

UDK 81'27'28(497.5 Osijek)

Izvorni znanstveni članak

Primljen 9. X. 2014.

TANJA GRADEČAK-ERDELJIĆ ♦ JADRANKA ZLOMISLIĆ

Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Osijeku

tgradeaca@ffos.hr – jzломislic@ffos.hr

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN THE CITY OF OSIJEK

Abstract

Our linguistic landscape research explores the sociolinguistic situation in the city of Osijek with a particular emphasis on the linguistic and cultural implications for the Croatian speech community. The study aims to answer the following research question: To what extent does the linguistic landscape of Osijek reflect the influence of the American language and culture? Using theoretical paradigms and analytical instruments of linguistic landscape methodology we analyzed linguistic signs collected at survey areas in the city. This analysis considers the influence on the linguistic landscape of Osijek of factors such as geographic distribution, power relations, prestige, symbolic value, identity issues, tourism, language vitality and literacy. Data analysis results have shown that the linguistic landscape in Osijek has been shaped by Americanization in all aspects of social and cultural identity. English prevails as the preferred language of Croatian non-native English speakers to the extent that not only has English pushed out Croatian as the language of popular use but American cultural values are competing with the local culture.

Key words: linguistic landscape, public sign, survey areas, visual imagery, Global English

1. Introduction

1.1. Global English

The last two centuries have witnessed the growth in economic and political power of the United Kingdom and the United States which has enabled the English language to take on a dominating role in today's world. English has been globally used in fields such as science, technology, diplomacy, commerce, popular culture (music and movie industry) which makes it necessary to define it as a world language or as McArthur points out „*the global lingua franca*“¹. Without resorting to the need to define more specifically what a *lingua franca* actually is or has been from the historical and sociolinguistic point of view, we consider English to be not the new Latin, but a rather fluid linguistic system under the constant pressure of different cultural and cognitive undertows. This fluidity and adaptability arises not only from the language's linguistic structure with its tendencies towards simplification of linguistic forms but also from its susceptibility to accepting foreign influences. Both traits have lent English an image of a powerful tool in communicating ideas originating from different sources and with various communicative goals.

As claimed by Cergol Kovačević² Croatia belongs to the expanding (outer) circle countries according to Kachru's division of English language speakers³. It means that English is neither the mother tongue of the citizens (which would put Croatian citizens into the inner circle of speakers of English), nor does it belong to one of the former British Empire colonies (creating the outer circle of its influence). English in Croatia is recognized as an important means of international communication, as the language of globalization used by speakers all over the world, who use it for the purposes of work, education and international

1 Cf. TOM McARTHUR, „Interanto: the global language of signs“, *English Today*, vol. XVI., (2000.), num. 1., p. 33.-43.

2 Cf. KRISTINA CERGOL KOVAČEVIĆ, „Visual Cognate Processing in Croatian Speakers of Global English“, *Suvremena lingvistika*, vol. XXXVIII., (2012.), num. 74., p. 155.-173.

3 Cf. BRAJ KACHRU, „World Englishes and English-Using Communities“, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. XVII., (1997.), p. 66.-87.

communication. English is the most frequently taught foreign language in Croatian schools at all levels, but the Croatian population is also very much exposed to it through media (TV, the Internet) and it may be safely said that there is a general positive attitude towards its use in everyday life. This general positive motivation to use English has been under a constant pressure by national authorities trying to curb the practice of borrowing words, not only from English but from other languages as well. Thus, Croatian linguists have been inventing lexemes to replace English loan words such as *notebook*, *chat* or *web page*. Consequently, there is a constant counterattack from 'below' where those frequently used lexemes are used by non-linguists, creating a situation of constant fluctuation of word forms. Hence, it is usually quite an arbitrary decision of a context or a situation whether an English loan word or its Croatian equivalent will be used.

When the context or the situation refers to specific visual imagery created by public linguistic signs in geographical areas inhabited by humans, we describe it as a linguistic landscape (LL). It is usually the case that various elements of cultural interaction or social activities involved in the process of linguistic communication influence this particular version of landscape.

The aim of this paper is to determine to what extent the linguistic landscape (LL) of the authors' hometown of Osijek, Croatia, reflects the influence of American language and culture on the everyday life of the town and its inhabitants. The visual imagery should provide a direct link to the attitudes of the community groups that shape the immediate linguistic chart of the town's streets or other venues to which the town's inhabitants or visitors are exposed. The immediate motivation for our research was the fact that Osijek is a multilingual and multicultural city with a very rich history of both cultural and linguistic influence. Hence, it was a logical step to try framing in scientific terms what had been obvious to our linguistically and culturally honed eyes: that there is a multitude of evidence that not only English as a language but American cultural influence is pervasive on its streets and among its inhabitants.

