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Minority language policy and bilingual name semiotic landscape in Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

The present paper addresses the issue of the interrelatedness of Slovakia's minority language policy and the bilingual name semiotic landscape; more specifically, the name semiotic landscape of settlements populated by Slovakia Hungarians and the way Slovakia's laws regulating name use affect visual proper noun use in the country. The name semiotic landscape constitutes an integral part of the linguistic landscape, comprising proper nouns and extralinguistic signs referring to, or accompanying names in name plates, signage in public spaces, and on various other surfaces. The name semiotic landscape is a component, an aspect, and a consequence of language policy and name policy. The way minority proper nouns can be displayed in public spaces is regulated by laws approved by the state. Some areas (such as personal name plates, business cards, and names of private institutions) are unregulated, and the forms of proper nouns can be chosen freely. This paper seeks to answer the following questions: to what extent are minority language rights implemented in visual name use in settlements populated by Slovakia Hungarians, whether Hungarian name usage is spreading, and to what extent do signage and name plates contain proper nouns in a Hungarian form. In bilingual societies, proper nouns and other signs in the minority language increase the prestige of the minority language and have the function of marking ethnic identity. In this paper, the proper noun semiotic, place name semiotic, and institution name semiotic landscapes are investigated for various proper noun types in Slovakia Hungarian settlements.

KEYWORDS

language policy, name semiotic landscape, proper noun, bilingualism, minority, Slovakia Hungarian name use

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THE NOTION OF THE NAME SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPE

The description of the linguistic landscape is one of the relatively new and dynamically developing topics of sociolinguistics, whose focus includes name use in signage as well. Definitions of the notion of linguistic landscape also encompass the use of proper nouns. According to Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25), the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or town is composed of official road signs, advertisements, street names, place names, signage on commercial establishments, and official signs on government buildings. This definition includes the official plates bearing place names and institution names. The name semiotic landscape is an integral part of the linguistic landscape, including unofficial proper nouns, personal names, other names in public spaces, and extralinguistic (non-verbal) signs referring to names as well. The name semiotic landscape is composed of proper nouns and extralinguistic (non-verbal) signs (such as emblems, photos, drawings, and sculptures) referring to or accompanying names on name plates, signage in public spaces, and various other surfaces (e.g., walls, tombstones, posters, and class collages) (Bauko, 2019, pp. 137–156). Nonverbal signs referring to proper nouns are often connected to the meaning of the name in question, for instance in the case of imagery accompanying names of businesses.

Research on the name semiotic landscape is interdisciplinary, using the findings of linguistics, semiotics, ethnography, history, law, geography, translation studies, psychology, and onomastics. Name semiotic research is typically empirical, involving fieldwork, during which researchers take photographs of name plates and other surfaces containing proper nouns and extralinguistic signs referring to them in order to document linguistic data. About the "photographic" way of data collection, Blommaert (2012, p. 5) writes that sociolinguists roam the world now armed not only with notebooks and recorders but also with digital cameras, snapping pictures of what has become known as the linguistic landscape. The analysis of such data should also be extended to signs other than text (e.g., flags, portraits, and images of products), and take into account the spatial arrangement of all elements: the placement of the text, and the color, size, and other characteristics of the lettering (cf. Bartha et al., 2013; David and Mácha, 2014; Gorter ed., 2006; Jaworski and Thurlow eds, 2010; Scollon and Scollon, 2003).

LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE NAME SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPE

The visual representation of proper nouns in public spaces is affected by a variety of factors. The name semiotic landscape changes dynamically depending on the dimensions of time, space, and society. The name semiotic landscape is a component, aspect, and consequence of language policy/name policy. Name policy is conscious action on the part of the state, or another organization or institution engaged in political action aimed at influencing official name use (cf. Csernicskó, 2013; Megyeri-Pálffy, 2013; Walkowiak, 2016). Government policy affects the official use of proper nouns (the registration of personal names and the official use of place name and institution name), and laws regarding names regulate minority name use. Societal change and ideologies influence the name semiotic landscape, while changes in traditions of naming are greatly affected by how people adapt to political powers. Proper nouns serve the strengthening of the representation of power in every era and society. The naming strategies of various periods reflect the ideology deemed to be followed by the powers that be (cf. Tóth, 2013).

