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*Zum Gedenken an Prof. Dr. habil. Waldemar Pfeiffer
(1938–2026)*



PROF. DR. HABIL. WALDEMAR PFEIFFER (1938–2026)

Zum Gedenken an Prof. Dr. habil. Waldemar Pfeiffer (1938–2026)

Liebe Leserinnen und Leser,
mit großer Trauer teilen wir mit, dass Professor Dr. habil. Waldemar Pfeiffer am 7. Juni 2026 verstorben ist.

Mit ihm verlieren wir eine herausragende Persönlichkeit der Fremdsprachendidaktik und des Faches Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Über viele Jahrzehnte war er der Adam-Mickiewicz-Universität in Poznań eng verbunden und hat unsere Fakultät sowie die polnische und internationale Wissenschaft nachhaltig geprägt. Um die Zeitschrift „Glottodidactica“ hat sich Professor Waldemar Pfeiffer in besonderer Weise verdient gemacht. In den Jahren 1977–1994 trug er mit außergewöhnlichem Engagement die redaktionelle Verantwortung und prägte somit eine kontinuierliche wissenschaftliche Profilbildung des Periodikums als einen Ort des akademischen Dialogs und der Verbindung von Theorie und Praxis mit.

In dieser Zeit veröffentlichte die Zeitschrift Beiträge der von ihm eingeladenen international anerkannten Autoren und Autorinnen, die zentrale Fragen der germanistischen Sprachwissenschaft, insbesondere der Glottodidaktik, aufgriffen und somit wissenschaftliche Reflexion mit schulischer, universitärer und gesellschaftlicher Praxis in Verbindung brachten. Ohne seine wissenschaftliche Neugier und Bereitschaft zur kontinuierlichen Weiterentwicklung wäre die heutige Position von „Glottodidactica“ nicht denkbar.

Wir werden Professor Waldemar Pfeiffer nicht nur als herausragenden Germanisten, Hochschullehrer, Mentor vieler Generationen von Deutschlehrkräften, Gründer des Lehrstuhls für Glottodidaktik, langjährigen Leiter der Abteilung für Interkulturelle Glottopädagogik und Direktor des Instituts für Angewandte Linguistik in Erinnerung behalten, sondern auch als einen außerordentlich freundlichen, zugewandten und unterstützenden Menschen.

Wir nehmen Abschied von Professor Waldemar Pfeiffer und sind dankbar für alles, was er zum Brückenbau zwischen Ländern, Sprachen und Kulturen,

zur Entwicklung der polnischen und internationalen Fremdsprachendidaktik, zur Ausbildung von Deutschlehrkräften und nicht zuletzt zur Geschichte unserer Zeitschrift beigetragen hat.

In stillem Gedenken
im Namen des Redaktionsteams

Sylwia Adamczak-Krysztofowicz

EDITORIAL

DANUTA WIŚNIEWSKA

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

MARTIN HENZELMANN

University of Vienna, Austria

GRZEGORZ LISEK

University of Greifswald, Germany

Linguistic landscapes in Slavic studies

This thematic volume brings together academic research that approaches linguistic landscapes (LL) in Slavic studies as both a record of written language in public (and semi-public) space and a complex indicator of social changes. The contributions share a commitment to analysing how languages become visible – through scripts, signage and other semiotic resources – and to asking what this visibility evokes: whom it includes or excludes, what identities it foregrounds, and how it shapes everyday language practices (cf. Themistocleous 2025; Gorter & Cenoz 2024). An important feature of our volume is that it highlights the interaction between linguistic landscapes, language learning and teaching methods. The article selection grows out of the ongoing consolidation of Slavic linguistic landscape research as a field that is theoretically rich and yet methodologically plural, reflecting the heterogeneity of research cultures across Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe and their neighbouring regions.

A unifying context for this special issue is the reconfiguration of linguistic landscapes in the context of contemporary geopolitical changes. Since 2022, at the latest, there has been a marked emphasis on the interconnection between language, power and society. The ongoing war in Ukraine has resulted in a significant shift towards the visibility of the Ukrainian language, while concurrently leading to a restriction on the use of Russian within the same country. Thus, language in public space serves as a significant indicator of societal development. Against this background, several authors examine how the public presence of Ukrainian and Russian is being renegotiated, how new forms of solidarity and tension are

semiotically expressed, and how altered landscapes are perceived by different communities. Other contributions broaden the scope to include borderland ecologies, to contested or weakly researched regions, to historical depth, and to playful or commodified language in advertising. Altogether, the studies show that linguistic landscapes are not merely “texts in space”, but dynamic arenas in which political events, migration, market logics, and educational practices become materially legible.

This special issue is the result of a long-standing and intensive collaboration between the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and the University of Greifswald. Common research interests were applied to organise the international conference *New Insights into Slavic Linguistic Landscapes* in Greifswald on 28–29 June 2024, which enabled pluralistic perspectives on the study of linguistic landscapes. Conference reports were published in the academic journals of *Opera Slavica* (cf. Lisek & Henzelmann 2024) and *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* (cf. Henzelmann & Lisek 2025). The conference participants came from Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, Germany, Poland, Serbia, and Slovakia, enabling a diverse basis for a critical analysis of heterogeneous structures in the field of linguistic landscapes in Slavic studies. Selected papers presented in Greifswald are included in the present volume. In what follows, we summarise the main themes of these contributions.

Lilit G. Brutian’s paper, *Linguistic landscapes of modern Armenia: In the footsteps of Russian-speaking relocants*, reports a particularly timely configuration: the arrival of Russian-speaking newcomers and the semiotic traces of their presence in the LL of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Building on contemporary examples such as posters and newly established cafés, Brutian highlights how Russian textual elements are combined with Armenian, producing hybridised sign forms that can be read as indexes of language contact, accommodation, and emergent belonging. Importantly, this is not reduced to a simple narrative of dominance or replacement. Rather, the paper points to a layered semiotic synthesis in which the cityscape becomes a site for negotiating cultural proximity and social integration under conditions of accelerated mobility.

Next, the study *Exploring the linguistic landscapes of Transnistria* by Martin Henzelmann widens the geographical and political scope to a region whose contested status is embedded in a complex multilingual reality. While Russian may dominate public life in Transnistria in many respects, Henzelmann draws attention to patterned deviations, localised multilingual practices, and the classificatory challenges they pose. The paper contributes to a better understanding of “dominance” in linguistic landscape research: apparent monolingualism can conceal structured multilingual repertoires, and the landscape may encode pragmatic accommodations that are not captured by high-level policy narratives.

Olga Iakovleva and Miłosz Huber offer in contrast in their paper *The linguistic landscape of Lublin in a diachronic aspect based on selected examples* a diachronic linguistic-landscape portrait of Lublin, reading the city's sacred and secular inscriptions as an archive of centuries of multicultural contact. Based on systematic fieldwork in 2025 (inventorying and photographing frescoes, façades, cemetery inscriptions and signage texts), they map the distribution of languages and scripts – Latin, Polish (including older forms), Yiddish, German, Church Slavonic and Russian – across key heritage sites. The study links documentation to heritage protection, and highlights the pedagogical value of historical landscapes for language and intercultural learning.

With Věra Janíková's contribution *Linguistic landscapes in the sociolinguistic and foreign language teaching research field in the Czech Republic*, the volume turns towards disciplinary mapping and research-practice transfer. Janíková situates linguistic landscape inquiry at the intersection of sociolinguistics and foreign language teaching, demonstrating how public signage and other semiotic artefacts can be used to connect linguistic forms with social meaning, and to foster interpretive competences that traditional classroom materials rarely provide.

Marta Koszko's article, *"Solidarity" and "inclusion" in the linguistic landscape: The presence of the Ukrainian language in public urban spaces in Poland and its language learning implications*, examines how Ukrainian has entered – and, in many places, stabilised within Polish urban agglomerations. The study foregrounds explicit and implicit references to solidarity and inclusion as they are materialised in signage, thereby connecting macro-level sociopolitical discourse with micro-level semiotic choices (lexis, script, placement, and addressivity). At the same time, Koszko extends the analytical lens: the urban environment emerges as an informal learning resource and an affectively charged contact zone that can be mobilised in language education, precisely because it renders multilingualism publicly visible and socially meaningful.

In his paper, *Linguistic landscapes in transition: Polish students' views on Ukrainian and Russian signage*, Grzegorz Lisek focuses on language visibility with an emphasis on perception. As linguistic landscapes shift, responses to them become a research object in their own right: how do viewers interpret Ukrainian and Russian signs, what emotions or evaluations are activated, and how do these reactions relate to wider sociopolitical frames? By engaging an exploratory design centred on attitudes, the paper makes a methodological case for integrating perceptual approaches into landscape studies – particularly in contexts where language visibility has become newly salient and socially contested.

The contribution by Tigran Simyan, *Language play and norm deviation in art and advertising in Old Tiflis: Occasionalism as a didactic tool*, examines how commercial discourse strategically mobilises Russian – through stylisation, indexicality,

and cultural referencing – to produce effects such as authenticity, nostalgia, cosmopolitanism, or irony. This perspective is crucial, because it demonstrates that linguistic landscape meanings are not reducible to “who speaks what” but are also shaped by market-driven semiotic play and by the commodification of language varieties.

Questions of scale and pedagogical relevance are central to the joint study by Magdalena Steciąg and Urszula Majdańska-Wachowicz, entitled *“Leave no trace”: The macro and microscale analysis of the linguistic landscape of the Polish-Czech border area*. By focusing on a Czech-Polish border region that is simultaneously touristic, environmentally regulated, and socially porous, the authors show how “macro” framings (institutional discourses and normative orders) interact with “micro” practices (situated, often ephemeral inscriptions and audience-oriented messages). Their approach underscores that landscape analysis benefits from tracing the mutual conditioning of infrastructures, ideologies, and everyday communicative behaviour – and that such analyses can be transferred into teaching formats that develop learners’ semiotic awareness and critical reading of public texts.

Across these varied settings, a common set of concerns emerges. First, the contributions demonstrate together that scripts and language choices are never neutral: they index histories, social alignments, and imagined audiences. Second, the contributions illustrate the analytical value of moving across different levels of description – connecting fine-grained semiotic observations to broader dynamics of migration, conflict, regionalisation, and institutional governance. Third, several chapters draw attention to the didactics / pedagogical potential of linguistic landscapes: public space may be read as a living textbook, though one that demands careful guidance and ethical attentiveness. This is particularly the case when the signs in question are associated with displacement, war, or contested identities.

Bringing these studies together, our volume seeks to advance research on Slavic and neighbouring linguistic landscapes in two key respects: by presenting empirically grounded analyses from contexts requiring nuanced interpretation, and by deepening the dialogue between foreign language teaching, sociolinguistic theory and applied linguistics methodology.

Greifswald and Poznań, February 2026

Danuta Wiśniewska
Martin Henzelmann
Grzegorz Lisek

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I. ARTICLES IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

LILIT G. BRUTIAN
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Linguistic landscapes of modern Armenia: In the footsteps of Russian-speaking relocants

ABSTRACT. The purpose of the paper is to analyse the linguistic landscape of Armenia during the period of 2022–2023 when the country was flooded by Russian-speaking relocants. The research is based on the empirical material which was collected in the capital of the country by taking photos. Additionally, classification, descriptive and analytical methods were applied. The texts under study are analysed from the viewpoint of the vocabulary, semantics, grammar, script usage, and translation. It is shown that the most interesting cases of the linguistic landscape are multimodal texts which present a mixture and combination of different semiotic codes. The analysis shows that, depending on the addressees, Russian and English (in rare cases – also Armenian) are used in the texts. It is also shown that the relocants have introduced into Armenia a new, mostly gastronomic, and “advanced” youth culture which, in its turn, has made the linguistic landscape of the country much more diverse and interesting.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscape, Armenian, Russian, English, intercultural communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present study is devoted to the description and analysis of the linguistic landscape of Armenia during the period of 2022–2023 when, in connection with well-known events after February 24, 2022, the country had been flooded by relocants. This terminology mainly refers to people who come from Russia to Armenia. The situation in the country which itself was in hard conditions because of ongoing war and blockade in Artsakh, the native Armenian land, has changed abruptly due to relocation, which was accompanied by widely spread Russian language and which, in its turn, has led to the transformation of the linguistic landscape. The description of this practically new linguistic landscape, which has changed abruptly and rapidly is a task of utmost importance and current

interest from the point of view of revealing the sociocultural changes that take place in society, as well as deeper understanding of intercultural communication. In the light of what has been said the novelty, and the urgency of the given study can be stated.

2. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES IN ARMENIA

Before moving on to our analysis it is necessary to clarify vital facts. Armenia has always been a monoethnic country with more than 98% of Armenian population. During the Soviet Union, the majority of the population were bilinguals who spoke Russian almost as well as their native Armenian. After the collapse of the USSR the language situation has changed: the younger generation speaks Russian much worse, instead they have a good command of English, which can be explained by numerous factors. Yet, Russian is still popular in Armenia, and this is one of the important reasons for the Russian-speaking relocants to move to Armenia. In addition, it should be clarified that when speaking about the linguistic landscape of modern Armenia as, for instance in Henzelmann (2023), we mostly speak the country's capital Yerevan. In a state with a small territory, practically everything is concentrated there, in the country's heart.

In our research we rest on the following definitions of linguistic landscape: linguistic landscape, according to Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) is defined as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings... that can serve two basic functions: an informational function and a symbolic function". Gorter (2006: 2) speaks about any "use of language in its written form in the public sphere". Fedorova (2014: 70) defines the linguistic landscape as "the multiplicity of graphic and written signs and texts that are available to the observer in the public space". In her other work, giving the definition of linguistic landscape, Fedorova (2019: 94) puts forward a beautiful comparison: "The linguistic landscape can be presented as a sum of messages, an open book which the city tries to make clear not only for the 'friends' but also for the guests".

If we consider linguistic landscape in the frame of the theory of communication which is quite logical, then it is necessary to characterize the main elements of this kind of communicative acts, having in mind "the presentation of the social group of the author and the target addressee" (Fedorova 2014: 71). In our case the addresser is always the relocant, while the addressees are relocants (the "friends") and sometimes – the natives ("the foes"). Besides, as Keningi and Nikunlassi (2019: 66) mention quite correctly, "the perception of LL and the signs in it is greatly influenced by the reasons and goals of residing the observer in the given space, as

they predetermine the value of different signs for him". If linguistic landscape is considered in the context of intercultural communication, the problems of "friend and foe", of integration, adaptation and self-identification become crucial, too. It is important to mention that "the written language element is able to reflect the social positioning, the arrangement of political forces, the attitude toward the people in power, as well as different social and national groups. It also serves for their self-identification and self-representation" (Fedorova 2019: 90).

Our research is based on the empirical material, which we collected in 2022–2023 in downtown Yerevan using the method of taking photos. These photos were carefully evaluated, classified, and sorted before being prepared for this study. Therefore, classification, descriptive and analytical methods were used. All figures presented in this paper were taken by the author, unless otherwise specified. Before proceeding to the analysis itself, let us dwell on the key notion of the research – the "relocant".

Armenia today, in relocants' opinion, is the most hospitable and friendly country towards them. The guests from Russia who have arrived in Yerevan with a one-way ticket are called jokingly *emigrants*, *relocants*, *vacationers*, or also *new Russian Armenians* (Kireyev 2022). Putting aside the joking nominations "vacationers" and "new Russian Armenians" which by themselves carry great, though different semantic and pragmatic load, we must mention that in the dichotomy of the terms "emigrant-relocant" the neologism "relocant" spread very rapidly. Now instead of the term "emigration" the term "relocation" is used much more often in Armenia than the others. In a newspaper article entitled "We are not emigrants, we are relocants. How do the Russians who have left after February 24 live" we read: "Emigrants are those who are afraid of political persecution. But those people whom I've come across have another motivation. They have moved to wait out and do not feel as emigrants. They are rather relocants" (Fontanka.ru 2022).

The neologism "relocant" which has originated from the English "to relocate" – "to move (sb, sth) to, or build (sth) in, another place" (Hornby 1995: 1064), denotes a person who moves to a new place of residence, a new country, as rule, because of a job. Thus, a relocant is a person temporarily displaced to another country, mainly an employee who has, unlike emigrants, another motivation. The process of relocation relates to adaptation to new living conditions, new challenges and their overcoming, integration into new sociocultural environment and, undoubtedly, with desire to preserve national and cultural identity. To make this process easier, relocants have established places of location, meeting places where various events, such as exhibitions, performances, master-classes, educational courses, etc. take place.

We will now consider the names of several locations, which have become a part of linguistic landscape of Yerevan.

N1. **“Ковчег”** – an organization which helps relocants. The word itself implies an especially important meaning: a place offering shelter or protection. The name is written in Cyrillic script.

N2. **“Triglinki”** – a co-living where its founders who have moved from St. Petersburg organize a wide range of events: concerts, masterclasses, trainings, film screening, yoga classes, group therapy sessions and so on. The name written in Latin script, has originated from the address Glinka Street 3 in St. Petersburg where the co-living was first founded.

N3. **“Common Ground Books and Spirits”** – is a location for avid readers, where lectures and presentations of new books, as well as courses of folk dances are organized. The title is a word combination written in English.

N4. **“Letters and Numbers”** – is a place where painters and art lovers meet, drink wine and discuss high ideas, give lectures and educate themselves. It serves also as a coworking space. The name is represented by a word combination in English.

N5. **“Dom Yerevan”** – is a location for music lovers and music creators, also for needleworkers and craftsmen who make jewelry and decoration. The name is presented by a word combination which is a mixture of “friend” (Dom) and “foe” (Yerevan) and where the Russian word is written in Latin script.

N6. **“Ari”** – a stand-up club. The name written in Latin alphabet presents an Armenian word “արի”, to be more precise, the imperative form of the verb “գալ” meaning “to come”. As the founders of the club say, it is called “Ari” because on the parking of the building where one of their stand-up comics live, when helping to park the car, people used to say “ari-ari”, so they decided that it is a nice name.

N7. **“ПЭУ”** – a meeting place for relocants and the locals.

This abbreviation stands for “Embassy of Aesthetic Pleasures” (russ. *Посольство Эстетических Удовольствий*). There is an ironic allusion to the topic of real embassies in the title. The “ПЭУ” project puts forward the idea of virtual citizenship, the ideas of equality and tolerance. Their goal is to promote in the world up-to-date gastronomic and event culture. On the territory of “ПЭУ” there is a garden with terraces, cafes and bars where also the locals work and relax (Media Max 2022). To show their respect to the Armenian culture, the founders of ПЭУ installed a traditional Armenian pulpulak (a realia, a traditional Armenian drinking fountain).

N8. **“Tuf”, “Түф”, “Tuf Club”** – a multifunctional café-bar. This is one of the first institutions established by relocants, where one can also hear the Armenian language. “TUF” is a fashionable club-café right in the centre of Yerevan, which has become a favourite place both for the relocants and the locals. Tuf is an Armenian “national” stone of pinkish colour Yerevan has been revetted with, which is

why it is often called “the pink city”. The order of how the title is written is worth mentioning: first, the Armenian word is written in capital letters transliterated in Latin alphabet, then the name is written in Cyrillic, consequently – in Latin alphabet. Inside the bar there is a slogan “Туф-туф-туф-тыш”. The owners of “TUF” decided to make “something familiar, something that was in Moscow”, and they explain the choice of the word “туф” as the name for their cafe, saying that in their opinion it is an “Armenian and warm, like a sunbaked stone” (Virabov 2022). It is a good example of integration and combination of “friend and foe”.

N9. **“Aysi”** – a beer bar where the locals like to be as well. This beer bar situated in the outskirts of Kond, one of the oldest and very atmospheric part of Yerevan, was established by the founders of the bar “Сосна и липа” in Moscow. Because many of their regular clients moved to Armenia, they have decided to establish a bar for them in Yerevan, too, and have brought with them recipes of liquors using also Armenian fruit: apricots, peaches, figs and so on. The name “Aysi” (meaning “garden” in Armenian and written in Latin alphabet) the founders of the bar explain as follows. Moscow’s “Сосна и липа” is often called “beer garden”. So, they thought, it is also a beer garden, but the name “Garejur aygi” (“Beer Garden” in Armenian) seemed strange for them, and they left only “Aysi”. The owners of the bar wanted very much that it would be a place for the locals as well, and they are very glad that the Armenians like to go there (Avetisyan n.d.).

N10. **“Korridorrr”** – a bar where the Russians and the locals relax. There is doubling and even tripling of the consonant “r” in the Russian word written in Latin alphabet, and this conscious distortion of a word aims at attracting attention.

N11. **“Mama Jan”** – bar. The name of this bar established by Russian relocants contains Armenian loving form of address and exclamation “jan” (“ջան”), which indicates reference to the Armenian culture, the desire to come closer to it.

N12. **Кофейня “Աստղիկ” (Звездочка)**. The owner of the coffee house (by the way, there were only cafes (кафе) before, “coffee house” – “кофейня” is a word that has been penetrated with relocation) is a Russian relocant from St. Petersburg. In his words, from the very beginning an Armenian word to name the coffee-house was chosen, as he positioned himself from the point of view of life in Armenia and realized that being a guest, he must adapt to new conditions. He suggested the translation of the word “Звездочка” because that is how he calls his wife (Melikyan n.d.). In the beginning a new word for the linguistic landscape of Armenia is indicated (as mentioned above) – the Russian word “кофейня”, then comes the Armenian word which is followed by its translation into Russian (in brackets).

N13. **Կոնժարան. Пельменная БОРЩ/Рюмочная. Пельменная БОРИЩ**. A Russian-Ukrainian restaurant that locals also frequently visit. In the name which is stated parallelly in Armenian (in the left-side) and in Russian (in the

right-side), the main dishes of Russian and Ukrainian cuisines are denoted. The word “борщ” (*borshch*) itself is written in capital letters under the corresponding parts of the text where the character of the restaurant is mentioned, in the Armenian part it is transcribed.

N14. **Рюмочная “Дружба”**. This drinking place “rumochnaia” is very popular among relocants who have moved from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The title is incredibly significant from the point of view of its semantics. It should be mentioned that there have always been many restaurants, cafes and bars in Armenia mainly in Yerevan, which the locals like to visit. Yet, the relocants have introduced into this business their own new colours, in particular a trend for the so-called “rumochnaias”. “Today we, the new Russian emigrants reveal Russian “rumochnaias” for Armenia”, – says one of the founders. They have found out that there is no equivalent to the word “рюмка” (glass, wine glass) in the Armenian language, and now either in joke, or seriously they want to ask the specialists of Armenian language working at the Institute of Linguistics of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia to create a word for it (Svyazka 2023).

In the mentioned above drinking and eating establishments relocants and locals visit equally often. Yet, in Yerevan, there are “purely relocant” establishments that do not conceal that they are intended for “friends” and for themselves, meaning that they are not going to integrate into the local life. As a bright example can serve the name of the bar:

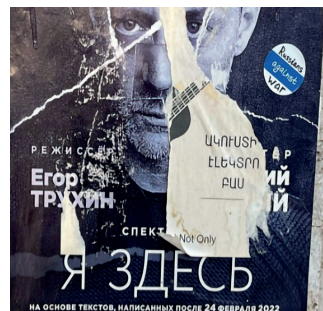
N15. **“Релокантъ”**. The name is very eloquent, speaking for itself. To attract attention, it is spelled the old way by means of imitation of the archaic name.

Let us now pass on to the consideration of the new outdoor advertising: banners, posters, ads, slogans and inscriptions that have appeared as the result of relocation. In Yerevan, and especially in its centre, there are a vast number of posters on the walls of buildings. Even more can be seen on every vertical surface. The key words and expressions on such posters are “relocation” and connected with it search of work and colleagues, as in the new conditions of relocation the necessity to be based on their usual values – family, professional and national-cultural identity, belonging to their group, as well as various interests is increasing. It should be mentioned that, at the same time there is a group of “passive” relocants in Yerevan – these are IT specialists who continue to live as before, working remotely and not trying to integrate into the new life. Created to help relocants navigate the city, the “UpTown Ереван” project features posters that point out “where they can find Moscow in Yerevan”, like “Places of IT specialists in Yerevan”, “Where to drink coffee”, etc. Below, we will highlight the most vivid posters from our material, which are grouped according to their subject.

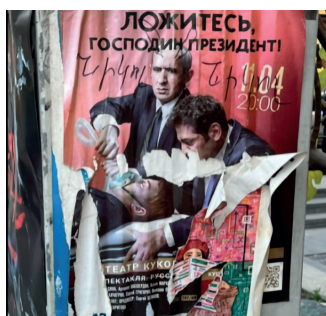
Posters about cultural events and activities



N16. Concert poster
Source: own study.



N17. There is additional information about the political character of the performance in the text, the title is written in capital letters and is emphasized, using a large font
Source: own study.



N18. There are playbills put up everywhere in the city. These are posters about Sergey Tselikov's comedy performance based on Oksana Nekritsova's play
Source: own study.

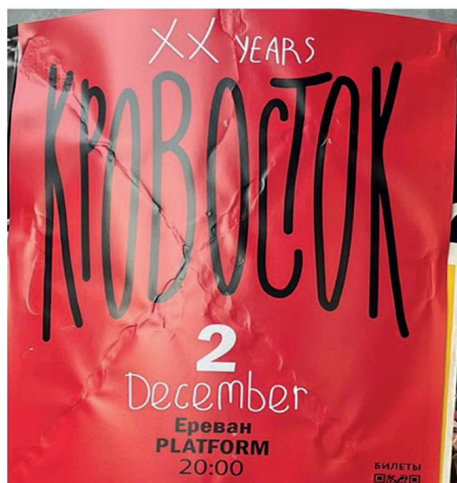


N19. A poster for a comedy featuring award-winning actors from the Soviet era
Source: own study.



N20. "Minsk" – a film about protests in Belarus by Boris Guts
Source: own study.

On the posters, which can be found all around the city, there is additional information about the provocative, very emotional character of the film.



N21. All these posters and playbills are exclusively in Russian

Source: own study.



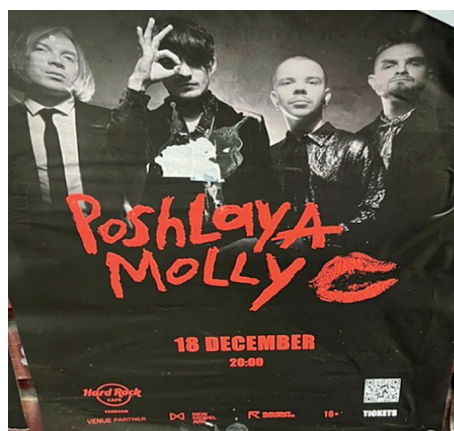
N22. This is an example of a poster which combines information written in Russian (first) and a Russian expression presented in Latin alphabet

Source: own study.



N23. An English-language poster featuring a colour-based semiotic contrasting

Source: own study.



N24. The poster is particularly striking due to its visual composition: vibrant red typography set against a black background is paired with an image of the actors to complement the verbal information. The latter is written in Latin letters, and the graphical presentation (combination of capital and lowercase letters) gives the possibility of multiple interpretation

Source: own study.

Posters informing on drinking establishments

Turning now to the category of drinking establishments, several posters stood out in the linguistic landscape of Yerevan.



N25. The whole poster is written in Russian, the text contains an additional information on the character of the establishment, its atmosphere, the closing time and, of course, first of all, it mentions that it is the first establishment of its kind in Armenia (more in detail about the drinking place was written above). The size of the font is capital letters

Source: own study.



N26. On the poster about this coffee-house (which was described in detail above) the verbal information is accompanied with a picture: a flared star on top of Ararat is depicted – and in this we are inclined to see not only the expression of respect and gratitude to the country that has given the relocants the possibility of residence (though temporarily), but also the expression of hope that the light will flash across Armenia again and that Ararat – the main symbol of the country, will become Armenian, as before

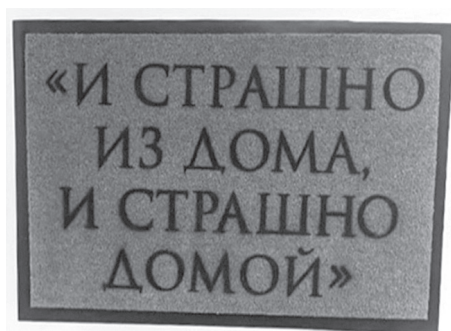
Source: own study.

Another key theme in the urban landscape involves posters with political messages.



N27. The meaning of this text is strengthened not only due to its composition (both parts of the well-known saying are written in a column, which intensifies the idea of opposition and the direction of movement to the goal, to the light) and graphical manifestation (everything is written in capital letters), but also deliberately chosen colour of the letters (the first part is printed in black, which symbolizes dark forces, gloom, and the last part – in blue which is associated with peace, harmony, truth and revival)

Source: own study.



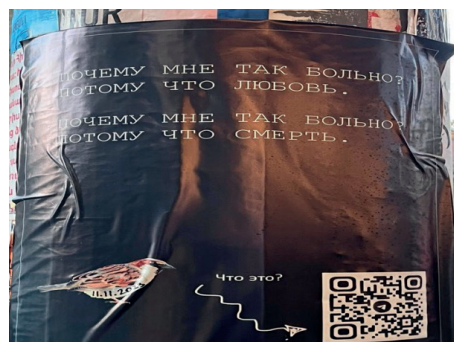
N29. The meaning of complete hopelessness, despair and uncertainty is expressed in the text by means of antonymic use of the word "home"

Source: own study.



N28. The Russian text is accompanied by a line after line translation into English. The meaning of verbal appeal for help is intensified non-verbally – by depicting the flags of Artsakh, the ancestral Armenian land, and of Ukraine – in the form of hearts

Source: own study.



N30. Чем эта ночь отличается от других
Что страшного происходит прямо сейчас
Мама, зачем ты дрожишь? Как ты смеешь дрожать?

Почему я не там, где ты?

The gloomy text sentiment is created due to the use of the lexemes "terrible", "tremble", "hurt", "death" (translated from Russian). Additionally to the text, a picture of a bird and a QR-code can be observed

Source: own study.

Finally, let us consider the slogans of the “Ковчег” organization, which was mentioned in the previous paragraph.



N31. A set of Slogans to the “Ковчег”

Source: own study.



N32. In these examples only Russian text can be observed. Nonetheless, the scriptures are not short in meaning

Source: own study.



N33. On the sticker inscription there is an allusion to the famous novel “1984” by George Orwell. This laconic but meaningful hybrid text consists, apart from the verbal constituent, of figures and Latin abbreviation

Source: own study.



N34. In contrary to the previous figure, here we can detect non-verbal text, which depicts the scene from the ballet “The Swan Lake”.

There is an allusion to the well-known events as a symbol of a pivotal moment and great upheaval in the country

Source: own study.

3. CONCLUSION

Our analysis has led us to the following conclusions of linguistic, intercultural, and glottodidactic character:

1. From the viewpoint of the vocabulary, in the onimization of appellatives there are words that have very important semantic load for the relocants: “Ковчег”, “Релокантъ”, “Korridorrr” (reference to their situation), “Дружба”, “Dom Yerevan”, “Mama Jan” (indication to the main values), “Աստղիկ” [Звездочка] – indication to light. There are also realia in the names, both Russian (“БОИЦ”, “рюмочная”, “кофейня”), and Armenian (“TUF”, “Կփ”). In addition, neologisms (“релокант”, “ПЭУ”, “Triglinki”) were created.
2. There have been cases of translation: “Aygi” (the Armenian equivalent for “сад” – garden) and “Աստղիկ” (the Armenian translation of “Звездочка” – star).
3. What concerns the use of parts of speech, there has been a unique case of usage of a verb in the name (the verb “գալ” in the imperative mood: “Արի” – “Ari”) with nouns dominating. Many word combinations have been detected as well. Examples for these are: “Common Ground Books and Spirits”, “Letters and Numbers”, “Dom Yerevan”, “Mama jan”.
4. A case of abbreviation has been defined: “ПЭУ” – “Посольство эстетических удовольствий” (engl. Embassy of Aesthetic Pleasures).
5. What concerns spelling, there has been a case of distortion of a word (“Korridorrr”), as well as of old spelling (“Релоконтъ”).
6. From the point of view of script usage, both Latin alphabet and Cyrillic were incorporated. The following inscriptions can only be found in Cyrillic: “Ковчег”, “ПЭУ”, “Дружба”, “Релокантъ”, posters and ads “Места айтишников в Ереване”, “Где пить кофе в Ереване”, “Ложитесь, господин президент”, “Кровосток”, “ЧЕРЕЗ ТЕРНИИ /к/ ЗВЕЗДОЧКАМ”, etc. Exclusively Latin-based signage is evident in: “Triglinki”, “Common Ground Books and Spirits”, “Letters and Numbers”, “Dom Yerevan”, “Ari”, “Aygi”, “Korridorrr”, “Mama jan”, “Vinil Selection /by/ Petr Prokhorov”. In this group there is a name with transliteration of a Russian word (“Dom”), as well as Armenian words (“Ari”, “Aygi”, “Jan”).
7. In terms of language didactics, linguistic landscapes of this type can be seen as an active field of learning, which depicts multilingualism as a relevant tool for different cultural communities. The inscriptions examined offer authentic and realistic language use, in our study the use of Russian in Armenia. We conclude that this material can be used to ex-

perience vibrant multilingualism in public spaces. It promotes language awareness and highlights the relevance of learning a foreign or second language, as it exists not only in distant places, but also in the viewer's familiar environment. Vocabulary acquisition, access to Russian as an important language, and intercultural skills are stressed and strengthened in a sustainable manner for both a local audience and relocants.

8. The most interesting cases of linguistic landscape are undoubtedly hybrid, multimodal texts. These texts are particularly complex in their linguistic arrangement and the way they employ translation or transliteration: colour and picture use, in a word, – mixture and combination of different semiotic codes. Among such cases we have singled out distinct types. These are, in particular,
 - a) an interplay of picture, colour, verbal information, the Russian word written in Latin letters, a combination of capital and lowercase letters in a word (example N24),
 - b) a Russian text combined with a picture (examples N26, N32),
 - c) a text written in capital letters in a column combined with colour (example N27),
 - d) a Russian text presented in parallel (line after line) translation into English paired with pictures (example N30),
 - e) a fusion of verbal information in Russian, figures and Latin abbreviation (example N33),
 - f) a combination of Russian expression with Russian words written in Latin letters (example N22),
 - g) a specific notational sequence: an Armenian word in capital letters transliterated into Latin, followed by Cyrillic, and finally in Latin script (example N8),
 - h) the name in Armenian followed by its Russian translation in brackets (example N12),
 - i) parallel notation in large font of a transcribed Russian word into Armenian on the left-side and in Russian on the right-side (example N13),
 - j) the co-occurrence of a verbal constituent with a picture (example N29),
 - k) a purely visual composition consisting of an image only (example N34),
 - l) finally, additional details that specify the main information (examples N17, 20, 25).
9. The study shows that in the considered above texts mainly two languages are used: Russian and English. In rare cases Armenian is also present. The addressees of the texts in Russian, written in Cyrillic script, are pri-

marily relocants. These texts concern themselves purely with “relocant” establishments (“Ковчег”, “Релокантъ”, etc.) and posters with “relocant” orientation (e.g. “Места айтишников в Ереване”, “ЧЕРЕЗ ТЕРНИИ /к/ ЗВЕЗДОЧКАМ”). There are much more texts in English or in Latin letters, the addressees of which are both “the friends” and “the foes”, which speaks about the openness of the relocants and their desire to adapt and integrate into their new reality of life. This manifests much more vividly in the texts combining “friend” and “foe” (“Dom Yerevan”, “TUF (Түф)”, “Мама Jan”, “Աստիսիկ [Звездочка]”, etc.). Moreover, it is also observable in other cases – by using only Armenian words in the names written in Latin letters (“Ari”, “Ayi”).

To summarize, it is important to mention that relocants have introduced into Armenia a new, mostly gastronomic, and “advanced” youth culture, which also has an effect on the linguistic landscapes of Armenia. The influx has transformed the public space into a more diverse and vibrant environment. Not only does this shift change the aesthetic of the streets, it also serves as a reflection of a society in transition. This transition is immediately felt by the younger generation, whose daily interactions are shaped by these new linguistic realities. Consequently, these changes inevitably find their way into the educational sphere, as schools and universities must respond to the evolving communicative environment of their students. By integrating these real-world observations into the curriculum, educators can tap into the lived experience of learners, making the city itself a primary source of knowledge. As Gorter (2013: 203) puts it: “The attention to the linguistic landscape in an educational context provides a promising way to teach about language awareness and literacy practices”.

Beyond its general educational value, incorporating the linguistic landscape into classroom practice carries a significant inclusive potential. As the relocant community settles, their children will increasingly be entering the Armenian school system. For these students, seeing their native linguistic and cultural markers reflected in the curriculum provides a sense of visibility and validation within their new environment. Simultaneously, for local students, engaging with these diverse signs fosters not only linguistic awareness but also a deeper human understanding of their peers’ backgrounds. This shared exploration of the urban space promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect, effectively turning the linguistic landscape into a bridge for social integration and intercultural empathy.

Ultimately, the posters found in Yerevan’s streets are more than just advertisements for new cafes and leisurely activities. They are practical examples of how language is changing right now. Using these materials in class helps students to not only understand different languages better but also to connect

with the people behind them, turning a simple poster into a starting point for real intercultural conversation.

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**Krajobrazy językowe współczesnej Armenii.
Śladami rosyjskojęzycznych przesiedleńców**

ABSTRAKT. Celem artykułu jest analiza krajobrazu językowego Armenii w latach 2022–2023, kiedy to kraj ten został zalany przez rosyjskojęzycznych przesiedleńców. Badania opierają się na materiałach fotograficznych zebranych w stolicy kraju. Dodatkowo zastosowano metody klasyfikacyjne, opisowe i analityczne. Zebrane teksty analizowane są pod kątem słownictwa, semantyki, gramatyki, użycia pisma i tłumaczenia. Wykazano, że najciekawszymi przypadkami krajobrazu językowego są teksty multimodalne, które przedstawiają mieszaną i połączenie różnych kodów semiotycznych. Analiza pokazuje, że w zależności od adresatów w tekstach używa się języka rosyjskiego i angielskiego (w rzadkich przypadkach również ormiańskiego). Wykazano również, że osoby, które przeniosły się do Armenii, wprowadziły do tego kraju nową, głównie gastronomiczną i „zaawansowaną” kulturę młodzieżową, która z kolei sprawiła, że krajobraz językowy kraju stał się znacznie bardziej zróżnicowany.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: krajobraz językowy, język ormiański, język rosyjski, język angielski, komunikacja interkulturowa.

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Exploring the linguistic landscapes of Transnistria

ABSTRACT. In this study, I explore several particularities of the linguistic landscapes (LLs) of Transnistria. This region is located between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, to which it *de jure* belongs. However, it operates *de facto* as an internationally unrecognized, yet functionally independent state entity with its own currency, army and parliament. According to the current legal situation, there are three official languages in Transnistria: Russian, Moldovan and Ukrainian. But, in practice, Russian is used almost exclusively throughout the territory. I argue that Transnistria's LLs are not oriented towards language policy guidelines but privilege those languages that play a central role in the education system and in international communication, namely Russian, as the most frequently used language, and English as an important global foreign language.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscapes, Transnistria, Russian, English, language in public space.

1. INTRODUCTION

Transnistria is a region which used to belong to the former Soviet Union's Moldavian SSR, which it constituted in the Soviet times together with the central part of Bessarabia. After the Republic of Moldova gained independence, Transnistria seceded from this union and declared its own sovereignty. Its unilateral secession has not been recognized internationally. Consequently, Transnistria presently belongs *de jure* to the Republic of Moldova but operates *de facto* as a separate state with its own institutions. The region remains largely unexplored in linguistic landscapes research (hereinafter: LLs), for which reason several distinctive features of its LLs will be identified here, while going beyond the consideration of urban spaces. In order to understand the conditions under which LLs (and the linguistic situation in general) develop locally, we first need to take a historical look at Transnistria and its population structure.

2. TRANSNISTRIA: HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Transnistria – officially the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic (Russian: *Приднестровская Молдавская Республика*) – is a territory encompassing some 4.163 km², most of which lies to the east of the Dniester River. It is located between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, without direct access to the Black Sea (cf. Map 1) but with an important industrial sector. From a historical perspective, the region's long-standing affiliation with the Russian Empire is particularly striking and goes back to Russian-Ottoman rivalries over the region (Oleksy 2016: 12). In 1792, Catherine the Great extended the Russian Empire's territorial claims to the Dniester River, bringing the area between the Dniester and the southern Bug into her sphere of direct influence.

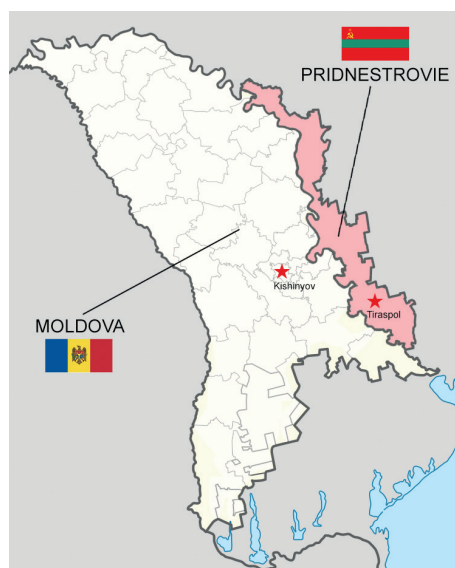
Initially, the local population in this land mainly spoke Romanian, but this was to change with the arrival of Russian and Ukrainian colonists (Cojocaru 2006: 263). The territory was, at that time, named "New Moldavia" and controlled by the Russian state (Colbey 2022: 56), and its capital of Tiraspol¹ was founded by the Russian General Suvorov. When neighboring Bessarabia, which today largely coincides with the Republic of Moldova, was incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1812, the *status quo* of Transnistria was formally and administratively consolidated. In contrast to Bessarabia, the region was more urbanized and industrialized, which continues to have an impact on its spatial structures today.

The political situation fundamentally changed in the 20th century. From 1918 to 1940, Bessarabia was integrated as a part of Romania, then again under Russian rule between 1940 and 1941, and under Romanian military occupation between 1941 and 1944. A central idea in Romania was to revive Greater Romania's ambitions, which undoubtedly included consolidating its sovereignty over Bessarabia. For this reason, rigorous efforts were made to enforce only the Romanian language usage on this territory. Along with strict language bans, the numerous other languages spoken in Bessarabia were to be suppressed, above all Russian. In 1924, Stalin had established a Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) that encompassed Transnistria and neighboring regions of Ukraine. When the Soviet Union gained control of Bessarabia in 1940, it joined the region with the territory of today's Transnistria to form the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). Then as now, the two regions had very different socio-demographic structures. Soviet propaganda began to speak of a "Moldavian nation" with a "Moldavian" language and culture, which were supposedly differ-

¹ The name derives from the Greek hydronym *Tyra* for the 'Dniester' and the topoformant *-polis* as a shortening of Greek *polis* for 'city'. To this day, the founding of this city is a symbol of Russia's claim to power over the territory and also a reason for the region's close connection with Russia.

ent from their Romanian counterparts. In addition, there were enormous social upheavals from 1945 onwards, which led to a strong industrialization of Transnistria, while, in Bessarabia, predominantly agriculture was developed. The conceptual basis offered for the opposition between “Transnistrian Moldovans” and “Bessarabian Moldovans” thus quickly became socially accepted (Cojocaru 2006: 263).

In the course of the Soviet Union’s collapse and with the Republic of Moldova’s associated declaration of sovereignty in 1990, tensions developed between Chişinău and Tiraspol. It is important to note that, in contrast to other post-Soviet conflicts, it was social rather than ethnic turmoil that developed here (Cojocaru 2006: 261–262). This sparked a debate about the question of territorial status and linguistic alterity in Transnistria, which escalated to such an extent that armed conflicts ensued as a direct consequence in the spring of 1992 (Oleksy 2016: 12). A strong background factor in this development was the Transnistrian perspective on language. There, it was assumed that the Russian language, which had largely dominated Transnistria up to that point, could become disadvantaged – a concern rooted in the historical experience of dealing with languages in Bessarabia before 1945, as described above – and this eventuality was categorically prevented.² Hence, Tiraspol seceded from the union with Chişinău before the first considerations were made as to whether a minimal consensus could be reached in order to live in a common state (Cojocaru 2006: 262). In the Republic of Moldova, the reintegration of the Transnistrian territory has repeatedly been considered since then, but, in stark contrast to other post-Soviet territorial disputes, the issue is met with conspicuous indifference among the Moldovan population (Popescu & Litra 2012: 3). Although a solution was very close in 2003, and constructive



Map 1. Location of Transnistria

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Transnistria#/media/File:Pridnestrovie_Moldavia.png

² In addition to historical concerns, this view was also linked to the fact that ethnic Moldovans contemporarily made up around 65% of Moldova’s population but only 35% in Transnistria (Oleksy 2016: 13). Accordingly, from Chişinău’s perspective, the primacy of Romanian should be perfectly socially acceptable – but not from Tiraspol’s perspective.

progress was made with the so-called “Kozak Plan”, which could have reunited the two territories, no viable consensus was reached (Durrieu & Parmentier 2019: 82). Rather, a “frozen conflict” emerged, at the end of which Transnistria is now an internationally unrecognized but *de facto* independent state – with its own currency, its own state organs and a large contingent of (local and Russian) soldiers and security forces. It furthermore pursues political orientations that are often diametrically opposed to those desired by the Republic of Moldova. This divergence certainly has much to do with Transnistria’s dependence on Russia, without which it would hardly be able to exist geopolitically (Dreyfus 2017: 136).

The strong cultural and political ties connecting Transnistria with Russia can be well understood against this background and are justified, above all, by the region’s historical affiliation with Russia, its lack of connection to the Romanian-speaking cultural sphere and the dominance of the Russian language. Another very interesting aspect is that the situation in which Transnistria has found itself since 1992 could only arise in the first place because linguistic affinities moved far to the forefront of society and led to a resurgence of historical mistrust,³ especially concerning state encroachment upon languages, which, in Transnistria, could be directed against Russian.

3. DEMOGRAPHY AND LANGUAGES IN TRANSNISTRIA

In the previous section, we saw that Transnistria has a complex modern history. Let us now take a look at how the ethnic structure in this region developed and which languages predominate. In 1936, Transnistria had around 280,000 inhabitants, of whom 42% were Moldovans, 29% Ukrainians and 14% Russians (Colbey 2022: 58). However, this demographic profile no longer corresponded to the linguistic reality since the end of the Second World War at the latest. Ever since Transnistria and Bessarabia became united under the umbrella of the Soviet Union, Russian had become increasingly important, especially in education. In addition, the Cyrillic script was made compulsory for Moldovan (Colbey 2022: 58). Both this measure and the designation “Moldavian” (i.e. Moldovan) for the regional variety of Romanian were obviously desirable from a regionalist mindset, because they suggested a distance from the typologically identical Romanian language and, at the same time, a visual proximity to Russian.⁴ During

³ In particular, a negative historical perspective on Romania came into being in Transnistria (cf. Komarnickij 2006: 69ff.). Moreover, the recent acts of war in Ukraine (cf. Parmentier 2024 for details) and their influence on the language issue in Transnistria need further study.

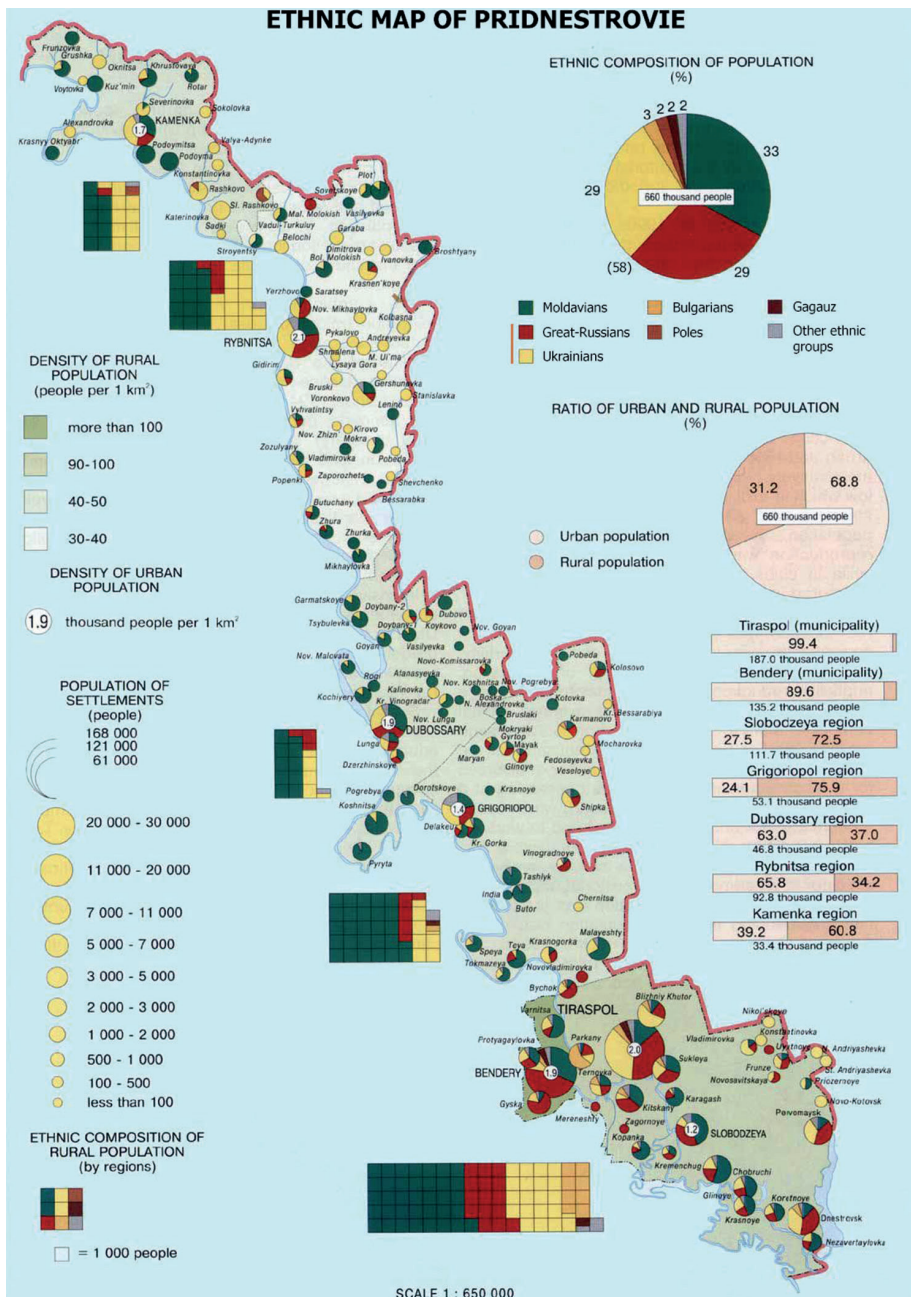
⁴ Romanian and Moldovan form a unit, from a linguistic typological point of view. The terminological distinction and the use of the Cyrillic script in Soviet Moldova and in today’s

this time, competence in Russian became the guarantor of social advancement, such that its dominance increasingly restricted the other languages of the region (Schlegel 2019: 25). Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the population of the region had grown considerably to around 700,000 inhabitants, 39% of whom defined themselves as ethnic Moldovans, 26% as Ukrainians and 23% as Russians (Cazacu & Trifon 2016: 356).

