

The “Linguistic Landscape” Method as a Tool in Research and Education of Multilingualism: Experiences from a Project in the Baltic States

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1 Introduction

“Linguistic Landscapes” (LL) is a research method which has become increasingly popular in recent years. In this paper, we will first explain the method itself and discuss some of its fundamental assumptions. We will then recall the basic traits of multilingualism in the Baltic States, before presenting results from our project carried out together with a group of Master students of Philology in several medium-sized towns in the Baltic States, focussing on our home town of Rēzekne in the highly multilingual region of Latgale in Eastern Latvia. In the discussion of some of the results, we will introduce the concept of “Legal Hypercorrection” as a term for the stricter compliance of language laws than necessary. The last part will report on advantages of LL for educational purposes of multilingualism, and for developing discussions on multilingualism among the general public.

2 Linguistic Landscapes: Some Aspects of the Method

The LL method investigates societal multilingualism by collecting and analysing language on signs in public – shop windows, road signs, graffiti etc. Its advantages lie in the relatively easy way of obtaining a large amount of data. This data can be analysed from a quantitative point of view, to which a qualitative angle can be added by interviewing the persons responsible for or dealing with these signs. The data collection takes place through taking photos. Through the wide spread of digital cameras, LL is therefore an easy and enjoyable way of involving students into field work and thereby motivating them for research in multilingualism. This applies today even to countries beyond the traditional Western countries, such as the transformation countries in Eastern Europe.

The LL approach can be used in any territory – in cities and rural areas, whether they are rather monolingual or traditionally multilingual. It has in recent years been taken up by scholars from all over the world in areas as diverse as Amsterdam, the Basque Country, Japan, Israel, or Ethiopia (cf. Gorter (ed.) 2006 and Shohamy & Gorter (eds.) 2009 for an overview of LL pioneer studies and discussions), thereby dealing with regions with various types of multilingualism, and a global network of scholars has gathered at two inaugural work-shops in Tel Aviv in 2008 and in Siena in 2009. Our project used one of the (by now justifiably called) “classic” understandings of the approach by analysing the main shopping streets of middle-sized towns in regions with a high degree of autochthonous multilingualism. Such areas have been chosen for reflecting upon the relationship between majority and minority languages in areas which have been influenced to a lesser degree by international developments than bigger cities.

The main interests of our project thereby related to the following topics: How is multilingualism reflected on signs in the public sphere and which patterns of language prestige do they illuminate? How do people acting in the public sphere react to the needs and wishes of the population? And do the signs indicate differences between linguistic behaviours at the openly visible and hidden levels? And, finally, in particular in the context of strong language policies: In what way reflect language practices and prestige patterns the language laws in an area?

3 Multilingualism in the Baltic States: An Overview

The societies of the three so-called Baltic States of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are characterised by a transformation from post-Soviet to European structures. As part of this process, language legislation is based on the principle of reversing societal language shift towards Russian caused by more than 40 years of Soviet occupation. The number of speakers with another language than the State language as L1 is highest in Latvia (about 40%), second highest in Estonia (over 30%) and lowest in Lithuania (under 20%). The number of Latvian L1 speakers, for instance, decreased from 77% before World War II to 52% in 1991 (Ozolins 2003: 218).

Languages which have to be considered when analysing multilingualism in Latvia are therefore:

- Latvian as the official State language;
- Livonian – a small Finno-Ugric language which is gradually becoming extinct, and which is protected by law as a traditional autochthonous language;
- Latgalian – a Baltic language which has traditionally often been considered to be a dialect of Latvian, and is mentioned by law as a „historical variety of Latvian“; yet, Latgalian today enjoys increased awareness as a separate language – although this is a view which meets resistance by centralist Latvian traditions;

- minority languages with support in education, culture etc. – speakers of these languages have to be divided into the large group of Soviet times migrants (mostly Russian speakers) and autochthonous speakers of languages traditionally present on Latvian territory such as Byelorussian, Polish, or Lithuanian, and also including small groups of Russian speakers; and
- foreign languages – traditionally mostly German, today more English, and increasingly also French and other languages.

