MULTIMODAL ASPECTS OF THE BANSKÁ BYSTRICA LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

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Abstract: The paper presents linguistic landscape (LL) research into the Banská Bystrica intra-urban space focused specifically on multimodality of the researched objects. The presented partial qualitative synchronous and diachronous analysis of the samples collected at Horná Street and the Námestie SNP Square in the city is a part of the larger project entitled APVV-18-0115 Language in the City – Documenting the Multimodal Semiosphere of Linguistic Landscapes in Slovakia and in a Comparative Perspective.

Keywords: Linguistic Landscape, Sign, Multimodality, Communication, Image, Visual

1 Introduction

The author has been involved in the APVV-18-0115 Language in the City – Documenting the Multimodal Semiosphere of Linguistic Landscapes and in a Comparative Perspective research project since 2019. The project aims to provide a complete comparative documentation and analysis of the linguistic landscape[1] of the four selected intra-urban locations in Slovakia (Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Banská Štiavnica, Komárno) and compare them with two German (Munich, Erlangen) and two Hungarian cities (Komárom, Békéscsaba). The interdisciplinary project draws from the assumption that a specific intra-urban linguistic landscape represents a semiotic world (semiosphere) defined by high multimodality in both traditional as well as creative aspects of public communication. Partial research results have been published in the *Od textu k prekladu XIV* collection, Part two: Linguistic Landscape (2020) edited by the head investigator in the project, A. Ďuricová, V. Istók and S. J. Tóth (2020, pp. 16-23) have investigated the history of LL research in Komárno and Komárom. The LL analysis of Banská Bystrica has focused on figurative language (Jurčáková, 2020, pp. 29-35), local dialect (Krško, 2020, pp. 36-46), gender-balanced language (Štefaňáková, 2020, pp. 67-85), and surnames in logonyms (Molnárová, 2020, pp. 60-66). P. Jesenská (2020, pp. 24-28) has performed a quantitative and qualitative LL analysis of the Národná Street in Banská Bystrica while Z. Gašová has analysed Bratislava (2020, pp. 69-82) and Z. Dobrík has investigated Banská Štiavnica (2020, pp. 127-138). The aforementioned studies have dealt primarily with language signs. J. Lauková (2020, pp. 47-54) has opened the question of the mutual interaction between text and image and shared perception of visual text in the LL visual semiotics. The research part of the paper presents a qualitative analysis of multimodality and in accordance with the conceptual database of the project, three main variables will be analysed: image/graphic form, colour, and text-image relations. For practical research, the Horná Street located in the historical centre of Banská Bystrica was investigated. The brief diachronous analysis deals with three samples collected at the Námestie SNP Square.

2 Multimediality, multimodality, and image in LL

„Multimodality and multimediality are typical features of today's period. These features interfere in all aspects of human activities. Multidimensional communication has become an obvious part of our life, and visual communication plays a more and more important role. The importance of modus "image" grows as never before and plays a significant role when perceiving and reflecting facts and events around us" (Kolečáni Lenčová, 2020, p. 160).

In LL research, multimodality as a term refers to images (signs) that combine with linguistic elements, thus enhancing the informative value of the sign. However, multimodality also incorporates specific forms of written language including the aspects such as font, colour, background, etc. Multimodal Linguistic Landscapes (derived from Bateman's *multimodal linguistics,* 2008) takes into account not only the linguistic units in their linguistically specific, semantic, and graphic forms, but also a broad range of other semiotic units (sign, icon, graph, image, signboard type and mounting, architecture, etc.) and sociodemographic, historical, and economic parameters. In a simplified way, LL modality can be defined as a combination of different sign systems which create content within the given geographic and sociocultural space. The object of LL research is the interaction of language and image in the open public space, mainly from the recipient's viewpoint. However, this interaction is also relevant from the purely pragmatic viewpoint because this is the most frequent combination found in the intra-urban linguistic landscapes.