After the political upheavals of *Perestroika*, a demographic downward trend developed and continues rapidly today. A combination of emigration, low birth rates and an ageing society have resulted in fewer and fewer people living in Transnistria since then. The demographic surveys from 2004 reveal the seriousness of these changes, as only around 555,000 people were living in Transnistria at the time, of whom only around 32–33% were Moldovans, while 29–30% were Russians and 29% Ukrainians, alongside smaller minorities such as 3% Bulgarians and, respectively, 2% Gagauzians and Poles (Lomakina 2018: 34; <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/pmr-ethnic-loc2004.htm>; see also Map 2). According to the latest surveys, there are now only 465,800 inhabitants living in Transnistria, with most defining themselves as ethnic Russians (33.8%), followed by Moldovans (33.2%) and Ukrainians (26.7%; Statističeskij ežegodnik 2021: 26). It is, therefore, very clear that the number of inhabitants has fallen dramatically and that ethnic group affiliations have increasingly shifted in favor of a Russian identity.

This brings us to the linguistic situation in Transnistria, which consists of two basic components: the legal framework and the practical handling of multilingualism. As we will see, the facts on the ground differ considerably between these two components. As regards the situation's legal underpinnings, we should mention that the law "On Languages" was passed back in 1992 and stipulates Moldovan, Russian and Ukrainian as official languages with equal rights, while mandating their use in the education system and in mass media. State bodies are tasked with implementing measures to ensure the use of these languages (Lomakina 2018: 36). However, as Lomakina points out, considerable challenges hinder the effective implementation of this law (Lomakina 2018: 37). In practice, maintaining the use of one's mother tongue at school or in kindergarten proves insufficiently feasible for all languages except Russian. Additionally, there is

Transnistria are politically instrumentalized interventions. For this reason, the terms "Romanian" and "Moldovan" can be used typologically as synonyms, even though there are sociolinguistic differences that have to do with ethno-linguistic identities. A consistent designation as "Romanian", as we find in some studies, therefore does justice to the typological but not the sociolinguistic and legal situation in Transnistria. With regard to the writing system, it should also be noted that Romanian was formerly also written in the Cyrillic script but was eventually transitioned to a more suitable Latin script. In the Republic of Moldova, this change took place after independence, while, in Transnistria, the Cyrillic script and the name "Moldovan" remain in use.



Map 2. The ethnic composition in Transnistria in 2004, visualization published in 2005

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Transnistria#/media/File:Ethnic_map_of_Pridnestrovie.jpg

uncertainty involved in ascertaining which languages are spoken by the population, as can be seen from the fact that the figures in the Statistical Yearbook record ethnicity but not the linguistic preferences of the inhabitants. There are, therefore, no reliable surveys on the distribution of individual languages and their vitality.

Muth (2014: 29) points out further linguistic problems associated with the marginalization of Moldovan resp. Romanian, as the use of the Latin alphabet is not welcomed, schools catering to this ethnic group have been closed and there are no higher-educational opportunities in this language. This negative trend is also represented in the officially recorded data on language distributions in the education system in Transnistria. Surveys show, for example, that at least 98% of education at vocational colleges and universities of applied sciences has been in Russian since 2016, and the remaining gap is closing. Moldovan fell from 2% to 1.5% in the period from 2016 to 2021, representing a rapid decline. The situation is completely devastating for Ukrainian, which does not occur at all in data for the same period and in the same educational formats. A similar picture emerges when looking at university-level institutions: Since 2016, over 98% of teaching has consistently been in Russian. Moldovan is used even less frequently than in vocational colleges or universities of applied sciences and fell from an initial 1.4% to 1.2% at the end of the 2020/2021 academic year. The situation is most serious for Ukrainian in this domain too, but there are still measurable values for this period, which range between 0.4% in 2016 and 0.3% in 2021 (see diagrams 1 and 2).

Given these figures, it is very difficult to speak of “equality” between the official languages in Transnistria. This is rather an unimplemented formal concession that only nominally elevates the three largest ethnic groups in the region to the same level. The situation is even more difficult for languages such as Bulgarian, Gagauz or Polish, which are spoken in Transnistria but do not have official status and therefore enjoy very limited opportunities for use outside of in-group interactions. There is also no information on how many young people learn English in educational institutions, but many of them speak English in Transnistria.

4. METHODS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Any attempt to approach the LL and conduct a study in Transnistria must carefully consider the contextual factors mentioned above. These differ significantly from those in the Republic of Moldova’s core territory and must be made explicit, because they inform one’s research questions and influence the choice of methodology.



Diagram 1. Organization of secondary and (or) primary vocational education (Russian – Moldovan – Ukrainian)

Source: data from the Statistical Yearbook (2021: 62).



Diagram 2. Organization of higher vocational education; student population (Russian – Moldovan – Ukrainian).

Source: data from the Statistical Yearbook (2021: 62).

In this section, I will first present my methods before moving on to the results. I chose a primarily qualitative investigation, while still addressing several quantitative aspects, following the approach outlined by Durk Gorter (2018). He speaks of three major steps, which are systematized and brought together to serve as the basis for developing an empirical study on LLs. The first step is to define the geographical area of the study. In my case, I selected four places,

each with different socio-cultural and structural conditions. The first is the capital city Tiraspol (Russian and Ukrainian: *Тирасполь*, Romanian resp. Moldovan: *Tiraspol* or *Тираспол*), where the focus is on shopping strips and commercial zones (Gorter 2018: 43). The second place examined in the study is the district capital of Slobodzeya (Russian and Ukrainian: *Слободзея*, Romanian / Moldovan: *Slobozia* or *Слобозия*), which, in contrast to Tiraspol, has a much less commercial and touristic offering. It is a typical small town with the corresponding infrastructure. The third choice is the village of Chițcani (Russian: *Кицканы*, Romanian / Moldovan: *Chițcani* or *Кицкань*, Ukrainian: *Кіцкани*). Although the predominantly rural structure of the village suggests only limited use of written language in public spaces, it is home to an important monastery that is of interest to tourists and is advertised accordingly. The fourth and final location studied is the settlement of Parcani (Russian: *Парканы*, Romanian / Moldovan: *Parcani* or *Паркань*, Ukrainian and Bulgarian: *Паркани*), which has a Bulgarian majority population. All four places have unique ethnic and linguistic structures whose impact on the LL is to be investigated.

The second step that Gorter mentions consists in the selection of particular signs and their content for analysis (Gorter 2018: 46). In this study, I focus on positionally static signs that predominantly feature a Russian component but also include other languages. The study objects are organized according to their occurrence within specific domains and are linked to the local ethno-linguistic context, which, in some cases, involves English as an international *lingua franca*.

After geographical and domain-specific categorization of the study objects has been carried out, the third phase involves photographing the selected objects, whose analysis will enable the formulation of hypotheses about the role of different languages in society. One point that Gorter makes seems particularly important, namely that the linguistic researcher should also be the photographer (Gorter 2018: 47). This enables the person who takes the pictures to develop a comprehensive interpretation of language and multimedia in a concrete environment. This guideline was followed while conducting the present study in the period from 2022 to 2024, and empirical data was collected as follows.⁵

⁵ The total corpus compiled in Transnistria to evaluate the LL during this period comprises over 300 records. However, only those records that are relevant to the question at hand are counted and analyzed here. Since different areas in Tiraspol were already evaluated in the analysis by Muth (2014), I only deal with selected aspects concerning that place in my study. This choice explains why the total number of records collected is higher than those examined here. More photographs were also taken than were analyzed for the other locations, which means that the total corpus of material encompasses more material than accounted for in the domains presented here. In addition, data was also collected in places in Transnistria that are not evaluated in this paper.

Table 1. The empirical evidence collected (overall and relevant to the present study).

Place	All Signs	Relevant Signs
Tiraspol	146	52
Slobodzeya	26	16
Chițcani	20	15
Parcani	52	13
	n = 244	n = 86

Source: own study.

The central research questions of this study focus on identifying which languages besides Russian are used in writing in the public sphere, which domains they occur in and how Transnistria can be explored as a “visual text”. Here, I draw on the work of semiotician Tigran Simyan (2022) and consider not only matters of multilingualism but also the interaction of multimodality.⁶ This approach is motivated by the problem of Transnistria’s official trilingualism, which also needs to be explored. Although Ukrainian and Moldovan are granted official status alongside Russian, this ideal is hardly to be found represented in practical application. In addition, there are other language communities, such as the Bulgarians in Parcani, whose language has no official status but is taught in the local school and cultivated at the community’s cultural center. It is, therefore, necessary to examine where and under what conditions languages other than Russian occupy a place in the public space. Finally, this raises the question of which didactic measures are being implemented in the region’s LL and what measurable relationship exists between languages of instruction and patterns of public language use in written form.

Before we turn to the evidence gathered, it is important to recall the following contextual factors: Transnistria is unusual in its status as a *de jure* unrecognized territory that functions *de facto* as a separate state. Although the area can be reached from Chișinău by bus and entered without a visa, there are no flight connections, and hardly any countries maintain serious diplomatic relations with Tiraspol. The absence of consular or diplomatic support mechanisms leaves little means to contest decisions made by individual authorities and can bear risks for researchers collecting photographic material, as is a standard component of LL studies (Gorter 2018: 47). In Transnistria, caution is required not only when

⁶ This aspect can also be analyzed from a didactic (cf. Lisek & Putzier 2024), contrastive synchronous (cf. Henzelmann & Hacı 2025), and diachronic perspective (cf. Odaloš 2021; Simyan & Makaryan 2023). In this study, I focus on contemporary synchronic findings, although some of them allow conclusions to be drawn about diachronic developments.

photographing state facilities but even for objects of tourist interest. In both cases, it is easy to arouse the suspicion of the authorities by conspicuously taking photographs. At the same time, observing due caution can place considerable restrictions upon the researcher, especially outside the capital of Tiraspol, where relatively few foreigners travel. The data on the wider LL is correspondingly sparse, as there have been only sporadic studies carried out on its structure in most areas. The paper by Sebastian Muth is an exception, but he focused his analyses on Tiraspol and the administrative and commercial infrastructure there (Muth 2014), leaving out other less accessible regions. However, this author also pointed out that pressure from state institutions makes empirical research on languages in the region considerably more difficult than in other contexts, even if direct contact with the population is not necessarily required for a study on LLs (Muth 2014: 29). The limited accessibility and political isolation of the region, compounded by the latent situation in neighboring Ukraine, the absence of local consular support and the mistrust of foreigners by the local authorities, therefore, collectively explain the sparsity of research on the Transnistrian LL and influence how researchers must approach such a study.⁷

5. FINDINGS

Let us now take a look at the specific findings from our four selected locations, starting with Tiraspol – the capital of Transnistria, with a population of 128,400 (Statističeskij ežegodnik 2021: 28). This city was chosen as the first location for the study because it is the most accessible, thanks to its infrastructure, and because a high quantity of public signage can be expected, due to its central importance. For the present study, a total of 52 relevant pieces of textual evidence were collected on and in the immediate vicinity of “October 25th Street” (in Russian *улица 25 октября*). The evidence focuses on restaurants, shops and service-based businesses. As this is the city’s central avenue, where the main sights of the capital are located, the greatest variety of offerings is to be observed there.

⁷ From my own experience, I can report that photography in Transnistria must be practiced with considerable caution. Even taking pictures of seemingly innocuous objects such as churches, museums or monuments can arouse the suspicion of the omnipresent authorities, security services or guards. In my case, this led to an interview and inspection of the photographic material. However, as long as one avoids photographing military objects and can credibly prove a genuine interest in Transnistria, there are unlikely to be serious consequences. At the same time, these conditions make the territory less attractive for empirical studies on LLs.

Here, the commercial use of different languages is in focus. There is no question that advertisements and signs on shops and restaurants all aim to attract customers and must therefore communicate short, appealing messages. I would like to classify these texts as external marketing, as they are directed toward an outside audience, while their actual informational content is less significant than the marketing strategy employed. At the same time, however, we also find service-oriented content such as opening hours, price lists or consumer information, which I would like to refer to as internal marketing. This distinction becomes important when taking a closer look at the findings in Figures 1 to 3: The external marketing takes the form of geographical names like “Stockholm”, “Toscana” or “Korea”, accompanied by additions such as



Figure 1. An electronics shop in the center of Tiraspol.

Source: own picture.



Figure 2. An Italian-style restaurant

Source: own picture.

“restaurant” or “glow / beauty for you”. These textual elements are rendered in Latin script and thus signify Western culture while activating stereotypes associated with the corresponding toponyms, such as tasty food or superior processing of goods and services.

The observer is invited in this way to understand that international and, therefore, high-quality products are being offered, while the informationally relevant additions, which fall under internal marketing, are consistently displayed in Russian. An exception to this exists in advertising signs written exclusively in English, of which only one sample could be found on the street under investigation. The sign advertises outdated cardboard coins, which have been replaced in circulation by metal ones, and are now marketed by a bank as souvenirs for foreign tourists. Accordingly, this advertisement (cf. Figure 4) is not predominantly aimed at a domestic audience and does not require a supplementary Russian text.

Thus, information relevant for a local audience generally occurs in Russian, most saliently as additions to foreign text elements. For example, the restaurant “Toscana” offers not only Italian but also (unspecified) European dishes, as is communicated by the corresponding addition in Russian (*Европейская кухня*; cf. Figure 2). The “Stockholm” shop offers not Swedish but American products, which is also indicated in Russian (*Товары из*



Figure 3. A beauty salon in Tiraspol

Source: own picture.



Figure 4. An advertisement on a bank for cardboard coins (no longer in circulation).

Source: own picture.

Америки; cf. Figure 1). And the working days and opening hours of the beauty salon in Figure 3 are also provided only in Russian with the abbreviations *ПН–СБ* (‘Monday to Saturday’) and *ВС* (‘Sunday’). In other words, the foreign-language terms (mostly in English or, rarely, French) fulfill a symbolic function, while informative text or information relevant for orientation is provided in Russian (Muth 2014: 33; Müller 2021). Ukrainian or Romanian resp. Moldovan inscriptions are completely absent from signage providing detailed product information to customers. The following results emerge from the data collected:

Table 2. Data collection in Tiraspol

Tiraspol	Signs
N	52
Russian	30
Russian + English	7
Russian + Toponym in Latin script	8
English	3
Russian + other	3

Source: own study.

These numbers clearly indicate that Russian dominates the commercial sector of Tiraspol’s LL. While Muth (2014: 33) estimates that around three quarters of all inscriptions are in Russian only, we can demonstrate that other languages are also visible in the commercial use of language in public spaces. English phrases, in particular, play a role here, but also various foreign toponyms rendered in Latin script, while Ukrainian and Moldovan resp. Romanian are almost never used for advertising purposes. One rare exception is given in Figure 5, where a translation agency in the city center advertises its services in Russian and Romanian. A double-sided display stand contains two posters with complementary symmetrical designs: On the one side, the Romanian phrase *Birou de traduceri* (‘translation agency’) is featured centrally above the Russian addition *переводы* (‘translations’). On the reverse side, the Russian text *Бюро переводов* (‘translation agency’) is accompanied by the Romanian addition *traduceri* (‘translations’). Both posters also indicate that all European languages are offered, but only in Romanian on the one side (left in Figure 5) and Russian on the other (right in Figure 5).

Interestingly, the Latin-based Romanian, and not the Cyrillic based Moldovan, script was used here, indicating that this office translates, among other things, documents originating from or intended for purposes in the Republic of



Figure 5. A translation agency advertises its services (in Romanian and Russian)

Source: own picture.

Moldova, where Romanian or Moldovan is standardly written in Latin script. Regardless of this exceptional case, we conclude that Moldovan resp. Romanian and Ukrainian occur almost exclusively on state institutions, in street names and on some place-name signs (in some cases displayed smaller than the Russian equivalent). Only non-local languages, such as French, Italian, Abkhazian or Ossetian, occur even less frequently overall (see also Muth 2014).

The situation is significantly different in the study's second location, Slobodzeya, which is the capital of the district of the same name and has around 16,000 inhabitants. According to the 2004 census data, 46% of the population are Moldovans, followed by 41% Russians and 11% Ukrainians. Although this town is hardly home to extraordinary sights that might attract foreign tourists, it is a strategically important place within the administrative structure of Transnistria. In the center of the city, I took 16 photographs in publicly accessible places, documenting the use of language on monuments, prominent signage and street signs. The photographs were taken along a 500-meter section of Frunze Street, between Lenin Street and Komsomolskaya Street. This is where the central monuments, administrative buildings and a small pedestrian zone are located, but only a few shops. While foreign-language inscriptions

are to be expected in a large city like Tiraspol, in this small town, I specifically looked for inscriptions that reflect the local reality away from administrative structures,⁸ above all, on signposts, churches or chapels, monuments and museums. Overall, the following relevant evidence was collected in this part of the town:

Table 3. Data collection in Slobodzeya

Slobodzeya	Signs
N	16
Russian	14
Russian + English	2

Source: own study.

In contrast to Tiraspol, the limited use of Latin script is very noticeable in Slobodzeya. While foreign-language inscriptions can be observed close together in Tiraspol, especially in the city center, a comparable linguistic infrastructure cannot be attested in Slobodzeya. Even for the two official languages Ukrainian and Moldovan, only very sporadic material can be found. Instead, at first glance, Russian dominates even more obviously here than in the capital. This is not surprising in relation to Western languages, as foreign tourists rarely visit this place. However, exceptions to Russian’s otherwise near exclusive predominance nevertheless occur on signposts indicating unique sights throughout Transnistria. These standardized signs are always colored brown with white text and provide relevant information in Russian and English, as shown in Figure 6. The upper sign, for example, points the way to Wool House “Mioara” in both these languages. And, even though the name comes from Romanian resp. Moldovan,⁹ which has official status in the region, this language is conspicuously absent from the sign, a general rule that also holds true for the lower sign.

Nevertheless, we cannot simply generalize and say that Transnistria is a territory characterized by uniformity of the LL as one moves away from Tiraspol. On the contrary, the LL is diverse and varied, though this diversity is not immediately obvious or widespread. The truth of the matter is neverthe-

⁸ This is an important point, as all administrative buildings in Transnistria have trilingual signs in Moldovan, Russian and Ukrainian. This practice can be interpreted as policy signaling, a form of strategic self-representation, making it all the more worthwhile to look at linguistic infrastructure beyond these administrative units.

⁹ *Mioara* is also the name of a sheep in a famous Romanian poem.



Figure 6. Signposts for places of tourist interest in Slobodzeya

Source: own picture.

less revealed by a look at the village of Chițcani, located about 12 km south of Tiraspol on the opposite side of the Dniester River. The following data were collected there:

Table 4. Data collection in Chițcani

Chițcani	Signs
N	15
Russian	7
Russian + English	2
Russian + Romanian	6

Source: own study.

Chițcani is home to the Noul Neamț Monastery, which was reopened 25 years ago, after being closed during the Soviet era, and is visited by pilgrims and tourists. The monastery was founded by Romanian monks in the 19th century, a fact that likely serves as one of the reasons we can find Romanian inscriptions in addition to Russian throughout the monastery grounds –



Figure 7. Signage of the shop at the church

Source: own picture.

often positioned next to each other. It is interesting to note that Romanian is written exclusively in Latin script here (cf. Figures 7 and 8). This observation is significant in two respects: Firstly, Moldovan in Transnistria is always written in Cyrillic script, so one can speculate that material support for the restoration of the monastery may have come from an external partner in Moldova or even Romania. Secondly, the presence of the Latin script is all the more striking because Cyrillic is strongly associated with the Orthodox Church and contrasts symbolically with the Latin script of the Western Church. One might, therefore, have expected Moldovan inscriptions in Cyrillic characters here, but no such signage was found on the premises.

In addition, there are several bilingual (Russian–English) information boards, as shown in Figure 9, that serve to inform visitors about



Figure 8. Bilingual (Romanian–Russian) sign above the entrance to a burial chamber

Source: own picture.



Figure 9. Bilingual (Russian-English) plaque about the history of Chițcani's Monastery

Source: own picture.

the history and distinctive features of the area. Tourist information boards in this style and language combination exist at places of interest throughout Transnistria.

The final example to be considered in this study is the LL in Parcani, a village situated between Transnistria's second largest city, Bender (Russian: *Бендеры*, Romanian resp. Moldovan: *Bender* or *Tighina* resp. *Бендер* or *Тигина*, Ukrainian and Bulgarian: *Бендери*), and the capital Tiraspol. This settlement is located directly on the Dniester and is distinct in that the majority of its over 10,500 inhabitants are ethnic Bulgarians.¹⁰ While Bulgarian is not an official language in Transnistria, it is nevertheless cultivated in local institutions. These include, in particular, the village's cultural center and the school, where at least a few hours of Bulgarian language instruction are offered. In this location, the following relevant empirical evidence was compiled for the evaluation of the LL:

¹⁰ Interestingly, Parcani is, therefore, also the largest Bulgarian "village" of all, owing to its being located outside of Bulgaria. There, a population of its size would entail classification as a "town" or even "city".

Table 5. Data collection in Parcani

Parcani	Signs
N	13
Russian	11
Russian + Bulgarian	1
Bulgarian	1

Source: own study.

Figure 10 shows a banner above the main entrance to the school expressing a welcoming greeting in Russian on the left and in Bulgarian on the right (Russian: *Добро пожаловать!*, Bulgarian: *Добре дошли!*). There are a few memorial and informational displays in the school building itself, but most of them are in Russian. Among them is a memorial plaque commemorating Stoyan Atanasov, a teacher originally from Bulgaria who played a key role in cultivating the Bulgarian language in the local education system.¹¹ Beyond this, the Bulgarian heritage of the population is commemorated by a monument to the well-known and much revered Bulgarian revolutionary Vasil Levski, which is located in front of the House of Culture, and the numerous Bulgarian surnames inscribed on a memorial honoring fallen soldiers in the village's central square. The Levski monument (shown in Figure 11) is particularly noteworthy because the name is spelled in Bulgarian (as *Васил Левски*) and not adapted to Russian orthography (as *Васил*

**Figure 10.** Welcome banners at the school in Parcani

Source: own picture.

¹¹ There is also the Bulgarian association *Българска община* ('Bulgarian Community'), which maintains a multi-purpose room in the cultural center, as well as a museum attached to the town hall that documents the history of Bulgarian settlement in the area. The local Bulgarian dialect has been little studied to date, but it exhibits numerous borrowings and structural similarities with Russian (on the latter topic, cf. Iliev & Koroloff 2021 and others).

or *Василий Левский*). This choice bears particular symbolic significance when contrasted with the common practice in Parcani of adapting the first and last names of its inhabitants to Russian spelling norms. For example, a common surname in the village is *Zhelezkov* (*Железков*), which derives from the Bulgarian *Zhelyazkov* (*Желязков*) and has been modified in compliance with Russian morphophonology. Not all names are subject to adaptation, such as the very characteristic Bulgarian surname *Stoyanov* (*Стоянов*), which can be found several times on the memorial to the fallen soldiers. Other typical Bulgarian surnames found engraved on this plaque are *Stanov* (*Станов*) and *Stoev* (*Стоев*; see Figure 12). Apart



Figure 11. Vasil Levski monument in Parcani

Source: own picture.

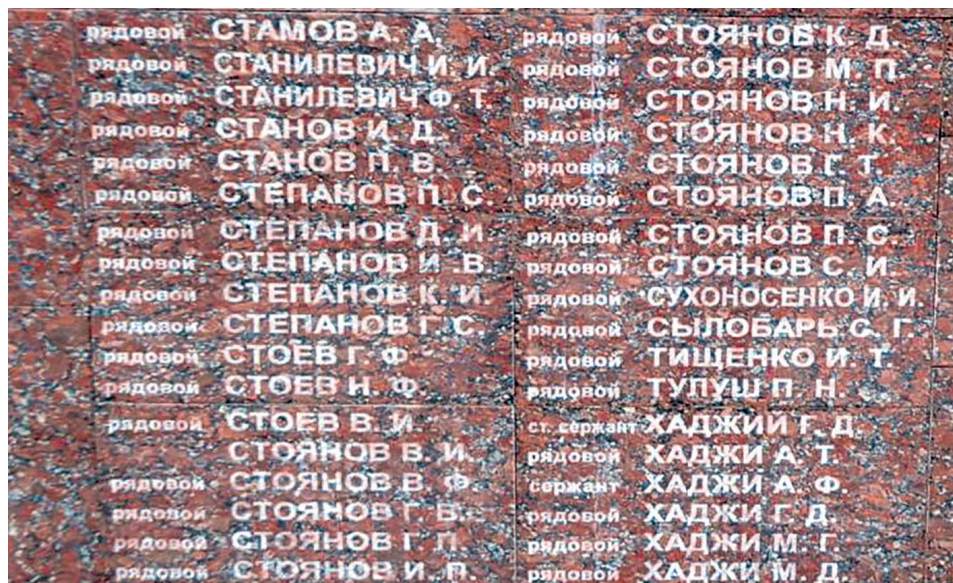


Figure 12. A memorial plaque with numerous Bulgarian names in Parcani

Source: own picture.

from these names and short phrases like the one on the school building, Bulgarian is used in Parcani almost exclusively in oral communication, such that it has hardly any recognizable impact on the LL of the village.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, I have highlighted several distinctive features of the LLs in Transnistria. I began by addressing the geographical, historical and demographic specificities of this area and explained why the language situation there is very complex. I then presented data from my own corpus compiled from four different locations, which revealed significant differences in the LLs of the region. I observed that the LLs do not align with the official language policy of Transnistria but rather reflect the languages predominant in both the education system and international communication, these being Russian as the main language and English as the most important global foreign language. Our findings thus clearly show that the overall LL in Transnistria is not tailored to an officially trilingual area or a migration-related linguistic superdiversity (in the sense of Földes 2020, for example) but to the actual competences in the written use of languages cemented by the education system.

The findings on the LLs in Tiraspol, Slobodzeya, Chițcani and Parcani reveal notable local differences. They nevertheless all demonstrate that Russian is the language most widely used across Transnistria and thus lives up to the paradigm of what Piotr Oleksy (2016: 242) calls the “bastion of Russian civilization”, which is surrounded by other cultures and languages. In practice, this circumstance poses no threat to the vitality of Russian but rather to all other languages, as indicated by both the figures on language choice in the education system (cf. diagram 1 and 2) and our findings concerning the LLs.

But the findings also reveal other aspects. For instance, they shed light on how much the LL in the city of Tiraspol differs from smaller and less frequently visited places. This distinction is highly significant, because inscriptions in Western foreign languages are far more common in the capital than in smaller towns or villages. In Tiraspol’s commercial sector, a wide variety of English inscriptions or other textual elements in Latin script are visible, in contrast to places where English is mostly limited to tourist information boards or signposts for locations of interest.

Furthermore, we can decisively state that the official trilingualism of Transnistria is far from being sufficiently implemented in the region’s LLs. While the policy is consistently reflected in the signage of administrative or state institutions, as well as on a few street-name signs and prominent message boards such

as those marking the entrance to Tiraspol, it is *de facto* non-existent in the private sector, public transport, tourist infrastructure and education. The policy's implementation can therefore be regarded as a merely symbolic gesture acknowledging the multi-ethnic nature of the society (Muth 2014: 43). But, where even official languages are not adequately included in the public sphere, this lack of inclusion applies all the more to languages without official status, such as Bulgarian. The integration of this language into the public space is attested only very sporadically and is largely limited to proper names, although Bulgarian is used more comprehensively in semi-public spaces such as the school of Parcani or in the village museum.

Furthermore, I argue that there is a striking difference in the practical use of Moldovan and Romanian (resp. the Cyrillic or Latin script) for inscriptions in Transnistria: The use of Cyrillic signifies the local Moldovan language, which, however, largely fulfills symbolic functions. This practice holds true for signage at educational institutions such as schools, kindergartens or the university, even where Moldovan is hardly used in the corresponding institutions, if at all. In contrast, the use of the Latin script to render Romanian is associated with practical and informative functions for addressees, as when guiding visitors around the monastery complex in Chițcani or offering translation services in Tiraspol (cf. Figure 5).

Another component that makes these observations quite interesting from a language didactic perspective is their relationship to multilingual language pedagogy. We can recognize a strong correlation reflected in the public relevance of languages in Transnistria, with Russian as the most important language of everyday life, other languages used only locally and mainly in private communication and English as an international *lingua franca*. Presently, English is also spreading among young people in Transnistria, especially in urban areas – a trend linked to a clear increase in student internationalization from around 2010 onwards, in accordance with socio-cultural and linguistic parameters (Tavares 2025: 156). In the medium term, this means that English will become an unavoidable tool of communication for younger generations in Transnistria. This development also aligns with the potential for enhancing Transnistria's tourism infrastructure going forward, which will require adequate English-language resources. We have seen that such measures are already being implemented in some cases, for example on information boards such as those in Figure 6, which are provided in Russian and English.

A further aspect relevant to language didactics is that the official languages Moldovan and Ukrainian are scarcely in use as mediums of education and can therefore only have a very limited scope of application in the LL – especially when it comes to regulations, traffic information or product advertising. Cor-

respondingly, those languages that are learned best through their dominance in the classroom are also embedded in the public space and appear most visibly in the LL. Russian is far and away the primary language in both instances, while English acquires increasing local relevance as a global foreign language, even though we have no reliable data on English proficiency. At the same time, it is suggested to the younger generation that learning Moldovan (and thus ultimately Romanian) or Ukrainian is of little relevance, which, in the long term, will bring this generation into even greater alignment with the Russian language, while, at the same time, alienating it from the Moldovan-Romanian language area. From a linguistic perspective, Chişinău and Tiraspol are moving further and further apart, and this is immediately apparent in the LLs of Transnistria.

Finally, it is evident that Ukrainian is only sporadically represented in the places under investigation and is primarily visible on the official trilingual signage of administrative or state institutions but not in the commercial or tourist sectors. It cannot be ruled out that the strong presence of Russian military units in Transnistria and the war in Ukraine today are having at least an indirect effect on the use of this language, but that question is deserving of a separate investigation that explores places beyond the scope of this study. What is clear, however, is that Ukrainian remains understudied in Transnistria (Muth 2014: 29) and underrepresented in its LLs in relation to the high proportion of Ukrainians in the region.

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Badając krajobrazy językowe Naddniestrza

ABSTRAKT. W niniejszym opracowaniu bada się kilka szczególnych cech krajobrazów językowych Naddniestrza. Region ten położony jest pomiędzy Ukrainą a Republiką Mołdawii, do której należy *de iure*. Jednakże funkcjonuje on *de facto* jako nieuznawane na arenie międzynarodowej, choć funkcjonalnie niezależne państwo mające własną walutę, armię i parlament. Zgodnie z obecną sytuacją prawną w Naddniestrzu istnieją trzy języki urzędowe: rosyjski, mołdawski i ukraiński. W praktyce jednak na całym terytorium używa się prawie wyłącznie języka rosyjskiego. Autor twierdzi, że krajobrazy językowe Naddniestrza nie są zorientowane na wytyczne polityki językowej, ale faworyzują języki, które odgrywają kluczową rolę w systemie edukacji i komunikacji międzynarodowej, a mianowicie rosyjski jako najczęściej używany język oraz angielski jako ważny globalny język obcy.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: krajobrazy językowe, Naddniestrze, j. rosyjski, j. angielski, język w przestrzeni publicznej.

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The linguistic landscape of Lublin in a diachronic aspect based on selected examples

ABSTRACT. Lublin is a city with medieval traditions, located on the route connecting roads from the east (Kyiv), north (Vilnius, Warsaw), and west (Krakow). The city has been developing since its foundation, with its golden age falling during the Renaissance. At certain periods in history, representatives of various nationalities, cultures, and religions came to Lublin and settled there, thus creating a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Numerous sacred and secular buildings with inscriptions in various languages are a remarkable reminder of the city's rich linguistic landscape. The article presents the characteristics of the visual linguistic element of these buildings in the historic districts of Lublin. The research material consisted of preserved inscriptions on frescoes, church and chapel walls, tombstones, and historic signs to determine the presence of languages in the graphic design of these inscriptions. The authors carried out an inventory and photographic recording of these inscriptions and described examples of the most interesting places to visit. These monuments are fragments of the historical and cultural landscape of Lublin, and are a rich source of information about the city. This text also draws attention to the need to protect these monuments, and the possibility of highlighting them against the backdrop of multilingual Lublin, a city that remains so to this day.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscape, inscriptions, multiculturalism, multilingualism, history, Lublin.

1. INTRODUCTION

Lublin is a city located in southeastern Poland on the Bystrzyca River in a temperate climate zone (Bartoszek et al. 2017; Sachindra et al. 2023). Lublin is located within the Lublin Upland, in a historical location on the routes leading east to the Black Sea and north to Vilnius. Lublin is the capital of the Lublin Voivodeship, the main city of the Lublin Region, and the largest city in eastern Poland. Lublin is located approximately 170 km from Warsaw, 100 km from Sandomierz, 250 km from Kraków, 170 km from Brest (Belarus), 70 km from

Chełm, 119 km from Luboml (Ukraine), and 216 km from Lviv (Ukraine). Lublin is a city founded probably in 1257 by Bolesław the Chaste (Rozwałka et al. 2006) and since then it has been developing, becoming an area of mixing eastern and western cultures. This influenced the character of the city's settlement and the population. Lublin's location at the crossroads of Eastern and Western Europe, and the functions it has fulfilled for centuries in Poland's socio-economic history, have made it a unique city of encounter, interpenetration, and dialogue between different cultures. The rich cultural heritage, embedded in Lublin's linguistic historical landscape, is manifested in the form of written texts, which can be found, among other things, on the walls of historic buildings and in the city center. Within the city's historical development, there are monuments unique in Poland.

The oldest traces of medieval settlement in the Lublin region date back to the 6th century C.E. (Rozwałka 1997). This is evidenced by archaeological excavations in the city and in the Dąbrowa Forest by an early medieval burial mound burial ground from the 8th to 10th centuries (Kotowicz 2005). In the 11th century, there were buildings on Staromiejskie Hill (Rozwałka 2017), and a stronghold surrounded by an earthen rampart existed near the castle hill. Structures for various purposes have also been found on Grodzisko Hill and, to a lesser extent, on other hills. Markets were likely held on Czwartek Hill in the pre-incorporation years, and a church was also built in later centuries. Further development occurred during the establishment of the Duchy of Kraków-Sandomierz (Rozwałka et al. 2006). This is evidenced by finds of Czech, Bavarian, Swabian, and Hungarian coins from the 11th century. The 12th century saw significant growth in the city, which likely received city rights in 1257 (the charter has not survived, and the city was chartered a second time in 1317 by King Władysław the Elbow-high) (Kociuba 2007). The city was located on a hill west of the fortifications that were built on the site of today's Lublin Castle (the seat of the castellan) (Rozwałka 2015). After the city's charter, King Casimir the Great contributed to the construction of the city walls around Lublin (Gawarecki 1954). A significant impetus for the city's further development was the Treaty of Krewo, signed in 1385 (a prenuptial agreement between the rulers of Lithuania and Poland) (Szczepański 2022). Lublin then found itself within a region of various economic zones, which contributed to increased trade, population movement, and settlement. King Władysław Jagiełło decorated the Castle Chapel and the Church of Our Lady of Victory with frescoes (Brykowska 1997; Flaga 2022). Lublin was visited by passing Polish kings, and parliamentary sessions were also convened here, including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was concluded here in 1569, establishing the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a landmark that could attest to the city's importance and location at the time (Stone 2001). During this time, many historic buildings were built in the city, which have

survived to this day (Strelnikowa 1971). In 1582, the Jesuit College was founded in Lublin (it survived until 1773) (Kupisz 2005). In the 16th century, impressive Renaissance townhouses were built in Lublin. From the mid-15th century to the end of the 16th century, four fairs were held in Lublin, attended by Ruthenian, Armenian, and Greek merchants from the east, and German, French, Dutch, and even English merchants from the west (Kraczoń 2014). The marketplace included, among others, the Market Square (with goods stored underground), the area around the Cracow Gate, and the area of Rybny Square. The Lublin Museum houses memorabilia related to the extensive trade relations of the population in ancient times. Examples include coins from various periods (including Czech, Hungarian, and many others) found in the city and surrounding areas (Huber & Markiewicz 2020; Markiewicz 2017), the richly painted 17th-century vaults in the tenement house "Pod Fortuną" (Under Fortune), and tenement houses belonging to wealthy families (Hartwig 1983). In the 17th century, as a result of wars, the tradition of fairs began to fade. The city's unique location led to its population of Ruthenians, Jews, Germans, Turks, Armenians, as well as French, Scots, Greeks, Dutch, and English (Pietrzyk 2016; Szulich-Kałuża 2019). They formed the city's multicultural and religious mosaic. Italians also worked in the city, contributing to the architectural modernization of Renaissance and Baroque buildings (Kłosowski 2021).

It is worth mentioning that in the 16th and 17th centuries, the city was a center of the Reformation, and in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Ruthenian presence was particularly noticeable (an Orthodox church existed from the 14th century). Jews also lived in the city, their percentage already noticeable in the 15th century. From 1580, the Jewish "Council of Four Lands" officially held its seat in Lublin, and there was also a printing house and a Talmudic academy. In the 18th century, the city's development slowed, and as a result of the partitions of Poland, Lublin found itself under Austrian rule until 1809, and then became part of the Kingdom of Poland (in the Russian partition) (Cieślak et al. 1976). Significant changes occurred in Lublin in the second half of the 19th century. In 1877, the city was connected by the Vistula railway, a number of factories were built, and trade flourished (Mroczek 2014; Puś 2010). This development was interrupted by the January Uprising of 1863 and the turbulent period of World War I. After the end of World War I in November, Lublin was the country's capital for several days, and Ignacy Daszyński's Provisional People's Government of the Republic of Poland was established there (Stępień 2020). The city's multiculturalism is evidenced by its churches, Orthodox churches, and cemeteries (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Jewish) with tombstones indicating the origins of its residents. Other examples include the factory buildings, founded by manufacturers of various nationalities. During the interwar period, a Talmudic academy and the

Catholic University of Lublin were established. These activities, in turn, were interrupted by World War II. During the war, the Germans exterminated the Jewish population, a symbolic act of which was the blowing up of the synagogue located directly next to Lublin Castle and the destruction of the Jewish quarter. Many Jewish buildings were destroyed, but the Talmudic academy building with its restored synagogue (which was used as a hospital during the war) survived. In 1941, construction began on the Majdanek concentration camp, and a ghetto operated in Lublin. After the war, government structures operated in Lublin for a short time (the Polish Committee of National Liberation) (Chmielewska 2003; Reynolds 1978), and the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University was established. After the war, the city began to be rebuilt, with factories and housing developments being built. Despite the challenges of political transformation in the 21st century following Poland's accession to the EU, the city continues to thrive to this day. Below, selected examples of historical monuments that make up the city's linguistic landscape are discussed, testifying to its centuries-long cultural heritage.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The most important monuments related to the city's linguistic landscape from a diachronic perspective are sacred and secular objects, containing various inscriptions in numerous languages. This study focuses on selected locations where original inscriptions have been preserved. This study used systematic sampling of inscriptions in the historic center of Lublin, where the authors conducted an inventory of inscriptions on frescoes, church and chapel walls, gravestones in cemeteries, and historical signs. The photographs were then placed in a corpus where each photograph has information about the time, place (using the GPS) of the photograph taken, as well as the language of the inscription, its type, and material. During fieldwork, special attention was paid to the condition of the inscriptions, especially in the context of determining how complete each object had survived to the present day. The degree of conservation work and protection of the objects against further deterioration was also assessed. This research was conducted in 2025. Complementary research was conducted in archives and libraries, as well as a series of interviews with specialists: museum professionals, guides, historians, and members of the Jewish and Orthodox communities. The research is primarily qualitative, not quantitative. This work aims to discuss selected examples of the written word, demonstrating the multilingual nature of the city, which have been recorded in the form of inscriptions on walls, plaques, and slabs, and are located in the historical districts of Lublin.

3. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

The term linguistic landscape is used in sociolinguistics to describe language contact and multilingualism in various regions. This is a relatively new field of sociolinguistic research, with its established approaches and methods for collecting and analyzing empirical material. A detailed review of research in the field of linguistic landscape can be found in P. Backhaus (2007). He argues that the concept of "landscape" and its variants (mediascape, financescape) began appearing in the scientific literature in the late 20th century. The concept of linguistic landscape was introduced by Canadian researchers R. Landry and R. Borhis, who define it as "The language of public road signs, billboards, street names, place names, commercial store signs, and public signs on government buildings constitute the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25). The definition indicates that the subject of linguistic landscape research is written language in public space. The public nature of the signs that constitute the linguistic landscape is also emphasized by other researchers (Ben-Rafael 2006; Cenoz 2006). When studying the linguistic landscape, scholars focus on the representation of different languages in the public spaces of multilingual cities or regions of the world, the interactions of languages, the dominance of one or another language, the position of minority languages in multilingual societies, determining the factors determining the choice and order of languages, and the use of written signs in official (top-down) and unofficial (bottom-up) inscriptions. The linguistic landscape is becoming a subject of increasing interest among linguists and sociologists worldwide. This increased interest among researchers is also related to active migration processes and globalization, which significantly influence the formation and changes of the linguistic landscape. This is evidenced by the significant number of studies devoted to the linguistic landscape of individual cities, regions, and even public organizations (Coluzzi 2016; Dargiewicz 2025; Edelman 2014; Huebner 2006; Itagi & Singh 2002; Jaworski 2010; Kasanga 2012; Lai 2013; Łodziński 2019; Opiłowski & Makowska 2023; Pelka 2024; Reh 2004; Tufi 2015). New directions and methods of linguistic landscape research are being developed, particularly in the fields of cultural linguistics (Saduov 2020), axiology (Miller 2024), psycholinguistics (Peshkova 2016), linguistic ecology (Golikova 2020), and other aspects. Despite this, diachronic research in the field of linguistic landscape is still scarce (Spolsky & Cooper 1991, Wenzel 1996). Lublin has a rich cultural heritage, with monuments from various periods and across the city's history. Previous works have presented the tourist attractions and natural resources of the city and surrounding area, or explored specific issues (Bernat 2014; Brzezińska-Wójcik & Świeca 2011; Dubrowska 2010; Gawrysiakowa 1987; Szczęśna & Gawrysiak 2009; Żywicki

2018). This fact determines the relevance of this study, which examines the linguistic landscape of Lublin from a diachronic perspective. The city's linguistic landscape is also reflected in its street names. Goral (2023), Buczyński (1966, 1997), Kopciowski (2016), Mucha (2017), and Romańczuk (2019) have conducted detailed analyses of Lublin's urban names from a linguistic perspective. This article adopts the definition of linguistic landscape given by Aneta Pavlenko, professor at the Centre for Multilingualism Research at the University of Oslo:

It is the sum of all signs and texts that constitute the linguistic face of contemporary cities, including official inscriptions (e.g. street name signs, road signs, information boards, commemorative plaques), commercial inscriptions (signboards, posters, billboards) and unofficial inscriptions (announcements, graffiti, posters) (Pavlenko 2017: 496).

4. LUBLIN'S LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Latin was already used in Lublin in the Middle Ages. It was used both in official documents and in various inscriptions in Lublin's Roman Catholic churches (Bondyra 2021). Such examples are relatively common in Lublin, due to the legacy of Western European culture. Inscriptions in Polish are also found in various historical buildings in the city, both commemorating significant events (e.g., the foundation of the Dominican Church by King John Casimir) and in inscriptions on epitaphs located in churches and in the historic part of the cemetery. Various inscriptions on epitaphs also demonstrate examples of the Old Polish language, along with the spelling that was immortalized there. Another interesting example is some of the facades of historic tenement houses in the Market Square area, restored after World War II, which feature fragments of images of famous figures and inscriptions in Polish. In Lublin, tombstone inscriptions and inscriptions related to the Evangelical community are in German. Inscriptions that may have originated during the world wars were painted over and renamed after the end of those conflicts (they are partially preserved within the Concentration Camp at the Majdanek Museum). Lublin once had a significant Jewish community (Bałaban 1991; Dymmel 2024; Kuwałek 2001), which left behind inscriptions in Yiddish. Unfortunately, these inscriptions were erased in the 20th century as a result of warfare. A relatively large area is occupied by Jewish cemeteries and sites of Jewish martyrdom from World War II, where inscriptions in Yiddish are prominent. Important landmarks on the city map include the former Talmudic school building, which now houses a hotel and museum, and the synagogue on Lubartowska Street. In the city center, there is the NN theater, where a permanent exhibition devoted to Jews in Lublin has been opened. A unique element

of this exhibition is an inscription removed from the walls of a tenement house at 4 Cyrulicza Street (an advertisement for a spice shop). Inscriptions in Church Slavonic can be found in numerous religious buildings in Lublin (including the Church of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, the Orthodox church at the cemetery, and the Castle Chapel). Inscriptions in Russian are less common (an advertisement for a milk shop from the 19th century, and gravestone inscriptions at the cemetery). Despite the century-long period of tsarist rule in Lublin, few traces of written Russian remain. Historic inscriptions in other languages are found in Lublin only in isolated cases (e.g., a gravestone with an inscription in Czech located in the Protestant section of the cemetery on Lipowa Street).

5. SELECTED OBJECTS OF THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Lublin, with its long tradition of multiculturalism, boasts written monuments located in various parts of the city. The majority of monuments related to the linguistic landscape are located within the city center. A certain group of these sites is located in the Kalinowszczyzna area, north of the Old Town, and the Wieniawa area, to the west, respectively. They are listed in Table 1. The most important monuments related to the city's linguistic landscape are sacred structures, which feature various inscriptions in many languages. The same is true for Lublin's historic cemeteries. This study also includes selected locations where original inscriptions on the facades of tenement houses have been preserved. Secular objects document both solemn moments and ordinary aspects of life; they most often refer to sayings carved on building facades or shop advertisements, which have survived to this day. Among the preserved objects, there are those written in Latin, Old Polish, Yiddish, German, Church Slavonic, and Russian.

Table 1. Analyzed objects in the city area

Object	Address:
Lublin Castle	Zamkowa 1
Castle Chapel of the Holy Trinity	Zamkowa 9
Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord	Ruska 15
The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, the Holy Trinity Church, and the Evangelical Cemetery	Ewangelicka 1
Lublin Yeshiva School of the Sages Hahmei	Lubartowska 85
Nosim Synagogue	Lubartowska 8
The Fortuna Cellar	Rynek 8
Church of the Women Bearing Scents and St. Prophet Elijah	Lipowa 12

Orthodox cemetery in Lublin	Lipowa 15b
Ukrainian graves from the early 20th century	Lipowa 15b
Old Jewish cemetery	Sienna 10
New Jewish Cemetery	Walczyńskich 4
2nd part of the new Jewish cemetery	Walczyńskich 6
Evangelical cemetery	Lipowa 15a
old Catholic tombstones	Lipowa 16
A Latin saying discovered in the facade of a tenement house	Grodzka 2
19th century shop sign "Молоко"	Olejna 9
Lublin Fair Board	Walczyńskich 4
Mural of Jewish stalls at the Vivo! Gallery	Al. Unii Lubelskiej 2
NN Theatre with a sign in Yiddish	Grodzka 21
Murals of tenement houses with sayings	Rynek 2, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16
Archicathedral of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist	Rynek 2, 5 10
Basilica of St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr	Złota 9
Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Victory in Lublin	Narutowicza 6
St. Paul's Church	Bernardyńska 5
Church of the Holy Spirit	Krakowskie Przedmieście 1
Church of the Discalced Carmelites of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Świętoduska 14
Roman Catholic Church of St. Nicholas the Bishop	Słowikowskiego 1
Church of Our Lady Help of Christians	Kalinowszczyzna 3
Greek Catholic Church of St. Josaphat	Zielona 3
Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Stanisława Staszica 11A
Church of St. Michael the Archangel	Fabryczna 19
Church of St. Adalbert	Podwale 15
The Academic Church of the Holy Cross of the Catholic University of Lublin	Idziego Radziszewskiego 7
Garrison Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lublin	Aleje Racławickie 20
The Krakow Gate Museum	Bramowa 2
Cultural Center, former monastery	Peowiaków 12
Museum in the Dominican Monastery	Złota 9
Monument to the Victims of the Lublin Ghetto	Radziwiłłowska 4
Plan of the former Jewish quarter	Zamkowa 9

Source: own study.

5.1. Lublin's castle and temples

5.1.1. Castle Chapel of the Holy Trinity (Kaplica Trójcy Świętej)

One of the most valuable monuments associated with Lublin's linguistic landscape is the Holy Trinity Chapel at Lublin Castle. Following the signing of a prenuptial agreement between Queen Jadwiga and Władysław Jagiełło in 1386 in Lublin, the king granted the city numerous privileges. In the castle chapel, built in the Gothic style, the king funded paintings in the Byzantine-Ruthenian style, which were completed in 1418 (Libera & Rozwałka 2013). A service commemorating the signing of the Polish-Lithuanian Union in 1569 was also held here. In the corner of the chapel are paintings associated with their founder (Figure 1). The foundation inscription, written in Church Slavonic, has also been partially preserved. In the area of the stairs to the choir, an inscription in Latin reads: "unia facta est cum Ducatus Lytwanie". Alongside are the scratched signatures of various noblemen who visited the chapel in the 17th century. The coexistence of these inscriptions and the paintings, along with the building's structure, makes this monument exceptionally valuable on a European scale.



