



Hungary: case studies

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IR - MultiLing 
Industrial relations in multilingual environments at work

Context

- Low number of immigrant work-force
Around 2% of the population, out of which 2 / 3 are ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring states
- Strict visa policy for third country nationals (work permits prior to entry visa)
- Others on family visa (typically spouses)- later difficulties in finding employment and getting permits
- Non-attractive economy, increasing outgoing migration (push factors)

CASE 1

TCS Budapest

- Since 2001, currently over 1300 employees, providing services to over 40 companies
- BPO, IT desk, language-based services
- 52 nationalities working for the TCS Bp office, speaking 32 different languages
- 38% foreign nationals in Bp, gender: 52% men, 48% women
- New employees through ISEC 15-25%, from local job market and universities (fresh grad), from other similar companies

CASE 1

Research method, difficulties:

- Visits to the company between July- Oct 2015, formal and informal discussions
- Access to the senior management (rare opportunity, personal ties)
- Profile of ppl interviewed: HR personell, IT heldesk (German speakers), Payroll team leader, pre-sales manager, pre-sales dpt head, CEO of Budapest TCS (both the leaving one and the new head)
- Nationalities: Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Indian, German, German/Hungarian, Dutch, Russian/Hungarian; language of interviews: English, Hungarian
- Difficulties: accessing ppl, why is this research question interesting, relevant, important? (legitimacy of this research), staying focused on language (often shifting away to culture in general)

CASE 1

The most interesting issues which came up during the interviews:

- Company language is English (unwritten rule) but exceptions apply, transgressions are tolerated to some extent both in written and oral communication (chat messages, email, meetings), **L1- for internal communication (E), L2- for business purposes** (32 diff Ls)
- Conflicts in *language use* :
 1. **linguistic nationalism** / parochial approaches to language use (HU)- vs. business ethics (professionalism) and global approaches to language by Indian management; in the background: diff approaches to native language (private or public) and English, also differences in language use e.g. ‘nem tudom’ - I don’t know

CASE 1

Conflicts in language use- cont.

2. **East/ West discourses**, German- Hu- Indian (progressive/ backward) in narratives about communicating partners, about their language use, culture, the way they work
3. **Gender**- HU IT desk women (speaking German as second language)- German men (customers)- T/ V form, their professional competence questioned (due to gender and German as second language), and rules of mutual politeness (in language) not respected by Germans

Case 1- cont.

- **Accent-** neutral accent? Getting rid of the ID and location of the speaker (typically a call center goal); in TCS case this is not so relevant, instead, a global language, getting rid of native L influences for professional reasons, easier to communicate, to be understood (both pragmatic and professional identity reasons), transnationalism
- Becoming global citizens in a multilingual company (Polish interviewee)- in a negative context of linguistic nationalisms and parochial thinking, a political statement
- accent in a language used for business purposes (sometimes local accents required by customers)- thus accent can be an additional value in services too

CASE 2

- Mercedes- Daimler Hungary, in Kecskemét, Eastern Hungary, green field project, enhance employment opportunities in the region
- Since 2012, 4 000 employees

Two plus one languages used as company language (Germ, Hu, plus English)

Betw 2012-2014 trainings in Germany for newly joined workers

Now mostly trained in Kecskemét, German language is a requirement for white-collar employees, workers speak only Hungarian, no migrant workforce from across the border

Trade union: Vasas- nationwide trade union in metal industry, local branch, in cooperation with IG Metall, Germany, tensions within the trade union, old structures and old ppl in the headquarters, unable to react to the new requirement and situations, effective work on factory level, collective agreement, good relationship with factory management