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Management der Sprachenvielfalt im Hochschulwesen
Language diversity management in higher education
La gestion de la diversité linguistique dans l'enseignement supérieur

Herausgegeben von/edited by/édité par
Jeroen Darquennes, Theodorus du Plessis, Josep Soler

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Jeroen Darquennes, Namur Institute of Language, Text and Transmediality (NaLTT), Département de Langues et Littératures Germaniques, Université de Namur, Rue de Bruxelles 61, 5000 Namur, Belgium

Leigh Oakes, School of Languages, Linguistics and Film, Queen Mary University of London, London E1 4NS, United Kingdom

Ingo H. Warnke, Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 10: Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften, Universitäts-Boulevard 13, D-28359 Bremen

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Tamah Sherman

Differing interests in the management of multilingualism in Czech higher education

Abstract: This paper is devoted to several ways in which the language of instruction in Czech universities is managed. One of the key issues in this context is the fact that programs accredited in the Czech language are tuition-free, while those in foreign languages are paid. On the one hand, it is deemed desirable by certain actors to integrate greater numbers of students from abroad, conform to the discourse of internationalization, and even earn money through courses in English. On the other hand, it is also viewed as necessary by other actors to cultivate the Czech language and provide a solid education for local students. These multiple and often opposing interests, as well as a number of language ideologies, guide individual management acts. Utilizing the language management framework (Jernudd/Neustupný 1987; Fairbrother/Nekvapil/Sloboda 2018), I explore three selected examples of the management of the language of instruction. In the first, I show how many Czech university programs are accredited in the Czech language, but offer many classes in English. In the second, I examine one case of financial motivation for foreign-language courses through university teaching development projects. In the third, I point to the differences between the language of accreditation of some Ph.D. programs and the languages actually used in their realization. Finally, I consider the fact that all of these cases of management involve some sort of compromise between the interests of certain groups, which means that the only way forward is an increased awareness of all aspects of the management processes.

Keywords: multilingualism in universities, higher education in the Czech Republic, language of instruction, language management, language ideologies

1 Introduction

During the latter half of the 20th century, the language situation of universities in European nation-states was largely reflective of the majority language situation in those countries. In the case of the former Czechoslovakia, this meant a context of receptive bilingualism (Czech and Slovak), with a move toward monolingualism when the country separated into two in 1993. At present, the Czech academic sphere is negotiating another type of change, one not initiated strictly by changes in the status of the country, but also by economic and migration trends and the move toward the

Tamah Sherman, Czech Language Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences, Letenská 123/4, 118 51 Prague 1, Czech Republic, sherman@ujc.cas.cz

internationalization of universities worldwide. Czech universities are seeing an influx of teachers and students from more parts of the world than ever before. But does this tendency lead to a greater degree of multilingualism than before? How does it influence the local multilingual constellations that were already present? And to what degree are students and teachers studying and working in different languages actually coming into contact in teaching and learning contexts?

In this paper, I will continue the discussion of multilingualism in the Czech academic sphere, begun partly by Nekvapil (2013), who examines, among others, the changing role of languages in Czech academic publishing, and in particular by Sherman (2015), who provides an overview of the major languages and communication spheres in which the choice of language is managed in Czech universities. Both texts use the point of departure of Czech as a medium-sized language (Vila 2013; Vila/Bretxa 2015) and consider the question of “domain loss” (Haberland 2008). While these perspectives will certainly be present throughout this study, they will not necessarily be the primary ones. This text’s specific focus is on language as it is used in university instruction rather than, for example, in the heavily researched field of academic writing (cf. the texts in Dimova/Hultgren/Jensen 2015 vs. those in Plo Astrué/Pérez-Llantada 2015).

I will begin by providing a brief background on the Czech university language situation and explain the theoretical-methodological approach. I will then examine some examples in which the language of instruction in Czech universities is managed. Finally, I will offer some considerations regarding the question of interests.