1.2. Globalization and visual imagery

The period after the Second World War created a structural and ideological infrastructure for a new development referred to as *globalization*. This process was brought about by the virtual permeability of national borders via modern communications channels, such as television, entertainment industry and, eventually, the Internet. Economic as well as cultural goods are being exchanged, which implies that not only the economy (i.e. production, transportation, trade), but also cultural products such as art, music, fashion, lifestyle, communications (World Wide Web) and language are being globalized. The process of globalization is thus taking place on various levels and to different degrees, reflecting in its complexity the network of mutually dependent factors of social organization, tradition and ideology.

Not surprisingly, the degree of globalization is directly connected to the medium of its application in a given space or geographical area, and it can be freely concluded that the decidedly visual nature of all the media involved in the process of globalization contributes greatly to its rapid spreading. Visual imagery is intricately involved in all elements of cultural globalization, particularly in the more recent decades when the visual image has replaced e.g. the audio image, as can be observed in the transition that popular music underwent from the radio era in the first decade of the twentieth century to the expansion of video spots toward the end of the century.

When visual imagery becomes predominant in communications among the members of a community, their cultural patterns inevitably succumb to the pressure of frequency of exposure to visual prompts or to their sensory appeal, which is more immediate and permanent than other senses, such as sound or touch. Written words set off not only a cultural, but also an anthropological revolution in the transition from the Dark Ages to the modern era in human history, and the reflection of the impact that a written word may have can be seen in the process of globalization we have been witnessing in this century. Along with its power to impose and cement the preferred variety of a national language standard, written language has become a powerful tool in the process

of both unification and diversification on a global level. The world is becoming increasingly multilingual in its current historical stage of late capitalism or post-modernity and as Graddol⁴ argues, previously established nation-state institutions of language control and language planning have been undermined by the global flows of information, media, people, and technology.

Urban areas are typically epicenters of cultural and linguistic changes and they both reflect and feed the sociolinguistic undercurrents contributing to the (r)evolutionary forces of language. Younger generations contribute mostly to these processes of cultural adaptation, creating an unmistakable dividing line between the elitist 'high' culture ruled by national authorities that suggest certain expected behavior and the mass culture and its conditioned behavior guided by indirect influence of mass media and popular culture. The result is very frequently a cultural vacuum where there obtains specific cultural bias, or 'structures of expectation' as Tannen⁵ calls them, with which everyone belonging to a certain group is expected to unconsciously and unerringly comply.

1.3. Language and culture

The relationship between language and culture is one of the most relevant vantage points both in general linguistics and in broader terms in semiology. Linguistic signs have been objects of research for scholars of different affiliations and relevance, from Plato to Humboldt to the structuralists and cognitivists of the new millennium. As Sapir⁶, one of the most influential scholars in this interface between language and culture, noticed: „...(l)anguage does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that

4 Vid. DAVID GRADDOL, *English Next. Why global English may mean the end of 'English as a Foreign Language'*, British Council, London, 2006.

5 Cf. DEBORAH TANNEN, „What's in a frame? Surface evidence for underlying expectations“, in: *New Directions in Discourse Processing*, vol. II., ROY O. FREEDLE (ed.), Ablex, Norwood, 1979., p. 137.-181.

6 Cf. EDWARD SAPIR, *Culture, Language and Personality*, University of California Press, Oakland, 1970.

determines the texture of our lives“⁷. Language is an essential ingredient in the network of information necessary to create an individual’s cultural background; it is not only the means of communicating information; it is the tool for creating the pool of knowledge which represents culture itself or, as Wardhaugh defines it: „...whatever a person must know in order to function in a particular society.“⁸ The definition here, as Wardhaugh further maintains, refers primarily to its general anthropological sense, to all socially conditioned aspects of human life, and not to the so called ‘high culture’ seen as the advanced intellectual development of mankind as reflected in its artistic expression. In the words of Deborah Peck⁹, this pragmatic view of culture sees it as the so-called ‘deep culture’, that is, as „... a body of ready-made solutions to the problems encountered by the group. It is a cushion between man and his environment.“

The relevance of language for identifying a particular society and its culture is indisputable, and the focus of most research in linguistic landscape is founded on the mutual relationship of society and its reactions to linguistic signs. If we assume that society is considered to be a community organized around specific public and common interests, public signage represents a direct access to specific visual imagery pertaining to specific values and interests that society cherishes. In other words, public signage represents to a high degree the acceptable image a society wishes to maintain. Goodenough’s well-known definition claims: „...a society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves.“¹⁰ Relevant here for the understanding of culture is the element of acceptability of a particular behavior and language use as one of the essential types of human behavior. On the assumption that communication is not only a

7 *Ibid.*, p. 207.

