Linguistic Landscape in Downtown Zagreb

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1. Introduction

　　Linguistic landscape studies are a relatively novel area of research in sociolinguistics that first emerged in the field of language planning in the 1980s (Johnstone 2012). The term 'linguistic landscape' itself refers to "the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (Landry & Bourhis 1997:23). This definition transforms signs from ordinary props into indicators of not only which languages are present in a certain space, but also of how that space is socially demarcated and what message is being conveyed by the sign. Space is the most important object of research in linguistic landscape studies because it serves several social functions – it is "always *somebody's* space; a historical space, therefore, full of codes, expectations, norms and traditions; and a space of power controlled by, as well as controlling, people" (Blommaert 2013:3). That space is also a sociolinguistic system, "a set of nonrandom interactions between sociolinguistic objects" (15). The goal of linguistic landscape studies is then to describe how these interactions take place and what their overall sociolinguistic effect actually is, or how "visible written language documents the presence of a wide variety of (linguistically identifiable) groups of people" (1). The best place to study this is the modern city, which abounds with all varieties of signs – from shop signs and road signs to graffiti and billboards. Zagreb is one of those cities: it is comprised of many neighbourhoods, all of which offer a plethora of public inscriptions worthy of analysis. This particular study focuses on only one of those neighbourhoods, but the most interesting and crowded one, namely Ban Jelačić Square and its surrounding streets and alleyways, which constitute the downtown area of the city. This urban district is the heart of the city because it is home to a large number of specialized shops, caffes, bookstores and many others, all vying for our undivided attention with their gaudy storefronts. It is also an important crossroads traffic-wise, together with being a very busy stop in the public tram system and a popular sight for tourists. All of this creates an area that is densely populated with signs. The aim of this research paper is to study those signs and the space they occupy in order to glean insights into how they function, how they interact with each other and what that tells us from a sociolinguistic standpoint – in short, what the linguistic landscape of downtown Zagreb is like.

The following section is about the theoretical background used to analyze the results of the research, followed by a section on how the research was conducted. The results and their interpretation comprise the next section, which is followed by the qualitative part of the research and its results. An overview and a conclusion is given at the end.

2. Theoretical framework

In their seminal article "Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality" (1997), Landry and Bourhis define the primary function of the linguistic landscape as that of a "distinctive marker of the geographical territory inhabited by a given language community"(25). In a broad sense, the linguistic landscape is indicative of the existence of language communities or a single community. In the case of several different language communities, constant use of a language on public signs can serve to delineate the areas these communities occupy.

While the linguistic landscape as a whole marks the area populated by a certain language community, the individual signs and their composition is what points to linguistic diversity. If the majority of the signs in a certain area are monolingual, the case is rather clear-cut, but a large number of bilingual or even multilingual inscriptions provides evidence of multiple different language groups and communities of people. It is not unusual in such situations that one variety is in some way more prominent than others. For example, this is true for diglossic areas, where usually a more prestigious or dominant variety can be seen on public signs, while the less prestigious variety might be reserved for home use, or be less visibly displayed in public compared to the more dominant one

The sum of all individual signs is what makes up a specific linguistic landscape, but not all signs are equal. They vary in regards to the physical part of the sign - what is written on them and in what typefaces and fonts, the placement of the text, where the actual signs are placed and so on – but also in regards to their function. Landry and Bourhis distinguish between two broad categories of signs according to their placement: private signs and government signs (26). They describe the latter as "public signs used by national, regional, or municipal governments in the following domains: road signs, place names, street names and inscriptions on government buildings...", while private signs consist of "commercial signs on storefronts and business institutions...advertising on billboards, and advertising signs displayed in public transport and on private vehicles" (26). While this distinction is useful for a more low-level analysis of linguistic landscape, it does not provide any information about the actual functions of the signs in question. In his book "Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes", Blommaert suggests categories that are a bit more refined: permanent signs, event-related signs, and 'noise' (53). Permanent signs combine the categories from the previous categorization and include road signs, landmarks, shop signs, permanent publicity

signs and so on – the permanence of these signs in the landscape is their distinguishing quality. Event-related signs point to certain occasions or happenings, and they come in the form of posters, temporary shop signs, for-rent or for sale signs or smaller announcements. 'Noise' is something that found its way there by accident - a paper bag or a cup with an inscription, or perhaps cars bearing advertisements – "these objects are in the landscape, but not as an effect of deliberate landscaping." (53) These categories can give some insight into the people that populate a certain area and the activities that they engage in; the first two categories point to more permanent residents, and the third to visitors or people simply passing through. Every sign belongs to one of these categories, but every sign still has a different function – each sign does something different in relation to the people it interacts with and activities it points to. Blommaert further distinguishes the function of each sign into five categories: landmark functions, recruitment functions, informative functions, public statements and muted signs. (54)

