

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Linguistic landscaping of the main railway stations in Bratislava and Vienna
linguistic and semiotic diversity of “buildings between worlds”

verfasst von | submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2024

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt |
Degree programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 812

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium English Language and Linguistics

Betreut von | Supervisor:

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Abstract

This Master's thesis aimed to explore what languages and other meaning-carrying elements can be observed in the public spaces of the main railway stations in the selected capitals of Central Europe, Bratislava and Vienna. The study was conducted in the tradition of Linguistic Landscaping, a relatively recent field, whose official beginning was marked by Gorter (2006). Since then, the field has displayed a significant interest in studying multilingualism in touristic areas, such as historical city centres (Takhtarova, Kalegina & Yarullina 2015), shopping streets (Sabec 2022) and others. On the other hand, official or government-controlled spaces have been researched less prominently, especially in the European context. In particular, transport buildings and railway stations have been continuously overlooked. This thesis collected photographs of signage in Bratislava and Vienna Main Stations and analysed them adopting the qualitative content analysis. The data was categorised based on the location of occurrence, the sign type/token distinction, the type of producer, the type of discourse and the various semiotic and linguistic forms present. The thesis determined that railway stations generally possessed a highly controlled and carefully planned type of public display. While multilingualism was present in the landscapes, the stations were clearly dominated by monolingualism and multimodality. The clear preference for monolingualism of the state language, German or Slovak, resulted in a normative policy making practice. The public display conveyed a need to adapt to the sole use of the state language in official contexts symbolising affiliation to the higher social structures (e.g. the country). In terms of foreign travellers in the railway stations, their presence was not completely ignored. They were either targeted with English as a *lingua franca* or with the use of non-verbal codes, mostly pictograms.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has supported me throughout the process of developing this thesis.

I am particularly thankful to my supervisor, Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Ute Smit, for her unwavering support and guidance. She provided invaluable feedback and encouragement that helped shape this project into the final version it is today.

I am also grateful to all the faculty professors whose classes I had the opportunity to attend during my studies.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends. I appreciate my family's encouragement and support, which allowed me to pursue my academic interests, and their faith in my potential throughout this educational journey.

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List of abbreviations

CDA.....	Critical Discourse Analysis
EU.....	European Union
GDP.....	Gross Domestic Product
HDC.....	Highly developed country
LL.....	Linguistic landscape
LL.....	Linguistic landscaping
LMIC.....	Low- and middle-income countries
QCA.....	Qualitative content analysis
RQ.....	Research question
VLL.....	Virtual linguistic landscape

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1. Introduction

Landry and Bourhis (1997: 23) define linguistic landscape as the visibility and salience of language in public space. Inhabited areas possess thousands of signs by which people are constantly surrounded. While language is its integral part, there are also other meaning-carrying elements present. The diverse types of signs not only serve as a means for communicating between sign makers and sign consumers but are also responsible for constructing geographical locations as social and lived constructs (Medway et al. 2019: 694). Signs displayed reflect many intricacies of social systems, such as political and economic realities and diverse types of ideologies.

Linguistic landscaping (LL) is an area of sociolinguistic inquiry that fundamentally studies linguistic diversity displayed in public spaces (Shohamy 2018: 26). While the multilingualism of public areas remains its core domain, LL has experienced significant growth in scope in recent years. Currently, it is a very open research inquiry addressing plethora of topics and interests (Gorter 2018: 42). In order to at least partially account for the complexities of public display, it draws on many theories and methods from other disciplines. The current multidisciplinary approach is generally referred to as the beyond-sign perspective (Shohamy 2018: 29).

Despite the great variety of topics in LL, some areas are given more attention than others. Official contexts and government-owned buildings for instance are one of the more overlooked areas. While some research has been conducted mainly in the Asian settings, there are still aspects that need to be covered. Transport system as a government-controlled sector is situated in numerous physical locations that have been mostly ignored by LL. Railway stations in particular are an under-researched area. The role of railway stations in social and lived constructs is, however, significant. Historically, they are one of the symbols of modernity that greatly sped urban construction (Mulders-Kusumo 2005: 201). While their prestige declined with time, their nature is still quite peculiar. Nowadays defined as multifunctional spaces “where tourists, commuters, salesmen, retailers, train-spotters and the homeless converge” (Edwards 1997: 21), railway stations face a challenging task of how to balance their public signage to be suitable for the great variety of sign consumers present there.

The aim of this paper is to explore the landscape of two main railway stations in the selected capitals of Central Europe, Bratislava and Vienna. Since the official context is mostly overlooked in the European LL and railway stations are almost completely under-researched

landscapes, this study hopes to provide an overview of the types of signs and codes found there. Adopting the qualitative content analysis, this paper aims to illustrate some common types of signs in relation to the sign production, modality and type of discourse. Then, it focuses on the use of languages, the type of meaning they convey and the contextual factors determining their display in railway stations. Finally, the paper provides an overview of the most prominent non-verbal semiotic forms and their interaction with the identified languages.

The study starts with the theoretical background of LL. Chapter 2 theoretically describes the nature of LL, its short historical development, the scope and aims and some prominent concepts borrowed from other disciplines. Chapter 3 then illustrates some notable LL research that has been conducted. Chapter 4 shifts its attention towards the study of official and transport landscapes in LL and other disciplines. Chapter 5 and 6 provide the contextual background for the selected landscapes and the methodology adopted in this paper respectively. The next three chapters discuss the findings in respect to the research objectives. Finally, Chapter 10 provides a discussion of key findings and Chapter 11 lastly concludes the paper.

2. LL as an area of sociolinguistic inquiry

Linguistic landscaping (LL) as a field of sociolinguistic study is relatively recent. The official beginning of this field was marked by a special issue of the *International Journal of Multilingualism* (Gorter 2006) that was later republished as an edited volume (Shohamy 2018: 25). The goal of the studies found there was to document the use of different languages in multilingual regions. Even though a number of studies about the language use in public spaces had been conducted prior to this publication, such as Spolsky & Cooper (1991), this issue marked the beginning of a more profound and systematic interest in the language of public signage. Previous publications, however, have not been completely disregarded. A number of them, such as Landry & Bourhis (1997), served as a basis for the development of LL as the field that is known today.

2.1. Prominent definitions

In terms of defining LL, there have been various prominent definitions throughout its relatively short history. Early years of LL following Gorter (2006) are associated with the definition taken from Landry & Bourhis (1997: 23) that states: “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government

buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration”. This definition is referred to as the *list* definition because it is viewed as a list of potential items that can be analysed. The primary focus is on textual signs disregarding other visual semiotic resources. Overall, the definition has been criticised for over-simplifying the scope of LL (Gorter 2018: 41). At the same time, the definition is also quite outdated. There has been a considerable increase in public signage since the 1990s with new types of signs emerging, such as QR codes or website links. There was thus a need for a more suitable and up-to-date definition.

The need for a more up-to-date description of the field was met by Shohamy & Gorter (2009: 2) that proposed the following definition: “attention to language in the environment, words and images displayed and exposed in public spaces, that is the centre of attention in LL”. According to this definition, the analysis of public signage goes beyond the textual domain and studies should consider non-verbal signs as part of the landscape too. While the definition describes that public space is the medium that LL focuses on, it still does not provide a satisfactory answer of what LL should do with the identified elements.

The most recently accepted definition presents a more elaborate and detailed reflection of the current interests within the field. It appeared in the introductory chapter of the *Linguistic Landscape* (2015: 1) journal and it states: “The main goal of LL studies is to describe and identify systematic patterns of the presence and absence of languages in public spaces and to understand the motives, pressures, ideologies, reactions and decision making of people regarding the creation of LL”. The perspective of what LL should be interested in has broadened even more. It is not enough anymore to discuss only what is displayed on signs but research adopts a beyond-sign perspective by taking into account the surrounding context. Circumstances around the collected signs, such as the geographical location or the given area’s history and politics, lead to more accurate interpretations (Shohamy 2015: 154). By considering the context, topics like the identification of what is lacking from the landscape or some aspects conditioning the presence/absence of codes can be addressed as well. Furthermore, the field has become more multidisciplinary by drawing on various theories and methods from disciplines like urban geography, language policy and planning and Critical Discourse Analysis in order to provide a more profound reflection of the linguistic state of public landscapes.

2.2. Scope

The scope of LL is not so easily definable and still remains a topic of discussion up to this day (Shohamy 2018: 34). As in any other academic field, the scope of study is not a firmly fixed matter. Rather, it has been the subject of slow development reflecting the trends specific for a period of time. The scope of LL in its early stages is probably the most easily definable. As seen in the definition above, Landry & Bourhis (1997: 23) clearly describe language displayed in public space as the primary focus of the LL analysis. Studies generally collected a representative sample of the displayed languages and analysed them using mostly quantitative methods. The frequency of occurrence of the languages was at the centre of attention putting emphasis on the language form and disregarding the meaning (Shohamy 2018: 28). Because of the lack of attention to the content, research provided only a limited number of findings and thus, the LL scope needed to be broadened. While the quantitative overview was not enough to provide a satisfactory representation of the landscape on its own, it still remains in use as an analysis' starting-point. As Shohamy (2018: 28) states, the frequency of language occurrence "is viewed as 'necessary' but not 'sufficient'".

With the emergence of Shohamy and Gorter's (2009: 2) definition, LL research started to pay attention to non-verbal mode in the public space. While the notion of language still remained at the centre of attention, it no longer referred to only the verbal domain but incorporated other multimodal elements, such as images, graffiti, sounds and others (Shohamy 2015: 153). Studies started to pay attention to the content of signs and showed that there are other elements beyond words that can convey meaning. It has been observed that a lot of signs are multimodal in nature and the text is very often accompanied by visual elements. In order to fully interpret the meaning of signs, both verbal and non-verbal modes needed to be considered (Shohamy 20018: 29). Some research even suggested that a linguistic landscape should be referred to as semiotic instead because of its multimodal nature (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010: 2).

The scope of LL has not only broadened in terms of content and multimodality. Currently, it is a very diverse field whose unifying feature seems to be the heterogeneity of studies (Gorter 2018: 42). The scope of LL has expanded in various aspects. Not only the notion of language has become vaguer since it can encompass both verbal and non-verbal modes, but also the definition of landscape itself has widened its boundaries. While the landscape used to refer to mainly public areas, nowadays it can range from public and private spaces, cyberspace, diaries to human bodies and others (Shohamy 2018: 29). There has also been a stable objective to make

LL a very multidisciplinary area of inquiry (Gorter 2018: 42). LL currently draws on theories and methods from various disciplines, such as sociolinguistics, that are discussed in the subsequent parts. Additionally, the definition appearing in *Linguistic Landscape* (2015: 1) emphasises the role of context in the process of sign interpretation. The notion of context presents a great number of possibilities in which the sign interpretation can endeavour into.

Overall, it is evident that the scope of LL has grown exponentially. What started as an overview of language frequency has evolved into a plethora of interests, theories and topics. Therefore, the challenge is not to define the scope of the field but what is outside the scope. Furthermore, with the inclusion of context, it is very difficult to determine the extent of circumstances relevant for sign interpretation. All this current heterogeneity makes it almost impossible to delimit the field. While LL has been a subject of criticism, it argues that its openness in terms of scope reflects its emerging nature. It is still quite a young field that needs to grow in different directions (Shohamy 2018: 29). Therefore, there is a need to define the scope for each study individually.

2.3. Aims

Similarly to the scope of LL, the aims of the field have slowly developed. The earlier stages of LL, which put major emphasis on linguistic forms and their frequency of occurrence, aimed to determine the representation of languages and their diversity in public spaces (Shohamy 2018: 28). As with the scope of LL, the identification of linguistic diversity on its own is not a satisfactory description of a landscape because of its superficial nature. Nonetheless, there is still a stable presence of this aim in LL studies, especially those focusing on neglected topics. Determining linguistic diversity thus forms the roots of LL on which other aims have been built on.

After the content of signs became of interest as well, it was no longer enough to merely determine linguistic diversity in form but also, research aimed to address their respective meaning within the landscape. On the one side, languages can possess denotative and instrumental value in case the message is meant to be understood by the largest possible number of people (Sciriha & Vassallo 2023: 163). On the other, languages can serve as symbolic markers of power, status and other connotative values (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006: 8).

As seen in the previous part, the scope of LL has recently significantly expanded in different directions. The primary reason behind the expansion of scope was to adopt a beyond-sign perspective and to bring space and signs closer to human agency (Shohamy 2015: 154).

Linguistic landscapes are both produced and consumed by people which leads to the conclusion that the human factor is inseparable from the language displayed at public spaces (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 219). Human agency is an essential part in the process of interpreting the landscape and cannot be overlooked.

2.4. Unit of analysis

As already stated, the LL's unit of analysis is commonly known as a sign (Gorter 2018: 46). However, the meaning behind the term is quite loose. While there is a prominent definition proposed by Backhaus (2007: 66) that views sign as “any piece of text within a spatially definable frame”, its overall application usually varies from study to study. For example, Alomoush (2023), Kim (2021) and Simungala and Jimaima (2022) use Backhaus' (2007: 66) definition in either an implicit or explicit way by focusing only on the verbal and spatially-bounded signs. However, all three studies present their unique set of further restrictions. While Simungala and Jimaima (2022: 42) collected any type of verbal signs, Alomoush (2023: 69) restricted their data pool into top-down verbal ones and Kim (2021: 124) went even further limiting the collected signs into only bilingual Korean-English signs. As in the case of the scope of LL, the unit of analysis, despite being referred to as a sign, remains open and flexible to suit the huge variety of LL topics and interests. Perhaps Backhaus' (2007: 66) popularity simply lies in its general nature that allows a lot of modification and tailoring in accordance to research interests.

With more and more emphasis being put on multimodality and the construct of the semiotic landscape, Backhaus' (2007: 66) focus on text and the verbal is no longer satisfactory. While the verbal mode still remains at the centre of attention for LL inquiry, its definition of sign needs to be adapted to encompass other semiotic modes as well since they are generally accepted as part of the landscape nowadays. Semiotics views sign as a physical form that stands for or represents any type of object, idea or event that is commonly known as a referent or referential domain. Signs can perform various functions from signalling existence and communicating meaning to modelling the external world (Sebeok 2001: 3). Since language is also a semiotic/representational system, the semiotic perception of sign allows that language can remain as the primary focus of analysis and at the same time encompass all the other modes. It is also general enough to fit into the currently very open scope of LL and enable modifications to suit the diverse research interests of the field.

2.5. LL data

2.5.1. Research location

Places of data collection in LL have been generally tied to geographical location since its beginnings. Despite the prominence of physical space, even this aspect has been recently transcended and currently includes other dimensions such as the cyberspace (Shohamy 2018: 29). Despite its current variability, geographical location still remains the most-typically associated place with LL data collection. Similarly to other aspects describing the LL inquiry, the boundary of location is very difficult to demarcate (Gorter 2018: 43). The emphasis is placed on studies to individualistically limit their own area of interest. These loose principles give rise to the great variety of topics present in the field today. Thus, the conceptualisation of geographical location varies from buildings (Esteron 2021), streets (Sabec 2022), areas around transport networks (Lai 2013) to entire communities and cities (Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias 2023).

As mentioned previously, there is a great variety of areas of interest in LL. The notion of landscape started to be used quite dynamically and new derivations have emerged, such as skinscape (Peck & Stroud 2015), soundscape (Scarvaglieri et al. 2013), smellscape (Pennycook & Otsuji 2015) and others. Despite the current variety of -scapes, none have yet come even close to rival the position of landscape as a geographical location. Research interested in the different types of -scapes seems to be limited and greatly outnumbered by the study of physical space. Since physical space displays high levels of popularity, it is also a more established paradigm within LL in terms of aims, methods and results compared to other -scapes. Physical space has been continuously researched since LL's beginnings and thus received enough time to form various trends.

Cyberspace, however, has the potential to become another popular paradigm within LL. The ever-increasing sophistication of the Internet with its many possibilities has allowed viewing the platform on par with the physical reality. Nowadays, the Internet is easily accessible by the majority of the world and its great potential imitates the physical reality in many aspects. It is not surprising that it has become an area of interest of many academic inquiries. Studying the Internet within the framework of LL was firstly introduced by Ivkovic and Lotherington (2009) that recognised its academic value for this field. Since then, the Internet's capability has increased exponentially which has led to the recent development of the notion of virtual linguistic landscapes (VLLs). VLL, similarly to physical LL, presents diversity in the types of

analysed spaces. Research focuses on a range of Internet-related sites, such as social media profiles (Biró 2018), messaging platforms (Yao 2023), official websites (Paramarta et al. 2022) and others. VLL is viewed as an extension of the physical reality that serves as a means to build identity and convey self-fashioning (Biró 2018: 190). The concept of identity is in fact a recurring feature in VLL studies. Similarly to LL, the use and non-use of languages can express ideologies and convey more than just the actual meaning of the code that is being communicated. Overall, VLL presents many similar elements with LL and while not yet as popular, it has the potential to become another integral part of LL as a sociolinguistic inquiry.

2.5.2. Nature of data

As established before, LL's interest lies in various types of space, mainly the geographical location. Since space is a dynamic environment, it needs to be documented for the purpose of studying it. The method of documentation that is characteristic for LL is taking photographs (Gorter 2018: 47). The process of collecting data is relatively easy and straightforward. The researcher conducts fieldwork and takes photographs of signs that meet the criteria of their research interests. No special equipment is needed since the cameras in current smartphones are able to capture high quality photos (Gorter 2018: 48). While the process of taking photographs is relatively straightforward, a lot of careful planning needs to take place before. As the scope, aims and unit of analysis are fairly loose in LL, these notions need to be defined for each study first, before undergoing the fieldwork process, in order to set boundaries of what to collect.

The collected data is visual in nature. The LL photography is a type of technical photography genre that is not meant to be aesthetic. It usually depicts elements that are considered “boring” or repetitive, such as shop windows or street signs, and displays elements that need to be legible. The collected photographs are analysed and interpreted as any other type of sociolinguistic data. Studies usually provide quantitative overviews, discuss the structure and different elements depicted on the photographs and describe the use of languages (Gorter 2018: 48-49). While the use of photographs is synonymous with LL, there are a couple of studies that select a different data-collection method, such as creating a written list of number of language instances within the landscape (e.g. Alomoush 2023). The different methods are, however, exceptions rather than alternatives.

2.6. Multidisciplinary-ness

As already indicated, LL has now more than ever become a multidisciplinary research inquiry. Given the aim to bring the study of public signs closer to human agency, this section illustrates the most prominent disciplines that allow highlighting the role of humans in relation to sign display. The theories and methods adopted from these disciplines also facilitate the perspective of “going beyond the sign”.

It is not surprising that LL as an area of sociolinguistic inquiry would draw on other sociolinguistic methods and theories. With the current emphasis being placed on human agency and the sign creation/consumption processes, more and more current LL studies have started to rely on other data-collection methods, mainly the interviews (e.g. Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023). Interviews are collected as another set of data besides taking photographs of public signage. They bring new perspectives to the study of public space by shedding some light on the linguistic power distribution and some thought processes behind the sign production and consumption. On the other side, including other methods shifts the focus away from the landscape. There is a risk that the actual public signage will no longer be the centre of attention of the study but a mere interview prompt (e.g. Simungala & Jimaima 2023). The loss of the main focus reflects a disadvantage of very multidisciplinary-oriented research. While employing various disciplines can result in interesting observations, it is arguably important to have in mind the principal nature of the study.

There are however other, more subtle, ways to still discuss the aspect of human agency along the linguistic landscape mainly by including the wider context. The context can include knowledge about the location or other socio-economic factors. These are objects of interests of mainly urban studies. A prominent urban inquiry, urban geography, generally focuses on the spatial distribution of human activities through which it aims to define and explain cities as urban constructs (Latham et al. 2009: 8). It links the placement of urban objects/buildings to other processes, such as value production or social stratification (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 219). Therefore, place is meaning-performative in urban geography.

The notion of space being meaningful was borrowed by LL in its early stages. Since semiotic representation happens in particular spatiotemporal environments, both the semiosis and its placement can convey meaning. However, despite the initial borrowings from LL, the two disciplines remained mostly separate. While both acknowledged the existence of the other, systematic attention was not paid (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 220). Urban geography

recognised that language constitutes part of the urban space but language still remained outside its scope. Similarly, LL agreed that the placement of linguistic items was meaningful, but it still mostly focused only on the language at use. However, recently there has been a major call for drawing together the two disciplines. LL research has actively started to relate semiotic representation with socio-economic changes. Semiosis is performative in nature as it not only reflects but also produces social differences (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 220). By taking into account these socio-economic and political dimensions of the codes displayed, it can help explore the producers/consumers' rationales behind the language choice (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 222).

Another contextual dimension that adds depth to the study of public signs is the politics, history and legality of the given area. In terms of the legal status of languages, LL research has oftentimes addressed the underlying language policies employed in the analysed landscape since its beginnings. Even Landry and Bourhis (1997: 24) recognised that language planning and linguistic landscape are closely connected.

Similarly to LL, there have been various attempts throughout the years to define the scope of the discipline of language policy and planning (e.g. Shohamy 2006; Kaplan 2011). While the definitions may vary in the angle or what they consider important, they usually agree that language policy does not only refer to legal documents but is a much more complex process (Hult 2018: 335). Spolsky (2004) proposed one of the most influential frameworks for the study of language policy. Language policy in this framework is viewed as a three-dimensional model formed by language management, language practices and ideology (Spolsky 2004: 5). Language choice is based on positive and negative beliefs about language. Positive beliefs ensure that the given language is used more frequently and the frequent use then favours the inclusion of the said language into the official regulations. Despite the close connection between the three components, they regularly do not align with one another in the real world (Spolsky 2004: 217).

