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# Qual der Wahl, or spoiled for choice? English and German as the subject of decision-making processes in the Czech Republic

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the position of English and German in the Czech Republic. It concentrates on the following general research questions: (1) what do the decision-making processes regarding the choice of foreign languages look like? (2) To what degree are economic concerns declared to be a motivating factor for the choice to learn a foreign language? The research is based on two main data sources: (a) media discourse concerning foreign language teaching and (b) interviews with agents influencing and immediately participating in these processes (principals or directors of various types of schools, parents and their children, private teachers). According to recent statistics, English and German are the most frequently chosen foreign languages in the Czech Republic. In spite of the fact that the Czech Republic neighbors on economically strong German-speaking countries and that employers demand German skills in the business and job market, the socio-economic and ideological tendencies continue to favor English.

**Keywords:** language management, business, English, German, language-in-education planning, social actors

## 1 Introduction. Overview of the sociocultural context of English and German in the Czech Republic

Business is the very domain – along with entertainment, technology and higher education – in which English has spread at the expense of other languages (Ammon 2015: 77–84). English is frequently taken for granted as the international lingua franca of business, but this view does not take local constellations or other languages in this function into account. This paper provides an analysis of the position of English and its comparison with German in the Czech Republic as it has been viewed and shaped by various actors during the last decade. Special attention is devoted to these agents' economic activities within educational business (e.g. private language schools) as well as to the economically and ideologically based decisions made both by public

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institutions and by foreign language learners. The Czech foreign language situation, with the dominant position of English as well as the gradually weakening position of German, has been discussed in several recent studies (see for example Kaderka and Prošek (2014); Eichinger (2014); Ammon (2015: 328–334); Dovalil and Engelhardt (2012); Lopuchovská (2012); Gester (2011); Šichová (2011); or Dovalil (2010)). This development dovetails with general long-term tendencies in other member states of the EU and falls into the trends of globalization which characterize one part of the current post-modern era (Neustupný 2006). This dominant position of English has begun to be categorized as imperial, postimperial or neoimperial.<sup>1</sup>

The current relatively weak position of German has to do with negative attitudes and stereotypes (or even prejudices) toward Germans and German which reflected the dominant position of Germans in Czech-German relations for centuries. The negative stereotypes are shared by a non-negligible part of the Czech population. German is said to sound hard and not nice, or German is said to be a difficult language (Dovalil and Engelhardt 2012: 12; Nekvapil and Sherman 2013: 104). These socio-cultural constructs are accompanied by the most widely spread language ideology expressed through the phrase *English is enough*. In line with this ideology, English is viewed as the only meaningful language to learn, because everyone else is doing so, making themselves understood practically under all circumstances. In other words, there is the prevailing belief that “one can get by in English in all situations” (Nekvapil and Sherman 2013: 107). Paradoxically, this belief may appear convincing in connection with German at first glance, because the German-speaking population in Europe is one of the well-educated communities having relatively good English skills.<sup>2</sup>

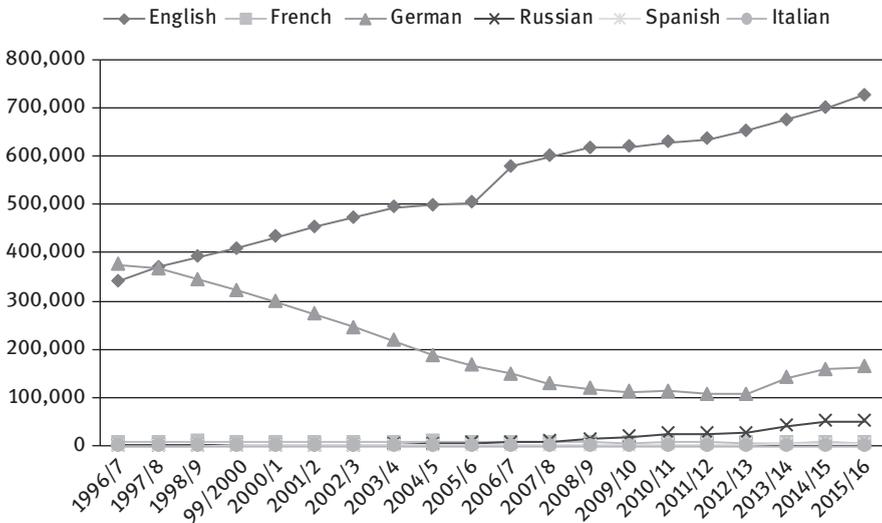
The statistics collected by the Czech Ministry of Education confirm the strong dominance of English as the most frequently chosen foreign language in the education system of the country. Despite this fact, interest in German has always remained strong enough to maintain at least the second rank, and the numbers of those who choose German began growing again in 2013.

If we reflect the situation in primary schools (see Figure 11.1), we can see an increasing distance between these two foreign languages between the school year

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<sup>1</sup> For more details dealing with different facets of these attributes related to English see Phillipson (2009: 26–70) who also observes a shift from linguistic imperialism to communicative imperialism (Phillipson 2009: 5). Similarly, Fishman (1998) considers the position of English to be so strong that it has redefined the linguistic order of the current world.

<sup>2</sup> For more details concerning the period 2007 – 2015, see the statistics of Eurostat at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Foreign\\_language\\_skills\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Foreign_language_skills_statistics).



**Figure 11.1:** Primary schools (6–15 year-old pupils).

**Source:** Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic (October 2016).

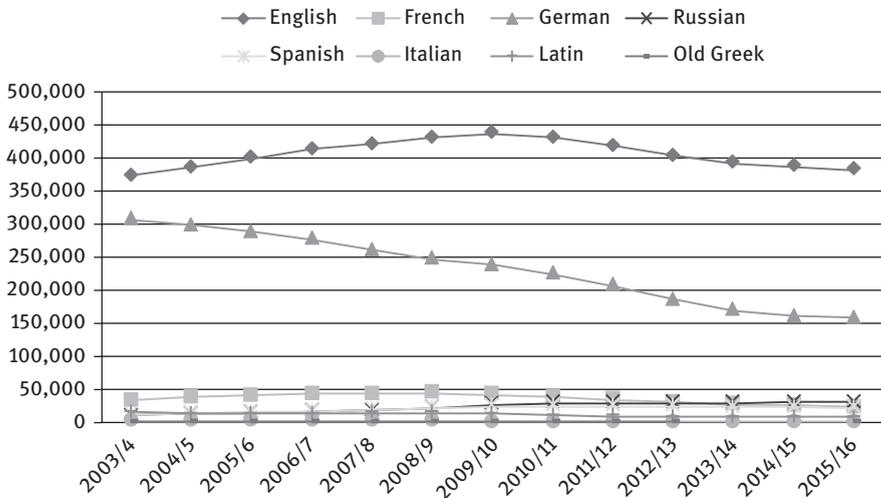
1996/1997, the last year when German ranked higher than English, and the school year 2012/2013, the last year when only one foreign language was mandatory in the primary schools. A second mandatory foreign language was introduced in September 2013.

The total number of those who chose German was constantly dropping from more than 374,000 pupils in 1996 to the lowest point of only 106,000 in 2012 when this tendency shifted. Probably as an effect of the introduction of the second compulsory foreign language, the interest in German started growing and amounted to 163,000 pupils in 2016. The number of pupils learning English increased without interruption from 341,000 to more than 725,000 during the same two decades.

The numbers of those who learn Spanish, French and Italian are two or even three orders lower. Thus, only 6,862 pupils learned French in the school year 2015/2016, which are e.g. 2,000 learners fewer than in the school year 2004/2005. The numbers of those learning Spanish amount to 5,268 in the school year 2015/2016 and 1,036 in the school year 2004/2005. Italian was learned by 172 pupils in 2016 and by 49 in 2005. Interestingly, the situation of Russian is somewhat different. Although the demand for Russian was similarly low more than 10 years ago (3,968 pupils in 2005), it has been rising since 2008 again. In 2016, almost 51,000 pupils learned this language in the primary schools.

