Carrying out a language policy change: advocacy coalitions and the management of linguistic landscape

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This paper focuses on agency in language policy change. The object of the analysis is the processes of bilingualization of signage in three European towns. Located in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Wales, the towns differ in various respects, including the extent to which signage language policies have faced opposition and threatened social cohesion. Two theoretical frameworks are combined to analyse what facilitated or hindered language policy changes at the three sites. Language management framework provides a model of behaviour through which language and communication evolve in response to deviations from communicative expectations. Advocacy coalition framework, developed in political science, is used to gain an understanding of how such behaviour by coordinated social actors influences macro-level processes such as policy change.

Keywords: language management; language policy; policy change; advocacy coalitions; linguistic landscape; bilingual signage

Introduction

This paper deals with the ways in which a broad range of coordinated social actors – from individuals to civil organizations and governmental bodies – initiate, shape and implement language policy. We examine this issue in an analysis of the processes of bilingualization of signs in public spaces in three European towns. These bilingualization processes meet with various degrees of resistance. Two theoretical frameworks from applied linguistics and political science – language management framework and advocacy coalition framework (ACF) – are combined to identify the differential developments in the three researched locations.

Theoretical approach

Language management

If we are to understand how language and communication evolve as a result of human behaviour, and more specifically, how language planning from below emerges, a model of situated metalinguistic behaviour aiming at a change in language or another component

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of communication (Hymes, 1974) may be useful. The language management framework developed by Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) provides such a model. An advantage of their conception of language management is that it is able to deal with any behaviour towards language and communication – formal and informal, explicit and implicit, voluntary and involuntary, individual and collective. Language management can take the form, for example, not only of complex government-initiated activities aiming at the replacement of monolingual signs with bilingual ones over a large territory, but also the form of an individual's damaging of one particular sign. From the perspective of this theoretical framework, such diverse metalinguistic behaviours are in principle the same type of human behaviour and are describable as such (for details, see Nekvapil, 2006; Nekvapil, 2009; Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003).

Here we use the concept of the language management process and its stages, in particular, as a guide for tracing and comparing language management in the selected locations. According to this framework, a language management process begins in response to the occurrence of a deviation from a communicative expectation. After the deviation occurs, one or more social actors may: (1) note this deviation, (2) evaluate the deviation, (3) select or create an 'adjustment design' (an image, model or plan of how a communication object should look), and (4) implement the adjustment. The process can stop at any of these stages, e.g. an adjustment can remain unimplemented. On the other hand, language management can become very complex when processes build one upon another or in terms of participants and resources involved. It can be simple, taking place between a few participants *in situ*, but also highly organized, involving larger social networks and consuming more resources.

If a *language policy* is understood as a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. xi), then language policy can be identified as an explicit 'adjustment design' (stage 3 of the language management process) that a group of social actors has arrived at and has agreed on in the course of organized language management.

Our analytic task has been to trace language management processes and to learn which noted deviations become an issue of organized management and lead to the formulation of a language policy, whereas other deviations do not receive such treatment and remain managed only situationally and individually, if at all.

Advocacy coalitions

The ACF, developed by Paul Sabatier and others for the study of the policy process (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier & Weible, 2007), provides a complementary model of coordinated groups of social actors whose language management aims at influencing language policy on a larger scale.

The basic unit of analysis in the ACF is a *policy subsystem*. This is the group of all the actors and organizations interacting regularly over a period of several years to influence policy within a functional policy domain (such as air pollution control, drug prevention, ethnic minority rights, etc.). Within policy subsystems, serious disagreements may appear that lead to cleavages resulting in the formation of advocacy coalitions. An advocacy coalition is a set of 'people from various governmental and private organizations who both (1) share a set of normative and causal beliefs and (2) engage in a nontrivial degree of coordinated activity over time' (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p. 120). An advocacy coalition is not limited to an interest group: its members may recruit from various groups and organizations ranging from state and local government officials to non-governmental

organizations, scientists, journalists and other stakeholders. The coalitions advocate a particular policy based on their system of *policy core beliefs*. These beliefs represent a coalition's normative commitments and causal perceptions pertaining to the entire policy subsystem. The existence of policy core beliefs alone is not always sufficient for an advocacy coalition to emerge. It is more likely to form if there has already been a previous organizational structure for mobilization as well as structural opportunities for political action (Kübler, 2001; Sabatier & Weible, 2007, pp. 199–201).

To influence policy in a subsystem, advocacy coalitions use various political venues and resources. *Venues* are institutional arenas, such as elections, public referenda, legislatures, etc., within which social actors have, or have not, the opportunity to influence policy-making. They try to gain control over venues and influence policy using available *resources*; the ACF distinguishes the following: access to formal legal authority, financial resources, information, public opinion, mobilizable troops and skilful leadership (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, pp. 201–203).

