

# Language Planning and Policy in Europe, Vol.1

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**LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY**

# **Language Planning and Policy in Europe, Vol.1 Hungary, Finland and Sweden**

Edited by  
Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf Jr.

**MULTILINGUAL MATTERS LTD**  
Clevedon • Buffalo • Toronto

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Language Planning and Policy in Europe/Edited by Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf, Jr.

Language Planning and Policy

Includes bibliographical references.

Contents: v. 1. Hungary, Finland, and Sweden.

1. Language planning--Europe. 2. Language policy--Europe. I. Kaplan, Robert B.

II. Baldauf, Richard B. III. Series.

P40.5.L352E854 2005

306.44'94--dc22

2005009432

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1-85359-811-9 (hbk)

ISBN 1-85359-812-7 (electronic)

**Multilingual Matters Ltd**

UK: Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall, Victoria Road, Clevedon BS21 7HH.

USA: UTP, 2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, USA.

Canada: UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, Ontario M3H 5T8, Canada.

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Material in this book has also appeared in Vol.1, No. 2 and Vol. 3, No. 2 of the journal *Current Issues in Language Planning* and Vol. 20, Nos 4 &5 of the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*.

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Printed and bound in the United States of America.

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# Series Overview

Since 1998 and 1999 when the first six polity studies on language policy and planning – addressing the language situation in particular polities – were published in the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 13 studies (through the end of 2003) have been published in *Current Issues in Language Planning*. These studies have all addressed, to a greater or lesser extent, 22 common questions or issues (Appendix A), thus giving them some degree of consistency. However, we are keenly aware that these studies have been published in the order in which they were completed. While such an arrangement is reasonable for journal publication, the result does not serve the needs of area specialists nor are the various monographs easily accessible to the wider public. As the number of available polity studies has grown, we have planned to update (where necessary) and republish these studies in coherent areal volumes.

The first such volume published concerned Africa (i.e., Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa) (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2004), both because a significant number of studies had become available and because Africa constituted an area that is significantly under-represented in the language planning literature and yet is marked by extremely interesting language policy and planning issues. This second volume – including Finland, Hungary and Sweden – focuses on Europe, again examining polities that have not been the subject of much published language planning and policy activity – at least in English. This volume will shortly be followed by a third volume, also with a focus on Europe (i.e., The Czech Republic, the European Union and Northern Ireland.)

We hope that these areal volumes will better serve the needs of specialists. It is our intent to continue to publish other areal volumes subsequently as sufficient studies are completed. We will do so in the hope that such volumes will be of interest to areal scholars and others interested in language policies and language planning in geographically coherent regions. The areas in which we are planning to produce future volumes, and some of the polities which may be included, are:

**Africa** (2), including Algeria, Burundi and Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Tunisia, Zimbabwe;

**Asia**, including Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Taiwan;

**Europe** (3), including the Ireland, Italy and Malta;

**Latin America**, including Ecuador, Mexico and Paraguay;

**Pacific Basin**, including Fiji and Vanuatu.

In the meantime, we will continue to bring out *Current Issues in Language Planning*, adding to the list of polities available for inclusion in areal volumes. At this point, we cannot predict the intervals over which such areal volumes will appear, since those intervals will be defined by the ability of contributors to complete work on already committed polity studies.

## **Assumptions Relating to Polity Studies**

There are a number of assumptions that we have made about the nature of language policy and planning that have influenced the nature of the studies presented. First, we do not believe that there is, yet, a broader and more coherent paradigm to address the complex questions of language policy / planning development. On the other hand, we do believe that the collection of a large body of more or less comparable data and the careful analysis of that data will give rise to a better paradigm. Therefore, in soliciting the polity studies, we have asked each of the contributors to address some two dozen questions (to the extent that such questions were pertinent to each particular polity); the questions were offered as suggestions of topics that might be covered. (See Appendix A.) Some contributors have followed the questions rather closely; others have been more independent in approaching the task. It should be obvious that, in framing those questions, we were moving from a perhaps inchoate notion of an underlying theory. The reality that our notion was inchoate becomes clear in each of the polity studies.

Second, we have sought to find authors who had an intimate involvement with the language planning and policy decisions made in the polity about which they were writing; i.e., we were looking for insider knowledge and perspectives about the polities. Furthermore, we have asked authors to locate those policies in the local socio-historical context. However, as insiders are part of the process, they may find it difficult to take the part of the 'other' – to be critical of that process. But it is not necessary or even appropriate that they should do so – this can be left to others. As Pennycook (1998: 126) argues:

One of the lessons we need to draw from this account of colonial language policy [i.e., in Hong Kong] is that, in order to make sense of language policies we need to understand both their location historically and their location contextually. What I mean by this is that we can not assume that the promotion of local languages instead of a dominant language, or the promotion of a dominant language at the expense of a local language, are in themselves good or bad. Too often we view these things through the lenses of liberalism, pluralism or anti-imperialism, without understanding the actual location of such policies.

While some authors do take a theoretical or critical stance, or one based on a theoretical approach to the data, many of the studies are primarily descriptive, bringing together and revealing, we hope, the nature of the language development experience in the particular polity. We believe this is a valuable contribution to the theory/paradigm development of the field. As interesting and challenging as it may be to provide a priori descriptions of the nature of the field (e.g., language management; Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003; minority language rights; May, 2003) based on partial data – nor have we been completely immune from this ourselves (e.g., Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003, Chapter 12), we believe the development of a sufficient data base is an important prerequisite for paradigm development.