Figure 1. The interior of the chapel

Source: own study.

5.1.2. The Cellar under Fortuna (Piwnica pod Fortuna)

In the so-called Cellar under Fortune in the Lubomelski tenement house at 8 Rynek Street, there is a monument in the form of frescoes. Late Renaissance polychromes dating back to the late 16th century, depicting secular themes, have been partially preserved on the basement walls and vaults. Thanks to research conducted by Urszula Gulbińska-Konopa and Łukasz Konopa, graphic patterns for all the images on the walls were discovered. Most of them come from an emblem book, which is also a kind of album, *Emblemata Saecularia* by Johann Theodor and Johann Israel de Bry, published in 1596 in Frankfurt am Main. The depictions correspond to the following engravings included in the *Emblemata Saecularia*: Democritus, Heracletus, Simia rugata, Amor vincit omnia, Speculum Morosophum, Connubia coeca, Arbor Virginifera, Trutina nupturientium (Gulbińska-Konopa & Konopa 2018) (Figure 2). The other two, including the depiction of Fortuna on the vault, were modeled on engravings by Heinrich Ulrich of Nuremberg. An important element of the paintings is panels and cartouches with Latin and German texts. The inscriptions are quotations from works by Horace, Virgil, Cato, and other authors popular at the time.

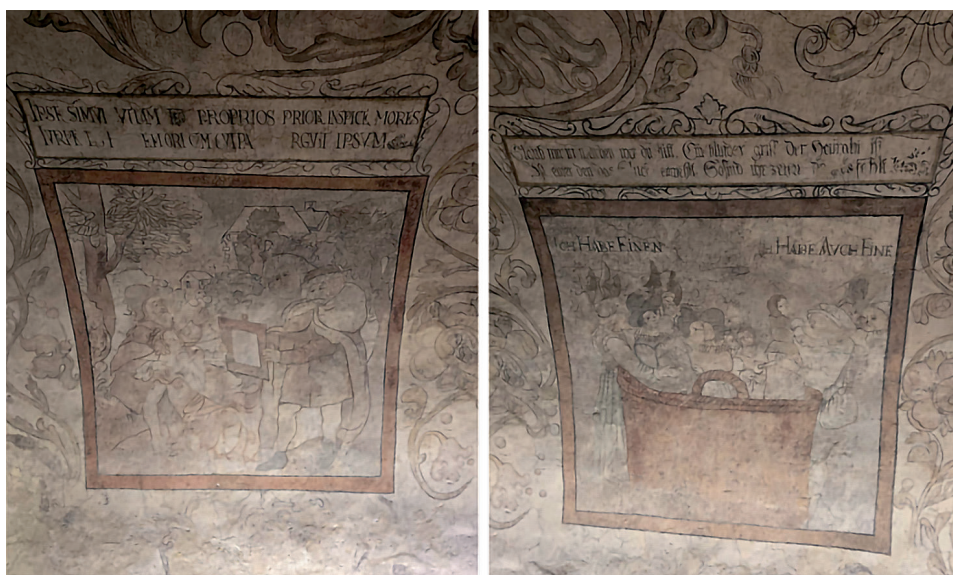


Figure 2. The Cellar under Fortuna

Source: own study.

5.1.3. Cathedral of the Transfiguration (Cerkiew Przemienienia Pańskiego)

It is the oldest Orthodox church in Lublin. The first building on this site was built in 1447 (Lewczak 2021). After a fire in 1587, construction of a brick church in the Czwartek suburb began in 1607 and was finally completed around 1620. During the 17th century, the church changed hands several times from Orthodox to Uniates, which led to numerous reconstructions and changes in the church's interior. The church's main element is the iconostasis from the second quarter of the 17th century. Inside, inscriptions in Church Slavonic are found on the walls, pillars, and altar elements. These inscriptions are found both inside and outside the church, and appear, among other things, on icons. Of particular interest are the inscriptions found on the church's walls (Figure 3). Some of these inscriptions date back to the 17th century. Only fragments have survived to this day. These inscriptions were restored during the renovation of the temple in 2000–2002.



Figure 3. Interior of the Orthodox Church in Lublin

Source: own study.

5.1.4. Epitaphs in churches

Until the burial reforms (in the second half of the 19th century), the deceased were buried in churchyards, crypts, and church walls. The oldest cemeteries have inscriptions in Latin. In younger ones, Polish appears more frequently. Interesting examples include mixed Latin-Polish cemeteries (Figure 4). Such examples can be found, for example, in the cathedral. They were created by placing older slabs in frames bearing inscriptions in Polish (Figure 4). Some churches contain inscriptions in German. One example is the baptismal basin preserved in the cathedral. In the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, there is an epitaph carved in German (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Examples of epitaphs using Latin, Old Polish, and German from churches in Lublin

Source: own study.

5.2. Cemeteries

5.2.1. Cemetery, Lipowa Street

A significant feature of the city's history is the numerous cemeteries, which feature tombstones in various languages and styles. The most important example is the multi-denominational cemetery on Lipowa Street. The necropolis in Lublin was established in 1792 because the existing church cemeteries were full and posed a threat to the city's residents. Permission was issued in 1794 (Serafin, online source). Following a decree from the Austrian authorities, the old churchyards in the Old Town began to be closed down. Regular burials began in this cemetery in 1811. Approximately one thousand graves, in varying states of preservation, have survived from the 19th century. In 1825, an Evangelical-

Augsburg section was established. As a result, tombstones in Polish, German, and even Czech were added (Figure 5). In 1840, an Orthodox section was established (currently approximately 500 tombstones), which bears historical inscriptions in Russian, primarily from the early 20th century. This section of the cemetery houses the cemetery chapel of the Holy Women Bearing Scents and a distinctive cemetery gate. The Orthodox section also contains the tombstones of soldiers of the Ukrainian People's Republic who fought against the Bolsheviks on the Polish side in the 1920 battle. Furthermore, in 1915, during World War I, the Austrian authorities established a military cemetery with a chapel. Since 2005, this cemetery has also housed a columbarium (Orthodox Cemetery, online source). In the mid-20th century, after World War II, a mausoleum for Red Army soldiers and their tombstones was built. The cemetery was expanded several times (including in 1853, 1870, 1899, and throughout the 20th century), increasing its area from less than 2 hectares to 12 hectares. Between 1821 and 1901, approximately 40,000 people were buried there. Beginning in 1932, the cemetery primarily served distinguished individuals, and in 1985, it was added to the register of historical monuments. Numerous tombstones with inscriptions in Polish, Russian, German, Ukrainian, and Latin aphorisms can be found in these cemeteries. Many of these tombstones are works of art, honoring important figures in the city's history.



Figure 5. Examples of historical tombstones from the cemetery at Lipowa Street

Source: own study.

5.2.2. Evangelical cemetery

The old Protestant cemetery at the Holy Trinity Church in Lublin was established between 1785 and 1788, during the construction of the church, and operated until the 1830s, when land was set aside for a Protestant cemetery on Lipowa Street. The oldest preserved tombstone belongs to the Weber family and dates from 1787 (Korniłowicz 2009). Inscriptions carved in this cemetery are in German and Polish

(Figure 6). Approximately 20 tombstones have survived to this day, in varying states of preservation, some with visible signs of devastation. The diversity of tombstone styles is evident: eclecticism and late classicism predominate. Many motifs relating to the transience of human life can be seen, such as broken columns, torches, and urns. In the church itself, tin coffin plaques commemorating the deceased have been preserved and are located inside the building beneath the choir.



Figure 6. Evangelical cemetery

Source: own study.

5.2.3. Jewish cemeteries

Lublin also has cemeteries associated with the city's Jewish residents. The oldest written records of a Jewish cemetery date back to 1555, although the oldest matzevah dates back to 1541, indicating that the cemetery existed earlier (16th-century documents indicate that Jews lived in Lublin as early as the time of Casimir the Great (Fijałkowski 1989; Trzciński 1996), although the location of burials at that time is unknown. The cemetery suffered the most significant destruction during World War II (of the several thousand matzevahs, only about 200 remain). The following people are buried in this cemetery: Jakub Kopelman (Talmudist, died 1541), Abraham ben Uszaja (cantor, died 1543), Szalom Szachna

(Talmudist, founder of the Talmudic academy, died 1558), Solomon ben Yehiel Luria (died 1573), Yaakov Yitzchak ha-Levi Horowicz-Szternfeld, i.e., the Seer of Lublin (died 1815) (Trzciński 1996).

In 1828, land was purchased for a new Jewish cemetery. As required, it was surrounded by a wall, had a well for religious ceremonies, and a funeral home. The women's section was located on the left side of the main gate, and the men's section on the right (Klimowicz, online source). As a result of World War I, a cemetery was also established for veterans of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies, which also included Jewish soldiers. The new cemetery was expanded in 1894, 1924, and 1931, among other places. During World War II, the cemetery remained in use; the area was expanded in 1940. It was likely destroyed in November 1942, when the matzevot were used to pave roads at the Majdanek concentration camp and the camp on Wronia Street. Despite this, it remained operational after World War II, and in 1945, it came under the care of the Jewish Religious Congregation. In 1966, an inventory of the gravestones was made, and the usable area was fenced off (Figure 7). In 1973, the Jewish cemetery (and the adjacent Catholic cemetery) was cut through to build a street (now W. Andersa Avenue), dividing the cemetery into two. The area south of the street currently constitutes an active Jewish cemetery, while the northern part has been landscaped. The involvement of the Frenkl Foundation led to the entire cemetery being placed under conservation protection (entry into the register of historical monuments in 1989), the fence was renovated, and a memorial building was erected.



Figure 7. Jewish Cemetery, renovated gate and ritual well, with preserved matzevot embedded in the walls

Source: own study.

5.3. The area of Litewski Square

According to A. Kopciowski, the focal point of tsarist Lublin, was Litewski Square (Kopciowski 2021). The buildings of the Gubernial Government and the governor's palace were located here. The latter also housed a chancellery, a government printing house, and the editorial office of the official Russian-language daily newspaper ("Lubelskie Wiadomości Gubernialne") (Kraśńska 2019). The Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was built adjacent to both buildings between 1873 and 1876. This cathedral was demolished in the interwar period, and some of its elements found their way into, among other places, the Soldier's House (columns) and the Church of the Transfiguration of Our Lord on Ruska Street (fragments of the interior). The emblems of the Lublin Governorate have survived to this day, located on the façade of the Lublin Industrialists' Fund building (now the Grand Hotel) and on the Lubomirski Palace (during the partitions, the governor's administration was located here).

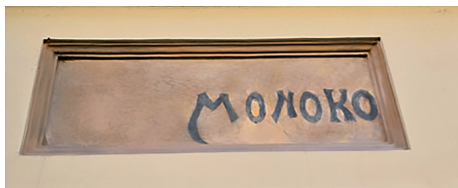


Figure 8. A shop sign from the 19th century

Source: own study.

5.4. Olejna Street 7 in the Old Town

The tenement house bears a preserved inscription reading "молоко" (milk) from the times of Tsarist Lublin, which was accidentally discovered in 2016 (Janiak 2016). In the 19th century, there was a grocery store here, and the discovered inscription is likely a fragment of the store's advertising sign (Figure 8). This inscription has now been

restored as a result of renovations to the building in 2016.



Figure 9. An example of a preserved sign in Yiddish

Source: own study.

5.5. The NN Theatre

The NN Theatre, established in 1990 (Zinczuk 2011; Jackowski 2017), oversees the preservation of historical monuments related to the cultural and linguistic landscape. This theatre houses various exhibitions related to the history of Lublin and its inhabitants.

One of the permanent displays is a preserved sign from the tenement house at 4 Cyrulicza Street, which was accidentally discovered during renovations in the 21st century. This sign was transferred to a special matrix and then displayed in the Theatre (Figure 9). It advertises a spice shop in Yiddish, with the characteristic spelling of Eastern Poland. Next to this sign are replicas of street signs from various periods of the city's history, including the Russian Partition. The museum houses numerous studies on the city's monuments, including those related to the written word. The museum maintains an extensive catalog and archive. Some information about the monuments discussed is available on the organization's website.

5.6. Majdanek

A dark continuation of World War II was the KL Lublin concentration camp at Majdanek, established in 1941 by the occupying authorities (Germans). It housed 280 buildings, including workshops, warehouses, barracks, bathhouses, gas chambers, and a crematorium, some of which have survived to this day (Kranz 2007; Kwiatkowski 1966; Marszałek 1987; Ossowska 1995). At this camp, as well as at other similar sites, matzevot from the Jewish cemetery were used to pave the avenues. Currently, it houses the Majdanek State Concentration Camp Museum. Inscriptions in German, related to the camp infrastructure, can be found throughout the camp. There are also memorial plaques erected after the war, with inscriptions in various languages, including Hebrew.

The examples described above do not exhaust all the sites bearing historical inscriptions in Lublin. However, they represent the most interesting and valuable places where the city's linguistic landscape is revealed. It is also important to emphasize that the linguistic landscape is dynamic and constantly changing. Contemporary Lublin is eagerly visited by tourists; in 2024, the city was visited by over 1.9 million people, and the entire Lublin Metropolitan Area by almost 2.3 million people (according to data on the Lublin City Hall website). Lublin is also an academic city, with over 60,000 students studying here, nearly 9,000 of whom are international students from over 100 countries (Lublin is home to a growing number of foreigners, online source). The presence of these people is evidenced by the various languages they speak, which can be heard throughout the city. The incoming population wishing to live, study, and work in Lublin also leaves its mark, creating a diverse linguistic landscape. Signage in public spaces is tailored to these individuals (tourists, migrants). City promotional materials, official guides, information leaflets, forms, and so on, are also published in several languages. Typically, English and Ukrainian, alongside Polish,

predominate in these spaces. Brochures for information and education are also published in these languages. Furthermore, these signs appear throughout the city's cultural, commercial, and university spaces, including on multilingual websites. This demonstrates the vibrant multilingual traditions that continue in Lublin in the 21st century. Lublin's designation as the European Youth Capital in 2023 (European Youth Capital Lublin 2023, online source) and the European Capital of Culture in 2029 (European Capital of Culture 2029, online source) were celebrated as a tribute to these traditions.

6. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Linguistic landscapes facilitate the study of the structure and functioning of multilingualism, the language situation, and policies of a country or region. The analysis of linguistic landscapes allows us to trace migration patterns and the dynamics of socioeconomic change in a given territory. In recent years, the linguistic landscape has gained importance in the field of language education, as it has been recognized as a rich source of knowledge in the field of language learning. Research aimed at exploring the didactic potential of the linguistic landscape in foreign language teaching is increasingly appearing. Linguistic landscape analysis is considered a method of foreign language teaching, complementing the main methods of glottodidactics. Thus, in 2021, a collective monograph, *Linguistic landscapes in English language teaching: A pedagogical guidebook*, was published, in which the authors present various possibilities for using linguistic landscapes and integrating them into language learning. According to many researchers, the linguistic landscape plays an important role in the process of learning foreign languages, serving as a valuable didactic resource (Gorter & Cenoz 2022; Melo-Pfeifer 2023). Linguistic landscapes themselves represent a multilingual and multimodal corpus in which a wealth of factual educational material can be found (Gorter & Cenoz 2015). Working with linguistic landscapes helps achieve a number of goals in teaching foreign languages, such as linguistic, didactic, and goals aimed at mediating cultural content, and goals oriented toward media education (Fesyukova 2023). Some authors pay special attention to the interaction between signs and learners, as well as the contextual knowledge necessary for interpreting signs. The study of the linguistic landscape deepens students' critical awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity (Hatoss 2019) and develops a special sensitivity to the linguistic environment in which they find themselves (Kolečáni Lenčová 2020; Molnárová 2021). The linguistic landscape provides an environment for natural linguistic immersion through interaction with linguistic objects in everyday life. The use of linguistic landscapes, based

on the principle of immersion, is a means of ensuring continuous linguistic development outside the classroom and makes learning more effective (Ariffin et al. 2020). Such immersion accelerates the process of language acquisition and develops communicative skills. Since language is inextricably linked with culture, its study should take into account the cultural component. A number of studies emphasize the special importance of linguistic landscapes in the process of developing intercultural competence (Dagenais et al. 2009; Prasad 2013). The usefulness of integrating linguistic signs into foreign language teaching is also demonstrated by projects such as Signs in the City in Europe, which promote the use of street signs and city symbols in developing language awareness.

Language signs intertwine the influences of past and present language contacts, and linguistic signs also serve as evidence of the existence of multiple cultures and the history of a particular location. The historical linguistic landscape, represented by inscriptions on historic buildings, memorials, or cemeteries, or texts found in church murals, provides a linguistic source for the subsequent analysis of linguistic signs in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic register. Translation exercises can be included in work with linguistic signs: for example, an assignment to translate an archaic epitaph into a modern language, which develops the ability to understand context and historical records. A special challenge can be deciphering inscriptions, for example, on ancient frescoes painted in historical scripts. Historical texts (often Latin) preserved in the historical glottodidactics of the old city train the ability to recognize related words in the target language (e.g., English, Italian, German), which contributes to the development of multilingual receptive competence. An effective method for working with historical glottodidactics is the project method, during which students (individually or in groups), under the guidance of a teacher, collect, document, and then classify and analyze their data. During the project, students can also access data from archives, museums, and other sources to obtain additional information. This type of work with historical glottodidactics develops students' research skills and critical thinking. The linguistic signs described in our study represent valuable material for glottodidactics, as they link language learning with history, culture, religion, and art. This demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of the analysis of historical glottodidactics, which combines the interests of various fields, including linguistics and the humanities.

7. DISCUSSION

The discussed sites, which contribute to Lublin's multicultural and multilingual character, constitute its unique position in Poland. The linguistic landscape

can be a rich source of information about the city's cultural heritage. Behind the signs is hidden a story connected with a specific place and the people who lived there (Lou 2016). As Koszko rightly states, "careful observation, as well as a willingness to participate in a kind of game or dialogue with space, allows us to discover extraordinary stories about seemingly ordinary but eventually forgotten places and people" (Koszko 2013: 33). Examples of the use of different languages, which connect Eastern and Western cultures, are monuments of European importance. Although some of these sites are located within museums (e.g., the Castle Chapel) or are still used by micro-communities (e.g., Lublin Orthodox churches and the Evangelical Church), which independently raise funds for their conservation, many places in Lublin require urgent repairs, as their condition could be permanently damaged, obliterating the inscriptions discussed. An example is the numerous epitaphs in the historic cemetery on Lipowa Street. Many of these tombstones are heavily damaged, and the materials used to make the tombstones are sometimes poorly resistant to erosion (limestone) or are heavily overgrown. Sometimes, it's because moss first covered the recesses in the carved inscriptions that they can be seen today. These tombstones, in many cases, also constitute valuable examples of various styles and art. They sometimes possess preserved original photographs mounted on porcelain tiles. This area should be better protected from vandalism (smashing of tombstones) and weather conditions, including through regular maintenance. Appropriate protection against damage should also be installed on the facades of tenement houses containing valuable, preserved historical inscriptions. Exposed to weather conditions, they systematically deteriorate and can also be subject to vandalism (especially if located in less frequented areas). The multilingual character of the city could be emphasized by appropriately displaying these inscriptions through appropriate plaques or links to online resources. An example of such an initiative is the proposed interactive game (Miłosz & Montusiewicz 2018), developed by students of the Lublin University of Technology. The multilingual aspect of the city's landscape can also be incorporated into popular culture. An example is the frescoes from the Castle Chapel, fragments of which can be found on city promotional materials, T-shirts, mugs, and notebooks, sold as souvenirs from Lublin. Alongside the famous and protected dishes of Lublin, these monuments should be given the status of "city ambassadors" and be used in campaigns aimed at encouraging visitors to the city.

8. CONCLUSION

The city's geographical location on the border of Poland's ethnic lands has shaped its multicultural character. For centuries, it has been a meeting place for East and West, a place of cultural dialogue. The monuments of Lublin's linguistic landscape reflect the fate of its inhabitants throughout history. Numerous preserved monuments testify to the city's multilingual landscape. Their identification has allowed us to distinguish language groups: Romance (Latin), Germanic (German), West Slavic (Polish, Czech), and East Slavic (Church Slavonic, Russian, Ukrainian). Preserved examples of inscriptions in various languages dominate in sacred buildings (Catholic churches, Orthodox churches). Other inscriptions are less common. Some of the described examples, particularly those located outside museums, require urgent conservation work. The city's multicultural and multilingual potential is partially utilized in city advertising, although this does not fully utilize Lublin's heritage. Linguistic landscape is particularly important as a tool for learning foreign languages in a multicultural and multilingual society, such as Lublin. Lublin's linguistic landscape provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and culture and can be used in foreign language teaching to develop intercultural competence. The linguistic landscape provides a source of authentic language material accessible in everyday life. Field research indicates that the linguistic landscape of Lublin is constantly changing, even in modern times, and this is influenced by cultural events and the constant presence of multinational groups residing in the city. The growing number of multilingual students in Lublin encourages further research in this area.

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Krajobraz językowy Lublina w aspekcie diachronicznym na podstawie wybranych przykładów

ABSTRAKT. Lublin jest miastem o średniowiecznych tradycjach, położonym na szlaku łączącym drogi ze wschodu (Kijów) i północy (Wilno, Warszawa) z zachodem (Kraków). Miasto to rozwijało się od czasów lokacji, a jego najlepszy okres przypada na czas renesansu. W różnych okresach historycznych do Lublina przybywali i zamieszkali go przedstawiciele różnych narodowości, kultur i religii, tworząc w ten sposób społeczeństwo wieloetniczne i wielowyznaniowe. Wydatnym śladem bogatego krajobrazu językowego miasta są zachowane liczne obiekty o charakterze sakralnym i świeckim z inskrypcjami w różnych językach. W artykule przedstawiono charakterystykę wizualnego elementu językowego tych obiektów w historycznych dzielnicach Lublina. Jako materiał do badań posłużyły zachowane napisy na freskach, ścianach kościołów i kaplic, nagrobkach, zabytkowych szyldach. Badania miały na celu ustalenie obecności języków w oprawie graficznej tych napisów. Autorzy przeprowadzili inwentaryzację i rejestrację fotograficzną tych inskrypcji oraz opisali przykłady najbardziej interesujących miejsc, które można odwiedzić. Pomniki te stanowią fragmenty historyczno-kulturowe pejzażu językowego Lublina, są bogatym źródłem informacji na temat miasta. W niniejszym tekście zwrócono także uwagę na potrzebę ochrony tych zabytków oraz możliwość ich wyeksponowania na tle wielojęzycznego Lublina – miasta, które takie pozostaje do dziś.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: krajobraz językowy, inskrypcje, wielokulturowość, wielojęzyczność, historia, Lublin.

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Linguistic landscapes in the sociolinguistic and foreign language teaching research field in the Czech Republic

ABSTRACT. This article investigates the potential of incorporating the sociolinguistic concept of the linguistic landscape (LL) into foreign language teaching, with particular attention to its applicability as a valuable supplementary resource in language education. Following a definition of the LL framework and a summary of current theoretical and methodological discussions, the article presents a concise overview of the development of this expansive sociolinguistic field, with a specific focus on the status of LL research within the Czech context. The analysis then turns to the didactic implications of the LL, exploring its utility in foreign language instruction. Drawing on illustrative examples and the author's own teaching experience, the article demonstrates practical applications of LL in the teaching of German as a Foreign Language, both in teacher education and classroom practice, within the urban environment of Brno, Czech Republic.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscape, research, sociolinguistics, foreign language teaching, teaching German as a foreign language.

1. DEFINING LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Since the invention of writing, people have been publicly presenting their language(s). Written announcements or appeals have become such a natural part of our everyday life that we often no longer even perceive the presence of written language in public spaces (Huebner 2016: 1). The appearance of different languages in public spaces, including their roles and functions, attracted the attention of many scientific disciplines at the end of the last century and the beginning of the new millennium. The sociolinguistic relevance of how language is represented in public spaces (Huebner 2016: 1) was already acknowledged by Landry and Bourhis (1997), who introduced the term linguistic landscape (Sprachlandschaft, Sprachenlandschaft) into the specialist discussion. They define linguistic landscape as linguistic signs that “are visible on signs or posters placed in public spaces” (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 23). LLs appear in various forms, such as posters, graffiti, advertising posters, street or shop signs, or commemorative

plaques. Cenoz and Gorter (2008: 267) also point out the diversity of textual forms and locations of LL in public spaces:

Language is visible in the public domain in its textual mode as words which are displayed on shop windows, commercial signs, posters, official notices, traffic signs, etc. This ‘linguistic landscape’ refers to all the language items that are visible in a specified part of the public space (Cenoz & Gorter 2008: 267).

In addition to the above-mentioned LL forms, LLs may also include street signs, warning signs or prohibition signs on buildings, inscriptions, or graffiti (Landry & Bourhis 1997; Spolsky & Cooper 1991; Schiedermaier 2015). As linguistic landscape research further evolves, the concept itself also becomes more differentiated. Today, for instance, we distinguish between LLs in semi-public spaces, i.e., administrative or educational institutions and company buildings (Marten & Saagpakk 2017: 7), and LLs in public spaces, such as generally accessible transit areas. Alongside this, the category of “movable signs” (Riehl 2014: 26) has now gained traction, encompassing, for example, advertisements on buses or signs on protest banners (Gorter 2018), bags, clothing items, or packaging. Due to technological advancements, which have brought about objects such as virtual spaces, the internet, and cyberspaces (Shohamy & Gorter 2009), virtual LLs have also come into researchers’ focus, including electronic flat screens, touchscreens, and scrolling banners (Gorter & Cenoz 2017). At the same time, interactions with soundscapes, smellscapes, and other semiotic phenomena, as well as typographic linguistic landscapes as distinct forms of representation (design resources) and socially relevant positioning resources, are being investigated (Ziegler & Marten 2021: 15).

Thus, the term LL refers to all linguistic symbols visible in a specific area of public space. In certain cases, these signs, placed in such a way, allow for deep insights into the sociocultural, societal, and political conditions of a given urban space. They provide conclusions regarding “[...] the shared use of language, migration languages, language prestige, and even language policy” (Krompák 2018: 247). Minority languages are also not excluded here. LLs simultaneously convey an image of the linguistic and cultural diversity in the everyday life of the respective society.

The following two chapters offer a brief overview of the development of linguistic landscape research in the international context (Chapter 3) and in the Czech Republic (Chapter 4), with particular emphasis on methodological approaches. The following chapter (Chapter 5) provides an overview of the use of linguistic landscapes in foreign language teaching and their didactic potential.

2. METHODOLOGY OF OVERVIEWS

In terms of methodology, a search was conducted in the Web of Science and Scopus databases (including scholarly articles and edited volumes). Subsequently, a selection of journal articles and academic theses (bachelor's and master's) focusing on the Czech context was made. These sources were identified not only through the Scopus database but also via publicly available online sources and search engines from Czech universities. An initial keyword search was carried out using the terms *linguistic landscapes*, *research*, *sociolinguistic*, *foreign language teaching*, *German as a foreign language*, *thesis* (in English, German and Czech).

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- it is an empirical study presenting original research on linguistic landscapes in the field of sociolinguistics and language education,
- the study / article is written in English, German, or Czech,
- the study had been published between 2003–2023.

3. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AS A RESEARCH FIELD

Even the types of LL listed above indicate how this research field has expanded and differentiated over the last quarter-century. Naturally, this also affects the methodological approaches to investigating visible language in public spaces. This development is confirmed by numerous scholarly articles and edited volumes (e.g., Huebner 2016; Mensel, Vandenbroucke & Blackwood 2016; Krompák 2018; Schulze 2018; Pütz & Mundt 2019; Ziegler & Marten 2021) as well as studies in the journal *Linguistic Landscape*¹, which has been publishing research on linguistic landscapes in various areas and from different perspectives since 2015.

Early LL research was primarily situated in the sociolinguistic field and was heavily quantitative, focusing especially on “the proportional distribution of languages and the linguistic description of signs” (Krompák 2018: 250). A macro-sociolinguistic approach to language in the societal context predominated: frequency data on the occurrence of LLs in certain languages were used to make inferences about the status of these languages in a given society and about the social significance of the corresponding speaker groups (Schulze 2018: 5; Ziegler & Marten 2021: 13). The place where the LLs were

¹ Studies on linguistic landscapes can also be found in other academic journals such as the *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *International Journal of Sociology and Language*, and *Language Policy*.

documented is usually the modern (major) city (see, for example, the studies by Landry & Bourhis 1997; Gorter 2006; Backhaus 2007; Ben Rafael et al. 2006; Barni 2008; Barni & Bagna 2008; Shohamy & Gorter 2009; Coupland & Garrett 2010; Jaworski 2010).

In later studies, the focus shifted more to the linguistic practices of specific publicly active actors in the sense of Blommaert, who assumes that the signs in public space lead us to particular practices, which in turn lead us to people living in a given area in a particular configuration, with a certain degree of regulation and order and various forms of social and cultural organization (Blommaert 2013: 50). In linguistic landscapes research, increasing attention is paid to questions of semiotic function, reception, and impact of LL, with the public space being perceived as a discursive space in which something is negotiated, bargained, or manifested. Writing in public spaces is understood as an act of performance (Warnke 2011). Along with this new focus, an ethnographic approach is often pursued (e.g., Blommaert 2013; Blommaert & Maly 2014), using qualitative methods such as participant observation and ethnographic interviews, which require a longer stay of researchers in the field (Krompák 2018: 250). While Backhaus (2007: 60) pointed out in the first decade of the new millennium that research on linguistic landscapes cannot develop without a clear quantitative corpus, later studies employ mixed-methods approaches, i.e., a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach also allows for the exploration of narratives regarding the cultural, historical, political, and social background of a specific space hidden behind a sign (Blommaert 2013), as well as the linguistic practices of the individuals involved (Krompák 2018: 250). Shedding light on the human dimension of the phenomenon cannot be achieved through numbers alone. Consequently, a need emerged to orient linguistic landscapes research diachronically, particularly if one aims to understand how a given LL historically developed.

4. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE RESEARCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In the Czech-speaking context, the first studies that can be assigned to the tradition of linguistic landscapes research appeared only at the beginning of this century, focusing primarily on language management and language contact. Their development follows the trends of international research, which also initially examined LL from a sociolinguistic and sociolinguistic-ecological perspective. In recent years, however, the ethnographic approach has been increasingly adopted in the Czech context.

For instance, the study “Language management in the Czech Republic” by Nekvapil and Neústupný (2003) deals with *Semiotic Landscapes*² in binational and bilingual German-Czech organizations. Methodologically, the study draws on the ethnological approach, based on the assumption that social structures are negotiated and reproduced in the course of interactions. Sloboda et al. (2010) present a comparative analysis of (post)communist Belarus, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, discussing the dialectical relationship between LL and state ideology and offering concepts for investigating this relationship. In another study, Sloboda (2016) devotes his attention to describing super-diversity in the Czech context from both macro- and micro-sociological perspectives. Following studies on multilingualism, Scarvaglieri and Pappenhagen (2018) analyze linguistic practices and attitudes toward languages in two border cities – Biel (Bienne) in Switzerland and Ústí nad Labem in the Czech Republic – using LL. The authors succeed in showing how linguistic practices and attitudes toward languages are similar in both cities by means of LL.

Adopting a qualitative-ethnographic approach in his study, Mácha (2020) addresses conflicts in rural municipalities of the Těšín region that have arisen in the last fifteen years as a result of introducing bilingual Czech-Polish signs. He presents selected findings from longitudinal study research based on an analysis of the LL in the Těšín region, media coverage, and the opinions of locals, municipal leaders, and representatives of Polish organizations, obtained through interviews and questionnaires. Folwarczná (2019) examines the linguistic landscape of the border town Těšín by comparing the occurrence of Czech and Polish LL in the main streets of the Czech and Polish parts of Těšín / Cieszyn. In addition to the relationship between Czech and Polish, she also focuses on the presence of English as a global language. Herold (2018), in his diploma thesis, explores the existing overlap between translation studies and linguistic landscape research. He focuses particularly on the specific characteristics of translations in the linguistic landscape, analyzing the centre of Prague. In his bachelor's thesis, Váňa (2022) documents the multilingual situation in the public space of Písek based on an ethnographic analysis of LL, drawing on Blommaert's approach. He collects data on-site and supplements them with research in online resources as well as participant observation. Data collection took place in 2021–2022. The findings offer insights into the life of individual language communities as well as how they are presented or self-presented in the linguistic landscape.

² Studies on linguistic landscapes can also be found in other academic journals such as the *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *International Journal of Sociology and Language*, and *Language Policy*.

Many of the mentioned studies address historical aspects of the topic by “establishing a connection between history and the place of data collection” (Schulze 2018: 6). One example is Frýdl (2020), whose LL research focuses on the linguistic composition of public-space signs and on the multilingualism and translatability of LL texts in connection with the demographic structure of Hrádek nad Nisou³ (German: Grottau; Polish: Gródek nad Nysą) and its surroundings (the presence of German and Polish due to proximity to the Polish and German borders). He pays special attention to how the presence of linguistic minorities is reflected in the linguistic landscape and how the region’s history, tourism, and globalization are manifested in the cityscape.

In recent years, application possibilities of LL in education have also attracted increased interest (e.g., Gorter & Cenoz 2022). Sociolinguistic research is a significant source of inspiration for education – both in terms of themes and methodology. The following section provides a closer look at how the concept of LL is understood in foreign language learning and teaching, outlining its didactic potential and offering examples of LL application in the training of German as a Foreign Language teachers that emphasize the historical perspective and draw parallels with sociolinguistic linguistic landscape research.

5. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND THEIR DIDACTIC POTENTIAL

The didactic potential of LLs for foreign language learning and teaching has been intensely discussed over the past two decades. Numerous theoretical-conceptual and practice-oriented publications have already demonstrated that this concept can provide a wide range of suggestions for both language learning and teaching research, as well as for foreign language classrooms. The thematic scope is diverse, encompassing (inter)cultural learning, historical aspects, language, culture and literature didactics, and language and school language policy (e.g., Backhaus 2006; Gorter 2006; Gorter and Cenoz 2007; Badstübner-Kizik 2015, 2018; Cerri & Jentges 2015; Schiedermaier 2015; Marten & Saagpak 2017; Janíková 2017, 2018; Krompák 2018; Malinowski, Maxim & Dubreil 2020; Blahak 2023; Eibensteiner 2023). The didactic potential of LL for foreign language learning and teaching was examined in a more comprehensive manner for the first time by Badstübner-Kizik and Janíková (2018), who demonstrate possible directions

³ Instead of the term ‘semiotic landscape’, introduced into the academic discourse by Jaworski and Thurlow (2010), the historically older term ‘linguistic landscape’ is more commonly used in current scientific discussions.

for the development of the linguistic landscape and foreign language didactics research field using application examples and reflections.

The debate on incorporating the concept of LL into (foreign) language teaching was initially conducted from the perspective of promoting language acquisition processes, examining the role of LL in these processes from five different angles: input, pragmatic competence, reading and writing skills, multilingualism, and affective and symbolic factors (Cenoz & Gorter 2008: 272). LLs are also considered with regard to the development of translation or mediation skills, where linguistic landscaping may involve activities to enhance learners' ability to recognize specific lexical, grammatical, and text-functional phenomena – for example, identifying the conspicuous persuasive strategies in an advertising poster.

By now, in line with the evolution of historically oriented linguistic landscape research in sociological and ethnographic contexts, the focus in foreign language education has shifted more toward the cultural aspects and content of foreign language acquisition, highlighting the possibilities that this concept offers for developing cultural awareness and pluricultural competence. LLs reflect different discourses – political or historical in nature – and represent cultural specificities of a particular urban space (Badstübner-Kizik & Hille 2016: 114). Consequently, the use of LL in foreign language teaching is of particular interest in cultural and area studies. This includes didactic concepts suitable for conveying cultural content in the context of modern societies characterized by heterogeneity and diversity. One approach that proves highly applicable here is the concept of *diskursive Landeskunde* (discursive area studies). In this concept, culture is understood as the knowledge about the world shared by people, “which is formed and socially shared in discourses – i.e., in communication about particular objects and phenomena” (Zeuner 2017). Although Zeuner focuses on German as a Foreign and Second Language in an inner-German educational context and primarily aims to foster comprehension and insight into “foreign” discourses among learners with a migration background rooted in different cultures, there are multiple parallels for using LL in DaF (German as a Foreign Language) instruction in non-German-speaking regions. This is because it also seems beneficial for learning processes in these contexts to encourage learners to critically reflect on their own and foreign positions or perspectives (Ciepielewska-Kaczmarek, Jentges & Tammenga-Helmantel 2020: 79). LLs facilitate the attainment of objectives in discursive area studies through the application of necessary methodological principles. Altmayer (2016: 16f.) provides a corresponding list, which, among other things, includes authentic, multi-perspective, and varied texts; taking learners' prior knowledge and experiences seriously;

problem orientation; reflection on cultural patterns; and diverse social forms and open teaching methods.

Aside from the possibility of employing the concept of discursive area studies in foreign language teaching by means of LL, the didactic potential of LL also extends to other areas, which can be exemplified as follows:

1. Promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity and the appreciative handling of multilingualism.
2. Highlighting language and culture contact within a given area, thereby making societal or cultural interactions visible.
3. Providing authentic teaching materials that reflect everyday life.
4. Enhancing discourse competence in a foreign language, understood as “the ability to participate in social dialogue with the aim of representing and
5. potentially modifying one’s own viewpoints, as well as recognizing and engaging with the viewpoints of others” (Schmenk 2005: 80).
6. Linking various subjects such as history, geography, civics, or other (foreign) languages.
7. Fostering inquiry-based learning in foreign language classes as well as in teacher education, where diverse (socio)linguistic and ethnographic research methods (e.g., interviews, diaries, or language-learning narratives) can be implemented.
8. Increasing learners’ motivation (e.g., Janíková 2017). Technological advances play a key role here by facilitating the documentation and exploration of LL using digital cameras and cell phones (Marten & Saagpakk 2017: 11) and by enabling the integration of virtual LL.

6. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN BRNO

The following section illustrates how LL can be utilized in learning and studying German as a Foreign Language. The geographic coordinates are based in the city of Brno (Brünn⁴), an urban area in the Czech Republic that has historically been inhabited by speakers of different languages. Czech and German cultures, as well as the Czech and German languages, have been closely intertwined here

⁴ This is a Czech town in the Liberec district. It is located in the Zittau Basin on the edge of the Zittau Mountains, about twenty kilometers northwest of Liberec and six kilometers southeast of Zittau, near the German-Czech-Polish tri-border area. The town was predominantly populated by Germans until the mid-20th century, and a Czech school was only established here in 1925. After the end of World War II, the majority of the original inhabitants were expelled (see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hr%C3%A1dek_nad_Nisou).

for centuries. In this context, the *Spot German* approach – searching for German language elements in public spaces to use them for teaching purposes – proves especially suitable (Marten & Saagpak 2017). The theoretical framework is provided by Blommaert's concept (2013), outlined above, which views LLs as signs constituting the multifaceted background of a specific, also historically cultural, space.

In recent years, I have addressed linguistic landscaping as a teaching method in several courses. Students collected LL in languages other than Czech and discussed their functions, the authors' motives, and their anchoring in historical and contemporary social contexts. Nonetheless, the focus was on documenting those image-text combinations in which German-language traces or references to the German-speaking world are discernible. Admittedly, quantitative perspectives did not play a role in this process.

So far, these project-based LL activities have convincingly shown that the German language and various facets of Czech-German coexistence in the city's history are still visible today in multiple LL forms – for instance, on commemorative plaques, monuments, inscriptions on private, commercial, and institutional buildings, or on gravestones in cemeteries or churches, on posters or flyers, in / on public transport, or on information boards. For example, the following LLs point to (a) a literary figure symbolizing the interconnectedness of Czech and Austrian cultural life in a specific historical context (Figure 1) and (b) the painful World War II and immediate post-war period in Brno (Figures 2–3).

Over time, a wide range of topics has emerged, offering a more specific insight into the linguistic landscape of Brno. At the same time, various teaching scenarios with concrete objectives were created, discussed, and reflected upon.



Figure 1. Robert Musil commemorative plaque on Jaselská Street in Brno

Source: photograph by Michal Klajban.



Figure 2. Memorial for displaced Germans, Mendel Square, Brno

Source: photograph by Ivo Šťastný.

AM 30. MAI 1945 MUSSTEN DIE DEUTSCHEN AUS BRÜNN UND DER SPRACHINSEL IHRE HEIMAT VERLASSEN. MÖGEN IN ZUKUNFT ALLE MENSCHEN IN EUROPA IN FRIEDEN UND UNTER ACHTUNG DER MENSCHENRECHTE LEBEN. ERRICHTET VOM HEIMATVERBAND DER BRÜNNER BRUNA IM MAI 1995. anquetil, velt	30. KVĚTNA 1945 MUSELI NĚMCI Z BRNA A OKOLÍ OPUSTIT SVOU DOMOVINU. KĚŽ V BUDOUCNOSTI VŠICHNI LIDÉ V EVROPĚ MOHOU ŽÍT V MÍRU A S ÚCTOU K LIDSKÝM PRÁVŮM. ZŘÍZENÝ DOMOVSKÝM SPOLKEM BRŇANŮ BRUNA V KVĚTNU 1995.
AM 30. MAI 1945 MUSSTEN DIE DEUTSCHEN AUS BRÜNN UND DER SPRACHINSEL IHRE HEIMAT VERLASSEN. MÖGEN IN ZUKUNFT ALLE MENSCHEN IN EUROPA IN FRIEDEN UND UNTER ACHTUNG DER MENSCHEN- RECHTE LEBEN. ERICHTET VOM HEIMAT- VERBAND DER BRÜNNER BRUNA IM MAI 1995.	30. KVĚTNA 1945 MUSELI NĚMCI Z BRNA A OKOLÍ OPUSTIT SVOU DOMOVINU. KĚŽ V BUDOUCNOSTI VŠICHNI LIDÉ V EVROPĚ MOHU ŽÍT V MÍRU A S ÚCTOU K LIDSKÝM PRÁVŮM. ZŘÍZENÝ DOMOVSKÝM SPOLKEM BRŇANŮ BRUNA V KVĚTNU 1995.

Figure 3. Memorial for displaced Germans, Mendel Square, Brno

Source: photograph by Ivo Šťastný.

Group discussions were used for these reflections (Riemer 2016: 166). The results confirm the didactic potential of LL for cultivating culturally sensitive German language learning in this particular urban context (cf. Janíková 2017, 2018). In group discussions, the following benefits related to cultural learning objectives in LL-based instruction were primarily highlighted:

1. Expansion of cultural-historical knowledge – in this case, in a region where two languages (Czech and German) and two cultures (Czech and German) coexisted for centuries.
2. Gaining deeper insight into how history and culture are constructed.
3. Contributing to a better understanding of the often complicated historical socio-political developments in this urban area in the context of Czech-German coexistence.
4. Providing opportunities to better understand history, including one's own.
5. Stimulating interest in current relations between the Czech majority population and the German minority, i.e., whether and how this minority is established (or has been established).
6. Allowing for the development of "a critical distance and the ability to look beyond specific phenomena and cases" (Badstübner-Kizik 2016: 33).

Based on their own experiences with this concept, students expressed interest in using LL in their own teaching practice to motivate their pupils to learn German (cf. Janíková 2024). In general, they reflected on which aspects of LL could be integrated into their teaching and how these authentic materials could be transformed into didactic resources. This is evident from master's theses examining, for example, the effectiveness of the linguistic landscape concept in the context of DaF instruction in schools through action research (e.g., Svobodová 2024).

7. CONCLUSION

Language in urban areas and in various locations has been attracting researchers' attention for several decades. They strive to investigate and interpret the contexts, messages, meanings, or purposes of these linguistic signs. This has led to the establishment of a new field – linguistic landscape research – which is sociolinguistically oriented and has been developing dynamically at the international level. This evolution not only expands traditional research objectives but also establishes new methodological approaches. In this context, interest in applying LL in education, i.e., in the classroom, has been growing. Overall, it can be stated that in recent years, especially the application possibilities and

challenges of LL approaches in foreign language teaching have gained significance in linguistic landscape research (cf. Ziegler & Marten 2021: 21), with sociolinguistic research providing inspiration.

Existing findings from linguistic landscape research and specialist discussions on the use of LL in foreign language instruction offer compelling evidence that LL can provide fresh impulses for foreign language learning and teaching and boasts great potential in language didactics. By integrating LL thematically into the classroom, one can more intensively promote language awareness, i.e., the ability to deal with language(s) in a reflective manner and to recognize differences at various linguistic levels. Concurrently, cultural awareness is also strengthened. Regarding specific teaching methods, working with LL provides new impulses for implementing inquiry-based learning, fostering critical thinking, and enhancing discourse competence. New (digital) technologies offer numerous ways to document LL and explore it further.

Depending on the concrete objectives as well as on spaces and locations, linguistic landscaping in classroom settings can address or emphasize different perspectives, aspects, and approaches that also matter in sociolinguistically oriented LL research. As a teaching method, linguistic landscaping offers a broad thematic spectrum for a specific target group in a certain cultural learning context - one that is grounded in learners' real-life experiences. At the same time, it provides a wealth of often not immediately apparent information on the political, linguistic, economic, social, religious, and other circumstances of a region, thereby significantly contributing to cross-curricular and culturally sensitive language instruction.

Based on the above explanations and examples, it can be inferred that a focused and purposeful connection between foreign language didactic linguistic landscape research and sociolinguistic research can substantially enrich the application of LL in foreign language teaching.

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Krajobrazy językowe z perspektywy badań socjolingwistycznych i nauczania języków obcych w Republice Czeskiej

ABSTRAKT. Artykuł bada potencjał włączenia socjolingwistycznej koncepcji krajobrazu językowego do nauczania języków obcych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem jej przydatności jako cennego dodatkowego źródła w edukacji językowej. Po zdefiniowaniu ram krajobrazu językowego i podsumowaniu aktualnych dyskusji teoretycznych i metodologicznych artykuł przedstawia zwięzły przegląd rozwoju tej rozległej dziedziny socjolingwistyki, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem statusu takich badań w kontekście czeskim. Następnie analiza skupia się na implikacjach dydaktycznych, bada przydatność krajobrazu językowego w nauczaniu języków obcych. Na podstawie przykładów i własnego doświadczenia dydaktycznego autorka pokazuje praktyczne zastosowania krajobrazu językowego w nauczaniu języka niemieckiego jako języka obcego, zarówno w kształceniu nauczycieli, jak i w praktyce szkolnej w środowisku miejskim w Brnie w Czechach.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: krajobraz językowy, badania, socjolingwistyka, nauczanie języków obcych, nauczanie języka niemieckiego jako języka obcego.

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“Solidarity” and “inclusion” in the linguistic landscape: The presence of the Ukrainian language in public urban spaces in Poland and its language learning implications

ABSTRACT. The aim of the article is to discuss how the linguistic landscape (LL) which emerged with the influx of Ukrainian refugees to Poland in 2022 reflects the solidarity and inclusive attitude of the Polish nation towards Ukrainian people. Furthermore, it has been suggested to consider this particular form of LL in raising language awareness, context-based language learning and language maintenance. The paper presents a two-stage quantitative-qualitative research of the LL. A diachronic approach has been applied, and the study first explores the linguistic landscape in the public space of Poznań during the first six months of war, and further analyses the changes that appeared in the LL within the following two years. The study has shown that the signs identified with the Ukrainian language express solidarity, support and understanding, as well as creating a sense of initial inclusion into the host society. “Solidarity” signs contained emotional slogans and appeals which reflected the unity of Polish society, and the shared, common objectives visible in their acting together to support Ukrainian refugees. On the other hand, the “inclusion” signs reflected the idea of including people in a group/community. This was expressed in the messages which referred to basic rights that Polish citizens are granted, such as access to healthcare, the labour market, education, as well as governmental protection. Further, “inclusion” was expressed in the signs that invited the refugees to participate in community life, for example in cultural events. The diachronic approach revealed the transience of solidarity signs, as most of them disappeared after six months, while at the same time those characterised as “inclusive” still remained in the public space of Poznań after two years of the war in Ukraine.

KEYWORDS: war, identity, linguistic landscape, Ukrainian community, solidarity, inclusion, language learning, language awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION – OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN 2022–2024

The beginning of 2022 was marked by the sudden and tragic upheaval of the socio-political situation in Eastern Europe. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine the socio-cultural reality in neighbouring countries, including Poland,

underwent a significant transformation. In fact, overnight this country became a new home for hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the territories affected by the military operations. Apart from their memories of the tragic events, they also arrived in Poland with their own language(s) and cultural background. Soon, the presence of the Ukrainian community started to be reflected in the language that appeared in various communication niches, in institutional spaces, as well as the mass media and virtual space. The new sociolinguistic reality was characterised by the changes in the “linguistic landscape” (LL) in the public space of Poznań, i.e. the emergence of signage with Ukrainian language. The “linguistic landscape” (LL) is here understood as “[t]he language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings [...]” (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25).

Since February 2022, the socio-political and linguistic-cultural situation in Poland has been very dynamic. In slightly over half a year the Ukrainian-Polish border was crossed by 12,324,430 refugees (UNHCR 2022). It was estimated that during the first six months of war in Ukraine around 7,156,748 (UNHCR 2022) refugees settled in Europe. Over one year later, in March 2023, there were 1,563,386 refugees in Poland registered for Temporary Protection with 4,946,920 in total in Europe (UNHCR 2023). This number, however, concerns only the refugees registered on national protection schemes. The overall number of refugees in Europe is estimated at 8,157,230. In comparison to other European states, Poland hosts the greatest number, over a quarter of all refugees. Those who have been registered for Temporary Protection in Poland were assigned an identity number (PESEL), which allowed them to get employment, send their children to public schools and daycare centres, enrol in higher education, and register in the national healthcare system. During the first 4 months over 358,000 Ukrainians took employment, mainly in the Mazowieckie (79,000), Dolnośląskie (37,900), Łódzkie (35,200) and Wielkopolskie (33,3000) regions. The choice of these regions is related to the location of the major urban agglomerations, which offer much greater employment opportunities, and hence better socio-economic perspectives, than other smaller towns or rural areas (X 2022).

