

THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF THE CENTER OF HÓDMEZŐVÁSÁRHELY

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ABSTRACT-The linguistic landscape of the center of Hódmezővásárhely

Hódmezővásárhely is a rapidly developing town attracting an increasing number of tourists from other countries. Therefore it is important to display information in at least one world language, mainly English, in places of interests that are likely to be visited by tourists. In my study I have examined the linguistic landscape of the town center including sights, services and the High Streets to see how well prepared the town is for the foreign visitors. I found that in all places of interest and services bilingual or multilingual information is available in different scope while streets apply foreign language for symbolic reasons.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, Hódmezővásárhely, public signage, sights, multilingualism

INTRODUCTION

Hódmezővásárhely is a rapidly developing town that is situated in the South-Eastern region of Hungary. The town attracts an increasing number of tourists both from inland and abroad year by year. Therefore, it is important to attend the linguistic needs of foreign visitors who do not speak the Hungarian language and display the relevant information in at least one world language.

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

My objective with the present study is to draw the linguistic landscape of the center of Hódmezővásárhely in order to assess the preparedness of the town for accepting foreign visitors from language perspective. In the focus of my study is the town center, as it is more likely to be the destination of visitors, particularly foreign visitors

Before examining the town's linguistic landscape itself, it is important to overview the history and the notion of linguistic landscape. The roots of linguistic landscape as a discipline reach back to semiotics, but as an independent research field it is a fairly new phenomenon. The linguistic landscape is the presence of written language in public spaces that is present in our daily life: signs and noticeboards are visible in the streets, public buildings and shops (GORTER et al., 2008). The term 'linguistic landscape' was introduced by Landry and Bourhis in 1997 and they defined it as the term for linguistic phenomena that mark the public spaces, including street signs, the names of places, streets, buildings and institutions. Therefore, the centers of cities are culturally and linguistically colorful (GORTER, 2006). The linguistic landscape studies focus on the analysis of written

information in streets in a certain, limited area (GORTER et al., 2008). Such places can be shopping centers, schools, offices, companies, buses, swimming pools, streets (SPOLSKY, 2009). Spolsky and Cooper distinguish eight main types of public signage: ‘street signs, advertising signs, warning notices and prohibitions, building names, informative signs (directions, hours of opening), commemorative plaques, objects (postbox, police call box), graffiti’ (SPOLSKY, 2009). Other researchers, like Shohamy and Waksman or Guilat expand the scope of linguistic landscape to the visual materials in public spaces as well (SHOHAMY et al., 2009). In my study, however, I only intend to examine the written signs. The rules and regulations referring to the language use are the most apparent in linguistic landscapes that is in the public signage (BACKHAUS, 2009).

In case there are bilingual signs, it is important to study their layout upon their examination: which is the first language in the signage: the dominant or the minority/foreign language? Are the size and type of the letters the same or different? (BEN RAFAEL et al., 2010). Is exactly the same piece of information included in the foreign language? These data tell us who the major target group in conveying the information is and how much likely speakers of other languages are considered to read the signage. However, not only the presence of one or two languages on signs, but their absence provide information for the linguist (SPOLSKY, 2009). In my examinations I also study the layout of the bilingual signs in order to gain extra information about the priority of languages used.

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

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

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To study the linguistic landscape of a given territory I used similar method that Griffin (GRIFFIN, 2004) did. I defined the scope of the town—the center—that I intended to examine with the help of a map. I chose the center as it is the part most possibly visited by tourists. Within this scope I determined the sights, places of interest and some services that a tourist is likely to visit or use: hotel, museums, bank, post office, café and the High Street with street signs and shop names. In these places I took photographs of the signage that contained bilingual, multilingual or monolingual signs. I examined the photos taken and with their help I could draw the linguistic landscape of the center: I studied the number of bilingual or multilingual signs, the type of information they contain and the written format they have and related the foreign language content to the Hungarian one.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

'Emlékpont' Museum

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

Also, there are bilingual signage on the entrance door, with opening hours and ticket prices. However, here English is in the first place followed by Hungarian and letters in the English text are bigger in size. In this signage not exactly the same pieces of information are written, as the content of the information 'entrance is free with residence card of Hódmezővásárhely' is written only in Hungarian. It can be assumed that the information that may be considered of prior relevance to foreign tourists (opening hours, fees) is not only given in English, but its importance is further emphasized visually. At least, the content that is relevant for them, thus it can be the reason why the free entrance possibility is not written in any other languages as probably this information is absolutely redundant for non-Hungarian speakers.