8 RONALD WARDHAUGH, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4. ed., Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2002., p. 221.

9 Cf. DEBORAH PECK, „*Teaching Culture: Beyond Language.*“ <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/3/84.03.06.x.html>

10 R. WARDHAUGH, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

process of exchange of information but also a highly cognitive as well as affective and value-laden activity, we must assume that cultural knowledge is not only an aspect of communicative competence but of a general cognitive competence necessary to survive in the complex network of contemporary social relationships.

Salzmann is quoted by Thanasoulas¹¹ as saying that language is ‘a key to the cultural past’, but it is also a key to the cultural present in its ability to express what is (and has been) thought, so our research hypothesis sets out to establish whether the present day LL of Osijek significantly differs from that of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century due to the frequent use of the English language in public spaces. Relying on the fieldwork method, as a principle research method in LL studies, and on the qualitative analyses method, we shall attempt to describe the current status of LL in Osijek in terms of its relationship to the influence of American culture. The research method is a simplified and adapted version of the standard research procedure described below, with a basic aim to illustrate the initial hypothesis.

We shall begin with a brief historical overview of Osijek’s multicultural identity and how it relates to its multilingual background. We shall focus on the relationship of public signage and the visual imagery of LL in various public spaces of the city and introduce the basic scientific terminology for LL research. The research data will be analyzed and described using two major approaches, the top-down, and the bottom up approach, more specifically related to the monolingual or multilingual character of linguistic signs. Visual prompts will be provided in order to illustrate some major points of relevance and we shall conclude our research by presenting some more humorous examples of the abuse of the multilingual character of public signs.

11 Cf. DIMITRIOS THANASOULAS, „The Importance of Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom“, *Radical Pedagogy* http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue3_3/7-thanasoulas.html,

2. Multiculturality and multilingualism in public life in Osijek

Osijek has a very rich history of both cultural and linguistic influence from its founding as the Roman colony *Aelia Mursa*, but the linguistic influence from that period cannot be considered as relevant and Latin influence was more to be assigned to the general status of Latin as the European *lingua franca* in the medieval period. Being at the crossroads of various trade routes and situated in a rich and fertile area along the river Drava, the town has always attracted a multitude of immigrants and invaders.

The Turkish influence following the invasion of the Ottoman army in 1526 is to be viewed as an integral part of the general cultural heritage the Turks left in the whole Balkan region.

However, the major linguistic influence is to be seen following the events happening in the early 18th century in the Habsburg Empire, of which Osijek was then a part, when there was a planned immigration and settlement of population from German regions of Baden-Württemberg, Hessen and Bayern, some Austrian regions, as well as from the Czech Republic and Hungary. It is no wonder, that Mažuran noted the following: „At the beginning of the 18th century the town of Osijek seemed to be a foreign town, linguistically speaking.“¹²

The Town council and military government used German and Latin (e.g. *Festung* – a German official name for the fortified part of the original town area called *Tvrđa*) and everyday communication was based on Croatian and German as co-existing languages; the proof of which are documented street signs in both languages and there was a steady, but inconspicuous use of Hungarian by the ever-growing Hungarian population.

In 19th and early 20th century Osijek, the German population of middle and lower classes developed a distinct Osijek dialect called *Essekerisch*¹³ with a German basis and some Croatian, Serbian, Hungarian and

12 IVE MAŽURAN, *Srednjovjekovni i turski Osijek*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1994., p. 26.

13 *Esseker Deutsch* or *Osijek German* is the official name of the dialect, where *Essek* is a German rendition of the name of Osijek).

even Turkish lexical infiltrations (e.g. *mončika* – derived from *Mann*: man, husband + Hungarian suffix *-čika*; *foter* or *fojdoš* -derived from *Vater*: father + Hungarian suffix *-oš*; *halasfiš* – Hungarian: *halasz*: fisherman + *Fisch*: fish stew). Public spaces were swarming with signs in German, even street names were written in German, so it can be freely concluded that the LL of Osijek in this period was under the firm grip of German cultural authority.



