

THE FORMS OF APPEAL IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

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Abstract: This paper reflects the research aim and starting points of the APVV-18-0115 project entitled *Language in the City – Documenting the Multimodal Semiosphere of Linguistic Landscapes in Slovakia and in a Comparative Perspective*. As formulated by its main author, Wolfgang Schulze (2018), the presented interdisciplinary project is focused on “the general research paradigms of the so-called cultural linguistics, sociolinguistics, multimodal linguistics, and cultural semiotics.” Within this context, the paper addresses the means used to express appeal in the linguistic landscape (order, ban, instruction, warning, request, or plea). The author draws on the characteristics and functions of imperative and its competitive forms in the German language, and observes their manifestations in the linguistic landscape. The analysis of the grammatical structures used for expressing the appeal deals with the material collected during the field research performed in the specifically selected parts of Erlangen, Germany. For the purpose of this analysis, the research material was complemented by the signs collected in the more frequented parts of Erlangen as well, i.e., places with increased movement and concentration of people such as the railway station, public transportation vehicles, malls, university, university library. The goal of this paper is to outline the means used in the German linguistic landscape to express an appeal and guide the behaviour of the intended recipients. The comparative perspective is applied not only in the examination and analysis of the research sample, but it also extends to the Slovak language. The results of the analysis are compared with the way an appeal is expressed in the Slovak linguistic landscape.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, communication, imperative, competitive forms of the imperative, German language, comparative perspective

1 Introduction

According to the well-known and frequently cited definition, “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (Landry – Bourhis 1997, p. 25), linguistic landscape can be briefly defined as a set of texts fixated on a variety of signs located in a region. These texts are complex and multimodal; besides the linguistic elements, they also contain metadata.¹ Schulze (2018) emphasizes their multimodality when he characterises the linguistic landscape as public urban communication, i.e., public texts consisting of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs. Therefore, it can be stated that the linguistic landscape takes the form of signs.

In terms of linguistic landscape research, it is useful to consider the diachronic perspective, i.e., the changes over time. The linguistic landscape is dynamic just like the language itself – it is dynamically changing, evolving, adapting, being enriched, modernised, and internationalised.

The linguistic landscape speaks to us – it addresses, informs, educates, influences, guides and instructs us, it offers us services and goods, and entices us to accept the offer – it communicates with us in a broad variety of ways.

The human communication processes are the foundation of social contact and common activities, which are taking place in different communication situations; each of them can be characterised as a different constellation of factors such as the number of communication participants, their social and communication roles, their relationships, the communication space, the observation of different objects within this space and their importance for the course of communication, but also the time and duration of communication including its development over time (Hoffmannová 1997).

Communication within a linguistic landscape is a specific phenomenon. The basic communication scheme: A → T → R (= author → text → recipient) applies to the communication within a linguistic landscape as well. In the perception of communication within a linguistic landscape, the elements of communication have a distinctive position. The author of the text remains in the background, they may be unknown or unmentioned, and the significant role is played by the text in its complexity, addressed to an essentially infinite set of recipients. Gašová (2022, p. 15) defines communication and the communication partners within a linguistic landscape as follows: “*How the communicative partners function: the linguistic landscape is represented by a particular sign while the recipient of the linguistic landscape represents the primary target group. [...] “The process of communication itself is associated with the transmission of information – conveying of some (intended) message to the recipient through a sign.”*”

This study draws on the theory of linguistic landscape communication. It investigates and analyses the signs, which convey an appeal, i.e., a variety of orders, bans, instructions, warnings, requests, pleas, which aim to guide the recipient’s behaviour, i.e., the recipient is expected to respect the information conveyed. The goal of this study is to characterise the selected portion of linguistic landscape from the viewpoint of the means used to achieve the communication goals, thus expanding our research project by another aspect. So far, the research team focused on the cognitive-cultural aspect (Dobřík 2021, 2022), diversity (Gašová 2021), multimodality (Lauková 2020; Molnárová 2022), increased expressiveness (Krško 2020), gender-neutral language (Štefaňáková 2020, 2022; Jesenská 2022), multilingualism (Lauková, Tóth, Istók, Lőrincz 2022), and the diachronic changes to the linguistic landscape (Bajusová 2021; Krško 2021; Molnárová 2020; Istók, Lőrincz, Tóth 2021). A complex view of the linguistic landscape can be found in the monograph authored by Istók, Lőrincz, and Tóth titled *Jazyková krajina miest Komárno a Komárom* (2022), which addresses a number of aspects and investigates the selected locations using the comparative method.