Signs that have landmark functions connect a certain area to history or tradition – for example, a Latin inscription on a historical site. Recruitment is what shops signs or event posters aim to do: "they invite particular groups of people" to interact with those who put those signs or posters up (54). While a shop sign that announces that the shop sells vegetables aims to recruit, the sign that displays the prices for each type of vegetable *informs*. Signs with the informative function are a subset of signs with recruitment functions, and they provide more specific details. These types of signs can be clearly traced to their point of origin, be it a shop, a massage parlor, or a restaurant or any other kind of establishment. The producers of graffiti, which belong to public statements, cannot be traced back so directly, but what is interesting about these types of signs is that "the addressee, however, can be quite identifiable, and language choice as well as features of graphic shape contribute to this; the same features enable us to make informed guesses about the producer as well." (54) Finally, muted signs "are only indirectly functioning as readable signs. A plastic bag containing rubbish is primarily a rubbish bag; the inscriptions on the bag are only indirectly an instrument for communication." (54) The purpose of the plastic bag is not to serve as a sign to be read by others; it does not invite people to interact with it as a sign.

These different distinctions are particularly important when studying an area that is linguistically diverse, where it is not enough to count the particular languages that exist there, but where each language has a certain function in the totality of that linguistic landscape which is expressed through signs that function in of the ways just described.

To be able to talk about the possible functions that signs have, they first need to be analyzed. A perfect example is a sign from Blommaert (2013:42)- :

The first thing that we notice when looking at a sign, often not consciously, are the modalities in which the particular sign operates. Modalities are different ways in which the sign interacts with people – through words, shapes, colors and so on (Blommaert 2013:42). This road sign exhibits several modalities: its visual shape, the color it is in, and text. This piece of writing in Chinese is obviously directed at people who can understand the language, while the visual portion of the sign can be understood by anyone (42). In other words, the different modalities of this sign also have different *semiotic scopes* (43). The shape on the

sign has a broader semiotic scope and it is intended for a wider audience than the text, whose semiotic scope is considerably narrower and aimed only at people who understand Chinese.

Different signs reach different people with their semiotic scopes, but they also exist in places that are non-random. The space to which signs refer to is called their *spatial scope* (43). In the example above, the sign is prohibitive, and its rules are valid only in the physical space that the sign occupies and represents.

When both the semiotic and the spatial scope of a sign are taken into consideration, it is clear that the sign is there to set certain boundaries; to "cut up a larger space into smaller ones, into micro-spaces where particular rules and codes operate in relation to specific audiences" (43). The totality of signs in a particular space creates eventually creates a pattern, and signs that fit that pattern are common and unremarkable, but signs that deviate from the norm are considered *exceptional*.

Figure 1

For example, the presence of graffiti in a neighbourhood that is already replete with this type of signs is nothing of note; but in a place where there is next to none, graffiti would present an exotic and extraordinary development. The few examples graffiti that are present in Tkalčićeva Street in Zagreb, such as the one illustrated above, are a peculiar development in a neighbourhood that is otherwise very "orderly" and tourist-oriented when it comes to signs. Furthermore, signs that were once considered out of place and were not conforming to the

pattern could start multiplying, and with time become the new pattern, thus drastically changing the linguistic landscape and its features.

This non-random emplacement, together with the notions of semiotic and spatial scope, puts each sign in a synchronic relationship with all other signs. Public signs and spaces they occupy "point sideways" to other signs and spaces in the present. (Blommaert 2013:45)

Apart from the present, public signs also operate in two additional dimensions – "every sign tells a story about who produced it, and about who is selected to consume it...every sign points backwards to its origins, and forward to its uptake." (44) These three aspects of signs provide more sociolinguistic information about a linguistic landscape by making further connections between people, practices and social and cultural organization.

Social and cultural organization in the form of public signs signify what Blommaert calls "forms of *legitimacy* of presence and of activities." (61) For example, if there is a number of signs in Korean in a certain neighbourhood, this naturally suggests that they were put up by Korean people for Korean people – the signs they put up are an indication of their "presence and activities." What is even more important, they are also an indication of voice – the ability to express an opinion or influence decisions (61). This presence is also crucial to identity – including a minority language in the linguistic landscape with signs contributes "to the feeling that the in-group language has value and status relative to other languages within the sociolinguistic setting" (Landry & Bourhis 1997:27) – which also extends to the people speaking the language. By the same token, "exclusion of the in-group language from public signs can convey a message to the effect that one's own language is not valued and has little status within society" and that it is "of little use for conducting public affairs, thus reinforcing a diglossic situation to the advantage of the dominant language." (28) To that effect, even though they are not written in a foreign language, permanent signs, along with event-related signs, "point toward sedentary producers – people permanently residing in the neighborhood..." (Blommaert 2013:53). These types of signs might get overlooked because they are very common, but when contrasted with the rest of the linguistic landscape, "already raise questions about social structure and social dynamics." (53)

Furthermore, the authors argue that the pervasiveness of a language on public signs has a significant effect on language behavior, where the "presence or absence of the in-group language is related to how much speakers use their in-group language with family members, friends, neighbors...in social gatherings; in cultural activities..." (45)