2 Background

Czech universities are, at present, above all aimed at serving the educational needs of the Czech society with its population of just over 10 million, over 90 % which declares Czech to be at least one of their mother tongues.¹ In other words, they play a sufficient role in serving both the national economy and national networks, which are, to a great degree, often defined by the use of the Czech language. From the perspective of language cultivation, this can be viewed as an achievement of sorts. Academics who have travelled abroad or hosted foreign guests have often met with surprised reactions to the fact that the teaching actually occurs in Czech. English in the Czech Republic is taught as a foreign language and knowledge of it is generationally-tied, with older generations being more proficient in German or Russian, if in any foreign language at all. Of course, we can imagine the limitations these conditions present in attracting both students and employees: it is desirable for everyone to speak Czech, but as Czech is not typically taught at elementary and secondary school levels outside the country, requiring it significantly reduces the pool of potential applicants.

¹ Source: <https://tinyurl.com/ydb5qcn3>. Last access 21 November 2019.

As sociolinguists in the Czech context, we can observe multilingualism at present in the university context, but there is little to no discussion of it by name, much less of policy. Meanwhile and elsewhere in Europe, the discussion is rich, whether in “officially” multilingual contexts or in regions where English use has reached the point of actually posing a threat to the national language. Despite all of this, we can state that language is *observably managed* at all levels (see Sherman 2015). We can also declare that multilingualism, i. e. the presence and active use of multiple named languages in a given delineated space, is and has always been present, and that the research challenge lies in highlighting its workings in an environment often presumed to be monolingual.

3 Theoretical-methodological framework

I understand the language problem in the higher education domain more generally as a situation in which an issue regarding language structure, use, status, etc. arises, typically due to a lack of harmony between the expectations of individuals in a given communication situation, such as during an oral examination, or between various actors, including institutions, in a more extensive large-scale language situation, such as during the process of designing and accrediting study programs. Through the systematic observation of instances which can be identified as phases in the language management process: the negative evaluation of deviations from norms or expectations, plans made to adjust or “fix” or improve the issues or situations that develop from this evaluation, and the implementation of these plans (Neustupný 1994; Neustupný/Nekvapil 2003), it is possible to identify a number of ideologies and interests that are indexed by and, more importantly, which serve as guiding forces in these management acts. These ideologies stem at least in part from the socio-cultural and socio-economic constellations in the given context, so by managing language problems, actors are in fact managing broader issues.

Given my particular focus on language of instruction here, I pose the following research questions:

1. Where do language problems with the language of instruction appear in Czech universities and how are they managed?
2. What specific factors in the Czech sociolinguistic environment inspire and support these problems and their management?
3. Who defines these problems and what interests of various actors are at stake?

Here I will opt for the same approach as in Sherman 2015, that is, to utilize the language management framework (Jernudd/Neustupný 1987; Fairbrother/Nekvapil/Sloboda 2018), specifically to comment on and describe the relationships between and common aspects of a number of selected instances of metalinguistic behavior.

These instances have been collected through years of participant observation in the Czech university setting beginning in 1996, with targeted data collection going on since 2009.² One part of the main body of data consists in the systematic observation of management acts directed at myself, my colleagues and students on the unofficial level, usually *ad hoc*, such as decisions regarding language selection in seminars, department meetings, student consultations, thesis defenses, or informal interactions. By “systematic observation of management acts” I mean the noticing of any instance in which language or communication is made relevant, either explicitly or implicitly. An explicit instance of this may involve the declaration at the beginning of a seminar that the main speaker will use English, but questions from the other participants can also be posed in Czech and German. An implicit one would be the unquestioned and uncommented-upon use of English in meetings in which there is a single non-Czech speaker present.

Another part of the data stems from seeking similar examples from publicly available documents such as academic senate, scientific council, or other committee meeting minutes, official decrees, university and department websites, information regarding entrance exams, job advertisements, media texts about the university, and the linguistic landscape (both official and unofficial signage in university buildings, advertisements on notice boards in these buildings, and the like). Again, this type of material may explicitly refer to issues such as which language will be or should be used when, which language competence certain actors should have, or even suggestions for the creation of official policy. It may also simply serve as a reflection of which language has already been selected for use and what status it has (for example, the order of languages on official signage).

