

Multilingualism in the Linguistic Landscape of Moscow Based on Inscriptions on Children's Toys

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Abstract—The paper deals with the peculiarities of the Moscow linguistic landscape (LL) based on the observations made by the authors in the years 2010 – 2018. Personal experience has been considered as valuable resource and facility for registration social changes through language changes. The appeal to the self-reflection of the native speaker, within the boundaries of which the clash of the old and the new, one's own and another's, acceptable and unacceptable, is recognized as legitimate by increasing number of scientists. The results of the study of a linguistic landscape fragment of Moscow are being presented. The subject matters of the research are the commercial signs, collected in the sphere of the children's toys. The description unit is a text, written on the material object, a package or a toy itself, if it is inscribed. The main groups of inscriptions: monolingual, bilingual and multilingual have been found; each of them has been identified by their percentage and regulatory compliance.

Keywords—*linguistic landscape, globalization, everyday life, sociolinguistics*

I. INTRODUCTION

The language contacts in the post-Soviet Russian cities have known big changes in comparison to the previous period [16]. The paper deals with the peculiarities of the Moscow linguistic landscape (LL) registered by the author in 2008 – 2018. The methodological base of analysis is the symbiotic fusion of qualitative and quantitative approach [12]; the broad conception of LL [14], and the post-non-classical philosophy which sees no difference between language and parole, between object and process.

Our data were collected in 2008 - 2018 from everyday language in the public space of Moscow. We describe the LL in the broad sense of the concept (signboards, labels in shops, different types of advertisements, municipal and transgressive signs and others) [14].

One of the characteristic features of the current state of language and society is the highest rate of change caused by globalization and the change of technology. The functioning of the language is affected by: changes in the technical conditions of communication and the very environment of the functioning of the language; increasing the intensity of language contacts; the growth of

multilingualism; changes in the areas of functioning of languages and their social prestige; the erasing of a new reality — to a large extent through a change in the linguistic picture of the world, and creating connections between semantic areas, to serve new social institutions, etc.; the role of linguistic ideologies is enhanced, the mechanisms of social construction are activated; the dynamics of language changes accelerates [3].

Megapolises are the zone of the most intensive transformations. In this regard, the importance of scientific understanding, systematization and forecasting of the further development of human, language and society through the study of social semiotics of megacities, which, in particular, is implemented as a study of the linguistic landscape of the city, is increasing.

II. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AS A WAY TO DESCRIBE EVERYDAY LIFE

Linguistic landscape (LL) is one of the ways to describe the every-day-existence of a language, consisting in the study of written characters in the urban space [10].

According to Landry and Bourhis, LL is “the language of public road signs, advertizing 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” [15].

LL can also serve as a tool for the study of language contacts, their dynamics, social relations behind it and many other indicators of the life of a language and its interaction with other semiotic systems. The visibility of a language in LL is an important indicator of its vitality [11].

LL is a complex multidimensional entity, so it can be studied by types of written signs (for example, municipal, commercial and transgressive signs [17], by the representation of different languages, by subject areas, etc. LL description is part of urban linguistics [1,4,6-9].

An innovation of the language description using this method is to calculate the spatial characteristics of the texts of the urban environment: location and size of the inscription, its environment; the ability to describe the mosaic of a language that is close to the real conditions of its existence, as well as the socio-cultural context of the sign.

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III. LANGUAGE CONTACTS IN THE INSCRIPTIONS OF CHILDREN'S TOYS

For the research we have chosen commercial signs in the field of “children's products”. The text is applied to the material object, the packaging or directly on the toy, if it has an inscription, and it is taken as a unit of description. The *inscription* is characterized as a component of the every-day-use of the language in LL and is defined as “written usages of the language which do not have a recognizable emitter and are not suitable for special receivers. They can be read / received by anyone coming into appropriate distance. They do not arise out of or establish or promote personal relationships and are not interpreted that way (as conversation is)” [18].

