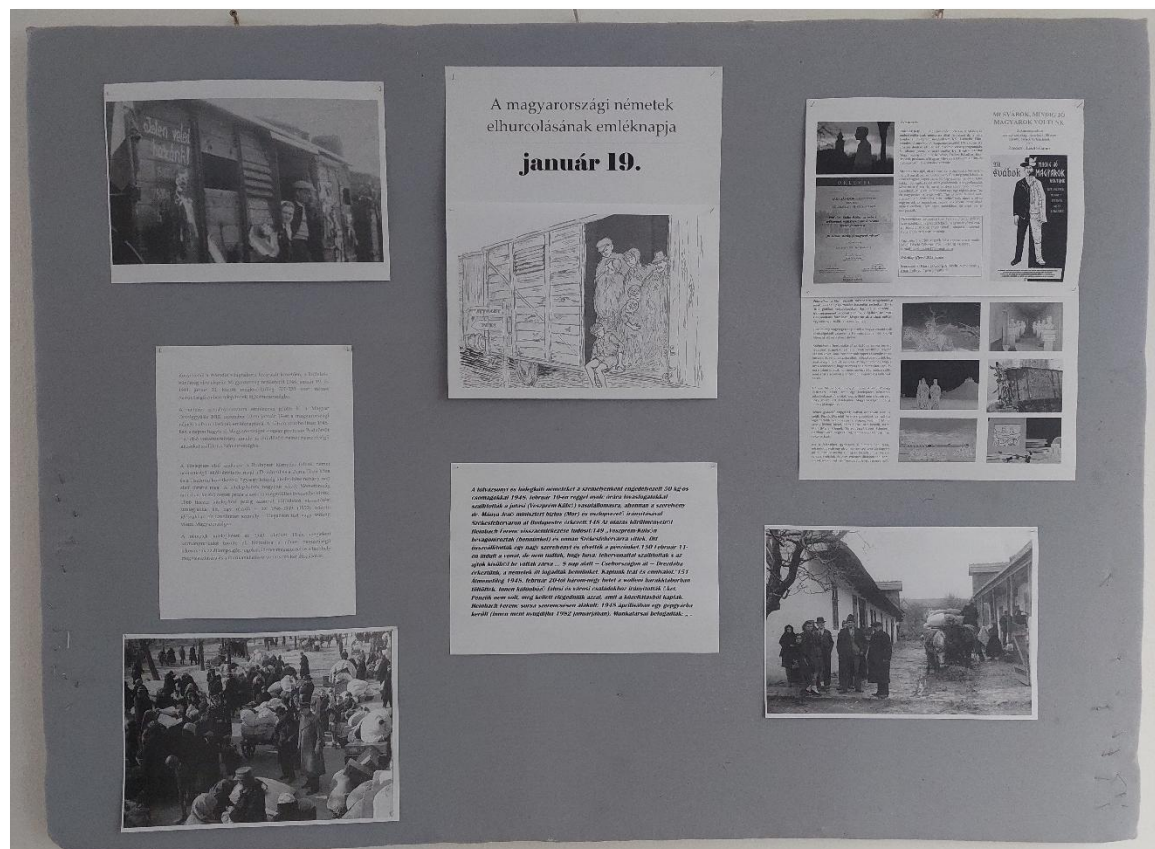


Photo 1. Commemorating the deportation of Hungarian Germans on the notice board about Hungary's population of German origin

On 13 March, it was replaced by new texts and decorations to commemorate the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–1849 (Photo 2.). The bright colours appearing here further highlight the message of the previous decoration, and also emphasize that the elements presenting the revolutionary theme relate to a glorious era, while the previous ones relate to a tragedy. The term “Hungarian Revolution” appeared in German on top and Sándor Petőfi’s poem, the “National Song” could be seen in Hungarian and German as well.



Photo 2. The notice board about the Hungarian Revolution of 1848

The decoration is enriched with several cockades and hearts in national colours, which were probably made by the students. Decorations made by or together with students are important, as the event presented by them will be better remembered by the students, they will be more emotionally attached to it, and it may arouse their interest (Pachné 2020: 194). Probably, due to the tragic nature of the topic, no student work was prepared for the German persecution, but hopefully for the joyful events (Martin’s Day, Maypole setting, other customs) the students are also involved in making the decoration.

Right next to the staircase, we can find three flags (Photo 3.). The size of the flags complies with the protocol, according to which flags placed next to each other must be the same size, and there is only one flag on a flagpole. The flags are on flagpoles of the same size, and none stands out from the other two. If there were a national flag among the three, it would have to be placed in the middle, but since there is not one, the following protocol must be followed from left to right, which is also implemented here: community flag (in this case, the flag of the German ethnicity), then the institutional flag, and finally the flag with the portrait of Sándor Petőfi, categorized as “other flag”.

