

Júlia Vrábľová

Specifics of institutional management of the national language in Slovakia

Abstract (Slovak)

V štúdií sa zameriavame na niektoré interdisciplinárne rámce, ktoré umožňujú skúmať jazyk prostredníctvom analýzy sociálnych aktérov a smerujú k pozorovaniu toho, “ako sa mikroštruktúry jazyka podieľajú na tvarovaní makroštruktúr spoločnosti” (Mayr 2008, 9). Zaoberáme sa vzťahom medzi konceptom spisovného slovenského jazyka a spoločenskými štruktúrami, ktoré sa artikulujú v inštitucionálnom diskurze. Starostlivosť o štátny jazyk na Slovensku zabezpečuje niekoľko aktérov, predovšetkým proces kodifikácie je svojrázny a zahŕňa viacero inštitúcií (koncept sociálnych aktérov preberáme od Thea van Leeuwena 2008). Hierarchia týchto inštitucionálnych subjektov naberá na význame pre jazykovú politiku, a to v oblasti kompetencie, resp. moci. Náš záujem je o to väčší, že kombinácia skutočných držiteľov moci spája dva typy jazykovej politiky – korpusového i statusového plánovania. Táto kombinácia nie je zrozumiteľná a v konečnom dôsledku súvisí so skutočnosťami v oblasti lexikografie. V tomto príspevku status slovníkov zobrazujeme ako prípadovú štúdiu reagujúcu na nevšedné postupy slovenskej jazykovej politiky.

Abstract (English)

This paper focuses on some interdisciplinary research frameworks in which language can be examined via social actor analysis. It aims to observe “how the microstructures of language are linked with and help to shape the macrostructures of society” (Mayr 2008, 9).

The paper also deals with the relationship between the concept of a standard Slovak language and social structures as articulated in the language of institutional discourse.

There are several actors involved in language management in Slovakia. The process of codification is particularly complex, with a number of institutional subjects involved. The hierarchy of these subjects becomes important for language policy in matters of competence, e.g. power. Furthermore, the approach of the relevant power holders combines both types of language policy, namely status and corpus planning. This combination is rather unclear and eventually relates to activities in the field of lexicography. In this paper, we try to present a case study of the status of various dictionaries and to outline some issues we consider important.

In the Slovak context, language in relation to politics is referred to as the so-called “language issue”, also dubbed “the language card”. This “card” is supposedly played when a certain social tension needs to be intensified – or, on the contrary, concealed by another one. I have already pointed out some symptomatic cases in

Helsinki (Vrábľová/Ondrejovič 2015). Almost all the governments in the history of the Slovak Republic have interfered in the State Language Act.¹ As a penal act, it regulates the use of the majority language and stipulates the use of the standard language in media and advertising, laying down the conditions and the process of standardisation. According to the wording of Article 2 (3) of the Act on the State Language, “Any interference into the state language which is in contradiction with its dispositions is inadmissible” (The Act on the State Language) (see also Vrábľová/Ondrejovič 2016). In this article, we focus on the official institutional interpretation of Slovak vocabulary, its development and protection, as well as its reflection in lexicography.

1. The research background

This paper is written against the backdrop of the dissertation thesis *Slovak Language Ideology in a European Context*,² whose aim is to contribute towards an understanding of the bases of Slovak language policy. How does a language act in a social space and as a social institution? How does it legitimise the social structure, and who takes part in this process – who speaks about language, and in what ways? The research data consists of selected articles of the Act on the State Language and the contents of the official website of the State Language Department at the Slovak Republic’s Ministry of Culture (which is the key actor in state language policy). These sources were assessed from the viewpoint of language ideology research and non/present social actors analysis (see also the social actors theory by Theo van Leeuwen 2008). This research, as a change-oriented process, leads us to a dialogue with those social actors who are in a position to take action in matters of appropriate pragmatic, citizen-oriented policy.