During the first year of war the number of Ukrainian refugees was increasing. They spoke different languages (either Ukrainian or Russian). From the moment war started on February 24th, 2022, Polish society united in providing humanitarian aid, and organised help for refugees in a variety of social spheres, from transportation, accommodation, food distribution, institutional help (legalising temporary stay and identity documents, work permits), health aid (hospitals), education (kindergartens and schools for children) or organised language courses. As a result of the spontaneous initiatives taken by the Polish citizens in reaction to the outburst of war and the influx of refugees in 2022,

the Ukrainian language started to mark its presence in the public space more intensely. For many, this was an unexpected change in the linguistic landscape of urban spaces that prompted the initiative to study the phenomenon. It has to be pointed out, however, that the Ukrainian community had been present in Poland before the 2022 war, not in such great numbers, but occasionally its presence had been marked in the LL of Polish urban space (Levchuk 2023).

After two years, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Poland is still at a high level, i.e. 955,110 (Eurostat 2024), which is visible on the job market and also in the presence of the Ukrainian community in many other spheres of life. Successfully entering the labour market and the education system by young Ukrainians allowed this community to slowly become an inherent component of the socio-linguistic landscape of Poland.

2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

A vast number of initial studies into the linguistic landscape (LL) (see for example, Trumper-Hecht 2008; Reh 2004; Cenoz & Gorter 2006) reports the data concerning the presence of various languages in public spaces and the relationships between those languages. They reflect the socio-linguistic structure of a given community and the social processes occurring in a given place. Usually, the areas under consideration are characterised by ethnically-linguistically diverse communities, and hence concepts such as "ethnolinguistic vitality" (Landry & Bourhis 1997), "identity", "bilingualism / multilingualism", "minority communities" or "public policies" (see Cenoz & Gorter 2006; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006) are the leading notions in the research in these areas.

Another feature that may be taken into consideration in LL research is the period in which the linguistic landscape of a place developed, and the reasons behind its present state. Many of the localities chosen for socio-linguistic analysis are inhabited by ethnically diverse communities which have been living in a given place for many years (constituting the original inhabitants), creating the unique socio-linguistic character of the place (see Cenoz & Gorter 2006; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Trumper-Hecht 2008). We can also see that although the LL can be a reflection of the world's linguistic trends, e.g. the spread of English as *lingua franca* (studies by Schlick 2002; MacGregor 2003; Griffin 2004; Karolak 2022), it can also indicate social changes and challenges, such as the migration of people (for varying reasons – work, military conflicts etc.; see e.g. Baranova 2004)) which seems to be a key issue of the present day realities. García and Guijarro (2019) conducted research in Lavapiés in Madrid – one of the gateway cities, which in the 20th century welcomed immigrants from all over the world,

and where now over 80 nationalities can be identified. Brown (2019) analysed the LL that emerged in the districts inhabited by Somali refugees in the USA, particularly in non-urban areas, while Karolak (2022) conducted research in Dubai, focusing on the attitude of the migrant populations towards the official Arabic language and English as the *lingua franca*.

The studies of the LL in Poland, which focused, for instance, on the presence of the Ukrainian language in public space, have been conducted for several years (Pawłowski 2019a, 2019b; Levchuk 2021, 2023). Levchuk (2021) recalls a number of factors that contributed to the growing number of Ukrainian immigrants in Poland, the political situation in Ukraine in 2014 (annexation of Crimea and occupation of the Donbas region) being one of them. At that time, Ukrainians started to mark their presence in such areas as education, universities and the labour market – as it was a relatively easy way to obtain work permits (Levchuk 2021). The Ukrainian language also started to be more visible in other public spaces, particularly in banks, regional offices, insurance companies, in advertisements, educational institutions or transportation (see Levchuk 2021: 2; after Pawłowski 2019a, 2019b). The case presented in this paper – the Ukrainian language in the Polish urban public space – differs however, firstly, in terms of the processes underlying the emergence of Ukrainian language in the public space, and secondly in terms of the categories of signage and places in which Ukrainian appears. The Polish context, to which the study refers, corresponds to a certain extent to what Brown (2019: 77) describes as “new multilingual contexts that result specifically in refuge situations, i.e., multilingual situations that bring together speakers of differing languages because of (forced) displacement”.

LL research focuses on a great variety of sociolinguistic aspects, as mentioned earlier, which also require proper analytical tools and methods. Most LL studies centre around collecting and counting the signs. Undeniably, this is often the first step which has to be, however, further followed by more in-depth analysis. Understanding the underlying socio-linguistic processes of the LL may require, for instance, the consideration of the theory of geosemiotics, i.e. “the social meaning of material placement of signs and discourse and of our actions in the material world” (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 2). Furthermore, the three systems of geosemiotics have to be included in the research, as they allow one to comprehend the meaning of the particular context. These, according to Scollon and Scollon (2003), would include “interaction order” (in LL research understood as all the ways in which discourses, placed on signs, regulate social interaction, here specifically how signs are produced and interpreted by social actors, for instance the responses to Ukrainian language on signs). Another notion concerns “visual semiotics” (images and how they are mediated by social actors) and the last one, “place semiotics”, very broadly understood as “the built environment

along with the ‘natural’ landscape within which the action takes place” (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 9). All of these concepts create an image of the analysed context. As “social actors” (here: Polish citizens, Ukrainian refugees), people interact with signs and discourses, which allows them to infer the overall meaning of signs.

In order to understand the meaning making process better, one also has to consider Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) “grammar of place semiotics” that includes “code preference” system (the indexical or symbolic use of the chosen language), the “inscription” system (e.g. fonts used, which for the purpose of the present study the author would associate with a writing system, i.e. Cyrillic alphabet), the “emplacement” system (“some of the ways in which signs and images and other forms of written discourse come to have their meaning in part because of where and how they are placed in the material world” Scollon & Scollon 2003: 166). The presented concepts may better explain the significance of signs with Ukrainian language and how they are received / perceived (different language and different writing system than in Poland, i.e. Cyrillic alphabet), and how they are understood and interacted with due to their placement.

3. THE STUDY

The study explores the linguistic landscape in the public space of the city of Poznań in the following two contexts: the first six months of war and after two years to verify if any changes appeared the LL. By looking at the sign emplacement, social actors and generally the theory of geosemiotics, the study examines the social meaning of the signs. The analysis is directed at two notions “solidarity” and “inclusion”. Further, the study also addresses the question of the role of the LL in context-based language learning, in the development of language awareness in the host community and maintenance of the language. The following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. How can the LL manifest solidarity between nations?
2. How can the LL prompt feelings of inclusion in newly arrived refugees, in the Polish context?

Further on:

3. How can the LL encourage language learning, develop language awareness and act as a language maintenance tool?

3.1. Key concepts for the study – “solidarity” and “inclusion”

The context of the research can be characterised by specific conditions: war, refugees, forced relocation, linguistic change and identity shifts. These can influence the character of the LL, which through language can reflect the dynamics of societal changes and processes. As the author assumes that discourse which appeared in the public space of Poznań may reflect acts of solidarity and the inclusive attitude of the host nation, the two terms, “solidarity” and “inclusion”, should be explained. The definitions serve as a point of reference in the process of analysis of the collected signs. The concept of “solidarity” can be briefly defined as the “unity (of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). While “inclusion” as “the act of including someone or something as part of a group, list, etc., or a person or thing that is included”. Furthermore, it can also be understood as “the idea that everyone should be able to use the same facilities, take part in the same activities, and enjoy the same experiences, including people who have a disability or other disadvantage” (Cambridge Online Dictionary). This study is an attempt to show how these definitions could be applied to the context of the LL and the Ukrainian community in Poland.

3.2. Methodology

The research discussed here was conducted with a diachronic approach in two stages, Stage 1 from February 2022 to September 2022, and Stage 2 after two years. In Stage 1 the graphic material was collected in the public space of Poznań, i.e. mainly in the central area of Poznań, here understood as the streets located within walking distance from the Railway Station, hence the outcomes of the observations are limited to this locality only. The reason for not going beyond this area was the focus on the spaces where refugees arrived, received help and visited institutions which issued necessary documents. The signs were documented (photographed) by the students of a master’s degree course in Modern Languages – specialisation: Image and Mediation Communication at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, as part of a seminar project under the author’s supervision. Students participating in the project gave written consent for their photos to be used in further research and for publication purposes.

The Stage 2 observations were conducted from mid-2023 to mid-2024, when the situation of the refugees was more stable, many of them having managed to settle in Poznań and having begun the acculturation process by entering the labour market and educational system. They did not need as much support as

at the beginning of 2022. In Stage 2, the findings from Stage 1 were compared with the socio-linguistic reality after 2 years.

In Stage 1 the author applied quantitative-qualitative method, which firstly concerned the categorization of signs with regard to the content. Further, they were analysed in terms of the issuers of the signs, i.e. bottom-up vs. top-down division, and language relations, i.e. categorization into monolingual, bilingual or multilingual signs. These signs were also analysed in terms of language use with particular focus on instrumental and symbolic functions and in reference to the concept of place semiotics. Any sign that contained a text in Ukrainian (or Russian) language constituted the unit of analysis. The author wanted to focus on these signs that could be read by refugees. Furthermore, a multimodal discourse approach was applied (see Malinowski 2009; Kress 2009) as an analytical tool. Most of the signs manifest multimodal composition, in which different modes become mutually influential. Malinowski (2009: 121) explains it by stating that "linguistic, visual, spatial, and other communicative modes present in the linguistic landscape might interact in complex ways to produce multiple meanings". The multimodal approach in the case of this study (analysis of signs in terms of solidarity and inclusive messages) gains particular applicable value as the mentioned combination of varying semiotic resources / modes, e.g. text, image and colour, create more memorable and better understood messages, which in general contribute to the meaning making process (see Kress & van Leeuwen 2020).

3.3. Stage 1 – Findings

In the course of the research a total of 117 signs (prepared by Polish citizens) were documented. Although this number does not seem particularly high, it should be remembered that some of the signs occurred several times in the researched area, therefore each of them was not counted as a separate unit. The main criterion in the course of signs' documentation was the presence of Ukrainian language. However, as the refugees arrived from the area where Russian was the main language, the researcher decided to document also any example of this language present in LL of the studied area.

3.3.1. Categories of signs

Firstly, the signs were divided into 9 categories (Table 1) according to the content. The analysis of the proposed categories revealed that messages touched upon the topics related to the daily existence of people. One could

find information on accommodation and job offers, health services, humanitarian aid and safety of the vulnerable people, which all served to meet the basic human needs.

3.3.2. Top-down vs bottom-up signs

The collected and categorised signs underwent further analysis in terms of the issuers of the signs and the author applied Ben-Rafael's (2006: 14) division into 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' signs. Within the collected items, both top-down signs ("issued by national and public bureaucracies – public institutions, signs on public sites, public announcement and street names") and bottom-up signs ("issued by individual social actors – shop owners and companies – like names of shops, signs on businesses and personal announcements") could be identified. Table 2 presents the distribution of top-down and bottom-up signs in each of the identified categories.

The results show that bottom-up signs, hence those created by private individuals and companies, dominated in all categories. The top-down signs, though in much lower numbers, reflected the involvement of official institutions, bureaucracies, by providing proper information concerning help, safety issues or legal regulations.

3.3.3. Language relations

In the next stage, the documented signs underwent analysis in terms of languages present. The study revealed the presence of monolingual (Ukrainian only, Russian only), bilingual (Ukrainian-Polish, Polish-Ukrainian) signs, as well as an instance of a trilingual sign. While Polish and Ukrainian languages dominated, one sign with Russian language was also recorded. This analysis was conducted separately for top-down and bottom-up categories (Table 3 and Table 4 respectively). The absence of Polish-only signs in the presented study has its explanation. The author focuses only on the signs that could be understood by refugees, as to them the messages were directed.

In the case of top-down signs, bilingual Polish-Ukrainian / Ukrainian-Polish signs dominated. Most of these signs belong to the category of informational signs which present "instrumental" use of language (Hult 2009) (showing the guidelines, warnings). Bilingual signs are also present in Cat. 4 Humanitarian aid and Cat. 7 Safety. The order of languages (Polish-Ukrainian, Ukrainian-Polish), although almost equal in numbers, still presents mainly the

Table 1. Categorisation of signs

Cat.	Category	N
Cat. 1	Accommodation	3
Cat. 2	Job offers	11
Cat. 3	Health	3
Cat. 4	Support / humanitarian aid	24
Cat. 5	Cultural events	10
Cat. 6	Services	3
Cat. 7	Safety	5
Cat. 8	Informational	39
Cat. 9	Solidarity slogans (flag, colours)	19
Total		117

Source: own study.

Table 2. Top-down and bottom-up signs in each category

Cat.	Category	Top-down	Bottom-up
Cat. 1	Accommodation	-	3
Cat. 2	Job offers	-	11
Cat. 3	Health	-	3
Cat. 4	Support / humanitarian aid	1	23
Cat. 5	Cultural events	-	10
Cat. 6	Services	-	3
Cat. 7	Safety	2	3
Cat. 8	Informational	11	28
Cat. 9	Solidarity messages	-	19
Total	117	14	103

Source: own study.

Table 3. Division of top-down signs into monolingual, bilingual and trilingual

Cat.	Monolingual	Bilingual	Trilingual	Lg combination
Cat. 4	-	1	-	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 7	1	1	-	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 8	3	7	1	Polish-Ukrainian (n = 4) Ukrainian-Polish (n = 3) Ukrainian-English-Polish (timetable)
Total	4	9	1	-

Source: own study.

official language (Polish) as the first one, which is in accordance with the overall language policy concerning presentation of messages in official vs non-official languages on bilingual signs (i.e. official language first, non-official / minority second). There was only one instance of a trilingual sign (providing information at the Railway station in Ukrainian, Polish and English), which was probably directed to a wider group of recipients than just Ukrainian or Polish people.

Table 4. Division of bottom-up signs into monolingual and bilingual

Cat.	Monolingual	Bilingual	Trilingual	Lg combination
Cat. 1	1	2	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-Polish
Cat. 2	6	5	–	Ukrainian-Polish
Cat. 3	3	–	–	–
Cat. 4	13	10	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-English (n = 1) Ukrainian-Polish (n = 7)
Cat. 5	2 (1 Russian only)	8	–	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 6	1	2	–	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 7	1	2	–	Ukrainian-Polish (n = 1) English-Ukrainian (n = 1)
Cat. 8	15	13	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-Polish (n = 7)
Cat. 9	8	11	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-Polish (n = 6)
Total	50	53	0	

Source: own study.

The bottom-up signs constituted the largest group of signs. They appeared both in monolingual and bilingual forms. Monolingual signs are present in all categories, with the dominant number in Cat.4 Support / humanitarian aid (n = 13) and Cat. 8 Informational (n = 15). Ukrainian language was used in all categories, with the exception of one sign which was written in Russian only (n = 1, Cat. 5). Bilingual signs were rather equally distributed in all categories, except for Cat. 5 (Cultural events, n = 8), Cat. 8 (Informational signs, n = 13) and Cat. 9 (Solidarity messages, n = 11) which were more numerous. Polish-Ukrainian language combination was present in each category and amounted to 28 signs in total. The Ukrainian-Polish language combination appeared on 23 signs, and one instance of English-Ukrainian combination was recorded. As monolingual signs counted in this research were mostly Ukrainian-only (except for 1 Russian-only), it becomes clear who the addressees of these messages are. In the case of bilingual signs, Polish-Ukrainian signs (n = 28) slightly

outnumber Ukrainian-Polish signs ($n = 23$). Although bottom-up signage is characterised by greater freedom in language distribution / combinations, in the studied case the official language still dominates and occupies the upper, first position on signs.

3.3.4. Multimodality of signs

Each of the identified categories of signs can be characterised by a multimodal composition that builds the image of the context in which languages are used. The descriptions of some of the categories, presented in this section, are supposed to illustrate how the messages were constructed with the multimodal approach applied.

Cat. 1. Accommodation

One of the most urgent challenges arising from the arrival of refugees was the need to secure safe accommodation. Support in this area was provided by non-governmental organisations, state authorities, and individual citizens. These differing sources of assistance influenced the materiality of the signs: institutionally produced signs were generally more solid and enduring, whereas those produced by private individuals were more temporary and ephemeral, as shown in Figure 1 ("I will host refugees from Ukraine free of charge" – author's translation). The placement of accommodation announcements was also of critical importance, as they were typically displayed at railway stations and near reception points – the first locations at which refugees arrived or to which they were directed.



Figure 1. Accommodation

Source: own study.

Cat. 2. Job offers

From the first weeks of the crisis situation, job offers (Cat. 2) appeared in the public space. Some of them were prepared by private people (often handwritten),



Figure 2. Job offer

Source: own study.

some were prepared more professionally, printed on posters by some businesses, which offered jobs to new workers from Ukraine. One of the examples of such an offer, depicted in Figure 2, provides the following messages: “Are you looking for a job?”, “Come to us”, “You will find a job in logistics, sales, ..., IT and in other sectors”, “Bring us your CV and we will try to adapt our offer to your qualifications” (author’s translation). Except for the text, this example also depicts the visualization of workers’ tasks. Another significant visual element is the use of colours of Ukrainian flags, which symbolize the nation and the recipients of messages.

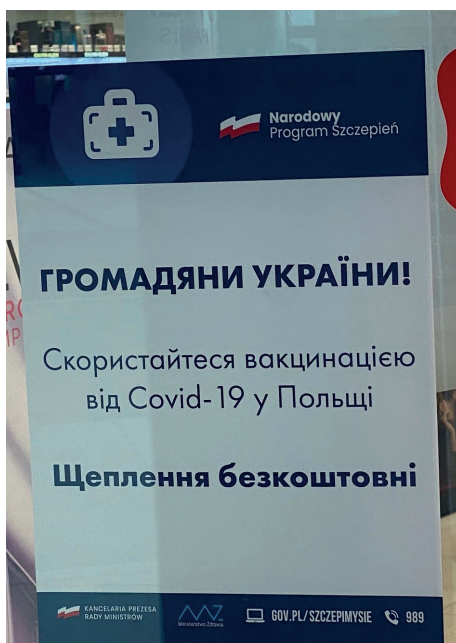


Figure 3. Information about COVID-19 vaccinations

Source: own study.

Cat. 3. Health

Leaflets / posters with information on the distribution of medicines, or different forms of medical help, including psychological therapy or vaccinations were also recorded, and they were intended to meet the needs of the traumatised people. They also show the access to basic services granted by the Polish government. Figure 3 depicts information on COVID-19 vaccinations issued by the Ministry of Health and by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister Republic of Poland. It says: “Ukrainian Citizens! Take vaccinations against Covid-19 in Poland. Vaccinations are free of charge” (author’s translation). The national character of the programme is emphasized by the symbolic use of the Polish flag. As a top-down official sign, it lacks reference to the Ukrainian flag colours.

Cat. 4. Support / humanitarian aid

Another category of signs, mainly in the form of posters, included information concerning help for refugees, such as the location of reception points, and where they could obtain humanitarian aid (Figure 4). The example depicts the directional sign that simply states “Reception point”. This is another example of sign where the written text is accompanied by the symbolic use of national colours, both Ukrainian and Polish, which may refer to mutual relations and help.



Figure 4. Informational sign

Source: own study.

Cat. 5. Cultural events

Supportive reactions could also be noticed in the field of cultural life. Bearing in mind the traumas the refugees experienced, on the initiative of cultural institutions, cultural events were announced (theatre plays, concerts, family events, circuses, etc.). Posters (Figure 5) in both Polish and Ukrainian, were inviting Ukrainian people to participate in them together with the hosting society and forget about the drama of war. In the presented example (“Poznan family Days”) the text is accompanied by an iconic image of a family and iconic representation of activities / attractions (i.e. workshops, conferences or picnics). The application of yellow background and fonts in blue colour form a symbolic message directed to Ukrainian people.



Figure 5. Cultural events – invitation to bowling and Poznań family days

Source: own study.

Cat. 7. Safety

With the influx of a great number of vulnerable people, mainly women and children, and the elderly, there appeared concerns over possible various forms of abuse that Ukrainian refugees might experience, including human



Figure 6. Safety instructions issued by the Police

Source: own study.



Figure 7. Organisation of the railway station

Source: own study.

trafficking. Hence, some informational posters (in English and Ukrainian) with instructions on how and why to act cautiously on arrival in Poland were issued by national institutions. The police distributed leaflets on safety precautions, warning against dishonest people who could take advantage of the difficult situation of the refugees. These leaflets also included telephone numbers and places that could be of assistance in case of emergency situations (Figure 6). They contained information both in Polish and Ukrainian that was printed on blue and yellow background indicating the potential addressees of the message.

Cat. 8. Informational

Railway stations and bus stations were, at the beginning of the war in Ukraine, often the first destination in Poland. Initially, a great number of refugees spent time in station halls waiting for further help. This resulted in a great variety of signs in Ukrainian language, produced both by national transport companies but also by ordinary people, with the intention of easing the refugees' war trauma and shock. Hence, the identified signs in Cat. 8 included, for example, information concerning the organisation of the railway station in Ukrainian language (Figure 7), or translation of information on tickets (Figure 8). These signs allowed the refugees to use national public transport just as Polish people would, even without additional assistance, as they present-

ed clear visualisation of the place and of a document.

Official government institutions, for example the border guard, also issued information for refugees in Polish and Ukrainian. This information referred to organisational aspects, concerning, for instance, the documents which refugees should apply for on arrival in Poland, or which institutions would be helpful. City council, as an example, where refugees could get their documents (e.g., the PESEL – an identity number in Poland which allows people to be employed legally, enrol their children in school, or use public health services), also immediately issued bilingual (Polish and Ukrainian) information signs, easing navigation in the institutions' premises.

Except for the signs with information concerning different forms of help for refugees, there appeared several instances of informational-warning signs in the public space of Poznań, for example near construction sites (Figure 9). It is worth mentioning that at the moment of the outbreak of war and the influx of refugees to the Polish cities, including Poznań, most of the centre of Poznań was one large construction site, which severely obstructed easy movement in the area. Further, this was the place often visited by refugees, due to the location of the railway and bus stations, as well as major help centres.

Cat. 9. Solidarity messages

Solidarity messages appeared in a variety of forms, such as stickers, plaques, posters or billboards. They all combined various modalities, texts (slogans), images (for example, hearts, see Figure 12, 13), the same colours blue and yellow symbolizing Ukrain-

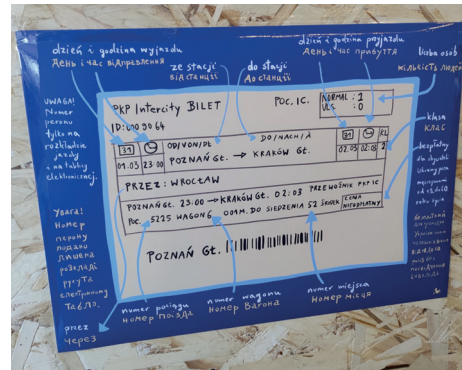


Figure 8. Translation of a railway ticket

Source: own study.



Figure 9. Organisational / informational sign at a construction site

Source: own study.



Figure 10. Solidarity slogans placed in the public transport

Source: own study.



Figure 11. Stickers on cars with solidarity slogans

Source: own study.



Figure 12. Free coffee and tea, and an expression of solidarity

Source: own study.



Figure 13. Solidarity billboards

Source: own study.

ian national flag. They differed however in terms of placement and size i.e. small stickers could be found on walls, lamp-posts, trams, cars; large billboards on tram stops or on large stands in the city centre, medium posters were placed on display racks. Such differences in emplacement guaranteed the message to be transferred to the wider audience. On most trams and buses one could notice stickers with the bilingual freedom slogan “Wolna Ukraina!!!” / “Вільна Україна!!!” (Eng. “Free Ukraine”) (Figure 10). Some of them were placed on cars (Figure 11). Blue and yellow colours of the stickers, which symbolized the Ukrainian flag, reinforced the message significantly.

Some signs combined different types of information, i.e. that of help and expression of solidarity as the presented example in Figure 12, which shows an invitation for free coffee and a solidarity slogan “ми з вами” (Eng. ‘We stand with you’). This message is reinforced by the images of two flags – Ukrainian and Polish, in respective national colours in the symbolic shape of hearts that accompany the text.

Another important group of signs are billboards. They played a significant supportive role at the beginning of the war in Ukraine. They appeared in public spaces in different places in the city within a week of the outbreak of war. Usually bilingual (Polish-Ukrainian, Ukrainian-Polish), they expressed solidarity and support for the Ukrainian nation (Figure 13;

Figure 14) through the slogans "Ми з Вами!" (Eng. "We stand with you") or "всім серцем з вами" (Eng. "With you with all our hearts"). As in the case of previous solidarity signs, also the messages on billboards were in multimodal form combining the text and a heart in Ukrainian national colours. Additionally, they were the medium used to spread knowledge among Polish citizens of the possible forms of help that could be given to the refugees.



Figure 14. Solidarity billboards

Source: own study.

3.4. Stage 2 – Observations 2023–2024

After over a year of war in Ukraine and the presence of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, some changes in the LL of Poznań were observed. Already by mid-2023 and up to mid-2024, the signage that expressed solidarity was almost non-existent. There were no billboards, while the stickers were present only occasionally. The top-down signs remained in the public space of official institutions (banks, post offices, hospitals) and only occasionally in the private sphere, such as in shops, in the area of culture (event posters), job offers, in shops, in healthcare, ATMs, construction sites or adverts / slogans. If we were to judge how large the Ukrainian community in Poznań is only on the basis of the LL in the streets (public urban space) it might be concluded that it is not significant. However, from everyday experience, when we see Ukrainian language in informational texts in institutions, in shops (both bottom-up and top-down signs), and people hear Ukrainian in all public spaces, we become aware of the presence of this community.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the research presented in this paper show that Ukrainian language was displayed in 9 categories of the signs collected and documented in 2022- mid 2023. They are all thematically related either to solidarity responses or to the everyday existence of people, i.e. health issues, safety, accommodation, employment etc. The author applied different research approaches in the discussed

study, i.e. content categorization, division into top-down and bottom-up signs, language relations, and multimodal perspective in order to analyse two research questions concerning the solidarity and inclusive character of texts. These notions are discussed in reference to the definition of “solidarity” and “inclusion”.

The majority of signs, which expressed solidarity, were categorized as “Solidarity messages (Cat. 9). The bilingual texts usually referred to the war and the Ukrainian community. Simple, short but powerful messages match the definition of “solidarity” well, which is centred around the notion of “unity” and “common interests, objectives, standards”. The LL reflected the unity of Polish society as for instance preparation of bilingual signs requires the cooperation of a large group of people who choose the messages and then translate them. Such initiatives correspond to the idea of the shared, common objectives visible in Polish people acting together to support Ukrainian refugees and the refusal to accept the injustice. Solidarity signs were spread around the city centre, and further in the other districts, however they were particularly powerful in places with large concentrations of refugees, such as railway stations, reception points or other facilities located in the central area of Poznań. An important feature that reinforced the power of solidarity messages is the multimodal composition of these signs. Texts and images were accompanied by Ukrainian national colours, blue and yellow, which symbolically index the addressees of the message (Ukrainian refugees) and which may contribute to the overall emotional intense reception of messages. The acknowledgement of national symbolism can also be considered as an act of solidarity. Not only did this concern the Category 9 “Solidarity messages”, but also in other categories the symbolic use of colours was present on signs.

Another studied characteristic of the collected signs was their inclusive character. The basic idea of the earlier presented definition of “inclusion” is the notion of “including someone as part of a group”. The inclusive character of the messages on signs was recorded in texts issued by both official institutions and private people. The inclusion was expressed for instance in invitations to cultural events, messages with accommodation and job offers, descriptions at the railway stations or texts related to the healthcare system. In that particular context, the LL referred to all the rights that the inhabitants of Poland possess, and which could also be granted to the refugees. Furthermore, including someone in the community does not only concern access to institutions, events, and the like, but it also provides this person with protection and care, as seen in the informational signs at construction sites, showing concern for the safety of all people in that particular locality, as well as in top-down signs issued for example by police concerned about human trafficking or possible thefts. On the basis of the analysed signs, it can be stated that refugees were perceived as members of

a community, which corresponds to the definition of inclusion, i.e. “including someone as part of a group”.

The analysis of the signs in terms of top-down vs bottom-up division revealed that signs were mainly issued by private people, who were most often involved in spontaneous aid actions. The official signage was limited only to informational signs, i.e. presenting more instrumental language use. In the case of the top-down category, bilingual Polish-Ukrainian signs were dominant. This follows the language policy of the country where the official language always appears first on signage. The bottom-up signs gave the issuers much greater freedom in language choice, hence the dominance of monolingual, Ukrainian-only signs in this category. This also indexed who the addressees of messages were. The presence of only one Russian-only sign can have symbolic meaning. A great number of refugees arrived from territories of Ukraine, such as Donbass, Crimea or central regions, where Russian was mainly in use. However, the attitude towards Russian language changed dramatically with the outbreak of war. The general resistance towards Russian language and turn to Ukrainian only started to intensify. Therefore, the presence of Ukrainian language on signs, except for its informational value, had also strong symbolic overtone, showing the resistance towards what was then described the “language of the oppressor”. It was also the identification with the cause among Polish citizens (the issuers of signs).

The presence of signs with Ukrainian language could pose some misunderstandings or negative reactions among Polish citizens. Inability to read the messages in Ukrainian language, the problem most of Polish society could have experienced, could lead to frustration and result in violent attitude towards Ukrainian people. However, this assumption did not go under further analysis, therefore cannot be perceived as an overall tendency. In bilingual bottom-up signs, Polish-Ukrainian language relation was dominant. As Ukrainian refugees constitute the minority in Polish society, the message can be prepared first in the language of the dominant group and then the language of the minority group.

Another important aspect of the research concerns the placement of signs. One can observe a strong relation between thematic categories of signs, the meaning of the message and the context of their presence. In accordance with Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) concept of “place semiotics” (see Section 2), signs would not serve their purpose if located in a different place than the restricted area described in the beginning of the Method section. This relation is well visible at the railway station where the signs index the actions a person can undertake in this particular place. The signs, actions and place create the “grammar of place semiotics” (Scollon & Scollon 2003). The analysed situation also shows how LL responded to the new reality. This response was reflected in code preference: the choice of Ukrainian language (directed towards Ukrainian refugees), in inscrip-

tion system (the choice of Cyrillic alphabet) and in emplacement (the greatest accumulation of signs was observed in the chosen research area, as a place where refugees arrived and organized their new life). These three interacting aspects created a meaningful system of communication between the “guests” and the hosts.

5. SOLIDARITY AND INCLUSION IN THE LL – FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS: SOME LANGUAGE TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

The conducted research, that centred around the notions of “solidarity” and “inclusion” in the LL, provides data that can be valuable in other social contexts, such as education. It also prompts further discussion on how the LL could be used in raising socio-cultural-linguistic awareness, in foreign (Ukrainian) language learning, and whether this can be a support for language maintenance within the Ukrainian community. The sudden emergence of a new language in the public space (Ukrainian in Poland) next to the official language, Polish, certainly prompted many discussions in the society. Taking into consideration the fact that Polish language is dominating the LL in Poland, with only certain areas where other languages appear (transport, tourism, advertising, entertainment), the emergence of Ukrainian written language (with its different writing system) may foster a discussion on its usage, function and position in communication.

Most language learning takes place in the school / classroom environment, with textbooks, fixed scenarios of the lessons and the use of different media. However, as many studies have shown (see for example Algryani 2022; Dumanig & David 2019; Melo-Pfeifer 2023), the LL may provide a natural language learning context, in which people in a way are “forced” to experience new linguistic messages, and hence may become more involved in the language learning process. If this case is taken into consideration (the emergence of new signs in the LL as a response to war), one can see that there are two contexts in which a language could be learned from the LL: the temporary one at the beginning of war, when the structures of messages, vocabulary, localities clearly indicate “solidarity” features, and the permanence or stability context, in which only language pertaining to the inclusivity remains, also characterised by its specific forms, structures and context-related vocabulary. Both of these contexts are an ideal source of information about language structure and lexis and their applicability, however, while the language of “inclusivity” can be implemented into classroom contexts more regularly (serving as material for linguistic analysis, new vocabulary acquisition), in the case of “solidarity” messages they can be of use only if they are archived, hence there is a great dependence on linguists and teachers who collect the signs for educational purposes.

The use of the LL for context-based learning has already been emphasised by many scholars such as Gorter et. al (2021) (LL and language awareness in the Basque Country in Spain), or an extensive publication on language learning opportunities in a variety of contexts in public spaces by Malinowski et al. (2020). Cenoz and Gorter (2008; after Sayer 2020: 329) describe the important features of the LL in the context of language learning, i.e., "input that is authentic and highly contextualised both because signage is in situ and is often evocative and multimodal". They identified three areas which point to the significance of the LL in language learning, that would be: "the development of pragmatic competence, the acquisition of literacy skills, and the development of multicompetence based on the ability to decode complex hybrid and multimodal texts" (Cenoz & Gorter 2008). In the case presented in the study, the LL could be used for practising reading skills, raising awareness about different writing systems, particularly visible in the case of Ukrainian language. Gorter et al. (2021: 179) further indicate that "[t]he linguistic landscape offers a chance to link the classroom with real language use in society. What is learned inside the classroom can be reinforced in the context of natural language use". That could be illustrated with the bilingual signs from Cat. 8, where a train ticket and a plan of a railway station are translated. Such real-life study materials may support both vocabulary and translation activities. They can be applied in Ukrainian language courses which are conducted at university level, or those organised as a response to the growing number of people interested in learning the language of the refugees / immigrants to ease communication with them.

The current study refers to two linguistic groups, speakers of the Polish language and speakers of Ukrainian (also Russian) language, it can be assumed that the process of context-based learning may differ in these groups. Recognition of its importance emphasizes the necessity to analyse the context itself, in which language emerged and can be acknowledged by the social actors. Understanding signs and how they are interpreted relies on the so-called "context of reception", a term used by Collins and Slembrouck (2004). They emphasise the differences in the perception of the signs which stem from the knowledge of a language, experience of the readers or purpose of reading. As their study shows, "shop signs and notices are complex indexes of source, addressee, and community which are manifest in different readers' interpretations" (Collins & Slembrouck 2004: 335). Furthermore, the "frame of interpretation readers bring to situated multilingual texts" (Collins & Slembrouck 2004: 335) can be very broad as they are influenced by different social, historical, cultural circumstances as well as personal experiences, beliefs and knowledge. This may influence the responses to LL as well as the whole interpretation process. In the context of presented research, signs in Polish or Ukrainian or bilingual ones may be perceived differently

by Ukrainian and Polish recipients. Different cultural backgrounds, experience (especially related to the trauma of war among Ukrainian refugees), knowledge of language (including the shifts in linguistic identity, i.e. conscious choice of Ukrainian language instead of Russian), they all form different emotional loads which may influence the interpretation process.

While many would think that such context-based learning practice is beneficial to Polish learners of Ukrainian or language enthusiasts, it should still not be ignored that, in the emerging Ukrainian community in Poland, there are people who may also not be fluent in Ukrainian, particularly children who are not part of the Ukrainian education system. Hence the presence of Ukrainian language in the public space may have a supportive role in language maintenance.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Prior to the outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian war, the Ukrainian community was not strongly visible in Polish society. People were used to the incoming labour from eastern Europe, and they accepted them as new members of society. The new language started to be heard in the public space more often, but it was still not widely spread in visual-written form. With the outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian war this changed. Never before had there appeared bilingual (here Polish-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Polish) signs in Poland on such a large scale (excluding minority and regional languages which have officially regulated status and are allowed to issue bilingual signage both officially and privately) and in such a variety of public spheres. One has to remember that in the Polish reality monolingual Polish signage dominates in LL in the public space. Furthermore, the content of the collected and analysed signs bears specific characteristics, as it reflects the current reality in which the signs emerged. The study revealed that the signs which appeared in the Polish public space as a response to the war in Ukraine, express solidarity, support and understanding, as well as create a sense of inclusion into the host society. Furthermore, the analysis of the 'context of reception' may contribute to the research which could measure the psychological impact the signs have on their readers, here Polish-only speakers and Ukrainian refugees. This notion also seems crucial in the context of language maintenance (Ukrainian community), raising language awareness, and general applicability of the LL in the language learning environment, as the attitude towards a language plays a key role in educational success, as well as in the process of integration.

The visibility of the Ukrainian language was related to two main phenomena: on the one hand, Polish people wanted to express their solidarity with the refugees and show them inclusive attitude by publishing different forms

of visual and textual messages in Ukrainian, and on the other, this immediate emergence of Ukrainian in different spheres of life eased communication with newly arrived, traumatised people.

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- Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej @MRPiPS_GOV_PL 22 July 2022 #Rynek-Pracy: zatrudnienie w Polsce znalazło już 358 tys. obywateli Ukrainy. Najwięcej osób rozpoczęło pracę w województwie: mazowieckim (79 tys.), dolnośląskim (37,9 tys.) [Image attached] [Post] X. https://x.com/MRPiPS_GOV_PL/status/1552306859956109313?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1552306859956109313%7Ctwgr%5Ecaa77f0b6c63ed4e4fcb36826d84eda596e1217d%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fbydgoszcz.tvp.pl%2F61530779%2Filu-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy-juz-pracuje-w-polsce&mx=2
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„Solidarność” i „inkluzja” w krajobrazie językowym. Obecność języka ukraińskiego w publicznej przestrzeni miejskiej w Polsce oraz wynikające z niej implikacje glottodydaktyczne

ABSTRAKT. Wybuch wojny ukraińsko-rosyjskiej znacząco wpłynął na życie milionów ludzi w Ukrainie, z których wielu musiało uciekać z kraju. Miało to również wpływ na rzeczywistość społeczno-kulturową w krajach sąsiednich, takich jak Polska, która przyjęła setki tysięcy uchodźców wojennych. Sytuacja ta znalazła odzwierciedlenie w pejzażu językowym (ang. *linguistic landscape* LL) wielu polskich miast, na przykład w Poznaniu, gdzie uchodźcy przybyli i rozpoczęli nowe życie. Pejzaż językowy, który pojawił się w tym konkretnym kontekście, jest opisywany w odniesieniu do koncepcji „solidarności” i „inkluzji”. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, że komunikaty na znakach skierowane do ukraińskich uchodźców mogą zarówno wyrażać solidarność narodu polskiego z Ukraińcami, jak i mieć funkcje inkluzywne. Ponadto zasugerowano, że ta szczególna postać pejzażu językowego może odgrywać istotną rolę w podnoszeniu świadomości językowej, w nauce języka obcego opartej na kontekście i w podtrzymywaniu języka. W artykule przedstawiono dwuetapowe badanie ilościowo-jakościowe pejzażu językowego. Zastosowano podejście diachroniczne, które skupia się najpierw na analizie pejzażu językowego w pierwszych sześciu miesiącach wojny, a następnie analizuje i opisuje zmiany, które pojawiły się w pejzażu językowym w ciągu następnych dwóch lat trwania wojny.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: wojna, tożsamość, pejzaż językowy, społeczność ukraińska, solidarność, włączanie, nauka języka, świadomość językowa.

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Linguistic landscapes in transition: Polish students' views on Ukrainian and Russian signage

ABSTRACT. In today's globalised world, the presence of foreign languages and signs is not unusual. However, during periods of conflict, these linguistic features gain particular significance, including linguistic landscapes. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has substantially affected the Polish linguistic landscape, prompting an exploration of the attitudes of Polish university students to these changes. The findings indicate, first, that students have observed a noticeable increase in Cyrillic signage in their cities. Second, responses to these multilingual signs – particularly those in Ukrainian and Russian – range from strongly positive to neutral, and in some cases overtly negative. While many participants view such signage as a marker of demographic change and a symbol of solidarity with newcomers, reflecting Poland's openness amidst geopolitical shifts, others perceive it as overshadowing Polish identity or indicating preferential treatment of Ukrainians. As a result, the presence of Ukrainian and Russian signage in Polish public spaces emerges not only as a practical tool for communication but also as a powerful symbol of evolving social values.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscape, Ukrainian language, Russian language, signs, attitudes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Signs are a foreseeable element of every public space, e.g., they regulate our behaviour as well as advertise products or services and, last but not least, enable us orientation in the area or city. They represent local city or regional authorities or may be implemented by private people. They are not only typical of multicultural metropolises or tourist hotspots like Karlovy Vary¹ (Sloboda 2020) or Świnoujście, both located in the borderlands with Germany, where

¹ A recent case study from the Czech-German border region offers a useful point of comparison: In the context of Karlovy Vary, multilingual signage in both the artistic and regulatory domains is predominantly driven by the tourism industry. The Czech language is dominant, with English serving as the primary accompanying language, while Russian is limited to rare quadrilingual signs, such as those pertaining to spa regulations and leisure attractions. The study interprets this minimal visibility as being compatible with a post-pandemic or post-2022 shift and a possible symbolic distancing from Russia in public space (cf. Lisek 2025: 360).

signs are mainly multilingual (Lisek 2020, 2018b). Linguistic landscapes (LL) are an everyday part of each urban or rural reality, also the post-covid and war reality – not only in Ukraine but also in the neighbouring countries, e.g. Poland.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already redesigned many LL and the way of thinking about language in the public space. Gorter and Cenoz (2024: 1) cogently point out that the pandemic “has made it clear how sudden changes can take place in linguistic landscapes”. Such a sudden change has evidently taken place when the Russian invasion of Ukraine started in 2022, so one may suppose that there currently exist more texts in Cyrillic alphabet² in the public space in Poland than it used to exist before the year 2000.

This pilot study focuses on the presence of Ukrainian and Russian in the LL of Polish cities in general after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and highlights attitudes towards the changed landscapes mainly among Polish students. It is driven by the following research question: How do residents of Polish cities perceive the presence of Ukrainian and Russian language signage in the LL?

The paper begins by clarifying the phenomenon of LL and discussing definitions of signs used for the purpose of our study. Section 2 offers an overview of the methodological framework and instruments employed in this analysis. Next, in Section 3 the paper describes the role of signs for the city communities and the attitudes towards Russian and Ukrainian among young Poles. The conclusions as well as the outlook with (language) didactics implications are presented in the last part, namely Section 4.

2. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES AS A RESEARCH FIELD

Linguistic landscapes (LL) is defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration”. They refer to the public display of written language in broadly understood urban spaces, including firstly road signs, shopfronts, billboards government buildings, and secondly any (also moveable) display surfaces within the sight of another person. This phenomenon offers a precious lens through which sociolinguists can examine how languages coexist in a given territory and the power relations they reflect, because “spaces are embedded in multiple political

² Both Ukrainian and Russian use the Cyrillic alphabet. Inevitably some Europeans perceive Russian as a language of the aggressor. Some of them may not know that a part of the Ukrainian society, especially in eastern Ukraine, uses Russian for everyday communication. Young Poles born in the 2000s often do not distinguish between the Ukrainian and Russian script.

dimensions as ownership, power, identity, rights, exclusion, and marginalisation" (Shohamy 2018: 152). While this sociolinguistic perspective has received relatively little attention in Slavonic studies, it is even more relevant for today's Poland due to the fact that after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 the LL of many cities changed and the coexistence of Cyrillic and Latin alphabet is a new Polish reality. So do new attitudes towards languages and signs in the LL occur among Poles and thus need a categorisation and explanation.

The field of LL origins in inquiries of the 1970s and has gained significant prominence within sociolinguistics or language didactics in the last few years, as the latest findings of Wiśniewska (2018, 2021, 2024), Melo-Pfeifer (2023), Janíková (2019), Ballweg (2018) or Lisek (2018a) display. This paper on one hand focusses on the sociolinguistic facets and considers the language didactics aspects on the other hand, because they are pertinent to teaching not only languages, but to raise the awareness of future language teachers in particular and students of linguistics in general.

In the developmental years of LL research, scholars focused widely on multilingual areas in the western hemisphere. Regions from this part of the world served as prime examples where the coexistence of multiple languages in public spaces could be examined from various analytical viewpoints. The evolution of LL into a multimodal field has prompted a significant incorporation of qualitative elements into various studies. Contemporary inquiries reflect the multimedia interactions among text, imagery, materials, environmental context, and other factors, thereby deeply enriching the semiotic interpretation of LL (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010). The thematic diversity within LL research has expanded dynamically in recent years, leading to the recognition of dominant trends such as a heightened focus on multilingualism and linguistic superdiversity, especially within urban settings (Gorter & Cenoz 2015).

Considering that the article examines a Slavic LL, it is relevant to reference studies originating from or concerning Slavic regions. Pavlenko (2012), as a pioneer researcher³ in Slavia, investigates the prominence and role of the

³ During the 1970s, Lotman and Uspenskij (1970) developed a cultural semiotic framework in which language is conceptualized as a specific element with a communicative function that facilitates reciprocal exchange. The cultural semiotic concept, along with the significance of language perception in public spaces, represents the initial attempts to describe linguistic and semiotic landscapes. In current research concerning Slavic linguistic landscapes, semiotics is at the forefront of some studies. For instance, Henzelmann and Hacı (2025) discuss the semiotization of minority languages and their social relevance from a historical and contemporary perspective. In their remarks, they clearly refer to the background of semiotics and its impact on linguistic landscapes (Henzelmann & Hacı 2025: 115ff.). Consequently, Lotman and Uspenskij (1970) may be regarded as pioneers within the Slavic scientific community, even though they have indirectly influenced contemporary linguistic landscapes research.

Russian language in Kyiv's public spaces. She argues that, despite Ukrainian being the official state language, Russian maintains a dominant presence in Kyiv's LL. This dominance functions as a form of transgression, wherein the linguistic norms prescribed by official language policies are frequently unnoticed. In a similar vein, Müller (2021) explores the LL of Minsk. Müller's study focuses on the roles that Russian and Belarusian play across various contexts, assessing whether they are linked to different life domains or embody distinct symbolic meanings.

Public urban settings present in the context of periods of warfare or in post-war societies. complex and often contradictory landscapes, including intense language debates, are demonstrated for instance in the works of Baranova (2024), Henzelmann (2023, 2024) and Volvach (2023). For example, Volvach's study of Sevastopol illustrates the changes in the LL of the city, marked by an increasing dominance of Russian symbols and language that effectively deletes Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identities. This transformation is propelled by both governmental initiatives and local community actions, resulting in an LL that normalizes and legitimizes Russian nationalism. Equally, Henzelmann (2023) highlights the sudden visibility of Ukrainian in Polish and German shared public realm subsequent to the war outbreak. These developments show that while the use of the Ukrainian language is subject to unusual fluctuations at home, it has been recognised as a prominent phenomenon in the LL outside the country in Europe for the first time since 2022.

Furthermore, omitting or using a specific language in times of war is also an important mirror of social changes or processes such as protests. The setting becomes even more interesting while "being part of a hidden conflict in a society under censorship, the LL reflects the positions and attitudes of language activists (rather than of the community as a whole), both towards the political agenda and towards multilingualism" (Baranova 2024: 56). This dynamic reveals how conflicts can reshape public spaces, underscoring the relevance of LL studies in understanding the socio-political implications of war.

As the paper examines LL as a phenomenon and incorporates the latest research findings, it is equally important for the pilot study to clarify our definition of "signs". The description of a "sign" is indicative of a variety of methodological schools (Malinowski 2018: 869) and encompasses not only the conceptualization of the spatial limits of signs but additionally the broader contextual implications must be considered⁴.

⁴ In general, there are many perspectives, as Lisek (2016: 143) mentions, which allow us to characterise a sign and that are for instance: governmental (official vs. non official, Leclerc 1989 or government vs. non-government, Huebner 2006), informative (top-down vs. bottom

Contrasting perspectives highlight the diverse ways in which language and signs in public spaces can be understood: one view focuses on functional and interactive aspects of language use (text-linguistic and functional-pragmatic), as Scarvaglieri, Redder, Pappenhagen, and Brehmer (2013: 55) stress “the interactive relationship between author and reader,” while another underscores the physical and spatial dimensions of signs, as put forward by Cenoz and Gorter (2006: 71) and Backhaus (2007: 66).

The understanding of a sign in this study has a rather heterogenous character. For the sake of this paper, signage is perceived as text, which may occur in public space (as well as it can be a part of interaction) within a (spatially) definable setting containing non-Cyrillic and Cyrillic letterings. Arabic and Chinese letterings are not considered in this paper as research units, because they were not as popular as Cyrillic signs before the outbreak of the war in Polish cities and towns.

3. DATA SAMPLING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section focuses on the research methodology and the collected data within our inquiry. As Blommaert (2013: 41) shows “Signs in social space tell us a lot about the users of the space, how users interact with signs, how users influence and are influenced by them; they so start telling stories about the cultural, historical and social backgrounds of certain space”. Furthermore, due to the fact that the scientific community (Henzelmann 2023; Levchuk 2023) has observed an increase of Cyrillic signs in Poland, the users of the public space are being asked about their attitudes towards Cyrillic (Ukrainian and Russian) letterings. It should be noted that the historical background of Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Russian affairs play a role in this study.

This study concerns language attitudes. As Li and Wei (2022: 1) aptly note, “language attitude is an important construct extensively studied in sociolinguistics for its important role in identity construction, language maintenance, bi/multilingualism, language planning and policy [...]”. Their observation underscores the central role of attitudes toward languages and their speakers in sociolinguistic research, which is particularly relevant in understanding perceptions of Russian and Ukrainian as languages and symbols. Despite it, the term “attitude” itself lacks a single, universally accepted definition and is often conflated with related constructs such as prejudices and stereotypes.

up, Ben-Rafael et al. 2006), functional (municipal vs. commercial and transgressive, Scollon & Scollon 2003)

Two principal theoretical perspectives – the mentalist and the behaviourist point of view – have thus emerged to guide scholarly inquiry into attitudes⁵.