Majority patterns of name use strongly affect minority name use and the name semiotic landscape of the given territory. Majority name forms are given preference over minority name forms, and the relations of subordination are reflected by the visualization and spatial relations of proper nouns: name plates usually contain text in the language of those in power, and they are placed higher than and before all others, as well as being in a larger font size. The majority may limit the public use of minority language proper nouns in various ways (cf. Csernicskó, 2019; Gorter et al. eds., 2012; Horony et al., 2012; Kontra, 2017; Laihonen, 2012; Szabómihály, 2020; Szoták, 2016; Vörös, 2004). The terms "place name war" and "personal name war" in Slovakia stemmed from such limitations on the official use of place names and personal names. After the change of regime in Slovakia in the 1990s, the registration of personal names in official registries in the minority languages, as well as the use of minority place names, was limited by the country's language law (Zalabai ed., 1995).

Name plates and other signage in public spaces that contains proper nouns convey information to visitors about the composition of the local population, the status of the language spoken, and language and name policy. The bilingual name semiotic landscape signals a strong interrelatedness of society and name use, its study being a topic of socio-onomastics. An understanding of historical, political and sociocultural relationships and the identification of causes behind the existence of the visible, visualized image are essential in interpreting bilingual name plates. Language ideologies are actualized in the name semiotic landscape (cf. Lanstyák, 2015; Shohamy, 2006). "Investigating language ideologies means an analysis of what extralinguistic connections and meanings are presupposed by those who put up the signs and those who read the signs regarding language choice, the semiotic characteristics and placement of signs" (Bartha et al., 2013, p. 16).

In bilingual environments, proper nouns (and other displayed text) in the minority language increase the prestige of the minority language, express collective identity, have identity marking functions, and can be regarded as ethnic symbols. Beregszászi (2005, p. 158) states that "minority people's feeling of home is greatly enhanced by the presence and extent of the presence of their language in public minority texts: does the language of the minority have the chance to be visible, or is it invisible, with its use limited to being oral (which no doubt is very important in itself)?" Minorities typically use proper nouns bilingually, since they use names in the majority (state) language as well as in their minority language (their mother tongue). Members of minority groups use dual personal, place, and institution names, with each variant attached to one of their languages, due to their bilingualism.

Below, I aim to discuss what the connection points are between Slovakia's minority language policy and its name semiotic landscape, how Slovakia's laws regulating name use affect visual proper noun use, as well as the personal name, place name, and institution name aspects of the semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements.[1]

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[1]As a result of historical changes, Hungarian settlements of today's Slovakia belonged to a number of different countries throughout the course of the 20th century. In the early 20th century, they belonged to Austria–Hungary. After WWI, as a result of the Treaty of Trianon, they became part of the newly formed (1918) Czechoslovakia. The First Vienna Award of 1938 connected southern Slovakia to Hungary, and then, after WWII, these territories were reconnected with Czechoslovakia. These social changes can be witnessed in name use as well, primarily in the way names were entered in registries and used in official contexts.

SLOVAKIA'S MINORITY LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE BILINGUAL NAME SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPE

Slovakia's Law 184 of 1999 on the use of the languages of national minorities[2] (a law that has been amended several times over the years) states that citizens of the Republic of Slovakia who are members of national minorities and reside permanently in a given settlement are eligible to use their minority language in local administrative offices, if members of the minority constitute at least 20% of the population of the settlement in two consecutive censuses (the latest amended version of the law, Tt. 287/2012, mentions a 15% threshold, which will be effective as of the 2021 census). All publicly displayed official texts (announcements, especially at markets and shops, sports venues, restaurants, bars and cafés, in the street, by or above roads, at bus, and railway stations, etc.) can be bilingual using the minority language.

The use and visual presentation of various names (personal, place, and institution names) is regulated by the various name laws as well.

Slovakia's minority language policy and personal name semiotic landscape

After the formation of Slovakia in 1993, two laws regulating the entry of names in registries were passed: Law 300 of 1993 on first names and family names, and Law 154 of 1994 on registries, both amended several times, allowing the official entry of first names in registries in the person's mother tongue, the correction of names originally entered in their Slovak forms to their minority language variants, and the entry of the family names of women of non-Slovak nationality without the *-ová* suffix.[3]

