

**Language Management on the Front Lines:  
A Report from Dunajská Streda  
Language Management Workshop – Dunajská Streda and Plášťovce,  
Slovakia – September 14-18, 2006**

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**1. Introduction**

In the spirit of the main topic of the Chiba Research Report, here I will present a contact situation which is somewhat less traditional than those offered thus far. The situation is as follows: A journey made by three Czechs (including one Czechoslovak) and an American to the part of Slovakia which is home to the Hungarian minority. In Bratislava, Slovakia's capital city, they were met by linguists, representatives of this minority, and taken to Dunajská Streda, a city located on "Rye Island" (Žitný ostrov in Slovak and Csallóköz in Hungarian), a piece of fertile land framed by the Danube River and its tributary, the Little Danube. This is the home of the Gramma Language Office, which was founded in 2001 in order to promote, cultivate and manage the use of Hungarian in Slovakia, as well as to conduct research in various fields of linguistics.

How did this contact situation among the research groups come to be? Let us examine the broader context. Research using the Language Management Theory (LMT), since its initial conception by J.V. Neustupný and B. H. Jernudd during the 1970s and 80s, has developed into a number of different topical foci. These include:

- 1) Focusing on the language, communication and sociocultural problems of foreigners (mostly Japanese in the case of Australia) in the respective countries, particularly in higher-education situations. Most of this work is done in Japan (e.g. the work of H. Muraoka, S.-K. Fan and others) and Australia (e.g. the work of H. Marriott), based initially on the framework set out by J.V. Neustupný. Interested in simple management.
- 2) Work addressing macro language problems, e.g. on the levels of entire countries, such as various Asian countries, Australia, Sweden, etc. and comparing the Language Management Theory to theories of Language Planning (initially B.H. Jernudd, J.V. Neustupný, partly R.B. Baldauf, etc.) Interested in organized management.
- 3) The Central European focus on issues surrounding power, e.g. language and ethnicity and language and economy in the Central European region, also tying the theory of LM to earlier ideas, such as Language Cultivation, developed by the Prague Linguistic Circle. This work stems from J.V. Neustupný's Czech origin. A recent development: the dialectic of micro – macro relationship between simple and organized management. This report concerns mainly work of these authors.

In the interest of producing an edited volume which would shed light on the connections between these foci, the Prague contingent identified the Gramma Language Office ([www.gramma.sk](http://www.gramma.sk)) as an organization for which language management was not only a question of theory, but a matter of day-to-day concern. What developed was a five-day workshop in which some basic background information and project reports were brought by the Prague group, and an initial application of LMT to the situation of Hungarian in Slovakia was prepared by the Gramma group, consisting of Istvan Lanstyák, Gizela Szabomihály and their colleagues.

## 2. The setting

Before I detail what happened on this occasion, a few words in explanation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia are in order. Slovak-Hungarian contact is neither a recent matter nor a small-scale one. In brief, the territory of what is now Slovakia was integrated into the Hungarian State between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following the First World War, the Czechoslovak state was created in 1918 and subsequently, on the basis of the Treaty of Trianon from June 11, 1919, this Hungarian-populated area was annexed into the new state. This was also the case of other Hungarian populated areas which became (and are still) parts of other states, for example parts of Transylvania (Romania), Vojvodina (Serbia), and areas of Austria, the Ukraine and Slovenia. The Hungarian language, then, is spoken by various groups of ethnic Hungarians outside of Hungary's borders. In the 2001 census, 572,929 inhabitants of Slovakia declared Hungarian to be their "mother tongue" (Lanstyák and Szabomihály 2005. For more on the situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, see Lanstyák 2000, Lanstyák and Langmann 2000, and Lanstyák and Szabomihály 1996).

## 3. The course of events

The visitors from Prague, then, were welcomed into these linguistic surroundings and brought immediately to the Gramma office, introduced to the staff and the office's major publications and activities. This was followed by tours of the bilingual cities of Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely, Komárno/Komárom and Štúrovo/Párkány. Then the group retreated to an indoor Boy Scout Camp facility in the village of Plášťovce/Palast for a day of presentations and discussion. This was not a conference in the traditional sense – speakers did not limit themselves in terms of time, the presentations were dialogical, and topics flowed into one another organically. The languages of communication were Czech and Slovak (which find themselves in a situation of "receptive bilingualism") with some Hungarian and English mixed in.