## **An Invitation to Contribute**

We welcome additional polity contributions. Our views on a number of the issues can be found in Kaplan and Baldauf (1997; 2003); sample polity mono-



graphs have appeared in the extant issues of *Current Issues in Language Planning* <<http://www.cilp.net/>> and in previously published volumes in this series. Interested authors should contact the editors, present a proposal for a monograph, and provide a sample list of references. It is also useful to provide a brief biographical note, indicating any personal involvement in language planning activities in the polity proposed for study as well as any relevant research/publication in LPP. All contributions should, of course, be original, unpublished works. We expect to work with contributors during the preparation of monographs. All monographs will, of course, be reviewed for quality, completeness, accuracy, and style. Experience suggests that co-authored contributions may be very successful, but we want to stress that we are seeking unified monographs on particular polities, not an edited compilation of various authors' efforts. Questions may be addressed to either of us.

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## Volume previously published in this series

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## Appendix A

### Part I: The Language Profile of . . .

1. Name and briefly describe the national/official language(s) (*de jure* or *de facto*).
2. Name and describe the major minority language(s).
3. Name and describe the lesser minority language(s) (include 'dialects', pidgins, creoles and other important aspects of language variation); the definition of minority language/dialect/pidgin will need to be discussed in terms of the sociolinguistic context.
4. Name and describe the major religious language(s); In some polities religious languages and/or missionary policies have had a major impact on the language situation and provide *de facto* language planning. In some contexts religion has been a vehicle for introducing exogenous languages while in other cases it has served to promote indigenous languages.

5. Name and describe the major language(s) of literacy, assuming that it is/ they are not one of those described above.
6. Provide a table indicating the number of speakers of each of the above languages, what percentage of the population they constitute and whether those speakers are largely urban or rural.
7. Where appropriate, provide a map(s) showing the distribution of speakers, key cities and other features referenced in the text.

## **Part II: Language Spread**

8. Specify which languages are taught through the educational system, to whom they are taught, when they are taught and for how long they are taught.
9. Discuss the objectives of language education and the methods of assessment to determine that the objectives are met.
10. To the extent possible, trace the historical development of the policies/ practices identified in items 8 and 9 (may be integrated with 8/9).
11. Name and discuss the major media language(s) and the distribution of media by socio-economic class, ethnic group, urban/rural distinction (including the historical context where possible). For minority language, note the extent that any literature is (has been) available in the language.
12. How has immigration effected language distribution and what measures are in place to cater for learning the national language(s) and/or to support the use of immigrant languages.

## **Part III: Language Policy and Planning**

13. Describe any language planning legislation, policy or implementation that is currently in place.
14. Describe any literacy planning legislation, policy or implementation that is currently in place.
15. To the extent possible, trace the historical development of the policies/ practices identified in items 13 and 14 (may be integrated with these items).
16. Describe and discuss any language planning agencies/ organisations operating in the polity (both formal and informal).
17. Describe and discuss any regional/international influences affecting language planning and policy in the polity (include any external language promotion efforts).
18. To the extent possible, trace the historical development of the policies/ practices identified in items 16 and 17 (may be integrated with these items).

## **Part IV: Language Maintenance and Prospects**

19. Describe and discuss intergenerational transmission of the major language(s); (is this changing over time?).
20. Describe and discuss the probabilities of language death among any of the languages/ language varieties in the polity, any language revival efforts as well as any emerging pidgins or creoles.
21. Add anything you wish to clarify about the language situation and its probable direction of change over the next generation or two.

22. Add pertinent references/bibliography and any necessary appendices (e.g., a general plan of the educational system to clarify the answers to questions 8, 9 and 14).

# Language Policy and Planning in Hungary, Finland and Sweden: Some Common Issues

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## Introduction

Methodological and historical barriers to language policy and planning (LPP) research have often made generalizability of results difficult if not impossible – sometimes because comparable information has not been produced, but often because basic data is simply unavailable. In many polities, Côte d'Ivoire (Djité, 2000) for example, conditions and the state of academic research (i.e., not only the work published about the polity, but access to journals and recent books, computer facilities, time to do research, adequate salaries and working conditions, let alone funds for travel and research projects, etc.) are such that many LPP issues, such as those represented by the 22 questions suggested for these studies, simply could not be adequately addressed (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2004: 7).

Furthermore, LPP research, unlike science, does not have a rich culture of controlled experiments – nor perhaps, despite some early thinking to the contrary (see, e.g., Rubin & Jernudd, 1971), is such work possible. Instead, a wide variety of methodological perspectives have been used to examine various aspects of LPP (see, Baldauf, 2002), but central to this body of work, a descriptive culture of citing 'best practice' has evolved, which is inherently anecdotal (see, e.g., Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). Furthermore, as Noss (1985) noted twenty years ago in relation to language-in-education planning, evaluation of language planning is relatively rare. This remains the case, and what evaluative work is done, at least at the macro level, is often poorly funded, empirical reports and experimental follow-ups that describe the 'effects' of some recent 'innovation,' often forgetting the basic tenet of science that association is not causation.