The visual representation of personal names on various surfaces (name plates, memorial plaques, tombstones, class collages, etc.) varies. The outer and inside walls of public buildings bear names of lawyers, notaries, doctors, administrators etc., and front doors of shops may bear the name of the owner or person in charge. Personal names are represented on name plates primarily in their majority language variants, and to a lesser extent in their minority language variants. If the bearer of the name has a title, it usually also appears by their name. Slovak variants of names predominate in the visual representations of personal names even in settlements populated by Hungarians in Slovakia, i.e. the ordering of the names is first name + family name, with women's names bearing the *-ová* suffix: e.g., *Katarína Nagyová, Jozef Nagy* (with a Slovak first name variant + Slovak family name variant + Slovak order). Name forms following the Hungarian name order[4] sometimes include Slovak variants of names: e.g., *Kováč Štefan,*

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[2]According to the latest, 2011 census, 80.7% of the population of Slovakia are of Slovak nationality. In addition to the majority population, the following minority groups are represented in the country: 8.5% Hungarians and 2% Romani; less than 1% each Czech, Rusyn, Ukrainian, German, Polish, Croatian, Serbian, Russian, Jewish, Moravian Bulgarian, and other; 7% unknown (undisclosed nationality). The largest single minority group in Slovakia are the Hungarians: in 2011, 8.5% of the whole population (458,467 people) professed to be of Hungarian nationality and 9.4% (508,714 people) to speak Hungarian as their mother tongue (for more on this, see Gyurgyík, 2014).

[3]The *-ová* suffix is attached to the base form of the family name to signal the female gender of its bearer, e.g. *Nagyová, Tóthová* from the Hungarian family names *Nagy* and *Tóth*.

[4]In the Hungarian language, the order of names is family name preceding the first name, in line with the general pattern of attributive adjectives preceding the modified noun: family names function as attributive adjectives in this sense (e.g. *Polák Angelika* – Which *Angelika*? The one belonging to the *Polák* family).

Vargová Katarína (with a Slovak family name variant + Slovak first name variant + Hungarian order). Hungarian name variants and/or parts of names may refer to the ethnic identity of the name bearer. On name plates, this may be indicated by a Hungarian first name, or, in case of women, leaving off the *-ová* suffix: e.g., *Tünde Mészáros, András Marsal* (Hungarian first name variant + Hungarian family name variant + Slovak order); *Stubendek Mária, Vörös Attila* (Hungarian family name variant + Hungarian first name variant or first name variant that is the same in both languages + Hungarian order).

More rarely, double family names also occur in the name semiotic landscape. Women sometimes keep their own family name after marriage, while also taking their husband's, with the husband's family name preceding the woman's, e.g., *Nagy Kovács, Nagyová Kovácsová, Nagy Kovácsová, Nagyová Kovács.*

Slovakia Hungarians often use their own names in two variants (cf. Bauko, 2020), with both family names and first names used in both Slovak and Hungarian forms (e.g., *Katarína Kovácsová: Kovács Katalin, Ján Varga: Varga János*). In minority populated settlements such dual name use also appears in bilingual memorial plaques, business cards, and other situations, with Slovak variants of names preferred in the context of the Slovak language text, and Hungarian variants in the Hungarian language text.

On rare occasions it happens that the dual name use in a name plate results in hybrid name variants, producing unusual forms: the form *Ján Thain János* appears in a memorial plaque (see Fig. 1), with the family name (*Thain*) between two first name variants, the Slovak variant (*Ján*) preceding it and the Hungarian variant (*János*) following it. The hybrid name form, uniting elements of the two languages, contains both the Slovak and Hungarian name variants at the same time (*Ján Thain* and *Thain János*, respectively). The two variants of the same name (e.g. *Juraj Mészáros György*) sometimes appear in this way in business cards, leaflets, published materials, etc. and may be an indication of their bearer's dual identity.

Name plates and other signage that display only the Hungarian variants of names, found in some Slovakia Hungarian settlements, attest to the Hungarian nationality of their bearers.

Name plates and graduating class collages[5] in Slovakia Hungarian schools that use Hungarian as a language of instruction usually include the students' and teachers' names in their Hungarian variants, attesting to the bearers' nationality, even though these name forms are not always the legally registered forms.

In cemeteries in Slovakia Hungarian settlements, is typical for many personal names to appear in their Hungarian variants on tombstones (depending on the proportion of Hungarians in the settlement). These Hungarian name variants and other Hungarian text found on tombstones are indicators of the late name bearers' identity.