The demographic situation of Rēzekne as the town that we are focussing on in this article reflects all instances of this multilingualism except for Livonian. Its 36,000 inhabitants are composed of the following ethnicities, with Russians being just short of an over-all majority (Rēzeknes pilsetas dome 2008). The composition in Rēzekne is contrasted in Table 1 with the figures for the population in all of Latvia according to self-assigned ethnicity in 2006 (Council of Europe 2006: 3):

Table 1: Ethnicities in Rēzekne and Latvia in Contrast

Ethnicity	Rēzekne	Latvia
Russians	49%	28.5%
Latvians (including Latgalians)	44%	59.0%
Poles	2.7%	2.4%
Byelorussians	1.7%	3.8%
Ukrainians	1.4%	2.5%
Others	1.2%	3.8%

Language legislation in all three Baltic States has since the early 1990s been similar in aiming at a reversal of language shift through a reversal of language prestige and functions. Speakers of the so-called titular languages of Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian shall be given the possibility to use their language everywhere in their countries (cf. Schmid 2008 for an overview of language policy since the end of the Soviet Union in Latvia; for Estonia: Siiner 2006; for Lithuania: Hogan-Brun/Meilutė 2003; for an overview of language legislation development in mostly Latvia and Estonia: Ozolins 2003). The Latvian government today is in a process of integrating the two formerly separated systems of Russian and Latvian schools, with the aim that all students acquire a reasonable knowledge of Latvian. As a result, many young persons with a Russian background today also have high competence in Latvian – but statistics and every-day experience also show that there are still considerable numbers of Russian L1 speakers without such competence (Ozolins 2003: 230). Latvia, as Estonia and Lithuania, has not signed the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, and the ratification of the Framework Convention for National Minorities in 2005 made explicit reservations regarding languages: Minority languages must not be used in administration, and no language other than Latvian, with the exception of Livonian, must be used on topographic

signs (Council of Europe 2006/2008). Signs, posters etc. in the public must be in Latvian if they concern the State's duties, but in exceptional cases they may also be in other languages. In practice, this rule is used, for instance, for signs which inform drivers about traffic regulations in Latvia when entering the country by road – which notably are in Latvian and English, but not in Russian. For private signs, on the other hand, there is an “at least in Latvian” rule – they should generally be in Latvian, but other languages may additionally be used (cf. Latvian Language Law §§21.4 – 21.6, and Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia 2000). For Latgalian, in this context, there is a certain degree of confusion what the denotation as “a historical variety of Latvian” in the Latvian State Language Law implies: Whereas central authorities in Riga tend to ignore any status of Latgalian as a separate language, there is today a strong movement in the region of Latgale to recognise the language as a full-fledged variety with all rights.

Therefore, in spite of the strong focus on overcoming the marginalisation of Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian during Soviet times, language policy in all three states does not entirely ban the use of languages other than the respective State language from the public. In addition, private language use is entirely without any restrictions, and in private enterprises, languages other than the State languages may be used as additional languages – a rule which does not only affect languages of international business or tourism, but explicitly includes Russian and other minority languages. Only for public authorities, a monolingual State language policy is carried out, and even regarding this rule, every-day practices tend to be rather pragmatic than dogmatic – at least as far as oral communication is concerned.

4 Our Project

4.1 The Approach

The medium-sized towns investigated in our project all have similar roles as regional centres, albeit with different levels and types of societal multilingualism. The project was carried out throughout the first half of 2008 together with a small group of Master students of philology at Rēzekne University College. After the introduction of the LL method to the students and a general discussion on various aspects of multilingualism, research was conducted individually as home-work from one lesson to the next in Rēzekne, and in the group during week-end trips to the three other towns within the framework of a small project financed by Rēzekne University College: Alytus in Southern Lithuania, Pärnu in South-Western coastal Estonia, and Ventspils at the Latvian coast. These field trips resulted in the collection of large amounts of quantitative data, which was sided by spontaneous interviews for a better understanding of the background and motivation underlying the LL. After that, a time-consuming data-base creation set in,

which provided the basis for the discussion and interpretation of the results in the course’s final phase.

