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Research Article

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Meanings and scripts in the linguistic landscape of Saint Petersburg

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Abstract: This article examines the linguistic component of building signs in the city center of St. Petersburg, Russia. The research is based on the analysis of an extensive database that covers 849 examples. It concludes that the Cyrillic script can be found in 84% of cases, Latin script – in 48%, and other scripts – in 4%. English is used to attract international visitors, demonstrate the authenticity of the brand, create a national flavor, hide meaning from the general public or as a part of linguistic creativity. Sometimes such language experiments break the phonetic–graphemic definitiveness of language, mixing form, and meaning. The use of the Latin script can either be targeted at those who do not know the Russian language or form a part of the language game for the Russian-speaking public.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, multilingualism, the Latin script, the Cyrillic script, Russian

1 Introduction

The study of the language landscape of different cities helps to understand better the use of language in the modern society. Traditionally, "the language landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" is defined as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combined together" (Landry and Bourhis 1997, 25). Due to the extensive use of modern technologies, it is necessary to include "electronic flat-panel displays, LED neon lights, foam boards, electronic message centers, interactive touch screens, inflatable signage, and scrolling banners" (Gorter 2013, 191). In a broader sense, "the linguistic landscape" can be defined as "linguistic objects that mark the public space" (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, 7).

Of great interest to researchers is the linguistic landscape of large cities, as they are most linguistically diverse, hence the term "multilingual cityscape" (Gorter 2006, Spolsky 2009). The presence of multiple languages in an urban linguistic landscape can reflect a variety of trends, where government regulation, bi or multilingual environment, nationalism, political and linguistic conflict, as well as globalization, international tourism, etc. play an important role. The language of a given linguistic landscape not only performs an informational function but also serves as a symbolic marker communicating the relative power and status of linguistic communities (Spolsky and Cooper 1991).

English occupies a specific place in the multilingual world. There are special studies devoted to the spread of English – "world Englishes," English as an international language, and English as a lingua franca (Hillman et al. 2020). English symbolizes "geography, ubiquity, and universalism" (Ricento 2015, 276).

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Although English does not have an official status in many countries, it is a substantial part of the linguistic landscape of their cities (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, Huebner 2006). Spolsky notes that one of the key principles for the choice of languages on signs is to select languages that the expected audience are able to read (Spolsky 2009). However, this principle is not the only one when it comes to using English in different regions. Rosenbaum, Nadel, Cooper, and Fishman called the use of English in a Jerusalem street a snob appeal (Rosenbaum et al. 1977). Researchers point out that in many cases, English in urban centers is associated with "modernity, internationalism, technological advancement, creative linguistics, language mixing, innovation, hybridization, syncretism, and innovativeness" (Boyle 2011, Gorter and Cenoz 2015, Higgens 2009). Selvi indicates that businessmen see the role of English in bringing a different "aura" to their businesses and contributing to the recognition of them, which puts the commercial motives in the first place (Selvi 2016). The trend of "Englishization" of languages is often evaluated negatively by researchers, who point to "a decisive and destructive force causing the degeneration" of the national language (Selvi 2016), a threat to local values, cultures, languages, and religion (Al-Issa and Dahan 2011). However, some Russian researchers tend to see English as a source of creativity (Maximova 2002, Rivilina 2015) and borrowing (Yelenevskaya 2008), as well as a tool for tourism development (Golomidova and Shcherbakov, 2019).

2 Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach involving qualitative and quantitative analyses (under Linguistic Landscape Studies and Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis framework (Blommaert and Maly 2015)). We studied the verbal component of the exterior (inscriptions in large letters on signboards and showcases) of 849 enterprises that provide services in the city center of St. Petersburg (Nevsky Prospect and nearby area: Malaya and Bolshaya Morskaya St., Griboyedov and Fontanka canal embankment, Pushkinskaya St., Ligovsky Ave., Liteyny Ave., Malaya Sadovaya St., Malaya and Bolshaya Konyushennaya St., Stremyannaya St., Goncharnaya St., Suvorovsky Ave., Ispolkomskaya St., etc.). Each enterprise is presented as a separate object of research (regardless of how many enterprises are located in one house). The sample was continuous, so every house in the address range was examined: Nevsky Prospekt houses 1-190, as well as adjacent streets and houses located on them. During the field study, only permanent signs and storefronts were considered, temporary advertising and other signs, ads, etc. were not taken into account. This article uses an interdisciplinary approach, which allows us to consider the linguistic landscape as a complex phenomenon from the perspective of sociolinguistics and urban linguistics. We also used the semiotic method and a number of scientific research techniques such as the construction of logical schemes, classification based on the semantics of words written in the Latin script, and graphical interpretation of theoretical information, which shows the correlation of semantic and script definitiveness of the linguistic landscape.