In connection with the decline in the total number of all pupils attending secondary schools, the development looks different in this segment of the school

system (see Figure 11.2).<sup>3</sup> The numbers related to German have been decreasing since 2003 with an indication of stabilization after 2013, which corresponds to the situation in the primary schools. However, in contrast to that, the secondary schools were also seeing declining figures of the pupils learning English from 436,000 in 2009 to 381,000 in 2016. This tendency is explainable by the overall demographic development.<sup>4</sup> Similarly to the primary schools, neither Spanish, nor French or Italian is chosen frequently in the secondary schools. This also holds for Russian ranking among rather marginal languages. However in contrast to the primary schools, the distance between English and German on the one hand, and the other languages on the other is lower (only one order). Nevertheless whereas almost 23,000 pupils learned French, 22,000 Spanish and more than 30,000 Russian in the secondary schools in 2016, only 452 pupils learned Italian in that year. Interestingly, this was distinctly less than in the case of Latin (7,760 pupils).



**Figure 11.2:** Secondary schools (15–19 year-old pupils).

**Source:** Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic (October 2016).

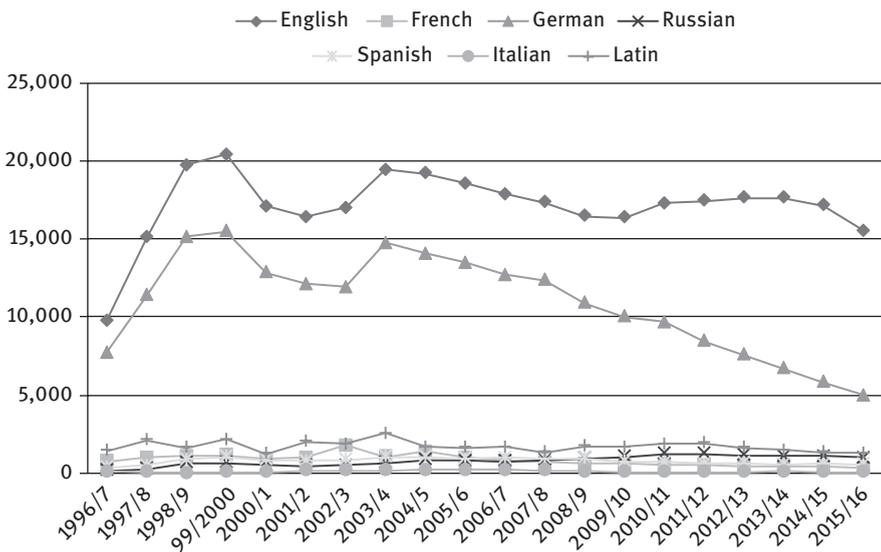
<sup>3</sup> Unlike in the case of the primary schools mapping the whole 20-year period since 1996, the data available for the secondary schools only allow us to outline the development since 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Comparable data showing the changes in Hungary between 1989 and 2010 are summarized by Bruen and Sheridan (2016: 151). The tendencies of the development in Hungary and the Czech Republic are almost identical. A relatively marginal difference can be found in the time since when the demand for English has been higher than in the case of German. In Hungary, this happened approximately three years later than in the Czech Republic – in the school year 1999/2000.

The last figures show the situation in the specialized post-secondary schools (termed *Fachhochschule* in German) which are attended by students who have already passed the school-leaving exam (see Figure 11.3). This type of school was introduced into the education system in 1996. The available data, therefore, reflect the whole period of existence of these schools without gaps. Interestingly, although the numbers of students learning English have been higher than in the case of German from the very beginning, the parallel development copying the total numbers of students can be observed for more than the first 10 years. Since approximately 2009, the difference between the interest in English and German has also increased. While the position of English remains relatively stable with figures oscillating between 15 and 17 thousand, the numbers concerning German continue dropping and reached 5,000 in 2016.

Having outlined this overview of the tendencies from the macro-perspective, it should be stated that (any) conclusions concerning the real interest in the respective foreign language would be rather inaccurate, because these figures do not say much about the decision-making processes.

Although the political and socio-cultural context of the current language-in-education planning in the Czech Republic is very different from that of Czechoslovakia prior to 1990, when Russian was the first compulsory foreign language particularly for political reasons (for more details see Neustupný and



**Figure 11.3:** Specialized post-secondary schools.

**Source:** Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic (October 2016).

Nekvapil 2006), the decision-making processes regarding foreign languages are of course not entirely politically free either. The decisive resource – admittedly less visible if compared to the ideological doctrine from the period before 1990 – which intensely influences these processes in the education system from the macro-level can be found in the Framework Educational Program for Elementary Education. Generally speaking, the authors of this document prefer English to other foreign languages and do not devote specific attention to the languages of neighboring countries.

Nevertheless, strong business ties with these countries are another aspect constituting the sociocultural context of foreign languages. From the economic point of view, Germany and Austria are the strongest neighbors as well as the most important business partners of the Czech Republic.<sup>5</sup>

This aspect goes hand in hand with the fact that in the case of the Czech Republic “the access of the multinationals [= multinational companies] to Central Europe has often been perceived [...] rather as a matter of the sensitive binary international relationship, particularly, a Czech-German one” (Nekvapil and Sherman 2013: 88). At the same time, it is necessary to admit that the role of geographical proximity cannot be assessed unequivocally, because “[g]lobalization, regionalization, and localization are all happening concurrently. They are, however, at different strengths in different parts of the world at any given time” (Fishman 1998: 37).

The spreading of English at the expense of other languages in multinational companies may be perceived as “neutral in power relations” (Nekvapil and Sherman 2013: 106). In these contexts, on the one hand, English – as a *lingua franca* – is believed to be equally foreign for all non-native speakers. On the other hand, English does not have to have similar neutral effects in higher education, where it has been introduced as the language of instruction in many countries since the 1990s. Symptomatically, the reasons for this kind of internationalization are commercial in nature. Ammon (2015: 623–642 and 670–682) argues that in spite of some economic advantages e.g. for Germany, the promotion of programs with English as the language of instruction may lead to further weakening of the status of German or even to a specific diglossia, accompanied by the domain loss (science) and regressing elaboration of German.

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<sup>5</sup> The Czech economy depends to a considerable extent on export to the neighboring countries. According to the Czech Statistical Office, Germany has been the biggest business partner since the 1990s with an almost 30% share in the total volume of the Czech foreign trade (as of 2015) ([www.czso.cz](http://www.czso.cz)). Many Czechs realize this, and some of them are even afraid of this degree of economic dependence (Nekvapil and Sherman 2013: 105).

## 2 Theoretical framework

The decision-making processes regarding foreign languages represent diverse forms of behavior towards language which is realized in various discourses. Discourse is conceived of as a sum of written as well as spoken texts (utterances) related to overarching topics. Texts serve as means through which actors can act and participate in the discourses,<sup>6</sup> and as tools to achieve specific purposes. Discourses are classified according to several criteria in here: actors – both producers and recipients – characterized by their social status, economic and political power; interests pursued by actors; settings (social contexts) in which these actors act; genres of texts, and topics.<sup>7</sup>

As various forms of the behavior towards language are the object of research and this behavior is dynamic in character, the tools for data collection and analysis are derived from language management theory (Nekvapil and Sherman 2015; Nekvapil 2016).<sup>8</sup> Noting specific language-related phenomena, actors produce texts, through which these metalinguistic activities become accessible for, and may be perceived by, other participants. They can, in turn, add further texts. If an actor evaluates the noted phenomena the management process can go on. If this evaluation is a negative one, it can induce the need to design adjustments to solve the identified language problems. The process can come to an end when the actors participating in this discourse are able to implement the adjustment plans.

The processes are characterized by cyclical nature and they may finish at any of the phases (noting, evaluation, adjustment design, implementation). Depending on actors, simple and organized management are distinguished. Individual interlocutors take part in the former kind of language management, while organizations participate in the latter one. The organized management (see Nekvapil 2016: 5) is the default case in this research, because

1. various institutions act in the discourse about foreign languages;
2. these institutions' management acts exceed individual situations and contribute to the establishment of complex networks comprising both individual language users, and organizations;

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**6** Out of numerous approaches to the concept of discourse, I refer to that of Adamzik (2001: 254) and Spitzmüller and Warnke (2011: 22–25) in here. This approach roofs the texts and locates the discourse at the top of the hierarchy of the levels of language system.

**7** All criteria are too complex to be elaborated on in more detail in this paper. Applied to individual actors, Zhao (2011: 910–912) categorizes their roles into four types (with gradually decreasing level of influence): people with *power*, people with *expertise*, people with *influence*, and people with *interest*.

**8** A detailed overview of the language management theory would exceed the proportions of this paper. Therefore, I am going to point out only the most important features to make the application of the theory to the data analysis transparent.

3. the actors communicate about the management acts;
4. the discourse is rich in ideological as well as theoretical interventions;
5. in addition to language used in interactions, the object of management process may also become language as system.