Finally, for the purposes of this paper, I conducted five in-depth interviews with academics, focusing on their experiences as students, teachers, and researchers, and covering a period ranging from the 1970s to the present. Due to my own background, it is also important to declare a strong bias toward humanities and social sciences, as well as toward fields which are heavily language-focused. It is, in fact, this reality which fueled my engagement with this topic – I arrived in the Czech Republic from the United States in the 1990s hoping to undertake university studies in the Czech language, which was, at the time, a very complicated option for foreigners. My transition

² Here it is interesting to note that the official support for this research has been limited to international projects, e. g. LINEE (Languages in a Network of European Excellence), supported by the European Commission (2006–2010), English in Europe: Opportunity or Threat, supported by the Leverhulme Trust (2012–2014), and IntlUni (The Challenges of the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space in the International University), an Erasmus Academic Network (2012–2015). I have also greatly benefited from several years of close contact with the CALPIU (Cultural and Linguistic Practices at the International University) research network at Roskilde University. It has thus far not been possible to gain financial backing for the initiative from national sources, which in itself may be indicative of the reflection of sociolinguistic issues on the local level.

since that time into a university teacher using multiple languages of instruction (both Czech and English) has been an ongoing stream of management acts concerning individual situations, in other words, an automatic, unavoidable aspect of everyday life. This paper will differ from Sherman (2015), which emerged from these stimuli as well, in that it is specifically focused on the management of the language of instruction, as well as on the ever-growing relationship between Czech and English, whereas the previous paper attempted to provide an overview of all of the major languages which are somehow managed.

The main reason for the choice of the language management framework is that, despite the exceptionally high level of attention devoted to language in the Czech Republic (see e. g. Beneš et al. 2018; Nekvapil/Sloboda/Wagner 2009), official language policy as such is not at the forefront of issues designated as key problems to be solved in Czech Universities. As an example of this, we note the publication by Dvořáčková et al. (2014), an important ethnographic study of the goings-on in Czech universities, which only devotes attention to questions of language in a short section on the international mobility of academics in relation to their career development (Dvořáčková et al. 2014: 87–89).

I employ the concept of language management here in reference to the initial work by Jernudd/Neustupný (1987) as an approach to metalinguistic behavior centered on the language problem. This specific framework originally emerged in the context of post-colonial language planning work, with the aim of integrating micro-level communication issues, as reflections of speakers' needs and stimuli for strategies for change. Over the years, it has both influenced and been influenced by other theories of language policy and planning, but is not to be seen as a mere alternative to them. Rather, it is a tool for the complex sociolinguistic analysis of a given language situation, in this case, instruction in the higher education context.

4 Managing the language of instruction

Changes in the language of instruction have taken place in universities on the territory of the Czech Republic since their very beginnings. This can be observed in the example of Charles University, the oldest Czech university.³ When it was founded in 1348, the language of instruction was Latin. In 1784 it became German. Upon its division into two universities in 1882, at the one, German was used, and the other, Czech. The Czech university (the latter) was closed in 1939, during the German occupation but reopened in 1945; incidentally the year in which the German university was closed

³ An extensive overview of this development is provided in the four-volume series *Dějiny University Karlovy* [The History of Charles University] (Čornejová 1995, 1997; Havránek 1997; Havránek/Pousta 1998).

(this, of course, corresponds to the end of the Second World War). This was followed by a period of Czech (and partially Slovak) instruction at the surviving Czech university. After 1989, the year when Czechoslovakia moved from a regime of state socialism to an independent democracy, the university studies were conducted in Czech plus programs in “foreign” languages, as will be discussed below. As can be observed from these points on the timeline, the language of instruction reflects not only the general European trends regarding interconnectedness between rulers, language choice in language domains and language development, as well as developments in the language of science.⁴

At present, the Czech Republic is one of a number of European countries, above all including its next-door neighbor Germany, in which the language of instruction is closely tied to the important socioeconomic issue of tuition. In other words, public universities teaching in the national language do not charge for tuition, neither for their own citizens nor for students from abroad. The lack of tuition for non-Czech citizens was implemented in the 1990s.⁵ In the Czech context, this is formulated from the opposite perspective. Act No. 111/1998 from the collection of laws on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments and Supplements to some other Acts (The Higher Education Act) § 58 states the following:

“(4) Should a public higher education institution offer degree programmes carried out in a foreign language, it sets study fees for Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral degree programmes....”⁶

We can read from this that the national language as the language of accreditation and instruction is presumed, and foreign language programs are viewed as something extra. At present, the language of instruction is stated in the official accreditation documents of individual study programs. This issue was discussed in Sherman (2015: 45). Since the publication of that text, not much has changed in terms of the general percentages of programs in individual languages. In 2018, there were 9,428 officially accredited study programs in the CR (2,944 Bachelor’s, 350 5-year Master’s, 2,696 Ph.D., 3,168 2-year Master’s). Of these, 2,273 study programs (or around 24%)

⁴ For parallels to this development elsewhere in Europe, see Mortensen/Haberland (2012) and Soler (2019).