2 Material and methods

The material consists of the selected signs documented within the research project entitled *Language in the City – Documenting the Multimodal Semiosphere of Linguistic Landscapes in Slovakia and in a Comparative Perspective*, i.e., it was collected using field research. This study is focused specifically on the regulative discourse² represented by signs consisting of linguistic and non-linguistic signs documented in the selected parts of Erlangen, Germany. These signs convey appeals targeted at the broad public. Besides the signs collected in the specific location demarcated within the city (Hauptstraße), further material located outside this area will be examined and analysed for the purpose of comparison. These signs are similar and located in Erlangen as well, specifically in and around the railway station, malls, university, university library, and public transport vehicles. It is assumed that in these places, public behaviour needs to be guided; therefore, the occurrence of signs relevant for this study can be expected there. Since this research draws on multimodality as a significant attribute of the linguistic landscape and is focused on the forms of imperative or in other words, appeal, both linguistic and non-linguistic signs will be analysed.

The results of the examination and analysis will be subsequently compared with the way appeal is expressed in the Slovak linguistic landscape.

¹ For more information on the classification and characteristics of these aspects, see Gašová (2021).

² Ferenčík (2015) specifies the regulative discourse as a criterion for the linguistic landscape research in his study dealing with English in the visual semiotics of the urban linguistic landscape. Compare Ferenčík (2014).

We are drawing on the theoretical characteristics of imperative and its competitive forms in German.

The forms of imperative and appeal in the communication with the public, documented within the selected portion of the linguistic landscape, will be investigated using the methods of analysis and comparison. The theoretical foundation will be explained using descriptive methods.

3 Appeal from the grammatical point of view

In the German language, an appeal addressed to one or more persons takes the form of an imperative. "An appeal can take the form of plea, request, instruction, order, etc." (Duden 1984, p. 175, Helbig, Buscha 1996, p. 207). However, besides the imperative itself, German also offers competitive forms. They include mainly syntactic and lexical means. "In the syntactic competing forms, the appeal is additionally marked graphically by an exclamation mark and in articulation, by an emphatic accent." The most used competitive forms include:

- modal infinitive with the preposition "zu", e.g., Die Verursacher sind aufgefordert, ihr Malheur (Nudeln, Mais, Soße (?)) umgehend zu beseitigen,
- reduced sentences using
 - the infinitive, e.g., *Einsteigen!*,
 - participles, e.g., *Aufgepasst!*,
 - different word classes such as nouns or adjectives, e.g., *Vorsicht!, Achtung!*
- passive structures, e.g., Widerrechtlich geparkte Fahrzeuge werden kostenpflichtig abgeschleppt,
- modal and other verbs conveying an appeal, e.g., Neben Mehrweg- können Sie alle pfandpflichtigen Einwegverpackungen hier zurückgeben.

4 Analysis and its results

The forms of appeal, i.e., the use of imperative and its competitive forms was investigated in a sample of 176 signs in German located in the selected location of Erlangen (Hauptstraße), at/around the railway station, malls, university, university library, and in/on public transportation vehicles. Most of these signs were multimodal. As it was already pointed out, the language of the linguistic landscape comprises more than just text. Therefore, the analysed signs are perceived as multimodal semiotic objects within the linguistic landscape.

