

# CHANGING WORLD-CHANGING TENDENCIES OF NAMING SHOPS AND SERVICES. THE DYNAMICS OF LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN THE CENTER OF HÓDMEZŐVÁSÁRHELY

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## ABSTRACT

The names of shops and services constitute a vast part of the linguistic landscape of an area, mainly the city center as most shops are located there. In the modern globalized world, signage of shops is linguistically colorful. World languages appeared in shop names with English in the first place and the application of foreign words in the signage is internationally an increasingly popular phenomenon. However, in the past, before the 1990s, using foreign words in shop signage was not a fashionable trend. In my work I examine the change of shop naming practice from a historical perspective in the center of Hódmezővásárhely within a century. I divided the more than 100 years long period in three sections, starting from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the period of communism and the present times. I collected photos and old postcards of the town center from these three periods where the shop names are visible and examined how the shop naming tendency changed during the decades and how the proportion of foreign names have increased by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** linguistic landscape, history, foreign languages, business, comparative analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape, introduced and defined by Landry and Bourhis as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop sign and public signs on governmental buildings combines to form the LL (linguistic landscape) of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (LANDRY ET AL., 1997, 25). The linguistic landscape is present in our daily life: signs and noticeboards are visible in the streets, public buildings and shops (GORTER ET AL., 2008). The examined places can be shopping centers, schools, offices, companies, buses, swimming pools, and streets (SPOLSKY, 2009).

As a result of the globalization, by the end of the 20th century the centers of cities became culturally and linguistically colorful and complex (GORTER, 2006). World languages, especially the English language, as the fashionable and prestige language infiltrates in the elements of public signage (GORTER, 2006). Studies of the linguistic landscape provide analyses of written information in streets in a certain area (GORTER ET AL., 2008).

The signage of shop and services greatly contribute to making the linguistic landscape of the cities more colorful. In most European countries the application of foreign languages in business signage has become very widespread. The use of foreign words and names in shop names, advertisements and signage are not without purpose: the foreign words provide extra meaning, prestige or provoke association with the ethnocultural stereotype of the country where the language is spoken (BARNI ET AL., 2009).

The linguistic landscape of a town is not static. It is changing dynamically as shops and services are closing down and new ones are opening. Furthermore, society, regimes, politics

are changing. All these changes are reflected in the linguistic landscape of a place. Therefore, linguistic landscape is both symbolic and informative (GORTER ET AL., 2006). It gives the observer information about the actual power relations, political situation and fashionable trends of language use. In this study the temporal change of the linguistic landscape in the center of Hódmezővásárhely is overviewed from the early 20th century till nowadays.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Using Huebner and Backhaus' method according to which he restricts his research in space, (BACHAUS, 2007) I limited my research to one area. With the help of a map I determined the center of Hódmezővásárhely as this is the area where the most shops and services can be found. For the mapping of the present linguistic landscape I used a digital camera and took photos of the signage with foreign languages while noting down the names of all shops and services in the area for quantitative results. After that I calculated the ratio of foreign language signs according to languages and presented the results in a pie chart. For the historical data I gathered material from Németh László library and Emlékpont Museum using postcards and photos, and grouped them according to the period when they were taken. To limit the time span, still get a thorough picture of the history I started the comparative examination from the early 1900s so that insight of the linguistic landscape change over a century could be gained. Also, visual material is more available from this period. Since the purpose of the study was to get an insight of the linguistic landscape of a given historical time and make and to compare the data of the different time sections, I divided the period from 1900 to the socialist regime, from the socialist regime till the 1990, when the change of the regime happened and from the 1990s till today. Based upon the visual materials I collected containing shops and their signage the change in the signage trend over the century could be observed.

### The early 20th century

In this period the the tendency for naming shops and services mainly included the name of the owners that provided the shop name respectively. Therefore, shop signage consisted names, often of foreign origin in their signage, sometimes with the profile added, frequently in possessive form: *Grossmann R. és Fia* (Grossmann R. and son), *Manheim Lipót Áruháza* (Manheim Lipót's supermarket), *Bandula Sándor Vas és Fűszerkereskedése* (Bandula Sándor's Haberdashery and Grocery), *Vadász Miklós Drogériája* (Vadász Miklós' Drugstore), *Pitzer Sándor*, *Nemes Ármin*. Other shop names that did not contain proper names, were written in Hungarian language, e.g. *Kék Csillaghoz* (To Blue Star).

