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# The management of diversity in schoolscapes: an analysis of Hungarian practices

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*The material environment of formal education (i.e., schoolscape) is determined not only by laws and local regulations, but by the visual practices of the given institution as well. Inscriptions and cultural symbols placed on the façade and the walls of the school building are tools for orienting the choice between various cultural and linguistic values and ideologies (Johnson 1980; Brown 2012). Based on photographs and research interviews collected in Budapest, I analyse both the material environments of four schools and the metadiscourses through which such spaces are interpreted and regulated. Investigation took place in both mainstream state schools as well as in private schools with alternative curriculum. In the analysis, I make use of the teachers' accounts on the scenes investigated. I present how teachers describe the linguistic landscape, and through these statements, some policies of their schools. Incorporating both emic and etic perspectives, I present differences between two types of organizational culture, comparing state and private schools. I conclude that the schoolscape of state schools can be interpreted in line with Johnson's (1980: 173) findings concerning "the symbolic integration of local schools and national culture", while the private schools seemed to construct schoolscape which foreground students' agency, and attract a special target group of parents.*

*Keywords:* ethnography, education, Hungarian language, language ideologies

## 1 Introduction

In this paper, I present ways in which language ideologies and ideologies of nationalism are (re)constructed through the arrangement of public spaces in school buildings in Hungary. After a short review of the literature, I provide a description of traditions in Hungarian education which are relevant for this study. I then describe and compare schoolscape and their local interpretations, concentrating on visual elements which are illuminative of the regulation and control of school discourses (cf. Aronin & Ó Laoire 2012).

Based on photographs and research interviews collected in Budapest, I analyse both the material environments of four schools and the metadiscourses through which such spaces are interpreted and regulated. Investigation took place in both mainstream state schools as well as in private schools with alternative curriculum. The aim of my paper is to demonstrate both etic and

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emic perspectives in the interpretation of the schoolscape. That is, in the construction of my position as a researcher, I build on previous studies and the interviews I recorded with teachers, applying theoretical and methodological approaches suggested by Garvin (2010) and Laihonen (2012). In the analysis, I make use of the teachers' accounts on the scenes investigated. I present how teachers describe the linguistic landscape, and through these statements, some policies of their schools. Combining the methods and main conceptions of educational narrative studies (Kalaja et al. 2008; Blommaert et al. 2012) and the interactional approach of language ideology studies (Laihonen 2008), I propose a complex analysis of the interactional co-constructedness of ideologies in relation to the management (regulation, arrangement, interpretation) of the linguistic landscape. The interactive routines observed in the research materials uncover institutionalized and inherited models of argumentations and identity construction, and their reception from the viewpoint of the interviewees.

## 2 Dynamism in the (re)arrangement of the schoolscape

Brown (2012: 282) defines *schoolscape* as “the school-based environment where place and text, both written (graphic) and oral, constitute, reproduce, and transform language ideologies”. Based on this definition and considering an extended approach of linguistic landscape (see e.g. Shohamy & Waksman 2009; Pennycook 2009), I use the term *schoolscape* as a reference to the visual and spatial organization of educational spaces, with special emphasis on inscriptions, images and the arrangement of the furniture.

Schoolscapes are determined not only by laws and local regulations, but by the visual practices of the given institution as well. Inscriptions and cultural symbols placed on the façade and the walls of the school building are tools for orienting the choice between various cultural and linguistic ideologies (Johnson 1980; Brown 2012). A dynamic and object-mediated negotiation of norms is detectable in the school buildings, controlled by the communities using the given space. Public spaces are discursively constructed, negotiated and contested (Shohamy 2012). That is, the visual and spatial organization of public spaces indexes the co-construction of ideologies in school settings.

In general, there is a centrally organized division of labour in the (re)construction of ideologies, and it is reflected in the management of educational spaces. According to widespread ideologies on education, teachers are considered to be the source of valid knowledge, while students have rather personal opinions (Wortham 1997): teachers demonstrate how to discuss certain topics, and students are expected to take on those practices, reproducing and reconstructing them (for basic considerations about the ecology of knowledge in certain communities, see Sidnell 2005; for a critical description of the commodification of classroom discourse practices, see Wortham 1997). The texts and visual symbols on display can function as frames of communication, providing canonical, semi-canonical or transgressive models of identity, initiating and influencing the (re)telling or the deconstruction of community-related narratives and evaluations. Objects placed by the directorate of the institution and other elements such as notice boards and tableaux exhibit and offer a wide range of cultural and linguistic norms, while transgressive signs in the form of graffiti can be interpreted as a manifestation of contestation (Pennycook 2009).

In the following sections, investigating the continuous (re)constructedness of schoolscape described above, I focus on the following questions in this study based in Budapest. (1) What are the characteristic, recurring practices in the schoolscape of the schools investigated? (2) Are there observable differences between the local practices, especially between state and private schools? (3) How do the teachers contribute to the understanding and the interpretation of the schoolscape of their workplace?

### 3 Some traditions in Hungarian education

There are several different traditions in the organization of formal discourses in Hungarian schools. Everyday practices reproduce certain elements of these traditions, and public spaces (i.e., spaces designed for communal use) often reflect them. Inversely, the spatial organization and the decoration of discursive spaces influence everyday practices, and thus investigation of this material environment uncovers social implications and hidden curricula (Snyder 1971). In the following paragraphs, I briefly refer to the manifestation of the Herbartian pedagogic tradition (Kenklies 2012) in mainstream schools, which are usually run by the state and churches. I then move on to a discussion of some alternative pedagogic routines, mainly characteristic of private institutions.

