

# CENTRAL EUROPE

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In Central Europe now we edit a paper of a Hungarian sociologist who conducted surveys on ethnicity and minorities in Hungary but his tragic death did not let him carry on to further results and conclusions. Despite the unfinished oeuvre, we find his attempt of methodological development important even in our days. This is the reason, why we publish experts from his report that has never been published before.

## SLOVAKIANS IN HUNGARY

The Social Science Information Centre (TÁRKI) conducted a sociological survey among the Slovakian population of Hungary, during the winter of 1990–1991. In the following, we intend to publish some important results and conclusions of this research. The sample necessary for the research could not represent the entire Slovakian nationality of the country since – to use a technical term – the theoretical population. That is, practically the total of the Slovaks in Hungary is unknown, even at the present – with respect to their demographic and economic characteristics –, or their exact number constitutes a bone of contention, respectively. Besides, due to financial reasons, we were compelled to confine our research to the age cohort of 50 to 60. Nevertheless, we thought – making a virtue of necessity – that this was the age group that had experienced all the effects of the soft, assimilatory policy of the past regime towards the national minorities. Therefore, our findings are valid for the circle of Slovaks living mainly in small villages. At the same time, we think that the situation of the Slovaks living today in the small Hungarian settlements – at least those aspects which can be described by the methods of sociology and social psychology – can be generalised for the ethnic minorities living under similar conditions in Hungary at present – with certain restrictions, of course. It must also be mentioned that we considered our research to be a certain test of methodology, since in the field of the Hungarian sociology there has not yet developed such a more or less standard methodology of the ethnic minority researches – “ethnic study”, to use the American-English sociological terminology – which could have been taken as guiding principle. In case the reader thinks that the concepts and the logic of the analysis are not clear or that they are deficient, the reason can partly be attributed to this, and partly to the fact that this was the first scientific undertaking of the authors in the field of ethnic minority researches, which field has plenty of problems and, unfortunately, is not devoid of intense emotions.

(...) As a conclusion of this part, we can say: in the circle of Slovaks in Hungary taken into our research, we could not see any such distinguishing marks of the ethnic group existence that would provide a basis for considering the Slovaks in Hungary to be discriminated in social-economical sense. It may be assumed that the members of this social group were not inspired, even by the prospects of attaining a better social status, to be Hungarians instead of being Slovaks or to identify themselves with the majority (Hungarian) group instead of their own ethnic group. It can be assumed at this level, and we tend to accept the

assumption that these types of macro-sociological factors do not considerably influence the vitality of the Slovakian minority. The contradiction between the objective and subjective dimensions of the ethnic group existence and the assimilation process, which can hardly be concealed, are presumably determined by other factors and processes.

By all means, one of the most important factors may be the so-called social-historical status, in *Gilests model*. The analysis of the social-historical status of the Slovaks in Hungary and its influence on the ethnic group vitality is a greater task than to be dealt with hereby. At the same time it is rather difficult to formulate the data of such an analysis and to adjust them into our model.

Similarly, although considering them very important, we cannot make a digression on the individual problems of the institutional support. In this field we possess adequate data in connection to one factor only, it is the question of religion.

### An (Informal) Sphere of the Institutional Support: Religion

The denominational-religious groups are certainly the types of social organisations that in many respects are similar to the ethnic groups. Along the characteristic features of the religious-denominational groups we can also find the "transgenerational" elements handed down from generation to generation (the formal membership of a denominational group belongs to this type), moreover, the optional elements (which roughly correspond to the consciously assumed religious commitment).

(...) The social model which may be called "ethno-denominationalism" after Greeley may involve an assumption that those who are more committed to religion and to their denominational groups, will also cleave to their ethnic group more intensely, and vice versa: those who are less religious and are not strongly attached to their denominational groups will not cleave to their ethnic group so intensely either.

The testing of the above assumption is made difficult by several factors in Hungary. On the one hand the Slovaks in Hungary belong to two denominations: Catholic and Lutheran, on the other hand belonging to a denomination in Hungary means a simple, formal registration and not a serious commitment.

Owing to all these, the above hypothesis must be tested from several aspects. By this statement we mean that the above hypothesis must be divided into further hypotheses.