## 4. Language Management: An introduction

The first formal presentation was by Jiří Nekvapil, who re-introduced Language Management Theory, whose subject matter scope corresponds to "behavior-toward-language" (a term coined by Joshua Fishman), one of the major topics of the Sociology of Language. He focused on the relationship between the study of language management (LM) and language

production or generation, the history and founders of the Theory and addressed questions of what can and cannot be expected from it. The question of how "Language Management" can be metaphorically understood and translated into Czech, Slovak and Hungarian was also discussed, primarily in relation to previous frameworks such as Language Cultivation and Language Planning. For example, what is the difference between "spravování" (administration) of language issues and the management of them? Nekvapil then offered several examples of LM on various levels. He demonstrated situations of conversational repair, which were originally defined in the methodological vein of Conversation Analysis. Among the topics discussed were the question of what form the phase of noting can take, what the real difference is between simple and organized management, and issues of the relationship between socioeconomic, communication, and language management (meaning language in a narrow sense). Nekvapil emphasized that LMT has been constructed in such a way that it can *fully integrate* the social dimensions of "micro" and "macro". Within the framework of LMT, language micro-planning is identified with simple (discourse-based) management, and language macro-planning with organized language management (in networks of various complexity). He also observed that LMT places less emphasis on the technical aspects of planning and focuses instead on agency, being in Jernudd's wording "an academic response to people in power in reaction against central imposition". And he concluded that LMT comprises not only top-down processes, but also bottom-up ones, while paying detailed attention to the whole language management cycle.

##### 5. LM in intercultural interactions

Nekvapil was followed by Tamah Sherman, with the topic of "Norms and their situation-boundedness in intercultural interactions: Language and cultural behavior of Mormon missionaries in the Czech Republic". Sherman provided some background about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons), which has approximately 60,000 missionaries working all over the world at any given time. The missionaries spend two years proselyting (spreading religious gospel) either in the United States or in a foreign country, in which case they must necessarily learn the language of that country. In order to learn the given language, they take an intensive language preparation course (lasting nine weeks in the case of Czech), and are subsequently transported to their respective countries and expected to communicate. At the same time, the missionaries offer free English classes to the people they meet. They also work in pairs (known as "companions") in which one missionary has more extensive linguistic and cultural experience in the country, and is expected to manage the less experienced missionary's language and cultural acquisition processes. Sherman presented a general set of prescriptive socio-cultural norms for the missionaries, drawn from research using interaction interviews (see Sherman 2006). She then produced an example of organized management in the form of a list of Czech language "adjustment strategies" prepared locally for the missionaries on the basis of repeatedly noted missionary deviations from acceptable norms of Czech conversation, for example, a reminder to female missionaries to use the feminine endings for some verb forms which refer to the speaker. Several examples which demonstrate the

issue of norms in the missionary interactions were then offered. The first of these was an issue previously discussed by Fairbrother (2002) and others, that of why, in some situations, deviations made by non-native speakers of a language are not overtly noted and adjusted by native speakers of those languages. The example involved a situation in which a missionary made several mistakes in Czech, apologized for his Czech, and was subsequently complimented by his Czech interlocutors. On the basis of this, Sherman referred to the different types of norms and related concepts discussed in various LM literature – internal or native vs. contact norms, “foreign factors” (Fan 1994), aware vs. unaware and covert vs. overt (Neustupný 1984), norms referred to as “expectations” (Neustupný 2003, 2005). Sherman then explored the concept of “collision of norms”, using the example of formal address in Czech. The missionaries must follow the prescriptive norm of “use the *vy* (formal) form when addressing everyone”. This “collides” with the Czech norm for young people, who are used to using the *ty* (informal) form for addressing people of their own age. This was demonstrated on the basis of two different examples of how this phenomenon is managed by both the missionaries and their interlocutors in the process of their slowly-unfolding relationships. Both cases involved the use of Conversation Analysis as the main tool for data collection and analysis. In the first of these, a missionary, after repeatedly using the ‘*vy*’ form with a teenage boy, bid him goodbye using the informal ‘*ahoj*’. The teenage boy reacted by addressing the missionary also with the ‘*vy*’ form and using a more formal form of ‘goodbye’. In the second example, the missionary again begins by addressing a teenage boy with the ‘*vy*’ form, but later utters the informal ‘*čau*’ and ‘*ahoj*’ in parting. This time the teenage boy accommodated to him by responding with ‘*ahoj*’.