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Photo 3. The three flags on the first floor

On the first flag (the one on the left) we can see the emblem of Hungarian Germans (Photo 4.). The teachers of the school tend to draw students' attention to the significance of the third flag and the notice board about Hungarian Germans. The placement of the flags and the decorations already discussed above suggest that the institution's commitment to the German roots of the village and its Swabian population is undeniable, but at the same time, great emphasis is placed on Hungarian traditions, history, national or regional culture and literature.



Photo 4. The flag with the emblem of Hungarian Germans

On the second flag, we can find the school's emblem, and on the flag on the right we can see the famous Hungarian poet, Sándor Petőfi, whose name can also be found in the school's name and also the number 200 commemorating his birth two centuries ago.

5.2 *How do foreign languages appear?*

English language only appears on the tourist map of the village, but the text is hard to read because of its size (Photo 5.). German language precedes it, which could be explained by historical reasons, that is, by German's priority over English in the area. The size of the text on the map is so small that probably most students do not read it at all, moreover, my experience in the foreign language classroom also backs up my assumption. There are no German-related buildings or attractions in the village, so this map can be considered more of a language teaching poster than a cultural history source.



Photo 5. The tourist map of Nemesvámos

There are three maps about Germany: one relief map, one with the states of Germany and another one with Germany and its neighbouring countries (Photo 6.). There is another map of Austria and its provinces (Photo 7.). We can find German language on these maps, moreover, on some other posters, pictures and texts mostly on notice boards. Even if it is a German nationality language teaching school, apart from the village's tourist map, everything else in German serves educational purposes, which means that the use of the German language is not the result of the area's German population's minority language use. Hungarian – being everybody's native language – dominates the school. Besides, German and English appear in educational materials (with German's clear dominance), thus, in books on shelves, in students' and teachers' bags, on the internet and most importantly, as a foreign language inside their minds. (The latter has been explored through interviews with students.)

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Photo 6. Maps of Germany



Photo 7. Map of Austria

5.3 *Through what kind of materials is educational content introduced?*

According to the school's pedagogical framework, which is freely accessible on the school's website to anyone interested, it is essential to emphasise that Petőfi School is an "open school" which means that not just students with German nationality are welcome. The school year of September usually starts with two first-grade classes. One of them follows the German nationality curriculum and has weekly five German lessons and one more about German culture. From seventh grade onwards, they will also learn English as a foreign language. As the curriculum, which is available to anyone on the website of the Office of Education,⁶ states, due to assimilation processes, students must not only be taught German literature, but also the language first. Thus, in grades 1–2, the focus is on teaching the German language and developing communication skills, after which reading and interpreting literary texts can take place in grades 3–4.

The second class follows the general curriculum and starts English from fourth grade onwards and has two English lessons a week, and from seventh grade onwards, additionally, two German as a foreign language lessons as well. From classes 5 to 8, students performing well in German can also choose to learn English once a week.

In the school's pedagogical framework, one can also read about forms of German nationality language teaching outside the language classroom. These involve cultivating local traditions, German celebrations such as Martin's Day, erecting the maypole, German nationality day, class trips to Városlőd, tournaments and German performances. These are listed as extracurricular activities, and there is not a single one in the school's list of holidays that is related to the German-speaking area, even though the most important ones (e.g. Constitution Day on May 23, or German Unity Day on October 3, or even St. Martin's Day, which is otherwise celebrated) could have been included in the list. It is also important to mention the tradition of "Schultütte", which should be written as "Schultüte" in High German but Hungarian Germans (due to the fact that is one of the dialects of German) tend to write it this way.

Although in the school's pedagogical framework, we can read about organising a German nationality day and the Hungarian Germans' hymn at the school's opening and closing ceremony, these two pieces of information are no longer valid. Hungarian Germans' hymn cannot be heard anymore at the opening and the closing ceremony. Since everybody is more or less monolingual Hungarian, playing a hymn other than the Hungarian would seem artificially transplanted into the ceremony. Moreover, the German nationality day has already merged with Martin's Day celebrated on 11th November. One of the reasons why Martin's Day has been appointed the German nationality day is that celebrating St. Martin is tied to both German and Hungarian culture, which can also be seen as an integration effort by Germans in Hungary. According to German tradition, the streets are lit by lanterns carried by children (torchlight procession, *Martinsumzug*), symbolizing that light drives away darkness. Bonfires are lit in the main squares and "goose, red cabbage and dumplings" (Nehra 2024) are traditionally eaten. Eating goose has long been present in Hungarian traditions, while the torchlight procession is starting to spread to more and more settlements these days.