3. Research methodology

The purpose of this paper is to answer three research questions: (1) what constitutes the linguistic landscape of downtown Zagreb and (2) how those constituent parts are connected to each other, as well as (3) what is the reasoning behind certain public signs in the area. To answer the first question, a quantitative research method was employed, where all the signs in the area were catalogued and analyzed, from which relevant statistics were drawn up. While this method is relatively straightforward, it does not bring us closer to answering the second research question because of its relative complexity. The method of choice here was the sociolinguistic interview, which was carried out with the proprietors of several establishments in the area. While traditional linguistic landscape studies usually do not include this type of qualitative research, it was used here in order to gain first-hand insight into the placement of certain signs, apart from what can be induced from the sheer numerical data. Furthermore, using this type of mixed methodology "is likely to result in complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004:18). Utilizing both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research also helps in building more comprehensive knowledge and insight that might be lost if using only one of these approaches (21).

In any type of quantitative research in linguistics, and particularly in studying linguistic landscapes, the amount of data collected needs to be sufficient in order to notice certain trends, patterns and linguistic phenomena. For this paper, the downtown area of Zagreb was chosen especially because of its high density of various different establishments that exhibit a multitude of public signs. The following map roughly displays the area covered in this paper (Google Maps 2019. Accessed 26 March 2019):

In order to chart all the languages and their prominence, all pertinent public signs in the area were photographed, documented and analyzed. Almost anything with text on it was classified as a sign – the only ones not included were several examples of graffiti and inscriptions that were illegible or inexplicable. When all the relevant data was collected during this initial phase of the research, it was first analyzed at a low level and all the signs were divided into 3 broad categories: monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs. Within those categories, signs were further subdivided according to the languages they feature. Following this basic analysis of the form, the signs' content and function was analyzed and compared to other members of the category.

The quantitative data collected and analyzed in this way gives us a broad understanding of the linguistic landscape in the Zagreb downtown area. "In order to know what meanings signs may carry in the social domain," as Pennycook (2009) puts it, "...we need to know more about how and why they are made, with what intentions, beliefs and ideologies, and how they are read, with what interests, interpretations and discourses." (304)

The sociolinguistic interview was used in order to gain a deeper understanding of what the data represents and see it in a new light. This method of research was pioneered by William Labov in his studies of language change and variation in New York and Martha's Vineyard to

gather data on new and emerging language patterns in different sociolects. Even though this was not the exact purpose behind the interviews conducted for this study, the principal points of the sociolinguistic interview still stand.

In order to achieve the goal of collecting usable data, the interviewer has to make sure that the atmosphere is as informal and laid back as possible in order to elicit the type of speech that comes naturally to the speaker. There are several ways/methods of doing this that are all key to conducting a successful interview – but the primary point of interviewing is to always be well prepared. The brunt of the preparation work lies in working out the conversational modules – groups of questions that focus on a particular topic (Labov 1984:33). Furthermore, the format of the interview itself is supposed to be colloquial – as Labov (1984) states, "many inexperienced interviewers, formulating questions without preparation, will exhibit a bookish lexicon and grammar, or show the influence of survey methodology...One governing principle is that module questions should take less than five seconds to deliver and in many cases, less than one second." (34) This is also true of the interview as a whole – the interviewer's interruptions of the speaker's narrative should be minimal and always done in a colloquial manner (37). They are also crucial, because it is necessary to encourage and guide the speaker to elaborate – as Labov put it, "the sociolinguistic interview is considered a failure if the speaker does no more than answer questions." (38) The interview should have a balanced number of topics initiated by both the interviewer and the speaker, because "...the additional material that the speaker provides...provides the main substance of the interview." (38) Whether the speaker will feel motivated to go on tangents and shift the topic of conversation entirely depends on their perception of the interviewer, since the latter is seen as an outside observer:

"Any identification of the interviewer as a teacher would stress the fact that he is a person that information flows from, not to. The basic counter-strategy of the sociolinguistic interview is to emphasize the position of the interviewer as a learner, in a position of lower authority than the person he is talking to. This favorable interactive position can only be achieved by a thoroughgoing rejection of the authority that stems from the association with the dominating social class." (40)

The most important consideration to have in mind when collecting recorded data of this kind is of an ethical nature. All speakers have to give their informed consent and be assured that the material they provide will be properly handled, which means that it is the researcher's

duty do ensure that the data is anonymous and confidential. Before the research is submitted and actually published, the data has to be reviewed for possible clues that might point to someone's identity and rendered untraceable to the particular speaker.

The questions devised for the interviews were organized into 6 modules with 5 questions each (the questions in English are located in the Appendix):

1.

a) Mislite li da je korištenje engleskog u Zagrebu nužno, primjerice zbog turista?

b) Zašto mislite da ljudi stavljaju natpise na engleskom, iz praktičnih razloga ili zbog prestiža?

c) Mislite li da natpisi na engleskom privlače više gostiju u restorane ili slične lokale?

d) Mislite li da ljudi previde natpise koji ne sadržavaju nešto napisano na engleskom?

e) Mislite li da su dvojezični natpisi primjetljiviji od jednojezičnih?