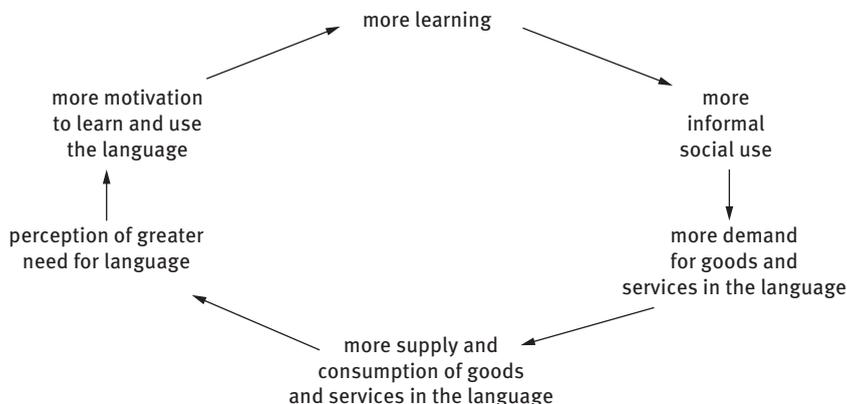
All language management acts take place in specific contexts, which create pre-conditions for the progress of the processes. According to the theory and considering the complexity of the cycles of organized management analyzed in this paper, the socioeconomic (or in a wider sense sociocultural) management represents the foundations indicating the factors which either impede, or drive the successful acquisition of English and German. The efforts aimed at good knowledge of these languages can only turn out well provided these sociocultural circumstances of language acquisition encompassing language-ecological as well as ideological aspects can be managed favorably.

There are two more levels of language management elaborating on this very complex sociocultural management: communicative management and the linguistic management in the narrow sense. Communicative management is located as the middle level between the very complex sociocultural and the linguistic level (for more details see Nekvapil 2016: 7, or Nekvapil and Sherman 2013: 91). It is this third level that concerns language knowledge, i.e. the management of grammatical, spelling, pronunciation, and lexical structures of the language. According to the theory, solutions to language problems should start with the sociocultural management and they should move from the communicative to the linguistic management in the narrow sense. Referring to this recommended order, when the sociocultural management having effects in favor of the respective language either does not take place, or fails, the theory is able to explain why the knowledge of this language is unsatisfactory in the end.

The economic component of the sociocultural management has been studied from several perspectives so far. Strubell (1999) and Darquennes (2007) operate on the interplay of demand and supply factors, which underpins the strong economic basis of the interconnected factors. Ideological or cultural elements of language acquisition which would comprise economically disadvantageous forms of behavior are not built in.<sup>9</sup> The perspective of recipients (process of learning, not teaching a language) is at the forefront (see Figure 11.4).

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<sup>9</sup> This comment refers to situations in which someone learns a specific foreign language for religious or emotional reasons, which may cause economic loss (at least for a certain period of



**Figure 11.4:** Catherine Wheel model (Strubell 1999: 241, see also Darquennes 2007: 70).

The arrows show the favorable direction resulting in the improvement of the language knowledge and they can be related to the situation of English (not only) in the Czech Republic. But the explanatory force of the model works, even if the arrows showed the opposite direction. The quantifiers *more* and *greater* would have to be replaced by the opposite *less* and *smaller* to describe the decreasing interest in, and consequently the lower knowledge of, e.g., German. The critical turning point depicting the change of the one tendency into the other can be found in any component of the model. The demand factor is very complex, though. One of the possibilities influencing, or even deforming the demand for foreign languages (= “more learning” above in the model) are educational programs and school curricula. They determine which language(s) the pupils are supposed to learn when and in which order.

Discussing the supply-demand-interplay and the economic value of languages and goods, Coulmas (1992: 81–83) refers to the necessity to distinguish the utility value (“Gebrauchswert” in German) from the exchange value (“Tauschwert”).<sup>10</sup> The utility value of languages is easily observable, because it turns out in using the respective language in communication with other people. To give the

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time). This language acquisition goes on although it does not pay off. It is disadvantageous in purely economic terms of cost-benefit-analysis (Grin 2003: 87–88).

**10** Coulmas (1992: 82) exemplifies the difference between these kinds of value in the following way: Diamond rings have a low utility value, but a high exchange value. The opposite usually holds for food (high utility value, but low exchange value). However, goods/services as such do not correspond to languages in many regards. Grin (2003: 34–37) identifies several important features which rule out any simplified comparison of goods/commodities/services and languages.

reader an idea of the essence of this value, he refers to the concept of communication radius of a language – the more people use a language, the higher utility value this language appears to have (Coulmas 1992: 84). However, Coulmas (1992: 87–90) adds at the same time that although this quantitative feature cannot be ignored, it cannot be overestimated either, because the mere fact that one can just make him/herself understood with someone else is not decisive: What also matters are the functions and contents of communication. When it comes to what a person needs or wants to get to know or communicate in a specific context, the utility value of a specific language may vary.<sup>11</sup>

A related approach which reflects the exchange value of languages is termed commodification of language (Heller 2010). In this process, services and skills are turned into objects for commercial use. Commodification of language draws upon the observation that language skills may also be interpreted as a means of production (typically in such language-centered economic activities as language teaching, translation, tourism, marketing and advertising, performance art, or call centers) and that such skills are exchangeable for money.<sup>12</sup>

All these economic ways of thinking have to do especially with the evaluative phase of the management process which, eventually, results in a decision about the choice of the preferred languages. Although this economic reasoning does not explain all decisions about foreign language choices (see footnote 9 above), it helps elucidate at least the part of the argumentation related to opportunity costs in which the economic evaluation of competing languages becomes apparent.<sup>13</sup>

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Unlike goods and services, language use is characterized by non-rival consumption and impossibility of exclusion.

**11** This argument is demonstrable in situations in which transfer of knowledge matters: Some pieces of information related to Czech literature or history may not be published in English, which is why the utility value of Czech is in this context higher than that of English. Individual private and emotional needs to know a specific language would be yet another circumstance which co-determines this value. See also the culture-based debate about the value of Russian in Bruen and Sheridan (2016: 156), or Coulmas' (1992: 90) reference to the fact that there was no Bengali journal for biochemistry, which made knowledge in this field through Bengali unavailable etc.

**12** The central economic role of commodified languages as a means of production can be seen both in “the means through which work is accomplished (the work process) and as a product of labor (the work product)” (Heller 2010: 104).

**13** The opportunity costs are, in addition to the cost-benefit-analysis, another tool of economics which can be transferred into the economic evaluation of learning languages. Opportunity costs represent loss/benefit an individual could have suffered/received, if s/he had taken an alternative action (e.g. learning English instead of German).

### 3 Data collection and methods

The data collected for this research come from two kinds of sources: media discourse and semi-structured interviews. The Czech media discourse is represented by 40 print and online texts published between the winter of 2009/2010 and the spring 2017. The media discourse consists predominantly of newspaper articles, press information issued by state authorities, and reports. The main criterion for the selection of these texts was their topic, that is, the situation of foreign language teaching and learning with a particular focus on the economic value and popularity of English and German (see the appendix). The print articles were collected during regular reading the newspapers; the online articles were looked up through google.cz by means of the key words “English in Czechia” and “German in Czechia” formulated in Czech. Both regional and supraregional/national media were taken into account. Internet discussions about the dis/advantages of German and English are exemplified in one case. Actors participating in this discourse are usually journalists working for the respective media.

The semi-structured interviews were recorded with the following actors: principals and heads of the curriculum departments of public schools, parents and pupils. 2 towns in eastern Bohemia, 2 towns close to the border with Germany and 2 towns in Silesia were selected. Several schools in each location were visited. These interviews were conducted between March 2011 and May 2012.<sup>14</sup>

In Silesia, 9–12-year old pupils were recorded in groups comprising three or four persons. Parents were interviewed in eastern Bohemia. These interviews took place during and immediately after meetings organized by schools for parents to discuss various topics, one of these being the choice of foreign languages. In total, 84 interviews were recorded during this first period.

The actors from the business sector are represented by one owner of an educational agency in another larger town in eastern Bohemia, one teacher from this town who also worked as an interpreter/translator, and one director of a private language school in Prague (run and owned by a limited liability company). Interviews with the actors from the educational agency in eastern Bohemia were recorded in March 2014. The director of the language school in Prague was interviewed in December 2015.