Previous studies on Hungarian classroom discourse (e.g. Antalné Szabó 2006; Herbszt 2010; Szabó 2012) suggest that in the case of mainstream schools, students are not involved in group discussions to any significant extent. They often just reproduce and assimilate authoritative statements and arguments, paraphrasing or quoting their teachers' words and the definitions codified in their textbooks (Szabó 2012). Debates and free negotiations of topics are rare. Instead of acting as independent agents, students often play a dependent role; that is, they are considered dependent on others' actions and conditions. This kind of dependence is usually reflected in students' narratives on their school activities (Szabó 2012). In mainstream schools, the majority of teachers maintain authoritative practices. For example, by the continuous evaluation and repair of students' speech, they monopolize the status of the competent speaker and primary knower (Szabó 2012). A genre in which this status inequality is clearly demonstrated is the highly formal speech event called recitation (*felelés* in Hungarian; see Duff 1995) where the student is expected to reproduce (recite) passages from texts in an oral examination which is organized along the display questions of the teacher. In addition, a homogenisation of learning habits is also observable; that is, teachers prefer certain routines and sources in gathering and processing information while they forbid the use of others (for examples, see Klein & Soponyai 2011). Many teachers do not explore in depth the learning, knowledge organizing and information processing techniques that the students have learnt informally or invented for themselves. Students are not experienced in the classroom interaction routines to a satisfactory extent, and their continuous failure (the negative evaluation of their performance) often alienates them from participating in educational discourses. This conflict of communication norms and the lack of a profound negotiation of problems seem to be even more significant if we consider that students in Hungary have relatively little chance of participating in classroom discourses in quantitative terms as well (see Antalné Szabó 2006). The teacher-centered design of learning environments offers limited opportunities, if any, for autonomous learning and

communication. Thus, students are very seldom, if ever, encouraged to articulate their own views.

Thanks to the decentralization (also called as liberalization) of education after the fall of communism (1989) in Hungary, schooling was no longer conceptualized as a state monopoly: the right to run a school was given to churches and foundations as well. The adaptation or reiteration of internationally accepted programs such as Waldorf and Montessori systems was observable. International schools and voluntary schools, following various alternative curricula, have been established as well. Unlike the mainstream institutions, these alternative schools aim at placing the children and adolescents at the centre of communication at school. In these schools, students have considerable impact on their studies and the strategies they use while learning. They often negotiate conflicts in public, and participate actively in the elaboration and the modification of school rules and practices (for a recent review, see Klein & Soponyai 2011).

As a paradox, after 1989, the democratization of Hungarian political life and the changes in the organization of the education system left educational ideologies and practices almost untouched. That is, authoritative, teacher-centred communicative practices are still dominant (Antalné Szabó 2006), and alternative pedagogical programs had only a limited impact on mainstream education (see Klein & Soponyai 2011 for details). What is more, several pedagogical innovations of the past decades were rejected by the current Hungarian law on education (see the *Act 190 on the National Public Education*, operative from 1 September 2013). My data collection was carried out in the months when transition to the recentralized education system had begun. In the new system, one single nationwide institution (KLIK) supervises almost all Hungarian schools, and regional directorates control the institutions. Local authorities have no right to nominate head teachers (i.e., school principals); they are appointed by the regional directorate (in many cases without considering the opinion of the school community). In addition, head teachers cannot make certain decisions about financial, organisational or professional issues concerning their schools without permission given by the regional directorate (for details, see Szüdi 2012).

Predictably, the multiple layers of bureaucracy and the limited agency of teachers and head teachers will influence school discourse practices in the future. For example, the distribution of textbooks and other educational materials has been centralised as well, managed by one single corporation called Kelló (Hír24 2012). The wide selection of textbooks has been radically diminished to a couple of materials for each subject (Origo 2013). Recent developments can be seen to rather enhance existing authoritarian tendencies in mainstream schools than to bring a new turn.

#### **4 Research materials and methods of analysis**

The combination of an interactional approach to language ideology studies and a linguistic landscape approach is, as yet, relatively new in research in Hungary and in East-Central Europe (but see Laihonon 2012). In order to gather data for future research and to contribute to theory building on this field, I carried out fieldwork from March to May 2013, and since then I have built a specific corpus

which contains circa 4 hours of recorded speech and nearly 900 photos from four schools:

**Table 1.** The sources in the corpus.

Nr	Form of education	School type	Number of pictures	Length of interviews
1	Elementary school	State	263	49' 46"
2	Grammar school and vocational school	State	264	90' 28"
3	Grammar school and vocational school	Private (foundation)	108	38' 21"
4	Grammar school	Private (foundation)	246	A: 23' 08" B: 31' 08"
<b>Total:</b>			<b>881</b>	<b>232' 51"</b>

I used a specific fieldwork method that I call *tourist guide technique*, similar to Garvin's walking tour methodology (Garvin 2010). That is, during the photographing of signs in the school building, I interviewed a person with some authority, namely a teacher from the given institution who guided me through the corridors, classrooms and other public spaces (in School 4, I recorded two interviews). At the beginning of the tour, I asked the teacher to make comments on the choice of language, quotes, and other symbols on display as if she was a tourist guide and I was a tourist. Without having a prepared list of questions, reflecting to the teachers' utterances, I occasionally asked my guides about further details, for example the reasons for displaying the artefacts, or whether stories or anecdotes are linked to certain objects. That is, we co-constructed narratives and ideologies as we surveyed the material environment together (cf. Fontana 2003: 52–53). This was a kind of joint exploration: my perspective as researcher, in this environment could draw attention to the hidden and implicit policies and ideologies of the school communities for the teachers as insiders, while I could take new insights from an insider angle into the topic of my study. The interview and its interactional structure was then analysed from a combined CA and DA perspective with reference to the dynamically changing and visually documented discourse environment. The analysis was based on the simultaneous investigation of the pictures, the audio recordings and the transcript. Representative and characteristic interview excerpts and pictures were chosen from the corpus for the purpose of demonstration in this article.

