

Multilingualism in HUNGARY

Practices and Perspectives

(Case studies)

By Zsuzsa Árendás

Center for Policy Studies, Central European University (CEU)



I - Brief introduction presenting the three case studies (1 page)

Multiethnicity and multilingualism has a long historic legacy in Central Europe. The 19th and 20th century assimilationist efforts of nation-states in the region attempted to homogenize the population, with more or less success. The post-1945 period of state socialism provided individuals with a limited scope for movement, and thus for the diversification of the country. In the post-1989 period of economic and political transition, foreign capital appeared in the region, mainly in the form of West European and US investors and companies. These companies brought into Hungary some of their employees, mostly in senior managerial positions. At the same time, some Asian investors also appeared on the market, further diversifying the linguistic and ethnic picture of Hungarian workplaces.

In other words, Hungary seems to be different from West European models of work migration. On one hand, a strengthening flow of outgoing migration of Hungarian workforce is characteristic for the last 5-10 years, unlike in Western Europe, where the dominant feature of workforce migration is immigration of workforce from the EU and other third countries. In Hungary, the proportion of foreign nationals is still very low, approx. 2 per cent of the total population, out of which 2/3 are ethnic Hungarians from the neighbouring countries. Ethnic Hungarians represent an invisible type of immigrant labour— they speak the language, know the culture, thus they do not pose any integration challenge to the Hungarian state (realising this advantage, Hungary provides preferential treatment in citizenship applications to ethnic Hungarians; on average, ethnic Hungarians may get citizenship in less than 3 months from the time of the submission of application). Foreign workforce in Hungary is thus composed of ethnic Hungarians working in different sectors and at various positions (their average qualification is higher than of the local population) and of other, non-Hungarian workforce (approx. half of them are EU citizens, others are non-EU). The characteristic of foreign employees of MNCs and other foreign companies is that they usually work in higher positions (due to difference between local and West European salaries) and many of them come for assignments for a few years. However, the 2008 economic crisis, badly effecting labour markets of southern parts of Europe, resulted in immigration of e.g. engineers from southern Italy, Spain, and Portugal to IT positions of MNCs located in Budapest.

The three case studies try to cover different sectors and types of employers from the Hungarian job market: the leading sector of the Hungarian industry, the car manufacturing industry represented by a German company; an MNC from the power industry, with headquarters in Germany but having local factories on a global scale, and finally a South Asian company in the consultancy services sector. Thus we manage to cover both European and non-European (Asian) employers, and three important sectors of the Hungarian economy.

II - The three case studies (including quotes from the interviews) (some 20 pages)

Case study 1

1. *Overview of the company*

The studied company is an IT services, business solutions and outsourcing organization that is part of a larger business conglomerate. Its headquarter is in South Asia (SA), the company has over 160,000 consultants based in around 42 countries. The company started its operations in Hungary in 2001 and currently has more than 1300 employees providing services to over 40 companies.

The Budapest office often emphasizes its diversity in culture, training, and knowledge. They are active in the field of BPO (Business Process Outsourcing), providing opportunities for potential employees (typically graduates) who speak more languages and are willing to learn financial basics, market research, HR, procurement etc. Their IT Helpdesk provides customer service support in different languages for both global and European clients.

The Budapest Service Center (BSC) has *employees of 52 nationalities (globally 115 nationalities), who speak 34 different languages (globally 40-45 languages)*. Out of the 1300 employees in BSC, *38% are foreign (non-Hungarian) nationals*. Regarding *gender composition* of the work-force, *52% of the employees are women, and 48% are men*. Every employee in the Budapest office speaks English, the common language of the company used for internal communication, and one more European language, which is used for business purposes. Regarding the level or proficiency in these languages, according to the general requirements, the level of English should be good/fluent enough to communicate both verbally and in a written form within the company (and with external partners from time to time), and the European language proficiency should be very high/ excellent, as that is the language used with third parties (clients). (This report will provide the details of measuring proficiency at the company and difficulties related to daily language use later, in a separate section.)

The BSC employees are usually recruited through three different channels: from the Hungarian job market, from other companies with similar business profiles, through the student organization ISEC, and from Hungarian universities (fresh graduates) through job fairs held every year at some of the most important universities in Budapest. The ISEC student organization has a special post of an intern (called ISEC coordinator) working for the BSC due to the volume and importance of the internship program between the BSC and ISEC, coordinating the cooperation, looking after the already placed interns, monitoring the process, and providing them continuous help and support during their first year of placement. The ISEC coordinator was in charge of 56 people during our fieldwork and expected the numbers to grow to 70 in the near future. According to the information provided by him, the interns work for a year at the BSC within the internship program and after the end of the one year, they may become regular employees of the company. As a result of this procedure, 15-25% of the company's employees come through the ISEC program. Interestingly enough, the ISEC coordinator is also responsible for coordinating the induction seminars for newcomers at the

company (including ISEC recruits), which means 16 hours/ month, including seminars on multicultural values (including language use in multicultural situations, etc).

In terms of *industrial relations*, the company has no trade union, and never had one in the past either. According to one of the senior managers of the Budapest office, the service industry is not typical for having trade unions either in India, nor in Hungary (though this latter is not completely true for Hungary). In his understanding, 80% of the white-collar employees of this sector are below the age of 25, they are not familiar with trade union traditions on one hand, on the other hand *'at least in X (the home country of the company), the first generation of IT professionals were groomed to compete against each other, there is no team spirit present among them. The industry is growing fast, the flexibility of slicing, modifying teams is continuously present, plus these are highly paid, well-compensated people..'*¹

95% of employees are on permanent employment contracts (thus 5% are the interns, in our understanding).

2. Fieldwork conducted/ Profiles of the interviewees

The fieldwork at BSC has been conducted between Jun, 2015 and Sept, 2015 in Budapest. It involved several visits to the company, including formal, recorded interviews with employees of the BSC and informal discussions with some of the South Asian managers and Hungarian staff. One of the interviews was conducted at the home of a senior manager, which provided me with an opportunity of a longer and more informal discussion, including his opinion on relationship between culture and language, perceptions of South Asian managers of CEE region and so on.

I tried to select my interviewees to be able to cover the full linguistic and ethnic diversity of the company in Budapest, including SA managers, IT professionals from Southern Europe, Hungarian employees working in various positions, interns from different parts of Europe, employees working for languages-based services related to different languages including German, Italian, Spanish, also foreigners married to Hungarians and living in Hungary for longer time (Russian speaker and national).

Regarding access to the field, due to some earlier personal contacts², I did not have to face any serious difficulties to conduct the interviews. Most of the discussions were one-to one meeting on company premises, in one of the meeting rooms of the BSC, and lasted for about an hour, in two instances two people were interviewed together, in both the cases they were colleagues, working in the same position, on similar issues, experiencing very similar things regarding languages use and diversity.

3. Languages, organisation of work and day to day work relationships

¹ J.J. interview, July 30, 2015.