3.1. Methodology

I conducted a quantitative-qualitative study (Dörnyei 2007: 38; Albert & Marx 2016: 12) in which I used the natural setting of the signs situated mainly in Poznań and generated data in an ethnographic way to continue in an explorative manner. We expanded on analysis of the natural setting by employing some of the signs as stimuli as a part of open-ended questions in the survey, which we conceptualised as data collecting instrument. The quantitative part of the study concerned the signs in foreign languages and the increase of the use of foreign language signs in general, so that the qualitative part covered mainly the attitude towards the spotted signs. Open-ended questions in the survey were analysed with resort to qualitative content analysis according to the content-structuring variant (Kuckartz 2018).

3.2. Collected data

I collected the data in spring 2024 via internet using the snowball sampling and gained data from ten voivodships, which formed a sample of $n = 111$ records. After limiting the answers only to L1 Polish speakers and the young respondents, the sample had $n = 83$ records. Female students gave 81% of the answers, while 19% of answers were conducted from male students from the following regions: zachodniopomorskie, wielkopolskie, lubelskie, łódzkie, mazowieckie, kujawsko-pomorskie, opolskie, śląskie, lubuskie. For the purpose of this study, the answers of recipients older than 30 years were not analysed. The students were mainly ($n = 50$) at the age of 20–25, although the second mostly represented group was younger than 20 ($n = 33$). Concerning the educational level of the respondents, 76% ($n = 63$) have declared a school final exam (matura), 23% ($n = 19$) have already finished graduate studies and 1% ($n = 1$) finished a secondary school.

⁵ From the mentalist perspective, attitudes are conceived as complex psychological constructs that, although not directly observable, can be inferred through self-reflection. They exert a relatively stable influence on an individual's perceptions, values, and group affiliations, providing insight into how people internalize and respond to the status of Russian and Ukrainian. By contrast, the behaviourist perspective emphasizes observable responses to external stimuli, defining attitudes in terms of measurable behaviours rather than internal states.

4. NEW LL IN POLAND AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEM

The following subsections discuss the answers on the posed research question *How do residents of Polish cities perceive the presence of Ukrainian and Russian language signage in the LL?* Firstly, the frequency of the new signs will be analysed, then the role of the signs for the respondents will be characterized and finally their attitudes towards Ukrainian and Russian language signage will be presented.

4.1. New signs in the LL

It is quite evident that Poland's linguistic profile is undergoing significant shifts due to recent political and societal developments, particularly the increased influx of refugees from Ukraine⁶.

The transformations within the (LL) of major cities, towns, and urban areas are undeniable and readily observable by researchers. However, it is more compelling to examine whether linguistic laypersons, who are equally embedded in and active within the contemporary public spaces, perceive these changes in the same manner as researchers.

Only 2.6% of respondents mentioned that they do not encounter Ukrainian and Russian language signs in public spaces within Polish cities, while 97% admitted to coming across Ukrainian and Russian language signs in their city or town with different intensity (34.2% not so often, 40.4% often, 22.8% very often). Furthermore, 84% (n = 76) of respondents reported a significant change in the visibility of signage in both Ukrainian and Russian.

The signs shown above present new (old) signs in the Polish LL, which means that the Ukrainian language signs are not really new in the LL, but the perceived frequency of appearance of such signs increased. New to some extent are Russian language signs that did not occur subjectively so often before February 2022, which is probably connected with different migration waves. In the first one, after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, mainly Ukrainians from the western Ukraine came to Poland, while after February 2022 also Ukrainians from the eastern part of the country migrated there, where Russian is (also) used widely.

⁶ Although Poland continues to be largely perceived as a monolingual country, political events such as the war in Ukraine have profoundly impacted both its linguistic environment and the expectations placed on the education system. Recent data from various sources indicate that the number of Ukrainians currently in Poland ranges from 1,400,000 to four million, and over 200,000 Ukrainian students are currently enrolled in Polish schools (MEN 2022), with schools needing to prepare for further increases in numbers. This creates an urgent need for strategies that facilitate the successful integration of these students into classroom settings.



Figure 1 (left). Signs in Polish cities in year 2019

Source: own study.

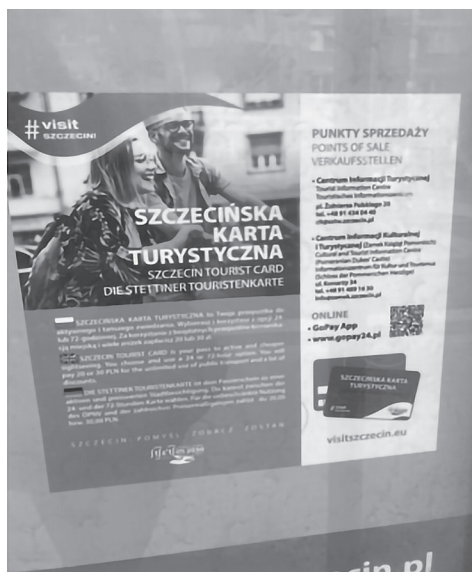


Figure 1 (right). Signs in Polish cities in year 2024

Source: own study.

4.2. The role of the signs

Due to the fact that the respondents mention an increase of the visibility of signage in Ukrainian and Russian language, it is relevant to understand firstly what Ukrainian and Russian language signs represent to the local communities⁷ in Polish cities.

The given responses were systematically analysed and categorised into thematic clusters to uncover predominant patterns and insights. This qualitative approach, known as clustering, enabled the identification of key areas of social strengths, challenges and emphasis among participants regarding the integration and support of Ukrainian and Russian populations within the Polish society. To streamline the analysis and enhance the clarity of the findings, it is beneficial to consolidate the inductive gained categories into broader, more encompassing themes. This step highlights the most significant patterns and insights.

The results of the analysis reveal several key patterns regarding the role of Ukrainian and Russian signage in Polish cities, as perceived by the respondents. The findings suggest that these signs are not only the markers of linguistic diversity but also indicators of broader social dynamics, including demographic presence, openness of the Polish speaking community, communication facilitation, and cultural integration.

Our results emphasize the recognition of the significant demographic presence of Ukrainian and Russian communities within Polish cities. 13 survey participants (out of 71) highlighted that these communities are already integrated into daily life, with some noting that their presence has become an undeniable part of the LL. This inquiry suggests that the signage, whether in Ukrainian or Russian, serves as a visible marker of the increasing foreign population. However, it also subtly underlines the recognition of difference, with a few responses acknowledging the unique challenges faced by Ukrainians, particularly in the context of the ongoing war.

The strongest tendency across the responses points to the openness and support shown by Polish communities towards Ukrainian and Russian speakers. This category received the most responses (25), with a particular emphasis on Polish solidarity with Ukraine. The signs are perceived not just as practical tools for communication but as symbols of support, empathy, and solidarity, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine. The respondents noted the helpfulness of

⁷ I understand local communities as comprising the residents of a city or town, regardless of whether they are predominantly native-born or newcomers and irrespective of their primary language.

Table 1. Themes and categories concerning the role of Ukrainian and Russian signs in local communities (n = 71)

Theme / Category	Number of Answers
1. Demographic Presence and Community Size	15
Many Ukrainians/Russians live among us	13
More foreigners are there	1
Feel the difference, which Ukrainians feel in Poland	1
2. Community Openness and Support	25
Polish help and openness	13
Polish help and being a symbol of war	1
Polish openness and easier living	3
Solidarity with Ukraine	3
Acceptance and Hospitality	2
Openness and inclusiveness of the city	3
3. Communication and Language Facilitation	12
Make the communication easier	8
Reducing the monolingualism in Poland	1
Need for communication	1
Foreign language and culture	2
4. Cultural Integration and Promotion of Culture	8
Culture and belonging	4
Promotion of Ukrainian and Russian culture	1
Need for culture and openness for it by Poles	1
That also Ukrainians like Graffiti	1
Multiculturalism	1
5. Others	11

Source: own study.

Polish society, which they view as facilitating easier integration and coexistence. The theme also suggests that the signage in Ukrainian and Russian serves as an indication of inclusiveness and a welcoming atmosphere, further promoting a sense of belonging among foreign nationals.

Another substantial theme revolves around the role of bilingual signage in facilitating communication. 12 responses reveal a strong belief in the importance of signs as tools for reducing language barriers. 8 survey participants highlighted that these signs make communication easier for both Ukrainians and Russians, promoting smoother interaction within Polish society. Furthermore, some responses indicated that the presence of such signage might help

diminish the prevailing monolingualism in Poland, fostering a more multilingual society. This finding underscores the functional aspect of signage: beyond symbolic representation, it serves as an essential element in everyday communication.

The theme of cultural integration emerged less prominently but still it is significant (with eight responses). These responses linked the visibility of Ukrainian and Russian languages to broader cultural and social dynamics, such as the promotion of multiculturalism and the integration of foreign cultures into Polish society. Some respondents emphasized the importance of cultural belonging and the promotion of Ukrainian and Russian heritage. While less frequent than other, these responses reflect a growing recognition of the cultural value of these languages and the need for openness towards diverse cultural expressions.

Overall, the most significant trend revealed in the table is the widespread recognition of Poland's openness and solidarity, particularly towards Ukrainian speakers, which positions bilingual signage as a powerful symbol of support. These signs are perceived not only as functional communication tools but also as representations of the broader social processes of integration and cultural exchange.

The findings indicate that the presence of Ukrainian and Russian signage in Polish urban environments is not merely a reaction to demographic shifts, but also an expression of the values of inclusivity, cultural promotion, and social solidarity within Polish society.

4.3. Perceiving the signs and attitudes

We already know that there are changes in the Polish LLs and that the respondents see the changes. Based on this, two questions regarding attitudes toward changes in the LL and their perception needed to be addressed. One of the questions was primarily descriptive ("Upon seeing the pictures, what immediate thoughts or associations come to your mind regarding the presence of Russian/Ukrainian signage in a Polish city?"), aiming to assess general attitudes and positions toward these languages in public spaces. The subsequent question addressed the presence of Russian and Ukrainian alongside Polish on signage, specifically: "How do you perceive the use of Ukrainian and Russian alongside Polish in public signage?"

Let us first examine the general attitudes, which are considerably diverse. The responses presented herein serve to illustrate the attitudes that were assessed using a picture stimulus.



Figure 2. Picture stimulus for the inquiry

Source: own study.

The quantitative results do not clearly indicate a strong distinct trend. The values for negative and positive responses are similar, with neutral attitudes being present only moderately in the majority. The resulting responses ($n = 69$) were categorized inductively into three main groups:

- a) negative ($n = 22$),
- b) neutral (31),
- c) positive (16).

Firstly, it is observable that the collected data encapsulate a range of negative attitudes of the respondents towards Ukrainian migrants in Poland. These categories exhibit varying frequencies, reflecting the prominence and prevalence of specific sentiments within the population.

One notable category is the *blocking of learning Polish*, which, although not the most frequently mentioned, underscores concerns about the potential barriers to linguistic integration. The respondents expressing this view perceive that the presence of Ukrainian migrants may impede the Polish-speaking population's

ability to maintain and develop their language skills, potentially affecting social cohesion and cultural preservation.

Another significant category is the *favouring of Ukrainians*, indicating a perception among some respondents that Ukrainian migrants receive preferential treatment. This sentiment may stem from observable disparities in policy implementation, social support, or public resources, fostering a sense of inequality and resentment among the native Polish population.

The feeling of “being abroad in one’s own country” reflects a profound sense of alienation experienced by some respondents. This sentiment suggests that the substantial Ukrainian presence has altered the social and cultural landscape to such an extent that individuals feel displaced or disconnected within their own homeland. This category highlights the complexities of national identity and the challenges of fostering a cohesive society amidst significant demographic changes.

The controversial views on the status of Ukrainians, encapsulated by statements like “Ukrainians are no longer guests”, reveal a shift in perception from viewing Ukrainian migrants as temporary residents to considering them as permanent fixtures within Polish society. This transition may influence attitudes towards integration policies, social acceptance, and the long-term implications of migration on national identity.

Predominantly, the category of negative attitudes emerges as the most prominent among the identified themes. This category encompasses a range of adverse sentiments towards Ukrainian migrants, indicating significant underlying tensions within the society. The negative attitudes are further illustrated by the following quotations:

Q(42): “These are rather negative thoughts, associated with the fact that Ukrainian signage has excessively dominated the landscape of Polish cities.”⁸

This statement highlights discomfort with the visible presence of Ukrainian culture in public spaces, suggesting a perceived threat to the aesthetic and cultural integrity of Polish urban environments.

Q(72): “Personally, I would prefer not to see them because I am in Poland and not in Russian-speaking countries.”⁹

⁸ The longer quotations presented in the footnotes in Polish are intended to facilitate a better understanding of the article. They were translated by the author of the text: *Są to raczej myśli negatywne, związane z tym, że oznakowanie ukraińskie zbyt mocno zdominowało krajobraz polskich miast.*

⁹ *Nie chciałabym ich widzieć, ponieważ jestem w Polsce, a nie w rosyjskojęzycznych krajach.*

This expression reveals a personal aversion to the presence of Ukrainian migrants, rooted in a desire for cultural homogeneity and possibly influenced by broader geopolitical tensions.

Additionally, the issue of *unequal treatment in education* surfaces as a critical category, with concerns about the disparate treatment of Ukrainian and Polish children within educational institutions. Such perceptions of inequality can foster feelings of injustice and exacerbate social divisions, hindering the integration process and the development of harmonious community relations.

Conflict-related concerns, encapsulated by references to “thinking about the conflict”, “war,” and “war and migration”, underscore the impact of ongoing geopolitical tensions on public attitudes towards migrants. The association of Ukrainian migrants with war and conflict likely intensifies negative sentiments and shapes the discourse around migration in Poland, reinforcing fears and prejudices that hinder social integration.

Secondly, the analysis of the data uncovered a range of categories reflecting neutral perspectives on LL and also on migration in Poland. These categories vary in frequency, indicating differing levels of prominence in respondents’ viewpoints. Notably, thoughts such as “there must be many migrants in PL” and “there must be many Ukrainians in PL” suggest a recognition of significant migrant presence, while categories like “associations with migrants” and “demographic changes are proceeding” highlight awareness of ongoing social changes.

Several categories denote neutral or pragmatic perspectives, including “new clients, new needs” and “nothing against the signs, but where is Polish”, which reflect practical considerations related to economic and cultural integration. Furthermore, expressions like “thoughts about aesthetics of the signs” and “associations with shops in the II Polish Republic” may carry underlying tensions related to cultural identity and historical associations. The quotations exemplifying negative attitudes underscore these sentiments:

Q(59): “There are many Ukrainians living in the area.”¹⁰

This statement highlights a perceived overabundance of Ukrainian migrants, potentially reflecting concerns about demographic saturation and its impact on local communities.

Q(93): “I believe that signage for services such as medical professionals should be translated more frequently.”¹¹

¹⁰ *W okolicy (sic!) mieszka sporo Ukraińców.*

¹¹ *Myślę o tym, że oznakowania serwisów takich jak lekarz powinny być częściej tłumaczone.*

This remark not only emphasizes the need for linguistic accommodation but may also imply that current signage is insufficiently inclusive, thereby fostering a sense of exclusion among native Polish speakers.

The diversity in category frequency reveals a complex interplay of acceptance, neutrality, and resistance within the sociolinguistic landscape of Poland. Addressing these multifaceted attitudes requires nuanced policy approaches that balance the facilitation of migrant integration with the preservation of cultural and linguistic heritage.

Thirdly, the inquiry captured also positive attitudes. Key positive categories include sentiments such as “each client is important”, “good idea”, and “happiness about the support”, which emphasize the value placed on assisting Ukrainian migrants. The recognition that “Polish is also present” alongside the migrants underscores a desire for linguistic inclusivity and cultural coexistence. Additionally, categories such as “medical or other live needs of Ukrainians”, “multiculturalism, openness and integration”, and “openness to new migrants and clients” reflect a commitment to addressing the practical and social needs of migrants, promoting a welcoming and tolerant societal framework.

The notion that “Poland becomes open and tolerant”, along with “support is important”, and “the Ukrainians feel welcome”, further illustrates the positive reception and integration efforts within Polish communities. Statements such as “we help Ukrainians during the war” highlight solidarity and humanitarian support in times of crisis, reinforcing the overarching theme of empathy and cooperation.

However, amidst these positive categories, there are underlying tensions exemplified by the following quotations which reflect negative attitudes:

Q(22): “It is good that thanks to such signs, Ukrainians do not have greater problems understanding the signs.”¹²

While ostensibly positive, this statement may imply that without these signs, Ukrainians would struggle, subtly suggesting a dependency or highlighting a perceived inadequacy in linguistic integration.

Q(25): “Poland is finally becoming an open and tolerant country.”¹³

Although the statement appears positive, the use of “finally” may indicate a previous lack of openness and tolerance, hinting at underlying frustrations or criticisms regarding Poland’s historical stance on migration.

¹² Dobrze, że dzięki takim znakom Ukraińcy nie mają większego problemu z rozumieniem znaków.

¹³ Polska w końcu staje się krajem otwartym i tolerancyjnym.

These quotations illustrate that while the overarching narrative is positive, there are nuanced negative undertones related to the process and perceptions of integration. The recognition of improvements in tolerance and support does not entirely negate past or present challenges, suggesting a complex interplay between acceptance and residual apprehensions.

The second part of this survey concerned the use of Ukrainian and Russian alongside Polish in public signage. The answers ($n = 77$) of the respondents were also divided in three main categories: negative (5), positive (24) and neutral (18).

Among the three categories depicted here, positive attitudes are the most frequent. Although neutral responses are also common, negative answers can be considered the least frequent. Here are some examples of the positive statements made by the respondents:

Q(38): "This is useful and necessary considering the numerous Ukrainian and Russian migrants"¹⁴.

Q(9): "Positively, everyone should feel welcomed in Poland, especially in a situation where they are fleeing from war"¹⁵.

Q(5): "Using Ukrainian and Russian languages in public spaces alongside Polish seems to me like a step toward openness and integration of communities, as well as a sign of respect for cultural diversity"¹⁶.

The three quotations are connected by a common theme of promoting multilingualism and inclusivity. They reflect a growing recognition of the need to adapt public language practices to accommodate the needs of migrant communities. The quoted answers also reflect how important language policies that embrace diversity and support the integration of migrants are, particularly in the context of Ukrainian and Russian speakers in Poland.

Furthermore, additional categories emerged with varying distributions of responses. Single mentions were also noted, however they were excluded from the in-depth presentation due to their infrequency:

- a) needed and helpful for native speakers ($n = 4$),
- b) it depends on the context, function and language ($n = 9$),
- c) it doesn't bother me ($n = 9$),
- d) natural or now natural ($n = 2$),
- e) needed, because English is needed ($n = 2$),
- f) strange and surprising ($n = 2$).

¹⁴ *Jest to przydatne i potrzebne zważając na liczne ukraińskich i rosyjskich migrantów.*

¹⁵ *Pozytywnie, każdy powinien czuć się witany w Polsce, szczególnie w sytuacji gdzie ucieka przed wojną.*

¹⁶ *Używanie języków ukraińskiego i rosyjskiego w przestrzeni publicznej obok polskiego widzę jako krok ku otwartości i integracji społeczności, a także jako wyraz szacunku dla różnorodności kulturowej.*

Some participants perceived the display of Ukrainian and Russian, alongside Polish, as functionally necessary or beneficial for speakers of these languages (d). Others stressed that the appropriateness of such multilingual signage depends on the specific context, purpose, and language in question (e). For another subset of respondents, this presence was not a source of concern (f). A small group considered the phenomenon natural or having become natural over time (g), or viewed it as equally justifiable as the use of English (h). Conversely, a few respondents found it unusual or surprising (i). Although these categories occurred less frequently and were therefore not analyzed in depth, they illustrate the diversity of attitudes toward multilingual signage in the Polish LL.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

This study offers an initial overview of Russian and Ukrainian in public space in Poland and the attitudes towards the changed LL mainly among Polish students after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The data reveals that for the vast majority of the respondents these multilingual signs are clearly visible and widely recognized as markers of demographic changes tied to migration patterns, especially following recent geopolitical events. Many participants associate such signage with Poland's openness toward newcomers, seeing it as a reflection of solidarity – particularly with Ukrainians – and a practical means of facilitating communication. In this sense, signage in Ukrainian and Russian is often viewed as a gesture of welcome and inclusivity, underscoring Poland's evolving cultural and linguistic environment.

At the same time, the responses given encompass a broad spectrum of attitudes, ranging from strongly positive through neutral to overtly negative. Positive sentiments focus on recognizing migrants' communication needs, appreciating diversity, and highlighting Poland's growing cultural openness. Neutral perspectives note the presence of new populations and the functional necessity of multilingual signage without expressing marked approval or disapproval. Though fewer in number, negative views spotlight concerns about overshadowing Polish identity, perceived preferential treatment of Ukrainians, or a sense of being "abroad in one's own country". These tensions are most pronounced in discussions of language learning, educational equity, and broader reflections on conflict-driven migration. Nonetheless, the mixed attitudes suggest a complex negotiation between fostering integration and preserving linguistic tradition within Polish cities.

Overall, the findings indicate that multilingual Ukrainian and Russian signage in Polish urban spaces serves not merely as an adaptation to demographic

shifts but also as a powerful symbol of evolving social values. On one hand, this practice supports newcomers' integration, mitigates language barriers, and projects solidarity during times of crisis. On the other, it sparks debates about national identity, cultural continuity, and the extent to which public spaces should reflect linguistic diversity. From a sociolinguistic perspective, these results underscore the role of the LL as both a practical medium for communication and an expressive domain for social attitudes.

5.1. Limitations of the study

It is also important to mention that this study has some limitations. First, the sample was restricted to students and individuals under the age of 30, which limits the generalizability of the findings. This demographic focus may not fully represent the broader population's attitudes towards Russian and Ukrainian signs in Poland, especially among older age groups or those with different educational backgrounds.

Second, the survey employed a snowball sampling. This approach, while practical, has inherent limitations in terms of reach. It primarily targeted individuals with internet access, excluding those who may have internet access but were not linked to the survey, as well as those without internet access altogether. This sampling bias likely skews the findings towards more digitally engaged participants.

Third, the survey was structured with a fixed questionnaire format, which prevented the possibility of follow-up questions or deeper qualitative inquiry. As a result, the study could not explore participants' responses in more detail, limiting the depth of understanding on the subject matter. Additionally, the survey was conducted over a period of no more than three months, which constrained the time available for data collection and participant engagement.

5.2. Further research

Subsequent research endeavours may extend the findings of this study by investigating the long-term implications of multilingual signage in Poland and other nations encountering analogous demographic transitions. Such studies could examine how these shifts influence public perceptions of linguistic diversity and the evolving role of language in national identity formation. This research would provide a deeper understanding of how public signage functions not only as a practical tool for communication but also as a symbolic rep-

resentation of the socio-political dynamics at play. In this way, the study serves as a pilot, capturing valuable trends and offering a preliminary sociolinguistic contribution to the understanding of attitudes towards Ukrainian and Russian in Poland's LL. Further research is certainly needed to address these constraints and deepen our understanding.

5.3. Foreign language teaching implications

Incorporating authentic LL materials into school or and university education is not a recent development. Research on teaching has long recognized LL as an effective pedagogical resource for both language teaching and teacher education, mainly due to its capacity to raise language awareness, promote multilingualism, and to connect classroom learning with everyday language use. As Andrade et al. (2023: 207) state,

it is essential to develop teacher education programmes that privilege understanding concerning the (in)visibility of linguistic and cultural diversity and its value in educational contexts. Such programmes may enhance teachers' contribution to the construction of fairer societies, by developing pupils' multiliteracy competences and language awareness (Andrade et al. 2023: 207).

Multiple studies have highlighted the potential of LL across diverse instructional contexts. This includes its application in Slavic language teaching, as demonstrated by Lisek's (2018a) investigation of Polish language courses. According to Lisek (2018a: 292), authentic LL materials – such as signs, menus, and advertisements – enhance language learning by fostering pragmatic skills and offering learners real-world linguistic experiences. Moreover, they contribute to developing intercultural competence, expand vocabulary acquisition, and boost motivation among language learners. Crucially, educators and students alike acknowledge these benefits, further underscoring LL as a powerful tool for broadening the scope of language instruction.

By integrating LL into classroom practice, teachers maintain and promote linguistic diversity, cultivate an atmosphere of shared exploration, and encourage co-constructive knowledge-building between instructors and students. Such an approach dissolves rigid distinctions between experts and novices, providing equitable opportunities for all learners to develop their linguistic and cultural competencies. Ultimately, strategic LL integration champions a comprehensive and inclusive pedagogy that extends beyond specific student groups and large urban centres. This holds true even in contexts where contact with extensive cityscapes is limited, such as peri-urban or rural settings. As Brinkmann and

Melo-Pfeifer (2023: 202) observe, “We can conclude that pedagogical work with LLs brings students closer to societal linguistic (super)diversity, even if this diversity is not immediately apparent or recognisable in the surroundings, and also promotes multilingual pedagogies for all.”

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Krajobrazy językowe w okresie przemian. Opinie polskich studentów na temat ukraińskich i rosyjskich znaków językowych

ABSTRAKT. W dzisiejszym zglobalizowanym świecie obecność języków obcych i ich znaków nie jest niczym niezwykłym. Jednak w okresach konfliktów te właściwości języka nabierają szczególnego znaczenia, dotyczą tym samym krajobrazów językowych. Rosyjska inwazja na Ukrainę znacząco wpłynęła na polski krajobraz językowy, skłaniając do zbadania postaw polskich studentów wobec tych zmian. Wyniki badania wskazują, po pierwsze, że studenci zauważyli wyraźny wzrost liczby oznakowań w cyrylicy w swoich miastach. Po drugie, reakcje na te wielojęzyczne oznakowania – zwłaszcza te w języku ukraińskim i rosyjskim – wahają się od zdecydowanie pozytywnych do neutralnych, a w niektórych przypadkach są otwarcie negatywne. Podczas gdy wielu uczestników postrzega takie oznakowanie jako znak zmian demograficznych i symbol solidarności z nowo przybyłymi, odzwierciedlający otwartość Polski w obliczu zmian geopolitycznych, inni opisują je jako przyćmiewające polską tożsamość lub wskazujące na preferencyjne traktowanie Ukraińców. W rezultacie obecność ukraińskich i rosyjskich znaków w polskich przestrzeniach publicznych jawi się nie tylko jako praktyczne narzędzie komunikacji, ale także jako potężny symbol zmieniających się wartości społecznych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: krajobraz językowy, język ukraiński, język rosyjski, znaki, postawy.

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Language play and norm deviation in art and advertising in Old Tiflis: Occasionalism as a didactic tool

ABSTRACT. The present article employs a diachronic linguistic landscape (LL) perspective to examine Russian-language advertising in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Tbilisi (Old Tiflis) as evidence of lived multilingualism and historically situated language competence. The analysis encompasses historically documented verbal and visual “texts in space”, primarily preserved in Armenian literary discourse, complemented by paintings depicting urban signage. The study examines the interaction of Russian, as the imperial lingua franca, with Armenian, Georgian and other local languages within a multiethnic urban environment. Methodologically, it combines semiotic metalanguage with Bakhtin’s theory of speech genres and the triad of norm-usus-occasionalism to classify deviations from standard Russian and interpret their pragmatic and cultural functions. The findings demonstrate that pervasive orthographic, grammatical, syntactic and stylistic “errors” cannot be reduced to illiteracy; rather, they index language contact, interference, sociolectal variation and a carnivalesque urban ethos conceptualised as “Tiflis Esperanto” and preserved in cultural memory. The article finally contends that such norm distortions possess a considerable didactic potential. At B2 level and above, the progression from occasionalism through usage to norm serves to enhance register awareness and facilitates the acquisition of spelling, grammar, syntax and pragmatic conventions. This process is facilitated by culturally grounded cognitive disruption.

Keywords: advertising occasionalism, semiotics of advertising, paintings-ads, Pirosmeni, Aghasi Ayvazyan, Vagharshak Elibekyan, Old Tbilisi / Old Tiflis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Synchronous themes take center stage in the linguistic landscape (henceforth: LL). However, this study adopts a diachronic perspective and begins with a historical observation of languages in space. The focus is on historically documented advertising texts and the Russian language used in Tbilisi, Georgia. Advertising traditionally plays an important role in the LL, especially when multiple languages, including foreign languages, are present. It provides insights

into the languages that play a significant role in a particular space, language skills, and languages of interethnic communication (Gorter & Cenoz 2024: 153). In some cases, it responds to political circumstances or changes associated with state-administrative interventions (Giger & Sloboda 2008), while migration and the resulting language contact also leave their mark in public spaces (Haci & Zafer 2021: 321; Gorter & Cenoz 2024: 174).

There is evidence that the use of different languages or their variants is related to the historical development of spaces and their societal transformation in modern times (Gorter & Cenoz 2024: 252; Henzelmann 2024: 235; Henzelmann & Haci 2025). As Henzelman (2024) shows, language use reflects the complex relationship between social values and identity, while another article co-authored with Haci (Henzelmann & Haci 2025) emphasizes the semiotization and visualization of linguistic presence in Bulgaria.

It should be noted that the linguistic landscape can also be accepted via the prism of the conceptual metaphors of Lakoff and Johnson: “The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 5). In this sense, LL functions as a spatial metaphor of discourse, in other words, as a “text in space” where the social and cultural metaphors of society are embodied. It follows from this that linguistic and visual signs in urban space are not only communicative acts but also a metaphorical realization of the city’s socio-cultural stratum.

When we deal with foreign languages, the glottodidactic aspect comes into play: we see that the use of foreign languages and their management in historical documents are evident, yet they receive little attention worldwide, especially in materials from the South Caucasus. However, this article reveals the linguistic spirit of that era. It provides an idea of the actual level of language proficiency of the population of Old Tiflis and the practical use of Russian as the language of advertising in public places in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

However, this topic provides insights into the actual language proficiency of the population, the degree of language transmission, and the practical usability of this language in public spaces, which we seek to assess using Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, as an example, and the specific use of Russian at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Russian has long been the lingua franca in this multiethnic city. Therefore, we can document evidence of correct language use and deviations from norms that have been consciously and unconsciously transformed into visual structures. Thus, this study aims to analyze the linguistic and visual advertisements of Old Tiflis, the distortions of linguistic norms in the Russian language, and their didactic application in language learning. It should be noted that the products of language deviations and games can be productive in teaching foreign languages and can be considered

only at the upper levels of language learning – starting from level B2 and above (cf. Kryuchkova & Moshchinskaya 2009).

This article's main argument is that grammatical, syntactic, stylistic, and linguistic "chaos", (distorting linguistic norms) – code-mixing, language switching, code-switching, etc. – are caused by linguistic ignorance and carnival thinking. These can be used as a didactic tool to teach from the inside out, from occasionalism to usage to the linguistic norm.

Our hypothesis is supported by the fact that accidental language acquisition allows one to comprehend the high, neutral, and low language registers, as well as language learning by the "roadmap". There is a game element to the ternary opposition of occasionalism, usage, and norm, which makes the didactic, cognitive, and commemorative process of language learning fruitful and productive for memorizing spelling, grammar, syntax, and pragmatic rules in the historical context of the Russian language in the South Caucasus.

2. A FEW MORE WORDS ABOUT OUR METHODOLOGY

The semiotic metalanguage (denotation, connotation, syntagma, and semantics), M. Bakhtin's theory of speech actions (Bakhtin 1997: 159–206), and the linguistic concepts of norm, *usus* / usage, and occasionalism are all employed when examining empirical data, advertising texts, and slogans. The examples will primarily be considered in the context of linguistic *usus* (as it is) and norms (as it should be), which presupposes how we should "correctly" and "non-correctly" use the language (Zakharova 2012: 33–40). The advertising examples analyzed below are occasional examples. They are, in fact, semantically already beyond the limits of usage. Occasional words, expressions, and phrases have a pronounced emotional and expressive coloring. Occasionalism requires a detailed description of the functioning of these speech acts, identifying the causes of these occasional expressions. These expressions were quite understandable to users but often not entirely understandable to native speakers who know the language's norms and usage. From a didactic point of view, the part described below can serve as an example of teaching a language in the context of a ternary opposition: *linguistic norm, usus, and occasionalism*.

3. THE LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF OLD TIFLIS

The history of Tbilisi or Tiflis can be divided into four eras: the medieval (V–XVII), pre-Soviet (from the 18th to the early 20th century), Soviet (1921–1991), and post-Soviet (since 1991).

The term “Old Tbilisi” or “Old Tiflis” was used in scientific literature before Georgia’s Sovietization. However, after that, Armenian scientific discourse more often used the Georgian version of the toponym – Tbilisi. In other words, after the Sovietization of Georgia, the era of multicultural Old Tbilisi ended, and a new “Georgian” Tbilisi began. Old Tbilisi was a multi-ethnic, multicultural, musical, and carnival city. Georgians comprised only one-tenth of Tiflis’ population (Zhelikhovskaya 1895: 72). By the end of the 19th century, Armenians constituted 42% of Tiflis’s population (Sahakian 1998: 103); in addition, there were Caucasian Tatars, mountaineers (Ossetians and Chechens), and Jews living there. Old Tbilisi no longer exists in reality today, and as noted by art historian Heinrich Igityan, “Old Tbilisi is an ethnographic concept” (Igityan 1991: 6).

This paper draws empirical material and linguistic examples from literary and visual texts of Armenian culture. It is based on the discourse of “Old Tbilisi in Armenian literature or culture,” which may be verifiable and expanded in the future based on texts from Georgian and Russian cultures.

According to the logic presented above, the discourse of “Old Tiflis in Armenian literature” can be compared to the discourses of “Old Tiflis in Russian literature”¹, “Old Tiflis in Georgian literature”, and so on (Manning 2023: 498–516)².

¹ It should be noted that the discourse of Old Tiflis in Russian literary studies is primarily known under the name “Caucasian text of Russian literature.” However, the phrase “Caucasian text,” as we see it, does not delineate the boundaries of the research subject, since “Caucasus” is an expansive concept (geographically).. It includes not only subjects of the Russian Federation (Chechnya, Dagestan, North Ossetia, etc.), but also Georgia. Do the countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia and Azerbaijan – belong to the geographical toponym “Caucasus”? Or should Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia be considered as countries of Transcaucasia? Thus, during the Soviet era, the term “Transcaucasia” referred to the three “brotherly” republics (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) (See Simyan & Dragan 2025: 95–97). In the post-Soviet period, the definition of “Transcaucasia” was too subjective or imperialistic, as it primarily emphasized the Russian perspective on territories south of the Caucasus mountain range. Therefore, in English- and German-speaking discourse, a more neutral, geographically acceptable toponym is increasingly used to refer to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: The South Caucasus. After the 44-day Second Karabakh War (2020), pro-European politicians, such as Tigran Khzmalyan, are introducing a new approach into Armenian public life: Armenia is the eastern boundary of Europe, and by 2030, as he claims, Armenia’s borders will be the southwestern borders of the European Union.

² See more about this in detail (Simyan 2019: 65–66; Anchabadze 1990; Grishashvili 1977; Mkhitaryan 1991: 59–67; Simyan & Ghazaryan 2020: 258–270).

Old Tbilisi was a multicultural and multilingual city. In this regard, the story by A. Ayvazyan's "The Gospel of Havlabari" is interesting. The story features the highly respected Mr. Asaturyan from Avlabari, "a philosopher who knew everything, had seen the world," telling about Diogenes, who spoke Armenian in Sololaki, Georgian in Vera, Old Armenian in the churchyard, Ashkharahabar (modern Armenian) to Sirachkhana's craftsmen, Russian in the palace square, Persian in the Turkish square / maidan, German in Kirichina, and Havlabari language in Havlabari (Ayvazyan 1985: 8-9).

Of course, in this quote, the author somewhat exaggerates and humorously describes the contexts in which various national languages function in the urban space. For instance, when Mr. Asaturyan spoke Havlabari with the locals. In reality, this refers to the Armenian dialect of Tbilisi. The author presents the local dialect as a language. The author is partly correct regarding the Old Armenian language, as Old Armenian's structure (grammar, semantics) is almost incomprehensible to modern Armenian speakers who are not specialists. The only meanings that can be grasped are separate words.

Nonetheless, what is important is the reference to the Armenian language in its various manifestations (Old Armenian, "Havlabari" (the Tbilisi Armenian dialect), modern Armenian, and other languages from different linguistic families, such as Indo-European (Armenian, Persian), (North) Caucasian (Georgian, Lezgian), and Turkic (Caucasian Tatar). It is important to note that Georgian in Old Tbilisi was represented in the full spectrum of its dialects (Megrelian, Svan, Gurian, Kakhetian, etc.). Approximately such a diversity of languages and dialects existed in Old Tbilisi. At this intersection of linguistic play, the language of signboards functioned, which the Armenian writer Aghasi Ayvazyan humorously called "Tbilisi Esperanto."

It should be noted that only the social "lower" class in Old Tbilisi in the 19th century spoke Armenian. This is confirmed by the example in the poem "The Grief of Levon" (1865) by Smbat Shahazis (1841-1908). Although the lyrical hero Levon, who came "from the North," (Russian Empire) finds the "dark-eyed" Armenian girls of Tbilisi beautiful in his eyes, he does not perceive them as possessing Armenian spirit, upbringing, or knowledge of the Armenian language: "Foreign dialect, foreign language // Armenian girls do not attract me // Why is there no Armenian upbringing in you, // Why does the Armenian Word not adorn you?" (Shahazis 1961: 271).

This point of view coincides with V. Zhelikhovskaya's idea that only the lower social classes spoke Armenian, and the middle and upper stratum did not know Armenian at all, "especially women" (Zhelikhovskaya 1895: 63). Literary texts show that women knew Armenian and spoke the Tbilisi (Avlabari) dialect. In their perception, Armenian was considered the language of the commoners

(kinto and karachogheli³), “the lower”, associated with a lack of education, and that is why they tried to speak “higher” languages – Russian and French.

To understand these speech acts, one must grasp the linguistic context of the region, Old Tbilisi. Georgian poet, translator, and researcher of the region’s literary connections, Iosif Grishashvili (1889–1965), describes the linguistic palette in his monograph “The Literary Bohemia of Old Tbilisi” (1926–1927) as follows: “The city had a single soul, and it spoke in its unique language. To an unaccustomed ear, the speech of the townspeople would seem wild, a peculiar mixture of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian words” (Grishashvili 1977: 11).

It was precisely this linguistic blend that, as Armenian researcher Yervand Margaryan noted, became a trigger for the emergence of “a special urban language, a distinctive urban *lingua franca*” when encountering the Russian language in the 19th century (Margaryan 2023: 336), as Russian was the primary language of advertisements and signboards in the urban space. It is worth noting that the lyrical hero Levon, traveling through the South Caucasus, seeks a “pure” Armenian bride, a pursuit that does not align with the spirit of Old Tbilisi. In this multinational city, mixed marriages were common, and wealthy Armenian families spoke Russian and French⁴. Wealthy parents employed French-speaking tutors to give private lessons to the children of Tbilisi merchants⁵, while the storekeepers themselves were mostly semi-literate. As V. Zhelikhovskaya pointed out, “Armenians living in Georgia are undoubtedly more active and enterprising than its native inhabitants; not only is the entire trade of the region, but also all economic activities – agriculture, animal husbandry, silk production, gardening, and nearly all crafts” concentrated in the hands of Armenians (Zhelikhovskaya 1895: 66).

However, “they are not skilled in managing large capital and rarely undertake big dealings. They can engage in various transactions, often intricate schemes, for quick profit” (Zhelikhovskaya 1895: 66). Armenian traders and merchants spoke a mixed Armenian-Russian language, in other words, Caucasian “Trasyanka”, where Russian served as the imperial language. At the same time, Armenian was the language of the “lower classes.” As previously mentioned, Old Tbilisi was multinational. As Armenian poet S. Shahazis remarked, it was

³ The Kinto were street vendors in Old Tbilisi, while the karachogheli were revelers, musicians, and creators (see Grishashvili 1977: 13–15; Simyan 2019: 71–76 for details). For information on the appearance of the karachogheli, see V. Elibekyan’s painting “The Meeting of the Karachogheli with the Writer Raffi” (1986) (Elibekyan 1991: 67).

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the “Eurocentrism” of Armenians’ wealthy layers, see (Simyan & Ghazaryan 2020: 264–265).

⁵ For more details about this epoch and problem, refer to (Simyan 2024: 485–486).

a city inhabited by Armenians, Caucasian Turks, Ossetians, Circassians, Jews, Russians, and Georgians (Shahazis 1961: 268). The Russian language was the language of the empire, the “elite”, and the primary communicative “channel” for different nationalities, even though Russians were not the majority in the city. Chakhetiya, in the article “Armenians in Tbilisi in the 1860s”, provides more detailed information (Chakhetiya 1958: 163).

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of Old Tiflis (1864–1876).

Demographic composition by year	Old Tiflis	Population
1864	Armenians Georgians Russians other nationalities	28878 or 47,4% 14878 or 24,76% 12302 or 20,47% 4417 or 7,23%
1865	Armenians Georgians Russians other nationalities	31914 or 44,9% 14787 or 20,8% 12142 or 17,09% 12208 or 17,21%
1876 r.	Armenians Georgians Russians other nationalities	37308 or 40,7% 21623 or 23,6% 19574 or 21,24% 13163 or 14,46%

Source: Chakhetiya (1958: 163).

The data suggests that communication among residents had to be in Russian, as it was the connecting language among different nationalities and the language of the Russian Empire. That is why inscriptions, signboards, and advertisements were mainly written in “broken” Russian, with grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors. Literary texts indicate that the Russian Empire did not have an “aggressive” language policy or linguistic institutions monitoring literacy in urban spaces.

4. LANGUAGE PLAY: CODE MIXING SIGNBOARD

Before moving on to the description of the advertising signs of Old Tbilisi, it should be noted that they are essentially primary speech genres (toasts⁶, proverbs, etc.). M. Bakhtin, in his work “The Problem of Speech Genres” (1953), notes that primary genres are processed into secondary (complex) speech

⁶ See examples of Old Tiflis (Grishashvili 1977: 44–45).

genres, such as novels, dramas, various scientific studies, large journalistic genres, and so on (Bakhtin 2000: 251). It is also important to note that documented speech acts are a small part of urban space's advertising "fragments" (Chakhetiya 1958: 163). Accordingly, all these speech acts are related to the square, the market⁷.

Let us examine the speech acts of Old Tbilisi using the works of Armenian writer Aghasi Ayvazyan (1925–2007) as an example. In his story "The Signs of Tbilisi" (1981), we learn about the artist and "advertiser" Grigor, to whom the following signs belong. To anticipate, let us note that all advertising slogans are without punctuation. Firstly, this indicates that the "authors" of these speech acts did not master Russian punctuation. Secondly, it reflects the influence of Georgian, which does not use uppercase letters and has almost no punctuation, except for the period and comma. Let's consider individual examples.

1. For example, "Grigor painted dancing kinto above the door of the Kaplo tavern and below it wrote very freely and clearly, joyfully and simply: «ТАНЦУЮ Я // ТАНЦУЮТ ВСЕ // ХОЧИШЬ СМАТРИ // ХОЧИШЬ НЕ» // 'I DANCE // EVERYONE DANCES // IF YOU WANT, LOOK // IF YOU DON'T WANT, DON'T'". There are a lot of mistakes on the signboard.

Spelling errors: ХОЧИШЬ СМАТРИ // *хочЕшь* (If you want), смОтри (look),

Syntactical error: ХОЧИШЬ НЕ instead of НЕ ХОЧЕШЬ. In the last phrase, there is also one spelling error: *хочЕшь* instead of хочИшь.

Let's clarify some obscure realities for the modern reader who does not speak Armenian or Georgian, or the era's sociolects. Regarding the first sign, the story's narrator notes: "Grigor was sure that these awkward words, which reeked of wine and vomit, were spiritual, alive. True freedom... ТАНЦУЮ Я // ТАНЦУЮТ ВСЕ // ХОЧИШЬ СМАТРИ // ХОЧИШЬ⁸... Wow! It was a hymn to his freedom... Freedom, brotherhood, eternity... Хочишь сматри, хочишь не⁹..." (Ayvazyan 1981: 6).

2. A signboard in Sololaki: «В ДУХАХЕ ГОГА // АППЕТИТ БОГА» // "IN THE TAVERN OF GOGA // THE APPETITE OF GOD". The phrase "В ДУХАХЕ ГОГА" can be understood and translated in two ways: a. "In the tavern (is) GOGA", or b. "GOGA'S tavern."

If we accept the second version ("GOGA'S tavern"), then the Russian translation should use the genitive case (Гога / GogI). Judging by this ad in the meaning of the second version, the tavern has a 'Michelin-starred', divinely delicious

⁷ The visualization of the markets in Old Tbilisi can be seen in the paintings of V. Elibekyan's "Bazar" (1978), "Bird Bazar" (1979), "Bazar" (1983) (Elibekyan 1991: 10, 13, 24).

⁸ "I DANCE // EVERYONE DANCES // IF YOU WANT, LOOK // IF YOU DON'T WANT".

⁹ "If you want, look; if you don't want, don't."

cooking master – God (Goga), since the words “Goga” and “God” rhyme in the advertising phrase. Moreover, the hyperbolic phrase “АППЕТИТ БОГА // THE APPETITE OF GOD” refers to the appetites of customers who will enjoy divine food prepared by God-Goga in the tavern.

3. A signboard in Havlabari: «ДУША РАЙ // ДВЕР ОТКРИВАЙ // НЕ СТУЧАЙ» // “SOUL (IS) PARADISE // OPEN THE DOOR // DON’T KNOCK”. We can identify some kinds of mistakes.

Spelling errors: it must be *дверь* (door) with a soft sign (door).

Grammatical error: It should be *не стучи* (“Do not knock”) and not *НЕ СТУЧАЙ* (“Do not knock”). The ad emphasizes the host’s openness and the tavern’s atmosphere. One can enter as if into their home without knocking at the door, passing through the demarcated space: street vs. tavern.

4. A signboard in Klor-takhe: «ВИНИ ПОГРЕБА // КАХЕТИНСКИЙ АКОБА // ПИОМ ДО ГРОБА И ДАЖЕ В ГРОБА» // “WINE CELLARS // KAKHETIAN (wine is made by) Hakob // DRINK UNTIL THE GRAVE // AND EVEN IN THE GRAVE”. According to language norms, this advertising text should have been formulated as follows: «Винные погребы // КахетинскоГО АкоПа, пьем до гроба и даже в гробу». According to language norms, the following spelling and grammatical errors are present in this ad. If translated from the language (sociolect) of kinto, karachogheli, it offers Kakhétéan wine supplied by the Armenian Hakob. The second part of the ad uses hyperbole (“even in the grave”). The text appeals to the notion that one should drink until losing consciousness.

In addition to hyperbole, an antithesis is used, from which one can derive the opposition: life (to drink) vs. death (grave); in other words, Hakob’s Kakhétéan wine is so good that one could transition to another world. Into a world of temporary non-being: drunkenness (temporary) vs. death (timeless). The advertisement emphasizes the rhyming words: ПОГРЕБА vs. АКОБА vs. ГРОБА (two times mentioned) // cellars vs. Hakob vs. grave / grave. Thus, the use of the phraseology “drink to the grave,” and its twist, makes the phrase carnival-like, implicitly pointing to the opposition life vs. death.

5. A signboard in Narikala: “САЛИДНИ ОБЕДИ ДЛЯ САЛИДНИ ЛЮДИ” (cf. figure 1). According to the linguistic norm, it should be: “*Respectable (not SOLID) dinners for respectable (not SOLID) people*”. There are obvious spelling, grammatical, and stylistic errors. Analyzing this advertisement, Yervand Margaryan notes that “the establishment is not just a simple eatery for urban ‘riffraff,’ but a respectable place where people of high-status visit” (Margaryan 2023: 339). Indeed, on a pragmatic level, the advertisement alludes to the prestige of the establishment and attributes a high status to the visitor while simultaneously indicating the high quality of the food, the elegance of the presentation, and the



Figure 1. Vladimir Garnikyan. САЛИДНИ ОБЕДИ ДЛЯ САЛИДНИ ЛЮДИ
[Respectable (not SOLID) dinners for respectable (not SOLID) people]. 2018

Source: https://artchive.ru/garnikyanart/works/582376~Vyveski_Tiflisa

traditional nature of the dishes, as the specified semes fall under the notion of “Respectable” (Солидный / сАлидный) (sememe).

However, this creates a dual, ambivalent situation for the speaker of the linguistic norm, raising the question: Why was the eatery’s client unable to effectively advertise its product? For didactic material, one can utilize a painting by contemporary artist Vladimir Garnikyan to visualize the advertisement sign and analyze the artwork. In a didactic sense, similar paintings should also be examined during the discussion to see how well the artist conveys the spirit of Old Tbilisi. This painting is perceived in contradictory terms: it seems to depict the spirit of Old Tbilisi, yet the mountain Ararat is visible through the windows. The space of Old Tbilisi has been “expanded” and placed in the Ararat Valley¹⁰.

6. A signboard at Sheytan Bazaar: «Բարև, կազո, մարդ-օրսին // Добри человек» (in Armenian) // “HELLO, FRIEND, PERSON // GOOD PERSON”

¹⁰ The painting can be analyzed in terms of the clothing language of the figures depicted, and an attempt can be made to reconstruct it in the context of the opposition: traditional (Georgian) clothing vs. European-style clothing.

This advertising text is designed based on the model of code-switching, addressing different residents of the city at once: “*barev*” in Armenian means “hello”; “*ḡuḡn*” (katso) in Georgian means “friend”, “*mard*” means “person”; *oqmin* means “someone”, “any person”) (Aghayan 1976: 1600). The word collocation “Добри человек” is in Russian means “GOOD PERSON”. As can be seen, while there are no errors in the Armenian part of Russian, word collocation is an obvious spelling mistake. If this multilingual jumble is translated into Russian, it reads: «Здравствуй, друг, добрый человек» // “Hello, friend, good person.”