Picture 1. A postcard from the beginning of the 20th century with Croatian and German street names is just one example of bilingual street signs

2.1. Beginnings of English in Osijek

The blending of cultures in the Ottoman Empire, or in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy is quite similar to the initial stages of the subsequent Anglo-American influence born in the expansion of British

colonial power. The second wave of this influence, which somehow seems to supersede colonialism, is the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power in the 20th century.

In the decades after World War II, during times of scarcity, many European societies were strongly influenced by Hollywood and the American consumer culture. The process of globalization boosted the further spreading of the English language, therefore influencing the language of technology, science and commerce. In the 20th century, due to the social and political circumstances in Yugoslavia, which as a socio-communist state nominally belonged to the Eastern block of countries behind the 'iron curtain', the conditions for the use of English were not quite favorable.

However, despite this nominal membership to the communist bloc, Yugoslavia was much more open to Western influences, so that as early as the 1950s English was introduced into primary schools as an alternate subject to Russian as a foreign language. However, exposure to spoken English through media or direct contact with native speakers was limited. During times of scarcity, many European societies were strongly influenced by Hollywood and the American consumer culture, and its influence in the then Yugoslav geographical area was slow, but steady. In 1961 one of the first teacher training colleges with a program in English was founded in Osijek and in the years between 1961 and 1977 around 200 students graduated and received a diploma in English language and literature. These beginnings of the institutionalized education in English language mark the official merging of the cultural scene of Osijek with the Anglo-American culture and tradition.

2.2. From national to global and back

One of the tenets of teaching foreign languages is the merging of linguistic instruction with the cultural background of the target language. The degree to which this merging is successfully implemented varies from nation to nation, depending to a high degree on national teaching curricula and teachers themselves. Teaching languages and cultures is a

direct approach to exposing individuals to foreign cultures, whereas one of the indirect channels of exposure to a foreign language is the linguistic environment of the habitat or the linguistic landscape of a particular settlement.

It goes without saying that learners must first become conversant with what it means to be part of a culture, their own culture. By exploring their own culture, i.e., by discussing the very values, expectations, traditions, customs, and rituals they unconsciously take part in, they are ready to reflect upon the values, expectations, and traditions of others „with a higher degree of intellectual objectivity“.¹⁴

After the resolution of the Yugoslav state in the 1990s, Croatia as an independent country strongly embraced everything Western, including the postwar and post-socialist desire to get rid of everything regressive, which tended to clash with the images many had of the idyllic U.S. lifestyles. At the same time, there is an obvious tendency of all past governments to promote distinct national identity in all areas of life, language being, not surprisingly so, among the most important battle venues. It is not only the struggle of the official bodies and institutes to create grammars, orthography manuals and dictionaries that would make a clear distinction between Croatian and Serbian, seen by some purists as a major threat to Croatian as an independent language, but a clear orientation toward purging Croatian of all borrowings and internationalisms from the officially promoted literature.

3. Researching linguistic landscapes

3.1. Multilingualism and public space

Public use of a foreign language thus becomes a bona fide open expression of the attitude of the town's inhabitants towards their mother tongue as well as towards different foreign languages. It is the reflection of the deliberate human intervention in the physical space in order to communicate a culturally relevant message.

14 Cf. HANS STRAUB, „Designing a Cross-Cultural Course“, *English Forum*, vol. XXXVII., (1999.), num. 3., p. 2.-9.

Public spaces become a way to publicize not only information of common civic value (general knowledge) but of the sociolinguistic structure on a par with other media such as press, electronic media, TV or radio. As all media types, public space creates a functional type of discourse, i.e. the type of discourse indicative of the targeted audience. Each audience has a distinctive ideological character such as can be found in e.g. political or academic discourse where a bias toward a particular idea is shaped through language and other means of expression. Some such cases of an ideological bias may be observed in the use of a higher register and slang with elements of the opposition between the overt and covert prestige contributing to the level of bonding among members of a group. Public spaces can thus be viewed as maps that provide a key to the accurate reading of the role a language plays in the sociological and linguistic dynamics of the city.