Our task is to “reveal the naturalised implicit propositions” (Fairclough 1995, 23) – those social reproductions of relationships and knowledge which make up legitimised content, providing certain subjects with a dominant position. Language policy research using methods of discourse analysis allows us to explore the ideological nature of language standardisation and also the ways in which language itself is legitimised, together with the resultant consequences. As Wodak stated (2004, 186), there is a significant emphasis on language ideology in the discipline of critical discourse analysis which links the perspectives of language pragmatics, metapragmatics and sociology.

¹ The section of the Ministry of Culture which deals with the state language offers an overview of all the amendments of the act here: www.culture.gov.sk/vdoc/194/zmeny-a-novelizacie-zakona-o-statnom-jazyku-lac.html.

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The first essential objective of this paper is to highlight a general tendency to view ideology as a closed scheme, a dogma which serves as a reality-bending explanatory mechanism, applied only in specific cultural and social collectives which have a totalitarian style of social management. The totalitarian power ideology is associated mostly with the fascist, Nazi, socialist or capitalist ideology. The notion of ideology has thus acquired a heavily pejorative character. In this understanding, which is closely linked with political power, ideology appears as a thought system which is explicit – that is, clearly formulated in advance – and acts from the top downwards. Ideology in this sense is supposedly managed by some centralised body using written rules which are easily referenced. The idea is perpetuated that identifying something as an ideology pre-defines the way to “defend” against it. This defence may take the form of a simple suggestion of the existence of an ideology and a warning against its “falsehoods”.

It appears, however, that ideology is of a rather more implicit character (Verschueren 2012), being based on the naturalisation of social reality (see Eagleton 1991). As Zienkowski stated, the task of connecting ideology with language – of joining macrosocial theory with a close textual analysis of spoken and written texts – may require new hybrids of linguistics, critical sociology, feminist and discourse theory (Zienkowski 2017, 210). We consider this research to be a result of the connection mentioned by Zienkowski and we understand it specifically as critical (change-oriented) social language policy research. The prerequisite for any language policy arising as a consequence of such a discourse is the legitimisation of its contents. Focusing on the codification process, we will have a closer look later at this shared idea, which creates certain social organisations based on the understanding of language and its functioning.

1.1 Sources

This selection could not overlook those texts which consciously set the frameworks for others. Despite the assumption that no text exists in isolation – i.e. texts are interlinked both diachronically and synchronically (Blackledge 2005, 2) – we suppose that the norms directing language and language-based regulatory behaviour have a higher discourse-forming authority and power (and as such, a practical impact on other discourse formations). The term “institutional discourse” thus primarily refers to the selected set of texts published by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, particularly the texts outlining the codification process and the actors of language policy (including online communications of the Ministry available at www.culture.gov.sk/posobnost-ministerstva/statny-jazyk-3c.html).

Institutional discourse is akin to political discourse. For example, in the Slovak situation, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic prepares all the documentation for political decisions and “the Ministry of Culture, in representing the

state, holds the highest responsibility for developing and realising the long-term state language policy” (The Conceptual Framework for the Management of the State Language of the Slovak Republic: 2001). Institutional discourse takes expert discourse (judicial and linguistic) as its information resource, which may or may not be taken into account. Institutional discourse comprises data acquired from the official pillars of the state language policy. This is reflected in their character:

- 1) On the one hand, legislative texts, particularly the Act on the State Language with all its amendments since its inception in 1995. We take relevant excerpts regarding codification from these. However, we face a problem stemming from the character of the legislative texts. The formulations of a legal text are specific, comprising many impersonal deictic expressions, so they are useful as a tool for discovering the explicit actors.
- 2) In an effort to focus on the social actors as they appear implicitly in texts as well, we also followed those texts published by the Ministry of Culture which did not necessarily have a purely legislative content, including:
 - explanatory and presentational reports of the Act;
 - The Conceptual Framework for the Management of the State Language of the Slovak Republic (2001);
 - measures in the field of the state language (2007);
 - reports on the situation with regard to the use of the state language (2014);
 - reports on the situation with regard to the use of the state language (2016);
 - all the online texts published by the State Language section of the Ministry of Culture (from both the old and new versions of their website).