For ethical reasons, informed consent was requested and given by all the participants. Personal details such as names or addresses were altered in the transcription, and persons are not identifiable in the pictures. In this paper I refer to the teachers and other persons from the schools with pseudonyms.

A combination of conversation analysis, discourse analysis, discursive social psychology and dialogic approaches (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Dufva 2005) was used to take account of the full complexity of the data. The analysis highlighted in particular the socially constructed nature of language ideologies. Special attention was paid to agency and the voices of the researched emerging in the texts, because agency (the semiotically constructed display of the ability to act with initiative and effect; cf. Hunter & Cooke 2007: 72) reflects the degree of a person's involvement in social activities (Aro 2012). The construction of agency relations is a tool for portraying a community as well (e.g. to what extent are the

members of the given community independent agents or patients?; what are their possibilities of shaping their own linguistic and visual environment?; cf. Szalai 2011). From this perspective, it is important to consider my own agency in the research process and in the interviews. As a researcher who is engaged in the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity and democratic practices in education, it was me who initiated the interviews and asked the participants to suggest other teachers who could participate. During the interviews, I sometimes challenged monolinguistic and monoculturalist ideologies when I asked for further details, explanations or justifications from the teacher, usually in the form of “why?”-initiated questions.

The goal of the study was to collect material for an investigation in the Hungarian context. Since this part of the research focuses on four schools in Budapest, it is not possible to generalize from the following analyses to the whole Hungarian school system. Instead, the aim is to provide an in-depth account on these four cases. Taking that the widest heterogeneity of educational programmes is available in the capital city, Budapest was an ideal site of research for the purposes of the present study. Considering that the teachers suggested others who agreed to participate in the study, their professional network was another influential factor in the selection of the schools.

## **5 Constructing communities and negotiating norms through the schoolscape**

Depending on their functional characteristics and their target audience, there is a difference between specific school spaces. For example, the façade of the building addresses a very general audience and gives basic information about the institution, for example the name and the specialism. According to the §7 of *Act 202 of 2011 on the Use of the Coat of Arms and Flag of Hungary and on State Awards*, it is now obligatory to display the flag of Hungary on the façade of school buildings. The former practice was to display this flag only on the occasion of national holidays. Additionally, I observed that it was a general practice to display the flag of the European Union as well. Through the use of these symbols, state and private schools alike, signalled the supremacy of the state and its membership in the EU.

In the following subsections, I analyse the linguistic landscape of the inner spaces of the schools investigated. First, I concentrate on the corridors which are used both by insider and outsider groups. These spaces are often arranged in a way that they attract parents and visitors (e.g. Khan 2012). Secondly, I provide an account on diverse practices in the classrooms and other learning areas (e.g. the library) which are mainly used by insider groups. During the analysis, I highlight four phenomena for detailed investigation. First, I present the visual reconstruction of national narratives and ideologies concerning Hungarian history (5.2.1) and language (5.2.2). I then investigate the (re)construction of negotiation processes, analysing different local interpretations of the same library scene (5.2.3) and the students’ agency (with a special regard to transgressive signs; 5.2.4).

### 5.1 Corridors and staircases

The school corridors and staircases are used both by the insider groups and by visitors from outside; that is why their arrangement plays an important role in the official (top-down) self-identification of the school. In the two state schools, this self-identification was mainly achieved by emphasizing the contribution of the given institution to the maintenance of national identity and to the national education system. The namesakes foregrounded were central personalities within various national narratives. In School 1, it was an outstanding musician who had composed the music of the national anthem and the first Hungarian opera. In school 2, the namesake was a 16<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary leader. Their connection to the Hungarian nation building was visualized in many ways. For example, in School 1, a marble table with the name of the namesake was surrounded by ribbons in the national colours, i.e., red, white and green. In this school, as the head teacher narrated, there is an annual one-week festival commemorating the namesake, and its opening ceremony takes place near the marble table. Conversely, the two private schools were named after their specialism, without reference to any personality.

As mentioned above, the state schools I visited as part of the study put an emphasis on the demonstration of their contribution to the Hungarian school system, i.e., their place in the ranking of Hungarian schools. Hungarian public education is highly competitive in general, and there is a tradition of segregating children by their performance (Csapó et al. 2009; Nahalka 2011). Schools make efforts to create an image of being a highly ranked institution, in order to attract those parents who are looking for an institution for high-performing students. Considering this tradition of elitism, it is not surprising that the most common means of positioning the school in this local and nationwide competition is the public exhibition of certificates. For example, in School 1, there were several boards full of diplomas and display cases crowded with cups from competitions at a city district level, all-Budapest and nationwide levels, emphasizing outstanding results in various school subjects and arts (Fig. 1). Similarly, in School 2, there were circa one hundred certificates and cups, emphasizing the results of its specialism in physical education. These exhibitions address both visitors and students. For the outsiders, they aim at attracting favourable attention, while these visual-textual tools offer an official interpretation of the notion of school success for the students. The diplomas and cups are multimodal means of constructing peer models and serve the goals of positioning the institution in general. They also highlight several personalities from the school community.

Similar exhibitions were not seen in Schools 3 and 4. As we will see later, the teachers of these schools who have influence on the schoolscape seldom position their local community within nationwide frame in the interior of the building. Likewise, the visual articulation of competitiveness does not play a significant role in the material environment: mainly the creative artwork of the students was made publicly visible. This practice was observed in Schools 1 and 2 as well, but, because the signs of nationalism and competitiveness were placed at the most central places, the position of artwork did not seem to be dominant.