And although we may be carried away by the romantic idea of an individual freely accepting other cultures by embracing their language, as should be the basic requirement in the process of learning a foreign language (cf. section 2.3), it would be much more plausible to assume different motivation for using foreign language in the domestic environment. It is much less embracing the *otherness* as it is very frequently opposing the *self* and one's own culture and identity. As pointed out by Grbavac¹⁵, it is the symbolic value of linguistic signs that is very frequently pushed into the foreground of the use of public signage, so that only specific elements of the cultural weight represented by those linguistic signs are put into the foreground.

In view of the observations stated above, the type of research undertaken in the study of the linguistic landscape of a town such as Osijek may provide a fine grained image of how public signs and their visual imagery transfer the elements of a foreign culture, in our case, American. As noted by Jaworski and Thurlow¹⁶, such studies have much to say about issues relating to demographic and institutional power, ethnic

15 Cf. IVANA GRBAVAC, „Linguistic landscape in Mostar“, *Jezikoslovlje*, vol. XIV., (2013.), num. 2.-3., p. 501.-515.

16 Cf. ADAM JAWORSKI, CRISPIN THURLOW, (ed.), *Semiotic Landscapes: Language, Image, Space*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2010.

and racial relations, linguistic vitality, and language ideologies. Within contemporary geography, space is now seen as a discursive as well as physical formation.

3.2. Linguistic landscape

As a discursive formation it represents a new phenomenon called *linguistic landscape* by sociolinguistic scholars. As a new scientific field it thus borrows from its visual content the very name for the geographical structure it represents, but it is the geographical structure construed with the help of linguistic signs of different kinds.

Linguistic landscape research falls under the category of the sociology of language since its scope of research includes both language conflict and multilingualism, two major phenomena present in the sphere of language contact among different social groups, as stressed by Chien¹⁷. Both phenomena are present in the principal areas of research covered in numerous scientific papers across the globe dealing with what has been labeled by using different referents (e. g. *visual landscaping* (Jaworski & Thurlow, forthcoming); *cityscapes* (Gorter, 2006); *geosemiotics* (Scollon & Scollon, 2003); *urban linguistics* (Rosenbaum i dr., 1977), etc.)¹⁸

The term *linguistic landscape* was first used by Landry and Bourhis in 1997: The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.¹⁹

17 Cf. SU-CHIAO CHIEN, „Sociology of Language“, in: *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, Volume 8: Research Methods in Language and Education*, NANCY H. HORNBERGER, DAVID CORSON, (ed.), Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 1997., p. 1.-13.

18 Cf. SELIM BEN SAID, „Representations of Multilingualism in Urban Space: An Analysis of the Linguistic Landscape of Tunisia“, <http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/s/b/sbb170/SBS2.pdf>

19 RODRIGUE LANDRY, RICHARD Y. BOURHIS, „Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study“, *Journal of language and social psychology*, vol. XVI., (1997.), num. 1., p. 25.

The study of public signage goes as far as back as the 70s of the 20th century when the pioneering works in the field emerged (Massai, 1972, according to Backhaus, 2007; Rosenbaum et al., 1977; Tulp, 1978, according to Backhaus, 2007). In Grbavac we find out that these studies have been reporting on language on public and commercial signs in various multilingual spaces: Jerusalem (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006), Lira in Uganda (Reh, 2004), Bangkok (Huebner, 2006), Tokyo (Backhaus, 2007), the Bask Country and Friesland (Cenoz and Gorter, 2006) etc.²⁰

But as noted by Jaworski and Thurlow, the study of linguistic landscapes has the potential to inform a range of intellectual issues above and beyond the mere analysis of linguistic form. One example of this from our research data below is, for example, a case of shop signs where the mere image creates an impression of the owners, the effort and money invested – in other words, their business policy.²¹

Such research involves the study of many concerns: multilingualism and language policies of different speech communities, the treatment of minority and majority languages, the relationship of the authorities towards the role of language in the public life of a nation, etc.

In view of this, Ben Rafael et al. suggest that the first step to put some order in the analysis of LL consists in distinguishing *top-down* and *bottom-up* flows of LL elements, that is, between LL elements used and exhibited by institutional agencies which in one way or another act under the control of local or central policies, and those utilized by individual, associative or corporative actors who enjoy autonomy of action within legal limits.²² The main difference between these two wide categories of LL elements resides in the fact that the former are expected to reflect a general commitment to the dominant culture while the latter are designed much more freely according to individual strategies. Both those categories carry specific symbolic value of public life, but may be per-

20 Cf. KINGSLEY BOLTON, „World Englishes and linguistic landscapes“, *World Englishes*, vol. XXXI., (2012.), num. 1., p. 30.–33.