Nicknames are also a part of the name semiotic landscape. An election campaign poster included a candidate's nickname in both Hungarian and Slovak, in addition to his first and family names: *Gömöri Obama/Gemerský Obama* (after the former President of the United States Barack Obama). Nicknames also appear in obituaries and on tombstones, typically in the case of Gypsy individuals.

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[5]High school graduating classes in Hungary and Slovakia produce large framed collages with formal photographic portraits of all students and their teachers, typically displayed in shop windows during the last semester of school.

Fig. 1. A memorial plaque with dual name use (photograph by the author)

Slovakia's minority language policy and the place name semiotic landscape

According to Law 191 of 1994 on place name signs (and governmental decree 221 of 1999 later), place name signs of settlements populated by minorities may include the name of the settlement in the minority language, in addition to the Slovak variant, if the minority constitute at least 20% of the local population. In accordance with modification 19/2018 of the Ministry of the Interior's decree 9/2009, the installation of place name signs of equal sizes started in 2019: the minority language variants of the names of settlements are included (in block capitals in black against a white background and in a blue frame) below the Slovak variant (in block capitals in black against a white background and in a black frame). Some settlements have not yet replaced the old name signs with the new ones: signs of unequal sizes follow the earlier regulations (with the bigger, Slovak language name in black against a white background above the smaller sign, with the minority language name in white against a blue background).

If an official place name is homonymous with the name of another settlement, the two have to be differentiated through other name elements – which results in the fact that unofficial name variants sometimes also occur in the name semiotic landscape. Since the Treaty of Trianon (1920), *Komárom* has been the official Hungarian name of two neighboring settlements, one in Slovakia, the other in Hungary. The motto "One town – two counties", used in the 2019 town festival posters and leaflets indicates the close sister city ties of the two settlements. The official bilingual name of the town in Slovakia is *Komárno/Komárom* (Bauko, 2018). The place name sign by the major road leading into the town has two signs of equal sizes, one with the Slovak variant, the other with the Hungarian one, but the less popular minor roads still have the older signs of non-identical size. In Komárom, Hungary, road signs indicate the direction to Komárno/Komárom, Slovakia, providing the name of the latter as *Révkomárom* and *Révkomárom–Komárno*. Due to their geographical positioning, the two towns are also sometimes differentiated as *Észak-Komárom* ("North Komárom", Slovakia) and *Dél-Komárom* ("South Komárom", Hungary) in both speech and writing (Figs 2 and 3).

Hungarian language place name signs have, in the past, been vandalized in some places in Slovakia. Hungarian place name variants can be used in official documents, railway-, and bus

Fig. 2. Official place name variants (photographs by the author)

stations, and on some signage, but this has not always happened in practice. Railway stations have not displayed Hungarian place names in recent years. Minority language place name signs, placed in railway stations of Slovakia Hungarian settlements by the activists of the Bilingual Southern Slovakia Movement,[6] were quickly removed. After this, the activists painted the Hungarian names on some railway station buildings, or placed Hungarian signs on private property (for instance, in gardens next to the railway stations). By now the situation has changed: the placement of official Hungarian place name signs began in March 2017 (under or next to Slovak language signs) in railway stations of settlements populated by Hungarians in Southern Slovakia, in accordance with the decree of the Minister of Transport, and these signs are all the same size.

During the place name reform after the 1948 Communist takeover, the Slovak names of 710 mostly Hungarian settlements were changed or legally abolished. Following the change of regime in 1989, some municipal governments have attempted to change the Slovak names of settlements to names that are closer to the Hungarian names (these are usually the place names made official in 1920). In some cases, Slovak legislation approved these requests following local referendums, but quite a few were rejected. The latter typically involved settlements named in Slovak after Slovak historical personalities. For instance, despite two local referendums that showed overwhelming support, the village of Pered was not allowed to change its name, *Tešedíkovo*, formed from the name of Sámuel Tessedik (1742–1820), Lutheran minister, teacher, and author in pedagogy and economy, to the previously used *Pered*. The activists of the Bilingual Southern Slovakia movement changed the place name sign *Tešedíkovo* to *Pered*, which was removed within a day by the public roads maintenance company, together with the

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[6]The Slovakia Hungarian "Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia Mozgalom/Dvojjazyčné južné Slovensko" (Bilingual Southern Slovakia Movement) is an unofficial and anonymous movement whose language activists aim to extend visually represented bilingualism to the Hungarian populated areas of Southern Slovakia.