**Figure 1.** Wall of fame: certificates in School 1 (from left to right, for city district level, metropolitan and nationwide level competitions).

### 5.2 Practices aimed at insider communities

While the arrangement of the landscape in the corridors and the staircases contributes to the (re)construction of all-institutional identities, ideologies and narratives, artefacts in the classroom mainly index the discourses of a community of students. As a general framing of discourse, national symbols were on display in Schools 1 and 2, usually in a central position (e.g. above the blackboard, as in Fig. 2). In these schools, the arrangement of the furniture was clearly designed for teacher-fronted classroom practice. The teachers' desk was near to the blackboard, and the students' desks were all facing it, in two or three rows. The national symbols (especially the coat of arms, accompanied by canonic texts such as the national anthem) were generally on the teacher's side, displaying authority. In Fig. 2, for example, we can see the coat of arms of Hungary displayed three times: once in the centre, and twice on the prints of two canonic texts. On the left, an excerpt from the national anthem known as *Himnusz* 'Hymn', can be read (usually performed at the opening of state and school ceremonies), while on the right, there is an excerpt from the poem *Szózat* which is used as a "second anthem" (usually performed at the closing of such ceremonies).



**Figure 2.** National symbols above the blackboard (School 1).

According to a teacher in School 2, these symbols are parts of the normative (i.e., average, not extraordinary) schoolscape. During the interview, after entering a classroom, she started to describe the place, pointing to some photographs depicting old Budapest, and then she added (interviews were conducted in Hungarian; I provide the excerpts in my own translation):

#### Excerpt 1

- Zsuzsa:** [...] and such completely boring stuff like the *Himnusz* and the *Szózat* in frames.
- Researcher:** Uh huh, and why do you say that it is boring?
- Zsuzsa:** Well
- Researcher:** What do you think about this?
- Zsuzsa:** I mean that it is boring, so nothing extraordinary,
- Researcher:** Uh huh.
- Zsuzsa:** I think these can be found in other schools, there is nothing...
- Researcher:** Uh huh, uh huh.
- Zsuzsa:** ...special in them.

The teacher initiated the evaluation, so her first turn was not a reaction to a question. Calling these artefacts boring, Zsuzsa critically defined the display of national symbols as the unmarked case. First, she spontaneously reveals her personal (and critical) perception of the symbols as 'boring'. Then I initiated



of another culture of pedagogy which aims at enhancing student-teacher and student-student interaction.

### 5.2.1 Reconstructions of a national narrative: the 1848 revolution in the classroom

In the following paragraphs, I present various practices reproduced in state schools for reconstructing national narratives. These narratives are considered to be important elements of Hungarian national identity. As an example, I provide analysis of the visualisation of the 1848 revolution which is narrated as an emblematic episode in the construction of the Hungarian nation state. The photos were taken in March 2013, a few days before (in School 1) and after (in School 2) the commemorative ceremonies organized by the schools. (15 March is the memorial day of the revolution and it is a public holiday in Hungary.)



**Figure 4.** National symbols and copies of certificates in School 1.

In a classroom in School 1 (Fig. 4), a typical combination of signs referring to the school's contribution to nation building and competitions was observable: flags, cockades (ornaments knot of ribbon, usually worn on coats or hats), the national colours and other symbols indexing the Hungarian nation are very close to the copies of certificates (below) on the information board. Above the certificates, an inscription (*Büszkeségeink* 'we are proud of them') can be read. The head teacher of School 1 summarized the related policy of her institution near to the end of the interview ([ ] marks overlaps):

### Excerpt 2

**Researcher:** And I see that there is a wall of fame for the class.

**Éva:** Yes, here, there it is. So [it's what I told you that that]

**Researcher:** [Yes, they are collecting nicely.]

**Éva:** er every class is a bit different,

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Éva:** but if you take a closer look, if we draw the conclusion, then the same values appear

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Éva:** everywhere, that we should appreciate our country, our history, our culture, our past, [we should be proud]

**Researcher:** [Yes, yes, yes.]

**Éva:** of those who deserve it,

**Researcher:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Éva:** so this this this common core appears everywhere, first one way, then another.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Éva:** Appreciating individual performance, but, at the same time, building a community is very important.

On my initiative, Éva started to speak about the wall of fame, constructing a generalized description of the school policy. First, she addressed me ("if you take a closer look"), involving me in her account, initiating consent ("if we draw the conclusion"), and then she started to formulate her utterances using 'we' ("we should..."), as if she was articulating the voice of the whole community. Finally, she proposed a conclusion in a depersonalized manner ("...is very important"), strengthening her authoritative position.

On the above mentioned (Fig. 4) board, cockades are on display for the commemoration of the revolution. Following the 1789 French tradition, the revolutionaries created the Hungarian cockade, and since then, this symbol refers to Hungarian nationalism. The cockades and other symbols of the revolution (e.g. the coat of arms without the *royal*, a.k.a. *holy* crown) are depicted in the artwork of the students. It is quite common, especially in elementary schools, for students to create such posters, drawings and other decorations following their teachers' initiative. During their work, they learn to highlight and visualize several fragments of the codified Hungarian national narratives, recycling traditional symbols and engaging in standardized reconstructions. As an example of visual reconstruction, Fig. 5 shows how a 9 or 10 year-old student summarized the narrative of the 1848 revolution and the 1848–1849 war of independence.