Our analytic task has been to identify coalitions and to learn about their structure, policy core beliefs and the use of political venues and resources. We have also tried to identify paths to policy changes: (1) external events (shocks or perturbations external to a policy subsystem), (2) internal shocks (shocks internal to a policy subsystem), (3) negotiated agreements, and (4) policy-oriented learning (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). These types are distinguished in the ACF and have been considered in our research.

Research locations

The research took place in three European towns: Llanelli (UK), Český Těšín (Czech Republic) and Békéscsaba (Hungary) (Figure 1). These towns represent different types of urban settings in terms of institutional infrastructure for minority languages and their political and socio-economic history: gradual development in Wales *vs*. post-communist transition to regimes modelled on Western Europe in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Figure 1.   Geographic location of the researched towns.

Llanelli is located in Carmarthenshire, South West Wales, UK. The conurbation has a population of approximately 45,000 with a significant number of Welsh speakers: almost 30% claimed to speak Welsh and a total of 47% have some Welsh language skills according to the 2001 census (Office for National Statistics, www.statistics.gov.uk). While no longer part of the Welsh-speaking heartland, its linguistic landscape, dominated by signs in English and Welsh, is similar to many other towns in Wales. Llanelli has recently attracted a high number of Polish immigrants, estimated at 2000 people (Lawrence, 2009), but signs in Polish are relatively rare there.

Český Těšín is a border town in the eastern part of the Czech Republic. It used to form one city with the neighbouring town of Cieszyn which now lies on the Polish side of the border. The former city was divided after an armed struggle over the region between Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1920. Český Těšín has a population of 26,000, of which ethnic Czechs comprise 75%, Poles 16% and others 9% (Czech Statistical Office, www. czso.cz). The town is the main centre of the Polish ethnic minority which is autochthonous in the whole Těšín region. Although Czech dominates the town's linguistic landscape, Polish is clearly visible in both private and public signage.

Békéscsaba lies in Békés County, south-eastern Hungary. The town's population is approximately 65,000; ethnic Hungarians form almost 94% of the population, Slovaks 6% (Central Statistical Office, www.nepszamlalas.hu). The town was resettled by ethnic Slovaks in the eighteenth century and has been an important centre of the Slovak minority in Hungary until the present day. However, Slovak appears only on some public signs and is not easily noticeable. Languages other than Hungarian and Slovak are extremely rare in the town's landscape.

Methods and data

The methods of data collection and analysis were qualitative in order to learn about the nature of coalitions, beliefs and language management taking place in the researched towns. The data were collected mostly during 2008–2009. A first set of data – media texts, Internet blogs, websites, administrative reports, legal and policy documents and photographs – was part of language management intrinsic to the social life in the researched locations. A second set of data consisted of field-notes from observations and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were used to obtain information on past and covert language management and on issues related to social actors' coordination and coalition behaviour. The interviewees included various categories of stakeholders: from ordinary citizens and visitors to regional and local officials. The data collected for each town are listed in Table 1. The proportion of various data types varies between the towns depending on the nature of the local language management. For example, while in

Table 1. Data.

	Llanelli	Český Těšín	Békéscsaba
Photographs	16	153	344
Websites	6	3	3
Internet discussions	2	8	1
Newspaper articles	13	23	5
TV news reports	0	3	0
Interviews (respondents)	13 (21)	6 (6)	44 (60)

Note: The list does not include field-notes, policy documents and reports.

Český Těšín much of the language management of signage has been intensive and overtly expressed in a number of places, language management of signage in Békéscsaba has been rather weak and covert, which thus entailed the need to conduct more interviews.

A most difficult analytic task was the reconstruction of relevant beliefs (including communicative expectations). In a quantitative ACF study, Weible (2006) formulated several beliefs in the form of short statements and let his respondents mark the level of their agreement with the statements. This *de facto* validation procedure was not used in our qualitative research. We took into account existing discursive expressions of beliefs, but in tracing language management processes, we paid equal attention to how they were reacted to, enacted in the adjustments and their implementation and how they corresponded to various local discourses. Most beliefs could well have been formulated in other ways, but we have selected those wordings that have appeared in natural contexts. In Békéscsaba, where little language management of signage is overt, some formulations have been created *post hoc* by the researchers. Validation also took place in interviews.

Results

This section provides a summary of some of the most important processes of language management in each town. This summary also includes a description of identified advocacy coalitions. The subsections on each town are uniformly structured to allow for comparative reading independently of the comparison made in the Discussion section further below.