The specification of our research interests resulted in a list of 27 parameters which we used during the data-base creation. The parameters relating to the type and place of the signs indicated the town and the area within each town, the question if the author or the sign was the government or a private person, or the location of the sign in terms of institution: e.g. at a shop, a restaurant, a bank, on an advertising billboard etc.. In case that the sign could be assigned to a shop, we also classified the branch, the question if the shop was part of a chain or independent, and a more detailed account of the location – i.e. if the sign was found at the door, the window, above or in front of the shop. As an example which illustrates the diversity of the signs, Table 2 shows the list of categories for the parameter “Type of Sign”:

Table 2: The Parameter „Type of Sign“ in our Project

Name of establishment	1
Other sign of establishment	2
Sign at establishment not by the establishment	3
Product on display, e.g. in a shop window	4
Street sign	5
Personal name plate	6
Sticker	7
Advertising poster	8
Graffiti	9
Security information	10
Private information	11
Official information	12
Sign allowing/prohibiting something	13
Direction sign on private shop or similar	14
Credit card sign	15
Security sign	16
Timetable	20
Political information/slogan	21
Memorial sign	22
WiFi sign	23
Student card sign	24
Sign at door (interphone, post box or similar)	25
Other	99

The parameters of the second type were language-related and collected information regarding the number of languages on a sign, the presence of proper names, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. languages in order of appearance, the question if there were differences between the 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. language in size, the type of font, or the amount of information given, and aspects of translation and language contact. Finally, there were two parameters relating to the more qualitative part of the research about reactions when taking pictures, and about whether we had spoken with any persons about the individual sign. The list in

Table 3 is again an example – the parameter relates to the translation of texts on multilingual signs:

Table 3: Parameter “Translation of Multilingual Signs in our Project”

Word by word translation	1
Free translation	2
No translation (i.e. there is no overlapping of the content in the different languages at all)	3
Partial translation	4
Not applicable (normally when a sign was monolingual)	99

As a result, we found 17 languages as the first language in order of appearance during the research. Many of these were expected, such as Latvian, Latgalian, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, Estonian, English, German, French, Swedish and Finnish, but some were also rather unexpected such as Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Danish, Japanese, and Latin. On the other hand, some languages which we assumed to find were missing completely, such as Ukrainian.

4.2 Our Project: Quantitative Tendencies

When addressing some of the results of the project, it should first be mentioned that there are no considerable differences between the results from the four towns. It is little surprising that there is an absolute dominance of the State languages in all towns included in the project.

What is more striking is that English is more present than Russian, even in Rēzekne, where Russian speakers outnumber Latvian L1 speakers. Whereas the lack of Russian on signs from public bodies can easily be explained by existing language legislation, it is more difficult to account for the behaviour in private businesses, on private notes etc. Russian is, however, more frequently present in situations at the border of public and more private domains of language use such as in the stair-cases of apartment buildings – people apparently feel safer to use Russian closer to their homes where language use is not as visible as on the streets. There is also a discrepancy between the inside and the outside of shops and other institutions such as banks: These often use State language-only signage outside but have multilingual information inside – mostly in Russian, but sometimes also in English. This applies more frequently to leaflets and brochures than to information about products on display. The latter observation could also be made in supermarkets – in spite of the fact that in some of these Russian is much more present than in others, even if largely the same products are on offer. This, however, only relates to the language of the notorious background music and to the language spoken by the shop assistants between each other. In relations with customers, also in more Russian-dominated supermarkets the State language is usually chosen as the first option to address someone unknown.