Based on the data obtained, an example of heat map was built in the QGIS program (using the QuickMapServices module).

3 Semantic and script definitiveness in the linguistic landscape of Saint Petersburg

A close look at signs of enterprises in the center of St. Petersburg reveals that there are a lot of them written in the Latin script. It is worth noting that 16% of enterprises do not have Russian inscriptions at all. The Latin script is used in almost a half of their external decoration (48%), while languages of non-Latin scripts can only be found in 4% of enterprises.

Heat map (Figure 1) shows the intensity of the use of the Latin and Cyrillic scripts on Nevsky Prospekt and nearby parts of it. In this area, the using of the Latin script is maximal. Colors are spaced on different sides of the street for ease of perception. The intensity of the color depends on the number of units of text in a particular script.

The choice of language depends on a number of factors. One of them is attractiveness and clarity for tourists. Usually, the initiative to use the English language in the center of St. Petersburg is "bottom-up" ("bottom-up" is defined by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) as initiated by individual social actors, not by the authorities). Although researchers point to initiatives by the Russian city authorities to use English for an efficient and comprehensive system of urban navigation (Golomidova and Shcherbakov 2019), state and administrative building signs are overwhelmingly monolingual.

Attracting international visitors to the city is not the only reason for using English. The Latin script is not something unknown to Russians. Although the knowledge of English in Russia is not very high, and public opinion polls show that only 63% of Russians can speak it and no more than 6% among them are fluent, this figure is slightly higher in St. Petersburg being 13% (Volkova 2015). Russia is on the remote periphery of the Expanding Circle of English continuum due to a restricted range of functions (Almazova et al. 2020, Anosova and Dashkina 2020, Bolotov et al. 2021, Proshina 2020, Rivilina, 2015, Valieva et al. 2019). Nevertheless, the phonetic correspondence of Latin letters to the Russian alphabet is well known to the vast majority of Russians, except for children (thus, according to the terminology (Bassetti 2013), most Russians are not bilinguals, but "biscriptals"), however, the latter now tend to get familiar with Latin script significantly earlier, using it on the Internet. This obviously does not mean that everyone can correctly read an English word, on the contrary, it is likely to be read as a combination of individual sounds without following the rules of pronunciation, or even with phonetic and graphic transfer. Therefore, some international brands have an "alternative name" in Russia, especially if they do not have audio advertising.

Researchers drew attention to the fact that the use of the national or English language depends on business type (Selvi 2016). For example, Lee explores the use of English in the beauty industry and gastronomic business and prioritizes the first area (Lee 2019).

The enterprises we are considering in the center of St. Petersburg can be divided into the following three main types according to the type of activity: shops (266 objects), services (331 objects), and catering objects (252 objects). Each of them, in turn, can also be classified. Stores are represented as follows: clothing stores (81 objects), shoe stores (14 objects), jewelry stores (20 objects), book stores (6 objects), alcohol stores (7 objects), electronics and household appliances stores (5 objects), sweet shops (13 objects), gift shops (26 objects), shopping centers (7 objects), pharmacies (18 objects), cosmetics shops (21 objects), grocery stores (30 objects), and others (18 objects). The objects of the service sector are hotels (20), private museums (4),



Figure 1: Intensity of using scripts on Nevsky Prospekt and nearby parts of it (red is Cyrillic one, green is Latin one).

banks (23), communication salons (12), beauty salons (19), government agencies (libraries, theaters, institutes, public services, schools, etc.) (30 objects), business centers (6 objects), real estate/travel agencies (12 objects), memorials and plaques (12 objects), as well as other organizations (193). In the food sector, there are cafes (100 objects), restaurants (71 objects), coffee shops (22 objects), bars (43 objects), canteens (12 objects), and specialized food (4 objects). Below are diagrams showing the percentage of the use of Latin script, Cyrillic script, and Bilingual for objects of various activities (Figures 2–4).

Cyrillic script is used in all objects of the type canteen and specialized food (100%), prevails in cafes (73%). In objects like a bar (81%) and coffee house (86%), on the contrary, Latin script is more common. The sphere of nutrition is the only sphere of those considered, where bilingualism is expressed in all types of objects considered.