7. A signboard in Ortachala: «ГОСТИНИЦА // ИМЕЕШЬ МЕСТО // НА МАЯ ГАЛАБА» // “HOTEL // YOU HAVE A PLACE // ON MY HEAD”.

The distortion of linguistic norms «Имеешь место на Моей ГОЛОВЕ» (“You have a place on my head”) makes the phrase somewhat unclear even after translating it without grammatical or spelling errors. This idiomatic phrase is a literal translation from Armenian, meaning “to be respected, loved, worthy of hospitality.” A survey among native Russian speakers showed that the idiom is entirely unclear. One respondent suggested rephrasing it as: «Имеешь место // В МОЕЙ ГОЛОВЕ» // “You have a place // In my head,” interpreted in the context of “a place in memory, in life.” Another respondent interpreted the idiom as «ты создаешь мне хлопоты, приходится заботиться о тебе, решать твои проблемы» “You are making a trouble, I have to take care of you, solve your problems.” To check if similar idioms exist in the Georgian language for «Имеешь место на Моей ГОЛОВЕ» (“You have a place on My Head,”) only one respondent gave a close answer: “A guest like a boss” (in Georgian *Batoni brdzandebit*), or “the customer is always right.” The Georgian respondent proposed another interpretation, suggesting it might mean “A guest from God” (Stumari dwtnisaa). As shown by all the Georgian respondent’s interpretations, the literal phrase “YOU HAVE A PLACE // ON MY HEAD” is linked to codes of xenophilia. The code of hospitality, familiar to Georgians and Armenians, serves as the basis for suggesting a correct response.

Thus, it can be concluded that the advertising text is unclear to native Russian speakers and also not clearly understood by those with intermediate Armenian language proficiency. Almost all respondents at this level struggled to offer any approximate version, and only one Armenian-speaking respondent suggested his variant: «Я про тебя не забыл» // “I have not forgotten about you.” It should be noted that native Armenian speakers have no trouble understanding the idiom’s meaning. Respondents indicated that this advertisement, in its connotative potential, can function fully only for native speakers of Armenian and is partially understandable to Georgians, as their thesaurus emphasizes love for guests – xenophilia.

8. A signboard in Didube: «СКОРИ ФАЙТОН // ВЕСОЛИ АНТОН / ИДУ ВАГЗАЛ // И ОБРАТОН» “FAST PHAETON // CHEERFUL ANTON / I AM GOING TO THE STATION // AND BACK.” The linguistic norm suggests that this shouting advertisement should have been written: «СкорЫЙ фаЭтон // ВесЕлый Антон // еду (вместо иду) на вОКзал // и обрАтно» // “Fast phaeton // Cheerful Anton // I am going (instead of I am going) to the station // and back.” In the phrase “fast phaeton,” the coachman Anton adds an emotional nuance, as the words «скорый фаэтон» (“quick phaeton”) is used in formal, “high” speech. Based on the rhyme, three keywords are emphasized in the advertisement: *phaeton*-Anton-*obraton* (файтон-Антон-обратон). Anton advertises himself and the emotions he will convey during the client’s transportation. Jokingly, he will “quickly” take the rushing client to the station, while “back” indicates a “shuttle” route.

9. A signboard in Sirachkhana: а) «БАЛЬНИЦА // ПУСКАЙ БЕЗ РАБОТИ // ЧАСТНИ ВЕНЕРИЧЕСКИЙ // УМРУ Я // ФЕЛШЕР ЛЕЧУ ВСЕ БОЛЕЗНИ // НЕ ЗАХОДИ, НЕ НАДО» “HOSPITAL LET IT GO WITHOUT WORK // PRIVATE VENEREAL I’LL DIE // THE PARAMEDIC TREATS ALL DISEASES // DO NOT COME IN, NOT NEEDED.” (Ayvazyan 1981: 6–7).

Judging by the advertising text in Old Tbilisi, the paramedic is illiterate. The signboard should have read:

«бОльница // пусть(кай) без работЫ // частнЫЙ венерический (кабинет) умру я // фельДшер лечу все болезни // не заходи, не надо». This signboard hung in Old Tiflis on Sirachkhana Street (translated from Georgian as “Wine Cellar”) and referred to the consequences of entertainment in the Ortachala brothels. A. Ayvazyan notes in his story “Activities on This Land”: “the kinto were cheerful, karachogheli were generous, and the women were voluptuous and sweet...” (Ayvazyan 1996: 75). There was high demand for such women in Old Tbilisi, as they were perceived as sweet by clients. The paintings-signs by Pirosmeni, “Woman with a Fan”, “Ortachala Beauties” (diptych), 1905, and “Beauty with a Mug of Beer” (Pirosmeni 2019: 71, 74, 120–121) refer to the voluptuous women, where one could drink beer¹¹.

For a native speaker of the language, the norm of this advertisement is not entirely clear. Since there are no punctuation marks, the semantic “noise” increases. To understand, we need to collect phrases in two blocks. The first semantic block includes medical information: the hospital has a venereal disease office, and a paramedic with specialized medical education treats venereal diseases. The “spirit” of Old Tiflis is already evident in the second block. A kinto-style paramedic invites sick clients with an emphasis on honesty, and he treats them

¹¹ See in detail about the Ortachala realia (Simyan & Ghazaryan 2020: 266–269).

honestly and completely. Otherwise, if he is not a professional, he is ready to lose his job and die. He swears that he is an honest and decent paramedic, not some charlatan. As for the last phrase, "Don't come in, don't needed," the advertising phrase is based on denial: don't come in, live without problems. The phrase ("DON'T COME IN, DON'T NEEDED") functions in the context of a virtual dialogue with sexually transmitted diseases. The dialogue is full of jokes: if you are not sick, don't come in; if you're sick, you'll have to go in.

5. ADVERTISING SLOGANS OF THE STREETS IN OLD TBILISI

Let us provide other examples from the street "shouts" and "slogans" of Tiflis kinto in the context of urban multilingualism on the streets of Old Tiflis: «Агурец, Агурец, Александре молодец» // "Cucumber, Cucumber, Alexander is a good fellow". We can see spelling (and grammatical) errors: Огурец (ы) with plural ending "Ы" (Cucumber+S): he is not selling only one cucumber. Александре (AlexandrE without E, just Alexander).

- a) «Черешни, черешни испанџки» // "Cherries, Spanish cherries" (Spelling and grammatical error: испанСкиЕ (Spanish);
- b) «Яблок антоновџки» // "Antonov apples" (Spelling and grammatical error: must be яблок+И as a plural form of apple. «АНТОНОВџКИ» is falsely written; the right is АнтоноВСкиЕ.
- c) «Перџик, перџик, априџос» // "Peach, peach, apricot". Spelling and grammatical errors: перСџиИ (PeachES), аБриџосИ (apricotS).
- d) «Смотри сюда, купи џто ли» // "Look here, buy something". There are semantic errors: Russian "купи џто ли" (literally "buy what it is") must be "купи что-нибудь" (buy something) (Anchabadze & Volkova 1990: 66).

The first commercial "slogan" example shows a rhyming play: огурец vs. молодец / ogurets vs. molodets). Who is Alexander? We assume that the choice of name has at least three potential functions: 1) Alexander is used just for alliteration (A). In addition, the sound [a] at the beginning of the word allows the kinto – "advertiser" of their goods to shout much louder ("Агурец, Агурец, Александре молодец" Cucumber, Cucumber, Alexander is a good fellow), since there are no preceding muffling consonants; 2) Alexander may match the name of a potential client, which pragmatically will serve as a "hooking" mechanism.

Furthermore, how do we interpret the word "молодец" ("good fellow")? It is better to interpret the phrase «Alexandre molodets» (Alexander – good fellow) in context as a compliment to himself. In this case, in the context of the playful spirit of Old Tbilisi, it can also be interpreted in a Freudian way.

In the second example by the Kinto “Spanish cherry”, it is hardly necessary to believe it is a marketing trick. European products in residents’ minds at the end of the 19th to 20th centuries were seen as premium, and wealthy residents of Tbilisi were fond of “European” goods. The third and fourth examples are not pronounced according to the norms of the language speaker. As our reader see, all correct ad slogans lose their charm and humorous undertone. Native speakers immediately notice humorous situations related to the pronunciation of Russian words. For example, Russian writer and journalist Nicolai Vezhbitsky notes similarly that typesetters and printers (Armenians, Georgians) of the newspaper “Zarya Vostoka” (Tbilisi) asked him to invite them to a party in honor of the anniversary of the October Revolution “Sirozha” («Сирожу») – Sergei Yesenin (Chakhetiya 1958). Typesetters and printers thought that the name “Сепёжа” (Serezha) was connected with the Russian word of the lower register – “rozha”¹² (рожа) that means “erysipelas”, “muzzle”).

The game of kinto with language can also be traced in the kinto song mentioned in the story by Aghasi Ayvazyan, “A Road for Horses,” in which the coachman Yuvan sings: «Идет СИМОН, // Несет ЛИМОН. // Вай, вай, вай! // Упал СИМОН, // Пропал ЛИМОН. // Вай, вай, вай. // Плачет СИМОН, // Пропал ЛИМОН, // Вай, вай, вай. // Не плачь, СИМОН, // Куплю ЛИМОН. // Вай, вай, вай!¹³ // “Simon is coming, // Carrying a lemon. // Oh, oh, oh! // Simon fell, // The lemon is lost. // Oh, oh, oh. // Simon is crying, // The lemon is gone, // Oh, oh, oh. // Don’t cry, Simon, // I will buy a lemon. // Oh, oh, oh!” (Ayvazyan 1981: 30)¹⁴.

One of the beautiful examples of “poetry” of kinto and language play is provided by I. Grishashvili in his work “Literary Bohemia of Old Tbilisi.” Kar-chokheli sings to the music of a mechanical organ:

«Облака за облаками по небу плывут, // Весть от девушки, любимой мне они несут... Или Ах, луна, луна, надежда пылающих любовью...» // “Clouds float across the sky, // They bring news from the girl I love... Or Oh, moon, moon, the hope of those aflame with love...” (Grishashvili 1977: 14).

¹² Si-rozha.

¹³ The author of the essay takes some examples from the previous article (Simyan 2020: 277), but they are analyzed from a completely different perspective.

¹⁴ According to the hyponym of the fruit (lemon), the song originated in Georgia, and from the interjections, it can be understood that it was composed by an Armenian. The interjection “vay, vay, vay” may be unclear to Russian speakers, as the Russian equivalent of the used interjection is “oy, oy, oy”, which in the text is used in two meanings: in the first case, “oy, oy, oy” means “look here,” and in all subsequent cases, it means “what a trouble”. For the semantics of the interjection “vay, vay, vay,” see the Rabiz song (Hayrapetyan 2017; “Ara vay, vay, vay” song 2009). It should be noted that territorially, this song was spread throughout the South Caucasus.

As seen from the quote, Karchokheli sings a “pure” text in grammatical terms, but the “kinto, for more fun, translates his lines into a “Russian,” so to speak, language:

«Кусок, кусок облак идет с висок небеса, // Запечатан письмо несет от лубовниса... // Ах, луна, луна, жаренных надежда»

“A piece, a piece of cloud goes from high in the sky, // A sealed letter brings news from the beloved... // Oh, moon, moon, the fried hope” (Grishashvili 1977: 14). Grammatically, the language is distorted, but the text conveys humor, a creative “translation” of connotations in a carnival style and an erotic code, if in the phrase “fried hope” («жаренных надежда») the last word is read as a proper noun, female name – Nadezhda: “Oh, moon, moon, fried Nadezhda.” The erotic code can also be read in opposition to the primary text, the song of karchokheli: “Oh, moon, moon, the hope of those aflame with love...”).

In the first version, the lyrical hero hopes for a flaming love with the moon woman, whereas in the kinto version, Nadezhda is fried, banged, and intimate.

A vivid example of folk texts of kinto is provided by Partugimov and Babloyan: «Бедный, бедный, бедный я кинто, // Не пожалеет меня никто! // Женился я давным-давно – / Не любит меня все равно. // Жена моя Кекела – // Черная, как холера, // С длинным носом красным // И лицом ужасным. // Хочу жена белый – // Как на стене мелом, // Чтоб любила меня и на самом деле» // “Poor, poor, poor I am kinto, // No one will pity me! // I married a long time ago – // She doesn’t love me anyway. // My wife Kekela¹⁵ – // Black as cholera, // With a long red nose // And a terrible face. // I want a white wife – // Like chalk on the wall, // To love me for real.” The text humorously represents the emotional, social, and civic state of kinto.

The social status is emphasized through the repetition of the word “poor,” while alienation in urban space is reflected in the second line (“No one will pity me!”). Family conditions, desires, and feelings are revealed in the contrast of skin color: black vs. white. The black, unloving Kekela with an unattractive appearance (long red nose, terrible face) is contrasted with a “white” woman who truly loves. The humor and comedy of the contrasting images manifest through metaphors and comparisons of appearance.

As seen from the above, thanks to social memory recorded in literary slogans, it is possible to reconstruct the speech acts of Tiflis’ kinto. At the same time,

¹⁵ The painting can be analyzed in terms of the clothing language of the figures depicted, and an attempt can be made to reconstruct it in the context of the opposition: traditional (Georgian) clothing vs. European-style clothing.

painting has allowed us to “see” the winding streets of Old Tiflis with “talking” advertising signboards.

6. OCCASIONAL EXPRESSIONS IN THE VISUAL PAINTINGS-ADS OF OLD TBILISI

In this section, we will focus on visual advertisements featuring promotional text. Such texts can also be used to teach Russian, allowing students to identify spelling, grammatical, and syntactical errors.

The bright signs of Old Tbilisi caught the attention of Armenian artist Vagharshak Elibekyan, who depicted them in his works. In his painting “Street Barbers” (1979), we read an informative advertising inscription: «Пускаем кровь с пиявкам (И)» (“We bleed with leeches.”). The painting, presented humorously, implicitly alludes to unsanitary conditions. The humor is conveyed through the grammatical, orthographic, and stylistic inscription that should have been written according to linguistic norms: «Лечим пиявкамИ» (“We treat with leeches.”). Instead of the letter “А,” it should be “Я / Ya” the word “пиявки” / “leeches” in the plural.

The visual text shows that leech therapy was practiced in Old Tbilisi to improve blood circulation, combat inflammation, lower blood pressure, and relieve migraines and headaches. The painting’s irony and humor are evident in its reference to the services of an outdoor barber shop: haircut, shaving, and leech therapy.

Regarding leeches, the Armenian writer provides another interesting example. The sign in Sirachkhan reads: «ПУСКАЙ БЕЗ РАБОТЫ // УМРУ Я // ЛЕЧУ ВСЕ БОЛЕЗНИ // УМЕУ ПИАВКА» // “LET ME WITHOUT WORK // I WILL DIE // I CURE ALL DISEASES // I HAVE LEECHES” (Ayvazyan 1981: 6–7). If we translate this advertisement into standard language, the doctor’s speech could be approximated as follows: “Let me remain unemployed, and I may die, but I cure all diseases; I practice hippotherapy.” However, it is not entirely clear why the “author” of the advertisement wants to die. The main message of the advertisement is that he treats without deceit. He treats them with leeches (“I HAVE LEECHES”). Honesty and responsibility are important to him. This is a matter of honor. The emotionally charged advertisement emphasizes: “Trust me,” the “author” addresses his potential patients, “if I am a charlatan, then I am ready to remain unemployed or even die.”

Let us return to the visual artistry of V. Elibekyan.

In his paintings “Street in Old Tbilisi” (1988), “Street in Old Tbilisi” (1988, Figure 2), one can read the signs “WE MAKE HIDE” (spelling error: “We Make

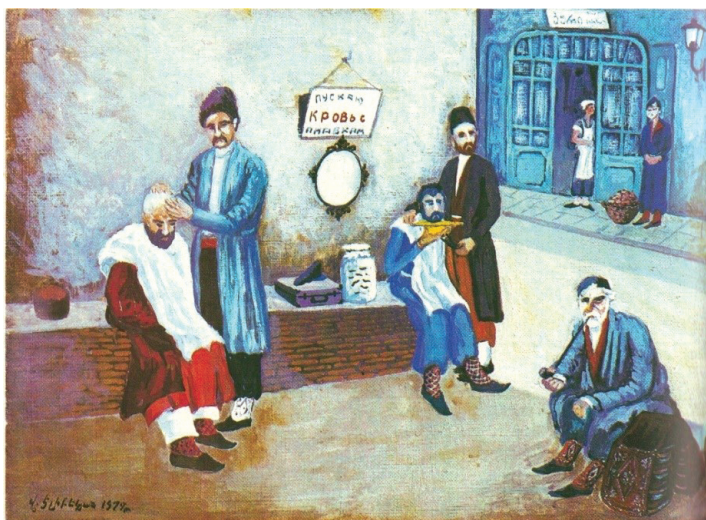


Figure 2. Vagarshak Elibekyan. Street Barbers 1979

Source: Elibekyan 1991: 118.

Hides”), and in the “Butcher Shop,” we read another amusing signboard: «ИМЕ-ИЦА СВЕЖИ УМИ» “(WE) HAVE FRESH BRAINS” (Figure 3).

A native Russian speaker is unlikely to understand that by-products are being sold. However, this phrase takes on an additional connotation in the context of the depicted human and animal heads. The following asymmetrical oppositions can be drawn:

1. human heads vs. “fresh brains” of domestic animals,
2. “fresh minds” of people vs not fresh heads of domestic animals (head trophies),
3. Fresh vs not fresh heads / minds of the workers and clients of the butcher shop.

Examples from Georgian painting will be provided.

The distortion of language can also be illustrated by taking the painting «Живая рыба»¹⁶ / “Living Fish” (1920) by Georgian artist Lado Gudiashvili (1896–1980). The fisherman-kinto playfully offers his catch. However, the humorous title of the painting enters visual dissonance with the expressions of the faces depicted as kinto. The play with language can also be seen in Pirosmani’s painting “Still Life» (The State Museum of Fine Arts of Georgia, Tbilisi),

¹⁶ Here, there are spelling and grammatical mistakes. It should be: “Жи (without ‘a’) вая рыба” / “Zhi (without ‘a’) vaya ryba”).



Figure 3. Vagarshak Elibekyan. Trio. 1980

Source: Elibekyan (1991: 12).

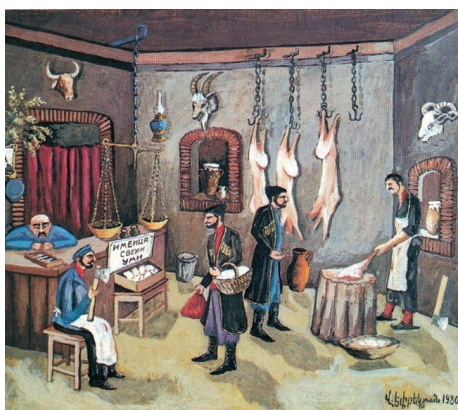


Figure 4. Vagarshak Elibekyan. Meat Shop. 1980

Source: Elibekyan (1991: 25).

which has the inscription in Georgian and Russian: “Да здрастуйте хълеба солнаго человека”¹⁷ / “Long live the hospitable man” (Pirosmani 1986: 48).

An example of wordplay is found in a beer advertisement: «Холодный пиво» (on signboard “Cold beer”), where there is a precise spelling and grammatical mistake according to the linguistic norm of the Russian language: “ХолодНОЕ пиво” (Pirosmani 2019: 118). In the same grammatical register, Nikolai Vezhbisky cites another signboard in his memoirs “Meetings with Yesenin” with a blue background: “‘Дарьял’ Вино, закуски и разный горячий пицц”¹⁸ (Chakhetiya 1958).

The above examples of visual advertising show that the authors did not play with the language; they did not use phrases such as ‘occasionalism,’ meaning that the linguistic norm was unintentionally broken. Language slogans and occasionalisms begin to function in a completely different way when they are used deliberately. Cognitive dissonance caused by intentional errors in advertising is a prerequisite for remembering the advertisement’s location and central message. The slogan becomes a memorable linguistic “virus.” Distortion of the linguistic norm in advertising

¹⁷ It must be “Да, здравствует хлебосольный человек!” from the point of view of the linguistic norm.

¹⁸ Spelling and grammar errors. It should be snacks and various hot foods. There may be a stylistic error in the phrase instead of the word “food,” which indicates an ordinary and neutral meaning – food. It should be written “dishes,” used stylistically in restaurant menus and served as a ready-made dish and served to the table, i.e., food and dishes differ in their micro-meanings – semes, but denote food.

can become a notable marker, a trick for linking the product with the slogan and the location. However, such pragmatic connections only work in native speakers' minds.

7. CONCLUSION

An analysis of the linguistic material of Old Tiflis, from signage, street chants, and folklore songs, showed that the urban speech environment of the 19th–early 20th centuries represented a genuine carnival multilingual cosmos. Tiflis existed as a multilingual and multinational space, where Russian served as the imperial lingua franca and the language of signage, but in fact constantly interacted with Armenian, Georgian (and its dialects), Turkic, and other languages of the region. At this junction, a special urban “language of Tiflis” arose – a hybrid, which Aghasi Ayvazyan aptly designated as “Tiflis Esperanto”. The analysis of empirical material allows us to conclude that the numerous spelling, grammatical, and syntactic deviations in the advertising texts of Old Tbilisi cannot be interpreted solely as manifestations of illiteracy. They are the result of clashes among different language systems, interference, and the presence of different sociolects in the city. In artistic texts (Ayvazyan, Grishashvili, etc.) and paintings (Elibekyan, Gudiashvili, Pirosmiani) (Simyan 2020: 266, 277–278), these distorted speech acts and visual texts are fixed as part of the cultural memory of the city: a signboard, a chant, a song turn into signs of the urban text and the urban “signage” semiosphere. In Old Tiflis, language norm distortion was mainly unintentional and resulted from differences in language proficiency. In fact, there is also a carnival attitude towards the language that has developed in Tiflis.

The didactic potential of this material confirms the hypothesis put forward in the work: the movement from occasionalism to usage, and then to the norm, effectively supports Russian language teaching at the B2 level and above. A violation of the norm, when understood and analyzed, highlights the boundaries of the “high”, “neutral”, and “low” registers and helps better understand spelling, grammar, syntax, and pragmatic rules. The game component, i.e., the effect of cognitive and cultural “disruption”, enhances memorability, and the inclusion of examples in a lively urban and cultural context makes the learning process not only more productive but also memorable.

The language games of Old Tiflis, manifested in various verbal and visual discourses, are not only an object of nostalgia but also a valuable source for modern linguodidactics and urban semiotics. They allow us to reconstruct the multilingual fabric of the city, trace the transformation of language policy “from below” and propose a methodology for teaching the language “inside out” –

from linguistic “chaos” to the norm. A promising area of further research is the expansion of the corpus of analyzed texts to include Georgian and Russian discourses on Tiflis, as well as a comparison of the “Tiflis text” with other urban texts of the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe.

It can be concluded that such empirical material can serve as excellent didactic material for teaching language norms, articulation standards, and usage, on which issues of language contact, code-mixing (Gorter & Cenoz 2024), problems of code-switching, dialects, and accents, depending on the situation, identity, etc., can be studied. Therefore, we recognize that language learning (LL) from a diachronic perspective is a multifaceted field that has been relatively underexplored against the backdrop of historical language teaching and lived multilingualism. The Caucasus has traditionally been a region where not only many languages but also very different languages meet. Historically, Russian has served as a lingua franca (and continues to do so in large parts of the region today). However, there is undoubtedly a need for further, comprehensive studies to analyze the use of the Russian language in Tbilisi and elsewhere in the Caucasus, in interaction with the numerous other languages of the Caucasus, from a diachronic perspective, especially in the era of modern change.

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Zabawa z językiem w sztuce i reklamie. Przykład rosyjskiego w Starym Tbilisi

ABSTRAKT. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje zjawisko okazjonalizmu w języku rosyjskim używanym przez sprzedawców i kupców na peryferiach carskiej Rosji, w Tyflisie, w drugiej połowie XIX wieku i na początku XX wieku. Przejawiało się ono w mieszaniu kodów i odtwarzaniu kodów oraz przełączaniu języków. Przyczyną okazjonalizmu było myślenie karnawałowe i ingerencja językowa (ormiański, gruziński itp.) ludzi żyjących w Starym Tyflisie jako zewnętrzny pogląd na język rosyjski. Ponadto argumentuje się, że zjawiska te wynikają z myślenia karnawałowego. Badanie sugeruje, że takie okazjonalne podejście może być wykorzystywane jako narzędzie dydaktyczne w nauczaniu języków obcych. Nauka okazjonalności ułatwia zrozumienie wysokich, neutralnych i niskich rejestrów języka. Trójkrotna opozycja okazjonalność – użycie – norma wzmacnia procesy dydaktyczne, poznawcze i pamięciowe w uczeniu się i nauczaniu języków obcych. Podejście to jest praktyczne w opanowaniu i nauczaniu ortografii, gramatyki, składni i pragmatyki. Artykuł analizuje również okazjonalizm wizualny w reklamie, który możemy zobaczyć na przykładach łączących go z dziełami artystycznymi malarzy ormiańskich i gruzińskich, a także Pirosmeni, Aghasi Ayvazyana i Vagharshak Elibekyan, a także z obrazami kulturowymi Starego Tbilisi / Tyflisu. Integrując opozycję trójskładnikową z semiotyką kulturową, badania te stanowią produktywną podstawę do zrozumienia i nauczania dynamiki języka w wielokulturowym i wielojęzycznym środowisku, w naszym przypadku w języku rosyjskim.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: okazjonalizm reklamy, semiotyka reklamy, obrazy-reklamy, Pirosmeni, Aghasi Ayvazyan, Vagharshak Elibekyan, Stare Tbilisi/Stary Tiflis.

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“Leave no trace”: The macro and microscale analysis of the linguistic landscape of the Polish-Czech border area

ABSTRACT. This article investigates the linguistic landscape of the Polish-Czech border area through the lenses of ecolinguistics and linguistic landscape studies. It explores the languages displayed in this region along with the semiotic and social contexts that surround them. Firstly, the study quantitatively examines the macroscale of the linguistic landscape in the Polish-Czech border area. The macroscale serves as a reference point for the microscale analysis. Specifically, the microscale examination focuses on a sticker board outside a tourist hostel entrance on Szczeliniec Wielki peak in Stołowe Mountains National Park, employing quantitative and qualitative methods. Both analyses reveal similar trends, i.e. a gradual shift from the monolingual paradigm. In addition, the examination of the microsigns on this sticker board in Stołowe Mountains National Park highlights the various forms of the tourists' self-expression. The paper also suggests a few activities – inspired by the research findings and LL – that can be incorporated into the EFL classroom.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscape, Polish-Czech border area, ecolinguistics, macroscale analysis, microscale analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leave No Trace is a set of ethics aimed to promote the conservation of the outdoors. It originated in the mid-20th century in the United States as a response to ecological damage caused by wilderness recreation. *Leave No Trace* is becoming more and more popular in Polish mountain tourism. Promoting responsible behaviour towards nature and its resources is closely linked to efforts to change communication practices, mainly by reducing symbolic traces: inscriptions such as “I was here” made by tourists on cultural and natural monuments. These inscriptions, often referred to as “language vandalism”, are a concern in Stołowe Mountains National Park. To stop this practice, the park introduced “sticker

boards", i.e. white surfaces placed in various locations along tourist trails where visitors can leave a trace legally.

This study explores the linguistic landscape in the Polish-Czech border area through the lenses of ecolinguistics and linguistic landscape studies¹. It examines the languages displayed in this region along with semiotic and social contexts that surround them. Firstly, the paper examines the macroscale of the linguistic landscape in the Polish-Czech border area. The macroscale serves as a reference point for the microscale analysis.

To clarify the goal, 5 research questions have been formulated:

1. What languages can be identified on the signs (the macroscale and the microscale)?
2. What is their hierarchy?
3. What „traces” do visitors leave on the board (the microscale)?
4. What are the similarities and differences between the macroscale and the microscale?
5. What features of the local community are reflected on the signs when it comes to language choices and multilingual practices in the border area under investigation?

The study has four parts. At the beginning, it outlines the theoretical background. The focus on nature conservation and caring for natural heritage connects research goals with the assumptions of ecolinguistics, a field interested in the interdependence between languages, communities, and environments. As Hult (2009) claims, the ecology of language emerged as a useful conceptual framework because it combines micro- and macro-level research to understand all aspects of social mechanisms involved in multilingualism. Based on this, the study brings together ecolinguistic research in language ecology with inclusive multilingualism and linguistic landscape studies. It is due to the fact that these fields address sustainability, visibility, and social dimensions of language use. Together, they may form a holistic framework for understanding how languages coexist, compete, and support diversity in the Polish-Czech border area (Steciąg & Majdańska-Wachowicz 2025).

Next, the study presents the macroscale analysis of the linguistic landscape in the Polish-Czech border area, employing quantitative methods, i.e. counting the languages and their order plus arrangements on photographed boards.

¹ The study is part of a research project titled *Lingua receptiva or lingua franca? The linguistic practices in the border area between Poland and the Czech Republic in the face of English language domination (ecolinguistic approach)*. The project was funded by the National Science Centre, Poland (agreement no. 2017/26/E/HS2/00039). The study refers to the findings of the research team (Karmowska 2019; Steciąg & Karmowska 2020; Steciąg & Majdańska-Wachowicz 2021; Steciąg & Majdańska-Wachowicz 2025).

After that, it investigates the microscale, i.e. a specially dedicated sticker board outside the entrance to a tourist hostel on Szczeliniec Wielki Peak in Stołowe Mountains National Park. Minimal texts recognised on the board are examined quantitatively and qualitatively.

Finally, since it is stated that ecolinguistics supports diversity and heterogeneity in the L2 classroom and promotes activities that challenge monolingual ideologies (Wolanin 2021), the paper offers some glottodidactic implications. These include some activities inspired by research findings and LL that can be integrated into language teaching (L2).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: TOWARDS INCLUSIVE MULTILINGUALISM

As this paper investigates the linguistic landscape in the Polish-Czech border area through the lenses of ecolinguistics and linguistic landscape studies, this section outlines the theoretical background that inspired the study. It starts with the notion of ecolinguistics and receptive multilingualism, then proceeds to the definition of *lingua receptiva*. After that, it explains the linguistic landscape within the framework of inclusive multilingualism and the importance of border areas research.

Ecolinguistics, which emerged in the 1970s as a new paradigm of linguistic research, has always been interested in language contacts and multilingual environments. Haugen (1972/2001: 57), regarded as the founding father of language ecology (Eliasson 2015), introduced a new perspective on intercomprehension in receptive multilingualism through his early research on language contacts between Scandinavians (Haugen 1966). To determine the extent of mutual understanding among native speakers of Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish, Haugen coined the term *semi-communication*. This concept highlighted the limitations / shortage of such contacts, metaphorically described as "the trickle of messages through a rather high level of 'code noise'" (Haugen 1966: 286). However, in the 1990s, the phenomenon of semi-communication was reevaluated and transitioned from being seen as a deficient mode of communication to being recognised as an effective mode and, as researchers in the field conclude, a fundamental element of intercultural discourse that encourages interlocutors to engage in multilingual practices (Beerkens 2010).

In more recent studies on multilingual communication in Europe, the term *lingua receptiva* (LaRa) has frequently been used. Simply put, *lingua receptiva* is believed to be a type of specific code-switching, it could be said radical, meaning that codes switch together with interlocutor switching, leastwise in its model

pattern. The very core of LaRa's is that participants of communication exchange roles in the course of the receptive multilingual discourse, speaking alternately in one language and understanding in a different one (Rehbein et al. 2012: 250). Seemingly, LaRa and ELF have a lot in common since the main goal of these two modes is successful intercultural interaction. It means that speakers take advantage of language resources and communicative strategies, enabling them to understand each other despite having diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds. This is why LaRa and ELF do not compete with each other or exclude each other in multilingual environments. Quite the contrary, integrated skills employed in multilingual environments allow a variety of communication modes to be applied inclusively – apart from ELF and LaRa it might be a regional lingua franca – RLF (the most useful and natural language resource in a given place and time, e.g. a contact dialect), code-switching and code-mixing or even spontaneous intercultural translation in terms of adjusting one's language to the interlocutor's language, for example, changing word stress or word order (Backus et al. 2013).

The examination of the linguistic landscape in line with inclusive multilingualism requires a few assumptions to address the topic holistically. Firstly, multilingualism is perceived as a starting point since signs containing at least two languages are common rather than exceptional in contemporary city landscapes. From the passer-by's perspective – who is decoding signs – the message placed on signs is not limited to particular languages. It should be seen as a whole. Secondly, not only does the analysis below include the hierarchy of languages written on signs, but these signs themselves are also treated as a multimodal message / sign. Finally, the social context of the linguistic landscape is included in the process of the material examination because it carries information about local communities, their values, needs, and aspirations (Gorter & Cenoz 2015; Kallen 2020; Amara & Spolsky 2022; Pavlenko 2023).

The theoretical framework would not be complete without some remarks about the importance of border areas studies. During the last decades, the concept of border and borderland has evolved significantly. Instead of seeing a border as a static dividing line between countries and nations, recent approaches perceive border regions as zones of encounters and multilingual spaces for language contact (Abel et al. 2007). Consequently, the language of interactions between residents of two or more countries living near the borderland is viewed as fluid, dynamic, and emergent practice rather than a fixed or reified code in contact (Steciag & Majdańska-Wachowicz 2025).

3. THE MACROSCALE ANALYSIS OF THE POLISH-CZECH BORDER AREA LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

The macroscale analysis of the Polish-Czech border area encompasses the linguistic landscape of the Hradec Králové Region on the Czech side of the border and part of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship on the Polish side. Those two constitute a typical section. Generally, the section consists of tourist attractive uplands and mountainous areas, including the Sudetes and the Silesian Beskids mountain ranges. Figure 1 shows the towns under investigation (marked red).

The material for the analysis of the local linguistic landscape was collected during two week-long photographic sessions, held two years apart in 2018 and 2020. The outcome is a collection of almost seven thousand pictures, depicting both man-made objects and natural elements, all of which are marked.

The macroscale analysis is quantitative. The procedure includes counting signs on the photographed boards according to language presence, visibility, and order. Trends in language configurations are recognised through frequency tables and charts. To trace language configurations and hierarchies represented most frequently, coherent terms: *lingua materna*, *lingua franca*, *lingua receptiva*



Figure 1. The Area under investigation

Source: Screenshot of google maps.

are employed. This terminology is helpful when investigating general rules and patterns in language selection on the examined signs (Steciąg & Karmowska 2020).

At first sight, the data would seem to suggest the predominance of the national language (referred to as a *lingua materna*) on both sides of the border. The vast majority of signs include *lingua materna*. Circa 80% of the collected research material is monolingual. The study of the remaining 20% reveals that multilingual signs can be associated far more with the public sector than with commercial activities of the private sector. Also, language configuration and hierarchy are not fixed on multilingual boards. The configuration is diverse on both sides of the border as detailed in Table 1. The order of configuration is determined per established frequency. The hierarchy refers to the sequence in which languages appear on the boards.

Table 1. Language Configurations and Hierarchy on Multilingual Boards contact.

Language configuration – Czech border	Language configuration – Polish border
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>lingua franca</i> (English), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish)	<i>Lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Czech), <i>lingua franca</i> (English), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German)
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Czech)
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German)
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German), <i>lingua franca</i> (English), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), international writing
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Czech), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish), <i>lingua franca</i> (English), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>lingua franca</i> (English), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German)
<i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)	<i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German), <i>lingua franca</i> (English)
<i>lingua franca</i> (English), <i>lingua materna</i> (Czech), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German), <i>lingua receptiva</i> (Polish)	<i>lingua franca</i> (English), <i>lingua materna</i> (Polish), <i>regional lingua franca</i> (German)

Source: Steciąg & Majdańska-Wachowicz 2025.

Table 1 shows that the most frequent language configuration on the Polish side of the border is: *lingua materna* (Polish), *lingua receptiva* (Czech), *lingua franca* (English), *regional lingua franca* (German). It seems that the information “layout” builds good neighbourhood policy and prioritises the neighbour’s language interpreted receptively (*lingua receptiva*). English follows in the hierarchy which may suggest that public institutions recognise its global function as a lingua franca. English is the second most frequent language (after the national language), appearing in 7 out of 10 configurations. On the Czech side of the border, the order differs a bit, with English as a lingua franca having a higher position than on the Polish side. The importance of English as a lingua franca in the Czech towns is proved by its frequency, appearing in 8 out of 10 configurations.

On balance, the analysis of the information boards in the public sector shows a tendency to foster a multilingual space at the junction of two ethnoses – the space respecting principles of inclusivity.

4. THE MICROSCALE ANALYSIS OF THE POLISH-CZECH BORDER AREA LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

The microscale analysis of the Polish-Czech border area refers to a *Leave No Trace* policy sticker board, placed outside a mountain shelter in Stołowe Mountains National Park. Installed in 2020, it was designed for stickers and written messages, encouraging tourists to leave a trace legally. The board is called *Tablica na wlepy* ‘Sticker Board’. The headline is followed by a subheading, inviting visitors to leave a trace of their presence: *Cieszymy się, że odwiedziliście Park Narodowy Gór Stołowych. Tutaj możecie zaznaczyć swoją obecność* ‘We are happy you visited Stołowe Mountains National Park. You can leave your trace here’. Figure 2 depicts the board and its content.

Since the name on the board indicates that it is intended for stickers, it is essential to briefly define stickers before examining the content. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, stickers are small pieces of paper or plastic that have a picture or writing on one side and an adhesive substance on the other, allowing them to adhere to surfaces. In digital communication, a sticker can also refer to a digital image used to express a particular idea or feeling². Makowska claims that stickers have specific features of minimal texts: they are small, transgressive, have limited number of words, and can be placed almost anywhere (Makowska 2023: 330). As for their functions, stickers can express protest,

² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sticker>



Figure 2. A Board for Stickers in Stołowe Mountains National Park

Source: own study.

identity, self-expression, solidarity, and advertisement. Also, they can serve educational purposes (Makowska 2023: 329). Stickers are multimodal minimal texts because they combine language and visual codes (Czachur 2020: 26).

In contrast to the macroscale analysis, the study of the microscale is both quantitative and qualitative. 161 minimal texts are identified on the board, with Polish (understood as a *lingua materna*) emerging as the most predominant language. Polish is represented by 57 stickers and 61 handwritten inscriptions. 39 minimal texts show languages other than Polish. 6 signs are excluded from the analysis due to great difficulty classifying them (e.g. acronyms such as SAS, Sewi, and AKO, unclear messages, e.g. *zajawa* / *zayava*). The numbers show a clear trend: the official language is dominant on the board in the area under investigation.

The analysis of the multilingual minimal texts shows 2 homophonic signs, presenting the same content in Polish and English. 17 mixed signs combine at least two languages to convey a message, not in equal representation though:

15 Polish-English / English-Polish, 1 Polish-Portuguese, and 1 Spanish-English. The remaining 20 messages are written in English. This proves that English as a lingua franca is the secondary mode of communication on the board while other languages have limited visibility. Table 2 presents some examples.

Table 2. Taxonomy of Multilingual Signs on the Board

Sign type	Examples
Homophonic signs (1:1)	Gość / Guest, Wojskowa Akademia Techniczna / Military University of Technology Opalenica – miasto pierwszego polskiego motocykla „Lech”. Opalenica A City of the first polish Motorbike “Lech”
Mixed signs (more than one language)	I was here. Henryk w Terenie, Galactic Lesbian. Marsz Równości, Queer Power. New is coming... Parada Równości, Hardcore City Szczecin, Good night Left Side Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, Wisła Football Fanatics Wisła Płock, Anwil Ultras, Julia Róża Dąbrowska i Amelia Helena Górską BFF
Foreign language signs (English)	Wildstar riders, The Voytek Bear. Geocaching, I love nature. I love off-road, I <3 just gym, Music Extends Life. Sequel One Records, breaky vibes, yeah bunny, tube adventures, Shrex is good, I'm not lost. I'm geocaching

Source: own study.

Moving from the quantitative findings, the qualitative analysis of the *Leave No Trace* policy board reveals the ways in which tourists leave their linguistic and social traces legally. The findings can be understood by the notion of two “traces”: 1) personal trace: including names and surnames, e.g. *Łukasz, Staś*. Personal trace is sometimes left when following the phrase: *Byłem / -am tu* ‘I was here’, 2) group trace: referring to geographic or administrative names, e.g. *Leszno* ‘Leszno’, *powiat raciborski* ‘Raciborz County’. This dimension also relates to community trace, i.e. various worldview movements, shared interests or values.

Some instances of the minimal texts are collected in Table 3.

Table 3. Personal Trace

Personal Trace Patterns	Examples
Name + (optionally) Date (nm) / Where from (nm), Graphics (e.g. hearts, smiley-face)	Łukasz 2020, Kornel 29.01., Tatiana Rewal, Klaudia Paweł Szczecin 07.03.2020, Eliza 11-.08.2020 (written inside a drawn heart), Monika 😊 Szymon 😊 2020 (written inside a drawn heart), Justyna Gryfino 2020, Joachim 😊, Janetta i Daniel z Tych 😊

Diminutives (names) usually in sequence with other names + date (optional) + where from (optional) + graphics (heart, smiley-face)	Tu byłem. 10.08.2020. – Staś, Oktawka, Amelka <3, Karolinka 2020, Pati 2020, Hela 05.08.2020 (written inside a drawn heart), Asia <3, Miki z mamą 16.09.2020 (written inside a drawn heart), Mati, Tosia 2020 (+heart), Ania, Małgosia, Ania Bartek <3 Węgrów29/07/2020
Name and surname + family member (optional)	Helena Piechota 2020, Górską Amelia, Lena Grzelak, Norbert Sobiecki Wadlew 2020, Mama Aga i Tata Darek Maja Teclaw 23.07.2020 (written inside a drawn heart)
Name (full form, diminutive, subtracted) and last name initial letter	Konrad P., Meggi S., Ala F. Raf. F, Mateusz F., Lola S. Greg F. , Ela B., Klaudia F.
Initials + date / pseudonym (optional)	R.B. 2020. Gryfino, IG. Elektryk 😊
Pseudonyms	Shrexowny Michau i Sawkuż tu byli, Piorun 2020, Ruda z Kielc i Słoń 😊 10.08.2020, Byczki tu były <3 8.2020, Serek Danio, Leśny ent
„I” – sometimes double „I” with spelling modification	JA, Jaya

Source: own study.

Table 3 suggests that the most common patterns contain: 1) handwritten names, optionally with dates, places of residence and graphics (common in other patterns, too), 2) diminutive forms of first names: in sequence with other names, dates, place of residence, and graphics, 3) name and surname, 4) name, its diminutive form, and last name's initial, 5) initials with dates, 6) pseudonyms, 7) the singular first-person pronoun *ja* 'I'. A comment is needed regarding writings that may identify young people. Diminutives are used by different generations in Poland. However, the examples seem likely to be written by teenagers. This assumption is supported by the presence of emojis and other symbols typical of online discourse (Grzenia 2006). For instance, the names are spelled using both Polish and English, as seen in *Mich-au* (with letters *-au* as the sound is similar to /aʊ/) instead of *Michał*). Another illustration is an English-like diminutive *Meggie* for *Gosia* (English 'Maggie'). A comparison of names and diminutives with the rankings of the most popular names given to boys and girls in Poland over the last decade makes it reasonable to suggest that these names identify the young generation. The presence of youngsters is evident in pseudonyms as a result of the influence of *młodomowa* ('teen slang'). Examples include *Shrexowny Michau* and *Serek Danio*.

Another dimension of linguistic and social traces is “group trace” (presented in Table 4).

Table 4. Group Trace

Group Trace	Examples
Geographic self-expression: region / province + date / graphics (optional)	powiat raciborski, Racibórz, Ełk 8-08-2020, Gdańsk <3, 20.08.20 Chojnice, Ogorzeliny 10.08.20 r., Leszno, Mikowice
Institutional self-expression: name of the institution, i.e. school name, foundation name, sport club	Hospicjum Ojca Pio, Fundacja Dobre Jutro, Studenckie Koło Przewodników Góskich Harnasie, 1 Grunwaldzka Drużyna Harcerska. Dąbrowa im. Władysława Szafera, Wybierz I ŁO w Brodnicy, Miejskie Koło PTTK „Łazik” w Zdzieńkowicach, Chuligani z Biedaszybów. Górnik Wałbrzych, Pogoń 1948, SKS Bałtyk Gdynia 1930, Władcy Trybun Białostocki Klub Sportowy, Stomil Olsztyn, Ciemna Strona Miasta ŁKS Łódź
Worldview self-expression: slogans, graphics typical of social movements, lifestyle	Wielka Polska, Wspieramy Polskę. Orlen, Good night Left Side Nowy Dwór, Queer Power. New is coming... Parada Równości, Młodzieżowy strajk klimatyczny, I love nature. I love off-road, Ziemia jest kobietą, Good night Patriarchat, dzisiaj wege dzisiaj homo parada równości, Wolne konopie Konopie dla wolności, Tu byłem, blanta spałem

Source: own study.

The examples show that geographic identification is pivotal, e.g. location of one's residence (towns, cities) because it often appears next to the name or separately. The sticker board indicates that Stołowe Mountains are a popular tourist destination for Poles from different cities and regions. No foreign geographic names were found on the board, meaning that either tourists represent a mono-ethnic group, or that foreigners leave no trace. Also, tourists express themselves through their institutions (e.g. names of schools, universities, student associations, hospice, foundations, etc.) let alone hobbies, particularly in leisure, tourism, and sports. Some of these writings are descriptive, e.g. *Ciemna Strona Miasta ŁKS Łódź* 'The Dark Side of the LKS Lodz', *Wybierz I ŁO w Brodnicy* 'Choose The Secondary School No. 1 in Brodnica', *Władcy Trybun Białostocki Klub Sportowy* 'The Owners of the Stands The Sports Club of Białystok'. Worldview self-expression is noticeable on the board as well. For instance, the board includes symbols from right-wing movements, such as *Wielka Polska* 'Great Poland' as well as symbols from left-wing movements, including feminists, e.g. *Ziemia jest kobietą* 'The Earth is a Woman' and the LGBTQ+ community. Some tourists sympathise with ecological movements *Młodzieżowy strajk klimatyczny* 'Teen Climate Strike' or a social initiative known as *Wolne Konopie* 'Free Cannabis'. Others manifest a generation gap, as seen in slogans such as *My jesteśmy rewolucją* 'We are the Revolution' and *New is Coming*. Visitors express global belonging and global trends by means of English as in *Music Extends Life*. These inscriptions are certain to be made by Poles because of the Polish names next to the writings and mixing

Polish and English. Those writings can be humorous: *Tu byłem, blanta spałem* 'I was here and smoked a joint'. The example extends the conventional 'I was here' phrase by adding unconventional content and a rhyme.

All in all, in a similar way to the macroscale, the microscale analysis on the Polish side of the border shows a gradual breakdown of the monolingual paradigm. Additionally, the *Leave No Trace* policy board gives information about the social context and personal or group traces.

5. GLOTTODIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS

Because of the nature of this journal, this part offers a few glottodidactic implications. Many scholars have examined LL in language teaching (Solmaz & Przymus 2021). As noted by researchers, "English language classrooms are ideal spaces for the inclusion of linguistic landscapes (LL) due to the significant presence of various forms of English language and culture in everyday life" (Solmaz & Przymus 2021: 10). This way students have a chance to extend their learning outside the classroom and observe language in real-life situations. In addition, from the ecological perspective, language learning should contribute to students' personal growth by coming into meaningful dialogue with the (language) surrounding (Wolanin 2021).

The classroom activities in the following section are designed to integrate the study data into the language class (preferably secondary school with Polish-speaking students) and outline some lesson ideas inspired by LL. Authentic minimal texts from the board serve as examples to illustrate how sticker boards (e.g. boards found in different tourist places) can foster both language learning and multilingual awareness in the classroom. The investigated material can be used in English classes as a correlation with Polish or geography (Polish term: *korelacja międzyprzedmiotowa*). Yet, the procedures can be applied to other language contexts. More general ideas on how to incorporate LL into the school curriculum demonstrate the ways to foster student agency and break the routine of textbook-centred lessons in ELT.

5.1. Lesson idea 1: The mini-analysis

As scholars such as Thornbury (2012) have suggested, the pedagogical potential of LL refers to its methodology. The lesson objective could be then to develop students' research skill, while covering a curriculum topic *Nature and Environment*, for instance. Before they do the research, students are introduced

to some hints to brainstorm and define keywords such as: *minimal text*, *sticker board*, *Leave No Trace* movement. Then students receive a picture with the board itself and guiding questions to carry out quantitative and qualitative mini-study. Suggested prompts might be as follows:

1. How many minimal texts can you see on the board?
2. How many are written in Polish?
3. How many are written in English?
4. How many are mixed signs (e.g. Polish-English or English-Polish)?
5. Are there any messages in other languages? Can you identify them?
6. Are there any messages unclear?
7. What messages do the minimal texts convey (e.g. names, places, dates)?
8. Can you group the minimal texts into categories? If so, what categories?

These questions represent just a sample. Students' answers may be compared with the original analysis. Question 8 could provide interesting reactions as students may apply different classification criteria and "traces" from the original findings. Comparing results reflect similarities and differences and trigger discussion. Students complete their analysis individually or in groups. They present the findings digitally (using Power Point, Canva, Genially, etc.) in the classroom.

Intended learning outcomes are to develop students' academic skills, linguistic knowledge, speaking and presentation skill, digital literacy, plus collaborative work and learning.

5.2. Lesson idea 2: The board content

Another lesson idea, which can be a follow-up to the previous one, is inspired by the board content. In the EFL classroom, the mixed and English-only minimal texts seem the most useful, although Polish-only texts may be valuable as well. The lesson objective is to raise students' awareness of the English-Polish language contact and multilingual practices. The lesson starts with a short introduction on English-Polish language contact and code-switching. Then students receive worksheets with selected examples retrieved from the board. For the mixed signs, students can be asked to identify English words and phrases in the messages chosen by the instructor. They can discuss the meaning, purpose, and necessity of using English and Polish at the same time.

For example:

- *I was here. Henryk w Terenie*
- *Good night Left Side Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki*
- *Hardcore City Szczecin*

Regarding the English-only stickers and inscriptions, students discuss their formal and semantic properties, i.e. grammar, accuracy, meaning, purpose, forms of expression.