² The former head of the BSC is from the same region of the South Asian country from where my husband comes from, thus we knew each other from before. It was due to his personal support of the project that the interviews could take place. As he left during summer of 2015, a slight delay took place in the work progress. The new CEO took charge end of the same summer, and with the help and full support of a senior manager, the interviews could continue. I need to express my special thanks to Jitesh J and Olexandra for organizing all the interviews, and for getting interviewed themselves.

The official language at the BSC is English, both in Budapest and in other European centers, with the exception of South America, where the official language is Spanish. The Budapest office has no direct communication with South America, so the issue of language compatibility does not come up in their daily language use. *My interviewees could not point to a specific document which would specify this central and single role of English*, instead referred to it as a general practice, a matter of common understanding. In my understanding, this general practice is further supported by the screening process at job interviews. All candidates for any type of position are expected to speak English. The applicants' level of English is assessed by a local language school from Budapest, using their own assessment methods (referred to as Berlitz scale). The expectations for the level of English for employees are of two types: those who use English for internal communication (both written and spoken) within the company, are expected to good language competencies, but not necessarily excellent (*'they should be able to communicate'* say most of my informants). Those employees expected to use English as a language of business, a language of communication with customers, should have excellent linguistic competences, explained my informants at the company. Most of the BSC employees are hired on the basis of their knowledge of a European language, used later on as their tool for communication with the BSC customers (in form of IT support, or business services).

The official internal language of the BSC is English, all written administration takes place in English, all documents are in English- this is the general rule. However, exceptions do occur. Customer related communication happens in various languages, depending on their needs. Also, despite English being the only internal language, some low-level communication happens occasionally in local language between local employees, in case of Hungary, between Hungarian employees. This is typically some email communication, or among IT support team, internal chat messages between employees belonging to the same language in their respective languages. Such informal practices are tolerated by the management till the point when such communication threads reach a manager who doesn't speak that language. The next interview excerpt is a good example for this:

'I have personally seen email communication between Hungarian employees in Hungarian being forwarded to me with an English translation with an explanation what has been said or happening.' (senior manager from the BSC)

The interviewed manager admits that *'such an email is totally based on the relationship between two individuals, if they feel more comfortable that way...'*, thus it's a matter of convenience and something highly situational, according to the interviewee. He stresses that the company (or rather the management of the BSC) tolerates communication of not very high level of importance in local languages, which is a sign of a certain level of flexibility in official language use and is a clear indication of practices of linguistic diversity at the company. However, the same person occasionally feels *outraged over transgressions of the unwritten law of linguistic conduct*:

'If am cc-ed to an email communication which happens to be in Hungarian, I usually reply saying, 'could you please write in English so that everyone understands?!' A few years ago, I have even written [as a response to such an email] that it's impolite to write in a language not understood by everyone...'. He ends by concluding that such things are always individual-based, based on the ignorance or arrogance of that individual, and thus difficult/ unnecessary to deal with on company-level.

4. Language training

Most foreigners working for the BSC, do not learn the local language. The reasons for this are multiple: Hungarian language is considered to be difficult to learn, thus it would be a time-consuming and long process according to many interviewees. On the other hand, most foreign nationals leave after 2.8 years spent at BSC on average. While in Budapest, they move around in an '*expat bubble*' (a close circle of foreigners living in the city) even outside of the company, so they manage to leave a meaningful social life even without the knowledge of Hungarian language. Moreover, Budapest has become multicultural enough in the last 5-10 years which enables foreigners to manage their life, daily routines in English, as most people report. Those who learn the language are the ones who have a Hungarian partner and/ or plan to stay in Hungary on a long-term. One of my Russian interviewees explains that her story with the Hungarian language in her work environment was bizarre: till she didn't speak the language, she experienced a lot of backtalk, jokes being cracked around her without being able to understand (though this was at a different workplace, before joining BSC). Once she has learned the language (as she is married to a Hungarian, and plans to stay on a long-run), the Hungarian speaking colleagues looked at her with disbelief and suspicion whether she really understands what is being said.

The BSC provides language courses inside the company for its employees for free. The only condition is that the employee is on a permanent contract, and needs to pass a language exam at the end of each term. Courses are available in most West European languages, subject to actual demand (a minimum number of people is required for starting a group). Most of the employees I spoke to appreciate this opportunity provided by their employer, but some complain that they cannot avail it properly. The courses are usually in the early morning hours or late afternoon. Those who work in various and often changing shifts (giving language based IT support to companies at different parts of the world) are not able to make use of this opportunity. Others note that the free nature of language courses is counter-productive: one does not value things given for free, people do not take it seriously; the end of the term exam is a formality, doesn't carry a real threat or significance. All in all, this in-house language course, despite all the difficulties, provides an opportunity to increase linguistic diversity in the company, and an opportunity for individuals to learn new languages and thus improve their job profiles. Teaching of Hungarian language is part of this service, but foreign nationals rarely avail it for the above mentioned reasons.

5. Initiatives and Policies to deal with Multilingualism at the Workplace

Language of documentation vs. language of reporting (language based support services)

The language of documentation at the BSC always takes place in English, even if the language of the actual service provided was different. This practice is followed in a very systematic

fashion, exceptions are only some French projects, where the language of documentation becomes French, explained my informants at the Budapest office.

Multilingual meetings

Both face-to-face meeting and teleconferences take place in English according to the general rule. This doesn't mean that other languages are not being used briefly, shifting for a while into the realm of semi-formal communication, e.g. as a sign of mutual trust or friendship. As the head of BSC expressed, *'It's a human habit that you unintendedly slip to your language... For 9 years I lived in Y, where the local language is T... I think people should feel free to talk in their local language (...) But of course in front of customers, it's strictly English'*. The same person also admits that local languages are often used as ice-breakers during a formal meeting situation, typically at the beginning or end of such occasions. His colleague, a SA senior manager with lot of international exposure to West European company culture however expresses his deep dissatisfaction over the use of local languages as a sign of provincialism, even of linguistic nationalism in Central Eastern Europe.

As one of the interviewees pointed out:

'In a corporate environment we need to be inclusive... in Eastern Europe especially, people because of their language, education system, the companies they work in, seem to have a smaller horizon, a smaller world, and they tend to think within that. If they work in a global environment where they need to be more inclusive, they often need more coaching.'

The above sharp observation touches upon issues related to multilingualism and multiculturalism- the lack of familiarity with such environments and related codes of conduct among local workforce in CEE. The comment also addresses some aspects of linguistic nationalism and ethnocentrism characteristic of this region, the lack of presence of English during state socialism, and so on. And of course it underlines the advantage of people coming from post-colonial settings (like SA) in terms of their familiarity with English as a domestic language.