Llanelli, Wales, UK

The language policy relating to signage in Llanelli, and in Wales in general, lies in the addition of Welsh to all types of signage which had been in English only, most of all to the signs of public organizations and of public service providers (be it public, private or voluntary). The beginning of the language management that led directly to this policy change dates back at least to the 1960s. It was initiated by the civil organization the Welsh Language Society (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg), originally a splinter group of Plaid Cymru (the Party of Wales). Initially, the press and the British government had been opposed to the Welsh nationalists' goals, but gradually became supportive of them (for details, see Merriman & Jones, 2009). With devolution in 1997–1998, new political venues became available for policy advocates and today the coalition includes organizations at all levels of government: the National Assembly for Wales (the main legislative body of Wales), Welsh Assembly Government (the main executive body), Welsh Language Board (an Assembly-sponsored public body promoting the use of Welsh), local governments, including Llanelli Town Council and Carmarthenshire County Council, public organizations, tourist organizations and others, not, however, most private and voluntary organizations and companies.

Currently there is a cleavage in this coalition between the Welsh Language Society and some other groups on the one hand and the current state administration on the other hand. Both sides share the normative belief that Welsh is the native language of Wales and should be used in signage, but they disagree on secondary aspects which now appear to be policy core policy preferences[1] about the policy implementation in the private sector. While the sub-coalition around the Welsh Language Society advocates more legal intervention (cf. Welsh Language Society, 2005), the current Welsh Assembly Government advocates only stimulation and persuasion in this area (cf. Welsh Language Board, 2006). Plaid Cymru currently seems to find itself in an intermediate position, as it also supports

further legislation concerning the private sector (Plaid Cymru, n.d.), but some of its members do not assert this position in practice. The party is not currently the dominant party, coming second to Labour in both Llanelli Town Council and the National Assembly.

Concerning overt and active opponents of the bilingual signage policy, there are few of them at present. We have not identified any organization or political party in Llanelli itself that would be strongly against it.

Expectations and noted deviations

The main policy core expectations of the current bilingual signage policy in Wales derive from the discourse of the history of Wales (originally independent, now part of the UK) and from the experience that many Welsh people speak only English today. The expectations can be expressed as:

- Wales should be truly bilingual.
- English and Welsh should be treated on the basis of equality.
- Visibility of Welsh promotes positive attitudes towards it.

In Llanelli, the textual data and interviewees reported a few deviations, sometimes on the basis of a comparison of Llanelli with another place in Wales. Interestingly, these noted deviations were limited to public signs and did not concern the absence of Welsh from many private signs in Llanelli. Our Welsh-speaking respondents also mentioned incorrect use of Welsh which concerned Welsh place-names and language mistakes. There are organized systems of spreading the information on noted deviations from the official bilingual policy. For example, the Welsh Language Board provides an on-line complaint form and advice on how and to whom to submit a complaint (www.byic-wlb.org.uk).

A reported deviation which collides with the official language policy concerns the expectation that road signs should be instantly readable for the drivers. According to the accounts of some of our respondents, the use of Welsh on road signs or their current bilingual design deviates from this expectation, but others, when asked about possible reading problems while driving, did not confirm this.

Evaluations

The perception of Welsh on signs has been generally positive. In a 1995 survey, 82% of the respondents from the whole of Wales stated that providing bilingual signs was a good idea ($n = 815$, NOP, 1995, p. 39). In a 2005 survey concerning private signage, as many as 80% of adult respondents from South West Wales considered the provision of bilingual signs by privately owned companies as important ($n = 169$, Beaufort Research, 2005, Table Q31i).

Our respondents did not see the use of Welsh on signs as a problem and based this perception of theirs on the belief that Welsh is the (native) language of Wales. This was in contrast to signs in Polish. When confronted with the idea of possible greater use of Polish on signs, our respondents did not respond positively, unless the function of such signs be purely communicative (i.e. not symbolic).

When asked about problems with reading bilingual signs in general, none of our respondents reported any. Some added that they knew where to look in a sign to find the text in their preferred language, i.e. to avoid the other language. This indicates that a uniform order of languages (i.e. standardized bilingual design) can help to prevent negative responses from bilingual signage users with clear language preferences.

Figure 2.   Wales: no differentiation between English and Welsh on a road sign.

Responses from our Llanelli respondents about bilingual design and the presence of Welsh on road signs in particular were mixed. However, the two interviewed Welsh Assembly Government officials in charge of road signage perceived as rather high the number of complaints. One of them expressed a personal preference for more differentiation between the languages, using Brittany and bilingual Breton-French signs as an example. The other considered the principle of language equality, expressed through identical design for both languages (Figure 2), superior to possibly uncomfortable reading.

