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MAKING TOURISTS FEEL AT HOME: LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF HÓDMEZŐVÁSÁRHELY

SA II FACEM PE TURISTI SA SE SIMTA CA ACASA: PEISAJUL LINGVISTIC AL HÓDMEZŐVÁSÁRHELY-ULUI

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Abstract: *Hódmezővásárhely is a rapidly developing town in the South-Eastern part of Hungary attracting an increasing number of tourists from other countries. Therefore it is important to display information in at least one world language-mainly English in places of interests that are likely to be visited by tourists. From the linguistic landscape it can be seen how likely the appearance of the non-native speakers is in the territory and how their linguistic needs are attended. In my study I have examined the linguistic landscape of the center of Hódmezővásárhely including places of interest and the streets of the center to see how well prepared the town is for the foreign visitors. I found that in all places of interest that can be visited by foreigners bilingual or multilingual information is available in different scopes, however streets apply foreign language for symbolic reasons*

Key words: *tourism, linguistic landscape, bilingualism, Hódmezővásárhely, sights*

INTRODUCTION

Hódmezővásárhely is a rapidly developing town that is situated in the South-Eastern region of Hungary. The town attracts an increasing number of tourists both from inland and abroad year by year. Therefore, it is important to attend the linguistic needs of foreign tourists who do not speak the Hungarian language and display the relevant information in at least one world language. To assess the preparedness of the town for accepting foreign visitors from language perspective I examined its linguistic landscape. In the focus of my study is the center of Hódmezővásárhely, as it is more likely to be the destination of visitors, particularly foreign visitors.

Hódmezővásárhely is a town with a population of about 48.000. Due to its thermal water, healthcare services (private dentistry services are offered and packages of dental care accomodation and shutter for foreign patients, especially for UK citizens.), sights and museums the town is becoming a more and more favored destination for both health, wellness and holiday tourist. Therefore, the use of English and German languages in public signage and especially that of informative function is increasingly important in order to make their stay easier more comfortable.

In order to draw the linguistic landscape of Hódmezővásárhely, I study the signage of public spaces and sights in the central area.

Before examining the town's linguistic landscape itself, it is important to overview the history and the notion of linguistic landscape. The roots of linguistic landscape as a discipline reach back to semiotics, but as an independent research field it is a fairly new phenomenon. The linguistic landscape is present in our daily life: signs and noticeboards are visible in the streets, public buildings and shops (Gorter and Cenoz, 2008:2091). The term 'linguistic landscape' was introduced by Landry and Bourhis in 1997 and they defined it as the term for linguistic phenomena that signs the public spaces, including street signs, the names of places, streets, buildings and institutions. Therefore, the centers of cities are culturally and linguistically colorful (Gorter, 2006: 32). The linguistic landscape studies focus on the analysis of written information in streets in a certain area (Gorter and Cenoz, 2008:2091). Such places can be shopping centers, schools, offices, companies, buses, swimming pools, streets (Spolsky, 2009:34). Spolsky and Cooper distinguish eight main types of public signage: 'street signs, advertising signs, warning notices and prohibitions, building names, informative signs (directions, hours of opening), commemorative plaques, objects (postbox, police call box), graffiti" (Spolsky, 2009:34). Other researchers, like Shohamy and Waksman or Guilat expand the scope of linguistic landscape to the visual materials in public spaces as well (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009: 9). In my study, however, I only intend to examine the written signs.

Upon examining the linguistic landscape, numerous questions emerge: what motivates institutions, offices and the people when displaying and visualizing a language the sings of public spaces (Spolsky, 2009:34). The rules and regulations referring to the language use are the most apparent in linguistic landscapes that is in the public signage (Backhaus, 2009:157).

In case there are bilingual signs, it is important to study their layout upon their examination: which is the first language in the signage: the dominant or the minority/foreign language? Are the size and type of the letters the same or different? (Ben Rafael, Shohamy and Barni, 2010:xviii). These pieces of information tell us who the major target group in conveying the information is and how much likely speakers of other languages are considered to read the signage. However, not only the presence of one or two languages on signs, but their absence (Spolsky 2009:27, 30). In my examinations I also study the layout of the bilingual signs in order to gain extra information.