Examples include:

- *I love nature. I love off-road*
- *Wildstar riders*
- *I'm not lost. I'm geocaching*
- *Music Extends Life. Sequel One Records*
- *breaky vibes*
- *yeah bunny*
- *tube adventures.*

If time allows, Polish minimal texts are reflected upon in this EFL lesson, helping students learn the form and purpose of diminutives and nicknames. Furthermore, the Polish material serves to compare and contrast capitalisation rules in Polish and English (e.g. when referring to group trace inscriptions). Also, it is used for translation practice.

The lesson concludes with a group discussion stimulated by the following questions: Do you like the messages on the board, why / why not? Why do people leave such writings in national parks or tourist places? Do you prefer Polish, English or mixed messages? Would you leave your trace in a national park or a tourist place, why / why not? Would you leave your trace in Polish, English or using Polish and English? What do people express with their writings or stickers? The group spokesperson reports back to the whole class.

Intended learning outcomes are to develop students' language awareness, language attitudes (L1, L2), and speaking skills (expressing opinions, debating). The activities can be used when celebrating the European Day of Languages.

5.3. Lesson idea 3: Students' minimal texts

A broader implication of LL is to ask students to create their minimal texts as a twist to regular textbook-based lessons. The lesson / activity objective is to practise summarising, expressing preferences. In this lesson students improve creative writing and learn degrees of formality.

For illustration, Figures 3-5 depict students' minimal texts as a follow-up activity to a reading comprehension exercise (using a text from the students' book). The stickers convey greetings and summarise the key information obtained from the text.

Intended learning outcomes are to develop students' critical thinking skill, text analysis, text summary, concise writing.

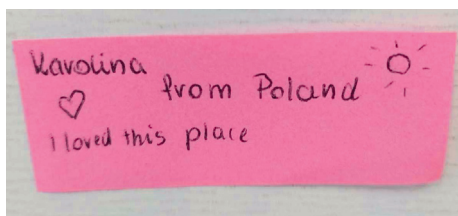


Figure 3. Students in Action

Source: own study.

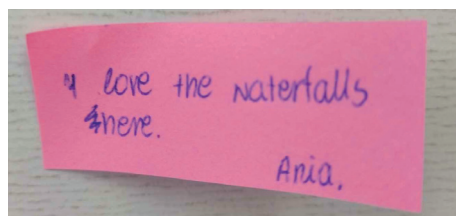


Figure 4. Students in Action

Source: own study.

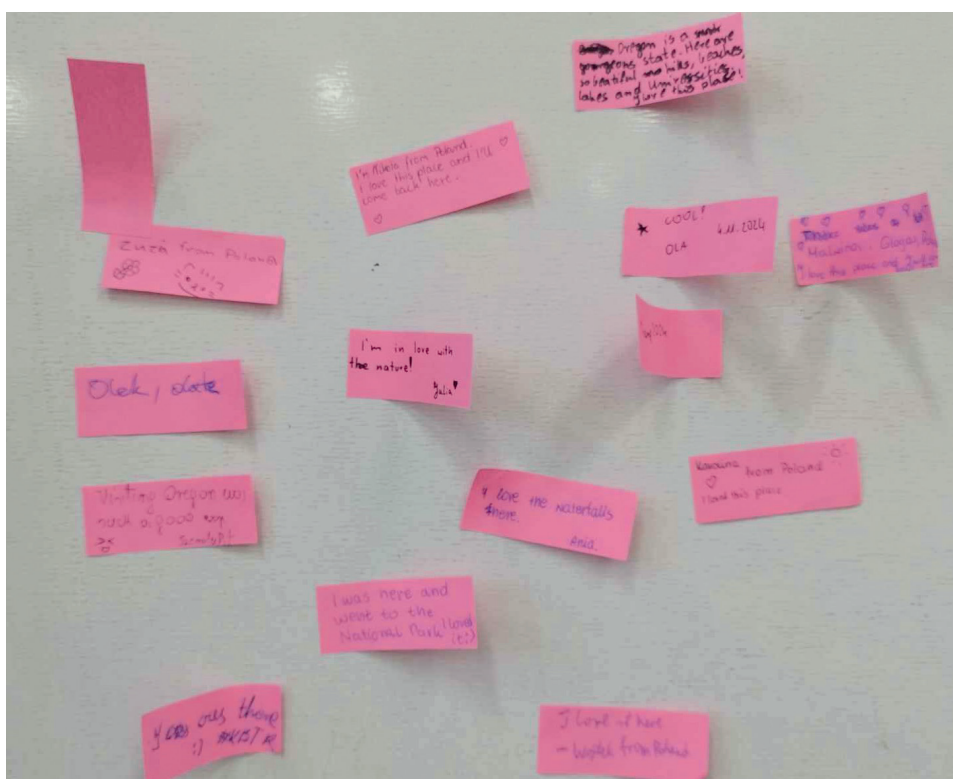


Figure 5. Students in Action

Source: own study.

5.4. Lesson idea 4: My city LL

Another glottodidactic implication of LL is the analysis of the linguistic landscape in students' towns or cities. Students are encouraged to take pictures

of various forms of public signage, including graffiti, slogans, and stickers. In EFL lessons, students are specifically instructed to identify language, their order, English elements in Polish signs and English borrowings. Students work individually or in teams to complete this task. The material collected can be used in the ESP classroom or regular English lessons for discussions about the language of marketing, advertisement, etc. Additionally, the linguistic landscape analysis may include virtual exploration of a chosen location worldwide (a digital walk) or even activities based on LL in games. As Sayer (2010, as cited in Dumanig & David 2019: 2) states, the linguistic landscape provides a “real-world experience” of language and culture.

Intended learning outcomes are to develop students’ research skill, decision-making, and student agency.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the linguistic landscape of the Polish-Czech border area through the lenses of ecolinguistics and linguistic landscape studies. Its goal was to explore the languages displayed in this region along with semiotic and social contexts that surrounded them. The paper examined the macroscale of the linguistic landscape in the Polish-Czech border area and the microscale (a *Leave No Trace* policy sticker board located outside the entrance to a tourist hostel on Szczeliniec Wielki Peak in Stołowe Mountains National Park). The research involved both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the board. Glottodidactic implications supplemented the findings.

The quantitative analysis of the signs in the linguistic landscape of the Polish-Czech border area and minimal texts found on the sticker board depicts similar tendencies. In both semiotic macro and micro spaces, there is a gradual breakdown of the monolingual paradigm. An important difference between the micro and macro scales is the number of language configurations. As noticed, there are much fewer multilingual elements on the sticker board than on the information boards of the studied Polish-Czech border area. However, it is worth mentioning that the board appeared in 2020 when cross-border traffic and international tourism were significantly reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This may be one of the reasons for foreigners leaving “no trace”.

The analysis of minimal texts placed on the board in Stołowe Mountains National Park opened up new research opportunities. Namely, it was possible to identify tourists’ forms of self-expression on the board while their visit to the park. The minimal texts reveal that tourists express themselves through name

forms, age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and worldview. Notably, no racial, class, and religious self-expression signs were identified. This, however, does not necessarily suggest indifference. The result implies that social divisions reflecting these categories may not have been as pronounced in Poland at that time.

Several glottodidactic implications are suggested, including activities inspired by the research findings and LL. These activities or lesson ideas aim to provide students with authentic sources, break the routine of textbook-centred lessons in ELT, and add variety. They all define intended learning outcomes.

The study has its limitations. Firstly, the LL analysis is based on data from 2020. It should be complemented by more contemporary research to explore changes over time. Secondly, the classroom activities have been tested in school spaces many times. Yet, student spoken feedback has been used for evaluation. Further quantitative analysis is needed to verify the adaptability of the lesson ideas for teaching practice. These limitations might present opportunities for future research.

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„Nie pozostawiaj śladów”. Analiza krajobrazu językowego polsko-czeskiego pogranicza w skali makro i mikro

ABSTRAKT. Celem artykułu jest ukazanie krajobrazu językowego polsko-czeskiego pogranicza z uwzględnieniem założeń ekolingwistyki oraz badań nad krajobrazem językowym. Analiza dotyczy konfiguracji języków na tabliczkach występujących w tym rejonie oraz ich kontekstów społeczno-semiotycznych. Część empiryczna składa się z dwóch części. Pierwsza przedstawia krajobraz językowy polsko-czeskiego pogranicza w sposób ilościowy w skali makro, co jest punktem odniesienia do analizy ilościowo-jakościowej w skali mikro. Ta druga czyni przedmiotem zainteresowania zawartość tablicy na wlepy umieszczonej przed schroniskiem na szczycie Szczelińca Wielkiego w Parku Narodowym Gór Stołowych. Analiza materiału dowodzi, że w omawianym regionie następuje stopniowe przełamywanie paradygmatu jednojęzyczności. Ponadto mikroznaki utrwalają różne formy autoekspresji turystów. Artykuł wieńcza implikacje pedagogiczne inspirowane materiałem badawczym, które można zastosować w praktyce dydaktycznej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: krajobraz językowy, polsko-czeskie pogranicze, ekolingwistyka, analiza makroskali, analiza mikroskali.

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II. ARTICLES

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Reflexion critique sur le choix des mots en le : une metacompetence essentielle face aux transformations de la modernite liquide. Le cas du FLE

Critical reflection on word choice in foreign language:
An essential metacompetence in response to the
transformations of liquid modernity. The case of French
as a foreign language

ABSTRACT. This article examines the need to develop a critical awareness of word choice in foreign language contexts in response to the discursive transformations of liquid modernity. It adopts a perspective rooted in the didactics of foreign languages, enriched by an interpretative theoretical framework drawing on insights from contemporary sociological analyses. Within this broader perspective of foreign language education, the study presents an exploratory investigation conducted with 30 French philology students. Focusing on French as a Foreign Language (FLE), the analysis examines the impact of digital media on learners' language practices and lexical sensitivity. The findings highlight an awareness of issues related to clarity and style that remains partial and largely intuitive, yet reveals significant reflective potential. The article concludes by outlining pedagogical directions aimed at fostering more conscious and critical language reflection.

KEYWORDS: critical reflection, word choice, FFL didactics, digital discourse, language awareness, metacompetence, reflexive learners, communication environment.

MOTS CLÉS: réflexion critique, choix des mots, didactique du FLE, discours numériques, conscience langagière, métacompétence, environnement communicationnel, apprenants réflexifs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dans ses analyses du monde contemporain, Z. Bauman (2000) propose une lecture existentielle de la modernité, dite « liquide », caractérisée par la dissolution des repères, la précarité des liens et le vide identitaire. Là où A. Giddens (1991) évoque la réflexivité adaptative et U. Beck (1992), les tensions induites par la société du risque, Z. Bauman en révèle la dimension profondément déstabilisante pour le sujet. Portées par cette dynamique de transformation, les pratiques discursives tendent à se simplifier et à se recentrer sur une fonction utilitaire, les médias numériques jouant à la fois le rôle de vecteurs et de catalyseurs de cette évolution. Produits et amplificateurs des mutations socioculturelles, ces dispositifs technologiques accélèrent l'instantanéité des interactions, favorisent la standardisation des échanges et généralisent des formes discursives fragmentées, homogénéisées, parfois même désémantisées. Ainsi, les médias numériques ne se contentent pas de refléter les transformations sociétales : ils en constituent désormais un moteur structurant.

Face aux évolutions des pratiques discursives dans les environnements numériques, il apparaîtrait essentiel de promouvoir le développement de compétences langagières adaptées à leurs contraintes tout en répondant aux exigences de qualité des interactions, conçues dans une perspective relationnelle, discursive et éthique. C'est ainsi que la didactique des langues étrangères, dans cette perspective, se doit d'assumer une mission de former des locuteurs réflexifs, capables d'interroger leurs pratiques discursives, d'en comprendre les implications sociales et d'exercer une responsabilité critique dans leurs choix lexicaux et stylistiques.

C'est dans cet esprit que s'inscrit notre démarche, qui articule un cadre théorique à visée interprétative avec une enquête empirique de nature exploratoire, menée auprès d'étudiants en philologie française, et prenant appui sur le cas du FLE. Nous nous attacherons, dans un premier temps, à analyser les mutations socioculturelles contemporaines et leur impact sur les pratiques de communication verbale, avant de passer à l'examen des résultats de notre étude qualitative, centrée sur la manière dont les étudiants perçoivent l'influence des médias numériques sur leurs usages du FLE. Une attention particulière sera portée aux écarts entre pratiques discursives en ligne et hors ligne, ainsi qu'à la pertinence et à l'utilité du développement d'une métacompétence de réflexion critique sur le choix des mots.

2. CULTURE, VALEURS ET STYLE DE VIE A L'ERE DE LA MODERNITE LIQUIDE

La modernité liquide (Bauman 2000) redessine les cadres socioculturels en instaurant une dynamique marquée par l'instabilité, l'immédiateté et la fragmentation. Ces bouleversements affectent profondément les modes de consommation, les processus de construction identitaire et les formes d'interaction sociale. Trois axes permettent d'en saisir les principales implications : d'une part, la culture de l'instantanéité, dominée par l'excès et la superficialité ; d'autre part, les figures de l'*homo consumptor* et de l'*homo mediens* (Urbaniak 2014 ; Morbitzer 2017 : 72), emblématiques des logiques de consommation contemporaine (voir le point 1.2 ci-dessous) ; enfin, les dynamiques identitaires, oscillant entre réflexivité et instabilité.

2.1. La culture instantanée : entre excès et superficialité

Née de la conjonction entre globalisation économique, numérisation des interactions et généralisation des logiques consuméristes, la culture de l'instantanéité érige la rapidité, la réactivité et la consommation immédiate en valeurs cardinales. Elle s'inscrit dans une temporalité abrégée, dominée par le présentisme, notion proposée par F. Hartog (2003 : 126), selon laquelle : « Le présent est devenu l'horizon. Sans futur et sans passé, il génère, au jour le jour, le passé et le futur dont il a, jour après jour, besoin et valorise l'immédiat. » Ce mode de structuration du temps s'accompagne d'une instabilité structurelle (Bauman 2011 ; Rosa 2010), où l'horizon de projection à long terme s'efface au profit d'une gratification pulsionnelle et continue (Urbaniak 2014). Dans ce contexte, le flot incessant de contenus numériques – souvent hétérogènes, redondants, voire insignifiants – contribue à une saturation cognitive, génératrice à la fois de désensibilisation axiologique et d'atrophie de la pensée critique (Citton 2014). Ce paradoxe – abondance matérielle et pénurie de sens – constitue un trait saillant de la condition postmoderne (Lipovetsky 1983).

Malgré une accessibilité sans précédent aux biens culturels, symboliques et technologiques, de nombreux individus manifestent une forme d'insatisfaction croissante, révélatrice d'un désajustement entre abondance matérielle et épanouissement subjectif, nourrie par la volatilité des expériences et l'obsolescence programmée des objets comme des relations. Z. Bauman (2007) attribue cette vacuité existentielle à la nature éphémère des gratifications contemporaines, incapables d'offrir un ancrage stable ou une cohérence narrative au vécu. S. Turkle (2011) vient renforcer ce constat en mettant en lumière le paradoxe selon lequel les

technologies numériques, tout en facilitant les connexions, contribuent à l'érosion de la profondeur des liens humains ainsi qu'à une moindre qualité de présence à soi et à autrui. Comme elle le remarque :

We romance the robot and become inseparable from our smartphones. As this happens, we remake ourselves and our relationships with each other through our new intimacy with machines. People talk about Web access on their BlackBerries as "the place for hope" in life, the place where loneliness can be defeated (Turkle 2011 : xxiii)¹

Dans une telle configuration, la culture de l'instantanéité valorise l'apparence au détriment du contenu, et la vitesse d'exécution supplante la profondeur de traitement. Elle engendre un régime discursif où l'économie de l'attention prime sur la densité sémantique (Citton 2014), et où l'accélération devient une norme internalisée – au prix d'une perte progressive de sens (Han 2011).

2.2. *Homo consumptor* et *homo mediens* : figures de la consommation contemporaine

Homo consumptor et *homo mediens* – deux figures emblématiques de la modernité liquide – peuvent être envisagées comme des prismes d'analyse des transformations identitaires contemporaines : (Blachowska-Szmigiel 2023 : 168-169). La première incarne un rapport à la consommation où l'achat devient un acte identitaire et une stratégie d'intégration sociale, dans la mesure où l'aptitude à se détacher sans regret des objets constitue une condition d'adaptation aux normes contemporaines de la circulation des biens, comme l'observe Z. Bauman (2007 : 132) : « Dojrzały konsumenci bez specjalnego trudu rozstają się z rzeczami. Bez żalu, a czasem z lekko skrywaną ulgą akceptują krótki żywot przedmiotu i ich wiadomy koniec. »² La seconde, immergée dans un univers numérique saturé de contenus, privilégie la visibilité immédiate à la réflexion durable (Giddens 1990 ; Han 2011 ; Hepp 2013). Bien que leurs logiques diffèrent, ces deux figures participent à un même cycle où consommation et quête de reconnaissance s'alimentent mutuellement. L'un affirme son identité par la possession ; l'autre, par la mise en scène continue de soi à travers les réseaux numériques (Marwick &

¹ Traduction de l'auteure : « Nous idéalisons le robot et devenons inséparables de nos smartphones. Ce faisant, nous nous redéfinissons ainsi que nos relations aux autres à travers une nouvelle forme d'intimité avec les machines. Certains évoquent l'accès au Web sur leurs BlackBerry comme un "lieu d'espoir" dans la vie, un lieu où la solitude pourrait être vaincue. »

² Traduction de l'auteure : « Les consommateurs aguerris se séparent des objets sans difficulté particulière. Sans regret, et parfois avec un soulagement à peine dissimulé, ils acceptent la brièveté de leur existence ainsi que leur fin annoncée. »

Boyd 2011). Cette dynamique souligne l'importance croissante de la performativité discursive dans la construction de soi.

Les comportements de *homo consumptor* et de *homo mediens* configurent des pratiques identitaires marquées par l'instabilité, la dépendance aux régimes de visibilité et la pression de se rendre constamment visible dans un espace public digitalisé (Papacharissi 2010). Ils illustrent la tension propre à la modernité liquide : le besoin de reconnaissance dans un monde instable, au prix d'une exposition permanente et souvent précaire.

2.3. La construction identitaire dans la modernité liquide

Dans la lignée des dynamiques incarnées par *homo consumptor* et *homo mediens*, la construction identitaire à l'ère de la modernité liquide se caractérise par une instabilité chronique et une injonction constante à l'adaptabilité (Giddens 1991). Le sujet contemporain est sommé de se réinventer sans relâche, de s'ajuster à des normes mouvantes, de répondre aux attentes multiples d'une société en perpétuelle reconfiguration. Ce processus, à la fois émancipateur et anxiogène, place l'individu dans une tension permanente entre aspiration à l'autonomie et exposition à la vulnérabilité. Ladite instabilité identitaire se manifeste par une quête continue d'actualisation de soi, souvent marquée par une fragmentation du moi, où les différentes facettes de l'identité coexistent sans réelle articulation ni cohérence narrative, nourrissant un sentiment de malaise persistant dans le rapport à soi et au corps, comme le soulignent les analyses critiques de la culture contemporaine ; ainsi, Z. Melosik (2013 : 324) observe : «Niekiedy mam wrażenie, że we współczesnym społeczeństwie wytwarzane są coraz to nowsze formy nieadekwatności tożsamościowej i cielesnej jednostki, aby broniąc się przed porażką, nieustannie poszukiwała na nie remediów. »³ Dans ce contexte, l'identité devient un projet à gérer, un capital à investir et une performance à entretenir (Scholz 2013). La consommation semble y jouer un rôle central, dépassant sa fonction économique pour s'imposer comme un opérateur symbolique de reconnaissance et de différenciation sociale (Bauman 2000) : l'individu consomme afin de signifier, d'appartenir et d'être reconnu (Rosiński 2023).

Les médias numériques exacerbent cette logique en instaurant des dispositifs d'évaluation identitaire fondés sur des indicateurs instantanés et éphémères – *likes*, partages, commentaires – transformant le regard d'autrui en métrique de

³ Traduction de l'auteure : « Il m'arrive parfois de penser que, dans la société contemporaine, sont continuellement produites de nouvelles formes d'inadéquation identitaire et corporelle de l'individu, de telle sorte que celui-ci, dans une logique de défense contre l'échec, se trouve contraint de rechercher sans cesse des remèdes à ces insuffisances. »

soi (van Dijck 2013) et accentuant la précarité identitaire par une dépendance accrue à l'approbation extérieure, où l'être devient indissociable de sa visibilité (Melosik 2003 ; Bauman 2003). L'identité devient alors un produit médiatique : visible, partageable, mais aussi hautement contingente (Bauman 2003). Dans cet univers où elle se reconstruit continuellement sous le regard d'autrui, les relations humaines se trouvent soumises à la même instabilité, oscillant entre désir de lien et crainte de la perte, entre connexion immédiate et rupture latente. La promesse de proximité véhiculée par les technologies relationnelles masque la fragilité des attachements, susceptibles de se dissoudre aussi rapidement qu'ils se nouent (Turkle 2011). Cette tension entre surconnexion et désintégration relationnelle constitue l'un des paradoxes centraux de l'expérience contemporaine du sujet.

3. LES PARADOXES DES RELATIONS HUMAINES A L'ERE DE LA MODERNITE LIQUIDE

Les dynamiques identitaires de la modernité liquide, amplifiées par l'omniprésence des médias numériques, redessinent les interactions humaines. Entre illusion de connexion et quête d'authenticité, deux paradoxes s'imposent : l'instantanéité des échanges alimente un sentiment de proximité, tout en fragilisant l'idéal de relation fondée sur la profondeur émotionnelle.

3.1. L'illusion d'une connexion authentique : entre marchandisation et isolement

La culture de l'instantanéité, qui s'inscrit dans les dynamiques de la modernité liquide, tend à privilégier des interactions rapides, fonctionnelles et faiblement engageantes sur le plan émotionnel (Bauman 2000 ; van Dijck 2013). Dans ce contexte, les relations humaines semblent se transformer progressivement en échanges superficiels et transactionnels, vidés de leur densité affective (Bauman 2003). Les applications de rencontre en ligne, en particulier, participent à reconceptualiser les liens sociaux en termes de sélection immédiate, fondée sur des critères visuels et numériques – tels que l'apparence, les préférences affichées ou le capital de visibilité (Sales 2015 ; Aboujaoude 2011). Ce phénomène, souvent qualifié d'« effet Tinder », accentue la précarité des relations contemporaines, devenues jetables et remplaçables dès lors qu'elles ne procurent plus de gratification instantanée (Marval 2024).

Les réseaux sociaux tendent à intensifier cette logique en favorisant une mise en scène permanente de soi, où la recherche de validation symbolique par les

likes, les commentaires ou les partages se substitue à l'échange réciproque. Le lien social se performe : il devient image, métrique, stratégie – au détriment du contenu, de la spontanéité et de l'authenticité relationnelle (Melosik 2003 ; van Dijck 2013). Ce processus de marchandisation des liens, bien qu'enveloppé dans une rhétorique de connectivité, tend à masquer une réalité paradoxale : celle d'une solitude émotionnelle croissante. En effet, si les plateformes numériques multiplient les opportunités d'interaction, elles peinent à reproduire la richesse sensorielle, contextuelle et émotionnelle des relations en présence (Turkle 2011). Elles instaurent une forme de proximité simulée, qui donne l'illusion d'un lien tout en dissimulant l'absence d'implication affective véritable (Bauman 2003 ; Aboujaoude 2011). Dans cet univers hyperconnecté, les individus se trouvent ainsi confrontés à une forme inédite d'isolement : un isolement relationnel au sein même de l'interaction – solitude paradoxale d'un sujet toujours visible, toujours joignable, mais rarement touché (Urbaniak 2014).

Cette évolution des modes d'interaction appelle une analyse plus fine de l'impact des technologies numériques sur la quête contemporaine de lien émotionnel, objet du développement qui suit.

3.2. Entre aspiration et désenchantement : l'impact des médias numériques sur la quête de connexion émotionnelle

Les technologies numériques instaurent une tension constitutive : en multipliant les opportunités de connexion, elles participent paradoxalement à la fragilisation des relations interpersonnelles. Alors même que les structures sociales traditionnelles s'effacent, ces dispositifs ne combleront pas le vide relationnel ainsi créé ; au contraire, ils en amplifient les effets, exacerbant la précarité des liens et l'incertitude affective qui en découle (Beck 1992 ; Bauman 2003). Dans un tel contexte, l'engagement relationnel est de plus en plus perçu comme un risque – risque d'échec, de rejet, d'abandon – alimentant une insécurité émotionnelle diffuse et persistante (Aboujaoude 2011).

Parallèlement, les médias sociaux véhiculent une imagerie idéalisée des relations humaines, fondée sur des mises en scène soigneusement orchestrées, en particulier sur des plateformes telles qu'Instagram ou Facebook (van Dijck 2013). Ces représentations esthétiques et émotionnellement édulcorées nourrissent des attentes irréalistes quant à la stabilité, à l'intensité et à la profondeur des liens (Collomb, Galligo & Pais 2016). Le contraste entre ces modèles hypervalorisés et l'expérience concrète du quotidien engendre frustration, sentiment d'insuffisance et désillusion. Plus les individus aspirent à ces standards relationnels normatifs, plus ils se heurtent à la superficialité vécue des relations réelles ainsi

qu'à leur volatilité structurelle. À cela s'ajoute l'action algorithmique des plateformes numériques, qui privilégient les contenus susceptibles de générer de fortes réactions émotionnelles – telles que l'envie, la jalousie ou la frustration – dans le but d'optimiser le temps d'attention et l'engagement des utilisateurs (van Dijck 2013). Ces affects contribuent à l'évitement du « poids » relationnel, comme l'illustre Z. Bauman (2003 : xii) : « Unlike 'real relationships', 'virtual relationships' are easy to enter and to exit. They look smart and clean, feel easy to use and user-friendly, when compared with the heavy, slow-moving, inert messy 'real stuff'. »⁴.

Les applications de rencontre, en tant que dispositifs emblématiques de cette logique, s'appuient sur des mécanismes de gamification qui encouragent une consommation rapide des relations, réduisant encore davantage les possibilités d'établir des liens profonds et durables (Sales 2015 ; Schrader 2018). Cette dynamique d'instabilité émotionnelle, structurée par la culture numérique, affecte également les modalités d'usage du langage dans les interactions quotidiennes. Elle ouvre ainsi un nouveau champ de réflexion sur les pratiques discursives contemporaines, que nous explorerons dans la section suivante.

4. L'IMPACT DE L'INSTANTANEITE SUR LE LANGAGE : VERS UNE COMMUNICATION SIMPLIFIEE, HOMOGENEISEE ET PERFORMATIVE

Prolongeant l'analyse des dynamiques identitaires à l'ère de la modernité liquide, cette section s'intéresse à leurs effets sur les usages langagiers. Dans les échanges numériques, la parole tend à se simplifier, se fragmenter et s'aligner sur des logiques d'efficacité. Nous examinerons ces transformations à travers trois axes : la simplification du langage (3.1), son homogénéisation dans les environnements numériques (3.2) et la performativité accrue du discours (3.3).

4.1. La simplification du langage

L'instantanéité constitutive de la communication numérique instaure un régime d'urgence interactionnelle qui reconfigure la structuration du langage, favorisant des énoncés brefs, directs et immédiatement décodables au détriment

⁴ Traduction de l'auteure : « Contrairement aux "relations réelles", les "relations virtuelles" sont faciles à nouer et faciles à rompre. Elles apparaissent intelligentes et épurées, se révèlent simples d'usage et conviviales pour l'utilisateur, surtout lorsqu'on les compare à la lourdeur, à la lenteur, à l'inertie et au caractère désordonné des "relations réelles". »

de constructions syntaxiques plus élaborées (Coupland 2010 ; Baron 2015). Cette dynamique est particulièrement visible dans les usages des réseaux sociaux, où la brièveté et l'immédiateté encouragent le recours à des formes abrégées et non standard, contribuant à une économie linguistique largement partagée, comme le soulignent L.L. Panjaitan et A.N. Patria (2024 : 55) : « non-standard forms like 'brb' for 'be right back' or 'u' for 'you are' widely understood despite their deviation from standard grammar ».⁵ Des phénomènes analogues peuvent être observés en français, notamment dans les usages numériques, où circulent également des formes abrégées et non standard telles que « bjr » (bonjour), « svp » (s'il vous plaît), « pk » (pourquoi) ou « tkt » (t'inquiète), largement comprises malgré leur écart à la norme.

L'usage généralisé des abréviations, acronymes et émojis contribue à cette réduction formelle, en restreignant la variété lexicale et en appauvrissant la richesse discursive. Par la limitation du recours aux subordonnées, aux conjonctions et aux enchaînements logiques, le langage numérique tend vers un style fragmentaire, hérité des formats télévisuels ou publicitaires, dans lesquels l'impact immédiat et la lisibilité priment sur la complexité syntaxique (Blommaert 2012 ; Postman 1985). Cette simplification a pour effet de restreindre le champ sémantique : la nuance, la polysémie et la subtilité s'effacent au profit d'un vocabulaire essentiellement fonctionnel. Elle engendre également une fragmentation du discours, marquée par des messages brefs, souvent déconnectés les uns des autres, favorisant des interactions ponctuelles et épisodiques plutôt qu'un réel développement dialogique (Turkle 2011 ; Carr 2021).

Ce mode communicationnel – fondé sur la concision, la vitesse et la réactivité – peut être lu comme reflétant et amplifiant une certaine instabilité émotionnelle caractéristique des relations humaines dans un monde saturé par l'éphémère. En réduisant la densité des échanges et en affaiblissant l'engagement discursif, ce régime langagier tend à participer à un processus de désensibilisation linguistique, dans lequel la parole semble progressivement perdre sa capacité à exprimer des émotions complexes et à structurer des idées abstraites (Jenkins 2006 ; Carr 2021). Il en résulte une forme de régression expressive, où la communication demeure fonctionnelle, mais se trouve privée de certaines ressources critiques, symboliques et poétiques nécessaires à une interaction pleinement signifiante.

⁵ Traduction de l'auteure : « des formes non standard telles que "brb" pour "be right back" ou "u" pour "you are" sont largement comprises malgré leur écart par rapport à la grammaire standard ».

4.2. L'homogénéisation du langage

Dans le prolongement de la dynamique de simplification analysée précédemment, le langage contemporain s'oriente vers une homogénéisation croissante des formes d'expression, privilégiant la clarté immédiate et une certaine standardisation fonctionnelle. Cette évolution est particulièrement perceptible dans les environnements numériques, où les usages linguistiques semblent façonnés par des logiques algorithmiques valorisant la répétition, l'efficacité et la prévisibilité (van Dijck 2013 ; Patino 2019). Les structures discursives tendent alors à devenir progressivement interchangeables, marquées par des tournures stéréotypées, faciles à identifier et immédiatement compréhensibles. Les algorithmes des réseaux sociaux jouent ici un rôle central : en mettant en avant des contenus jugés « engageants » – c'est-à-dire simples, émotionnellement marqués et facilement partageables – ils contribuent à la diffusion de modèles langagiers uniformisés (Jenkins 2006 ; Patino 2019). Cette logique computationnelle de l'attention encourage des formats discursifs courts, percutants et largement partagés, souvent au détriment d'expressions plus singulières ou contextuellement ancrées. Ce phénomène s'inscrit plus largement dans une transformation des rythmes culturels et cognitifs contemporains, marquée par l'accélération et la fragmentation des modes de réception. À cet égard, le constat de B. Patino (2019 chap. 7) selon lequel « notre vie culturelle et intellectuelle est devenue stroboscopique » offre un éclairage sur la manière dont la réduction du temps d'attention et l'adaptation des formes narratives à des formats toujours plus brefs peuvent contribuer à la standardisation des pratiques langagières.

Ce processus d'homogénéisation s'accompagne d'un appauvrissement de la diversité linguistique. Les formulations originales, les variations stylistiques ou régionales, et les nuances culturelles tendent à s'effacer au profit de codes globalisés – souvent décontextualisés – qui fonctionnent comme des signaux symboliques standardisés. Les énoncés perdent ainsi en profondeur culturelle et en ancrage subjectif, pour devenir des objets de circulation algorithmique, soumis aux logiques de viralité et de visibilité (van Dijck 2013).

Par ailleurs, cette homogénéisation ne concerne pas uniquement la forme linguistique, mais affecte également les usages sociaux du langage, en modifiant la manière dont les individus se représentent et interagissent dans les espaces numériques. La communication langagière, dans ces contextes, tend à se transformer en instrument de mise en scène de soi – où l'expression personnelle cède souvent la place à la performativité sociale (Jenkins 2006).

Ce glissement vers une communication standardisée, opérant tant sur le plan formel que pragmatique, contribue à redéfinir les contours mêmes de la parole

publique contemporaine, en la rendant plus lisible, mais aussi plus pauvre sur le plan symbolique, identitaire et dialogique.

4.3. La performativité du langage

Inscrite dans la logique d'homogénéisation linguistique présentée dans la section précédente, la communication contemporaine accorde une importance croissante à la performance, à l'impact immédiat et à l'efficacité interactionnelle. Dans les environnements numériques, l'objectif n'est plus seulement d'informer, d'argumenter ou de dialoguer, mais de produire un effet direct, de susciter une réaction instantanée, parfois au détriment de la réflexion ou de la nuance (Bauman 2000). Ce repositionnement des fonctions communicationnelles s'accompagne d'une redéfinition du langage, qui tend à assumer un rôle performatif au sens pragmatique : il ne se contente plus de signifier, il agit. Il affecte le réel, déclenche une émotion, appelle une réponse. Cette dimension active du discours se manifeste notamment à travers l'usage intensifié des émojis, des formules expressives ou des interjections visuelles, qui condensent et véhiculent des affects de manière immédiate (Crystal 2006). Le langage devient ainsi un vecteur d'efficacité sociale : il capte l'attention, active l'engagement, mais relègue souvent la complexité conceptuelle au second plan.

Les réseaux sociaux constituent l'un des terrains d'expression les plus manifestes de cette logique performative. Celle-ci s'y déploie selon diverses modalités : choix lexicaux stratégiques, hashtags percutants, slogans calibrés pour provoquer un effet. Les réactions des usagers – qu'elles prennent la forme de likes, de commentaires ou s'incarnent dans des mèmes et des gifs – s'inscrivent dans une dynamique expressive où l'émotion prime sur l'argumentation. Comme le souligne A. Wagener (2020 : §2) : « les mèmes et les gifs, dans leur immense variété, permettent précisément de cristalliser l'expression cognitivo-affective de signes qui se veulent dynamiques et éphémères dans un environnement d'interaction et de communication qui l'est tout autant. » Ces formes condensées, à la fois ludiques et chargées d'affect, deviennent ainsi des vecteurs privilégiés de performativité sociale en ligne.

Ladite logique performative tend à marginaliser la profondeur, la contextualisation et la rigueur argumentative (Crystal 2006), au profit d'une culture de la validation numérique fondée sur des indicateurs quantitatifs de reconnaissance. Le discours devient un instrument de (re)présentation de soi, orienté vers la captation du regard social. La notion de « présentation de soi » développée par E. Goffman (1959) permet d'analyser avec acuité cette scénographie identitaire. Dans les environnements numériques, les interactions, loin d'être spontanées,

sont construites et réglées pour projeter une image cohérente et contrôlée. Le langage devient ainsi un outil stratégique, mobilisé pour susciter l'adhésion ou la reconnaissance. Exacerbée par la médiation technologique, cette dynamique illustre un paradoxe central de la modernité liquide : une communication plus visible, mais moins signifiante – plus fréquente, mais moins féconde (Turkle 2011).

5. L'IMPORTANCE DE LA METACOMPÉTENCE DE RÉFLEXION CRITIQUE SUR LE CHOIX DES MOTS EN FLE : RESULTAT D'UNE ETUDE QUALITATIVE

Face aux mutations identitaires, relationnelles et langagières analysées dans les sections précédentes, la didactique des langues étrangères se trouve confronté à un enjeu fondamental : offrir aux apprenants des outils pour s'orienter dans un environnement communicationnel instable, marqué par l'instantanéité et la standardisation (Bauman 2000 ; Michelot & Colin 2019). Dans ce contexte, le développement d'un rapport conscient et réflexif au langage apparaît comme un levier essentiel pour enrichir la qualité des échanges et promouvoir des pratiques discursives plus nuancées. Cette réflexion s'inscrit dans une perspective plus large : celle de la conscience linguistique (*language awareness*), entendue comme la capacité à comprendre les usages du langage dans leurs dimensions sociales et culturelles (Hawkins 1984 ; Gombert 1990 ; van Lier 1995 ; Carter 2003). La métacompétence de réflexion critique sur le choix des mots constitue une déclinaison concrète de cette conscience : elle suppose une attention portée aux nuances lexicales et à leurs effets discursifs dans des contextes variés (James & Garrett 1992). Appliquée à l'enseignement / apprentissage des langues étrangères, elle viserait à outiller les apprenants pour qu'ils développent une posture distanciée vis-à-vis de leurs usages langagiers et soient capables de déconstruire les automatismes discursifs (Fairclough 1992).

Dans le prolongement de cette réflexion, l'analyse empirique présentée dans la section suivante s'appuie sur le cas du FLE. Elle a pour objectif d'examiner, à titre exploratoire, la manière dont les apprenants perçoivent et mobilisent leurs ressources lexicales et discursives dans différents contextes d'usage (en ligne et hors ligne), ainsi que les représentations qu'ils se construisent autour du développement d'une métacompétence de réflexion critique sur le choix des mots.

5.1. Méthodologie de la recherche

Trois questions de recherche ont orienté cette étude qualitative :

1. Comment les étudiants en FLE de la génération iGen – c'est-à-dire les individus nés approximativement entre le milieu des années 1990 et le début des années 2010, ayant grandi dans un environnement numérique omniprésent – perçoivent-ils l'impact des médias numériques sur leurs usages langagiers et la qualité de leurs interactions ?
2. Quelles pratiques discursives adoptent-ils en ligne et hors ligne, et que révèlent-elles de leur rapport à la langue ?
3. Attribuent-ils une valeur formative au développement d'une métacom pétence de réflexion critique sur le choix des mots ?

Dans le souci de garantir la clarté des consignes et de favoriser des réponses nuancées, un questionnaire structuré a été élaboré en polonais. Sa version originale, ainsi que sa traduction en français, sont jointes respectivement en Annexes 1 et 2. Le questionnaire explore : a) la manière dont les étudiants perçoivent l'impact des technologies numériques sur leurs usages langagiers, leur apprentissage du FLE (questions 5 à 6), et la qualité de la communication (questions 7 à 8) ; b) les pratiques langagières qu'ils adoptent en contexte numérique et hors ligne (questions 9 à 11) ; c) le degré de réflexion critique qu'ils mettent en oeuvre dans le choix des mots, ainsi que le besoin de développer cette métacom pétence dans le cadre de l'apprentissage pratique du FLE (questions 12 à 15). Le questionnaire inclut aussi des éléments sur le profil linguistique des répondants et leurs expériences avec le français (questions 1 à 4). Le questionnaire inclut également des items relatifs au profil linguistique des répondants et à leurs expériences avec le français (questions 1 à 4), afin de contextualiser leurs pratiques langagières.

Menée auprès de 30 étudiants de première année en philologie française, le questionnaire porte sur les discours subjectifs et les pratiques effectives. L'analyse s'ouvre par une exploration du rapport au langage à travers les trajectoires personnelles et les usages déclarés. Les données recueillies ont été soumises à une analyse thématique inductive (Braun & Clarke 2006). Les réponses ouvertes ont été lues ligne par ligne afin d'identifier des segments de discours significatifs. Ces segments ont été codés manuellement à l'aide de mots-clés représentatifs, puis regroupés en catégories thématiques. À partir de ces catégories, des thèmes transversaux ont été mis en évidence, révélant les régularités, les contrastes et les tensions dans les représentations des étudiants.

En complément, les réponses aux questions fermées ont fait l'objet d'une analyse de contenu descriptive, visant à quantifier les tendances observées (fréquence des éléments identifiés dans les usages numériques, impact perçu des médias sociaux, degrés de conscience réflexive). Cette double approche permet

de croiser la profondeur interprétative propre à l'analyse thématique avec une objectivation partielle des phénomènes linguistiques perçus.

5.2. Analyse des résultats

5.2.1. Profil linguistique, parcours d'apprentissage et pratiques langagières numériques des répondants

Les étudiants interrogés présentent des profils linguistiques et des trajectoires d'apprentissage variés, traduisant une exposition hétérogène, mais significative à la langue française. La majorité se situe au niveau débutant (A1–A2, 16 répondants), tandis qu'un tiers présente des compétences intermédiaires à avancées (B1–C2, 10 répondants). Douze étudiants déclarent ne disposer d'aucun contact extra-universitaire avec le français, tandis que les autres font état d'expériences d'exposition antérieures, formelles (cours suivis dans l'enseignement secondaire, séjours en immersion, cours particuliers) et informelles (consommation médiatique, échanges avec des francophones). La quasi-totalité des étudiants maîtrise au moins une autre langue étrangère (anglais, espagnol, allemand ou italien), ce qui s'inscrit dans le cadre du système éducatif polonais, où l'apprentissage de deux langues étrangères est obligatoire dans l'enseignement secondaire. Cette situation contribue à favoriser une approche contrastive du langage ainsi qu'à développer une sensibilité accrue aux structures discursives. Leurs usages du français dans les espaces numériques révèlent une immersion active : certains communiquent avec des locuteurs francophones, d'autres recourent à des applications d'apprentissage ou consultent régulièrement des contenus authentiques tels que des articles, des vidéos ou des podcasts.

Cette interaction quotidienne et plurielle avec la langue cible constitue un terrain favorable au développement d'une conscience linguistique, laquelle est susceptible de participer à une plus grande précision lexicale et à un renforcement progressif de la maîtrise discursive en contexte FLE.

5.2.2. Perception étudiante de l'impact des médias numériques sur les pratiques langagières et la communication en FLE

Les étudiants interrogés manifestent une conscience fine des tendances communicationnelles contemporaines, notamment de l'évolution des usages langagiers sous l'effet des environnements numériques. Ils en identifient spontanément plusieurs phénomènes caractéristiques, parmi lesquels : un raccour-

cissement généralisé des énoncés, associé à la prédominance de messages courts et dynamiques (15 répondants), une simplification des structures grammaticales (14 répondants), ainsi que l'omniprésence de signes graphiques – émojis, acronymes et abréviations (11 répondants). En outre, certains étudiants (6 répondants) attirent l'attention sur la pression temporelle induite par la rapidité des échanges, souvent au détriment de la précision expressive.

Malgré l'identification de ces phénomènes, 22 étudiants sur 30 estiment que les médias numériques n'ont pas d'impact négatif sur la qualité globale de la communication. L'un d'eux note par exemple que « les Français sont très polis »⁶, suggérant que la courtoisie langagière peut être préservée dans des contextes numériques. De manière générale, l'usage des médias numériques est perçu comme bénéfique pour l'apprentissage du FLE. Vingt-et-un étudiants évoquent des effets positifs sur leur processus d'acquisition : 13 mentionnent un enrichissement du vocabulaire, 9 une meilleure mémorisation des structures linguistiques, et 6 une exposition accrue à un français authentique. Comme le résume un répondant : « Grâce aux réseaux sociaux, j'apprends du vocabulaire plus naturel et des expressions courantes. »

Au-delà de cette perception favorable, l'analyse des usages concrets du français dans les environnements numériques révèle certaines tensions. Six étudiants dénoncent une surutilisation d'abréviations, d'expressions familières et de discours fragmentés, rendant les échanges moins clairs et plus difficiles à suivre. Parmi les difficultés évoquées, figurent également la perte de nuances émotionnelles (4 répondants), l'érosion des structures grammaticales complexes (5 répondants), la banalisation du langage (3 répondants) ou encore l'apparition d'un fossé générationnel dans les usages linguistiques (3 répondants). Six étudiants observent une tendance à l'automatisation des expressions figées et à l'usage récurrent du registre familier, qu'ils perçoivent comme un facteur d'appauvrissement des productions langagières. L'un d'eux exprime cette inquiétude en ces termes : « Je remarque que j'utilise de plus en plus des expressions toutes faites, ce qui appauvrit mon vocabulaire » tandis qu'un autre souligne que ces phénomènes posent un défi particulier aux apprenants débutants.

5.2.3. L'analyse des pratiques langagières des étudiants en FLE dans les environnements numériques et non numériques

L'analyse des réponses met en évidence que 16 étudiants sur 30 déclarent recourir, au moins ponctuellement, à des éléments caractéristiques de la commu-

⁶ Toutes les traductions du polonais sont réalisées par l'auteure.

nication numérique dans leurs extra-universitaire en FLE. Il s'agit notamment de l'usage d'émoticônes, de formes abrégées, de formulations familières, de structures fragmentées ou de tournures préfabriquées. Ces éléments sont, dans la majorité des cas, réservés à des contextes numériques ou informels – tels que les messageries instantanées ou les réseaux sociaux – ce qui semble témoigner d'une conscience pragmatique des registres et d'une capacité à ajuster le discours en fonction des canaux et des situations. Pour environ la moitié de ces étudiants (9 sur 16), ces choix s'inscrivent dans une stratégie d'adaptation : ils permettent de pallier une compétence encore en cours de construction, de gagner en spontanéité ou d'introduire un registre affectif difficile à véhiculer par des moyens plus formels. L'un d'eux écrit : « Je simplifie mes messages pour les rendre plus naturels et rapides ». Ce genre de propos invite à dépasser une lecture normative du phénomène pour y voir aussi un geste de négociation linguistique – entre ce que l'on sait déjà dire, ce que l'on voudrait dire, et ce que l'on ose dire.

Parallèlement à ces formes expressives, 14 étudiants insistent sur la nécessité d'adopter un style plus soigné dans les contextes formels. Ils déclarent prêter une attention particulière à la correction grammaticale, à la précision lexicale et à la cohérence stylistique, notamment dans leurs productions universitaires. La plupart d'entre eux marquent une frontière claire entre sphère numérique et écrits académiques. Comme l'exprime un participant : « J'adopte un style plus familier sur les réseaux, mais jamais dans mes écrits universitaires ». Cette posture traduirait moins un clivage qu'une forme de conscience discursive en devenir, dans laquelle le style peut être envisagé comme un choix, et non plus uniquement comme un effet de niveau. Il convient toutefois de nuancer les postures. Quatorze étudiants déclarent ne pas recourir à ces formes numériques, ni en ligne, ni hors ligne. Cette absence peut certes traduire un rapport encore normatif à la langue cible ; elle pourrait également s'inscrire dans une forme de prudence – stratégique ou inconsciente – face à un espace discursif perçu comme instable. L'un d'eux écrit avec une sincérité désarmante : « Je ne me sens pas encore assez à l'aise pour utiliser le français en dehors du cadre académique ». Cette phrase dit beaucoup : non seulement sur le niveau de compétence, mais aussi sur l'enjeu symbolique de la prise de parole en langue étrangère – là où chaque mot expose autant qu'il exprime.

Dans l'ensemble, les réponses analysées ne laissent pas apparaître une opposition strictement polarisée entre usage numérique et usage formel. Elles donnent plutôt à voir les prémices d'un espace de tension féconde, dans lequel les pratiques langagières des étudiants semblent progressivement s'inscrire. Dans cet espace, le langage ne se contente pas de véhiculer du contenu, mais devient un lieu où se déploient, s'ajustent et parfois s'expérimentent des identités discursives en formation.

5.2.4. Réflexion critique sur le choix des mots : entre conscience déclarée et pratiques effectives

L'analyse des réponses suggère l'existence d'une conscience largement partagée de l'importance du choix des mots, bien que cette réflexion reste souvent intuitive, fragmentaire et déclenchée par le contexte. Lors de la lecture de textes en FLE, 23 étudiants déclarent prêter attention au poids sémantique et à la connotation des mots, mais seuls 7 le font de manière systématique. Cette tendance se prolonge dans la production orale et écrite : 28 étudiants sur 30 affirment réfléchir à leurs choix lexicaux, mais seulement 10 y accordent une attention approfondie dans le but d'enrichir leur expression. Pour la majorité, cette réflexion reste occasionnelle ou implicite, au profit d'un usage centré sur la compréhension mutuelle et l'adaptation situationnelle.

Le niveau de métaréflexion exprimé s'articule avec les paramètres évoqués par les étudiants pour orienter leurs choix de mots : 26 affirment adapter leur vocabulaire au contexte et à l'interlocuteur, 23 mettent l'accent sur la clarté et la précision, et 18 prennent en compte la dimension stylistique – généralement dans des contextes formels. En revanche, seuls 12 considèrent la charge émotionnelle des mots, et 10 leurs connotations culturelles, ce qui témoigne d'une sensibilité encore partielle aux dimensions implicites du discours.

Interrogés sur l'intérêt d'une réflexion critique plus approfondie, tous les étudiants s'accordent à dire qu'elle pourrait améliorer leur expression en FLE. Pour 23 d'entre eux, elle renforcerait nettement la clarté et la richesse des échanges ; 7 la jugent surtout pertinente dans des contextes formels tels que la rédaction académique. Cette unanimité peut être interprétée comme l'indice d'un besoin perçu de développement dans ce domaine, bien que cette réflexion ne soit pas encore pleinement intégrée dans les usages langagiers quotidiens.

5.3. Discussion et conclusion de la recherche

Les résultats de cette étude qualitative invitent à penser l'existence d'une tension constante entre pragmatisme langagier, adaptabilité contextuelle et volonté – encore partiellement formulée – d'explorer des usages plus réflexifs du FLE. Immergés dans les logiques communicationnelles des environnements numériques, les étudiants manifestent une conscience partielle des transformations discursives en cours. Toutefois, cette conscience demeure largement intuitive et insuffisamment soutenue sur le plan métacognitif. Afin de structurer cette discussion, les résultats sont examinés à la lumière des trois questions de recherche formulées en amont de l'étude.

Premièrement, en ce qui concerne la perception de l'impact des médias numériques sur leurs usages langagiers et la qualité de leurs interactions, une majorité de répondants tend à considérer les médias numériques comme un facteur susceptible de favoriser la simplification du langage, la brièveté des énoncés et le recours routinier à des tournures figées. Cet impact apparaît globalement reconnu, sans toutefois faire l'objet, dans la plupart des cas, d'une interrogation critique ou d'une réflexion systématisée. Les étudiants semblent néanmoins manifester une certaine capacité d'ajustement aux contextes, en différenciant les registres selon les situations (formelles / informelles). Cette aptitude peut être interprétée comme l'indice de l'émergence d'une compétence adaptative, encore largement guidée par l'intuition plutôt que par des choix linguistiques pleinement délibérés.