Adjustments

Adjustment measures to increase the visibility of Welsh in the landscape are based on the 1993 Welsh Language Act and are highly organized. The Act also binds Llanelli and Carmarthenshire to adopt their list of measures or the Welsh Language Scheme, in which the town and the county stipulate the equal use of Welsh and English on signs which they are responsible for, with Welsh coming first (Carmarthenshire County Council, 2007; Llanelli Town Council, 2002). The Welsh Language Board and the Assembly provide a large number of means for the policy implementation, such as small grants for private organizations, short translations for free, advice on bilingual design, instruction on Welsh for local development planning authorities, place-name manuals and others. Currently, the ruling Labour–Plaid Cymru coalition in the Welsh Assembly proposes to debate a measure that will extend the duty to provide bilingual signage to some private companies. However, to assert Welsh in the private sector, members of the group around the Welsh Language Society continue with direct actions.[2]

Implementation

The gradual gain in public support and the devolution as an external event significantly contributed to the implementation of the bilingual signage policy. Most importantly, the policy core belief that Welsh is the native language of Wales and should also be present

in its landscape is widely accepted today. Concerning Welsh language mistakes, our respondents reported that public authorities and private persons readily correct them. They thus do not present a general problem.

Less successful has been the language management of private signs by Welsh nationalists. The sub-coalition around the Welsh Language Society employs direct actions and correspondence to authorities, but does not control important political venues and does not have direct access to legal authority. These are occupied by Plaid Cymru which is not the strongest party in Wales and is willing to make compromises.

Český Těšín, Czech Republic

The ongoing language policy change in Český Těšín lies in the addition of Polish texts to public signs which were previously monolingual in Czech. The policy change has involved signs on municipal buildings, city-limit signs, street signs and railway station signs. The policy advocates are planning its extension to other types of public signs.

The language management leading to this bilingual signage policy was initiated around 2001 by Polish minority activists, particularly their main organizations: the Congress of Poles (*Kongres Polaków*) and the Polish Cultural and Educational Association (*PZKO*). The local government of Český Těšín joined this coalition in 2007 (see below). Among the most important internal resources of the coalition has been its access to the Czech Government through two members of the minority organizations who work in the Government Council for National Minorities (GCNM), the Government's advisory body.

Although there has been visible and verbally fierce opposition to this bilingual policy since 2006, no coalition has formed to resist it or to promote another policy. The initial resistance or reluctance of several members of the local government soon disappeared.

Expectations and noted deviations

Unlike in Wales, the main policy core expectation derives from both legal and civic discourse of ethnic minority rights:

- The Polish ethnic minority has the right to express its autochthonous presence in the region through public signage.

This expectation seems to be based on two experiences. First, policy advocates remember that some signage in Český Těšín used to be in Polish, in accordance with the ethnic policy of the Communist Party before its regime fell in 1989. The regime change, which also included far-reaching changes in property ownership (before 1990, the State owned or controlled possibly all shops and companies, for example), impacted on the linguistic landscape as well. Polish disappeared from the landscape during the 1990s. Second, the advocates have learnt about the situation in other multilingual regions of Europe and have often suggested regions with multilingual signage, such as South Tyrol, Brittany and southern Slovakia, as a norm against the background of which the local population should also reconsider the Těšín situation.

The expectations of the policy opponents, from whose perspective the use of Polish on signs presents a deviation, but which does not have support in Czech law, include most significantly the following:

- Public signs in the Czech Republic should only appear in Czech.
- The Polish ethnic minority should not claim benefits as useless and costly as signs in Polish.

- The Polish ethnic minority should not emphasize its presence in the town.
- The Polish minority should behave as any other ethnic minority in the Czech Republic, it should not stand out.

These expectations seem to be based on the memories of the Czech-Polish ethnic conflicts (in 1920 and 1938) and on the widespread belief that the Czech Republic is the nation-state belonging to ethnic Czechs. Thus for the local population, increasing the visibility of Polish unambiguously means increasing the visibility – or even the presence – of ethnic Poles.

Evaluations

Newly erected signs in Polish received a number of negative, often very emotional, evaluations mostly from ethnic Czechs (see, e.g. the discussion under Havlíková & Sikora, 2008), but also some ethnic Poles, and spread in both printed and electronic media. These evaluations include especially the following:

- The use of Polish on signs is useless from the point of view of communication and way-finding (local Poles understand Czech and know the town well).
- Installation of signs is wasting the money of Czech tax-payers/of the municipality.
- The signs are showing the Polish minority as 'cocky' and in a bad light.

Policy advocates have made efforts to achieve normalization or re-evaluation of the use of Polish on signs by presenting it to the public as proof of the Czech majority's respect and tolerance towards the Polish minority. However, as they lacked the trust of the Czech population the Polish organizations decided to turn for assistance to the national and regional authorities. In February 2010, the President and the Minister for Human Rights and Minorities visited the region, since large numbers of signs throughout the Těšín region started to be damaged or the Polish texts painted out (as in Figure 3). What the result of this recent attention to the issue by important officials will be is difficult to predict at the moment.

Figure 3.   Český Těšín: Polish text painted out on a bilingual Czech-Polish street sign (photo by Ewa Sikora).

The damaging or painting out of Polish texts on signs, however, has not received positive, but rather negative or neutral evaluations, even from local Czechs. They argue against it mostly on moral grounds (it is inappropriate as a solution) and on economic grounds (the cleaning and replacement of the damaged signs is costly).