The global strategy of the semi-structured interviews builds on theory-driven questions which can be derived from the language management process. The phases of the process are described by verbs (note, evaluate, design

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<sup>14</sup> The interviews in the towns close to the border with Germany as well as a half of the interviews in eastern Bohemia and Silesia were recorded by Oliver Engelhardt.

adjustments, implement) which – along with other synonyms – were used as predicates in interrogative sentences. Power hierarchies and economic aspects were targeted.

The principals were asked to talk freely about the current situation of foreign languages of the respective school first. The goal of the narrative part was to let the interviewees identify the main problems in this field (noting and evaluation) and describe the solutions (adjustment designs). Then, questions about internal school practices in which foreign languages are offered and chosen were focused. One part of the interview was devoted to the relations between the respective school and its superior authorities. These interviews took 25 – 35 minutes.

As mentioned above, the decision-making processes carried out by parents and pupils were reconstructed not in the face-to-face interviews, but in the group interviews. This part of the data was collected in connection with meetings of teachers with parents. These conversations, whose focus was defined by the central question *which first/second foreign language are you going to choose for your children and why*, did not take more than 15 minutes.

The group interviews with pupils were organized by the respective school. The groups comprised three or four children who were supposed to answer two main questions – *which languages do you (want to) learn (and why)* and *how (by whom) was this decision influenced*. The conversation with each group took no more than 20 minutes.

The interviews reflect the processes going on at the micro-level. These actors' influence turned out as relatively limited, admittedly. They can be classified as “people with interest”:

These people are ordinary citizens at grass-roots level, who passively or unconsciously get involved in making a decision on language use for themselves, often accidentally, partially because of their occupations. [...] Their below-the-radar participation seems to be extremely intermittent and ad hoc, and is limited to rare occasions, but their individual attitudes toward language use taken as a collective can affect societal language behavior in a significant way. (Zhao 2011: 910)

However, in correspondence with language management theory, the behavior of the actors who represent the micro-level is not explored in isolation. The macro-level is also added. Besides the media discourse summarized in Section 4, the macro-level is represented by organized management as it is conducted through the documents of the Ministry of Education. A specific German-related case of the analysis at the macro-level is provided by the Goethe-Institute in a coalition with the embassies of Germany and Austria.

## 4 Media discourse

In the analyzed texts, no preferences in favor of a specific foreign language are presented overtly. Thus, readers of these texts may get an impression of impartial and unbiased statements, the purpose of which is to describe the “real” situation of foreign languages, preferences, advantages and disadvantages concerning specific languages as well as various problems related to language teaching.

In the texts, the following common features occur repeatedly:

1. Popularity of individual foreign languages is usually derived from statistical overviews. Learning foreign languages is almost exclusively connected with economic reasons and job activities. The business and job market are the main contextual background of the articles. Arguments for learning foreign languages which would emphasize cultural points of view and reflect broader socio-cultural phenomena such as mutual close relations or the fact that the countries border on one another are rather rare. The knowledge of English is generally believed to be indispensable, or just obvious. In connection with English, no differentiation in terms of segments of business, the labor market and individual jobs is carried out.
2. In contrast to the first point, explicit statements like *English is NOT enough* or *English is standard and only people with knowledge of an additional language (for example German) are sought after* also appear. Taking this aspect into account, English is no longer viewed as a “usual” or “normal” foreign language comparable to others. Two strategies can be identified in this respect:
  - (A) An article deals with the topic of foreign languages in a general sense, and probably for stylistic reasons, English is used synonymously with “foreign language”.
  - (B) A statement about English not being viewed as a foreign language is published explicitly. This position corresponds to a thesis which Phillipson (2009: 82–100) relates to all of Europe. From this point of view, the knowledge of English does not entail any added value.
3. The growing reflection of the utility of German above all in the job market can be observed (doctors, nurses, highly qualified technical and craftsman’s professions). Thus, economically oriented reasons appear even more salient than in the case of English. This has to do with the higher added value of any foreign language other than English (see the previous paragraphs). The high value of the knowledge of German does not hold for regional contexts of the borderlands only. German has been more in

demand since 2014, over one hundred thousand jobs are reported to be offered to people with the knowledge of German, which helps to achieve higher income (e.g. by 15%).

4. Negative evaluation referring to the low level of the knowledge of foreign languages is another stable and visible line within the media discourse. This holds even more specifically for German. It is German companies investing in the Czech Republic which repeatedly complain about the lack of people with at least some knowledge of German. Interestingly enough, the German employers are willing to prefer applicants with German skills to the professionally qualified applicants without German. These employers are able to provide additional training for such applicants. In these cases, German appears even more important than English. Typically, it is the German-Czech Chamber of Industry and Commerce that points out the disproportion of potentially existing, but unused opportunities for employees as well as business activities in the Czech Republic.
5. In connection with the fourth point related to German, the Czech media also refer to the good practices and job chances of Czechs who would like to work in Germany (or who have already done so) and need some German skills. Articles and reports of this kind were published in connection with long-standing problems and low salaries of nurses and doctors. Interestingly, one such media wave appeared before May 2011 when the restrictions on the free movement of workers in the internal market of the EU were not allowed to be prolonged any more.<sup>15</sup> The fact that the labor market in the German-speaking countries became accessible to Czech citizens might have intensified the foreign language-related public debates.

Surprisingly, it is rather rare that systematic attention is devoted to educational programs in the media discourse. This part of the organized management carried out from the macro-level is explored in the next section.

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<sup>15</sup> Unlike the English-speaking Great Britain and Ireland, Germany and Austria insisted on the restricted mobility of workers coming (not only) from the Czech Republic (Czech citizens), Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and several other new EU member states as long as possible. It was as late as May 1, 2011, i. e. 7 years after the Czech Republic joined the EU, when this transitional period ended. For the position of German, paradoxically enough, this policy is likely to have further weakened the interest in German in the Czech Republic at that time. These effects contrast with Germany's and Austria's parallel efforts to support German.

## 5 Public and private sector. Selected actors and their decision-making processes about foreign languages

### 5.1 Ministry of Education and Framework Educational Program for Elementary Education

Language-in-education planning and its implementation do not take place independently of the socio-economic conditions and power hierarchies. Since foreign language teaching co-determines the economy in the public sphere as well as in private business it is needed to analyze the macro-frameworks in which foreign language teaching takes place. The most powerful institution that influences the decision-making processes concerning foreign languages in terms of top-down organized management is the Ministry of Education. The tool by means of which this kind of language management is carried out is the Framework Educational Program for Elementary Education (hereinafter referred to as FEPEE).

As it is issued by the National Institute of Education governed by the Ministry, this document is a part of the hierarchically ordered regulations of language policy. On the one hand, the FEPEE has to comply with the National Educational Program and the School Act (No. 561/2004 Co. as subsequently amended) at the macro-level of the education policy of the country. On the other hand, the FEPEE serves as a basis for school educational programs which represent the projection of the education policy into the activities of individual schools.<sup>16</sup> This hierarchy may lead to centralistic enforcement of FEPEE regardless of what the regions – for instance, those bordering on Germany and Austria – may need or prefer.<sup>17</sup>

The passages directly concerning the relation between English and German can be summed up in the following points:

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**16** For specific details on the legal status of FEPEE and its role within the Czech educational system, see the provisions of paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of the School Act and Gester (2011: 11–14). The most recent version of this program can be downloaded from <http://www.nuv.cz/file/433>. (Only a version in Czech is available as of 12 February 2017).

**17** The regional needs can be seen in the higher demand for German in connection with business and various kinds of occupation (waiters, shop assistants or nurses) in which people commute across the border on a daily basis to earn more due to the knowledge of German (Dovalil and Engelhardt 2012).