**Figure 5.** A reconstruction of codified narratives (School 1).

The student had written the emblematic date of the national holiday (15 March 1848) on the top of his or her drawing, colouring the letters and numbers according to the national tricolour. In the centre, a large cockade can be seen. At the bottom, s/he had highlighted one of the locations of the revolution: the National Museum in Budapest. Tradition has it that the great Hungarian national romantic poet Sándor Petőfi presented his poem *Nemzeti dal* 'National song' on the stairs of the museum. (According to experts, this is a myth and cannot be proved to be a historic fact; see Debreczeni-Droppán 2007.) The poem was printed as a handbill on the first day of the revolution and the text itself and its author became an emblematic symbol of the movement. In another fragment of the narrative, on the right, a soldier stands next to a cannon. This can be interpreted as a reference to the war of independence (1848–1849). The student had illustrated the museum building in its present form, with the Hungarian and the EU flag on display. Thus, the drawing depicted the place of commemoration. In another commemorative element, the student had quoted an excerpt from a poem *Március idusán* 'In the middle of March' written by Gyula Juhász (the translation is mine):

**Excerpt 3**

*Vannak napok, melyek nem szállnak el,  
De az idők végéig megmaradnak.*

There are days that do not fly away  
But remain until the end of time.

The quotation was probably suggested by the teacher, and the name of the poet (the source of authority) was added by her.

As Johnson (1980) has observed, handmade artefacts are more common in classrooms for younger children. Adolescents are usually exposed to the visual stimuli of mass produced signs. For example, in School 2, a print copy supports the reconstruction of the history of the 1848 revolution (Fig. 6). From left to right, it offers a chronological summary – in a manner similar to the previously presented handwork. First comes the text of *Nemzeti dal* ‘National song’, and on the right, there is a tableau of the generals who were executed on 6 October 1849, after the failure of the war of independence. They are considered the martyrs of the war of Hungarian independence.



**Figure 6.** Mass production of canonic texts and idealized pictures of highlighted personalities (School 2).

Hungarian national narratives such as the history of Hungarian revolutions provide key resources for national, institutional and personal identity construction. They are intertwined with the community events in which they are retold. Thus, the self-presentation of the community members as the maintainers of a Hungarian tradition is on display as well. As narrated by my guide in School 2, the classes visit various places of commemoration (e.g. statues, memorials, etc.) when the anniversary of the revolution is approaching. These tours are initiated by the teachers. The students are expected to take photos of themselves as a group, demonstrating that they have visited the given sight. As a task, they create and display a handmade tableau with the photo of their group on it. One of the classes entitled their work *Márciusi ifjak* 'Young people of March' (Fig. 7). This expression traditionally refers to the 1848 revolutionaries, but on the tableau, it is the students and not the historical personalities who are portrayed. Thus, with the use of this expression and the symbolic appearance of the blood of the martyrs, the students construct a sense of the communion between them and the revolutionaries.



**Figure 7.** 'Young people of March' (School 2).

Considering that the events of commemoration and the reconstruction of national narratives are crucial elements in the maintenance of the nation state ideology in Hungary, exclusively monolingual and monoethnic references seem to be essential in these practices. In the days of the revolution, the majority of the inhabitants of Pest (where the revolution broke out) were German speakers. Considering bilingual realities, the text of the leaflets was available in two languages: Hungarian and German (Debreczeni-Droppán 2007), but the German versions were never on display in the investigated contemporary schoolscapes,



and the contribution to the revolution and the war of independence by the participating many non-Hungarian ethnicities (see Deák 1997) were not visualized. Similarly, the heterogeneous ethnic and cultural background of the protagonists of the narratives (e.g. the Slovak background of Sándor Petőfi – born Petrovics – or the ethnicity of the executed generals) was not emphasised. Thus, a multilingual and multi-ethnic history was reconstructed in a monolingual and monocultural way. Here we can witness the practice of ideological *erasure* (Irvine & Gal 2009), that is, certain elements and issues have been erased from the re-narration of the revolution.

### 5.2.2 The (re)construction of standardized and canonical literacies

Tableaux designed for pedagogical purposes such as visual summaries of grammar or natural science topics played a central role in the regulation of classroom discourses and in norm negotiation in some of the schools I visited. They displayed and visualized scientific, political and religious ideologies disseminated by each institution. In the following paragraphs, I analyse the visual (re)construction of the notion of the standard Hungarian language and the canonical national literature. These practices are important in the (re)production of the nation state ideology in Hungary (for further analysis on standardism and the notion of national literacies, see Milroy 2001 and Bonfiglio 2013).

As they enter the school system, students learn to read and write, and, at the same time, they are introduced to the formal use of metalanguage. Tableaux depicting the Hungarian alphabet as a standardized system also serve to portray the language itself as a standard sign system (Fig. 8, 9). Students learn to segment utterances (acquiring a bias towards writing: sentences), words, syllables, consonants and vowels, and then they learn to speak about language as the combination of these elements. Emphasizing the importance of writing, school discourse practices orient students to the symbolic power of the written standard as well.

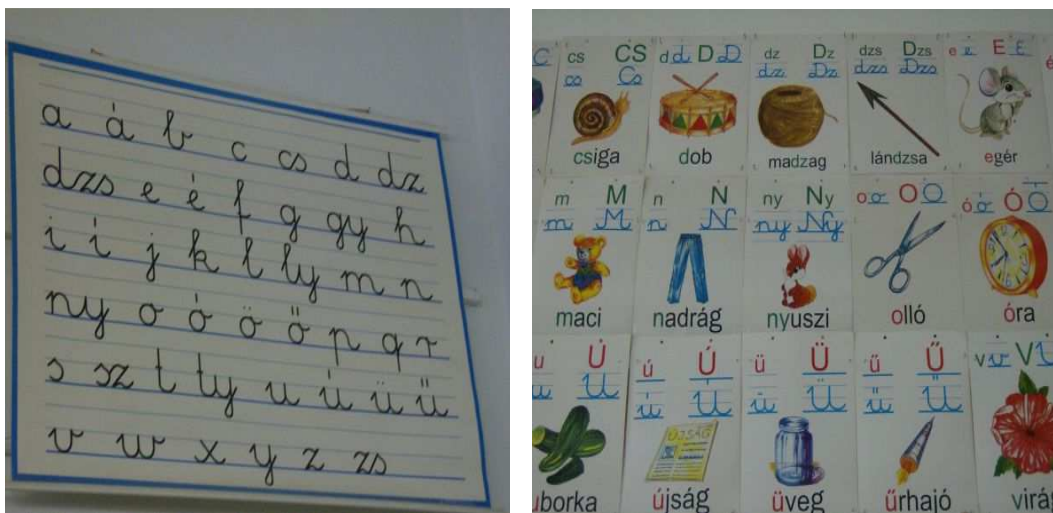


Figure 8, 9. Language as a standard sign system (School 1).

