

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA
FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

Reference number:

INFORMAL SYMBOLS OF CHOSEN CULTURES
Bachelor thesis

2023

Barbara Deák

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FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

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Bachelor thesis

Study program: Intercultural communication and foreign languages
Field of study: Philology
Consultation Centre: Department of Intercultural Communication
Supervisor: PhDr. Tatiana Hrivíková, PhD.

Bratislava 2023

Barbara Deák

Affirmation

I hereby affirm, that I have been elaborated the final thesis independently and I have listed all the literature and online sources used.

Date:

.....

(Student signature)

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor PhDr. Tatiana Hrivíková, PhD. for the valuable time, guidance, support, and feedback throughout the writing process. Their knowledge, expertise, and commitment to excellence have been instrumental in shaping the structure and content of this bachelor thesis.

ABSTRAKT

DEÁK, Barbara: Neformálne symboly zvolených kultúr . – Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta aplikovaných jazykov. Vedúca záverečnej práce: PhDr. Tatiana Hrivíková, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2023,

Záverečná práca je vypracovaná na tému Neformálne kultúrne symboly. Cieľom záverečnej práce bolo identifikácia, analýza a porovnanie neformálnych symbolov dvoch zvolených kultúr. Zvolené kultúry boli Slovenská a Maďarská kultúra. Analyzované časti zvolených kultúr boli: jazyk, ľudové kroje a ich vzory, a najznámejšie neformálne symboly slovenskej a maďarskej kultúry. Prvá, druhá a tretia časť záverečnej práce boli zamerané na základné teoretické vedomosti k tejto téme. Štvrtá časť približuje dve vybrané kultúry. Piata časť je zameraná na jednotlivé symboly zvolených kultúr a na ich porovnanie. Posledná časť je stručné zhrnutie práce a výsledkov. Výsledkom riešenia danej problematiky je, že obidve skúmané kultúry majú vlastné, jedinečné a rozdielne neformálne symboly.

Kľúčové slová: Kultúra, slovenská kultúra, maďarská kultúra, symbol, neformálne symboly

ABSTRACT

DEÁK, Barbara: Informal symbols of chosen cultures. - University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages. PhDr. Tatiana Hrivíková, PhD. - Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2023,

The final thesis is elaborated on the topic Informal cultural symbols. The aim of the thesis was to identify, analyse and compare the informal symbols of two selected cultures. The chosen cultures were Slovak and Hungarian culture. The analysed parts of the chosen cultures are the followings: language, folk costumes and their patterns, and the most famous informal symbols of the Slovak and Hungarian cultures. The first, second and third parts of the final thesis were focused on the basic theoretical knowledge of the topic. The fourth part introduces the two selected cultures. The fifth part focuses on the individual symbols of the selected cultures and their comparison. The last part is a brief summary of the thesis and the results. As a result of solving the given problem, it is found that both cultures under study have their own, unique, and different informal symbols.

Keywords: *Culture, Slovak culture, Hungarian culture, symbol, informal symbols*

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim of the thesis

The main aim of this bachelor thesis is to first identify then analyse the informal symbols of two chosen cultures, namely the Slovak and the Hungarian culture. Furthermore, to assess the possible similarities and differences between them. As well as to find and briefly explain their meanings and investigate the symbols' historical and cultural settings and the origin of the individual symbols.

The purpose of the thesis is to provide better and deeper understanding of the role of informal cultural symbols and their relevance.

1.2 Methodology

In the first, theoretical part of the thesis the method of literature research is used to present the theoretic background of the topic. In the second, empirical part, the method of analysis and comparison is used. The chosen informal symbols of each culture themselves are the subjects of the analysis, followed by a comparison of the informal symbols of the two chosen cultures.

1.3 Introduction to the topic

Culture is the core element of people's existence in society defining the way of their thinking, believes, norms and basic behavioural patterns of individuals. Symbols are an essential component of each culture and serve various functions within a cultural context. Whether the symbols are formal or informal, they play an important role in a society. This thesis is primarily dealing with the second category, the informal cultural symbols. Although formal cultural symbols such as national flags and anthems are generally recognized by societies, they do not cover the whole variety of cultural expression. Informal cultural symbols are just as essential as formal cultural symbols in representing and reinforcing cultural identity. The everyday objects, gestures, rituals, and practices that people use to convey meaning, develop social ties, and express emotions are known as informal cultural symbols. They are sometimes neglected or taken for granted, but they have a substantial impact on the formation of cultural norms, values, and attitudes. Despite their importance, academic writing has paid relatively little attention to informal cultural symbols. A thorough

examination of the nature, functions, and meanings of informal cultural symbols, as well as their impact on intercultural communication and understanding, is required. This thesis seeks to fill a vacuum in the literature by investigating the topic of informal cultural symbols. In the next chapters, we will look at the concept of cultural symbols, differentiate between formal and informal cultural symbols, and investigate the social and cultural elements that influence the emergence, transmission, and reception of informal cultural symbols. We'll also talk about the advantages and disadvantages of employing informal cultural symbols in intercultural communication, as well as ways for improving intercultural competency and empathy. Finally, the goal of this thesis is to improve knowledge of the significance of informal cultural symbols in cultural diversity and intercultural communication.

2 Culture

2.1 Defining culture

“In the same way that personality determines an individual's uniqueness, culture determines the uniqueness of a human group” writes Hofstede (2001) in his work. Finding one specific, exact, and brief definition for what the term culture accurately means would be impossible as the concept is so broad and has been examined and discussed by a large number of professionals. Countless scholars have interpreted the term in various different ways, however they have all agreed that culture is an essential part of people's existence within a society, as much as their individual development. One of the first systematic definitions by Edward Tylor (1871) explains culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Later Peirce in his work *The Fixation of Belief* (1877) described culture as the accumulated beliefs, customs and practises of a society or group, which shape how individuals perceive and interpret the world. Another eminent anthropologist, Edward T. Hall (1959) mentioned culture as a form of communication, furthermore he particularized culture as an element that controls one's behaviour in a profound way beyond the awareness of the individual, noting, that it is something hardly modifiable. Lastly, Geert Hofstede (2001) interpreted culture as a specific program in people's minds, based on what they are distinguished from other groups. According to him, the set of programs in one's mind influences the way how individuals feel in a society, understand, and react.

2.2 Mental programming of people

Every individual is assumed to have a partly unique partly shared mental programming that influences the persons acts and thinking. This mental programming can be categorized to three different levels. The first level, the universal level covers the most elemental behaviours shared by almost all human species. Followed by the second level, that is called the collective level. The mental programs of this level are shared by people belonging to the same group. This is the level where culture belongs to. Lastly, the individual level of mental programs, that contain the most unique features. (Hofstede, 2001) The mentioned mental programs are being transferred from generation to generation by being inherited or by the process of learning at an early age. Hofstede in his book *Culture's*

Consequences (2001) pointed out values and culture as the main concepts describing the mental programs.

2.3 Values and culture

Given that the construct of culture has been defined previously, the term of values could be defined as one's strong propensity to prioritise certain kinds of conditions over others (*Kluckhohn, 2018*). The core difference between values and culture lays in their character. Whilst the values are invisible exposing themselves only in intangible forms as actions and habits, culture also expresses itself with visible components. Symbols, heroes, and rituals are three of the many terms used to characterize visible demonstration of culture that, when combined with values, cover the whole concept (*Hofstede, 2001*). Symbols are words, gestures, images, and objects with complex meanings that are known primarily by members of a specific community. Heroes are beings, animate or inanimate, real, or hypothetical, fictional, who possess characteristics valued in society, therefore, serve as role models. Rituals are collective activities that, while they are practically redundant to accomplish desired outcomes, are socially valued within a culture and enhance the connection of the individuals and their culture (*Hofstede, 2001*).

3 Symbols

3.1 Sign – Icon, Index, Symbol

Charles Peirce's name is associated among others with the division of signs in semiotics. The American philosopher was the first to suggest the classification of signs, which led to the classification of icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons resemble the object they represent (*Nöth, 2010*). Indexes are directly related to the object they represent. In contrast with that, symbols are not innately related to the object they represent and rely on common cultural meanings.

Peirce's semiotic work also included the discipline of how signs are used to convey meaning (*Nöth, 2010*).

3.2 Peirces understanding of symbols

Contrasting other semioticians who characterized signs based on the concepts of arbitrariness, conventionality and codedness, Peirce demonstrates a much wider concept when he describes the symbol as a sign with the character of a developing habit. Peirce added an evolutionary perspective to symbol analysis with his innovative and original criterion of habit. Cultural symbols, according to Peirce, are fundamentally connected to a community's customs and practices. In contrast with a number of his peers, he contended that symbols are not arbitrary, but rather they are formed by the social and historical contexts in which they are implemented (Nöth, 2010). Considering his idea of a "habit" can help to understand Peirce's viewpoint on cultural symbols. Habits, according to Peirce, are implanted patterns of behaviour that shape how humans view the world and interact with the environment around them. Habits are created through recurring actions and maintained by the socialization process and the standards of society. Therefore, symbols, according to Peirce, are closely linked to habits because they are the result of individuals' and communities' interactions with the world. Language, for example, is a cultural symbol shaped by a linguistic community's traditions and practices. The meaning of words and phrases is formed by how they are applied and perceived by members of a society. Peirce's method emphasizes the significance of context and history in shaping symbol meaning. Symbols are dynamic and malleable, constantly changing in reaction to changing social and cultural contexts (Nöth, 2010).