Adjustments

The advocacy coalition relied on adjustment strategies provided for in the legal norms. The crucial stimulus came from the 2000 amendment to the Municipality Act (No. 128/2000), which was part of the Czech Republic's measures that resulted from the adoption of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM). The amendment introduced the following strategy:

> In a municipality inhabited by national minorities the name of the municipality, its parts, and other public areas, and buildings of government agencies and territorial self-governing units are also written in the language of the national minority, provided in the last census at least 20% of the inhabitants of the municipality claimed to have the nationality and provided at least 50% of adult inhabitants of the municipality claiming to be part of the national minority have petitioned for it. (Section 29, Paragraph 2)

The 20% population threshold, however, excluded most of the municipalities with a significant Polish population, including Český Těšín with 'only' 16% of Poles. In view of a possible failure to implement the country's commitments, another amendment reduced the threshold to 10% (Act No. 273/2001, Section 15). However, in some smaller municipalities in the region, the agitation for petitions received extremely negative evaluations from the local Czech population and damaged interethnic relations. To solve this problem, the policy advocates used their participation in the GCNM and reported the problem to the Government (GCNM, 2003, 2005, 2006). After several years of complaints and direct propositions, the Government eventually proposed another amendment, effective since 2006. The condition requiring a petition was replaced by the formulation:

> ... provided that representatives of a national minority request it through the Committee for National Minorities [of the municipal government] and if the Committee resolves to endorse the request. (Act No. 234/2006: Section 24)

However, this proved to be difficult to implement due to another section of the Municipality Act: 'Streets and other public areas will be signposted by the municipality *at its expense*' (Section 30). This made the implementation impossible for smaller municipalities due to the high costs of signage. Polish representatives reported this problem to the Government which, in view of the ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML), decided to release several subventions for its implementation, including the bilingual signage.

Concerning the opponents, we have identified only individual adjustment suggestions, most often to simply remove the Polish texts and, in a few cases in Internet discussions, a radical suggestion that ethnic Poles should leave the country.

Implementation

Two external events have eventually been decisive for policy implementation: (1) the above-mentioned Government's subventions for the ECRML implementation, and (2) the influence from the transport policy subsystem – the concurrent reconstruction of the

railway corridor running through Český Těšín. After some debates, the Town Council eventually decided to apply for a state subvention and received its first one in 2007 (www.tesin.cz; see also GCNM, 2009). From this point onwards, the municipal government has unambiguously become a member of the coalition of the policy advocates. The other event, railway modernization, was an opportunity for the conclusion of an agreement between the municipality and the Czech Railways company about the replacement of station signage as the works proceed. The costs become part of the reconstruction costs covered by the company. The municipality concluded the agreement in 2007 with implementation due in 2010.

The opponents' adjustment implementation has been rather limited Český Těšín, although five bilingual street signs were stolen and Polish text on a few dozens of signs were sprayed over (ČTK, 2010). Police investigations have not revealed the identity of those responsible so far.

Békéscsaba, Hungary

The signage language policy change in Békéscsaba has concerned the addition of Slovak to some types of public signs. The policy has been fairly modest and has involved city-limit signs, signs on the municipal buildings and only a selection of street signs and memorial plaques. The policy dates back to the beginning of the 2000s at least, but most of these signs were bilingual before the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

The main policy advocates include the Békéscsaba Organization of Slovaks (*Čabianska organizácia Slovákov*, which is the main organization of the Slovak ethnic minority in the town), the local Slovak minority self-government (an elected advisory body of the local government) and the Association for the Town Heritage Preservation (*Városvédő Egyesület*). Members of the Research Institute of the Slovaks in Hungary (*Magyarországi Szlovákok Kutatóintézete*), a state-sponsored institution which is based in Békéscsaba, also assist the coalition with advice or language services.

Although Slovak on city-limit signs was painted out recently, the identity of those responsible has not been revealed. The police investigated this act as property damage rather than as an act of ethnic hatred. The opinion of some of our respondents is, however, that the responsible persons were members of the far-right nationalist party Movement for a Better Hungary, called Jobbik, which has a cell in Békéscsaba. The party has recently gained seats in the European and the Hungarian parliaments.

Expectations and noted deviations

Similarly to Český Těšín, policy advocates in Békéscsaba remember that there used to be various signs in Slovak before the fall of the communist regime in 1989. During the regime change, Slovak signs disappeared from the town's streets as premises changed owners and new institutions replaced the old. This experience may have raised the expectations that Slovak would reappear in signage. Unlike in Český Těšín, however, a main policy core expectation is not based on the right to signs in one's minority language alone, but is embedded in the discourse of the town's Slovak history. The main expectation can thus be formulated as:

• The local Slovak minority has the right to commemorate its historical figures in their own language.