After the introductory level of primary education, the symbolic role of the standardized variety is strengthened by mass-produced and handmade tableaux. This process of legitimation is similar to the visual reconstruction of certain narratives from the history of the Hungarian nation (as seen in the above section) and the Hungarian literary tradition. For example, as Fig. 10 and 11 illustrate, there are tableaux on display which highlight personalities who are considered the most eminent contributors to the written Hungarian language.



**Figure 10.** The life of poet János Arany – mass-produced print (School 1).

The main events from the life of poet János Arany were marked on a map of pre-WW1 Greater Hungary in School 1 (Fig. 10). The map depicts the geopolitical reality in the life of the poet, but later it became an emblematic image of post-WW1 Hungarian nationalism. On the tableau, several artworks also visualised the connection between Arany's works and his contemporaries. This tableau had been placed in a room specially designed for teaching Hungarian grammar and literature, which was full of portraits, maps, and summaries on grammar. According to my teacher guide, when the students are learning the life of a poet, such tableaux are unhooked from the walls and placed in the centre of the room. It is a procedure of making a canonized narrative central, not just discursively but spatially and visually, too.



**Figure 11.** The life and works of writer and editor Ernő Osvát – as retold by the students (School 2).

In School 2, there was no special classroom for Hungarian studies, but similar tableaux were on display. For example, the life and activity of writer and editor Ernő Osvát was summarized (Fig. 11). These handmade artefacts contribute to the internalization of standardized life narratives through highlighting and visualising certain events and the symbolic images linked to those events (cf. section 5.2.1 and Fig. 5, 7).

Tableaux on humanities or on science were also on display in Schools 3 and 4, but they did not appear as frequently as in the state schools.

### 5.2.3 Competing interpretations

In School 4, there were no displays of standardized Hungarian national narratives on the corridor or classroom walls. Tableaux of Hungarian politicians or artists such as those illustrated in Fig. 6 were absent. The only public space where similar decoration was observable was the school library. In the main reading room, handmade portraits of artists were hanging from the ceiling (Fig. 12).



Later, following Vilma’s advice, I asked Kati about the reasons. Kati, who was the librarian, provided a narrative on the pictures. According to her, she had asked the Arts teacher for portraits for the library. The students, under the supervision of that teacher, made the magnified copies of some of Kati’s pictures. According to her, it was the students’ choice to make a copy of one or another portrait. Several students chose the same picture, so it happens that there are four or six copies of the same picture on display. In the interview, Kati emphasizes that this selection is playful and personal, rather than official or prescriptive:

#### Excerpt 5

**Researcher:** And {what about} these things hanging?

[...]

**Kati:** these {are like} pictures of angels, because actually it’s as if {they are} small Virgin Marys hanging {from the ceiling}. I definitely like it because there is a bit of silliness in it, so I’m not touched by this, but anyway I like it so much.

Emphasizing personal emotions and affects (“like”, “touched”) and linking the notion of unconventional (“silliness”) to the portraits, referring to extra-school traditions like religion (“angels”, “small Virgin Marys”), Kati chose a different strategy from Vilma: she did not refer to authorities (e.g. the “school tradition”) but to herself as somebody who enjoys the display of these artefacts. The selection of portraits reflects a wider conception of culture than in the state schools, exhibiting traditional and contemporary popular artists at the same time; e.g. the popular comedian and film director Woody Allen comes directly after the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian national playwright and poet Imre Madách, who is preceded by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century English writer D. H. Lawrence.

#### 5.2.4 Competing cultures: negotiations on the control of surfaces

All the institutions I visited have had specific policies on the arrangement of indoor surfaces. During the interviews, the teachers made these policies explicit on their own initiative or in response to my questions. The teachers often referred to students’ impact on the schoolscapes.

According to Shohamy (2012), there are sometimes conflicts between communities concerning the control of publicly available spaces. In all the four the schools I visited, teachers tended to support a top-down hierarchic order, restricting the students’ activity in rearrangement and redesign, regulating even the students’ informal visual communication. However, such regulations differed in their scope and implementation. For example, in School 2, teachers often designated areas for the students’ in-group communication. As a manifestation of this technique, there were boards where students could post their texts and artwork. For instance, Fig. 13 shows a collection of wisecracks. Such collections visually constructed a long-established community of practice and highlighted certain scenes from the community’s shared past. In excerpt (6), one of the wisecracks is cited from a female teacher who addresses a boy called András (*Andriska* is his nickname; I provide my own translations from Hungarian):



**Excerpt 6**

We're quite fine when our brain doesn't work, don't you think, Andriska?

András, who is linked to the lack of mental effort in this quote (cf. "when our brain doesn't work"), appeared as a protagonist in other wisecracks on the very same board. He seemed to be famous for his easy-going and challenging behaviour which was illustrated by a quoted conversation between him and a male teacher:

**Excerpt 7**

Professor Garai: I'll break the hand of that student who...  
 Kiss András: Will you, Professor Garai? Oh come on, there's no way...