A very obvious way of how to determine whether the linguistic use aligns or resists the language management is through the study of LL (Hult 2018: 336). This direct relation between the two disciplines is generally present in case of explicit language management (e.g. laws). In terms of a less direct relation, the construction of LL can be seen as an example of policymaking practices (Hult 2018: 341). Language codification can emerge from daily practices such as public language display where the present semiotic aggregates can be considered the *de facto* language policy of the particular place. Additionally, LL can also illustrate a possible future

orientation for language management (Hult 2018: 348). Since LL has the potential to illustrate the power relations between languages and their underlying language ideologies, it can indicate some legal steps that should/will be taken in the future.

All the contextual information necessary to interpret the landscape from various angles usually springs from various disciplines. While each discipline can reflect a different research interest, their role in LL generally is to explain the linguistic diversity's form and meaning in relation to human endeavour. Their inclusion into individual studies, however, needs to be carefully considered to avoid the risk of shifting too much attention away from the landscape.

2.7. Summary

In summary, LL is a complex field of sociolinguistics that has undergone some dramatic changes in recent years. While the language of public spaces is still the primary area of study, the need to include different dimensions in the process of analysis has added new depths to the current approach. Now more than ever, it is indeed a multidisciplinary field that aims to explain not only the language present/absent in the landscape but also its rationale behind the choice and the impact on the society.

3. Research within the tradition of LL

This chapter aims to present some notable research that has been done in LL as an area of sociolinguistic inquiry. The already introduced theoretical background in the previous chapter is exemplified with studies reflecting the numerous aspects discussed before. The chapter starts with the historical development and then proceeds to the current geographical distribution. Despite the great variety of research interests, some recurring and prominent topics are still identified in the subsequent sections.

3.1. Early studies

Gorter (2006) marked the official beginning of LL. The studies in the early years predominantly focused on regions officially recognised as bi- or multilingual or where there was a significant presence of minority languages, such as Catalonia, Basque Country or Friesland. The aim was to explore how the national variety related to the minority languages in these regions. For example, Coluzzi (2009) analysed the public signage in two shopping streets in Milan and Udine with special focus on the minority languages of Milanese, a dialect of the Lombard

variety, and Friulian. The study found that the use of minority languages was quite low and public signage usually appeared in Italian or English (Coluzzi 2009: 310). As indicated by the results, the study mostly focused on linguistic forms, their frequencies of occurrence and patterns of interaction. The content of signs and the meaning that the identified language forms conveyed was mostly outside the scope.

Despite the limited scope however, the results of the early studies were still able to indicate a systematic use of language and its patterns of behaviour. The display and lack of language representation were closely associated with collective identity, globalisation and economics (Shohamy 2018: 26). Additionally, some patterns of behaviour firstly identified at this stage of development were later transformed into the most prominent topics within the LL paradigm. For example, Coluzzi (2009: 310) identified systematic use of English even though the north of Italy has very little ties to the English-speaking world. The systematic use of English in foreign environments quickly converted into one of the principal research interests of LL. While the early research provided only limited findings, a lot of the identified patterns form the basis of the current LL approach.

3.2. Expansion of scope

As indicated in the previous section, the scope of LL in its early stages was quite limited. It mostly operated in legally bi-/multilingual regions and focused on linguistic form. As the time progressed, LL slowly started to open its scope more and more. There was still a significant number of studies that focused on legally bi-/multilingual regions but the research addressed far more topics than only the linguistic form.

To illustrate, Mirvahedi (2016) explored the landscape of the Iranian city Tabriz and mainly focused on the representation of Farsi, the official variety, and Azerbaijani, a minority language spoken by a substantial community of people there. The study still provided a quantitative overview of the linguistic forms found in the landscape. The discussion's focal points, however, were the signs' producers, whether they were issued by the government or ordinary people, the resulting ideologies about the language use and the relation between the signage and the Iranian language policies (Mirvahedi 2016: 196). The paper determined that Farsi was used predominantly because of its legal status and there was a significant representational lack of Azerbaijani within the landscape (Mirvahedi 2016: 212). The unequal distribution was attributed to the nature of the language policies that heavily favoured the use of Farsi and the different levels of prestige associated with each variety.

Mirvahedi (2016) serves as an example of the shift in scope in LL. While the linguistic frequency of occurrence still remained part of the analysis, its role changed from the primary focus into the starting point. At the same time, the content and context became equally important in the process of understanding the representational nature of the landscape. In the case of Mirvahedi (2016), the context was mostly formed by language regulations whose use indirectly required to utilise theories from the field of language policy and planning as well. This example of context inclusion serves as an illustration of how LL has adopted its multidisciplinary approach.

One of the primary aims of LL since its beginnings was to encounter and discuss linguistic diversity (Shohamy 2018: 28). There was an assumption that linguistic diversity could be found only in legally bi-/multilingual regions and regions typically viewed as monolingual were avoided. However, both Coluzzi (2009: 310) and Mirvahedi (2016: 202), while presenting many differences in scope, aims and geographical location, still encountered instances of English. Both Italian and Iranian settings possessed very loose connections to the English-speaking world but English still appeared. The continuous occurrence of English in these environments prompted the LL scope to expand its interest in terms of geographical location. Since English appeared and displayed systematic behaviour in legally bi-/multilingual regions with very little cultural and legal background, LL research stopped being limited to these areas and spread to locations typically viewed as monolingual.

The spread to monolingual areas proved successful as instances of multilingualism were encountered and research has been conducted in these areas ever since (e.g. Takhtarova, Kalegina & Yarullina 2015; Sabec 2022). English that was originally the prompt for this spread became the key notion for the majority of studies. It was attributed the status of a global language, a *lingua franca*, that functions as a mode for communication between people of diverse linguistic backgrounds (Sabec 2022: 20). Since the use of English is a prominent topic in LL, it is discussed as a separate section below.

3.3. Current course in LL

As Gorter (2018: 42) states, the only inherent trait of LL nowadays seems to be its diversity. LL is a multidisciplinary field that addresses a range of topics and research interests and is carried out practically anywhere in the world. Research presents a lot of variety in terms of topics, scope, aims and other LL-related notions, such as a landscape or a sign. While it is very difficult

to find some unifying characteristics, prominent topics, attitudes and approaches still emerge that are applicable to at least a part of the inquiry.

3.3.1. Geographical distribution

In terms of geographical development of LL, there seems to be an emerging difference between studies conducted in western and highly developed countries (HDCs) and those situated in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) and formerly colonized countries of Asia and Africa. The difference, however, is not caused by the countries' economy but rather the political status of languages and the level of multiethnicity (Romaine 2017: 554). HDCs usually present a stronger tradition of one or two official languages that are spoken by the majority of the population and are used in both private and public domains. Because of the lower level of multiethnicity and the strong legal status of a few languages spoken natively by the majority, HDCs are generally viewed as monolingual countries. Since the legal status of languages is generally firmly established within these societies, government-owned spaces get sidelined because of the assumption that they simply comply with the policies. While not totally ignored, they are usually discussed as a dimension of landscape in contrast with the private sector. LL research conducted in HDCs generally focuses on places frequented by travellers and consumers where there is an interplay present between private and public sectors. Some common landscapes include shopping streets (e.g. Lee 2019) and historical city centres (e.g. Sabec 2022). The interpretation usually involves a quantitative overview and the discussion of the type of meaning that the signs and languages aim to convey in relation to the overall context. Human agency is implicitly reflected in the circumstances surrounding the collected signs, such as the body responsible for sign production, the intended group of consumers or the role of language policy.

To illustrate, Sciriha and Vassallo (2023) explored what languages can be found in the touristic area of the capital of Malta. It primarily adopted quantitative methods to analyse data whose results were then explained in relation to the Maltese official languages. The paper made a distinction between officially-issued (by an institution) and unofficially-issued (by people and advertisers) signs and interpreted them in accordance to the context and language ideologies. It indicated that official domains were more interested in identity construction through the utilisation of the official variety. Unofficial domains adopted instrumental value to reach the largest amount of people and mainly displayed English (Sciriha and Vassallo 2023: 162-163).

In contrast, LMICs present a more complicated language situation. While they may possess a few languages with legal status, their position is not as firmly established as in the case of HDCs. Since these countries often present higher levels of multiethnicity, the legal languages are generally not spoken by the majority of population. For example, there exist dozens of aboriginal languages in the Philippines. The official languages are English, imported through colonization, and Pilipino that is spoken natively by less than half of the population (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2023). Because of the complex linguistic situation, LL research addresses government-owned spaces more prominently in LMICs than in HDCs. Overall, while the diversity of LL is a feature common for the discipline in its entirety, it is more prominent in research conducted in LMICs. Landscapes are formed by a plethora of settings that range from historical sights (Esteron 2021), schools and universities (Simungala & Jimaima (2023), airports (Li & Yang 2021) to representative samples taken from entire cities (Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias 2023). The role of human agency within the landscape is also addressed more explicitly. While the context, the implicit reflection, is still discussed, it is frequently enriched by additional data collected from interviews.

For example, Wu, Silver and Zhang (2023) focused on the linguistic landscape of three universities in China and how these construe their institutional identity as semi-public spaces. The study applied a geosemiotic approach that views sign placement as meaningful too. The study focused on physical, political and experiential dimensions by taking photographs, discussing signs in relation to the context, mainly the language policies and socio-economic factors, and randomly interviewing consumers of the signs. It discovered that language choices can symbolically reflect power dynamics, cultural affiliations and identity negotiations (Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023: 837). The paper not only addressed the role of languages but also other non-verbal elements. Both verbal and non-verbal elements appearing on signs were referred to as semiotic aggregates. The aggregates occur in dialogical interaction because they constitute the meaning of the particular sign together (Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023: 840). Furthermore, the study attributed different roles to languages found in the LLs. Out of the more frequent ones, Chinese performed various functions ranging from instrumental to symbolic. English, on the other hand, was used to build the identity of the universities as places associated with internationalism and high-quality. Zhuang, an ethnic minority language, was used only symbolically as a form of idealisation of the Zhuang identity (Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023: 846).

There is a clear intention of a very multidisciplinary approach to interpret the full account of LL signage. However, it is impossible to discuss the full sociolinguistic reality of the landscape

in one academic paper. Public signage in reality is the result of thousands of factors and LL research can only do so much. It is important to set boundaries between what is relevant for the interpretation and what causes the loss of LL's established foci. There is a fine line in very multidisciplinary approach between balancing everything out and succeeding as in the case of Wu, Silver and Zhang (2023) and going too far and reducing the collected signs into secondary illustrations as in the case of Simungala & Jimaima (2023) discussed below.

3.3.2. The role of English

Chapter 3.2. already established that the occurrence of English is discussed prominently in LL. Nowadays, English is used extensively almost anywhere in the world. It is no surprise that its use in public signage is a recurring feature of a lot of LL research. The topic of English is, however, not approached homogenously in LL since its use around the world differs. There are numerous factors that influence the use of English, which makes it country- or region-specific. These differences are also reflected in the LL research. Based on the status of English around the world, some geographical locations display stronger roots of LL traditions. Similarly, the topic of English in relation to context is treated differently.

Kachru's (1985: 12-13) three-dimensional model of World Englishes, despite being criticised and outdated (Schreier, Hundt & Schneider 2020: 3), nicely illustrates the distinction where LL is more prevalent. Kachru (1985: 12-13) differentiates between the Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles. In the Inner Circle, English is the dominant language spoken natively by the majority of population and is used in both private and public contexts. The Outer Circle countries use English dominantly only in the official contexts. As formerly colonized countries, they usually possess numerous indigenous languages where English serves as an inter-ethnic lingua franca and generally represents more highly-prestigious medium. The notion of lingua franca refers to "a language of convenience used by speakers of mutually-incomprehensible mother tongues" (Mallette 2014: 330). Finally, English in the Expanding Circle is not an official language but a foreign language. The language is still spoken but functions again as a lingua franca, a medium for communication between people from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

While a number of studies have been conducted in the Inner Circle, LL research is much more common in the Outer and Expanding Circles. LL research in the Inner Circle does not focus on multilingualism per se but rather how certain worldwide crises, such as Covid-19, impact public signage as in the case of Marshall (2023). The study analysed how the landscape of Vancouver has changed under the influence of COVID-19. It focused on the emergence of pandemic-

related signs and how these interacted with the original signage. The newly added signs mostly relied on non-verbal semiotics to convey meaning and other than that, English had a clearly hegemonic position (Marshall 2023: 209-210). This problem-oriented tendency can be attributed to the fact that the Inner Circle is typically viewed as monolingual. LL research so far has not yet confirmed or denied this typical perception despite Marshall's (2023) findings as his scope was too limited. Perhaps there is still a lack of some prompt that would initiate a more profound LL interest in the Inner Circle similarly to how the occurrence of English in non-English multilingual areas led to the spread to non-English monolingual ones. Since English is the official variety in the Inner Circle, a different reason needs to be determined that would bring forth a more systematic attention of LL.

The dominant approach of LL in the Outer Circle is very similar to the one that prevails in LMICs discussed in the previous section. LL research in these areas adopts a high level of multidisciplinary-ness and a relatively large scope when selecting the relevant context. The inclusion of interviews and subsequent narrative inquiries is a common feature. There is also an emphasis on language ideologies and power hierarchies. In these cases, many studies draw on theories and methods of analysis from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The prominently multidisciplinary approach in the Outer Circle is very well reflected in Simungala and Jimaima (2023) that explored the landscape of the University of Zambia. The paper adopted a broader perspective by exploring public signage in relation to human agency and socio-political context. Based on the linguistic items found in the landscape, the authors conducted interviews and produced narrative inquiries of both producers and consumers of the signs (Simungala and Jimaima 2023: 42). The presence and absence of languages was discussed in relation to power dynamics, economic factors and language ideologies. The paper linked the linguistic presence with the process of legitimizing it in the eyes of sign consumers and thus motivating them to further use the given variety. On the other side, the linguistic absence led to the delegitimization and an attempt to convey that the absent variety is not suitable for public contexts (Simungala and Jimaima 2023: 47). In terms of English, it had a clearly hegemonic position. Its dominance arose from the long tradition of legitimizing it in the public space oftentimes at the expense of other indigenous varieties and from its status as an official language. The presence of foreign languages was generally connected with visual de-/legitimization and outside influence, such as international economic powers and socio-political ideologies (Simungala and Jimaima 2023: 47-48). Overall, while the study provided many

interesting findings, its discussion deviated so far from LL that it can hardly be considered as only the study of public signage anymore.

Finally, the tradition of LL research in the Expanding Circle is as strong as in the Outer Circle. While the Expanding Circle is typically associated with monolingualism similarly to the Inner Circle, in contrast, there is clear evidence of linguistic diversity here. Out of various foreign languages, the occurrence of English is a regular pattern that is frequently discussed in relation to particular language policies of the given countries. In terms of attitudes towards English, there seems to be two opposing positions, one positive and one negative.

Sabec (2022) analysed the signage in the old town centre of a major Slovenian city and indicated that English has a clearly dominant position. It appeared in monolingual and mixed signs and, in some cases, influenced Slovene grammar, vocabulary and spelling (Sabec 2022: 25-31). While Sabec (2022: 31-32) claims to have a neutral position towards the use of English, the author later argues that the spread of English is unchecked and may ultimately lead to feelings of confusion or a loss of proficiency of Slovene speakers. This claim, however, lacks evidence and seems extreme. The study is concluded with a call for stricter government language policies. Similarly, Takhtarova, Kalegina & Yarullina (2015) present a negative stance towards the occurrence of English in public spaces of Paris, Berlin and Kazan. The study indicates that English was used frequently in the analysed landscapes even as a form of language hybridisation with official varieties (Takhtarova, Kalegina & Yarullina 2015: 455-457). The paper briefly explains the language policies of the respective countries and, similarly to Sabec (2022), argues in favour of more policies that would promote and preserve the use of official varieties (Takhtarova, Kalegina & Yarullina 2015: 458). Both studies view English as a threat that must be stopped because it might slowly replace other languages.

The two studies clearly link the occurrence of English in public space with linguistic imperialism. Linguistic imperialism refers to the process of one language exercising its power at a transnational level over other indigenous languages (Canagarajah & Said 2011: 388). The language is ideologically given a hegemonic position. Communities believe that its use comes at the expense of their own languages and they start to question their own identity (Canagarajah & Said 2011: 389). There is a clear link between language and power when referring to linguistic imperialism. Historically, the process of linguistic imperialism was more straightforward since it could be linked with colonial efforts. For example, the hegemony of English was mostly caused by the powerful status of English-speaking countries, such as the British Empire. Nowadays, the situation is much more complex especially in case of English.

The use of English is less and less associated with its “home countries” and more and more with the global flow (Canagarajah & Said 2011: 395). The current hegemony of English is more likely caused by its connection with globalism, the Internet and its status as a lingua franca. The Inner Circle countries nowadays still benefit from the dominance of English but are no longer the instigator (Canagarajah & Said 2011: 388). With the current role of English and the factors associated with it, two perspectives have emerged. The English hegemony as a global trend can still be approached critically and be described as a new ramification of linguistic imperialism. In contrast, the same argument of English as a global language can be used as a form of validation of its occurrence. Similarly in LL, some research approaches English critically as a threat and some presents a more-welcoming attitude and tries to justify its use in the landscape.

In terms of a more-welcoming position, Kim (2022) focused on the interaction between English and Korean on bi- and multilingual signs collected from different touristic areas across South Korea. Similarly to Sabec (2022: 25-31), the study found instances of language and script mixing (Kim 2022: 127-129). However, while Sabec (2022) viewed code mixing as something threatening, Kim (2022: 130) described it with adjectives, such as “creative” and “innovative” that carried a clearly positive connotation. The role of English was described as a playful and enjoyable linguistic resource that helped diversify the landscape. Alomoush (2023) also adopted a positive attitude and explored how English and Arabic interacted in an international medical institution in Jordan. The majority of signs were bilingual with Arabic appearing on top of English and meaning-wise, they displayed duplicating multilingualism. Duplicating multilingualism refers to the instance where the same text occurs in several languages (Reh 2004: 8). There were only few examples of monolingual signs. The results indicated that English had a slightly more dominant position leading to the conclusion that English was the official language of the medical setting (Alomoush 2023: 74). Despite the major occurrence of English in a foreign environment, the author did not view it as a threat but rather as a means for effective communication (Alomoush 2023: 75). The study nicely illustrated that the occurrence of languages was frequently conditioned by external circumstances, such as the medical environment in this case.

When comparing the two positions, the more-welcoming attitude is more reflective of the current LL approach. The position of linguistic imperialism appears to disregard the role of context and human agency in the landscape. Studies may overlook various circumstances that determine the use of English and potentially reduce it to a parasitical form that needs to be eliminated. Additionally, their view of language policies can be problematic too. They seem to

take away the landscape's *de facto* policymaking potential (Hult 2018: 341) and downgrade policy to a mere legal document. This negative position appears to be quite old-fashioned nowadays. On the other side, by viewing English and other foreign languages beyond the perspective of something to be feared of, it creates space to discuss the different roles that these varieties can have in shaping the analysed landscape and what circumstances laid the basis for their use.

3.3.3. Virtual linguistic landscape

Virtual linguistic landscape (VLL) shares many features with the traditional process of LL. Paramarta et al. (2022) explored the linguistic diversity in the government website of Bali. Similarly to the LL approach, the study took photographs, or in this case screenshots, where one screenshot represented one sign (Paramarta et al. 2022: 4). The paper also provided a quantitative overview of languages found in VLL and discussed their functions, interactional patterns and associated ideologies. It mainly discussed the occurrence of three varieties, Indonesian, Balinese and English. Indonesian as the official language was used dominantly and had both an instrumental and symbolic role. It was meant for at least a group of people to understand it and at the same time marked the VLL's identity. Balinese had a purely symbolic role and marked the regional identity of Bali (Paramarta et al. 2022: 5-7). English had an instrumental role of a *lingua franca*.

Despite many similarities, there is one difference between VLL and LL that has a direct impact on the role of English. LL as a geographical location belongs to the territory of the country and can be accessed only physically. VLL is also in possession of the given country but can be accessed from practically anywhere in the world and there is no travel time nor any special requirement to enter, such as having a visa. This type of easy accessibility of any person with an online connection makes the use of English an obligatory feature of the website because of its status as a *lingua franca*. While its use in LL, especially in touristic areas, is heavily favoured, its use in VLL is practically required (Paramarta et al. 2022: 10).

Since the Internet has become such an integral part of human lives, the current time period is essentially viewed as the post-digital era. The process of digitalisation has come so far that the boundary between the physical and virtual reality is blurred. Online and offline communication form a continuum that should not be viewed as separate (Bolander & Locher 2020: 66). This interconnected view poses a challenge to the LL field of what to include and where to set the landscape's boundaries. Rosendal et al. (2022) argued in favour of a more holistic approach and

explored four Swedish neighbourhoods in both physical and digital worlds. The study collected photos of the offline signs and used two popular Swedish commercial websites to attain the online signs (Rosendal et al. 2022: 188). Offline signs usually presented a more simplistic nature with only a limited amount of information and displayed means, such as website links, to access their online counterparts. Online signs frequently provided more detailed information that could not be found offline. Therefore, there is a close interconnectedness between the two realities. Offline signs, such as stickers, may serve as an entry point to the digital reality where additional information is available (Rosendal et al. 2022: 204).