H. Stöckl (2011, pp. 47-48) has specified the following reasons why images are combined with language:

- From the historical point of view, writing has evolved from image.
- The use of language and images have identical mental representations and involve the same invariants (propositions, scripts, frames, mental models). Multimodal communication is also conditioned by the fact that humans are multisensory beings.
- When the "text" consists of language and image, the communication functions are redistributed between the semiotic systems to compensate for the other's shortcomings. While the images provide visual experience rich in signs, the language can name the specific aspects of this experience and explicitly demand action.

From the semiotic point of view, an image represents a continuous flow of iconic, spatially configured signs. Perception and cognitive processing of images involve rapid, simultaneous, and holistic perception with a powerful effect, therefore images are easy to remember and directly connected with emotions. W. Kroebel-Riel (1993, p. 53) has described them as "schnelle Schüsse ins Gehirn", i.e. having quick and efficient brain impact. The recipient simply compares the perceived forms with their own mental models and practical experience with the semantic concepts. On the other hand, the perception of language is slower, successive, and linear and does not necessarily connect with emotions. In terms of their semantic potential, image is vaguer and polysemous, i.e. semantically overloaded due to the limited space (negation, modality, logical cohesion of statements) G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen (2006, pp. 41-44), have adopted the theoretical notion of "metafunction" from the work of M. Halliday (1994) and specified the three functions of semiotic artifacts. Firstly, images represent cut-outs of the world by showing objects and their actions (ideational metafunction). Secondly, they visualise the relationships between the producer, image, and recipient (interpersonal metafunction). Thirdly, they combine the visual elements into formally cohesive and semantically coherent "text" structure (textual metafunction). To "read" the images, the recipient needs general knowledge (Weltwissen) and a sense for context, but also at least basic knowledge of the ways, principles, and types of visual representation in the given time and culture (Kodewissen) (compare Stöckl, 2010, p. 52; Kolečáni Lenčová, 2017, pp. 17, 22).

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[1] One of the first complex definitions of linguistic landscape and the most cited one has been formulated by R. Landry and R. Bourhis (1997, p. 25): *„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".* The definition and characteristics of the basic LL terms and concepts can be found in the author's previous studies (Molnárová, 2020, pp. 60-66; Lauková – Molnárová, 2020, pp. 97-111).

As already mentioned, LL most frequently combines images and text, therefore two types of perception and cognitive processing take place in the recipient's mind; they can be successive or alternate in different combinations. I. Schulze (2019, pp. 47-57) has analysed a number of models in his study entitled "Bilder-Schilder-Sprache"[2] to point out the different perception processes. Itti and Koch's (2000) saliency theory distinguishes bottom-up and top-down processes. In the first case, the perception process is controlled by the distinct elements in the aggregate regardless of the recipient's will. For example, the red colour, larger or more distinct font, central placement of the image or text, etc. Top-down perception can take place simultaneously; it is controlled by the recipient who intentionally focuses on certain LL elements in order to achieve a specific goal. Schnotz et al. (2003) have created a model with two different ways of text *(descriptive)* and image *(depictive)* processing which result in the creation of mental models. The results of these processes are subsequently compared and updated in terms of *mapping*. These models provide an interesting starting point for qualitative-quantitative LL research from the producer's point of view, although they require complementary analysis of the logical and semantic relationship between the image and the text. Therefore, I. Schulze (2019, pp. 51-57) has modified the model designed by Martinec and Salway (2005), which will be partially applied in this qualitative analysis. The goal is not a complete quantitative and qualitative analysis of the selected intra-urban space – instead, certain parts and signs pertaining to the selected objects will be analysed in terms of multimodality. The complex relationships among all the signs on the investigated objects (e.g. complete front façade of certain houses, inner courtyards, etc.) will not be addressed.