2. The term “institution” and its definition

The term “institution” in this paper is used in two ways: as a key for the selection of relevant texts that were published by the institution of the Ministry of Culture, and secondly as a term that could be subsequently explored in relationship to the standard language (where the standard language itself behaves like an institution).

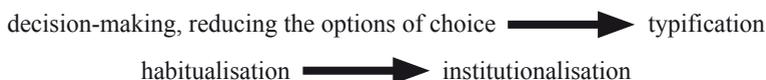
Institutions are not simply forms of social organisation, invested with the value of language and with its practical effects, because they have legitimacy aside from their practicality (see also DiMaggio/Powell 1983). They also constitute institutional objects of value as they validate themselves. Since institutional discourse is an object of interest in critical studies (whose common feature is a focus on power),³ it is possible to include critical media studies, analyses of academic discourse, churches, legislative texts and higher education or other institutions.

³ Due to the analogical introduction of discourse norms of e.g. neoliberal politics into the spheres where it has, in the authors’ opinion, no place (eg criticism of the educational system following the rules of business), some social scientists critically speak of the ideology of

This term in sociology and anthropology has shifted from the definition of objects – types of social groups – towards procedures, rituals, combinations of norms, statuses and roles, i.e. attributes (Velký sociologický slovník 1996). We view institutions as behaviour models framed by social penalties, in contradiction of a formerly instinctive behaviour (*ibid.*).

It is possible to ponder with J. Blommaert over the question: “How is it possible that such deep cognitive schemes end up in human heads and they end up there as phenomena of a collective nature?” (Blommaert 2005, 162). One of the reasons for criticism is, for example, the inappropriate transfer of business models into social spheres, guided also by different norms (left-wing criticism of technocratic approaches).

So, institutionalisation is a level of standardisation of habits, attitudes and behaviour. It arises as a consequence of the world of social representations where a human, as part of society, is obliged to live. According to Berger/Luckmann (1999, 62): “institutionalisation is coming to an end, there is a significant semantic shift going on: from ‘how do we do?’ towards ‘such are the things done’” (Kaiserová 2008, 110), being preceded by habituation. Institutions also simplify cognitional (and thus decision-making) processes. They justify themselves by claims to greater efficiency (see also Sage Dictionary of Sociology 2006). “Social institutions develop as interpersonal activities, they integrate and routinise into collective performances, a semantic system develops reflecting the complexity of roles, and then some individuals perceive the confluence of meanings in the semantic system and concoct the institution as a functional entity to be sustained and defended” (Heise-MacKinnon 2010, 209).



(Berger/Luckmann 1999) (Churches 2002)

Here it is possible to talk about creating norms which move from the individual experience of solving a problem to a meta-individual order. Semantic (already social) contents are thereby legitimised, becoming accepted by a collective.

We are interested in the institutionalisation of public discourse in relationship to language, in the sphere where language has gained the status of an institution and where it is thought about in terms of models, norms, or normalities, which eventually underlie the operation of organisations dealing with language.⁴ The paper

neoliberalism. J. Habermas (according to Mayr 2008) speaks of the colonisation of human lives by the systems of economy and state.

⁴ The terms – institution and organisation – are mentioned here as two different terms on purpose.

deliberates (hence this longer digression) over the task and role of a norm and institutionalisation in the codification process of Slovak language, and speculates whether the norm corresponds with such a broader (aforementioned) definition.

3. Standard language as institution

What does it actually mean to investigate an institution as a term related to the decision-making process? Bourdieu (1991) says: “To institute, to give a social definition, an identity, is also to impose boundaries.” And what is an institution in the context in which we work, i.e. in the context of standard language? How are the boundaries imposed? Deetz says linguistic and sociological approaches to the study of institutions and their discourses generally regard language as constitutive of institutions (Deetz 1982 according Mayr 2008, 5). Similarly, we understand language as a socially shared meaning which has gone through the process of legitimisation – a process through which a language or some of its aspects (standard language) comes to be accepted as appropriate and generally supported by those who participate in it.