In excerpt (7), András has challenged the background of the teacher's playful threat, expressing doubts concerning the physical power of the teacher.



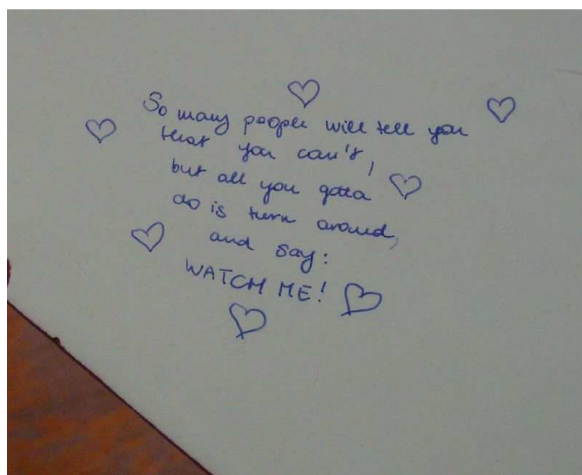
**Figure 13.** Collection of wisecracks (School 2).

Other student activities displaying the personalization of public spaces were also observable. In School 2, an official timetable issued by the Ministry of Human Resources of Hungary (the body responsible for public education) was posted on the wall. It indicated Hungarian national holidays, regional and nationwide competitions in school subjects, and the main events of the semester. The timetable was coloured with the Hungarian red-white-green tricolour. This mass-produced poster had been sent to all educational institutions in Hungary, representing the goals and standards of the Ministry (e.g. in the form of competitions and ceremonies). The students in one of the classes had overwritten the timetable, making it more personal and local. Next to the dates relevant to the Hungarian state education system, they marked the dates important for their own close community of practice: for example, the birthdays of the classmates (Fig. 14).

K. Andi szülinap! ♥	P. A félévi tanulmányi eredményekről szóló értesítések határideje. Az általános felvételi eljárás kezdete. Központi írásbeli felvételi vizsgák az érintett 6 és 8 évfolyamos gimnáziumokban. A HHTAJTP-be tartozó intézmények találkozási szerveznek a programba jelentkezőkkel. A BM irányítása alá tartozó szakképzések szakmai szóbeli és gyakorlati vizsgáinak befejező napja.	H. Biológia OKTV más A szóbeli meghallgatások Eljárás keretében a középt
Sze.	Szo. Központi írásbeli felvételi vizsgák a 9. évfolyamra jelentkezők, valamint a HHTAJTP-be jelentkezők számára az érintett középfokú intézményekben.	K. Spanyol nyelv OKTV
Cs.	V.	Sze. Olasz nyelv OKTV
P. A téli szünet előtti utolsó tanítási nap.	H.	Cs. Olasz nyelv OKTV
Szo.	K.	P. Téli szünet OKTV más határideje (második forduló) Kultúra OKTV második fo
V.	Sze. Magyar nyelv OKTV második forduló (a pályamunkák felkészítési határideje)	Szo.
H. Pihenőnap	Cs. Főző központi írásbeli felvételi vizsgák a 6 és 8 évfolyamos gimnáziumokban és a 9. évfolyamra jelentkezők, továbbá a HHTAJTP-be jelentkezők számára azoknak, akik az előző tanévtől	V.

**Figure 14.** Personalization and localization of the official timetable (School 2).

Other marks of in-group values and personal interests were managed differently in the institutions. According to my teacher guide, in School 2, students were not allowed to use certain surfaces like the wooden panelling on the walls or the top of the desks. For those who wrote on those surfaces, a written punishment was given by the head teacher. It was a serious sanction, given that somebody who received a couple of these kinds of punishment could be dismissed from the school. Nevertheless, students continued the symbolic occupation of these surfaces (Fig. 15, 16) as a manifestation of transgression (cf. Pennycook 2009) and their claim for a higher level of agency in the (re)arrangement of the schoolscape.



**Figure 15.** Text on the students' desk in School 2.





After she had described the above presented institutional policy and its inefficiency, I asked her about the ideologies legitimizing this policy:

**Excerpt 9**

**Researcher:** What is the problem with this kind of decoration?

**Zsuzsa:** Well, I think that mainly that it's not organized and, well, there are quite a lot of students who probably wouldn't stop at the border. [...] Zero tolerance.

In this excerpt, Zsuzsa articulated the central position of the organization – in other words, the controlled use of public spaces. Reserving the right of regulation to the teachers, she added that if regulation was less strict, control would be hard to sustain.



**Figure 17.** Legally produced graffiti (School 3).

In School 3, according to my teacher guide, conflicts concerning graffiti had been regular in the past. At a school meeting, with the active participation of students, the whole school community had decided to allow the posting of graffiti on a certain staircase wall (Fig. 17). That area of the wall is repainted annually, at the beginning of the new school year. This practice of shared agency resonates well with the school's student-centred philosophy. According to the agreement, other places could not be used for graffiti. The teacher called the illegal signs vandalism:

**Excerpt 10**

- Researcher:** And, by the way, why is it counted as vandalism if signs like this are posted?
- Dóra:** {Telling me that once the wall was painted full of red dogs, their makers were ordered to erase these signs and to draw nice pictures instead to the same surface.} The children's urge to post is often untrammelled and unbounded. Well, then, if it's possible, then let's regulate it a bit.

This excerpt shows that even in this alternative institution, the idea of top-down regulation was central in the teacher's description of institutional policies. Distinguishing between "children's urge" and the need for regulation, she evaluated the students' bottom-up aspirations as "untrammelled and unbounded". Both metaphors referred to the lack of strict regulation and the need for adult control. It is noteworthy however that written punishment was not used in this school. Instead, as the excerpt shows, those who put illegal signs to the wall were instructed to create artwork which was conformed with the teachers' taste.