Thus, there has been a global tendency to view LPP research as one fad (or one 'innovation') after another, each with a typical life span of five to ten years (often tied to the life of a political administration) (see, e.g., Kaplan & Tse, 1982). It is rare that anyone critically examines the evidence that validates one or another new practice. This soft approach to LPP research has led to redundancy and has inspired cynicism and existential fatigue among policy makers, journalists, and the public. In the process, LPP research has become a low-status undertaking, increasingly open to critique, although unfortunately much of the critique has focused on the way the discipline is seen to operate through its 'involvement' in issues like 'linguistic imperialism' or 'minority language rights', rather than on

developing research based studies that appropriately address and try to understand the issues involved.<sup>1</sup>

Another recent direction taken by some scholars has been to attempt to deal with language policy activities in terms of a dichotomy of *success* and *failure*. Given that language policy activity is commonly an on-going or continuous process, it is quite impossible to dichotomise LPP outcomes in such terms, though there are other attempts at structuring order that may be more useful.

For example, Pennycook (1998) provides a critical analysis of English and the discourses of colonialism, especially the tension between views of 'the self' and 'the other', between the 'insider' and the 'outsider', the emic and the etic. His primary focus of analysis is on colonialism – both historic and in its Eurocentric neo-colonialist forms – and the positive manner in which Europeans portrayed themselves versus the way they portrayed the colonised others. Following from this, he points out that there is a need to look 'more contextually . . . at the sites and causes of the development of colonial discourses on language . . . ' as there is a 'constant negotiation of colonial language policy images of the Self and the Other' where 'culture and language were always being produced, developed and redefined' (1998: 128). This dichotomy and interaction between the Self and the Other – which Pennycook illustrates with Hong Kong as an example – is also characteristic of the tension in perspectives that individual LPP authors bring to their studies (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2004: 8).

Another obstacle to dichotomising outcomes – i.e., as successes or as failures – lies in the matter of the actors. Key actors in language policy designs can warp those designs to support quite different objectives (e.g., Kaplan & Baldauf 2003, the discussion of the role of Kim Il Sung in North Korea). In some polities, language policy activity has had a quite specific political objective, often without reference to the realities of language use in the polity, and sometimes to the detriment of the speaker population. As Kayambazinthu points out (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2004: 79), in her study of language planning in Malawi, ' . . . language planning practices (past and present) present an interesting case study of pervasive ad hoc and reactive planning, based more on self-interest and political whim than research.' In such cases, dichotomising outcomes becomes futile.

Furthermore, policy efforts may show some successes and some failures simultaneously. But, as we have pointed out earlier, ' . . . there is a great deal of language planning that occurs in other societal contexts [not necessarily at governmental level] at more modest levels for other purposes' (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 3). At these more micro levels, it is virtually impossible meaningfully to discuss *success* and *failure*. In short, dichotomising outcomes on a two-part scale seems not to constitute a useful activity – the world is not 'black and white'; rather it consists of many shades of grey. Indeed, there is a variety of policy and planning that occurs without planning (e.g., Baldauf, 1994; Eggington, 2002) – i.e., a situation in which some language planning occurs as fall-out from some other planning activity; e.g., the multi-polity accords of the International Postal Union on the required mode for addressing envelopes to assure international delivery.

A purpose of this series is to work with authors, involved in LPP in their polities, to bring together the available research in its socio-historical context, exploring with them what has happened, and the extent to which this has been

documented in their particular polity. Hopefully this will help us to understand the language planning process better.

In particular, this volume brings together three language policy and planning studies related to Northern and Eastern Europe.<sup>2</sup> (See the 'Series Overview' in this volume for a more general discussion of the nature of the series, Appendix A for the 22 questions each study set out to address, and Kaplan *et al.* (2000) for a discussion of our underlying concepts for the studies themselves.) In this introductory paper, rather than trying to provide an introductory summary of the material covered in these studies, we have tried to draw out and discuss some of the more general issues raised by these studies in light of the debates which have been going on in the field.

### Polity Planning Characteristics

Except that all three of these polities fall within the broad definition of *Europe* (and that all three are included within the European Union), the three studies included in this volume do not represent any sort of geographic or linguistic coherence. Hungarian and Finnish are languages belonging to the same language family – the Uralic family; however, the relationship between these two languages can only be established on historical linguistic grounds. Sweden and Finland are part of the Nordic region – together with Denmark, Iceland and Norway. In addition, Finland was part of the Swedish empire for nearly five centuries from 1323 to 1809 and the Swedish language as well as the legal and social structures left their mark on the country. Indeed, Finnish and Swedish are the Constitutional national languages of Finland, and some 300,000 Swedish speakers reside in Finland (out of a total population of about five million, thus just under six per cent of the population). Sweden, on the other hand, has two distinct Finnish speaking populations; those more recent 'economic' migrants speaking standard Finnish and those speaking Meänkieli (Tornedalen Finnish), distinguished by the relative amount of 'Swedisation'. Finnish is not officially recognised as a national language in the Swedish Constitution.

It is important to recall that Hungarian and Swedish have long histories and especially that they were at one time 'imperial' languages which have now been reduced essentially to minor roles in the context of contemporary Europe and in the context of the European Union (EU). At the same time, virtually hundreds of new 'minority' languages have appeared in Europe, in part as the result of the political rearrangements occurring within Europe over the past two centuries, and in part as the result of significant immigration from non-European areas echoing the movement of populations toward seemingly better economic conditions and relative political stability. These population movements, combined with current concerns for minority language rights within the EU, raise language policy and planning concerns in each of the polities.