⁵ The reason this implementation occurred in the 1990s was that this period immediately followed the transition from the regime of state socialism to a representative democracy, resulting in a reorganization of many spheres of life, followed by the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993. One of my interview participants recalled that one of the motivating factors for this implementation was the idea that Slovak students, who had traditionally attended (and enriched the student body of) Czech universities, and due to the receptive multilingualism of Czech and Slovak, were at a disadvantage simply due to the country having divided. He also observed that it was not anticipated that thousands of students from around the world would later also take advantage of this option. The subject of charging tuition to non-Czech citizens is also often brought up during situations of budget crises at the university.

⁶ Source: <https://tinyurl.com/yccyloup>. Last access 19 November 2019.

were accredited in English, 105 in German, 17 in Russian, 9 in French, 3 in Italian, 1 in Polish.⁷ And as before, it is important to note that this is merely a list of programs which may be opened. It is one thing to advertise a program or declare its interest in the context of the discourse of internationalization, but to run the program is something different. We do not know if the programs are actually opened, or such details as the numbers of applicants they have, graduation rates, origins of teachers and students, and the like. The existence of these programs is, however, but one of a number of factors which prevent the Czech public universities from being entirely monolingual in terms of language of instruction. I will explore these factors from a partly chronological and socio-economic perspective.

Prior to the massification of Czech universities (Dvořáčková et al. 2014: 34–68) and the increase in opportunities to study abroad, in the 1990s the first English-medium programs appeared, e. g. in medicine. One understanding of this phenomenon was that universities (and their employees) were financially strapped, and English-medium programs could have become a source of income. It is not uncommon for university teachers to take second jobs, and one common practice has been for them to do so at private institutions (either in Czech or in English) and international, often American study-abroad programs at Czech universities, including jobs as teachers of Czech as a foreign language. What can be called the “discourse of internationalization” (Fabricius/Mortensen/Haberland 2017) appeared later. This is often manifested in accountability regarding numbers of incoming and outgoing students per academic year, courses in foreign languages (read: English), integrated programs, and so on. This discourse has also appeared in debates preceding elections of university rectors, as well as in official policy measures. One recent such example, from Masaryk University in Brno, involves the requirement that habilitations (cumulative or monographic works, usually in separate book form, for the promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor level) be written in a foreign language⁸. As the then rector of the university stated in a news interview:

“...in the Czech context, practically in all fields, the local community is so small and intertwined with personal ties, that we have to have a peer-review process, to open ourselves up to the international community. Our university aims to compete with the top universities on a global level, and this can’t happen without the quality of the habilitations being certified in the international context.”⁹

⁷ Source: <https://regvssp.msmt.cz/registrvssp/>. Last access 19 November 2019.

⁸ For a more extensive discussion on this issue at Masaryk University in Brno, see: <https://tinyurl.com/y89wvnd9>. Last access 19 November 2019.

⁹ Source: <https://tinyurl.com/ydhtkf4r>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech mine. This quote was originally taken from an interview with one of the major national newspapers, but here it is used in a venue whose main readers are people working as academics. Interestingly, the title of the article is “Associate Professors have to write in English”, even though the given provision is not English-specific.

In addition, the number of joint-degree, Erasmus- and other non-tuition-paying exchange students has gradually increased. These are, for the most part, students who do not and cannot arrive for a semester or a year prepared to study in Czech, even if they wanted to, due to the limited opportunities for learning the language at foreign universities. This often translates into not only the demand for specifically English-medium courses, but often even the assumption that such courses will be available with a scope broader than that corresponding to reality. The question emerged as to what such English-speaking courses these students could attend. One interviewed colleague forwarded to me in an e-mail what an Erasmus student had written to him: “When composing my Learning Agreement, I was not to choose Czech-speaking but English-speaking classes.” And as another interviewed colleague mentioned, Erasmus students often presume the availability of English-medium courses even in areas where other large European languages such as German are the standard medium of instruction.