The 176 items in the sample were categorised based on the occurrence of imperative and its competitive forms:

4.1 Imperative – third person plural (formal): 25

In this category of appeals, the recipient was directly addressed ten times (verehrte Kunden, sehr geehrte Kunden, werter Kunde, werte Gäste, werte Besucher), in three cases, the recipient was thanked, and in three cases, the author of the text was listed. E.g.:

- *Verehrte Kunden*, bitte *nehmen Sie* ihren Einkaufswagen bereits vom Parkdeck in den Verkaufsraum *mit*
- Bitte *benutzen Sie* die gekennzeichneten Raucherbereiche. *Vielen Dank* für Ihr Verständnis und Ihre Mitwirkung. *Ihr Bahnhofsteam*
- Bitte *bieten Sie* diesen Platz körperlich beeinträchtigten Fahrgästen *an*

4.2 Competitive forms

As for the competitive forms of imperative, the infinitive, nouns, and participles were the most frequent. The frequency of occurrence and examples of appeals are listed below. In this context, it is necessary to point out the use of the exclamation mark. The exclamation mark was used in thirteen cases only; in two cases, triple exclamation marks were used for greater emphasis. Besides these forms of appeal, usually conveying a ban, order, or warning, familiar symbols, signs, and images were

also used. The appeals are often emphasized by the symbolic use of colour, e.g., ban – red, warning – yellow, order – blue; typography, e.g. capital letters, bold, size, underlining, arrangement, and as for punctuation, the exclamation mark.

- Infinitive or infinitive + negative (nicht, kein): 62
 - Bitte keine Ware in den Markt *nehmen*
 - Ausfahrt Tag und Nacht *freihalten*
 - Garage. Einfahrt *freihalten*.
 - Achtung noch *nicht anfahren*. Bremsen *prüfen*. Bitte *losfahren*.
 - Aufzug im Brandfall nicht benutzen
 - *Nicht öffnen* bevor der Zug hält.
 - Behinderteneingang. Bitte keine Fahrräder *abstellen*
 - Achtung! Fahrräder bitte *nicht* vor dem Schaufenster *abstellen!*
 - Bitte 1 Meter Abstand *halten*. Wartungsarbeiten. Danke!!!



Figure 1: Multimodality and synonymy of signs banning people from parking their bicycles in the specific spot.

- Infinitive with the preposition "zu" combined with other elements: 1
 - ACHTUNG. RUTSCHGEFAHR Die Verursacher sind aufgefordert, ihr Malheur (Nudeln, Mais, Soße (?)) **umgehend** zu beseitigen.
- Noun and noun + the pronoun "kein": 24
 - Nur *Fluchttür*. *Kein Ausgang*
 - *Kein Verzehr* von mitgebrachten Speisen und Getränken!
 - PC für *Studienzwecke*, *keine Privatnutzung*
- Noun + passive verb: 14
 - *Überkleben*, *Beschädigen*, *Entfernen wird* strafrechtlich *verfolgt*.
 - Jeder *Ladendiebstahl wird angezeigt*. Für jeden *Ladendiebstahl wird ein* befristetes *Hausverbot ausgesprochen*.
 - Wir weisen noch mal darauf hin, dass im Treppenhaus *unbedingt auf Ruhe geachtet wird*.
 - *RUHE!* Hier *wird gearbeitet!*
- Noun + adjective: 7
 - Notbremse. *Missbrauch strafbar*
 - *Kartenzahlung* erst ab 10,00 € *möglich*. Danke für Ihr Verständnis
- Participle: 14
 - *Werbung einwerfen im Haus verboten*
 - *Bekleben streng verboten!!!*
 - *Unterhaltung mit dem Fahrer während der Fahrt untersagt!*
 - *Fahrradfahren an Werktagen erlaubt*.
 - *Fahrräder ablehnen oder abstellen verboten!*
- Participle + verb "sein": 13
 - *Elektrischer Betriebsraum*. *Der Zutritt ist nur befugten Personen gestattet*
 - *Unbefugten Personen ist der Zutritt nicht gestattet*
- Modal verb: 3
 - Neben Mehrweg- können Sie alle pfandpflichtigen *Einwegverpackungen hier zurückgeben*
 - *Wir dürfen hier nicht rein!*