3 Multimodality in Banská Bystrica

3.1 Diachronous analysis

As already indicated, the recipient comes into contact with the visual reality of a linguistic landscape through the language, symbols, and objects; the visual representations can mediate the context directly or indirectly. However, this phenomenon is not new at all. Artistic elements such as statues of reliefs have always been an inseparable part of architectural styles, e.g. coats of arms and other elements characterising the property owner, or later the tenant, used to be placed on façades. In the centre of Banská Bystrica, a major change took place in the 19th century, when the first "display windows" appeared. Their appearance somehow stifled the sale of certain goods at markets and fairs, and the era of shops began. The ground level premises of the residential buildings with the windows facing the street in the city centre were adapted to display goods. The "display windows" were the predecessors of today's shop windows which also display the goods, sometimes using other objects (mannequins in clothes shops, 3D compositions, etc.). It can be described as the conscious formation of a semiotic, i.e. linguistic landscape by the producers with the aim to present a product or service to the potential customers. For example, the "display window" of the Potraviny U Klimov grocery shop (Námestie SNP Square 9) – one of the oldest preserved shops in the Banská Bystrica city centre. In the era of Austria-Hungary, the Móry family operated a general store on the ground floor of their house entitled "Móry János" (Baláž, 2008, pp. 78-80). Around 1922, the Klimo brothers took over the shop and renamed it to "Móry nástupca bratia Klimo" ("Móry – successor: Klimo brothers", Fig. 1). The Banská Bystrica citizens kept referring to the grocery shop as (U Klimov, do Klimov = Klimo's) even when the shop sign ("U Klimov") had been removed.[3]

Figure 1 Display windows in 1913.

From the diachronous point of view, the Červený Rak (Red Crayfish) restaurant at Námestie SNP 13 is important in this study. From the 1590s, it was owned by Juraj Krebs, a member of the external city council. The name of the restaurant derives from his name, which translates as "crayfish"; for more than 300 years, the restaurant has retained the name and was referred to as Rak (Crayfish), U raka (Crayfish's), U červeného raka (Ger. zum Roten Krebs = Red Crayfish's). A mention from 1786 refers to a large sheet metal crayfish decorating the front façade of the house (Baláž, 2008, p. 116). As can be seen in this historical example, the linguistic landscape of Banská Bystrica includes not only the texts placed on the façades of the houses – the multimodal combinations of language and image had an equal status, e.g. the written sign "Hotel Rak" and a crayfish sculpture. However, the information represented by the image is vaguer than the text.

Figure 2 Hotel Rak with the metal sheet crayfish sculpture in 1928.

Today, the red crayfish sculpture accompanies the name of the restaurant again, placed on the front façade of the house. However, the main text (name of the facility) and the respective image have the same status. They contain double information (direct repetition): the written text (Červený Rak) is repeated in the form of the image depicting a red crayfish sculpture, i.e. using another semiotic system. Additional information can be found under the name of the facility, however, the writing is smaller, therefore the recipient perceives and deciphers it only after they notice the sculpture and main text. Interestingly, red has been used. Conventionally, red is used as a "signalling" colour to attract attention (e.g. discounts in shops) or warn about danger (prohibitive road signs), or to express emotions (e.g. love). In this case, only the crayfish sculpture is red while the text is not, therefore the folklore historical context could have played a role. In Slovak, the simile "červený ako rak" ("red as a crayfish") derives from the fact that a crayfish turns red when it is boiled; in the past, crayfish were abundant in Slovak streams and restaurants often offered this meal.

Figure 3 The name of the restaurant and the crayfish sculpture today

The brief diachronous insight into the LL multimodality of the Banská Bystrica city centre ends with the analysis of this photograph. The deli is located at Námestie SNP Square 3 in

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[2] Currently, the only study of a linguistic landscape focused on complete documentation of the both qualitative and quantitative analysis of multimodal units in the semiotic landscape of the public space known to the author is I. Schulze's *Bilder-Schilder-Sprache. Empirische Studien zur Text-Bild-Semiotik im öffentlichen Raum.* Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2019. 227 p. ISBN 978-3-8233-8298-0.
[3] During the period of socialism, all shops in the Banská Bystrica city centre were uniformly named POTRAVINY (GROCERY SHOP) and due to pragmatic reasons, the citizens used additional names to distinguish between them. In this case, the historical context has been retained and the original name of the shop restored.