Finally, it may seem that one major, though perhaps less commonly mentioned, goal of internationalization initiatives is the exposure to foreign languages and cultures that internationalization provides to local students. In the monolingual mode of thinking, this area was covered by the institution of mandatory language exams at various phases of study, with the languages and their levels determined by the specific study program accreditation. Interviews with colleagues, not only those who studied prior to 1989, but even those whose study period extended into the mid-2000s, have confirmed this. Later, this was complemented by the increasing opportunities to study abroad for a semester or a year. Latest of all came the integration of courses in other languages. Of course, the question is: how to do this while still keeping the official language of accreditation Czech, among others, for the purposes of tuition-free study?

Given all of these circumstances, I will now explore three brief examples in which the language of instruction has been managed, either on the national level, i. e. for all public universities, or within individual universities. In line with the language management approach, I have selected these examples because they have emerged as relevant problems for both teachers and students. In my analyses, I will consider the interests at stake and their potential conflicts.

4.1 Example 1: Language of accreditation vs. language of instruction

In Sherman (2015), I drew attention to the following provision in the rules for accreditation as an example of large-scale management on the part of the Ministry of Education:

“Note:

By ‘instruction in a foreign language’ we mean instruction in the full range of the study program/major, not the instruction of selected individual subjects or parts of them in a language foreign to the accredited program/major.”¹⁰

One significant example in which the actual practices do not correspond to this definition is the Bachelor’s program “Economics and Finance” at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. On the program website, one can read the following about the program:

- “Offers instruction in an attractive location in the center of the city with excellent public transportation access”
- “*Offers most of its courses in English (70 % of courses at Bachelor’s level)*”
- “Enables students to utilize the broad range of study opportunities abroad at more than 60 partner institutions through the Erasmus+ program and other inter-university agreements in Asia, Australia and the US.”¹¹

The underlying language problem consists in the need to satisfy demands put forth via the discourse of internationalization, create available courses for non-tuition paying students, and at the same time make foreign-language teaching accessible for local students as well as and even in Czech-accredited programs (which appears to be the main emphasis of the information on the program website mentioned above). From this example, we can infer that English-medium courses are perceived and presented as something of which there is a shortage. Czech-language instruction in this prestigious program is necessary, but at the same time, there is the interest in providing elite, internationally-oriented programs which can also be attended by the best Czech students. The adjustment design within the management process, then, is this: the universities create programs which can make use of the a “loophole” of sorts in the definition and specification of the language of accreditation above – the space for the integration of foreign-language courses without the implementation of tuition.

A similar set of adjustment designs is observable in the Department of Linguistics (my own department, where it has been typical for department heads to include state-

¹⁰ Source: <https://tinyurl.com/yd58v82q>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech mine.

¹¹ Source: <http://ies.fsv.cuni.cz/cs/node/294>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech and emphasis mine.

ments regarding the number and scope of English-medium courses in their publicly available departmental mission statements, written prior to the beginning of their terms, as part of their solicitation for the function. See, for example, the following from recent mission statements:

For 2011–2015: “All students (including B. A. students in the second year of study and beyond) should be able to read and understand academic texts in English and complete a certain number of lecture and seminar courses taught in English.”¹²

For 2015–2017: “The request for teaching in English, which is moving into the center of the university’s interest, is being fulfilled in the meantime by an offer of several courses...and will be gradually expanded on the basis of availability and interest.”¹³

For 2018–2020: “In recent years, we have been able to expand the teaching of courses in English, and I will continue to place emphasis on the development of teaching in English – to such a degree that it will be possible to create an English-language version of all courses within a few years.”¹⁴

In considering the representation of the various interests at stake in these documents, we can point to several issues. The advertising text for the economics program, given its genre, presents itself as being in the interests of students with an international orientation. The departmental mission statements, on the other hand, are indicative of a more top-down management approach directed at students who may not actively seek out English-medium courses. While the earliest statement places emphasis on requiring a certain level of competence on the part of the students, the second one points to the fact that English-medium instruction has been depicted as desirable on the university level. The third one does neither, perhaps presuming the self-evidence of the interests involved, referring to continuation and expansion of past successes in this area. Its ambitious nature (establishment of an English-language version of all courses) directs our attention to another issue. That is, the question of the practical aspects of the realization of the adjustment designs arises. Do these plans mean that all of the courses mentioned do and/or will exist in parallel versions – Czech and English? This connects to the next example, relating to the actual process of realization.