Overall, VLL and the online-offline continuum are still an overlooked area within the scope of LL and they have only recently started to take roots and gain popularity. Initial findings, however, indicate that the presence of the digital reality cannot be underestimated as it is deeply integrated into human lives within the limits of the physical domain. Thus, the inclusion of the online sphere into the LL field might potentially get more and more common in the coming years.

3.4. Summary

This chapter aimed to provide examples of studies that reflect the short evolution of LL as a sociolinguistic inquiry and its current approach. As seen above, the field slowly grew from counting linguistic forms in legally multilingual areas (Coluzzi 2009), through inclusion of the content and context (Mirvahedi 2016) to a diverse discipline that addresses a range of topics in a variety of places.

4. The study of railway stations

A railway station is a type of public building that provides inter-city connections by the means of train transport. Railway travel is a well-established form of transportation that still displays popularity. Railway stations are public buildings that fall under the control of the government usually through some special institutional organisation. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of some relevant research that can illustrate the inner-workings of this type of building. The chapter starts with an LL overview of, firstly, landscapes of an institutional nature and then moves to railway stations and other types of transport buildings. The second part of the chapter discusses railway stations beyond the LL inquiry, mainly in urban geography. The chapter ends with the explanation of the research gap that this study aims to address.

4.1. LL and public spaces

In this section, “public” refers to spaces that are somehow connected with the official domain of the country, the government. Since these spaces are closely linked with the political system, there is a stricter expectation to comply with the official requirements, such as the language policy. For example, there are definitely more rules present in a house of parliament about the public signage than there are in a shopping street. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the study of public landscapes is less prominent in LL. There seems to be no instances of a public buildings being the primary aim of LL research in European settings.

Perhaps reflecting that LLs are often more heterogeneous in Africa and Asia, instances of LL research in solely public spaces can be encountered in these contexts. There are diverse types of public landscapes ranging from places where an institutional reality is dominant, such as a government-owned VLL, to sites where various spheres meet as in the case of a medical clinic. Several studies situated in the official settings have already been discussed in the previous chapter. As seen there, Wu, Silver and Zhang (2023) and Simungala and Jimaima (2023) both explored universities, Alomoush (2023) focused on a medical clinic and Paramarta et al. (2022) analysed a government-owned website.

While there is a diversity in landscapes, all the above-mentioned studies share some common features and research interests, namely the intention to find the reason why the identified linguistic forms appear in the landscape. There is a significant emphasis put on the connection between the language presence/absence and the wider context, especially the circumstances connected with power. For example, Chinese occurred in the Zambian landscape because of the huge investments made by China (Simungala and Jimaima 2023: 45) or Indonesian dominated the Balinese VLL because of the language policy of the country (Paramarta et al. 2022: 6). The legal and financial dimensions are important contextual domains that can significantly influence public landscapes. They are thus less autonomous than landscapes such as shopping streets.

Additionally, all the presented studies attribute similar roles to English and the official varieties except for Simungala and Jimaima (2023) due to its very critical orientation. The official languages perform a multifunctional role in the landscape ranging from an instrumental purpose to a conveyer of national identities (Alomoush 2023: 74; Paramarta et al. 2022: 6). The official variety is not only meant to be understood by its speakers but to also reflect a value with which the official body, the government, wishes to be associated with. In case of English, it can also perform various functions. One that seems to reappear frequently is its use because of the

expectation of the presence of people with diverse linguistic backgrounds (Alomoush 2023: 75; Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023: 844). Therefore, there is a higher requirement to display English as a lingua franca in these types of landscapes.

4.2. LL and railway stations/transport buildings

The previous section addressed the topic of LL situated in the official domain. The discussed landscapes ranged from places directly connected to the government to sectors that fall under its control such as education or healthcare. Another government-regulated sector is transportation. In terms of LL, the transport-connected landscapes are an overlooked area. There seems to be no instances of research conducted in the European context that would solely focus on transport buildings. In the Asian context, however, there are a few studies (e.g. Li & Yang 2023) that directly focused on transport buildings there. Apart from this geographical difference, there are also some studies with very large scopes (e.g. multiple cities) that, while discussing the overall linguistic situation, made small references to transport buildings, mainly railway stations. Other than these brief remarks, railway stations appear to never have been exclusive landscapes of LL research.

Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias (2023) explored the public signage of three major Indonesian cities. As part of their results, they discussed the linguistic situation of one railway station. The paper defined it as a type of public institutions where there is a greater pressure to comply with the official language policies of the particular country when compared to private businesses. At the same time, they are less pressured compared to other types of government buildings, such as houses of parliament, as there is a higher presence of private shops and society at large (Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias 2023: 295). The findings indicated that English clearly dominated in this space at the expense of local varieties (Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias 2023: 301). While the definition of the railway station is applicable anywhere, the findings are more context-specific. Indonesia is a very multilingual country with a lot of regional languages where English serves as a global language. European countries, on the other side, display a stronger tradition of one or two official varieties actually spoken by the majority. Therefore, it is doubtful that English has the power to completely replace the role of official languages in the European environment.

Similarly, Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan (2018) explored linguistic diversity in four major German cities by the means of taking photographs and interviewing people. There were various criteria in the process of city selection, one of which was the presence of the main railway

station (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 266). In case of major cities, if there are multiple railway stations present, there is a high probability that one station will be designated as the main one. While the paper generally did not differentiate between data taken from different sites, some small remarks were still made about the stations' signage. The paper observed that the main railway stations displayed a fixed set of languages of German, English and French in the respective order. The fixed pattern illustrated that the display of railway stations was not completely independent but rather a subject of various rules (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 274). Additionally, the conducted interviews brought to light that sign consumers did not like the occurrence of multilingual signs in the main railway stations. Interviewees indicated that railway stations should be associated with a certain normative status and comply totally with monolingual language policies. They demanded that public spaces should be linked with the sole use of German which, in their opinion, represented the identity of the country (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 284).

In terms of transport buildings as the exclusive landscapes of interest, Li and Yang (2023) adopted a smaller scope and focused on the international airport in Shanghai. The study was, however, not interested in the language diversity per se but rather how the airport built and conveyed Shanghai's identity as a global city. The airport was quite successful in conveying this type of image by employing multilingual signs mostly in Mandarin Chinese and English (Li & Yang 2023: 255). In contrast to Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias (2023), English was not described as a replacement of local languages nor was it viewed as a threat (Li & Yang 2023: 264). It oftentimes occurred in combination with the official variety, Standard Chinese, and it followed "the politics of code sequence" (Coupland 2012: 11). Apart from the meaning that the identified languages conveyed, their order in which they were displayed was meaningful too and created a hierarchical relation between them. The way codes were presented reflected underlying power relations, ideologies and sociocultural norms (Li & Yang 2023: 264). Regarding the status of official languages, the Chinese context is more similar to Europe compared to the Indonesian context. Therefore, it is to be expected that in the European environment English will not threaten the local varieties because it usually follows a particular sequence in the landscape.

Finally, Backhaus (2015) analysed the landscape and soundscape of Tokyo's underground stations with the primary focus being on the use of English. The study firstly focused on the variety of English used in the landscape, which was mostly based on American English with a few exceptions here and there (Backhaus 2015: 206). In terms of the information provided, both

the landscape and soundscape displayed additional information in Japanese. English was used in direct commands and lacked detail. There was also a clear tendency to display English-only signs in very straightforward messages, such as “no smoking”, oftentimes accompanied by a pictogram (Backhaus 2015: 207). In these cases, English as a lingua franca not only targeted foreign travellers but the home population as well.

4.3. Railway stations in other disciplines

While railway stations and transport buildings are an under-researched area in LL, it does not mean that these landscapes are completely overlooked in other disciplines. For instance, urban studies and urban geography in particular pay significant attention to these places. Their interest in transport springs from the fact that railway journeys, among other means, are seen as a means to explain how the “urban” is comprised (Latham et al. 2009: 11). Regarding the scope, urban geography research involving railway stations is rich. It ranges from stations’ impact on cities or regions (e.g. Adolphson & Fröidh 2019), intra-city and inter-city connections (e.g. Diao, Zhu & Zhu 2017) to the discussion of the railway station as a single entity in focus. While some studies are theoretical in nature, railway stations are generally explored as case studies.

Railway stations are defined as central urban spaces responsible for the successful creation of an urban area (Mulders-Kusumo 2005: 201). In other words, stations’ central location is directly linked to the historical development of cities. As one of the most important products of the industrial revolution, railway stations are a mark of modernisation that led to a rapid population growth and the creation of modern cities (Alexander & Hamilton 2015: 65-66). Their importance in the 19th century was far bigger than a mere transport portal. Oftentimes referred to as “volcanoes of life”, “palaces of modern industry” and “cathedrals of humanity” (Dethier 1981: 6), they adopted almost a biblical-like status. Their symbolic and emotional value reflected the great achievement that they were considered to be. Taking into account these historical attitudes, it is no surprise that railway stations are so centrally-located. Their placement still remains one of their biggest assets nowadays, especially compared to airports.

However, their period of prestige was not everlasting and, during World War II, it came to a halt that was followed by a period of decline (Hale 2013: 72). The ambition to construct “cathedral-like” buildings was cut short due to the decrease in financial and human resources caused by the war. This period of low prestige nevertheless prevailed even after the war until approximately the end of the second millennium. The humble building constructions and the lack of other functions apart from transporting people was caused by the stereotype that rail

travellers were too poor to afford a car (Hale 2013: 76). This attitude had a damaging effect on the development of rail travel. Despite railway stations still maintaining a very central location physically, many were attributed with the sense of placelessness (Alexander & Hamilton 2015: 70). There used to be a prevailing feeling that not only citizens but also authorities refused to see them as part of the city landscape. Their placeless nature resulted in the buildings decaying. Finally, the present-day railway situation can be described as a period of renewal and innovation (Hale 2013: 72). There has been a stable effort to make up for the previous lack of care. But station buildings are not only being reconstructed but also redeveloped. For the last decade, railway stations adopted functions beyond transportation and have become integrated city spaces (Zacharias, Zhang & Nakajima 2011: 250). They evolved into heterogenous microcosms offering leisure, business, commercial and transportation services (Bissell 2009: 174). The increase in functions led to increased flows of people with the possibility that more time can be spent there beyond the required quantity for travelling. The overall historical development has resulted in railway stations nowadays being landscapes full of heterogeneity and contrast. Edwards (1997: 21) defines a railway station as “a place where tourists, commuters, salesmen, retailers, train-spotters and the homeless converge”. Railway stations are thus the places where the private meets with the public, the modern with the neglected and the innovative with the historically valuable. All these historical and social observations add value and can help explain the rationale behind what is being displayed in the landscape of a station.

4.4. Summary and research gap

This chapter focused on the landscape of railway stations. From the LL perspective, railway stations and transport buildings are an overlooked area of research. The chapter indicated that the building itself and its overall linguistic diversity is not usually the main aim of study. Transport buildings are generally addressed as short references or serve other research interests, such as the identity conveyer of the city as in the case of Li and Yang (2023). The chapter then borrowed some notions from urban geography in terms of explaining its historical development. Finally, the railway station was defined as a central urban construct that is easily accessible and provides quick mobility (Mulders-Kusumo 2005: 201).

Taking into account all that has been stated above, this paper aims to explore the landscape of two main railway stations in the selected capitals of Central Europe. Since railway stations and public institutions in the European context are generally under-researched areas, this study hopes to explore and come to understand the dynamics of sign display in the multifunctional

landscape of the main railway station and its connection to broader social, cultural and political factors. Furthermore, since comparative studies are not very common in LL, this paper also intends to provide the comparative element between the two stations where possible. The aim of the comparison is to determine some patterns about the main railway station as a singular entity in the European context. The study will do so by taking photographs and analysing the *Bratislava Hlavná Stanica* and *Wien Hauptbahnhof* stations. The landscapes will be analysed bearing in mind the wider context, mainly the language policies of the respective countries and some socio-economic, historical and cultural background.

5. Contextual background

5.1. National context

Austria and Slovakia are countries in Central Europe that share more than just their geographical location. Both countries are nowadays parliamentary democracies that present strong bilateral economic, political and cultural relationships (Pawera et al. 2020: 455). Among other reasons, their close relation is a result of their rich histories that intertwined at various points throughout the past. While Slovakia as an independent political entity is relatively young, its history dates further backwards as part of other, more powerful, political organisations. In the second half of the 19th century, Slovakia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which left significant cultural impact that is still reflected to the present day in mainly the architecture of some historical landmarks (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2024). Therefore, many historical buildings in Austria and Slovakia are designed in a similar fashion. Both countries were influenced by the many drastic changes in the 20th century ranging from the Austro-Hungarian demise, Nazi domination, two world wars and the Cold War (Wagnleitner et al. 2023). After World War II, the two countries adopted opposite political orientations which resulted in the present-day differences in terms of economic prosperity.

Economically, the two countries display distinct economic profiles. Austria, after adopting the western post-war orientation, developed a highly prosperous and stable economic position. The country's main economic source of health is the service sector which constitutes more than half of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Leichter et al. 2024). In contrast, Slovakia as a post-communist and much younger country displays a less prosperous status of its economy. Its GDP is mostly generated by the private sector with mainly industrial orientation (Auty et al. 2024). In terms of tourism, both countries present a lucrative potential with their long histories and

mountainous terrains. But while Austria possesses highly developed touristic facilities due to its service-sector prosperity (Leichter et al. 2024), Slovakia is lacking behind. Due to its mainly industrial formation, Slovakia's touristic sector had long been overlooked and its establishment in relation to the economic development has started only very recently (Pawera et al. 2020: 458). Despite the differences between the two countries, both are members of the European Union (EU) and the Eurozone. The economic and monetary union adds another layer of closer integration between the two countries which facilitates processes of investment, trade and employment (Hix & Høyland 2022: 278).

Linguistically, Austria is a German-speaking and Slovakia is a Slovak-speaking country. While these languages belong into different language families, Germanic and Slavic respectively, the two countries present similar language policies. Both countries utilize their respective constitutions to mark the official languages of the countries. The Federal Constitution of the Republic of Austria (1920: Art 8 Section 1) defines German as the “State language of the Republic”. Similarly, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (1992: Art 6 Section 1) declares that “the Slovak language is the State language in the territory of the Slovak republic”. Additionally, both political entities ensure the protection of minority languages but they keep their constitutional descriptions very vague. While minority languages are legally protected (Federal Constitution of the Republic of Austria 1920: Art 8 Section 2; Constitution of the Slovak Republic 1992: Art 34 Section 1-3), they display very low legal status compared to the respective state language. Due to the constitutional status of the official variety, both countries are perceived as monolingual.

In terms of language use, however, Austria and Slovakia display a multilingual reality. There is a significant presence of immigration which leads to the use of multiple languages in Austria (Smit & Schwarz 2019: 294) as well as Slovakia (Vass 2015: 43). A significant role is held by English that, despite lacking the legal status and historical connection, is used extensively. English use is favoured practically anywhere because of its status as a *lingua franca* and, also, the *de facto* language of the EU (Szabó 2020: 183). Overall, despite the legal monolingualism that these countries are associated with, they are, in reality, multilingual in use which this paper aims to bring further evidence of.

The capital cities are Vienna and Bratislava, which are geographically very close, only around 55 km apart in a straight line. Apart from performing the capital-related functions, both cities are economically very valuable as they are responsible for generating at least a quarter of the countries' GDP (Hanzl-Weiss, Holzner & Römisch 2018: 1). The capitals also serve as touristic

spots and oftentimes entry-points to the respective countries. In terms of transport, they are very well-connected by highway, train and ship. The train connection is quite active with two direct trains per hour under normal circumstances. The railway in-between the cities is currently undergoing a reconstruction with the intent of full electrification that would shorten the travel time. This process of modernisation is mostly funded by the EU (Hanzl-Weiss, Holzner & Römisch 2018: 8). The railway transport is thus crucial in connecting the two cities which is reflected in the frequency of trains and the large finances invested there. Both cities possess multiple railway stations, with each having one designated as “the main”.

5.2. Bratislava Main Station

Bratislava Hlavná Stanica is one of the most important and frequented railway stations in Slovakia. It is located in the centre of the capital providing domestic and international connections. Due to Bratislava’s border position, it offers direct connections to Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

The station had a crucial historical role in developing the railway transport in Slovakia. Its history dates back to the middle of the 19th century when it was known in German as *Pressburg Hauptbahnhof* or in Hungarian *Poszony Fopályaudvar*. The first steam train in Slovakia arrived at this station from Gänserndorf through Marchegg essentially connecting Vienna and Bratislava (ŽSR - Železničné telekomunikácie n.d.1). During the construction of the railway stations across the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a new architectural style emerged across the territory of the country. As a result of this railway style, the majority of railway stations in Europe have been built in a similar fashion. The buildings were also prescribed to have certain areas such as entry halls with cash desks, waiting rooms and a space for safeguarding luggage (ŽSR - Železničné telekomunikácie n.d.2). These areas can nowadays be considered the prototypical parts of a railway station.

Throughout its history, Bratislava Main Station possessed three buildings in total. The first building is located one street away from the current station and nowadays serves as a museum and a ministry building. The second building was built because of the new connection to Budapest at the end of the 19th century and one century later, it was expanded by one more additional building (Kubáček 1999). The station was influenced by various architectural styles during the Austro-Hungarian, communist, post-communist and modern periods. Since each period added some elements to the display of the building and there seemed to be no effort to unify the building in style, all historical periods are still visible, which creates visual disarray.

The station nowadays presents a very low level of prestige in terms of its aesthetics. It is oftentimes referred to as "the biggest shame of the city" among the locals and the press (e.g. Gubčo 2022).

When it comes to academic research, a number of studies have been conducted in the tradition of urban geography. These, however, focus on the process of transportation and inter-city connection. The actual station building remains mostly under-researched except for some undergraduate theses. Apart from the visual issues, the station presents another set of problems regarding its urban location. It is located at the foot of a hill which impedes its expansion and, despite having a central location, the intra-city connection is very poor (Kameniar 2019: 12). Overall, Bratislava Main Station is full of contrasts and disarray. While displaying historical and inter-city/country value, these are oftentimes overshadowed by its many problems, mainly the looks and intra-city connection. Several discussions have been led about solving its problematic nature but none have been successful in solving anything so far (Hanzl-Weiss, Holzner & Römisch 2018: 9).

5.3. Vienna Main Station

Wien Hauptbahnhof is considerably younger. The station began to fully operate in 2015 as a result of the planned demolition of its predecessor *Wien Südbahnhof* (Vienna South Station) (Kosmowski 2019: 143). The new station is an example of a regeneration megaproject that refers to the result of a lengthy, costly and pre-planned construction built in order to impact the urban space and the society on a major scale (Flyvbjerg 2014: 6). The construction of this megaproject in the Viennese setting was necessary due to the absence of a designated main station in the city.

Even though Vienna lacked the main railway station for over 150 years, the historical development of railway transport still took place and, at the same time, was crucial for the whole region of today's Central Europe. The first steam train appeared in the Austrian context in 1837 and ran between the Viennese district Floridsdorf and Deutsch-Wagram. Based on the emergence of railway transport in Vienna, connections to other important cities, today's Central-European capitals, were built (Hartig 2015: 24). The existence of railway transport in Central Europe has been thus directly dependable on the Austrian railway development.

Historically, Vienna possessed a number of stations which turned problematic for travellers. Since there were only terminal stations and no railway bottleneck, travellers from different regions arrived at distinct points across Vienna. It then resulted in time-consuming changes

between them (Hartig 2015: 25). Finally, after years of careful planning, Vienna South Station, that dated back to 1870s, was demolished to create space for the new megaproject. By being such a new building, Vienna Main Station lacks the historical visibility that many stations across Europe still possess. Nevertheless, the station still remains historically and symbolically important.

As seen in the previous chapter, there is a set pattern of stations' historical evolution from "cathedrals of humanity" (Dethier 1981: 6) to "placeless buildings" (Alexander & Hamilton 2015: 70). Vienna Main Station represents the result of this historical process as a "building between worlds" (Hirsch 2015: 16). The station metaphorically does not form part of the city despite having a central position. It arises as a multifunctional space where a lot of societal spheres meet ranging from transportation portals and government-owned institutions to private businesses. The symbolic importance and the metaphorical separateness from the city mirror the history of railway buildings. Therefore, Vienna Main Station emerges as a landmark of the 21st century and a next step of railway evolution (Bönsch 2015: 12). It is quite possible that railway stations in other cities might follow the Viennese example.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research objectives

As already established, the linguistic landscape of a railway station is an under-researched area. There seems to be very little research conducted about how the particular landscape displays various semiotic resources. It is also difficult to find some commonalities with other, more researched, types of landscapes because of the unique nature of a railway station. As defined by Hirsch (2015: 16), this "building between worlds" is a place where several aspects of human life meet and interact. A railway station is a multifunctional space usually located in the centre of various continua such as the local and global, the public and private or the government-owned and corporate. Furthermore, there is a substantial lack of LL studies focusing on government-owned landscapes in the European context.

Based on the presented gap, the aim of this study is to explore the landscapes of Bratislava Main Station and Vienna Main Station. In order to provide an overview of the public signage there, the study hopes to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What types of signs can be found in the two landscapes?