Language is a constituent of institutions, a principal means through which institutions form a coherent social reality (identity belongs here, too) – and it limits the framework of its own agency. In this view, language is the principal means by which institutions create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are (Mumby/Clair 1997).

The perspective of the sociologists Berger and Luckmann plays a significant role in the classification of these means. In their opinion, the legitimisation of a social meaning/phenomenon is realized at four levels:

- 1) vocabulary, notions (Bourdieu 1991) likewise emphasises the key role of the act of naming, the conveyors of this act in constructing the world perception structures are social agents);
- 2) theoretical assumptions of relationships and structures of notions;
- 3) explicit theories (expert level);
- 4) symbolic worlds, symbolic universes (Berger/Luckmann, according to Kaiser 2008, 111).

To illustrate this structure using the example of language in institutional discourse, the first level would comprise language standardisation, codification, and language norms; the second would include the relationships between them. Let us mention, for instance, the often unclear relationship between the attributes *standard* and *codified* (concepts which are very often used interchangeably).

The third level would be theories that are present in texts. We will refer to the example (more Vrábl'ová/Ondrejovič 2016) where the authors of the anonymous *Report on the Situation of Use of the State Language on the Territory of the*

Slovak Republic, discussed by the Slovak Government on 28th November 2012, put forward a theory about the problems which take place during a non-standard communication. According to this theory, a recipient must first identify a non-standard speech code as incorrect, then decode it, and then translate it into a standard form of language in her/his mind – and only then is he/she able to react to it. According to this explanation, the authors of the report regard the non-standard communication as slower and less efficient, but this so-called theory does not reference any research or an author; it appears unsupported in the text.

In general, we find the act of naming as the most significant for analysing language as a social institution. Hereby, the strategy of language management is to improve the so-called language culture and it appears as the most obvious part of its agenda (The Conceptual Framework for the Management of the State Language of the Slovak Republic 2001). Texts on the website of the Ministry of Culture offer an illustration of such an agenda in the form of methodological materials to solve language issues which the institution finds critical. All the recommendations on the website relate to names (as opposed to e.g. syntax), and they are given in a dichotomous manner (correct vs incorrect). The emphasis is put on so-called appropriate and inappropriate words in legislative texts (adapted expressions taken from the Czech Republic), and so-called most common language flaws in official documents (similar to the previous category). Both of these categories are covered by a list of words and every word is assigned an equivalent from the standpoint of “language correctness”, but with no expert justification provided (for instance, corpus-supported). Likewise, the norm and its change are not put under any challenge or reconsideration – it is fixed. It has no links to dictionaries or corpora, so we believe their legitimacy is based on unclear ideology, and not on the speakers of the language.

For instance, the website prescribes the official names of countries and the usage of the suffix –ová in women’s surnames. Regarding the text on women’s surnames, it is possible to identify an explicit presence of argumentation, similar to an expert one, although lacking a reference. We see the argumentation using language typology. The authors of the text assert that Slovak belongs to “inflected language types” in contrast to “analytical language types”, for instance English, inferring that language belongs to either one or the other group. Yet they omit the fact that just like other languages, Slovak is hard to assign to only one language type (the information on the analytical elements in Slovak is omitted) (for more Vrábl’ová/Ondrejovič 2016). The text also does not tackle the names of women’s professions (male grammar forms are common to denote women’s professions).

Similarly to this, there has been another case in respect of official names. In 2017, several publishing houses and press sections of ministries received a letter from the Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Authority of the Slovak Republic, where they stipulated the duty to use official names. For example, the common

name Great Britain may not be used because of its geographic incorrectness. The only permitted form is “the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” or “the United Kingdom”. The authority warned that if any media used the incorrect name, it could face a fine of up to 3,300 EUR. In the case of repeated violation, the fine would be increased to 6,600 EUR. The Act on Geodesy and Cartography has been in effect since 1995; the option of imposing a fine on media was enabled by its amendment in 2003. Until then, it had been possible to impose a fine for the usage of a non-standardised geographic name only in the case of cartographic works, not newspaper articles. The name Britain or Great Britain is a customary, well-settled expression, and it was indicated by linguists, too.