Fig. 3 . Non-official place name variants (photographs by the author)

supplementary trilingual (Hungarian/Slovak/English) red sign that aimed to remind people of the ignored referendums, stating that "On 5 March 1995 and on 10 March 2012, a local referendum changed the municipality's name from Tešedíkovo to Pered, which was arrogantly and antidemocratically rejected by the government. This sign is implementing the legitimate decision of Pered's residents."

In some cases, the residents of villages with a local Hungarian majority prefer the visual representation of the Hungarian name of the settlement. A case in point is Bart/Bruty, a village that is over 90% Hungarian, according to the figures of the 2011 census. The road signs marking the limits of the village are bilingual. In addition, the village has a flower bed in which flowers spell out *Bart*, the Hungarian name of the village in red, white, and green, the colors of the Hungarian flag, giving a clear indication of the Hungarian identity of the locals. A wooden post by the road leading to the village displays a bilingual greeting sign, but it gives the name of the village only in Hungarian: *Üdvözöljük falunkban/Bart 1223/Vítame vás v obci* "Welcome to our village [Hungarian]/Bart 1223/Welcome to our village [Slovak]". Most of the postcards depicting the sights of the village also only inclue the name *Bart*; only rarely do they include both names, and even when they do, the Hungarian name is placed first: *Bart – Bruty.*

According to Law 184 of 1999 on minority language use, settlements can provide the names of streets and other local geographical places in the minority language as well. The bilingual street signs approved by the municipal governments of Hungarian populated settlements are included in the official listings as well. Bilingual street signs usually contain the Slovak name above and the Hungarian name below (e.g., *Svätoondrejská ulica/Szent András utca* "Saint Andrew's Street"). In some places, for instance, in Vrakúň/Nyékvárkony, the Hungarian street name precedes the Slovak one. In others, where there are no official bilingual street signs, unofficial street signs are used. For instance, in Hajnáčka/Ajnácskő the residents placed unofficial Hungarian street signs in public places, which include place names that are used in everyday conversation (such as *Felvég* and *Keskeny*). In the town of Komárno/Komárom, the building in which the flower shop *Krisztián* (named after its owner) is situated has a sign with

the Hungarian/English hybrid name *Krisztián street*. The building opposite the shop has the official street name, *Ulica Františkánov – Ferences barátok utcája* "Franciscan brothers' Street".

Slovakia's minority language policy and the institution name semiotic landscape

Names of institutions can also be displayed in the minority language in settlements populated by a minority.

In the case of state institutions, bilingual Slovak–Hungarian name plates predominate in Slovakia Hungarian settlements. The Hungarian name is usually placed underneath the Slovak name, in the same font and font size.

Section 21 of Law 596 of 2003 on education administration and the self-government of schools regulates signage in educational institutions. Schools that conduct most of their educational activity in the minority language have to indicate their language of instruction in the name of the school. In case the school headquarters are found in a settlement where minority persons constitute at least 20% of the local population, the location has to be indicated in the minority language as well. Signage on the outside of the school must indicate the name of the school without the address or location. After the change of regime in 1989, many Slovakia Hungarian schools officially changed their names, most of them adopting the names of either regionally prominent people or people of Hungarian historical significance (e.g. *Gymnázium Hansa Selyeho Komárno s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským – Selye János Magyar Tannyelvű Gimnázium Komárom* "János Selye High School of Hungarian Language Instruction, Komárno/Komárom"[7]).

Other state-run institutions in Slovakia Hungarian settlements (administrative offices, museums, libraries, cultural and medical centers etc.) also typically have Slovak–Hungarian bilingual signage (see Fig. 4, *Okresný úrad Šaľa/Járási Hivatal Vágsellye* "District Administration, Šaľa/Vágsellye").

Signage involving proper nouns is linguistically diverse in the case of privately-owned institutions (such as shops, hotels, and restaurants). Bilingual Slovak–Hungarian signage is less frequent than monolingual signage (in Slovak, Hungarian, English, or another language), and the names of institutions do not really have limitations: any word can become a part of a name (e.g., *Baby Shop, Club Las Vegas, Crystal, Diving Shop, Happy Dog, Happy Day, Hell, Outlet Center,* and *Sweet Home*, etc.).