1. The first foreign language is termed by the unmarked expression *foreign language* in FEPEE. Although English is not defined as the first mandatory foreign language overtly at any point in the document, the authors of FEPEE prefer English in another indirect way (see point 4 below). This restricts the choice of the first foreign language within the Czech school system.
2. The Barcelona principle *mother tongue plus two* is supposed to be implemented by the introduction of the second compulsory foreign language. FEPEE calls the second foreign language *additional foreign language*. The choice of this additional foreign language is exemplified by the following (in the order listed in FEPEE): German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Slovak, Polish or yet another foreign language. Provided English is not chosen as the first foreign language, it must be chosen at least as this additional foreign language.
3. The other recommendation of the European language policy, according to which the languages of the neighboring countries should receive attention, is not elaborated in any more detail.
4. In spite of the changes carried out in connection with the introduction of the second compulsory foreign language in 2013, the essential restrictions concerning the first foreign language remained. The only change of the formulation from the previous version consists in the replacement of the modal verb “must” with the form “should be”. Thus, since September 1, 2013:

[...] **English should be offered primarily**; when the pupil (his/her legal representative) chooses a foreign language other than English, **the school has to demonstrably familiarize the legal representatives of the pupil with the fact that the education system does not necessarily provide continuity of the chosen language** when the pupil changes to another primary or secondary school. (Source: Framework Educational Program for Elementary Education 2013, paragraph 7.2, page 120, translation and bold characters mine)

More specific details concerning the additional foreign languages go on as follows:

From the school year 2013/2014 on, another foreign language is defined as a part of the educational area *Language and language communication*. Given its possibilities, the school integrates this additional foreign language into the curriculum from the 8th grade on at the latest. The minimal extent amounts to 2 lessons a week. Due to the increasing importance of foreign languages, the school must use these lessons only for this additional foreign language, or – in justified cases – for the consolidation of the first foreign language [...]. (Source: Framework Educational Program for Elementary Education 2013, paragraph 7.2, page 120, translation mine)

The predominant standing of English appears in the wording of the subsequent paragraph according to which “the school must offer the English language to those pupils who did not choose English as their foreign language” (i.e. their first foreign language).

The supporters of English argue in favor of the restricted choice of the (first) foreign language from the macro-perspective. They refer to the limited resources of the Czech Republic that should be able to guarantee a good level of foreign language teaching. As Daniel Münich, member of the former National Economic Council of the Czech government, put it in a radio interview on July 29, 2011, the Czech Republic cannot afford to provide all pupils with good level of teaching several foreign languages at the same time. That is why, he argued, one language must be preferred. His behavior toward English corresponds to the ideology according to which English is enough, because one can manage with English both in Germany and in Austria.<sup>18</sup>

However, the general preference of English as cited above in the crucial paragraph 7.2 of FEPEE may discourage pupils or their legal representatives from choosing e.g. German as their first foreign language. This fact clashes with some provisions following from the international treaties which the Czech Republic undertook to fulfil.<sup>19</sup> The wording of paragraph 7.2 of FEPEE places foreign

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**18** The National Economic Council was constituted in 2009 to make suggestions which would help to stabilize the Czech economy during the economic recession at the time and to recover from its negative effects. Experts in several fields (the business and financial sector as well as academia) became members of this body (<https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/ekonomicka-rada/narodni-ekonomicka-rada-vlady-51371/>). D. Münich suggested recommendations for the education system. Interestingly enough, he did not argue against this kind of competition (opportunity costs) between other school subjects, e.g. between chemistry and history, geography and physics. In his opinion, the lack of resources had to do with foreign languages. Similarly to many other people arguing in favor of English without critical reflection, he took the higher numbers of English learners and the lower numbers of German learners in schools to be the reason why English should maintain its dominant position. He did not admit that these numbers could also be a result of the preference as it was formulated in FEPEE (personal communication in late August 2011). In this case, the effect may be conflated with the cause.

**19** Members of the German-speaking minority are concerned who would like to learn German at least as their first foreign language. According to Article 7, paragraph 2 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages “[t]he Parties undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it.” Similar provisions are set in Article 14, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and in Article 25, paragraph 2 of the bilateral Czech-German Treaty on Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation. According to this Czech-German Treaty, “the Parties shall make every effort to spread the teaching of the language

languages other than English at a disadvantage in an indirect, but quite effective way. Pupils (their legal representatives) who would prefer a language other than English as their first foreign language are discouraged from doing so, because learning this other language is (probably) in vain when the desirable teaching continuity is not ensured. The discrepancy between the goals set in the FEPEE and the commitments defined by the international law appears striking.

The ministry's behavior toward foreign languages demonstrates significant differences in favor of English. The relevant supporters of German acting at the macro-level can be found primarily in the Goethe-Institute and in the embassies of Germany and Austria. Their behavior is explored in the following section.

## 5.2 Goethe-Institute and Embassies of the German-speaking neighbors. The ŠPRECHTÍME campaign

Unlike in the case of English, where sociocultural management works in favor of the language and generates social networks of actors in which it pays off or even appears indispensable to learn and to improve English, a specific set of adjustments turned out to be necessary to help German in this regard. A public campaign, the name of which corresponds to a Germanism in the Czech language meaning “we speak German” – *šprechtíme* represents such a measure of the socio-cultural management aimed at improving the prestige of German.<sup>20</sup> This goal can be identified using the Catherine wheel model (see Section 2 above) as efforts to increase the public *perception of greater need for German*, which should bring about the subsequent positive effects in motivation and learning. The campaign was begun in September 2011 by the Goethe-Institute, one of the prominent

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of the other country in schools as well as in other educational institutions” (translation from Czech mine).

**20** The Goethe-Institute had a representative questionnaire research carried out in May 2010 in which competence of the Czech population in German – compared to English, Russian, French and Spanish – was explored. Experts from Institute for Social and Economic Analyses (ISEA) addressed 1061 respondents in the whole country who were older than 15 years. The most important findings related to German are summarized as follows: 55% of the respondents declared German “quite important”, 31% even “indispensable”. 77% agreed to the statement that “German is useful for getting a job”. Although 50% of the respondents did not consider German important for life in general, they agreed to the proposition that German was important for getting a job. 54% out of those who declared good knowledge of German claimed that they also spoke English well. The most frequent incentives for learning German were “my parents wanted it”, “school”, “teachers or schoolmates”, “necessity for my job/career”, “my relationship to the country and culture”, and “school exchange or studies abroad” (Matějů 2010).

actors promoting and spreading German language and culture internationally,<sup>21</sup> and by the Austrian and German Embassies in Prague. Its main goal is to provide people interested in German with as much information as possible about the opportunities to learn it, about educational offers, language competitions and exchange programs designed for schools, public events organized by regional partners of this project and many other aspects related to German.<sup>22</sup> Apart from these rather general objectives, and based on the recommendations issued by the German-Czech Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the creators of this campaign decided to engage the attention of students of business and of technical universities more specifically.

Similarly to marketing strategies addressing the general public, the most visible and complete form of this campaign is its online version. Unlike in the fall and winter 2011/2012 when people could come across posters on public transportation and in the newspapers, this kind of publicity has ultimately disappeared. From the methodological point of view, the impact of this campaign on the target audience's behavior toward German is hard to estimate, because the main supporters did not have the effects evaluated globally (for more details illustrative of the difficulties in evaluating the success rate see Filipová 2016: 111–112). Although the actors (the Goethe-Institute and both embassies) realize that their adjustment designs need to be implemented on the micro-level, it is not ruled out that the implementation is failing.

Although this campaign devotes attention to the business sphere in which German has especially promising potential, there are other actors whose activities represent prototypical language-centered business. As a part of the growing “language-teaching industry”, these cases correspond to one form of the commodification of language (Heller 2010: 108–109). They are explored in the next section.

### 5.3 Business in education: A private agency in eastern Bohemia (Pardubice)

After the political changes in 1989, private business entered all economic activities including the educational sphere. Teaching foreign languages became a free trade, which enabled to run both private language schools, and to offer private

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**21** The strategies of activities carried out by the Goethe-Institute in various European countries support the values of European integration and European multilingualism, which is considered unthinkable without German. However, other regions of the world are not ignored. The main addressees of the programs promoting German are educated social classes. It is assumed that these activities are not carried out at the expense of, or even against English (Ruckteschell 2007).

**22** For more details see [www.sprechtime.cz](http://www.sprechtime.cz) and [www.goethe.de/ins/cz/prj/jug/spr.deindex.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ins/cz/prj/jug/spr.deindex.htm).

face-to-face lessons by natural persons. The educational agency in Pardubice, a regional center of around 90,000 inhabitants, was founded in 1994. It offers 3 kinds of courses which most often take place at weekends: intensive courses of English, German, French, Russian and Spanish, special courses for companies, and individual courses. The prices amount to 100–120 CZK per hour and person (approximately 4 euros according to the exchange rate as of mid-March 2017), and they depend on the kind of course, not on the language. The English courses have been more lucrative than the German ones from the very beginning. The most important clients of this agency are 20–25 companies from the region. The owner of the agency cooperates with a stable network of 20–30 language teachers working as freelancers with individual business licenses. Due to the additional salary costs (health insurance, social security), the owner has no employees with regular labor contracts. As an effect of the personal stability of the network, no new jobs were advertised in 2014.