Cyrillic script in stores was found in 100% of objects in the categories Bookstore, Alcohol store, Electronics stores, Candy Stores, and prevails over Latin script in all categories, except for clothing and footwear stores.

Cyrillic script in the service sector is most often found in private museums (100%), banks (95%), and government agencies (90%). Latin script dominates beauty salons (63%) and hotels (75%).

The diagrams are not shown, but have been reviewed in research and other scripts. They are quite small in number, as among the objects "shops" and "food" they are represented only on 5% of signboards and showcases, and in the service sector even less than 2%.

Attractive international brands are most often presented in the original language. Many stores and salons use the Latin script to demonstrate originality, quality, and popularity of products and thereby enhance their attractiveness. This is the case for clothing and footwear stores widely represented in the city center (e.g., Marina Rinaldi, Bolco Liliegi, MaxMarA, Laperla, Incanto, Louis Vuitton, Luisa Spagnoli, COLIN'S, Rieker, Marko, Thomas Munz, etc.). In most cases, fashion brands are proper names that do not have a particular meaning in any language. The Latin script can be found in 72% of clothing store signs, and Cyrillic – in 36%. This is the largest ratio in favor of Latin script of all the categories we have identified. The Latin script is also common in beauty salons, cosmetics stores, and other places where brands are important to customers. European names written in the Cyrillic script are less common (e.g., the Villeroy & Boch tableware store on 139 Nevsky Prospect). In addition, the name of the enterprise itself can be registered in English. The names of some Russian brands of clothing stores are usually short and written in the Latin script (e.g., Zara, Lena) as well as the names of many restaurants and hotels. Sometimes the Latin spelling of the brand sign is used to refer to the site of the same name to avoid confusion since it is possible to transliterate a non-Russian word in different ways.

Numerous studies that examine the interaction of different languages within a particular linguistic landscape raise the issue of whether and how the language of proper names in brand signs should be

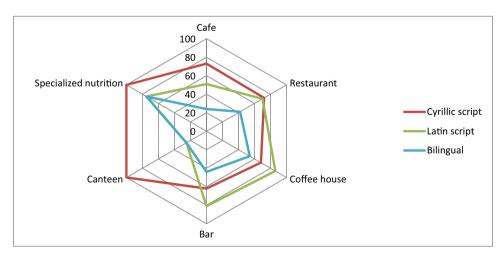


Figure 2: Analysis of using scripts by the organizations' type of activity. Food (%).

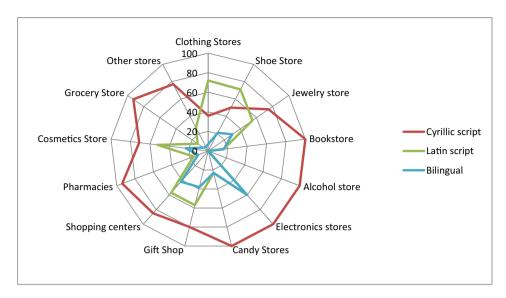


Figure 3: Analysis of using scripts by the organizations' type of activity. Shops (%).

defined (Alomoush 2015, Blackwood 2011, Tufi and Blackwood 2010). For example, Tufi and Blackwood claim that "McDonalds, Coca Cola, and Levi Strauss no longer index a particular language, but are part of every language where they have some resonance or some kind of value" (Tufi and Blackwood 2010, 201). However, for languages that do not use the Latin alphabet, there is a question what graphemes to choose to convey the name. For instance, McDonalds signs in Russia are written in Cyrillic, and Coca Cola – in Latin letters. In this article, the emphasis is not on the language used, but on the letters of the alphabet used: Latin or Cyrillic.

Besides signs described above that do not have a particular meaning in any language, there are names that may have one in one of the languages and be just a set of letters in another, or it may have some meaning in both languages. In this case, an original word can remain unchanged or be transliterated. Alomoush suggests distinguishing between "multiscript" and "multilingual," where the former means using characters from different language systems (Alomoush 2015). However, in addition to the three possibilities of representing a language – with the corresponding script, with the script of another language, or in the form of code-mixing (mixed script), there is a problem with the understanding of boundaries of a language. As a result of linguistic creativity, multilingual words appear not to be assigned to any

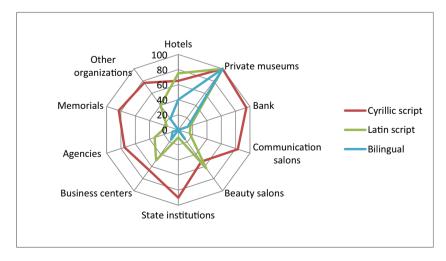


Figure 4: Analysis of using scripts by the organizations' type of activity. Service (%).