3.3 Saussure's definition of symbol

The Swiss linguist and semiotician, Ferdinand de Saussure is widely considered as one of the founders of modern linguistics. Saussure's approach to cultural symbols is based on the theory of semiotics, which he defined as the study of signs and symbols and their use in communication (Wirwan, 2020). In contrast with Peirce, according to Saussure cultural symbols are arbitrary and unconventional signs representing ideas, concepts, or objects. He argued that the relationship between a sign and its meaning was defined by social and cultural customs rather than an intrinsic relationship between the two. According to Saussure, the meaning of a sign is shaped not only by its intrinsic characteristics, but also by the context in which it occurs and its relationship to other signs within the system.

Saussure's views about cultural signs and symbols influenced semiotics and cultural studies significantly. His method has been used to study and examine how symbols are used to convey meaning and shape cultural behaviours and beliefs.

One of Saussure's most important contributions is his emphasis on the significance of social and cultural elements in influencing the meanings of symbols. Earlier approaches that perceived symbols as reflecting natural or objective meanings were challenged by this viewpoint. Saussure's method served to open up new ways of comprehending the intricate relationships between language, culture, and society by emphasizing the arbitrary and customary nature of signals (Wirwan, 2020).

3.4 Theoretical background, the meaning of symbols

As the meaning of symbols can be interpreted in different ways, it is important to clarify which understanding is practiced in this thesis.

In one approach (primary symbols), the symbol itself is essentially the same as the concept, the word. This is because, when language is formed, man associates an element of what is experienced or perceived with a group of sounds. In this conception, therefore, every naming is a symbol: a thing or phenomenon is symbolized by its name; thus, every word or concept can be considered a symbol. In another interpretation (secondary symbols), a symbol means the connection of an existing concept or word with another, substituting it with the help of stylistic categories such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, personification. Consequently, in this interpretation of a symbol, it has a deeper and broader meaning (Kapitány, Kapitány 2017). Since the two concepts are rather different, it is important to emphasise that this thesis is dealing with the second category, (secondary symbols).

The study of cultural symbols, their meaning and how this meaning is transmitted and being used as a mean of communication is known as cultural semiotics (Berger, 1994). To understand the meaning of symbols it is necessary to take into consideration the cultural factor. Professor Gerald Titchener defined cultural symbols as “anything that carries a particular meaning recognised by people who share a culture”. This definition demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between culture and symbols. The two expressions define each other’s meaning and are essential to each other. This results that certain symbols might carry dissimilar meanings in different cultures, as the symbolic meaning of objects might differ from culture to culture (*Titchener, 2016*).

3.5 Relevance/ function of symbols in a cultural context

Humanity has been gifted with the creative ability to create symbols, which has allowed them to be learned and communicated between individuals, groups or even cultures.

Human interactions and relationships are processes of creating and communicating symbols and their meanings. Human engagement and social interaction become real and gain new meaning through the use of symbols (*Meng, 2020*). At the first-place symbols serve as a means of information transmission between people within a culture. They represent abstract ideas, emotions, and beliefs that are difficult to exactly convey through words (*Ting-Toomey, Chung, 2012*).

Secondly, it is important to mention the ability of cultural symbols to shape identity as they are able to help individuals and groups identify with a particular culture or community, create the feeling of belonging somewhere. This is because they represent shared values, history, and traditions that are unique to a particular cultural group. As a result, they developed artificial instincts that allow large numbers of individuals to collaborate effectively and feel united (*Harari, 2014*). The social psychologist and sociologist György Csepeli (*1992*) identifies symbols as ancient communication tools that convey emotional information about the group to its members. He describes the functions of symbols as follows: they express the common identity of a group; they contain the essence of a group and therefore evoke strong emotions in the people who use them.

Furthermore, symbols form an essential part of various rituals of the cultures and their ceremonies. Their function can be to mark critical events, such as births, marriages, and deaths, helping individuals navigate life transitions. Further, power and authority can be expressed with symbols, representing the status of individuals or groups within a society and signal their level of authority (*Toksun, 2022*). Lastly, the cultural heritage is preserved through the symbols, that are passed down from generation to generation, serving as a link between the past, present, and future (*Toksun, 2022*). Overall, it is to be seen, that the spectrum of functions symbols cover in a cultural context is broad.

3.6 Relevance/ function of symbols in an intercultural context

The formation of national image is concerned with the relationship between nations, where the interactional communication of symbols is important. In this understanding, symbols play a vital role in how nations or cultural groups communicate and interact with each other, furthermore how they represent themselves in the intercultural arena (*Ting-Toomey, Chung, 2012*). Unlike the predominantly homogeneous formal symbols, informal symbols are not coherent and can take any shape, embody any meaning (*Toksun, 2022*). These symbols of the culture carry a piece of the culture's identity and history, helping the

external spectator understand the given culture from a closer perspective and discover inner layers of a culture. In an as increasingly interconnected environment as the current world, developing the competence to interpret not only one's own culture, but different foreign cultures as well is crucial, in order to be able to respectfully communicate on an intercultural level, which involves understanding the foreign cultural context. In addition, it is essential to be aware of one's own cultural biases and assumptions, as these can impact how symbols are interpreted and understood (*Toksun, 2022*).

3.7 Formal and informal symbols of a culture

Cultural symbols that link individuals and characterise groups and societies can be distinguished according to whether they are formal or informal. Formal cultural symbols, such as national flags, anthems, and official seals, are symbols that are legally recognized and sanctioned by a community and its authorities. These symbols are frequently imbued with great meaning and significance, and they are commonly used to represent the values, history, and identity of a specific group or country (*Geertz, 1973*). The American flag is a common example of an official cultural symbol symbolizing the United States and its ideals of liberty, democracy, and justice. It frequently tends to occur at official organizations, government structures and military ceremonies (*Barkan, 2011*). Informal cultural symbols are those that emerge spontaneously within a culture and are not recognized or authorized by any authority. These symbols can take many forms, such as slang, gestures, or fashion, and they frequently represent attitudes, beliefs, and values (*Geertz, 1973*). Clifford Geertz (1973), a well-known anthropologist of the field argues that informal cultural symbols play an as crucial role in the process of meaning formation and the interpretation of cultural phenomena, as the formal ones. Geertz (1973) also explains that cultural symbols, including informal symbols, are not purely arbitrary representations of meaning, but they are deeply ingrained in cultural practices.

3.8 Importance of informal cultural symbols

The presence of informal cultural symbols in a culture is important for several reasons. Primarily, their significance lies in their ability to reveal implicit layers of culture that lie hidden beneath explicit layers of culture, according to Geertz (*1973*). These symbols often transmit information about social relations, power dynamics and social hierarchies, providing insights into the functioning of a society.

They are also significant from the aspect that informal cultural symbols help to create a sense of belonging within a community and also strengthen a sense of social belonging (Geertz, 1973). A social sciences specialist Katinka Dancs (2018) expresses a similar view on informal cultural symbols. She claims that national symbols function as psychological and cultural border markers, expressing both belonging to others and separation from others. In the case of nations, the common culture from which these symbols derive includes elements of history, traditions from the past and elements of material culture. Therefore, it can be stated, that informal cultural symbols create an important part of a culture because they reflect and reinforce cultural values, beliefs, strengthen the cultural awareness, provide deeper understanding of a culture.

3.9 Development of informal cultural symbols

Since the beginning of mankind, people have converted signs and messages into meaningful symbols that became unique and characteristic to one particular group. These symbols were passed down through generations, and they help to define and reinforce the collective identity of a community internally and externally as well. This means, cultural symbols were created and generated since the beginning through a long process. In this process, the development of the national and cultural image played an essential role (Toksun, 2022). A national and cultural image are not something any country is born with. Alternatively, it was formed through international interactions between the image of the “self” and the image projected by the “others”, meaning the other foreign cultures. The image is typically seen in the light of a particular cultural context and is rooted in a symbolic system that has specific meanings (Toksun, 2022). This means, international image is the discourse presentation and discourse construction that participants in international relations engage in using symbols and specific frameworks of cultural meaning-making. Therefore, an understanding of the meanings and purposes of symbols sheds light on the theoretical and practical aspects of the intercultural construction of national image. As the outcome of this process each culture developed their own traits, symbols that they are associated with (Toksun, 2022).

3.10 The persistence and transformation of symbols

The different symbols used by different cultures are a legacy from humanity's spiritual past and all express the general laws of a society. Symbols not only played a

significant role in the existence of previous civilisations but are still present today. Symbols have always served as messengers of the culture in which they were created and where they first acquired their original meaning. The primary characteristic of the world of symbols is transmission, in which each member of the community, depending on one's abilities participates passively or actively in the socialisation process (*Kanyó, Lőwi, 2021*).

As a result of the interaction of different cultures, some symbols have merged and their meanings have changed, resulting in the replacement of traditional formal aspects by other materials. The features of a historical period are always symbolic representations of that period, and the features reflect the prevailing ideology of the society of the time. Sometimes the symbols of a particular period may only convey their meaning to certain groups of people, i.e., they may represent the original content, while other groups may associate the symbol with other kinds of information (*Kanyó, Lőwi, 2021*).