Minority populations in all three polities are, nevertheless, quite small, but of course in some respects this makes the problem of language provision and support even more difficult. Varietal variation in some groups (e.g. the Roma) increases the problem.

- Finland's minority populations include: Russian 28,205, Estonian 10,176, English 6,919, Somali 6,454, Arabic 4,892, Vietnamese 3,588, German 3,298,

Albanian 3,293, Kurdish 3,115, Chinese 2,907 (out of a total population of five million). None of these groups approaches 1% of the total population.

- Hungary's minority populations are also more fully defined: Roma 142,683, German 30,824, Croatian 13,570, Romanian 10,740, Slovak 10,459, Serbian 2,905, Slovenian 1,930 (out of a total population of ten million). None of these groups approaches 1% of the population.
- Sweden's minority populations are only available as estimates: Saami 5,000 to 10,000; Tornedalians 25,000 to 70,000; Swedish Finns 200,000 to 250,000; Roma 5,000 to 15,000, and Jews about 3,000 (out of a total population of about nine million). The largest of these groups represents only about 2% of the population. The small Jewish population is attributable to some extent to antisemitism over the past 300 years.

While the numbers of speakers of languages other than the respective national languages are really quite small, it is apparent that all of these polities are multi-lingual and multicultural.

As Figure 1 indicates, while these polities differ in a number of ways, they are all smaller states within the European context in population size, in area, and in GDP (as compared with, e. g., France [population = 59,329,691; area = 547,030 sq. km.; GDP = \$1.32 trillion; 5th republic] or Germany [population = 82,797,408; area = 356,910 sq. km.; GDP = \$1.813 trillion; parliamentary democracy]).

<i>Country Name</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Area in sq. km.</i>	<i>GDP* in US\$ (billions)</i>	<i>Type of Government</i>
Finland	c. 5,000,000	337,000	\$103.6	Republic
Hungary	c. 10,000,000	93,000	\$75.4	Republic
Sweden	c. 9,000,000	449,000	\$175.0	Constitutional Monarchy

**Figure 1** Basic facts pertaining to Finland, Hungary and Sweden

\* Gross Domestic Product

Finland and Sweden also share some minority languages – Saami (see, e.g., Bull, 2002), Yiddish (and to some extent Hebrew as a language of religion) and Romani; Finland also includes communities of Tatar and Russian speakers. After World War II, and especially after 1980, groups of immigrants migrated to the Nordic Countries – speakers of Arabic, Chinese (various regionalect varieties), English, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Polish, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese – though the population numbers of these communities are quite small. Hungary, like much of the rest of Europe, also has communities of speakers of these languages. All three of these polities have reported special problems with respect to speakers of Romani.

It is interesting to note the extent to which the respective Ministries of Education are basically responsible for language policy. In all three polities, it is the Ministry of Education that is responsible for first language education – Swedish in Sweden, Hungarian in Hungary and both Finnish and Swedish in Finland. It is also of interest that the minority languages are defined by the Ministries of Education. While all three polities have problems with respect to the Romani-speaking populations, and while Finland and Sweden have special problems



with respect to the Saami people, the other minority languages are essentially consigned to community responsibility; that is, the polities do not assume much responsibility for education in the minority languages, and such education in those languages as is provided is often provided largely through 'Saturday Schools,' basically funded by the respective communities. It is apparent that smaller communities (basically those of 'new' immigrant populations) do not have the resources for extensive language education. Thus, there is a need to provide language support for both traditional minorities and recent immigrant communities (particularly in accord with the provisions of various recent EU treaties) and the difficulties this need poses for all members of the EU, for the three polities under discussion here, and for the increasing membership of the EU.

All three polities essentially endorse a state religion, and communities espousing other religions are left essentially to their own devices. In Finland, some 85% of the population is Lutheran, despite the existence of the 1922 Religious Freedom Law granting religious freedom of choice to all citizens. In Sweden, the Church of Sweden (Lutheran) is dominant, though other sects are permitted to conduct services. In Hungary, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 allowed the 'churches' to select the languages used in their rites, but the Roman Catholic Church has played a significant role. The Church is credit with an important part in the spread of Hungarian. In this instance, duration of residence in the polity is a factor. Thus, Jewish communities which have been in place for at least two centuries have more fully developed language and culture programs than do most of the more recent arrivals; indeed, recent arrivals have very few options in terms of language and culture preservation. The issues pertaining to the Roma appear to be impervious to national solutions and probably will require EU-wide attention.

All three polities report extremely high rates of literacy. However, the meaning of literacy is not uniform. The expansion of the EU has had some impact on language education/preservation, but these developments are too recent to have had any measurable effect. In sum, in all three polities, basic long-term policies have been directed toward assimilation. While these polities share a number of common educational, social and economic problems, the approach to problem solution tends to be largely restricted within the polity; there is relatively little evidence of broader – European-wide – solutions. But the development of the EU holds great promise for more effective recognition of multilingualism and multiculturalism and for the development of more effective remedies in first and second language education and literacy. Indeed, the EU seeks to expand language ability beyond the national language. While Finland has relatively broadly held bilingualism and trilingualism within the base population, Hungary is struggling to increase bilingual and multilingual fluency in its population.