12 Source: <https://tinyurl.com/yby9rkz7>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech mine.

13 Source: <https://tinyurl.com/yamxtxlb>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech mine.

14 Source: <https://tinyurl.com/ydc3qem3>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech mine.

4.2 Example 2: Development projects and the language of instruction

Thus far, we have established that, at the very least, the management of the language of instruction in the humanities and social sciences at Czech universities exists at the level of defining the underlying language problem: although English-language courses are desirable for various reasons, the supply does not correspond to the demand. One adjustment design, first mentioned in Sherman (2015: 51), is the regular, continual request for the creation of new English-medium courses sent out to teachers by the International Department of the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, prior to each semester. In fact, during the writing of this paper, I received such an e-mail request for offers of English-language courses for American students from the Eastern and Central European Studies Program. The request included the fact that these courses are paid from a separate source, meaning that they constitute extra money and are not simply part of the duties included in the academic's standard job description and covered by his or her regular salary. But this adjustment design, which we might call "financial motivation for teaching in English", can also be observed in the recent development of requirements for a competition for so-called development projects. As the competition announcement published in 2018 states, one aim of the projects is the "[c]reation or innovation of courses for students from abroad, above all general, survey courses in individual disciplines, enabling the students to become familiar with the Czech/Central European space". Project applications receive 25 points (out of a possible 100) for a course in English, 15 points for a course in "a world language other than English".¹⁵

Though it is impossible to determine this with one-hundred-percent certainty, the publicly-available titles of the 30 accepted projects¹⁶ reveal that 20 of them involved either the introduction of a new English-medium course or series of guest lectures or a multilingual course, or the conversion of an existing Czech-medium course into an English-medium one. No more than three projects indicated that instruction in other "world languages" might be taking place (for more on the use of the term "world languages", see Sherman 2015: 52–53).

Why are the development programs set up this way? The management process begins with identifying a shortage of English language courses, which are noted and evaluated negatively, an adjustment design in the form of competition is put in place, and implemented in the form of the realization of courses. There are many reasons for the shortage of courses, the main one being that not all areas of study are suitable for international students, and not only from a language perspective. Many are for students with a Czech secondary school background, which presumes certain content-related knowledge. In addition, especially at elite institutions like Charles Univer-

¹⁵ Source: <https://tinyurl.com/y71546nr>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech mine.

¹⁶ See: <https://tinyurl.com/y9uyspvy>. Last access 21 November 2019.

sity, international students may be perceived as poorer than local ones and therefore less interesting to teach. Finally, there is the understanding that some courses should remain accessible in Czech, hence creating English ones would involve doubling the work (teaching parallel courses in Czech and English).

4.3 Example 3: Ph.D. programs – language of instruction?

Finally, I will offer a third example which ultimately draws attention to the fact that defining the “language of instruction” is often not entirely straightforward. This concerns the medium of Ph.D. programs. These programs can take various forms internationally, ranging from “taught” programs, in which students attend courses and seminars, to exclusively “research” programs, which are focused upon the writing of the final thesis, the language of which, in the Czech context, is selected by joint agreement of the student, advisor, and the doctoral studies board for the given field. In addition, Ph.D. programs often find themselves on the borderline between study and employment, meaning that unlike bachelor’s and master’s study, it may be considered unwise (or even risky, considering the resulting debt in relation to the job market) to pay tuition for the program. And in the Czech system, on the contrary, it is standard for internal Ph.D. students to in fact be paid for their studies, either through grants or scholarships or as lecturers which may include teaching or research requirements without a direct relation to their thesis work.