1) In the circle of the Slovaks in Hungary, a more intense religious commitment brings about a stronger Slovakian identity.

2) As we were unable to render a "stronger-weaker" value to the denominational membership as it was done in the above according to our hypothesis the denominational membership in itself does not affect the national identity of the analysed population.

3) Underlying Features of Ethnicity. The Problem of Survival as Ethnic minority and the Problem of Assimilation

Our research was aimed at clarifying some basic questions. We wanted to get a deeper knowledge of the factors that may constitute the underlying features of ethnicity and which, at the same time, can be regarded as the components of the ethnic feeling. The problem of belonging to a certain ethnic minority can only be comprehended by the exploration of these factors.

On the other hand, we wanted to find an answer to our question whether our assumption that the tendency of assimilation is much more characteristic of the Slovaks in Hungary than that of their survival as ethnic minority is true.

## The Components of Ethnic Affiliation

Although the technical literature of this field provided great help in determining the components of ethnic affiliations, we also took some additional aspects of sociology and social psychology into consideration. There is an overall consensus in the technical literature about the fact that the characteristics of ethnic existence are basically determined by the following factors: customs of language usage in different fields of life (e.g. language usage in the family or in the community of the settlement, the language used with the children growing up in the family or in conversations with friends, etc.), language skills, the transmittance of the above to the following generation, moreover the fact what nationality people declare themselves and which language they regard to be their native language. These were further expanded by two additional factors that in our opinion may have a role in determining the ethnic affiliation. One of these factors was what the community of the settlement thinks of its members, that is, into which ethnic group the community sorts out the individuals, and the intensity of the individuals' knowledge of their native culture and the intensity of its consumption. The former is considered by us to be important because – keeping in mind that the villages preserve more traditional characteristics, it can justly be assumed that the likely existing ethnic traditions may have been better preserved which, however, may increase the ethnic feeling of the members of the community. The consumption of the native cultures is important in our opinion because it promotes the survival of the language and the preservation of the ethnic culture and, at the same time, it also indicates a stronger adherence to the ethnic culture.

In the following two questions had to be answered. The first question was whether the method of our analysis was suitable for exploring the underlying features of ethnic existence sufficiently; and the second: what sort of role the individual factors have in determining the ethnic affiliation.

We arrived at the conclusion that the method we used (Bool-factor analysis) is indeed suitable for the elucidation of the underlying features of ethnic existence, since by this method the three basic dimensions of ethnic affiliation could be separated in an excellent way for interpretation. These are: 1) the dimension of cultural practice; 2) the dimension of language usage (including the language used in the community both in the broader and narrower sense, moreover the skills of a given language and the children's command of the language); 3) the dimension of ethnic consciousness (including the fact what nationality the individual declared oneself and, from the other aspect, what nationality the village of an individual considers one to be, moreover which language a person considers to be his native language). Therefore when talking about Slovakian nationality we think of an ethnic group which along these dimensions is endowed by the specific features that differentiate them from the majority of the society with respect to their language usage, cultural behaviour and ethnic affiliation, too.

We wanted to find an answer to the question whether the individual factors have equal role in forming the ethnic existence or they can be ranked according to their importance. On exploring this ranking basically we examine whether the different dimensions show similar or significantly different proportions in determining people as being of Slovakian orientation. Evidently – as regards their Slovakian ethnicity – the analysed population can best be characterised by the dimension that the majority belongs to. Both the technical literatures dealing with this theme and our own considerations suggested that there are such differences between the individual elements. *According to our results, language orientation can be taken as the most important element of determining someone as belonging to a certain ethnic group. That is, which language people eagerly choose in certain social spheres like the family or the village*

*community, and to what extent they transmit that language to their descendants.* 60% of the population examined from this point of view can be taken as having strong Slovakian orientation, whereas the cultural consumption showed a result of 42% and the ethnic conscience only 33%. It means consequently that the customs of language usage can be considered to be the most important criteria of ethnicity although the other factors cannot be neglected either.

Being aware of the constituents of the underlying features of ethnicity, in the followings we endeavour to find an answer to the question: which is more characteristic of the examined population: assimilation or preservation of the ethnic character.