The only domain where “top-down“ signs not only in the titular language were regularly found is tourism. Occasionally, remains of increasingly rotten Soviet time road or address signs were spotted at private houses – which are bilingual

or even only in Russian. These were mostly found in hidden corners and were usually easily identifiable as old signs which have not (yet) been replaced – and apparently have not received attention by the relevant authorities.

English is very frequently used in advertisements, and sometimes also in the names of shops. Concrete information in English, on the other hand, is much less regular. German comes second, with a large gap to English, in the list of most frequent international languages. In contrast to English, its use is much less tokenistic or aimed at the creation of a prestigious image: Tourism information plates in Latvia are regularly quadrilingual Latvian-Russian-English-German and reflect the economic potential of German-speaking tourists as well as geographical and historical connections. Otherwise, German appears in rather unexpected places – for instance at newspaper stands. It can be assumed, however, that most magazines available in German are bought rather for their illustrations than for their language – frequent journals on display in German deal with decorations, gardening or other rather visual topics. At the same time, German products are omnipresent in shops, thereby creating a clearly German-oriented atmosphere. In addition, cars, trucks and buses regularly display texts in German (and occasionally also other Western European languages such as Dutch, French, Swedish or Danish). This, however, is less caused by traffic connections between these countries, but because transport companies tend to buy old vehicles in Germany without re-decorating them. This even applies to coaches which drive around the Baltic States on long-distance connections with the names of German or French transport companies. They frequently only get marginal refreshments in Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian where officially required, e.g. for indicating emergency exits.

Regarding other international languages, different Scandinavian languages are occasionally present in all cities – mainly in company names or advertisements. Other languages visible, mostly in special situations, are French, Spanish or Italian. These enjoy a high prestige as, in this part of the world, exotic and glamorous. Given the low spread of competence in these languages it cannot be assumed that these signs are meant for information. Interestingly, Byelorussian and other traditional minority languages are almost not to be seen at all – with some very rare exceptions in cafés or restaurants. As the only minor exception, Polish has a very limited presence in Rēzekne. The three Baltic State languages can similarly occasionally be found in the respective two other countries. Given their close geographical proximity, however, these are surprisingly rare – and often they feature on advertisements or products by international companies which only have one version of their package for the three countries.

It is finally noteworthy that there is hardly any written presence of Latgalian in Rēzekne – in spite of the fact that it can frequently be heard in oral use in the streets of the town. The instances where Latgalian occurs are very few and highly marked – such as a local radio station, a traditional café, a stone commemorating the deportation of parts of the local population to Siberia in the 1940s, and, very infrequently, in graffiti.

4.3 Our Project: Qualitative Results and Interpretation

The qualitative side of the research and its interpretation also show that all languages can be assigned similar functions and hierarchic positions in all three States. The following conclusions are based on the spontaneous interviews conducted in the shops, cafés etc., and on reactions and observations experienced throughout the photographing.

One fundamental result is that there is principally very little awareness of linguistic behaviour in the public. This applies even to situations in which people are confronted with the presence of a sign in their every-day life. Employees often do not know which languages are on display in the windows of the shop in which they work. In an extreme case, the employee of a café with the English name “One more” was not able to translate this seemingly simple phrase – and had to be helped by a customer who joined the conversation. Other answers revealed a very superficial perception of languages and names: the employee of a beauty parlour with the name “La Femme”, for instance, reported that the shop owner thought that French was a “beautiful language” – and considered any further contemplation unnecessary. This incidence confirms the assumption that the use of “exotic” languages often takes place simply for prestige purposes. Passive attitudes may also be explained by the fact that window displays often are provided by the headquarters of a company outside the region. Local employees have little influence on it – but in any case, this tendency remains remarkable from a point of view of linguistic identification of the employees with their work-place.