The fourth level of legitimacy is composed of a symbolic world represented by values. In the Slovak context, the standard language has the highest symbolic value, with the value of dialects not articulated even once.

As quoted from the text on the website:

The Slovak standard language is one of the forms of national language. It is considered **the most important, representative** and it takes the **highest position in the hierarchy** of the forms of national language, since it is a common nationwide language used in the public sphere all across Slovakia as well as in international relations.

The codification of standard language guarantees its single form across society (the codified form of the state language), which is binding in certain areas of public use.

The way in which these notions are distributed, their mutual relationships as well as related material resources, make the conditions for peoples’ language behaviour. A base for further agency is thus created. What takes place is a reproduction of contents, relationships, structures between those and acting subjects. Thereby it is interesting to observe from the viewpoint of pragmatics and meta-pragmatics how this coherence is ensured.

In the sources which we consider as being the official institutional documents (see references), anonymous authors were clearly dominant. Normalities related to language (as assessed by the state) may be implicitly, but also explicitly expressed. The explicitly-expressed normality in this context defines certain characteristics of language which it assesses as correct. The normality also formulates or selects language principles or “dispositions” (Act on the State Language), through which it confirms itself.

The absence of explicit references to any scholarly discourse in the text is “offset” by a propositional content which states “the opposition between ‘given’ and ‘new’ information – a distinction that connects directly with the ideology-related phenomenon of presupposition“ (Lee 1992). The form of presuppositions varies, so let us mention only those characterised by an object which deprives itself of its own agency.

Referring to van Leeuwen (2008, 66-68), we identified three ways of deagentialisation:

- 1) *eventuation* – when an action or reaction is represented as an event, as something that just happens without the involvement of human agency.
“To achieve law enforceability, the introduction of some missing sanctions are suggested.”⁵
“to achieve a goal, it has been suggested ...”
(Explanatory Report of the Act on the State Language 2009)
- 2) *existentialisation* – an action or reaction is presented as something that simply exists.
“Some coordination and control of the state language is inevitable”⁶
(Report on the Use of State Language Situation 2012)
“A general lack of interest in the area of language culture in the central bodies of public administration is observed.”⁷
(Report on the Use of the State Language Situation 2012)
- 3) *naturalisation* – an action and reaction are an expression of a natural process.
“The level (“culture”) of this communication is a **logical consequence** ...”⁸
(Explanatory Report of the Act on the State Language 2009)
“**It is natural** that changes in language ...”⁹
(Explanatory Report 2009)

The agents are unclear and rather non-active. Besides these deagentive forms, some references to social actors have been identified.

4. Social Actors (SA)

The research into social actors provides an answer to the question of what choice the language enables us to make when we talk about humans or refer to humans (van Leeuwen 1996, 32). We explore the models of *us and others*, i.e. models of identities – both individual and collective (compare van Leeuwen 1996, 45-50).

⁵ „Na dosiahnutie vykonateľnosti zákona sa navrhuje zavedenie chýbajúceho sankčného ustanovenia.“

⁶ „Konštatuje sa všeobecný nezáujem o oblasť jazykovej kultúry v ústredných orgánoch štátnej správy.“

⁷ „Konštatuje sa všeobecný nezáujem o oblasť jazykovej kultúry v ústredných orgánoch štátnej správy.“

⁸ „Kultúra tejto komunikácie je **logickým dôsledkom** starostlivosti nielen o jazyk, ale o kultúru vôbec.“

⁹ „**Je prirodzené**, že zmeny v jazyku...“

It is, however, not an enumerative account; social actors are understood as a category of discourse analysis. The practice of a particular (here an institutional) discourse in the portrayal of an active agent of a certain social activity and the one affected by it (van Leeuwen 2009, 154-157), is equally interesting for the analysis of any discourse (compare Fairclough 1989, 1996; van Dijk 1991).