## Assimilation or Survival: Interpretation of Assimilation and Survival as Ethnic Minority

Naturally, we are aware of the fact that it will be unlikely to give an unambiguous answer to this question which would be satisfactory to everyone. Our intentions are restricted only to explore those tendencies which characterise the changes of ethnicity and their basic nature from the childhood of the investigated population when the existence of the Slovakian "parent-generation" was a current fact of history. The illustration to the changes of the ethnic affiliation is imagined on a continuum, the final points of which are given by those who can be considered as belonging to the Slovakian ethnic minority from all aspects, whereas at the other end there are those who cannot be considered to be Slovaks from any aspects: those who have never had, or have lost their ethnic character. Consequently, those people will be regarded as insisting entirely on their ethnic character who in all fields of their lives stick to the inheritance of their ancestors both in their way of thinking and in their behaviour, who identify themselves with this inheritance and intend to transmit it to their children. They speak the Slovakian language and make every effort to preserve their ethnic culture. On the other hand, those persons will be regarded as being completely assimilated who use only and exclusively the Hungarian language for their everyday communication, and who would not even understand Slovakian, those who definitely feel themselves to be Hungarian and treat their children according to this spirit. They do not even have any roots of the Slovakian language.

We have some knowledge of the above because we collected some information about the childhood of the questioned people in connection with the fact how far the usage of the Slovakian language was a natural and everyday phenomenon for them. We made enquiries about the language their parents used to like speaking best among each other, and the language their parents used when speaking with them or with the other people in the village or, considering the questioned persons, which language they spoke in the school communities and with their friends during their childhood. The basic idea of our concept was that *the ethnic attitude that has developed in a person during his life is not in the least independent of the intensity of the stimulation one got in childhood, that is, what the conditions of language socialisation were like at the place where a person was growing up.* Whether it was characterised by the predominant use of the Slovakian or Hungarian language or neither of these. We made an attempt to separate the different types of language socialisation background, with respect to the childhood of the questioned people, by special statistical methods. These methods are not discussed here in details, however, according to the results we got in the end, *44% of the sample had Hungarian language background, 23% of it was mixed (both languages were used but neither of them had predominance over the other), and 33% of it had Slovakian language background.*

Despite the fact that the Slovakian origin of the "previous generation" can well be proved, the Slovakian language was not definitely predominant even in one's childhood, for the rela-

tive majority. It could be stated therefore that there is a certain group in the analysed population that does not have any Slovakian language roots. It is part of the truth, however, that, by considering the people of Slovakian and mixed language background as belonging into one group (based on the idea that the Slovakian language-culture is present in both cases) nearly 60% of the sample can be regarded as having Slovakian roots.

The further analyses indicated that only some per cents of the analysed population can be placed to the two final points of the continuum of the ethnicity that had been sketched out by us previously which fact clearly shows that these clear types are not really relevant categories. Only 6.4% of the sample showed the complete signs of survival as ethnic minority. The ratio of those who completely got assimilated was even less than this 3.6%. The essential point consequently is the following: the persons who can be located in between the two extreme points are better characterised by the preservation of their Slovakian ethnic character or assimilation, and whether their behaviour and culture imbued the awareness of belonging to both sides.

## Changes of the Factors Influencing the Ethnic Character

In order to find a relevant answer to our question, we have to analyse what kind of changes took place in the customs of language usage, in the language skills and in the ethnic identity itself, with respect to the language socialisation background where the majority was characterised by the existence – although at different levels – of the Slovakian language and communication.

The analysis concentrates on the customs of language usage owing to two reasons. On the one hand, as being generally accepted customs and not only temporary activities, they can give us information about the whole life of the people questioned by us. On the other hand, because we already know that the most important element of being defined as an ethnic minority is the language orientation and the developed customs connected to the language. The changes of the above provides consequently basic information about the changes taking place in the field of ethnic affiliation, as well. Similar types of information may be gathered of things based on the language or language usage, such as the language skills, cultural behaviour and, of course, the next generations' command of the Slovakian language, because this latter will also develop in accordance with the customs of language usage of the persons questioned by us.