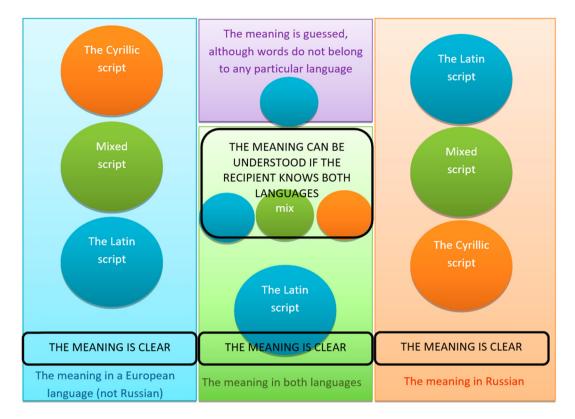


Figure 5: The correlation of semantic and script definitiveness in the linguistic landscape of St. Petersburg.

of the languages (Figure 5). According to the definition of Blommaert, "multilingualism is a ... complex of specific semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined 'language,' while others belong to another 'language'" (Blommaert 2010, 102). Even if we focus on the material object of material culture of multilingualism, which carries a verbal message (Aronin 2018, Aronin et al. 2018), as we do when considering the signs and storefronts of the linguistic landscape of St. Petersburg, we cannot refer to the multi-lingual space of the city as the sum of several languages (even regarding script as a separate variable).

Code-mixing games where the graphic and phonetic definitiveness of the language is blurred are widely presented in the linguistic landscape of St. Petersburg. The Latin script is most often used when people are supposed to understand the information correctly in Russian as well as in any other language (usually English).

A non-Russian name, which makes sense in the original language, is usually meaningless for the Russian-speaking public and perceived simply as a brand name. It is the case for the Spanish name of the restaurant Las Torres (i.e., towers) on 53 Nevsky Prospect that has neither translation nor transliteration in Russian.

Other companies, on the contrary, instead of translating the Russian name into English, use transliteration. For example, on 69 Nevsky Prospect, there is a sign in the Latin script *Juvelirtorg*, which means jeweler trade. On 1 Rubinstein St., the strip bar has the sign Zavist Flirt Eap where only the last word is written in Russian and the first two are written in Latin letters. The first word stands for envy and the second has the same meaning in both Russian and English. The name Nebar written in Latin letters means not a bar (57 Liteyny Ave.). A number of brands represented in the center of Saint Petersburg have names that only make sense in a European language, although they can be written in both Latin and Cyrillic scripts. An example of the latter option is the cosmetics store L'étoile (i.e., star), the name of which is represented exclusively in the Cyrillic script (Figure 6).

In most cases, the names of international brands in Russia are transliterated neither in advertising nor on the product and its packaging. For example, on 3 Nevsky Prospect, one can see the inscription Coca-Cola



Figure 6: The French word L'étoile written in the Cyrillic script.

in the window of a fast-food café written in English. Back in the Soviet times, when mass production and sale of Fanta, the first lemonade of the company, was launched in 1974, and Coca-Cola – during the 1980 Summer Olympics, not only bottle and disposable tableware labels and fizzy drink advertising posters were transliterated into Russian, but also signs on the points of sale (Figure 7).

Nowadays, in some cases, the trend is quite the opposite. Although the use of some English words like *sale* and *tax free* does not correspond to the legislative language of the Russian Federation, they are much shorter than their Russian equivalents and therefore much more popular. The word *sale* looks more attractive and familiar to the Russian-speaking public than the Russian word *pacnpodaxa*, which has ten letters.

Some loanwords that have been recently borrowed into Russian and do not still have an adequate Russian translation are often used in the original graphic, for example, *Boutique* or *Business lunch*.

The use of English becomes natural when referring to the cultural realities of English-speaking countries. For example, a bar based on the movie *Game of Thrones* is called *The Game of Swords* (133 Nevsky Prospect). Fans of George R. R. Martin's saga are supposed to understand easily the allusion even if they do not know English well.