approx. 1932 [4] (Baláž, 2008, p. 29). In Fig. 4, a combination of different semiotic systems can be seen. Their goal is to attract the potential customer's attention. The information about the facility is mediated using both linguistic and non-linguistic signs. The owner's name is placed on the façade above the shop windows and entrance in accordance with the contemporary conventions (sign type: shop sign). The text is written in a distinct, large sans-serif typeface. The font size and its location allow for quick perception immediately after the recipient notices the visual elements. Additional written information about the facility type is located in three different places, therefore it seems that the producer considered them important. The recipients perceive the information when they approach the shop from different directions, since the sign is mounted on the wall as well as on a wall bracket perpendicular to the façade (sign type: wall bracket). The goods are presented using a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic signs, specifically the goods are displayed in the shop window together with an advertising poster.

Figure 4 Bodega – Pavel Tóth's deli (around 1932)

3.2 Synchronous analysis

In this part of the paper, the specific examples of multimodality in the current linguistic landscape of the Horná Street in Banská Bystrica will be addressed. It focuses on the signs that combine text and image/graphic elements and the sign types themselves vary. All the analysed signs (8) and their photographs are a part of the APVV project database. The categorisation of the multimodal data[5] and terminology stabilised based on the existing theoretical sources and pilot research will be used.

All these research objects belong to the branch of trade, service, and partially also culture and gastronomy. Specifically, they include a grocery shop, cosmetics shop, jazz club with a restaurant, bar, music shop, textile shop, clothing rental, and lawyer's office. In terms of sign authorship, the objects are commercial, therefore the discourse can be characterised as unofficial (bottom-up). In terms of the sign type, it can be a plate, shop sign, wall bracket, or a poster. In terms of the sign shape, rectangles and squares prevailed, although ovals and real object shapes (e.g. guitar, mannequins in the shop window, etc.) were also identified. In terms of multimodality, mainly communication and logos were found. Communication is defined as a combination of text with an image/graphic element, which includes objects such as mannequins and decoration. Logo is defined as a graphic representation of the name of an organisation, company, or institution combined with a visual element.

The first example is the Talianske Potraviny (Italian grocery shop, Fig. 5). The name is written on a rectangular plate placed on the façade of the house No. 16 along with seven other plates.

[4] The Slovak cultural identity has been significantly marked by the Czechoslovak era. The First Republic was characterised by extraordinarily rich culture, economic boom, and the increase in the commercial activity in the regions as well as many Slovak towns and cities including Banská Bystrica (Rošteková, 2020). The Slovak cultural identity further developed throughout the Soviet era, and after the fall of the regime in 1989, the key role was overtaken by Europeanisation. (Rošteková, Rouet, 2013; Ušiak, 2010)
[5] I. Schulze: Codebook. 2020. [online] available at https://www.ff.umb.sk/katedry/ katedra-germanistiky/apvv-18-0115-jazyk-v-meste-dokumentovanie-multimodalnej-semiosfery-jazykovej-krajiny-na-slovensku-a-z-komparativnej-perspektivy-10475/manualy-leitfaden-manuals.html

[6] All these plates fulfil the identification function in the public space; usually, the contents are stereotypical (name of the facility, company, brand, etc.). In terms of attracting the recipient's attention (marketing goal of the sign producer, bottom-up perception process promotion), it is important for the plate to differ from the other plates. The placement of the plate is deliberate – it is at the top and is one of the larger plates. The linguistic signs are limited to a minimum and the information is condensed to the essence, while the visual and emotional stimuli take the form of colours contrasting with the building façade (stylised Italian flag) and typeface (large, distinct letters with serif typeface).

Figure 5

On the façade of the house No. 16, there is also a table saying "RYOR" (Fig. 6). It is rectangular, but half the size of the Italian grocery shop plate, and it is located to the left from the centre, which should be a less advantageous placement in comparison with other plates in terms of perception. It fulfils the identification function; the name refers to a Czech brand of cosmetics. Again, the linguistic signs are limited to a minimum and condensed to the point when it is vague for the recipient as it lacks information about the type of facility. The visual stimulus and the bottom-up perception process are supported by the use of green contrasting with the font and the building façade at the same time. The letter Y is stylised. Further contextual knowledge is necessary for more thorough perception. Ryor is a Czech brand of natural cosmetics. It is an acronym consisting of Czech "rybíz" ("currant") and English "orange". The green colour and replacement of a part of the letter Y with a leaf picture refer to nature and pure natural products.