During teaching German as a foreign language, one can discover bilingual German-Hungarian and Hungarian-German dictionaries as well (Photo 8.). Additionally, course books can be seen in most of the bookshelves of the classrooms. Hence in class 5, there is a bookshelf

⁶ https://www.oktatas.hu/koznevels/kerettantervek/2020_nat/nemzetisegi_nevels_oktatas_kerettantervei/nemet

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specifically for the German language, the bookshelf is not full yet (Photo 9.). English language materials can only be seen for learners of English during the 45-minute English lesson, mostly on the interactive whiteboard, in the student's book and the workbook.



Photo 8. Bookshelf with bilingual dictionaries



Photo 9. Bookshelves with German as a foreign language materials

Moreover, in class 5, there is a traditional table with three German cases on one of the walls (Photo 10.). It might seem like an example of an old-fashioned way of teaching, but still, it has proved to be quite helpful several times so far. These types of so-called learning aids can be used as illustrative tools during the teacher's explanation or can be useful when reviewing the current grammar or topic. They can also help in organizing and memorizing previously learned and new knowledge (Pachné 2020).

Alanyeset Wer? Was?	der ein kein	die eine keine	das ein kein	die - keine
Tárgyeset Wen? Was?	den einen keinen	die eine keine	das ein kein	die - keine
Részes eset Wem?	dem einem keinem	der einer keiner	dem einem keinem	den + n - keinen + n

Photo 10. Table about the three most important German cases (nominative, accusative, dative)

In another classroom, the door is decorated with German words that can and should come to students' minds when they think of the word "Klassenzimmer", meaning classroom in English (Photo 11.). These words in English: writing workshop, calculating centre, place of learning, thinking room, German empire, creative zone, meeting place, workspace, reading room.

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Photo 11. Decoration on a door

There is a chance that we see German picture dictionaries on the walls of the school (Photo 12.). During the 3-month-long investigation, I was able to find a smaller one created by one of the German language teachers at the school.

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Photo 12. Picture dictionary

Besides, I was doing an experiment, for which I designed German picture dictionaries on two notice boards under each other on one of the walls of the school (Photo 13.). Those boards mainly served purposes of research on language pedagogy and linguistics.



Photo 13. Picture dictionaries for research purposes

5.4 *Students' linguistic self-identity*

The group consists of six (by birth more or less Hungarian monolingual) 11-12-year-old multilingual students.

Students' estimated proficiency level in German and English according to CEFR:

- S1. A2 German – A1 English
- S2. B1 German – A1 English
- S3. B1 German – B1-B2 English
- S4. A2 German – B2 English
- S5. A2 German – A1 English
- S6. A2 German – A1 English

During the interview in the EFL classroom, students answered questions in Hungarian concerning their linguistic self-identity based on Tódor's (2019) list of questions. I picked practically the questions that seemed relevant and made them suitable based on the age of the group.

Q1: What languages do you use when you are in the following life situations?:

Q1.1: What languages do you use when you talk to your parents?

Mostly they talk to their parents in Hungarian, except when their parents help them learn German. S5 mentioned that when they visit his godfather in the Czech Republic, he tries to talk to him in English and when his parents talk to their son's godfather, they do not always switch back to Hungarian from English. S3's mother can speak English and they sometimes have a conversation in English. When S3 meets her uncle's Slovakian wife, she can talk with her in English.

Q1.2: What languages do you use when you talk to your grandparents?

All students talk to their grandparents in Hungarian, and as far as they are aware, their grandparents learned German at school. S1 and S2 both mentioned that their great-grandmothers were Hungarian Germans living in the area but they did not know them in person. Both grandmothers were bilinguals, meaning they could speak Hungarian and a dialect of German.

Q1.3: What languages do your parents and grandparents know?

All students' grandparents learned Russian and German in their childhood. The parents of the students learned English, German or both of these languages at school. S3's mother and S2's father can also speak Russian to some extent. S6's father is learning French now.

Q1.4: What languages do you use when you talk to your friends?

S3 usually talks to them in Hungarian but sometimes she talks in English with one of her classmates. S4 usually talks to them in Hungarian but he also has some friends from abroad who he talks to in English via the internet. S6 usually talks to them in Hungarian but sometimes in German or English with his online friends from abroad. S2 mentions that although she speaks in Hungarian most of the time to her friends, sometimes they say some German words like "danke" to thank something. S6 adds that he does the same sometimes when he greets his friends in the morning with "Guten Tag!".

Q1.5: What languages do you use when you go shopping abroad?

All the students have mentioned Austria, one of them Germany too. In German-speaking countries, they usually try to speak German but sometimes they accidentally say English words. In the case of other countries, students try to use the English language with more or less success. S3 and S4 can have meaningful conversations in English when they go shopping.

Q1.6: What languages do you use when you chat on the internet or write an email?

