COMPARING THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF HÓDMEZŐVÁSÁRHELY FROM TOURISM AND BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

LINGVISTICA ÎN HODMEZOVASARHELY DIN PERSPECTIVELE TURISMULUI ŞI AFACERILOR

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Abstract: *The linguistic landscape examination can happen from different perspectives, such as the viewpoint of tourism, minority languages and business. The mapping of the linguistic landscape from these various perspectives lead to different results as different elements of the same landscape are examined. From touristic point of view linguists examine if the public places visited by tourist dispose information in foreign languages to assess the preparedness of the area for 'accepting' foreign tourists. The business perspective examination includes the mapping of signage and names disposed by shops and services mainly in town centers to see whether the international tendency of foreign language use in shop signage is present. In my study I examine the linguistic landscape of the center of Hódmezővásárhely from the perspective of tourism and business in order to compare the results and conclude in which area the town center uses foreign language more.*

Key words*: linguistic landscape, rural tourism foreign languages, business, comparative analysis*

INTRODUCTION

The linguistic landscape of town centers is becoming increasingly multilingual. Choosing languages other than the mother tongue for signage in the public sphere can have various considerations. 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). 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). The linguistic landscape studies focus on the analysis of written information in streets in a certain area (GORTER and CENOZ, 2008). Such places can be shopping centers, schools, offices, companies, buses, swimming pools, streets (SPOLSKY, 2009). 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).

The multilingual signage in public spaces can have both informative any symbolic functions. Landry and Bourhis distinguished two major functions of public signs: informative and symbolic functions (SPOLSKY, 2009). 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 examined from the perspective of tourism provides information in bilingual form have real informative value, whereas signage of business perspective in streets have rather symbolic value.

In the international tendencies, partly as a result of globalization, cities distribute a growing preference for the application of foreign languages, with English in the first place in the shop front signage (GORTER: 2006). English is the most widespread language—after the mother tongue—used in shop signage (SCHLICK: 2003). It is followed by French, Italian or German, however, I found that the ranking of these languages are changeable, there can be no stabile sequence established in their case. Also, the appearance of the bilingual signs is more frequent than the monolingual foreign language ones. I examined in what degree the linguistic landscape of Hódmezővásárhely correspond to this tendency.

In my study I examine the linguistic landscape of the center of Hódmezővásárhely from both tourism and business perspectives and compare the results in order to see which field provides more contribution to the multilingual complexity of the town center.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For gathering information about the 2 different types of perspectives, different types of public signage need to be examined. I used the distinction of Spolsky and Cooper for this purpose (SPOLSKY: 2009). I grouped the types of public signage thematically, according to which signage carry important information in the examined areas. Therefore, for the examination of the perspective of tourism I collected signage such as warning notices and prohibitions, informative signs (opening hours and directions disposed in public places that are likely to be visited by tourists: banks, post office), commemorative plaques, objects. For this examination I mapped the signage applied inside the buildings as well, since that is also part of the public sphere and tourist are more likely to get information from the signage within the building than outside. These buildings were museums, hotels, shops, banks and post office.

For the business perspective I collected data from advertising signs by shops and services. Shops and services frequently apply names and signage in foreign languages in order to provoke association with the stereotype of the country (PILLER: 2003) where the language is spoken as mother tongue, to increase prestige, to express a cosmopolitan feeling (EDELMAN: 2009) or to convey extra meaning (BARNI and BAGNA: 2009).

To determine the area of mapping the linguistic landscape I used a map and limited my research to the center of Hódmezővásárhely as it is the place most likely visited by tourist, citizens of the town and most of the shops and services are localized there. I took photos of the signage, both monolingual and multilingual ones to examine their content and visual disposal while noting down all the shop and service names in the area to have quantitative data. Using Griffin's method (GRIFFIN: 2004) I grouped shop and service names according to the language/s used and established the average in percentages to determine the ratio of foreign language signage according to the context. Finally I disposed the results in pie charts

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perspective of tourism

From tourist perspectives I examined the Gingko Sas Hotel, Sas Kávézó café, Post Office, MKB, K&H, Postabank, Emlékpont Museum and

the interior of the high street shops.

As I result I found that the Gingko Sas Hotel, designed to cater for wellness, holiday and conference tourism, had a high preparedness for the acceptance of foreign tourists. The signage in the interior contained both Hungarian and English languages in a way that Hungarian was followed by English signage with the same content. Bilingual information included price list, bar and restaurant menu card, bike rental, smoking prohibition and signs for location and giving directions. The welcome sign and shop sign was monolingual English. The menu card includes three languages: Hungarian, English and German. Generally, it can be concluded that the hotel is the place in town that is the 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.

The Sas Kávézó has very scarce written signage; however, all written information is multilingual. Written signage can be found on the menu card in Hungarian, English, German and Italian languages.

In the Emlékpont museum, where the reminiscent and memories of the town's life under the Soviet regime are disposed, information about opening hours and ticket prices are written bilingually on the outside of the museum building. However, within the museum narratives, memory plaques, pamphlets, and biographies are in Hungarian languages only. For speakers of English, though, audio guide and tourist guide is available upon request for extra fee. The appearance of bilingual signs in English with informative function is scarce in the museum. Only the very basic information is displayed in two languages. Besides, only English language is included.