RQ2: What functions do the identified languages perform in the landscapes?

RQ3: What other meaning-carrying elements are there apart from the verbal mode?

Since railway stations have not yet been thoroughly researched in the tradition of LL, the aim of RQ1 is to provide a reflection of the overall situation in the landscapes. The unit of analysis for this stage is the sign, as is typical for LL (Gorter 2018: 46). Its general definition is borrowed from semiotics as a bounded physical form that stands for a referent (Sebeok 2001: 3). However, more detailed definitions (e.g. Kress 2013: 132) that align with Sebeok (2001: 3) are also adopted throughout the analysis to help better explain the nature of signs.

In the subsequent two RQs, the unit of analysis is zoomed in from a sign to a sign-constituting element, a mode. Since railway stations have never been properly explored in LL, the analysis takes a step back from the current trends and focuses on the most integral parts of an LL analysis. The aim is to identify linguistic, or better said semiotic, diversity in form and to discuss the type of meaning the diverse forms convey. As stated by Shohamy (2018: 28), this type of “superficial” analysis is a necessary starting point. Despite the paper’s orientation to the core aims of LL, the current trends are still not ignored. The study still adopts a beyond-sign perspective by taking into account the contextual background and the implicit role of human agency when discussing the signs and modes.

The focus of RQ2 is on the verbal mode. The aim is to provide evidence that challenges the typical monolingual perception that is closely associated with Central-European countries. Systematic behaviour of the identified languages is detected in order to determine the preferences of railway stations in terms of their public signage. Finally, RQ3 explores the non-verbal mode. Non-verbal or extralinguistic signs are elements that are not expressed by words and are generally effortlessly understood by people coming from different linguistic backgrounds (DeRosia 2008: 299). However, extra-linguistic signs oftentimes lack the arbitrary dimension that the verbal communication presents. The aim of RQ3 is to determine the most prominent meaning-carrying elements that are non-verbal in nature.

6.2. Data collection

The process of linguistic landscaping involves collecting signs displayed at public spaces usually in the form of photographs (Gorter 2018: 43). While it may seem as an easy task of mere photo-taking, it presents a number of theoretical challenges. In order to successfully document the language use of a particular geographical space, there is firstly a need to define

the scope of the data collected, such as the boundary of the analysed places or the unit of analysis.

In terms of the analysed space, the selected landscapes are the two main railway stations located in the capitals of Austria and Slovakia, two countries, that currently share various political, social and cultural aspects. The process of choosing a landscape has been relatively easy since, as stated before, railway stations are under-researched spaces and the main railway stations in the capital cities present a unique role. The designated main station is hierarchically superior to other intra-city stations, serves as an essential node in transport networks and represents the overall railway travel of the particular country. It is thus logical to begin the LL analysis from the top of the hierarchy in this overlooked area of railway stations. Furthermore, the two stations present very different processes of formation. As indicated in the previous chapter, Bratislava Main Station is a relatively old building associated with lower prestige. In contrast, Vienna Main Station is a modern facility perceived much more positively. The relatively similar national context and the different nature of the stations render the two landscapes suitable for comparison. By providing a comparative element, the results may yield insights that could be applicable to railway stations in general, in case similarities are identified.

What has been more challenging, however, was to select the specific places within the landscape since these railway stations are large spaces and possess thousands of signs. The number of photos taken needed to be limited by the feasibility of the analysis and therefore, only the most possibly representative data of a railway station could be collected.

In recent years, LL studies (e.g. Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias 2023) with very large scope of geographical area adopted the ethnographically oriented walking approach (Stroud & Jegels 2014). This data-collection method consists of walking in the landscape, talking to people about the signs and taking photographs based on the researcher's choice. While this approach allows collecting the most interesting signs and people's opinions about these, it is unclear to what extent this method is truly representative of the selected landscape. Since it essentially lacks systematicity, there is a great risk that the dataset would be composed of only the meet-the-criteria signs based on the research objectives set by the researcher.

Therefore, this study adopted a more systematic approach regarding the collected data. In order to have a dataset that is truly representative of the landscape, the stations were divided into smaller sections in which all signs could be collected. The representative spots were selected based on the literature and similarities between the two stations. As seen in the previous chapter,

railway stations historically needed to possess an entrance area with cash desks, a waiting room and a luggage room (Kubáček 1999). In terms of the functions of these rooms, all these spots can still be found in the stations. Their shape, however, has evolved as railway stations significantly increased in size and function from pure transport buildings to multifunctional microcosms (Bissell 2009: 174). Table 1 illustrates all the eight selected locations and the reason why they have been chosen.

Table 1. Selected areas within the stations

Representative spots	Reason for selection
Main entrance area from the outside	Entrance area – historically representative
Main square with a huge digital display of the train schedule	Historical entrance area from the inside that increased in size
Ticket office	Former cash desks – historically representative
Info point	Split from the former cash desks
Waiting rooms	Historically representative
General platform (Platform 4 in Bratislava and Platform 11-12 in Vienna)	- Platform is what makes railway station a railway station - All platforms except for the first one are very similar - The particular platforms were chosen on the spot based on the smallest presence of people
First platform (Platform 1 in Bratislava and Platform 2 in Vienna)	- These platforms are unique and different from the rest of the platforms - Bratislava – the backside of the building (includes storage lockers and staff-only rooms) - Vienna – provides only intra-city connections, serves as part of the public transport within the city
RegioJet area	Central-European company

	• The only private carrier in both stations • Its ticket office present in both stations
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The data was collected on the 20th March 2024 in Vienna and 23rd March 2024 in Bratislava in the early-morning hours. The data collection took three and a half hours in Vienna and two in Bratislava starting from 5 a.m. in both stations. The time frames and days had been selected based on the information obtained from the staff and online in order to avoid rush hours. Signs were collected only in the identified station areas that were placed on the walls of the building following the line of sight from the bottom of the wall till the height of an average floor approximately 3 metres long. The signs also needed to be visible and readable from around a metre distance. There were 758 photos collected in Vienna and 385 photos in Bratislava, which were further edited in the early stages of data analysis based on the principle of one sign per photo.

6.3. Data analysis

LL research is usually a mixed method study with major emphasis being placed on the qualitative interpretation. The general structure of an LL study usually involves a quantitative overview of results and then continues with a discussion of qualitative findings. Photographs from the dataset oftentimes appear in the final paper and are used as visual examples of the particular landscape or as argument illustrations that support the interpretation (Gorter 2018: 49). While the majority of research does not specifically attribute a name to its procedure, similar steps can be encountered in many studies. The analysis generally involves observing the data, identifying themes, coding and interpreting the identified codes in relation to the research interests (e.g. Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023: 833-834). Since there seems to be an emphasis on the development of codes, it can be assumed that LL research generally utilises a type of content/thematic analysis.

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is a systematic method of analysis that can be applied to a diversity of contents of communication such as texts, pictures and videos. At its core, there lie the categories that reflect the coding of the dataset. QCA is a very flexible approach that can be easily moulded to serve individual research requirements (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 28). The development of the key tool, a category, can result from *a priori* knowledge or can emerge later based on the data observation (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 51; 59). The formation of categories

can thus be deductive, inductive or a combination of both to suit a range of research interests. Interpretative thinking is the crucial principle when assigning categories (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 25). Even though it is called a qualitative analysis, it can still include quantitative evaluations (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 21-22). The classification and categorisation of the data reflect a step-by-step procedure that is guided by a series of rules set by the researcher (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 25).

QCA is especially suitable for a large amount of data that is in need of a systematic procedure. It is also context-sensitive and allows the researcher to make references to the circumstances that have given rise to the data (Krippendorff 2019: 45-46). The data in LL in the form of photographs represents a visual type of communication (Gorter 2018: 47). The collected signs are usually numerous and can sometimes present a disorganised nature. QCA can therefore be a useful method to help make sense of the data. Its context-sensitivity also matches the current LL perspective of going beyond the sign (Shohamy 2015: 154). Additionally, the flexible nature of the method is compatible with the great variety of LL topics and interests.

A category, the central element, is the result of classifying units. Categorisation is one of the most fundamental cognitive abilities that is based on human perception of similarities and differences in the world. A category in QCA is, however, more complex (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 34). Various category-related terms have been introduced, such as codes, concepts or themes. While some studies consider them synonymous, there is an ongoing effort to attribute them a hierarchical organisation (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 39). In the meantime, as the terminology still remains quite loose, it is the researcher's responsibility to pre-define them for each study specifically taking into account the category's primary function of structuring and systematising the dataset (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 26).

This study adopted QCA and analysed its dataset using the computer software MAXQDA. The two category names for the purpose of this study were adopted from the MAXQDA terminology, the variable and the code. The code referred to a sign-constituting element and represented a linguistic/semiotic form. Codes generally emerged inductively based on the dataset's observation even though there had been some accurate *a priori* expectations, such as the occurrence of German in Vienna Main Station. The variables referred to signs in its entirety, emerged mostly deductively and served two functions based on the state of analysis. In the early steps, variables were created for the purpose of data segmentation. Data segmentation refers to the process of dividing units into smaller sections (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 46). The variables at this stage emerged deductively based on common sense, such as the location of occurrence,

or on the theory as in case of the sign type/token distinction (Sebeok 2001: 41), the sign production (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006: 10) and the types of discourse (Scollon and Scollon 2003: 21). At a later stage, variables emerged as a result of the presence of various combinations of codes in the form of sign modality and the number of languages.

The role of the variables was to create certain dimensions in which the identified linguistic/semiotic forms occur to a major or lesser extent in order to determine their respective functions in the landscape. Based on the codes' preferences in relation to the variables, the type of meaning of the linguistic/semiotic forms was interpreted. The codes as meaning-carriers could either convey instrumental (Sciriha & Vassallo 2023: 163) or symbolic (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006: 8) meaning or a combination of both. The upcoming chapters discuss the resulting findings taking also into account the wider context. Chapter 7 presents a concise overview of the variables and Chapter 8 and 9 focus specifically on the linguistic/semiotic forms and its preferences in relation to the variables.

7. Landscapes' overview

The following chapter illustrates the overall sign situation within the two analysed landscapes. It starts with a short quantitative overview of all the collected data and its subsequent sampling. The collected signs are categorised based on various dimensions, such as the location or the signs' producer, that will play a crucial role in explaining the function of all the meaning-carrying elements discussed in the subsequent two chapters.

7.1. Quantitative overview

7.1.1. Total number of signs

The total number of signs collected differs drastically between the two stations. While 965 signs have been collected in Vienna's station, 579 signs have been found in Bratislava. The difference, however, is not really surprising since Vienna as a city and its main railway station is substantially larger.

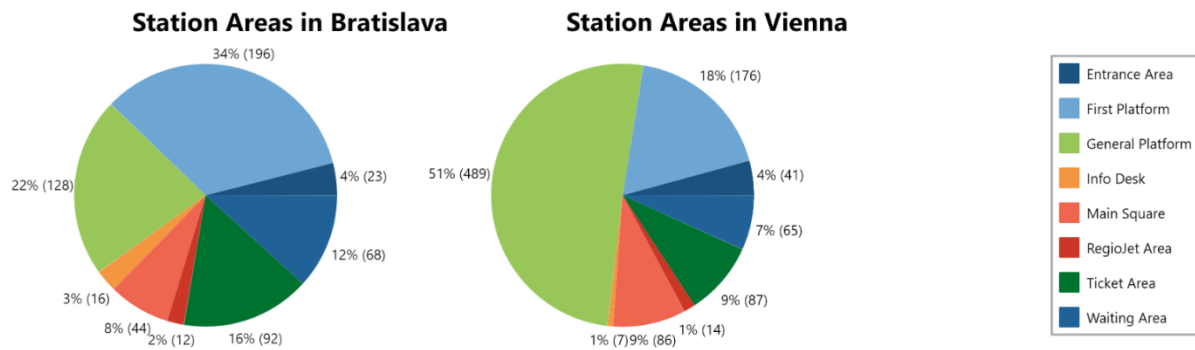


Figure 1. Total number of signs in the selected station areas

Figure 1 illustrates the total distribution of the collected signs within the station areas. While a number of differences can be identified, both Bratislava and Vienna display a more or less similar sign distribution. The richest areas are definitely the platforms. This result is not very unexpected since in terms of all the station areas, the platforms are among the most sizeable ones. Therefore, there is an abundance of space that can be filled. The two stations differ in the type of platform, though. Bratislava displays the most signs on the first platform because of its multifunctional nature. Apart from being a platform, it serves as the backside of the station building, luggage lockers and houses staff-only rooms. Vienna's most abundant spot is the general platform, platform 11-12, simply because it is the largest area.

The second most abundant spot is the ticket area. Compared to the platforms, it is a considerably smaller section. Interestingly, both stations display an abundance of signs in this relatively tiny space which results in an overfilled area. The increased occurrence of signs can be connected to the acts of offering railway products, advertising and purchasing. The ticket area is followed by the waiting area and the main square. These areas are also located in the middle of the spectrum regarding their size. The sign frequency directly correlates with their proportions. The smallest areas are the RegioJet's ticket office and the Info Desk, which also display the least number of signs. And lastly, an interesting case is the entrance area. While the entrance area could rival the platforms in size, at least in the case of Bratislava, in terms of sign occurrence, it is very underused and visually almost empty. The lack of signs appearing there emphasises the importance of the few signs displayed in such a huge area. These are carefully tailored in order to represent the whole landscape of a railway station. This area is thus crucial in conveying the identity of the place. The most prominent sign in the entrance area, shown in Figure 2, is the name of the building which illustrates the importance put on fast recognisability of the place.



Figure 2. Stations' name

7.1.2. Number of sign types

A railway station is a large building that possesses thousands of signs. These signs oftentimes re-occur to various degrees across the station. Terminologically, each occurrence of a sign can be referred to as a token and the group of all the occurrences of a single sign is called a type (Sebeok 2001: 41).

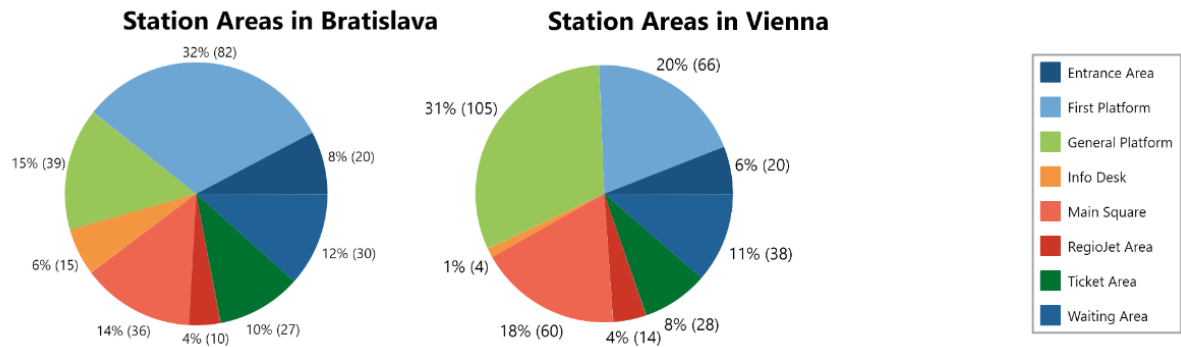


Figure 3. Number of sign types in the selected station areas

Figure 3 represents the occurrence of sign types in the stations. Each station area separately includes only one sign type and all its respective tokens within the single area have been eliminated. In other words, while it is possible for two identical signs to appear in the dataset in two different station areas, it is not possible to have two identical sign types within one area. This type of sampling has been applied because of the emphasis that this paper puts on the place of sign-occurrence and the difficulty to pinpoint the exact place of origin.

By comparing Figure 1 and 3, it is clear that the areas with the highest number of signs also present the greatest number of re-occurrences. By eliminating all the tokens from each area, the number of signs equals 259 signs in Bratislava and 335 signs in Vienna. The huge difference between the total number and the number of sign types illustrates that railway stations, despite possessing an abundance of signs, convey only limited amount and oftentimes an established type of information. The railway station as a form of public institution is a subject of careful and function-oriented planning that needs to comply with numerous rules and regulations (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 274). Creativity and uniqueness, which are usually associated with commercial spots (Kim 2022), are cast aside in favour of the efficiency between a sign and place. The majority of signs displayed need to present a simplified nature that is easy to understand and to replicate. The efficiency of railway stations is further discussed in section 7.2.3.

The distribution of sign types across the station is much more balanced. While there are still differences between station areas, these are usually proportionate to the size of the selected spots apart from the entrance area, of course. The platforms still remain the most abundant station area, followed by the main square. A substantial reduction can be seen in the ticket area, which suggests that there is a firmly set pattern of sign types that are repeated. The least number of tokens are displayed by areas that also present the smallest number of signs in total.

Table 2. Number of sign types that present no tokens and sign types possessing tokens

	Bratislava Main Station	Vienna Main Station
Unique Sign Types	142	160
Sign Types Possessing Tokens	117	175

Table 2 illustrates that only around 150 signs appear only once. The similar number of unique sign types creates a huge difference between the two stations. Considering the size of both stations, Bratislava presents a major level of originality and disparity within. Vienna, on the other side, displays more uniformity and, in that case, there is a stricter sign incorporation and major level of awareness of what is displayed as illustrated in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Sign types expressing the same meaning (signs in the 1st line collected in Bratislava; signs in the 2nd line collected in Vienna)

Figure 4 exemplifies Bratislava's less fixed nature of signs. All the signs carry the same meaning of informing about the presence of security cameras. While Vienna presents a single sign type whose tokens can be found all around the station building, Bratislava possesses 4 types to convey the same meaning. Their presence illustrates the visual disarray that the station in Bratislava is notoriously associated with (Gubčo 2022). The landscape may appear chaotic and less professional, which might add to the associated feelings of low prestige. Vienna, on the other side, appears more uniform and standardised with its consistency to display tokens of only one type.

7.2. Types of signs

The public space is composed of a diversity of signs that serve various functions. The meaning of signs is not a simple matter. Similar to language, which is a sign system as well, their meaning is context-dependent. There are various factors that contribute to the meaning that signs convey. Apart from what they represent, they are also influenced by the place where they appear, who issues them and who is their viewer (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 2-3). The subsequent sections

aim to determine the context-dependent meaning of the signs displayed in the railway stations. The previous section already addressed the relation between the collected signs and their location. The attention is now shifted towards the role of human agency and the signs' representative nature.

7.2.1. Sign producer

As seen in the previous chapters, signs found in the landscape cannot be separated from human agency (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 219). Behind the physical display and its location, there is also the dimension of who produces and who consumes the particular sign. In terms of sign production, a distinction can be made between top-down and bottom-up signs. While top-down signs are issued by public institutions and comply with various regulations, bottom-up signs are produced by individual entities that are legally-autonomous (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006: 10).

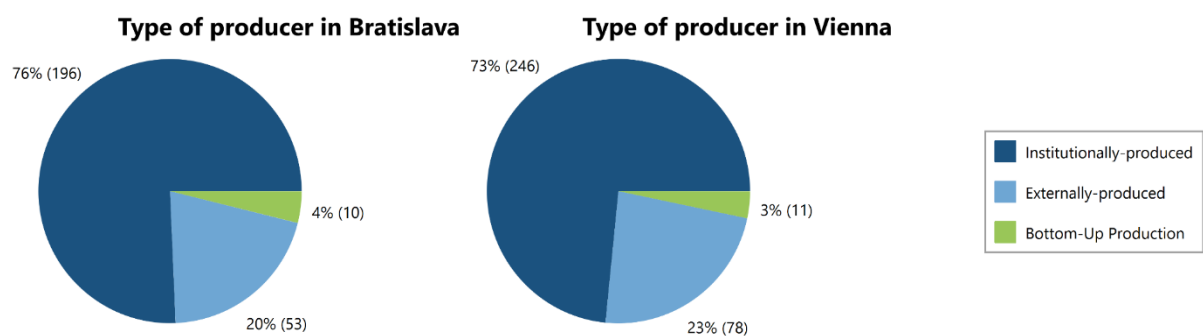


Figure 5. Number of signs based on the entity responsible for their production

As illustrated in Figure 5, the process of sign production in railway stations seems to be well-established. It can be assumed that a pattern emerges as both stations exhibit almost equal distribution. This pattern also serves as another evidence that the sign-display is carefully planned and firmly set in this type of landscape. A far majority of signs are top-down signs or those produced by the institution itself. On the other side of the spectrum, there are only very few bottom-up signs.

In case of railway stations, there seems to be a third category emerging of signs that are externally-produced. This category includes signs issued by private businesses. While Ben-Rafael et al. (2006: 14) would consider these as bottom-up signs because private companies are legally autonomous, in case of railway stations, these businesses have lost a part of their legal independence. These entities, while still autonomous from regulations, need to be first

institutionally approved in order to appear in the landscape. Therefore, the externally-produced signs are somewhere in the middle of the top-down-bottom-up spectrum. While the produced signs in isolation are institutionally independent, the external producers behind them are not so fully. Furthermore, in such a heavily dominated environment by the institutional entity, it is easy to also become subject of the same type of display strategy. The only signs outside the institutional influence, the bottom-up signs, are those committed as an act of vandalism. Their very small number, however, indicates that railway stations are very effective in preventing and removing these types of signs. It can be concluded that railway stations in general are strictly regulated environments dominated by a singular entity (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 274). The said entity is a subject of legal and cultural expectations, which make the sign occurrence planned and not randomised.