Figure 4.   Békéscsaba: Bilingual Hungarian-Slovak street sign (left) bearing the name of Slovak figure Marik and monolingual Hungarian sign (right) bearing the name of Hungarian poet Csokonai.

This seems to be why only those memorial plaques and street signs that bear the names of the Slovak historical figures who contributed to the development of the town have been selected for bilingualization and not others (for example, see Figure 4). The coalition's current language management does not involve larger numbers of signs, since it is based on the belief generally held in Békéscsaba that:

- Békéscsaba Slovaks do not need the signs because they speak (communicate in) Hungarian.

We recorded only sporadic expressions of the wish to have more signs in Slovak than at present.

Evaluations

Coalition members' perception of the absence of Slovak on some relevant signs was not evaluated particularly negatively, but rather as a mere inadequacy. Slovak on signs in Békéscsaba receives positive evaluations especially from Slovak inhabitants, but also positive or neutral ones from our Hungarian respondents. This may be related to the fact that Hungarians hardly notice them in the town due to their scarcity. However, when asked about their opinion on the idea of more Slovak signs, our respondents did not answer negatively either. They expressed a reservation, nevertheless, that there was no need for any more since few visitors from Slovakia came to their town. This belief shows that, in their view, the *local* Slovaks do not need the signs and that economic motivation is perceived as crucial for the use of languages other than Hungarian in the town's landscape.

Only one young respondent evaluated the idea of more signs in Slovak negatively, when she recalled the occasional tensions between Slovakia and Hungary, i.e. at an international level, reported in the local and national media. This suggests that negative evaluations

distributed in the media have some influence on the local language management that is otherwise free of such evaluations.

It was also from the media that some of our respondents learnt about Slovak city-limit signs painted out in 2008. Although the media reports categorized these anonymous acts as political and mentioned Jobbik – whose representative, however, expressed disagreement with the acts (Lampert, 2008) – our respondents categorized them as acts by 'stupid people,' i.e. simply as deviant behaviour.

Adjustments

The advocacy coalition proposes lists and forms of street names for bilingualization to the local government which is authorized to implement them. Its competent members also offer usually free-of-charge translations into Slovak, but mostly only if contacted and rarely on their own initiative. There is some awareness of the effect of economic factors on the use of minority languages among the Slovak population: some respondents mentioned that, in northern Hungary, customers from Slovakia come shopping across the border, which leads to the proliferation of signs in Slovak in those areas. The coalition members, however, do not seem to consider taking steps to attract more Slovak-speaking visitors and customers to their town. This can be explained by the locals' image of Békéscsaba as generally unattractive for tourism and its distance from Slovakia (cf. Figure 1) also seems to play a role.

Implementation

Hungary's ethnic minority policy is a significant external event favourable to the implementation of the bilingual signage policy in Békéscsaba. The country was one of the first to ratify the FCNM and ECRML. At the local level, the policy implementation has been easy mostly due to the fact that it has been rather modest and has been based on the widely shared discourse of the Slovak history of the town's population. It has thus met with almost no opposition. This discourse may have also been the reason why the painting out of Slovak did not target memorial plaques or street signs, but only city-limit signs, in which the historical motivation for the use of Slovak is not obvious.

Discussion

The bilingual signage policies in the researched towns may appear as top-down activities, but a closer inspection of language management processes has shown a significant bottom-up component. The researched localities vary in this respect, however. The policy in Wales originated as a strong civil initiative which has developed a tradition of direct action. In the 1960s, it was almost impossible to insist on the use of Welsh in signage in any other way due to the initial resistance of the central government and the Welsh nationalists' failure to win any seats at the 1959 election, which resulted in the inaccessibility of important venues and resources. At present, both the bottom-up and top-down methods co-exist in Wales. The situation in Český Těšín is different. Although there is a strong civil initiative with a coordinated organizational structure there as well, the initiative started to promote bilingual signage after the political and legal system of the country had become predisposed to it. The first stages of the Polish organizations' language management were largely covert. Their language management met with resistance only after the implementable adjustments had already passed through important venues, such as the government and the parliament.

Even though the situation is currently more conflictual in Český Těšín than in the other two locations, there is an apparent effort on both sides to avoid conflict escalation: the advocacy coalition relies on top-down methods avoiding agitation and petitions, the opponents do not organize and their direct actions, unlike in Wales, are carried out anonymously. In Békéscsaba, the coalition whose core is both a civil initiative and the Slovak minority self-government also profits from the system's predispositions as well as from the access to formal authority. However, the absence of policy conflict can rather be explained by the policy's modest scope and by the fact that both Slovak and Hungarian local populations share the main policy core belief. It must also be stressed that the Welsh language management is influenced by the fact that Welsh is a 'stateless' language, at home in Wales with no external resource of political and cultural power, whereas Polish and Slovak are perceived in both locations as having 'their own' state or national community elsewhere (in Poland and Slovakia, respectively).