## 6. The Linguistic Landscape in Belarus

Sherman was followed by Marián Sloboda, who in a presentation entitled “Language Management in a Linguistic Landscape: The Case of Bilingual Post-Soviet Belarus”, examined the use of various languages on signs, billboards, posters, etc. in Belarus. Sloboda traced the historical development of language use on the territory of what is now Belarus, highlighting periods of Russification, Polonization, and Belarusification under various empires and political regimes. A language law in 1990 declared Belarusian to be the sole official language of Belarus, and in 1996 Russian was also declared to be the official language. The relationship between the two languages is not regulated by law. Thus the current situation, Sloboda claimed, involves an asymmetrical Russian-Belarusian bilingualism, with a general preference for and higher competence in Russian among the general populace. Sloboda divided the signs observed into four categories – monolingual in Belarusian, monolingual in Russian, bilingual, and other. Using color-coded annotated photographs, he demonstrated cases of the parallel display of bilingual signs, their partial parallel display, mixed bilingual signs, and monolingual signs. He observed that Belarusian has a functional specialization, appearing primarily in specific types of signs – road signs, public transportation, post office signs, but also in banners created by political opposition groups, signs announcing national holidays, signs promoting the “Belarusian-ness” of various products for sale,

including books on Belarusian literature and culture. He followed this up by documenting cases in which the language on given signs was reproduced or changed (both from Russian to Belarusian and vice versa) over short time periods. In terms of LM, Sloboda posed the question of in whose favor (on the basis of whose norms or ideology) is language managed? Who maintains or relinquishes which language and why? He then presented three cases of management in regard to elements of the linguistic landscape. In the first, a temporary sign was placed in a store window, indicating that there were repairs going on in the store. This sign was written in Belarusian, which was noted and evaluated as "strange" by a Belarusian respondent. In the second, employees of the mobile phone company Samsung, decided to invoke the public's noting of a deviation from the following norms: "standard Belarusian is used by the elites", and "Russian is the default language of communication" and "an advertisement is meant to capture people's attention" by using Belarusian in their billboards, which were subsequently placed next to Russian-language billboards. In the third case, passers-by repeatedly noted mistakes in signs in written Belarusian. Adjustment designs were not implemented except in one case in which an individual wrote to an internet site operated by a government authority, "Belarusian Toponyms", calling their attention to the mistake. As a result, the error was corrected. Sloboda ended by concluding that language maintenance in a linguistic landscape is a process of LM, that LMT is a dynamic, processual model of change in the linguistic landscape – more than one norm is evoked for each sign. He also observed that the collision of norms can exist, for example when a Belarusian student who normally uses Russian "internally" when speaking to other Belarusians uses Belarusian "externally" when speaking to a Russian friend. He also posed the question, on the basis of examples, as to whether Belarusian serves as a "frame", a form of communication "outward", for the city of Minsk (the signs which greet visitors at the main train station are in Belarusian), or, in fact, for the entire country (the signs at Belarusian embassies abroad are only in Belarusian). Yet, as indicated by survey research, Russian is the language used for most communication "inward". This differentiation in function of the two languages serves as a norm. LM as a method of dealing with deviations from norms can help researchers to find out which deviations from this functional specialization of Belarusian and Russian can (not) transform into a new norm. This depends on two factors: 1) how the deviations occur, or what motivates them, and 2) how the "recipients" of the signs evaluate and accept (or do not accept) them. Which is why, Sloboda concluded, the study of language management is a method for uncovering the ways in which Belarusian can extend beyond its current boundaries and become a more widely used medium of communication.

#### **7. Applying LMT to Hungarians in Slovakia: Some general theoretical issues**

All of this provided food for thought in preparation for the final presentation by Istvan Lanstyák, entitled "Language Management Theory from the Perspective of Management of Linguistic Processes taking place in Bilingual Minority Communities". Lanstyák, one of the founders and major researchers at the Gramma Language Office, after having carefully studied some of the LMT literature, especially that produced in Central Europe, posed the question of how

applicable LMT is to the situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. He did this in fifteen points, extensively comparing LMT to theories of Language Planning (LP) and Language Cultivation (LC). These points, and the subsequent reactions to them from the other participants, are as follows:

1. LMT, as opposed to theories of LC, relies on real language problems of speakers in given communities. Many “language errors” defined by language cultivators do not actually cause problems for speakers, and at the same time speakers have other problems which language cultivators either do not notice or do not concern themselves with. On the other end of the spectrum, though, Lanstyák took issue with the LMT concept of “problem” being defined only by everyday users, finding this definition restrictive and assuming it rejected the possibility that experts might define language problems at all.
2. It is the expectations of the speakers engaged in interaction that are relevant, as opposed to the observation of norms of a particular variety. This appears to be a better point of departure than that of LP (which lacks the appropriate methodology for detecting language problems) and LC (which deals only with deviations from a codified norm). However, it is not clear that “deviation from the norm” can always serve as the basis for detecting language problems. Rather, the lack of stable norms or the competition of different norms are what may be symptoms of language problems, though not necessarily language problems which need to be solved, i.e. it may be the negative evaluation of the norm deviation which is the problem, not the norm deviation itself. Also, it is possible to note norm deviations but not consider them problems. In this vein, Lanstyák posed the question of whether or not it is possible to determine “the” norm in many everyday situations, and if so, using what methods.
3. LMT recognizes a range of language problems at both the macro and micro levels, and aims at mapping this range of problems before managing them, enabling experts to see connections between language problems at different levels, which would ideally lead to complex empirical research, which is not the case with LP or LC. At the same time, though, LMT must be differentiated according to the inevitable differences in handling different types of language problems.
4. It is necessary to work out a hierarchy of language problems with different weight given to different problems, while acknowledging that the assignment of weight cannot be objective, which can be an inevitable source of conflict. In the Gramma Language Office, which serves as a language consulting center, the relative weight of the language problems which occur is determined on the basis of the requests and questions the office receives. Yet there are other problems which cannot be solved by turning to a language consulting center, thus the experts do not become aware of them.

5. It is important to establish models not only of negative deviations, but of positive deviations from norms. This point is closely related to the situation of Hungarian. Preoccupation with errors has characterized practical LC activities, e.g. in articles written by Hungarian language cultivators living both in Slovakia and in Hungary. This is related to the corpus planning ideal of “one Hungarian language”, based on the extra-linguistic ideology that the unity of the Hungarian nation should be preserved, though it is divided into parts.

6. Language problems are primarily recognized on the micro level, and solved on the macro level, which is a both realistic and democratic approach. LM is thus a good fit for minority language settings. In the Gramma Language Office, language problems of everyday speakers are often pre-managed, as they require corpus planning, e.g. the creation of terminology for an adequate translation from Slovak. Some of the solutions applied by ordinary speakers, e.g. avoidance strategies or code-switching, may not always be applicable for an institution such as Gramma, but should be taken into consideration nevertheless. Lanstyák also took issue with the idea that all language problems originate on the level of discourse, claiming that the absence of a language or variety from a domain of language use could be a problem that would not be detectable at this level.

7. LMT's wide scope, covering all behavior with language as its object, means that it can be differentiated even more extensively than merely between the extremes of “macro” and “micro”. For example, we could talk about “layman management” vs. “expert management”, “unconscious management” vs. “conscious management”, “idiosyncratic problem management” vs. “typical problem management”, or “correction in discourse” vs. “change in the language system”. LMT must differentiate between speakers, institutions and domains in order to find the relevant management actors and networks.

8. Simple and Organized Management, representing management directed toward discourse and management directed toward the language system, respectively, are both practiced by Gramma. The micro level appears to take priority to the macro level in LMT, especially as concerns methodology, which is also true of Gramma's practice. It is also important to differentiate between LM oriented toward discourse and LM oriented toward the language system – this is one of the problems of the LC approach: language advice is not given to ordinary speakers for the purposes of the given situation, but rather, due to the language cultivators' long-term aims at bringing about changes in the language system.

9. The hierarchy of socioeconomic problems > communication problems > language problems is in full harmony with the experience of Hungarians in Slovakia (hereafter HS). For example, in order for bilingual report cards to be issued in Hungarian schools in Slovakia, first the legal conditions for doing so would have to be met before anyone could raise the question of the lack of

Hungarian language terminology for these report cards. Yet, it is important to note that in regard to the solution to these problems, this hierarchy should be considered a general principle, not a dogma, and it is also important to consider language ideologies, which may overwrite real language problems as well as communicative and socioeconomic problems.