7.2.2. Sign modality

After providing some possible classifications for the ‘where’ and the ‘who’ of the collected signs, the process of categorisation continues with the aspect of what the signs actually display. By definition, a sign is a physical form that aims to represent a referent, and one of its multiple functions is to communicate messages (Sebeok 2001: 3). While human communication is usually linked to language, a verbal system, it consists in its entirety of both verbal and non-verbal signs (Sebeok 2001: XIV). The dual composition of human communication is very well illustrated in Figure 6.

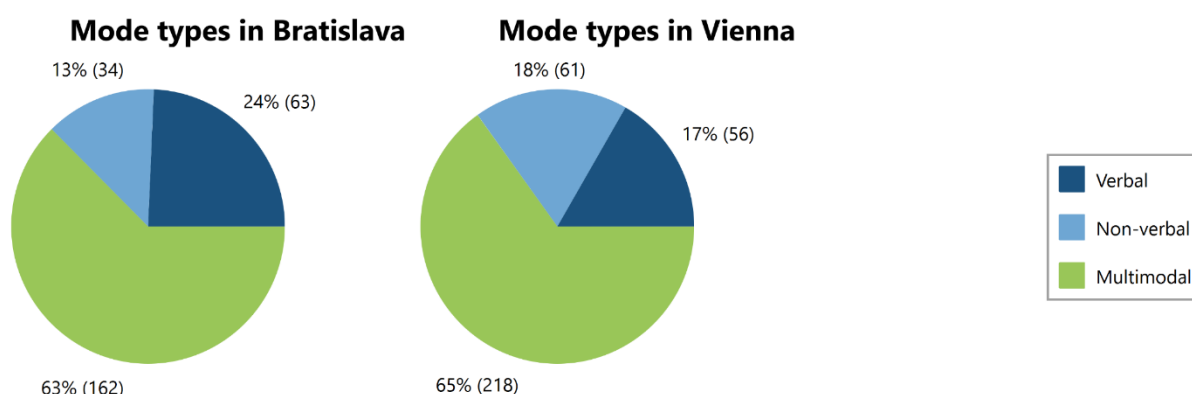


Figure 6. Nature of signs based on modes displayed

The far majority of signs presents a multimodal nature in both stations. On the other hand, the distribution between purely verbal and non-verbal signs differs slightly. While there is an almost equal number of purely verbal and non-verbal signs in Vienna, the verbal signs surpass the non-verbal ones by half in Bratislava. The difference in Bratislava may be caused by the visual

disarray present there and a general absence of sign standardisation. As seen above, Vienna presents a significantly major level of uniformity.

The frequent occurrence of multimodal signs supports the idea that the public space should not be referred to as a linguistic landscape but rather a semiotic landscape (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010: 2). Even though language still remains the centre of attention of an LL analysis, it needs to be acknowledged that it is not the only meaning-carrying mode in the landscape. Domke (2018: 115) makes an important point that landscapes can be read, seen, felt as well as heard. Despite this level of multimodality present in every landscape, the majority of LL studies has almost rigorously focused only on the readable (Domke 2018: 116-117). The current LL approach, however, has slowly started to pay more and more attention to the non-verbal mode as well, at least in theory (Shohamy & Gorter 2009: 2).

In case of this study, since the data has been collected by the means of photographs, it can focus only on the visually-identifiable modes. The analysed landscapes are thus constituted by verbal and non-verbal visual modalities, which will be discussed separately in the next two chapters. There is, however, a close interconnectedness between these two modes as the majority of signs are multimodal in nature and a lot of references will be made between one and the other. After all, the verbal and non-verbal modes are semiotic aggregates that are in dialogical interaction and thus, constitute the meaning of signs together (Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023: 840). Nevertheless, Figure 7 shows that it is also possible to visually identify tactile mode in the form of Braille code and 3D print. Its occurrence in the landscape is very low though.



Figure 7. Tactile mode in Vienna Main Station

Since language has always been the focal point of LL, it is also significantly easier to identify some established categories within the verbal domain. The verbal communication presents complex systems that are normally country- and culturally-specific. For example, it is quite

easy to differentiate between instances of German and English since at least the standard languages present a fixed form. Once these different systems have been identified in the landscape, signs could be classified based on the number of languages they present as indicated in Figure 8. In contrast, attributing higher categories to the non-verbal mode is much more challenging. Even though non-verbal elements should be understood quickly and effortlessly (DeRosia 2008: 298), their form is not as fixed as the one of a standard language (Hall, Horgan & Murphy 2019: 271). While some non-verbal signs may be considered universal, as in the case of traffic lights, there is also a lot of variation for some referents. The variation may be caused by the lack of dictionaries or some specifications for this type of communication (Hall, Horgan & Murphy 2019: 271). While standard languages are usually country-specific, at least in the case of Europe, the boundary of non-verbal mode is more challenging to determine. Despite still being culturally specific to a degree, it is hardly possible to indicate a clear set of non-verbal signs used in a particular community. Therefore, only linguistic forms were grouped together into higher organisation.

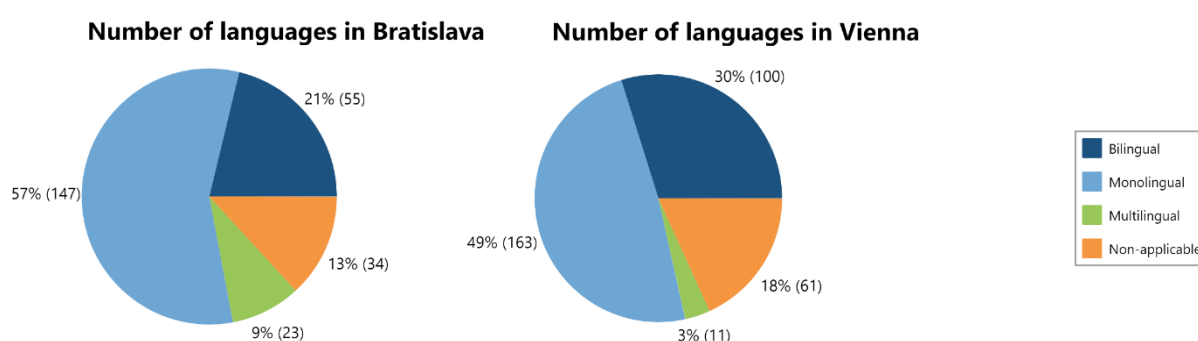


Figure 8. Linguistic diversity on verbal and multimodal signs

Within the signs that present partial or total verblity, it is possible to differentiate between instances of monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism. As displayed in Figure 8, monolingual signs occur most frequently in both stations. In Chapter 3, it was indicated that duplicating multilingualism (Reh 2004) is an effective technique to target international audience. In case of these two railway stations however, the pattern indicates that different strategies are applied since a considerable part of the collected signs are monolingual. With the far majority of multimodal signs, it can be concluded that railway stations rely more on the interaction between the text and visuals to ensure traveller's understanding rather than on the processes of translation. The occurrence of bilingual signs is the second most frequent in both landscapes. While in Vienna, it constitutes more than a quarter of dataset, in Bratislava, it is actually less than a quarter of all the signs. Bilingualism is thus not as prominent in railway stations as one may typically expect.

Lastly, multilingual signs are the least frequent type, which again supports the idea that these landscapes make greater use of visual semiotics than they do of the relation between different languages. Interestingly, Bratislava, a considerably smaller station, displays twice as many multilingual signs as Vienna does. Figure 9 illustrates two examples of multilingual signs found in Bratislava.



Figure 9. Multilingual signs in Bratislava Main Station displaying the word *welcome* in various languages

Both signs in Figure 9 are examples of duplicating multilingualism where the word *welcome* appears in multiple languages. Nowadays, with English and non-verbal signage at our disposal, it is simply not necessary to display an excessive number of languages. It is more likely to view the use of multilingualism on a single sign as something symbolic rather than something meant to be understood. The most obvious symbolism of multilingualism can be an indication of internationalism. A railway station as a “building between worlds” (Hirsch 2015: 16) takes advantage of displaying a series of languages to evoke sentiments of multiculturalism and globalism that make the place different from the rest of the city. This symbolic nature can also explain the difference between the two stations. Vienna as a global hub of Central Europe is more likely to be connected with feelings of internationalism and multiculturalism. There seems to be little need to further reinforce this idea in the Viennese station. On the other side, Bratislava as a city is much smaller and probably less attractive to foreigners. Therefore, the station might need to show the values of globalism in a more explicit way.

The code choice in Figure 9 is partially randomised. English, Slovak and German re-occur on both signs in the same order which implies some level of fixed nature. The remaining languages, however, seem to have been picked because of their diverse appearance and for the sake of

simply being multilingual. The translation is too excessive in order to be considered an instrumental type of language choice.

7.2.3. Type of discourse

As mentioned before, the term “sign” is quite flexible and various definitions exist (Gorter 2018: 46). Kress (2013: 132) states that “signs are *motivated* conjunctions of form and meaning, the product of the sign-maker’s agency and interest”. The definition nicely distinguishes between the form, the physical representation, and the meaning or the function of a sign. The previous section already focused on the formal aspect. It proposed one way to categorise the physical representation taking into account the way signs convey meaning utilizing words, pictures or dots. This section in continuation discusses the type of meaning that these physical representations aim to convey or, in other words, the functions of the signs in the landscape. Adopting the distinction between different types of discourse proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2003: 21) and expanded by Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan (2018: 266), Figure 10 illustrates the functional patterns of the two analysed railway stations. The discourse of signs refers to an area of human life and tries to explain what the particular sign is “doing in place” (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 2). The landscape is formed by a spectrum of discourses that are oftentimes in “interdiscursive dialogicality” (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 167). In other words, the discourses present in the landscape may influence one and the other and together they constitute its complexity.

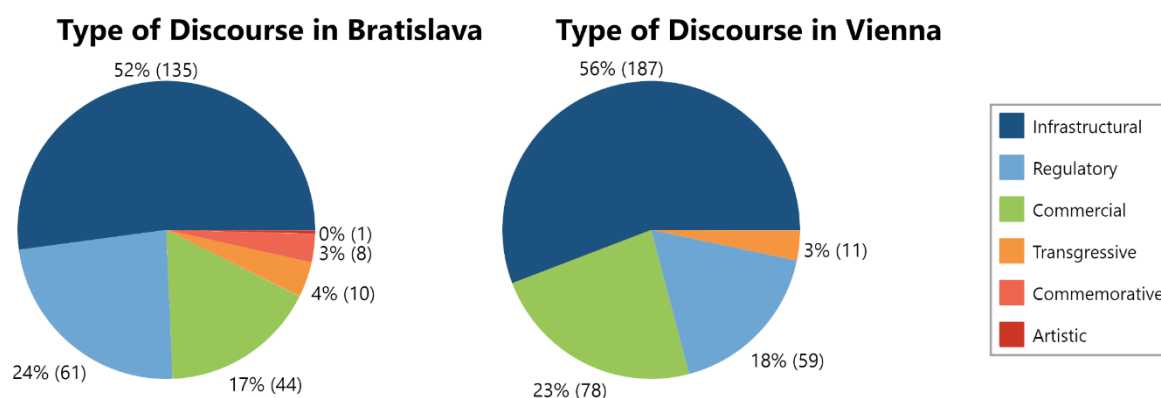


Figure 10. Number of signs based on type of discourse

As indicated in Figure 10, railway stations seem to have quite an established system of sign roles in the landscape. Despite some minor differences, the distribution between the different types of discourse is roughly similar in Bratislava and Vienna. More than half of the collected signs in both stations are infrastructural. Infrastructural signs are indexical in the way that they name places and indicate where they are located. While being of minor semiotic importance, a

landscape without these would be considered strange at best (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 186-187). Considering the size of these buildings, the need to navigate the visitors is understandable. Despite this need, however, their very frequent occurrence and the similar meaning that many of them convey may evoke sentiments of overuse. Furthermore, even though railway stations are multifunctional facilities nowadays (Bissell 2009: 174), their primary function can still be considered to transport people. Within the process of transportation, there is a greater need to ground this place in the network of space when compared to other touristic spots, such as historical city centres. The sense of space is not only present within the station building but also as part of a greater railway network.

There is a difference between Bratislava and Vienna in the second most frequent type of discourse. While regulatory signs are placed second and commercial signs third in Bratislava, it is the other way around in Vienna. In terms of numbers, both Bratislava and Vienna display roughly the same number of regulatory signs. This coincidence can be caused by the fact that technically, since Bratislava is a smaller station, more spots have been covered in the data collection process. The station also possesses less space where to display signs and probably needs to condense various types into a single area. For example, staff-only rooms are definitely present in both stations but, since they are placed on the first platform in Bratislava, the signs of these have been collected only there. On the other side, Vienna possessing more space has the possibility to avoid multifunctional spots and can place certain locations in isolation. The Viennese dataset is thus less representative since the station is bigger. The numbers in Vienna are probably higher when taking into account the entire place. Furthermore, Bratislava presents a less standardised form of sign types. Figure 4 above displays regulatory signs. While Vienna possesses one type, Bratislava uses additional three to convey the same message.

Regulatory discourse refers to signs that carry some regulatory weight. If one does not comply with what is being indicated, they might potentially face some legal sanctions (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 185). Probably the most prototypical regulatory signs are those related to traffic. Since railway stations constitute a part of the transport system, it is not surprising that regulatory signs form a significant part of the dataset. Regulatory discourse as a category is quite diverse in nature (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 185) which is nicely reflected in the analysed landscapes. Figure 11 exemplifies the different types of regulatory signs.



Figure 11. Types of regulatory signs respectively: a traffic sign, a warning, an in-case-of-emergency sign, a ban, a sign informing about regulations present in the landscape

Interestingly, regulatory signs present similar form in both stations and, despite some minor formal variation, convey identical meaning. They perform an essential role in conveying meaning crucial for the correct functioning of these facilities. Regulatory discourse forms the very basis of the railway stations despite being outnumbered by the infrastructural discourse. The infrastructural signs convey meaning that is oftentimes very similar to almost identical, such as the indication where the toilets are located. Regulatory discourse thus possesses a major level of importance.

Commercial discourse, according to Scollon and Scollon (2003: 187), consists of shop signs and signs indicating businesses. It is easy to identify commercial signs as those being produced by external companies, such as McDonalds, that hold little to no influence on the inner-working of the railway station and simply possess a small branch there. This definition, however, causes a challenge for the case of railway stations as an institutional entity. Both stations are operated by national companies, ŽSR and ŽSSR in case of Bratislava and ÖBB in case of Vienna. Despite

possessing an institutional role responsible for the station's functioning, these companies are still a type of business designed to make profit. The institutional signs found in the landscapes can be thus part of the infrastructural, regulatory as well as commercial discourse. In case of institutionally-produced signs, they needed to be connected with economic aspects, such as advertising ticket prices or job positions, in order to be considered commercial. Figure 12 illustrates the different nature that the signs produced by ÖBB can have.



Figure 12. Types of discourse of signs produced by ÖBB respectively: an infrastructural sign informing about a disruption in the railway infrastructure, a regulatory sign of smoking ban and a commercial sign advertising a ticket price

The number of commercial signs differs between Bratislava and Vienna but is proportionate to the stations' sizes. Their substantial representation within the dataset is natural since one of the primary aims of the different corporate bodies present in the stations is to generate profit. These bodies all offer a certain product, such as a train journey, a meal or a souvenir, and the visitor is viewed as a consumer in all of these cases. The diversity of these commercial signs is a very good indicator of the multifunctional nature of railway stations (Bissell 2009: 174).

However, railway stations by definition are government-owned buildings (Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias 2023: 295). The governmental or the official reality is oftentimes viewed as the polar opposite of the commercial or private sphere. The latter is typically synonymous with profit-orientation and the process of consumerism that both take place within the railway station. It cannot be stated that one reality is more prominent than the other since the presence of both is essential for the existence of a railway station. Transport system is, however, still typically associated with the governmental sphere which overshadows that the building in its

essence is also a capitalistic instrument. The necessary presence of both realities within the station nicely supports the station's attribution of a "building between worlds" and demonstrates its contradictory nature (Hirsch 2015: 16).

Almost the entire dataset in both stations is formed by the aforementioned discourses. As indicated in the comparison between sign types and their respective tokens, railway stations are highly dominated by efficiency and functionality of signs that come at the expense of creativity. It is not surprising that railway stations are an overlooked area in the LL field. As stated by Scollon and Scollon (2003: 186), infrastructural and regulatory signs are visually not very prominent and normally get ignored. The fact that these two discourses constitute the far majority of the whole landscape makes it appear boring or not worthy of an in-depth analysis. The commercial discourse that, on the other side, has been of great interest for the LL inquiry especially in Europe, is significantly overshadowed by the other two discourses. All three discourses are, however, crucial for the inner-working of the station. They are responsible for conveying the structure of space organisation, the rules applied there and the possible products that can be consumed. A hypothetical lack of one of these discourses would significantly impact the whole landscape. The remaining types of discourse discussed in the following paragraphs in contrast, do not carry the same level of importance for railway stations' functioning.

Transgressive discourse is the last type identified in both landscapes. Transgressive signs are a diverse group of signs that are prohibited by the official body in the given space. They present a marginalized placement which means that officially, they should not be considered as part of the display (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 188-189). Their very low number in both stations indicates that railway stations impose strict regulations to prevent their appearance and are quite effective in demanding compliance. Even when they appear, the institution usually intends to eliminate them. Vienna is generally more effective in their erasure though. As indicated in Figure 13, while it is obvious that the staff in Vienna actively tried to remove the sign, in case of Bratislava, the sign's erasure is left for the passage of time.



Figure 13. The process of erasure of transgressive signs in Bratislava and Vienna respectively

In terms of form, transgressive signs vary from bigger graffiti to smaller stickers. The peculiar aspect about the transgressive discourse is whether it is read and who it is intended for (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 188). It is challenging to speculate about these questions since the only unifying trait of this discourse is its disregard for internal regulations. It is very difficult to find some commonalities between the particular signs even on such a small representational scale as only around 20 signs.



Figure 14. Transgressive signs; the first and last appeared in Vienna, the second in Bratislava

Figure 14 represents a series of three transgressive signs. The first one is clearly intended to be read or, in this case, scanned as it displays a QR code. It is a clever technique of how to get noticed in a very public space. Since it requires the reader to actively engage with the sign in order to obtain the necessary information online, there is a clear intention to be read. In contrast, the second sign represents a football team logo and thus, the emphasis remains on the producer who may have wished to express some sense of personal identification. The final sign despite having the form of a word is not really legible. The latter two are examples of self-expression where the intention mostly remains unknown. In terms of perceiving, all the transgressive signs, even those presenting verbal form, are viewed as visual singularities. Their intention thus may not be to be read but to be seen. The act of transgression in such a carefully crafted and rule-like landscape can make their production even more appealing and noticeable.

In case of Bratislava, there have been two more types of discourse identified. It does not mean that Vienna lacks these categories but within the scope of this study, none have been collected. Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan (2018: 272) also identified that, for their study, these signs similarly constituted the smallest group. By definition, commemorative discourse includes memorial plaques, and artistic signs are those that “can be obviously identified as works of art”

(Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 272). These definitions seem, however, quite incomplete since for example, a transgressive sign can too be considered a work of art. Thus, the requirement for a sign to be issued or at least approved by the institution has been included.



Figure 15. Commemorative signs

Given the relatively long history of the railway station in Bratislava compared to Vienna, the presence of commemorative discourse is not very surprising. The commemorative signs in Bratislava's landscape aim to recall some pivotal moments which are somehow connected with the railway transport. There is an interesting difference within this group that can be seen in Figure 15. While the signs that refer back to older historical moments are bi- or even multilingual, the more recent ones appear only in the state language. The difference may be caused by the severity of the impact and the relevance that these milestones hold. The impact of the Holocaust is far greater and more relevant for international audience than a regional railway renovation.

Finally, there is only one small artistic sign issued by a private company. The overall lack of this type is not surprising since railway stations, as mentioned before, are significantly dominated by functionality. Artistic discourse, however, is not completely absent from the landscape. It just typically appears higher than the line of eyesight. Railway stations are generally huge halls with high ceilings. Since the functional signs compose the majority of space around the line of eyesight, artistic signs are pushed closer to the ceiling, which was outside the scope for this study. It can be summarised that artistic discourse is used to fill in the space left out by other types of signs. This role of artistic signs is well illustrated by Figure 16

as the only instance collected. The door is completely empty and the shape of heart is most likely used to simply occupy the space and avoid visual silence.



Figure 16. Artistic sign

8. The role of the verbal mode

The verbal mode has been the principal research interest of LL inquiry since its beginnings following the definition provided by Landry and Bourhis (1997: 23). The dominant focus on language is natural since the verbal mode is a trait unique only to human beings and constitutes the primary form of communication. Even though the next chapter shows that the non-verbal mode can convey meaning as well, the verbal one is usually considered the primary meaning-carrying resource that seems to be of exclusive interest in LL (Domke 2018: 116-117).

This chapter centres around this core element of LL and focuses on the discussion of signs that presents the use of verbal mode. It firstly provides an overview of the languages found in the stations and then continues with the discussion of their respective roles and reasons for their appearance. As Shohamy (2018: 26) indicates, the use of language is systematic in public spaces and patterns of behaviour can be identified through the process of careful observation.