A fairly simple way to achieve understanding is to refer to famous fictional or real characters whose names or surnames are equally understandable to the Russian and English-speaking audience. For example, the store of bags and accessories *Baggins* refers not only to the word *bag* but also to the famous character of R. Tolkien. A cigars and wine shop has the English sign *prof. FREUD* (18 Malaya Morskaya St.).

For signage, one can use words that sound the same in both languages, such as *Grizzly*. A more difficult way to achieve understanding is to use words of the common origin. In the following examples, *Planeta Organica* (98 Nevsky Prospect) and *Natura Siberica* (108 Nevsky Prospect), both words are of the Greek



Figure 7: The name of the Fanta trademark on street points of sale in the USSR written in the Cyrillic script.

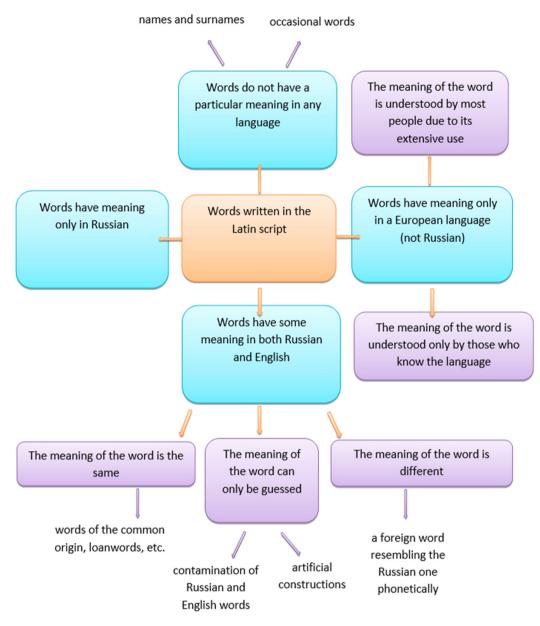


Figure 8: The semantics of words written in the Latin script.

origin, and although such choice of names for the cosmetic brands is not quite obvious, they are both understandable in Russian and English and associated with something living and natural. Sometimes brands have Latin roots – *Molecule* (147 Nevsky Prosect), *Capsula* (74 Ligovsky Ave.). In addition, there are words borrowed from European languages in Russian with the same meaning, or words borrowed from third languages. This group includes such names as *Lady charm* (55/4 Ligovsky Ave.), *Gentelmen club* (16 Stremyannaya St.), *Grizzly* (96 Nevsky St), the meanings of which are equally clear in Russian and English. In some cases, knowledge of a foreign language may add connotations to the name that is understandable in two languages. For example, the company name *Bel Etage*, which is not an architectural bureau, but a beauty salon, implies that potential customers know the meaning of the word *Bel* (i.e., beautiful). The sign of the restaurant *Ketch Up* (59 Liteyny Ave.) might be read as *ketchup*, which sounds the same in both Russian and English, however, those who know English can notice the similarity with the expression *catch up*.

Linguistic experiments on signs are not limited to natural languages (Figure 8). Sometimes the name written in the Latin script does not belong to any particular language, but nevertheless, like Esperanto, is



Figure 9: A sign with the combination of Latin and Cyrillic scripts.

intuitively understandable to speakers of different languages, for example, *Pegas Touristic* (10 Pushkinskaya St.), *Megobaro* (63 Liteyny Ave.). However, not all businesses seek to be understood by people who do not know English. Some enterprises apparently oriented for English-speaking audience do not hesitate to write words and entire phrases in English. That is the case for *Turkish StreetFood restaurant* (2/45 Rubinshteyna St.), which has no Russian translation, but only accompanying inscriptions: *burger*, *kebab*, *tantuni*, *doner*, as well as the beauty studio with the English name *Make Me Lashes* (61 Ligovsky Ave.) and a bar called *Self-Cost*. Sometimes there are language games with double meaning within the English language: for example, a cafe on 94 Nevsky Prospect has the slogan *Take Eat Easy*, and a restaurant on 7 Malaya Konyushennaya St. is called *Wine Gogh*.