21 Vid. A. JAWORSKI, C. THURLOW, *op. cit.*

22 Cf. ELIZIER BEN-RAFAEL et. al., „Linguistic landscape as symbolic construction of the public space: The case of Israel“, *International Journal of Multilingualism*, vol. III., (2006.), num. 1., p. 7.–30.

ceived differently by different people (according to their age, gender or profession).

Our research data were first categorized according to the top-down versus bottom-up distinction, and subsequently according to specific sub-areas of activity. *Top-down* signs were coded according to their belonging to national or local, and cultural, social, educational, medical or legal institutions. *Bottom-up* items were coded according to categories such as professional (legal, medical, consulting), commercial (and subsequently, according to branches like food, clothing, furniture etc.) and services (agencies like real estate, translation or manpower).

The next step in our study is the categorization of the signs. That dimension of categorization refers to a difference between official signs placed by the government or related institution and nonofficial signs put there by commercial enterprises or by private organizations or persons. Table 1. Typical items sampled in the process of the LL research. (In: Ben-Rafael et. al., 2006)

Category	Type of item	Sampling criteria
Top-down	1. Public institutions: religious, governmental, municipal – cultural and educational, medical	20-30 samples at each site (30% of all items in each site)
	2. Public signs of general interest	
	3. Public announcements	
	4. Signs of street names	
Bottom-up	1. Shop signs: e.g. clothing, food, jewellery	70-100 items in each of the main streets of the sites and/or in commercial areas (70% of all items sampled at each site)
	2. Private business signs: offices, factories, agencies	
	3. Private announcements: 'wanted' ads, sale or rentals of flats or cars	

4. Osijek in the process of Americanization

Osijek may not have been exposed to the process of immigration in recent years, more likely quite the opposite, but there is a strong orientation in its recent economic agenda to develop as an important trading center with an aim of attracting buyers and customers from neighboring regions in Hungary, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. If Hungarians are excluded from this linguistic equation, it leaves only the Serbian and Bosnian customers with their shared knowledge of the Croatian language as a genetically related--if not the same--language, as some linguists claim. Therefore, it would be a puzzling phenomenon to have such a large number of signs in English.

Shopping malls borrow not only the structure and design from their American paragons but the language itself plays a role in the marketing strategy for many of them. Thus, we have the direct borrowing of whole advertising campaigns (e.g. Nike: *Just do it* etc.) where the English language plays a purely embellishing and luring role, attracting customers' attention to the products displayed in the shops.

Although our focus was on the area around the town center, we could not neglect the obvious prevalence of advertisements in English found in the shopping malls at the periphery of Osijek.

4.1. *The appeal of the mall culture*

Once again, due to globalization, traditional Croatian customs are being overtaken by novelties like the American mall culture which has changed not only the buying habits but also the lifestyle of average families. Shopping malls in Croatia are 'literal translations' of American malls, their architectural design and structural organization being followed by typical linguistic inventory, so that e.g. the mall researched for the purposes of our study bears the very English name of *Avenue Mall* and is advertised as „Osijek's new promenade“, where the traditional walk along the river Drava, called 'promenada' ('the Promenade') is transferred into an enclosed space of a commercial building.



Picture 2. A shopping mall in Osijek

City centers are becoming ghost towns and there is also a tendency of Croatian businesses with a long-standing tradition of quality merchandize to give way to shops with low cost goods, destroying along the way the traditional value scale. So, even though there is a convention in linguistic landscape research to study the influence of the immigration population on the structure of public language signs, we found it even more interesting how a strong presence of one culture in public life may influence the linguistic map of a town.

5. Research data

In our research we retained the skeleton of the basic procedure of LL research methods, but we did not limit ourselves to a strictly limited and delineated geographical area. The rigidity of such an approach is required when a purely quantitative analysis of LL signs is undertaken, but since the focus of our interest was in the qualitative analysis of the results, we concentrated on gathering a pool of photos illustrating most precisely the previously noticed tendencies in the LL of Osijek. We took pictures of public signs in the area of the town's center, main public

square and the shopping area--with the addition of two peripherally positioned shopping malls--and then analyzed such signs according to language, location, and domains.

The collected data in the form of digital photos are organized in two distinct subsets: one that refers to the number of languages present on the signs and a second subset that refers to the top-down, bottom-up distinction mentioned earlier in section 3.2.

The city center and the outskirts were selected for this investigation because these areas are rich in linguistic signs; for ease of analysis, these signs have been categorized into Croatian-only signs, bilingual signs, and English-only signs.