In case of numerous cities the usage of two or more languages in the linguistic landscape is primarily the manifestation of the relation of dominant and minority languages. However, in Hódmezővásárhely, not a minority language is what establishes the second language usage in public signs (owing to the lack or very low rate of minority languages in the population), but rather the use of English and German that can be either due to the foreign tourism or fashion (Piller, 2003:172). Therefore, in my study I examine the appearance of the above mentioned languages.

Landry and Bourhis distinguished two major functions of public signs: informative and symbolic functions (Spolsky 2009:28). In the case of the bilingual signs in Hódmezővásárhely, too, it is possible to distinguish between these two functions. As I will demonstrate it in the followings, signage in museums or hotels providing information in bilingual form have real informative value, whereas shop names in streets have rather symbolic value.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To study the linguistic landscape of a given territory I used similar method that Griffin (Griffin, 2004:5) used. I defined the scope of the town that I intended to examine. I chose the center as it is the part most possibly visited by tourists. Within this scope I determined the sights and places that a tourist is likely to visit: hotel, museums and the High Street. In these places I took photographs of the signage that contained bilingual, multilingual or monolingual signs. Also, I took photos of signs that have relevant information only in Hungarian, as the lack of other languages also belong to the linguistic landscape and have informative value for my study.

I examined the photos taken and with their help I could draw the linguistic landscape of the center: I studied the number of bilingual or multilingual signs, the type of information they contain and the written format they have and related the foreign language content to the Hungarian content.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section I study and assess the bilingual signage of places of interests one by one. As mentioned above not only bilingual or multilingual signs are relevant for the study, but their lack as well. Therefore I examine both bilingual/ multilingual signage and monolingual ones respectively.

'Emlékpont' Museum

In the Museum visitors can see the reminiscents and memories of the town's life under the Soviet regime. There are different artifacts, object exhibited along with written and oral narratives of those who lived in that era. Upon examining the museum from the linguistic landscape viewpoint, it can be observed that all narratives, memory plaques, palmphlets, and biograbhies are in Hungarian languages. As far as the museum guide is concerned, if someone is interested in the English version, he can hire audio guide or a tour guide who presents the trip in English. Both the audio guide and the tour guide cost extra fee. There are few pieces of information printed in a bilingual edition. There is one type of palmphlet giving an overview of the Museum is in Hungarian-English edition, with Hungarian language in the first place and English below, letters are of the same size and type. The text is quite scarce, rather picture material. Furthermore, there are two pieces of memory plaques of the outside statues. Similarly, first in Hungarian then in English, same size and type of letters.

Also, there are bilingual signage on the entrance door, with opening hours and ticket prices. However, here English is in the first place, then Hungarian follows, letters in the English text are bigger in size . In this signage not exactly the same pieces of information are written, as the information 'Hódmezővásárhelyi lakcímkártya felmutatásával ingyenes ('Entrace is free with residence card of Hódmezővásárhely'). This piece of information is written only in Hungarian. It can be concluded that the information that may be considered of prior relevance to foreign tourists (opening hours, fees) is not only given in English, but its importance is

further emphasized visually. At least, the content that is relevant for them, thus it can be the reason why the free entrance possibility is not written in any other languages as probably this information is absolutely redundant for Non-Hungarian speakers.

It can be concluded that the appearance of bilingual signs in English with informative funbction is scarce in the museum. Only the very basic information is displayed in two languages. Besides, only English language is included.

Synagugue and Museum

Hódmezővásárhely has a restored Synagogue with a Holocaus Museum in the premise. The museum is often visited by tourist groups and foreign visitors, too. To cater for the needs, the museum has several bilingual and some multilingual issues. In the museum there are authentic reminiscents of the World War II that have special relevance to the town. There are also statistics and historical facts written under the artifacts in monolingual Hungarian. One of the main interests of the exhibition is the series of recorded narratives and interviews about the deportation and the camps told by holocaust survivers of the town. The narratives are bilingual: they are narrated in Hungarian with English subtitles.

There are multilingual written materials available in the museum: the history of the synagogue and the content of the museum is presented in three foreign languages: English, French and Spanish, with the same content and format.

As far as English guiding is concerned, it is provided by the guide of the museum, there is no need to requesting it beforehand or paying extra fee for the service.