Due to the essential role they play in developing the ethnic characters, it must be analysed to what extent the customs of language usage and the language skills that have developed from childhood throughout one's life determine that after all which ethnic group the individuals will feel, think and declare themselves to belong to. Though we already know that, *on the basis of the individuals' self-sorting into the ethnic groups and of the determination of their native language, the absolute majority (64% of the analysed population) can be regarded as having Hungarian identity, 10% of them as having dual identity (they are the ones whose the determination of ethnicity and native language was mixed), and 26% can be considered to have Slovakian identity.* It still remains a question where the reasons of the striking predominance of the Hungarian ethnic feeling should be sought: in the past, in the customs that had developed in the course of life, or in a completely different area.

## Effects of the Language Socialisation Background

First we are going analyse how the language/background and the cultural roots that the questioned people have preserved from childhood, influenced their customs of the language usage, their cultural consumption, the language skills and the transmission of the latter.

*Due to the fact that the use of the Slovakian language was also a natural feature of the language background, it can be said that at a later phase of one's life, the simultaneous usage of the two languages became characteristic on the whole (that is, the use of mixed language), although the Hungarian language also preserved an important role.* From this point of view, there are differences between the individual fields of language usage. Considering the contact with their children and the occasions of praying at home, the people questioned by us used the Hungarian language more often than the mixed language (we reckon the language used for praying important because 77.1% of the sample declared themselves to be religious). The relationship, however, between the acquaintances and the family life is predominated by the usage of the mixed language to such an extent that in these areas even the fact that someone comes from Hungarian language background does not hinder the simultaneous usage of the two languages. (The language one spoke with his children in their childhood is treated separately from the one which was generally spoken in the family in the past, or is spoken there nowadays, where, besides the children, other persons belonged to as well, like parents, grandparents and other relatives.) Considering the other aspects, namely the communication with the children and praying at home, those who come from Hungarian language background, almost always speak Hungarian only. Those of mixed language background speak mixed language beside the Hungarian only when talking with acquaintances and with the members of their family, but in the case of direct communication with their children and the occasions of praying, they mainly use Hungarian. The exclusive usage of the Slovakian language in all fields of life demands that the persons should come from this type of language background. The mixed culture in itself does not give enough stimulation for this. It can mainly occur in the circle of acquaintances and children where the influence of the language transmission is the strongest. All facts support us in supposing the existence of such a tradition in the settlement and family communities that promoted the preservation of this Slovakian language orientation the most successfully in these two fields.

Out of the areas of cultural consumption it is the habits of newspaper-reading which are influenced the most strongly by the fact which language background a person comes from. Whether a person reads fiction, either in Hungarian or in Slovakian, and whether one watches the television programme in the Slovakian language made for the ethnic minority, is almost completely independent of one's language socialisation background. This is because these features depend on completely different things that belong to other fields, and so they are not discussed hereby. The essential point at this place is that although reading newspapers is mainly characteristic of those who come from Hungarian language background still, those who read only in Hungarian and those who read in both languages, represent equally significant proportions. Even among the ones having Hungarian language background there are people who can speak Slovakian so well that they even read in this language. It can be taken as natural that the same is true for the people of Slovakian background, too. The cultural behaviour indicates even if it is not manifested clearly in the habits of consumption, that the Slovakian language-culture is also hidden in the cultural traditions of the questioned persons.

In the field of the language skills we found that, almost independently of the people's language socialisation background, the equal knowledge of the Slovakian and Hungarian languages is predominant, it is characteristic of the majority. However, it is shown that, for speaking better Hungarian as compared to the other language, one must come from Hungarian language background. Although this Hungarian medium does not exclude the fact that these people may know the Slovakian language just as well as Hungarian. It can, however, be stated – and this is the most important finding – that the Slovakian language has also been

preserved in the speech customs of the majority as equal to the Hungarian, and they have not been completely forgotten. This is partly due to the fact that the roots of socialisation and of the society, at the same time, inspired the people principally for mixed language usage and not for using the Hungarian language – as it has already been seen.