The level of development of a culture, the nature of a culture and the relationship of the initial culture to the rest of the world are all clearly reflected in the interpretation of the symbols of a given culture in a given period. Early societies carved images into the bark, carved sculptures or even drew geometric figures to express these feelings, because collective feelings that are meaningful to the human community can only be made conscious and sustained if they are recorded. These symbols had an accepted meaning in the community. Symbols meaningful to the prehistoric community were preserved and transmitted (*Kanyó, Lőwi, 2021*).

Intercommunication between civilisations was possible by symbols, and this role ensured their survival. Ancient symbols did not disappear; rather, they were modified and given new meanings appropriate to the times. It has become clear that the symbols of different historical periods cannot be considered in isolation from each other, as symbol systems have changed and evolved over time. The symbolic world of earlier eras has been inherited and is still visible today. Symbols become the fundamental unit and means of expression of eras and cultures and, as a consequence, historical eras themselves can become symbols (*Kanyó, Lőwi, 2021*).

3.11 General types of informal symbols

Culture was previously defined as the symbols, beliefs, norms, and objects that comprise any community. As this definition implies, culture is made up of two fundamental components: ideas and symbols in one group, and in the other group the artifacts (material

things). The first category, known as nonmaterial culture, consists of a society's values, beliefs, and language. The second type, known as material culture, contains all of the physical objects of civilization, such as tools and technology, clothing, eating utensils, and modes of transportation (*Barkan, 2011*).

Given that symbols are considered to be means of communication, the information is typically transmitted into different kinds or shapes (*Chandler, 2007*). These shapes of one kind or another allow societies to demonstrate their national image internally and externally. The symbols may take various forms, from gestures and expressions to clothing styles, different forms of arts or even food (*Geertz, 1973*). Primarily, language can be considered as a strong and widespread symbol of a culture. Moreover, it is potentially the most significant group of symbols a culture has. The common language that agrees on the same interpretation of a concept creates a dominant feeling of belonging, as well as unity (*Barkan, 2011*).

Secondly the gestures and expressions can be considered a symbol when it has a specific meaning that is recognized and understood within a particular cultural context (*Barkan, 2011*). Furthermore, the various rituals, practices and ceremonies of different cultures that often mark transitions in life can also own the status of a symbol. Rituals reflect the norms and values of a culture and are transmitted and kept alive by the society from decade to decade. Such a ritual can be the graduation ceremonies at colleges and universities are well-known examples of timeless rituals. In many societies, rituals help signal gender identity or family status (*Barkan, 2011*).

As part of material culture, the clothing styles are often counted as symbols of a culture, pointing out the traditional costumes of the cultures and societies. Frequently examining the classic folk dresses of a culture information about the culture's norms, beliefs and values can be revealed. Often it is possible to conclude the approximate geographical location of the given culture, only taking a detailed look on the costume (*Davis, 1992*).

Next, the different kinds of visual and performing arts can also be considered as important informal symbols of a culture. Music and dance, furthermore painting, sculpture, architecture and literature carries a significant amount of information of a group. In music and dance, the choice of musical instruments, the temper and placement of the piece and the movements are all signifiers of the beliefs, customs, and norms of the culture. Similarly, by visual arts the used materials, the content, the structure, all communicate certain meaning. Therefore, it is important to note by mentioning arts as informal symbols of a culture, that different trends and styles should not be confused with culture (*Davis, 1992*).

Furthermore, food and cuisine or specific dishes or even drinks are often associated with a specific culture. Often this association is so relevant and powerful, that the dish itself can be considered a symbol of the culture (*Barkan, 2011*).

Lastly, different objects and animals form a large part of informal cultural symbols. Objects and animals considered as symbols are often endowed with an important meaning or a unique, special attribute and outstanding qualities. These symbols can have historical or cultural significance or can represent values (*Barkan, 2011*).

4 Introduction of the chosen cultures

4.1 The Slovak culture

Slovakia is a small, landlocked country in central Europe, with around 5.5 million inhabitants. Slovakia's culture is shaped by its history, geography, and the influence of neighbouring countries, such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, their culture, and the culture of Slavic groups. The culture of the nation has developed over the centuries under the influence of various factors such as geographical conditions, historical events, religion, language, and art. This culture is characterised by various elements that distinguish it from other cultures (*Lajčiak, 2007*). Slovaks can be characterised as a nation with a rich cultural history and traditions, which, however, have often been distorted and oppressed during their past under various regimes and occupations, but in all times, they strive to maintain their cultural identity and traditions even in today's modern world. Thus, the Slovak people can be described as a proud nation, they value their culture and are not very receptive towards other nations, referring to the historical events (*Lajčiak, 2007*).

At the first place, language plays a very important role in Slovak culture. The Slovak language is a Slavic language and belongs to the group of West Slavic languages. Slovak literature has developed since the 10th century and has a rich history. Slovak writers such as Hviezdoslav, Štúr and Kukučín have become key figures in Slovak literature and their works are still popular and considered to be national values (*Lajčiak, 2007*).

Art and architecture create another relevant part of the culture. Slovak art is very diverse and encompasses many styles and influences. Slovak architecture is characterised by medieval castles and churches as well as Baroque and Renaissance buildings. National cultural monuments such as Spišský hrad, a well-known castle in Eastern Slovakia, and the mountain village Vlkolínec, that has been preserved from the 14th century and is a part of

UNESCO World Heritage, are important representatives of Slovak architecture (*Lajčiak, 2007*).

Thirdly, Slovak customs and traditions are mainly linked to peasant life and work in the countryside. In some areas, old traditions have been preserved, and are still practised in some villages today. This is particularly important because keeping traditions alive and practicing them plays a major role in linking the past and the present. It is important to mention, that Slovak folk songs and dances are not only in numerous cases part of traditional events, but they also build a relevant part of Slovak culture (*Lajčiak, 2007*).

Another highly influencing aspect for the Slovak culture is religion. Most Slovaks are Roman Catholic, but there are other religions such as Protestantism and Orthodoxy (*Lajčiak, 2007*).

4.2 The Hungarian culture

Hungary is located in Central Europe sharing borders with the above-mentioned Slovakia, with a history and culture dating back to the 9th century. Their culture and the life of Hungarians have been shaped by numerous historical events and cultural influences of other nations. The ancient history and traditions of the Hungarian people, as well as the influence of surrounding groups and societies, are present in this nation's culture. The traditional lifestyle, customs and beliefs of the Hungarian people are also characteristic of the country. The values of the Hungarian people include belonging, freedom, and a strong sense of community (*Vásáry, Fodor, 2014*).

The Hungarians traditionally led a nomadic lifestyle and favoured horseback archery. After the conquest, however, the Hungarians also adopted commercial and cultural influences of different cultures, but these were always combined with adaptation to Hungarian culture.

As the most important characteristic feature, the language plays an important role in the nation's development and sense of belonging. Hungarian language belongs to the Ugric language family. The structure and vocabulary of the language is diverse and provides a unique way of expressing Hungarian culture. The language also plays an important role in preserving Hungarian identity and keeping the culture alive (*Vásáry, Fodor, 2014*).

Hungarian culture has further numerous characteristic features, that reflect the way of thinking, mindset, and traditions of the Hungarian people. Hungarian folk art is a significant part of Hungarian culture, reflecting the influence of folk traditions and the natural environment. Hungarian folk art has taken different forms over the centuries and its diversity

can be observed in different regions. Important elements of Hungarian folk art include folk songs, dances, weaving, embroidery, pottery, jewellery making and woodcarving. These traditions and craft techniques have been incorporated into modern art in recent centuries and play an important role in the preservation of Hungarian cultural heritage. One of the best known is Matyó folk art, which is characterised by embroidery and the rich use of colours, or another relevant, the folk art of Kalocsa, which, in addition to embroidery, also includes features of folk dance and music. Hungarian folk music is a characteristic form of the nation's culture, building an important part of the culture. It is till nowadays performed at formal and informal cultural events. The special features of Hungarian folk music are its melodic style and simple instrumentation (*Vásáry, Fodor, 2014*).

It is necessary to mention the Hungarian literature as an important part of Hungarian culture. It has played a significant role in the development of Hungarian national consciousness and mother tongue awareness. The Hungarian landscape, Hungarian folk life, Hungarian history, and culture are all represented in literary works. The history of Hungarian literature begins in antiquity, and the importance of medieval Hungarian literature is reflected in the first written record of the Hungarian language (*Vásáry, Fodor, 2014*).

Lastly, the gastronomic values of Hungarian culture, that include a number of typical dishes have to be mentioned. These are dishes that are so deeply rooted in Hungarian culture that they are known worldwide, representing the culture they belong to (*Vásáry, Fodor, 2014*).

4.3 The relationship between the Slovak and the Hungarian culture

Slovak and Hungarian cultures have a very complex relationship that has over the decades seen both cooperation and various disputes. Since the two cultures are geographically neighbours to one another, there has long been a substantial exchange of cultural features between them, having an impact on each other's cultural development. However, the connection between the two cultures has been shaped by historical conflicts, cultural parallels, and contrasts, they share a diverse common heritage. Additionally, both cultures have been influenced by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which has contributed to the formation of a shared Central European identity.