As far as the form goes, social actors are embodied through various deictic expressions as well as their absence (see above): van Leeuwen, in identifying identities apart from a content analysis of characteristics assigned to groups, examines participants with respect to their position in the text as well as their institutional manifestation. Institutions manifest themselves through the repetitive performance of roles.

The language participates in the experience of identity. By experiencing identity, we classify ourselves into a certain group – an *ingroup*, delimiting ourselves from another group, an *outgroup*, as their non-members (van Dijk 2006, 115). This opposition – us vs. them – may be motivated by different “criteria”, by the language or attitudes towards the language. The polarisation present in this experience has a form of absolutising the characteristics of groups: most often the group into which we classify ourselves (*ingroup*) carries positive characteristics, whereas the other (*outgroup*) carries characteristics which we are prone to judge negatively. Language ideology is constituted by means of discourse which represents the identity of a group, delimiting their place, separating it from other groups and at the same time differentiating it. For example, in the local context, the expression *fellow-citizen* (in Slovak *spoluobčan*) is used to denote a member of a Romani ethnicity, mostly in contexts where the use of the expression indicates an intention to exclude, not include – as we would formally assume from the prefix *fellow*. Without knowing the context, it would be impossible to notice this implicit otherness or segregation, therefore one may not be satisfied with a nominal expression (at the first level of the aforementioned model of legitimisation of a social meaning), because many language means of self-identification and identification of others (those linguistic features of identity that are generally the most robust) are typically most salient when thinking about people at a societal level (Edwards 2009, 22).

5. Absence in text, absence in reality

To understand better the social actors of language and institutional discourse, let us have a closer look at the context, in particular to the regulation laying down the codification (standardisation) and the social actors that are present in it.

The list of the codification handbooks fails to feature the newest work of Slovak lexicography, the *Dictionary of Contemporary Slovak Language*. This publication represents one of the crucial works of the Ľ. Štúr Institute of Linguistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and is supposed to help language users in

communication. The Department of Lexicography and Lexicology at the institute has already published 3 volumes of the dictionary: A-G (2006); H-L (2011); M-N (2015), with a team of linguists still working on three remaining volumes.

Their work is invisible from two points of view: firstly, in terms of individual academic progress, as the category of dictionaries is registered as a non-scientific publication. Secondly, these products of contemporary lexicology and lexicography are not even recommended by the Ministry of Culture or announced on its website. This is despite the fact that the methods and tools of computer lexicography and a set of textual corpora comprising the Slovak National Corpus¹⁰ – several specialised and web corpora totaling more than 3.5 billion textual words – were used to put it together.

The codification process is set out in the Act on the State Language. It is the ministry that *approves* the codification and publishes it on the internet, before the ministry *announces* a codified norm (“The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic *approves* the codified form of the state language and *publishes* it on its website”). As a result, the work of the orthographic or orthoepic committee (with a nationwide scope, including representatives of all the important universities or academic institutions in Slovakia) has to be approved by the Ministry of Culture which makes the final decision.

Specifically, in relation to the regulation laying down the codification and the social actors that are present in it, we focused also on the document *The Conceptual Framework for the Use of the State Language of the Slovak Republic (2001)*, which we understand as the only pillar of conscious explicit language planning in the Slovak Republic. It describes the role of the Institute of Linguistics as follows:

The Institute of Linguistics holds an irreplaceable role in the area of linguistics and linguistic research. Its task is to explore and describe the Slovak language and scientifically follow the issues of language culture and language practice. It is also a professional academic workplace with a codification scope in the field of the standard Slovak language.

Later on, in *Reports on the Use of the State Language Situation* from 2014 and 2016, the Institute of Linguistics is explicitly mentioned only as an institution providing the services of an advisory body.