Similar results are given if we examine the Slovakian language skills of the children of the people questioned by us. Children have a definitely good command of the Slovakian language because they speak it as their native language, although their knowledge is imperfect in some ways. It is essential that not only the children of people having Slovakian background may have good Slovakian language skills, but those of Hungarian background, too. Naturally, the children of inferior language skills come from this latter group. A good command of the native language can be best achieved if the questioned people themselves had already grown up with Slovakian language background and they presumably preserved this heritage throughout their life. The question whether language-socialisation-background promotes better the preservation than the assimilation of the ethnic heritage or vice versa, can be answered as follows: it may result in the development of such language usage customs and language skills for the majority which makes the preservation of the socialisation heritage possible. No unambiguous statements can be formed, however, about the cultural consumption, for it depends on several other factors as well.

### Effects of the Language-Usage Customs

The customs of language-usage were examined from the same aspects. On the one hand, we wanted to know how much the customs of language-usage influence each other: whether they are formed in different ways independently of each other or they can be characterised by a certain type of language-usage. On the other hand, we also wanted to find out how these customs influence the cultural consumption, the language skills, and the transmission of the language-culture.

On the basis of our findings we can say that the customs of language-usage significantly influence each other. This means on the one hand that the language one uses in the closer and wider circles of the community (i.e. in the family, with the children, acquaintances, etc.) is not an independent factor: *the customs of language usage characteristic of one sphere will influence the language people use in other fields of their lives.*

It also means, on the other hand, that just as a result of the above mutual interdependence, *the majority is inclined to use both languages, or, at a lower degree, only the Hungarian language.*

There are two cases when people use Hungarian rather than any other languages: in relation with their children and on the occasions of praying at home. However, in the family and in the community of the settlement they firmly insist on using both languages. We state this because the same phenomenon was found when we examined which language people prefer using on the basis of their experiences in childhood. We suppose that this may refer to some tradition reaching back far into the past and grew more and more intensively.

The fact that mixed language usage was found to be the most predominant speaking custom means at the same time that *the Slovakian language culture is also preserved at a certain level in their everyday language culture* hence they regularly use the Slovakian language. Considering the perspectives of survival as ethnic minority, the above fact must by all means be regarded as a favourable phenomenon.

If, however, we compare the customs of language usage of the analysed population to those of their parents, a significant shift can be noticed in the usage of the Slovakian (and mixed)

languages, towards the usage of the mixed (and Hungarian) languages. In the case of the parents, the proportion of those who spoke only Slovakian at home, between themselves, with the children and with the people of the village, too, was 40–50%. The usage of the two languages together was similarly high, whereas the proportion of parents who used only Hungarian in each field of life, was only 10% altogether.

As compared to the above proportions undoubtedly significant changes have occurred. The old customs have only been preserved in the communities of the settlements. Most people use mixed language when talking with their acquaintances in the village even today; a smaller number of them speak Slovakian, and the fewest of them speak Hungarian. We were right, therefore, supposing that communication is controlled by some tradition. Most families do not use the Slovakian language any more but they speak mixed language – and, considering their numbers, those who speak only Hungarian are ranked only after them. Those who speak Slovakian come to the last place. Thus, the traditions have not completely disappeared in spite of the changes. In the contact with their children, however, there was a radical change. Most of the people questioned by us spoke Slovakian when talking with their parents whereas they now speak mixed language with their children. The number of those who spoke mixed language was also great and of those who spoke only and exclusively Hungarian with their children was the smallest. At the present, those who always and exclusively spoke Slovakian with their children belong to this group. Although the usage of mixed language preserved its second place, people use it for communication with their children to a smaller extent as compared to the past. As we get closer from the wider circles of the community towards the most intimate spheres, the position of the Slovakian language is gradually taken over by the Hungarian.

Out of the areas of cultural consumption, the language one generally speaks influences principally the habits of reading fiction and newspapers. The majority show a preference of reading fiction or newspapers mainly in Hungarian – if they read anything at all. This is characteristic not only of those who generally use the Hungarian languages but of those who otherwise prefer speaking mixed languages as well. Reading in both languages may occur – although to a much smaller degree – both among the ones preferring to use Hungarian and among those who prefer to use mixed language. A deeper knowledge of the Slovakian language and culture is only possible with a strong affection for the Slovakian language.