The BSC, being SA company, with an office based in CEE turned out to be an interesting research topic not only because of the differences in using global (English) and local languages, but also because of the ways in which the employees of the BSC *relate* to languages. and in their different attitudes to language use in private and public. SA managers living in Budapest reflect on the role and use of languages in the following way:

'In SA, speaking English or being able to use this language is a sign of being well-educated, of something very nice and positive. In a corporate environment, speaking good English is well-appreciated. Speaking X (local SA language) or any other regional language... is just not professional.'

It is worth to note how the role of English has changed in the perceptions of these young professional say, since the times of anti-colonial movements of the 20th century, when English was the language of the colonizers, and local national languages meant freedom and were clear signs of self-determination. The same SA manager speaks also about the role of mother tongue/ first language in public and private zone, and the differences in such practices between SA and Europe/ Hungary.

'Okay... so the perception of using the mother tongue of a M (regional language of SA with over 30 million speakers) and a Hungarian, or a German is very different. We are a bit shy to use

our mother tongue outside of our [private- Zs.A.] zone. We of course use it in public, but in business environment, we don't want to show that we speak the same language. But if we walk to each others' office, we of course speak M...[his former boss was from the same region of SA, thus spoke his native language].'

Despite one of the main principles of the BSC, that of cultural diversity, some of my interviewees expressed their concern over the fact that this diversity is mosaic-like, patchy, where people belonging to the same language group 'move around' together, and do not mix much with others, unless officially they had to do so. Moreover, because people and projects are grouped together on language basis (according to the logic of the company's language-based services), this system reinforces pre-existing, language-based groups, interpersonal links and friendships. This may be a diversity management problem of the BSC, but as far as it doesn't lead to serious conflicts, the senior management of Budapest office doesn't feel the need to officially address it. On the pretext promoting cultural diversity, they organize a few cultural events (food festival, a cultural evening presenting the particular culture of the SA region from where the company originates from), but these are rather formal and occasional attempts than day-to-day management of linguistic and cultural diversity on a micro-level. Some of my informants complained about this kind of linguistic/ cultural isolation in the company, saying that they expected something more, something different in this respect, a proper multicultural environment with lot of mixing taking place during daily work. Others consciously try to go against it, like an Italian interviewee, who decided when he joined the company that he wants to get rid of his Italian accent and befriend others, outside of the Italian group, so he carefully stays away from the 'Italian gang' in informal situations and during his private time.

From a managerial point of view, communication forms a team, *'the quality of communication has a direct impact on the business output'*, as one of the senior managers put it. And to follow this line of thought, communication (thus the use of language), *'the way we choose our words, is deeply cultural'*, he continues. *'The way you think, how you perceive words...It's very complex. There are two ways...one, you trade everyone into a common boat of communication, which is impossible...It takes time'*. And he gives an immediate example: *'A Hungarian employee replies to my question with "I don't know". For me this is a lack of ownership, for him it's the translation of "nem tudom" (in Hungarian). What he wanted to say is that he doesn't have full information and he doesn't want to deliver me partial information. A South Asian would first give a high-level, overall information, and then go into details. SAs are educated to know the answer, most of the Westerners are educated to find the answers. (...) So the fundamental difference is in the education system- if you say I don't know, it means I am bad in what I am doing (in SA). So it annoys me, because I expect hundred percent performance from my personnel. For a Western manager if you say, I don't know, it's fine, as far as you know how to find the answer.'*

So for a SA manager in Budapest, despite English being a *lingua franca*, managing a team still involves lot of diversity management issues because of the various cultural backgrounds, culturally acquired reflexes and *habitus* of different English language speakers/ users of this language.

Similarly, manager of accounts section of the BSC explains that her South American employees often *use English in a Spanish way*, that is using ‘too strong’ and emotionally charged words in spoken communication, similarly, they use too many exclamations and other punctuation in a written context, both seem to be inappropriate.

The BSC is an interesting company from the point of view of cross-cultural communication: it communicates between different geographical locations and cultures. The BSC communicates with its SA headquarters, with its European company centers and European clients, and with the US (both customers and its own company centers in some US cities like Dallas, Detroit, NY). In this densely knit web of interactions, according to employees working from Budapest, the SA speakers are the ones who are the most difficult to communicate with from a CEE perspective. The explanation is in culture, as they say. According to these employees (Hungarians, other central Europeans, and other Europeans), Indians have the ‘strongest’ and ‘deepest’ cultural roots, thus they are unable to get rid of their incorrigible cultural influences when they speak foreign languages, including English. The most obvious manifestation of this is *accent*, which will be discussed in a separate section. The cultural influences also show, according to these interpretations, in the ways in which SAs communicate: they do not communicate directly, instead they speak indirectly, especially if it takes place in a hierarchical relationship (e.g. for the question ‘do you understand?’ they would never say ‘no’ if they don’t, instead they would start avoiding the negative answer in a fairly complicated manner. In contrast, according to these interviewees, Europeans (like Hungarian, Polish, or German) speakers would give a very short and precise answer. The question of direct or indirect way of communication (especially if it’s a rejection) and behaviour in a hierarchical situation is obviously related to certain social norms/ hierarchies and the social conditioning in such settings. It is interesting to note the ways in which the interviewees perceive these through language, even if it’s only through the limited channels of internet and skype- communication and not through a face to face relationship with their SA partners.

6. Special issues related to language use and culture

Indians, stereotypes, East/ West slope

The previous point about making a direct link between language and culture, points to the question about stereotypes on ‘Indians’, ‘Hungarians’, ‘Germans’, especially when it comes to communication, but going a step further and establishing larger categories of East and West, though the latter have been articulated only in very careful, implicit ways. Some of my Hungarian and East European (Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian) interviewees expressed their opinions that Hungary and this region (CEE) is significantly closer to Western Europe when it comes to proficiency in foreign languages (though statistics on this are not that positive, as presented in the Country Report), less strong accents (less), positive attitudes towards using foreign languages (again, statistics challenge this point), than to SA and its speakers of foreign languages. A cultural slope has been established in their narratives by some of my interviewees, where US, and/ or Western Europe (particularly Germany) were positioned on the top of the slope, CEE somewhere in the middle (but culturally closer to the West), and SA at the bottom. Positive attributes like hard-working, efficient, easy to communicate with, straightforward, able

to solve problems easily were assigned to the top of the slope, and opposite/ negative attitudes were assigned to the bottom like difficult to communicate with, not straightforward, unable to think out of the box, and so on. Needless to say, that the negative attributes were assigned to the faceless, unknown IT personnel sitting in SA and not to the top management of the BSC in Budapest. Many of my CEE interviewees were quick to add that SA is changing though, moreover, lots of ‘Westernized Indians’ don’t fit to the previously described model³.

Accent/ Neutral Accent

When asked about language use in everyday situations and linguistic competencies of different speakers in a multilingual environment, interviewees usually start speaking about issues related to accent. There are two ways of speaking about accent as such: (1) *accent as a business tool* (as something positive, when it matches the target communities or business partners), and (2) *accent as an obstacle* (when it comes to regional language influences, which don’t match business partners’ needs), which needs to be fought, controlled, or tackled.