As indicated above, Russian is – in contrast to English – more often present in situations where a concrete information shall be transmitted, for instance in bilingual job advertisements at the door of a shop. The presence of English is more symbolic and for obvious prestige purposes – along the lines of linguistic behaviour in other European countries. In such situations, it is not the meaning of the English text which is in focus – such as in advertisements in the State language with an added slogan in English. Interestingly, there is a certain tendency towards trilingualism in Latvia in Latvian, English and Russian, e.g. in telephone booths: Here, the display of Russian is apparently seen as advantageous by the phone company – but it tries to avoid to create a picture of a bilingual society which would be given if only Latvian and Russian were used. Some international languages repeatedly occur in specific situations only: Norwegian, for instance, is regularly present in the name and the products connected with a major Norwegian petrol station chain, or Italian in the advertisements for opticians. It was in one optician’s store also that we found one of the rather rare examples in which the manager was indeed very aware of the LL in her shop and happily engaged in a conversation on Italian as a main language of advertisement in her business. Other seemingly odd situations could be clarified easily through a brief investigation, such as the use of Spanish in the quadrilingual advertisement for an Italian restaurant featuring text pieces of Latvian, English, Italian and Spanish in Rēzekne. Since it can not be expected that too many residents would recognise

the difference between Italian and Spanish, and the number of Spanish visitors to the region is marginal, this left us at first with a big question mark. However, there was no mistake on the poster – the reason was simply that one of the owners of the restaurant has a Spanish background. This is one other important result of the research – for many “irregular” or “unexpected” situations of language use there are concrete explanations which render cases individual rather than prototypical.

Regarding local minority languages, where they are present at all, it should be noted that they rather appear in their international than their local functions. The rare stickers in Polish which we found in Rēzekne come from Poland and are not connected with the Polish minority in Latgale, but relate to Polish companies or cultural events imported from Poland – and, similarly to German, to Polish products in the shops. Advertisements by Polish or Lithuanian companies were much more frequent than signs with local information in these languages; one rare exception was a local Byelorussian café in Ventspils. The only major exception to this is the Polish school in Rēzekne. Russian, on the other hand, which in spite of it decreasing importance can still be called an international lingua franca in post-Soviet countries, features mostly in its local rather than in its global function. Notes in Russian were usually addressed to locals rather than aimed at international business relations – with some exceptions such as for tourist information purposes. Some situations are difficult to interpret in this respect – such as the use of Russian in telephone booths or in cash machines mentioned above. Some of the very few Russian-only signs could be found at Russian Orthodox churches.

As a final result, it is important to remark that the data collection regularly provoked interest by passers-by. Their reactions occasionally turned out to be sceptical or even openly hostile. In several situations, the researchers were literally chased away during the process of photographing a shop. Here, ethnic tensions in the Baltic States had their direct influence on the linguists' work – but also that is, of course, a part of the whole picture and as such a result of the investigation. It is not always easy to draw the right conclusions from these situations: This behaviour might be based on negative experiences with controls by the State language inspectors. Alternatively, shop assistants might also have believed that we were working on behalf of competitors in order to investigate their business strategies. An initially hostile reaction repeatedly relaxed slightly when we explained carefully our aim and our background as scientists within an academic project – but hostility usually only turned into scepticism, but not into welcoming. On the other hand, we have also met occasional true interest in the research and the possibilities for creating discussions around multilingual issues generated by its results – such as by a local radio station in Rēzekne which showed active interest concerning the results regarding Latgalian.

Summarising these qualitative and quantitative results, it is possible to draw the following hierarchy of languages in the LL of Rēzekne – regarding both their frequency and their functions. Language hierarchies in the other towns

are similar – with the exception of the lack of a language corresponding to Latgalian:

1. Latvian
2. English (Prestige) / Russian (Functionality)
3. Russian (Prestige) / English (Functionality)
4. Other international languages
5. Latgalian
6. Local minority languages

4.4 “Legal Hypercorrection”