8.1. Quantitative overview

As seen in the previous chapter, there are 225 out of 259 sign types in Bratislava and 274 out of 335 sign types in Vienna that present a partial or total verbal nature. The frequent occurrence clearly indicates the importance of the verbal mode within the landscape. Figure 17 shows the number of signs displaying different linguistic forms.

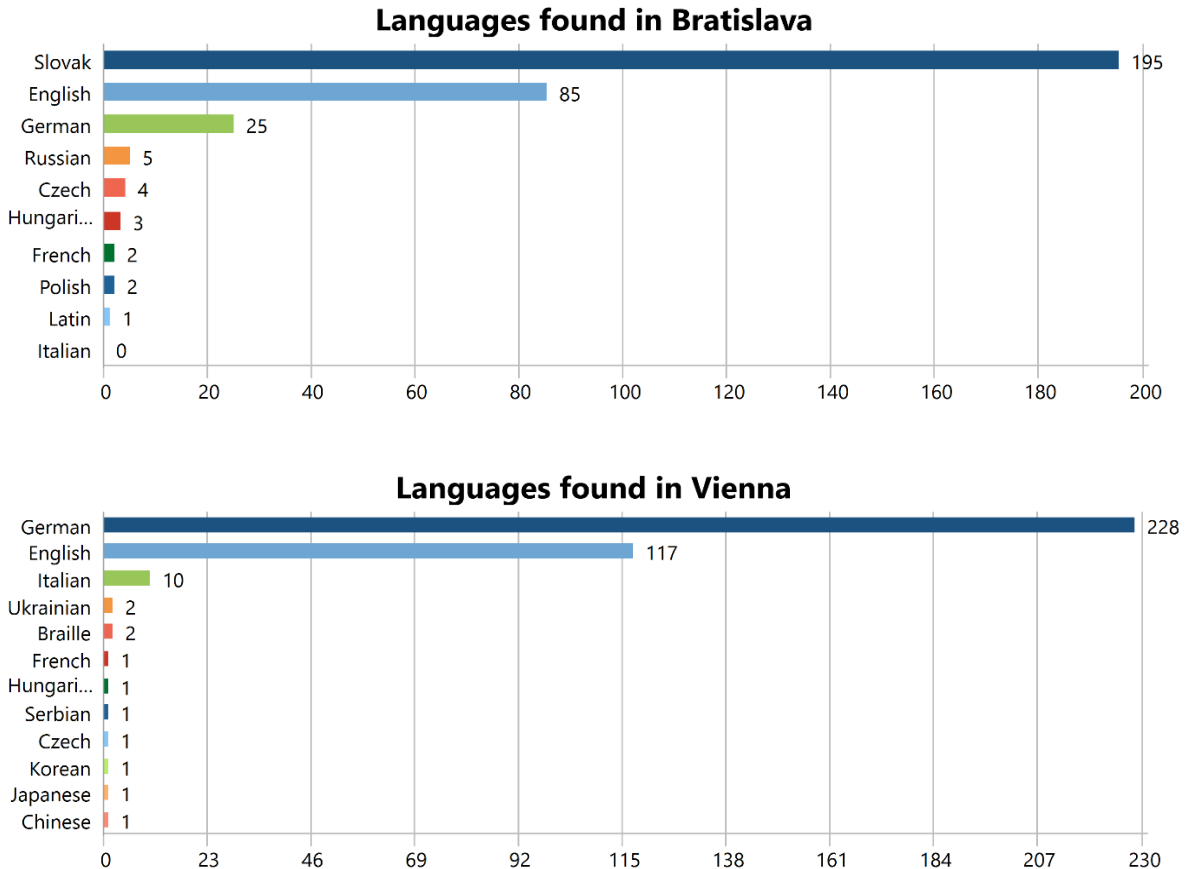


Figure 17. Number of signs displaying identified languages

Figure 17 indicates that there is indeed a systematic behaviour in the railway stations. Both landscapes are multilingual spaces. Given the context of both countries, it provides yet more evidence that areas typically viewed as monolingual present instances of multilingualism. The number of signs displaying foreign languages is not very high though. Despite the nature of a railway station as a place housing a significant flow of foreign travellers, multilingualism is not that prominent. It is clear that both stations are, by far, dominated by the respective state language. Its unrivalled position is probably dictated by the normative nature of railway stations (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 284). There is a stricter requirement to comply with the image conveyed by the government. Since the two respective countries present such a strong tradition of the state language, the landscape of a railway station is a natural representational spot reflecting this value.

The second most occurring language is English which is expected because of its current status as the main lingua franca. English is the only foreign variety that is prominently repeated within the landscapes. It is also the only non-state variety that appears on top-down monolingual signs. On the other side of the spectrum though, the existence of English is greatly overshadowed by the respective state language. The numbers in Figure 17 clearly indicate the huge gap between the use of English and the state language.

The third place presents a bridging category of somewhat semi-consistency and semi-prominence. While being greatly overshadowed by the use of the state language and English, the languages placed as the third still minimally re-occur in the landscapes. The re-occurrence is more prominent in Bratislava but in case of both stations, the use of German and Italian is institutionally-dictated. Even though they cannot rival the presence of English and the state language, their use presents a more stable nature in the landscapes compared to the remaining varieties because the signs, on which they occur, are usually issued by the institution.

The remaining identified languages present a more randomised nature. Since their occurrence is very low, patterns in use are not easily identifiable. On the other hand, the behaviour of multiple languages presenting only very few instances within the landscapes is systematic. Since railway stations are linguistically very controlled spaces, the rare occurrence of a completely different variety is very eye-catching. These languages are thus prominent because of their scarce use and very distinct nature. Therefore, there are two opposing types of visual prominence which again illustrates the railway stations' contradictory nature (Edwards 1997: 21). The use of language can either be too rare and unique or be overly repeated in order to be noticeable.

8.2. The role of foreign languages

This section discusses the use of foreign varieties within the railway stations apart from English. It starts with the languages displaying the least instances and continues to those presenting the most. Even though English is also a foreign variety in this context, due to its close interaction with the state language, it is discussed in the next section. The languages discussed in this part mostly appear on multilingual and bilingual signs. Their appearance on monolingual signs is rare and only occurs in case of the transgressive discourse.

8.2.1. Chinese, Japanese & Korean



Figure 18. Use of Chinese, Japanese and Korean on a commercial sign in Vienna Main Station

There is only one instance of Chinese, Japanese and Korean that occurs in Vienna on a single multilingual sign illustrated in Figure 18. This single instance is also the only occurring use of typically non-European languages. The sign in Figure 18 is clearly dominated by the use of German, the state language. The use of these Asian varieties is striking because of its completely different appearance. They present a different type of script which has no equivalence in Europe. While distinct, a regular traveller with no prior knowledge would not be able to differentiate between the three scripts if not for the presence of flags. If the writing was targeting speakers of these languages, there would have been no need to include the flags. The use of so many languages along with English also seems excessive. It can be assumed that the use of these languages is symbolic rather than instrumental (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119). Their value in the landscape mainly lies in their distinct form which can be perceived as something exotic in the given context. They are then perceived as visuals rather than actual words. Since this sign belongs to the commercial discourse, the use of these varieties can be considered a creative advertising strategy to attract attention.

8.2.2. Serbian

Figure 19 illustrates the only instance of Serbian on a transgressive sign located in the waiting area of Vienna Main Station. The sign displays two scripts. The majority is written in Latin alphabet and the word *Serbia* appears in Cyrillic as well. There is also a non-verbal signage displayed in the shape of a heart, an exclamation mark and an arrow.

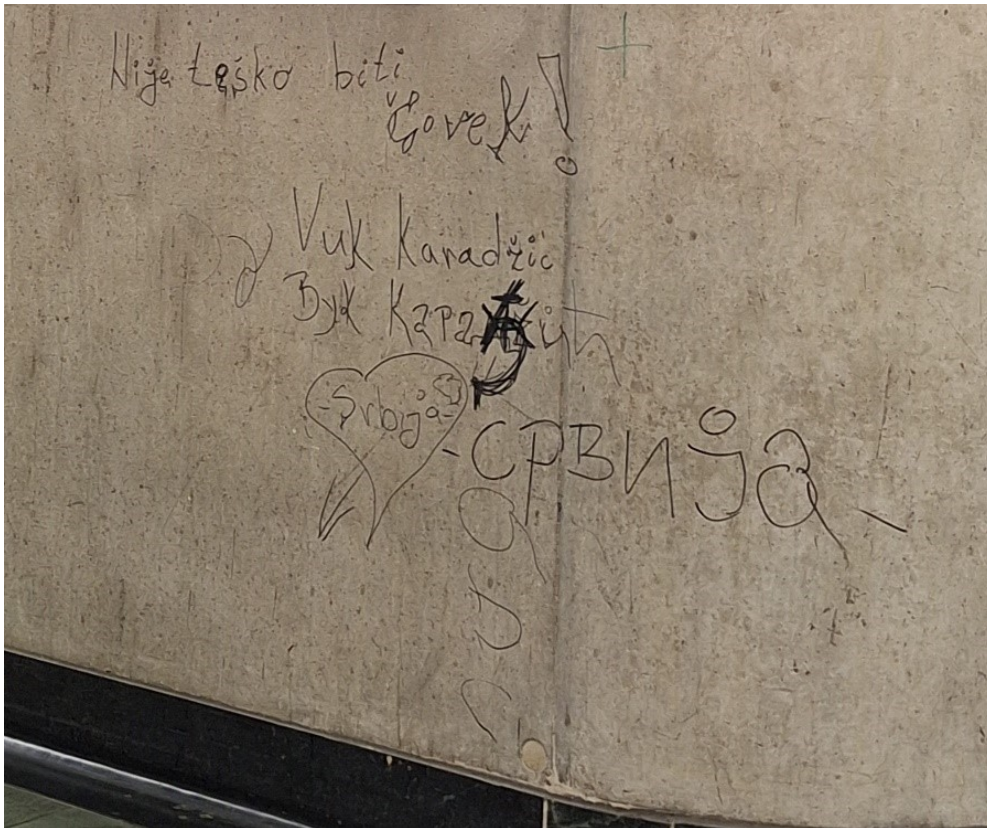


Figure 19. Use of Serbian on a transgressive sign in Vienna Main Station

Since Figure 19 is an example of a transgressive sign, the emphasis is mostly put on the producer (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 188). It can be assumed that this sign is a form of self-expression and while it remains unknown whether it is read or not, its placement in a waiting room and substantial size ensure that it can be seen by diverse travellers. A waiting room is a place where people spend a major quantity of time and thus the sign is more likely to get noticed. Within the waiting room, the sign appears right under the house rules poster which creates an interesting dichotomy between the regulatory and transgressive discourse. The sign may symbolise a form of direct rebellion against the strict rules applied in the landscape. In terms of languages use, Serbian can be used as a form of the sign producer's identity marker. Vienna is a multicultural city and former Yugoslavs constitute a significant minority group in Austria (Minority Rights Group n.d.).

8.2.3. Czech, Hungarian & Polish

The use of Czech, Hungarian and Polish can be attributed to the geographical proximity. Czechia and Hungary are neighbouring countries to both Austria and Slovakia and their respective state languages appear in both landscapes. Poland borders with Slovakia and its state language is present in Bratislava Main Station. Primarily, all these varieties are used to refer to geographical place names located in territories where these languages possess legal status as illustrated in Figure 20.

ODCHOD DEPARTURE	DRUH CATEGORY	ODPRAVCA OPERATOR	CÍLOVÁ STANICA DESTINATION	SMER JAZDY DIRECTION	NÁSTUPÍŠTE PLATFORM	MEŠKA DELAY
6:05	EN	ZSSK	Praha hl. n.	Kúty	2	
6:08	rjx	ZSSK	Budapest-Nyugati	Nové Zámky	1	
6:09	Os	ZSSK	Zürich HB	Bratislava-Petržalk	4	
6:13	Os	ZSSK	Galanta	Senec	2	
6:13	REX	LESK	Komárno	Bratislava-N. Mesto	5	
6:15	Bus	ZSSK	Marchegg	nástupište II	SB	
6:21	RJ	RJSK	Praha hl. n.	Brno hl. n.		
6:27	S20	ZSSK	Kúty	Malacky		
6:35	S70	LESK	Dunajská Streda	Kvetoslavov	5	
6:36	S50	ZSSK	Trnava	Pezinok		

Figure 20. Names of stations appearing in the state language of particular places, 1st line in Czech, 2nd line in Hungarian, 3rd line in German

The above figure exemplifies the power that the state languages hold in the European context. Even though translations of the depicted place names exist in German and Slovak, they still appear in their respective state languages for the three countries. It is clear that they do not target speakers of these languages but act as symbols. These languages serve as identity markers but not for individuals but geographical locations (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119). They are used synonymously with places where the state languages are officially established. Their use on an international level reinforces the idea of associating a language with a country. Naturally, many European countries are therefore viewed as monolingual due to the symbolic use of state languages on an international level.

In case of Bratislava Main Station, Hungarian and Polish are also used to symbolise the railway station as a global sight. Figure 9 in the previous chapter illustrates that these two languages are displayed in the entrance area. They do not target a specific group of people but serve as a way

to convey the identity of the building. Particularly Hungarian, which is quite different from other European languages, diversifies the sign. Through the utilisation of multilingualism, the station evokes sentiments of internationalism. Similarly to the previous paragraph, the use of languages serves as a mark of place identity. In contrast though, their symbolism lies in their interplay. They need to be viewed collectively in order to serve as an identity marker and together they emphasise the railway station's global connection. Furthermore, considering the dominance of only a few languages in the landscape, the language use for the sole purpose of being multilingual makes the landscape more appealing. Since railway stations are heavily function-oriented, this use of foreign varieties is one of the few ways to advertise and creatively market the place.

Lastly, Czech displays one more form of use in Vienna Main Station. As seen above, languages can act as symbols for place identity. Figure 21 shows another type of identity marker, a corporate one. The company RegioJet is the only private train carrier in both stations. It is a Czech company and possesses a ticket office in both landscapes. While the signs issued by this company adopted a very similar nature to those produced by the institution itself, Figure 21 shows an exception.



Figure 21. Sign in Vienna Main Station displaying rare sequence of languages: Czech, German and English respectively

Figure 21 illustrates a case of duplicating multilingualism (Reh 2004) and displays Czech first, German second and English as the last. The language order in this case is important because it violates the “politics of code sequence” (Coupland 2012: 11) established in this station. Since westerners read from top to bottom and from left to right, the occurrence of Czech in this case is visually the most salient. This sign is one of the rare examples where the state language loses its dominant position and is explicitly overshadowed by another variety. Moreover, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 193-195) relate the top-bottom placement with the ideal-real distribution. Czech appearing at the top represents the world as it might be and is not concerned with practical matters but rather with emotive appeals. English appearing at the bottom represents the real, practical world. It conveys information that is meant to be understood. German serves as a connective element that can perform functions from both poles. While it can be viewed as a symbol of the place, a synonym of Austrian context, it can also be viewed as a communicative element targeting German speakers. The role of Czech thus continues in the emerging pattern of a language representing the identity of something, in this case, a private company.

8.2.4. French

The use of French in Bratislava Main Station follows the pattern of displaying foreign languages for the purpose of being multilingual. The use of French is not very common and it does not display any strong traditions in the Slovak context. Therefore, its occurrence in the railway station is conditioned by their recognisable and distinct form that helps convey the feelings of a global space.



Figure 22. Food industry adopting French names: namely *Le Crobag* and *asiagourmet*

In terms of Vienna Main Station, French is used only on a multilingual sign displaying a series of private brands shown in Figure 22. French is used to represent the company *Le Crobag* that is interestingly of German origin (Le Crobag n.d.). The company *asiagourmet* also uses the French word *gourmet*. Both companies use French as a means to construct their identity and convey feelings of luxury, quality and good food that are typically associated with France and,

by extension, with its respective official language. Its use also exemplifies the trend of linguistic fetishisation of this language. For a long time, it has been very popular to adopt words of French origin in marketing, especially in food and beauty industry, to convey quality-related sentiments (Keng Wee Ong, Ghesquiere & Serwe 2013: 24).

8.2.5. Russian

Instances of Russian can be found only in Bratislava Main Station. Due to its different script, its occurrence again indicates the recurring pattern of displaying languages in order to symbolise a global and multilingual landscape as already seen in Figure 9. Russian is, however, not used only symbolically. Figure 23 illustrates the use of Russian for the instrumental purpose (Sciriha & Vassallo 2023: 161).

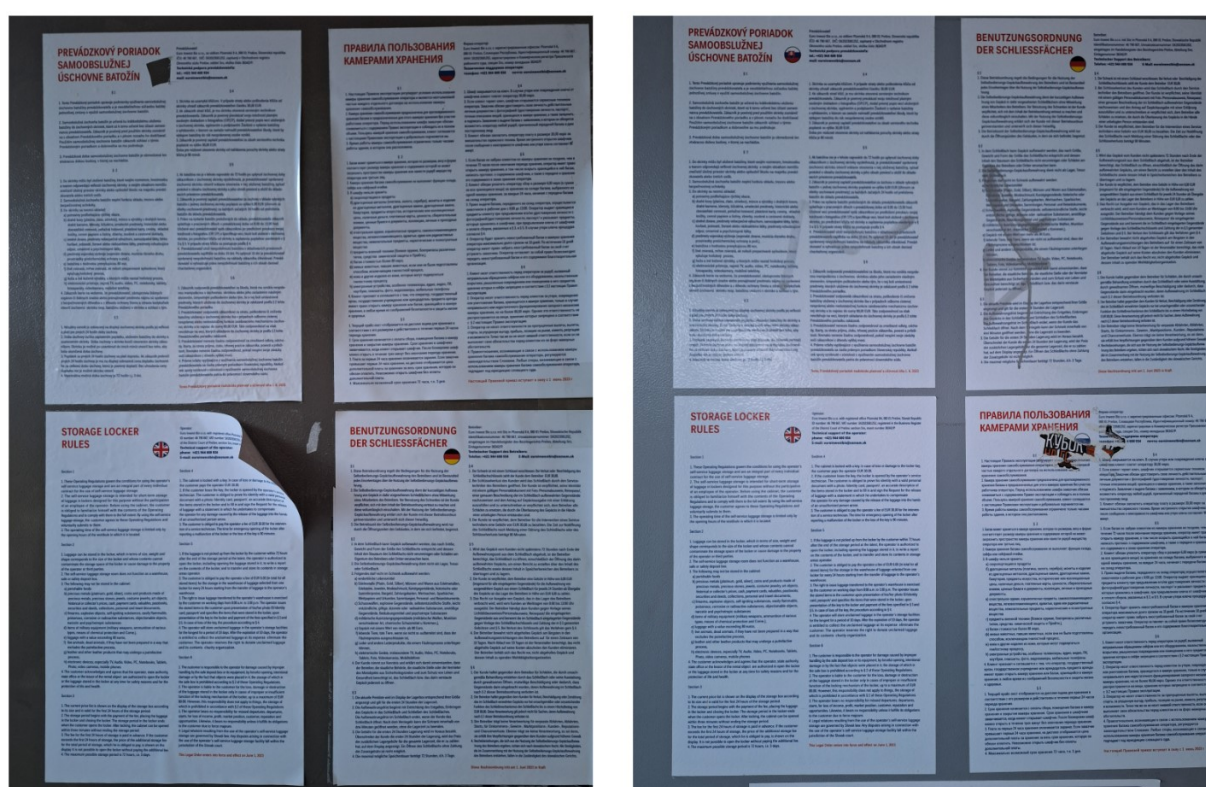


Figure 23. Regulatory signs displaying different sequence of languages: Slovak-Russian-English-German on the 1st sign; Slovak-German-English-Russian on the 2nd sign

The text displayed above is simply too extensive to present a symbolic value. The text appears in 4 languages that are related in the form of duplicating multilingualism (Reh 2004). Even though the two sign instances display the same linguistic information, they cannot be considered tokens because the order of languages is different. Therefore, only a semi-presence of politics of code sequence (Coupland 2012: 11) can be indicated. While Slovak and English display a fixed position, Russian and German interchange their order. It can be either an error on the producer's side, the institution, or an indication of code preferences and disregard within the

station. While Slovak and English clearly dominate in the station, there are considerably less instances of German and Russian and therefore, these two are significantly less important. They are simply not significant enough to be attributed a fixed sequence.

Figure 23 shows all the languages that Bratislava Main Station issues from the role of an institution and they all carry instrumental value. While the languages discussed so far adopted the role of a visual or an identity-marker, Russian is one of the four languages that is meant to be understood. Since Figure 23 is a regulatory sign, the message on the sign needs to be comprehended. The four depicted languages include the state language and three varieties performing the role of a lingua franca. Russian's use can be attributed to the historical connection between Russia, Slovakia and the Eastern bloc countries, and its Slavic roots. Russian was historically used as a mark of political orientation and, due to the unquestioned position of the USSR within the block, as a lingua franca among the eastern-bloc members. Its historical role is also supported by the fact that no recently-issued signs appear in this language anymore. Russian is thus only a remnant of historical development of the station.

8.2.6. Ukrainian



Figure 24. Use of Ukrainian in Vienna Main Station

Ukrainian can be found only in Vienna Main Station and its use is conditioned by the on-going warfare situation in Ukraine. Figure 24 displays a sign issued institutionally that is almost entirely in Ukrainian. The sign clearly targets refugees from Ukraine and thus presents a fixed

group of sign-consumers. Translation does not appear because this sign is simply not meant for the international or home audience. This sign also illustrates the role of the main railway station in the capital as the metaphorical entry point of the country. Since the sign targets refugees, it conveys the image that these people will enter into the country through this landscape.