S'agissant des pratiques discursives adoptées par les étudiants, en ligne comme hors ligne, et de ce qu'elles laissent entrevoir de leur rapport à la langue, les éléments issus de la communication numérique tendent à être intégrés avec prudence et demeurent, dans la plupart des cas, cantonnés aux échanges informels. Une partie des étudiants semble manifester une certaine réticence à utiliser le français en dehors des cadres académiques, ce comportement pouvant être interprété, entre autres, à la lumière de la charge symbolique associée à l'expression en langue étrangère. L'usage du français apparaît ainsi moins comme une pratique stabilisée que comme une pratique identitaire en construction, marquée par une tension persistante entre confort linguistique et quête de légitimité discursive.

Pour ce qui est de la valeur formative attribuée au développement d'une métacompétence de réflexion critique sur le choix des mots, celle-ci est largement reconnue comme pertinente par les étudiants. Toutefois, sa mobilisation effective semble demeurer limitée dans les usages quotidiens. L'intérêt qu'elle suscite ne s'accompagne pas encore, dans la majorité des cas, d'une intégration active hors du cadre académique, ce qui peut suggérer l'existence d'un décalage entre la reconnaissance théorique de sa valeur et sa mise en œuvre concrète. Cette dissociation invite à interroger les modalités d'activation de la métaréflexion langagière dans des contextes d'apprentissage davantage incarnés et ancrés dans l'expérience vécue.

6. CONCLUSION GENERALE

L'enseignement du FLE s'inscrit aujourd'hui dans une perspective actionnelle, centrée sur la capacité à agir par et à travers le langage dans des situations de communication authentiques (Conseil de l'Europe 2001). À l'ère de la moder-

nit   liquide, marqu  e par l'instantan  it  , la performativit   et la standardisation des   changes, cette orientation tend    supposer la formation des locuteurs capables de mobiliser la langue comme outil d'action sociale. Elle s'accompagne ainsi d'une adaptation continue aux discours contemporains – notamment    ceux qui circulent dans les environnements num  riques (Michelot & Colin 2019). Or, ces discours, souvent d  crits comme simplifi  s, homog  n  is  s et format  s, semblent peu propices    l'  mergence d'une expression riche, nuanc  e ou critique. C'est pr  cis  ment dans cet   cart que se dessine l'un des enjeux majeurs de la formation langag  ri  re contemporaine : doter les apprenants non seulement de comp  tences communicationnelles, mais aussi d'outils de lecture critique leur permettant d'interroger les usages, de d  construire les automatismes discursifs et de (re)donner sens    leurs mots.

D  velopper une conscience m  talangag  ri  re et une r  flexivit   sur le choix des mots peut ainsi   tre envisag   comme une mani  re de former des locuteurs capables non seulement de dire, mais aussi de penser ce qu'ils disent – dans et par le langage. Les mots, loin d'  tre de simples vecteurs d'information, peuvent en effet   tre appr  hend  s comme des miroirs de nos pens  es (Laplane 2005 : 77–94), des t  moins de notre rapport au monde et des instruments de notre pouvoir d'agir. Les r  sultats de l'enqu  te qualitative sugg  rent que, malgr   une forte exposition aux pratiques num  riques, les   tudiants manifestent une sensibilit   – encore diffuse – aux enjeux de clart  , de style et de pr  cision lexicale. Cette sensibilit  , bien qu'intuitive, semble constituer un terrain favorable    l'  mergence progressive d'une m  tacomp  tence langag  ri  re plus consciente et nuanc  e. Dans cette optique, plusieurs implications p  dagogiques se d  gagent : a) favoriser l'observation critique des discours – y compris num  riques – afin d'  veiller la conscience des m  canismes langagiers implicites ; b) introduire des activit  s centr  es sur le choix des mots et leurs effets   motionnels, culturels et argumentatifs ; c) encourager une alternance entre expression spontan  e et relecture r  flexive, afin d'articuler usage, forme et intention.

Sans pr  tention    la g  n  ralisation, cette   tude exploratoire men  e aupr  s de 30   tudiants en premi  re ann  e de philologie fran  aise offre un   clairage pr  cieux sur la mani  re dont les jeunes adultes per  oivent et exp  rimentent l'usage du fran  ais dans un environnement num  rique en mutation. Elle met   galement en   vidence les limites inh  rentes    ce type d'approche : les r  sultats restent li  s    un contexte sp  cifique,    un profil d'apprenants particulier et    un niveau de comp  tence donn  . Pour approfondir les observations et enrichir les interpr  tations, des recherches compl  mentaires seraient souhaitables – aupr  s d'autres publics, dans divers cadres   ducatifs et    diff  rents stades d'apprentissage. Ces prolongements pourraient notamment explorer les m  canismes de la r  flexivit   langag  ri  re,   valuer les effets de dispositifs

pédagogiques innovants, ou encore interroger les tensions entre automatisation discursive et conscience critique.

En ce sens, cette étude constitue un point d'ancrage pertinent pour nourrir une réflexion plus large sur la construction d'une conscience critique des usages langagiers dans l'apprentissage des langues étrangères. En prenant appui sur le cas du FLE, elle suggère l'intérêt d'inscrire la conscience du langage au cœur des apprentissages linguistiques contemporains, comme levier possible d'émancipation discursive et d'appropriation réfléchie de la langue cible.

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**Krytyczna refleksja nad doбором słownictwa w języku obcym
jako kluczowa metakompetencja w odpowiedzi na przemiany płynnej nowoczesności.
Przypadek języka francuskiego jako języka obcego.**

ABSTRAKT. W niniejszym artykule przeanalizowano zagadnienie rozwijania krytycznej świadomości w zakresie doboru słownictwa w kontekście języka obcego w odpowiedzi na dyskursywne przemiany płynnej nowoczesności. Przyjęto perspektywę zakorzenioną w dydaktyce języków obcych, wzbogaconą o interpretacyjne ramy teoretyczne oparte na współczesnych podejściach socjologicznych. W ramach tej szerokiej perspektywy w artykule przedstawiono badanie przeprowadzone z udziałem 30 studentów filologii romańskiej. Koncentrując się na języku francuskim jako języku obcym (FLE), zbadano wpływ mediów cyfrowych na praktyki językowe studentów i ich wrażliwość leksykalną. Wyniki badania wskazują, że świadomość kwestii związanych z jasnością i stylem wypowiedzi pozostaje częściowa i w dużej mierze intuicyjna, ale ujawnia znaczny potencjał refleksyjny. Artykuł kończy się nakreśleniem kierunków działań dydaktycznych mających na celu wspieranie bardziej świadomej i krytycznej refleksji językowej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: krytyczna refleksja, dobór słownictwa, dydaktyka języka francuskiego jako obcego, dyskurs cyfrowy, świadomość językowa, metakompetencja, refleksyjni uczący się, środowisko komunikacyjne.

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ANNEXE 1

Kwestionariusz ankiety

Refleksja nad językiem w komunikacji cyfrowej. Perspektywa studentów języka francuskiego jako obcego

Zapraszam Cię do udziału w krótkim badaniu poświęconym refleksji nad językiem w komunikacji cyfrowej.

Celem kwestionariusza jest lepsze zrozumienie, jak studenci języka francuskiego jako obcego postrzegają współczesne zmiany językowe, z jakich strategii korzystają podczas formułowania wypowiedzi w tym języku oraz czy dostrzegają potrzebę świadomego namysłu nad doбором słów. Twoje odpowiedzi są anonimowe i zostaną wykorzystane wyłącznie do celów naukowych. W kwestionariuszu nie ma odpowiedzi „dobrych” ani „złych” – liczy się Twoje osobiste doświadczenie i punkt widzenia.

1. Jakie znasz języki obce oprócz francuskiego? Wymień proszę wszystkie języki, którymi potrafisz posługiwać się w mowie i/lub w piśmie.
2. Jak oceniasz swój poziom znajomości języka francuskiego?
 - a. poziom początkujący (A1–A2)
 - b. poziom średniozaawansowany (B1–B2)
 - c. poziom zaawansowany (C1–C2)
 - d. trudno określić
3. Czy przed rozpoczęciem studiów uczyłeś się / uczyłaś się języka francuskiego? W przypadku odpowiedzi twierdzącej opisz krótko wcześniejszą edukację językową (określ np. czas trwania nauki, liczbę zajęć w tygodniu, miejsce nauki: szkoła podstawowa, szkoła średnia, kursy językowe, zajęcia indywidualne, inne). W przypadku odpowiedzi przeczącej przejdź do kolejnego pytania.
4. Czy miałas / miałeś kontakt z językiem francuskim poza edukacją formalną (np. przez internet, filmy, muzykę, media społecznościowe, rozmowy, podróże)? W przypadku odpowiedzi twierdzącej krótko opisz ten kontakt.
W przypadku odpowiedzi przeczącej przejdź do kolejnego pytania.
5. Czy posługujesz się językiem francuskim w komunikacji cyfrowej poza zajęciami akademickimi (np. w mediach społecznościowych, na forach internetowych, w komunikatorach takich jak WhatsApp lub Messenger)? W przypadku odpowiedzi twierdzącej wskaż wykorzystywane media cyfrowe, częstotliwość ich użycia oraz orientacyjny czas poświęcany dziennie na komunikację w języku francuskim. W przypadku odpowiedzi przeczącej przejdź do kolejnego pytania.
6. Czy korzystasz z mediów cyfrowych w celu samodzielnej nauki języka francuskiego? W przypadku odpowiedzi twierdzącej wskaż wykorzystywane narzędzia, częstotliwość ich użycia oraz orientacyjny czas poświęcany na naukę języka francuskiego.
7. Jakie charakterystyczne cechy zauważasz we francuskojęzycznych wypowiedziach publikowanych w mediach cyfrowych (np. w mediach społecznościowych, na forach internetowych, w komunikatorach)? Pytanie dotyczy codziennej komunikacji – zarówno prywatnej, jak i publicznej. Możesz zaznaczyć dowolną liczbę odpowiedzi.
 - a. skracanie wypowiedzi, upraszczanie struktur gramatycznych
 - b. staranne rozwijanie myśli i unikanie skrótowości
 - c. stosowanie skrótów, emotikonów i akronimów
 - d. pogłębiona argumentacja i analiza tematu

- e. unikanie rozwijania myśli
 - f. schematyczność (powtarzalne formuły, utarte zwroty)
 - g. neutralność emocjonalna wypowiedzi
 - h. presja na szybkie odpowiedzi kosztem precyzji wypowiedzi
 - i. zastępowanie słów znakami graficznymi (emotikony, GIF-y, memy)
 - j. dbałość o poprawność gramatyczną i stylistyczną
 - k. używanie krótkich, dynamicznych zdań zamiast bardziej rozbudowanych wypowiedzi
 - l. rozbudowane wypowiedzi, długie i złożone zdania
 - m. silne nacechowanie emocjonalne (język wyrazisty, hiperboliczny, prowokacyjny)
 - n. język performatywny (nastawiony na autoprezentację, zdobywanie reakcji)
 - o. fragmentaryczność wypowiedzi (brak logicznej ciągłości, urywane myśli)
8. Czy spośród elementów francuskojęzycznej komunikacji wymienionych w pytaniu 7 uważasz takie, które mogą negatywnie wpływać na jakość porozumiewania się, np. utrudniać wyrażanie emocji, subtelnych znaczeń lub bardziej złożonych myśli? W przypadku odpowiedzi twierdzącej wskaż maksymalnie trzy takie elementy oraz krótko uzasadnij swój wybór. W przypadku odpowiedzi przeczącej przejdź do kolejnego pytania.
9. Które z elementów wymienionych w pytaniu 7 wykorzystujesz w swoich wypowiedziach w języku francuskim? Wskaż formy komunikacji, w których ich używasz (np. rozmowy bezpośrednie, korespondencja e-mailowa, teksty akademickie, komunikacja w mediach cyfrowych) i krótko uzasadnij swój wybór.
10. Czy media społecznościowe wpływają na sposób, w jaki formułujesz wypowiedzi w języku francuskim? Jeśli tak, opisz, proszę, charakter tego wpływu i określ, czy oceniasz go jako raczej wspierający, czy ograniczający.
11. Czy zauważasz różnice w sposobie formułowania wypowiedzi w języku francuskim w zależności od tego, czy mają one formę cyfrową, czy tradycyjną (np. listy, dłuższe teksty opisowe lub narracyjne)? Jeśli tak, opisz, na czym polegają te różnice, wskaż preferowaną przez siebie formę oraz uzasadnij swój wybór.
12. Podczas lektury tekstów w języku francuskim jak często zatrzymujesz się nad znaczeniem poszczególnych słów i zastanawiasz się nad ich „ciężarem” znaczeniowym (np. ładunkiem emocjonalnym, konotacjami pozytywnymi lub negatywnymi, stopniem formalności lub nacechowaniem kulturowym)?
- a. często
 - b. czasami
 - c. rzadko
 - d. nigdy
13. W jakim stopniu analizujesz dobór słów podczas redagowania wypowiedzi w języku francuskim? Zaznacz jedną odpowiedź.
- a. zazwyczaj dobieram słowa intuicyjnie, bez pogłębionej analizy
 - b. zastanawiam się nad wyborem słów, lecz poświęcam temu niewiele czasu
 - c. świadomie analizuję dobór słów w celu wzbogacenia wypowiedzi
14. Jeśli analizujesz dobór słów w swoich wypowiedziach, jakie czynniki bierzesz pod uwagę? Możesz zaznaczyć dowolną liczbę odpowiedzi.
- a. precyzję i trafność wyrażenia myśli
 - b. kontekst komunikacyjny oraz odbiorcę
 - c. efekt stylistyczny i estetyczny
 - d. unikanie słów o niejasnym lub wieloznacznym znaczeniu
 - e. wartość kulturową oraz konotacje danego słowa

- f. emocjonalny „ciężar” znaczeniowy słowa (np. nacechowanie pozytywne, negatywne lub neutralne)
- 15. Czy uważasz, że refleksja nad doбором słów oraz ich znaczeniem może sprzyjać tworzeniu bardziej precyzyjnych i bogatszych wypowiedzi w języku francuskim?
 - a. zdecydowanie tak (świadomy dobór słów w istotny sposób wpływa na jakość wypowiedzi)
 - b. raczej tak (refleksja ta może być użyteczna w określonych sytuacjach, np. w tekstach pisanych lub komunikacji oficjalnej)
 - c. raczej nie (bywa pomocna, lecz w codziennej komunikacji nie jest konieczna)
 - d. nie (kluczowa jest przede wszystkim zrozumiałość wypowiedzi, a nie precyzyjny dobór słów)

ANNEXE 2

Questionnaire d'enquête

Réflexion sur la langue dans la communication numérique : perspective des étudiants en français langue étrangère⁷

Je t'invite à remplir ce questionnaire consacré à la réflexion sur les usages de la langue dans la communication numérique. Cette étude vise à comprendre comment les étudiants en français langue étrangère perçoivent les évolutions linguistiques contemporaines, quelles stratégies ils mobilisent lors de la formulation de leurs énoncés et s'ils ressentent le besoin d'un choix conscient des mots. Les réponses sont anonymes et leur analyse sera utilisée exclusivement à des fins scientifiques. Il n'existe ni réponses correctes ni réponses incorrectes : ce sont tes opinions et ton expérience personnelle qui m'intéressent.

1. Quelles langues étrangères connais-tu, en dehors du français ? Indique toutes les langues que tu es en mesure d'utiliser à l'oral et/ou à l'écrit.
2. Comment évalues-tu ton niveau de compétence en français ?
 - a. niveau débutant (A1-A2)
 - b. niveau intermédiaire (B1-B2)
 - c. niveau avancé (C1-C2)
 - d. difficile à déterminer
3. As-tu appris le français avant de commencer tes études universitaires ? Si oui, décris brièvement ton parcours d'apprentissage antérieur (par exemple : durée de l'apprentissage, nombre de cours par semaine, lieu d'apprentissage : école primaire, lycée, cours de langue, cours particuliers, autres).
Si non, passe à la question suivante
4. As-tu été en contact avec la langue française en dehors de l'enseignement formel (par exemple via Internet, des films, de la musique, les réseaux sociaux, des conversations, des voyages) ?
En cas de réponse affirmative, décris brièvement ce contact. En cas de réponse négative, passe à la question suivante.

⁷ Traduction française du questionnaire réalisée par l'auteure.

5. Utilises-tu le français dans la communication numérique en dehors des cours (par exemple sur les réseaux sociaux, les forums en ligne, ou via des messageries comme WhatsApp ou Messenger) ?
En cas de réponse affirmative, indique les médias numériques utilisés, la fréquence d'utilisation et le temps approximatif que tu consacres chaque jour à la communication en français. En cas de réponse négative, passe à la question suivante..
6. Utilises-tu les médias numériques pour apprendre le français de manière autonome ?
En cas de réponse affirmative, indique les outils utilisés, la fréquence d'utilisation ainsi que le temps approximatif que tu consacres à l'apprentissage du français..
7. Quelles caractéristiques remarques-tu dans les énoncés francophones publiés dans les médias numériques (par exemple sur les réseaux sociaux, les forums en ligne ou les messageries) La question concerne la communication quotidienne – aussi bien privée que publique. Tu peux cocher autant de réponses que tu juges pertinentes.
 - a. raccourcissement des énoncés et simplification des structures grammaticales
 - b. développement soigné des idées et évitement de la brièveté
 - c. usage d'abréviations, d'émoticônes et d'acronymes
 - d. argumentation approfondie et analyse du sujet
 - e. évitement du développement des idées
 - f. caractère schématique (formules répétitives, expressions figées)
 - g. neutralité émotionnelle des énoncés
 - h. pression en faveur de réponses rapides au détriment de la précision
 - i. substitution des mots par des signes graphiques (émoticônes, GIF, mèmes)
 - j. attention portée à la correction grammaticale et stylistique
 - k. recours à des phrases courtes et dynamiques au détriment d'énoncés plus développés
 - l. énoncés développés, phrases longues et complexes
 - m. fort marquage émotionnel (langage expressif, hyperbolique ou provocateur)
 - n. langage performatif (orienté vers l'autopromotion et la recherche de réactions)
 - o. caractère fragmentaire des énoncés (absence de continuité logique, pensées interrompues)
8. Parmi les éléments de la communication en français mentionnés dans la question 7, en remarques-tu certains qui pourraient nuire à la qualité de l'échange – par exemple en rendant plus difficile l'expression des émotions, des nuances ou des pensées complexes ?
En cas de réponse affirmative, indique au maximum trois éléments et justifie brièvement ton choix. En cas de réponse négative, passe à la question suivante.
9. Lesquels des éléments mentionnés dans la question 7 utilises-tu dans tes propres productions en français ?
Précise dans quels types de communication tu les emploies (par exemple : conversations directes, correspondance par e-mail, textes académiques, communication dans les médias numériques) et justifie brièvement ton choix.
10. Les réseaux sociaux influencent-ils ta manière de formuler des énoncés en français ?
Si oui, décris la nature de cette influence et indique si tu la considères plutôt comme un soutien ou comme une limitation..
11. Observes-tu des différences dans ta manière de formuler des énoncés en français selon qu'ils prennent une forme numérique ou traditionnelle (par exemple : lettres, textes descriptifs ou narratifs plus longs). ?
Si oui, explique en quoi consistent ces différences, précise la forme que tu préfères et justifie ton choix

12. Lors de la lecture de textes en français, t'arrive-t-il de t'arrêter sur le sens de certains mots et de réfléchir à leur « poids » sémantique (par exemple : leur charge émotionnelle, leurs connotations positives ou négatives, leur niveau de formalité ou leur marquage culturel) ?
 - a. souvent
 - b. parfois
 - c. rarement
 - d. jamais
13. Dans quelle mesure analyses-tu le choix des mots lors de la rédaction de tes productions en langue française ? Sélectionne une seule réponse.
 - a. je choisis généralement les mots de manière intuitive, sans analyse approfondie
 - b. je réfléchis au choix des mots, mais j'y consacre peu de temps
 - c. j'analyse consciemment le choix des mots afin d'enrichir mon expression
14. Lorsque tu réfléchis au choix des mots dans tes énoncés, quels sont les facteurs que tu prends en compte ? Tu peux cocher autant de réponses que tu souhaites..
 - a. la précision et l'exactitude de l'expression de la pensée
 - b. le contexte communicationnel et le destinataire
 - c. l'effet stylistique et esthétique
 - d. l'évitement de termes ambigus ou polysémiques
 - e. la valeur culturelle et les connotations du mot
 - f. le « poids » émotionnel du mot (par exemple : marquage positif, négatif ou neutre)
15. Penses-tu que la réflexion sur le choix des mots et leur signification peut favoriser la production d'énoncés plus précis et plus riches en français ?
 - a. oui, de manière décisive (le choix conscient des mots influence de façon significative la qualité des productions)
 - b. plutôt oui (cette réflexion peut être utile dans certaines situations, par exemple dans les textes écrits ou la communication formelle)
 - c. plutôt non (elle peut parfois être utile, mais n'est pas indispensable dans la communication quotidienne)
 - d. non (la clarté du message prime sur la précision lexicale)

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Investigating language learning strategies through the strategy inventory: A study among immigrant adolescents in Italian secondary schools

ABSTRACT. Adolescent learners of Italian as a Second Language (L2) often face multiple challenges, requiring the use of diverse Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) to support acquisition. This article presents a theoretical framework for LLSs (Rubin 1987) in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), drawing on established categorizations and recent insights from the Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020). The research aims to investigate the LLSs that students perceive themselves as using when learning L2 Italian. Subsequently, an inventory adapted from the SILL, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford 1990), was administered to 157 immigrant students aged between 11 and 19 from nine secondary schools in Northeast Italy. The discussion will outline the development of this tool and evaluate its efficacy in reflecting on LLSs. The data analysis revealed that the students with a foreign background are medium strategy users ($M = 3.09$), predominantly employing indirect L2 learning strategies, and demonstrate a correlation between low usage of LLSs and their proficiency in Italian. Moreover, strategies are influenced by cross-cultural differences among adolescents. Thus, to enhance the effectiveness of language acquisition within this demographic, it is advisable to promote the adoption of cognitive, social, and compensatory learning strategies. This can be achieved by prioritizing goal-oriented and collaborative tasks, as well as bottom-up and inside-out language learning activities.

KEYWORDS: Italian as a second language (ISL), language learning strategies (LLSs), newly arrived migrant students, proficiency, secondary school, strategy inventory for language learning (SILL).

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent updates to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) outlined in the Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020), and the Recommendations of the Council of Europe (2022), advocate for a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of strategy and Language Learning Strategies (hereafter referred to as LLSs) as well as their application in second language acquisition (SLA) and learning. Kumaravadivelu (2006) argues that students derive greater meaning and practicality from their learning experiences when they possess an

understanding of how to learn effectively. Additionally, maintaining consistent behavior and thought patterns aligned with desired outcomes is vital for success in the language acquisition process, including the comprehension and retention of new vocabulary, language usage, and proper grammatical structures (Kumar et al. 2022: 577). Meeting the diverse needs of newly arrived migrant learners (0–5 years) with limited proficiency in L2 presents a significant challenge, particularly as these students may be unaware of the potential benefits of employing learning strategies and adapting to different learning styles (Oxford 1996).

For these reasons, the primary aim of this paper is to evaluate the strategies employed by immigrant students in their language-learning endeavors and to assess the extent to which these strategies are utilized. This will be achieved using a structured questionnaire that measures strategy frequency, based on Oxford's SILL, i.e., the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1990). The evaluation process includes not only the translation but also the modification of the original SILL model to suit the Italian context, based on collected data.

This research presents a comprehensive examination and categorization of LLSs (§2). Following this, §3 and §4 explain the research questions (RQs), methodology, and research context, drawing from data collected in secondary schools. §5 is dedicated to presenting findings derived from data analysis, while §6 delves into prospects for advancing methodologies and techniques related to LLSs within secondary education settings.

2. THE COMPLEXITY IN DEFINING LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

It is crucial to clarify at the outset that LLSs lack a universally accepted definition in the scholarly literature. As Cohen and Henry (2020) observe, disagreement persists regarding the very nature of LLSs, particularly whether they should be understood as mental activities, and to what extent they involve conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviours that learners employ with the explicit aim of improving their knowledge and understanding of an L2. Macaro (2006: 325) identified nine unresolved issues surrounding LLSs; among these, two remain especially relevant: (1) the lack of consensus on where LLSs are located, whether they occur internally, as cognitive operations, or externally, as observable actions, and (2) the absence of agreement on what LLSs actually are, that is, whether they consist of knowledge, intention, action, or a combination of the three.

One of the earliest definitions of LLSs was proposed by Selinker (1972), as one of the five distinct psycholinguistic processes that contribute to shaping

interlanguage systems¹. Selinker described LLSs as cognitive activities occurring at both conscious and unconscious levels, involving the processing of L2 data to convey meaning (Selinker et al. 2000). This suggests that the development of interlanguage may also be influenced by students' approaches to language materials. Expanding upon the role of students in employing learning strategies, Williams and Burden (1997) proposed that during learning tasks, students engage various resources in diverse ways to complete or solve the activity, which can be considered a learning strategy process. Recently, according to Kumar et al. (2022), strategy in language learning is a collection of techniques that students can use to learn the language. Similarly, the Council of Europe (2001) defines a strategy as any organized course of action, adopted with a specific purpose, and selected by the learner to accomplish a particular task (par. 2.1). Its broader context, the Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) advocates for a teaching and learning approach that values interaction as fundamental for the co-construction of meaning, thus rendering the process more engaging for immigrant students. It delineates strategies into four categories: i) production, ii) reception, iii) interaction, and iv) mediation. This approach aims to enhance learning outcomes by encouraging collaborative learning and dynamic interaction within the educational environment.

Overall, these categories provide educators with a framework for designing diversified and interactive learning experiences that promote meaningful engagement and the effective development of communicative competence within SLA (Oxford et al. 1989). Within the context of multilingual classrooms, especially with students at lower proficiency levels (A0 – A2), examining how these strategies apply to the teaching and learning of Italian L2 becomes pertinent, enhancing the inclusion of students with a foreign background within the Italian educational system. This effort resonates with the principles outlined in *The New EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation* (European Commission 2020) and the related Council of Europe's (2021) recommendation, which advocates for measures promoting equality, inclusion, and participation in education.

¹ The other components are native language transfer, overgeneralization of target language rules, transfer of training, and communication strategies. Interlanguage can be defined as a reconstruction process that starts with an initial hypothesis and gradually becomes more complex. Cf. Nemser (1971); Corder (1981).

2.1. Taxonomy of language learning strategies

There are various approaches to classifying LLSs. In a similar vein, Rubin (1981; 1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990) proposed a classification system for LLSs based on classroom observation and data collection. Their classification consists of strategies that directly impact learning and those that indirectly affect learning. Building upon O'Malley and Chamot's classification of metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies, this paper adopts Oxford's taxonomy, which further distinguishes:

- direct strategies, which encompass memory strategies (SILL Part A), cognitive strategies (SILL Part B), and compensation strategies (SILL Part C), which necessitate mental processing of the target language;
- indirect strategies, which include metacognitive strategies (SILL Part D), affective strategies (SILL Part E), and social strategies (SILL Part F). More recently, Oxford (2016) comprised metacognitive, social, and affective terms in meta-strategies domains;

Oxford's taxonomy encompasses 50 items and is widely regarded as user-friendly for educators (Amerstofer 2018). These items are categorized into the six previously mentioned strategy categories (i.e., cognitive, metacognitive, memory, compensation, social, and affective strategies), each delineating a specific strategic action. Furthermore, Oxford's (2016) latest model, the S²R, i.e., the Strategic Self-Regulation Model, expands the identification of strategy categories, emphasizing their functional flexibility and overlap.

Over the past two decades, the construct of LLSs has been at the centre of considerable debate, particularly regarding its conceptual clarity and methodological validity. Despite Oxford's taxonomy being considered extremely comprehensive and appealing for L2 learners (Amerstofer 2018: 499), the strategies inventory administered aims to address criticisms of the SILL taxonomy. Notably, these criticisms, articulated by Dörnyei (2005), highlight that the SILL taxonomy primarily concentrates on quantifying how often strategies are utilized, rather than assessing the effectiveness or impact of the strategies themselves. Critics have emphasized that self-report instruments such as SILL may fail to differentiate clearly between strategies, skills, and more stable learner traits. In response, Tseng et al. (2006) proposed reframing strategic learning within the broader theory of self-regulation, focusing on learners' ability to manage motivation, cognition, and behaviour throughout the learning process. They further argued that instruments designed to assess self-regulation, such as their proposed questionnaire, can offer a more psychometrically reliable measure of strategic learning than traditional strategy scales. Similarly, Rose (2012) reconceptualizes strategic learning from a dy-

namic, socio-cognitive perspective that integrates metacognitive, cognitive, and memory-related processes.

Accordingly, the present study acknowledges this theoretical evolution and positions itself at the intersection between traditional strategy-based approaches and the self-regulatory paradigm. While the notion of LLS remains valuable for examining metacognitive awareness in multilingual learners, the analysis also considers learners' strategic behavior as part of a broader system of self-regulated learning processes, especially within contexts of linguistic diversity and L2 acquisition. Even though coming up with a definite classification of LLSs is still debatable (Macaro 2006), it is useful to have categories to investigate LLSs that immigrant adolescents use. In the Italian context, within the framework of post-method², an effort to classify learning strategies has been undertaken by Torresan (2022), who proposed a categorization into five groups of strategies (for a total of 73), following the work of previous scholars: i) cognitive, ii) linguistic, iii) metacognitive, iv) regulative, v) dynamic, and social mediation. Torresan defines these strategies as "hinges" (2022: 43) that connect the abstract and the concrete realms of language learning by promoting pupils' active participation. In other words, strategies can concretely bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and their practical application in plurilingual classroom settings, supporting the development of language skills through interactive and dynamic activities.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Despite advancements, research on LLSs and their association with language proficiency in the context of Italian as an L2 among adolescents remains limited. This stands in contrast to the body of literature available for English as a Foreign Language, EFL (among others, Zarei & Baharestani 2014; Habók & Magyar 2018; Malpartida 2021; Habók et al. 2022). Consequently, two guiding research questions (RQs) have been formulated for the study:

RQ1. What are the LLSs that adolescents report more frequently for Italian as an L2, both in direct and indirect forms?

RQ2. Is there a significant relationship between the use of language learning strategies and proficiency in Italian L2?

² The post-method is an orientation that emerges from the ashes of the communicative approach, seeking to offer flexible guidelines (Torresan 2022: 15). It articulates itself through micro-proposals such as the Lexical approach and the Drama approach. Cf. Torresan (2022); Kumaravadivelu (2006).

Understanding these RQs can guide the development of more targeted and sustainable educational policies and practices, tailored to the linguistic and cultural specificities of the students involved.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative approach, utilizing data gathered from the adapted Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and analyzed using the Jamovi 2.3 version (2022). Descriptive statistics were applied to calculate the mean, median, and standard deviation (SD) for each of the 20 items administered to the learners.

Participants were classified based on their grade levels, spanning from sixth to ninth grade, and including those enrolled in Diploma programs at the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA, *Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*), equivalent to the conclusion of the eighth grade. Additionally, participants were stratified by gender (M; F). Detailed information regarding the distribution of the sample based on both grade level and gender is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample

Grade	Italian Grade	M	F	Total
Sixth grade	Prima media	19	12	31
Seventh grade	Seconda media	13	11	24
Eighth grade	Terza media	15	13	28
Ninth grade	Prima superiore	7	9	16
Provincial Centers for Adult Education	Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti (CPIA)	49	9	58
Total		103	54	157

4.1. Participants

Data were collected from 157 secondary school students with a foreign background from nine public schools in Northeast Italy. The age range of the sample was 11–19 years. 147 (93.6%) were immigrant students in middle school and CPIAs for the achievement of the Diploma of eighth grade, and 10 (6.4%) were immigrant students in high school. Teachers stated that none reported a hearing, language, or learning disability.

Within the sample, there were 103 males (constituting 65.6%) and 54 females (constituting 34.4%). This gender imbalance reflects broader national enrolment patterns in CPIA settings, where a higher proportion of male learners typically arrive from abroad on their own, often leaving their families in their country of origin, and consequently access adult education pathways in greater numbers than women (cf. Table 1). It is noteworthy that recent data from Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito (2023) indicate that males exhibit a higher likelihood of premature school dropout compared to females. Moreover, the participants represented a diverse array of linguistic backgrounds, encompassing 19 languages: Albanian, Arabic, Bambara, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, German, Hindi, Mandinka, Pashtu, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Wolof.

Schoolteachers informally assessed their proficiency in Italian through observation and classroom assessments. It was determined to be between the beginner / elementary level (CEFR A1–A2). Participants whose proficiency exceeded the A2 level were excluded from the study to ensure greater homogeneity of the sample.

4.2. Research instrument: The 20-item strategies inventory

A 20-item Strategies Inventory, adapted from the SILL Version 7.0 ESL / EFL (1990) and S²R model by Oxford (2016), was revisited and employed for self-assessing the frequency of students' LLS usage. Originally consisting of 50 items regarding strategies of language use distributed across six sections, the SILL underwent restructuring and simplification to facilitate completion within one hour. Following Oxford's original taxonomy, the adapted Inventory is classified into five broad categories: memory (items 1–5 / SILL Part A), cognitive (items 6–12 / SILL Part B), compensation (items 13–15 / SILL Part C), metacognitive (items 16–18 / SILL Part D), socio-affective (items 19–20 / SILL Part E and F).

To suit adolescent participants in Italian secondary settings, the following modifications were made while ensuring the framework of the SILL remained intact:

- a) Translation into Italian (L2).
- b) Incorporation of examples and simplification to align with the proficiency level of A1+ / A2 QCER. Item 1 states: "Collego le parole che so già in italiano con nuove parole che ora sto imparando (come unire i pezzi di un puzzle)", i.e., "I connect the words I already know in Italian with new words and phrases I am learning (like putting pieces of a puzzle / jigsaw together).

- c) Deletion of 30 out of the 50 items. The reasons are twofold: cognitively, within the one-hour time frame allocated by schools, it would have been overly burdensome for foreign students to comprehend and furnish non-hurried responses. Additionally, certain assessment items would have been inappropriate for administration to students. This could be due to their recent introduction to the classroom environment (e.g., SILL 38. I think about my progress in learning English) or because the items are overly complex for students at the elementary level to understand (e.g., SILL 33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English).
- d) Students were instructed, though not required, to provide comments alongside the items to convey their feelings or incorporate personal information as desired.

Students had to answer using a 5-point Likert scale with the poles being “never or rarely true” (1) to “always or almost always true” (5). Students with a low proficiency in L2 can identify the strategies yet still some struggle in learning the language; on the other hand, they can be unaware of their learning strategies and therefore give random responses (Pavičić Takač 2008: 133). For this reason, this work incorporated a visual search strategy for students, i.e., color coding, which has proven effective in numerous studies (e.g., Michalski 2014; Zhang et al. 2022). Using color coding in the Likert scale provides a visual cue that aids students in quickly and accurately interpreting and categorizing the content they are searching for. This approach leverages visual perception, making it easier for students to differentiate and prioritize linguistic information, ultimately leading to more efficient and successful search outcomes.

The assigned task and accompanying instructions administered were – as follows (cf. Appendix A for the complete inventory and its Italian translation):

“How true is this for you on a scale from 1 to 5? Mark your answer with an “X”. Remember: there are NO right or wrong answers.” –

- Point 1: rarely / never (0–25%)
- Point 2: only sometimes (25–50%)
- Point 3: so-so, half the time true, half the time not (50%)
- Point 4: almost always true (50–75%)
- Point 5: always true, true (100%)

*I watch TV in Italian, watch movies in Italian on Netflix or at the cinema, and use social networks in Italian.*³

These modifications aim to assist adolescents with a lower level of Italian proficiency in better comprehending the proposed item strategies.

³ Example item from the adapted inventory (Oxford 1990), SILL No. 15: “I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English”.

4.3. Data collection

The SILL, comprising 20 items, was administered between December 2023 and January 2024 across nine classrooms distributed among nine secondary schools in Northeast Italy, including one technical institute, three CPIAs, and five middle schools.

The total administration time averaged approximately 60–65 minutes. Recognizing that not all adolescents may be aware of their learning strategies and may provide random responses, a pre-reading session was conducted with participants to prevent misunderstandings. This session also included presenting examples and moments of reflection to prepare the students for personal responses.

Throughout the study, the researcher ensured the confidentiality of participants' identities and protected the privacy of their opinions.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this section, the study's findings on adolescents' LLSs are presented. In Table 2, various scores were interpreted following the guidelines provided by Oxford (1990) and those established in the recent study by Zou and Lertlit (2022: 713):

Table 2. Score specifications

Score	Frequency	Specifications
3.5–5.0	High	The strategy is highly employed
2.5–3.49	Moderate	The strategy is moderately employed
1.0–2.49	Low	The strategy is employed to a limited extent

Descriptive statistical analysis of the mean, mode, and SD to evaluate major and minor frequencies were calculated for data analysis, as shown in Table 3.

As shown in Table no. 3, adolescents reported a moderate level of use of LLSs, ranging between 2.5 and 3.49, with a mean of 3.09 ($M = 3.09$).

It can be observed that the most frequent strategies with high mean and mode are items no. 9 (SILL 17), item no. 17 (SILL 35), and item no. 18 (SILL 40). These strategies entail the act of notetaking and messaging in Italian, active listening during Italian conversations, whether with friends or teachers, and proactively attempting to initiate conversations with Italian speakers. The data underscore the strong willingness among immigrant learners to actively engage in the L2

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

Strategy No.	Classification	Mean	Mode	SD	Frequency
<i>Item 1</i>	Memory	2.84	3.00	1.11	Moderate
<i>Item 2</i>	Memory	3.11	3.00	1.34	Moderate
<i>Item 3</i>	Memory	3.00	3.00	1.24	Moderate
<i>Item 4</i>	Memory	3.10	3.00	1.43	Moderate
<i>Item 5</i>	Memory	2.80	3.00	1.25	Moderate
<i>Item 6</i>	Cognitive	3.15	4.00	1.41	Moderate
<i>Item 7</i>	Cognitive	3.00	3.00	1.32	Moderate
<i>Item 8</i>	Cognitive	3.33	5.00	1.37	Moderate
<i>Item 9</i>	Cognitive	3.54	5.00	1.40	High
<i>Item 10</i>	Cognitive	3.18	4.00	1.18	Moderate
<i>Item 11</i>	Cognitive	2.56	1.00	1.40	Moderate
<i>Item 12</i>	Cognitive	2.99	3.00	1.43	Moderate
<i>Item 13</i>	Compensation	2.85	3.00	1.27	Moderate
<i>Item 14</i>	Compensation	2.63	1.00	1.39	Moderate
<i>Item 15</i>	Compensation	3.29	3.00	1.32	Moderate
<i>Item 16</i>	Metacognitive	3.36	3.00	1.25	Moderate
<i>Item 17</i>	Metacognitive	3.56	5.00	1.28	High
<i>Item 18</i>	Metacognitive	3.60	5.00	1.34	High
<i>Item 19</i>	Socio affective	3.12	3.00	1.23	Moderate
<i>Item 20</i>	Socio affective	2.88	3.00	1.31	Moderate

community, both within the school through interaction with peers and outside the school by maintaining contact with Italian friends through messaging apps or social networks. It is noteworthy that item no. 8, which pertains to watching TV in Italian, viewing films on Netflix or in cinemas in Italian, and using social networks in Italian, exhibits a mode of 5.00 ($SD = 1.37$). Many adolescents report infrequent visits to cinemas in their comments, while they consistently use TikTok and Instagram in L2 Italian. This result emphasizes the need to expand real-life tasks carried out in school environments to strengthen LLSs, employing technologies for the learning of Italian L2.

Conversely, the least employed LLSs include trying to remember new words or phrases solely based on their placement on a page, blackboard, or computer screen (item 5); searching for words in students' native language that resemble new Italian words (item 11); and relying on gestures when facing difficulties in recalling Italian words (item 14).

5.1. Discussion

In response to RQ1, indirect strategies were identified as the most employed LLSs, i.e., metacognitive strategies ($M = 3.5$, items 16–18). This outcome aligns with the findings of Rismayana (2017) and Oxford (2016: 71), both of whom investigated the use of strategies as predictors for English as a Second Language (ESL) proficiency. However, it deviates from the findings of O'Malley et al. (1985), who observed a higher incidence of cognitive strategies in their research compared to metacognitive strategies. In terms of frequency, cognitive strategies ($M = 3.1$, items 6–12) are followed by socio-affective strategies ($M = 3$, items 19–20), memory strategies ($M = 2.97$, items 1–5), and compensation strategies ($M = 2.92$, items 13–15). Specifically, the category of memory strategies is consistent with observations made in several recent studies (among others, Kuna-saraphan 2015; Tieocharoen & Rimkeeratikul 2019). Nevertheless, the results regarding compensation strategies do not align with certain recent studies (Charoento 2017; Zou & Lertlit 2022), which researched Chinese and Thai EFL students, revealing that compensation strategies are the most frequent. One of the main reasons for this misalignment may lie in the composition of the sample. Indeed, in the present study, the percentage of Asian participants represents only a portion of the sample (20.3%). Since strategic L2 learning is contingent upon a multitude of factors (Amerstorfer 2018: 513), individual learner differences and culture influenced the measurement of the strategies employed (Oxford 1996). For instance, in strategy no. 12, unlike their counterparts from other foreign backgrounds, Chinese, Bangladeshi, and Sinhalese students reported frequently relying on translation into their mother tongue, utilizing free multilingual translation services such as DeepL and Google Translate for completing homework assignments.

Secondly, concerning the response to RQ2, it is pertinent to acknowledge that the present study includes students with an elementary proficiency QCER ($M = A1+$). Consequently, the relationship observed between the SILL and Italian L2 proficiency levels in the responses of immigrant adolescents suggests a potential correlation between low employment of cognitive, socio-affective, memory, and compensation strategies and their language proficiency. Different scholars (e.g., Oxford 2011; Habók et al. 2022) have demonstrated a significant correlation between SILL use and proficiency levels. This suggests that there exists a direct relationship wherein increased usage of LLSs by students corresponds with higher levels of proficiency, as reported by numerous studies (Zarei & Baharestani 2014: 33).

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

The data analyzed in the previous section led to the following general outcomes, some of which call for further research. Specifically, the prevalence of metacognitive LLSs highlights the need for targeted interventions to diversify and enhance language learning approaches.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that LLSs be adapted to suit specific tasks and goals (Oxford et al. 2004; Oxford 2011) and that an action-oriented approach be utilized in collaborative tasks (Council of Europe 2020: 31). This methodology underscores active participation and interaction among learners as essential components for reaching educational goals. It advocates for the utilization of laboratory settings, facilitating engagement in practical exercises. What is more, it promotes the cultivation of meaningful dialogue and discourse among students and educators, fostering critical thinking, reflection, and the exchange of ideas. Following Rubin's (1975) idea, the behaviors and strategies employed by proficient language learners could be passed on or taught to other learners, suggesting that through observation and practice, less proficient learners can adopt and emulate the effective learning techniques used by those who have achieved a higher level of proficiency in the target language. This concept underlines the potential for peer learning and the role of educators in facilitating the dissemination of successful language learning strategies within a learning community. As Kumaravadivelu (2003) posits, educators should engage in negotiation to facilitate integration, maximize learning opportunities, and foster students' autonomy, as well as their cultural and social awareness within educational environments.

To accomplish this goal, schoolteachers should encourage bottom-up and inside-out language learning activities that encompass cognitive, interactional, and compensatory dimensions to facilitate the integration of foreign adolescents. Consequently, activities should be designed for vocabulary building through word roots and prefixes, and learners should be encouraged to analyze and discuss authentic media sources in L2, such as news articles, movies, music, or podcasts. Particularly for students with lower proficiency levels, it would be necessary to define strategies in alignment with the competencies outlined in the CEFR (Council of Europe 2020). These strategies encompass a range of activities, including brainstorming sessions, setting learning goals, adjusting strategies accordingly, and engaging in small-group communication (Naughton 2006). Furthermore, employing techniques such as word inference, contextual clue identification, gesture, body language interpretation or visual aids, language simplification, and seeking clarifica-

tion can markedly improve both communication efficacy and comprehension levels⁴.

The research is limited to describing the most frequently reported LLSs that immigrant adolescents claim to apply when learning L2 Italian. The focus is therefore on the strategies they self-report using, rather than on those they demonstrably put into practice, two dimensions that do not necessarily coincide, and for which future research is strongly encouraged. As stressed by Ellis (1996), the development and implementation of LLSs should consider a variety of factors (e.g., age, aptitude, intelligence, attitude, and motivation), which this study calls for in future research. Likewise, it would be interesting to follow the research by looking up different tests (i.e., interviews, semi-structured interviews, surveys) for assessment strategies in multicultural classrooms, since strategies are both observable and unobservable (Purpura 1999). Furthermore, it would be interesting to administer the SILL in students' L1 to gather more information about their judgment of personal strategies.

Ultimately, understanding the effectiveness of the LLSs in the Italian context provides educators and policymakers with valuable insights to facilitate informed decision-making. This includes enhancing the inclusivity promoted by a plurilingual approach, as detailed by the Council of Europe (2001 par. 1.3), thus better addressing the unique challenges encountered by learners with a foreign background in secondary school settings.

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Badanie strategii uczenia się języka za pomocą inwentarza strategii. Studium przeprowadzone wśród nastoletnich uczniów z doświadczeniem migracyjnym we włoskich szkołach średnich

ABSTRAKT. Nastoletni imigranci uczący się języka włoskiego jako drugiego (L2) stają przed wieloma wyzwaniami, które wymagają stosowania różnorodnych strategii uczenia się języka (LLS). Artykuł przedstawia wybrane założenia teoretyczne dotyczące strategii uczenia się i przyswajania drugiego języka (SLA), z wykorzystaniem klasycznej literatury przedmiotu i najnowszych spostrzeżeniach zawartych w publikacji Council of Europe (2020). Celem projektu jest zbadanie strategii uczenia się języka stosowanych podczas nauki języka włoskiego. W badaniu uczestniczyło 157 uczniów imigrantów w wieku od 11 do 19 lat z dziewięciu szkół średnich w północno-wschodnich Włoszech. Wykorzystano inwentarz strategii opracowany przez Oxford (1990): Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. W dyskusji nakreślono rozwój tego narzędzia i oceniono jego skuteczność w badaniach nad strategiami. Analiza danych wykazała, że uczniowie pochodzący z rodzin imigranckich stosują strategię na średnim poziomie ($M = 3,09$), wykorzystując głównie pośrednie strategie uczenia się języka. Badanie wykazało ponadto korelację między niskim poziomem wykorzystania strategii uczenia się języka a poziomem biegłości ucznia w języku włoskim. Na sposób użycia strategii wpływają także różnice międzykulturowe wśród nastoletnich uczniów. W związku z tym, aby zwiększyć skuteczność przyswajania języka w tej grupie demograficznej, zaleca się promowanie stosowania strategii poznawczych, społecznych i kompensacyjnych. Sprzyja temu stosowanie zadań zorientowanych na cel i opartych na współpracy oraz aktywności typu *bottom-up* i *inside-out*.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: język włoski jako drugi język (ISL), strategie uczenia się języka (LLSs), nowo przybyli uczniowie z doświadczeniem migracyjnym, biegłość językowa, szkoła średnia, inwentarz strategii uczenia się języka (SILL).

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Adapted into Italian for Foreign Learners.

'How true is this for you on a scale from 1 to 5? Mark your answer with an "X". Remember: there are NO right or wrong answers.'

1	Number 1. Rarely, never (0–25%)
2	Number 2. Only sometimes (25–50%)
3	Number 3. So-so: sometimes true, sometimes not (50%)
4	Number 4. Almost always true (50–75%)
5	Number 5. Always true, true (75–100%)

SILL 1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.

Italian: 'I connect words I already know in Italian with new words I am currently learning (like putting together pieces of a puzzle).'

1	2	3	4	5
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SILL 2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.

Italian: 'I try to use new words in Italian when I write and speak so that I can remember them better.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help remember the word.

Italian: 'I connect the sound/word of a new Italian word and an image or a picture of the word to help remember the word.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.

Italian: 'I use Italian songs or phrases from films and television programmes to remember new words.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Italian: 'I remember new Italian words or phrases by remembering their position on the page, on the board, or on the computer screen.'



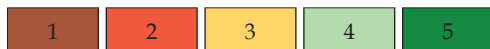
SILL 10. I say or write new English words several times.

Italian: 'I repeat or write new Italian words several times.'



SILL 14. I start conversations in English.

Italian: 'I start conversations in Italian, without any problems or fear.'



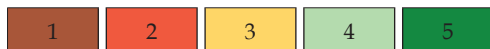
SILL 15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.

Italian: 'I watch TV in Italian, watch movies in Italian on Netflix or at the cinema, and use social networks in Italian.'



SILL 17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.

Italian: 'I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in Italian.'



SILL 18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.

Italian: 'After an initial quick reading in Italian, I go back and read it again carefully.'



SILL 19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.

Italian: 'I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in Italian.'



SILL 22. I try not to translate word-for-word.

Italian: 'I translate word by word into my mother tongue.'



SILL 24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.

Italian: 'To understand Italian words I do not know, I make guesses or invent new words.'

1	2	3	4	5
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SILL 25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.

Italian: 'When I can't think of a word during a conversation in Italian, I use gestures.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Italian: 'If I can't think of an Italian word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.

Italian: 'I notice my Italian mistakes and use that information to help me do better.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.

Italian: 'I pay attention when someone is speaking in Italian.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 35. I look for people I can talk to in English; SILL 47. I practice English with other students.

Italian: 'I look for people or students I can talk to in Italian.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.

Italian: 'I try to speak and write in Italian even when I am afraid of making mistakes.'

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SILL 42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.

Italian: 'I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using Italian.'

1	2	3	4	5
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