2.

a) Mislite li da je vizualni dojam natpisa bitan?

b) Što mislite da je bitnije, kako natpis izgleda ili što na njemu piše?

c) Kakvi natpisi vam odmah privuku pozornost?

d) Koji su još neki elementi zbog kojih se znakovi više ističu?

e) Mislite li da javni natpisi moraju biti pisani na hrvatskom književnom jeziku?

3.

a) Mislite li da su grafiti u centru Zagreba prikladni?

b) Mislite li da grafiti ostavljaju loš dojam na ljude koji posjećuju Hrvatsku, ili možda na domaće ljude?

c) Koja je za vas razlika između grafita i ulične umjetnosti (*street art*)?

d) Što mislite o grafitima koji imaju nekakvu političku poruku?

e) Kome su grafiti najprivlačniji, po vašem mišljenju?

4.

a) Kakav dojam na vas ostavljaju natpisi samo na hrvatskom ili samo na engleskom?

b) Jeste li primijetili još neke jezike pored engleskog i hrvatskog?

c) Privlače li vašu pozornost znakovi na drugim stranim jezicima ili ih samo ignorirate?

d) Jesu li vam znakovi na drugim stranim jezicima primjetljiviji ako sadrže dodatne vizualne elemente?

e) Jeste li primijetili još neka pisma pored latinice?

5.

a) Jeste li primijetili natpise na nekom od hrvatskih narječja?

b) Kakav dojam na vas ostavljaju znakovi koji nisu pisani na hrvatskom književnom jeziku?

c) Mislite li da znakovi koji sadrže nekakvu gramatičku ili pravopisnu pogrešku privlače pozornost, odnosno negativnu pozornost?

d) Kad vidite nekakvu posuđenicu na natpisu na hrvatskom, kako vas se to dojmi?

e) Jeste li primijetili natpise na hrvatskom koje smatrate neprikladnima, ili manje prikladnima?

6.

a) Mislite li da natpisi koji označavaju nekakvu znamenitost trebaju biti prevedeni na engleski?

b) U centru ima par znakova na latinskom, jeste li ih primijetili? Mislite li da su oni na istoj razini kao i ostali znakovi?

c) Mislite li da je moguće imati previše natpisa? Je li centar Zagreba preplavljen njima?

d) Što se tiče znakove, biste li htjeli vidjeti nekakve promjene u Zagrebu?

e) Jeste li primijetili nekakvu razliku između znakova u centru i znakova u drugim dijelovima grada?

The results of both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the research are presented in the following sections, and are then further analyzed in the broader context of the linguistic landscape of downtown Zagreb.

4. Quantitative research results

A total of 723 signs in the designated area were analyzed. Following the basic categorization of monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs introduced previously, this total consists of 563 monolingual, 146 bilingual and 14 multilingual signs.

The breakdown of the particular languages that make up those 563 monolingual signs is presented in the following table:

Language	Total signs	Percentage
Croatian	403	71.7%
English	145	25.8%
Korean	5	0.8%
German	2	0.3%
French	3	0.5%
Arabic	1	0.1%
Italian	1	0.1%
Spanish	1	0.1%
Chinese	1	0.1%
Latin	1	0.1%

At first glance, Croatian represents the overwhelming majority of monolingual signs – almost 72%. It is important to mention, however, that 142 of the 403 inscriptions in Croatian (roughly 35%) belong to the category of government signs, which is not particularly surprising because Ban Jelačić Square is a hub where many different streets meet. The rest of the languages are scarcely represented – the only monolingual instance of Arabic, Italian, Spanish and Chinese can be found above the Tourist Information Centre at the heart of the Square.

The 146 bilingual signs include the following combinations of languages:

Languages	Total signs	Percentage
Croatian / English	140	96.5%
Croatian / Italian	3	2%
English / Italian	1	0.68%
Croatian / French	1	0.68%
Croatian / Latin	1	0.68%

Considering how tourist-oriented the city of Zagreb is, these numbers should come as no surprise. The less represented variations of bilingual signs are employed in a highly specialized capacity – for example, Croatian – Italian and English – Italian at the Italian Language Institute.

Lastly, the following languages are found on the few signs in the multilingual category:

Languages	Total signs	Percentage
Croatian / English / Italian / German	3	21.4%
Croatian / English / Italian / German / French	1	7.1%
Croatian / English / Italian	1	7.1%
Croatian / English / German	4	28.5%
Croatian / Italian / French / Spanish / Portuguese / German / Chinese / Korean /	1	7.1%

Japanese		
English / Italian / French / Portuguese / Spanish	1	7.1%
Croatian / Serbian / English	1	7.1%
English / German / Italian / French	1	7.1%
English / German / French / Spanish	1	7.1%

As we have already seen, these bilingual and multilingual one-offs are usually connected to very particular instances of usage. The enumerated types of signs are almost exclusively used in contexts related to advertising and tourism.