Figure 6

Rectangular plates are typical for lawyers' offices on Horná Street in Banská Bystrica. In most cases, the plates use a single language, they are saturated with text and lack graphic elements; they are usually silver, grey, or golden. The text is neutral, it contains the essential information about the service provided and the name(s) of the providers. Often, the floor on which the office is located is specified. This paper analyses a lawyer's office plate, which deviates from the uniform presentation usually opted for by lawyers (Fig. 7). The main information on the plate is presented in three languages (Slovak, English, and German). The text "Váš právny expert" ("Your law expert") fulfils an appellative function and addresses the potential percipient in a more personal way. This lawyer's office plate includes graphic elements: a circle and the section sign (§), i.e. a symbol used by the legal system. Multimodal elements include the red colour used for the letter L (referring to English "law") and the section sign "growing" from this letter.

[6] Since a large number of facilities in the Banská Bystrica city centre are located in the inner courtyards of the buildings, this is a frequently occurring sign type, shape, and location.

Figure 7

A multimodal combination of text and image in the creation of bottom-up signs can be observed in the following example as well (Fig. 8).

Figure 8

In terms of the sign type, it is a plate, however in terms of multimodal elements, it resembles a poster. This communication combines text informing about the facility type (rental of social and carnival clothing), name of the facility (Lady Mell), and its location (in the courtyard). The first visual and emotional stimuli for the percipient are provided by a colourful image depicting two figures in genre clothing (with dominant red colour), which distinguishes the plate from other plates placed on the façade of the house No. 37.

Another frequently occurring sign type at the Horná Street is the wall bracket. Three examples will be analysed. Each of the three wall brackets take different shapes and combine linguistic signs with graphic elements. In the first case (Fig. 9), the wall bracket is shaped like a guitar referring to the fact that this kind of musical instruments is sold in the shop. The mounting of the wall bracket is supposed to look like a guitar strap and the offset from the building façade increases its visibility. Figures 10 and 11 show another form of combining text and image. In terms of multimodality, the first figure shows a logo with double information provided by the text and repeated by the image. The second figure shows a wall bracket employing multiple types of modality. The font simulates handwriting, which can evoke a relaxed artistic atmosphere related to the music genre presented in the club as well as a get-together with French wine; the producer of the sign indicates that the customers are perceived as guests. The non-linguistic signs include a stylised French flag as a background for the text U FRANCÚZA (FRENCHMAN'S) and a sketch of a person holding the flag; the colours are harmonised.

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

5 Conclusion

The paper provided a partial qualitative analysis of the language landscape in the public intra-urban space of Banská Bystrica focused on the multimodality of the researched objects from the diachronous and synchronous perspectives. The analysis drew from the project hypothesis based on which the intra-urban linguistic landscape represents a semiotic world. It is characterised by a high level of multimodality comprising both the traditional and creative aspects focused on by the individual sign producers in terms of public communication. The analysis used the project categorisation of multimodal data and the stabilised terminology, i.e. the synthesis of the current verified theoretical starting points and existing pilot research. The focus was on the multimodality of the selected parts of the objects and their individual signs. Although the study did not focus on the complex relationships among all the signs on the observed objects, the hypothesis can be considered confirmed.

In further research, the author would like to focus on the complexity of the relationships among the individual signs, and by extension, the creation[7] and perception of the multimodal objects and their meaning within the semiotic aggregate (compare Scollon – Scollon, 2003). It incorporates a broader range of semiotic units (sign, icon, graph, image, mounting of the sign board, architecture, etc.) and the variety of text-image relations.

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[7] Compare Kolečáni Lenčová, 2021, pp. 65-66

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