The relationship between Slovak and Hungarian culture has been shaped by a shared history dating back to the 9th century, when Hungarians settled in what is now Slovakia.

Hungarian culture had a significant influence on the development of Slovak culture, especially in terms of language and architecture.

However, the relationship between the two cultures has also been marked by tensions and conflicts, especially in the 20th century, when political conflicts between Slovakia and Hungary led to strained cultural relations.

Despite these challenges, efforts have been made in recent years to promote better understanding and cooperation between the two cultures. Cultural exchange programmes, joint projects, and initiatives to preserve and promote Slovak and Hungarian cultural heritage have been implemented to enhance mutual understanding and appreciation.

Today, Slovakia and Hungary are both members of the European Union and their relationship is characterised by cooperation and mutual respect. Although cultural differences and tensions still exist, both countries recognise the importance of maintaining strong cultural ties and working together to promote their shared history and heritage.

5 Informal symbols of the chosen cultures

The following empirical part of the thesis deals with the selected symbols themselves, their role and history. In this part the symbols of the two cultures are going to be compared as well. The first unit of this part is focused on the identification and examination of the most well-known informal symbols of the Slovak and the Hungarian culture. Using the method of analysis, the meaning of each symbol, their origin, development, and historical background is explored and explained. The second unit of this part uses comparison, in order to spot the possible identical/similar or divergent features. Further the same methods are being used to analyse and compare the Slovak and Hungarian language, as well as the folk costumes and patterns of the two cultures.

5.1 The most well-known informal symbols of the Slovak culture

5.1.1 The Tatra Mountains

The Tatras or Tatra Mountains are one of the essential symbols of Slovakia's cultural and ecological values. The Tatras are a mountain range linking Slovakia with its northern neighbour country, Poland. On the Slovak side of the boarder these mountains are divided into two parts, namely the High Tatras and the Low Tatras. Both the High and the Low Tatras

are highly popular and well-known for their beauty and are home to many rare species of flora and fauna. Thanks to the stunning landscapes, exceptional views, and a wide selection of activities the Tatras are a relevant tourist attraction, often visited not only by local people, but foreigners as well. Furthermore, it is important to highlight, that the mountains also have historical and cultural significance. They are rich in historical and cultural treasures, including antique architecture, such as wooden churches, religiously themed rock sculptures or mountain huts. These landmarks are relevant not only as cultural heritage, but they also take part in the process of forming the national identity of Slovak people. (*Bendíková, 2021*)

The Tatra Mountains are seen as the most significant symbol representing the Slovak culture, not only by the country's inhabitants, but among expatriates as well. This statement is demonstrated by the fact, that these mountains are the most recognised and respected informal symbols of the Slovak Republic by its residents and by the residents of its neighbouring countries (*Mrva, 2018*).

The Tatras are carrying numerous symbolic meanings. They have been perceived as a symbol of not only the Slovak culture and identity, but also the Slovak nature, history, freedom, independence, strength, courage, and pride.

The Tatras are of great importance for Slovak society and for this reason the majority of Slovak people have strong emotional connection to them. Slovak inhabitants perceive the Tatras as a place where their national identity is manifested. The mountains have been present in Slovak culture and history for centuries and their symbolic meaning has been passed on from generation to generation. This way the mountains have become part of the national consciousness and cultural heritage of the Slovaks.

It would be hard to identify the specific place and time when the Tatras were first mentioned as a symbol of Slovakia, because the process was gradual and intertwined with the development of Slovak culture and society. However, it is known, that the Tatras perceptibly became a symbol of Slovakia around the 19th and 20th century. The Slovak national revival in the first half of the 19th century had a great impact on this process, because during this period the Tatras became a place where the individuals, who took part in the nation-building process, met and this caused, that the Tatras started to be mentioned as a symbol of Slovak national identity and patriotism. It was also around this time that numerous Slovak writers and artists started to find inspiration in the mountains for their work and started to use the Tatras as a symbol for Slovak identity in their artworks. This way the significance of the Tatras for the Slovaks and their culture is reflected in various pieces of literature, visual arts, and music not only in the past but present years as well. After the First World War and the

establishment of Czechoslovakia, the Tatras also became the symbol of strength and courage, freedom, independence, and hope. The reason for this was, that the mountains were a refuge and a place of resistance against various forms of oppression and dictatorship. Later on, during the Second World War the partisans used to hide in the mountains and the Tatras were an important place of resistance against communist rule in the 1950s. During the same period, the Tatras were highly valued as a symbol of Slovak national identity, and the communist government propaganda sought to enhance and promote tourism in the Tatras. (*Maniak, 2022*)

Considering the countless moral values these mountains hold possession of, provides a clear understanding of the reason, why they are so significant and crucial symbol of the Slovak culture and the country itself.

5.1.2 The Fujara

A fascinating and unique wind instrument, the fujara is a commonly known appliance among Slovak people owning a special place in the traditional music and culture of the nation. It can be described as an oud flute that originates from the central and eastern regions of the country. The name “Fujara” comes from the jargon of the Slovak shepherds and translated to English it means “to call”. This traditional musical instrument is characterised by a long, slender flute, typically consisting of three parts. The longest part of the instrument can be as long as 1.6 metres, despite of this fact the instrument is not heavy. The fujara has three finger holes at the front and one larger thumb hole at the back of the instrument. To produce a sound, the musician presses the flute hard with his fist while opening and closing the holes to produce rich and resonant tones. The fujara is an integral part of Slovak national culture and tradition and is often used during performances at folklore events and festivals. In 2015, the fujara was inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, highlighting the importance and value of this unique Slovak wind instrument, ensuring its place as one of the symbols of the Slovak nations culture. (*Blagojević, 2019*)

The fujara has become a symbol of Slovak culture not only because its uniqueness, but also because the instrument is connected with the rich Slovak musical and craft tradition. As mentioned previously, this instrument is associated with shepherds and pastoral culture. In the past the fujara was used for communication and entertainment while herding sheep in the mountains, where the shepherds often met and sang to it. This traditional instrument was very popular in the past in areas where sheep were cultivated and for this reason it spread rapidly

throughout the Slovak Republic. Later the fujara also became part of folk festivals and events such as weddings, anniversaries, funerals, and other similar occasions.

Fujara has a relatively long history in Slovakia, dating back to the 18th century. During this period the fujara was only popular among shepherds and was used mainly by them. From the 19th century onwards, fujaras began to be produced by craftsmen and became a part of Slovak folk music. During this period, the instrument became increasingly popular and various musical groups were formed, specialising on playing the fujara combined with different other traditional Slovak musical instruments. *(Blagojević, 2019)*

The symbolism of the fujara in the Slovak culture developed continuously during the 20th century. Over time, the fujara became a symbol of Slovak culture because it became an integral part of the cultural music and values of the country. It was recognised as a national cultural monument of Slovakia and in 1949 it was officially declared a symbol of Slovak folk music and craft. Later on, the instrument became a symbol of the whole Slovak republic. Its manufacturing became highly respected and supported in the whole country. The Slovak folk music groups started to teach the playing of the fujara, showing appreciation and striving to preserve and transmit the traditions of Slovak culture to the next generations furthermore foster the national heritage. Contemporarily, the fujara is still produced by craftsmen and is a significant feature of the Slovak folk music. The sound of the instrument is characteristic and unique, which makes it an instrument like no other. As one of the cultures informal symbols. the fujara is part of many cultural and social events in Slovakia representing the Slovak traditions even today. *(Blagojević, 2019)*



Image 2 Fujara



Image 1 Fujara 2

5.1.3 The Koliba

The Koliba is an exceptional and rustic wooden structure found mostly in the mountainous areas of Slovakia, but it can be found in other Central European countries, such as Poland, or the Czech Republic. It is a simple building consisting of solid wooden walls and a shingle or thatched roof. Originally these wooden buildings were used as the shepherds' homes or sometimes as shelters for mountain tourists. Contemporarily, numerous preserved or renovated huts have been converted into wonderful tourist destinations, such as restaurants, accommodation for visitors, like hotels and apartments or simply comforting cosy places to stop and rest. Locals and foreigners as well can enjoy the popular traditional food and drink in a traditional Slovak setting where visitors can feel as if one have stepped back in time. Furthermore, these wooden buildings are an excellent representation of the Slovak culture and traditions. (*Dorko, Kotradyová, 2022*)

The Koliba is an important part of Slovak culture and a symbol of the country and nation, especially in connection with the mountainous regions of the Republic. In the past, these wooden huts were an essential part of the life of shepherds who tended their cattle in the mountains. Koliba has become a symbol of Slovakia due to its importance for Slovak culture and history. As in the past, the wooden koliba was an important dwelling for shepherds and farmers in mountainous areas they are closely linked to the traditional Slovak way of life. They were used in the past for sleeping and storing various items, as well as for storing crops. Thanks to its rustic and natural appearance, the koliba has become an icon of Slovak architecture as well.