The idea to use a foreign language in order to hide the message from the general public is not less interesting. It is unlikely that the name of the bar-cafe *Manneken Pis* would have existed for a long time on Nevsky Prospect if it was written in Russian (even considering that this is the name of a beer brand). In its current form, the name of the bar seems obscene, although it is not quite clear to most passers-by who hardly happen to know the Dutch language and much less the name of one of the most famous sights in Brussels. In addition to this, we have an interlanguage homonym here as the first word *Manneken* means mannequin in Russian, which implies prospects for one's own interpretation. Another example of "hiding" an obscene name is offered by a hookah bar with the sign *WTF time-bar* (17 Bolshaya Morskaya St.). The abbreviated English expression *WTF* used in the Internet slang is supposed to be understood by the target audience, but will remain a meaningless set of letters for the older generation and children.

A curious design option is the combination of Cyrillic and Latin letters. The simplest example of it is the word written in different script letters, which can be easily read by the Russian-speaking public. However, the need to decipher a grapheme-phonemic puzzle makes the reader pay a little more attention to the name. For example, the abbreviation for Saint Petersburg – SPb can be written as *SIIE* (8 Nevsky Prospect, Figure 9) where the first letter is not Cyrillic, the second letter is not Latin, and the last Cyrillic letter "B" has only one



Figure 10: Hieroglyphs with Russian transliteration on the sign of a Chinese restaurant.

"extra" line compared to Latin letter "b." Nevertheless, this inscription is aimed at local residents and its second meaning can be understood as the abbreviation of the Russian words самый правильный бар (i.e., the most legitimate bar). In addition, the restaurant design contains texts in English and Chinese indicating its type and location.

Games with Cyrillic and Latin letters can also involve playing with identical-looking letters that are pronounced differently. A more complex version of contamination involves combining morphemes of Russian and English words. Hybridization and script shift create a new word that has no equivalent in either Russian or English, but is intuitively understandable due to its semantic parts: *чε*θγ*r*οο*m* – *νε*θγ*p*εκ + room (64 Liteyny Ave.), the manicure studio Π aκuLike – π aκ (the Russian word for a fingernail polish that sounds quite similar to the English word lucky) + like (19 Malaya Morskaya St.). The use of letters of different scripts indicates the necessity to read in two languages.

The rest of the linguistic landscape of the city (different from Cyrillic and Latin scripts), with some exceptions, consists of Chinese hieroglyphs. Most Chinese inscriptions are aimed at city guests and explain what kind of business is located in the building and what it offers. An alternative option is ethnic entrepreneurship, which is presented, according to the study (Baranova and Fedorova 2019), by ethnic cafes and small shops. TANG ZHEN restaurant, 74 Nevsky Prospect (Figure 10), is a Chinese restaurant where hieroglyphs help create a national flavor and Cyrillic signboard uses graphic mimicry (stylized for Chinese letters).

Other languages can also be used to create color – for example, the inscription *Trattoria* (22 Sadovaya St.) is supposed to be associated with the Italian cuisine. In an Indian restaurant, the Sanskrit word नमस्ते is transliterated into English as *Namaste* (5 Malaya Konyushennaya St.). If an enterprise deals with foreign languages, they naturally enter signs and shop windows, so the English courses are called Talk a lot (5 Dumskaya St.), and the translation agency - Guten Morgen (4 Vosstaniya St.).

4 Multilingual texts in the linguistic landscape of Saint Petersburg

Let us look at how different languages are used to represent the same enterprise in the center of St. Petersburg. From semantic perspective, inscriptions in different languages can completely duplicate each other, partially duplicate or be completely different in meaning. To describe these variations, Backhaus suggests using terms borrowed from musicology: homophonic signs, mixed and monophonic signs (Backhaus 2007). A total of 24% of all enterprises studied have bilingual labels with exact translation being found only in 26% of cases. In most cases (58%), the texts do not duplicate each other. It is worth

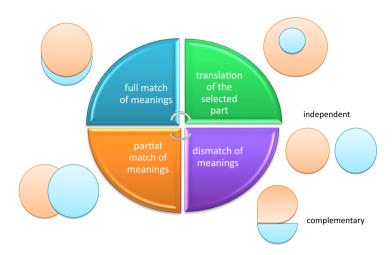


Figure 11: The correlation of meanings in bilingual signs.

noting that the need to save space, among other things, puts limitations on the use of a language. The main inscriptions should be large and concise in order to attract more attention.

Between the full match and mismatch of text meanings, Reh suggests two types of multilingual information (Reh 2004):

- fragmentary (The full information is given only in one language, but in which selected parts have been translated into an additional language or additional languages),
- overlapping (Only part of its information is repeated in at least one more language. In this case, the content of the texts in the different languages may simply overlap, or the content may be identical although the speech acts are not) (Reh 2004).