Let’s start with the first one. The head of the Budapest office in an interview with him referred to cases when customers ask for a particular accent (e.g. British English, or American English, or in German different regional accents). In such cases, employees responsible for the given task/ project are selected on this basis, or are trained for that accent.

Here we need to stop for a while, as training for a particular accent or for no accent, the so called *neutral accent* is a South Asian ‘product’.

It all started in the Indian call-center industry in the 1990’s, when call centers began to train their employees to mime certain types of accents, based on their clientele in order to increase their business efficiency, namely, sales. Speaking a common language and a common accent in call center industry means establishing a *mutual trust*, which provides bases for any successful business deal. However, lots of problems cropped up related to this linguistic mimesis. Because it was artificially trained and not learned in a natural linguistic environment, call center employees often ‘fell out’ of their role in unexpected situations, unable to respond in a correct way to unexpected questions, creating lot of confusion and mistrust in their customers on the other end of the line. Thus a shift in approach emerged, which was directed toward making communication possible instead of imitating accents. To understand and to be understood by the other side became the (seemingly) simple and direct goal. This influenced the pace, emphasis, intonation, and most importantly, the neutralization of the thickness of regional accents. (more details on this issue by Aneesh, 2015)

Among my interviewees at the BSC, hardly anyone spoke of aiming to mimic any sort of accent (probably they would have found it ridiculous, or ‘unauthentic’), but all of them would start speaking about getting rid of their own national/ regional accent, for the sake of achieving or rather speaking an ‘international English’ (meaning without accent, thus with neutral accent). They find it important for at least two reasons: (1) because it communicates better, the message

³ The concept of cultural slope for CEE has been described in detail by Melegh, A. (2006), *On the East/West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Eastern Europe*. CEU Press. Melegh’s book is based on Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1977), and his critical approach to dominant Western discourses and practices of category formation based on a sharp East/ West divide.

is delivered in a clearer and more efficient way, (2) because business is often more successful if regional identity of the speaker remains hidden, unimportant, and professional aspects come into the fore.

One of the pre-sales managers explained that *'customers sometimes ask for neutral accent, which means, according to me, that there is no interference of any other language in his/her English, so that the speaker can't be identified which cultural background does she/he belong to, and which geographical place.'*

This is exactly the original idea of SA call centers, no wonder it resurfaces at a service sector company with SA ownership. According to some, accent invokes prejudices, so it needs to be avoided. Some SA managers bring the example from their part of the world, where accented English means low level of language proficiency, and this latter suggests bad schooling and lack of professional expertise. As we see it, this is a very specific SA understanding and discourse (and the change of attitudes towards English is noteworthy), which may not be true for most European speakers or only partly acceptable by them. On the other hand, regional accents in other languages used for business purposes (German, Dutch, French, etc) can serve as a value addition to the services by the BSC, thus are encouraged, as mentioned earlier.

For one of the Polish interviewees, who noted with satisfaction that he managed to reduce his regional language accent to almost non-existent, the *neutral or rather international accent* in English is important beyond mere work-related purposes: he thinks that international accent is equal (and product of) globalization, cultural openness and cosmopolitanism, thus has lot of political and identity-related meanings. He also thinks that TCS in Budapest with its linguistic and cultural diversity represents a utopian model, a utopian society, which may have a positive influence even on societies like Hungary, when the Hungarian state is building fences around its borders.

2nd Case study

1. Overview of the company

The company is a strong player in the Hungarian energy asector. It was set up in 1953 as 'Erómű Karbantartó' vállalat (Erókar, in short form), by the communist Hungary as a state-owned company. Later on, the company name has changed several times during the political-economic transition as part of the company privatization process.

After S. purchased the company in 1997 a merger took place between the three Budapest units (two in Pest, one in Csepel, previously different state-owned Hungarian companies) , in 2011 October. With these steps, the S. Hungary obtained its current form. The harmonization process between the collective agreements of the three units soon began, and from Apr 1, 2012, S. Hungary works with a unified collective agreement.

Currently S. in Hungary employs over 2,500 employees on its three sites in Budapest. On the Csepel site (one of the outside districts of Pest), factory of the Energy Management Budapest produces dry- and oil-transformers, primarily to foreign markets, the Power and Gas Budapest Factory in Pest, Késmárki street produces turbine components, and is also involved in material quality control, and engineering work (design of compressors).

S. Hungary 'inherited' a functioning trade union of the previous companies, when the purchase of original Hungarian company took place in 1997. When S. took over these post-socialist companies of the three sites (all in the energy sector) it was a difficult task to reorganize the trade union, and synchronize it with the German employer, says the current head of the trade union, a seasoned trade union worker in her sixties. As she explains, *the Germans represented a different work culture*, the types of social benefits the Hungarian employees were used to prior to 1989 (from the period of state-socialism) were unknown for the German employer or the German trade union model. The head of the S. trade union perceived the establishment of factory works council based on German model (prescribed in the *Hungarian Labour Code 2002*) as a direct challenge to the trade unions, to their role in industrial settings. However, this critical period is over according to her, the roles and competencies have been clarified. She finds the relationship between the company management and the trade union as '*functional and balanced*', a relationship that works well⁴. What is difficult, according to the trade union head at S., is to mobilize the workforce and get them involved in the work of the trade union. The non-members expect from the trade union to fight for their rights (especially when it comes to pay-hike and other social benefits), and often take for granted these achievements. The union head complains about lack of solidarity within workforce and about the fact that the system of IRs functions with 'free-riders', as she calls them. She thinks that achievements in terms of working conditions, salary-hike, and other benefits should be applicable only for those who are active members of the trade union.

2. Fieldwork conducted/ profiles of interviewees

The field visits to S. have been conducted during Feb-March 2016. I have visited all the three sites, and spoke to local employees as well as foreigners working in Budapest in various positions and on different levels of company hierarchy.

Majority of employees in Budapest are local staff, speaking Hungarian as their native language. Blue-collar workers involved in production do not speak other foreign languages except some team-leaders who may speak some basic English or German, but it is not a job-requirement. Administrative staff, managers, engineers- white-collar staff speaks English as a company language. Additional languages are used on some departments (e.g. sales, discussed later), and company senior management speaks German in addition to English. German is an extra asset for engineers and managers, but not an entry requirement; some of them learn the language later onwards during their work if needed.

3. Language use, organization of work and day-to-day relationships

The spoken communication in the Budapest office sites (all three of them) takes place mostly in Hungarian between the local staff. Physical workers on production sites speak only Hungarian. Administrative staff, engineers, managers have to speak some English as well, on a level which communicates to business partners and other S. units in the world. Their level of

⁴ based on the interview with president of S. Hungary, trade union, V. Zsuzsanna.

English is assessed during their job interview through verbal communication (part of the job interview is conducted in English).