Implicitly the Institute is present as the author of the publications where the codified norm of Slovak language is described:

¹⁰ The Slovak National Corpus is yet another crucial project that is settled at the Institute of Linguistics. This department works on various types of corpora, for example manual morphologically annotated corpus, morphological database of the Slovak language, paradigms of Slovak nouns, paradigms of Slovak verbs, parallel corpora, web corpus, corpus of Slovak Wikipedia and Necyklopédia, specialized corpora, corpus of texts from 864-1843, corpus of texts from 1845-1954, spoken corpora.

- a) Rules of Slovak Orthography (2013),
- b) Short Dictionary of Slovak (2003),
- c) Rules of Slovak Pronunciation (2009),
- d) Morphology of Slovak Language (1966).

Subsequently, the results of the analysis of social actor in the text correspond with this explicit factual absence. To illustrate this:

In the section *Results and Activities in the Area of the State Language* on the website of the Ministry of Culture, one finds a relatively extensive account of activities and measures taken in chronological order. The most frequent actor is the Ministry itself, which is linked with verbs such as *participates*, *prepared*, *worked out* etc. The Ministry itself describes its activities or interactions with other actors. The actors present are the *Ministry of Culture* (Department of the State Language), *departments of Slovak Languages*, *Matica slovenská* (Slovak Foundation/Association) and *other experts*.

From the viewpoint of the language norm, this manner of describing the activities is changed with the inclusion of the actor *Slovak Academy of Science*. As seen in the quote below, the active agent is suppressed in many ways.

The contract on collaboration between The Ministry of Culture and the Slovak Academy of Sciences **has been signed**.

This type of formulation is consistent: “This project [...] **was opened** in the Institute of Linguistics on 22 November 2002 [...] In June 2006, [...] **was signed** [...]”.¹¹

We must say that the source of data might not be representative enough. In both cases, i.e. the description of collaboration on the corpus development and the dictionaries, the agents were not explicitly present and active as in other texts we have analysed. Agentless sentences are symptomatic of legislative texts; their specific occurrence in an institutional text signals certain regularities; we take it for granted that they perform their task. Therefore, they are symptomatic only for some argumentative models. Its validity (veracity) is articulated by variously expressed forms of normality (succession of phenomena, naturalness, presuppositional certainty). The use of such formulations appears as an attempt to reduce accountability.

In this paper, we tried to discover the real decision-makers in charge of language policy and language planning. The prevailing language ideology gives them legitimacy through several discourse strategies. We tried to discover some of them via a combination of interdisciplinary analyses. This approach might be inspiring for the analysis as it could help us describe the actual roles of the actors, especially the role of experts (linguists) and the role of current linguistic research. Agentlessness blurs the borders between the action of an agent and a patient,

¹¹ „Na základe tohto projektu sa v Jazykovednom ústave E. Štúra SAV 22. novembra 2002 otvorilo [...] V júni 2006 sa podpísala.“

obfuscating their relationship and power balance, whereas the passive form of a statement formally attributes value to the argument (see also the terms eventuation, existentialisation and naturalisation).

That is why we believe that passivisation allows for the suppression of agents and of their connection to reality. Accordingly, we refer to the analysis of polyphonism which can contribute to deeper knowledge of the relationship between language and identity. This relationship allows us to think about language in a certain manner and it is the task of linguists to avoid the restriction to the most fundamental oppositions “us and them”, or “us vs. them”.

On the other hand, we must be careful when we think of language as a constituent of institutions and, at the same time, a principal tool of creating a coherent social reality. This is in terms of the statement that “the most important characteristic of the traditional view is that language is essentially a homogenous ‘object’ – a formal system that is to a large extent independent of its users and its context of use” (Lee 1992, 185). As a result, this view could set a framework for the institutional influence which is not linked to language users or citizens at all. Referring to Norman Fairclough (2015) we see the act of social change as a dialogue with social actors who are capable of enacting such a change. Therefore the ability to have a dialogue between the institutional actor (the Ministry of Culture) and other relevant actors (linguists, citizens) requires a consensus on the function of language standardisation. We assume that standardisation, as a type of social norm, should react to the communication needs of citizens rather than to other kinds of reasoning based on ideology.

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