Students tend to use Hungarian when they talk to Hungarians, and when they talk to their online friends, they usually use English. S1, S2, S5 and S6 have a German chat group for their class where they sometimes ask each other about the German language or mostly the homework in German. They have also mentioned that they use online dictionaries or a translator when they read each other's sentences or write something in the chat group. All students have mentioned that they write emails in German when they write to me.

Q1.7: What languages do you use when you watch movies or listen to music?

Students usually watch movies in Hungarian. S3 and S4 sometimes watch movies or videos on the internet in English. All students have answered that they listen to music mostly in English and sometimes in Hungarian, but never in German.

Q2: What is the most beautiful language?

Three students think that English is the most beautiful language, one student thinks it is German, one thinks it is Hungarian and one of them thinks it is French.

Q3: What is the most useful language?

Five students think it is English and one student thinks it is Spanish. The student who thinks it is Spanish has heard about the high number of Spanish speakers in the world.

Q4: Do you accidentally switch between languages? What is it like?

All six students have mentioned switching accidentally between German and English. It seems that they can successfully separate Hungarian from their two foreign languages. In their case German is also a foreign language in spite of the fact that they learn it in a nationality school, as they do not consider German as a mother tongue for themselves. All of them have mentioned that sometimes when they have to talk in English they accidentally use German. S1 has mentioned her own experience with “Kinder” and “children”, and S2 has told the group about her experience with using the German “wir” instead of the English “we”. However, it is not always true the other way round as S1, S2, S5 and S6 claim that they do not experience switching from German to English. It seems that the higher students' English proficiency level is, the more they experience switching to English in German lessons. Although S4 claims he cannot speak German (which is not true), he has mentioned that once or twice he has said “Was ist...?” instead of “What is...?”.

Q5: Do you prefer English or German?

Except for S4, all the other students have said that they prefer German to English. Interestingly, S3 speaks better in English (seemingly without being aware of it), but still, she prefers German to English.

5.5 The teaching perspective

In the teaching process, I have experienced several times that as learners of a third language, they do not always rely on their first language but on their second language. Moreover, the six children interviewed have highlighted instances of accidental switching between their second and their third languages. It seems that they handle their languages similarly to children born into a family where the parents' mother tongues are not the same. In Hungarian schools, L1 usually refers to the mother tongue of the children, L2 to their first foreign language and L3 to their second foreign language. It is important to note that Hungarian students usually start to learn languages consecutively (L1->L2->L3), and then they start to learn L2 and L3

simultaneously. I have noticed that students starting English after having learned German for some time have more advantages that include better language learning strategies and communicative ability.

In German lessons, L2 instruction is preferred in general, but there are individual differences in terms of the extent to which teachers of German use the Hungarian language too. I usually teach with L2 instruction and only use or refer to Hungarian or students' other languages, when it serves pedagogical purposes. In the course books and workbooks that teachers use during German classes, there are some exercises with questions where the answer is expected in the mother tongue of the students, so in Hungarian.

6 Conclusion

The 3-month investigation at Petőfi School, conducted from 15 December 2022 to 13 March 2023, aimed to capture the multilingual dynamics within the schoolscape. As a teacher of English and German at the school, I focused on visual and linguistic elements, complemented by a classroom interview with six 11-12-year-old Hungarian students proficient in German and English. The analysis revolved around the theoretical underpinnings of linguistic landscape research in education, exploring regional identity, foreign language presence, and educational material introduction. The hypothesis, asserting that multilingualism is primarily confined to foreign language teaching, underwent scrutiny across these dimensions. It seems that although many students have German ancestors, they do not automatically consider German as part of their own identity. Consequently, if we consider only the curriculum, my hypothesis is true meaning despite being a German nationality language teaching primary school, multilingualism is mostly confined to foreign language teaching. However, interviews with students show that older members of the family used to speak German, but its marginalization can be traced back to discrimination against Germans. The school landscape also shows that German identity is prominently present in the visual elements (flag, poster commemorating the deportation). The teaching of the German language and the daily direct contact with German culture through the schoolscape create a suitable environment to revive the German national community, or at least initiate the process that leads to it.

A German nationality language teaching primary school in a Hungarian village with a population of Hungarian and sometimes very distant German origin, language displays cannot simply be classified as “bottom-up” or “top-down” as the local German dialect and identity seems to be almost extinct. What Petőfi School is actually committed to is trying to keep the German language alive. The German-language signage itself is top-down as the goals of the German nationality language teaching school type are formulated in the national curriculum and the pedagogical programme. However, if the role of the German language is viewed from the teachers' or students' perspective, exclusively regarding German as something institutional, it would be far from reality.


The findings can hopefully contribute to our better understanding of multilingual dynamics of schoolscape research, emphasising the need for flexible language policies and pedagogies that adapt to the evolving linguistic landscape. In the future, I am planning to thoroughly investigate the effects of the linguistic landscape of the school on students' cross-linguistic awareness with the help of quantitative data.

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