Figure 2: Multimodality and synonymy of signs mediating a ban using a modal verb

- Modal verb + passive infinitive: 2
 - Die Bücher aus dem Handapparat *sollen* ausschließlich im Aufsichtsbereich *gelesen werden* und *dürfen* nur kurzfristig (max. 30 Min.) gegen Vorlage des Studienausweises zum Kopieren *mitgenommen werden*.
 - Druckgasbetriebene Fahrzeuge *dürfen* nicht hier *abgestellt werden*.
- Other forms: 8
 - Wer Fahrzeuge beschmiert oder beschädigt, schadet allen
 - Wir weisen noch mal darauf hin, dass im Treppenhaus unbedingt auf Ruhe geachtet wird. Laute Unterhaltungen stören die Arbeit in den Lesebereichen ungemein. Telefonieren per Handy nur außerhalb der Bibliothek. Danke. In Namen aller Benutzer.
 - Privatparkplatz! Widerrechtlich geparkte Fahrzeuge werden kostenpflichtig abgeschleppt

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the use of imperative, specifically the 3rd person plural, is a polite way to convey an appeal or request, usually accompanied by the word “please”. The politeness can be emphasized by addressing the recipient and thanking them. Instead of a ban (Rauchen verboten – Smoking forbidden), a polite request is used (Bitte benutzen Sie die gekennzeichneten Raucherbereiche. Vielen Dank für Ihr Verständnis und Ihre Mitwirkung.) In all cases where the imperative (3rd person plural) was used, the recipients were addressed directly, i.e., these forms are not impersonal. As for the competitive forms of imperative, the most frequently used structures can be seen as “templates” into which specific words can be inserted, e.g.

- negative + infinitive (nicht parken, nicht öffnen),
- negative + noun (Kein Ausgang, keine Privatnutzung),
- noun + infinitive conveying an order (Ruhe bewahren, Ausfahrt freihalten),
- noun + negative + infinitive conveying a ban (Zutritt nicht gestattet, Aushänge bitte nicht entfernen),
- noun + participle/adjective (Betreten nicht gestattet, Bekleben streng verboten!).

The productiveness of the most frequent language means conveying an appeal in German is supported by the fact that they are used as synonyms for conveying the same appeal. The ban on smoking takes the form of imperative, infinitive, noun, or substantive plus adjective and participle. Parallels can be found in the parking bans (except for the imperative). Signs related to parking offer instructions on the possibility and methods of parking (with a parking ticket, free of charge, in marked spaces, ban on parking in a handicapped space) or warn in case of non-compliance with the ban or order (e.g. the vehicle will be towed away). In other words, both bans and orders are used.

The imperative constructions conveying the ban on smoking:

- *Bitte benutzen Sie die gekennzeichneten Raucherbereiche. Vielen Dank für Ihr Verständnis und Ihre Mitwirkung. Ihr Bahnhofsteam*
- *Raucherfreier Bahnhof. Zur Verbesserung der Sauberkeit und aus Rücksichtnahme auf Nichtraucher ist das Rauchen auf diesem Bahnhof grundsätzlich nicht gestattet*
- *Ab hier nicht mehr rauchen*

- *Achtung Rauchen verboten*
- *Hier gilt absolutes Raucherverbot*
- *Rauchen ist nur in gekennzeichneten Raucherzonen erlaubt*



Figure 3: Multimodality and synonymy of signs mediating a smoking ban

The imperative constructions conveying the ban on parking or parking instructions:

- Parkplatz! Widerrechtlich geparkte Fahrzeuge werden kostenpflichtig abgeschleppt
- Privatgrundstück. Nutzung nur mit Genehmigung des Eigentümers
- Privatgrundstück. Durchfahrt nur mit Parkgenehmigung. Für LKW gesperrt
- Privatgrundstück. Parken verboten. Widerrechtlich geparkte Fahrzeuge werden kostenpflichtig abgeschleppt
- Garage. Einfahrt freihalten
- Ausfahrt Tag und Nacht freihalten
- Mit Parkschein. Parken in gekennzeichneten Flächen erlaubt
- PARKSCHEINAUTOMAT Hier Parkschein lösen
- Achtung vorwärts einparken
- Ab 20 €1 Std kostenlos parken.