As a last aspect of the research results, the findings presented above allow the conclusion that the LL in the Baltic States is indeed heavily influenced by State language policies, in particular regarding the relation between Russian and the titular languages, considering the large number of speakers with Russian as a mother tongue. In that, language laws regarding written language in public even seem to be followed to a higher degree than necessary: As explained above, language policy and legislation would allow the use of other languages than Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian in addition to the respective State language on any sign which is not subject to the immediate sovereign functions of the state. Thereby, any information by a private business or any personal note could contain parts in other languages in addition to the State language, including Russian. The fact that there are only rather few examples where this is done shows a phenomenon which can be labelled as “Legal Hypercorrection”. In analogy to the classic notion of “hypercorrection” in sociolinguistics, Legal Hypercorrection shall thus denote a fulfilment of linguistic legal norms by language users to a higher degree than necessary. Such practices are in the written language of the Baltic States synonymous to a high degree of linguistic accommodation towards a variety which is perceived as more prestigious, and related to clear power relations between languages and their speakers. In addition, Legal Hypercorrection in Rēzekne does not only affect the use of Russian – it applies also to Latgalian: Because of a lack of knowledge about the status of Latgalian in language laws with a certain (albeit not clearly defined) degree of recognition, people feel insecure about using it in the written public space – and therefore use it only very marginally.

Two major reasons for the remarkable lack of awareness about language legislation can be deduced from the research. First, there is a lack of knowledge about policies and laws among the population in the Baltic States in general – based on the lack of a tradition of democratic participation in these post-Soviet transformation societies. Among large parts of the population there continues to be a prevailing attitude that decisions are taken from above, that individuals are not supposed to take initiative and responsibility, and that the general public’s opinion doesn’t matter. At the same time, what maintains this attitude to languages is the fact that any notion of an active promotion of multilingualism – re-

ardless if that would be relating to Russian, to Latgalian or to other local languages – is not on the agenda. The state does not openly encourage the use of either of these languages – whereas efforts that people should learn English have regularly become parts of education programmes in recent years. The latter aspect is connected with the second reason – the fear of authorities and in particular of the language police, as experienced through the hostile reactions during the photographing process. Connected with the lack of interest in societal affairs, many people have little awareness of their rights, including issues relating to language. The Soviet legacy therefore does not only influence the linguistic composition and the LL of Baltic societies – it also influences efforts to overcome linguistic tensions as it renders an open debate more difficult.

It may therefore be concluded that Legal Hypercorrection in the Baltic States is based both on the wish to participate in prestigious parts of society – and on a lack of knowledge of laws and a fear of punishment by the authorities.

5 Benefits of the LL Method Beyond the Core Research Interests

5.1 Advantages of the Method: Education

As the last part of our paper, we are now going to reflect on the potential that the LL method has beyond the core research interest. Our project was explicitly designed to use its opportunities as a tool in education and for raising multilingual awareness.

The students involved in the project were benefiting from the project through enhancing their understanding of linguistic patterns in the society they live in, and from the discussions of the effects of language legislation and policy in their practical application in reality on language power relationships and hierarchies. An additional benefit was that the students were able to start their own field work projects – instead of studying in a theoretical way only. By getting out of the classroom, students got the feeling of doing something “concrete” and of exploring something new. They thereby benefited on various levels – through the practical application of a previously studied topic in field work, through the statistical analysis and other processing of their data, and they finally could practice the presentation of their research results in essays and at a students’ conference. Practical advantages for the project leaders included the fact that the amount of data which could be collected and processed was increased by the higher number of active researchers. Of course, it should not be forgotten in this context to give the students the credit which they deserve for their share of the investigation. However, the involvement of students requires that they are well chosen, have enough true intrinsic motivation, and are reliable. Therefore, the use of this method is suited for a small truly interested group (between 4 and 8 students in our case) rather than for larger seminars. Our course required more commitment

and time than “ordinary” seminars – in particular of those students who joined us on the research trips to the other towns beyond Rēzekne. At the same time, as one of the additional positive outcomes, a team building process set in among students as well as between students and teachers, from which all participants could profit in the long run. All that was possible at relatively low costs – even though students received funding for accommodation, transport and eating. In our case, it was not too difficult to convince the University to support this project since it so obviously connected research with the integration of students into academic life. Finally it should be stressed that, whereas our project was conducted in order to create a synergetic effect for teaching and research, the method could also be used in secondary, and to a lesser degree, even primary schools. There, however, the teaching aspect would obviously be more central than the research.