At the same time, the expansion of the EU has exacerbated problems relating to the role and reach of English as a language of wider communication within the European context. The language situation in the operations of the EU is extremely complex (see, e.g., van Els, 2001; van Els & Extra, 1987), but there is no question that English has assumed an important role. Not only has the role of English changed, but the operations of the EU have created a significant termino-



logical issue, since it is desirable that terminology should be consistent across all the members of the EU. These matters have placed great pressure of language policy practitioners with respect to language maintenance in the context of both inter-polity and intra-polity use. Many of what are now perceived as minor languages (including national language now reduced to minority status) may have had significant histories, in some cases may have a standard variety, indeed, may be national languages in other parts of the world, and may have extensive oral and written literatures (see, e.g., Trim, 1999).

Finland and Hungary recognize the existence of relatively large overseas populations and pay some attention to the maintenance of the national languages in the expatriat populations. Sweden also has a significant expatriat population, but there seem to be no efforts to facilitate language maintenance in those populations.

## Concluding Remark

We hope that by bringing these studies together in this second areal volume they will be more accessible and will better serve the needs of specialists. It is our intent to publish other areal volumes subsequently. We will do so in the hope that such volumes will be of interest to areal scholars and others concerned with language policies and language planning in geographically coherent regions. (See the Series Overview elsewhere in this volume for more detail on our future plans.)

## Notes

1. The literature on this topic is large and expanding, and has been drawn together in a number of studies (e.g., May, 2003) and contexts (e.g., the EU, van Els, 2001). The highly charged tenor of aspects of the debate also can be seen in exchanges such as those that have occurred in 'the Forum' between Skutnabb-Kangas, Bruitt-Griffler, Canajarah, Pennycook, and Tollefson in the journal *Language, Identity and Education* (2004, 3(2), 127–160).
2. The studies in this volume were previously published as follows: **Hungary** *Current Issues in Language Planning* (2000) 1, 148–242; **Finland** *Current Issues in Language Planning* (2002) 3, 95–202 and **Sweden** *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (1999) 19, 376–473. Authors' updates to the Hungarian study – taking into account major changes in the language planning and policy situations in that polity – follow as an addendum to the original article.

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# The Language Situation in Hungary

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This monograph reports on the language situation in Hungary, a largely monolingual country, where nearly 98% of the population speak Hungarian as their first language. Therefore, the *primary focus* of the study is on the Hungarian language as used by some 10 million people within the national borders of Hungary, and less attention is paid to either Hungarian as a minority language spoken mostly in the neighbouring countries, or the language of ethnic minorities living in Hungary. At the same time, conscious of the fact that the Hungarian language is of limited use outside Hungary, Hungarians have always attached great importance to foreign language learning. The *secondary focus* of this monograph, therefore, is placed on issues concerning foreign language instruction. While the language situation of Hungary is examined from a historical perspective, the main emphasis is placed on the presentation of recent developments, especially those occurring since the fall of communism in 1989.

## Part I: The Language Profile of Hungary

### The Native Language Profile

It is a truism to state that every country is multilingual – the concept of monolingual nationhood is a myth. However, it is also true that countries differ in the degree of their multilingualism: certain countries are less multilingual than others. Hungary, for example, where nearly 98% of the population speaks Hungarian as a first language (Statistical Yearbook, 1998), is certainly less multilingual than most of its neighbours. Moreover, Hungarian is a language belonging to the Finno-Ugric family of languages, while all the surrounding countries use a language of Indo-European origin as their first language: in five of them a Slavic language is spoken (Slovak, Ukrainian, Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian), whereas Romanian is a Neo-Latin language, and German, the official language of Austria, is a Germanic language. Thus Hungarians are not able to communicate with their non-Hungarian neighbours unless they have learnt to speak foreign languages. In view of this, it is small wonder that the knowledge of foreign languages has always been held in high esteem in Hungary – as a Hungarian proverb puts it: ‘You are as many persons as many languages you can speak.’

In this monograph, the space allotted to the discussion of foreign languages will be commensurate to their importance: the issues related to foreign language knowledge, instruction and study will be dealt with in greater length than those concerning Hungarian. As for minorities in Hungary, since they represent a mere three per cent of the total population, their language situation will receive less attention.

As the words ‘Hungary’ and ‘Hungarians’ can be interpreted in several ways, depending on which historical period is being discussed, it seems important to