Monolingual Hungarian proper nouns used by private institutions indicate their founder's language identity, attitudes, and a preference for name use in the mother tongue. In some cases, names or parts of names are also represented visually. The name plate of the café *Bufet CsirkeFogó* "Buffet Rascal" [lit. "chicken catcher"] depicts a chicken with a chef's hat on. The place used to specialize in grilled chicken and functions as a café today (with the name unchanged). The spelling of *CsirkeFogó*, with the *F* capitalized (*Csirke + Fogó*), refers to the multiple possible interpretations, evoking the meaning "rascal" among other things. Underneath the name plate of *Presso Lesz Vigasz* "Café Find Solace" [lit. "Café There Will Be Solace"] a picture of the American city of Las Vegas is placed, to underscore the pun in the name of the

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[7]The two different variants of the first name, *Hans* vs. *János*, refer also to the Austrian–Hungarian origin of the renowned researcher of stress. This duality of name use also appears in his own publications: he used his name as *Selye János* in papers he published in Hungarian, and as *Hans Selye* in papers he published in other languages.

Fig. 4. The Slovak–Hungarian bilingual name plate of a state-run institution (photography by the author)

establishment (the Hungarian phrase *lesz vigasz* contains the same consonants as Las Vegas and suggests the idea of finding solace in drinking). In the name of *Gombaszögi Nyári Tábor* "Gombaszög Summer Camp", the largest, week-long festival of Slovakia Hungarian young people, a part of the name, *Gombaszög* (lit. *gomba + szög* "mushroom + nail")*,* is visualized in an image: a mushroom shaped area contains the name of the festival, with a nail hammered into the cap of the mushroom. This suggests a folk etymological interpretation of the place name, since the real etymology is based on an older meaning of *szög* (*szeg ~ szög* 'corner'), referring to a place rich in mushrooms (Kiss, 1988, p. 521).

CONCLUSION

State administration, municipal governments, private businesses, and non-governmental organizations all take part in shaping the name semiotic landscape. The presentation of minority proper nouns in public spaces is regulated by laws passed by the powers that be. The presentation of signage is, to a great extent, an issue of power, which is why language laws also address it. However, the linguistic presentation of proper nouns is up to individual choice in a number of unregulated areas. The presentation of names is also relevant in the private sphere (cf. personal name plates or business cards, etc.). Official regulation influences cemeteries and private establishments (shops and restaurants, etc.) to a lesser extent, and names displayed in them are shaped by people who make the signs and inscriptions, which, in turn, reflect the sign makers' attitudes towards power, the environment, and practical considerations. The presentation of minority names on name plates and signage in general is an important issue of language strategy.

The visual presentation of proper nouns in Slovakia Hungarian settlements depends on the type of name in question. The use of personal names in signage is unregulated by laws, which results in great variability in names in the name semiotic landscape. The use of place names (i.e., names of settlements and streets) in street signs and settlement signs is regulated by laws about

names. The use of institutions' names is regulated in case of state institutions (e.g., schools and administrative offices) but not in the case of private institutions (e.g., companies and restaurants). Thus, name use is more liberal in the latter, with names of any form, or language presented visually.

The personal name semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements is characterized by the presence of both Slovak and Hungarian name variants in name plates and other signage. Slovak name variants are more frequently used, but dual name use also occurs, and in some contexts Hungarian name variants predominate. Tomb inscriptions and graduating class collages of schools with Hungarian as a language of instruction often display names in Hungarian forms used by individuals and the community, even when the person's name appears in the official registry in its Slovak variant.

The place name semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements is characterized by bilingualism (primarily in the names of settlements and streets): the Slovak name variant usually appears above the minority language (Hungarian) variant.

The institution name semiotic landscape of Slovakia Hungarian settlements is variable: in state institutions (such as administrative offices and schools with Hungarian as a language of instruction) bilingual Slovak–Hungarian signage predominates, while private institutions (such as shops, hotels, and restaurants) usually have monolingual (English) names.

Due to the efforts of organizations and individuals of Hungarian identity – primarily, municipal assemblies with Hungarian representatives – in recent years Hungarian language name use and Hungarian signage have been spreading in some Slovakia Hungarian settlements where Hungarians constitute a local majority. The increased presence and visibility of the Hungarian language in visual representations has been encouraged by bottom-up initiatives and language activists, who work on calling attention to opportunities of visually using the minority language in names, and in general, in order to exercise minority language rights in practice more widely.

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