A person's language skills principally depend on the fact which language one used in the family and with the children. This seems reasonable because at the best these are the areas where people communicate most frequently and most freely consequently it gives the most opportunities to practise a language. However the practice one acquires in the communication with the acquaintances and with the habits of praying has also significant role in the formation of one's language skills. The majority is characterised by equal knowledge of both the Hungarian and the Slovakian languages. This fact is true even for those who otherwise, in certain situations, do not use mixed language but only Hungarian. However, among the people who equally use both languages, there is a significant proportion that has a better command of the Hungarian language.

In this case, the Slovakian language is only used when talking with acquaintances, but even then, the command of the two languages is the same. The fact that the equal knowledge of both the Slovakian and Hungarian languages is the predominant feature indicates that the Slovakian language culture is also preserved in the language skills, beside the perfect command of the Hungarian language. This can obviously be attributed to the customs of language usage.

The basic factor determining the language skills of the questioned people – and of their children, too – is which language the members of the family use when talking with each other

and with their children. As compared to the language skills of the next generation that have been examined until now, we experienced a certain decline in this field at present. This is the consequence of the fact that the customs of language usage connected to the family and to the children definitely decrease the children's language skills owing to the fact that even the mixed language usage may result in weaker skills. Naturally, they basically prioritise the development of good language skills. It is not in the least surprising that the usage of the Hungarian language definitely spoils the skills and can even bring about the complete loss of the command of the Slovakian language. In this case, the families become so detached from the Slovakian language culture that they are no longer able to transmit it to their children. We also realised that the development of a good command of the language (native language) is better promoted if the parents generally spoke Slovakian only. Considering the chances of transmitting the ethnic culture, it must by all means be regarded as a favourable phenomenon that *although the Slovakian language skills of the children have declined as a consequence of the language usage customs, still these declined skills have not gained predominance over the good language skills. This can basically be attributed to the general practice of using mixed language.*

### Trends of Change of the National Identity, with Respect to the Factors Determining the Underlying Features of Ethnicity

Owing to the roots of language socialisation, the feeling of Hungarian ethnicity increased in the majority – basically in the case of those people whose language background is Hungarian or mixed. Only those persons proved to have Slovakian identity that had grown up strictly in Slovakian surroundings. Beside the fact that there are certain unambiguous corresponding features between the Hungarian language background – Hungarian identity and the Slovakian language background – Slovakian identity, respectively, there are also significant differences at the same time. 21% of the people having Slovakian ethnic roots declare themselves to have Hungarian identity whereas 11% of the persons of Hungarian identity come from Slovakian language background. We make an attempt trying to give some explanation for this strange phenomenon at a later phase of our paper. Out of the people having dual identity (they are the ones with whom it is the least possible to decide what they think about themselves, from this point of view) 50% come from Slovakian background and nearly one-third of them from mixed language background. This manifest estrangement of the people having Slovakian roots from their own past indicates that there is an extremely complex problem hidden in the development of the ethnic identity, which even raises the question whether we have the possibility to find an adequate explanation.

*In the case of the majority, the Hungarian ethnic identity has increased, with respect to the customs of language usage, too. At the same time, the same majority has dual links as regards their language culture and language customs, since they mainly use mixed language. Thus, despite the existence of the affection towards the Slovakian culture, they have completely estranged from their Slovakian roots.* It is certainly true that, in order to consider and declare oneself still to be Slovakian, it is necessary to use the Slovakian language everywhere or to speak mixed language at least. The mixed language background, however, still promotes the development of Hungarian ethnic identity, rather than that of the Slovakian. Only the Slovakian language usage is the one that cannot result in any other ethnic identity than the Slovakian. There are two fields of life where still fairly many people speak Slovakian: *with the acquaintances and when people are at home.* These are at the same times areas that among the other factors *play the most significant role in forming the ethnic identity.*

In fact this finding supports exactly the same idea which is emphasised by the sociologists and social psychologists in connection to the description of the concept of identity. These branches of science *try to interpret this phenomenon as a feeling of "self-identity" which includes both personal and public features as well.* This means that the above feeling is formed both by the fact what sort of knowledge one has, what sort of picture one creates about himself on the basis of his experiences and of the events that have happened to him; and at the same time this feeling is also influenced by the person's experiences about how other people see him and what sort of image people in the surroundings create about the person. This may all be important in the feeling of "self-identification" because we do not live separated from each other but as members of different social groups, being constantly in connections where the behaviour of the persons belonging to a certain group and even their personality, are formed by the norms of that actual community. It may be due to this specific character of the identity that the personal and public attributes of the language usage gained such great significance.