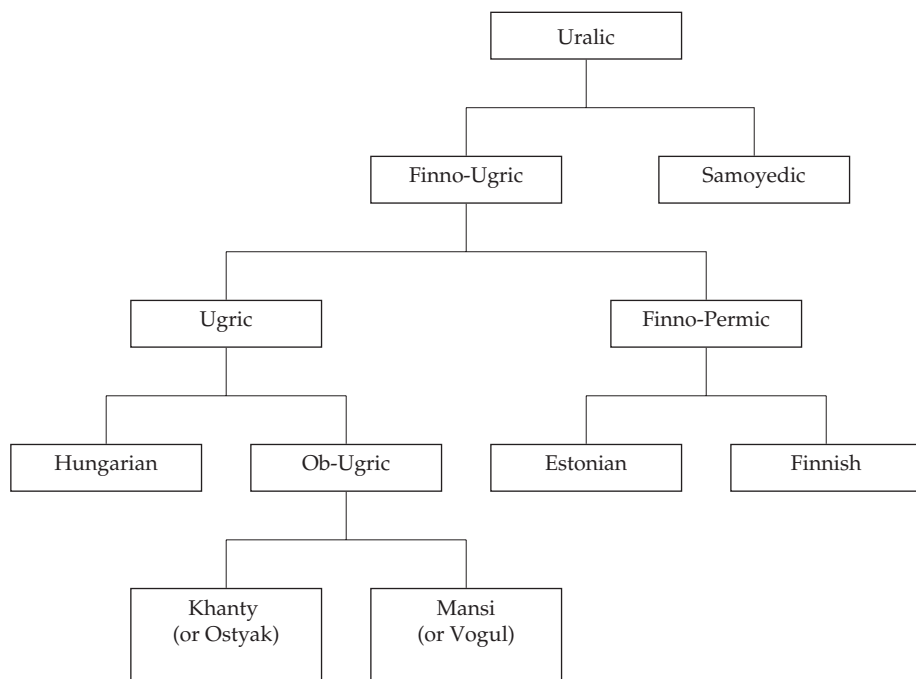
make clear how these terms will be used in this monograph. 'Hungary' will refer to the area presently covered by the Republic of Hungary. 'Hungarians' will denote Hungarian citizens whose first language is Hungarian. Hungarian minority groups who live in neighbouring countries will be referred to as 'ethnic Hungarians', whereas Hungarians living in non-neighbouring countries will be termed 'emigrant Hungarians'.

### **A brief history**

Hungary is a landlocked country, occupying almost the whole of the Carpathian Basin in central Europe. The area of Hungary is 35,920 square miles (93,033 km<sup>2</sup>) and its population is slightly more than 10 million. The territory of present-day Hungary has always been a busy crossroads and, consequently, was attacked and occupied repeatedly by foreign invaders. Wedged among several peoples, Slavs, Germans and Romanians, Hungarians have been exposed to a variety of influences. Two major influences were the Turks, who invaded and occupied Hungary for 150 years in the 16th and 17th centuries and, in their wake, the Austrian Hapsburgs with their strong Germanising impact. National feeling, however, could not be suppressed: Hungarians have a history of heroic but tragic uprisings, including the Revolution and War of Independence in 1848–49. Hungary received autonomy in 1867 after the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was established, and full independence when the monarchy was defeated after World War I. As a consequence of the war, in 1920 some two thirds of the former territory of Hungary was annexed to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia.<sup>1</sup> Thus large Hungarian minority groups were created in the neighbouring countries. Hoping to recover its lost territories, Hungary sided with Nazi Germany in World War II. After the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, 'Soviet liberation forces' remained in the country ostensibly to ensure the implementation of a peace treaty reaffirming the 1920 frontiers. Following a communist take-over in 1949, the Hungarian People's Republic was proclaimed under Stalinist rule. A revolution broke out against this regime in 1956, only to be crushed by the Soviet Union with military force. Between 1956 and 1988, Hungary gradually adopted more and more liberal policies in the economic and cultural spheres, with the result that it was considered to be the most tolerant country behind the 'Iron Curtain'. In 1989, Hungary's communist leaders voluntarily abandoned their monopoly of power, thus facilitating a peaceful shift to a multi-party democracy and free-market economy. Since 1990, three consecutive free elections have been held – an exceptionally long democratic period in the history of Hungary.

### **The origins of the Hungarian language**

Hungarian is a unique and isolated language of central Europe, because it is not Indo-European in origin; rather it belongs to the Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic family of languages (Figure 1). According to estimates, the total number of speakers of Uralic languages all over the world is about 25 million, the majority of whom (approximately 15 million) speak Hungarian. The beginnings of the development of an independent Hungarian language date back to about 1000 BC, and the oldest written records of the language can be traced back to the 11th



**Figure 1** An outline of the family tree of Uralic languages

century AD. Its closest relatives are Mansi (or Vogul) and Khanty (or Ostyak), spoken together by a total of 10,000 people in Western Siberia. More distant relatives are Finnish and Estonian.

Although there have been several theories concerning the origins of the Hungarian language, it is now generally accepted that Hungarian belongs to the Uralic family of languages. Are any of these languages mutually intelligible? Mansi and Khanty are as closely related to each other as Serbian is to Croatian but in neither case would a speaker understand Hungarian. Hungarian and Finnish are as comprehensible to each other as, for example, English is to Greek. In other words, their kinship is based merely on linguistic evidence, revealed in regular and systematic differences and similarities between the two languages – peculiarities that would not be noticed by speakers of either Finnish or Hungarian.

## Hungarian Grammar in a Nutshell

### Spelling and pronunciation

#### *Orthography*

Hungarian uses the Roman alphabet. It contains 44 graphemes, including digraphs, i.e. combinations of single letters which represent one consonant. Among the 30 consonant letters, *q*, *w*, *x*, *y* are not 'native' in the sense that they

only appear in foreign or archaic words such as *tequila*, *Wekerle* (family name), *taxi*, or *papaya*.