Other places that are likely to be visited by tourists are the post office and banks. In case of the Post Office, there is only one multilingual sign prohibiting the use of mobile phones and camera within the building. It includes Hungarian, English, German, French and Russian languages. However, all the other functionally relevant information and directions (which button to push on the machine for the ticket for different activities) are in monolingual Hungarian only. It seems that only information regulating customers' behavior is written in more languages but no language

aid is provided for them if they want to use the services.

In the banks information about the opening hours, the use of ATM after closing time and information about regulations are written in English, too.

In the inside of the shops no foreign language signage is disposed, except for the Spar supermarket, where a grammatically incorrect 'Don't smoking' sign is put at the cashier's indicating that no cigarettes are sold to underage persons.

It can be concluded that the city center has multilingual signage to make foreign visitors' orientation easier during their stay, and the Gingko Hotel and the banks are the most prepared for it. However, other facilities that are likely to be visited by foreigners scarcely dispose signage in other languages than Hungarian with informative value. Moreover, mainly English language is applied, but in some instances German and other world languages appear, too. Although the town is frequently visited by Serbian, Romanian tourists, these languages cannot be found in any signage. This fact suggests that visitors from other, non-English (or German speaking countries) are expect to understand world languages.

Business Perspective

From business perspective I examined the signage on shops and services focusing on their names. I found that the 50% of the signage in shop and service names are written in foreign languages. Among foreign languages, English is the most widely used; it appears in 66% of the foreign names. Italian is the second most widespread occupying 8% of the foreign language signage, German appears in 7% and in 22% other languages (French, Latin, other) are applied.

The application of the foreign languages in the shop and services name in the center of Hódmezővásárhely mainly corresponds with the foreign tendencies (PILLER: 2003) according to which Italian and French languages are mainly used fashion, restaurants, German, English in technology, but English, as the international language of trendiness being very fashionable in advertising, cannot be restricted to areas. It is the most widely used in shops that sell jewelry, cosmetics, electronics (SCHLICK: 2003).

Similarly to the international tendencies, Italian and French languages appear in the field of fashion (*Amica boutique*), English in the field of electronics, informatics (*Electrodigit*). Also, similarly to the foreign

tendencies, English is not limited to a number of categories as it appears in the signage of various types of profiles: travelling (*Last Minute Travel*), fashion (*Trendy, Balance*), banking (*Unicredit*), perfumery (*Lady)* and catering (*Joker Café, Mexico*). However, German appears in chemists' (*Rossman*), supermarket (*Spar*) and in hunter's store (*Hargita-Jagd Vadászbolt*).

The appearance of 'mock-language' suggests extra meaning that can be expressed the not appropriate use of the language (PILLER: 2003). In the center of Hódmezővásárhely this application is also present (*T-Boy, Yesss*). In the first name, the Hungarian pronunciation of the name provides the extra meaning, and in the latter, the ungrammatical use of triple 's' stresses the meaning.

The application of foreign names in the center of Hódmezővásárhely also reflects the international tendency that foreign language in names is applied because it can express more content than the Hungarian name would: the shop name *T-Boy* the use of 'Boy' implies the shop profile as it sells men's clothing. *Amica boutique* containing both Italian and French words refers to the shop's profile not only in language, but also in word use (amica-girl friend): it sells Italian and French fashion cloth for women.

Furthermore, the names of shops and services do not always reflect the profile. In these cases, the main aim is to be fashionable, to provide a cosmopolitan atmosphere or to express extra meaning by choosing a name from a foreign language.

However, there are differences in the application of foreign languages in the names in Hódmezővásárhely compared to the international tendencies. In Hódmezővásárhely, the application of foreign languages is scarce in catering, certain languages are almost or completely missing from certain areas (French from fashion, German from technology) at least in the center.

Languages with no data recorded in studies in the field of linguistic landscape from the perspective of shops and services can be found (Latin in catering: *Lucullus, Veritas*, English and German in perfumeries: *Lady, Rossmann*). Also, though I found no data in other studies regarding travel agencies, in the town center they almost exclusively apply English language, similarly to financial services and private health services (dentistry).

Conclusively it can be asserted that the application of foreign languages is widespread (50%) in shop and services names, with the use of English language in the first place, though, the monolingual signs outnumber the bilingual ones. As the business profile is not always reflected or connected to the name it can be concluded that applying Spolsky's categories, they rather have symbolic and not informative value. This way, the linguistic landscape of the center of Hódmezővásárhely from the business perspective fits well into the international tendencies.

CONCLUSIONS

From the linguistic landscape of the center of Hódmezővásárhely, it can be concluded that foreign language use has a priority in the field of shop and service names and they have primarily symbolic function. However, signage disposing informative function in foreign languages is scarce, it is present primarily in the Gingko Sas Hotel, the Emlékpont Museum and banks, and is entirely absent from other outdoor signage providing directions and information. All signage with informative function contains world languages only, primarily English, and German, Italian French in some cases. Foreign tourists from neighboring countries (such as Romania or Serbia) are expected to understand the world language in getting information. The preparedness for international tourism adds very little foreign language to the linguistic landscape of the town, and what is added appears rather within the buildings. However, the shops and services greatly contribute to the multilingualism of the linguistic landscape in the center of Hódmezővásárhely, primarily in the streets on the façade of the buildings.

The town well fits into the international tendency of foreign language application in shop and service names to create a fashionable, cosmopolitan feeling, however, it needs development and amplification in foreign language signage for informative values to promote tourism.

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