In addition, the koliba has also become known for Slovak gastronomy, where traditional dishes are served in a rustic atmosphere. Tourists from all over the world come to Slovakia to enjoy traditional food and drink in koliba and visit places where the authentic atmosphere of koliba has been preserved. (*Dorko, Kotradyová, 2022*)

Because these huts are closely linked to traditional Slovak culture and was in the past an important part of the life of traditional Slovak people, they have become a symbol of Slovakia and its culture. They represent protection and shelter for families and entire communities. They also symbolise memories of the past and a traditional way of life. Kolibas often serve as a place for folklore and cultural events and festivals in Slovakia, where traditional customs and rituals are preserved and popularized.

Koliba is part of the Slovak country's cultural identity and plays a significant role in tourism as one of its pillars. (Dorko, Kotradyová, 2022)



Image 3 Koliba

5.1.4 Bryndzové halušky

“Bryndzové halušky” translated as sheep cheese potato dumplings is a traditional Slovak dish made from a special dough consisting of flour and boiled potatoes, mixed with the traditional Slovak sheep cheese, the bryndza. Halušky are small dumplings in the shape of an oval cylinder, which are cooked in boiling water and then mixed with the bryndza and fried crispy bacon, and chopped onions are added to flavour them.

Bryndza is a traditional Slovak cheese made from sheep's milk. It has a characteristic salty and slightly spicy taste. Bryndza halušky is a popular dish in Slovakia and is considered one of the most typical Slovak dishes, furthermore the national dish of the country.

Bryndzové halušky has as a symbol of Slovakia because it has been produced for centuries and has been part of the daily diet for many Slovak families. Bryndzové halušky is also considered as a symbol of Slovak cuisine, which is characterised by its simplicity and the use of local ingredients. (Dorko, Kotradyová, 2022)

In addition, bryndzové halušky has also become a popular Slovak dish because of its ability to bring people together. In the past, bryndzové halušky were often prepared for whole

families or groups of friends and eaten together at evening tables. Today, bryndzové halušky is considered a symbol of Slovak gastronomy and is a popular attraction for tourists who want to taste traditional Slovak food and get to know the local culture and traditions.

5.2 The most well-known informal symbols of the Hungarian culture

5.2.1 The Hungarikums

Hungarikums are a special category of uniquely Hungarian items that are known for their exceptional quality. A committee of professionals carefully selects these items based on their uniqueness, quality, and association with Hungary. Hungarikums are an important part of Hungarian culture and can be achievements, patents, works of Hungarian nationals, or creations of Hungarian artists. They can also be plants or animals that are native to Hungary or have been bred there. Hungarian folk art, fine art, monuments, distinctive architecture, music, language, and literature are also included as Hungarikums. Examples of famous Hungarikums include pálinka, a traditional Hungarian fruit brandy, goulash soup, Tokaji aszú wine, the Hortobágy puszta, a vast area of plains located in eastern Hungary, stretching over approximately 2,000 square kilometers, Hungarian folk art and embroidery, the Rubik's cube, the Hungarian dog breed, the „vizsla“, and world-renowned Hungarian scientists such as Albert Szent-Györgyi and John Neumann. Additionally, Hungarian folk tales and songs are an important part of the country's cultural heritage and are considered Hungarikums as well. (*Tózsza, Zátori, 2013*)

The story of the origins of the Hungaricums is, for the most part, closely interwoven with the history and cultural development of Hungary. Many Hungaricums, for example, originate from Hungarian rural life and traditions. Others, such as the Rubik's Cube, are the inventions of Hungarian inventors and engineers. The first official Hungaricums were created in 2007 by the Hungarian Tourism Ltd. to raise awareness of Hungarian cultural heritage and to promote its preservation and promotion. Later in 2012 the Hungarian Parliament has adopted and published the Hungarikum law, which confirms the importance of Hungaricums for the protection of culture and officially accepts the designation of intangible and tangible cultural values as Hungaricums. Since then, the list of Hungarikums has been continuously expanded and now includes more than 100 items. However, it is important to note that numerous Hungarikums are symbols of Hungary and the Hungarian culture, but not all of them. (*Tózsza, Zátori, 2013*)

In addition to the Hungaricums, there are other non-formal symbols of Hungarian culture and the country.

5.2.2 The holy crown

The Holy Crown, or St Stephen's Crown, is Hungary's crown jewel, a symbol of the independence and sovereignty of the Hungarian state.

Over the centuries, the Holy Crown has played an important role in the history and politics of Hungary. The crown was commissioned by King Saint Stephen, the first king of Hungary, and used as a symbol of the country's sovereignty and the power of the monarch.

There is no exact date of manufacture, but it is thought to have been made between 1000 and 1010. It was used by Hungarian monarchs as a coronation jewel and signified the official transfer of power from the monarch to the emperor.

The crown was originally kept in the Buda Castle, but throughout the history it was sometimes stored in other cities, such as Szekesfehervar, Bratislava, or in Kosice.

Furthermore, it also happened, that the crown has been stolen, hidden, or handed over to other powers several times in the history of Hungary. For example, it was taken from the country during the Tatar invasion of 1241 and has been kept abroad in this way on several occasions. (*Timon, 1920*)

The importance of the Holy Crown has been demonstrated many times throughout Hungarian history. One of the most important events, when the role of the crown was prominent, was during the 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence, when the crown was seen as a symbol of the Hungarian nation. The crown was after in the hands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was returned to Hungary after the First World War.

The Holy Crown remains an important symbol of Hungary today and is seen by many in the country as a symbol of statehood and national independence. The jewel is kept in the building of the Hungarian parliament in the Hungarian capital city, Budapest, where it is possible for the public to view it in a highly safe environment. Although the Holy Crown is the best known and most important, there are four other significant crown jewels: the sceptre, the king's apple, the robe, and the sword. All of these can be considered symbols, as they are all symbols of Hungarian belonging and independence. (*Timon, 1920*)



Image 4 Holy Crown

5.2.3 The Turul Bird

The turul bird is an important sacred bird in Hungarian mythological traditions. In the ancient beliefs of the Hungarians, the turul bird symbolized the relationship with the high gods and symbolized power, protection, and freedom. The Turul bird is only a mythical bird and is not a real bird of any species. It is often portrayed as a large, powerful bird of predation, with sharp talons and a wingspan capable of flying great distances. (Dúcz, 2008) In Hungarian mythology, the Turul bird is believed to be a messenger and is also linked to the origin story of the Hungarian people. According to a legend, the Turul bird appeared in a dream to Emese, the mother of the first leader of the Hungarian tribes, and impregnated her with a divine spark, which led to the birth of Álmos and the founding of the Hungarian people.

Although the Turul bird is not a true bird species, some ornithologists believe that its depiction may have been influenced by various species of large birds of prey that once inhabited the Carpathian Basin, such as the Eastern Imperial Eagle, the Golden Eagle, and the White-tailed Eagle.

The turul bird has also played an important role in Hungarian history. In the legend of the conquest of Hungary, the turul bird helped the Hungarians to find their homeland. The turul bird also appears in the coat of arms of the Árpád kings and was a decoration of many churches in medieval Hungary.

The turul bird has become a symbol of Hungarian national identity and freedom over time. During the 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence, the turul bird symbolised the Hungarian desire for freedom and independence. The turul bird has been an important symbol of Hungary ever since, present in the symbolism of the state, in the Hungarian coat of arms, and along with other important national symbols. (Dúcz, 2008)



Image 5 Turul Bird

5.2.4 The goulash soup

Hungarian cuisine is an integral part of the country's cultural identity, and its unique flavours and culinary traditions are highly appreciated by Hungarians and visitors alike. Goulash soup is a popular traditional dish in Hungary and is often associated with Hungarian culture and cuisine. It is made from beef, onions, peppers, and other vegetables and is typically flavoured with spices such as cumin seeds and bay leaves and paprika. Goulash soup is a well-known and popular dish in Hungary, one of the many delicious and important components of Hungarian cuisine and culinary heritage. The origins of the “gulyás” date back to the 9th century, when Hungarian shepherds used to prepare a hearty stew of meat, onions, and peppers in large cauldrons over an open fire. The dish has evolved over time, with different variations and ingredients depending on the region and the cooks.

Goulash became a popular dish in Hungary in the 19th century and spread to other parts of Europe and the world with the culinary skills of Hungarian immigrants. Today the goulash soup is the national dish of Hungary and is often considered a symbol of Hungarian cuisine, not only in Hungary but also in other countries. (*Lukácsné Marnika, 2012*)

5.2.5 Comparing the Slovak and the Hungarian symbols

Among the best-known informal cultural symbols of Slovakia are the Tatras, the fujara (traditional wind instrument), the koliba (a wooden shepherd's hut, now often used as a restaurant or tourist facility). Furthermore, Slovak cuisine is also a relevant part of the country's culture, with dishes such as bryndzové halušky (potato dumplings with sheep's cheese) and another famous one, the kapustnica (sour cabbage soup with meat and sausages). In Hungary, unofficial cultural symbols include relevant number of the Hungaricums, the coronation jewels and the turul bird. Hungarian cuisine is also well-known, with dishes such as the goulash soup, chimney cake (a sweet baked dough) and pálinka, the national spirit. Hungarian folk music and folk dance, including the traditional Csárdás, also belong to significant informal symbols of the culture.

The above-mentioned symbols are just few out of the large number of informal symbols the cultures have. There are a significant number of symbols in both Hungarian and Slovak culture, of which no written reference is available, but which are present in the public consciousness as symbols of the culture or society.