5.2 Advantages of the Method for the Creation of Debates around Multilingual Issues

In addition to its potential in education, the LL method also carries a high value for the creation of awareness of language issues among the general public. This starts during the research itself: It is inevitable that people notice what the researchers are doing – it is simply too obviously unusual to see someone walking around town taking pictures of any public sign – from every shop window to every sticker on a rubbish bin. Where it is appropriate, such situations can already be used for creating debates, explaining what linguists do, or speaking about multilingualism. On the more personal level, this applies also to the opportunity for involving friends and family into one’s work through the presentation of research examples.

The results of the research may then be used for a visualisation of language policies, multilingualism, and linguistic work in general on any level. Lecturers and students much more easily gain a forum for public presentations with such a topic which is much closer to many persons’ every-day experience than many others. Beyond linguistic circles, the pictures are very useful for entertaining conference presentations and at any general university event. Lectures in and outside the academic world illustrate what linguists are doing – and thereby people might start to be more conscious of their linguistic environment. Posters may easily exemplify the work at exhibitions, festivities at university, library events, or within university marketing campaigns. In addition, they may also be helpful in creating a connection between academics and public events in the local city – such as at lectures in local libraries, for exhibitions in museums of local history, and because of its artistic potential even in art galleries.

One such example where we used our project for linguistic marketing was the participation of Rēzekne University College in the European Researchers’ Night in September 2008: We used pictures taken in the four towns of the research for creating a quiz around them. Questions asked related, for instance, to the languages of the texts on the pictures shown and their meaning, to the specific place

where we found a sign, but also to more interpretive topics such as why a sign was at a certain place. The audience consisted mainly of High School students who had come to the University College for getting an insight into its work. There were different levels of the questions, and some of them proved to be very difficult – but in general, feed-back was very positive and the young visitors understood that linguistics can be an enjoyable enterprise.

Similarly, also in tourism, LL results may easily be used for creating a valuable tool for visualising cultures and languages in an area. Visitors to a region interested in cultural tourism often find it rather difficult to experience theoretical readings in reality – but through the use of LL results, concrete examples of language use can be shown. Both from an aesthetic point of view and for systematic information, examples of multilingualism can be sided by language laws or information about cultures, and wherever possible set into relation with the explanation of historic events. This can happen at monuments, historically important sites and other places, but also in the context of visualising the situation under which language groups and other minorities live, such as at cultural centres or in the presentation of organisations of linguistic and cultural minorities. Obviously, this can be followed by a number of side-products such as books, brochures, post cards or posters – which can be important promotional tools for the development of tourism, and may even carry a certain economic importance, in particular in rather peripheral areas. The city of Rēzekne, for instance, has produced a colourful DVD with short video clips of its minorities: Each of these films presents one local minority by associating one colour and one song to each group – the clips show both their traditions and how these find their expression in contemporary society (Rēzeknes pilsētas dome & Rēzeknes nacionālo kultūras biedrība 2006).

And finally, as the example of the Latgalian radio station has shown, this is also a method that local media in small towns may show interest in. Also in this way, discussions resulting from LL research may contribute to the awareness of a minority language and thereby to the promotion of tolerance for smaller languages.

All these examples show that the Linguistic Landscape method does not only have a value for understanding hierarchies of language use and prestige. In our project in the Baltic States, it has also proved to be a useful tool in various settings in education and beyond. We therefore encourage all interested students, researchers and teachers at any level of education to apply the LL method to their own environment. As our experience shows, the relation between its easy application and the diversity of results which can be obtained are therein certainly more favourable than when using many other methods.

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