5.1. The top-down subset

5.1.1. Croatian-only signs

Most frequent examples of the top-down subset are found, as expected, in Croatian only, since the institutionalized status of the national language is, naturally, promoted through inscriptions and signs (tables on buildings, building entrances) of national, municipal and county institutions (state archives, agencies, courts, prison, councils etc.)



Picture 3. A public sign advertising a national institution:
Republic of Croatia. Ministry of Finance. Customs Administration. Customs Office in Osijek



Picture 4. A public sign advertising municipal institutions: *Republic of Croatia. Osijek-Baranja County. City of Osijek. City Council. Osijek* (above). *Republic of Croatia. Osijek-Baranja County. City of Osijek. Mayor. Osijek* (below)

The institutional status of those signs is promoted not only by their linguistic contents but there is also a certain visual impact created by the use of the national and town's coat of arms and the uniformity of their design, which is rather austere. This approach to official public signage is quite universal and in our opinion implies that in planning their physical appearance the authors do not put much stress on visual creativity since the authority of the institution itself suffices to impose the necessary impact of institutional relevance. The opposite is found in the bottom-up subset of public signs, where the impact of a foreign language is paired with visually more attractive designs. In that subset the advertising power of public signs is achieved through a combined effort of the more varied spectrum of colors, as well as in the choice of fonts, added illustrations etc. (cf. illustrations in section 5.3 below).

In this subset we also found public signs put up by public institutions or authorities which advertise essential services from the public sphere (medical, educational, religious institutions) which are otherwise solely in Croatian, but from time to time international symbols are added for non-Croatian speakers, derived from the set of international traffic signs or similar internationally recognized systems of signs.



Picture 5. A public sign advertising essential services from the public sphere (top-down: *Emergency, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Orthodox church, Church of the Sacred Name of Mary*)

Without resorting to the qualitative analysis of the Croatian-only signs, we may tentatively conclude that they dominate the LL in Osijek since the sheer number of official institutions and businesses in the town's center relating explicitly to their national, i.e. Croatian character forces Croatian in the foreground of the visual imagery of Osijek.

5.1.2. Bilingual and multilingual signs

In this subset we found public signs put up by public institutions or authorities which are otherwise solely in Croatian, but from time to time international inscriptions are added for non-Croatian speakers. This subset may be regarded as bilingual although the ratio of Croatian and English words was not equal in all cases. The signs mostly contain

the Croatian core with individual English words and sometime translations into English or other foreign languages are added. Those signs are aimed at international visitors and tourists visiting Osijek, providing information about locations and objects of public interest which may be of practical value (Picture 6) or of more educational and informative quality (Picture 7).



Picture 6. A parking sign intended to provide information to visitors of Osijek, both foreign and domestic



Picture 7. A billboard with maps and images of the old Turkish bridge across the river Drava in Osijek with explanations in Croatian and their translations in six different languages

It is important to stress that in the top-down subset we were unable to trace any English-only public signs, which supports our basic hypothesis of foreign languages, in our research English, belonging to the non-institutionalized level of public life, where national or municipal authorities do not find it relevant to present any kind of information of public interest in any other language but Croatian. Croatian is imposed as the language of the dominant culture and it is difficult to imagine any part of Croatia where English would be predominant in official public signage.

Although we did not perform a quantitative analysis of the data, it may be safely said that Croatian is still predominant in the public signage of the LL in Osijek, but for the sake of economizing space, we find it more relevant to present the English-only and the bilingual set of the bottom-up subset of public signs. In the following section, thus, we shall concentrate on those two sub-sets with an aim to establish which locations and areas of public life in the LL of Osijek are typically influenced by the English language and elements of the American culture.

5.2. The bottom-up subset

As it turns out, the results of the analysis of our research data comply with the model of the bottom-up flow of LL elements where public signs usually come from small or large business either local or otherwise. The primary goal of LL signs in the bottom-up subset is not to provide information about the offer but to attract attention and enhance the impact of the hidden message, in other words, to stand out from the rest. English inscriptions are used as a marketing tool to draw attention of the viewer and escapism, in the sense that they are buying not just goods and services but an attractive life style.