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

Synagogue and Museum

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

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

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

Pottery House

The town has a long-time fame for pottery and embroidery. The pottery house is a traditional farm house from the early 20th century. Situated in the center of the town, it displays the fragment of village people's life in the 1900s along with artifacts of traditional pottery and embroidery. There are no written pieces of information as the museum can only be visited with a guide upon request. Also, English language guiding can be requested with no additional fee, thus the museum can be fully enjoyed by foreign visitors.

Tornyai János Museum

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

Gingko Sas hotel

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

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

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

‘Fekete Sas’ café

The café do not have any signage on display except the opening hours which is in monolingual Hungarian. However, the menu card is available in three foreign languages besides the Hungarian: English, German and Italian, with the same information included. As in case if the café the menu is the most relevant information for a non-Hungarian speaker, it can be concluded that the place if prepared for foreign visitors from different countries.

Banks

As far as banks are concerned they do include certain information in English besides Hungarian. However, no other languages are used. Most information for costumers is written in monolingual Hungarian. The bilingual signage includes information about

security, the use of ATM after bank closing time and information about exchange rates. Money exchange and ATM are indeed the most frequent functions foreign visitor can use, therefore these have high informative value. However, the menu on the machine providing the numbers for various services that could also be useful for non-Hungarian speakers at times is only in monolingual Hungarian.

Post Office

I studied the signage of post office as in some cases it can be necessary for a tourist to use the service it offers (e.g. sending postcard). Here all signage, relevant information and the menu of the ticket machine with the service types at the post office are in Hungarian only. It may be a problem for foreign visitors as they have no information about which button to press for the required service. However, no service is available without it. There is only one multilingual sign that contains two types of prohibitions. It is written in four foreign languages: Hungarian, English, German, French and Russian. In case of both prohibitions Hungarian is the first language, in bigger letters, highlighted by red background, while the other languages received smaller letters on a green, less emphasized background. The sign prohibits taking photos and mobile phone use. It can be concluded that the multilingual information serves only the interest and safety of the office itself but provides no help for the foreigner to utilize the services. Therefore, it is almost impossible for a non-Hungarian speaker to use postal services without asking for help. Although there is the signage of prohibition, I would assert that the multilingual sign of the post office have no real information value for a foreigner.

Bilingual signs in the city center

The city center is the area in a city that a foreign tourist is the most likely to walk along with. For this reason I included the streets of the center in my study. Along the High Street (Andrássy street) of Hódmezővásárhely further signs written in different languages (mainly English) can be found: ‘Jegyző-Notary’ and the names of shops: Trendy, Drogerie Markt (DM), Yesss, Golden Meat, Veritas, Goods Market. There is also name in mixed Hungarian and English: Szuperpress.

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

Other signage that locates streets and places of interest and importance (museums, restaurants, schools, swimming pool, sports center) on one board are written only in monolingual Hungarian, however they would be definitely important for non-Hungarian speaker visitors as well as they provide useful information about location and directions.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the presence of the bilingual signs in the center of the city it appears that the places which are likely to be visited by tourists from other countries are prepared for their

acceptance. Especially the hotel situated in the city center that has the highest possibility for being a tourist destination has almost all the information about the services, offers, directions written in English. Museums, as places of interest have the basic information in English, but offer either written description of the artifacts or English guiding upon request. Within the service sector banks provide the substantial information in English, too, however, the post office has very scarce information in other languages than Hungarian. Moreover, the information written in more languages serves exclusively the interest of the office and do not provide any help for foreigners.

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

In conclusion it can be assumed that Hódmezővásárhely is linguistically keeping pace with the increasing foreign tourism making tourists' stay in town convenient. The foreign language applied in bilingual signage is mainly English, as it is the most widely spoken world language and can cater for the needs of tourist in most European countries. However, there are multilingual pieces of information as well that include French, Spanish, Italian or German languages. It can be hypostatized that with the town's tendency of becoming more adaptable for foreign tourism (e.g. health tourism) the appearance of bilingual and multilingual signage in the linguistic landscape of the Hódmezővásárhely will further increase.

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