10. A positive aspect of LMT (again, as opposed to LP and LC) is that it is not oriented solely toward the standard variety of a given language, but rather, it is also oriented toward any variety of language in which problems occur. This is significant, because everyday speakers' aim is not solely to observe the norms of the standard, but to communicate successfully, though the standard itself is an important concept.

11. Problem-solving in LMT is based on the question of varying interests, which are often changing – it is impossible to participate in the LM practice and act on behalf of “universal” interests of an entire society. Lanstyák observed that this point made him realize that the activities of the Gramma Language Office are also not interest-free. Furthermore, there is the methodological question of how to find out the interests of various sectors of a community. There also exist oppositions between individual and group interests and between short-term interests and long-term interests. Any act of LM motivated by one set of interests or values may have other language problems for other people as a side effect. A possible solution to this is the decentralization of language policy.

12. LPT, unlike LMT, has never systematically dealt with the question of power, or the capacity to realize one's interests, on various levels. Often the elite, since it has more power than other groups in a community, is more successful in implementing its own interests. Hungarians in Slovakia have power in settlements where they constitute the majority of the population, and where the local government also consists primarily of Hungarians. It is possible in these situations to spread e.g. administrative or legal terminology with the help of teachers of Hungarian language and literature, who can include the teaching of these registers into their curriculum. The question of power in the HS community language planning could stand to be discussed in greater detail.

13. As opposed to theories of LC, LMT presupposes a shift from the practices of the elites to those of everyday speakers. However, in practice this may be a problem. In the HS community, a common argument by language cultivators against new LM is that it “endangers the unity of the Hungarian language”. The concept of “unity” however, differs in interpretation between the language cultivators, who see it as Standard Hungarian, and Hungarian minority communities outside Hungary, who accept that Hungarian is a pluricentric language.

14. Another strong point of LMT is its emphasis on the evaluation of language phenomena by both ordinary speakers and experts. Evaluation has always created a sort of conflict in LC. That is,



language cultivators do not have a definite set of values, rather, they inconsequently refer to criteria, most importantly structural and purist criteria which often contradict one another. Some sociolinguists' reaction to this is to reject evaluation completely, calling for a value-free, scientific approach to questions of language system and use. However, language experts also must be aware of their own values which are determined by their own interests, a value-free approach is essentially impossible.

15. The processual character of LM (the fact of its four phases of noting, evaluating, planning an adjustment, and implementation) is not so different from that of LP, but lacks "deep concern" about the fourth phase, implementation. One more phase might be added: A fifth phase, feedback, which can be identical to the first phase (author's note: this has also been mentioned in Neustupný 2004).

Instead of offering conclusions, Lanstyák then posed three questions: 1. Is the classical LM theory which is called "general theory of LM" suitable for solving the language problems of bilingual minority communities in general and HS community in particular? 2. If it is not – could the possible adjustments of the theory be made within the classical paradigm, or should a new version of the theory be developed? 3. If it is not, and the problems are more fundamental – should a different (but similarly wide-scoped) theory of LM be devised which should use a great number of elements from the general theory of LM? In the subsequent discussion, it was generally determined that the answer to the first question was yes, though some adjustments, in the spirit of the second question, may be welcome.

#### 8. Ending up

The presentations were followed by a closer look at the village, including the local folk museum and pub. In the social activities conducted as part of the workshop, there was no lack of examples of precisely what we had been discussing around the table. On the final day, a smaller group journeyed to the nearby Čabrad' Castle, where they observed further management processes. They came upon a sign describing the castle in Slovak, German and French. Someone had noted a certain deviation, evaluated it negatively, and adjusted it by writing in Hungarian "This is a Hungarian Castle." Someone else, in reaction, had repeated the process by writing, (also in Hungarian) "Whoever wrote that is an idiot".

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接触場面と言語管理の学際的研究

—接触場面の言語管理研究 vol.5— (2006年度)

人文社会科学部

研究プロジェクト成果報告書 第154集

編者 村岡英裕

平成19(2007)年2月28日発行

発行 千葉大学大学院

人文社会科学部

印刷 株式会社 こくほ

ISSN 1881-7165

**INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES  
OF LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT  
IN CONTACT SITUATIONS**

LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT IN CONTACT SITUATIONS VOL.5

REPORT ON THE RESEARCH PROJECTS  
No. 154

2007

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Chiba University