Three groups of inscriptions were identified among 1096 collected units: toys with the inscriptions in one language; toys with texts in two languages and toys with texts in more than two languages. The number of texts of the first group was 65%, of the total number of studied texts, the second – 25% and the third – 10%.

1. The group of toys with the inscriptions in one language has two subgroups:

- a) Toys with the texts in Russian;
- b) Toys with the texts in English.

In the group of monolingual texts, the share of English is 63, 50%, and the share of Russian is 36, 50%.

2. The group of the toys with the inscriptions in two languages has three subgroups:

- a) Toys with English-Russian texts;
- b) Toys with English – another (non-Russian) language text;
- c) Toys with other bilingual texts where both Russian and English are absent.

In the group of bilingual texts, the share of English-Russian texts is 92%, English-foreign texts – 5%, and the share of foreign-language bilingual texts – 3%.

3. The group of the toys with inscriptions in three or more languages contains four subgroups:

- a) The Russian language is present;
- b) There is no Russian language;
- c) The English language is present;
- d) There is no English language.

In the group of the bilingual texts, the share of the English-Russian texts is 92%, English-foreign texts – 5%, and the share of the foreign-language bilingual texts – 3%.

In the third group, multilingual texts amounted to 1096 units. In this group, the inscription is presented in at least three languages, while the Russian language is represented in an amount of 5,2%, and its indicator is much lower

compared to English, where the percentage of use was 26, 2%. There were 34 languages identified, in addition to Russian and English. Language recognition was performed by the google-translator program on <https://translate.google.com> using the function “define language”. Among the identified languages are:

TABLE I. LANGUAGES PRESENTED IN INSCRIPTIONS

Language	Quantity	The number of the units in percent
English	288	26,2 %
French	138	12,6 %
Spanish	132	12 %
German	112	10 %
Russian	57	5,2%
Italian	54	4,9%
Dutch	46	4,2 %
Portuguese	38	3,4 %
Polish	29	3%
Greek	22	2%
Turkish	12	1,1%
Slovenian	12	1,1%
Hungarian	12	1,1%
Romanian	11	1%
Danish	10	0,9 %
Swedish	7	0,6 %
Slovak	6	0,5 %
Ukrainian	6	0,5 %
Arab	6	0,5 %
Serbian	6	0,5 %
Korean	5	0,5%
Latvian	5	0,5%
Japanese	5	0,5%
Czech	5	0,5%
Croatian	4	0,4%
Lithuanian	4	0,4%
Finnish	3	0,3%
Bosnian	3	0,3%
Bulgarian	3	0,3%
Norwegian	2	0,2%
Belorussian	2	0,2%
Javanese	1	0,1%
Estonian	1	0,1%
Hebrew	1	0,1%
Language not identified	48	4,4 %

IV. CONCLUSION

The collected data lead to the conclusion about the intensity of the language contacts and revealed the submergence of the functional space of the state language – Russian. The study showed a widespread violation of regulatory documents: some of the products do not have Russian translation of advertising/instructions and are presented only in a foreign language. Since we are dealing with a sign of the urban landscape, the spatial characteristics of the inscriptions on the packaging are important: it revealed that the font size, the content of the inscriptions in different languages and their location often do not match, and this discrepancy reveals the infringement of the space of the Russian language and complicates the perception of the Russian text.

The texts on goods labels often do not meet the criterion of clarity and good visibility, since the sticker with information about the manufacturer is presented in a very small print. Often, the Russian text is placed not on the gable of the box, but on the side or the back of it, which makes it difficult for the buyer to access Russian-language information. The text in Russian is often shorter than one in a foreign language and reveals not all the characteristics of the toy.

At the turn of the century, a pronounced contact of languages is observed in the linguistic landscape of Moscow. The study showed that in the study area, English (and to a lesser extent other foreign languages) invade the functional space of the Russian language and in some cases even force it out. Any violation of language legislation can not be considered valid.

These facts allow us to speak not only about the violation of the law of the language, but also that this violation entails a narrowing of the functional space of the Russian language. The result obtained can also be correctly interpreted in terms of a decrease in the vitality of a language in an urban space [9].

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