### The socialist regime

The period of the socialist regime lasted from 1949-1989 in Hungary. In the photos and postcards I found it seems that instead of proper names, shops obtained their names from their function, thus signage contained Hungarian words referring to the products sold or services provided at a given business. For instance: *Háztartási és Vegyiárúk* (Household Goods and Chemicals), *Barkácsbolt* (DIY), *Műszaki Faárúk* (Technical Wood), *Hód Áruház*, *Komplett Ruházati Vállalat* (Hód Department store, Complett Clothes Company), *Jármű szaküzlet*

(Vehicle Shop), Illatszerbolt (Perfumerie), *Gyermek Ruhabolt* (Kids's Clothes Shop), *Sport, Játék, Ajándék, Rekord Áruház* (Sport, Toys, Gifts, Record Department Store), *Takarék Pénztár* (Savings Bank), *IBUSZ* (Travel Agency).

Names were given in Hungarian language almost exclusively. I found only two examples of non-Hungarian language use in shop signage: *Espresso*, a café in present Kossuth square, and *Sport, Horgász, Camping Bolt*, (*Sport, Fisherman, Camping Shop*) as name, however, the signage under contains '*Kemping Árúk*' (the Hungarian equivalent for 'camping goods'). It seems that the word 'camping' appeared in both ways, but the English word appeared in the name, with more emphasised visual display written in bigger letters.

### **From the late 20th century until today**

By the late 20 with the spreading of the globalization, foreign languages infiltrated in the public signage in respect of shops and services. The booming in the presence of the foreign languages is a relatively modern phenomenon and an international practice. Mostly, the purpose of applying foreign languages in the signage of businesses is to provoke association with the ethnocultural stereotype of the speakers of the country where the language is native to. The signage does not necessarily has to be meaningful, relevant to the shop's profile or understandable to the speakers of the language, only to be easily associated with the stereotype. The most widespread foreign language in non-English speaking countries is English (PILLER, 2003).

Typical languages choices according to profiles and the joint ethnocultural stereotypes: Italian: restaurants, confectionaries (often ice cream stalls) and fashion. The ethnocultural stereotype of good food and positive attitude to life). (*Don Pedro Pizzeria*); French: fashion, parfumerie, restaurant (the ethnocultural stereotype of elegance) (*Amica Boutique*); English: informatics, electronics primarily, occasionally luxury cars, chocolate. English cannot be categorized unanimously as it is a highly fashionable foreign language associated with the Western culture, and youth culture (GORTER, 2006) thus used in any fields of signage. (*Electro digit*); German: technology (the ethnocultural stereotype of precision, quality and reliability).

In Hódmezővásárhely, just like in other European cities, the signage of shops and services abound in foreign languages, especially English by the early 21st century. The data collected in 2011 show that about 50% of shop names and signage includes foreign languages, totally or partially.

The foreign language use in shop signage can occur in different ways (KALLEN, 2009, SHOHAMY ET. AL., 2009): the entire word in foreign language without native language equivalent (1); foreign word is complementary, along with the native language content (2); it blends with the native language in one word (3); foreign word is inserted in the native language context (4).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The shop and service names of Hódmezővásárhely have undergone a major change establishing the more colorful linguistic landscape including English, Italian, French, German, Latin and other languages. In the early the 1900s the shops primarily got their names from

their owners, containing foreign elements only in case the name had foreign sound or origin. In the era of socialism, names that referred to the shop profiles were applied, thus foreign elements were hardly present. After the 90s with the spreading of the globalization, foreign names, words or elements appeared with English in the first place and started to boom. The international trend of foreign language use in shop signage is flourishing in Hódmezővásárhely, sometimes for provoking association with the ethnocultural stereotype, but often independently from meaning or shop profile to create prestige or a cosmopolitan atmosphere (EDELMAN, 2009). With the international fashion of the booming foreign language use, it can be supposed that trend in Hódmezővásárhely will persist or even increase.

In the early 1900s there was a preference towards the use of the owner's name (e.g. *Nemes Ármin, Grósz Izidor*) then in the socialist regimes proper names appeared rarely they were rather substituted by the function or the profile of the shop, using Hungarian language. By the end of the 20th century foreign languages have infiltrated into shop naming practice and if proper names are used, they are often of foreign origin (e.g. *Don Pedro*). The dominance of English language can also be observed. The foreign language use appears in about 50% of shop names, and mainly corresponds to the international trend of the application of foreign names or words in shop signage. Considering that in the beginning of the 1900s the shop names with foreign sound were only present because the owner had a foreign sounding name, then in the socialism until the 1990 there was almost no foreign language used in shop signage, it can be concluded that the foreign language use in shop signage appeared and has become a popular naming practice after the 1990s.

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