Advocacy coalition analysis allows us to pinpoint the shared and the distinctive features of language policy changes in the three locations. Table 2 provides a schema for possible comparisons; here we only deal with the following topics: (1) policy subsystem affiliation of the language policies, (2) external events, (3) policy-oriented learning, and (4) the role of discourses.

Language policy does not always represent a *separate policy subsystem*. It is a separate policy subsystem in Wales, i.e. Wales has its legislation on language and organizations and instruments dealing specifically with language (cf. the Welsh Language Act, Welsh Language Board, Welsh Language Schemes, etc.). In the Czech Republic and Hungary, in contrast, language policy is an intrinsic part of the policy subsystem of ethnic minority rights, i.e. minority languages are part of ethnic minority policy and intertwined with ethnic issues. This is significant. In Wales, the principle of equality of the languages has become the basis of the policy and the support for Welsh is typically not understood as a matter of the relationship between the Welsh and the English. Welsh policymakers show awareness that the Welsh language policy should be implemented in a way that does not divide citizens on the basis of language. In the other two localities, however, the initiative comes from ethnic minority organizations and the promotion of a minority *language* is, instead, generally perceived as a promotion of the respective *ethnic group*. This contextualization has been particularly detrimental to the policy implementation in Český Těšín, where it has evoked reminiscences of past conflicts between ethnic Czechs and ethnic Poles and has spoiled their relations. Both the Těšín Poles and the Těšín Czechs are citizens of the Czech Republic, but the Czechs' persistent idea of their country as a nation-state belonging to ethnic Czechs and not as a state of citizens (as declared in the 1992 Constitution) of various ethnic and linguistic identities prevents them from seeing the introduction of Polish to public signage as a reasonable act of equality between citizens.

Several *external events* have emerged as crucially influential. The fall of the communist regime in the Czech Republic and Hungary resulted in profound changes in socio-economic conditions, which led to the almost complete disappearance of minority languages from the landscapes of the two towns during the 1990s. Nonetheless, the experience of bilingual signage from the communist period strengthened the expectations of a possible reintroduction of minority languages. Other external events – the EU-accession process which entailed the application of subsidiarity in previously heavily centralized states, the use of 'elsewhere-in-Europe' examples and the adoption of the Council of Europe's treaties – provided solid backing for the formulation and implementation of policies supporting the use of minority languages. At the same time, however, the central governments relinquished their monopoly on power with the creation of self-governing administrative units and with

Table 2.   ACF schema for the researched towns (last two decades).

	Llanelli		Český Těšín		Békéscsaba	
Policy goal Policy subsystem Discourses	Addition of Welsh Language policy For: • Equality of languages • Welsh is the native language of Wales		Addition of Polish Ethnic minority policy For: • European standards • Law obedience (minority rights) • Respect towards autochthonous minorities		Addition of Slovak Ethnic minority policy For: • Slovak history of the town/population • European standards	
	Against: • Readability of road signs		Against: • Local Poles understand Czech • Wasting of financial resources • Czech Republic as a nation-state		Against: • Local Slovaks communicate in Hungarian • Few tourists • Hungary to the Hungarians (Jobbik)	
Previous organization	Advocates: Plaid Cymru, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg		Advocates: PZKO, Kongres Polaków		Advocates: Čabianska organizácia Slovákov	
External events	Opponents: none(?) Devolution		Opponents: none • Regime change • Council of Europe treaties • EU-accession • Decision in railway transport subsystem		Opponents: Jobbik(?) • Regime change • Council of Europe treaties • EU-accession	
Resources[a]	Advocates	Opponents	Advocates	Opponents	Advocates	Opponents
Formal authority	XXX	?	XX	X, later 0	XX	X
Financial resources	XXX	?	0, later XX	X?	XX	?
Information	XXX	?	XXX	0	XX?	?
Public opinion	XXX	X?	X	XXX	X	0?
Mobilizable troops	XX	?	X	X?	X	X
Skilful leadership	XXX	0	XX	0	X	X
Policy-oriented learning	XXX	?	XX	0	X	0?

Notes: [a]The number of crosses does not mirror the absolute amount of a resource, but only relative amount as compared with the other towns. The question mark indicates unavailable or insufficient information.

the introduction of private property. As a result, the capability of the Czech and Hungarian governments to assert their language policies effectively came to an end in a number of social domains, settings and places. Thus, while the central authorities have accepted the commitment to implement the FCNM and the ECRML, some newly established local governments, within which the idea of a nation-state is still deeply entrenched, tend to be reluctant to the treaties' implementation. In Wales, in contrast, decentralization as a consequence of devolution enhanced institutional opportunities for Welsh language policy. Here also, the institution of private property imposes high demands on policy implementation as it is necessary to gain support for a policy from a wider group of stakeholders, although Welsh society has a longer tradition of this than Czech and Hungarian society.