Figure 2

For example, Croatian-English-German-French are regularly used on this restaurant's displays along Tkalčićeva Street, which reflects the fact that the street is a blend of many different restaurants and world cuisines and other tourist attractions.

5. Quantitative research results discussion and representative pictures

A cursory glance at the raw data lends us a rough insight into how this part of the city is linguistically organized – monolingual signs represent the majority of total signs examined, with bilingual signs following them and a handful of multilingual inscriptions. The most predominant languages are clearly Croatian and English – Croatian is found on roughly 77% of the documented signs, while English is found on circa 41% of them. If we exclude the signs that have to be written in Croatian, that reduces presence of Croatian to about 57% – almost on a par with English.

Figure 3

There are also many instances of multiple government and private signs occupying the same space (see fig.2). In a part of the city where English and other foreign languages are used on public signs as much as shown in the tables, areas that predominantly feature permanent signs in Croatian suggest that they are not geared towards people other than the locals.

The following sign in particular has a very interesting form and function:

Figure 4

The sign establishes a historical connection between itself and the school it is featured on – it serves as a landmark. The inscription on the sign is bilingual – it is written in Croatian and Latin, but while the target audience for the Croatian part is, of course, everyone who speaks Croatian, the audience for the part in Latin is scarce – there are people who do understand Latin, but that is not the function of this particular sign. In Blommaert's words, "(...) the language does not point towards a particular community of language users, but points to a (...) tradition." (54) When compared to other signs of this type in the area, this one is unique in its form, because it points backwards towards tradition and history, but also addresses the readers of the sign in the present and the future.

There are a number of signs that have similar functions, but none of those included in this study have yet been translated to English (or any other foreign language). This could likely indicate that they are not considered to be of any particular interest to non-Croatian speaking

passers-by, or simply not worth the trouble – even though some of them feature important historical figures, like Nikola Tesla:

Figure 5

Since downtown Zagreb is a fairly large part of the city, there are always bound to be buildings in disrepair and renovations going on. At the time of carrying out this study, there were a few warning signs strewn about the area that indicated falling roof tiles and plaster, but all of them were monolingual – which is strange because of the high percentage of foreigners.

Figure 6

Especially in an area where a lot of foreign people pass by, a monolingual warning does not make much sense. This could be explained by the fact that these types of warning signs are temporary, event-related signs that are not expected to stay there, and therefore the authors thought it made little sense to translate them. That is definitely applicable to certain announcements whose content is unlikely to attract any attention other than that of the locals, such as the one in figure 6, which read "*Oprez! Pada crijep i žbuka*", or such as this one, which says "*zabranjeno odlaganje kontejnera*":

Figure 7

While the target audience of this sign are people living in the area, the previous sign carries information that is vital to anyone who finds themselves in the vicinity.

There is also a situation similar to this one, but reversed – the sign in question is also monolingual, but in Korean.

Figure 8

While the name of the establishment is up there in both Korean and Croatian ("*Moj dom*"), the rest of the inscription loosely translates as "bed and breakfast". This is an exceptional occurrence in Tkalčićeva Street – there are few monolingual signs in Croatian and a multitude of bilingual and multilingual signs, which usually also feature text in Croatian, but this is the only instance of a monolingual inscription in Korean. The semiotic scope of the sign is immediately clear – it is intended for a Korean-speaking audience. This is also evident in how the sign is presented visually, because the Korean lettering is much more noticeable and occupies more space than the other smaller signs.

Graffiti have already been mentioned as signs that function as public statements. Because of their form and function, these statements are usually considered mere vandalism or "transgressive social behaviour" (Pennycook 2009:302). Pennycook further argues that in order to fully appreciate and comprehend linguistic landscapes, researchers need to "look not only at presence but also salience" (304). Because they combine text, image and popular culture, graffiti are the most salient signs in a linguistic landscape full of more traditional ones.

Figure 9

This graffiti is located in a tiny side street near Ban Jelačić Square along with countless other scribbles and tags. The sign itself combines several different modalities. Firstly there is the image of a pig holding a moneybag, which immediately suggests a mute, but incisive social commentary. The words above the image, "fuck wars" (not visible in Figure 9), give the image voice and clarify its intentions – it protests against wars fought for profit. The third

element is the allusion to the popular film franchise "Star Wars", along with the font that is also used for the movies' title. While the author's identity is not known, it is reasonable to assume that it is a person who has at least some knowledge of world politics. While the sign's semiotic scope includes anyone who can read and understand English, it is also directed at and against capitalism. Because of its message, it does not operate only locally – even though it is physically tied to a narrow little street, its meaning is much broader, and so is its spatial scope. The placement of this sign puts into perspective the entire landscape – the surrounding streets contain a large number of government signs and an even larger number of other permanent and event-related signs, and are nothing out of the ordinary, while this small, marginal street is anything but ordinary. Because of the context it is in, the sign in question is particularly salient – even among other graffiti, which is a quality not many other signs possess.