8.2.7. German

While German is the Austrian state language, it still remains a foreign variety in Slovakia. In this case, this section only addresses the role of German in Bratislava Main Station. As seen in Figure 23 above, German is an institutionally-issued language that carries instrumental value.



Figure 25. Trilingual sign in Slovak, English and German

Figure 25 illustrates an infrastructural sign displaying three languages, Slovak, English and German, that are related by duplicating multilingualism (Reh 2004). The interesting aspect of this sign is the structure of bullet points. The first two bullet points display the message in Slovak. Logically the following two would display the message in English and the last two in German but that is not the case. The third bullet point provides the translation of the first bullet point first in English and then in German and the pattern continues in this manner. English and German are thus viewed as one unit and since English is aimed at foreign audience, so is German. The two languages are not used to target their respective native speakers but anyone who can understand them.

It can be stated that German is used as a lingua franca for the European audience. German is the state language in several European countries and possesses a significant number of native speakers. The German-speaking countries' strong economies also make the language very appealing for Europeans to learn (Darquennes & Nelde 2006: 64-66). German is often a lingua franca but far from the usage of English in this context. The politics of code sequence (Coupland 2012: 11) indicate that there is a clear hierarchical relation between Slovak, English and German respectively. This hierarchical relation is ignored only in few instances, such as in the case of

Figure 26. German is given precedence over English on this commemorative sign because of its historical importance. As stated in Chapter 5, the first-ever train in Slovakia arrived from Austria, a German-speaking country. This historical importance changed the established placement of languages. It can thus be concluded that German occurs in the landscape because of its European importance as well as the historical connection with Slovakia.



Figure 26. Commemorative sign appearing in German, English, French and Russian respectively

8.2.8. Italian

As mentioned above, Bratislava Main Station presents three languages that institutionally act as a lingua franca because of various reasons. In case of Vienna Main Station, English is clearly the lingua franca of the landscape which will be further discussed in the next section. In order to diversify the landscape, there was probably a need to add another institutionally-supported language which overall posed a challenge. German, that often serves as a European lingua franca, already had a prominent role in the landscape as a state language. Therefore, the sign-makers probably felt the need to select one more foreign variety.

Figure 27 shows that Italian has been selected as the third language with an institutional background. Despite its limited occurrence, the fact that it appears as a selection choice on a ticket machine gives Italian significant importance. However, this study can only speculate why Italian has been chosen. It may have been selected because of the significant number of tourists visiting Vienna or the geographical proximity since Italian possesses legal status in two Austrian neighbours, Italy and Switzerland. Also, its use may have sprung from history, mainly the Cold

War period, when the Slavic countries were forbidden to travel to Austria. Furthermore, Italian as a Romance language nicely counters the Germanic-dominated landscape. It remains unclear what exact criteria have been taken into consideration when selecting this variety.

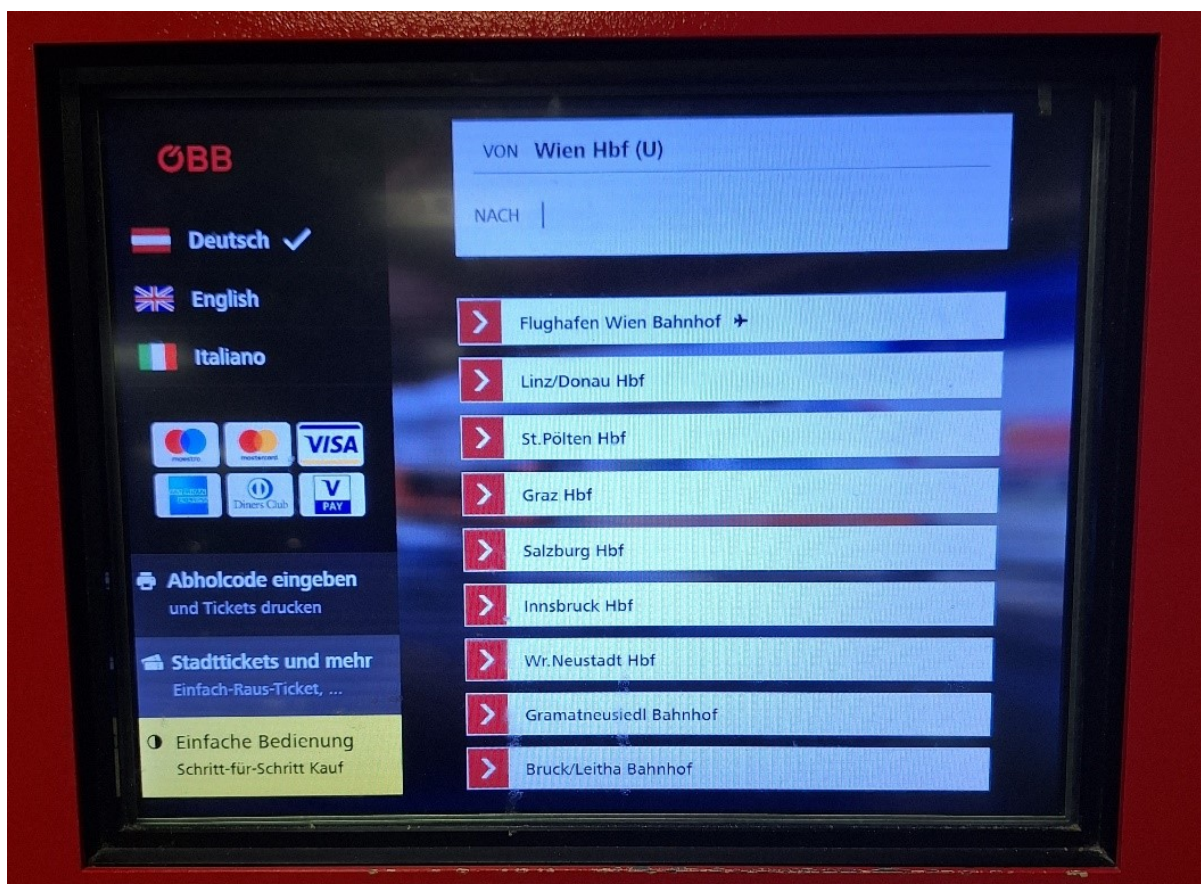


Figure 27. Ticket machine providing the selection of languages in German, English and Italian

In case of Italian, it is also used on commercial signs where it adopts a symbolic role. In this case, the use of Italian can also be considered an example of linguistic fetishisation similar to French (Keng Wee Ong, Ghesquiere & Serwe 2013: 24). Since Italy is famous for its gastronomy, Italian is used as a means to evoke feelings of good gastronomical experience which makes it an ideal marketing tool for food-related industry.

8.3. The role of the respective state language and English

8.3.1. Monolingual signs

Table 3. Number of monolingual signs in the state language and in English

	Bratislava Main Station	Vienna Main Station
State language	122	126
English	11	28

Almost all the monolingual signs appear either in the state language or English. Table 3 shows a clear dominance of monolingual signs in the respective state language. Considering the size of the stations, the state language monolingualism is more prevalent in Bratislava and it monopolises the infrastructural and regulatory discourse. English monolingualism is then limited to only commercial discourse. The situation in Vienna on the other side is more complex.



Figure 28. Name and motto of ÖBB

In terms of infrastructural signs, Vienna displays similar behaviour to Bratislava. As illustrated in Figure 28, the corporate/institutional body ÖBB in charge of the station is closely linked with the state language with its name and motto. All the signs issued by this company are greatly influenced by this connection of company-state language. Apart from conveying instrumental meaning, these institutional signs also perform a secondary function of symbolising the landscape affiliation to a larger social structure (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119). As mentioned before, European languages are very often viewed as extension of the country itself and thus, their significant presence not only serves a communicative tool but also as an identity marker. German serves as a conveyer of the identity of the country as well as the company.

In case of Vienna however, there seems to be an exception to this pattern shown in Figure 29. In this case, the use of English can be explained as a matter of simplification. The words displayed in English are universally recognised and their German equivalents (e.g. *Fahrkarten*) are longer and more complex. The use of English here is simply more efficient as it saves physical space and the required time to read it.



Figure 29. English replacing German, the state language, as a matter of simplification and space efficiency, namely *Tickets* on the 1st sign and *shop* on the 2nd sign

Regulatory signs in Vienna display more variety but a pattern can be indicated as well. Figure 30 shows that regulatory signs can address distinct primary audiences. The first sign indicates the presence of some equipment and appears in German. While the sign can concern the general public, it is primarily aimed at the stations' staff or some specialists (e.g. technicians). There is thus an expectation that those who live and work in the country can speak the state language. The second sign in Figure 30, in contrast, appears in English and is aimed at a universal audience. The use of English in this case is symbolism-free and acts as a true lingua franca concerning everybody. Backhaus (2015: 207) indicated the same pattern in the Tokyo's underground. Simple regulatory messages accompanied by a pictogram appeared in English-only in that landscape as well.



Figure 30. Monolingual regulatory signs in German and English in Vienna Main Station

In terms of commercial signs, both stations display signs in the state language and in English. Commercial signs in the state language usually serve to advertise and show a variety of products. In contrast, signs in English display a more fixed category and generally refer to tourism-related services (e.g. hotels, sights and food). In both cases, the language use is mostly instrumental. A separate category of commercial signs are the shop windows that display languages based on companies' identities and the particular values they aim to convey. Figure 31 illustrates how some companies use the state language to convey feelings of local products and the affiliation to the country and others utilize English to evoke sentiments of globalism.



Figure 31. Monolingual commercial signs in German and English in Vienna Main Station

8.3.2. Bilingual signs

Table 4. Distribution ratio between the state language and English on bilingual signs

	Bratislava Main Station	Vienna Main Station
Duplicating multilingualism	37	38
State language dominance	16	49
English dominance	0	5

Table 4 shows that the ratio between English and the state languages on bilingual signs can vary. Equal ratio takes place in case of duplicating multilingualism (Reh 2004). Given the stations' size, it is more prominent in Bratislava. In terms of function, these signs usually belong to the infrastructural and regulatory discourse. They usually target travellers and are connected with performing actions connected with the inner-working of the building, such as the opening hours, complex regulations and stations' spatial organisation.



Figure 32. English expression *touch screen* on a bilingual sign in Bratislava Main Station

As seen in Figure 8 in the previous chapter, bilingualism is less frequent in Bratislava Main Station. Out of all Slovak-English bilingual signs, the significant majority presents the relation of duplicating multilingualism. The remaining signs are those in which Slovak dominates. In general, these instances belong to the commercial discourse where English lexis is used as a way to convey global identity of some brands. In case of infrastructural signs, as seen in Figure 32, modern signage (e.g. touch screen) displays internationally-recognised English words. The

anglicisms in these cases are far more natural for these modern devices than their respective translations.

In case of Vienna, the signs where German prevails are much more abundant than where English does. Similarly to Bratislava, English lexis is oftentimes used on commercial signs to convey the identity of some companies and to name some modern devices, mainly the Internet-related ones that penetrated into German. Vienna also presents a unique use of English concerning mostly the words *tickets* and *exit*. While the German equivalents do appear in the landscape, these are very often replaced by English. As stated in the previous section, the replacement takes place because they present a simpler and easily recognisable form that saves physical space. Their use also imitates the spoken language.

Lastly, Vienna presents a very small group of bilingual signs with English being the dominant variety. These signs belong to the commercial discourse and behave very similarly to the monolingual signs in English explained in the previous part. They target international travellers and address their typical, tourism related, needs as illustrated in Figure 33 that shows two hotel advertisements.



Figure 33. Commercial signs where English possesses dominant position

The signs above could have been considered monolingual if not for the address appearing in German. The use of the word *Vienna* is interesting in this case. In the first sign, it appears in English as the advertised entity. The remaining instances of this word appear in German and represent the actual geographical space. Under these circumstances, the use of German is symbolic as a characteristic of the physical space itself (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119). On the other side, English is used instrumentally to target travellers of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

8.3.3. Multilingual signs

The behaviour of English and the respective state language on multilingual signs have already been addressed when discussing other foreign varieties, mainly Italian in case of Vienna and German in case of Bratislava. As seen above, there is a more or less fixed hierarchical relation with the state language being superior to English. This relation is very well represented in the vertical placement of the languages where the state language appears at the top. There are also a few multilingual instances in Bratislava that present horizontal placement. In these cases, the sequence of languages is less fixed as illustrated by Figure 34 below. The loose sequence of horizontal placement can be interpreted as yet another example of visual disarray of Bratislava Main Station (Gubčo 2022).

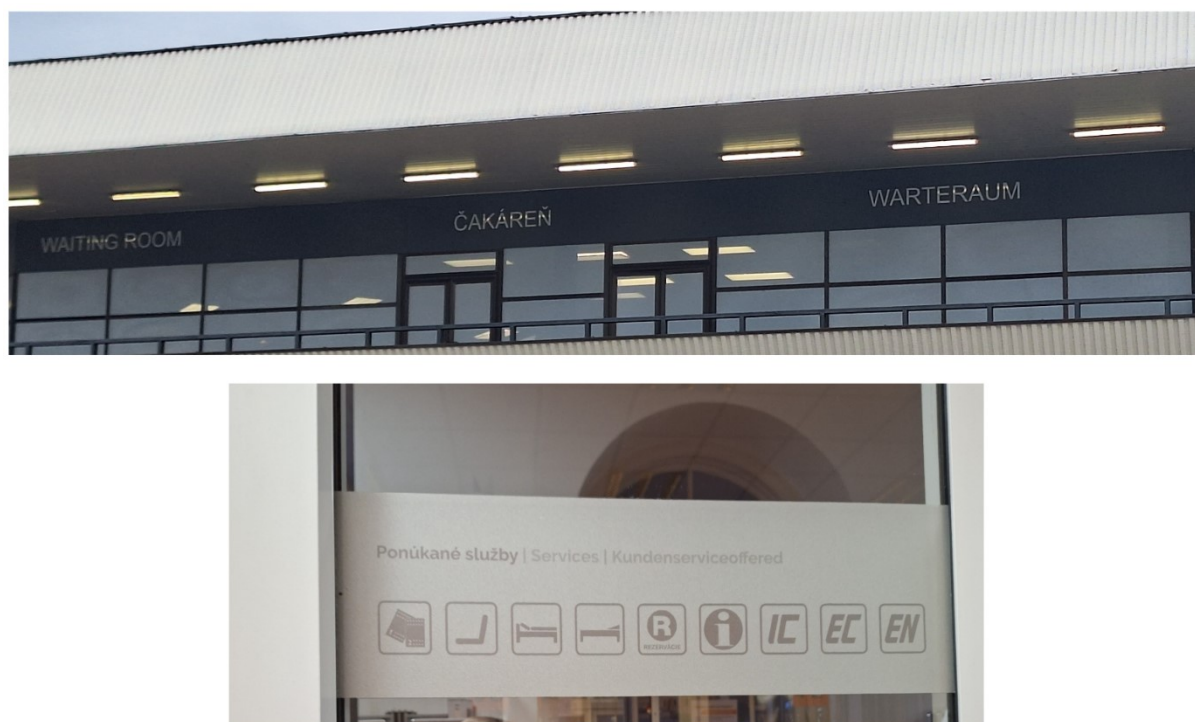


Figure 34. Horizontal sequence of languages in Bratislava Main Station: English-Slovak-German on the 1st sign; Slovak-English-German on the 2nd sign

In terms of meaning, the state language presents a multifunctional role. It is used instrumentally to target its respective speakers and at the same time symbolically, to display the affiliation to a larger societal organisation, such as the country (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119). English is then used as a lingua franca and serves as a means for communication between people of diverse linguistic backgrounds. These two varieties are accompanied by various languages because of distinct reasons as seen above. Additionally in case of multilingual signs in Bratislava, some signs are used symbolically to convey feelings of globalism. These make use of the interplay between distinct linguistic forms. In terms of this use, Slovak can still serve as a mark of

affiliation. The other languages, however, are used simply because of their distinct (e.g. Russian) and easily-recognisable (e.g. English) forms.

8.4. Linguistic absence

As already introduced in Chapter 2, the aim of LL is to not only discuss the presence of languages but also their absence (*Linguistic Landscape* 2015: 1). Linguistic absence can be identified through some unmet expectations present in the landscapes that emerge from the context.

The most notable linguistic absence in both landscapes is that of English. While it is still the second most frequent language in the stations, it is possible to identify some situations where its absence is notable. In both stations, there are areas where English is totally absent. In case of Vienna, it is the first platform where only city trains operate. Despite Vienna being a multicultural city, the German-only use in this section of the station indicates that city travellers/commuters should be speakers of German. There is an unspoken normative requirement that those in need of intra-city transport in Vienna should adapt to the use of the state language (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 284).

In case of Bratislava, the waiting area similarly presents no instances of English. Its absence, however, is likely to be linked to the fact that this section is the most recently built. There are also other indications that the use of English has already reached its peak and currently, there is an on-going period of slow decline (Pennycook 2020: 682). In terms of commemorative signs, the older signs had been issued in bilingual Slovak-English display and the more recent ones appear only in the state language as already seen in Figure 15. While it is only a small representational sample and the conclusion can only be drawn with due caution, it may be a minor indication of feelings that English had already been overused and new trends need to emerge. While the passage of time is easily noticeable in Bratislava, Vienna is more homogenous regarding its time development and similar behaviour cannot be observed.

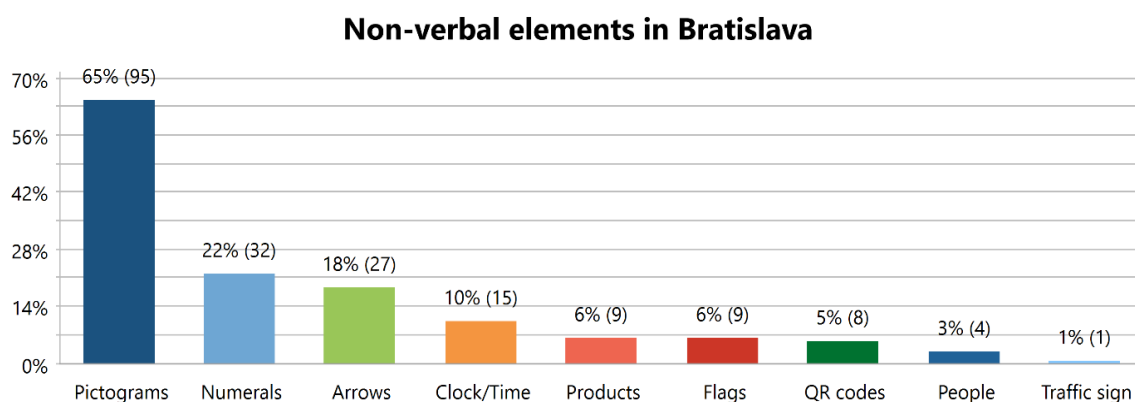
Considering the historical evolution of Slovakia and its relation to Czechia, the representation of Czech is almost non-existent. Czech presents a unique status that contravenes its use in the station. It currently lacks a legal status in Slovakia and is not a widely-spoken language in Europe to be used instrumentally. At the same time, it may be too familiar and similar to the state language in order to be used symbolically. As seen above, Bratislava frequently utilises foreign languages to convey sentiments of a global space. Czech linguistic forms are most likely not foreign enough for a typical Slovak spectator in this case.

In terms of Vienna and its geographical location, only Italian is used as a neighbouring language. There are very few instances of other Central-European languages. Considering the minority ethnicities in Austria and the significant presence of Slavic groups (Minority Rights Group n.d.), their respective languages are not represented within the landscape which may be another indication of the implicit need to adapt to the use of the state language. Furthermore, Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan (2018: 284) found instances of French in German railway stations. Since German and Austrian environments are quite similar and French is overall an important European language, its absence in Vienna Main Station can be considered interesting.

9. Most prominent non-verbal semiotic forms

As Jaworski and Thurlow (20210: 2) state, a linguistic landscape should be referred to as a semiotic landscape since there are various modes beyond language that can carry meaning. Landscapes as such cannot only be read but also seen, heard and felt (Domke 2018: 115). Since this paper is based in the visual domain, it is possible to identify a series of visual resources that carry meaning apart from the various languages discussed in the previous chapter.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the most notable non-verbal resources and groups them together based on their semiotic form. Similarly to the verbal mode, the non-verbal forms convey meaning that can vary from symbolic to instrumental. While some present quite a uniform type of meaning, there are others that display more variety. Figure 35 illustrates the frequency of some notable non-verbal elements and show that both stations display very similar behaviour that is proportionate to their size.