Both Slovakia and Hungary have a rich and varied cultural heritage, with unique traditions, cuisine, music, and art that reflect the history and character of each nation. Slovaks have deep-rooted traditions and customs that define their culture, such as traditional costumes, pottery, cheese-making and traditional festivities. Slovakia has a varied landscape, including the Tatras, caves, rivers, lakes, and waterfalls, which are highly respected and very popular among Slovak people. The county also has a number of historic castles and chateaux, which are visited by bus and are not only an important part of Slovak culture, but also important tourist attractions. Traditional crafts such as pottery, spinning, blacksmithing and embroidery, which are still very popular today, are also relevant and all of them represents respect traditions. On the other hand, Hungarian culture is characterized by its distinct and exeptional language, a reverence for traditions, customs and values, a diverse gastronomy, folk art with deeply rooted folk music and folk dance, that is fostered till these days. Furthermore, a rich historical past with numerous important happenings, the countries

religion, which influenced the development of several traditions and the accomplishments of exceptional scientists, writers, and artists. All of these factors influence Hungarian culture and identity, and they contribute significantly to the country's rich cultural heritage. It can be concluded, that both cultures, the Slovak and the Hungarian as well pay close attention to their cultural heritage, appreciation and fostering of the traditions, to keep the culture alive. The national identity is strongly present in the life of both Slovak and Hungarian people.

Despite the few features the two cultures have in common and their shared and at various points connected history both of the cultures have their own unique characteristics, as well as their own informal cultural symbol. This fact is interesting considering the relation between the development of informal cultural symbols and the history and formation of a nation.

Overall, it can be concluded, that even if the two cultures share slight similarities due to their geographical placement and common historical events and periods, both cultures and their symbols are exceptional and unique building up a piece of their own culture and national identity.

5.3 The language as a symbol of a culture

“The ethnic and national culture of any people is reflected mainly in the language. In this regard, language is one of the main sources of preservation of our own culture, formed by the essence of the nation.” (Tektigul et al., 2022) According to this, the mother tongue of a society can be considered as one of the informal symbols of their culture. In this meaning, the Slovak and the Hungarian language can be mentioned as informal symbols of their cultures.

5.3.1 The Slovak language

The Slovak language is the official language of the Slovak republic. It is spoken by approximately 5 million people worldwide. Slovak belongs to the West Slavic branch of the Slavic language family, being closely related to Czech and Polish languages. The language has a deep and rich history, dating back to the 9th century, when the Slavic missionaries Cyril and Methodius introduced Old Church Slavonic in the Great Moravian Empire. The first written records of the Slovak language appeared around the 15th century and were written in Old Slovak. Since that period the language has undergone significant development and change during the centuries. The Slovak language was then first codified in the second half of the 18th century, during the times of the Slovak national revival. The codification process was

led by scholars and intellectual, who developed a set of rules and guidelines for grammar, spelling and pronunciation. This process was a core element of the formation of the Slovak national identity. (*Varsányiová, 2003*)

Though, the Slovak language is very closely related to numerous other Slavic languages, it has its own distinctive features. The most relevant of these is the declension system, which denotes the grammatical cases of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. In Slovak grammar six cases can be distinguished, including nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, locative, instrumental. This complex system of declension can be challenging for language learners, but it is essential for expressing accurate meanings in written and spoken communication. Another feature of the Slovak language is pronunciation. Slovak has a relatively large number of vowels, precisely with 6 vowels and 12 diphthongs. The language also has a phonemic stress system which varies depending on the position of the stress in the word and the presence of certain consonant groups.

It is important to mention, that the Slovak language has a rich literary tradition, with prominent Slovak writers who contributed to the corroboration of the language and the culture with their relevant works. Here such litterateurs as Jozef Ignác Bajza, Samo Chalupka, Martin Kukučín, and Janko Matúška can be mentioned. Slovak literature has been influenced by the country's history and culture, including a long tradition of folklore and oral storytelling. (*Varsányiová, 2003*)

The Slovak language is an essential part of Slovakia's cultural heritage and national identity. The ability of speaking this language provides a strong sense of belonging and inhesion for its native speakers. The promotion and preservation of the Slovak language is crucial to the country's efforts to preserve and celebrate its unique cultural identity.

5.3.2 The Hungarian language

The Hungarian language, the “Magyar” is the official language of Hungary and belongs to the Uralic language family. The language is spoken by approximately 13 million speakers worldwide, also used by Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries of the country such as Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine. It is considered to be one of the most unique and challenging languages to learn, due to its complex grammar, extensive case usage and specific and colourful vocabulary and phonetics.

One of the most distinctive features of Hungarian is the extensive use of suffixes, which are added to words to indicate their function in the sentence. These suffixes can completely

change the meaning of a word, or even create entirely new words. Another feature of the language is the system of vowel harmony, where vowels within words must match in terms of front or back position.

Hungarian also has a specific sound system, which contains certain sounds that do not occur in many other languages. (*Papp, 1999*)

Hungarian literature, the history of literature written in Hungarian. Hungary's literary history began in the Middle Ages, when the first Hungarian-language works appeared alongside Latin. Since then, literature has evolved continuously, and many great writers and poets have created Hungarian literary classics. Literature has evolved through several periods and styles. In the mid-nineteenth century, during the Romantic period, writers emphasized on Hungarian national identity and the importance of the mother tongue. During the modernist period, writers abandoned traditional literary forms in favour of new techniques. Hungarian literature produced writers and poets of not only local but international prominence throughout the centuries, such as Sándor Petöfi, János Arany, Dezso Kosztolányi, Mihály Babits, Endre Ady, Kálmán Mikszáth, or Miklos Radnóti. Hungarian literature is an important part of the national cultural heritage and literary works are still important for Hungarian culture and humanity. (*Nemeskurty, 1966*)

The Hungarian language has played a significant role in Hungarian history and identity, serving as a symbol of national pride and independence. In fact, during Soviet rule, the Hungarian government made efforts to preserve the language, creating institutions and programmes to promote language use and learning.

In conclusion, the Hungarian language is a unique and complex language with a rich history and cultural significance. Its complex grammar, extensive case usage and distinctive phonetics make it a challenging yet fascinating language to learn, study and speak. (*Papp, 1999*)

5.3.3 Comparing the Slovak and the Hungarian language

However, the countries of Slovakia and Hungary are lying next to each other sharing history and borders, the Slovak and Hungarian language are two heavily different languages both with their own characteristics and numerous differences between them. While Slovak belongs to the Western Slavic language group of the Slavic language family, Hungarian belongs to the Uralic language family. Main differences between Slovak and Hungarian language can be detected in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary as well.

Grammar

Slovak and Hungarian have different grammatical structures, and dissimilar grammatical rules due to their different origin. Slovak is a flecional language, where the endings of words vary depending on their function in the sentence. In contrast, Hungarian is an agglutinating language, where words are built up by adding suffixes and prefixes. Their word order in a sentence is parallel as well. Slovak follows the more traditional SVO (subject-verb-object) word order, while Hungarian uses the more flexible SOV (subject-object-verb) word order.

Pronunciation

Slovak has a simple and regular vowel system, while Hungarian has a slightly more complex vowel system. However, both languages have specific sounds that are not or rarely found in other languages. In Hungarian, a significant number of rules affect consonants, which influence their pronunciation in words. While Slovak also has a unique consonant pairing system, where certain consonants are pronounced differently when paired with different vowels.

Vocabulary

Slovak vocabulary is influenced by Slavic, German and Latin languages, while Hungarian vocabulary is influenced by Turkish, Germanic and Slavic languages. It is important to note, that the two languages had influences on each other as well. Also, close to the borders of the two countries the exchange of certain expressions is common. To sum up, Slovak and Hungarian are two different languages with unique characteristics, grammatical structures, word order, pronunciation systems and vocabularies. Despite their differences, both languages are an essential part of their cultures and serve as an important means of communication for their speakers.

5.4 The folk costumes and patterns

It can be said that folk art plays an important role in the history and culture of a large number of nations and in their development. It is also clear that folk culture is the source of many traditions that are the basis and heritage of a nation. Clothing (folk costume) plays a very important and, above all, unforgettable role in folk culture.

Clothing is a part of material culture which, through its variety, detail, and functionality, provides an insight into the life of a people. Folk costume is in fact a narrator of the history of people's lives, environment, and culture. Furthermore, dresses played an important role in determining the role and status of the people. (*Horká, 2009*)

5.4.1 The Slovak folk costumes

It is difficult to exactly determine the characteristic features of the oldest folk costume. It is likely, however, that in the early days both women's and men's clothing may have been of the same or very similar shape and form. The basic and primer function of any piece of clothing was definitely to protect the body. Starting from the 18th century it can be proved that the traditional clothing began to take on the form know today.

Work clothes and ceremonial clothes were mostly made up usually of the same parts, differing only in the materials and decoration. Of course, the costumes also varied according to different aspects, such as place and religion, age, or social position.