Obviously, if the meanings of a bilingual sign partially match (as for 18% all bilingual labels), the inscription in the second language may be just translation of the first language inscription, or it may have an additional meaning as well (Figure 11).

Inscriptions duplicated in Russian and English in the center of St. Petersburg most often indicate the type of activity of the enterprise, or give other short piece of information (1–2 words). An interesting question is why multilingual texts provide different information. In the case of Uganda, Reh indicates that such signs display complementary multilingualism, since knowledge of all the languages involved is required to understand the whole message (Reh 2004). Backhaus claims that whenever a translation or transliteration is available, the sign has been designed in a multilingual format with people of foreign backgrounds in mind (Backhaus 2007). In the linguistic landscape of the city center of St. Petersburg, "monophonic signs" are diverse, and in some cases, are aimed at different audiences (Russian and Englishspeaking). Russian and English signs of enterprises that do not duplicate each other may relate to its type/ name and the products offered. On 11–2 Nevsky Prospect, for example, the word *pecmopa* (i.e., restaurant) is written in Russian, and Pasta Pizza in English, and on 107 Nevsky Prospect, the name Крупской, фирменная торговля (i.e., Krupskaya, branded trade) is in Russian, while the word *chocolate* – in English. In the first case, the authors expect that the words *Pasta* and *Pizza*, which also exist in Russian, will be understandable to both Russian and English-speaking audiences. The second case deals with the name of a chocolate factory known to the Russian-speaking public, so the word chocolate is primarily aimed at international visitors who are unfamiliar with the brand, and does not add any particular meaning for Russians who know English.

Advertising that claims superiority of the company and therefore prohibited by the legislation of the Russian Federation is sometimes translated into English, for example, *The Best Price in St. Petersburg*. Promotions (e.g., *First cup free*) and attractive features (e.g., *dog friendly*, *hang loose*, *live music*, *warming drinks*, *made in*, etc.) are sometimes written in English as well as greetings like *Happy New Year*. In these

cases, knowledge of English allows you to learn more. Sometimes a relatively small font in English (and less often Chinese) provides information about the work of the company for visitors to the city.

Sometimes it is difficult to translate an English sign in Russian appropriately. For example, a cafe that is called Дачники (Dachniki means owners of dachas - Russian country cottages used especially in the summer) in Russian has the English name Soviet Café. In some cases, literal translation prevents from understanding the offer of the enterprise. The name Грибная аптека (i.e., mushroom pharmacy) on 180 Nevsky Prospect has the additional inscription in Latin letters Chaga to indicate the mushroom used for medical purposes and most known to the English-speaking public. Thus, in the center of St. Petersburg, inscriptions in several languages usually do not duplicate each other, and in most cases, provide different information. The English text can be either aimed at English-speaking clients or at everyone else, using vocabulary that is borrowed in Russian.

5 Conclusion and discussion

The linguistic landscape of the city center of Saint Petersburg is quite diverse. The Latin script is slightly less common here than Cyrillic. The purposes of its use can be very diverse: clarity for tourists, demonstrating authenticity of foreign brands and trademarks, creating a national flavor, using popular words, playing language games, etc.

In the center of St. Petersburg, the use of Latin script is very common and initiated by the owners of private enterprises, according to the bottom-up principle. Meanwhile, the legislation puts a number of restrictions on the use of English without Russian translation. Other European languages are mostly used by enterprises that are not aimed at the general public. In some cases, a foreign language is used to hide meaning from the general public.

The use of Latin letters extends the field of possible linguistic experiments including games with phonetic-graphemic arrangement of languages, which goes beyond "Englishization" of Russian (Rivilina 2015). Signage and storefront designer experiment with meanings and multilingual understanding appealing to the dominant language constellation (a group of one's most important, vehicle languages, functioning as a whole, and enabling an individual to meet all needs in a multilingual (Aronin 2020a, 2020b)). In some cases, the choice of names is the result of searching for words with a semantic field that is common for the Russian and English-speaking public. Sometimes those who know a particular language can reveal additional meanings of inscriptions. However, sometimes, despite the occasional use of Latin letters, the language game is played exclusively with the Russian-speaking public.

Although Russia is located on the remote periphery of Expanding Circle of English, the city center of St. Petersburg is an interesting example of multilingualism, where a variety of ways of using the Latin script are combined, which sometimes goes beyond the conventionally defined language.

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