In respect to *written communication*, German translation of Hungarian official communication (email correspondence, official documents) is occasionally used if it reaches high-level German managers.

There seems to be a *generational divide* between the knowledge and use of foreign languages among S. local (Hungarian) employees. Younger generation (approx. below the age of 40) speaks mostly English as a foreign language, while older generation prefers, and speaks German. This has obviously something to do with the schooling system, the changing strategies in foreign language teaching in schools and changing preferences of students among new market conditions.

Some of the elderly administrative employees (who were taken over from the Hungarian owner) may not speak foreign languages, neither English nor German. They usually do work, where Hungarian knowledge is sufficient (e.g. I spoke to an employee working at accounting, who set next to an English-speaking colleague; in case she needed any communication in other language than Hungarian, she relied on her colleague's help. By now, she has retired from this position and does a different job, where only Hungarian is needed.)

On the other hand, young Hungarian engineers who use English during their daily work (all technical descriptions, software used for design are in English) were complaining that the Hungarian *university education did not provide them enough English language skills*. They had to take extra language classes from their own private money after their university studies to meet the demands of their job.

The employment contracts are in Hungarian language, for non-Hungarian employees (high-level managers) *English or German translation of the document* is provided automatically.

4. Language Trainings

Language courses are provided by the company in form of language classes provided on company premises within working hour, in an intensive form (if such an instant need occurs) or on weekly 1-2 hours basis during a longer stretch of time. Participation on these courses is always based on job requirements, actual business trips, upcoming project tasks. The classes are paid by the company, and language teachers of a particular language schools are hired for this task on a contractual basis.

5. Initiatives and Policies to deal with Multiculturalism at work

There is no single document defining the company language. However, it is commonly understood that on local level, the language of daily use is Hungarian. With other S. offices in Germany and in other parts of the world, English language is used. With German colleagues, German language is occasionally used in case the Hungarian employee of S. happens to know German. But this latter is less and less common, as young generation speaks English mostly.

- *Multilingual meetings;*

The in-house meetings take place in English, as it is the *connecting language (lingua franca)* of the company, explain most of my interviewees at S. Magyarország. In practice, the language of the meetings always depends on who is present at the meeting, that is defined by participants and their language competencies. It also happens that a Hungarian employee (e.g. trade union representative) who does not speak English is present during a meeting, and German managers are also present (thus, Hungarian cannot be the language used in the meeting), he or she receives a translation from English to Hungarian. This is done not by a professional translator, but by a colleague who volunteers for the task.

Some of the meetings may take place in German too, if all present speak enough German, but there are precedents as for switching between languages during the same meeting: it starts in German but someone comes in in between who doesn't speak German, or someone asks for a clarification in English whose German is not up to the level of the meeting, and thus the whole conversation shifts to English.

The *guiding principle is practicality*, as one of the Hungarian engineers summarized it for me. In his opinion, there is *no need to more formalization in language use* at S. Magyarország, as *'the least formalized things are, the best they work'*, he opines.

During meetings with other S. offices, employees, Hungarian employees of S. Magyarország observe that Germans prefer to speak German, if it's possible, otherwise their English is usually very good too. Based on this experience, one of my interviewees decided to learn German (within a company language course), and managed to reach a good level of German, and use it later on during his work.

-Meetings and communication with clients:

S., Csepel site hosts the sales department, where I have conducted interviews with French, German, Arabic speaker sales managers of S. Magyarország.

Their experience with use of multiple languages is, understandably, different from other, local employees in Budapest. They have been hired for their first language (German, French, Arabic, etc.) and they use that particular language for their daily work most of the time. Besides, they use English as the common company language. Some of them don't speak Hungarian at all, others (who happen to be married or in a relationship with a local Hungarian) speak some Hungarian, and use it in office during daily interactions with their Hungarian colleagues. There are also specific cases of bilingual people, e.g. sales manager for Germany is a second-generation Hungarian born and brought up in Germany who decided to return to Hungary. His German is of native level, but his Hungarian is of very high level too, with a slight accent, so he is not necessarily identified as a Hungarian among his colleagues.

The French sales manager talks about positive attitudes of his Hungarian colleagues regarding foreign languages and foreigners as such: *'I think Hungarians are very open when it comes to communication, they speak German and English, and sometime languages of neighboring countries...'*

This is a reference to the fact that many ethnic Hungarian migrants live and work in Hungary, who speak the language of their native land (Serbian, Croatian, Romanian, Slovak). Though the company doesn't hire anyone on the basis of these languages, it happens that during some

business transactions with clients from neighbouring countries they need to use these languages. This never takes place automatically, rather after a failed attempt to communicate in English or German. In such 'emergency cases' a colleague is called as an informal, *ad hoc* translator to translate, thus solving the communication problem.

The French sales manager in an interview conducted with him spoke to me about linguistic nationalisms in France and Hungary: he claims French often refuse to communicate in any other language but French; this would never happen in Hungary, as Hungarians are always open and try to communicate in other languages, even if they are happy to speak in Hungarian, whenever it's possible.

A middle-aged Hungarian woman, heading the sales department, spoke in an interview with her, about her difficulty in switching from German (learnt at university before 1989) to English. She belongs to the earlier mentioned older generation, and the use of foreign languages is still an extra effort for her, it doesn't come as an automatic practice, she admits. She thinks the reason is that during those times (pre-1989) *Western languages (or foreign languages as such) were not taken as seriously* as it would have been required for her later work purposes. When I ask her, which language would she prefer during her daily work if the choice would be hers (and I meant a choice between English or German), she replies without any hesitation: 'Hungarian'. It clearly reflects her attitude towards and comfort level with foreign languages perhaps typical specifically for her generation schooled before 1989.

Most of my interviewees, when asked about foreign language use of others and of themselves, spoke about cultural differences between different groups of people, between different nations. *They thought language use is strongly connected to culture.*

A sales manager originating from an Arabic country spoke about how amazed he was about provincialism of Hungarians after arriving to Hungary. It sounded quite familiar to the interviews with South Asian managers for the first case study in this project (for details see Case study 1, Multilingualism at a South Asian MNC). In the S. production site and office place he uses only English, he explains. About meetings within S. Hungary he feels that despite being able to communicate (his English is understood by Hungarian colleagues), many people from the company, colleagues, don't accept him, and its because of his Arabic culture, his religion, being a Muslim.⁵

Just like the South Asian managers in case study report 1, this Arabic sales manager also mentions about issues related to *mentality of the local workforce* in the interview conducted with him. When asked about the meetings at S., he voices his puzzlement and anger over Hungarians' authoritarian way of behaviour, the way in which they don't dare to speak up and express their personal opinions openly. *'They might say that I am loud, that I speak too much, but I can't take...I'm usually very outspoken'*, he summarizes these situations from his point

⁵ Hungary has not been known for its Islamophobia till now, instead anti-Semitism is the dominant discourse of Hungarian far-right, some of its followers used to wear Arafat-scarfs for instance as a clear sign of their anti-Israel stance. However, the right-wing Orbán governments' recent communication campaign against immigrants and specifically Muslim immigrants has a definite impact on attitudes of Hungarian population in this respect.

of view. This observation has again something to do with Hungarian education system, with frontal teaching methods according to which students were not expected to speak up, rather accept what the teacher told them. This seems to be changing slightly with new methods of teaching entering the schools, but there is still a strong tendency at many places to this 'old school' method. Also, such a self-subordinating attitude of local employees is linked to the way they imagine company structures and hierarchies; the Arabic manager comes from a Western-style work culture (from a recent posting in Austria), where flat company structure is the norm. This is not always automatic or obvious for local Hungarian employees, especially for the older generations (above 45-50 years of age).