There are eight digraphs, e.g. *cs* (like English *ch* in church) and *ny* (like British English *n* in new). There is one consonant which is spelled with three letters (a trigraph): *dzs* (like English *j* in jam). Consonant letters can be doubled to denote phonetically long consonants, e.g. *ott* [ot:] 'there'. In the case of digraphs only the first character is doubled to express length, e.g. *busszal* [bus:al] 'by bus' (and not 'busszal').

Hungarian has 14 vowels, many of which appear with diacritical marks. They form seven short/long pairs, e.g. *a-á*, *i-í*, *ö-ő*, *ü-ű*. Those without an accent or with umlauts are short, those with accents or double accents are long. Length is a distinctive feature of Hungarian vowels since it may affect the meaning of the word, e.g. *tör* [tør] '(s/he) breaks' and *tőr* [tør:] 'dagger'.

Hungarian vowels are either front (*i-í*, *ü-ű*, *e-é*, *ö-ő*) or back (*u-ú*, *o-ó*, *a-á*), either rounded (*ü-ű*, *ö-ő*, *u-ú*, *o-ó*, *a*) or unrounded (*i-í*, *e-é*, *á*).

### Vowel harmony

One of the most important regularities of the sound pattern of Hungarian is that most endings harmonise with the stems they are attached to. This means that most endings have two or three alternative forms differing only in the vowel, e.g. *-nál*, *-nél* 'at', *-hoz*, *-hez*, *-höz* 'to'.

As a rule, two-form suffixes have one form with a back vowel and one with a front vowel, e.g. *-ban*, *-ben* 'in'. The selection of the ending depends on the vowel(s) of the word stem. Back vowel words take the suffix with the back alternant, front vowel words take the front alternants: *ház* – *házban* 'house – in the house', *kert* – *kertben* 'garden – in the garden'. Some suffixes have three alternative forms, one with the back vowel *o*, one with the unrounded front vowel *e*, and a third with the rounded front vowel *ö*: *-on*, *-en*, *-ön* 'on'. Words with a rounded front vowel in the final syllable take the rounded front (*ö*) alternant of the three-form suffixes: *föld* – *földön* 'ground – on the ground'.

Mixed vowel stems usually harmonise according to the vowel of the last syllable, e.g. *virág* – *virággal* 'flower – with flower'. If the last syllable contains one of the so-called neutral vowels: *i-í*, *é*, the mixed vowel stem harmonises with the vowel of the second last syllable, e.g. *kávé* – *kávéba* 'coffee – into coffee' (Polgárdi, 1998; Vago, 1976).

### Sound-letter correspondence

In Hungarian, letters tend to have constant phonetic values: it is generally true that a given letter always corresponds to the same sound.

There are no diphthongs in standard Hungarian, so adjacent vowels are pronounced as separate syllables: *mai* [mai] 'of today'.

### Word stress

In Hungarian, stress always falls on the first syllable of the word, even in loan words: *Amerika* [ˈamerika] 'America' (Kontra, 1995).

## Morphology and syntax

### An agglutinative language

As there are no prepositions in Hungarian, words are built up in a sequence



of units, with each unit expressing a particular grammatical meaning. For example, 'for my pictures' in Hungarian is *képeimnek*, which can be analysed as:

*kép/eim/nek*

picture + plural possessive (i.e. the 1st person singular possessor has more than one possession: 'my pictures') + for. So the direct equivalent of the Hungarian sequence is 'pictures my for'.

### *Verb conjugation*

Verbs are conjugated in Hungarian by putting endings after the basic form of the verb. The basic form is the present tense 3rd person singular, the 's/he' form. Thus the 'dictionary' form means: 'he/she . . . s' (e.g. *fut* 'he/she runs'). This is the stem to conjugate when a different person/number is to be described (Törkenczy, 1997).

There are two 'slots' after the Hungarian verb stem; each slot gives only certain kinds of information. The first slot provides information about tense/mood, the second one about person/number.

*sétál/t/unk* *sétál/ná/tok* walk/-ed/we walk/would/you (plural)

As the verb ending indicates which person is meant, personal pronouns are not usually used except for emphasis.

There are two sets of person/number suffixes and, consequently, two verb conjugations in each tense: definite and indefinite. This distinction is based on the definiteness or the indefiniteness of the object. The object is definite when it is uniquely identifiable, either absolutely (e.g. the name of a person or a place) or through context (e.g. the object is preceded by the definite article). Therefore, there is an important grammatical difference between 'I'm watching *a* film' and 'I'm watching *the* film': the Hungarian verb takes an indefinite suffix in the first sentence and a definite suffix in the second one. This distinction does not exist in English: compare the Hungarian equivalent of the two sample sentences:

*Nézek egy filmet.* I'm watching a film. (indef.)

*Nézem a filmet.* I'm watching the film. (def.)

### *Tri-directionalism*

When expressing location and direction, the most important suffixes can be considered as belonging to three sets: one indicating movement towards a position, one indicating a state of rest in a certain position, and one indicating movement away from the position. Hence the name 'tri-directionalism'. The three 'directions' correspond to the question words *hová?* 'where to?', *hol?* 'where?' and *honnan?* 'where from?' (see Table 1).

A peculiarity of the Hungarian language is that while all towns and countries in the world are associated with a closed space, e.g. *Oxfordban* 'in Oxford', the word '*Hungary*' and most Hungarian place names are regarded as a surface, e.g. *Budapesten* 'in Budapest' (literally 'on Budapest').