What is further interesting about this street is that it is so inundated with graffiti that any other sign seems extremely out of place.
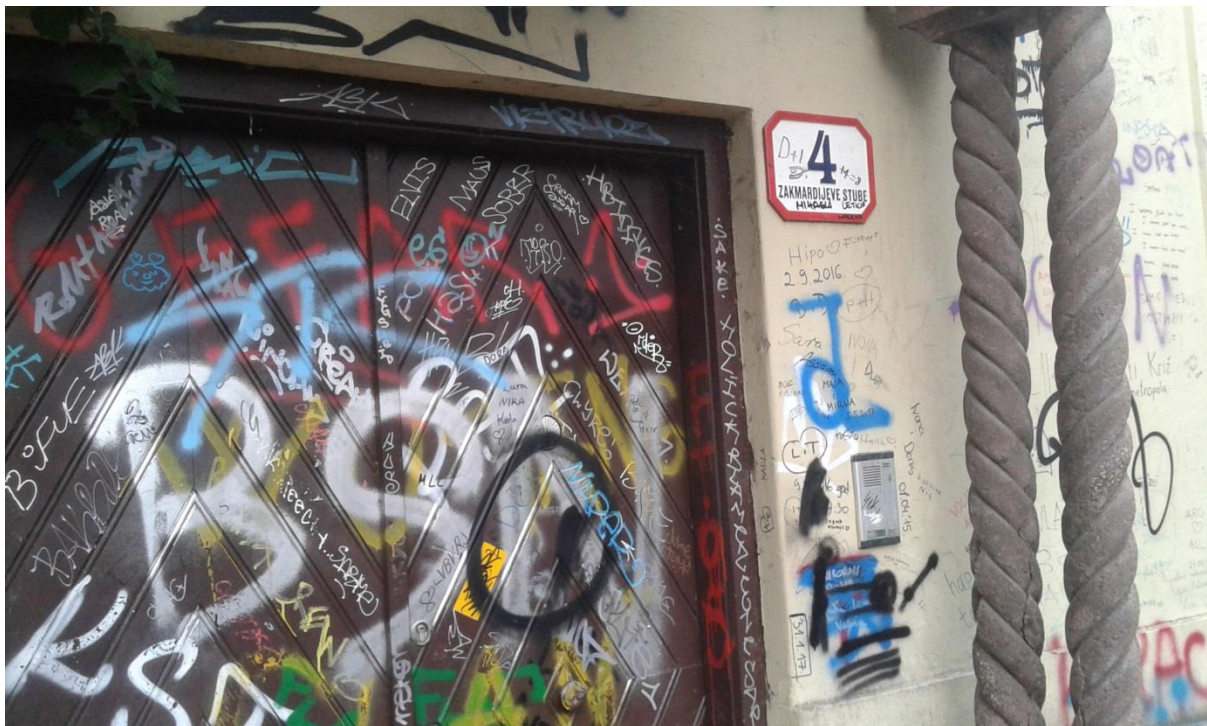

Figure 10

Old writing has been replaced with new inscriptions, and even the lonely street sign was not spared in the process. While not everything here might be completely legible, the message is clear: this is a place where rules do not apply, where walls get defaced, and where the

dominant ideologies are called out. It is a place where the extraordinary has become the norm; a small pocket of space where people get to express themselves anonymously.

6. Qualitative research results and analysis

For the qualitative part of the research, two people were interviewed using the modules presented in the section on research methodology. The first of the participants, a man in his forties, expressed very strong, and almost hostile, views on English on public signs:

"I don't think English is at all necessary, not even because of tourists or other people. I think it's possible to get around without it, but I understand why it's so. I don't like it, but even I was persuaded to make some small concessions on that front."

That small concession is the word *open* on the door of his establishment. He further expanded on his views:

"I think the people are almost afraid not to put English on a sign, like it's expected of them, or it would be considered abnormal. It's also dangerous for Croatian, every day I see so many butchered translations, I can't stand it anymore. It's dangerous because it's suppressing our own language. I've also seen errors in bilingual signs that feature Croatian and Italian or French – I used to be a journalist and a translator, so...."

It becomes clear that his views on English, and especially Croatian, are influenced by his past work. In these professions the use of Standard Croatian is obligatory, and the usual practice in this variety of the language is to replace loanwords with words or phrases in Croatian. The fact of the matter is that few of these actually replace the loanwords in use. For example, the Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics curates the web-page www.jezicni-savjetnik.hr, where "advice" on "proper" usage is given. One such entry concerns the word "afterparty", where it is recommended to instead use the phrase "zabava nakon posla /koncerta/događanja/zabave". Such instances are inevitable because of the major influence the English language has exerted, and still exerts over other languages, including Croatian.