Considering the relationship between the customs of cultural consumption and the ethnic identity, several factors may prove to have significance. It may be assumed that not only the cultural behaviour types have important role in forming the ethnic identity, but the ethnic feeling itself may influence the cultural customs developed by the individual people. It may justly be presumed that those who really try to make the best of the cultural opportunities of the ethnic language do this because it is important for them to preserve their language inheritance, ethnic culture in this way as well. *This phenomenon, however, does not refer to the majority, who feel themselves Hungarian and if they read fiction or newspapers, that is by all means done in Hungarian.* The Slovakian language culture also exists in the habits of newspaper reading, but to a much smaller extent. This group of the population can have Hungarian identity just as well as Slovakian. It indicates that the cultural customs are not basically influenced by the differences of the ethnic identity, but by some other factors that belong to some other field.

The language skills also intensify the Hungarian ethnic identity in the case of the majority of the analysed population, despite the fact that the same majority has an equal command of the Slovakian and Hungarian languages. Thus the same phenomenon can be experienced as in the case of the customs of language usage. *The dual language culture is present in the population, still in their minds they got estimated from the Slovakian roots.* It could be also noticed that the predominance of the Hungarian identity is almost completely independent from the language skills. We know this from the fact that the majority of those people who have equally good command of both the Slovakian and the Hungarian languages all feel themselves Hungarian, not displaying any differences according to the language skills. This is true even if considered from the opposite point of view: the phenomenon that people know and speak both languages well is so general that this does not significantly influence their skills – they can have either Hungarian or Slovakian identity with respect to this. We are going to elaborate this in more details later.

## Summary

On the basis of the analysis of the elements and their relationship with respect to the underlying feature of ethnicity, now we can give an answer to the question what is more characteristic of the analysed population: the preservation of the ethnic character or assimilation. The question cannot be answered from a single point of view: the whole process must be taken into account during which the adherence to the given ethnicity has developed.

If we examine the language socialisation background in one's childhood, or the fact what kind of language customs and skills were created by this background for the majority of the people, we can say that these customs and skills promote rather the preservation of the ethnic

roots and of the Slovakian language and culture than assimilation. It was obvious that on the basis of their memories of the language socialisation background in their childhood people prefer mainly the simultaneous usage of the two languages. They have at least as good command of the Slovakian language as that of the Hungarian, and better Slovakian language skills are developed in their children as well. In the field of the cultural behaviour however, we experienced that the ethnic culture had been pushed into the background. It must also be mentioned at this place that the adult customs of cultural consumption are not influenced principally by these factors but by some other ones that were not analysed in the present research.

When considering the fact *how the individual customs of language usage influence each other and what kind of language skills are formed as a result of these customs*, we can say that these skills have still *promoted rather the preservation of the ethnic language culture than assimilation*. In case of the customs of the language usage the same tendencies were experienced as the ones recorded at the analysis of the language socialisation background. The children's language skills are exceptions from the above. Although these skills have declined to a certain degree still the inferior language skills do not exceed good language skills.

However, when analysing the character of the ethnic identity that has developed in the majority of the people as a result of the language usage customs and of the language skills we found that *the Hungarian ethnic affiliation was definitely prominent*. This tendency has developed despite the fact that in the meantime the adherence to the Slovakian language is also present in the language culture and in the customs of the language usage. With regard to the ethnic identity thus the assimilation is much more characteristic than the survival as an ethnic minority.

To sum it up, we can say that as we proceed from the roots of socialisation through the customs of language usage that have developed throughout one's life towards the formation of the ethnic identity, the tendency of assimilation becomes more and more intense. There is a striking change in the field of the consciousness of ethnicity, with respect to the language culture. The lack of agreement between the traditions, the customs and the ethnic identity makes us come to the conclusion that the ethnic consciousness is a problem of completely different nature than the ones we have examined.