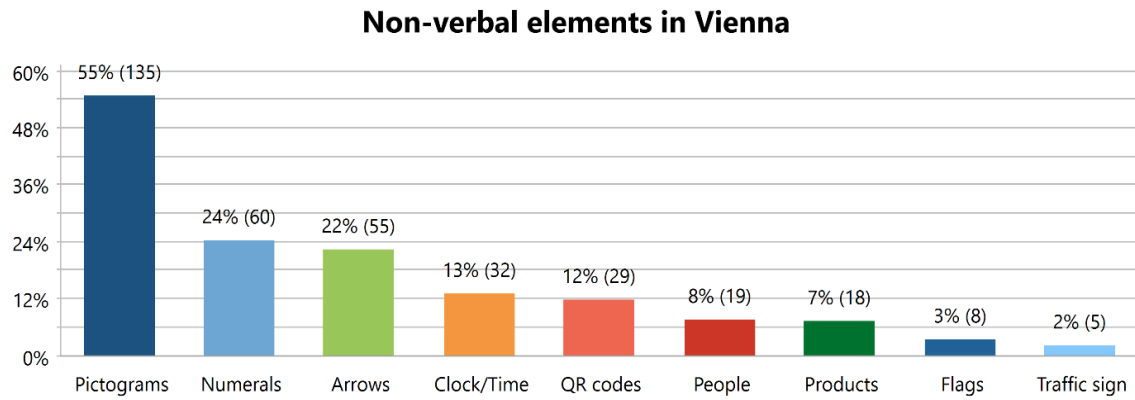


Figure 35. Number of signs displaying identified non-verbal forms

9.1. Traffic signs

Even though railway stations are considered multifunctional spaces (Bissell 2009: 174), they still remain a type of transport building in their essence. The presence of the means of transport, trains in this case, requires regulations. As in any other type of transport, the operation and regulation are achieved by the use of traffic signs, such as traffic lights. While the representation of traffic signs in the dataset is very low, their presence in the railway stations is more notable. They just usually appear either higher than the eye-level or further away from the places frequented by travellers. In Vienna, there is also a small number of instances where traffic signs typical for road travel target pedestrians as seen in Figure 36.



Figure 36. Road signs targeting pedestrians

Since a main railway station is a large building where there is a huge flow of people, traffic signs are an effective means to convey instrumental meaning. These types of signs present a

very simple form and usually occupy little space. They are not constraint by the borders of countries and thus are easily interpreted by travellers of diverse linguistic backgrounds. Traffic signs are an efficient way to convey meaning that is normally free of some deeper symbolism and ideology. They are closely linked with regulatory discourse and can target ordinary people as well as the stations' or trains' staff.

9.2. Flags

As seen in Figure 35, the occurrence of flags is not very significant in the landscapes. The few, however, still represent a certain preference for infrastructural signs. Additionally, they also appear on one more type of discourse, on commercial signs in Vienna and commemorative ones in Bratislava. There is, in fact, a stable pattern of displaying flags on commemorative signs which accounts for their increased occurrence in Bratislava. In terms of their role, they are used as symbols of political entities. Similarly to language in the European context, flags are uniquely inherent traits of countries whose aim is to represent geographical places as social and lived constructs (Medway et al. 2019: 694).



Figure 37. Use of Austrian flag to represent German and British flag to represent English

Flags on infrastructural signs are similarly used to represent political entities. There is, however, a major emphasis on their connection with language. Figures 37 and Chapter 8's 18 and 27 illustrate that the flag serves as a means to visually represent the language. There is also an interesting flag choice illustrated above. English is the official language in many countries but in this case, the British flag has been selected as the representational element of what is essentially a lingua franca. The choice can be a result of geographical proximity or an ever-present stereotype of English being associated with the UK. Similarly, German, that is the state language in several European countries, is used with the Austrian flag. This use of flag and language nicely illustrates their symbolic role of conveying the affiliation to a higher societal structure, Austria (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119). Finally, the flags' occurrence on commercial

signs is the least frequent and probably serves as a corporate marker of identity or as an attention-drawing visual in advertising.

In general, the occurrence of flags, especially the national ones, is very low. Given the role of railway station as an entry point, their low frequency may be surprising. Based on the context, however, there is not a strong tradition to display flags in Central Europe. Their absence also indicates that other, more subtle, strategies are preferred to convey the country's identity such as the use of the state language.

9.3. People & products

People and products are usually displayed in the commercial discourse and accompany verbal texts on multimodal signs. They generally appear on shop displays and advertisements and carry symbolic meaning. The depicted products are prototypes of what the respective companies offer. For example, a carrier company displays a train and a drugstore depicts a make-up concealer. In terms of people, they are usually depicted displaying certain positive emotions or doing product/service-related activities to establish interpersonal relations with the consumer and draw attention (Sulistyani et al. 2022: 153).

9.4. QR codes

QR codes can be considered a modern type of signage that serves as an entry point to the digital reality where additional information can be found (Rosendal et al. 2022: 204). It is another effective type of signage that saves physical space. A small square shape has the ability to encompass chunks of text without even displaying it. QR codes are also a clever way of how sign consumers can actively engage with the landscape. Since there is a direct interaction between the sign and the consumer, it is not surprising that the majority of QR codes are displayed on commercial signs. The commercial discourse is generally related to advertisements and shop displays and its intention is to draw consumers' attention and enhance profit (Sulistyani et al. 2022: 153). Excessive texts are avoided in favour of visuals, brand names, slogans or some key information. QR codes make possible to keep verbal texts to a bare minimum. Additionally, the interactive feature of QR codes is more likely to engage the consumer and draw their attention.

In terms of numbers, Vienna presents more signs displaying QR codes than Bratislava does. While the difference is notable, it can still be attributed to the size of the two landscapes. Vienna also possesses more commercial signs and is overall a more modern building. A more relevant

difference between the two stations is the placement of QR codes within the sign that is illustrated in Figure 38.



Figure 38. Use of QR codes in Bratislava Main Station and Vienna Main Station respectively

The first sign in Figure 38 illustrates that, in Bratislava, there is an overuse of three QR codes that form the root of the sign. In contrast, the second sign in Figure 38, collected in Vienna, displays only one QR code that is placed in a less prominent position. In this case, the QR code only accompanies the more important elements of the sign. The focus on the QR code in Bratislava may be an indication of the stations' objective to display elements connected with modernity to counter the building's outdated appearance.

A QR code can convey both symbolic and instrumental meaning. It symbolises the gate to the online world, a certain connection between the physical and the digital reality (Rosendal et al. 2022: 204). At the same time, it indicates the presence of additional information. The difference between a text and a QR code is that while the first is read, the latter needs to be scanned with an electronical device before it can be seen. In terms of Bratislava, there might be an additional symbolic meaning as a way to express modernity. In this case, a similar observation is further discussed in the next section.

9.5. Clock & time

The display of time is quite recurrent and prominent in the landscapes. Since train travel is based on specific timetables, it is not surprising that the notion of time is visually present and both stations are similarly consistent in displaying it. Figure 39, however, illustrates an interesting difference. While there is a preference for digital clocks in Bratislava, a substantial part of Vienna's clocks remains analogue.



Figure 39. Display of digital clock in Bratislava Main Station and analogue clock in Vienna Main Station

Since Bratislava Main Station is located in an old building, the institution probably intends to evoke feelings of modernism by displaying various elements connected with the modern age, such as digital clocks or QR codes. The contrast between the modern-related signs and the old-fashioned space is significant, which only adds to the ever-present visual disarray in Bratislava (Gubčo 2022). Vienna Main Station, on the contrary, is located in a very modern space and thus, there is room to display more traditional signs. Since the role of clocks is to indicate time, they generally convey instrumental meaning. In case of analogue clocks in Vienna, however, some adopt a symbolic role of representing the station itself as in the case of Figure 40. This clock is not only indicative of time but of the symbolic presence of the transport system.



Figure 40. Use of clock as a form of representation of the station

9.6. Numerals

Numbers are quite frequent in the landscape and can appear on any type of sign. They normally carry an instrumental meaning and are indicative of the number they represent. They are most frequently utilised in relation to digital clocks, platform names, prices and distance.

9.7. Arrows

Arrows present quite a uniform meaning of indicating directions of where something is located. They predominantly appear on infrastructural signs and are always accompanied by other elements. The sign that contains an arrow should also indicate the destination it points to. Arrows can appear in combination with both verbal and non-verbal codes.

9.8. Pictograms

A pictogram is an iconic representation of an object, activity or idea that comes in a simple, non-verbal form. It conveys meaning that is somehow connected with regulations, such as warnings or prohibitions. Pictograms are normally utilized in situations where meaning needs to be processed quickly, where there are people present from various linguistic backgrounds and in spaces requiring compliance with various legal obligations (Tijus et al. 2007: 18). Considering pictograms' typical environments, their occurrence in railway stations is natural. Figure 35 clearly indicates that pictograms are the most frequent type of non-verbal code appearing in both stations. While pictograms are not completely universal and present cultural

variation (Tijus et al. 2007: 18), Bratislava's and Vienna's stations display a lot of instances of identical or very similar forms. Despite the two countries possessing distinct linguistic backgrounds, the use of pictograms is not constrained by the borders. In this case, it can be concluded that pictograms indicate shared backgrounds within Central Europe.

Because of pictograms' frequent use and similar form in this part of the world, they assume at least a partial role of a lingua franca. They convey instrumental meaning and target travellers disregarding their linguistic background. Additionally, they are mostly ideologically and symbolically-free. As seen in the previous chapter, while English, German and other languages can behave as a lingua franca, their use is mostly conditioned by other external factors, such as economic powers, stereotypes or geographical proximity. The conveyed meaning goes very often beyond the instrumental nature of language by communicating feelings of globalism, modernism and others. This high degree of ideological representation is hardly seen in the display of pictograms. On the other side, pictograms simply cannot assume the full role of a lingua franca because of the limited nature of the meaning they are capable to convey (Tijus et al. 2007: 18). They can usually only refer to physical concepts or very simple activities. Therefore, pictograms are only ideal for certain situations, such as the regulatory discourse, but under other circumstances, their use would just be unsatisfactory.

Pictograms are a type of non-verbal code that can exist and convey meaning on its own. While there is a number of pictograms that stands on its own within the two landscapes, a significant part is accompanied by verbal codes. The occurrence of multimodality springs from two different reasons and thus two categories of multimodal pictograms can be identified.



Figure 41. Use of pictograms on multimodal signs

On the first sign of Figure 41, the verbal elements clarify the meaning expressed by the pictogram. Even though pictograms should be easily understood, there is still a risk of misinterpretation (Tijus et al. 2007: 18). The use of language reinforces the meaning

communicated by the pictogram. The three codes, German, the pictogram and English, are related through something akin to translation. The sign shows that duplicating multilingualism (Reh 2004) does not only occur between different languages but also between different modes. In the second case of Figure 41, the verbal code does not clarify but it modifies the meaning conveyed by the pictogram. The pictogram itself represents a car. The broad meaning is narrowed down by the use of the verbal code, usually the state language, into only a type of car. This technique allows pictograms to convey more complex meanings or adjust the scope of their portrayal.

10. Discussion of key findings

Railway stations currently possess many attributions, such as buildings between worlds (Hirsch 2015: 16), heterogeneous microcosms (Bissell 2009: 174) or places full of contrasts (Edwards 1997: 21). All these names highlight the somewhat ambiguous and contradictory nature of the particular place and the findings provide several examples of this trait. The top-down issuer of signs, the national carrier company, acts as both a private-sector profit-generator and a government-controlled institution (Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias 2023: 295). Its dual nature results in the production of various signs ranging in function between regulatory, infrastructural and commercial discourse.

Each discourse presents its own preferences in terms of mode and code choice, which leads to a sign diversity in the landscape. While in terms of modes, there is generally a clear preference for multimodality in all types, the display of languages presents various patterns. Similarly to Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan (2018: 296), multimodality and multilingualism are the most prominent in commercial and transgressive discourse. Regulatory and infrastructural discourse, on the other hand, are more likely to be monolingual, hence the large occurrence of monolingualism found in the railway stations. Transgressive discourse is the only type that is totally outside the influence of the institution. When viewed collectively with the institutionally-issued signs, there is another contrast between the carefully crafted, function-oriented display and the few original instances produced as a form of violation of the stations' more or less established sign arrangement.

As indicated in any other LL study, the use of languages is systematic (Shohamy 2018: 26) and easily identifiable in languages that are displayed frequently. Even though some foreign

languages present a very low appearance, their occurrence collectively can also be considered systematic. There is therefore another contrast in language display strategy. They are either visually prominent because of their overuse or because of their underuse. In the latter case, they usually present a very different or easily recognisable linguistic form which makes the sign visually striking and serves as a form of marketing (Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias 2023: 299). Nowadays, written forms are often used as symbolic and economic goods that serve as a basis for linguistic commodification. The displayed languages and, by extension, the particular landscape are converted into a commodity or an object for sale (Järlehed 2020: 28). This strategy is usually only applied in commercial and transgressive discourse though and in the case of symbolic multilingual signs in Bratislava.

Railway stations generally present a very established way of displaying languages. Therefore, the people's expectation of normativity from this environment determined in Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan (2018: 284) is not completely misplaced, even though linguistic diversity still occurs. Railway stations are quite efficient in complying with the countries' language policies and attribute the state language with an unquestioned dominance. The sign display can be considered a type of policymaking practice (Hult 2018: 341) that is mostly in line with the wider language management. Normativity is thus present, which is achieved through the monolingual use of the state language or its attribution of the dominant position when displayed with other languages. Additionally, the normative policymaking practice is not only seen through language use but also its non-use. The linguistic absence illustrates how some varieties such as the state language are legitimised through their frequent use and other varieties that one may expect to find are delegitimised through their non-use (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 220). There is a resulting requirement to adapt to the use of the state language in official contexts that reinforces the typical monolingual perception of Central-European countries.

The politics of code sequence (Coupland 2012: 11) is generally adhered to, which seems to be a trait of railway stations (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 274) and other public institutions such as medical clinics (Alomoush 2023: 74) or airports (Li & Yang 2023: 264). The identified pattern in this study is the state language followed by a lingua franca, English. There is a clear preference for vertical placement since it reflects hierarchical relations more effectively. The two fixed varieties can be followed by additional languages whose occurrence is mostly conditioned by geographical location. An interesting exception to normativity is the use of English in simple commands of regulatory and infrastructural discourse that was also identified in Tokyo's underground stations (Backhaus 2015: 207). There is no distinction between the

“home” and foreign audience and all are targeted as a homogeneous group in English as the main lingua franca. This pattern can be an indication of a trait particular for transport systems as a means to simplify and make the display more efficient in terms of space and the required time to read it.

The use of language can range from symbolic to instrumental. The overall pattern indicates that the least occurring varieties generally convey symbolic meaning and the most frequent ones instrumental or predominantly a combination of both. In terms of symbolic meaning, there is a great emphasis put on the notion of space as a geographical and political concept (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119). Languages are tightly linked with higher societal organisations (e.g. countries) that possess a bounded physical territory and they serve as marks of affiliation.

Finally, railway stations frequently make use of non-verbal codes to convey meaning as well. These places are a prototypical illustration of the fact that linguistic landscapes are in reality semiotic landscapes (Jaworski and Thurlow 20210: 2) due to the high occurrence of non-verbal elements. This paper discussed only the most prominent selection of non-verbal types and there are many more, such as the use of colours. Out of the discussed types, pictograms present an essential role in the inner-working of railway stations (Tijus et al. 2007: 18) and are used extensively. They can act as a non-verbal lingua franca in the transport sector. However, pictograms possess only a limited range of conveying meaning (Tijus et al. 2007: 18) and thus, they are frequently accompanied by verbal codes. Pictograms’ regular appearance on infrastructural and regulatory discourse can also account for the monolingual tendency of these types of signs (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan (2018: 296). In general, given the frequent multimodality of the collected signs, there is a close interaction between verbal and non-verbal modes that illustrate the complexity of the signs’ meaning.

In summary, the public display of railway stations results in a *de facto* normative policymaking practice that legitimises and monopolises the use of the state language in official contexts (Järlehed, Milani & Rosendal 2023: 220). The rare cases where the normativity is ignored is in commercial discourse (Kim 2022: 130) and in simple regulatory and infrastructural commands (Backhaus 2015: 207). At the same time, the expectation of foreign travellers is not completely ignored. The most prominent practices to target people of diverse linguistic backgrounds are the use of pictograms (Tijus et al. 2007: 18) and English as a lingua franca (Paramatra et al. 2022: 10).

This study also presents a number of limitations. Some result from the recency of LL as a discipline (Shohamy 2018: 26). Since there is no fixed set of LL principles, the taste is put on the researcher to define and delimit the particular research. There is thus a risk of the researcher's bias being present throughout the process of collecting and analysing the data. The criterium of relevance is somewhat ambiguous and may lead to the researcher selecting theories, methods and contextual information that are more likely to match the research interests rather than reflect the landscape. Another limitation is the size of the landscape and how relevant it is on a bigger scale.

In terms of the particular research design, the analysis and classification of signs reflect only one possible approach of interpreting the data and there are other ways to categorise the signs based on different criteria. It should also be taken into consideration that the sign type/token sampling may have slightly skewed the quantitative findings. While the sampling was necessary for the study's feasibility, it may have affected the number of occurrences of some categories. Finally, the two particular railway stations seem to possess no specific language policy documents. Therefore, it has been assumed that these railway stations are subjects of the countries' language policies provided in the respective constitutions. Despite these limitations, the study of railway stations in the tradition of LL can still result in interesting findings. Since this paper only provides surface-level observations, further research can build on these findings and conduct more detailed studies.

11. Conclusion

LL as an area of sociolinguistic inquiry has experienced significant development. The current approach can be described as a multidisciplinary and very open field that presents quite a varied set of terminology to suit the plethora of topics and interests that LL intends to address (Gorter 2018: 42). Despite the great variety, there still remain some areas that lack consistent interest. The government-controlled places and transport buildings for instance are usually not featured prominently in the tradition of LL.

This study aimed to explore the LL of two main railway stations in Bratislava and Vienna, two capitals in Central Europe. As an under-researched area, railway stations presented a unique type of landscape where various types of societal structures meet (Edwards 1997: 21). The primary objectives of this paper were to illustrate the systematic use of verbal and non-verbal

codes within railway stations and to provide evidence of the linguistic diversity in government-controlled places typically associated with monolingualism. These objectives were achieved by providing various sign classifications, identifying linguistic and semiotic forms and discussing the content and context of the collected signs and observed mode types. The study selected two stations, Bratislava Main Station and Vienna Main Station, to illustrate that, despite different formations, railway stations present systematic behaviour in terms of their sign display.

The findings indicated that there is a variety of different types of signs present in railway stations. This diversity reflects the station's position as a multifunctional space (Bissell 2009: 174). Railway stations, however, show preferences for certain sign and mode types. Multimodality and monolingualism clearly dominate the landscape. The dominance of this combination is related to the normative nature of railway stations (Ziegler, Schmitz and Uslucan 2018: 284). The normativity is reflected in the clearly hegemonic position of the state language in frequency and hierarchical placement. The expectation of the presence of travellers from diverse linguistic backgrounds generally creates an exception to the normativity though (Paramatra et al. 2022: 10). These travellers are usually targeted with English, the most frequent foreign variety.

In terms of future research, studies can focus only on the selection of aspects to provide more detailed interpretations. With the emphasis that LL currently puts on human agency (Shohamy 2015: 154), future research can also explore the participant perspective by conducting interviews. In addition, it might be worthwhile to check whether a similar behaviour can be observed in railway stations beyond Central Europe. Finally, another potential research orientation may involve comparisons with other transport buildings. Since railway stations and transport buildings are generally under-researched areas in LL, there are numerous potential directions, which this area of inquiry can endeavour into. Overall, this study highlights that even landscapes that are consistently overlooked in the tradition of LL can provide interesting and relevant findings that can help explain broader social implications connected with language, such as stereotypes and power relations.

Word count: 29 281

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Appendix

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch

Diese Masterarbeit zielt darauf ab, die Sprache und visuelle Symbole in den öffentlichen Räumen von Hauptbahnhöfen zu untersuchen. Ausgewählt werden hierfür zwei Hauptstädte Mitteleuropas; Bratislava und Wien. Die Studie wird in der Tradition der Linguistic Landscaping durchgeführt, einem jungen Forschungsfeld, dessen offizieller Beginn durch Gorter (2006) markiert wurde. Seitdem hat das Feld erhebliches Interesse an der Untersuchung von Mehrsprachigkeit in touristischen Gebieten gezeigt, wie zum Beispiel in historischen Stadtzentren (Takhtarova, Kalegina und Yarullina, 2015) und Einkaufsstraßen (Sabec, 2022). Im Gegensatz dazu werden behördliche oder staatlich kontrollierte Räume, insbesondere im europäischen Kontext, weniger erforscht. Vor allem Verkehrsgebäude und Bahnhöfe finden wenig Beachtung. Diese Masterarbeit sammelt Fotografien von Beschilderungen in den Hauptbahnhöfen von Bratislava und Wien und unterzieht diese einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse. Die Daten werden nach dem Standort, der Unterscheidung von Schildtypen/-token und Formen kategorisiert. Hierbei wird festgestellt, dass Bahnhöfe im Allgemeinen eine stark kontrolliert und sorgfältig geplante Art der öffentlichen Darstellung aufweisen. Obwohl Multilingualismus in den ländlichen geprägten Regionen vorhanden ist, werden Bahnhöfe von Monolingualismus und Multimodalität dominiert. Die klare Präferenz für den Monolingualismus in der Staatssprache, Deutsch oder Slowakisch, führt zu einer normativen politischen Entscheidungspraxis. Die öffentliche Darstellung vermittelt die Notwendigkeit, sich an die ausschließliche Verwendung der Staatssprache in den offiziellen Kontexten anzupassen, die die Zugehörigkeit zu höheren sozialen Strukturen (z.B. dem Land) symbolisieren. Ausländische Reisende werden durch Englisch als Lingua Franca oder durch Verwendung visueller Symbole, primär Piktogramme, angesprochen.