Policy-oriented learning, gaining and spreading knowledge about events and experience in other policy subsystems or in the wider national and international context, was a great advantage to the policy advocates in Wales and in Český Těšín, who have profited

from it in many ways. In Békéscsaba, however, although there was some knowledge of the fact that economic motivation could help support the use of minority languages, this knowledge was not used in carrying out signage language policy. The experience from other multilingual areas of Europe also seems to have not been considered in Békéscaba. On the other hand, while the policy advocates in Békéscsaba have based their policy on a more widely shared belief, the policy advocates in Český Těšín grossly underestimated the importance of explaining the policy to ordinary citizens.

The fact that we have not identified more advocacy coalitions in the researched locations does not necessarily imply the inapplicability of ACF, designed for conflictual situations with more coalitions. An analysis following this framework can provide information on the reasons why more coalitions have not formed, e.g. because of the lack of mobilization structures, lack of political opportunities and unavailability of venues and resources, entrenchment of a policy in too many venues, the absence of a competitive policy core belief, etc. It is in this situation of a limited number of advocacy coalitions that the question of what *discourse* mediates a policy core belief or frames the interpretation of language choice becomes particularly significant for the policy process. Before we explain this, note that the notion of discourse (as historically developed and socially shared ways of communicating about certain topics) seems to be absent from the ACF. Indeed, Fischer (2003) criticizes the ACF for failing to explain why and how policy changes come about, suggesting Hajer's (1993) discourse coalition approach (which uses a notion of discourse) as a more adequate alternative. Our research has confirmed that discourses can not only mobilize social actors to coordinate their action, but they can also lead them to act in the same way without any coordination or to refrain from coordinated action. For example, many opponents of Polish signs in Český Těšín strongly disagree with the main policy core belief that Polish should appear in the landscape inhabited by Poles, but they have not taken political action in an organized and coordinated way. One explanation is that the policy advocates have managed to embed this belief in a discourse to which it is morally unacceptable to react negatively at present. Although the discourse of the Communist Party ethnic policy featured the same belief, the policy advocates have not drawn on this stigmatized discourse, but on the discourse of the European standards of minority rights and multilingualism which it is difficult to refuse or resist in the context of the country's ongoing integration into (West) European structures. Similarly in Wales, it is hardly morally acceptable to refuse the principle of equality which underlies the Welsh language policy. Discourses can thus function both as resources and as beliefs (in the sense of ACF). Namely, social actors can use multiple discourses *strategically* as political resources in argumentation and policy justification, but, on the other hand, discourses are also social forms of beliefs, including policy core beliefs, in which the existence of advocacy coalitions is anchored and on which it depends. Advocacy coalition research could benefit from including discourses into its framework.

Conclusion

The tracing of language management processes has not discounted behaviours which the ACF, dealing with long-term coordinated activity, does not capture. Less coordinated short-term activities are not insignificant for the language policy process. They can initiate or modify language policy, such as the direct actions and citizens' complaints did in Wales or the spontaneous resistance against the petitions for Polish signs did in the Těšín region. The tracing of language management processes also shows how much 'ordinary' people

outside of administrative and government structures influence and shape language management later carried out by those structures themselves.

The examination of language management, most strikingly in Český Těšín, has shown that responses to expectation deviations concerning the linguistic landscape are not only belief-based, as one could assume following the ACF, but also emotion-based. This appears most clearly in negative evaluations of deviations from expectations that are normative in nature (i.e. when deviations from them are highly consequential). Normativity is important from the point of view of collective action: our analysis suggests that deviations from *normative* expectations usually provoke negative evaluations that are multiplied and quickly distributed among the population, typically by the media. Such deviations can thus result in widely shared social problems. It is, therefore, important to learn if people coordinate and manage these problems. ACF can help to identify the capacities of advocacy coalitions that have formed to deal with them as well as to diagnose what aspects of the policy process advocacy coalitions underestimated and why their behaviour actually caused other problems.

The three towns differ overall in the way in which the language management of signage has been carried out. The cases particularly show the role of the tradition of civil society, community involvement and political dialogue in the Welsh context and the absence of such a tradition in the Czech and Hungarian contexts. The cases also reveal how uneasy the adoption of Western European ways of minority language protection and of doing politics can be in East-Central European transition societies with different historical experiences.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. *Policy core policy preferences*, a subtype of policy core beliefs in the ACF, are 'normative beliefs that project an image of how the policy subsystem ought to be, provide the vision that guides coalition strategic behaviour, and help unite allies and divide opponents' (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 195).
2. Direct actions are politically motivated actions of protest, disobedience or else undertaken outside of conventional political structures, e.g. strikes, property damage, blocking of roads, sit-ins, etc.

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