Due to the experiences gained during the research, we realised that in fact, the underlying features of ethnicity in this case can be defined in two ways:

1) *One of them is the type of ethnicity that exists in people as a matter of routine, traditionally, and which is only too obvious for them*. It seems that no special emotions or ideas are connected to this and there are not any forms of conscious considerations or informal actions in its background. This may be the ethnic content which was determined by means of the Bool-factor analysis referred to at the beginning of the chapter, on the basis of which minimum 60 % of the analysed population proved to have Slovakian identity. This type of ethnic content can really be created and formed by the roots of language socialisation and by the customs of language usage connected to these roots. It is also known about this type of language customs connected to the past that – by means of the mixed language-usage – they intensify the dual ethnic orientation. It follows then from the above that *the traditional ethnicity basically means the dual ethnic adherence itself, and the related system of customs*.

2) *The other type can be called subjective or assumed ethnicity, when the conscious action of decision-making is present in the behaviour and in the self-definition reflecting in certain ways the identity of the individual*. This type of ethnicity is undoubtedly influenced by the language roots and by the language-culture itself, but it is sure that it is also formed by other considerations and social norms about which however, there was not sufficient information at our disposal in the present research. In fact this may be the reason why we failed at finding a satisfactory explanation for the development of the ethnic identity.

This duality of the ethnic character produced apparent contradictions. One is the fact that among the people having a better command of the Hungarian language, there are also ones that read fiction or newspapers in Slovakian. Another example is that those who declared themselves to be Hungarian proved to be Slovakian, on the basis of their everyday practice and of their language-usage. It was also an apparent contradiction that among the people of Hungarian identity there were persons whose children speak Slovakian as a native language, which requires the regular usage of the Slovakian language in the family.

All these findings support Parson's theory, which says that the ethnicity can be divided into "transgenerational" and "optional" constituents. The most important element of the transgenerational ethnicity is the language or the language usage respectively – which statement is proved to be true on the basis of our research, too – and the optional (or conscious) factor of the ethnic affiliation is definitely a separate factor from these.

Naturally, we wanted to check to what extent the adherence originating from the traditional ethnicity was preserved towards the dual culture. In the case it has been preserved, this means that the analysed population is not unambiguously characterised by assimilation, but by the fact that their whole culture and behaviour is imbued with the feeling of belonging to both sides. According to our findings, *out of the three types of ethnic orientation, the dual ethnic affiliation and customs represent the most significant proportion even today. This means that at present, the situation of the Slovakian (and probably not only of the Slovakian) ethnic group in Hungary can mostly be interpreted as a dual ethnic affiliation, with a certain shift towards the Slovakian ethnicity, but, at the same time, towards the Hungarian ethnicity as well.*

The question must also be raised which factors influenced this duality in becoming so natural-and constant. It is sure that the geographical location of the Slovaks played an important role in this, since they have never lived in separate blocks from the Hungarians but just on the contrary, they got mixed with the Hungarians. Consequently they could only preserve their own culture if, in the meantime, they adapted themselves to the Hungarian culture as well. This, however does not give an exhaustive explanation for the phenomenon, since this geographical location was the same in the childhood of the questioned people, and still they were able to preserve the predominance of the Slovakian language in the communities of their family and settlement.

Thus, we suppose that some other reasons have also contributed to the preservation of this dual character. As the possible reasons were not analysed in our present research we can only form some presuppositions hereby. It is probable – as we see it – that there was an accelerated process of assimilation (starting from the beginning of the 50ies) which, having certain more or less forceful ways and bringing some "latent", not too obvious constraint into operation, "infiltrated" the life of the given community. This happened, on the one hand by emptying or worsening the organised, institutional conditions of survival as a definite ethnic group (or even eliminated them), or, on the other hand, in a way of transforming the scheme of socialisation in the family – to their opposite. It is also a possible explanation that, in parallel with the modernisation of the society (which has undoubtedly begun), the importance of the ethnic existence has decreased to a certain extent because other things became important for the people in question, as for example acquiring certain consumption goods, increase in wealth, increase in their standard of living, etc. This may have transformed their entire way of thinking, the motivation of their deeds and their actions themselves.

These questions, however, can only be answered on the basis of a subsequent research (with respect to the next generation probably).