So, what does the management process look like here? In the social sciences and humanities, we often remain on the discourse level – the underlying language problem is defined, specified, and even debated, especially during university officials’ election campaigns and their accompanying mission statements (similar to the mission statements of department heads discussed above). This implies, again, that adjustments are designed but often not implemented.

As Ph.D. programs in the Czech Republic are based above all on individual study plans, most of the work done within them involves contact with the advisor, other instructors, and fellow students. This means that the language of interaction is negotiated individually, and ultimately, that it is possible for students to sign up for Czech-language-accredited programs to avoid tuition fees, but without Czech language competence.

In terms of the financial benefits brought by tuition-paying Ph.D. students through English-medium programs, all one needs to do is have a quick look at the actual number of enrolled students. During the 2018–2019 school year, the Charles University information system revealed a total of eight students in English-medium programs: three in Translation Studies, two in Romance Literatures, and one each in Egyptology, Musicology and History (for an idea of the ratios, every year approximately 100–200 students begin doctoral studies at the faculty). In the following year (2019–2020) these numbers were more or less the same, with one additional student

in the field of Anglophone Literatures and one student having left the Romance Literatures program. In other words, only a minimal number of students were enrolled in these programs, though in some cases the programs were used as affiliations for short-term Erasmus students.

The current state of affairs may serve the interest of university officials, but the question of whether it goes beyond that and serves the interests of the students arises. I am not the first to make this observation. For example, an unsuccessful candidate for rector of Charles University included the following statement in his pre-election program in 2017: “Unlike the present leadership of CU, I do not think that every Czech study program needs to have an English variant, which in many cases would be merely pro forma. I would like to concentrate my efforts on the creation of English-language programs tailored toward potential applicants from abroad who are interested in studying fields in which we are already excellent”.¹⁷

4.4 Discussion: languages, interests, and associated problems

In the previous sections, I have outlined a number of issues that I have called “language problems”. However, it would be inappropriate for me to simply elucidate these problems without addressing the question of *whose* problems they are. As a sociolinguist, my aim is to attempt to explain the complexities that occur in the current multilingual constellations resulting from the arguably (dis-)organized management being done in Czech universities. This professional orientation, however, is unavoidably accompanied by a number of ideological aims. These include the idea that multilingualism is good, that a multilingual space should involve more than the national language plus English (otherwise known occasionally as “English is not enough”, cf. Penz 2015), that the socioeconomic status of various languages should be considered and appropriate measures taken to support the weaker ones, and that all efforts should be made to cultivate the national language, Czech, as a full-fledged and potentially even international language of research and teaching. But as a teacher and researcher, sometimes my own activities may go against these aims. I teach some of my courses in English, and they are attended by many students from the Central European region and Slavic-speaking countries with whom, years ago, the language of communication might have been Czech. I also publish extensively in English, despite being employed by an institution devoted to the Czech language. I have sufficient reason, for example, to see the division of programs into those directed at foreigners and those directed at Czechs as a threat. I have personally viewed it as a problem since the 1990s, during which Czech universities with Czech-language-medium instruction often presented a hard shell to crack for non-Slavic-speaking foreigners.

¹⁷ Source: <https://tinyurl.com/ybu9qh9n>, last access 21 November 2019, translation from Czech mine.

The separation of local and international students, who are often perceived as two separate groups, brings with it a number of problems. For example, Přeřvátlová (2019) in her research on American students studying at a Czech university, found that more than half of the surveyed participants did not consider taking a basic Czech course important and suggests ways for teachers to help overcome student insecurities and boost motivation. In her text, she poses the (somewhat rhetorical) question of whether it makes sense at all to have them take Czech classes.

But these seemingly harmful realities are met with many different responses. For many teachers, especially for those outside the humanities, there is personal economic motivation involved, as sectorization, or the division of students into different programs financed from separate sources, in which some pay tuition and some do not, may lead to an additional source of individual income¹⁸.