In the 2013/2014 school year, for the first time in the history of the agency, no intensive German courses were opened. Due to the dropping demand for German beginning in the late 1990s, German courses have had to be subsidized by English courses since the 2008/2009 school year.

This agency advertises its services predominantly on the internet. In the period between 1994 and 2004/5, it sent out catalogues to its clients (companies). This practice has been limited since 2005. For economic reasons, the agency informs its customers about subsidies offered by the European Social Fund to promote foreign language education in the Czech Republic. Successful applications submitted by the customers who profit from this fund mean a substantial financial contribution to the economic stability of the agency.

## 5.4 Business in education: Private language school in Prague

The other business subject, a language school with headquarters in Prague, was founded in 1998. It has 8 branches in the Czech Republic. Apart from several variants of foreign language courses (group courses, individual conversation courses, courses for companies and several more kinds), this school offers translation and interpretation services as well as some other language-related commodities: Its business activities include the sale of textbooks and other teaching materials. Although the school was offering courses in 53 languages in December 2015, the core offer concentrates on English, German, Russian, Italian, French, Spanish and Czech for foreigners. One year-long (September through June) general course costs between 20,900 CZK and 34,900 CZK (i.e. between 775 and 1,300 euros). The director presents the school as very open and willing to accommodate its customer's language-related wishes. Thus, the driving force of the school is the demand:

I1: Whoever comes up with- eh eh we just try to arrange for a lecturer to carry out the teaching. [...] I admit, it's complicated. Not long ago eh I had to arrange for Hebrew with specialization on accountancy, that was tough. The customer realized that eh eh and replaced it by English in the end.

Just like in the case of the agency operating in Pardubice, the management of this school also cooperates with a stable network of teachers who work as freelancers. Their total number amounts to 200. Around 70 persons teach English, fewer than 20 teach German. But 40 German lecturers would be needed. Regular labor contracts are too expensive, because the employers have to pay additional costs on behalf of their employees (health insurance and social security) in such cases. From the employers' point of view, it pays off to hire a freelancer instead of an employee in order to avoid these additional costs. As for the salaries, native speakers in particular have higher expectations, and the management of the school has to negotiate levels which are acceptable for all parties.

To find out why participants attend the courses, the school has distributed questionnaires several times in the past. Mostly, the course was a gift, or the participants needed the course for their work or in order to make themselves understood on vacation abroad. Language courses as a benefit offered by employers were yet another variant. These facts indicate that the participants do not invest their own income to learn the respective language. Traditional private payers are in the minority. This holds particularly for younger students who have already passed their school-leaving exam and who are supported by their parents.

Thus, the sociocultural circumstances managing the demand for foreign languages are of manifold nature. The economic basis cannot be derived from the fundamental interest of a person in a foreign language. In order to preserve the student status, which exempts them from the duty to pay social security and health insurance, young people start attending full-time language courses. In other cases, as long as employers can raise funds for their employees, these employees are willing to attend the courses. The demand for the language courses is based on indirect circumstances in numerous cases.

I1: As soon as the companies stop paying benefits the people stop attending the classes, because they aren't interested in the courses anymore or they don't have their own financial means. [...] On the other hand, the companies also need to exhaust this kind of budget and sometimes, they decide to prolong a course for this very reason.

As far as German is concerned, the director of this school noted a rapid increase in the demand for it. However, English has always been crucial. Unlike in the case

of the agency in Pardubice, this language school does not subsidize unprofitable courses with more lucrative ones. However, the prices of courses do not depend on the language either. Just like in Pardubice, it is the type of the course that determines the price.

## 5.5 Private teacher and interpreter/translator

The perspective of a private language teacher working for the agency in Pardubice can be provided through an interview with a teacher who was born in 1947. His language-centered business activities fit in the concept of commodified languages understood as a means of production (Heller 2010: 104). The foreign language biography of this person is extraordinarily valuable, because it provides evidence of the changes caused by the dropping demand for German and increasing demand for English during the 1990s and after 2000 (see the factor *more demand for goods/services in the language* in the chain of factors interconnected in the Catherine wheel model above). These changes are reflected in the behavior of an individual person who felt forced to adjust his foreign language knowledge to a considerable extent. As he put it, German had been enough before 2000, although he observed that English began to dominate the foreign language market at that time. However, in order to maintain his income, he had to brush up his English knowledge in the late 1990s.<sup>23</sup>

I2: Before two thousand eh one could live well on German. I had enough work, this wasn't a problem at all. But but it changed after that, definitely eeh if you didn't want to lose a part of your income, English became necessary. I had to brush it up.

His professional experiences before and during the 1990s included activities as interpreter/translator for a large company with national importance concentrating on engineering and heavy manufacturing in another town in eastern Bohemia not far from Pardubice. He had a regular labor contract there. He commented on several situations in which he had used German as a lingua franca. German-only in com-

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<sup>23</sup> A somewhat different kind of the adjustment design and implementation from the 1990s is exemplified by Nekvapil and Nekula (2006: 318). A man started learning English after the age of 40. Later, he became a manager of a German multinational company in the Czech Republic. After he got this position he had to start learning German, because the German director of the company preferred German to English. This changed after a Czech person became the new director. English began to be used more frequently.

munication with business partners from the German-speaking countries was the default case (including the situations of the first contact). English as a lingua franca was not an alternative option, as nobody came up with such an idea back then:

I2: I don't recall any attempt ever on the part of our German native speaking partners to propose English.

Apart from that, he was also working as a freelancer for the educational agency in Pardubice between 1994 and 2007. He taught intensive courses. His contracts with the agency were always made for one year only. There were no price differences between the English and German courses. He experienced extraordinarily high demand for German during the first 5 years:

VD: And how eh how would you describe the demand at that time? did you experience anything noteworthy?

I2: Oh yes, CROWDS of people applied for the courses. You had to know somebody to get in! But this changed around two thousand when people started travelling more to Greece, Turkey and Egypt. Fewer lecturers taught German [...] courses got shorter and shorter.

VD: And how would you estimate the proportion between German and English?

I2: Eh the less German, the more English. [...] People might have realized that they could not learn both languages equally well.

This essential transformation of the behavior corresponds to the strategy based on the opportunity costs. He observed that both languages found themselves in a competitive relationship and decisions in favor of one language only seemed inevitable. However, he himself was able to cover the costs for both. As a retired person, he can still make some extra money with translations of specialized texts from German. Interestingly, he noted a renewed higher demand for German after 2012.

## 5.6 Public schools

### 5.6.1 Parents and pupils

The features of the opportunity-costs-argumentation discussed above are also recognizable in the sphere of public education. Though this sphere is less affected by the supply-demand-interplay than private business, it does not lie outside of

the economically co-determined reality either. Parents declared in the interviews that they considered the possibility of choosing a language to be a value. At the same time, working of language ideologies often appeared. Owing to the generally perceived difficulties in learning foreign languages, they argued that English is enough:

I3: It's good to have a possibility of choosing foreign languages eh we appreciate that. But [...] I think that ONE language should be enough [...] English is the most important language anyway as you certainly know- [...] you cannot manage everything, priorities are necessary.

If the parents were asked about the languages in a comparative perspective, German was understood as difficult and hard, whereas Russian and English were considered to be easy. Moreover, the image of English was associated with modernity. References to the higher communication radius of English in comparison with German also appeared (i.e. the utility value in terms of Coulmas 1992).

Surprisingly, the level of acquired knowledge did not play an important role. What was seen as necessary was the children's ability to make themselves understood, even if the future of the children and their job expectations were often mentioned as an argument. Only in this context, the geographic closeness to the German-speaking neighbors was pointed out when German was viewed as advantageous:

I4: [...] I learned German and it did pay off, indeed. I have been running my business here in [a town in eastern Bohemia] since the early nineties and I have customers from Germany eh I am satisfied they come regularly. One can negotiate without interpreters, which saves quite a lot of money by the way. And I hope my son will take the business over from me one day, so so German will be necessary for him.

In several cases, the parents declared that they had discussed the foreign language choices with their children thoroughly. Small local business owners who were successful due to German were mentioned as good examples of everyday experience bringing the foreign language closer to practical life.