**6 Conclusion**

In this paper, I demonstrated the use of a combined, visual-interactive method in schoolscape research. I have drawn attention to the importance of analysing interview excerpts in the context of such research and I have also noted the need for us as researchers to be reflexive about how our own turns imply ideological stances. The teachers' statements cannot be analysed solely as institutional standpoints. They are rather ideological positions on implicit or explicit policies that are co-constructed: they are the results of negotiations with or without reference to authorities, insider or outsider groups.

Incorporating both emic and etic perspectives, several discourse processes have been described here and I have illuminated differences between two types of organizational culture, comparing state and private schools. For example, the articulation of top-down homogenization was stronger in the case of state schools, while the representatives of alternative schools oriented towards a wider negotiation of communication practices, including visibility in general and the management of transgressive sign use in particular. Handmade artefacts served the goals of internalising institutional ideologies in every visited school, but their use was different. In state schools, the reconstruction of nationalist ideologies and identities was mainly promoted, in connection with the reconstruction of standardist language ideologies, while the practice of private institutions supported ideologies of personal uniqueness and creativity. The dominant arrangement of furniture (e.g. teacher-fronted vs. group discussion setting) also manifested differences between institutional policies concerning the structure of a typical classroom discussion.

In the empirical sections, I have demonstrated various techniques in the co-construction and contestation of traditions and norms. I have highlighted the importance of visual-textual narration and its reception in the interviews. As certificates on the corridor tell about the history of the school from the perspective of its competition with other institutions (section 5.1), similarly,

handmade or mass produced pictures, tableaux and other signs tell about the school community and its vision about the country in which its members live. From this point of view, it was illuminative to investigate how state schools scaffolded the reconstruction of homogenized narratives and ideologies on Hungarian history and culture. For example, as a consequence of ideological erasure, Hungary's multilingual and multi-ethnic history was not discussed. Techniques like highlighting quotes or reproducing pictures (e.g. portraits) or symbols (e.g. coat of arms, national colours) were, among others, used widely. These techniques, for example quoting, could also be found in the students' sub-rosa practices, with different cultural orientation. From the presented examples, the teacher-initiated drawing on the commemoration of the 1848 revolution contained an excerpt from a poem written by a national poet, while the text on the student desk came from a global contemporary pop icon. As the analysis of the library scene showed (section 5.2.3), mainstream techniques of selection and erasure in norm construction were so widely known and acquainted that they were mentioned as points of departure even in the interpretation of an alternative school teacher.

In the state schools, the pervasive presence and combination of national symbols (e.g. coat of arms, tricolour), the visual re-narration of national history, the visibility of canonical texts and standardized literacies together with the award certificates can be interpreted in line with Johnson's (1980: 173) findings concerning "the symbolic integration of local schools and national culture". As he summarized (1980: 187), "classroom material culture functionally reinforces the integration [...] of heterogeneous local communities into national networks of society and culture". Although signs of local communities (e.g. wisecracks) were also present in the state schools, their position was not dominant, and their visibility was restricted.

The very limited display of traditional nationalist textual-visual references and the high-level visibility of the local communities (e.g. in the form of student artwork or legal graffiti) in the private schools can be interpreted in a way that these schools aimed at constructing an identity which differed significantly from their competitors (i.e., mainly state schools). For example, Dóra from School 3 said that their school did not want a "traditional look", and the two teachers from School 4 also referred to "uniqueness". It can, among others, mean that by foregrounding students' work, these institutions positioned themselves as student-centred, progressive schools, focusing on its members' scale rather than the authoritative national frames. This identity may attract those parents who seek, and intend to pay, for a place where, according to their perception, their children's personality is more appreciated and developed than in another, e.g. state institution. This explains some of the difference, if we consider the parents as primary readers of the schoolscape, and marketing as one of its major functions (cf. Khan 2012). However, on behalf of pupils and teachers as readers, it needs further investigation to find the impact of the schoolscape on the complex processes which contribute to institutional identity construction both in state and private schools.

One of the main goals of my paper was to present the agency of the members of a school community in the negotiation processes concerning schoolscape, with a special attention to students' contribution – as it could be reconstructed from researcher's observations and the interviews with teachers (in the future, students could also act as guides in similar interviews). Considering Shohamy and Waksman's claim (2009: 314) that linguistic landscape includes "verbal texts,

images, objects, placement in time and space as well as human beings”, this study did not only contribute to the scientific investigation of linguistic landscape but also to the landscaping processes of the schools observed with the researcher as one of the agents. Near to the end of the interview, a couple of seconds after making the comments quoted in (2), Éva, the teacher guide in School 1 noted:

**Excerpt 11**

- Éva:** By the way, it’s interesting also for me that now, this way, from this perspective,  
**Researcher:** Uh huh.  
**Éva:** look through the whole thing, because,  
**Researcher:** Uh huh.  
**Éva:** evidently, I’ve never gone through like this before that  
**Researcher:** Uh huh.  
**Éva:** well, then, what I really see and wh- what can be presumed or recognized  
**Researcher:** Uh huh.  
**Éva:** behind behind these things  
**Researcher:** Yes.  
**Éva:** so it’s very illuminating for me, too.

Reflecting that this teacher started to apply the researcher’s perspective in her own account (see “it’s interesting also for me”; i.e., not only for the researcher, or “I’ve never gone through like this before”), this excerpt sheds light on the potential of linguistic landscape studies in the planning and implementation of local policies. That is, not only the published results but the fieldwork process itself thematizes and problematizes issues which were previously not discussed by the participant who takes part in local decision making.

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