Besides the general support for monolingual and OLAT (one language at a time) ideologies, separating students in the described manner also leads to a shortage of the mutual enrichment that the students can provide to one another. The international students may gain little “local knowledge”, including linguistic knowledge, further perpetuating the cycle of non-integration. Yet, the interests of the students from abroad can be largely tied to personal motivations which cannot necessarily be discarded as irrelevant. It is not uncommon to hear such students state that they came to work on their English in a space where it functions as a *lingua franca*. Or that they wanted to get to know a different culture, while at the same time there is the assumption that this familiarization process need not be tied to advanced knowledge of the local language. The Czech Republic is one place which actually provides the ideal context for this.

It is thus important to point out some further promising aspects of the development of the multilingual atmosphere in Czech universities over the last 30 years. For one, the tolerance for non-native varieties of Czech has grown, as has the knowledge of English of Czech students and teachers (and those from elsewhere). This has led, among others, to certain highly commendable moments of interaction between local students and those from abroad. In a number of classes established via the development projects mentioned above, both groups attend classes together in English. Czech-medium courses are also becoming more and more accessible, among others through the program of Czech language for foreigners.

¹⁸ See also the brief description of salaries in Czech academia in Sherman (2015: 60, note 12).

5 Concluding remarks

In the previous sections, I have identified a certain number of language problems pertaining to instruction in Czech universities at present. These involve the need to integrate students from abroad, to conform to the discourse of internationalization, and to even earn money through courses in English on the one hand vs. the need to educate Czech students for free in Czech, to integrate non-native speakers of Czech and to cultivate the Czech academic language on the other hand. The specificity of these problems, in my view, emerges from the very strong position of Czech as a national language in combination with the limited opportunities for foreigners (particularly those from non-Slavic speaking countries) to learn it outside of the Czech Republic and its low perceived instrumental value there.

In general, the management strategies applied to these problems appear to be focused on satisfying multiple interests in situations where it may initially not seem possible. In the case of the language of accreditation vs. the language actually used in some of the program courses, the management strategy appears to correspond to the Czech equivalent of the proverb “To have the cake and eat it too”: having English-medium courses in an officially Czech-medium program remains in the interests of the students, who pay no tuition but receive foreign-language instruction, as well as in the interests of the departmental and faculty administrators, who can report and declare the existence of these courses when it comes to the outward presentation of the internationalization processes. The same applies to the linguistics department. Yet it may go against the interests of two other groups: students and teachers whose knowledge of English is not at the level of that being used in the instruction. One might argue that this is a form of “tough love” for these individuals, who are somehow not able to decide what is good for them, with the English instruction providing them with opportunities for learning and improvement. But on the other hand, can it not be said that they have a right to learn and teach in Czech, their native tongue and the majority language? And indeed, these management processes seem to go against the interest of those who are trying to promote the maximum cultivation of Czech in these areas. The case of the development projects shows that while they certainly offer opportunities for enrichment, the issue is that teachers can only teach so many hours per week. Introducing an additional course in English means either a) teach more courses overall, or b) replace Czech-medium courses with English-medium ones. The case of the Ph.D. studies in the humanities, most of all, reveals discord in interests between certain groups. It is truly a situation where a certain adjustment design exists in name only, and its realization is problematized by the fact that changing the language involves charging tuition fees in an area where they are difficult to ask for.

This web of issues corresponds to a certain degree to the classic concept of Ruíz (1984), in which the discourse on Czech supports the language-as-a-right (students should learn in their mother tongue) as well as language-as-a-resource (Czech can be cultivated and used as a lingua franca) orientations, but at the same time the lan-

guage-as-a-problem one (Czech as a barrier to internationalization). It is only the next logical step to state that these management processes are reflective of larger issues concerning the position and status of different languages within the Czech context. Nekvapil/Sherman (2013: 93), for example, explore the management guided by and underlying two language ideologies which they paraphrase as “Czech is a difficult language” and “Czech is a small language used only by the Czechs”. Our examples show that these ideologies appear to be closely tied to some of the practical issues involved in managing the language of instruction at universities: in all three cases, the idea that students from abroad should simply learn Czech if they want to study in the country is not even considered. While it would be desirable to try to make the Czech language the medium of internationalization to the greatest degree possible (cf. Haberland 2011), it is also necessary to keep the above-mentioned ideologies from becoming a deterrent for potential students. It appears that the only way toward finding a compromise between these two potentially conflicting poles is to be continually aware of them and revisiting them on a regular basis in individual acts of management on various levels.

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