Although the other sociocultural aspects influencing the decision-making processes are not as directly business-related as the examples above, they are not less relevant. They have to do with the parents' assumed capacities to help their

children learn the respective foreign language.<sup>24</sup> Qualification and personality of teachers as well as school partnerships abroad were another frequent argument. The parents referred both to good and bad practices of German and English teachers which influenced their decision-making processes. However, if a “bad teacher” was presumed to teach the second foreign language, which was German or Russian in most cases, the tendency to prefer information technologies, physical education or other subjects to this second foreign language appeared very clear.

Pupils’ decisions concerning their foreign language choices arise mainly in the discussions with their parents. Language ideologies surrounding foreign languages appeared regularly – German was considered hard and ugly, while French was taken for beautiful (see also Nekvapil and Sherman 2013: 104). The pupils ascribed these aesthetic qualities independently of whether they learned the respective language by themselves. Only some older pupils reflected the (potential) usefulness of the language they had decided to learn. The usual economic and job-related reasons were mentioned in most cases.

### 5.6.2 School administration

The utterances given by the school administration were characterized by aspects which distracted the main topic of the language-centered decision-making processes. Broader context concerning the respective school as a whole was taken into account. Hence, the recommendation *mother tongue plus two* remained practically unreflected. The principals did not mention this feature of the European language policy, which could have co-determined their decisions, in any single case. They declared that they did not have enough time to be interested in these idealistic principles after they had been asked about. Instead, they often referred to various organizational barriers in schools:

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**24** Just to select several examples, the children were supposed to choose the same language which their parents had learned before, or for which affordable beginner courses could be organized. In other cases, the parents proclaimed that the groups of schoolmates to which their children belonged had to be taken into account and maintained. If possible, the children should stay in the same class and learn the same foreign language as their friends. In connection with classes of the respective language, some parents also complained about bad placement of foreign languages in schedules. In quite a lot of cases, this holds especially for German as a second foreign language. It suffers from lack of interest when these classes are taught rather late in the afternoon (for more details see Dovalil and Engelhardt 2012: 11–15).

I5: We have difficulties in drawing up education plans, or in ensuring teaching continuity. A principal has hard life ((sigh)) eh we need to deal with pressing issues other than foreign language teaching. You have to have a school kitchen repaired, a dining hall or a gymnasium.

The process of finding out foreign language preferences is carried out by means of questionnaires. Only rarely was the school administration interested in the parents' opinion and arranged for meetings to discuss more details. And it was even rarer for the parents to address the school administration directly in connection with foreign languages.

When the principals were asked specifically about paragraph 7.2 of FEPEE and the degree to which they were guided by it the answers were all but uniform. Many principals implemented this passage as it was laid down, but several evaluated it very negatively. Emotional attitudes were also articulated:

I6: It's discrimination, it's discrimination. You know my heart beats for German, it has its tradition and I always say that it's very useful for Czechs. If I could I would cross it out.

Surprisingly, not all principals were conscious of this passage in FEPEE. As one principal put it, regardless of what exactly is stated in this document and how, English is learned by most people worldwide, and hence it is the most important language anyway. Arguing in this way without further differentiation, he complied with the utility value of a language derived from its communication radius, which Coulmas (1992: 84) views as simplified.

Although the cases of parents who would have liked their child to learn German or Russian as the first foreign language were not frequent, they did occur. Referring to the FEPEE, the principals often demonstrated that they turned some recommendations into normative instructions in their decision-making practice. Especially in connection with their numerous duties, they explained this practice by acting in compliance with the superior authority, which makes their life easier. Doing so, they have a possibility of referring to a regulation, if problems should arise.

A serious long-term problem which was regularly noted by many principals and evaluated negatively was the qualification of teachers and the related costs:

I7: Eh eh everything costs something you know one cannot ignore the facts. And teachers also cost something eh don't forget that either. And provided you may choose eh you may choose a cheaper option so why wouldn't you do that? To put it purely economically it happens

that an unqualified English teacher is simply cheaper than a qualified German teacher in the end [...] just like in normal business.<sup>25</sup>

Based on the data quoted in the last example, a hypothesis could be formulated according to which the socio-economic management of the Czech school system leads to preference of English at the expense of other foreign languages. This may, in turn, appear to be an unexpected connection with the general orientation of FEPEE.

## 6 Conclusion

The situation of English and German in Czechia, as it is analyzed in this paper through the lens of language management theory and by means of related socio-economic tools, can be summarized in the following way: The actors operating on the micro-level have to deal with different problems than those on the macro-level. Many people do not experience a language problem which would relate specifically to German. What the majority of the actors note and evaluate negatively is the low level of competence in foreign languages as such. Learning English and improving English skills are seen as the most appropriate adjustment design to solve this problem. Although it is not possible to say how successful the implementation has been, because adequate data have not been collected, the negative evaluation related to the low level of foreign language knowledge as summarized in the media discourse gives reasons for the hypothesis that the implementation is failing. The fact that new articles concerning foreign language skills (regardless of which language is discussed) are published represents new cycles of language management processes. Hence, the adjustments designed by the institutions at the macro-level do not reach the interlocutors at the micro-level in many cases.

The *Šprechtíme* campaign is derived from the expectation of actors supporting German that the Czech population should speak German better, or that this population could be aware of the advantage consisting in good German skills both in business and in private life. It can be interpreted as effort to make the Czech population note a problem, or as an opportunity (adjustment design) to solve a

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**25** It needs to be added that a solution to the problem of unqualified language teachers is being slowly implemented, because the Ministry of Education decided to raise the salaries of the teachers in regional schools. Apart from these efforts, the legal possibilities of employing unqualified teachers were limited. In spite of this positive development, the problem remains in existence. According to the data of the ministry, the ratio of unqualified German teachers both in primary (15%) and secondary schools (10%) was lower than in the case of English (20% and 14% respectively in the school year 2013/2014).

German-related language problem if some people evaluate the level of their own German skills negatively. However, *Šprechtime* is an adjustment designed by the actors at the macro-level. Although it seems to meet some interlocutors' needs at the micro-level (business people, engineers and other technical professions as the main addressees of the campaign), no detailed data describing the implementation at the micro-level are available. To reach the micro-level in favor of German, more cases of best practices showing the successful careers of individuals with good knowledge of German would appear appropriate.

Another adjustment designed to improve the knowledge of foreign languages was the introduction of the second foreign language as a compulsory school subject in 2013. Although the Ministry of Education had shared the negative evaluation of foreign language knowledge with many other actors long before, the adjustment was approved as a part of FEPEE as late as 2013. Its implementation can hardly be assessed yet; the fact that increasing numbers of pupils are learning German as an additional foreign language says little about their actual language skills. Moreover, the Ministry of Education tends to present as results (implementation) only some approved adjustment strategies (in other words, it offers evidence of *output* as opposed to *outcome*).

The specific problem of continuation of the second foreign language teaching has not been noted by the ministry. Or, if other actors make the ministry note this question, the ministry does not share the negative evaluation of the fact that only the teaching of English should be continually ensured. This problem is not noted by many other actors in schools (principals, parents) either. This explains why the management process related to the free selection of foreign languages does not go on to reach further phases. Contrary to such expectations, the language-in-education planning in the Czech Republic discourages those who would like to improve or to start learning German as their first foreign language and continue learning this language at higher stages of the school system. This may eventually have a negative impact on the competitive abilities of a part of the population of the Czech Republic.

The hypothesis that a substantial part of the Czech population does not expect high knowledge of German, which would require devoting more attention to this language, explains the simple fact why the German-oriented management processes do not take place. The expectations are not clear enough, which is why we can observe that various uncertain feelings and beliefs (ideologies) concerning the different importance of English and German influence the choice of foreign languages. This happens despite the information about very good business and job opportunities for people who speak German (as reported by the German-Czech Chamber of Industry and Commerce, or German and Austrian investors). The business-oriented part of the media discourse does not share the ideological opinion that English should be enough.

Only a part of the decisions concerning the foreign language choices has an immediate economic basis in terms of *a need to know a foreign language to get a (better) job*. This economic argumentation does not have to be as business-related at first glance as in the cases of private schools and freelancers who work for them. A part of the demand for foreign language courses is generated by indirect economic incentives which have to do more with the socio-economic status of the participants than with their preferences for the respective language. In such cases, their enrolment in a course is primarily a way of avoiding economic costs, and not to learn the chosen language. These costs would arise if these young people did not have student status, because they would have to pay for social security and health insurance by themselves. Otherwise, these payments are covered by the state for the students below 26 years. Such patterns of the behavior of young people toward foreign languages are not marginal when socio-economic factors are considered.