The participant was vehement about his dislike of the usage of English in public, but he also shared strong opinions on other forms of public signs, such as graffiti:

"Street art is one thing, but graffiti are a different matter altogether. Street art is an art form and it can look beautiful. Graffiti are just ugly, I really hate them. For me, they almost border on vandalism, if you just look at what they've done to certain streets. I think it looks bad in other people's eyes' too, us locals have just gotten used to it."

I pointed out several graffiti that carry strong political or social messages, but the respondent was adamant:

"No, I don't condone graffiti even if they are used in such a way."

The participant's stance on the usage of dialects in public space was very much in line with his stance on the usage of English, albeit a bit toned down:

"I think there is a place for Croatian dialects, but I think Standard Croatian should be used in public in every circumstance."

While I tried to steer the conversation away towards other topics I intended to discuss, the participant always made an effort to repeatedly highlight his disdain for all instances of English on signs. Any question I asked that was not related to that issue was usually answered with a short reply that did not develop the conversation in other directions.

The participant's views on both Standard Croatian and English on public signs are emblematic of the standard language ideology. Lippi-Green (2012) defines this set of ideas as "a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class" (67). The standard variety is seen as inherently "better" than other varieties of a language, but also any other language that may have influenced it.

Another ideology apparent in the participant's answers is the monoglossic ideology. English has been a presence in our everyday life for quite some time, and it is taught in school (even kindergarten), so there is bound to be contact between it and Croatian. The monoglossic ideology presupposes that each language is a discrete entity, and any interaction between two languages, such as lexical borrowing or code-switching, is seen as not as "pure". (Garcia & Torres-Guevara 2009:188)

The second participant, a woman in her mid-twenties, had slightly more moderate opinions regarding public signs. In her opinion, English is featured on signs because

"the ability to communicate on a basic level is a prerequisite for many businesses, and especially in tourism. Mostly out of practical reasons, to attract non-Croatian visitors".

When asked about which signs are particularly salient for her, the participant said that

"the content and the visual aspects of signs attract the most attention, and also their size."

Furthermore, she found that what signs looked like was more important than what they were about,

"because if a sign doesn't attract attention visually, it doesn't matter what it says because it won't be read."

The participant also shared some of her views on graffiti with the previous participant:

"I don't like graffiti in general. They are a form of art, but for me they don't have any aesthetic value. The political ones are the worst – they only express discontent with no constructive criticism or perpetuate hate towards certain groups. I don't like that I have no say in being exposed to that kind of language."

On the topic of public signs and Standard Croatian, the participant was adamant that

"formal signs absolutely have to be in Standard Croatian, and private signs should at least contain some basic information"

in the variety, because she finds

"signs only in English absolutely pointless."

Furthermore, the participant found signs that were not written in non-standard varieties "very endearing." When asked about any potentially inappropriate signs in Croatian, the participant answered that

"any sign in Croatian that has any kind of grammatical or spelling error, or is worded awkwardly, is inappropriate."

These statements are mild in comparison to what the previous participant had to say regarding Standard Croatian, but they still exhibit a form of the standard language ideology.

Even though the second participant was more verbose when it came to the same topics, their opinions still mirror some of the first participant's ones. It is interesting to see that not only do both participants find unacceptable the form of graffiti, but also their function – even though the function is to provide scathing social commentary or simply aesthetic pleasure. Since graffiti are non-traditional signs (or even non-traditional art) in form, the participants disliked them in spite of the function they perform, which may seem more acceptable when combined with a more traditional form, like a pamphlet or a painting.

This also goes back to what both participants said about Standard Croatian. Everything related to non-standard varieties was described as almost on a different level, ranging from there being a "place for non-standard varieties" to using adjectives like "endearing." The standard language was viewed as a homogenous entity that is deemed appropriate for public, and other, spaces, while the non-standard varieties always seemed like unwanted by-products – they were never spoken about as being on the same level.

7. Conclusion

Studying the linguistic landscape of downtown Zagreb provides an insight into the types of public signs and the space they occupy in such a densely populated, urban area filled to the brim with features and amenities. A grand total of 721 signs have been documented and categorized according to the languages they featured. Of those 721, almost 78% are monolingual, and almost 72% of all monolingual signs are in Croatian, with almost 26% of the signs in English. The rest of the featured languages – Korean, German, French, Arabic, Italian, Spanish and Chinese – appear on extremely rare occasions, usually only once. This does not point to a specific trend in monolingual signs in these languages. Croatian forms the bulk of the monolingual signs, which was to be expected, but more than a quarter of all monolingual signs are in English – certainly an impressive percentage.

20% of all signs are bilingual, and all of them except one feature Croatian as one of the languages. Almost 97% of all bilingual signs are signs in Croatian and English. As with monolingual signs, other combinations of languages, such as Croatian-Italian, English-Italian and Croatian-French represent less than 1-2% of all bilingual signs.

Multilingual signs represent the rest with almost 2% of total signs. Their purpose is exclusively in special cases, and most of them appear only once. Almost all of them feature English and Croatian, and the most common combinations of languages are Croatian-English-Italian-German, appearing 3 times out of 14, and Croatian-English-German, appearing 4 times out of 14.