The museum is apparently well prepared for accepting foreign visitors. All documentation is available in English, even if the information is written only in Hungarian within the Museum, it can be found in English as well in the brochure or can be listened to from the guide. Moreover, basic information is displayed in three foreign languages. Also, it can be concluded that the information written in foreign languages has informative not symbolic value.

Pottery House

The town has a long-time fame for pottery and embroidery. The pottery house is a traditional farm house from the early 20th century. Situated in the center of the town , it displays the fragment of village

people's life in the 1900s along with arifacts of traditional pottery and embroidery. There are no written pieces of information as the museum can only be visited with a guide upon request. Also, English language guiding can be requested with no additional fee, thus the museum can be fully enjoyed by foreign visitors.

Tornyai János Museum

At present the museum is under restoration, thus no information is available about bilingual signage.

Gingko Sas hotel

The hotel is destined to cater for wellness, holiday and conference tourism. In what follows I present the bilingual and monolingual signage that can be found in the hotel. It is probably the most plentiful source of bilingual signs as it is destined to serve for a large number of foreign customers as well being a wellness hotel and conference spot as well.

All the other relevant information was bilingual in a way that Hungarian language was followed by English, always below written in the same size and type of letters. Bilingual information included price list , bar and restaurant menu card, bike rental, smoke prohibition and signs for location and giving directions.

In monolingual English signage the most apparent is the welcome sign for the guests. Also, the signing under the hotel chain name is in English only, though it can be presumed that it automatically goes along with the name Best Western Hotel, hence is the monolingual use of English. Finally, the Shop sign is in English only from the outside of the hotel, though it is becoming a more and more widespread practice in Hungarian commerce to use 'shop' instead of the Hungarian equivalent. However, in case of an international hotel, the use of the English word seems quite justified.

Generally, it can be concluded that the hotel is the place in town that is th most prepared for non-Hungarian speaker visitors. The bilingual signage they apply-using the distinction by Landry and Bourhis-have more of an informative than symbolic function. That is, they provide the non-Hungarian speaker guests with relevant information about the hotel and its facilities.

Bilingual signs in the city center

The city center is the area in a city that a foreign tourist is the most likely to walk along with. For this reason I included the streets of the center

in my study. Along the High Street (Andrássy street) of Hódmezővásárhely further bilingual signs can be found: 'Jegyző-Notary' and the names of shops: Made in UK (Now: Trend), Drogerie Markt (DM), Rossmann, Yesss, Golden Meat.

These names have no informative function (except Golden Meat may have some informative function with suggesting being a butcher's), but rather symbolic function. The reason for this is probably the fashion: foreign language signage is fashionable and provokes attention, provides people with the feeling of internationalism and may be associated with higher quality than shops with Hungarian names (Piller, 2003:172). Also, there are shops that have names in foreign language because they are part of a foreign company chain. Therefore, in this case, English language or other foreign language signage has purely symbolic function.

Other signage that locates streets and places of interest and importance (museums, restaurants, schools, swimming pool, sports center) on one board, however are written only in monolingual Hungarian.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the presence of the bilingual signs in the center of the city it appears that the places which are likely to be visited by tourists from other countries are increasingly prepared for their acceptance. Especially the hotel situated in the city center that has the highest possibility for being a tourist destination has almost all the information about the services, offers, directions written in English. Museums, as places of interest have the basic information in English, but offer either written description of the artifacts or English guiding upon request.

Based on the distinction of Landry and Bourhis, it can also be concluded that the bilingual texts always have informative function: their aim is to provide information and transmit the content of the Hungarian texts. However, in the high street, the information that can be found in English is purely symbolic: no information is provided, it is rather the name of shops that are in English instead of Hungarian.

In conclusion it can be assumed that Hódmezővásárhely is linguistically keeping pace with the increasing foreign tourism making tourists' stay in town convenient. The foreign language applied in bilingual signage is mainly English, as it is the most widely spoken world language

and can cater for the needs of tourist in most European countries. However, there are multilingual pieces of information as well that include French, Spanish or German language. It can be hypostatized that with the town's tendency of becoming more adaptable for foreign tourism (e.g. health tourism) the appearance of bilingual and multilingual signage in the linguistic landscape of the Hódmezővásárhely will further increase.

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