### *'Reverse order'*

When endings are attached to some verbal and nominal forms, they are also extended 'to the right', and suffixes express the meanings indicated by preposi-



**Table 1** The tri-directionalism of Hungarian nominal suffixes. After Payne (1987, p.72)

	<i>hová?</i> [where to?]	<i>hol?</i> [where?]	<i>honnan?</i> [where from?]
closed place (e.g. a shop)	-ba/-be (into)	-ban/-ben (in)	-ból/-ből (from)
surface (e.g. a table)	-ra/-re (on to)	-on/-en/-ön (on)	-ról/-ről (from)
point in space (e.g. my friend)	-hoz/-hez/-höz (to)	-nál/-nél (at)	-től/-től (from)

tions in English. In these cases the order of units is reversed compared to English. Thus *barátomtól* 'from my friend' can be analysed as

*barát/om/tól* friend/my/from

The order of personal names is reversed as well; the given name follows the family name, e.g. *Bartók Béla*. The same rule applies to addresses and dates. The sequence goes from general to specific, i.e. town → street → number of block; and year → month → day. However, there are lots of cases when the 'reverse order' rule does not apply: adjectives precede nouns; articles precede nouns and noun phrases just as in English: *a fehér kutya* 'the white dog'.

#### *What Hungarian does not have*

There is the absence of gender. In the third person singular, *ő* is the equivalent of both 'he' and 'she' in English.

There is no equivalent of the English continuous tense in the Hungarian conjugation system: *futok* 'I run/I am running'. There is no perfect aspect either; thus a single Hungarian past verb form can have four English equivalents: *olvastam a könyvet* 'I read the book (yesterday), I have read the book, I was reading the book, I have been reading the book'.

There is no direct equivalent of the possessive 'to have' in present-day Hungarian. It is expressed by using a construction which involves the possessive forms. *Van egy álmom* 'I have a dream' would translate literally as 'Is a dream my' (Kiefer, 1985).

A numeral is followed by a singular noun, e.g. *hét könyv* 'seven books', literally 'seven book' (cf. 'three quid' in British English.)

Further exploration of Hungarian phonology and morphology in English may be found in the following sources: Abondolo, 1988; Benkő & Imre, 1972; Kenesei *et al.*, 1998; Nádasdy, 1985.

## Vocabulary

### *Finno-Ugric lexis*

In current Hungarian there are approximately 700 base words of Finno-Ugric origin. They include:

Pronouns: *én* 'I', *te* 'you', *ő* 'he/she'

Parts of the body: *fej* 'head', *fül* 'ear', *szem* 'eye'

Kinship: *atya* 'father', *anya* 'mother'  
 Nature: *ég* 'sky', *csillag* 'star', *víz* 'water'  
 Plants: *gyökér* 'root', *tő* 'stem', *fa* 'tree'  
 Animals: *lúd* 'goose', *hal* 'fish', *fecske* 'swallow'  
 Activities: *alszik* 'sleep', *áll* 'stand', *mond* 'say'  
 Existence: *lesz* 'will be', *él* 'lives', *hal* 'dies'

The words for 'yes' (*igen*) and 'Hungarian' (*magyar*) are also Finno-Ugric.

The Ugric language community broke up when Hungarian tribes started migrating to the west. The migrations were caused by the attacks of various nomadic peoples from the east and by overpopulation within the local tribes. To reach the Carpathian Basin from the southern foothills of the Ural mountains took about 2000 years; in this period Hungarians settled among other tribes (they lived as part of the Kazar Empire in Levedia, for example). This intermingling had a number of consequences. Among others, it left its mark on the Hungarian vocabulary:

Early Iranian loan words are: *tíz* 'ten'  
 Persian loan words (probably from traders) include: *vásár* 'market'  
 Iranian-Alan loan words are: *híd* 'bridge'.

However, it was ancient Turkish that exerted the strongest impact on Hungarian during the period of migrations. The approximately 300 ancient Turkish loan words include:

Parts of the body: *boka* 'ankle', *kar* 'arm'  
 Colours: *kék* 'blue', *sárga* 'yellow'  
 Animal husbandry: *bika* 'bull', *disznó* 'pig'  
 Agriculture: *alma* 'apple', *búza* 'wheat'  
 Religious beliefs: *boszorkány* 'witch'  
 Domestic life: *kapu* 'gate', *bölcső* 'cradle', *szék* 'chair'

### *Slavic loan words*

When the Hungarians arrived in the Carpathian Basin, the area had been dotted with Slavic settlements. Slavic loan words appeared between the conquest of Hungarian tribes (around 900 AD) and the battle of Mohács (1526).<sup>2</sup> They emerged in many economic, administrative, religious and everyday contexts. Some examples are:

Manufacture and trade: *kovács* 'smith'  
 Administrative and legal: *király* 'king', *pénz* 'money'  
 Church and religion: *keresztény* 'Christian'  
 Family: *cseléd* 'servant', *család* 'family'

Between the 10th and 18th centuries three other languages had a considerable impact on the Hungarian vocabulary: German, Latin and Turkish.

### *German, Latin and Turkish loan words*

The appearance of German loan words can be dated to two different historical periods. The first coincides with the foundation of the Hungarian kingdom (1000 AD) when, at the Bavarian-born Hungarian queen's invitation, missionary