In total, all of this amounts to 299 signs that in some way feature English, which is 41.4% of the signs documented. 77.4% of the signs feature Croatian in some way, and 20.8% of the signs feature both English and Croatian in some capacity.

These numbers are representative of the growing influence that English has had not only on the Croatian language, but also on the public space in which signs interact with each other and their recipients. English occupies a sizeable amount of public space, and it also shares much of that space with Croatian.

The information provided by the two participants offers a first-person insight into how these signs are actually perceived. They both think that the inclusion of English into public space was a necessity, a practical move that facilitates interactions between businesses and both foreigners and locals. It is also seen as a matter of prestige, but also as a matter of the sheer

influence that the English language has over the world. Both participants concede the point that English is virtually necessary, but they also highlight their ideological beliefs about Standard Croatian – that it should play a major part in the public space of Zagreb. Moreover, they both remark on the appearance of non-standard varieties of English in that same space – one participant holds a very strong opinion that those "have their place", while the other expresses a somewhat milder view. Nevertheless, it shows that they are influenced by the standard language ideology, and regard Standard Croatian as something that should be adhered to.

For future research, the research methodology used here could be applied to other parts of Zagreb. A larger scope of research could provide data about the linguistic landscape of the entire city and how its neighbourhoods are interrelated. Furthermore, more interviews might provide a fuller picture of how this linguistic landscape is perceived by the public, while also highlighting possible differences between people in different parts of the city. A longitudinal study of the same nature could indicate certain trends or shifts in the linguistic landscape.

8. Abstract and keywords

The purpose of this paper is to study the linguistic landscape of downtown Zagreb. In the area of downtown Zagreb, in April 2018, 723 signs were analyzed and categorized based on the languages they feature. 563 of those feature one language, and 146 feature two. There are only 14 signs with multiple languages. The most prominent languages are Croatian and English, with Croatian appearing on 77.4% of all signs, and English on 41.4%. Both languages appear on 20.8% of the signs. Other languages include German, Italian, Korean, French, Arabic and several others, all apearing several times or less. In order to put these numbers into context, two people were interviewed about their views on public signs in downtown Zagreb. Both of them were disappointed by the relatively high frequency of signs bearing text in English, but agreed that English was a necessity because of tourists and businesses. They also endorse the standard language ideology by claiming that Standard Croatian should be used as much as possible in public spaces.

These results indicate that the area of downtown Zagreb is oriented towards its non-native visitors, with almost half of all the signs featuring English. At the same time, foreign languages other than English are scarcely represented, which suggests that the intended audience is general and not specific. The insights gleaned from the interviewees point not only towards the practical use of English, which is unavoidable considering the area is very much tourist-oriented, but also the practical and symbolic roles of Standard Croatian on public signs in the same area.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, Standard Croatian, English, multilingualism, public space, public signs

9. Appendix

1.

a) Do you think that English is mandatory in Zagreb today, because of tourists and such?

b) Why do you think people put English inscriptions on signs, for practical reasons or because it might be considered more prestigious?

c) Do you think signs in English help attract more customers for restaurants and similar establishments?

d) Do you think that signs without English on them get overlooked?

e) Do you think that bilingual signs are more salient than monolingual ones?

2.

a) Do you think that the visual impression of a sign is important?

b) What do you think is more important, what a sign looks like or what it says?

c) What kind of signs immediately attract your attention?

d) What are some other elements that could make a sign stand out more?

e) Do you think that public signs have to be written in Standard Croatian?

3.

a) Do you think that graffiti in downtown Zagreb are appropriate?

b) Do you think that graffiti make a bad impression on people visiting the country, or even the locals?

c) What's the difference between graffiti and street art for you?

d) What do you think about graffiti that express some sort of political commentary?

e) Who do you think graffiti appeal the most to?

4.

a) What kind of impression do signs only in Croatian or English make on you?

b) Have you noticed any other languages except English and Croatian?

c) Do signs in other foreign languages attract your attention in any way, or do you just ignore them?

d) Do you find signs in other foreign languages more salient when they contain additional visual elements?

e) Have you noticed any other scripts besides the Latin script?

5.

a) Have you noticed any signs written in dialectal Croatian?

b) What impression do signs not written in Standard Croatian make on you?

c) Do you think that signs that contain some sort of grammatical or spelling error don't attract attention, or, rather, attract negative attention?

d) When you see some kind of loanword on a sign in Croatian, how does it strike you?

e) Have you seen any signs in Croatian that you consider inappropriate, or less appropriate?

6.

a) Do you think that signs that designate some sort of a famous landmark should be translated into English?

b) There are a couple of signs in Latin around town, have you noticed them? Do you think they are on the same level as the other signs?

c) Is there such a thing as too many signs? Do you think downtown Zagreb is inundated with them?

d) Regarding signs, are there any changes you'd like to see in Zagreb?

e) Have you noticed any differences between signs in downtown Zagreb and other parts of the city?

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