Figure 4: Multimodality and synonymy of signs mediating the ban on parking or parking or parking conditions

The documented material proves that an appeal can take the form of non-linguistic signs, i.e., symbols, and still be comprehensible. Symbols are useful in the regulative discourse since they are international and comprehensible for foreigners as well. For example, the symbols of smoking or parking bans in the figures above. Many similar symbols appeared in the linguistic landscape during the *COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)* pandemic. In Erlangen they conveyed the appeals (orders) related to the compliance with the anti-pandemic measures, most frequently wearing masks and respirators, and maintaining distance from other people.

The documented material shows the richness of the linguistic landscape and the use of synonymous signs conveying an appeal and guiding the recipients' behaviour. Besides the synonymous appeals, signs can have divergent functions based on their location. For example, the signs on the public transport vehicles. The location of these signs, for example, the sticker on the front of the bus, fulfils an informative function – it informs about the transportation possibilities for passengers as well as objects, e.g., the transportation of the physically disabled persons using wheelchairs or babies in prams. Placing them on or around the door turns them into orders, e.g., an order to use a specific door.



Figure 5: Sign homonymy – the informative and command functions of symbols

5 Conclusion

Based on the analysis and comparison of the linguistic and non-linguistic signs conveying appeals in German and the identification of the most frequent structures, it can be stated that the dynamics and variety of language in the linguistic landscape manifests in the communication with the public, specifically with the goal to guide people's behaviour. It also reflects in the synonymy of signs, which expands the selection.

The linguistic and non-linguistic signs in the linguistic landscape, which convey an appeal (ban, order, instruction, warning, request, or plea), are part of the regulative discourse. They are functionally combined and complemented, which reflects in their multimodality. A broad variety of signs and functions is used. As for the language means, the imperative and its competitive forms are frequent. The non-linguistic signs mainly take the form of symbols, pictograms, icons, typography, and colours. The appeals – bans and orders – are emphasized using the symbolism of colours, font size, bold, capital letters, arrangement on the sign, underlining, strike-through, or exclamation marks. Another way to emphasize an appeal is a warning specifying the consequences of non-compliance. The investigated material often included the sign (icon) of warning that illegally parked cars will be towed.

The analysis and comparison of the investigated signs pointed out the parallel use of multiple appeals on a single sign, i.e., the linguistic signs are complemented by one or more non-linguistic signs. For example, "Illegally parked vehicles will be towed for a fee" is complemented by a no-parking road sign and an icon showing a towed car.

The comparison with the Slovak language showed certain differences resulting from the differences of the languages and cultures. Besides the imperative forms, Slovak prefers the following competitive forms to convey an appeal: (Pozor výjazd, neparkovať), the noun *zákaz/ban* (ZÁKAZ PARKOVANIA, ZÁKAZ FAJČENIA), or the adjective *zakázané/banned* (FAJČIŤ zakázané, FAJČENIE ZAKÁZANÉ). Similar to the German samples, Slovak samples also use non-linguistic signs such as symbols, typography, and colours. The ban on bicycle parking in Erlangen points out a cultural difference between Germany and Slovakia. Due to the difference in the tradition of bicycle use in Germany vs. Slovakia, this type of sign is rare in Slovakia (in Banská Bystrica, which was part of the area investigated within this project, no such sign was found).

This paper presented the linguistic and non-linguistic signs conveying an appeal with the aim to guide the recipients' behaviour in the German linguistic landscape. The results of this analysis and comparison can be useful in translating appeals from Slovak into English. The preferred productive competitive forms of the imperative can be used as a template for the translation of tourism-related appeals and in places frequented by tourists.

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