- In-house / outsourced translation and or interpretation services; Informal practices (ex. other colleagues serving as interpreters, etc.);

No official translators are hired by S. Magyarország in any situation. If any such need arises, an internal colleague, employee of S., mastering more languages (e.g. Hu, Eng, Germ) steps in as ad hoc translator both in cases of written and verbal communication. E.g. The S. Hungary CEO's administrative assistant used to do the German- Hungarian translation of some of the written communication between the German CEO and those office bearers (e.g. trade union head) who don't speak foreign languages. However, such instances are rare, as all employees on higher levels of company hierarchy speak some English which enables them to use English as a connecting language.

- language use and the trade union

During meetings between the company management and the trade union both Hungarian and German languages are being used, and often English instead of German. Among works council representatives not everyone speaks fluent German (or English), but *'I have always spoken enough German so that they could not cheat me in the negotiations'*, she states firmly. Despite her limited but confident knowledge of German, she prefers to negotiate with the employer in two languages, using both Hungarian and German. She thinks that during tough negotiations, when one needs to use all the skills of persuasion, tactics of negotiation, it is important to communicate on one's first language. One needs to think ahead in such situations, read from the meta-language, *'thus there is no time and space for translation'* (so she relies on translation, usually provided by a colleague who speak good German). *'Each and every word has a special weight, a consequence which translates directly to wages'*, she adds.

'I'm glad that we had German-born management from the very beginning as they have been socialized in a certain culture of workers rights representation; it was natural for them (unlike for Hungarians). When the first CEO left I was afraid that they will nominate a Hungarian top-manager for the post, luckily it didn't happen...'

Later on she explains what she means by the previous sentences: *'If an employee is strict, it means he/she follows the rules, which is good for us as well, as we can remind him to follow all the rules and regulations when dealing with us (the trade union).'*

6. Special issues/ Summary of findings related to different forms of Multilingualism at S. Hungary

Since the beginning of its operations (1997), English has been the *lingua franca* at S. Hungary, used by local employees (mostly Hungarians, with some international staff for instance on sales section, by German managers, and foreign partners). This was a conscious decision at S., adjusting to global business trends, also making communication between different geographical locations easier, as S. has a strong global presence in more than 190 countries.

But having English as a connecting language does not mean that other languages would not have been used at different company locations and levels of hierarchy. In Hungary, blue-collar workers speak only Hungarian, with some Maisters being able to communicate in basic English to foreign engineers. The presence of Hungarian language is very strong in higher levels of company hierarchy too: Hungarian language is used among white-collar administrative staff, local engineers, departmental head, as majority of the local staff are Hungarian speakers. They communicate in Hungarian between themselves if no outsider, or non-Hungarian speaker is involved (e.g. in an office). As part of multilingual realities of S. in Hungary, German is occasionally spoken (though it is not a compulsory language in the company), and other regional languages (e.g. Romanian, Serbian) if regional business partners find it difficult to communicate in English.

In this latter case, English is used as a „*transit language*”, bridging the communication gap between different, non-native speakers of English. A mix of German and English technical words, expressions form a specific „*company speak*”, which is used by engineers and managers used within larger company context, between different locations in Germany, CEE, and other parts of the world.

Among Hungarian staff of the three Budapest sites, a generational divide seems to be characteristic, that is older generation prefer to speak German as a foreign language, while younger generation opts for English. However, their first choice would be, and in fact it often is, Hungarian language. This is out of sheer practicality (if everyone around speaks Hungarian), but related to linguistic nationalism too, roots of which run deep in the history of the region. Uneasiness about foreign languages is not simply related to history or politics, but to education system too. My interviewees often complain that during their education years (including university studies) they did not get a real chance to learn foreign languages on the level, which became required for their job later on. The issue of foreign language education and attitude of people towards foreign languages as such are of course interrelated, and both are vividly criticised in public debates in Hungary since 1989, though not much improvement has been achieved on the ground so far.

3rd case study- A German car manufacturing company in Hungary

1. Overview of the company

This German car manufacturing company started its investments in Hungary in 2008 in a form of a *greenfield* project, 120 kms South-East to Budapest, and became the leading investments of the region called Southern Hungarian Plains (Dél-Alföld) and of the Hungarian industry in general too. It has started its productions in 2012. Three worldwide know models of this German top-category car are being produced in the Hungarian factory. These models are being exported to 180 countries to all around the world.

The factory provides 4,000 workplaces to its employees due to the continuous capacity-building. Parallel to the increase of in-house workplaces (within factory), the number of contractors is also increasing. By now the factory cooperates with over 32 local Hungarian contracting companies, and has produced 500,000 cars since 2012.

This German car-manufacturing company has established the system of dual training in Hungary, this program works since 2011 starting with a secondary school level up to the university level training for car engineers. This German investment has so far involved over 1 billion euros, but further investment may follow. On a global scale, this car manufacturing company has completed its most successful year since its existence, and a 12.9 per cent growth compared to the previous year (2013).

The factory in Hungary is the only plant in Europe with operations outside of Germany. Further plants have been established in the US, and recently in Mexico too. In Hungary, the senior management of the plant comes from Germany, and stays usually for two-three years. Mid-level management and experts are of mixed background in terms of country of origins, both Hungarians and Germans are involved in it. Line workers are all Hungarians, typically from the region of approx. 50 kms of radius.

Since the beginning of the factory set-up in K., a works council has been established in collaboration with partners in Germany and the European organization of works councils. The most active and largest trade union in this plant is a local unit of Vasas trade union (the oldest one in this sector, predating the 1989 changes), organizing 30% of the total workforce in K. They set up their local unit in 2010 May, starting with ten people, by 2012 they had 1,000 members (30-33% of total workforce) and this ratio remains roughly the same till the present.

Liga is another local branch of a national trade union, but managed to organize less than 100 workers locally. Some conflicts between the local Vasas leader and the national leadership have been reported by our interviewees on the grounds of transparency issues and

undemocratic practices, as a result of which the local trade union head has been dismissed from the organization.⁶

In 2012 a collective agreement has been signed, already under the new Labour Code which came into force in the same year.