The traditional Slovak costumes were worn in Slovakia during various festivities and events such as weddings, folk festivals, pilgrimages, or traditional dances. It is hard to summarize their characteristic features, given the fact, that the costumes are different depending on the region. Each region has its own characteristic elements, colours, and patterns. At the end of the 19th century, Slovakia had over 50 types of folklore clothing, if not more, which differed in design, technology, embroidery, and headgear. (*Horká, 2009*)

Men's costumes usually had a simpler cut and were more practical. They consist of a shirt, waistcoat, trousers, vest, and hat. The women costumes are much more elaborate and have a more complex cut. It consists of a white shirt decorated with lace, skirts, apron, scarf, and various accessories. The colours and patterns of the costumes were often inspired by local nature, such as flowers, leaves and animals. Geometric patter was also popular in particular regions, or symbols and motifs such as crosses, or stars and hearts were also common to decorate the costumes with. In the past the traditional Slovak costumes were usually made of materials like cotton, linen, or woollen cloth, however today, costumes are also made of modern materials such as polyester or synthetic fibre. The Slovak folk costumes were usually complemented by various decorations and accessories such as lace, ribbons, buttons, jewellery. Hair ornaments and scarves were extremely popular and commonly worn by woman.

The costumes are of great cultural significance and are linked to the history, traditions and customs of Slovakia and are an important element of Slovak folklore and culture. Their production and wearing are still maintained and developed in order to preserve Slovak cultural identity and tradition. The folk clothing is also a popular attraction among foreign tourists, who can see them in museums or at various cultural and folklore festivals across Slovakia. (Horká, 2009)



Image 6 Slovak traditional folk costume 1



Image 7 Slovak traditional folk costume 2

5.4.2 The Slovak folk patterns

Slovak folk patterns are an important and highly valued part of the country's cultural heritage. Handed down from generation to generation. These patterns are often found in traditional clothing such as costumes, embroidery, and weaving, or as a decoration of various home appliances, even walls.

The patterns often depict geometric shapes, flowers, animals, and religious symbols, all of which have symbolic meanings and tell stories and convey important messages. One of the best-known Slovak folk designs is the “Křížik”, or cross, which consists of a series of crosses arranged in a repeating pattern, often composed with additional geometric shapes and flowers. This pattern is often used in embroidery and weaving and is a favourite element of traditional garments. Another popular pattern is the “wave” pattern, or the repeating pattern

of diamond shapes and triangles. These patterns were often used and were also seen on traditional blankets and rugs.

Stars, circles, and spirals are also commonly used motifs in Slovak folk patterns, often combined with other patterns to create intricate designs in embroidery and weaving.

Overall, Slovak folk designs are a beautiful and integral part of the country's cultural heritage. They are still widely used today in a variety of ways, from traditional clothing to decorative arts. (Horká, 2009)



Image 9 Slovak folk pattern 1



Image 8 Slovak folk pattern 2

5.4.3 The Hungarian folk costumes

In Hungarian society, costume were an expression of many different situations and statuses. The dress indicated age, rank, economic status, occupation, and family status. For women in particular, it was easy to understand from the clothing, whether a woman was a daughter, a bride, a daughter-in-law, a woman with children, an elderly woman, or a widow. For men, this indication was more modest, showing the status of a bachelor, a groom, and a married man. The costume was also adapted to everyday life, for example, a costume could be used to tell the wearer what kind of work he was going to do.

The hungarian folk costumes was a traditional style of dressing that was typical in the various regions of Hungary. The folk costumes vary from region to region and were made using different patterns, colours, and materials. They played an important role in preserving and cultivating Hungarian culture and also helped to identify features of the life of the people who wore them.

The development of Hungarian folk costume dates back to the Middle Ages. There is no preserved written legacy of the ancient Hungarians, so information about their dress is only

available from later chronicles. In the Middle Ages, the Hungarians began to develop their own folk costumes, influenced by neighbouring societies.

The Hungarian folk costume is characterised by strong colours and rich decoration. Women's clothing usually consisted of a long skirt and a colourful blouse or shirt, often complemented by a brightly coloured shawl or headdress. Men usually wore long trousers and waistcoats, complemented by a white shirt and a colourful apron. A hat or cap was also an important accessory.

As mentioned previously, Hungarian folk costumes can be various in different regions. Commonly the traditional folk costumes were very colourful and ornate, while there are some regions where the clothing could be characterised by simpler black and white pieces. In each region, folk costumes also had functional elements that protected the person who wore it from the weather and hard physical work.

Hungarian folk costumes are still worn today at various festivities and events. It is a common vision among Hungarian people, that this traditional style of dress is an important part of Hungarian culture and identity, and that it is important to preserve and cultivate it. (Tóth, 2005)



Image 10 Hungarian traditional folk costume 1



Image 11 Hungarian traditional folk costume 2

5.4.4 The Hungarian folk patterns

Hungarian folk designs are very diverse and varied and are closely intertwined with Hungarian folk art and traditions.

It would be rather complicated to mention the wide range of patterns used in the past.

However, the most commonly used motifs and patterns can be grouped into four categories.

The first group, the geometric motifs, such as lines, upright and oblique crosses, stars, triangles, rectangles, zigzags, and other elements. There are also a number of freeform motifs - usually floral motifs - such as pomegranates, lilies, tulips, carnations, rosettes, acanthus leaves, and bouquets and vine leaves. Furthermore, there are the vines and branches, which were used to link the motifs, and an additional popular feature was the acorn.

In addition to the plant motifs, there are also animal motifs. From animal motifs, the bird motifs were used in the first place. Birds such as peacocks and roosters were commonly in use.

In Hungary the folk patterns are an important part of the country's rich cultural heritage, some of them are even considered as Hungaricums. The patterns have been passed down from generations to generations and are closely tied to traditional Hungarian art and customs and rural life. There are many variations of Hungarian folk patterns, each with their own unique characteristics and meanings.

Among the most popular patterns belong the Palóc pattern, that is known for its bright colours and geometric shapes, such as diamonds, squares, and triangles. The Kalocsa pattern is a type of Hungarian folk pattern, known for being very colourful and ornate. It is often found in traditional Kalocsa embroidery patterns, which are characterised by intricate and detailed designs. The Kalocsa pattern is one of the most famous patterns in the country, that typically features geometric shapes and a wide variety of floral motifs such as tulips, roses, and other flowers. The colours used in the patterns are often bright and bold, including shades of red, blue, green, yellow, and pink. A very similar and also widely known and used pattern is the Matyó pattern. It is a decorative folk design from the town of Mezőkövesd in north-eastern Hungary. It is also characterised by bold and bright colours, typically deep red and bright blue with black and white accents. The designs usually consist of geometric shapes such as diamonds and triangles, and floral motifs including roses and tulips. The Matyó embroidery technique used to make the designs is a special form of Hungarian folk embroidery, which is made using intricate hand stitching. It is typically used to decorate traditional garments, such as women's blouses and aprons, as well as household items such as

tablecloths and curtains. In contrast with these bright and lively motifs and designs, the pattern of Sárköz, originating from the Southern Plain, usually used black and white colours and features geometric patterns such as rhombuses and triangles.

It can be stated that Hungarian folk patterns not just were but continue to be an important part of Hungarian culture and are still used today in many forms of art and decoration. They represent the unique history and traditions of Hungary. (Tóth, 2005)



Image 12 Hungarian Matyó pattern



Image 13 Hungarian Kalocsa pattern

5.4.5 Comparison of the Slovak and the Hungarian folk costumes and patterns

Hungarian and Slovak folk costumes have very similar elements, but there are also some important differences. Since in both countries the folk clothing differ from region to region, it is impossible to make a summarised comparison. Taking into consideration the similar climate and location of the two countries it is understandable, that their traditional clothing share similar features. The composition and pieces of clothing are very similar. In both cultures, the shirt or blouse, the waistcoat, the apron, and the favoured use of headdress are popular. There is also a particular similarity in colour selection between the traditional dresses of the two cultures, with bright, strong colours such as red and blue, or black and white, being used in both, depending on the region. Both costumes use many decorative elements such as embroidery, lace, and ribbons.

Overall, both cultures take great pride in their traditions and folk art, and many people in both countries still wear traditional costumes for festive events and celebrations.

6 Summary and conclusion

Informal symbols play an essential role in shaping a nation's identity, they are part of the cultural heritage of a nation and serve as a source of pride for its people. Furthermore, these symbols can serve as a mean of communication on an international level. While formal symbols of a nation and culture are strictly regulated, informal symbols are much wider ranging. An informal symbol of a culture can be anything, intangible or tangible asset, that carries a specific meaning for the given society. Natural features, traditional crafts, historic structures, folk traditions, costumes, and rituals, and even the language itself are examples of these symbols. They act as a link between the past and the present and they are an essential component of a nation's cultural life.

This thesis was specifically focused on the Slovak and the Hungarian culture, and their informal symbols. These two cultures share a long and complex history as neighbouring countries in Central Europe. Moreover, the two countries were once part of the same political entity, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For this reason, it could be assumed, that after comparing the two cultures and their informal symbols some similarities could be found. However, this assumption proved to be incorrect.

The informal symbols of both, the Slovak and Hungarian culture take an integral part of the daily lives of the people living in these countries, and they hold great significance in their lives often without the people realising it. The symbols are associated with shared values, traditions, and cultural heritage, that are passed down from generation to generation.