5.2.1. English-only signs

English is used quite liberally in the LL of Osijek, despite the fact that the target audience does not necessarily imply speakers of English. Potential buyers are expected to recognize the sign as an indicator of

the prestige that the offer represents and not necessarily the actual quality of the goods. In this region ‘imported goods’ have added value as opposed to domestic ones so that it is not infrequent that e.g. Croatian fashion brands use English for both the brand name and slogans to bring over a message of either expensive clothing not in the price range of the lower income or lower middle class buyers (Picture 8) or even to boost the value of low cost goods as in the case of the second hand shop (Picture 9).



Picture 8. A Croatian fashion brand



Picture 9. A second hand shop in Osijek

In the case of the second hand shop, we have a case of the transfer of the whole commercial concept from the Anglo-American culture, so that there is no appropriate expression in Croatian for the type of the commercial establishment selling hand-me-downs²³ and the English expression is used in all types of discourse.

Two further examples of the total cultural transfer visible in the LL of Osijek is the case of the phenomena typically originating in the US involving businesses dealing with new technologies (e.g. information technology (IT)) or the urban trend in popular culture involving the sports and the music of new urban generations. The example of an English-only sign can thus be found on the official plaque advertising a software company that obviously targets the international market (Picture 10) or in the case of the international skateboard and BMX competition held annually in Osijek, which has English as its official language and is advertised mostly in English (Picture 11)



Picture 10. An IT business office plaque

²³ The expression 'rabljena odjeća' ('used clothes') can be found occasionally, but not in the context of designating a shop.



Picture 11. A sign for the international skateboard and BMX competition

We would claim that in the two above cases the authors of signs were not solely profit-driven but showing awareness of cultural diversity and hospitality. They want to reach as many customers as possible and they realize that English can boost the market value of their goods and services. However, thereby they are treading the fine line between being miscomprehended due to the use of a foreign language and being accepted due to the use of language as a tool of cultural transfer.

Furthermore, although British English has dominated the Croatian school curriculum from the very beginning, the preference of American spelling is evident in the LL (c.f. the spelling of 'center' and not 'centre' in Pictures 12 and 13). Except for the obvious dominance of American cultural elements in today's popular culture, we find this phenomenon interesting because it conforms to the principle of the bottom-up subset as a type of opposition to the dominant culture or authority and since the educational system promotes British English, it is felt to be not fashionable enough for the role that the English language has to play in the context of public signage.



Picture 12. American spelling of 'center' e.g. 1



Picture 13. American spelling of 'center' e.g. 2

5.2.2. Bilingual signs

Bilingual Croatian-English signs are primarily used to give information to residents and visitors about essential or basic goods and services available in the observed area, e.g. pharmacy, bank, exchange office, parking, hotels, restaurants etc. They designate both the commercial

contents of the business conducted on a given location but also the basic life necessities such as health or money.



Picture 14. Bilingual signs in Osijek 1



Picture 15. Bilingual signs in Osijek 2

The use of English is primarily aimed at providing positive connotations where the language serves both as a luring hand but also the hand of hospitality, inviting customers to use the services provided in English, which is supposed to ensure communication without language barriers or any cultural impediments.

As the final point of our research we would like to present the concept of bilingualism taken to its extreme in the form of a clumsy and absurd street billboard advertising a car wash.



Picture 16. Bilingual signs in Osijek 3

This image is a typical reflection of the cultural background derived from American movies and music, with scenes from carwashes, initializing a whole scenario of a recognizable and desirable life style although this service has been offered in Croatia only in recent years.

The picture reads: „Wellness for your car“, assuming that that wellness or pampering is not only for you but also for your four-wheeled pet. As another new concept, wellness, which to the better informed Croats presents total pampering of body and soul and the highest degree of luxury that not many can afford creates an impression of elitism at its best.

6. Concluding comments

Our research has shown that the linguistic landscape in Osijek is dominated today by the Croatian language, mostly due to street signs and state and town institution signs (top-down signs) but there is a high frequency of English only and bilingual English-Croatian signs. The essential role of the English language is that of a means of transfer of cultural items and concepts found in American culture and the English signs range accordingly from those intended to provide information to residents and visitors to those used to boost the market value of goods and services offered.

The historical overview of the linguistic background of Osijek, as a typical, middle-sized continental town in Croatia has proven the influence of American culture not only on the linguistic landscape of Osijek, but also on the traditional beliefs, values and customs of its residents..

The qualitative analysis of the research data provided in our paper represents only a fraction of the potential a more thorough analysis of the linguistic landscape in Osijek could offer, so it is our hope to continue in this venue and provide a more insightful image of the actual impact American culture exhibits in this part of the global map.

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