There are plans to establish a joint office in cooperation with the German IG Metal in K, primarily with the goal of training new trade union trustees and thus enabling a further growth of the local trade union (ideally 70-80%, according to the local leader of Vasas).

2. Fieldwork conducted/ profiles of interviewees

The fieldwork in the factory, near a small town of K. took place between March- April, 2016. After several failed attempts in approaching the company HR office, I managed to visit the factory thanks to the help of the local works council and trade union. They were the ones who invited me for interviews to their office, and with the help of their personal intervention I got finally access to the senior management of the company, including the new CEO of the company, who arrived to K. only a few months before. In this second phase of my investigation, I have received lot of direct help and support from different people working for this company in Hungary.

I managed to have among my interviewees engineers, people working for the sales department, quality control, HR, works council, trade union, and in the production area too. Most of the respondents were Hungarians, working in two, or occasionally three languages during their daily work, and some Germans, who spoke mostly German, and English from time to time. I interviewed the leader of the local Vasas trade union, as well as the head of works council, and some other works council members.

3. Language use, organization of work and day-to-day relationships

According to all the interviewed people at the K. plant, the official company language is German. This is the educated version of German language used in all formal interactions in Germany. For less formal, or informal interactions, often local dialects of German are used too with the German partners coming from certain regions in Germany.

Almost everyone adds when asked about language use at the K. plant, that Hungarian language is also widely used locally (in K) in both written and spoken communication. The language use (whether it becomes Hungarian or German) is decided by the level of communication (if it's a high level one, or a lower level one), usually a switch in language use takes place when an originally low level communication shifts to a higher level, thus switching from Hungarian to German.

⁶ The charges were made by the local leader against the headquarters. It seems to be both a generation divide, as the challenger belongs to a younger generation, while the national leadership belongs to the old generation of cadres. Due to this fact, the German AG Metal halted its plans for cooperation with the K. plant local trade union unit as they have started the cooperation with the dismissed trade union leader and do not trust the national leadership of Vasas.

'My boss is German, so in my case, any upward communication takes place in German', summarizes these situations one of my interviewees, who works on the quality control department in K.

For some people, working for special department, like sales, or for employees who are in touch with regional and other non-German suppliers, the language of communication as a *lingua franca*, becomes English.

However, strictly speaking, within company, English is not used as a language of communication, only with outsiders. Thus, English is not an entry requirement for jobs at K. plant, only in special cases and for particular posts.

All interviewees agreed with the fact that German is the single company language, though they could not point to any particular regulation or document which would state this fact. I understood from their inputs that it is so, because it is practiced so in daily company life. When searching for reasons, I heard various reasons from my interviewees, such as, first of all, it is an identity issue for a German company. Second, so far the company operated mostly in Germany, so the use of German language was evident. Involving new locations like the US, Mexico, English came to the fore instantly. In case of Hungary, the company could preserve the dominance of German, as it is a location within Europe, in a region which has strong traditions of the German language use. A works council member went even a step further, claiming, that during a bidding process for the new location of this plant, Hungary became the strongest candidate exactly of its long history and familiarity with German language, culture and traditions. This argument reemerged in different forms later on, when I asked employees about language and culture, and about their opinion on work culture represented by this company.

From most of the interviews conducted with Hungarian employees in the car-manufacturing plant it seems clear that they make a strong connection between language and culture: they believe that a particularly good/ appropriate use of language comes from sufficient familiarity with the culture, with the place where this language is spoken by its native speakers. They made difference between Hungarians who learned German in school, or during shorter stays in Germany, and those who lived and worked in Germany and Austria for longer period, perhaps for years. This second type of German language speakers is familiar with certain German dialects, gets the internal references, jokes, in short obtained a cultural closeness which provides them with the feeling of familiarity and comfort when dealing with native speakers.

Another important issue when speaking about Hungarians using German as a foreign language is their attitudes towards German language and the German people. Here, a strong appreciation of German professionalism, precision, technical skills, and hard-work can be noted, which was evident in all interviews on this subject. This is often connected to the public production of the categories of the East and the West, and the usual attributes assigned to both. (more on this can be read in the first case study on the South Asian company)

4. Language training

As part of the hiring process for the K. plant, candidates have to undergo a language test, which includes some grammar exercises, reading and communication (spoken language). At the beginning of the hiring process for the K. plant, that is around year 2011 and in the first years of the plant operations, even if a candidate did not perform well on the language test, but professionally he/she qualified for the job, such a person was hired and some additional language classes were assigned for that person. Such language classes took place during the working hours, on company premises. The intensity of the language training always depended on the actual need of the particular person/ the tasks given to him to be performed in German. However, according to many interviewees, this 'tolerant language policy' from the plant management has changed recently, and only those get hired who already speak enough German to perform their job. The reason behind this, as most people agree, is that there are enough people on the Hungarian job market who speak good or at least good enough German to be selected. I personally met Hungarian managers who after working for some years in Germany or Austria returned to Hungary to work for this particular plant in K. Obviously, in such cases, a good knowledge of German is not an issue.

In the initial period of K. plant operations, Hungarian employees, including line workers were sent out to the German headquarters for training. Such trainings took min. 2 months up to 10 months in some cases. Respondents who attended such trainings spoke about these occasions with lots of appreciation in terms of work ethic, skills and professional knowledge they have gained. Improvement in German was also part of the planned goals of these stays.

At some point, when the number of employees hired by K. plant reached a critical number, the plant management decided to build a training line in Hungary, on the premises of the K. plant to avoid sending out large numbers of new workers for training to Germany. So since then, the regular trainings for all newly hired workforce, especially of line workers, takes place in K., but engineers, highly qualified Hungarian employees (including engineers) still attend trainings in Germany, primarily with the aim of professional development.

When I asked my respondents about any language related conflicts, they usually replied in a negative way. They thought such conflicts are not typical at all, and also believed that conflicts occur out of human imperfections ('stupidities') and language is used only as a cover-up, an excuse. But in general, they could not recall such cases and they think it is not typical at all. They often referred to accent (in German) as to something which can lead to misunderstandings, but not to conflicts.

5. Initiatives and policies to deal with MC at work

I was informed about various initiatives within K. plant related to enhance effective communication within the company and to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism among employees and their families.

As for the employees, the CEO of the company is holding regularly (on month basis) informal meetings between employees, senior management and CEO called „discussions at the fireplace”, based on a German tradition of informal communication in a close group of people. Here, employees are encouraged to raise up various issues, problems, concerns and speak about them freely with the company management. This is a cultural model totally unknown for the Hungarian employees. As the CEO of the K. plant recalled in an interview with him, first people felt uneasy in these situations or could express themselves only in an inappropriate way, but slowly they became familiar with this way of communication and now these sessions take place in a very productive way.