This is relevant because a part of the actors operating from the macro-level (central institutions, a part of media) argues using tendencies based on statistics, which may in turn affect the vague feelings concerning the importance of the respective language at the micro-level. This strengthens the mutual impact between the vaguely perceived importance on the one hand and the decisions made on the other hand (Dovalil and Engelhardt 2012: 20). Generally speaking, drawing upon the ideology according to which English (as a lingua franca) is enough, the sociocultural management works in favor of English, which can be confirmed by the Catherine wheel model as well as by the mainstream within the language-in-education planning.

Hence, if we return to the question raised in the title of this paper as to what extent people in the Czech Republic are spoiled for choice when foreign languages are concerned, we can conclude that the education system does not offer too many choices which would considerably complicate the decision-making processes of the foreign language learners. Generally speaking, if a selection is too broad it may cause discomfort and difficulties in making the best decision. But this does not seem to be the case of the Czech Republic – neither in terms of what the school system offers, nor in terms of deliberation concerning the decisions made by most learners. However if we directly focus on English and German in business, some people might be in a quandary after all if they did not like to learn both languages. The general preference for English as it is pre-determined by FEPEE does not correspond to the business sphere interconnected with German and Austrian investors who also generate numerous opportunities in the Czech job market in favor of German.

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## Appendix: List of analyzed articles

1. Nein, nechceme němčinu [Nein, we do not want German] (respekt.cz, 23. 9. 2009, Bára Procházková)
2. Znalosti němčiny se platí zlatem. Český bábel [Knowledge of German is paid in gold. The Czech Babel] (respekt.cz, 4. 10. 2009, Bára Procházková/Michal Komárek)
3. Deutsch ist besser. Učte se víc německy, žádají firmy [Deutsch ist besser. Learn more German, companies require] (3. 2. 2010, Radek Pecák)
4. Pro německé investory je němčina důležitější než angličtina [German is more important for German investors than English] (CIO, Patrik Khudhur, 9. 2. 2010)
5. Výuka cizích jazyků ve školách: Obrat k lepšímu, ale dobrých učitelů je málo [Teaching foreign languages in schools: A change for the better, but there are too few good teachers] (Hospodářské noviny, 16. 2. 2010, Jana Machálková)
6. Jen polovina umí cizí jazyk, ostatní se nedomluví [Only one half knows a foreign language, the others cannot make themselves understood] (Mladá fronta dnes, 16. 12. 2010, Radka Wallerová)
7. Tradiční evropské jazyky válcuje asijská “formace” [Traditional European languages are beaten out by the Asian “formation”] (Hospodářské noviny, 17. 1. 2011, Petr Býma)
8. Soumrak výuky jazyků. Stačit má jen angličtina [Doomsday for teaching foreign languages. English is supposed to be enough] (Hospodářské noviny, 1. 3. 2011)
9. Experti navrhnou počítače místo němčiny [Experts propose teaching computers instead of German] (Hospodářské noviny, 1. 3. 2011, Jana Machálková)
10. NERV se plete [National Economic Council is wrong] (respekt.cz, 11. 4. 2011, Bára Procházková)
11. Angličtina, nebo němčina? To si dobře rozmyslete! [English, or German? Think it over thoroughly!] (žena.cz, 8. 12. 2011, Monika Kuncová)
12. Znamky vám plat nezvyšší. Angličtina to dokáže [Good grades will not increase your salary. English will] (Metro, 27. 6. 2012, Adam Váchal)
13. Práci v Německu má 30 tisíc Čechů, Němci chtějí víc [30 thousand Czechs have a job in Germany. Germans would like more] (aktualne.cz, 11. 7. 2013)
14. Pracovním inzerátům vládnou angličtina a němčina [Job advertisements are dominated by English and German] (jobs.cz, 23. 7. 2013, Lenka Kovářiková)
15. Češi mluví špatně anglicky. Hůř než Maďaři či Poláci [Czechs speak English badly. Worse than Hungarians or Poles] (aktualne.cz, 6. 11. 2013, Zuzana Kleknerová)
16. Trendy v jazykové poptávce Čechů? Vracíme se k ruštině a němčině, láká nás i čínština [Trends in the language demand of Czechs? We are returning to

- Russian and German, we're also attracted to Chinese] (studentpoint.cz, 2. 2. 2014, Anna Dudková)
17. Jazykovky musely s cenami dolů [Language schools had to bring down prices] (Lidové noviny, 20. 5. 2014, Radka Kvačková)
  18. Němčina frčí [German is in] (studenta.cz, 16. 6. 2014)
  19. S němčinou se vám v Česku otevírá přes sto tisíc pracovních míst [German opens up more than hundred thousand jobs in Czechia] (studenta.cz, 17. 6. 2014)
  20. Příběhy absolventů: Jak se stali profesionály ve svém oboru [Stories of graduates: How they became professionals in their field] (studenta.cz, 26. 6. 2014)
  21. V Čechách platí: němčina nad zlato. Rozhovor s Markem Dusilem, ředitelem jazykové školy a nakladatelství Polyglot [What holds true in Bohemia: German more valuable than gold. Interview with Marek Dusil, head of the language school and publishing company Polyglot] (hrnews.cz, 27. 6. 2014)
  22. Angličtina je standard. Firmy chtějí lidi s portugalsštinou nebo němčinou [English is standard. Companies want people with Portuguese or German] (Hospodářské noviny, 13. 7. 2014, Zuzana Keményová)
  23. Uchazeči o práci podceňují znalost jazyků [Job applicants underestimate language knowledge] (novinky.cz, 22. 8. 2014)
  24. Nezaměstnaní na Karlovarsku studují němčinu [Unemployed people in the Karlovy Vary region study German] (uradprace.cz, 7. 1. 2015, Kateřina Beránková)
  25. Češi neumí německy, stěžují si německé a rakouské firmy působící v tuzemsku [Czechs can't speak German, German and Austrian companies investing here complain] (rozhlas.cz, 16. 1. 2015)
  26. Poslední krok, který ti chybí k získání kariéry šéfa [The final step you need to take for a higher management career] (studenta.cz, 19. 1. 2015)
  27. Angličtina vytlačuje ze škol němčinu. Na vzestupu je i ruština [English is forcing German out of schools. Russian is also on the rise] (rozhlas.cz, 20. 1. 2015)
  28. Pět důvodů, proč znalost němčiny výrazně pomůže vaší kariéře [Five reasons why German will substantially help your carrier] (Institut jazykového vzdělávání ijv.cz, 14. 5. 2015, Helena Staňková)
  29. Angličtina nestačí. Znalost druhého jazyka zvyšuje plat [English is not enough. Knowledge of a second language raises salaries] (ekonomicky-denik.cz, 18. 7. 2015)
  30. Pečujte o romštinu a němčinu, vyzvala Česko Rada Evropy [Take care of Romani and German, Council of Europe appeals to the Czech Republic] (novinky.cz, 14. 12. 2015)
  31. Kariérní cesty ve financích: angličtina samozřejmostí, s němčinou se příjmy zvýší [Career paths in finance: English is obvious, incomes increase with German] (cfoworld.cz, 1/2016)

32. Zaveďme angličtinu jako úřední jazyk. Většina Čechů by se ji naučila a získala tak velkou konkurenční výhodu [Let's make English an official language. Most Czechs would learn it and gain a great competitive advantage] (respect.cz, 11. 6. 2016, Marek Švehla)
33. Kromě angličtiny zaměstnavatelé nejčastěji požadují němčinu a francouzštinu [Apart from English, employers most often require German and French] (novinky.cz, 16. 6. 2016)
34. Zahraniční tisk: V EU vzroste úloha francouzštiny a němčiny na úkor angličtiny [The foreign press: The role of French and German will increase at the expense of English] (zet.cz, 28. 6. 2016)
35. S němčinou lépe než s angličtinou [Better off with German than with English] (iteplice.cz, 6. 8. 2016)
36. Angličtinářů je v Česku pomálu [There are two few English teachers in Czechia] (Metro, 12. 10. 2016)
37. Němčina poráží španělštinu [German defeats Spanish] (Metro, 30. 11. 2016, Filip Jaroševský)
38. Neumíme německy. Firmy jedou lovit zaměstnance do Berlína [We can't speak German. Companies go hunting for employees in Berlin] (finance.idnes.cz, 13. 4. 2017, Kateřina Hovorková)
39. Němčina je žádaná [German is in demand] (Metro, 26. 4. 2017)
40. Proč se učit anglicky [Why learn English] (Respekt, 15. 5. 2017, Jiří Sobota)