Slovak culture's informal symbols include the Slovak language, the folk costumes and patterns, the Tatra Mountains, the traditional and unique wind instrument, the fujara, the wooden koliba buildings, and the traditional dish, the "bryndzové halušky", sheep cheese dumplings.

Hungarian culture's informal symbols similarly include the Hungarian language and folk dresses with folk patterns, the selection of Hungarikums, the historically relevant Holy Crown, the national animal, the turul bird and the popular national dish the Goulash Soup.

After identifying few of the most popular informal cultural symbols and comparing them, as well as comparing the structure and vocabulary of the Slovak and the Hungarian language, furthermore the folk costumes and their patterns, the result shows that each culture has developed and evolved in its own way, each with its own unique characteristics and symbols.

Resumé

Kultúra je základným prvkom existencie ľudí v spoločnosti. Určuje spôsob ich myslenia, ich svetonázor, tiež ovplyvňuje ich normy ako aj správanie jednotlivcov v spoločnosti. Symboly sú základnou zložkou každej kultúry a plnia v kultúrnom kontexte rôzne funkcie. Či už sú symboly formálne alebo neformálne, hrajú v spoločnosti dôležitú úlohu. Táto práca sa zaoberá predovšetkým druhou kategóriou, teda neformálnymi kultúrnymi symbolmi. Hoci formálne kultúrne symboly, ako sú štátne vlajky a hymny, sú v spoločnostiach všeobecne uznávané, nepokrývajú celú škálu kultúrnych prejavov. Neformálne kultúrne symboly sú pri reprezentácii kultúry a posilňovaní kultúrnej identity rovnako dôležité ako formálne kultúrne symboly. Niekedy sa zanedbávajú alebo sa považujú za samozrejmú, ale majú podstatný vplyv na formovanie kultúrnej identity a sú aj nástrojmi reprezentácie danej kultúry. Napriek ich významu sa v akademickej literatúre neformálnym kultúrnym symbolom venuje pomerne málo pozornosti. Je potrebné dôkladne preskúmať povahu, funkcie a významy neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov, ako aj ich vplyv na interkultúrnu komunikáciu. Táto práca sa snaží vyplniť nedostatky v literatúre skúmaním témy neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov. Bakalárska práca sa venuje koncepcii kultúrnych symbolov, vysvetľuje rozdiel medzi formálnymi a neformálnymi kultúrnymi symbolmi a skúma sociálne a kultúrne prvky, ktoré ovplyvňujú vznik, a pochovanie neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov, ako aj ich vyskytovanie. V neposlednom rade je cieľom tejto práce zlepšiť poznatky o význame neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov v kultúrnej sfére a interkultúrnej komunikácii, ale aj poskytnúť lepšie a hlbšie pochopenie úlohy neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov a ich významu.

Hlavným cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce je najprv identifikovať a následne analyzovať neformálne symboly dvoch vybraných kultúr, a to slovenskej a maďarskej kultúry. Ďalej posúdiť možné podobnosti alebo rozdiely medzi nimi. Ako aj nájsť a stručne vysvetliť ich významy a preskúmať historické a kultúrne prostredie symbolov a pôvod jednotlivých symbolov.

V teoretickej časti práce je použitá metóda literárnej rešerše, pomocou tejto metódy sú uvedené základné teoretické východiská témy. V empirickej časti je použitá metóda analýzy a komparácie. Predmetom analýzy sú samotné vybrané neformálne symboly jednotlivých kultúr, po ktorých nasleduje porovnanie neformálnych symbolov dvoch vybraných kultúr.

Neformálne symboly zohrávajú dôležitú úlohu pri formovaní identity národa, sú súčasťou kultúrneho dedičstva národa a slúžia ako zdroj hrdosti jeho obyvateľov. Okrem toho

môžu tieto symboly slúžiť ako prostriedok komunikácie na medzinárodnej úrovni. Zatiaľ čo formálne symboly národa a kultúry sú prísne regulované, neformálne symboly majú oveľa širší záber. Neformálnym symbolom kultúry môže byť čokoľvek, nemotný alebo hmotný statok, ktorý nesie špecifický význam pre danú spoločnosť. Príkladom takýchto symbolov sú prírodné prvky, tradičné remeslá, historické stavby, ľudové tradície, kroje a rituály, a dokonca aj samotný jazyk.

Dve zvolené kultúry, Slovenská a Maďarská majú ako susedné krajiny v strednej Európe dlhú a zložitú spoločnú históriu. Navyše obe krajiny boli kedysi súčasťou toho istého politického útvaru, Rakúsko-Uhorska. Z tohto dôvodu sa dalo predpokladať, že po porovnaní týchto dvoch kultúr a ich neformálnych symbolov by sa mohli nájsť určité podobnosti. Tento predpoklad sa však ukázal ako nesprávny.

Neformálne symboly slovenskej aj maďarskej kultúry sú neoddeliteľnou súčasťou každodenného života ľudí žijúcich v týchto krajinách a majú v ich živote veľký význam často bez toho, aby si to ľudia uvedomovali. Symboly sú spojené so spoločnými hodnotami, tradíciami a kultúrnym dedičstvom, ktoré sa odovzdávajú z generácie na generáciu.

Medzi najznámejšie neformálne kultúrne symboly Slovenskej kultúry patria Tatry, fujara (tradičný dychový nástroj), koliba (drevená salaš, dnes často využívaná ako reštaurácia alebo turistické zariadenie). Okrem toho je významnou súčasťou kultúry krajiny aj slovenská kuchyňa, ktorej jedlá sú napríklad bryndzové halušky (zemiakové halušky s ovčím syrom) a ďalšia známa kapustnica (kyslá kapustnica s mäsom a klobásami). Tiež do tejto skupiny patrí aj slovenský jazyk, ako aj ľudové kroje a vzory.

K neformálnym symbolom maďarskej kultúry podobne patrí maďarský jazyk a ľudový odev s ľudovými vzormi, výber Hungarikumov, historicky významná Svätá koruna, národné zviera, vták turul a obľúbené národné jedlo gulášová polievka.

Uvedené symboly sú len niekoľkými z veľkého počtu neformálnych symbolov, ktoré kultúry majú. V maďarskej aj slovenskej kultúre existuje značný počet symbolov, o ktorých nie sú k dispozícii žiadne písomné zmienky, ale ktoré sú prítomné vo verejnom povedomí ako symboly kultúry alebo spoločnosti.

Možno konštatovať, že Slovensko aj Maďarsko majú bohaté a rozmanité kultúrne dedičstvo s jedinečnými tradíciami, kuchyňou, hudbou a umením, ktoré odrážajú históriu a charakter každého národa. Všetky tieto faktory ovplyvňujú maďarskú kultúru a identitu a významne prispievajú k bohatému kultúrnemu dedičstvu krajiny.

Po identifikovaní niekoľkých najpopulárnejších neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov a ich porovnaní, ako aj po porovnaní štruktúry a slovnej zásoby slovenského a maďarského

jazyka, ďalej ľudových krojov a ich vzorov, výsledok ukazuje, že každá kultúra sa vyvíjala a vyvíja svojim vlastným spôsobom, pričom každá má svoje jedinečné charakteristiky a symboly. Možno tvrdiť, že obe kultúry, slovenská aj maďarská, venujú veľkú pozornosť svojmu kultúrnemu dedičstvu, oceňovaniu a pestovaniu tradícií, v záujme zachovania kultúry. Národná identita je silne prítomná v živote slovenského aj maďarského národa. Napriek niekoľkým spoločným črtám a prepojenej histórii majú obe kultúry svoje jedinečné charakteristiky, ako aj vlastných neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov. Táto skutočnosť je zaujímavá vzhľadom na vzťah medzi vývojom neformálnych kultúrnych symbolov a históriou a formovaním národa.

Celkovo možno konštatovať, že aj keď obe kultúry majú mierne podobnosti vyplývajúce z ich geografického umiestnenia a spoločných historických udalostí, obe kultúry a ich symboly sú výnimočné a jedinečné a vytvárajú kus vlastnej kultúry a národnej identity.

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Image 3 Koliba. Available at https://hiking.dennikn.sk/ar/1404/koliba_nad_malou_tureckou.html

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Image 5 Turul Bird. Available at <https://turul.info/turul/szobrok>

Image 6 Slovak traditional folk costume 1. Available at <https://parta.sk/vyroba-krojov/>

Image 7 Slovak traditional folk costume 2. Available at <https://slovander.sk/netradicno/slovenske-kroje-ako-umelecke-dielo-plne-tajomstiev/>

Image 8 Slovak folk pattern 1. Available at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b9/Slovak_Folklore_Patterns.jpg

Image 9 Slovak folk pattern 2. Available at <https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/slovak-folk-art-seamless-geometric-pattern-vector-37367261>

Image 10 Hungarian traditional folk costume 1. Available at <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-neprajzi-lexikon-71DCC/n-734DB/nepviselet-7359E/>

Image 11 Hungarian traditional folk costume 2. Available at https://netfolk.blog.hu/2013/04/23/rimoci_szokasok_viselet

Image 12 Hungarian Matyó pattern. Available at <https://mindenamieger.blogspot.com/2018/01/ismerd-meg-matyo-himzes-motivumait-es.html>

Image 13 Hungarian Kalocsa pattern. Available at <https://www.kalocsafolkart.hu>