This is also related to the earlier point on language and culture, how the two are strongly interrelated, and how particular language use is embedded in a certain set of cultural meanings and everyday knowledge/ know-how. Thus, while German language use *is* an issue for most Hungarian employees (as it does not just come automatically, usually they have invested lot of time and effort learning it, and they constantly reflect on the level of their knowledge), it is also about an issue *how* to use it as non-native speakers. This latter is related to a set of behaviours, background knowledge (e.g. if they have been to Germany before, if it was only a short training or they used to work in Germany or Austria), and not least importantly, to their attitude towards German language and people as discussed above.

Regarding company policies targeting larger audiences like the families of employees, or the township of K, the plant management has recently opened a bilingual elementary school for the children of its employees in K. This schooling for children of employees is free in this institution, and might provide a huge asset for those kids who attend it in terms of further studies or later employability. (Bilingual private schools in the capital city for instance cost lot of money, so the value of such schools is significant, especially in a small town where no such school was available before). As the school has been launched only last year, it is difficult to state anything about its success, but in terms of interest, a significant interest was reported from among the employees by my respondents.

6. Special issues

Interviews with German managers and the German CEO of the company revealed that Hungarian employees' ideas and perceptions of organizational hierarchy are quite different from the German model, and this difference has an effect on the way they use language (German) and communicate.

To be more concrete, the CEO explained how he noticed that local employees do not speak up on a meeting even if they have a strong idea about something; they need to be asked. In worse cases, they do not say even if they don't understand something due to language issues or otherwise. He thinks this is related to Hungarian way of schooling, at least to how it was in the past, to the way people were not encouraged to speak up their mind.

According to their managerial experiences during the short history of this plant, such communication skills can be changed, improved by conscious effort of the senior

management and with the help of some special incentives (e.g. a reward system is in place in the K. plant for innovative ideas, inputs from the employees).

Another special issue to be noted in this case study of a German company is related to perceptions of the German language. The role of German language has been changing in the CEE region in the 19-20th century. Once a co-official language of the Monarchy and compulsory language in all schools, it has completely lost its place and significance after WWII. Only few schools continued teaching German, as Russian language was the dominant foreign language. After 1989, German language partly regained its importance in schools, along with English language. (These are the two most widely taught foreign languages in Hungarian schools, with a slight dominance of English language). However, the older generation (above 45) still speaks more German than English, due to the longer historic presence of this language in the region. Recent outgoing work-related migration to Germany and Austria seems to reinforce the importance of German language among younger and middle-aged, economically mobile population.

As my interviewees working in senior posts at this car-manufacturing plant explained, their factory still offers very competitive salaries in the region, thus they do not struggle with serious fluctuations of workforce and there seems to be enough German-speaking people to be hired by them if needed, however in other parts of Hungary, especially in Northern Hungary, close to the Slovak and Austrian border, a company with a similar profile has to already face such problems.

And finally, as a special issue for using German widely and almost exclusively within this company: when asked about reasons, senior management (Germans) and Hungarian employees (mid-level managers) all agreed that it is perceived as an identity issue in this company. German language use is directly linked to German culture, mentality, talent, thus contributing the the positive branding of the product they make.

Also, when the CEO of the plant spoke about his transnational work experience, emphasized that due to the widespread use of German in the Hungarian plant, 'it feels like being at home', by that he meant that the K. plant is a small Germany in Hungary, working according to the same rules and standards as its German counterparts.

III - Some general conclusions (1 page).

Central Eastern Europe, and more specifically, Hungary, has a particular tradition of multilingualism, characterised by imposed imperial and state languages on the one hand (see references about the 19th and 20th century history earlier in this text), and various minority languages due to migratory movements of people belonging to various ethnicities (minority languages).

German language has been in both the roles- it used to be an imperial language in Hungary in a specific historical period of the Monarchy, and was used by its German minority populations arriving to the territory of the current Hungarian state since the 15th-16th

centuries. Thus, German language, as a language of power and knowledge, and also as a language of people has been present in this region through long centuries. The post-WWII period ending with 1989 represented a short rupture in this process, while in the 90's the status of German as a foreign language was partly re-established in the school system. The history of English language in much shorter compared to German language, and can be linked to the post-1989 changes, of foreign capital, Western knowledge and culture coming into the country, and in education system it is clearly linked to the Bologna process and Hungary's accession to this process.

The above difference in the historic heritage of the two languages in Hungary is reflected in a generational divide between its users too. While older generations prefer and speak mostly German, younger generations are more familiar with English. These tendencies were clearly detectable in two of the case studies in Hungary.

Hungarian speakers of foreign languages, among them of English and German, often struggle when it comes to their spoken skills. This is directly linked to the way foreign languages have been taught in schools (outdated methods of language teaching) and priority given to foreign language teaching (low priority, *pro forma* importance).

Some of the cases studies, especially the one about the South Asian company, where the cultural gap between foreign employers and local staff is the largest, the lack of multicultural experience in this region is evident. This is due to the recent past of this region marked by isolation from the rest of the world, low level of migration in and out of the country, and a specific political climate marked by strengthening voices of nationalism and ethnocentrism. On the other hand, it can also be expected that increasing migratory movements, especially linked to outgoing workforce from CEE, oriented towards Western Europe might differentiate this picture characterised with strong monolingualism and monoculturalism of the majority of the population.

From the three cases studies of this research it seems that managers of foreign companies tolerate linguistic nationalism of the local staff when it is restricted to low-level communication, without seriously effecting the communication with higher level management. Smaller conflicts do occur when a communication shifts levels, especially if it happens upwards and the language switch does not follow, or it follows with a delay. On the other hand, the company senior managements seem to be paying little systematic attention to management of multilingual practices. The rule appears to be a kind of *lessaize fair*, meaning that despite a general rule/ guiding principle of using a single company language (which is German in some cases, English in others), particular situations produce concrete answers to questions of multilingualism. As one of the employees interviewed during my research summarized, practicality is the guiding principle, and the less regulated issues of language are, the better they work.

Most of the interviews also point to the fact that language use is directly linked to culture. Thus, regulation of linguistic practices might also involve management of multicultural practices. Company managements in all the three cases seem to be aware of this fact and often reflect on this question in the interviews, but concrete steps to manage diversity of workforce

seem to be rare, and often formal, as company priorities fall elsewhere, namely mostly focusing on daily tasks and project/ production related routines.

Linguistic abilities/ level of foreign language knowledge is a returning issue in all the interviews, here it is obvious that local workforce needs to catch up with the global trends regarding multilingualism and mastering foreign languages, stepping from its linguistic isolation. When it comes to the use of foreign languages, accent is also among frequently cited factors. Accent is used sometimes in a positive context, especially when it comes to language-based services (serving a particular group of clients speaking a particular accent), but most often it is referred to as something one needs to get rid of, as an undesirable characteristic of non-native speaker, revealing his/ her country or origin, location, etc. Not using the right form of language (either in terms of accent or linguistic abilities) may also suggest lack of professionalism, lack of professional knowledge, as some of the interviewees pointed out.